

Convergence of Children's Roles: The Changing Role of Daughters and the Transformation of the Traditional Elderly Care Model

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Abstract: With the emancipation of social thinking, the improvement of women's social status in the transformation of the family structure has changed the original structure and function of their participation in the family. The increase in the phenomenon of daughters' elderly care has made the idea of converging son's and daughter's roles gradually accepted. The phenomenon of daughters' elderly care reshapes the family's expectation of daughters' roles and the establishment of emotional communication between the married daughters and their parents' families. The article explains the formation of the phenomenon of children's assimilation through the change of the father's concept of old age, the children's division of labor, and the improvement of women's status in the family. Under the influence of modernization and transformation, Chinese families have formed a new mode of support in which children participate together.

Keywords: Elderly care model; Children's role convergence; Status of women

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1. Introduction

According to the 2022 National Bulletin on the Development of the Elderly Program, there will be 280.04 million elderly people aged 60 and above by the end of 2022, accounting for 19.8% of the total population, and there will be 209.78 million elderly people aged 65 and above, accounting for 14.9% of the total population ^[1]. The dependency ratio of the elderly population aged 65 and above is 21.8%. The number of people aged 60 and above has been on the rise in recent years, and the country is aging seriously, so how to solve the problem of the elderly has become an urgent issue in the context of population aging.

As the most important way of old-age care, rural family old-age care is recognized by villages, society, and families, and raising children for old-age care is the main way of old-age care in rural families. Ancient China has a saying "Raising children to prevent old age." In the traditional concept of the family, the son can inherit the family's property, and the son also directly assumes the responsibility of old age. However, with the continuous emancipation of social thinking, the idea of the convergence of sons and daughters is constantly

accepted by everyone. In rural and urban areas, the phenomenon of daughters' elderly care is as common as the phenomenon of sons' elderly care, and the status of daughters' roles in the family has been changed from "married daughters are like splashed out water" to "raising daughters is a treasure." The status of daughters is constantly rising, with a gradual shift from the traditional monogamous model of family elderly care, in which sons support their children, to a dual model of children's elderly care. However, in a situation where the paternal line of succession is still dominant, daughters face many structural dilemmas in their old age, and the sense of responsibility and affection for their parents in their mother's home is likely to add to the troubles and burdens of married women ^[2].

As a new trend in the current changes in family structure, the assimilation of children is essentially an assimilation of the rights and obligations of daughters and sons within the family. The role of daughters in the family has changed, and they not only enjoy the rights of their mother's family but also bear the corresponding obligations. Daughters can still maintain close ties with their mother's family even after they are married off, and even when daughters are married off, their parents still grant them property rights and require them to fulfill their old-age responsibilities. Thus, daughters and sons gradually converge in their interactions with their fathers.

2. Reasons for the formation of children's role convergence

Existing studies have analyzed the causes of daughters' care for the elderly, and because women are more attentive and gentle, daughters' care for the elderly can provide more emotional value and comfort than men's care. According to Li Cuiling and Qin Qunfeng, many married women not only take the initiative to provide material support and care for their parents, but also are good at recognizing and understanding their parents' spiritual needs, and paying attention to the protection of their parents' emotions, so that their daughters' companionship, care and concern are the most important sources of spiritual comfort for the elderly parents ^[2]. For the elderly who are lonely in the spiritual world, the fulfillment of spiritual needs can bring them more comfort, so most of the elderly are more willing to choose their daughters as the main body of support. In addition, there is an unbalanced distribution of family labor. Some rural men choose to go out to work to make a living for their families and have a lower sense of presence in family care and family affairs. Su Yunxun said that the son as the main labor force of the family usually goes out to work, so they face difficulty in realizing the emotional comfort and life care for the elderly. In the case of the son having difficulty taking care of the elderly, the reality of the demand for elderly care forced the son to acquiesce to the participation of the married woman in the elderly care, and they even proposed the married woman to the elderly care in defiance of the traditional village public opinion ^[3]. Meanwhile, Li Cuiling said that in terms of spiritual and emotional aspects, daughters are more willing to invest a lot of time and energy in paying attention to and taking care of their parents' emotional state ^[2]. Elderly parents have multi-level needs, from the different levels of intergenerational support, economic support is the foundation, life care is the key, emotional communication and spiritual comfort is the core, so the daughter in the latter two aspects of the advantage appears more obvious. Women's financial independence is also one of the reasons for realizing women's participation in family old-age care. Women can have the right to dispose of their property, and according to Gan Ying, many young women take it for granted that they will pay for the old-age care of their maiden parents and contribute to the medical care of their parents ^[4]. Therefore, their financial interactions with their parents have changed from simple financial supplements, such as giving small amounts of pocket money and buying clothes, to diversified financial support, such as providing daily expenses for daily necessities, hospitalization costs, and red packets of nearly 1,000 yuan for New Year's and festivals. The change in the overall social status of women has led to a shift in the traditional family model

of old-age care.

Aging daughters have turned out to be a common phenomenon in today's social life and married daughters play an important role in the process of dealing with emotional family relationships. Studies have shown that married daughters maintain close interactions with their parents and that older adults with daughters typically have a greater sense of well-being and a higher quality of life. Daughters are more emotionally close to their parents than sons, and more often reciprocate with their parents in terms of financial, household, and emotional support.

3. Reasons for the formation of children's role convergence

3.1. Changes in the father's perception of old age

In the traditional concept of the family, only sons have the right to inherit the family property, and some skills directly state that they are "passed on to men but not to women", and even refuse to allow women to participate in some activities so that daughters have always been treated as "outsiders." It is widely believed that only sons can continue the family lineage and reproduce heirs for the family and that while sons inherit the family business, they also have to bear the obligation to support their parents, and it is a "disgrace" for daughters to retire in old age. However, with the continuous development of society, this traditional thinking has been disintegrated, the status of the elderly in the family is correspondingly lowered, and the traditional family elderly care model of the son is also correspondingly lowered. The patriarchal system of the elderly care ethic has also been impacted by societal change.

In today's society, most of the elderly are in favor of daughters' elderly care, they think that daughters and sons are all their children, and they pay the same energy in the process of raising them. In today's families, the idea that "women in the country do not marry outside the country" is widely spread, and they believe that daughters should stay by their side to be able to take care of each other and keep each other company. The notion of father-generation parenting is gradually being abandoned by most people, and the phenomenon of children being assimilated into one another has become prevalent.

3.2. Children's split elderly care model

According to the data of the 2010 China Family Tracking Survey, an analysis and comparison of the two types of support behaviors and patterns of elderly care between sons and daughters in terms of daily life care and economic support reveals that due to the differences in the personality attributes of men and women as well as the division of labor in the family, there are differences in the ways of supporting their parents, with men, as the main laborers in the family, taking on the major expenditures in the family economy, and women mainly taking on the responsibility of caring for the family, both taking different ways of caring for their parents in the elderly care pattern. Women are mainly responsible for taking care of the family, and both sides take different ways to take care of their parents in the old-age model. Among them, men mainly choose to provide financial support for their parents, while women choose to take care of their parents in their daily lives, with the direct effect of daughters being higher than that of sons, and this "son pays, daughter contributes" approach is a new mode of division of labor in the family's old-age care.

As the most important form of old-age care in Chinese society, family old-age care is recognized by both village society and the family. Children's assumption of their respective roles in the family old-age care model promotes the idea of the convergence of sons and daughters. The family is not just a home for one person; family affairs concern every member of the family, and most older people are already able and willing to accept their daughters as caregivers for them, while the division of roles between men and women in old-age care has

gradually made gender equality between men and women more deeply rooted in people's hearts and minds.

3.3. Improvement of the status of women in the family

As times have changed, family structures and intergenerational relations have also changed dramatically, with family size becoming smaller and smaller and the nuclear family becoming the most common family structure. Along with this, the economic and social status of women in the social structure has been rising, the idea of equality between men and women has been deeply rooted in people's hearts, and various policies in society are also bringing equality between men and women closer, which makes women's gender awareness gradually increased, and women have begun to pursue the balance of family power in family life. As women began to pursue the balance of family power in family life, women first chose to control the right to use family property. After owning their own businesses, women's own economic status is gradually rising, women in control of the distribution of family property, the biggest beneficiaries are the woman's parents and family members, and women have the right to dispose of family property at will. In the context of the prevalence of small families, where husbands work outside the home for many years to earn money and wives are responsible for keeping the family income, running the household, and taking care of human affairs, this right to control family property and to have a say in family affairs not only makes wives the de facto decision makers and executors of family affairs but also makes it more convenient for daughters to give to their parents economically.

Since the opening of the labor market, most women have participated in employment to realize their economic independence, and women no longer need to rely on men to make a living, and their financial freedom gives them enough confidence to be on the same footing as the men in the family, realizing equality between men and women in the family. Therefore, they can freely use their own money to support their parents and repay them with more financial support.

4. Retrospect and prospect

In China's current social context, the problem of old age is not only a family problem but also a social problem. The solution to the problem of old age can promote the harmony and stability of society as a whole. Because of the increase in the number of elderly people left behind as a result of current social mobility, the solution to the problem of old age is urgent. Because most young adults go out to work, in contemporary rural society, daughters' old age behavior and phenomenon will not attract attention but show a gradually expanding trend. Many elderly people will understand and adopt it, which also shows that the family old age model will continue to change, and is not a static mono-system of old age model ^[5]. With the social and economic development, the main body of old age is no longer borne by men alone, and the role of daughters in the mother's family has also undergone significant changes, from the role of outsiders to the role same as the son. The convergence of the roles of the sons and daughters has reduced the difference in their roles, as manifested in the equal distribution of family property, the responsibility of the family old-age care, and the common participation in the ceremonies. In rural families with many children, the traditional son's old-age unilineal support mode has been replaced by a new mode of old-age division of labor between sons and daughters, and this phenomenon of joint old-age support between sons and daughters or even old-age support by daughters provides another way of thinking about the harmony of the family and also demonstrates that the mode of family old-age support will be transformed with the progress of the times ^[6]. However, the further promotion of the convergence of the old-age care model for sons and daughters will require the concerted efforts of many levels to accomplish, and thus true gender equality between men and women can be achieved.

In a sense, the current family structure is facing changes in family structure and family relations in the

context of modernization and transformation. This reflects the dynamism of the Chinese family in the process of modernization in the future development trend of Chinese families, as the change in the concept of childbearing, the serious aging of the population, and the developmental goal of urbanization continue to seep into the lives of Chinese peasant families.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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