WEP Warwick Evans Publishing

International Journal of Global Economics and Management

ISSN: 3005-9690 (Print), ISSN: 3005-8090 (Online) | Volume 8, Number 3, Year 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.62051/ijgem.v8n3.21
Journal homepage: https://ijgem.org

Research on Performance Evaluation of Home-Based Elderly Care Service Institutions

-- Taking Anhui Province as an Example

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ABSTRACT

As the aging population in China continues to deepen, home-based elderly care services have become the core of the elderly care service system. Taking Anhui Province as an example and combining public service performance theory, this paper constructs a theoretical framework for evaluating the performance of home-based elderly care service institutions, which includes four dimensions: resource input, service process, service outcomes, and sustainable development. Through the introduction of comparative case studies of two representative institutions, A and B, the research verifies the applicability of this evaluation framework and identifies key issues in current service provision, such as uneven resource allocation, shortage of professional talents, and inconsistent service quality. Finally, optimization suggestions are proposed from three levels: government policy support, internal management of institutions, and integration of social resources. The aim is to provide theoretical references and practical paths for enhancing the operational efficiency of home-based elderly care service institutions.

KEYWORDS

Home-based care; Performance evaluation; Indicator system; Case analysis; Anhui Province

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

Currently, China is experiencing a rapid and massive population aging process. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2024, the population aged 60 and above exceeded 310 million, accounting for 22.0% of the total population, and the pressure on social pension services continues to increase [1]. Against this backdrop, home-based care, as the core component of a service system that is "based on home, supported by community, and supplemented by institutions," has a direct impact on the quality of life of the elderly and the effectiveness of the national pension strategy through the operational performance of its service institutions. Anhui Province, as a typical province with a large outflow of population, has a prominent problem of empty-nest elderly in rural areas, and the demand for home-based care services is urgent and representative. Therefore, conducting scientific performance evaluation of its service institutions has important practical significance.

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1.2. Research Significance

The significance of this study is primarily manifested at both theoretical and practical levels. At the theoretical level, by constructing a performance evaluation framework for home-based elderly care service institutions applicable to the central region, it enriches the specific application of public service performance management theory in the field of elderly care services. At the practical level, the research findings can provide a basis for government departments to formulate precise support and regulatory policies, while assisting service institutions in self-diagnosis and improvement, thereby promoting the overall quality enhancement of regional home-based elderly care services.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Research on the Necessity and Value of Performance Evaluation in Elderly Care Services

The academic community generally believes that establishing a scientific performance evaluation system is a key mechanism for promoting the high-quality development of home-based elderly care services, transitioning from mere availability to excellence. Recent research has further deepened and expanded our understanding of its necessity and value.

Yang Qianwen, Yang Shuo, and Wang Jiahe (2021) [2] argue that performance evaluation is an important component of government procurement of public services. Implementing performance evaluation helps to identify the gap between actual results and service objectives, as well as the reasons for the gap, and continuously narrow the gap by correcting behaviors that deviate from the objectives, thereby achieving control over the overall process of purchasing services. This viewpoint profoundly reveals the core value of performance evaluation in connecting supply and demand and enhancing policy precision.

Zhuo Deming and Jia Yundi (2025) [3] propose that a scientific performance evaluation system can effectively guide the improvement of government procurement of institutional elderly care services, enhancing the efficiency of fund utilization and social satisfaction. In the design of the performance evaluation index system, it is crucial to focus on multi-stakeholder collaboration and seamless service provision throughout the entire process. Typical demonstration projects should be selected as references for performance evaluation, covering all aspects of the project from "decision-making to process, output, and benefits," with a quantifiable index system reflecting the demands and work effectiveness of all stakeholders.

2.2. Research on the Existing Problems and Optimization of Performance Evaluation in Elderly Care Services

Despite abundant research, academic achievements in the past two years have continuously and deeply criticized the deficiencies of the existing evaluation system. Scholars generally believe that the performance evaluation of elderly care services still faces a series of deep-seated issues that urgently need to be addressed in the practical evolution. These issues are mainly concentrated in the following aspects:

(1) The indicator system is homogenized and lacks specificity in terms of region and scenario. In the current top-down promotion process of many evaluation systems, the uniqueness of local conditions is often overlooked. Zhao Hengbo, Huang Xijin, and Wu Haibo (2025) [4] pointed out that when national-level guiding standards are implemented locally, there is often a phenomenon of "not fitting the local conditions," and a unified indicator system struggles to adapt to the significant differences in fiscal capacity, aging structure, and cultural customs across different regions. They emphasized that for a province like Anhui, which is a major labor exporting province, if the evaluation system

cannot significantly increase the weight of special services such as spiritual comfort and emergency assistance for "empty-nest elderly," the reliability and validity of the evaluation results will be greatly compromised.

(2) Emphasizing "hard" indicators while neglecting "soft" indicators makes it difficult to grasp the core of service quality. The tendency to pursue quantifiability and ease of assessment leads to an evaluation that still focuses on hardware facilities and resource input. Zhang Xiaoyi and Liu Bangcheng (2011) [5] criticized this "digital supremacy" tendency in their research, arguing that it leads to insufficient attention to "soft" indicators that constitute the core of service quality, such as service attitude, humanistic care, respect for privacy, and promotion of social participation. They pointed out that existing research on measuring such soft indicators mostly relies on simple satisfaction questionnaires, which are single-method and prone to the "ceiling effect," lacking more refined measurement tools such as the "mystery shopping method" and in-depth interviews.

(3) The evaluation subject is single, and the service recipients have a structural disadvantage in terms of discourse power. Although the concept of "centering on the elderly" has become a consensus, in practical operations, the evaluation power structure has not undergone fundamental changes. Tao Tao (2024) [6] found through empirical research that among multiple evaluation subjects, the evaluation weights of the elderly and their families are often "symbolically" adopted in the final results, and their true feedback is easily overshadowed by the professional judgments of the government or third-party evaluation agencies. This structural disadvantage makes it difficult for the evaluation results to truly reflect the personal experiences and core demands of the service recipients, resulting in the "involution" of evaluation.

(4) The application of results has become utilitarian, failing to effectively embed into the management closed loop of continuous improvement. The ultimate goal of performance evaluation is to "promote construction and reform through evaluation", but practical applications often deviate from this objective. Current evaluation results are often directly linked to utilitarian rewards and punishments such as short-term financial subsidies and star ratings, while there is a loose connection with continuous improvement mechanisms within service organizations, such as long-term strategic planning, employee training systems, and process optimization. This "evaluation for evaluation's sake" model makes service organizations more inclined to prepare in a "campaign-style" before evaluations, rather than internalizing the concept of performance management as an organic part of daily operations, resulting in the long-term efficacy of evaluations being unclear.

3. CONSTRUCTION OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATION INDEX SYSTEM FOR HOME-BASED ELDERLY CARE SERVICE INSTITUTIONS

3.1. Basic Principles of Construction

Based on public service performance theory and the "structure-process-outcome" model, this study aims to construct a comprehensive and systematic evaluation framework. This framework not only focuses on the basic resource input (structure) of institutions, but also attaches importance to the provision and management of services (process), ultimately focusing on the effect perception of service recipients and social benefits (outcome). The design of the indicator system follows principles such as systematicness, operability, and guidance to ensure its scientificity and practicality.

3.2. Framework of Indicator System

Based on the aforementioned principles, this study has constructed a theoretical indicator system consisting of 4 primary indicators and 10 secondary indicators, as detailed in the table below:

Table 1. Performance evaluation index system for home-based elderly care service institutions

Primary indicator	Secondary indicator	Indicator description
A1 Resource input	B1 Infrastructure allocation	Hardware conditions such as site area, barrier-free facilities, and rehabilitation equipment
	B2 Human resource level	Nursingstaffratio, professional qualifications, training status
	B3 Funding guarantee capability	Stability of government subsidies, diversity of self-operating income
A2 Service Process	B4 Service Content	Standardization Service Project Standardization, Service Process Clarity
	B5 Professionalism of service personnel	service attitude, skill level, emergency handling ability
	B6 Management and Operational Efficiency	Internal Management System, Degree of Information Technology Application
A3 Service Outcomes	B7 Elderly Satisfaction	Satisfaction with life care, emotional support, etc. obtained through questionnaire surveys
	B8 Family Burden Reduction Effectiveness	Actual Relief Effect on Family Care Pressure for the Elderly
A4 Sustainable Development	B9 Social Reputation and Influence	Community Recognition, Media Coverage, Awards
	B10 Innovation and Learning Ability	Development of new service projects, employee learning and growth mechanisms

4. CASE ANALYSIS: TAKING TWO INSTITUTIONS A AND B IN ANHUI PROVINCE AS EXAMPLES

To verify the applicability of the aforementioned indicator system, this study selected two representative home-based elderly care service institutions in Anhui Province for comparative analysis. Institution A is located in Hefei city and operates under a public-funded private-operated model; while Institution B is situated in a county-level city and follows a private-funded private-operated model.

Resource input (A1): Institution A is significantly superior to Institution B in terms of infrastructure and funding support, benefiting from municipal support and stable procurement of service projects. However, Institution B faces issues such as limited space, outdated equipment, and financial constraints.

Service process (A2): Institution A has standardized its service process and introduced a smart elderly care platform for management, achieving high efficiency. Institution B's service content is relatively limited, mainly relying on the personal experience of caregivers, and its management standardization needs improvement.

Service Outcomes (A3): According to the questionnaire survey, the elderly in Institution A exhibit significantly higher satisfaction with rehabilitation nursing and emotional support services compared to those in Institution B. Meanwhile, clients of Institution B place greater emphasis on the reliability and affordability of basic life care services.

Sustainable development (A4): Institution A, leveraging its brand effect and innovation capabilities, has seen its social influence continuously expand. On the other hand, Institution B, due to resource constraints, lacks motivation in service innovation and market expansion.

Case summary: Through comparison, it is evident that performance differences not only stem from the amount of resource input, but are also closely related to management models, degree of

professionalization, and innovation awareness. This case analysis demonstrates that the constructed indicator system can effectively reveal the core strengths and weaknesses of different institutions.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1. Research Conclusion

Establishing a scientific performance evaluation system is a crucial tool for guiding home-based elderly care service institutions to transition from "extensive operation" to "refined service".

Currently, the problem of uneven development of home-based elderly care service institutions in Anhui Province is prominent, with significant gaps in performance levels between urban and rural areas and different operation modes.

The core of improving performance lies in optimizing the quality of the service process, especially in enhancing personnel professionalism and management efficiency, rather than merely increasing hardware investment.

5.2. Optimization Suggestions

At the government level: It is recommended to implement classified guidance and evaluation, setting differentiated evaluation standards and support policies for institutions in urban and rural areas and different models. At the same time, strengthen policy support for the construction of talent teams in elderly care services, such as providing vocational training subsidies and promotion channels.

At the institutional level: Service organizations should focus on building core service capabilities, and on the basis of ensuring basic services, develop targeted value-added service projects. At the same time, actively apply information technology to enhance management efficiency.

Social level: Encourage the development of third-party evaluation institutions to ensure the objectivity and fairness of performance evaluation. At the same time, strengthen the linkage between communities, families, and institutions to build a diversely collaborative elderly care support network.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is supported by the key school level scientific research project of Anhui University of Finance and Economics "Research on the Performance Evaluation Indicator System and Its Optimization for Home-based Elderly Care Service Institutions -- Taking Anhui Province as an Example" (Grant No: XSKY25042ZD).

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