

Present Situation and Dilemma of Accompanying Medical Service: Based on the Investigation of S Hospital in Shandong Province

Jinglong Li*

School of University of Jinan, Jinan 250022, Shandong Province, China

*Corresponding author: Jinglong Li, stss2301ljl@163.com

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Abstract: There are few existing research materials for the development status of escort services. The research materials are mainly news reports, and the research literature with strong scientific rationality is even less. This study obtained the research data through questionnaires and interviews to describe and analyze the current development status and difficulties faced by the escort service industry. The main findings of this study are that there is a market gap in escort services, and the supply needs to be strengthened. The accompanying service industry is currently facing a variety of internal and external difficulties and needs to be supported and regulated. This paper briefly describes the current status and problems of escort services and explains the details of the problems. At the same time, this study can provide a typical and representative analysis sample for the research on the high-quality development of people's escorting services and community governance in the new era.

Keywords: Accompanying diagnosis service; Digital governance; Resource integration; Population aging; Lonely doctor visits

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1. Introduction

In November 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the National Medium and Long-Term Plan for Actively Responding to Population Aging. The plan stressed that population aging is the basic national condition of China for a long time to come^[1]. With the aging of the population becoming increasingly severe, the number of disabled and semi-disabled elderly people is increasing, the number of one-child families is increasing, the burden of social and family pensions is increasing, and the contradiction between supply and demand of pensions and health services is becoming more prominent. At the same time, for the young people who struggle outside, independence is their attribute, but it does not mean that they will not be lonely and do not need company. Visiting a doctor alone is often an inevitable thing. In such an environment, the demand for accompanying patients grows, and the accompanying services emerge at the historic moment and gradually enter the public eye.

To understand the basic situation of the escorts in S Hospital of Shandong Province and the public's understanding

and recognition of the escorts, this study designed a questionnaire for the escorts in S Hospital of Shandong Province and the residents of Jinan City. Among them, the questionnaire for the escorts of S Hospital in Shandong Province mainly collected the basic information of the escorts, such as gender, education, income, and reasons for joining, and a total of 9 escorts gave answers. A total of 403 valid questionnaires were collected for the residents of Jinan City, which mainly investigated the basic identity information of the respondents, the understanding of the escort service, the degree of recognition, and other information. To understand the real work situation of the escorts of S Hospital in Shandong Province, the author went to S Hospital in Shandong Province and conducted structural interviews with the escorts of S Hospital in Shandong Province. A total of 8 escorts and 1 medical supervisor explained the daily work of escorts, the development status of the escorts industry, and the development of escorts themselves.

2. Theoretical basis

The theory adopted in this paper is the resource integration theory. The research of resource integration theory begins with the resource endowment theory from the perspective of economics. The resource endowment theory was proposed by Heckcher in the 1930s. He believed that the cost of a product was not affected by a single factor (labor), but by the comprehensive effect of multiple factors (capital, land, and technology), and established the Heckscher-Ohlin model accordingly ^[2]. This analytical model provides an analytical framework for the theory of resource integration. Later, some scholars expanded the scope of application of this theoretical model, proposed the theory of resource management based on the theory of resource endowment, and took resource integration, an important analytical element in the theory, as an important premise for the generation of resource value, and believed that the process of resource value creation is the process of resource integration ^[3]. This further enhanced the prominent position of resource integration theory.

With the in-depth development of the concept of diversified governance, the intervention of social service resources in social governance has increasingly become an important research field, and the research of service resource integration theory has gradually expanded to the field of sociology. The research content can be summarized as follows. For example, the integration of social service resources is divided into three types: traditional, exchange coordination, and administration-led. Through empirical analysis, it is concluded that administration-led integration is the main type of social service resources integration ^[4]. The integration model of social service resources, for example, divides the integration of social service resources into four models: market intervention, internal demand, administrative allocation, and social sponsorship ^[5]. The integration process of social service resources, such as the integration of social service resources into resource mobilization, resource development (resource absorption), resource management and maintenance, resource sharing, and other processes ^[6]. In addition to the above theoretical research, the concept of social service resource integration has also been widely applied in practice and achieved positive results. For example, the social elderly service emphasizes the important role of social worker resource coordination for the elderly and their families ^[7]. This establishes a trust relationship between the elderly and professional service organizations through resource integration ^[8].

3. Supply and demand dilemma and reason analysis of accompanying medical service

3.1. The supply and demand dilemma of accompanying diagnosis service

3.1.1. There is a large market demand for escort services, but the supply of professional escort services is limited

Several escorts from S Hospital in Shandong Province said that patients and their families have a demand for

escorting services. In the questionnaire survey, more than 70 percent of the respondents said they were willing to try the service. At present, the market prospect of the accompanying clinic service industry is considerable, but the supply of accompanying clinic services is not enough to meet the market demand. The first is the shortage of human resources. There are only 12 escorts in S Hospital in Shandong Province, and the lack of limited reception capacity exists objectively. Moreover, all the 12 escorts are women, so there is a lack of physical strength. The second is the technical difficulties. Although the current escort service has manpower and market, it lacks sufficiently mature digital technology to combine the supply force and supply and demand of the escort service. Finally, the supply of funds is limited. The accompanying service of S Hospital in Shandong Province is purchased by the hospital from Weigao Group. However, as a public institution, S Hospital in Shandong Province cannot earn from its main business and has a limited financial budget, so it is difficult to invest a large amount of economic cost to purchase the accompanying service in a short time.

3.1.2. There is insufficient publicity of escort services and it is difficult for the elderly group to obtain publicity information

This questionnaire shows that about 50% of the respondents do not know much or do not know about the escort service, and most of them are elderly. A considerable number of respondents said they had “never heard of escort service at all” or “there was a lack of local publicity” (Figure 1). Based on the above survey data, we found that there is a problem of insufficient publicity in the escort service industry at present. At present, the accompanying service of S Hospital in Shandong Province is mainly promoted through the hospital’s official website, WeChat public account, and Douyin live broadcast. However, residents who do not know about S Hospital in Shandong Province rarely pay attention to the hospital’s official website or WeChat public account, while the page views of Douyin Live broadcast are about 100 to 500 people each time, so the publicity effect is relatively limited. It is not difficult to find that the main publicity front of the accompanying service of S Hospital in Shandong Province is the Internet, as the elderly can obtain limited resources from the Internet, which makes it difficult for the elderly group to obtain relevant information about the accompanying service. In addition to S Hospital in Shandong Province, a considerable part of commercial escort services also rely on Internet platforms such as Taobao or WeChat public accounts for publicity, and it is naturally difficult for elderly groups to access this information.

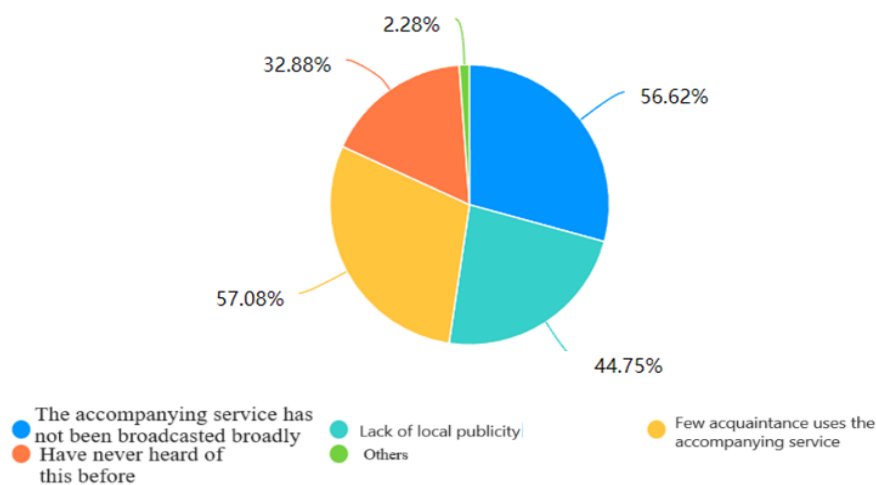


Figure 1. Survey data of influencing factors of understanding the degree of accompanying service

3.1.3. There is confusion on the supply side and trust problem on the demand side

Although the types of escort services are no longer limited to traditional inpatient nurses, and the service items of escort services are relatively complete, there are also problems such as a lack of pricing standards and uneven service quality. The accompanying diagnosis application of various cities in the country shows that at present in Beijing, the price for full consultation accompanying is 588 yuan/time, about 59 yuan/time before the diagnosis, 398 yuan/time for consultation, 328 yuan/time for sending results, 388 yuan/time for taking medicine. In Shijiazhuang, 299 yuan/time for a full consultation, 59 yuan/time for pre-consultation, 188 yuan/time for consultation, 98 yuan/time for sending results, and 168 yuan/time for taking medicine. This shows that the fee standard of escort services will be different in different cities. Patients already need to spend money to buy medicine, examination, and treatment, so if they have to spend tens or even hundreds of yuan to buy the accompanying service, they may face economic and emotional pressure. At present, the profession of escort doctor has not been included in the “Occupational Classification of the People’s Republic of China (2022 edition)” issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. There is indeed a lack of guidance and supervision in the charging standard of the accompanying medical consultation industry. There is also a medical industry practitioner who said, “Although there are more institutions providing escort services, due to the lack of relevant industry norms, its entry threshold is not high, with no age, industry, education, and other restrictions, so the qualification level of practitioners, professional ability is uneven, which is the current configuration of the industry status quo.”

Due to the emergence of the service industry in a short time, little related publicity, higher prices, uneven service quality, and other problems, consumers cannot fully trust the industry. In the questionnaire survey, nearly 30% of the respondents chose “reluctant” or “unwilling” to try escort services, and more than half of them said they “do not trust escort services”, especially because they are worried about personal safety, privacy disclosure and the professional level of escorting staff (Figure 2).

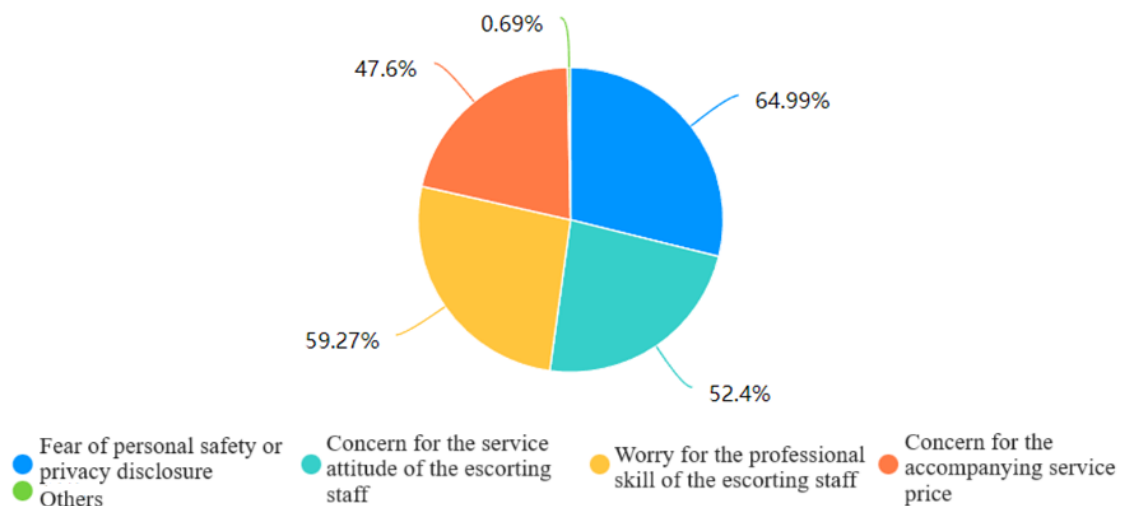


Figure 2. Survey data on the public’s acceptance of escort services

3.2. Analysis of the causes of the supply and demand dilemma of accompanied diagnosis services

3.2.1. There is a shortage of funds and low occupational attraction for escort service

The rise of escort services can be said to be a result of demand driving supply, and supply gradually feeding demand. In the development process, there is a lack of policy attention and capital help.

At present, among the many hospitals in Jinan City, only S Hospital has invested in the accompanying service of Weigao Company, while other hospitals have not made any investment. Since S Hospital has limited investment in this respect, it has not made any follow-up purchases after purchasing the first batch of accompanying services. The low occupational attractiveness of the accompanying service position restricts the human resource supply of the public service accompanying team. The monthly salary of escorts in S Hospital is about 5,000 yuan, most of them feel that the salary is not enough, the work pressure is high, and the position is sometimes not valued by patients. Compared with the labor remuneration of hundreds of yuan per time for commercial escorts, public service escorts are not attractive enough for employment.

3.2.2. There is a shortage of professional talents in the accompanying diagnosis service industry

At present, the escort team of S Hospital is facing difficulties in the supply of personnel. First, the financial budget of S Hospital is limited, and it is difficult to come up with more money to purchase the escort service of Weigao Company. Second, the employment attraction of the escort profession is low, and with the requirement of a medical professional background and nurse qualification certificate, it is difficult to guarantee the number of young people who are willing to engage in escort services in Weigao Company and S Hospital. It can be said that the shortage of human resources makes Shandong S Hospital temporarily unable to increase the publicity of accompanying services, which makes Shandong S Hospital know that many elderly people find it difficult to obtain information about their accompanying services, but could not address the situation.

3.2.3 The application of digital technology in the field of professional escort service is insufficient

At present, S Hospital in Shandong Province has not been able to make high use of digital resources, which also makes their publicity effect unsatisfactory. S Hospital in Shandong Province failed to provide patients with a digital and convenient way to make an appointment for accompanying consultation service through the WeChat mini program, public account, or application, which will inconvenience some middle-aged and young people who are accustomed to using WeChat. At present, it is common to use the WeChat e-health card for medical treatment, and S Hospital in Shandong Province failed to combine accompanying consultation service with the WeChat e-health card. Hence, S Hospital has failed in this aspect.

3.2.4. Lack of corresponding market access mechanism and government supervision

Escorting has not yet been included in the Occupational Classification of the People's Republic of China (2022 edition), but at the same time, there is indeed customer demand, which makes the escorting service industry a blank field that lacks norms and supervision with arbitrary growth. On the supply side, the government has failed to play the dominant role in resource integration. The providers of escort services can set prices relatively freely and set the specific content of services independently. Due to the lack of market supervision, the service attitude and service quality of escorts and attendants are less guaranteed in the process of providing services, which makes it difficult for the customers of escorts to give escorts enough trust, especially when the escorts need to have access to the patient's home address, ID number, and other private information.

4. Conclusion

In the current development of commercial escort services, S Hospital in Shandong Province provides both professional and free escort services, realizing the compatibility of good quality and cheap price, and provides a template for the development of public escort services. Only with the active participation of the government, the market, hospitals, patients, and other parties, promoting the rational allocation of resources, coordinating the

interests of all parties, and respecting the demands of all parties, can a good escort service industry be built.

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Disclosure statement

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