

# Advances in Research of Influencing Factors and Promotion Strategies of Willingness to Work among Elderly Care Professionals

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**Abstract** To address the shortage of elderly care professionals, this paper systematically reviews the factors influencing the willingness to work and the strategies to enhance it. The research indicates that willingness to work is influenced by multiple factors, including personal characteristics, professional identity, the professional environment (such as salary and career development opportunities), and social support. Key promotion strategies include strengthening educational guidance, optimizing compensation and promotion mechanisms, improving policy subsidies, reducing social prejudice, and deepening school-enterprise cooperation. Addressing this issue requires collaborative efforts from the government, society, and educational institutions to stabilize the workforce and improve the quality of elderly care services.

**Key words** Elderly care professionals, Willingness to work, Influencing factors, Promotion strategies

## 1 Introduction

The population aging is a major global social issue. China, as the country with the largest elderly population, is experiencing a continuously accelerating aging process<sup>[1]</sup>, leading to an increasingly urgent demand for elderly care professionals. These professionals are the direct providers of elderly care services, and their quantity and quality determine the capacity for service delivery<sup>[2]</sup>. At present, China's elderly care workforce faces several challenges, including a significant shortage in numbers, an unreasonable structure, high turnover rates (with annual turnover exceeding 40% in some regions), and relatively low professional competence. The low willingness to work in this field is a key factor contributing to this shortage and high turnover<sup>[3]</sup>.

The willingness to work as an elderly care professional represents an individual's subjective inclination towards choosing this career. It serves as a crucial indicator for predicting occupational behavior and plays a significant role in strengthening the workforce, reducing turnover, and enhancing service quality. In recent years, scholars globally have conducted extensive research on this topic, identifying a range of influencing factors and proposing corresponding strategies<sup>[4-5]</sup>. This paper synthesizes existing findings to systematically review these influencing factors and summarize promotion strategies, thereby providing a reference for improving the training system for elderly care professionals.

## 2 Factors influencing the willingness to work among elderly care professionals

**2.1 Personal characteristic factors** Personal characteristics are fundamental factors influencing the willingness to work, primarily including gender, age, educational background, family context, and personal interests. The impact of gender on willingness

to work remains controversial: traditional views suggest that women have a higher willingness due to empathy and meticulousness, but recent studies indicate that with changing social attitudes, some men have increased their recognition of this profession, showing a willingness to work no lower than that of women<sup>[6]</sup>. Regarding age, younger groups demonstrate a stronger willingness to work, while older groups are more concerned with job stability and compensation, showing relatively lower willingness. Educational background is significantly correlated with willingness to work; those with higher education place greater emphasis on personal development and social value, exhibiting higher willingness, whereas those with lower education focus more on material factors such as salary, showing lower willingness. Individuals who live with elderly people, have experience caring for relatives, or come from families that support this profession tend to have higher willingness to work due to deeper exposure to the work and fewer obstacles<sup>[7]</sup>.

**2.2 Knowledge, attitude, and professional identity factors** Individual knowledge, attitudes, and professional identity are core intrinsic factors influencing the willingness to work. Individuals with solid professional knowledge in elderly care and positive attitudes toward the elderly population are better able to understand the value of the profession, demonstrating a stronger willingness to work<sup>[8]</sup>. Those who have practical experience in elderly care, have received systematic vocational education, and possess a clear understanding of career development opportunities exhibit higher levels of professional identity<sup>[9]</sup>. In addition, social recognition and the professional environment also affect professional identity, which in turn influences the willingness to work.

**2.3 Occupational environment factors** The occupational environment constitutes the core external factor influencing the willingness to work, primarily encompassing salary and benefits, working conditions, career development opportunities, and social status. Remuneration is the foremost influencing factor. Elderly care work involves high intensity, significant responsibility, and

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substantial professional demands; however, the average monthly salary for this group in China remains low<sup>[10]</sup>, with a notable gap compared to clinical nurses. This mismatch between compensation and the value and intensity of the work discourages professionals from entering the field and predisposes current employees to leave. Research has confirmed a positive correlation between salary levels and the willingness to work<sup>[11]</sup>.

The impact of the working environment is significant, encompassing both physical and human dimensions. In some elderly care institutions, inadequate facilities and a lack of protective conditions exacerbate work-related stress; in others, poor management practices, complex interpersonal relationships, and a deficiency in respect and care for staff lead to low job satisfaction. In contrast, a comfortable and safe environment, a harmonious atmosphere, and comprehensive safeguards can enhance satisfaction and a sense of belonging, thereby strengthening the willingness to work<sup>[12]</sup>.

Career development prospects and social status are crucial determinants of long-term willingness to work. Currently, elderly care institutions in China suffer from inadequate promotion systems and ambiguous career pathways, coupled with a lack of systematic training and professional title evaluation mechanisms, leaving practitioners with little confidence in their future. Compounded by prevailing social biases, these professionals endure low social status and a diminished sense of professional pride, further constraining their willingness to work<sup>[13]</sup>.

**2.4 Social support factors** Social support constitutes a critical external safeguard influencing individuals' willingness to pursue a career, encompassing policy support, family support, and Social awareness. These elements provide developmental reinforcement and environmental security, directly shaping career choices. Policy support serves as the cornerstone for motivating career intentions, with well-structured policies significantly enhancing occupational appeal. Government initiatives such as entry subsidies, social insurance subsidies, and points-based household registration policies amplify economic returns. Programs like the "1 + X" elderly care certificate system clarify skill development pathways, fostering long-term career expectations<sup>[14]</sup>. In contrast, policy gaps or ambiguous implementation weaken career confidence.

### 3 Research progress on strategies to promote the willingness of elderly care workers to pursue careers

**3.1 Strengthening educational guidance to enhance professional competence and identity** Educational guidance serves as the foundation for increasing career willingness, primarily by systematically improving individuals' professional competence, career awareness, and occupational identity<sup>[15]</sup>. It involves optimizing the curriculum system for elderly care education by expanding the proportion of aging-related knowledge and geriatric nursing courses within nursing programs in academic institutions. Curricula should integrate content such as geriatric psychology, communication skills, and ethical and legal considerations, enabling students to

acquire professional competencies and understand the needs of the elderly. Industry experts and outstanding practitioners are invited to deliver lectures and provide career guidance, while psychological counseling is strengthened to help students develop a sound professional outlook.

**3.2 Optimizing the professional environment to enhance occupational attractiveness** Optimizing the professional environment is a core external measure to increase career willingness, primarily by improving working conditions, remuneration, and development prospects to enhance occupational attractiveness<sup>[16]</sup>. This involves raising salary and social security levels, establishing a reasonable salary growth mechanism that adjusts compensation in line with economic development and price fluctuations, ensuring alignment with work intensity and responsibilities; improving the social security system by fully paying various insurances to alleviate concerns; and setting up special subsidies to increase the economic appeal of the profession. It also requires improving the working environment by strengthening facility construction in elderly care institutions and equipping necessary nursing and protective equipment; standardizing internal management to create a harmonious atmosphere, respecting the labor of practitioners, establishing reasonable performance assessment and incentive mechanisms to enhance sense of belonging; and arranging work tasks reasonably to safeguard practitioners' rest and physical and mental health.

**3.3 Improving policy support and strengthening institutional guarantees** Policy support constitutes an important guarantee, and governments should introduce targeted policies to provide institutional backing for the development of the elderly care workforce<sup>[17]</sup>. Efforts should be made to strengthen policy support by improving policies for the cultivation, recruitment, and motivation of elderly care professionals, increasing financial investment, and supporting educational institutions in enhancing program development. Tax incentives and financial subsidies should be provided to elderly care institutions that recruit graduates and conduct training, encouraging them to reinforce talent development. The vocational qualification certification system should be improved by refining the "1 + X" elderly care certificate program, standardizing certification criteria and procedures, and enhancing the value of certificates. Linking qualification certificates to compensation and promotion will encourage practitioners to upgrade their professional skills.

**3.4 Strengthening social awareness to foster a supportive social atmosphere** Social awareness can improve occupational cognitive biases, enhance professional status and recognition, and create a favorable environment for practitioners. Efforts should intensify positive publicity by utilizing various media platforms to highlight the importance of the elderly care profession, its development prospects, and the inspiring stories of practitioners, enabling the public to understand the profession's specialized nature and social value, thereby changing stereotypes. Themed promotional activities should be organized to cultivate a culture of re-

spect and care for the elderly, enhancing practitioners' professional pride and social recognition. Public participation in elderly care volunteer services should be encouraged to foster understanding and support for care work, creating an atmosphere of respect and care for practitioners.

### 3.5 Deepening industry-education integration to promote precise alignment between supply and demand

Industry-education integration is key to enhancing the quality of talent cultivation and promoting the alignment between supply and demand, effectively improving graduates' job adaptability and career willingness. Efforts should strengthen school-enterprise collaboration by promoting deep synergy between educational institutions and elderly care facilities and healthcare enterprises, jointly establishing talent development mechanisms, collaboratively designing training programs, developing curricula, and building practical training bases to achieve the integration of teaching and practice. Enterprises should provide internship positions and guidance to help students transition directly into employment after graduation, reducing employment costs and enhancing career willingness. Order-based cultivation and modern apprenticeship systems should be implemented to train personnel according to the specific needs of elderly care institutions, with students signing employment agreements upon enrollment. Through one-on-one mentorship by experienced practitioners, students' practical skills and job adaptability are improved, strengthening their career confidence.

## 4 Conclusions

Enhancing the willingness of elderly care professionals to pursue careers is a systematic project, influenced by multiple factors including individual characteristics, knowledge and attitudes, professional identity, occupational environment, and social support, requiring coordinated efforts from the government, society, educational institutions, and enterprises. By strengthening educational guidance to improve professional competence and occupational identity, optimizing the professional environment to enhance attractiveness, improving policy support to strengthen institutional guarantees, enhancing social advocacy to create a favorable atmosphere, and deepening industry-education integration to promote alignment between supply and demand, career willingness can be effectively increased, the talent pool can be enriched, and the quality of elderly care services can be improved. In the future, in-depth research should be conducted on the factors influencing career willingness, more targeted enhancement strategies should be explored, and talent cultivation and guarantee mechanisms should be improved, thereby providing a solid talent foundation for the healthy development of the elderly care service industry.

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