INSTITUTO
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The Participation of Non-profit Organizations in Community-based Elderly Care in China: Sustainable Development and Stakeholders' Interests

ZHANG Lifen

Doctor of Management

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Southern Medical University

June, 2023

BUSINESS
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Marketing, Operations and General Management Department

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Abstract

China stepped into an aging society in 2001 and the elderly population has been on the increase. The participation of Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs) in community-based elderly care has greatly reduced the pressure on Chinese families and governments but its sustainable development has been influenced by various factors.

To understand the real situation and find the reasons and measures that may enhance the current condition, this thesis identifies the stakeholders of NPOs and analyses in-depth the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care in China, unveils challenges and reasons for the challenges, and puts forward suggestions to promote the sustainable development of non-profit organizations in community-based elderly care from the perspective of the Stakeholders' Theory through a qualitative research based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 respondents who are managers of NPOs involved in community-based elderly care and directors of related programs.

The research results show that to practically enhance the long-term sustainable development of the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care, joint efforts should be made by both NPOs themselves and each stakeholder. NPOs should strengthen their own comprehensive capacity in self-positioning, financing, management, talent recruitment and training, as well as in communication with various stakeholders. Efforts from stakeholders include government support in terms of policies, funding, evaluation and advocacy, volunteers' connection with NPOs and the elderly and familiarity with NPOs' community-based elderly care services, as well as communication and awareness, recognition and trust from the elderly and the public. Based on the above findings, the research has identified five core dimensions closely related to the sustainable development of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care: "Resources", "Policy Support", "Professional Capabilities", "Communication and Coordination" and "Promotion and Guidance."

Keywords: nonprofit organizations, community-based elderly care, sustainable development, Stakeholder Theory

JEL: M10; I31

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Resumo

Desde 2001 que o envelhecimento da sociedade na China tem vindo a aumentar. Neste contexto, a participação de Associações não Lucrativas (ANL) no apoio a idosos inseridos em comunidade tem aliviado a pressão sobre as famílias e sobre o governo, mas estas debatem-se com problemas no que respeita ao seu desenvolvimento sustentado.

Para melhor entender as razões que levam a esta situação e procurar formas de as resolver, esta tese identifica os principais intervenientes (*stakeholders*) na atuação das ANL na China, quais os desafios que se colocam e as suas causas, e propõe sugestões tendo em vista o desenvolvimento sustentado destas organizações no que respeita ao apoio a idosos em comunidade. A tese utiliza a Teoria dos *Stakeholders* e uma metodologia qualitativa tendo por base entrevistas profundas, semi-estruturadas com 20 gestores e diretores de ANL envolvidos nestes programas.

Os resultados mostram que, para o desenvolvimento sustentado da participação de ANL que apoiam idosos em comunidade, têm de ser desenvolvidos esforços conjuntos por parte de todos os agentes envolvidos. As ANL deverão fortalecer as suas capacidades no que respeita a posicionamento, financiamento, gestão, recrutamento e formação de talentos, mas também na comunicação com os outros intervenientes no processo. Por seu lado, o governo deverá apoiar em termos de políticas, financiamento, sistemas de avaliação e promoção. A ligação entre as ANL e os voluntários deve ser melhorada e estes especialmente apoiados. Finalmente, o esforço das ANL deve ser reconhecido e merecedor da confiança dos idosos, famílias e público em geral. Esta pesquisa identificou cinco dimensões chave relacionadas com o desenvolvimento sustentável das Associações não Lucrativa envolvidas no apoio às comunidades para idosos, a saber: "Recursos", "Apoio Político", "Capacidades Profissionais", "Comunicação e Coordenação" e "Promoção e Liderança".

Palavras-chave: associações não lucrativas, cuidados a idosos em comunidade, desenvolvimento sustentado, Teoria dos *Stakeholders*

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摘要

中国已于2001年进入老龄化社会，且老年人口不断增加。非营利组织参与社区养老，大大减轻了中国家庭和政府的养老压力，但其在参与社区养老的可持续发展却受到了各种因素的影响。

为了解非营利组织参与社区养老的真实现状，找到其可持续发展遇阻的原因及讨论促进其参与社区养老可持续发展的具体措施，本研究梳理了非营利组织的利益相关者模型，深入分析中国非营利组织参与社区养老的情况，揭示了其面临的挑战及原因，并从利益相关者理论的角度提出了促进非营利组织参与社区养老可持续发展的建议。

研究结果表明，要切实促进非营利组织参与社区养老的长期可持续发展，徐阿哟非营利组织自身及其各利益相关者的共同努力。非营利组织应加强自身的综合能力，包括融资、管理、人才招聘和培训、与各利益相关方的沟通。各利益相关者的努力包括：政府要在政策、资金、评估和宣传方面给非营利组织提供支持；志愿者应加强与非营利组织和老年群体的沟通，提升对非营利组织社区养老服务的熟悉程度；老年群体及社会大众需要提升对非营利组织的了解、认可和信任。基于以上发现，研究共提取出与非营利组织参与社区养老可持续发展密写相关的五个核心维度：“资源”、“政策支持”、“专业能力”、“沟通协调”和“宣传引导”。

关键词：非营利组织，社区养老，可持续发展，利益相关者理论

JEL: M10; I31

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all the individuals who have contributed to the successful completion of my doctoral dissertation. Their support, guidance, and encouragement have been invaluable throughout this journey.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisors, Professor Virginia Trigo, Professor Nelson Antonio and Professor Zhang Chichen. Their expertise, patience, and unwavering commitment to my academic growth have been instrumental in shaping this dissertation. Their invaluable guidance and insightful feedback have consistently pushed me to strive for excellence and have greatly enhanced the quality of my research. I am truly grateful for their mentorship and for the time they have dedicated to nurturing my intellectual development.

I am deeply indebted to the staffs and resources of Southern Medical University and University Institute of Lisbon, which has provided me with the necessary tools and infrastructure to carry out my research. Their constant support and administrative assistance have been invaluable in facilitating the smooth progress of my work.

Last but not least, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my family for their unwavering support, love, and understanding throughout this journey. Their encouragement and belief in my abilities have been a constant source of motivation.

In conclusion, the completion of this doctoral dissertation would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of all the individuals mentioned above. Their guidance, support, and encouragement have been the cornerstone of my academic journey. I am humbled and honoured to have had the privilege of working with such remarkable individuals, and I will carry the lessons learned and the relationships formed throughout my academic and professional life.

Thank you all.

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致谢

我想对所有为我成功完成博士论文做出贡献的人表示最深切的感谢。他们的支持、指导和鼓励，是在我完成博士论文的过程中非常宝贵的财富。

首先，我要衷心感谢我的导师 Virginia Trigo 教授、Nelson Antonio 教授和张持晨副院长，他们的专业知识、耐心和帮助我学术成长的坚定承诺，让我有信心完成这份论文。他们的指导和有见地的反馈意见，不断促使我精益求精，大大提升了我的研究质量。我真心感谢他们的指导，感谢他们为我的学术发展所付出的时间。

我深深感谢南方医科大学和里斯本大学学院的工作人员和资源，他们为我提供了开展研究的必要工具和基础设施。他们的不断支持和行政协助对于我能顺利完成研究和写作起到了宝贵的作用。

最后，我想对我的家人表示衷心的感谢，感谢他们在这一过程中坚定不移的支持、爱和理解。他们的鼓励和对我能力的相信是我不断的动力源泉。

总之，如果没有上述所有个人对我提供的宝贵支持，我可能没办法坚持完成这篇博士论文。他们的指导、支持和鼓励是我继续这场学术之旅的基石。我很荣幸能与这些优秀甚至杰出的人士一起走完了这一段学术旅程。今后，我也会将我在这个过程中学到的经验贯穿于我的学术和职业生活中。

感谢所有人。

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List of Abbreviations

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPC	Communist Party of China
CSR	corporate social responsibility
NGO	non-governmental organizations
NORC	Naturally Occurring Retirement Community
NPO	non-profit organization
PNS	Primary Non-Social Stakeholder
PSS	Primary Social Stakeholder
RBV	resource-based view
RDT	resource dependence theory
SNS	Secondary Non-Social Stakeholder
SRI	Stanford Research Institute
SSS	Secondary Social Stakeholder
VCSA	value creation stakeholder accounting
VCSP	value creation stakeholder partnership

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research delves into the examination of non-profit organizations' (NPOs) involvement in community-based care services through the lens of the Stakeholder Theory, with a specific focus on sustainable development. In order to establish the logical framework of this study, this chapter serves to introduce the research background, highlight the current challenges and dilemmas encountered in the field, establish the objectives of the research, and formulate the research questions. These research questions act as the fundamental guideposts that will direct the trajectory of the investigation. By exploring these aspects, this study aims to shed light on the intricate current situation of NPOs' engagement in community-based care services, ultimately exploring the suggestions to promote the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in this context.

1.1 Research background

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, when a country's population aged over 60 accounts for 10% or more of the total, or 7% in the case of those over 65 years of age, the country has become an aging society (Henry et al., 1982). Based on the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2022), more than 7% of the population in 2001 was over 6, indicating that the country entered an aging society.

In recent years, with the increase of the elderly population and the intensification of the aging problem, community-based elderly care has become a topic of great concern. All sectors of society have shown great concern for the resulting aging problems.

Due to changes in the family structure of modern society, the traditional family model of elderly care is no longer able to meet the complex and diverse needs of the elderly. The dispersion of family members, the pursuit of personal development by the younger generation and increased financial pressures have all made the family-based elderly care model a great challenge. In order to better cope with this problem, academics have focused on the model of multi-subjects' participation in community-based elderly care. Among these actors, the role of NPOs has received much attention, as they play an important and prominent role in the process of providing community-based elderly care services and are considered to be able to make up for the shortcomings of community-based elderly care to the greatest extent.

NPOs have a unique advantage in providing services in the community-based elderly care. Firstly, these organisations usually aim to promote the social welfare and focus on the well-being and needs of older people, rather than aiming to make a profit. The non-profit nature of the organisations makes them more focused on the quality of their services and social benefits rather than the pursuit of financial profits. Secondly, NPOs usually have a flexible organisational structure and decision-making mechanism, which enables them to better adapt to the diverse needs of community-based elderly care. They are able to utilize community resources and work with relevant stakeholders to build up a tight community-based network to provide comprehensive and personalised elderly care services. In addition, NPOs are able to integrate community resources and organise and coordinate voluntary efforts to provide important services such as companionship, care and social activities, thereby reducing the sense of isolation and psychological stress of older people.

However, NPOs still face some challenges, such as funding sources and sustainability, professional management and partnership. In order to further promote the development of the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care, efforts in various aspects, including policy support, social cooperation and innovative mechanisms, are needed to promote the development of NPOs and enhance their role and influence in community-based elderly care.

In the following parts, this thesis discusses the urgency and necessity of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care in China to ease the elderly care pressure of the Chinese government and families from the perspective of the aging population, shortcomings of conventional family-based elderly care as well as the government's social elderly care burdens.

1.1.1 China's population is aging at an increasingly fast speed

Since China entered an aging society in 2001, the process of population aging has been accelerating along with the changes and transformation of social and economic structures. Based on the latest data released by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2022), more than 7% of the population in 2001 was over 65, indicating that the country entered an aging society. In 2018, among the 1.405 billion Chinese people, 170 million were beyond the age of 65, accounting for 11.9%, up by 4.9 points compared with the numbers in the 2001 census. In the latest 2020 census released by the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), among the 1.4121 billion Chinese people, 190.64 million were beyond the age of 65, rising from 11.9% to 13.5%. In 2021, the population aged 65 and beyond increased to 200.56 million, accounting for 14.2% of the total.

According to the age-based composition of the Chinese population provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, to figure out the development trend of population aging, based on the proportion and dependency ratio of people aged 65 and over, we make Table 1.1 as follows.

Table 1.1 Proportion and dependency ratio of population aged 65 and over in China after 1982

Year	Total population (100 million)	People aged 65 and over (million)	Proportion (%)	Dependency ratio (%)
1982	10.16	49.9	4.9	8.0
1990	11.43	63.6	5.6	8.3
2000	12.67	88.3	7.0	9.9
2010	13.40	118.9	8.9	11.3
2018	14.05	166.5	11.9	16.8
2019	14.10	176.03	12.6	17.8
2020	14.121	190.63	13.5	19.7
2021	14.126	200.56	14.2	20.8

Source: The National Bureau of Statistics of China (2022)

Implementing China's family planning policy has led to an increase in the proportion of China's aging population to a certain extent. After China's reform and opening up in 1978, most areas of the economy and society turned from the model planned by the government to the model regulated by the market, while reproductive rights were centralized to the government from the family. According to a chronicle of the evolution of China's population policy, compiled by Xinhua News Agency and reported by Wang and Hu (2015), in March 1978, *Article 53 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China* adopted at the first session of the Fifth National People's Congress (1978), stipulated that "we advocate and promote family planning". Thus, family planning was officially included as a basic national strategy in the Constitution for the first time in the First Session of the Fifth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (1978). In the report by Wang and Hu (2015), in October 1978, the central government proposed that "a couple should better have one child, two at most". With the implementation of the family planning policy, the proportion of the elderly in the Chinese population has been gradually increasing.

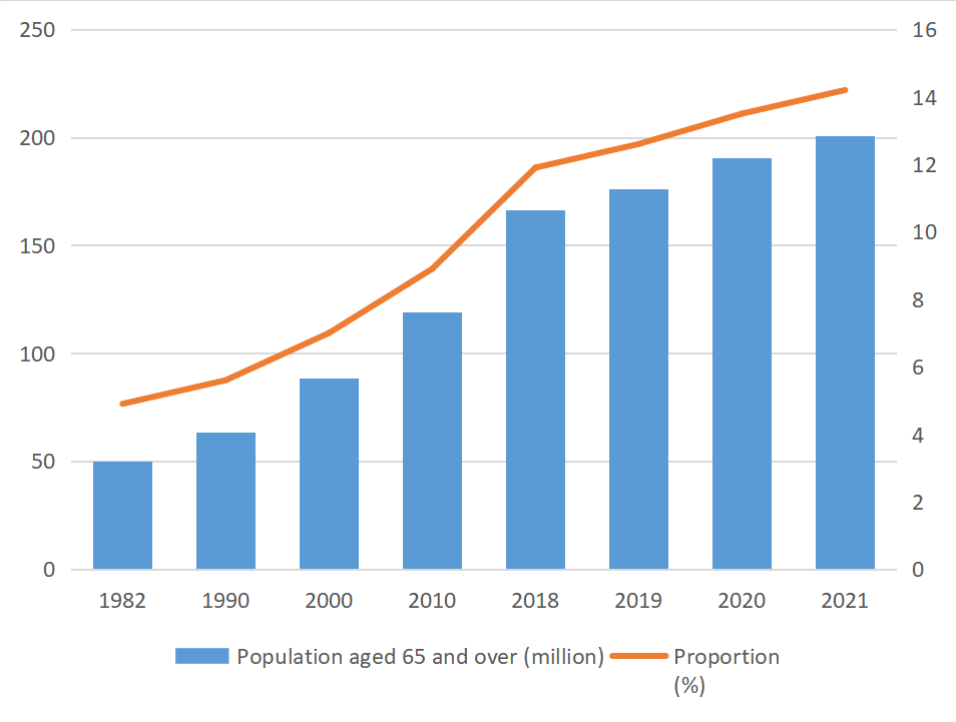

Figure 1.1 Proportion of population aged 65 and over in China after 1982

Source: The National Bureau of Statistics of China (2022)

By comparing the above data shown in Figure 1.1, it can be found that the proportion of the elderly population in China has been increasing, and the degree of population aging has been growing. X. Q. Jiang and Du (2013) mentioned that it is estimated that the ratio of the elderly in China will rise rapidly from 12% to 30% in the period from 2018 to 2050, and the total number of the elderly will exceed 470 million, which means that one out of 3.3 Chinese people will be over 65. The elderly population will continue to rise. According to the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), since 2010, the dependency ratio of the elderly population in China has also been increasing year by year, from 11.9% in 2010 to 20.8% in 2021.

The demand for elderly care is experiencing a rapid and substantial growth, encompassing not only the material sphere but also the spiritual and cultural aspects. This increasing demand places a significant burden on the development of elderly care services and the government's ability to effectively manage the challenges posed by the aging crisis. As the elderly population continues to expand, it becomes increasingly critical to enhance the quality and scope of elderly care services in order to meet the diverse and evolving needs of older individuals. This entails adopting a comprehensive approach that goes beyond mere physical assistance, encompassing emotional support, mental well-being, and the preservation of cultural identity. Moreover, it is incumbent upon the government to take proactive measures in addressing the aging crisis by implementing policies, programs, and allocating resources that can effectively meet the

dynamic demands of elderly care. By recognizing and responding to these evolving demands, both service providers and the government can work collaboratively towards ensuring a holistic and sustainable approach to elderly care that promotes the overall well-being and dignity of older individuals.

While China may not have the highest aging rate in the world, its sheer population size contributes to distinctive characteristics of its aging tendency. China experiences a significant aging trend characterized by a large absolute number of elderly individuals and a rapid pace of aging. Moreover, regional disparities in aging are observed, with higher average ages in the East and lower in the West. Notably, China's aging process unfolds within a unique political and economic context when compared to developed countries. In developed nations, the aging issue typically arises after achieving higher levels of economic development. Conversely, China's aging phenomenon emerges within an environment characterized by lower productivity levels, regional imbalances in development, and substantial wealth disparities. This situation is often described as "getting old before getting rich," presenting a substantial challenge to China's economic development, as well as social welfare and security systems. The convergence of these factors poses a considerable hurdle to address for China's economy and necessitates comprehensive strategies to navigate the complexities of an aging society while promoting sustainable development and social well-being.

1.1.2 The shortcomings of conventional elderly care in China

China's approach to elderly care is shaped by its economic and social development. During a phase of relatively low social productivity, the prevalent belief in Chinese society was centred around the idea of "raising children for elderly care, more children mean more happiness." This mindset persisted for a significant period, with the expectation that individuals would be naturally supported by their children in their old age, and that they would enjoy their later years surrounded by their offspring. This traditional model of inter-generational support and care relied on the assumption that children would assume responsibility for their aging parents, providing both financial and emotional support. This cultural norm reflected the prevailing socio-economic conditions and the strong emphasis on family ties and filial piety in Chinese society. Therefore, for a long time, most older people in China chose to spend their old-age life in the family, supported by their children or grandchildren (Mu, 2000).

However, as China undergoes rapid social and economic changes, including urbanization, migration, and shifts in family structures, the traditional model of relying solely on children for elderly care is facing challenges. These changes have led to a growing need for alternative

elderly care arrangements and support systems to accommodate the evolving needs and preferences of older individuals and their families in China. With the development and change of China's economy and society, under the influence of China's urbanization process, the role of traditional home-based elderly care mechanism has been toned down. At the same time, there has appeared a social demand for multiple elderly care methods. China's elderly care has transformed from the traditional home-based mode to a social one, which means that the individual, society, and governments share the elderly care responsibility.

The following aspects mainly influence the change in China's traditional elderly care system:

(1) Economic system reform and urbanization give birth to the "empty nest family"

Since the reform and opening up, China has experienced enhanced corporate reform, government reform and urbanization. For the elderly, the impact of urbanization is particularly prominent. It has led to accelerated population movements between urban and rural areas, which resulted in the youngsters working in cities and the old staying at home alone (Mu, 2000). This is why they are called the "empty nest family". According to China's sixth national census in 2010 released by the Census Office of the State Council (2012), among families with old people over 60, the proportion of "family with empty nest elderly" is as high as 31.77%, in which those with solitary elderly account for 16.4%, close to 100 million. The increasing physical distance between family members, coupled with busy work schedules, has resulted in daughters and sons being unable to provide constant companionship to their elderly parents. This phenomenon has contributed to the growing prominence of the elderly care problem. Modern lifestyles often involve family members living in different cities or even countries, creating significant space barriers that hinder regular and close interaction between the elderly and their children. Additionally, the demands of busy work schedules and other commitments leave adult children with limited time and resources to dedicate to elderly care. As a result, the elderly is left facing a more pronounced care deficit, with limited social interaction and support. The emerging dynamic underscores the need for effective and accessible elderly care solutions that can bridge the physical distance and provide adequate support to the aging population. By addressing the challenges posed by space distance and demanding work schedules, society can work towards mitigating the increasing prominence of the elderly care problem and ensure the well-being of older individuals in their later years.

(2) Changes in population size and family structure

There are changes in population size and family structure. Traditional Chinese families are large, and all family members live under the same roof. However, Chin implementing the

family planning policy in 1978, advocating that "a couple should better have one child, two at most". Since then, most urban one-child families have presented a "421" family structure, that is, a family consisting of four elderly people, two adults and one child (Mu, 2000). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), the seventh census conducted in 2020 shows that currently in China, the population scale of each family is 2.92 persons, 32.56 percent less than 4.33 persons in 1985, while the dependency rate of the aging population rises to 19.7 percent. In a family where two adults are juggling the responsibility of supporting four older adults and raising a child, all while managing their own work commitments, the pressure of elderly care can become overwhelmingly burdensome. This challenge is further compounded if the elderly family members have mental retardation issues, requiring specialized care and attention. The weight of supporting multiple generations and meeting work demands simultaneously places significant physical, emotional, and financial strain on the adults in the family. Caring for elderly individuals with mental retardation adds an extra layer of complexity, necessitating additional resources, expertise, and patience. The cumulative pressures can have adverse effects on the well-being and quality of life for both the caregivers and the elderly individuals in need of care.

Despite the implementation of China's "two-child" policy in 2016, which aimed to encourage eligible couples to have two children, and the subsequent encouragement in 2020 for couples to have three children, the sustainable development of childbirth among young people in China has been progressively declining. This trend can be attributed, in part, to the direct impact of modern medical advancements, which have resulted in a society characterized by lower birth rates and mortality rates. Consequently, China continues to face the challenges of an increasingly aged population, exacerbating the strain on families and the growing need for elderly care. Despite efforts to address these issues through policy adjustments, the underlying demographic shifts remain largely unaffected, necessitating comprehensive strategies to mitigate the impact of population aging and provide adequate support for both the elderly population and their families.

1.1.3 Great pressure on government in elderly care requires NPOs' participation

Since China entered an aging society, the elderly care problem has constrained social and economic development. In China, community-based elderly care is mainly undertaken by local governments. Still, as the demand for the services grows, it will be challenging to continue having the government assume responsibility for community-based elderly care. This will undoubtedly pose a difficult challenge for both the Chinese government and the development

of social welfare. The change of traditional elderly care mode made the government realize that elderly care must be carried out by individuals, families, society and the government together following a socialized development road.

As early as 2000, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China et al. (2000) jointly promulgated *Opinions on Speeding up the Socialization of Social Welfare*, which made "socialization" the primary tool to deal with the aging of the population, and also determined the development direction of China's elderly care service. In 2010, the *Suggestions of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on the Formulation of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development* released by the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (2010) made it clear that "we should actively respond to the aging of the population, emphasize family and community functions, give priority to the development of social elderly care, and foster and strengthen elderly care services and industries". Since then, the socialization and industrialization of elderly care services has risen to the level of national strategy and has entered a substantial stage of promotion and development. The Chinese government has a profound understanding of its unavoidable responsibilities and obligations in the socialization of elderly care services. In the current social context, as China's population is aging, the demand for elderly care services is increasing day by day. The government is aware that relying on families and individuals alone is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of the elderly and must take positive action to promote the socialization and industrialization of elderly care services. The increased socialization of socialized elderly care services means that the government is taking on greater responsibility and accountability in the provision of elderly care services. The government should play a leading role in ensuring the universality and sustainability of elderly care services by formulating policies and regulations, establishing a system of elderly care services and providing financial support and subsidies, among other measures.

Since 2010, local governments across China have been actively responding to the "9073" project initiated by the General Office of the State Council (2012), striving to achieve the goal of helping 90% of the elderly spend their old-age life supported by social elderly care services, 7% receive elderly care through government purchases of services and 3% through professional elderly care institutions.

Many policies reflect that the government support socialized elderly care services, including community-based elderly care.

In 2016, the State Council of the People's Republic of China (2017) released *Notice of the State Council on Printing and Distributing the Medical and Health Planning of the 13th Five-*

Year Plan and proposed to "further develop the pilots of integrated elderly care services with medical care, establish and improve the cooperation mechanism between medical and health institutions and elderly care institutions, build a green channel for two-way referral between cooperative hospitals and medical institutions within elderly care institutions, provide integrated services for the elderly in hospital treatment, rehabilitation care, stable-stage life care and hospice care, meanwhile, coordinate health and elderly care service resources, innovate healthy elderly care model, establish and improve the business cooperation mechanism between medical institutions and elderly care institutions, encourage general secondary hospitals or above to carry out counterpart support and co-construction with elderly care institutions, and promote the development and improvement of the mechanism of integrated elderly care services with medical care".

In addition, the State Council of the People's Republic of China (2017) released another Notice on the 13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Elderly Care Undertakings and the Construction of Elderly Care System to further clarify that it is necessary for to vigorously develop community-based elderly care and strengthen the construction of community service facilities. Relying on community-based elderly care venues, it is necessary to build an integrated information platform for community public service; at the same time, carry out the "Internet +" elderly care project; support communities, elderly care institutions, social organizations and businesses to use information technologies such as the Internet of things, mobile Internet, cloud computing and big data; develop and apply intelligent terminals and smart platforms, information systems, applications, and WeChat (an instant message app popular in China) subscription accounts for home-based community service; focus on remote warning and control, automatic alarm and disposal, dynamic monitoring and recording functions; standardize the data interface; and build virtual nursing homes.

In April 2019, The General Office of the State Council (2019) issued the *Opinions on Promoting the Development of Elderly Care Services*, pointing out "strengthen the service management system with credit as the core and quality as the guarantee, and emphasize both decentralization and supervision; ensure that, by 2022, basic elderly care services will be guaranteed to all, and the diverse and multi-level needs of the elderly will be satisfied".

In addition, a range of elderly services have gradually been added to Chinese communities to make it easier for the elderly to live and get around, such as community health posts, nurseries, elderly activity centres, schools for the elderly and leisure squares for the elderly. At the same time, in order to provide a more comprehensive service, there is a growing team of volunteers dedicated to providing support and assistance to the elderly.

With the great support of the Chinese government, socialized elderly care services in China have entered the industrialization stage.

According to the report on the development process of the social elderly care service industry summarized by the Institute of JingData (2020), before the implementation of the reform and opening up policy in 1978, under the background of a planned economy, elderly care services were distributed by the state collectively. Only a small part of the elderly population was benefited while most of the elderly relied on family support to spend their old age. After the reform and opening up in 1978, with the development of urbanization and industrialization, a large number of young people have left their hometowns for jobs, so the traditional family-based elderly care has been weakened. As the proportion of the elderly population has been continuously rising, the government proposed to develop community service for the whole society, including elderly care service. China entered an aging society in 2001, the government took the lead in establishing public elderly care institutions, but the level of social participation was insufficient. The resources of government-led or operated elderly care institutions were scarce, unable to meet the growing demand for elderly care. Although the government began implementing *The Construction Plan of the Social Elderly Care Service System (2011-2015)* in 2011, and China's elderly care services entered the industrialization stage, marking the industrialization stage of elderly care services in China, state-owned enterprises, large private enterprises, and others eagerly entered the social elderly care industry, establishing elderly care institutions, diversifying and professionalizing the services provided. However, the overall industry still faces various challenges. On one hand, the consumption habits and purchasing power of the elderly population regarding social elderly care services still need to be cultivated and improved. On the other hand, the service models in the social elderly care industry still require optimization.

Against the backdrop of the unsustainable government-led model of aging care, and the national context of China's elderly population generally preferring to age at home, the community-based model of elderly care based on community resources is highly regarded. It is worth noting that China is home to a large number of non-profit organizations, covering a wide range of fields and sizes. These non-profit organizations play a strong complementary role in participating in community-based ageing services, helping to alleviate the pressure on the government in relation to community-based ageing.

The community model of elderly care focuses on using resources within the community to provide services for the elderly to meet their various needs in their daily life. Fan (2014) pointed out that this model is in tune with the preferences and realities of the elderly and can provide

personalized, warm and caring services. NPOs play an important role in community-based elderly care services.

Wan (2018) pointed out that firstly, NPOs are able to make full use of their expertise and experience to provide specialized elderly care services. These organizations usually have professional nursing staff, rehabilitators, psychological counsellors and other professionals who can provide specialized services such as medical care, rehabilitation training and psychological support to meet the multi-level and multi-faceted needs of the elderly. Secondly, NPOs can play the role of volunteers and organize and mobilize community residents to actively participate in community elderly care services. Volunteers can provide the elderly with selfless assistance such as companionship, care and mobility assistance, psychological support and social interaction, effectively alleviating the problem of loneliness and social isolation of the elderly. In addition, NPOs can also take on the role of information transfer, education and training in community-based elderly care services. They can organize talks on ageing and health education activities to enhance the health awareness and self-management skills of the elderly, helping them to better cope with the challenges and needs of the ageing period.

Through the active participation of NPOs, community-based elderly care services are effectively complemented and the pressure on the government in this regard is reduced. The government can work with NPOs to build a community-based elderly care service system, share resources and improve the quality and coverage of services.

Based on the advantages of NPOs' participation, local governments in provinces and cities in China welcome NPOs' participation and strongly encourage and support NPOs to engage in community-based elderly car. However, the sustainability of NPOs' involvement in community-based senior care has been affected by many factors from various stakeholders.

1.1.4 Overseas successful experience of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

The social problems caused by aging are not limited to China, but are a major challenge faced by many countries around the world. In response to this problem, many countries around the world have developed a global experience of solving the challenges of aging by involving NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care and provide adequate care and support for the elderly. In other words, based on community development, community-based elderly care and relevant services are concluded from the experiences of many countries worldwide to solve the elderly care problems.

The United States has gone through decades of exploration of the development modes of social elderly care. From the earliest Kearsley Retirement Community, the United States has developed a comprehensive industrialized elderly care system, including home care, nursing care and retirement community care. As the aging population grows in the United States, the Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) has gradually become the mainstream of community-based elderly care in the United States. It tends to lean toward large cities and central cities. In such a community, government, social organizations, including NPOs, medical and health care providers and the elderly are all participants in creating a community-based elderly care system together (Zhang & Zhang, 2014). These various services provided by different participants have not only promoted the delicate operation of the market competition mechanism and made up for the shortage of government supply, but also played a critical role in the talent flow and improvement of elderly care. Such communities have become a popular choice for the elderly despite not being specially set up for the elderly (similar to institutional elderly care). NORC combines social networks, partnerships and the subjective initiative of the elderly in its development and has achieved great success, which China can learn from (Hou, 2011).

The community-based elderly care in Britain has a complete content and care system with various services. The participants involved in the supply are also diversified and at different levels. The British community-based elderly care not only reflects the government's guiding role but also fully encourages and arouses the enthusiasm of all social subjects to participate. All kinds of social organizations, volunteers and enterprises perform their respective duties under a clear labour division. It is worth mentioning that the British mode does its work starting from the fundamental level to encourage public participation. The government encourages young people to participate in community care services and links community services to school curricula, thereby promoting their awareness of community-based elderly care from an early age (Guo, 2016).

Regarding NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, the British government has established a comprehensive system of laws and regulations to provide an overall legislative guarantee. For the management and monitoring of NPOs' work in community-based elderly care, the British government has a department dedicated to evaluating, monitoring and regulating elderly care providers, as well as third-party evaluators who assess the quality of services with a view to NPOs providing more satisfactory community-based elderly care services. The government also works with the health, police and other departments to monitor the quality of services from NPOs for the elderly people in the community (Yang, 2016).

In 2011, the proportion of people over 65 years of age in the Finnish population increased to 18.14% of the total population (Zhang & Li, 2013). In order to cope with aging, Finland has established a precise elderly care service system focusing on the service needs of the elderly from demand identification, supply, management and support of elderly care services through the development of assessment standards, information-based surveys, and the establishment of profiles for the elderly (Ju & Cao, 2018). The Finish experience in building a precise elderly service system is reflected in the following aspects: a) precise identification of elderly people's needs for elderly services through the development of assessment standards, information-based surveys, file and card creation, and dynamic adjustment; b) precise elderly care supply through targeting elderly service recipients, tailoring policies to individuals, identifying supplying bodies, and clarifying supplying responsibilities; c) precise management through departmental linkage, talent management, full supervision, and precise assessment; d) precise management through stratification and classification, bottom-up relief, and spiritual concern; and e) precise support through stratification, bottom-up relief, spiritual concern and technical monitoring (Ju & Cao, 2018). This provides some reference for the construction of China's elderly service system.

Influenced by Confucianism, Singapore has been adhering to the family-centred community elderly care model. The success of Singapore's practice in community elderly care is reflected in the government's emphasis on community construction and the protection of laws and policies. Singapore's community services have a clear classification, which are divided into administrative services, social welfare services and business services, covering all aspects of life to meet the needs of the elderly. Moreover, in community planning and construction, the empty space on the open floor is set aside for community elderly centres, community hospitals, education centres and other places to provide elderly services. At the same time, public transportation and facilities for the disabled in each community are very convenient. In 1994, the Singaporean government introduced a series of laws to protect the rights and interests of the elderly, such as t*he Elderly Care Act and the Nursing Home Act* and established strict standards and assessment systems for the implementation of the law. The most famous central provident fund account system has carried out compulsory savings plan for young people to inspire their awareness of elderly care security and alleviate the country's elderly care pressure to some extent (Jiang, 2014).

In Japan, known as "the nation of silver hair", the elderly with few children is abundant, and the contradiction between supply and demand of elderly service is prominent. Influenced by the Confucian family ethics of the East, Japan, while promoting the socialization of elderly

care services, keeps its elderly care undertakings and households in close contact. According to its practical conditions, it has developed a solid and comprehensive home-based elderly care system, giving full play to the synergy of multiple subjects, which not only promotes the health of the elderly, but also lightens the burden on the government (Zhao, 2017). Since the 1960s, the Japanese government has introduced more than a dozen laws and policies on community-based care and the development of NPOs to implement social welfare policy reforms, thus constituting a legislative protection system for the participation of NPOs in community-based care services in Japan (Zhou et al., 2013). In 1987, Japan enacted the Law on Social Welfare Officers and Nursing Welfare Officers to train specialists in disease prevention, health and social welfare for the elderly; in 1989, it published *the Ten-Year Strategy for Promoting Health and Welfare for the Elderly* ("Golden Plan") to integrate the elderly home service system and institutional service system; in 1994, according to the outcome of the "Golden Plan", the Japanese government put forward *the "New Golden Plan"-New Strategy for Promoting Health and Welfare for the Elderly*, emphasizing the importance of home care and proposing to strengthen the community-based home elderly care service system (Zhao, 2017). Japan's comprehensive home elderly care system takes prevention as the core, leverage the synergy of multiple subjects, sets the goal of ensuring the health of the elderly, reduces medical and elderly care costs, increases the participation of social organizations, including NPOs, in the elderly care industry, and improves the life quality of the elderly.

Hong Kong, adjacent to China's mainland, is one of the "oldest" regions in the world. Since the 1970s, families in Hong Kong have become smaller and more nuclear. As families become smaller, the traditional home-based elderly care function is also declining. In order to relieve the elderly care pressure, since the 1970s, the Hong Kong government has promulgated *the Future Development Plan of Hong Kong Social Welfare*, *the Green Paper on Elderly Services* and *the White Paper on Social Welfare* in Hong Kong, recognizing the concept of community care. After that, in the1990s, *the White Paper on Social Welfare* and *the Green Paper on Rehabilitation* were published, proposing that, in addition to professional and formal care provided by the government and NPOs, informal care services provided by families, neighbourhood and community residents should also be encouraged, so that the elderly can have more choices in their old age. In addition, the Hong Kong government also encourages participants to be responsible for their profits and losses and even operate privately, seek market and social forces to enrich community-based elderly care services, and relieve the pressure of family elderly care (Shi & Liu, 2016). The primary providers of elderly care services in Hong Kong include government, NPOs, social organizations and communities. The structure has

shifted from the previous family-only style to the multi-subject one. The various subjects take clear responsibilities respectively, through complementing each other, working in close cooperation. In this way, they satisfy different levels of elderly care needs and improve the quality of life for the elderly.

The core point of the involvement of NPOs in community-based elderly care is to transfer of the senior care services to the community level, drawing on the participation of NPOs to provide comprehensive and personalized care to the elderly, aiming to meet the various needs of older people, including medical care, assistance with daily living, social activities and psychological support.

The implementation of getting NPOs involved in community-based elderly care to provide related services in countries around the world has been effective in improving the quality of life of the elderly and enhancing the response to aging issues across the whole society.

Successful cases and experiences of the above overseas community-based elderly care practices provide a valuable reference for exploring NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care in China's mainland.

In summary, it is urgent and necessary for Chinese NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care and alleviate the elderly care pressure on the government and families. NPOs have unique advantages and potential in meeting the challenges proposed by the aging population, making up for the shortcomings of the traditional family-based model of elderly care, and sharing the burden on the government. By drawing on international experience and strengthening organisational capacity, NPOs can better meet the needs of the elderly and make a positive contribution to the development of community-based elderly care.

1.2 Research problem

This section highlights the shortcomings associated with the engagement of NPOs in community-based elderly care, as well as the theoretical investigations pertaining to NPOs' involvement in this particular domain.

1.2.1 Shortcomings of NPOs' participation in community-based senior care

In the face of an aging population and a low birth rate, China is under tremendous pressure to provide care services for the elderly. Because of insufficient elderly care resources families and tremendous economic pressure on some "4-2-1" families (four grandparents, two parents, and one child) from private elderly care institutions, the community-based elderly care model,

which uses community resources to provide services, is highly acclaimed. In China, community-based senior care services are mainly offered by local governments, but as the demand for community-based senior care grows, the model is unsustainable. A large number of NPOs in China can complement local governments in offering the services and reduce the pressure on the government to provide community-based elder care services. Although governments at provincial and municipal levels have encouraged and supported NPOs through various governmental actions such as policy formulation, many factors affect the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care and hinder the growth of NPOs in this sector.

In China, most NPOs are subordinate to government agencies in execution, filling the gaps in government functions. However, in terms of funding sources, most social organizations are disconnected from government organizations in terms of funding allocations except for direct government purchases and commissioned services. Only a few can receive policy subsidies and support (Wang, 2015). NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care is exceptionally constrained by the local government's elderly care policies, especially financial support.

Although NPOs in China are involved in community-based elderly care to a certain extent, due to ignorance of NPOs and lack of trust from the public, they need support from grassroot government organizations (such as street offices and neighbourhood committees) to offer services in new communities, which hampers the motivation of NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care (Hou & Teng, 2015).

In terms of supervision mechanism, the only laws that apply to NPOs' engagement in community-based elderly care are administrative regulations, such as the *Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly*, *Regulations on the Registration and Administration of Social Groups*, and *Interim Regulations on Registration Administration of Private Non-enterprise Units*. There is a lack of more targeted and sounder laws and regulations and scientific evaluation and supervision mechanisms for NPOs.

Organizations without self-regulation have harmed the reputation of NPOs in the community-based senior care service market, which has hindered the development of NPOs in this sector (Xu, 2019). Journalists Sun and Xu (2020) reported on Thepaper.cn that a community-based elderly care service centre in Nanjing had falsified service records by falsely reporting the number of people served in some community-based elderly care service projects. For example, in the service records of the centre in 2019, a total of 1187 times were recorded in the bathing project, but in the actual investigation, the reporters found that similar signatures appeared on the lists but for different elderly. Therefore, the reporters went to the homes of

several elderly people in the service records to verify, but some elderly people said that they had never used the centre's bathing services. The journalist Qian (2021) reported that some social institutions carried out illegal fundraising activities in the name of "elderly care services", which seriously damaged the economic interests of the elderly.

In addition, there are various internal factors that affect the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, such as insufficient workforce, low professionalism, and inability to provide comprehensive, professional and differentiated services (Shi, 2018; Zhao, 2018).

In an aging society, the government cannot meet the growing demand for community-based senior care services, and NPOs can be a potent complementary force. Therefore, measures should be taken to enhance the sustainable development of NPOs in community-based senior care to "provide care services for all seniors" with the help of private groups.

1.2.2 The lack of theoretical research on NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

The connotation and model of elderly care take different forms at different stages of social development. The development of elderly care in major developed countries and regions shows that before the change of demographic structure and social division of labour, home-based elderly care was supported by the vast base of the family labour force, and this was the only elderly care model.

However, with the rapid development of the economy and society, problems caused by aging population are becoming more and more serious. The traditional functions and structure of home-based elderly care have been weakened by dwindling family size and homogenizing family structure. It has become increasingly difficult for the conventional models to meet the diversified elderly care demands of society.

Nowadays, the rapidly aging population and the dilemma of "getting old before getting rich" have put the government-led elderly care system under substantial financial pressure and put higher demands on the government's social governance capability in China.

Under such circumstances, exploring an elderly care model suitable for China's national conditions is a major concern of the academic community. Considerable studies have been conducted on the provision of home-based care services by social forces and NPOs. The State Council of China (2019) has proposed to build a "home-based, community-based and institutional-supported elderly care service system" in *Opinions on Accelerating the Development of the Elderly Service Industry*. The policy indicates that the government has

given greater importance to social entities in the provision of elderly care services, i.e., through allocating social resources to make up for insufficient workforce, material, and service resources in family elderly care. Nevertheless, considerable financial support from the state or collective entities is needed (Tao, 2014). The positioning and functions of NPOs in the new elderly care model are not yet precise. Most studies on NPOs' home and community-based elderly care still focus on describing the current problem, and academia lacks descriptive studies (Liu & Wu, 2019).

Internationally, NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care has formed a mature model and have accumulated rich practical experience. However, in China, the participation of NPOs in the field of community-based elderly care services is still in the process of development and has not yet produced a mature system. Considering China has unique national conditions in dealing with the issue of elderly care, we should not simply copy foreign models. Instead, it is supposed to further explore appropriate countermeasures to promote the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care according to China's actual national conditions.

In China, NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care is still a new topic. The theoretical framework in this sector will be significantly enriched by analysing the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, exploring measures to enhance the motivation of NPOs to offer services, and developing measures to ensure orderly participation of social forces in the sector.

1.3 Research objectives

This study aims to explore how each stakeholder influences the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care from the perspective of stakeholder theory and to reveal the current situation of NPOs' engagement in community-based elderly care and the factors influencing the sustainability of their participation through in-depth interviews with survey interviewees. Based on the interview findings and foreign experiences, we propose suggestions to improve the sustainability of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care and reduce the elderly care burden of the government from the perspective of stakeholders. The research will also provide a reference for NPOs that have already entered or want to enter the sector, for local governments to encourage and guide NPOs to offer community-based care through formulating policy measures, and for future formulation and

adjustment of related policies so that government's regulation will be more targeted and the effectiveness of policies on NPOs will be enhanced.

The innovation of this research is as follows:

(1) It profoundly analyses the current situation of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care in China, finds the current challenges, explores the reasons for the challenges, and puts forward suggestions to promote the sustainable development of NPOs in community-based elderly care from the perspective of the Stakeholders Theory. The recommendations put forward in this study to improve the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care are based on the challenges and difficulties encountered by NPO practitioners in many years of practical work, which have profound practical significance. This will not only provide constructive guide to the NPO institutions and practitioners themselves but also provide constructive enlightenment to other stakeholders, namely the government, volunteers, the elderly groups and the public. It is hoped that through the systematic improvement suggestions for the different stakeholders, a synergy effect can be created for the sustainable development of NPOs' undertakings in the community-based elderly care sector.

(2) It sorts out the stakeholders involved in the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. It proposes a conceptual model that is more suitable for the related stakeholders based on their roles. This has particular theoretical value and theoretical contributions to the NPO industry.

1.4 Research questions

To settle the aforementioned research problem, based on the stakeholder theory, the study sorts out the stakeholders that influence the sustainable development of NPOs in community-based elderly care and explores how they affect the sustainable development of NPOs in the area. The research proposes the following four research questions.

(1) What stakeholders influence the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care?

(2) How do various stakeholders influence the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care under the current situation?

(3) What factors hinder the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care?

(4) What are the countermeasures to solve the problems hampering the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care?

1.5 Research content

This thesis discusses the current situation of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care in China, finds the current challenges, analyses the reasons for the challenges and puts forward suggestions to promote the sustainable development of NPOs in community-based elderly care from the perspective of the Stakeholders Theory through semi-structured interviews with 20 interviewees who are managers of NPOs involved in community-based elderly care and directors of community-based elderly care programs from the perspective of stakeholders.

Five chapters are arranged, and the contents of each chapter are as follows:

Chapter One provides a general introduction to the research background of this thesis and the current dilemma of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care, thereby introducing the research purposes, research questions and the research route of this thesis.

Chapter Two serves as the theoretical framework and literature review. In this chapter, this thesis reviews and defines the core concepts involved in this research, such as NPOs and community-based elderly care, and also systematically discusses the concept and classification of stakeholders and the study on Stakeholder Theory in China and the West. Based on the literature review, this thesis also classifies the stakeholders of this study, which lays a theoretical foundation for the subsequent research and data analysis.

Chapter Three is the research method. Based on the problems faced by NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care services in China and the related theories and research literature in the first two chapters, this chapter puts forward the research methods and analysis methods suitable for the research purpose of this thesis. Also, it explains the research objects and research plans.

Based on the in-depth analysis and discussion of the feedback obtained from the interviews, Chapter Four systematically explains and summarizes the overall status, challenges, reasons for challenges and sustainable development suggestions of NPOs in community-based elderly care and discusses the survey results.

Based on the findings, Chapter Five further emphasizes suggestions for NPOs' sustainable undertakings in community-based elderly care, summarizes the possible contributions of research, and looks forward to the subsequent research directions that can be optimized.

1.6 Technical route for the study

The technical route for this research is shown as Figure 1.2 as follows.

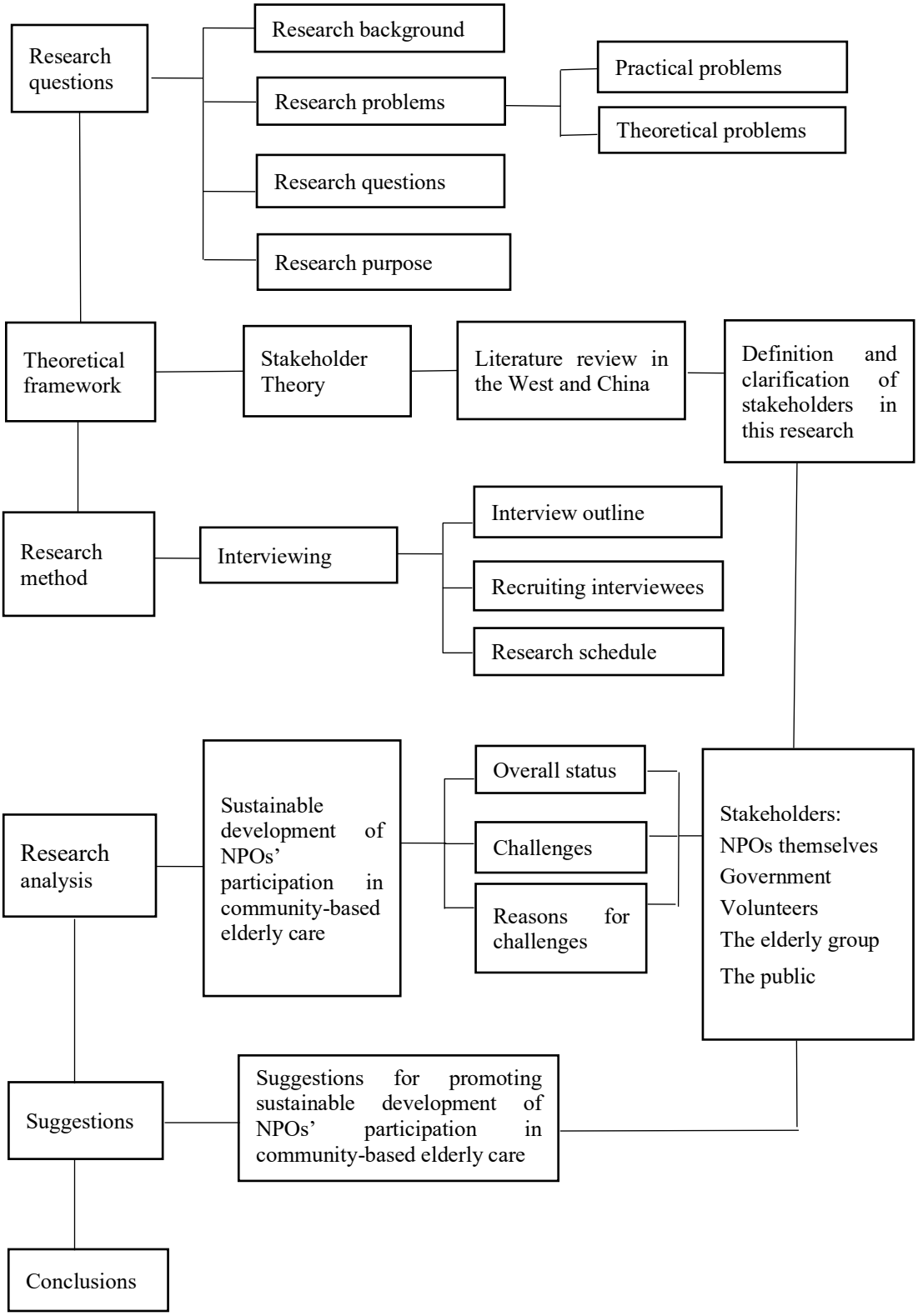

Figure 1.2 Technical route for the study

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter introduces the theoretical foundation and literature review of the study. The research first defines the core concepts and then reviews the development, definition, and classification of stakeholders based on the stakeholder theory and provides a literature review of the research results of Chinese and foreign researchers on the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care.

2.1 Definition of core concepts

The following parts explain the definition of the core concepts involved in this study, including NPOs, community community-based elderly care and sustainable development. To clarify the definition of these core concepts helps better specify the research scope of this study.

2.1.1 NPOs

The study of social organizations has a long history, but there is still no unified definition. The reason for this may be that its development has different characteristics in different historical periods and countries. In the international community, social organizations are also known as "volunteer organizations", "non-profit organizations" (NPOs), "the third sector", and "non-governmental organizations" (NGO), whose main operational objective is to promote national and social development, not to make profits (Xia & Zhang, 2014).

NPOs originated in the U.S. In 1973, a U.S. researcher, Theodore Levitt (1973) introduced the term "third sector" to refer to social organizations which are neither statutory nor profit maximizing. Later, American researchers Lester and Helmut (1997) proposed a definition of NPOs: "As long as an organization is organized, private, non-profit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary, then we can call the organization a non-profit organization." This is the most widely accepted definition. Private NPOs are ideal for filling the gap created by government deficits because of their small size, flexibility, and ability to harness grassroots personnel (Lester & Helmut, 1997).

In China, many researchers have also explained the conceptual boundaries of social organizations.

Chinese scholar Z. M. Chen (2003) defined NPOs as "social public welfare organizations that belong to neither the government sector nor the for-profit sector, rely on non-profit income such as membership fees, private donations, or government grants, and engage in social welfare undertakings that the former two sectors are unable, unavailable or unintended to do, thus serving the public and promoting social stability and development."

M. Wang (2009) defined social organizations as non-profit and non-governmental organizations and networks which are spontaneously formed by citizens of different types and classes in the process of social transformation.

Bai (2011) pointed out that different from Western countries, China's social organizations sprout late. In the early stage of reform and opening up, they were called NPOs, which mainly presented a non-political state purely serving society.

Y. Z. Li (2012) believed that if the whole civil society is regarded as a whole system, then the civil public sphere, other than the state and government system and the enterprise system is a social organization. Social organization is the general term of a system, including a series of spontaneous organizations such as industry associations, interest groups, public welfare organizations, and mutual aid organizations.

According to Article 166 of *the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China* approved by the Third Session of the Thirteenth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (2021), "A NPO is a legal entity that engages in non-profit activities in accordance with the provisions of the law, is not established for any profit-making purpose. Its income is used solely to serve public interest objectives." According to the relevant regulations in China, NPOs need to register with the civil affairs department in order to carry out their operations legally.

According to the Chinese scholar Qi (2010), there are two main categories of NPOs in China. One is NPOs legally registered with the civil affairs department, which mainly includes three categories: social groups, foundations, and private non-enterprise organizations, and each category is further specified into different types. For example, social groups include academic, industrial, and professional organizations. Foundations are subdivided into public funding and non-public funding foundations. Private non-enterprise organizations include hospitals, and schools. The other category refers to NPOs as that are not registered with the civil affairs department, mainly including other government-affiliated departments or enterprises. See Figure 2.1 for details.

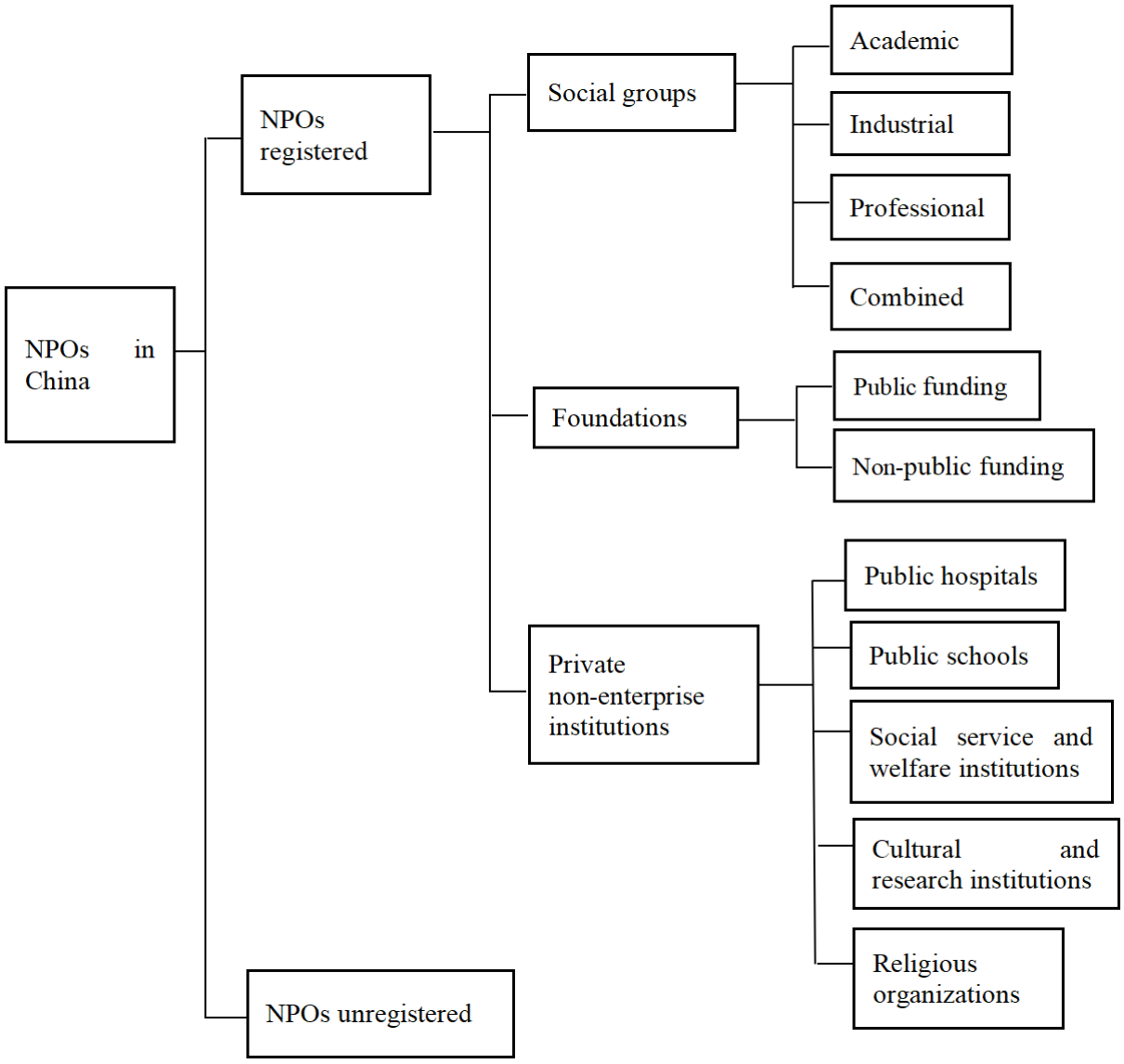

Figure 2.1 Classification of NPOs in China

Source: Qi (2010)

The definition of NPO adopted in this thesis refers to the organization that is beyond the range of the government and market, which provides specific products or services to a particular field of social governance; an organization or group characterized by public welfare, non-profit making, voluntariness, and autonomy. Therefore, the NPO referred to in this thesis is a social organization engaged in public welfare undertakings in a particular field, which is not a specific type or form, but a conceptual category with specific connotations as well as certain ambiguity and flexibility. It is an improvement and supplement to the existing conceptual system of NPOs.

2.1.2 Community

The word "community" originated from Greek, meaning "friendship" or "fellowship" (Wang & Zhao, 2007). The word itself appeared early, but the study of community in its true sense

began with the origin and development of sociology in the 19th century. When translating the book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* written by the German sociologist Tonnies into English, American geographer Loomis (2011) pointed out that Tonnies described the community in the regional form as "gemeinschaft" in German, which means "community". Tonnies believes that a community is composed of common will and values and based on factors such as blood relationship and geography. It has deep human feelings and cultural traditions. There are essential differences between community and society. Although society is also a community, its formation is based on shared interests and power contracts (Ge, 2014). Later, Loomis (2011) translated "gemeinschaft" into "community", which explained the connotation of the community from the perspective of geography and linked the community with the region where people's lives are closely related, thus branding the community with regional characteristics. In the 1930s, American researchers Park and Burgess (1925) defined "community" as a collective where people connect natural urban features and group characteristics through common living places and social relations. Chinese scholar Sun (1990) pointed out that "community" means society, population and relationship, as well as territory and region in the Chinese version. In other words, a community connects society and population through certain structural relations in a specific domain and region. As an entire community, it must have six elements: community population, community location, community facilities, community culture, community identity and community time.

In many studies, the community has been endowed with a relatively unified cognition by researchers; namely, it is where people live together in a specific region because of their ordinary life or values and have a consistent identity and sense of belonging to the area. However, the academic circle has not made a unified definition of the boundary of community because the regional scope of different characteristics can be as small as a residential unit or as large as a city. In order to make the concept of community in community-based elderly care consistent with the reality of China, the idea of community adopted in this thesis refers to the common place where people live that is provided with elderly care services by the urban community or neighbourhood committee within the management scope.

2.1.3 Community-based elderly care

The concept of community-based elderly care is a Western import, which has gradually developed in combination with China's national condition of aging in social transformation and reform. At present, there are still some disputes about the definition of community-based elderly care in academic circles.

Y. G. Chen et al. (2009) explained community-based elderly care from the perspective of elderly care support. They believe that community-based elderly care is a way of providing elderly care services by all possible elderly care modes in society, and the sources of elderly care services are diverse, not just families or countries.

J. Wu (2012) believe that community-based elderly care is a community-based elderly care platform constructed by the family as the basic unit under the government's security system, and it is an organic combination of various stakeholders and groups.

L. X. Zhao (2004) pointed out that. At present, many studies have mixed the concepts of community-based elderly care and home-based elderly care. There are some subtle differences between them. Currently, the home-based elderly care that most researchers refer to is only a part of community-based elderly care, home-and-community-based care for older people. Making the concept of elderly home-based elderly care in the community equal to that of community-based elderly care reflects that, under insufficient community strength and resources of elderly care services, most older people still choose to live in the family and receive elderly care services from the community.

Ding (2013) pointed out that family support is a traditional way of elderly care in China. People are used to living at home and receiving elderly care at home. However, at present, both family supporting and institutional care are not suitable for China's national conditions. Therefore, a new mode of elderly home-based elderly care in the community has emerged. Most older people still live at home. On the one hand, they receive care provided by the family, and on the other hand, they gain elderly care services from community resources.

Du (2016) pointed out specific differences between the objects of community-based elderly care and home-based elderly care services. From the perspective of the health status of the elderly, home-based elderly care mainly serves the elderly who can take care of themselves but have behavioural impairment. In contrast, community-based elderly care mainly helps the elderly with the partially impaired self-care ability or the elderly who lack caregivers at home and want to be accompanied. Under the design of this system, the boundary between home-based elderly care and community-based elderly care in China is not very clear at present. Most older adults' physical health is suitable for community-based or home-based elderly care, so it is difficult to distinguish the two types. In practice, community-based elderly care usually means establishing elderly care service places where the elders live for a long time. These places provide comprehensive services such as life care and daily recreational activities for the elderly and mainly alleviate the problems of the elderly who lack family care and caregivers in the daytime. The focus of community-based elderly care service is "community", which means that

the elders spend their day or most of their time in elderly care service places in the community.

The General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China (2012) defined the functions of community-based elderly care as "day care for the elderly" and "home-based care support" in the *Construction Plan of the Social Old-age Service System (2011-2015)*. It is stated in the above document that the service objects of community-based elderly care are mainly the elderly who live at home and cannot be taken care of in the daytime. The "9073" plan proposed by the General Office of the State Council (2012) aims to realize the following goal by 2020: 90% of the elderly will be supported by family care with the assistance of social pension services; 7% of them will purchase community care services through the government; and 3% of them will enjoy elderly care services in institutions.

Based on the academic research results and policy interpretation in the academic circle, this thesis adopts the definition standard of the functional definition of community-based elderly care, which includes not only the elderly care pattern of living at home and receiving the care of family and community, but also the pattern of being provided with all aspects of elderly care services and resources directly from the community. Community-based elderly care in this study refers to the model in which most of seniors live at their own homes and receive care from their families and enjoy elderly care services from NPOs in the community, such as free meals in senior restaurants run by NPOs, day care, daily recreational activities, or some home-based care services provided by NPOs.

2.1.4 Sustainable development

A widely used concept of sustainable development now is widely described as "a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (United Nations General Assembly, 1987) in 1987. From this definition, it can be known that traditionally, "sustainable development" has been commonly understood as a concept focused on environmental preservation.

Researchers also made effort in giving a definition to sustainable development in the field of business sector. In a policy document by the Aspen Institute, USA (Wolk, 2008) sustainability was identified as one key characteristic of social entrepreneurship. They define sustainability as 'identifying reliable financial and other types of support by utilizing markets, forming partnerships across sectors, and responding to stakeholder needs to ensure that the solution will be enduring'.

Weerawardena et al. (2010) further connected sustainability with survival in their research of the sustainable development of NPOs, holding the idea that for NPOs, sustainability primarily means being able to survive so that they can continue to serve their constituency.

This thesis shares a similar definition of sustainable development with that of Weerawardena et al. (2010). In this context, sustainable development extends beyond environmental concerns to encompass the "survival" and "long-term continuity" of community-based elderly care programs and services provided by NPOs. The focus of sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care is on maintaining the organizations' operations and ensuring the continued thriving of elderly care programs and services over time.

2.2 The proposal and development of the Stakeholder Theory

This part introduces development of the stakeholder theory, including its proposal and its development in the western world as well as that in China.

2.2.1 The proposal of the Stakeholder Theory

According to Feng and Zhang (2009), the stakeholder theory originated in the 1930s in a debate about corporate social responsibility (CSR) between Professors Dodd of Harvard Law School and Berle of Columbia Law School. In the discussion, Berle (1931) noted that on the premise of shareholders' consent, enterprises could appropriately consider the interests of non-shareholder stakeholders. Dodd (1932) argued that managers are the trustees of enterprises who must balance all stakeholders' interests in the management process. He also divided "stakeholders" into two categories: owners who have an investment in the enterprise and owners who have no investment but have a stake in the enterprise. This discussion has aroused widespread attention from the public. It is also the first time "stakeholders" have appeared in people's eyes. However, they did not hold deeper discussions and research on this issue, so the concept and theory of stakeholders have been suspended for nearly 30 years.

Then, in 1963, the theoretical concept of stakeholder first popped up in an internal memo of Stanford Research Institute (SRI). Their research adopted this term to describe the stakeholder groups in enterprises, and they defined that the organization would cease to exist without stakeholders' support. These groups include shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, creditors and associations (Freeman, 1984).

In the 1960s, the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries pursued the corporate governance model of "shareholders first", believing that shareholders are the owners of enterprises and the enterprises' operation must serve their highest profits. The view of "shareholders first" requires enterprise administrators to make operational decisions to maximize shareholders' interests. Under the guidance of this view, enterprise administrators have to pay attention to short-term goals at the cost of employees and other stakeholders' interests or the enterprise's long-term development. Although the stakeholder theory contends that stakeholders are the owners of the enterprises and business activities should pay attention to their interests, the view of "shareholders first" still has a mainstream position (Fu & Chen, 2007).

During the 1970s, the stakeholder theory was gradually recognized and accepted by Western researchers and enterprises, and its influence started progressively to expand. At that time, the business environment was turbulent, and enterprises had to face problems in management: CSR, corporate ethics, environmental management issues, and others. Original business management methods failed to cope with these changes effectively, and enterprise managers cannot judge which changes need to be responded to and which changes need to be dealt with through preventive measures (Freeman, 1984). In 1977, the Wharton School in Pennsylvania, United States, launched a stakeholder management course designed to apply corporate strategic management, which gradually formed a relatively complete analysis framework (Jia, 2002).

2.2.2 Earlier research on the stakeholder theory

After researchers at the SRI put forward the theoretical concept of stakeholder, other researchers have also conducted research in different fields, and the theory has been gradually developed in multiple directions. According to Freeman et al. (2010), in the early stage, the main research directions of this theory were in the fields of: a). strategic management, b). system theory, c) corporate social responsibility (CSR), and d). organizational theory as detailed below (Freeman et al., 2010).

(1) The strategic management

In the 1970s, the concept of stakeholders began to appear in the plentiful research literature on strategic planning. In 1977, the Wharton School opened a stakeholder course, which applied the idea of stakeholders to corporate strategic management. Back then, Western researchers and enterprises commenced to recognize and accept the stakeholder theory. Bernard (1971) pointed out in his corporate strategy research that the ultimate goal of corporate operations is for the

stakeholders' interests. Dill (1975) defined stakeholders' relationship from the perspectives of "influence" and "responsibility" and put forward the view that "the enterprise faces its stakeholders, and vice versa". He pointed out that stakeholders can become active participants in strategic decisions. King and Cleland (1978) proposed a method of analysing "stakeholders" in project management in their book Strategic Planning and Policy. Hussey and Langham (1978) proposed an environmental model of organization and stakeholders and employed it to analyse the crucial role of management in enterprise process development.

In the research related to project strategy formulation, Derkinderen and Crum (1979) used the concept of stakeholder, and the views they put forward were reflected in Heenan and Perlmutter's (1979) research on the organization development of multinational companies. These authors also adopted the stakeholder approach, and some other researchers specifically utilized the concept of stakeholders to study management process issues in the literature on strategic management. When conducting strategic hypothesis analysis of problems, Mitroff et al. (1979) mentioned that stakeholder analysis requires managers to consider all groups that can affect or are affected by significant decisions and require managers to list the groups or interest groups with a stake in the decision.

(1) The system theory

Ansoff (1965) pointed out in his classic book Corporate Strategy that he disagreed with the role of stakeholders in strategic management and that he believes that stakeholders only play an accidental role in the survival of the organization. In addition, there are many more situational variables affecting the organization's survival. Ackoff (1974) reinterpreted Ansoff's viewpoint and defined a method of stakeholder analysis in an organizational system. He believes the system would not be completed without the stakeholders' participation when the system is designed. Therefore, Ackoff proposed that when solving problems at the system design level, we should consider the scope involving stakeholder groups.

(3) CSR

Since researchers at the SRI put forward the concept of stakeholders, those who study the social responsibility of business organizations have begun to pay attention to the concept of stakeholders, and many CSR documents that take this perspective as the starting point have been produced. In the past, people generally believed that the non-traditional stakeholder groups and the company had a hostile relationship, and the interests of both parties were also opposed. The emergence of CSR literature broke this state of opposition. Researchers employ the concept of stakeholders to analyze the relationship between non-traditional stakeholder groups and companies. They emphasize that companies should consider and satisfy the interests of the

public, communities, and employees (Freeman et al., 2010). Dill (1975) pointed out that for a long time, we had always believed that the views and initiatives of stakeholders could be treated as external factors in the strategic planning and management process or they could only be used as data to help managerial personnel make decisions, or that they are just legal and social restrictions in decision-making. Nowadays, the trend has changed, and the role of stakeholders has shifted from mere influencers in decision-making to that of participants. Some external stakeholders may seek opportunities to proactively participate in management's decision-making.

(4) The organization theory

The Swedish organization theorist Rhenman (1968) employed the concept of stakeholders in his research on industrialized democracy and used the term to denote specific individuals or groups who have a mutual relationship with the company. Companies need to use the strengths of individuals or groups to achieve their objectives, and these individuals or groups also rely on the companies to achieve their goals in turn. Rhenman (1968) believed that stakeholders include any group that has requirements for the company, and the company also has provisions for them. However, these groups are not necessary to support the company's continued survival.

2.2.3 The development of the Stakeholder Theory

In the following part, the development of the stakeholder theory in the western world and China are introduced.

2.2.3.1 The development of the stakeholder theory in the western world

Since the SRI first proposed the concept of stakeholder, other researchers entered the discussion, including Ansoff, Mitroff, Emshoff. After Freeman received his PhD degree in philosophy from Washington University in St. Louis, he became a researcher at the Wharton School and capitalized upon the opportunity to listen to the aforementioned researchers' explanation and discussion on the concept of stakeholders. Encouraged by Emshoff, Freeman conducted research on stakeholders and completed a research thesis with Emshoff (Freeman & Emshoff, 1979). Later, Charan and Freeman (1980) published an article introducing the results of the research on negotiation with stakeholders. In 1984, Freeman (1984) compiled his research on stakeholders in the book "*Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*".

In the book, Freeman (1984) defined "stakeholder" as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives". This definition has also become the classic definition of "stakeholder". Additionally, Freeman (1984) also

described the essential characteristics of corporate stakeholders in the book. He proposed that managers must consider the interests of stakeholders' demands if a business organization wants to succeed in the current and future environment. Also, Freeman drew an organization's stakeholder map, pointing out that the stakeholders of an organization or enterprise are such organizations or individuals who have a direct influence on the organization or corporate activities, including stakeholders, creditors, employees, suppliers, customers, communities, the environment, the media, and others.

Freeman (1984) also divided the strategic management process into three levels: rational level, process level, and transactional level. The rational level explains how to identify the stakeholders of an enterprise and analyse the "stake" they are pursuing. It requires that managers be familiar with the stakeholders and evaluate their identities and rights comprehensively and objectively. The process level concerns the formulation of a stakeholder strategy, how to consider the stakeholders' rights and interests when analysing objectives and strategies, and how the stakeholders' behaviour can affect the realization of corporate goals. The transactional level involves the interaction, communication and business exchanges between the enterprise and stakeholders. Freeman pointed out that, for the purpose of effectively completing this level of interaction, managers should pay attention to the relationship with stakeholders, clarify the optimal way for the interaction between the enterprise and stakeholders, and incorporate resources into this process.

Freeman also systematized the stakeholder theory, established a theoretical framework for analysing stakeholders, and pioneered a systematic study of stakeholders from an individual perspective, which provided subsequent researchers with research space for further development. Although Freeman's research results did not form a complete and comprehensive stakeholder theory system at that time, he made the public realize that shareholders are not the only stakeholders of an enterprise. Instead, there are other individuals or groups besides them who are also very important for the company's survival and development.

In the 1990s, Western researchers began to study corporate governance from the perspective of stakeholders. Under this perspective, corporate governance needs to adjust a variety of relationships, including the relationship between shareholders and managers, that between major shareholders and small and medium shareholders, and that among shareholders and other stakeholders. Company administrators should maximize the value of the company on the premise of protecting all stakeholders' stakes. For example, Clarkson (1994) proposed that a firm is a socio-economic system composed of stakeholders. The fundamental goal of a firm is to add value to its stakeholders.

The research of stakeholder theory by Western scholars has gradually developed from the stage of "affecting the survival of enterprises" and "implementing strategic management" in the 1960s to the 1980s to the stage of "participating in ownership distribution". In response to the criticism that the definition of stakeholder is generally broad, the studies of the successors, such as Williams and Hatton-Yeo (2015) as well as Savage et al. (1991) who believed that the essence of a firm was the connection of specific assets that cannot be completely replicated by the market. It lays a foundation for stakeholders to participate in corporate governance. The essence is to discuss whether stakeholders can share the ownership of enterprises from the perspective of corporate governance and organization theory.

For example, in recent years, Mitchell et al. (2015) developed an interdisciplinary theory of value creation stakeholder accounting (VCSA) theory based on stakeholder risk sharing, introducing value creation stakeholder partnerships (VCSPs) as a mechanism for the implementation of VCSA. In the field of value creation/entrepreneurship theory, Mitchell proposed four premises when evaluating the key processes of capturing stakeholder value creation through risk sharing, namely: activity, consistency, interactivity and reciprocity. In the case of stakeholder theory, Mitchell et al. (2015) suggested that the classification criteria of stakeholders should consider the grouping process of stakeholders and the risks shared by stakeholders in each category.

2.2.3.2 The development of the stakeholder theory in China

Research on the stakeholder theory by Chinese researchers commenced at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. The main representative researchers are J. H. Wan et al. (1998), R. L. Yang and Zhou (2000), S. H. Jia (2002), S. H. Jia and Chen (2003), H. H. Chen (2003), L. Wu and Chen (2003), L. Wu (2006), Hao (2007), L. Liu (2008) and others.

For example, L. Wu (2006) classified enterprise stakeholders with different properties, different technical characteristics and different life cycle stages from the resource-based view and resource dependence theory, namely, key stakeholders, important stakeholders, general stakeholders and marginal stakeholders. Her classification of stakeholders takes into consideration the dynamic changes among enterprises and is more suitable for different Chinese enterprises' requirements of stakeholder classification management.

Corresponding to L. Wu's (2006) study on the dynamic stakeholders among enterprises, Hao (2007) classified enterprise stakeholders at different stages of development from the perspectives of enterprise needs and strengths. She defined stakeholders as important, minor, and general stakeholders.

L. Liu (2008) proposed to supplement the concept of stakeholders from the perspective of investment specificity and interaction with enterprises. Stakeholders refer to those individuals and groups who have made certain special investments in enterprises, or have direct or indirect, long-term or short-term interactions with enterprises, bear risks due to enterprise activities, and whose activities can affect the achievement of enterprise goals or are affected by the process of achieving enterprise goals.

When Chinese researchers L. Liu and Gan (2009) combed the research progress of the stakeholder theory in China, they pointed out that Chinese researchers' research on this theory can be divided into two stages: the stage of retelling the preliminary explorations of stakeholder theoretical research results in Western countries and the stage of further development of stakeholders in China. Prior to 1999, most of the research on the stakeholder theory in China was the research results that reproduced Western stakeholder theory, and only a small number of Chinese researchers were conducting preliminary discussions on this theory. After 1999, the research on the stakeholder theory in China began to explore its application in different fields.

Such studies have achieved fruitful results in the definition and classification of stakeholders as well as in the approach to corporate governance, yet most are normative and descriptive research results. Few are empirical and aimed at operationalization.

2.3 Definition and categorization of stakeholders

There are two core issues in the stakeholder theory: one is who the stakeholders are; the other is to classify the stakeholders. To effectively manage stakeholders, they must be identified first. In this regard, it is necessary to clarify the definition of the concept.

2.3.1 Definition of the stakeholders

The original definition of stakeholders came from the SRI, at its inception. In 1963, researchers described the concept of stakeholders as "those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist" (Freeman et al., 2010). According to this definition, it can be seen that judging whether an object belongs to a stakeholder mainly depends on whether it can affect the organization's existence. Although the definition does not indicate the complete scope of stakeholders, it also provides us with a new perspective on the organization. That is, shareholders are not the only stakeholders of the organization. In addition to shareholders, there are many interest groups that affect its existence.

Since the concept of stakeholders was put forward in the 1960s, Western researchers have

continued to explore its definition. Ansoff (1965) posited that when formulating the company's goals, it is necessary to balance the conflicting demands among various stakeholders, including managers, employees, shareholders, suppliers and distributors. Freeman (1984) defines stakeholders as all individuals and groups that can affect or are affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives and divided them into stakeholders in a broad sense and stakeholders in a narrow sense. Stakeholders in a narrow sense are those on which the organization is dependent for its continued survival, such as investors, customers, suppliers, employees and communities. Stakeholders in a broad sense are all groups and individuals who can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who are affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives". Compared with the research of SRI, Freeman's definition greatly expands the scope of stakeholders and enriches the connotation of corporate stakeholders. His view is very similar to the view of CSR that was emerging in European and American countries back then and was soon widely endorsed by some management experts and economists who studied corporate theories.

However, many researchers mainly define the stakeholders of enterprises from a broad perspective. For example, researchers from the SRI describe the concept of stakeholders as "groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist" (Freeman et al., 2010). In the 1980s, the development of economic globalization and the increasingly turbulent business environment brought many impacts on corporate decision-making. Researchers began to realize that the original definition of stakeholders was too broad, and it needed to be further refined for enterprises to make more precise decisions. Wheeler (1998) once noted that some non-social individuals or groups should also be the enterprise's stakeholders, such as the deteriorating or improving natural environment.

However, for the seemingly simple question of "who are the stakeholders of a firm", many researchers have given their own views from their own research perspectives, yet there is still no universally agreed definition. From numerous stakeholder theoretical studies, a variety of stakeholders can be found, such as shareholders, managers, employees, creditors, suppliers, consumers, communities, internal service agencies, competitors, management agencies, governments, distributors, media, environmental protection organizations and others. Mitchell et al. (1997) have studied the proposers and the development history of the stakeholder theory in great detail. They summarized 27 representative definitions of the stakeholder concept as proposed by Western researchers from the research of SRI in 1963 to the end of the 20th century, shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 27 representative definitions of stakeholders

No.	Time	Proposer	Definition of stakeholders
1	1963	SRI	Stakeholders are groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist.
2	1964	Rhenman	Stakeholders depend on the firm in order to achieve their personal goals and on whom the firm depends for its existence.
3	1971	Ahlstedi and Jahnukaimen	Driven by their own interests and goals, stakeholders are participants in a firm and thus depend on it and on whom for its sake the firm depends.
4	1983	Freeman and Reed	Wide: stakeholders can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives. Narrow: stakeholders are groups on which the organization is dependent for its continued survival.
5	1984	Freeman	Stakeholders can affect or are affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives.
6	1987	Freeman and Gilbert	Stakeholders can affect or are affected by a business.
7	1987	Cornel and Shapiro	Stakeholders are "claimants" who have "contracts" in a business.
8	1988	Evan and Freeman	Stakeholders have a stake in or claim on the firm.
9	1988	Evan and Freeman	Stakeholders can benefit from or are harmed by, and whose rights are violated or respected, corporate actions.
10	1989	Bowie	Without whose support, the organization would cease to exist.
11	1989	Alkhafaji	Stakeholders are groups to whom the corporation is responsible.
12	1989	Caroll	Stakeholders assert to have one or more of these kinds of stakes--ranging from an interest to a right (legal or moral) to ownership or legal title to the company's assets or property.
13	1990	Freeman and Evan	Stakeholders are contract holders.
14	1991	Thompson, Wartick and Smith	Stakeholders are groups in a relationship with an organization.
15	1991	Savage, Nix, Whitehead and Blair	Stakeholders have an interest in the actions of an organization and the ability to influence it.
16	1992	Hill and Jones	Stakeholders are constituents who have a legitimate claim on the firm established through the existence of an exchange relationship and who supply the firm with critical resources (contributions), and in exchange, each expects its interests to be satisfied (by inducements).
17	1993	Brenner	Stakeholders having some legitimate, non-trivial relationship with an organization [such as] exchange transactions, action impacts, and moral responsibilities.
18	1993	Carroll	Stakeholders are asserts to have one or more of the kinds of stakes in business--may be affected or affected.
19	1994	Freeman	Stakeholders are participants in the human process of joint value creation.
20	1994	Wicks, Gilbert and Freeman	Stakeholders are people who interact with and give meaning and definition to the corporation.
21	1994	Langtry	The firm is significantly responsible for their well-being, or they hold a moral or legal claim on the firm.
22	1994	Starik	Stakeholders can and are making their actual stakes known, who are or might be influenced by, or are or potentially are influencers of some organization

No.	Time	Proposer	Definition of stakeholders
23	1994	Clarkson	Stakeholders bear some form of risk as a result of having invested some form of capital, human or financial, something of value in a firm or are placed at risk as a result of a firm's activities.
24	1994	Clarkson	Stakeholders have or claim ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities.
25	1995	Nasi	Stakeholders interact with the firm and thus make its operation possible.
26	1995	Brenner	Stakeholders are or who could impact or be impacted by the firm/organization.
27	1995	Donaldson and Preston	Stakeholders are persons or groups with legitimate interests in procedural and/or substantive aspects of corporate activity.

Source: Mitchell et al. (1997)

After the stakeholder theory was introduced in China, Chinese researchers also put forward their own opinions on the definition of stakeholders. S. H. Jia and Chen (2003) believed that stakeholders are those individuals and groups that have made specific investments in the enterprise and are shouldering risks of the organization, whose behaviour can affect or be affected by the process of the enterprise in achieving its objectives. This viewpoint not only emphasizes the specific investment of stakeholders in the firm but also stresses the two-way influence between these two entities.

L. Yang and Yi (2003) started from the perspective of contracts and risks and proposed that the so-called stakeholder market refers to the people who have a contract with the company. They bear varying degrees of risks due to corporate activities, including shareholders, managers, employees, creditors, suppliers, consumers, communities and others.

S. Qu and Li (2003) hold that stakeholders refer to all participants in the economic activities of a company or enterprise, covering shareholders, creditors, managers, employees, customers and others. From the perspective of investment specificity and the interaction with enterprises.

L. Liu (2008) defined that stakeholders refer to those who have made certain special investments in firms or have a direct or concise, long-term or short-term interactive relationship with them, and those individuals and groups who bear risks due to corporate activities and whose activities can affect or be affected by the process of enterprise's realization of objectives.

It can be seen that although Western and Chinese researchers have given different definitions of stakeholders from their own research perspectives, overall speaking, there is still no universally agreed definition, just as Donaldson and Dunfee (1994) put it two decades ago.

2.3.2 Categorization of the stakeholder theory

To guide the clarification of stakeholders in this study, it is necessary to figure out how both Western scholars and Chinese scholars conducted comprehensive studies on the clarification of stakeholders.

2.3.2.1 Western researchers' classification research on the stakeholder theory

In the 1980s, when Western researchers were defining stakeholders, they also realized that it was not enough to stay at the definition level. Instead, there exists a need to classify and sort out stakeholders. Therefore, researchers have successively carried out research on this classification. The representative classification approaches are mainly multiple dimensional, and score based as it is described below. The review of these two approaches is presented in the following parts.

(1) Multi-dimensional classification approach

Starting from multi-dimensions, researchers who carry out classification research on stakeholders include Freeman (1984), Savage et al. (1991), Charkham (1992), Clarkson (1994), Fredrick (1998), Wheeler (1998).

This study summarizes their classification standards, shown as Table 2. 2.

Table 2.2 Classification of stakeholders by Western researchers from the multi-dimensional classification approach

Researchers	Classification perspectives	Stakeholder categories	Stakeholder coverage
Freeman	Ownership, economic dependence and social benefits	Stakeholders related to organization ownership	Managers, directors and other shareholders who hold company shares
		Stakeholders who are financially dependent on the company	All managers, internal service agencies, employees, creditors, consumers, suppliers, competitors, local communities, management agencies and others who receive salaries from the company
		Stakeholders related to the company's social interests	special groups, government leaders, media and others
Savage et al.	The level of threat potential and cooperation potential posed to the enterprise	Supportive stakeholder	board of directors, managers, employees, parent companies, suppliers, service providers and NPOs
		Marginal stakeholders	Including consumer interest organizations, shareholders, labour unions and others
		Mixed stakeholder	Including employees, agents or customers in positions of short supply, organizations that provide auxiliary products or services and others
		Opposing stakeholders	Including competitors, labour unions, government, and sometimes news media
Charkham	Contractual relationship	Contractual stakeholders	Shareholders, employees, distributors, suppliers, lenders
		Community stakeholders	Consumers, regulators, government agencies, media, local communities and others

Researchers	Classification perspectives	Stakeholder categories	Stakeholder coverage
Clarkson	Ways of risk-taking	Voluntary stakeholders	Individuals or groups that actively invest in materials, capital or human resources with the company
		Involuntary stakeholders	Individuals or groups who passively bear the risks brought about by business management and decision-making
	Closeness of the connection to the enterprise	Primary stakeholders	Those who have a significant impact on the company's survival and development, including shareholders, employees, investors, suppliers, customers and others
		Secondary stakeholders	Indirectly affecting or being affected by the operation of the enterprise, but these people do not directly transact with the enterprise, and will not fundamentally affect its survival, such as the media
Starik	Enterprise operation dynamics	Actual stakeholders	Individuals or groups who invest specific assets in the enterprise
		Latent stakeholders	Those individuals and groups who may affect or be affected by the realization of corporate objectives
Fredrick	Degree of direct benefit connection with the enterprise	Direct stakeholders	Including shareholders, employees, creditors, suppliers, retailers, consumers, competitors and others
		Indirect stakeholders	Including governments, social organizations, media, the general public and other organizations in China and foreign countries
Wheeler	Social dimension and closeness of interests	Primary social stakeholders	Customers, investors, employees, local communities, suppliers, and other business partners
		Secondary social stakeholders	Resident groups, related companies and numerous interest groups
		Primary non-social stakeholders	Natural environment and human descendants
		Secondary non-social stakeholders	Environmental pressure groups Animal interest pressure groups

As can be seen from the table above, the multidimensional segmentation approach divides and classifies stakeholders based primarily on differences in their different characteristics and relationships, their roles in the decision-making process, their interests and resources. For example, stakeholders can be categorised as primary, secondary or marginal stakeholders in order to better understand their importance and influence in decision making.

From the three dimensions of ownership, economic dependence and social benefits, Freeman (1984) carried out a basic classification of stakeholders. Managers, directors and other shareholders who hold company stocks are stakeholders related to corporate ownership; all managers who receive salaries from the company, internal service agencies, employees,

creditors, consumers, suppliers, competitors, local communities, management agencies and other parties are stakeholders who have economic dependence on the enterprise; special groups, government leaders, media and others are stakeholders related to the company's social interests. This makes people realize that the impact of these stakeholders on the enterprise can be divided into economic, political, social, technical and management levels. There is not only one type of stakeholder, and their impact on the enterprise is also differentiated. Therefore, managers should adopt diversified management strategies targeted at different stakeholders.

Savage et al. (1991) believed that previous studies failed to establish a reasonable relationship between the classification of stakeholders and their management strategies. Pursuant to the stakeholder's potential for threats to the enterprise and the potential for cooperation, they divided stakeholders into four types: supportive stakeholders, marginal stakeholders, mixed stakeholders, and opposing stakeholders. The management strategy that respectively matches each stakeholder is participation, monitoring, defence, and cooperation. The factors affecting the threat or cooperation potential of stakeholders to the enterprise include four aspects: a). whether it grasps key resources; b). how its strength is compared to the company; c). what actions may be taken; d). who may be aligned with what or whom. Enterprises can judge the types of stakeholders based on the actual situation of each one in these four aspects. Supportive stakeholders have a high degree of cooperation with the enterprise and pose little threat to it. They are the ideal stakeholders for the firm, and this type of stakeholders may include the board of directors, managers, employees, parent companies, suppliers, service providers and NPOs. Marginal stakeholders include consumer interest organizations, shareholders, workers' unions and others, whose threats to the enterprise and potential for cooperation are very low. Although they have potential interest relationships with the enterprise, their demands can rarely get the attention of the firm. Mixed stakeholders refer to the individuals or groups that pose a high threat to the enterprise but are also highly likely to cooperate with it, including employees, agents or customers in short-supply positions, organizations that provide auxiliary products or services and others. Individuals or groups of this type are very likely to become opposing stakeholders of the enterprise, or they may also possibly become supportive stakeholders. Opposing stakeholders are the groups that pose a high threat to the enterprise and have a low possibility of cooperation, including competitors, labour unions, governments and sometimes news media (Savage et al., 1991). It is believed that the importance of these four types of stakeholders for corporate management decision-making is different. Managers should minimize the interests of marginal stakeholders and maximize the interests of supportive and mixed stakeholders so as to increase their support for the enterprise.

Moreover, Savage et al. (1991) also pointed out that the threat potential and cooperation potential of stakeholders to the enterprise are variable. In this regard, it is one of the critical tasks of enterprise administrators to strive to make the threat potential and cooperation potential of stakeholders develop in a beneficial direction for the firm.

Charkham (1992) holds that stakeholders can be classified into contractual stakeholders and public stakeholders based on the fact that related groups have transactional contract relations with an enterprise. The former includes shareholders, employees, distributors, suppliers, and lenders. The latter involves all consumers, regulators, government sectors, media, and local communities.

Clarkson (1994) proposed two classification approaches based on the willingness of corporate stakeholders. The first classifies the stakeholders into voluntary stakeholders and non-voluntary stakeholders according to the risks they take in the business activities. Voluntary stakeholders refer to those individuals or groups that actively invest in material, capital or human resources with the company in the business management activities of the enterprise. These groups voluntarily bear the risks that may be brought about by business management and decision-making. Involuntary stakeholders refer to individuals or groups that passively bear the risks brought about by business management and decision-making. The other classification approach is based on the closeness of the relationship between the stakeholders and the enterprise, and the stakeholders can be divided into primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those who have a significant impact on the company's survival and development, including shareholders, employees, investors, suppliers, customers, and others; secondary stakeholders refer to those indirectly affecting or being indirectly affected by the company's operations. However, these people do not have direct transactions with the firm and will not fundamentally affect the firm's survival, such as the media.

Starik (1995) investigated from the perspective of enterprise operation dynamics and proposed that stakeholders can be divided into actual stakeholders and latent stakeholders. Latent stakeholders refer to those individuals and groups that may affect or be affected by the realization of firm's objectives. When these individuals or groups invest specific assets in the enterprise, latent stakeholders will turn into actual stakeholders.

Fredrick (1998) divided stakeholders into direct stakeholders and indirect stakeholders according to the degree of direct benefit connection between stakeholders and the enterprise. Direct stakeholders include shareholders, employees, creditors, suppliers, retailers, consumers, competitors and others; indirect stakeholders cover Chinese and foreign governments, social organizations, media, the general public and other organizations.

Wheeler (1998) combined Clarkson's (1994) classification method and divided all stakeholders into four types according to the closeness of interest by starting from the social dimension: primary social stakeholders, secondary social stakeholders, primary non-social stakeholders, and secondary non-social stakeholders. Primary social stakeholders have direct contact with the enterprise and involve people in social activities, such as customers, investors, employees, local communities, suppliers, and other business partners; secondary social stakeholders have indirect connections with the enterprise through social activities, including residents' groups, related enterprises and numerous interest groups. Primary non-social stakeholders have a direct influence on the enterprise but are not related or connected to specific people, including the natural environment, human descendants and others. Secondary non-social stakeholders have an indirect influence on the enterprise, but they do not have contact with people, including non-human species.

(2) Score-based approach

Mitchell et al. (1997) proposed a new way to define the classification of stakeholders: the score-based approach. According to the specific situation of the enterprise, its stakeholders can be scored from the following three attributes: legitimacy, power, and urgency. It can be seen from Figure 2.2.

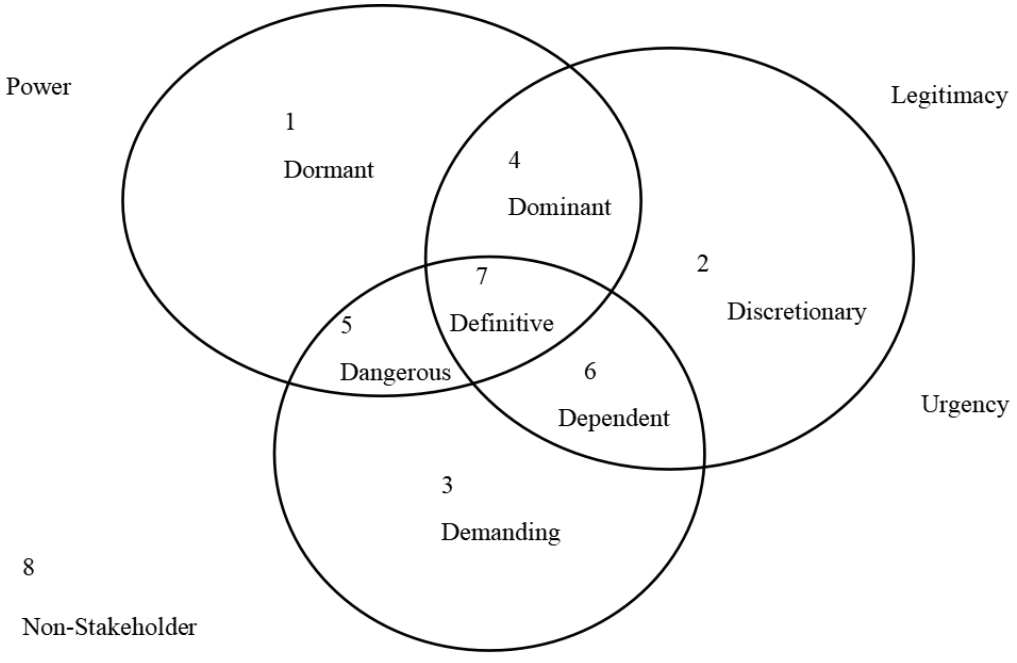

Figure 2.2 Stakeholders analysis model put forward by Mitchell et al.

Source: Mitchell et al. (1997)

Legitimacy means that a stakeholder has a legal or moral claim on the enterprise; power means whether a stakeholder has the ability and the corresponding means to influence the business decision of the enterprise; urgency refers to whether the interest demands of a

stakeholder can immediately arouse the attention of enterprise managers.

Mitchell et al. (1997) held that whether an individual or a group is a stakeholder of a firm depends on whether he or she has the characteristics of legitimacy, power and urgency. As long as an individual or a group has one of these characteristics, it can become a stakeholder of the firm.

After scoring the above attributes, according to the score, stakeholders of the firm can be divided into three types.

The first type refers to latent stakeholders who possess only one of the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency. It can be further classified into dormant stakeholders, discretionary stakeholders and demanding stakeholders. Dormant stakeholders have the power to impose their own will on the company but lack legitimacy and urgency. Therefore, their power cannot work in practice, such as what happens with laid-off employees. Discretionary stakeholders have legitimacy but lack the power to influence the firm and urgency, such as the researchers studying corporate social responsibility and performance. Demanding stakeholders have urgency but lack legitimacy and power. For company managers, such stakeholders are makers of small troubles and can easily distract managers' attention.

The second type is expectant stakeholders who maintain a close relationship with the enterprise and possess two of the above three attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency. This type of stakeholders includes dominant stakeholders, dependent stakeholders and dangerous stakeholders. Dominant stakeholders have both power and legitimacy, which can guarantee their influence on the enterprise. With legitimate power, they are in a "dominant position" in the enterprise. Managers need to respect and value their demands. Dependent stakeholders lack power but have legitimacy and urgency, so they need to rely on others to help them achieve their influence on the company. When the stakeholders only have urgency and power but lack legitimacy, they are dangerous for the firm because they may take some violent actions to harm its interests.

The third type is definitive stakeholders, who have all three attributes: legitimacy, power, and urgency. For the survival and development of the enterprise, the management must pay attention to and meet their interest demands at any time and try to improve their satisfaction. Typical definitive stakeholders include corporate shareholders and customers.

In addition, there are also some groups that do not have any of the above three attributes for the firm, so they do not belong to the stakeholders of the firm.

Managers should give top priority to the requirements of definitive stakeholders who have the attributes of legitimacy, power and urgency at the same time, then consider those of

expectant stakeholders with two attributes, and finally consider those of latent stakeholders with only one attribute.

This score-based approach can provide a quantitative way of comparing and ranking stakeholders to better understand and respond to the needs and interests of different stakeholders.

However, Mitchell et al. (1997) also pointed out that the above analysis model is dynamic, and any individual or group will change from one form of stakeholder to another after gaining or losing some attributes. It means that the attributes owned by stakeholders are variable, not static. The task of managers is to analyse and monitor this possible change. Chinese researchers H. H. Chen and Jia (2004) consider that Mitchell's score-based approach greatly improved the operability of defining stakeholders and promoted the application of the stakeholder theory in different fields.

In a more recent study, Mitchell et al. (2015) argued that the problem of broad stakeholder inclusion in organizational decision-making also arises because of inadequate accounting theory and practice and develop an intentionally transdisciplinary VCSA theory based on stakeholder risk-sharing as a superior rationale for stakeholder inclusion introducing VCSPs as a promising mechanism for the implementation of VCSA. Mitchell et al. (2015) suggested that accounting for stakeholders must be inclusive of the value-creating or risk-sharing partnership among an organization's stakeholders. For the field of value creation/entrepreneurship theory, they propose four premises that capture the key processes of stakeholder value creation through risk-sharing: activities, alignment, interaction, and reciprocity premises. For the cases of stakeholder, Mitchell et al. (2015) proposed that the classification criteria of stakeholders should consider the grouping process of stakeholders and the risk sharing of stakeholders in each group.

From the review above of these two stakeholder classification methods, it can be concluded that stakeholder classification studies provide organisations and decision makers with a clearer understanding and appreciation, which helps to better address and align the interests of all parties in the decision-making process. However, different classification methods have different applicability and limitations, and the appropriate method needs to be selected and applied according to the specific context and objectives.

2.3.2.2 Studies on stakeholder categorization in China

At the end of the 20th century, Chinese researchers began to study the classification of stakeholders.

In the book *Stakeholder Management*, J. H. Wan et al. (1998) put forward that the stakeholders of a firm can be divided into two levels as shown in Figure 2.3.

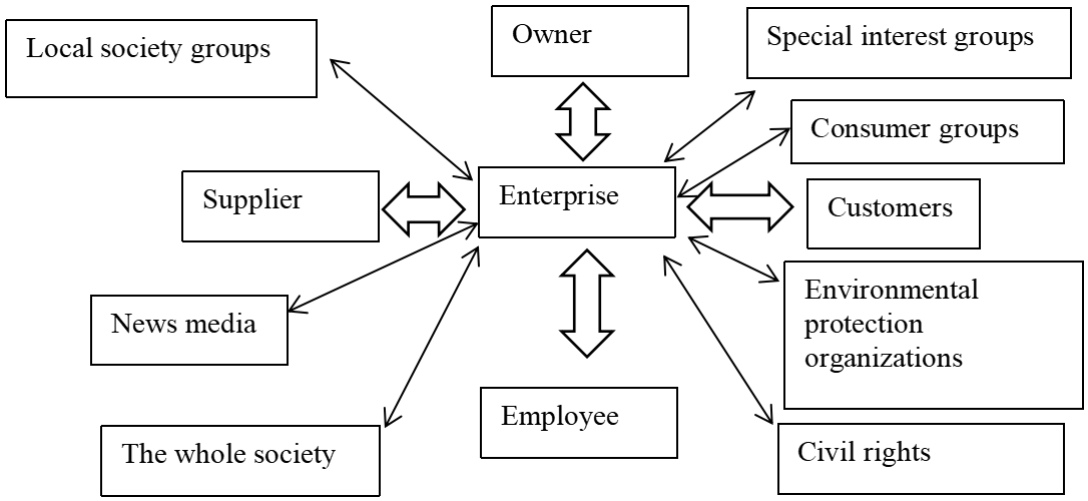

Figure 2.3 Two levels of stakeholders

Source: J. H. Wan et al. (1998)

Note: the first level: ⇔ the second level: ⟷

The first level of stakeholders has formal, official or contractual relationships with the enterprise, including the owner of financial capital, the owner of human capital, governments, suppliers and customers. The second level of stakeholders includes the public, environmental protection organizations, consumer-right-protection organizations, communities, market intermediary organizations and news media.

After studying the relevant works and theses of foreign researchers, according to the scope of the definition, R. L. Yang and Zhou (2000) divided the definition of stakeholder into three categories. The first category has the broadest definition. According to it, any person or group that can affect or be affected by enterprise activities is a stakeholder. Stakeholders in this category include corporate shareholders, creditors, employees, suppliers, consumers, government departments, social organizations, social groups, and social members. The second category refers to the people or groups directly related to the firm, excluding government departments, social organizations, social groups and social members. The third category covers the narrowest range of objects, and only those who "have a stake" in the firm are considered as stakeholders.

By incorporating the classification of stakeholders of Savage et al. (1991) and from the perspective of cooperation and threat, X. H. Li (2001) classified stakeholders into four categories: supportive stakeholders, marginal stakeholders, unsupportive stakeholders and hybrid stakeholders. Supportive stakeholders have the characteristics of strong cooperation and low threat. Marginal stakeholders have both low cooperation and threat. Non-supportive stakeholders have a low possibility of cooperation and a greater possibility of threat. Finally,

hybrid stakeholders have a higher possibility of cooperation and threat.

H. H. Chen and Jia (2004) used a multi-dimensional classification approach and a score-based approach for reference to conduct an empirical study on the classification of stakeholders of Chinese enterprises. From three dimensions–initiative, importance and urgency–stakeholders of firms can be subdivided into three categories: core stakeholders, dormant stakeholders, and marginal stakeholders. Different individual and corporate factors affect people's understanding of stakeholders.

Based on the resource-based view (RBV) and the resource dependence theory (RDT), L. Wu (2006) conducted an empirical study on the management strategies of stakeholders in Chinese firms and divided them into four categories: key stakeholders, important stakeholders, general stakeholders, and marginal stakeholders.

In the classification put forward by L. Wu (2006), key stakeholders are the essential resources for the survival and development of enterprises, and their support is crucial in ensuring the continued progress and growth of these businesses. Important stakeholders refer to those individuals or entities whose support is indispensable for the survival and development of enterprises. However, the level of dependency on them for the survival and development of enterprises is comparatively lower than that of key stakeholders. General stakeholders also play a significant role in the survival and development of enterprises, although their level of dependence is notably lower than that of important stakeholders. Without the support of general stakeholders, the survival and development of enterprises would be compromised. Marginal stakeholders, on the other hand, are not as vital to the survival and development of enterprises. Even without their support, enterprises can still manage to survive and progress. These stakeholders occupy a middle ground between main stakeholders and individuals or entities who have no stake in the enterprises.

2.3.3 Classification of stakeholders in this study

As mentioned before, Wheeler (1998) based their classification on the sociability factor and considered that stakeholders can be primarily social, secondary social, primary non-social, and secondary non-social, as Figure 2.4 shows as follows.

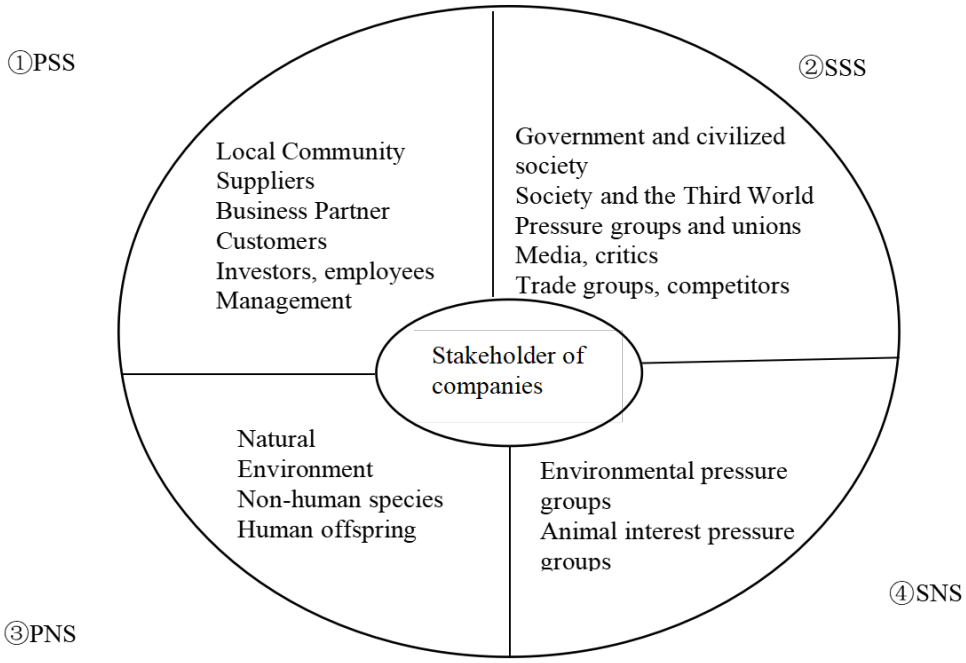

Figure 2.4 Stakeholder classification model proposed by Wheeler

Source: Wheeler (1998)

①PSS: Primary Social Stakeholder ②SSS: Secondary Social Stakeholder
③PNS: Primary Non-Social Stakeholder ④SNS: Secondary Non-Social Stakeholder

Primary social stakeholders are directly connected to the company and involved in its social activities, such as customers, investors, employees, local communities, suppliers, and other business partners. Secondary social stakeholders are indirectly connected to the company through social activities, including residents, related companies, and numerous interest groups. Primary non-social stakeholders directly influence the company, but they are not linked with specific personnel, such as human descendants. Secondary non-social stakeholders (such as non-human species) indirectly influence the company but are not connected to people.

Based on the stakeholder clarification, Wheeler (1998) offered management systems approaches designed to maximize the benefits of actively involving stakeholders in corporate strategy.

In the research on NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, NPOs need to classify their stakeholders. Different stakeholders are bound to have differences in the significance and degree of influence on the sustainable development of NPOs in community-based elderly care. Wheeler's classification models explain the degree of difference and the correlation of influence, providing the necessary theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis.

We adjusted some elements of Wheeler's classification model according to the research subjects. Based on the above discussions, this study designs a stakeholder classification model

for the sustainable development of NPOs in community-based elderly care as shown in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5 Stakeholder classification model for NPOs in this research

①PSS: Primary Social Stakeholder ②SSS: Secondary Social Stakeholder
③PNS: Primary Non-Social Stakeholder ④SNS: Secondary Non-Social Stakeholder

In this model, there are also four main categories of stakeholders for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care: primary social stakeholders (PSS), secondary social stakeholders (SSS), primary non-social stakeholders (PNS) and secondary non-social stakeholders (SNS).

Primary social stakeholders are mainly the government. Willams and Hatton-Yeo (2015) argued that the government, as the main stakeholder of NPOs, directly influences NPOs in offering social elderly care services. It is argued that the government is the funder for NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care activities. The amount, frequency of funding, approval process and formulation and introduction of relevant supporting policies are all dominated by the government, so the government is obviously more important than other stakeholders. Therefore, the government plays the primary major stakeholder role in the participation of NPOs in the community-based elderly care activities (Williams & Hattton-Yeo, 2015). This study also agrees that the government plays an important role in community-based elderly care, with responsibilities for policy formulation, financial support, coordination of resources, supervision and management. The involvement of the government is crucial to the sustainable development of the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care. In addition to the government, neighbourhood committees, street offices, Communist Party of China (CPC) committees and civil affairs bureau organizations are administrative institutions

subordinate to the Chinese government. Therefore, this study classifies these subordinate units as government roles.

Secondary social stakeholders refer to volunteers. Bastoaens et al. (2007) pointed out that volunteers, as the main NPO workers are the right helpers in community-based elderly care activities other than NPO operators and staff and are secondary stakeholders because their service quality directly affects the perception of service receivers. Volunteers play an important supportive role in community-based elderly care. They can provide a variety of voluntary services, including accompanying the elderly providing help with daily living and organising social activities to provide care and support for the senior group.

Primary non-social stakeholders are the elderly group. Davey and Patsios (1999) suggested that seniors, as the service recipients, are the primary non-social stakeholders. It can be seen from practice that the pension group (i.e., the elderly) is basically retired people, disabled people, elderly widows and orphans and others. They have quit or are quitting the construction activities of the society and belong to the vulnerable group or even the marginal group in society. Therefore, the elderly group is the non-social stakeholder in community-based elderly care activities. The elderly are the direct beneficiaries of community-based elderly care, and they are the main service targets of the NPOs involved in the sector. To achieve sustainable development of elderly care services, their needs and rights should be fully considered and safeguarded.

Secondary non-social stakeholders are mainly the public. Berm-Klug et al. (2009) pointed out that since the public's attitudes and perceptions indirectly impact the behaviour of NPOs, they are secondary non-social stakeholders. They do not directly participate in community-based elderly care activities but play an indirect role in promoting or hindering the sustainable participation of NPO in community-based elderly care activities. Therefore, the public (i.e., private enterprises, social media, family members of the elderly) are secondary non-social stakeholders among various roles. The public may not have a direct interest in community-based elderly care, but as a part of the whole society, their support, acceptance and participation in this field is vital. The understanding, support and participation of the public can contribute to the sustainable development of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care.

As can be seen from the above, these four types of stakeholders are interlinked and influence each other in the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. The primary social stakeholder (the government) provides policy support and resource security, the secondary social stakeholder (volunteers) provides practical service support, the primary non-social stakeholder (the elderly group) is the direct service recipient,

and the participation and recognition of the secondary non-social stakeholder (the public) provides social support. Together, they form a mutually complementary and supportive stakeholder network, laying the foundation for the sustainable development of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care.

2.4 Study on practice of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

Regarding the practice of NPOs involved in community-based elderly care, most researchers in China and overseas have focused on various aspects, including the importance of such diverse participation, the current mode of involvement and its limitations. This thesis reviews these studies in the following sections.

2.4.1 Review of Western studies on NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

Western researchers have discussed NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care from various aspects and have developed an extensive and in-depth review of research on the involvement of NPOs in community-based elderly care. The following is a summary of some of the main ideas and research findings.

In terms of its importance, McMullin (2016) and other researchers believe that joint research on multiple participation in community-based elderly care is a way to put empowerment principles into practice. In the field of social work and elderly care, the social influence and conflict demonstrated by different subjects can be a catalyst for providing public services that are more inclusive, fair and responsive. The collaborative governance model formed by multiple participants in community-based elderly care helps promote the interdependence of different organizations in society and improves the quality of life and social well-being of the elderly, thus achieving active aging (Thomas & Blanchard, 2009).

In the policy framework of the World Health Organization, one crucial recommendation to actively respond to population aging is to strengthen social participation, which has been proven to have a remarkable effect on the mortality rate, the incidence rate and the quality of life of senior people. Wuthnow (1993) pointed out that social participation, including but not limited to the participation of senior citizens, also involves voluntary services. Providing community-based elderly care through volunteers can ease the burden on the government and create a better community environment.

Apart from social organizations, elderly individuals are also important participants in community-based elderly care. Williams and Hattton-Yeo (2015) considered that from the perspective of traditional participants in senior community services, the elders were seen as passive recipients of such services. They also pointed out that the government encourages senior citizens to engage in community-based elderly care, a co-production service delivery, through which the elderly's preferences and feedback serve to examine the performance of local governments in Wales, thus better measuring the effectiveness of care services. Moreover, strengthening the elderly's involvement can improve their adaptability during the process, ensuring that they stay positive about the significance of life.

Leahy (2018) considered health and wellness as the primary challenge of population aging. She analysed the participation of social organizations in Ireland from the perspective of disabled elderly care. In Ireland, there is a distinct separation between community-based elderly care and disabled elderly care, both of which are carried out by different social organizations in the way of cooperation and division of labour. In particular, elderly care for the disabled is undertaken by special medical care institutions.

Through interviews with St. Barnabas Senior Services and Queens Care Health Centres in Los Angeles, Han et al. (2015) argued that it is necessary to enhance the relationship between social organizations and communities. Otherwise, the participation of non-profit and other social organizations in community-based elderly care cannot be increased.

Davey and Patsios (1999) suggested that NPOs should cooperate with the government in providing community public services. One of the cooperation models is franchising, where the government does not purchase goods or services for taxpayers and offers franchises or other benefits to attract NPOs to bid for providing elderly care services. For instance, the government can offer pension subsidies. In this approach, NPOs arrange and provide public services, including government-supported public service programs, such as assistance to the elderly and the disabled. Because these services are earnestly needed by the public and "free riding" rarely occurs, they should not be charged, or at least the service fee should be lower than its cost. Therefore, NPOs must seek funding to carry out such public service programs, and in most cases, the government provides subsidies to make up the gap between the cost and the price of services provided by NPOs.

Henderson and Caplan (2008) argued that there is a competition model in which NPOs and the government offer community-based elderly care. The competitors refer to public service providers, i.e., the government, NPOs, and private-owned enterprises. However, the competition model does not represent free competition among subjects but is based on a

contractual model where subjects constrain each other to conduct healthy competition. The model does not exclude the government's prerogative to enforce orders in certain extreme situations.

Young (2000) believed that the functions of NPOs include: a). providing community-based elderly care, meeting the various elderly care demands of seniors, and protecting the vulnerable groups among seniors; b). participating in policy formulation, enabling the elderly to better express their wishes, and accelerating the democratization of civil society; c). broadening financing channels and fostering social capital; and d). increasing employment so that even the younger seniors can deliver their own value.

Furman et al. (2008) pointed out that the solution to community-based elderly care lies in the community. A community is the epitome of society, and we are reshaping our own community through NPOs. Community-based NPOs are not only a mainstay of society, but more than that, they are the most distinctive mainstream of NPOs.

In summary, the review of Western scholars' research on the involvement of NPOs in community-based elderly care highlights key factors such as the participation of multiple subjects, cooperation and collaboration, and the role of NPOs. These research findings provide important theoretical and practical references for understanding and promoting the role of NPOs in community-based elderly care.

2.4.2 Review of Chinese studies on NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

Chinese researchers have conducted various studies on NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. In the early stage, relevant literature research mainly focused on introducing mature experiences and cases of NPOs participating in community-based elderly care in developed countries in Europe and the United States. At the same time, making suggestions for establishing and improving the community-based elderly care system in China, taking into account China's national conditions and actual practices. Later, Chinese researchers began to conduct research in niche areas, mainly focusing on the participation of multi-subjects, home-based elderly care, resource allocation, development models as well as relevant legal concerns.

Peng and Huang (2006) pointed out that participation of multi-subjects is a paradigm of welfare pluralism analysis, which is designed to complete the transformation of the welfare nation into a welfare society through institutional arrangements. In community-based elderly care, the traditional model of overall elderly care responsibility shouldered by the government will be transformed into a model that elderly care services are taken by multi-subjects through

multi-channels, with more participation of families, service suppliers and other informal organizations.

Lei et al. (2013) conducted an in-depth study of Nanjing, a national pilot city for community-based elderly care, and pointed out that although the Nanjing government has been aware of the need to establish as soon as possible a model of participation in community-based elderly care by multi-subjects including the local government, the social suppliers, non-profit organizations and families, it is difficult to promote the development of community-based elderly care with external forces due to the lack of effective integration of existing social funds, technology and information in concrete practice.

By analysing the current situation of NPOs' participation in home-based elderly care, Qi (2011) discussed the role of NPOs in home-based elderly care, the advantages of NPOs' participation, and also elaborated the corresponding suggestions and countermeasures for NPOs to provide home-based elderly care.

D. H. Wang and Zhang (2013) studied the operation model of the Hetong (vigorous seniors) nursing home, the first nursing home run by a private organization in China and a NPO. They found that it is because of adhering to the concept of welfare pluralism and breaking through the traditional model that the government is fully or mainly involved in the provision of elderly care services that the nursing home has won the trust and favour of the local elderly. This provides a useful attempt and exploration for Chinese non-profit organizations to participate in community-based elderly care.

Q. P. Qu (2015) pointed out that only when the rights and responsibilities of each participating body are clarified and the scope of work is divided can good cooperation in the community-based elderly care be achieved. That is to say, according to the different nature and types of services in community-based elderly care, it is necessary to find the matching supply bodies, so that the relevant responsibilities of different bodies can be clarified and a good interaction mechanism can be formed.

L. Chen and Xu (2015) explained the division of labour among the multiple participating subjects in the field of community-based elderly care from the perspective of elderly care resources. They argued that the resources for community-based elderly care exist in the government, social suppliers and families respectively. L. Chen and Xu (2015) further explained that the resources in families for elderly care are inherited from the traditional Chinese way of elderly support, which is categorized as informal elderly care resources. With the change of family structure and social structure, the government is supposed to take up the most basic responsibility of guaranteeing citizens' elderly care. As the government is under

great pressure of dealing with complex social issues and is severely constrained in terms of energy, material and financial resources when delivering elderly care services, social organizations will replace the government in carrying out some of the elderly care responsibilities.

X. L. Li (2016) stated that the main development models for community-based elderly care can be categorized as the "medical and elderly care model", the "internet+ model", the "leisure and wellness care model" and the "real estate-based model" , each of which involves the participation of different social organizations such as NPOs and enterprises to provide related professional services.

Cai (2017) investigated three cases of NPOs participating in community-based elderly care in Nanjing and pinpointed some internal and external obstacles that many social subjects are confronting at the current stage. From an external point of view, social organizations of different natures are under the supervision of different management entities. The elderly care service system in China often involves multiple departments such as the ones of Civil Affairs, Finance and Committee on Aging. Besides, NPOs and enterprises also come under the administration of different regulatory agencies. The overall deployment and coordination of elderly care services lack effective communication and cooperation, which is a big concern. In catering services for community-based elderly care, there are multiple departments sharing regulatory responsibilities, including the Civil Affairs Department, Food and Drug Administration, Administration for Market Regulation and Taxation Administration, but when problems occur, they may try to shift the blame one another. The Civil Affairs Department, as the leading authority in management, is not capable enough of mobilizing and coordinating resources from other departments, causing harm to the interests of social organizations.

Song et al. (2017) classified the NPOs providing home-based elderly care into three types: government-led, corporate-affiliated, and public welfare-led. They selected three typical cases in Nanjing to examine the different operational characteristics of the three types of NPOs and their realistic effects on the provision of home-based elderly care services and proposed improvement strategies for settling the problems of different models.

In terms of the studies on the legal system related to NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, Y. Q. Wan (2018) noted that China's law system for the construction of NPOs is still inadequate, and the legal safeguard is relatively weak. In practice, NPOs are likely to be affected by governmental actions with limited independence and innovation vitality. Particularly in terms of the source of operating funds, NPOs mainly rely on governmental appropriation and donations from civil society to maintain their daily operation, which leads to

excessive government intervention and even irregular and opaque financial spending. In terms of policy, by comparing the development and policy support of Guangming Village and Changqiao Catering Aid Centre, it was found that the participants have all built a cooperative relationship with the government. Only NPOs can enjoy benefits from the government, such as the availability of sites and expense reduction of water and electricity. However, profit-making community-based elderly care organizations are offered no chance to have such preferential treatment. It is precisely those expenses that lie behind their losses. Biased policies have caused unfair competition between participants from NPOs and enterprises in community-based elderly care, which has dampened the engaging enthusiasm of enterprises.

Chinese scholars Lin and Li (2022) proposed that when it comes to encouraging NPOs to deliver elderly care services in communities, on the one hand, the government should reform the community service management system and policies to strengthen the institutional guarantee for NPOs' participation, their market access, and service category, and on the other hand, NPOs should improve their service provision, professional capability, and comprehensive ability so that they can lay a solid foundation for future engagement in community elderly services. Currently, NPOs are in an awkward position when offering community public services, and the government's role in public social services is misplaced, which is related to NPOs' insufficient capability and the government's doubts about the capability of NPOs. The marginalized position of NPOs in the community management system cannot be settled if we make clear the roles of diverse participants and improve NPO's capabilities.

W. Li and Wei (2022) conducted a case study based in Nanjing. To settle the problems faced by Nanjing NPOs in community-based elderly care, they proposed three suggestions based on the current situation in Nanjing: a). to cope with the financial difficulties of NPOs, the government should change its mindset to provide financial support and policy guarantee for NPOs' participation in elderly care services; b.) the government should assist NPOs and organizations related to elderly care service in establishing information communication platforms and providing institutionalized communication mechanisms; and c). the government should take the lead in offering various training programs for senior care service personnel and bettering infrastructure.

C. P. Wu (2018) believed that the development of social organizations' intervention follows the route of "underdeveloped social organizations" to "connection social organizations plus feeder social organizations" to "connection-feeder social organizations". She suggested that at the early stage of development, social organizations are weak, and their management system is not mature nor standardized, so they are underdeveloped social organizations. At this stage, the

government should help social organizations by providing policy and financial support. As they grow mature, feeder social organizations emerge. Feeder social organizations provide in-home services, while connection social organizations offer outdoor services. The connection-feeder social organizations have the advantages of the two types of social organizations, providing in-home services, including medical care and spiritual comfort, and promoting the development of home-based elderly care with healthcare. Being in the mature stage, social organizations are in the form of connection-feeder when the supply of elderly care resources and resource connections are both in good development. At this stage, the participation of social organizations in community home care services should focus on the equalization of home care service supply so that urban and rural elderly can enjoy homogeneous home care services.

T. T. Ju and Meng (2021) summarized the three problems faced by NPOs in home-based elderly care in China: a). the cooperative relationship between the government and NPOs has not been fully established, and the government does not provide enough financial and policy support to NPOs; b). in the primary stage, NPOs are weak in capabilities and autonomy; c). there is a serious lack of social welfare and volunteer spirit, and there is a lack of reasonable and effective management supervision for NPOs. To settle the three problems, they proposed some solutions. They believed that to improve the participation of NPOs in China's home-based care services, and people should clarify the positioning of the government and social organizations in community-based home-based care services. The two are a cooperative relationship rather than an affiliation relationship, and there should be a clear division of labour and complement each other. The government should provide financial and institutional support for NPOs to participate in-home care services and overcome the financial bottleneck and institutional obstacles to the development of NPOs. In addition, the government can transfer some of its functions and powers to NPOs to expand their space for action. NPOs cannot pin all their hopes on government support. They should effectively change their dependence on the government, improve their management capabilities, strengthen the construction of a professional team of community home care services, and continuously improve the quality of community home care services.

These research areas cover a wide range of aspects of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care. Chinese scholars have made important contributions in these fields of research by exploring the development models of community-based care appropriate to China's conditions through comparative analysis of domestic and international cases and experiences, not only continuously promoting the development of related research，but also

promoting the quality and sustainable development of community-based elderly care services to improve the well-being and quality of life of the elderly.

2.4.3 NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

As a livelihood project, elderly care requires not only the participation of the government but also of enterprises, NPOs, communities, and families. This collective engagement allows for the utilization of diverse social resources and distributes the responsibility of elderly care across the society. It serves as a means to supplement the limited elderly care services provided by the government. The experience of developed Western countries highlights the increasing importance of the participation of NPOs in this sector and also indicates that the joint participation of NPOs in delivering community-based elderly care will be a prominent trend in the future. The experience of NPOs in developed countries in offering community-based elderly care can be summarized as follows: a) the formulation of comprehensive laws and regulations; b) active promotion and development support of NPOs by the government; c) substantial financial support provided by the government to NPOs.

Practical research and academic studies on the involvement of NPOs in community-based elderly care services in Western countries are relatively early and are more developed and detailed than those in China. This is mainly because Western countries faced the challenges of an aging society earlier than China and began to focus on and study the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care at an earlier stage. However, while it is important to study and learn from foreign experiences, there is still a need to take into account China's specific political and economic foundations and cultural context when applying these experiences to the Chinese context. As a developing country, China faces a different social, economic and institutional environment to that of the West, and so we need to learn from their experiences while making appropriate adaptations and innovations to suit China's national context and actual needs so that we can take fewer detours.

Many Chinese researchers have conducted many studies on NPOs' participation in elderly care, accumulating rich information and putting forward many valuable opinions and policy proposals. Most Chinese studies are about the necessity, feasibility, and current situation of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. Most of them explore related theories, but do not consider the actual practices. Thus, China's theoretical studies on NPOs lag behind the development of NPOs, and this is mainly due to the late establishment of NPOs in China. In addition, Chinese researchers overemphasize the role of government without paying sufficient attention to the functions of NPOs. Relevant practical studies have been piloted in

some developed cities, but they have not been widely promoted in China. In addition, there are relatively few studies in China related to the sustainable development of the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care. Chinese scholars should expand the scope of their research, enrich its content and explore in depth various aspects of the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care services, including organisational management, service models and sustainable development. In addition, attention should be paid to the huge role of NPOs in community-based elderly care services, and the promotion of relevant practices on a national scale.

In promoting the sustainable development of participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care, the Stakeholder Theory can help analyse and resolve the conflict of interests and cooperation among various stakeholders, forming a multi-party synergy to promote the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. Through cooperation with the government, volunteers and the public, complementary advantages can be achieved to provide more stable and sustainable support for the development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care services.

In conclusion, the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care is a complex and important issue that requires the joint efforts of the government as well as other stakeholders. By strengthening practical exploration and drawing on overseas experience, it is possible to promote the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care services and provide more effective and sustainable support for the needs of the aging population.

2.5 Sustainable developments and NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

As stated previously, sustainable development in this study refers to the "survival" and "long-term continuity". Thus, when sustainable development of community-based elderly care is discussed, it mainly focuses on the continuous operation of the elderly care programs and services provided by NPOs in community.

As for the sustainable development of community-based elderly care, many scholars have discussed this issue in their research.

Weerawardena et al. (2010) argued that any attempt to undertake a deeper investigation into the issue of sustainability in NPOs must address the unique operative characteristics of NPOs that differentiate them from their for-profit counterparts.

In their research on community-based supports and services for older adults, Siegler et al. (2015) emphasized that the funding of community organizations is often precarious, and the survival of a network of community-based supports and services relies on a combination of support from national, state, and local governments, as well as private contributions, business support, and other philanthropic sources. Consequently, the sustainable development of a nonprofit organization's involvement in providing community-based elderly care services is significantly hindered by limited financial resources.

Lv et al. (2013) believed that promoting the sustainable development of community-based elderly care models relies on clarifying responsibility, improving institutional design, integrating community resources, increasing publicity efforts, and establishing standardized models.

In a comprehensive analysis of the operational mode of community-based elderly care, Qian (2016) proposed a series of strategies and suggestions targeting the sustainable development of community-based elderly care, encompassing the interpretation of relevant laws and policies, fostering professionalization, and harnessing the potential of digitalization.

Furthermore, Ban and Ding (2023) pointed out that the sustainable development capacity of community-based elderly care services in China is still lacking, specifically including inefficient operation of elderly care services, a significant shortage of professional practitioners with instability and lack of expertise, excessive reliance on government subsidies without self-sustaining capability, and unclear responsibility allocation when the rights of service recipients are violated. They proposed the need for improvements in service system rules, funding mobilization, talent development, and risk prevention to promote the sustainable development of community-based elderly care services.

In conclusion, the sustainable development of community-based elderly care is a complex issue that requires attention to various factors. Scholars have highlighted the importance of financial resources, institutional design, integration of community resources, and standardized models in promoting sustainable development. Moreover, the unique operative characteristics of nonprofit organizations play a significant role in shaping their ability to provide sustainable community-based elderly care services.

2.6 Summary

This chapter serves as the theoretical framework for the present study. It begins by providing definitions for key concepts utilized throughout the research. By establishing a solid theoretical

foundation, this chapter aims to enhance our understanding of the complexities and dynamics inherent in stakeholder relationships within the context of community-based elderly care.

To commence, a clear and precise definition of core concepts used in this study is presented. These concepts include NPOs, communities, and community-based elderly care. Defining these terms ensures a common understanding and facilitates effective communication throughout the research.

Following the conceptual clarification, an extensive literature review on stakeholder theory is conducted. This review encompasses the origin and evolution of stakeholder theory in both Western countries and China. By exploring the historical development of stakeholder theory, we can grasp the underpinnings and conceptual evolution that have shaped its current form. Understanding these theoretical roots is crucial for comprehending its applicability and relevance to the study of NPOs and community-based elderly care.

Building upon the knowledge gleaned from previous studies, this chapter further develops stakeholder clarification criteria specific to NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. These criteria are established based on the insights and perspectives put forth by Chinese and foreign experts. The identified stakeholders include the government, volunteers, the elderly groups, and the public. Recognizing these stakeholders and their respective roles is vital for comprehending the multifaceted nature of community-based elderly care and the various actors involved.

Furthermore, this chapter conducts an extensive review of both domestic and foreign literature concerning NPOs' participation in community elderly care from diverse angles. These include exploring the importance of multi-subject participation, examining different participation models, and highlighting their associated limitations.

Overall, the literature reviews presented in this chapter provide a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical landscape surrounding NPOs and their involvement in community-based elderly care. The insights gained from this theoretical framework will serve as a guide for the research and analysis to be carried out in the forthcoming chapters of this study.

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Chapter 3: Research Method

This chapter outlines the rationale for the research design and methodology used in this study. First, this chapter introduces the research route and then explains the interview-based research method, including the design of interview outline, the steps of conducting the interview and the tools adopted. In addition, this chapter also elaborates the basic situation of the research objects and puts forward the research objectives and research problems. Next, the chapter presents the results of the analysis of the interviews.

3.1 Research route

The research route of this thesis is as Figure 3.1 shows as follows:

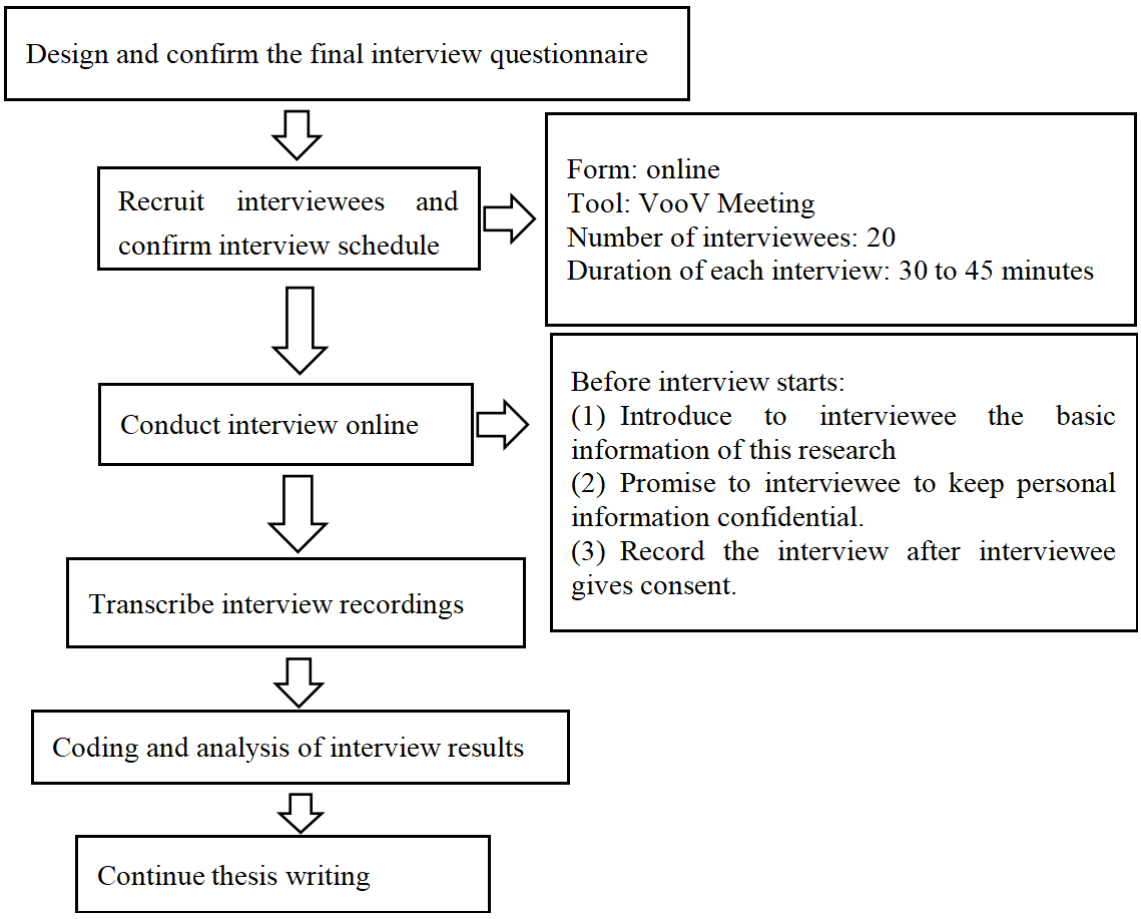

Figure 3.1 The research route of this study

3.2 Research methods

This section presents the research methodologies employed, specifically focusing on the utilization of interviews as a means of data collection. The methods encompass questionnaire design and delineate the research procedures employed throughout the study.

3.2.1 Interview

The interview method is a research approach that involves engagement in conversation with interviewees, either in person, over the telephone or via online platforms, in order to understand the situation through the information gained from the interviewer's conversation with the interviewees. The primary objective of this method is to extract valuable insights from the interactions between the interviewer and the interviewees. Typically, this method employs point-to-point individual surveys to enable in-depth understanding and discussion of a specific topic or phenomena. Through interviews, researchers can efficiently acquire a substantial amount of detailed information within a concise time duration and effectively fulfilling the research requirements.

Based on our research objectives and themes highlighted in the literature review, we adopted a cross-sectional study on semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data. Malterud et al. (2016) argued that interviews can facilitate the exploration of perspectives, beliefs, and experiences on specific topics. As a major method for qualitative research, semi-structured interviews contain predetermined questions that can help researchers to capture the desired information. In addition, they offer guidance to the interviewers and interviewees about what to pursue and provide room for elaboration (Stuckey, 2013).

In this way, researchers can uncover opinions that have not emerged in previous surveys but are relevant to the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In-depth semi-structured interviews can increase data validity as the interviewers can explore interviewees' understandings and ask for clarification. However, to ensure research validity, it can be difficult to conduct semi-structured interviews because it requires the interviewers to maintain a balance between the research objectives and the unexpected comments/experiences from the interviewees.

The semi-structured interviews of this study were scheduled online and had a duration ranging from 30 to 45 minutes for each interview. A major advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that the questions can vary with the different tasks of participants working in the

community-based elderly care business run by non-profit organizations. Moreover, this approach enables the collection of detailed information regarding the respondents' perspectives.

Complementary questions of the questionnaire, including asking respondents the reasons behind their answers, discussing the participants' personal experiences and opinions. Influencing factors related to these situations may not be covered in the questionnaire, and the questionnaire needs to be adjusted in real time.

3.2.2 Design of the interview outline

The purpose of designing the interview outline is to allow the interviewer clearly to understand the interview needs and enable the interviewees to better understand the content of the interview, thus carrying out an effective conversation in a short time. It is very important to design a reasonable interview outline around the research topic.

The interview outline is designed to discover the influence of various stakeholders on the sustainable development of Chinese NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. Based on the theme of "current status, challenges, reasons and countermeasures", the interview outline consists of the following five modules.

The first module includes some ice-breaking questions, whose purpose is to warm up and eliminate the tension of the interviewees. For example, "In general, how are the specific situations of NPOs in community-based elderly care?" This is followed by the main questions of the four themes of "current situation, challenges, reasons and countermeasures", and a series of sub-questions are set up under each main question to further discuss with the interviewees.

For example, the first main question is about the current situation of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. Due to space limitations, the subdivision questions cannot be presented in the text. One example is "Are there obvious difficulties for NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care (e.g., source of funds)?"

The second main question is about the challenges of non-profit organizations' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care. Some of its subdivision questions are as follows: "When NPOs participate in community-based elderly care, how do the NPOs themselves influence sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?"

The third main question three is about the reasons for the challenges of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care. Its subdivision questions include: "In terms of NPOs themselves, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?"

The fourth main question is about the countermeasures or suggestions on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. Its subdivision questions include: "How can NPOs themselves achieve the sustainable development of their participation in community-based elderly care?"

Please refer to Annex A for the specific interview outline.

3.2.3 Interview procedures

The sampling method adopted in this study is snowballing. Although snowball sampling has been criticized for its selection bias and lack of external validity or generalizability, it is flexible and convenient when researchers approach geographically dispersed participants in small samples (Parker et al., 2019), especially during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Therefore, it is a more credible and effective method to recruit participants.

This study used a sampling survey because the general research objective was to determine the impacts of different stakeholders on NPOs' involvement in the sustainable development of home and community-based elderly care and to explore the mechanisms and issues that influence the sustainability of the elderly care model. The number of available field research methods was limited, given the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 in China. Therefore, we conducted a qualitative study through in-depth online interviews to examine the reasons why each stakeholder influences NPOs' participation in the sustainable development of the elderly care model and to understand the participants' opinions on what influences NPOs' participation in the sustainable development of the elderly care model. The interview steps are as follows:

(1) Obtain approval from the supervisors and identifying the interview outline.

(2) Recruiting volunteers, setting an interview date and time, creating an interview checklist based on the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research published by Tong et al. (2007), and signing informed consent forms with volunteers.

(3) Conducting online interviews on VooV Meeting (a Chinese online meeting software developed by Tencent). Communicating with the interviewees to understand their feelings about the communication environment. As long as they feel quiet, comfortable, and private, the environment is considered suitable for communication. Each interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted primarily in Chinese.

(4) Coding and data analysis were conducted through relevant tools such as MAXQDA.2020.

(5) Briefing the participants on the interview results and thanking the interviewees for their engagement and dedication.

(6) Conducting a retrospective analysis of the entire interview process to fully reflect on the qualification, relationship, content, and selection of the interview to further improve the interview's effectiveness.

3.2.4 Ethical issues and contingency plans

Prior to conducting interviews, participants were briefed on basic information about the study and promised privacy throughout the study. Interviewees were informed that they could withdraw at any time during the interview if they felt offended or uncomfortable exploring the topic.

The interviews were recorded using VooV Meeting with the permission of the interviewees, as face-to-face interviews were not feasible during the COVID-19 period. Interviewees had the right to stop the interview anytime and anywhere. Interviewees were free to express their views during the interview, as their personal information was anonymous, and discussions remained confidential to all participants. In addition, pseudonyms were used when discussing the experiences and thoughts of the interviewees.

However, moral hazard still existed during the interview process. In order to reveal the influence of various stakeholders on Chinese NPOs' participation in the sustainable development of community aged care, interviewees were asked to describe their personal experiences and encouraged to express their understandings. Therefore, it was inevitable to present negative discourse in the interview. Even though their educational background and personal information were kept private, interviewees might worry that overly detailed information may reveal their identities. As a result, some interviewees were reluctant to talk too much about their personal experiences or express negative remarks. In this study, creating an absolutely safe environment for communication is an ethical issue.

This study was conducted according to the norms of the university's ethics committee, reviews, and favourable opinions. In addition, the participants (i.e., interviewers and interviewees) were on an equal footing. The interviewees were not treated as "subjects" or "functions" (Rescher, 2021).

The interviewees' willingness was fully respected, and the interview would only begin after the interviewer received consent from the interviewees.

Online interviews might generate stressful or sensitive feelings/memories due to the participant's home environment (e.g., family conflicts, couple relationships), and employment status. If participants suffered from such tensions during the interview and continuing the

interview would make them uncomfortable, they were free to skip these questions or end the interview.

Due to tight time limits, researchers might endure emotional distress during the study. In such cases, we would seek advice from the university's supervisor, private tutors, or counselling institutions to minimize negative effects. In addition, interviews would be conducted on VooV Meeting, a secure platform for unfamiliar participants to log in/out, and it can protect and record data.

3.2.5 Feasibility analysis of the research

The research of this thesis is based on a comprehensive literature review and is conducted under the guidance of supervisors who are experts in the stakeholder theory research. In literature review stage, the university library and its online literature databases serve as valuable resources for identifying relevant literature and reliable existing research. Throughout the whole research process, frequent communication is maintained with the supervisors to ensure guidance and support.

Regarding the recruitment of the respondents for the interviews with managers of NPOs involved in community-based elderly care and directors of community-based elderly care programs, since there are many NPOs already involved in the sector, am ample pool of respondents are ensured and that guarantees the rationality of the research.

Conducting interviews with respondents located across China is facilitated by the convenience of using laptops and online meeting software (e.g., VooV Meeting). Prior consent if obtained from the interviewees and the interviews are recorded for reference. Furthermore, conducting interviews online allows interviewees to remain in their familiar environments, which contributes to the smooth progression of the interviews.

Considering the available support, risk assessment and our background in this field, the research is deemed feasible and can be carried out successfully.

3.3 Research subjects

In accordance with the principles of the stakeholder theory, this research focuses on examining the influence of NPOs on the sustainable development of their participation in community-based elderly care. To accomplish this, we conducted the study by engaging with managers of NPOs actively involved in the practice of home and community-based elderly care, as well as directors of community-based elderly care programs. The objective was to explore and analyse

the specific influence of NPOs in this domain, taking into consideration the various stakeholders involved.

In terms of sample size, Malterud et al. (2016) argued that in interviews with sufficient information, the quality depends on research objectives, sample specificity, theories adopted, communication quality, and analysis strategies. Empirical studies have demonstrated that a sample size of 20 or smaller is sufficient to reveal approximately one-third of the common issues encountered during interviews (Blair & Conrad, 2011). Considering the objectives of our study, the chosen analysis strategies, and the occupational background of the participants, we recruited a sample size of 20 individuals.

Because the interview questions were derived/designed according to theory and research objectives proposed by Johnson et al. (2000), Bujanover et al. (2010) and Steinerman et al. (2013), to ensure the validity of our interview questions, two participants were invited to attend a pilot interview before the formal interviews. The pilot interviews were aimed to assess the suitability and effectiveness of the interview questions. Ultimately, a total of 20 respondents attended the interview, encompassing out chosen sample size.

This part presents a comprehensive summary of the information of the 20 interviewees from the aspects of gender, age, position, years of experience in community-based elderly care services and their respective geographic locations, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Information of the interviewees

No.	Gender	Age	Position	Working years	Location
P1	Male	48	NPO manager	10	Wenzhou, Zhejiang
P2	Female	38	Program director	8	Guangzhou, Guangdong
P3	Male	50	NPO manager	9	Wenzhou, Zhejiang
P4	Male	33	NPO manager	8	Chengdu, Sichuan
P5	Male	32	Program director	3	Guangzhou, Guangdong
P6	Female	34	Program director	10	Guangzhou, Guangdong
P7	Male	37	Program director	5	Chengdu, Sichuan
P8	Female	38	Program director	6	Guangzhou, Guangdong
P9	Female	24	Program director	2	Guangzhou, Guangdong
P10	Male	43	Program director	5	Chengdu, Sichuan
P11	Male	36	Program director	6	Chengdu, Sichuan
P12	Female	42	NPO manager	7	Shenzhen, Guangdong
P13	Female	33	Program director	3	Guangzhou, Guangdong
P14	Male	30	Program director	2	Guangzhou, Guangdong
P15	Male	32	Program director	4	Guangzhou, Guangdong
P16	Male	40	Program director	5	Chengdu, Sichuan
P17	Male	37	Program director	5	Beijing
P18	Female	30	Program director	6	Chengdu, Sichuan
P19	Male	36	Program director	5	Chengdu, Sichuan
P20	Male	28	Program director	4	Chengdu, Sichuan

In terms of the gender, the study comprised of 13 male participants and 7 female participants, accounting for 65% and 35% respectively of the total sample size. In order to

mitigate gender bias, a more balanced gender ratio would be better. However, it is worth noticing that the gender distribution among the interviewers in this study is slightly skewed, with a larger representation of male interviewees.

In terms of age distribution, 65% of the interviewees in this study fall within the age range of 30-39 years old. In addition, 20% of the participants are between 40-49 years old. Two individuals are under the age of 30, accounting for 10% of the sample size. Furthermore, one interviewee is over the age of 50, accounting for 5% of the total sample.

The interviewees in this study, seen from Table 3.1, have been engaged in community-based elderly care business for a relatively long period of time, with a minimum of two years and a maximum of ten years of working experience. Specifically, among the participants, there are two individuals who have been engaged in community-based elderly care business for two, three, four and eight years. Additionally, there are five interviewees with five years of experience, six with six years of experience and one with seven, nine, and ten years of working experience each.

In terms of locations, the interviewees in this study are mainly from Beijing, Guangdong, Sichuan and Zhejiang provinces, encompassing cities of various tiers in China. Specifically, at the municipal level, one interviewee is from Beijing, eight are from Guangzhou, one from Shenzhen, eight from Chengdu and two from Wenzhou.

3.4 Research schedule

The research schedule for the interview-base study is outlined in the following parts, starting the proposal of the interview questionnaire in September 2022 to submitting the final version of the thesis in June 2023.

From September 1, 2022, to October 10, 2022, the main tasks were to make a proposal of the interview questionnaire and receive feedback from the supervisors on the proposal. Then time was taken to make necessary adjustments to the interview questionnaire.

From October 11, 2022, to October 15, 2022, we mainly focused on training in research methods, including attending workshops and acquiring knowledge and skills as well as seeking confirmation from the supervisors regarding the feasibility of the study.

From October 16, 2022, to November 16, 2022, it was the implementation period of the interview-based research, including recruiting the managers of NPOs or directors of community-based elderly care programs as interviewees, scheduling time for each interview, conducting interviews through online platform of VooV Meeting and maintaining recordings,

transcribing the interview recordings and coding the interview outcomes for analysis purposes. Time duration for the interviews ranged from 30 to 45 minutes.

From November 16, 2022, to January 10, 2023, the main tasks were analysing the interview outcomes utilizing relevant tools such as MAXQDA 2020 and starting the writing of the initial version of the thesis.

From January 11 to May 31, 2023, we kept writing and revising the thesis according to the research findings. As well, regular discussions about the progress of the writing were kept with the supervisor.

In June 2023, we submitted the final version of the thesis.

3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used research method that aims to identify and analyse recurring themes or patterns with qualitative data pertaining to a specific research topic. It is recognized as a prominent approach in analysing qualitative data, particularly in social science research focused on exploring the experiences of individuals or groups. Thematic analysis is valued for its scientifically robust method for examining relevant research areas (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Therefore, the thematic analysis method is commonly used in qualitative research and is a very systematic method that can be applied to analysing interview reports and can provide recommendations for related professions. However, it is important to acknowledge that thematic analysis may not be able to retain a sense of continuity and contradiction through any one individual account (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nonetheless, the systematic nature of thematic analysis makes it a helpful tool for qualitative research, enabling researchers to uncover meaningful patterns and understand the complexities within the data collected through interviews.

The interviews were transcribed into qualitative data and subjected to thematic analysis in order to interpret the discourse of the interviewees. This method facilitated the exploration and understanding of the influence of various stakeholders on the sustainable development of the participation of Chinese NPOs in community-based elderly care. Before conducting the interviews, the question categories like influencing factors, influencing mechanisms, and degree of influence, through questionnaires and literature review. However, during the data collection process, additional influencing factors were revealed by the respondents. To ensure the readability and comprehension of the data, we organized and regrouped them into new categories.

The interviews in this study were conducted in Chinese, the first language of the interviewees. Communicating in their first language helps ensure clear understanding of the questions, minimizing concerns about incorrect or misunderstood expressions. However, it is important to note that when translating the responses of the interviewees from Chinese into English, there may be some degree of ambiguity introduced. Efforts were made to mitigate this challenge and maintain the accuracy of the translated version, even though some inherent limitations in translation may persist.

The analysis of this qualitative interview data was conducted using MAXQDA 2020 software. This research is based on interviews with NPO managers and directors of elderly care programs from multiple NPOs that operated community-based elderly care services. The approach was guided by a "Grounded Theory" paradigm, following a data-driven process. The focus was on labelling data to the interviewees as the core, employing an inductive analytical logic to distil concepts and construct relationships between concepts. This methodology aligned with Gioia's "grounded" paradigm.

In this research, an open-coding technique was utilized. Open coding involves extracting key terms from interview transcripts to form first order concepts, followed by categorization of concepts that share common characteristics into the secondary order themes. This process involves progressively condensing a substantial amount of data records based on principles, using concepts and themes to accurately reflect the content of the data. It involves breaking down, reassembling, and amalgamating both data records and abstracted concepts. The objective of open coding is to identify phenomena, define concepts, and discover categories, ultimately uncovering the underlying operational logic behind the issues. The procedural steps in open coding encompass conceptualization, category mining, category naming, and exploring the nature and dimensions of categories. The delineation of category attributes and dimensions is aimed at ensuring a scientifically precise refinement of concepts into categories.

Open coding was conducted by importing all interview data into MAXQDA software. After deconstruction, there were a total of 400 original paragraphs. These original paragraphs were organized, analysed, and interpreted. They were then sequentially labelled based on the information contained in the original paragraphs, with an effort to preserve the original meaning as much as possible. For example, in the response from P8 in Question 1: "*Our organization is currently a non-profit organization, and we are involved in elderly care services, including some community-based home care and home visit services. In fact, according to the requirements in the current elderly care service policies, it is divided into ten categories, including daily care, home medical care, rehabilitation, meal assistance, as well as various*

aspects of spiritual comfort and cultural entertainment." This response was labelled to extract the main information, resulting in the first order codes such as "providing meal services," "entertainment services," and "collaborating with medical institutions to provide healthcare services to the elderly." These three labels are independent of each other and collectively capture most of the original text's meaning.

In total, there were 1,043 instances of primary coding across all interview data, resulting in 410 primary codes, as detailed in Table 3.2. Subsequently, based on these primary codes under each question, further analysis and discussion were conducted to explore the sustainable development status and challenges faced by NPOs in community-based elderly care in China.

Table 3.2 Opening coding for the qualitative interview scripts

Original paragraphs	Labels
Question 1: In general, how are the specific situations of NPOs in community-based elderly care?	
1. *Our organization is currently a non-profit organization, and we are involved in elderly care services, including some community-based home care and home visit services. In fact, according to the requirements in the current elderly care service policies, it is divided into ten categories, including daily care, home medical care, rehabilitation, meal assistance, as well as various aspects of spiritual comfort and cultural entertainment.* (P8) *2. We were initially a voluntary charity organization, and our operations began in 2006. I joined the organization around 2015. As for our projects gradually transitioning into elderly care services, the planning started around 2016-2017, and we began implementing them in 2018. Normally, we transition certain charitable projects into elderly care services. We collaborate with welfare institutions, communities, elderly individuals without support, disabled elderly individuals, and those without children. We engage in activities such as gifting items, donating goods, and participating in holiday events. We also regularly visit and provide emotional support to the elderly.* *Starting from 2018, we initiated elderly care efforts within neighborhoods and communities, primarily targeting older, dilapidated residential areas. Our approach to elderly care is tailored to specific needs. For families with better financial conditions or adult children to support them, community-based elderly care services might not be as necessary. However, for vulnerable elderly individuals, such as those without children, or those living in poverty, we offer assistance to the best of our abilities. We help with everything from minor renovations like plumbing and electrical work to providing essential household items. We also offer psychological counseling, as some of our volunteers are psychologists or teachers. We organize regular activities to show our care and support for the elderly on a psychological level. Some elderly individuals may have spent their lives pursuing material possessions or living modestly. In their later years, they might experience a sense of emotional*	aa1 Providing meal services aa2 Offering entertainment services aa3 Collaborating with medical institutions to provide healthcare aa4 Operating a public service center aa5 Engaging in community-based charitable projects aa6 Offering elderly care services for vulnerable elderly individuals aa7 Providing assistance with daily life aa8 Offering psychological and emotional counseling

Original paragraphs	Labels
comfort and emptiness, which is where our emotional support comes in. We collaborate with the community to gather information about these elderly individuals and provide corresponding services. (P4) … Question 2：Do you think it is feasible for NPOs to fully participate in community-based elderly care? *1. In terms of elderly care, it can be broadly divided into three categories: home-based elderly care, community-based elderly care, and institutional elderly care. These aspects are considered significant, and the government at the national and social levels has a comprehensive arrangement for them. As non-profit organizations, we primarily serve as a supplement in this context. Most non-profit organizations, I believe, are currently starting at a small scale, from a micro perspective, because the broader landscape is beyond our control. It operates under the overarching framework set by the government and serves as a supplementary entity. Therefore, I think non-profit organizations first need to find their role and positioning. It's similar to the early stages of China's reform and opening up when no one had prior experience. Initially, it allowed a portion of the population to prosper, and the development of private enterprises and private businesses was somewhat unregulated. However, as the concept of socialist market economy was introduced, the country had to follow the socialist path, which meant the state advancing while the private sector retreated. In the current context of elderly care, the dominant force in the market is still government participation. Non-profit organizations are in a similar situation. Initially, due to the severity of the elderly care issue, the country was suddenly overwhelmed, and it had to mobilize the entire society, including non-profit organizations like us. In other words, we are all in the process of trying to adapt to the current situation.* (P3) *2. During the process, there are a few challenges we encounter. Firstly, there's the issue of space. Our current facility is not particularly large, and it can't accommodate all the elderly people in need of our services at once. We serve around 600 elderly individuals annually, and if too many come at the same time, it becomes challenging to provide timely care due to space constraints. That's one of the issues. Another challenge is related to funding. As a non-profit organization, we primarily rely on donations. At most, we charge a small lunch fee, typically around 3 yuan per person. Essentially, we are not profit-driven. We do receive some subsidies from the government, and there are also kind-hearted individuals in society who make donations. Additionally, some businesses cooperate with us and provide financial support. However, despite these efforts, our expenses often exceed our income, which remains a significant challenge.* *The involvement of non-profit organizations in community elderly care is certainly feasible and encouraged by society. After all, elderly individuals often have limited sources of income, primarily relying on their retirement pensions. In some cases, families with better financial situations also donate funds to us, which is heartwarming.*	aa9 as a complement to professional elderly care institutions aa10 Limited capacity of non-profit organizations to address elderly care issues aa11 the importance of identifying the role and positioning of organizations aa12 High demand for elderly care services aa13 the industry in the exploratory development stage aa14 Lack of suitable facilities or space aa15 Certain pressures on operating funds aa16 Challenges in fundraising efforts aa17 Limited financial capacity of elderly individuals aa18 Easing the burden of elderly care on families

Original paragraphs	Labels
The participation of non-profit organizations undoubtedly brings benefits to society. It plays a role in promoting the well-being of the elderly during the day, both in terms of their daily lives and emotional well-being. It's like taking care of things at home while the family members are away for various reasons. This contributes to social stability. (P20) … Question 3: Are there obvious difficulties for NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care? 1. *There are several aspects to consider. Firstly, as I mentioned earlier, our resources are not particularly abundant. In terms of funding, the government provides some subsidies, but they are relatively limited. Most of our funding comes from self-raised funds and various channels of social donations. However, both self-raised funds and donations have their limitations. When it comes to personnel, some of our team members are volunteers who do not receive salaries. In terms of time and energy allocation, there are times when we feel stretched.* *Another challenge is related to the different types of elderly individuals we serve in the Pidu District. We have retired cadres, elderly individuals who have lost their only child, and those with health issues who don't have family support. Their actual needs often differ significantly from the services we provide, creating a noticeable gap.* (P11) 2. *In the initial stages, there are several challenges we face. Firstly, it's crucial to establish credibility and trust, as we interact with multiple departments, including the Civil Affairs Department, the Department of Culture, and the Department of Health. Building trust with these departments is essential. Additionally, ensuring the safety of the elderly individuals we serve is a concern, as there are inherent risks involved.* *Another challenge is mobilizing resources, particularly in terms of volunteer recruitment and manpower. We need to put in effort in this regard. Financial sustainability is also a consideration for long-term development. Furthermore, since there aren't many established precedents in this field, we need to explore and experiment with different models. So, during this process, we are simultaneously providing services while exploring ways to make it more sustainable and successful.* (P2) … Question 4: Does the government provide enough support? 1. *In terms of guidance, yes, we do have some support. We have a standardized system for elderly care, which is documented in a handbook. Our work is guided by this system, and we follow its principles and procedures.* *Additionally, government departments provide us with support. As I mentioned earlier, they provide us with funding and lists of personnel. The government also assists us with publicity efforts. Street-level authorities have their own public accounts and media platforms, and they help promote our services. After we provide services, they help us with publicity, which increases our visibility among residents and lets more people know about our facility.*	aa19 Insufficient operational funds aa20 Inadequate manpower aa21 Difficulty in meeting the needs of some elderly individuals aa22 Low trust levels among the public aa23 Challenges in communication and collaboration with government departments aa24 Lack of professional technical personnel aa25 the need to explore a sustainable operational model for health

Original paragraphs	Labels
Furthermore, the government helps us connect with resources. For example, the Civil Affairs Department has various services for the elderly. They collaborate with our facility to provide services to the elderly. This collaboration includes linking us with teachers, experts, and providing items and gifts such as toothpaste and shower gel for distribution. (P9) 2. The government provides various forms of support, including financial assistance and resources. They also facilitate connections between non-profit organizations and businesses or organizations in the community. Additionally, government members, such as the Communist Party members, may volunteer in these organizations, further supporting their efforts. (P5) …	
Question 5: What is the situation after volunteers' participation?	
1. *Volunteers play a crucial role in our organization, and most of our services are provided by them. We have a mix of long-term and short-term volunteers. Some volunteers have been with us for a long time and are dedicated to our cause, while others may join for a short period to gain some experience or for various personal reasons. We welcome all volunteers, but it's important to note that the quality and commitment of volunteers can vary. Sometimes, we face challenges in maintaining a stable volunteer base, and there are times when we experience a shortage of manpower.* (P11) 2. *We have actively engaged volunteers in our community elderly care services. Our volunteer force is divided into two main categories: local community volunteers and external volunteers. Local community volunteers primarily consist of women and children within our village, including stay-at-home mothers and children. We mobilize their efforts and involve them in various aspects of community elderly care.* *On the other hand, external volunteers typically come from outside our community and often bring valuable expertise and resources. They are instrumental in providing training and education to our elderly residents. This includes practical skills training and expanding their knowledge on various topics, such as using smartphones effectively, among other things.* (P14) …	aa32 Volunteers provide human resources, material support, and financial assistance aa33 Volunteers cannot be expected to fulfill excessive demands aa34 Volunteers may not guarantee service stability and quality aa35 Volunteers alleviate the shortage of manpower aa36 Encouraging the addition of more professional services
Question 6: Are the elderly people satisfied with NPO's participation and willing to take the services?	
1. *They actually accept it. The prerequisite is that your service needs to be clearly communicated to the elderly, whether it's free for public welfare or offered at a very low cost, they are generally accepting of it. Furthermore, during our service process, most elderly individuals appreciate it and are willing to continue receiving it. As for the factors influencing whether they continue or not, there are two: first, their own financial situation, and second, whether the organization can provide the services they need or if they are willing to pay for those services.* (P6)	aa37 Mostly satisfied aa38 Depends on whether the fees are acceptable aa39 Depends on whether their needs are met aa40 Building understanding and mutual trust with the organization is important

Original paragraphs	Labels
2. *Some are satisfied, while others are not. It varies among individuals. For example, some people are easy to get along with, have a generally friendly and amiable personality, and they will express gratitude for the help you provide, even if it's not always explicitly stated but can be felt. On the other hand, some elderly individuals may feel that the assistance provided is insufficient or are not entirely satisfied. They may have concerns and suspicions, thinking along the lines of "there's no such thing as a free lunch" or questioning your motives, wondering if you have ulterior motives or if you're some kind of scammer. Initially, when people first come into contact with each other, especially when dealing with elderly individuals who may not be in the best physical or mental health and may not have much social interaction in their daily lives, communication can be challenging.* (P11)	aa41 Some hold a skeptical attitude towards the organization aa42 Some elderly individuals have difficulty with communication and cooperation
…	…
440 original paragraphs in total	410 labels in total

The technical roadmap of this study primarily follows the research process of Grounded Theory, with references to Chen et al. (2008) and the operational process for cross-sectional theory construction proposed by Wang and Gao (2010). The technical roadmap of data analysis for this study is divided into eight steps:

Step 1: Phenomenon definition: this involves observing reality or reviewing relevant materials, contemplating and focusing on the relevant phenomena, and ultimately defining the scope of the study.

Step 2: Literature review: this step includes reviewing, analyzing, and studying literature related to the phenomenon, aiming to elevate the phenomenon to the theoretical level, examining the research value behind the phenomenon, and determining the research questions.

Step 3: Initial sampling and theoretical sampling: Grounded Theory research utilizes a cyclic research process of "data collection - theory development - further data collection - theory refinement."

Step 4: Data compilation and analysis: this step strictly follows the coding procedures of Grounded Theory to extract concepts and categories from existing data. The study employs MAXQDA 2020 for coding, developing coding categories, progressively coding data, establishing an interpretive framework, and taking notes for data analysis.

Step 5: Data reorganization and categorization: it involves identifying the inherent relationships between data and codes, analyzing the alignment and contradictions between data and expected hypotheses, and composing analysis memoranda.

Step 6: Proposition development and preliminary theoretical framework: this step includes data focusing, hypothesis testing, reevaluating preliminary findings, and conducting multidirectional analysis of critical themes.

Step 7: Theoretical construction: it entails delineating the deep structure, integrating all data, contexts, and theoretical propositions to construct a theoretical framework as a foundation for future research.

Step 8: Conclusion and recommendations: this final step involves interpreting the model and providing guidance and recommendations for practical applications based on the theoretical findings.

3.6 Summary

This chapter serves as a critical foundation for the research project, outlining the key components necessary for conducting the study effectively. The primary focus is on establishing robust research methods that will enable the exploration of the research topic in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

One of the key aspects addressed in this chapter is the design of the interview outline. Careful thought and consideration were given to ensure that the interview questions would elicit rich and relevant information from the participants. The interview process was designed to create a comfortable and conducive environment for the participants, allowing them to freely express their thoughts and experiences.

To ensure the scientific rigor and ethical integrity of the study, a specialized method for addressing ethical issues was incorporated. This method provided a framework for addressing any ethical concerns that may arise during the interviews, thereby safeguarding the rights and well-being of the participants. Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in any research project, and this study was no exception.

The selection of appropriate research tools was another crucial aspect of this chapter. By integrating relevant theoretical research findings, it was ensured that the chosen tools were well-grounded and aligned with the objectives of the study. This approach enhances the credibility and validity of the research findings.

Upon the completion of the interviews, the gathered information was compiled and organized in a comprehensive manner. This data will serve as the foundation for in-depth research and analysis on the research topic. The researcher will employ thematic analysis, a well-established qualitative research method, to identify patterns, themes, and insights within

the data. This analysis will provide valuable insights into the influence of various stakeholders on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in home and community-based elderly care.

In conclusion, this chapter lays the groundwork for the research project, ensuring that the research methods are well-designed, ethical considerations are addressed, and appropriate tools are selected. The careful planning and execution of these components will contribute to the scientific rigor and credibility of the study, ultimately enabling a comprehensive exploration of the research topic and the generation of valuable insights.

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Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussions

In this chapter, the research findings are classified and sorted out through the research methods and processes described in previous chapters. The overall status, challenges, reasons, and suggestions for the engagement of NPOs in community-based elderly care are categorized into four aspects according to the order of the interview outline. Stakeholders for the sustainable development of NPOs are divided into groups according to the stakeholder theory: a). NPOs, b). government and its subordinate institutes such as neighbourhood committees, party committees, and the Civil Affairs Bureau; c). volunteers; d). elderly care groups; and e). society such as the media, the public and the family members of the elderly, with themes extracted accordingly.

In the section on the status quo, this study starts from the process and experience of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care practice and expounds on the status quo of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. In the section on challenges encountered, this study analyses the factors affecting the participation of NPOs in the sustainable development of community-based elderly care from the perspectives of internal governance of NPOs and government financial support according to the research results. At the same time, this section explores the reasons for challenges faced by NPOs in their participation in community-based elderly care. Finally, in terms of the countermeasures for NPOs to promote the sustainable development of their participation in community-based elderly care, this study proposes suggestions from the perspective of different stakeholders based on the research results.

4.1 Overall status of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

First of all, as for the question "Do you think it is feasible and smooth for NPOs to fully participate in community-based elderly care?", 75 percent of interviewees believed that it is viable for NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care, while a quarter thought it is not so feasible. The proportion is shown in Figure 4.1.

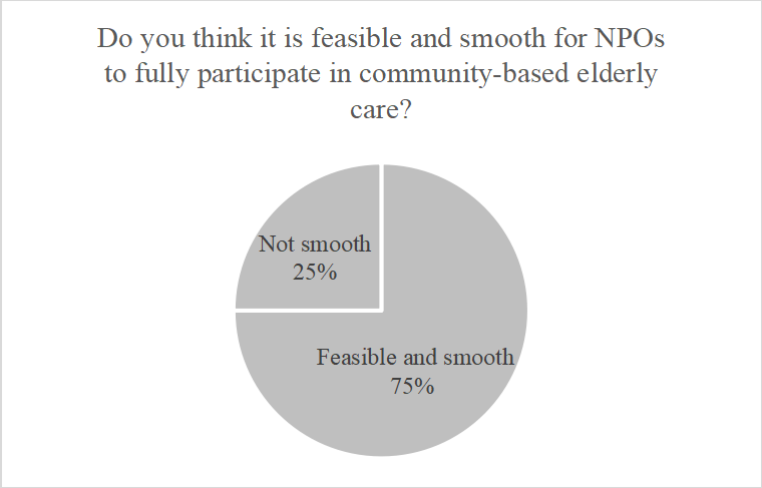

Figure 4.1 Interviewees' inputs about the feasibility of NPOs fully participating in community-based elderly care

75% of the interviewees expressed that it is feasible for NPOs to participate in social elderly care, and the main manifestations are the following views. First, elderly care is an urgent matter, and the phenomenon of aging is intensifying. The only child of the family, especially in cities, is in urgent need of social resources or government support, which means that the participation of NPOs in elderly care has its practical necessity. Second, NPOs offer flexible and extensive services that align more closely with traditional Chinese elderly care concepts. As mentioned in P9 "*One of the functions of NPOs is to allocate specialized professionals to perform their respective tasks. Without our involvement, traditional Chinese elderly care predominantly revolves around home-based care, with limited reliance on elderly care services provided by institutions like us. With home-based care and the presence of social workers, elderly individuals can benefit from more specialized services. For instance, during the day, adult children need not worry about where their elderly parents can engage in activities, and concerns about their safety are alleviated*." Third, the government's recognition of NPOs increases funding for elderly care projects. Fourth, some NPOs can receive support from foundations, which will help NPOs improve their services to meet different needs of elderly care. Fifth, the recognition of NPOs by the elderly and their families is increasing, so the number of service objects is increasing.

However, it is not smooth for NPOs to carry out the cause of community elderly care, which is mainly manifested in the following points of view. First, economically, the government needs to provide financial subsidies and tax exemptions to support these projects. However, currently, the government only provides direction and rent and tax reduction policies, so the support is not strong enough. This has resulted in under-funding and limited operating space. These projects do not have enough funds and space to serve hundreds of seniors at the same time.

Second, in terms of policy, the government currently does not promote government support based on the type of pension, nor does it take various measures to reduce the difficulty of NPO daycare centres. Third, in the communication between NPOs and communities and streets, it is difficult for NPOs to secure human, material and financial guarantees. Fourth, the fundraising cycle is long, and the resistance is great. For NPOs that attempt to involve in community elderly care, they need to report upward through many levels of the government department, and then the results return to NPOs. There are difficulties in the implementation of the process. Fifth, some differentiated services of NPOs are not allowed. Overall, the challenges primarily manifest in insufficient manpower, material, and financial resources, as well as inadequate policy support to sustain the operations of NPOs, while simultaneously imposing numerous constraints on these institutions.

It can be seen that the previous chapters that the government has highlighted the functional role of social forces in the selection of the path of elderly care supply. Despite the government's clear emphasis on the role of social forces in solving the shortage of human resources, material resources, and service resources in family-based and community-based elderly care by leveraging the resources of the whole society (Tao, 2014), the interviews revealed that the development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care activities is still hindered by a multitude of factors, including policies, funding, venues, operational materials, coordination, and communication.

To sum up, although the government has clearly emphasized the role of social forces in the provision of elderly care and solved the problem of insufficient human, material and service resources in family elderly care by integrating social resources, the survey found that NPOs still face difficulties in participating in community-based elderly care activities, which are affected by a number of factors including policies, funding, facilities, operational resources, coordination and communication, as well as NPO's own operational capacity.

The overall status of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care was coded and summarized into themes and aggregate dimensions, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The coded overall status of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Q1. Are there obvious difficulties for NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care?		
Part-time staff lacking dedicated time	Insufficient resources (N=42)	Resources
Salaries insufficient to attract young individuals to join		
Shortage of manpower		
Lack of specialized technical personnel		
Weak professional capabilities among staffs		

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Low salary stability with high turnover. Insufficient government funding leading to sustainability challenging Inadequate operational funding Heavy workload and low reliability of volunteers Difficulty in fundraising Elderly care requires significant material and human resources Lack of office space. Limited social donations Lack of subsidies for volunteers		
The service content is entirely controlled by the government More policy support is needed Regulatory policies need to be more friendly Material and financial support Difficulties in communication and collaboration with government departments Difficulties in meeting the requirements set by government departments Limited government funding with multiple constraints Lack of market-based regulation for services High barriers to applying for government grants Challenges in coping with government regulatory policies Reliance on government support makes it difficult to engage in profitable activities to sustain expenses Government-purchased services are insufficient to cover the needs of some elderly people Government assistance policies lack enforceability and are difficult to implement	Insufficient policy assistance but excessive constraints (N=18)	Policy support
Unclear roles and positioning Public expectations of free services Need for many specialized resources to be paid for Depressing and monotonous work environment Challenges and difficulties in dealing with the elderly Low trust level from the public Difficulty in meeting the needs of some elderly individuals Enhancing public understanding and support Lack of understanding of the institution by the elderly Need to define the target service recipients	The industry faces various challenges in its development (N=16)	Communication and coordination
NPOs to enhance their own capabilities Explore sustainable operating models Develop strong resource integration abilities	Insufficient operational capabilities (N=5)	Professional capabilities
Q2. Does the government provide enough support?		

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Introducing corporate resources Facility support Target customer information support Promotional support Government trust and support Resource integration and networking	Resources sharing and support (N=16)	Resources
Some financial support available Limited subsidies Government payment based on service projects and service volume	Financial support (N=10)	Resources
Providing operational guidance Supportive policies exist but implementation is challenging Invited to participate in government-led projects Policy support is in place	Policy support (N=6)	Policy support
Q3. What is the situation after volunteers' participation?		
Passionate about philanthropy High level of participation and enthusiasm Wholeheartedly dedicated and committed Tend to prefer long-term and stable volunteers Volunteers provide manpower, resources, and financial support Mostly young retirees Volunteers alleviate the shortage of manpower	Volunteers have provided crucial manpower support (N=16)	Resources
Encourage the addition of more professional services Volunteers cannot be expected to demand too much Participate during their free time Volunteers lack professional expertise Volunteers cannot guarantee the stability and quality of service	Volunteers provide limited support (N=16)	Resources
Providing volunteers with some financial subsidies Adding meaning and value to work Getting spiritual rewards Point-based incentive system Policy-driven rewards for volunteers	Increase volunteer satisfaction through policies (N=10)	Policy support
Various resources brought by volunteers Low public recognition and trust in NPOs Positive image and reputation improved by volunteer participation	Volunteers contribute to the promotion of NPOs (N=4)	Promotion and guidance
Q4. Are the elderly people satisfied with NPO's participation and willing to take the services?		
Satisfaction feedback mechanism in place Enjoyment in communicating with volunteers Mainly focused on providing services to lonely elderly Active participation in learning activities Mostly satisfied	Mostly satisfied (N=23)	Professional capabilities
Skeptical attitude towards NPOs Affordability of fees	Meeting needs and gaining trust is the key (N=8)	Promotion and guidance

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Enhancing understanding and mutual trust with NPOs Depends on whether the needs are met Some elderly individuals have difficulty with communication and cooperation Lack of financial capacity Hard to meet the needs of some elderly individuals	Hard to meet the needs of some elderly individuals (N=4)	Resources, communication and coordination
Q5. Does the public recognize NPOs' engagement in community-based elderly care?		
Gradually gaining the trust of the elderly and their families Received support from many compassionate individuals in society Families support elderly individuals with recreational spaces Both the community and collaborating organizations provide significant support Filling the gap left by children's absence Relatively accepting Willing to support after understanding the details A lubricant between the elderly group and the government	Recognizing the role of the organization in elderly care (N=22)	Professional capabilities
The public is unaware of the services NPOs can provide Low level of understanding among the public Unclear roles and positioning for social groups when participating Questioning the project's profit motives	Some groups lack trust and understanding (N=9)	Communication and coordination
Short-lived enthusiasm Easily accept free services Participate if there are free services	Lack of awareness and enthusiasm for public welfare in elderly care (N=4)	Promotion and guidance

4.1.1 The interviewees' inputs about the overall status of NPOs

The interviewees' primary perception of the overall status of NPOs is the inadequacy of resources, mentioned as many as 42 times. This inadequacy primarily manifests in the following aspects. First, there are a few full-time NPO staff who have low wages, low professionalism, less time investment, and high mobility. Therefore, it is difficult for them to improve service quality and service continuity.

For example, P17 said that *"There are now far from enough staff in an organization with normal staffing. Normally there are about 100 seniors in a typical community of day care. With this service staffing ratio, we may need a minimum of five to six staff at one agen*cy." P18 added that *"For example, if the staff salary slightly increases, our service funding will be reduced, which means that maybe our subsequent service quality can't keep up, further resulting in an increasing gap with the specialized service quality in the marke*t."

Second, NPOs do not have a fixed office space, and the venue facilities for their operation are insufficient to ensure the safety of the elderly, which deters them from carrying out their elderly care services.

Third, the NPO has insufficient funds. The appropriation procedures of the sub-district are tedious and long, so NPOs do not consider the slim possibility of funds allocation from the sub-district. Other funds sources, corporate donations, government, and CPC committees are not sufficient and will be delayed. In addition, NPOs' ability to mobilize social resources is weak. These points are summarized in Figure 4.2.

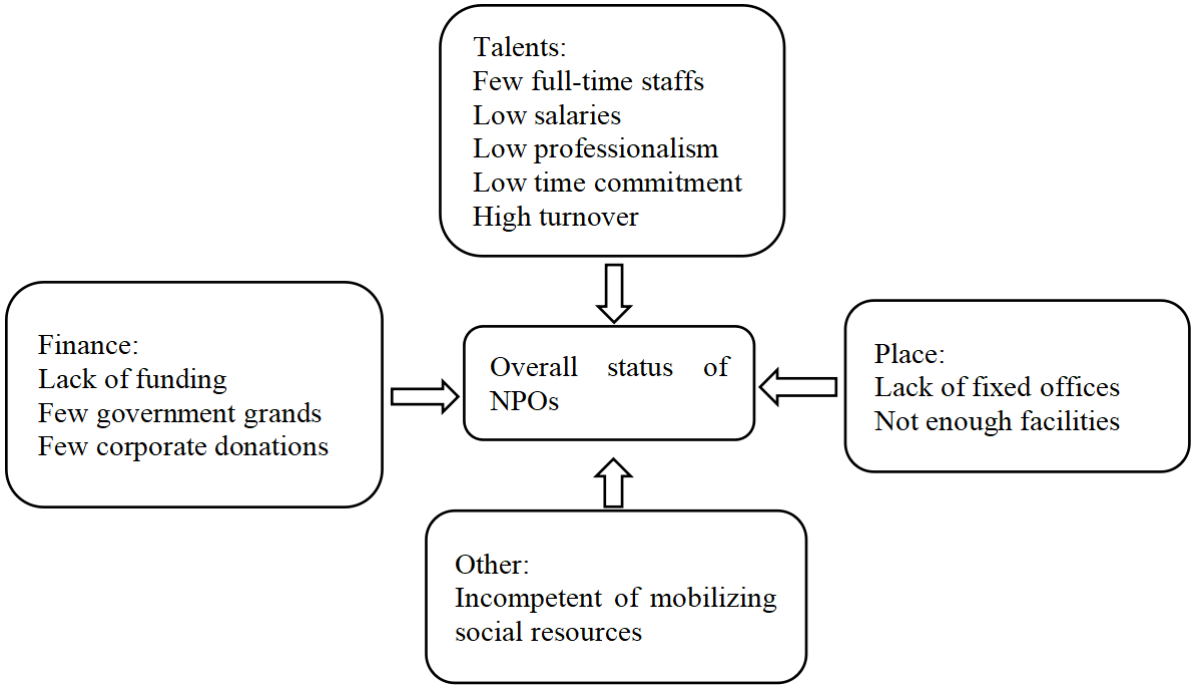

Figure 4.2 Interviewee' inputs about the overall status of NPOs

The interviewees' inputs regarding the maintenance of relationships with the government were mentioned 18 times. On one hand, the operation of NPOs heavily relies on the government, either through government funding or the purchase of services. However, this support is often insufficient to sustain the normal operation of these organizations, leading many to grapple with resource inadequacy. On the other hand, due to their status as public welfare organizations, they are subject to extensive regulations and constraints imposed by government departments. As mentioned by P6, "*When we provide services in government-owned facilities, it can limit our ability to explore market-oriented activities or engage in activities that incur basic operational costs. The government expects us to adhere to their rules and assessment mechanisms when using their facilities. This entails a significant workload, and NPOs must expend considerable time and effort responding to government requirements.*" Additionally, as mentioned by P12, "*For community-based elderly care services, as long as they are public-private or non-*

corporate projects, they are audited by the Civil Affairs departments, which defines their service scope and content. Furthermore, during the three-year service contract for government procurement, the contract specifies in detail the services, service frequency, and service content to be provided. All of these are nonprofit services, and there are no fee-based services. If there are any fee-based services involved, they are not allowed." These measures not only place high demands on the professionalism of the NPO staffs, but they also result in organizations lacking self-sustaining capabilities. They become dependent on government funding and donations from social organizations, exacerbating their resource constraints and creating a vicious cycle. Therefore, many NPO managers are calling for the allowance of autonomous exploration of market-oriented pathways to support their normal operations while ensuring proper oversight and the non-profit nature of these organizations.

4.1.2 The interviewees' inputs about government support

When asked further about whether the government provided sufficient support, the interviewees' inputs of government support are reflected in Figure 4.3. Among the 13 individuals who mentioned government support, it primarily manifested in resource sharing support (N=16) and financial support (N=10). Specifically, these inputs include the following aspects. First, providing partial funding, or purchase pension insurance (such as long-term care insurance) for NPOs. Second, offering policy and license support. Third, helping NPOs connect with relevant resources (such as introducing companies to NPOs, and connecting with other government departments). Fourth, providing volunteer support. Fifth, offering low-cost or free event venues and office space support. Sixth, invite NPOs to participate in government-led community pension projects. Seventh, provide social publicity for NPOs.

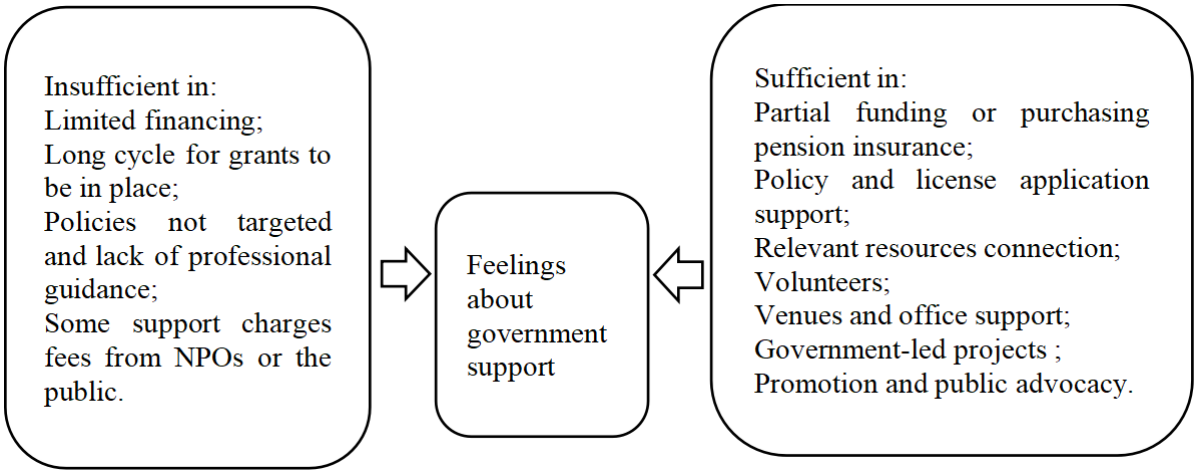

Figure 4.3 Interviewees' inputs about government support for NPOs

In addition, seven interviewees mentioned the lack of support from the government. Specifically include the following. First, financial support from the government is either unavailable or very limited. Second, the funding cycle is too long. For example, "*The government generally provides subsidies for elderly care institutions, but our non-profit organization has been in operation for three years, and the subsidies have not been in place*", said P3. Third, insufficient policy and professional guidance. Fourth, the support is very limited, and some government programs also charge fees, such as traditional Chinese medicine services.

Combining the previous chapters of this study, it can be seen that government departments such as the General Office of the State Council, the Office of the National Commission on Aging, the Development and Reform Commission, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs have successively promulgated a series of constructive provisions to support the socialization of the elderly care service industry, such as *The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China's Proposal on Formulating the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development* released by the Central People's Government of People's Republic of China (2010). However, these policies are directional guidance or constructive opinions and fail to put forward systematic and substantive operational guidelines and specific implementation measures on how to socialize community elderly care services. Therefore, the current NPO still lacks substantive policy support at the government level.

4.1.3 The interviewees' inputs about volunteers' participation

Interviewees' inputs about volunteers are shown in Figure 4.4. First, volunteers mainly come from the sub-district office or newly retired old people and CPC members, with relatively high understanding and enthusiasm. Some provide material donations to needy elders, which reduces the workload of NPOs and strengthens their sense of identity with NPOs. For example, P18 said that *"There are five communities in a sub-district. We rely more on warm-hearted uncles and aunts in the community who act as volunteers and provide some simple services, such as door-to-door delivery of meals."* Second, volunteers are an important pillar for the long-term development of NPOs. Third, the working time of volunteers is unstable, so it is difficult to achieve long-term sustainable. Fourth, the content of volunteer services is often simple since they cannot provide highly professional services (such as medical and nursing services). Fifth, the level of service is uneven, and the scope of service is unevenly distributed. There are problems such as insufficient communication with NPOs and dereliction of duty. At the same time, the interviewees believed that in terms of policy, more attention should be given to

volunteers, encouraging their participation in the activities held by NPOs to enhance their sense of achievement.

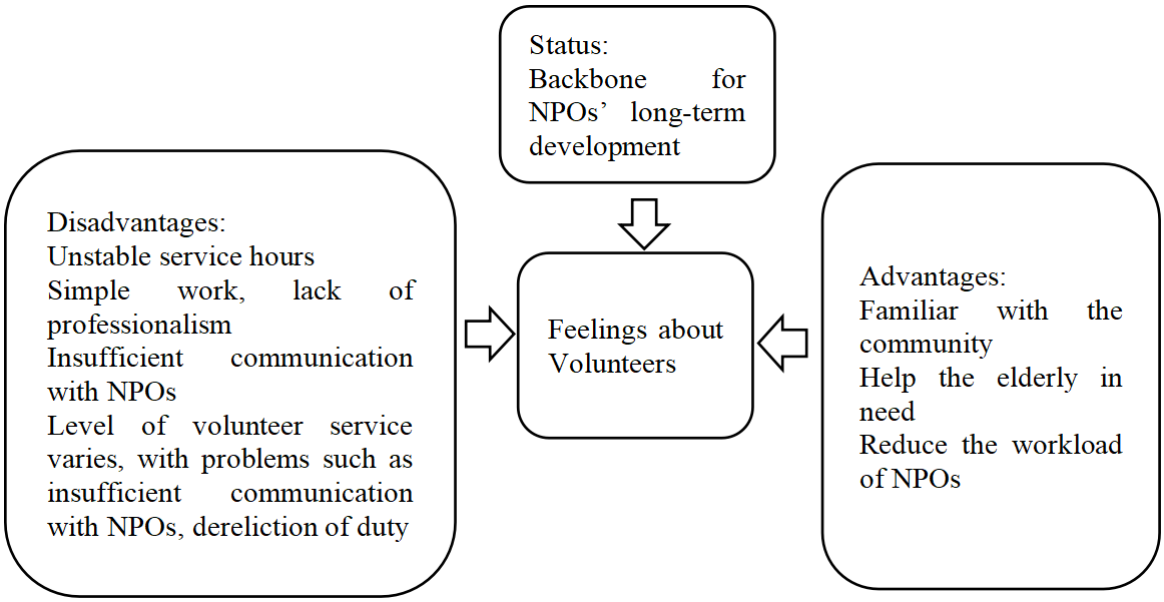

Figure 4.4 Interviewees' inputs about volunteers

4.1.4 The interviewees' inputs about the elderly group

Interviewees' inputs about the elderly care group are shown in Figure 4.5. Most of the elderly care groups have high satisfaction and willingness to participate, while the codes with a relatively high satisfaction frequency was mentioned 23 times. The reasons are shown as follows.

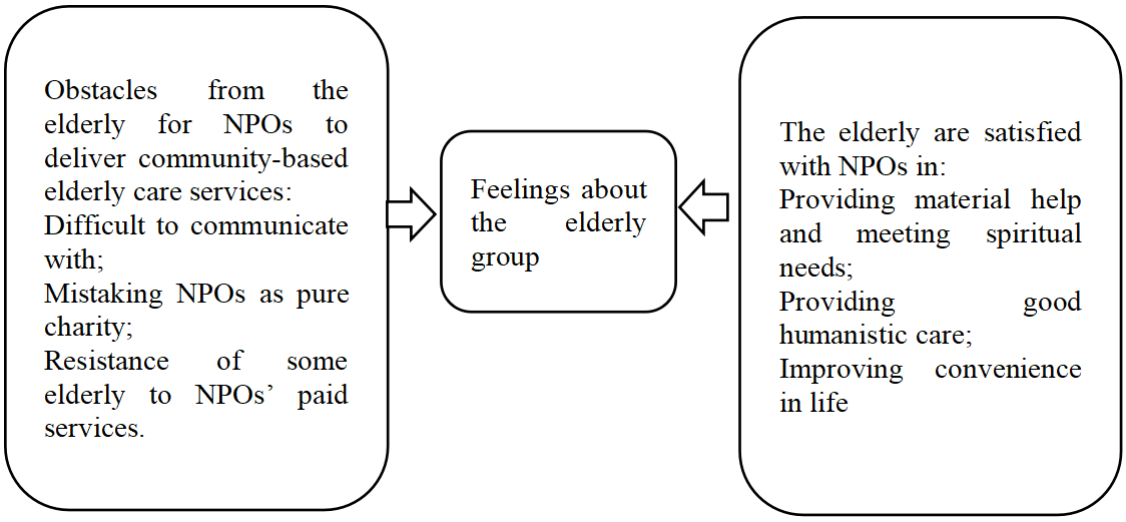

Figure 4.5 Interviewees' inputs about the elderly group's attitude towards NPOs

First, NPO can meet the needs of the elderly materially and spiritually, and humanistic care is very good (such as services during COVID-19). Second, volunteer services (such as meal delivery) bring great convenience to the elderly, and thus the elderly have built a deep trust in the volunteers. Still, there are also some elderly people who have difficulty communicating due

to individual differences. For example, withdrawn personality, disabled post-traumatic psychological disorder, cognitive impairment caused by low education, communication barriers caused by lonely life, and poor economic conditions. For these reasons, they defaulted to NPO as a government welfare resource, so these services should not be charged. They even resist the paid services from NPOs.

It can be seen that although volunteers provide a certain level of service and care to the elderly in the community and the satisfaction and willingness to participate is high, there are still some individual differences and communication barriers. At the same time, there is also some unevenness and imbalance in the level and distribution of volunteers' services. These problems need to be solved by better communication and coordination between NPOs, volunteers and elderly groups.

4.1.5 The interviewees' inputs about the recognition from the public

The code related to interviewees' inputs that the public generally supports NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care and recognizes their role in elderly care was mentioned 22 times. Specifically, the nature and role of NPOs in serving community elderly care, as well as the trend of elderly care, determine that they are more popular with the public. Here are the specific aspects: first, the praise of our NPOs by the children of the elderly is very good. Second, some cooperative organizations or institutions are also concerned about the NPOs. Third, sub-districts attach great importance. Fourth, media reports on NPOs are very positive.

At the same time, there were 13 instances of coding indicating that interviewees believe that the public lacks understanding, familiarity, trust, and enthusiasm for NPOs, indicating a lack of awareness and support. They think that NPO may be a scam, or think that since it is government-funded, it should provide free services. Two more interviewees agreed that it takes time to build trust. Because it takes a process to accept recognition, it is based on trust, practical help (such as loving restaurants), and promotion of traditional culture (such as the Chinese philosophy of "expending the respect of the aged in one's family to that of other families").

In other words, despite the support and recognition of NPOs by some members of society at large, there is still a lack of understanding, familiarity and trust among some people. In order to gain wider social support, NPOs need to strengthen their communication and interaction with the general public, increase their visibility and establish a good reputation to gain the trust and recognition of the general public.

Based on the analysis of the development stages of social elderly care services in China by the Institute of JingData (2020), it is evident that at present, NPO's participation in community-

based elderly care services is in the industrialization stage of China's elderly care services. The elderly care model that utilizes community resources to provide services is more in line with the national conditions that the elderly in China prefer to live at home. Therefore, as a supplementary channel for community elderly care services, NPOs are expected to gradually become popular and recognized in China. However, NPOs still face many challenges in participating in community elderly care services, which will be elaborated on in the next section.

4.2 Challenges of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care

The obstacles to the sustainability of NPO' involvement in community-based elderly care then indicate the need to continue to gain insight into the challenges they actually face. Next, the challenges of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care are coded and explained by the theme, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 The coded challenges of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Q1. how do the NPOs themselves influence sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?		
Promoting the elderly to unleash their self-worth Integrating various resources to assist in operations Developing core competitive advantages in service Exploring scientific management and operational models Meeting the spiritual needs of the elderly In-depth understanding of elderly care demands Unclear role positioning Having more self-sustaining capabilities Enhancing cooperation and collaboration with government agencies Building cohesion and appeal Strengthening the sense of mission Able to gather the strengths of relevant roles Expanding more business opportunities	Enhancing the internal business and operational capabilities (N=29)	Professional capabilities
Building an employee training mechanism Cultivating more stable volunteers Enhancing professional competence Specialized service capabilities Legal and financial expertise Operational management High employee turnover Strengthening professional ethics among staff Establishing an upward incentive mechanism for employees	Steady professional talent cultivation (N=18)	Resources
Raise more funds Expand fundraising channels Actively pursue community projects	Seeking more funding resources (N=10)	Resources
Q2. How does government influence NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?		
Government has a decisive influence Government should increase promotion for non-profit organizations Government support is crucial for building organizational credibility Government assistance is needed for resource integration Policy and funding support have a significant impact Government can serve as both a participant and overseer Government support for information on the elderly Policies provide guidance for work	Policy support and funding are essential to ensure the operation of organizations (N=33)	Policy support and resources

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
direction		
Policies encourage businesses to participate		
Over-reliance on government control can hinder an organization's ability to generate its own resources	Policy dependence constrains organizational development (N=9)	Policy support
The government should provide organizations with flexibility for development		
Excessive dependence on the government is not conducive to growth		
Organizations should maintain relative independence from the government		
This ensures more operational flexibility and sustainability		
Difficulty in meeting government requirements can hinder continuous development		
The government's evaluation system for NPOs is unreasonable	Communication and collaboration between the government and NPOs are not smooth (N=7)	Policy support
Regulatory departments lack comprehensive planning		
Regulatory departments lack collaborative mechanisms		
NPOs struggle to meet policy regulatory requirements		
Q3. How do volunteers as a group influence NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?		
Volunteer participation plays a crucial role in driving the development of NPOs	Volunteers play a significant role in the development of NPOs (N=23)	Resources
Volunteers provide valuable additional professional manpower		
It is essential to cultivate local residents as volunteers		
A strong community base is vital for development		
Volunteers can offer valuable and well-informed suggestions from the perspective of the recipients or beneficiaries		
They play a critical role in resource integration		
Volunteers cannot guarantee the stability and quality of services	Quality of volunteers requires improving (N=18)	Professional capabilities
Relying solely on volunteers is not sustainable		
Volunteers often lack professional expertise		
It's important that volunteers have certain professional skills		
Training and assessment are necessary to enhance the professional capabilities of volunteers		
Q4. How does the elderly group influence NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?		
Meeting recreational needs	The needs of the elderly met	Professional

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
High levels of recognition for the services Elderly individuals can be both recipients and participants in the services Mutual accommodation and cooperation Meeting the dietary and healthcare needs of the elderly Meeting the needs of the elderly is crucial Obtaining support and satisfaction from the elderly population is important	(N=13)	capabilities
Enhancing trust Strengthening communication, feedback, and engagement Limited understanding of NPOs	Enhance understanding of NPOs (N=13)	Communication and coordination
Willingness to accept services influenced by views on aging Willingness to receive services Understanding and support from the elderly and their families are crucial Influence of aging perspectives and beliefs	Impacts of traditional mindset (N=6)	Promotion and guidance
Q5. How does the public influence NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?		
Local community support is crucial Online public opinion support facilitates event execution Manpower and financial support from the public are required Support from the elderly's families Recognition from the general public is needed Government intensifies publicity to guide the public in forming a correct understanding of NPOs Deepening the public's understanding of NPOs is required	The industry's development requires positive public opinion support (N=23)	Promotion and guidance
Public opinion controversies over fee-based services affect service advancement Taking NPOs as organization with no fee-based services	Preconceived notions from the public can have negative effects (N=5)	Promotion and guidance

4.2.1 Challenges from NPOs

The interviewees believed that NPOs face three main challenges from themselves when engaging in community-based elderly care work. Firstly, the organizations need to enhance their own business and operational capabilities. These challenges are mentioned 29 times and is specifically reflected in: First, NPOs do not have a clear definition of old-age care, which leads to NPOs not knowing what they can do and how long they can do for community-based old-age care. Second, NPOs lack internal professionalism, such as insufficient organizational structure and teamwork capabilities, and slow adjustment and transformation. Third, NPOs

have insufficient external open-source channels and limited financing and resource integration capabilities. For example, *"NPO's ability to integrate resources, such as the ability to raise funds through resource integration; and the ability to open-source channels, such as the ability to develop charging projects, are very limited"*, said P9.

The second challenge is the need for stable professional talent development in the industry, mentioned 18 times, and is specifically manifested in: first, NPOs urgently require specialized professionals, as mentioned by P13: "*NPOs urgently need specialized professionals, such as nursing professionals, psychology professionals, and legal professionals.*" Second, low salaries in NPOs lead to a lack of employee attachment, high turnover, and an inability to retain talent with core competencies. Third, a lack of employee training and career advancement mechanisms also reduces the willingness of talent to join the industry.

Furthermore, there is a need to broaden the sources of funding, mentioned 10 times. NPOs need to take measures to raise more funds.

These three challenges are highly interconnected: adequate funds attract talents, who enhance the organization's business and operational capabilities, which in turn attracts more funding support, creating a positive feedback loop. As mentioned by P18, "*The issue of talent turnover, as I mentioned earlier, the funding provided by government procurement is relatively low, so the corresponding staff salaries are not high. This high turnover actually has a significant impact on non-profit organizations. While there are people, talent is not easy to come by.*"

Overall, these findings are consistent with the views of J. Shi (2018) and J. Zhao (2018), who suggested that various internal factors within NPOs hinder their sustainable development in social elderly care, such as a shortage of manpower, inadequate professional training, difficulties in providing comprehensive, specialized, and differentiated services.

4.2.2 Impacts from government

The interviewees generally believed that government has a decisive impact on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, concerning financial support, policies, evaluation, communication, and promotion. Firstly, there is insufficient support in terms of policies and funding, with a frequency of 33 mentions. This is primarily reflected in: First, government funding is unstable, untimely, and in small amounts. These findings align with the research conducted by H. Wang (2015) who also found that NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care is often contingent on local government policies, particularly those related to funding support. Second, the government needs to strengthen policy

efforts to encourage businesses and volunteers, among other members of society, to participate in elderly care and provide more resources to NPOs. Third, the government should make full use of promotional resources to establish credibility for NPOs and educate the public about the elderly care services provided by NPOs.

Furthermore, some NPOs managers believed that an excessive reliance on government policies restricts the autonomous development of the organizations. This dependence hinders their self-sustaining capabilities and diminishes their motivation to improve their operational capacity. The frequency of related coding is 9 times, as seen in the example provided by P12: "*The government places too many restrictions on our operational methods, dictating what we can and cannot do, and their regulations are very rigid and detailed, all written in the contract. For example, during the three-year service contract for government procurement, the contract specifies in detail the services, service frequency, and service content to be provided. It's all about public welfare, and there are no fee-based projects. When it comes to fee-based projects, they are not allowed. The government should give organizations space to operate more flexibly and freely, within legal and regulatory boundaries, and while protecting the interests of the people, provide them with an opportunity for unfettered development.*"

Additionally, there are shortcomings in government policies during the process of communicating, collaborating, and guiding institutions, mentioned 7 times. This is primarily manifested in: first, frequent policy changes and the involvement of too many guiding departments lead to inconsistent guidance and advice. For example, *"Frequent changes in government funding mechanisms have affected the sustainable development of NPOs. The government used to allocate funds in advance but now favours NPOs to finish their services first and then provide subsidies based on the number of people. In addition, the transform of government teams has led to slow funding approval"*, said P2. Second, the government has a confusing evaluation system, focusing only on the completion of indicators but not on the substantive process and results. As P6 mentioned that *"The process regulation and outcome regulation are separate in the government's regulatory system, resulting in completely different evaluation criteria and supervisors at the time of acceptance. Different people have different interpretations of the criteria and make different judgments."* P9 complained in this way: *"The government focuses only on the completion of indicators, but not on the substantive process and results."*

This finding is consistency with the view of a previous study by H. Wang (2015). She argued that in terms of funding sources, except for direct government purchases and entrusted services, other social organization activities are mostly separated from government

organizations in terms of funding, and rarely receive policy support and subsidies. In addition, this study discovered other challenges from the government, such as frequent policy changes, confusion in government evaluation, and the role of government guidance needs to be strengthened. These findings are new viewpoints and feelings mentioned by the interviewees of this survey, which were not mentioned in previous studies. Therefore, relevant government departments need to pay attention.

4.2.3 Impacts from volunteers

The interviewees generally believed that volunteers play a significant role in promoting the development of NPOs when they engage in community-based elderly care. This was mentioned 23 times. On one hand, volunteers are crucial human resources that to some extent alleviate the shortage of personnel in NPOs. On the other hand, volunteers serve as excellent channels for promotion and can raise awareness of NPOs among the public, potentially attracting more corporate and individual sponsorship. As mentioned by P9: "*The first thing is the support from volunteers. Because what we need is to integrate social resources, as we are a non-profit organization, we need to do this, which is to integrate social resources, accumulate social capital, and provide services to the public. So, one of the key factors for us is volunteers. What we need is strong support from volunteers and the creation of an atmosphere where they are willing to participate in charity work.*"

The challenges faced by volunteers were perceived as a need to improve the quality of volunteers, mentioned 18 times. This is primarily reflected in the following points. First, volunteers need to change their attitude and improve their professionalism. Second, with high turnover, volunteers cannot serve for long periods. Third, the age of the volunteers also has an impact on the service and volunteers themselves. Fourth, NPOs cannot ask volunteers to implement too many tasks. For instance, as mentioned by P10: "*When it comes to volunteers, first, their working hours are not very consistent. Second, since they don't receive a salary from us, managing them is quite loose, primarily relying on their level of enthusiasm. When they come to do tasks, I have no way to constrain them. For us managers, during events like 'Respect for the Elderly Day,' there is a big turnout, but when there's no event, there are no volunteers. This does have an impact on our day-to-day work arrangements. Therefore, from the perspective of a normal non-profit organization like ours, I believe that relying mainly on volunteers is not sustainable.*"

Overall, previous studies have not discussed the challenges posed by the volunteer group. Thus, the findings of this study can shed some new light from the perspective of volunteers to enhance the NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care services.

4.2.4 Impacts from the elderly group

From the aspect of challenges from the elderly in terms of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care, the challenge posed by the elderly is primarily related to how to meet the needs of the elderly, mentioned 13 times. This is specifically manifested as follows. First, the elderly recognizes day-care places, and nursing care stations, but reject the paid service centres (e. g. health service centres). It is difficult to convince the elderly to spend money on elderly care. Second, the elderly is concerned more about the substantial assistance and will complain if their needs are not met by the NPOs. Third, the elderly is not very good at modern technology. NPOs need to pay attention to helping the elderly to use and grasp technology.

Furthermore, elderly individuals present challenges as they tend to distrust and lack understanding of NPOs, coupled with a reluctance to seek out or engage with these organizations. Communication with elderly individuals can also be difficult, collectively mentioned 13 times. For instance, as mentioned by P19: "*Their trust in us as a whole is currently not very high. Many elderly individuals tend to hold attitudes towards volunteers providing home services or organizations offering free services that associate us with pyramid schemes in their eyes.*"

Additionally, some elderly individuals are influenced by traditional beliefs and are unwilling to receive elderly care services from organizations, mentioned 6 times. For example, P11 mentioned: "*For family members or the general public, if elderly care concepts are still somewhat conservative or traditional, it may be less efficient to implement or promote them. Because personally, I still believe that when parents get older, it's the responsibility of the children to take care of them. If you completely entrust their care to society, the government, or organizations, whether they are for-profit or non-profit, I still feel that there may be some conflicts in terms of beliefs.*"

From the literature review, it is noted that few studies have analysed the difficulties of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care services from the perspective of the elderly population. However, this study examines the challenges faced by NPOs from the elderly population's perspective, which not only meets the needs of the elderly population but

also provides another perspective for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care services.

4.2.5 Impacts from the public

When NPOs engage in community-based elderly care, the challenges from the general public mainly revolve around the need for positive public opinion and support. This is mentioned 23 times and is specifically manifested in two aspects:

First, the public especially the family members of the elderly is not well informed of NPOs in community-based elderly care, resulting in a one-sided picture, stereotypes, or dissatisfaction. This finding is consistent with the research of J. D. Hou and Teng (2015) which indicated that although China's NPOs have participated in community-based elderly care to some extent, they lack a trust foundation due to the public's limited understanding of NPOs. This study has also found that even though NPOs have been implementing community-based elderly care services for many years, they still lack recognition among the general public and a social trust foundation.

Second, the negative impact of public opinion spreads faster and wider, with some media platforms and self-media platforms being criticized for reporting in a biased manner and sensationalizing negative events. This has led to a decrease in public trust in NPOs. For example, P18 says: *"During the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be inconvenient for an elderly person to go out to buy vegetables or get medical treatment, but we as an NPO may not arrive at the front line in time, or deliver vegetables to his door, or help him get medical treatment, opinions of complaints from him will spread among residents or neighbours quite fast, which has many negative impacts on us. The public might say that the government does not give enough support or care. In fact, such opinions from the public have a negative impact on the government as well. It affects the public appraisal of the NPOs in the future."* P19 mentions *"Some news reports show that the elderly was abused in some day-care centres, which leads to the public distrust of NPOs."*

The finding suggested that the involvement of NPOs in community-based elderly care services may be affected by social events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, none of the interviewees invited to this study was found to have fabricated records of NPOs' services or engaged in illegal fundraising activities under the guise of elderly care services, as reported in previous studies by Sun and Xu (2020) and Qian (2021). These adverse events will seriously erode the economic interests of the elderly. As this study was conducted in the form of self-retrospection by the interviewees, whether these adverse events happen has not been confirmed.

Furthermore, inherent beliefs among the public have hindered the development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, leading to disputes over NPO fee-based projects or fee structures. This is mentioned 5 times. P8 says that *"The public will have disputes over NPOs' charging services or rules (such as the charges based on the class of different residential complexes)"*.

To conclude, the challenges faced by NPOs in carrying out their work in community -based elderly care include the lack of understanding and one-sided perceptions, the negative impact of public opinion dissemination and the controversy over fee charging programmes and rules. To address these challenges, NPOs need to strengthen communication and publicity with the public, increase transparency, explain and popularize the meaning and work of community-based elderly care, as well as fair and reasonable fee charging mechanisms. At the same time, they should build trust and good reputation by responding positively to social concerns and strengthening cooperation with the media and relevant stakeholders in order to win wider social support and recognition.

4.3 Reasons behind the challenges of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care

Next, the reasons behind the challenges of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care are coded and summarized by the theme, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 The coded reasons behind the challenges of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Q1. In terms of NPOs themselves, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?		
Employees need a strong sense of responsibility and self-motivation NPOS should prioritize transparency Building organizational credibility is crucial Standardization of organizational operations is necessary Employees lack strong professional skills There is room for improvement in employee service awareness and values NPOs needs to enhance its ability to integrate and operate resources	Employees need to enhance their professional skills (N=9)	Professional capabilities
Q2. In terms of the government, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?		

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Government policies promoting community-based elderly care can benefit various stakeholders Providing professional guidance to enhance operational capabilities is essential Additional financial or promotional support from the government is needed Measures should be taken to enhance participants' sense of value The assistance policies or funding provided by the government are limited	The policy support is insufficient (N=12)	Policy support
Government demands high professionalism from personnel Expectations for project operational effectiveness are too high Policy admission thresholds may lead to business contraction for NPOs Regulatory policies do not consider personnel composition NPOs lack professional personnel to cope with government inspections	The policy requirements exceed NPOs' capacity (N=8)	Policy support
Government believes that safety comes first, which hinders development Government regulations impede organizational growth Regulations are excessively strict Multiple departmental regulations make work difficult to carry out Government-procured services do not align with the elderly's needs	The policy's guidance direction is not conducive to NPOs' development (N=7)	Policy support
Standards for executing documents during regulation are inconsistent Instability in cooperation with the government Lack of government recognition leads to operational difficulties Policies progress too quickly Weak sustainability in policies	The stability and sustainability of the policy are difficult to ensure (N=6)	Policy support
Difficulties in policy implementation and execution	Difficulties in getting policies implemented (N=1)	Policy support
Q3. In terms of volunteers, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?		
Unstable working hours Need to enhance the professional capabilities of volunteers Challenges in managing volunteers Low professional ethics among volunteers Mistakes made by volunteers can have a negative impact on the organization	Lack of professionalism among volunteers (N=16)	Professional capabilities
Low income and high workload reduce volunteer enthusiasm Volunteers lack recognition from the general public Lack of a sense of value in their labor	Lack of enthusiasm among volunteers (N=16)	Promotion and guidance

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Volunteers may be resistant to and not adapt well to the work		
Discrepancies between the reality of volunteer work and expectations		
Doubts about the implementation of incentive policies for volunteers		
A shortage of volunteers		
Lack of enthusiasm among volunteers		
Utilitarian participation by volunteers		
Q4. In terms of the elderly group, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?		
The elderly feel that NPOs should not have fee-based services	Lack of understanding and trust in NPOs (N=16)	Promotion and guidance
Mutual understanding is needed		
The elderly lacks understanding about NPOs.		
Low trust in NPOs		
Elderly individuals tend to choose larger organizations		
Excessively high expectations of elderly care services	High expectations for NPOs' services (N=12)	Communication and coordination
Staffs lack the professional skills to meet the needs of the elderly		
Elderly individuals have emotional opinions		
Service quality affects elderly satisfaction		
Reluctance to spend money on elderly care	Influence of traditional elderly care mindsets (N=5)	Promotion and guidance
Acceptance level and attitudes		
Activities carry safety risks	The uniqueness of the elderly population themselves (N=4)	Communication and coordination
Difficulty in communicating with the elderly		
Q5. In terms of public opinion, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?		
Negative reviews reduce the trust of the elderly	The public opinion tends to prefer negative news reporting (N=10)	Promotion and guidance
Low public attention to elderly care		
Reviews are relatively positive	Public opinion needs positive guidance (N=10)	Promotion and guidance
Public opinion needs more positive guidance		
Public opinion influences the support that can be obtained		
Social opinion does not approve of the fee-based model	Public opinion does not understand the operation of NPOs (N=6)	Promotion and guidance
Doubt the motivation for profit		
Public opinion needs to establish the reputation of legitimate elderly care institutions		

4.3.1 Reasons for challenges from NPOs

Interviewees think the reasons for the challenges faced in their sustainable participation in community-based elderly care from the NPOs themselves primarily stem from issues related to their credibility and operational capabilities. First, NPOs are not professional in the deployment of available people, money, and resources. *"People refer to the cooperation between volunteers*

and staff, and the communication with the elderly; money is the control of the cost; resources are the various on-site facilities to meet the needs and habits of the elderly", said P3. This finding complements the research of T. G. Liu and Wu (2019). They argued that at present, there is still a lack of studies on the positioning and functions of NPOs in the new pension model. Most of the studies on the NPOs' involvement in home-based community care still stay in the description of the current situation of the problem, lacking explanatory research. However, this study conducted in-depth interviews with NPO interviewees to provide systematic explanatory research, which is a supplement to previous research gaps. Moreover, it is reasonable to see from the interviews that it is precisely because of the lack of clear positioning of NPOs in the new elderly care model that causes or further exacerbates the phenomenon that NPOs are unprofessional in the allocation of existing human, financial, and material resources. Although NPOs do not seek to make profits, but because they need to integrate resources and incubate more professional services, there is currently no way to improve sustainable development through charging fees by offering professional services.

Furthermore, challenges related to the professional competence and service philosophy of the NPO staffs are also significant. If elderly individuals are not satisfied with the services provided, it becomes difficult for the organization to sustain its development in the regard of community-based elderly care. As mentioned by P2: "*I think the initial intentions of social organizations like NPOs conducting community-based elderly care services are crucial. If you are driven by personal interests or desires to gain something from it, it becomes very difficult, and it deviates from the right path. This doesn't benefit volunteers or the service recipients. So, first and foremost, your initial intentions must be pure, and you must genuinely have a sense of mission or responsibility, treating these elderly individuals as if they were your own family members.*"

4.3.2 Reasons for impacts from government

Interviewees think the reasons for the challenges from the government faced by NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care are as follows.

First, the challenges stem from inadequate policy support, mentioned 12 times. The government has not enacted laws to deal with NPOs' engagement in elderly care, resulting in limited allocations and poor substantive services. Participants in supporting community-based elderly care initiatives, including enterprises and volunteers, have not felt a clear recognition from government departments.

Second, the government's expectations on NPOs are excessively high, with many

requirements exceeding the capacity of these institutions. This has escalated the workload and pressure on NPOs and led to a reduction in their evaluation scores, sometimes even resulting in the discontinuation of future funding. The coding related to this issue appeared eight times in the data. This finding differs from the views of Xu (2019). Xu (2019) who believed that at present, China still lacks targeted and comprehensive laws and regulations. There is a lack of scientific evaluation and supervision mechanisms for NPOs. Therefore, the development of NPOs in the community care for the elderly is hindered. However, the NPO interviewees surveyed in this study thought that the government requires too much control over NPOs, and their expectations are too high. We believe that the reason for this difference may lie more in the rationality, effectiveness, continuity, and unity of the government's implementation of NPO supervision and supervision mechanisms, rather than the number of regulations. Only by improving the rationality, effectiveness, continuity, and unity of government supervision, can NPOs participate in the sustainable and healthy development of community elderly care services.

Third, the government has too many regulatory requirements for NPOs and there is complex administration in the government, where one has to go through too many procedures at different departments to finish simple work. Departments are always trying to pin the blame on other departments. This is in line with the research findings of Cai (2017) who concluded that the elderly care service system in China often involves multiple governmental departments. NPOs and businesses are also subject to regulatory agencies from different government departments. The overall coordination of elderly care services lacks effective communication and collaboration. In terms of catering services for community elderly care, many governmental departments, including civil affairs, food and drug supervision, industry and commerce, and taxation, claim themselves as the leader of the administration. However, once a problem arises, these departments shirk responsibility and blame each other. As the leading department, the civil affairs department, fails to mobilize and coordinate the resources of other departments, resulting in damage to the interests of social organizations. Besides, some government-mandated performance indicators do not align with the actual needs of the elderly population. Nevertheless, NPOs are obligated to fulfil these indicators, which hinders their sustainable development.

Fourth, unsustainable government involvement creates distrust of NPOs among businesses and volunteers. The government normally begins with tigerish energy but peters out towards the end when regulating or supporting NPOs. As a result, businesses and volunteers do not trust NPOs. For example, as mentioned by P16: "*The government's level of involvement is not*

sustained; it provides less guidance and management in the later stages. This is actually a negative factor. It affects not only our sustainability but also the sustainability of society. If the government's support is not sustainable, even if some enterprises in society continue to support you, if the government no longer pays attention and stops issuing relevant documents, wouldn't people think your organization is unreliable? Volunteers would lose trust as well."

In a nutshell, the reasons for the challenges brought by the government indicate the need for optimization and improvement in policies and regulatory mechanisms to better support the sustainable development of NPOs in community-based elderly care services.

4.3.3 Reasons for impacts from volunteers

Interviewees think the reasons for the challenges from volunteers faced by NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care primarily revolve around insufficient volunteer expertise and a lack of enthusiasm for the work.

First, volunteers may be affected by the emotions of the elderly. For example, P4 mentioned that "*Experienced volunteers are less affected psychologically by elderly men's behaviour, while novice volunteers are strongly affected by elderly people.*"

Second, some volunteers are not of high quality, not strong in dedication, and do not do practical work when serving the elderly, which leads to complaints from the elderly to the NPOs.

Third, the legal awareness of the volunteers is weak. If mistakes are made, the NPO needs to bear corresponding responsibilities. In addition, newcomer volunteers have no experience in serving the elderly, so they may not be competent for this job at the beginning.

Fourth, Volunteers have doubts about the practical feasibility and guarantee level of the specific implementation of the "time bank" plan (such as how to exchange accumulated service time, and how to convert it into content that volunteers can enjoy). For example, P15 put forward a realistic problem: *"The elderly or residents, who engage in volunteer service, may think, 'I have devoted my time to the community-based elderly care, then how can I exchange the accumulated service time? Will this kind of service be provided first when I get older? Is there a guarantee of policy? Is there a related material guarantee or financial guarantee? I don't think there are answers. Even if NPOs have volunteered for three to five years, 'When I really need to serve someone else, will this organization still be in this area? In other words, when the organization provides services in the community, will it recognize my previous volunteer service time?' There are no answers now."*

Fifth, the reason that affects sustainable development is the mismatch between the high expectations of volunteers and the publicity methods as well as the specific services of NPOs.

Based on the above challenges, it is also necessary for NPOs to seek countermeasures to enhance the sustainability of volunteer participation in community-based elderly care and to promote the long-term development of the sector.

4.3.4 Reasons for impacts from the elderly group

Interviewees pointed out that the reasons for the challenges from the elderly faced by NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care mainly include a lack of understanding and trust in the organization, as well as having unrealistic expectations of the services provided by the organization. These factors can easily lead to dissatisfaction with the organization.

First, the elderly doubt and avoid NPOs because they do not have a thorough understanding of NPOs.

Second, many elderly people are withdrawn, alone, and easily emotional with rigid thinking and poor understanding, which leads to barriers in communication. *"The activity effect is not satisfactory because the elderly people have slow reactions and no smooth communication*", said P20.

Third, elderly people are dependent and demanding with high expectations of NPOs. They are likely to give unfavourable evaluations and resist NPOs if their expectations are not met.

Fourth, some elderly people think that NPO services cannot meet their needs.

Finally, the amount of the pension of the elderly will affect their willingness to participate in NPOs. In response to these challenges, NPOs can take targeted measures, such as strengthening advocacy with the elderly to enhance their understanding of NPOs and increase their trust; providing diversified services to try to meet the individual needs of the elderly and ensure service quality.

Through various measures, NPOs can better respond to the challenges from the elderly and provide more caring and effective community-based elderly care services.

4.3.5 Reasons for impacts from the public

When NPOs engage in community-based elderly care, the reasons for the challenges from the public mainly include a preference for negative news in the media (frequency of 10 mentions), the need for enhanced positive guidance and publicity in the media (frequency of 10 mentions), and a lack of understanding or awareness of the operational conditions of NPOs by the public (frequency of 6 mentions).

First, some unscrupulous NPOs mislead public opinion. Negative public opinion has an amplifying effect, which in turn leads to the public's doubts or distrust of NPOs. For example, P19 says: *"News reports of the abuse of the elderly in daytime elderly care centres have led to the distrust of NPOs among the elderly."*

Second, NPOs have a confusing management mode and lack credibility, which leads to public distrust.

Third, insufficient government publicity or misleading publicity, like "elderly care depends on the government", leads the public to believe that NPOs should charge no fees. For example, *In the past two years, the public has been generally dissatisfied with some government procedures. The government has performed poorly. Then the public will think elderly care is supposed to be undertaken by the government. Why should we carry out tasks and work on publicity? Therefore, the media may pay little attention to NPOs. Besides, nobody wants to do something without benefits"*, said P2.

Fourth, a small number of people are concerned about social welfare. As P11 mentioned that *"Everyone is focused on entertainment, such as fast news, Wechat Moments and material life. Little attention has been paid to spiritual and social life."*

Last, the public's understanding of NPOs is inconsistent with the services NPOs provide.

4.4 Suggestions on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

In this section, suggestions on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care are coded and summarized by the theme, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 The coded suggestions on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Q1. How can NPOs themselves achieve the sustainable development of their participation in community-based elderly care?		
There is institutional supervision and aggregation of everyone's work results	The elderly care industry actively progresses (N=16)	Professional capabilities
Form industry representatives to promote industry development		
Strengthen NPOs' cohesion and sense of value		
Clarify responsibilities and positioning of NPOs		
Form associations of NPOs to exchange and learn from each other		

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Be able to recruit full-time staff. Enhance NPOs' professional capabilities Learn from the achievements and experiences abroad Actively explore models for independent development Provide more flexible services based on the needs of the elderly Diversify sources of funding Need to carry out some fee-based projects to obtain funds Funding sources need to have reliable channels	Enhancing the self-sustainability of NPOs is essential (N=5)	Resources
Q2. How can the government support the NPOs to achieve the sustainable development of participation in community-based elderly care?		
Provide spiritual rewards for multiple participating roles Elderly care policies should be continuous and long-term Integrate social resources to gain multifaceted support Mobilize more social forces, including enterprises and universities, to participate Strengthen public relations and publicity efforts Need stable access to government projects Government departments should increase funding and policy support	Policies are encouraging the flow of resources into the elderly care sector (N=24)	Policy support and resources
Develop preferential policies to encourage volunteers, businesses, and others to participate in charitable activities Need more communication, exchange, and feedback with government departments Policy recommendations often go unaddressed Government departments should have a clear and explicit evaluation system Government departments should formulate comprehensive planning and policy guidance Government departments should have clear and stable responsible individuals	Government departments are emphasizing communication and feedback with NPOs (N=21)	Communication and coordination
Q3. How to improve the quality and willingness of volunteers?		
Increase publicity efforts to cultivate volunteers' sense of value and satisfaction Encourage university students to join and pursue careers in the field Establish incentive mechanisms for career development Policy guidance to boost willingness to participate Government recognition through qualification certificates	Policy guidance plays a crucial role (N=24)	Policy support

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes (Frequency)	Aggregate Dimensions
Enhance organization and training for volunteers Ensure volunteers have a better understanding of their roles Strengthen volunteer retention efforts Foster the growth of passionate volunteers	Strengthening organizational and training efforts is essential (N=20)	Professional capabilities
Q4. How to precisely meet the demands of the elderly?		
Enhance communication and observation Provide regular support and consolation Improve the feedback and assessment process	Regular communication and observation with the elderly in their work are encouraged (N=18)	Communication and coordination
Conduct thorough market research Collaborate with professional organizations Utilize elderly information available from government departments Establish standard criteria for assessing various needs of seniors Categorize and provide assistance based on the specific needs of seniors	Various methods are used to investigate and understand the situation (N=12)	Communication and coordination
Q5. How to eliminate the misunderstanding and dissatisfaction of the public?		
Increase promotional efforts Government departments should provide institutional certification for NPOs Long-term awareness campaigns are necessary to make people embrace community-based elderly care services by NPOs	Increased public awareness campaigns aim to promote accurate perceptions (N=18)	Promotion and guidance
NPOs should prioritize transparency and adherence to regulations Showcase NPOs' achievements Organize open events for some day care centers Engage resident representatives in discussions	NPOs are becoming more open and transparent (N=13)	Professional capabilities
Continuously improve service quality to build a positive reputation	Service quality improvement is a priority (N=1)	Professional capabilities

4.4.1 Suggestions for NPOs to enhance their sustainable development of participation in community-based elderly care

The suggestions provided by the interviewees for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care primarily fall into two categories. On the one hand, continuous improvement within the elderly care industry (frequency: 16 mentions) is required. The industry itself should strive to learn from best practices and constantly evolve and progress. On the other hand, it is necessary for NPOs to enhancing self-sustainability (frequency: 5 mentions), which means that NPOs should work on building their own capacity for self-

sustenance and not rely solely on the government for support. This involves the following aspects:

First, NPOs should have precise positioning of themselves as a supplement to the government's elderly care. At the current stage, NPOs, as an important complementary force to the government's social care services, undertake some of the elderly care responsibilities separated from the government to meet the needs of the elderly groups in the community. At the same time, community-based elderly care businesses, including the government as the primary social stakeholder (PSS), volunteers as the secondary social stakeholders (SSS), the elderly groups as the primary non-social stakeholders (PNS) and the public as the secondary non-social stakeholders (SNS), to jointly promote the senior care business development and improvement. Moreover, NPOs should establish various systems and formulate relevant codes of conduct and service process requirements so as to carry out community elderly care services in an orderly manner. For example, P3 mentioned that *"To develop the career continuously, the first thing we need to do is to position ourselves. In terms of positioning, we need to know what we should do and how to do it. As I said earlier, the majority of elderly care is still led by the government, and we are playing a supplementary role. And we ourselves should have various processes and regulations to keep organized. Our minds should be clear about what to do and how to do it in order to do it well."* P1 added that *"NPOs can have a precise positioning of themselves by understanding the needs of the elderly through social research."*

Second, NPOs need to adjust their mentality and settle down to do charity instead of making money. NPO is purely public welfare, and doing community elderly care is also a public welfare undertaking. They need long-term persistence and hard work, not just short-term gains, or external performance. At the same time, NPOs managers should cultivate a strong sense of social responsibility and professionalism, so as to ensure that NPOs can be operated under the principle of fairness and transparency when developing community elderly care services. P3 expressed that *"Adjusting the mindset means that we develop a career for public welfare instead of money. Therefore, we should not think about whether we can make money, how much money we can make and how to make money. Otherwise, we will be easily impatient, and we will not be able to throw ourselves to elderly care."*

Third, it is recommended that NPOs mobilize more social forces to participate in the elderly care business and listen to the opinions of operating institutions. These social forces can be young volunteers, students, and social groups. They can not only provide services but also establish closer ties with NPOs and elderly care groups in the process of participating in community elderly care services and then become an important force in promoting the

sustainable development of community elderly care services. For example, P2 mentioned that *"Attempts can be made to involve more social forces in the elderly care and listen to the opinions of operating organizations; We should expand sources of financial support such as charitable organizations and sources of volunteers, including college students and junior elders."* P20 also agreed that *"More people and companies get involved and provide funds, venues, and facilities, which can play a huge role in the sustainable development of NPOs."*

Fourth, it is hoped that NPOs can recruit full-time staff to engage in community elderly care. To carry out high-quality community elderly care services for NPOs, a large number of talents are needed. These talents are not only volunteers but also full-time professionals. Therefore, NPOs need to improve their talent support system, not only to attract talent but also to retain full-time personnel through various means.

Fifth, diversifying sources of funding. This requires NPOs to enhance their financing capabilities. Only with sufficient funds can we ensure that NPOs participate in the sustainable development of community elderly care. While receiving government financial support, NPOs can cultivate and explore more fund-raising channels by integrating social charity funds, small-amount funding projects, and exploring market-based projects that can charge fees.

Sixth, NPOs can set up an association to organize collective communication with the government. This move helps improve communication efficiency. The association can convey opinions and suggestions to the government on behalf of NPOs so that the government can better understand and meet the needs of NPOs in the process of carrying out community-based elderly care. At the same time, the association can also promote mutual understanding and cooperation among NPO members, and jointly promote the development of community elderly care. For example, P8 mentioned that *"We hope to set up a platform for communications and liaisons for NPOs so that the community-based elderly care sector can blossom."*

Last, opening multiple channels to recruit volunteers (such as from colleges and hospitals) and provide professional training to volunteers to improve the level and segmentation of volunteer services.

In line with the directional viewpoints of Chinese scholars Lin and Li (2022) that strengthening the self-capacity building of NPOs is the key to addressing the dilemma of the marginalization of NPOs in the community management system, this study provides targeted measures for improvement based on the interviews with some main managers of NPOs, which supplements previous study.

4.4.2 Suggestions for government to enhance sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

The suggestion from interviewees on how the government can promote and improve the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care include implementing policies to facilitate the flow of resources into the elderly care sector (frequency: 24 times) and prioritizing and improving communication and feedback mechanisms between government departments and NPOs (frequency: 21 times).

First of all, the government should give the NPO a formal identity through the promulgation of government documents on policies, guarantees, explanations and necessary guidance. The attitude and positioning of government departments towards NPOs have an important impact on the sustainable development of NPOs. The government should recognize the social status, social functions, and social responsibilities of NPOs in legal form, and considers the rationality, effectiveness, continuity, and unity of the implementation of NPO supervision and supervision mechanisms when formulating policies. Management according to law creates a good legal environment for NPOs to participate in community elderly care services, which is of great significance to the more sustainable and healthy development of NPOs' participation in community elderly care services.

Second, the government should set up dedicated funding departments to connect with NPOs in order to speed up funding approval, precedent approval, and implementation. This is consistent with the research viewpoints of W. Li and Wei (2022). This can not only improve the efficiency of government departments in handling matters related to NPOs but also strengthen the cooperation between the government and NPOs in social welfare undertakings and provide better and more efficient support and guarantee for NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care.

Third, the government should improve the volunteer credit management system and incentive mechanism (such as star rating standards, and point-based household registration), so that both volunteers and NPOs can benefit. Volunteers are an important force for supporting NPO activities. Improving the credit system and incentive mechanisms can give volunteers appropriate social recognition and spiritual encouragement, thereby increasing volunteers' willingness to continue participating in community-based care. As P17 mentioned that *"It is good to adopt a point system to enhance the recognition and sense of the value of volunteers to NPOs. Therefore, volunteers can exchange some support or benefit in the future."* P18 also

expressed similarly that *"The current elderly people of low age serve the elderly of old age and other elderly people of low age will serve them in the future, forming a virtuous circle."*

Fourth, the continuity of government policies should be enhanced, such as the continuity of policy support, the continuity of evaluation standards, and the continuity of liaison personnel. Both interviewees P7 and P8 mentioned that *"the continuity in assessment criteria and changes in government staff affect us. The person of the neighbourhood committee (under the government) may not be in charge anymore, or transferred, and the continuity is broken. Hopefully, assessment is consistent with policy interpretation."*

Fifth, the flexibility of government policies should be enhanced, and moderate marketization of NPOs should be permitted. P9 advocated that *"Now the Ministry of Civil Affairs provides some elderly plans and advocates the development of suitable village projects for the elderly. The government will build villages for the elderly and need the assistance of the residential care department of NPOs, which also lets NPOs play a role. Then, the government will value and provide help and support in policy."* P12 also said that *"The rehabilitation fee may be 120 yuan, but it may be 80 yuan in NPOs. Therefore, the government encourages NPOs to carry out paid programs. The activity venue is provided by the government. After subtracting the operating costs and the corresponding compensation given by the government, a cost will be calculated to encourage NPOs to launch services to the market."*

Sixth, the government, NPOs, communities, and publicity departments should communicate regularly to integrate resources and to better serve the elderly. P4 suggested that *"Government departments such as neighbourhood committees and NPOs should have more contact. On the one hand, neighbourhood committees popularize policies for NPOs. On the other hand, NPOs' needs are fed back to the community, which helps to offer solutions."* P14 suggested that *"Constant policy support can be consolidated by holding monthly government and NPOs joint meetings and seminars and introducing volunteer representatives to the meetings."* Their suggestions align with the viewpoint of W. Li and Wei (2022) that the government should assist social organizations and relevant entities in elderly care services by establishing an information exchange platform and providing institutionalized communication mechanisms.

Last, the government should guarantee that the requirements, expectations, and norms of NPOs are within a reasonable range and make a commitment to providing substantive support.

In summary, in the process of participating in the sustainable development of community elderly care, NPOs depend on the strong support of the government in terms of funds and policies. The government should create a facilitating environment for NPOs to participate in

the sustainable development of community-based elderly care through a combination of administrative and economic means.

4.4.3 Suggestions on improving volunteers' quality and the willingness to enhance sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

The suggestions provided by the interviewees on how to enhance volunteer quality and willingness include policy guidance to encourage volunteer participation (frequency: 24 times) and strengthening volunteer organization and training efforts (frequency: 20 times).

First of all, government provides volunteers with honour and utilizes media resources to increase publicity efforts, fostering a sense of value and achievement among volunteers. This will help create a societal atmosphere where respecting and caring for the elderly and serving them is encouraged, ultimately attracting more volunteers to join, as mentioned in P18: "*However, individuals may have some personal demands related to volunteering. When we engage in volunteer service, can we gain something in the future? Can we obtain something? It's not just about money; it might also involve honour and a range of incentives.* "

Second, students from some majors (such as nursing and psychology) in colleges can join NPOs for internships. P12 said that "*NPOs can recruit some volunteers with a professional background, such as students from some majors like nursing, social work, who have a higher level of professionalism.*" By doing voluntary services in community-based elderly care, these students can better understand and practice what they have learned to continuously improve their practical skills. Moreover, participating in community-based elderly care volunteering can as well allow the students to learn about the real situation of the industry, which is helpful for broadening their horizons and laying a more solid foundation for their future careers. For those who are interested in pursuing a career in community-elderly care services or NPOs, they might have a clearer career path with hands-on experiences. This is also conducive for NPOs to recruit more talents to join their community-based elderly care.

Third, addressing the issue of insufficient professional competence among volunteers, it is crucial to strengthen the organization and training of volunteers. Volunteers should understand the characteristics of the elderly to provide corresponding service through more communication and observation. P10 mentioned that "*Due to the impact of aging, the elderly groups might be unable to keep up with the fast pace of social development, since their learning ability, cognition level might be much worse. Therefore, while doing voluntary services, volunteers need to understand the characteristics of the elderly so as to provide corresponding services to meet their needs.*" Volunteers providing elderly care services also need to possess a certain

level of professional competence. Providing training to volunteers is essential to enhance the satisfaction of the elderly and promote the sustainable development of the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care, as emphasized by P7: "*I believe that organizations like the Red Cross should have specialized training, technical guidance, medical knowledge, first aid knowledge, or guidance on donating first aid supplies and the like*."

These research findings expand on Wuthnow's (1993) study which suggested that volunteer services can be considered a part of social participation, and that providing basic community eldercare services through volunteers can alleviate government pressure and create a better community environment. This study provides substantial suggestions and specific measures, making it of greater practical significance.

4.4.4 Suggestions on precisely meeting the demands of the elderly to enhance sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

The suggestions provided by the interviewees on how to accurately understand the needs of the elderly group and thereby promote the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care include:

First, NPO staff and volunteers should be familiar with community elderly care industry to meet the needs of the elderly. This requires staff and volunteers to understand the situation of the community and the elderly's elderly life and pension needs and utilize NPOS's existing resources and the skills and experience of the staff and volunteers to help the elderly maximumly. P4 mentioned that "*On the one hand, our own staff and volunteers shall be familiar with community-based elderly care services and be able to look carefully at what can be done to meet the demands of the elderly, what resources are lacking and what needs cannot be met, then we can correspondingly adjust our services. On the other hand, we should also listen to the ideas and suggestions of the elderly and their family when carrying out community-based elderly care."*

Second, NPO staff should listen to the old people's thoughts in the process of providing services. They should understand and record the needs of the elderly group by investigation and record in order to help the elderly in a gradual manner. For example, P5 said that *"More care and comfort should be given to the elderly, especially the elderly living alone."* Ignoring the views and needs of the elderly can lead to the embarrassing situation that even though NPOs provide many services, they still fail to meet the needs of the elderly in their daily life. To improve the quality of community-based elderly care, it is always important to listen to the group first.

Third, categorizing the elderly group (for example, using economic conditions, or whether the elderly can take care of themselves as a standard). For example, P20 proposed that *"NPOs should communicate regularly with neighbourhood committees to classify the situations of different elderly people and follow up with different levels of care."* P14 expressed similar ideas that *"The elderly people are classified, whose spiritual needs are met through partner assistance, regular visits, and engagement of the elderly in volunteer services."* P15 also mentioned that "*The classification might be based on financial status or physical self-care ability. Then it might be more likely that the next step is to set up separate community-based elderly care service profiles for each elderly so as to provide services based on their different demands, thus finally improving the quality and satisfaction of NPOs' services."* This finding in consistent with Leahy's (2018) research results which argued that China can learn from Ireland to strictly distinguish community-based elderly care from care for disabled older adults. NPOs should be responsible for community-based elderly care services and provide classified services to the elderly group. The care for the disabled elderly should be entrusted to professional nursing and medical institutions.

Fourth, industry associations should develop a set of mature scales for NPOs to provide normative guidance and follow-up work for the elderly. P9 advised that *"A scale for the elderly should be designed by a professional organization, which can provide standardized guidance to NPOs and our follow-up work."* These scales can contain multiple measurement dimensions, such as physical health, psychological state, and self-care ability of the elderly. In this way, these scales can scientifically guide NPOs to develop community elderly care services and provide targeted assistance services for the elderly, greatly improving the quality of NPO community elderly care services.

Fifth, grid-based services in the community should be provided. P16 explained that *"Just as a community epidemic prevention team, the community is divided into several areas. Several people form a service team and each service team serves one or more of the designated communities."*

By adopting these recommendations, NPOs can improve the way in which community-based elderly care services are delivered, promote the sustainability of NPOs in this field and better meet the needs of the elderly.

4.4.5 Suggestions on improving the public's recognition to enhance sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

The recommendations provided by the interviewees for guiding people to have a correct understanding of organizations (mentioned 18 times), enhancing the openness and transparency of organizations (mentioned 13 times), and improving the service quality of organizations (mentioned 1 time) thereby to promote the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care include the following aspects.

First, the government's endorsement can make the public more trustworthy of public welfare asset projects. As impartial and authoritative bodies, the recognition and support of public welfare projects by government agencies can not only win more trust and attention for NPO public welfare projects but also enhance the reputation and popularity of public welfare asset projects. In addition, government endorsement can provide more resources and support for public welfare asset projects, such as financial allocations, and workforce support to further enhance the implementation effect and social influence of the project.

Second, continued normative, informational, and financial transparency of NPO institutions. P4 said that *"Take the funds for example, at the end of every month, the details of the funds raised will be sent to the WeChat group which is formed by the people who donated to us. Therefore, everyone will know how much we received and where the funds are used."* P7 suggested that *"NPOs can apply for a crowdfunding account for public welfare projects so that the account is supervised by the platform, where the funds are transparent."* P20 further supplemented that *"The crowdfunding platform will update the basic information, ledger and the investment list."* These recommendations can allow all sectors of society to better understand the operations and financial status of NPOs, as well as the use and management of funds. Only by strictly regulating the transparency of the institution can NPOs win the public's continuous support and trust and provide stronger support for NPOs' future development.

Third, NPOs should listen to the advice of the public (like firms) frequently. This suggestion is consistent with the viewpoint of Han et al. (2015) that to strengthen the participation of NPOs and other social organizations in community eldercare, it is necessary to strengthen the interconnection between social organizations and the community. In the process of carrying out community-based elderly care services, it is important for NPOs to take full account of the needs and suggestions of the public in the local communities so that they can provide better-targeted services. In particular, it is also necessary to listen to the suggestions from firms, as they have a strong advantage in financial and technological resources and can

provide more comprehensive, effective and practical assistance to NPOs. By strengthening communication with firms and local communities, NPO institutions can obtain more resources and support for community elderly care, and at the same time, they can further expand the influence of NPOs in the community.

Fourth, the media should positively publicize and educate the public on the contributions made by NPOs in community-based elderly care, so as to create a good social atmosphere, as P4 said that "*On the one hand, they need to keep open and transparent records of their business. On the other hand, there is also a need for the whole society to promote and improve the awareness of the public about community-based elderly care, the services and the contribution made by NPOs in this field."* NPOs have played an important role in community care for the elderly. Organizing volunteers, raising funds, opening day-care centres, and carrying out recreational activities, it can provide a variety of cares and care for the elderly in the community, reducing the pressure on families and communities. However, there are still many people who have a limited understanding of NPO. Therefore, we need to strengthen the publicity and education of the contributions made by NPOs in community elderly care and enable more people to understand the work and value of NPOs through different channels. For example, P7, P8, and P17 all made the following suggestions that *"a). Official media such as official accounts should be made for publicity and supervision; b). Industry associations or government departments should show the work fruits of NPOs; and c). NPOs introduce and demonstrate themselves through the way of open days."*

Fifth, the general public can visit NPO day care centres to improve public satisfaction. Visiting NPO's community-based elderly care places can enable the public intuitively to understand the working process and service content of NPO institutions. The public can also interact with the elderly during the visit to understand their real feelings. In addition, the general public can also learn about the community elderly care services and resources that NPOs can provide during the visit, so as to obtain more information and help for those in need of community elderly care.

Sixth, the change of public opinion also requires the support and recognition of the family members of the elderly.

These suggestions aim to increase the recognition of NPOs in society at large, promote the sustainability of NPOs in community aged care work, and provide more support and resources to improve elderly care services. At the same time, changing the perceptions of the community at large also requires the participation and advocacy of the senior group themselves, and through

their personal experiences and promotion, the recognition and support of NPOs in society can be further increased.

Overall, the suggestions for the stakeholders involved in the process of NPOs' participating in community-based elderly care services align with the arguments made by Freeman (1984) and Clarkson (1994) from the perspective of corporate governance. For firms, sustainable development and governance need to mediate a variety of relationships. Institutional managers (i.e., NPO) should maximize the value of customers (i.e., pension groups) and ensure sustainable development to the greatest extent under the premise of protecting the interests of various stakeholders. NPOs' participation in community elderly care is like a social and economic system composed of stakeholders. The fundamental goal of a firm is to add value to its stakeholders (Clarkson, 1994).

4.5 Summary

This chapter describes the responses of various stakeholders on the sustainable development of NPO from the following four categories: the overall status, the challenges faced by NPOs, the reasons for the challenges and recommendations. In these sections, we summarise interviewees' perceptions of the impact of various stakeholders on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care.

By integrating the various first order concepts and second order themes mentioned in Chapter 4, we have formed an aggregate dimension that governs the full study, as shown in Figure 4.6.

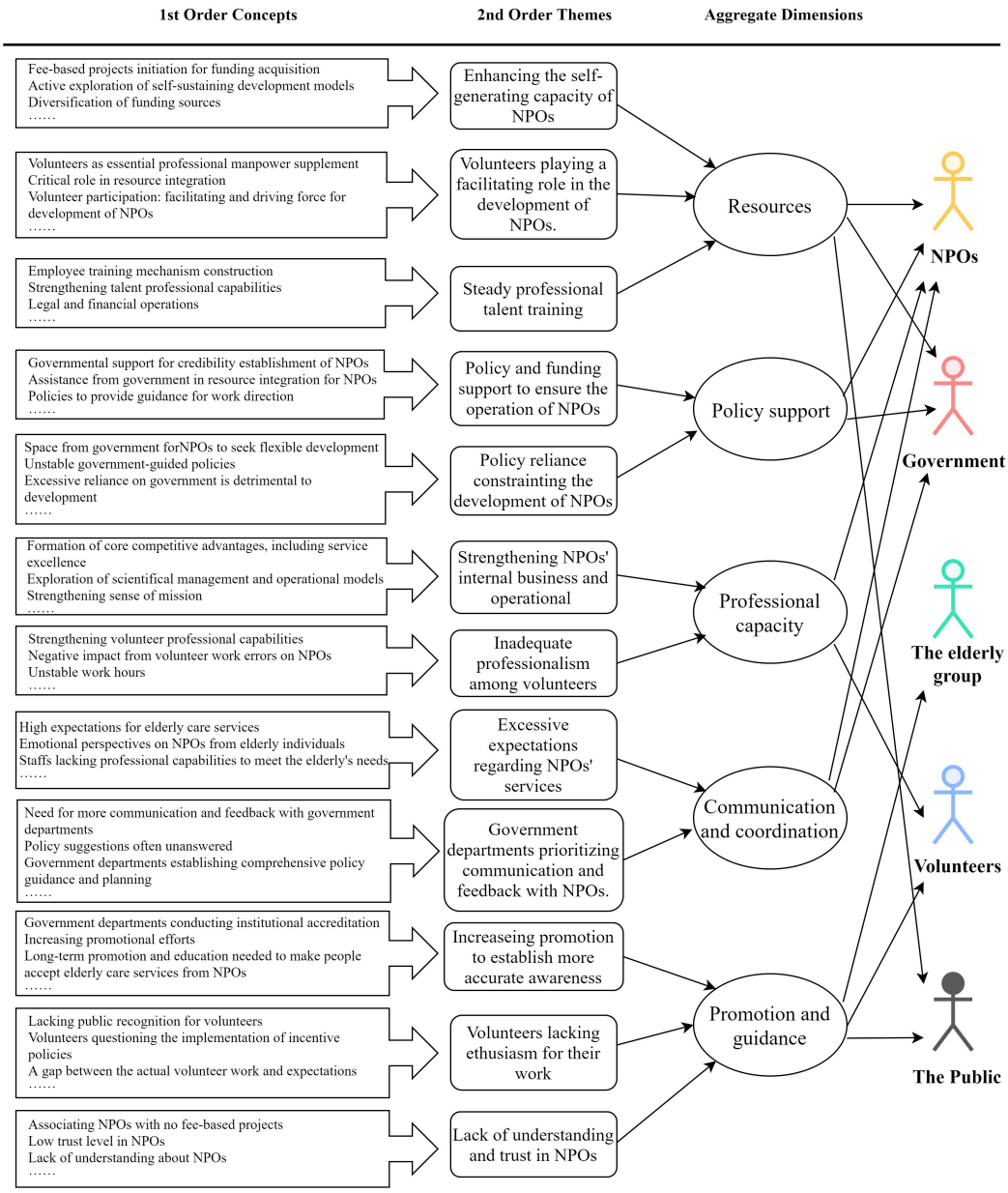

Figure 4.6 Data structure of the analysis for the study

Note: due to space limitations, this data structure is a selective presentative, and please see complete data structure from Table 4.1 to Table 4.4.

In the process of summarizing the research findings, this chapter represents the overall status, challenges, reasons behind challenges and suggestions of sustainable development of the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care from five dimensions, including the four major types of stakeholders, namely PSS (government), SSS (volunteers), PNS (the elderly) and SNS (the public), as well as the NPOs themselves. Additionally, it has delved into the challenges, reasons, and recommendations that affect nonprofit organizations' participation in sustainable community elderly care development within these five dimensions. The study found that "resources," "policy support," "professional capabilities," "communication and

coordination," and "promotion and guidance" are key aggregate dimensions that enhance the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care in China.

Based on Figure 4.6, this research independently combs through the relationships between various dimensions and stakeholders, deriving a theoretical model diagram for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, as shown in Figure 4.7.

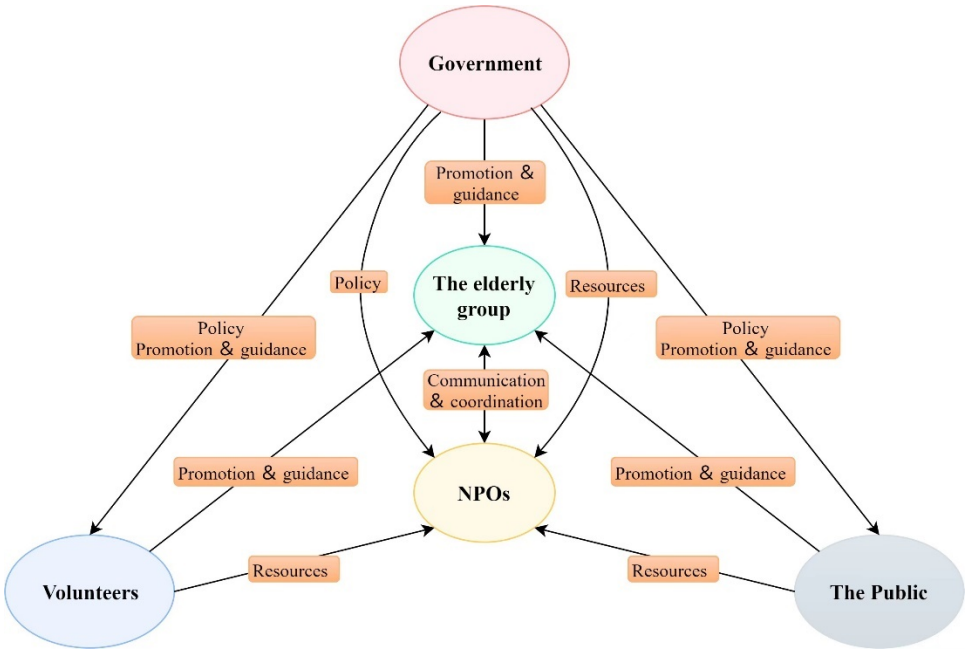

Figure 4.7 An integrated theoretical model diagram for NPOs' sustainable participation

While presenting the findings, this chapter discusses and explains the research outcomes in conjunction with the findings of the previous literature review in Chapter 2 and the views of various scholars. Integrating analysis and discussion helps to further explain and interpret the research findings and connect them to existing theoretical frameworks and perspectives, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the overall status, challenges faced and recommendations for sustainable development of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care.

To strengthen the validity and credibility of the research, the representative cases and statements by the interviewees are listed as the rational for discussions to support and enrich the research findings. This approach combines the insights gained from literature review with the first-hand information obtained through interviews, providing a more comprehensive and accurate source of information for the study, making these findings more convincing and credible.

As for the key issues and challenges in each dimension identified in the research, such as policy support of government, the participation and training of volunteers, the needs and willingness to participate of the elderly, awareness and support of the public, and the

organisational management and capacity enhancement of NPOs themselves, the next chapter will summarise the corresponding suggestions, such as strengthening policy support, promoting volunteer training and incentive mechanisms, enhancing social advocacy and education, and strengthening the organisational capacity of NPOs.

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Chapter 5: Conclusions

This chapter will systematically summarize and review the main research findings. Combined with the literature review and research findings, the significance and implication of this study to reality will be proposed. At the same time, it will reflect on some of the research limitations of this study, and prospects for future research and conclude the whole study.

5.1 Conceptual model and strategic management of stakeholder engagement in community-based elderly care by NPOs

It is very important to summarize the stakeholder conceptual model of NPO participation in community aged care on the basis of identifying relevant stakeholders and clarifying their roles, since so far, no studies have proposed a dedicated conceptual model for this important industry, based on empirical or theoretical studies. At the same time, it is also important to revisit the relevant literature mentioned earlier in this study and relate it to the data analysis, because it allows us to examine the existing studies from a practical perspective, so as to contribute to the development of stakeholder theory from the perspective of practice.

This thesis, based on the three levels of institutional strategic management under the stakeholder theory proposed by Freeman (1984) and the clarification model by Wheeler (1998), this study analyses the roles and functions of various stakeholders in NPO's participation in community elderly care services to build a conceptual model of stakeholders unique to this industry (see Figure 2.5).

From the analysis of the interview outcomes, it can be seen that the processes or elements involved in NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care services are in line with the three levels of institutional strategic management under the stakeholder theory proposed by Freeman (1984). At the "rational level", this study first elaborates on the division of stakeholders by different scholars, analyses the "interests" involved or pursued by various stakeholders in NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care services, comprehensively and objectively evaluates their positions and rights, and finally identifies and categorised the stakeholders of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care services.

In China, local governments are the main responsible entities for community-based elderly care services. Governmental actions directly affect the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care activities (Williams & Hattton-Yeo, 2015), making them the primary social stakeholders (PSS). On the other hand, the elderly are the service objects and the beneficiaries of NPOs. They are more concerned about whether their demands and needs can be met by NPOs without interference from external stakeholders. Therefore, this group is the primary non-social stakeholder (PNS) according to Wheeler (1998). Compared with the core stakeholder role of the government, the role of volunteers is secondary social stakeholders (SSS). This is consistent with the understanding of volunteers by Bastiaens et al. (2007) and Wheeler (1998) who both pointed out that volunteers are the main staff of NPOs, so their service skills directly affect the perception of the service group. Therefore, they are placed in the position of secondary stakeholders. Finally, according to Wheeler's (1998) stakeholder theory and his definition of secondary non-social stakeholders, it can be seen that the general public is the secondary non-social stakeholder (SNS).

In addition, Freeman (1984) proposed the "process level" as the second level of institutional strategic management under the stakeholder theory. The process level involves developing stakeholder strategies, considering stakeholder interests when analysing goals and strategies, and examining how stakeholders' behaviour may affect achieving corporate objectives (Freeman, 1984). Based on interviewees' feedback, this study suggests that NPOs themselves should first clarify their positioning and goals as a crucial supplement to government elderly care services. This is consistent with the view of Zhong (2012) "NPOs and government organizations have a cooperative relationship, rather than a subordinate one, and complement each other in function with a clear division of labour." Therefore, NPOs need to clarify the relationship and role of each stakeholder in their sustainable development and then consider how to operate, manage, optimize, and achieve sustainable development.

Furthermore, Freeman (1984) proposed the "transaction level" as the third level of institutional strategic management under the stakeholder theory. This study explores how NPOs can collaborate and coordinate with other stakeholders from the perspective of NPOs' operational managers to promote the sustainable development of community-based elderly care services. For example, NPOs can mobilize more social forces to participate in elderly care services, take operational organizations' advice, explore marketization moderately, establish associations for NPOs, organize collective and government communication to improve development efficiency, recruit volunteers through various channels, provide professional training, and improve services. These suggestions complement the suggestion of Zhong (2012)

that improving the government can transfer some of its functions and powers to NPOs to expand their operating space. NPOs cannot rely solely on government support and should effectively reduce their dependence on the government, improve their management ability, strengthen the construction of professional talent teams for community-based elderly care services, and continuously improve the quality of community-based elderly care services.

In addition to the previous literature review, this study reaffirms the core stakeholders involved in NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care through interviews with practitioners. Firstly, NPOs, as direct service providers, bear the responsibility of mobilizing manpower, material, and financial resources and ensuring efficient operations to provide high-quality elderly care services. Government departments, as responsible entities for elderly care services, indirectly facilitate elderly care provision by providing funding and operational policy guidance to NPOs, playing a decisive role in the process of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. Volunteers, as a significant driving force for NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, not only provide them with a labor force but also serve as a communication bridge between the organizations, the elderly, and the public, enhancing NPOs' public influence and facilitating sponsorships from individuals and corporate entities. Volunteers play a critical role in the resource integration efforts of NPOs. The elderly individuals, as the direct recipients of community-based elderly care services, have a direct impact on the NPOs' sustainable development through their perceptions, attitudes, and acceptance of community-based elderly care. The growing demand for elderly care services in China underscores the significant practical value of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care. While the public may not be direct consumers or providers of elderly care services, the elderly care services provided by NPOs contribute significantly to reducing the elderly care burden on society, promoting family and societal harmony. Moreover, the public's attitude toward NPOs directly affects the organizations' ability to access resources beyond government funding. Therefore, fostering a societal atmosphere of respect and care for the elderly is essential for NPOs to achieve high-quality and sustainable development of their participation in community-based elderly care.

Based on the research results, we can answer Research Question 1: which stakeholders influence the sustainable development of nonprofit organizations in community elderly care?

The stakeholders closely related to NPOs' sustainable involvement in community-based elderly care include government departments, volunteers, the elderly group, and the public.

Through these analyses and findings, this study provides a theoretical basis and practical guidance in the strategic management of NPOs' involvement in community aged care services.

However, it should be noted that the limitations of this study are the qualitative approach and small sample interviews used, and the applicability of the findings is limited. Therefore, quantitative research methods can be used in future studies to expand the sample size and to further validate and refine the stakeholder conceptual model.

Despite the limitations, overall, this study provides useful reflections and insights for promoting the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care services. By systematically exploring the overall status of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, the challenges faced and suggestions for sustainable development, this study presents a comprehensive and in-depth understanding. It provides an important reference for relevant policy makers, administrators and practitioners to help them formulate strategies and policies to promote the sustainable development of the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care services.

5.2 Concluding comments for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

Based on the research result discussed in Chapter Four, further concluding responses for the challenges and causes as well as suggestions for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care are presented in the following parts.

5.2.1 The challenges and causes for influencing the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

First of all, it is important to reiterate the challenges and causes for influencing the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, because this can help to explicit the relevant countermeasures to aid with its development.

In the following parts, the current challenges and reasons for each stakeholder of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care are listed separately.

From Table 5.1, it can be seen that in terms of the current challenges that NPOs have faced in providing community-based elderly care, NPOs had neither a clear definition of elderly care services nor clear long-term development goals, leading to a not clear self-positioning, which further leads to inadequate operational professionalism, a vague organizational structure, and slow adjustment and transformation. Because NPOs have limited access to resources, it's difficult to operate community-based elderly care services only on their own and hard for them

to solve the problems of lacking space and facilities. The biggest challenge comes from a lack of funding, due to few government grants, few social donations and NPOs themselves having no clear idea of improving sustainability through paid services towards the market. In addition, NPOs lack expertise in the deployment of available human, financial and material resources, which makes market-based development and sustainability more difficult. The lack of effective resource management and allocation mechanisms may lead to wasteful and inefficient resources.

Table 5.1 Current challenges from NPOs and reasons

Current challenges	Reasons
Self-positioning: Not clear enough Talent-related: Few full-time staffs Low salaries Low time commitment High turnover Structure and teamwork: not professional Place: Lack of fixed offices Not enough facilities	1. Neither a clear definition of elderly care services nor clear long-term development goals 2. Limited accesses to outward resources and including fund raising, human resource recruiting, professional training 3. Incompetent of mobilizing current social resources
Financing and funding: Lack of funding	1. Few government grants 2. Few corporate donations 3. No clear idea of direction for sustainable development through paid services

In terms of policies and support of the government, as shown in Table 5.2, NPOs' lack of funding mostly is due to the unstable, untimely and small amount of government fund allocations. More specifically, it is because the government has no exclusive funding pools to support NPOs in community-based elderly care. Besides, government policies change frequently, and the evaluation system is confusing, focusing only on the number of indicators and not on the substantive process and effects, which is because the government put too high expectations on NPOs, while at the same time, they set many regulatory requirements on NPOs. In turn, the lack of government funding, changing policies and confusing evaluation mechanisms exacerbates the serious problems of low salaries and high turnover of full-time NPO staff. These findings are consistent with those of T. T. Ju and Meng (2021). However, this research further expounds the main reason for the problem. The main reason for this lies in the government's failure to stipulate appropriate laws and establish funding pools to address the problems that occurred in NPOs' service delivery. Besides, because of the government's administrative complexity, one task involves many departments and they shift the responsibility onto each other, thus implementation becomes even more difficult. Furthermore, the unsustainability of government involvement and the mismatch between government demands

and the needs of the elderly have posed multiple challenges to the sustainability of NPOs' engagement in community-based elderly care.

Table 5.2 Current challenges from government and reasons

Current challenges	Reasons
Limited financing to NPOs Long cycle for grants to be in place Unstable financial support	No exclusive funding pools to support NPOs in community-based elderly care
Policies: ever changing	Lack of comprehensive laws Mismatch between government demands and the needs of the elderly Unsustainable government involvement
Evaluation mechanism towards NPOs: confusing, result-oriented	Too high expectations but too many regulatory requirements Complex administration in the government

As Table 5.3 shows, when it comes to volunteer service, the challenges include that the service time of volunteers is irregular, and it is difficult to provide long-term and continuous service. The service quality of volunteers also varies. Their attitude and professionalism need to be improved as well. These problems lead to a decrease in the quality of community-based elderly services and the satisfaction of the elderly with NPOs and have also impaired the sustainable development of NPOs' community-based elderly service to a certain extent. From the perspective of the volunteer group, these challenges are partly due to the lack of legal awareness and volunteer professionalism, but more so due to the uncertainty of the service return, which leads to irregular service time and makes it difficult for volunteers to offer long-term and continuous service, thus affecting the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care.

Table 5.3 Current challenges from volunteers and reasons

Current challenges	Reasons
Service hours: short and unstable	Unsure about the rewards of their work
Professionalism: low level	Lack of experience, especially the new volunteers
Workload: only simple work	Lack of professional background
Attitude: not positive enough	Lack of sense of duty, fear of taking responsibility

In terms of the elderly group, the trust, Table 5.4 tells that acceptance and emotional problems of the elderly towards NPOs have an impact on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. That is partly due to the lack of understanding and trust of the elderly in NPOs. Some elderly resist paid services from NPOs due to their poor financial condition, while some seniors mistake NPOs as pure charity groups which are supposed to provide free services. The rejection creates resistance to NPOs' exploration of moderately market-based and fee-based programs, which is harmful to the sustainable development of NPOs' community-based senior care. Besides, too strict requirements or high expectations on NPOs from the elderly are reasons behind complaints if NPOs fail to meet their

needs. Factors such as the senior's stubborn personality and inflexible mindset generate communication barriers, creating resistance to the sustainable development of NPOs.

Table 5.4 Current challenges from the elderly and reasons

Current challenges	Reasons
Recognition towards NPOs: untrusted, low acceptance and even resistance	Have not enough understanding of NPOs
Accept only free services but resist paid ones	A small amount of pension Mistaking NPOs as pure charity
Complaints if NPOs fail to meet their needs	Too strict requirements and high expectations on NPOs
Difficult to communicate with	Due to individual differences, being withdrawn, post-traumatic psychological disorder, cognitive impairment due to poor literacy, communication difficulties due to widowhood life, poor financial condition

In terms of the public, seen as in Table 5.5, it is believed that the public is not well informed about community-based elderly care. Their lack of familiarity and understanding led to some stereotypes or dissatisfaction towards NPOs. Besides, the negative impact caused by social opinion exacerbated the problem. Some wicked NPOs have impaired the NPO reputation, and the negative public opinion goes viral, which leads to the lack of NPOs' credibility. Besides, the insufficient or false government publicity that "the elderly can rely on the government to get services" make the public believe that NPO services should be free. Additionally, the public may be confused about certain paid services offered by NPOs due to the unclear management models employed. The lack of self-promotion and advocacy efforts by NPOs has also contributed to misunderstandings among the public. These are the external challenges for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care.

Table 5.5 Current challenges from the public and reasons

Current challenges	Reasons
Stereotype or dissatisfaction towards NPOs	Lack of familiarity and understanding of NPOs and the services provided. Not large number of the public concern about community-based elderly care. Insufficient advocacy
Negative opinions	Some unscrupulous NPOs bring negative public opinion
Confused about NPOs' charging services or charging rules	NPOs' confusing management mode and lack of credibility.
Mistaking NPOs as pure charity	Taking NPOs as government-funded and they should serve for free. Insufficient or false government publicity.

Understanding the challenges and reasons for the sustainable development of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care helps to provide targeted recommendations to address the issues by coming up with more effective proposals to facilitate the continuous

involvement of NPOs in the field of community-based elderly care. This section will be explored in the next sections.

Based on the above discussions, Research Question 2 "How do different stakeholders currently impact the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care?" and Research Question 3 "What are the reasons causing negative impacts on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care?"

The impact on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care primarily includes the following factors: the business capacity, operational capabilities, talent development capabilities, and fundraising capabilities of NPOs themselves; government support and collaboration with NPOs; the quantity and quality of volunteers; the elderly group' satisfaction with services, their understanding of NPOs, and their traditional beliefs; public opinion support and changes in inherent beliefs.

The reasons causing negative impacts on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care mainly include: inadequate business capabilities among NPO practitioners; insufficient government policy support, excessive policy requirements, unclear policy directives, policy instability, and policy implementation difficulties; insufficient professionalism and enthusiasm among volunteers; lack of trust and understanding among elderly individuals regarding NPOs, high expectations of services provided by NPOs, and traditional beliefs; media preference for negative news about NPOs, and public misunderstanding of organizational operations.

5.2.2 Suggestions for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

It is important to highlight the suggestions based on the research results for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. The joint efforts of NPOs, governments, volunteers, the elderly group and the public can help to practically enhance the substantial development of NPOs' participation in this industry and provide better well-being support for the elderly in the community. In the following part, efforts to be made by NPOs and the route to promote sustainable participation of NPOs in the community-based elderly care industry will be presented.

5.2.2.1 Efforts to be made by NPOs themselves to improve sustainable development of participation in community-based elderly care

Figure 5.1 shows the efforts that NPOs should spend. First of all, NPOs should have precise positioning and improve the processing system. As mentioned in the previous part of this thesis, NPOs are important complementary forces to the government in carrying out social care services to meet the needs of the elderly groups in the community. Having a more accurate self-positioning can not only help NPOs deal with the relationship with their stakeholders in the field of community-based elderly care, namely the government (PSS), volunteers (SSS), the elderly groups (PNS) and the public (SNS) but also motivate NPOs to play their roles well by providing comprehensive and targeted services to the elderly in the community.

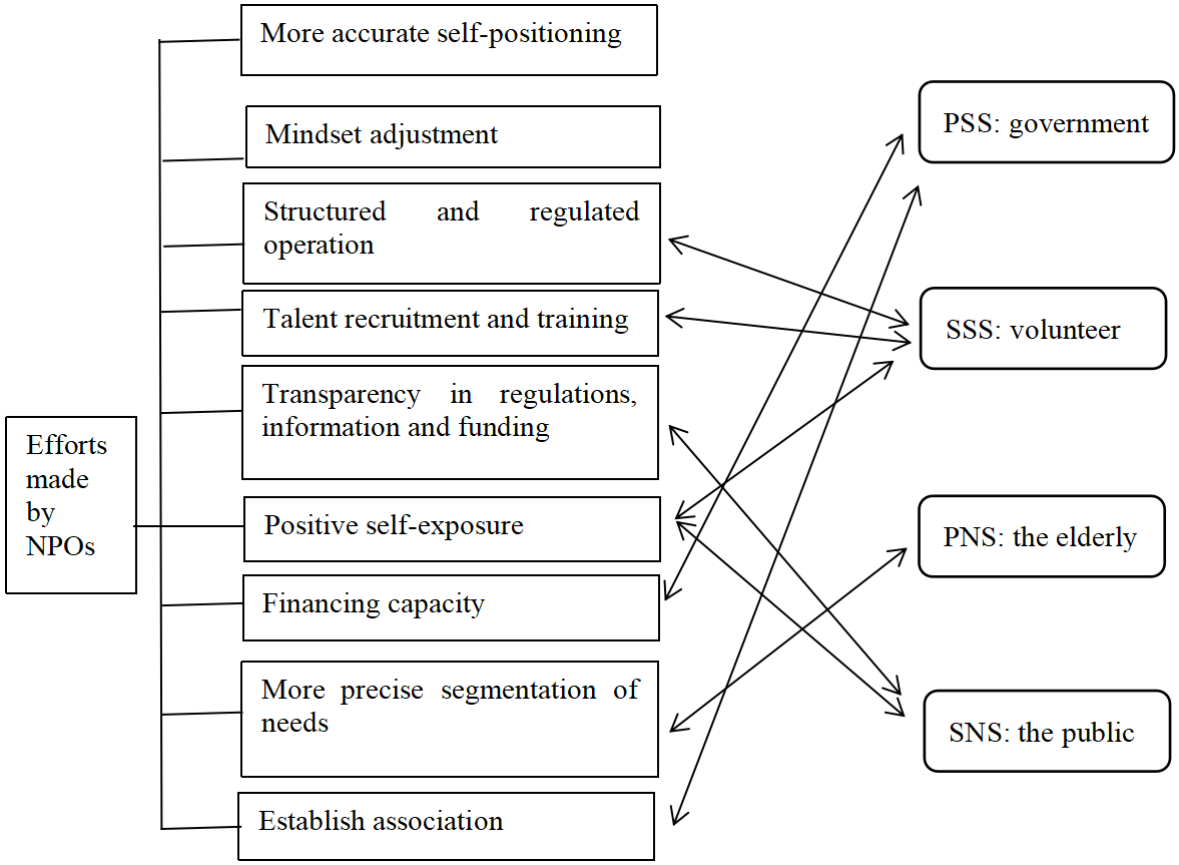

Figure 5.1 Efforts to be made by NPOs themselves to improve sustainable development of participation in community-based elderly care

Aspect connected with stakeholder: ⟷

Second, NPOs should adjust their mindset and be committed to public welfare.

Third, NPOs should establish a comprehensive organizational structure as well as systematic regulations and operation guidelines, which are necessary for the full-time staff and volunteers to carry out high-quality services to the elderly.

Fourth, they should attach importance to talent recruitment and training. Delivering community-based elderly care services requires a large amount of talent, including volunteers. NPOs can not only attract more full-time talents to join them in community-based elderly care but also recruit volunteers from multiple channels, such as university students. Training can

help improve the professional skills of the full-time staff and volunteers, which helps to enhance the service quality.

Fifth, keeping transparent in regulations, operations and funding can help improve NPOs' credibility and earn the trust of the elderly and the public. Increasing self-exposure through various channels including websites, videos, and opening day can enhance the awareness and understanding of the public, thus NPOs should make efforts in these regards.

Sixth, financing capacity, the most important issue, should be strengthened. NPOs themselves, within the permitted scope legally, can take steps to embark on the marketing of some paid services to reduce dependence on government financing and achieve self-sufficiency.

Seventh, precise segmentation of the needs of the elderly can also attract more seniors to use the services provided NPOs. Furthermore, it is also suggested that associations should be established for NPOs to organize communications between associations and the government to improve development efficiency.

In summary, to improve the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, apart from external resources and support, it is most important for NPOs themselves to strengthen their comprehensive capacity, including financing, management, talent recruitment and training, and communication with various stakeholders. By making those efforts together with the stakeholders, sustainable development can be enhanced for NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care.

5.2.2.2 Efforts to be made by stakeholders to improve sustainable development of participation in community-based elderly care

Boger et al. (2017) believed that community-based elderly care, as a complex social governance issue, cannot rely solely on a specialized department to provide effective solutions, but requires interdisciplinary, professional and inter-departmental innovation and collaboration. This kind of equal and cooperative partnership can better promote the initiative of all participants. This can also be applied to the promotion of NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care.

Promoting the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care requires the joint efforts of various stakeholders. As mentioned in the previous parts, the main stakeholders of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care include government, volunteers, the elderly and the public. This study has collated the pathways for each stakeholder to promote the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care as shown in Figure 5.2.

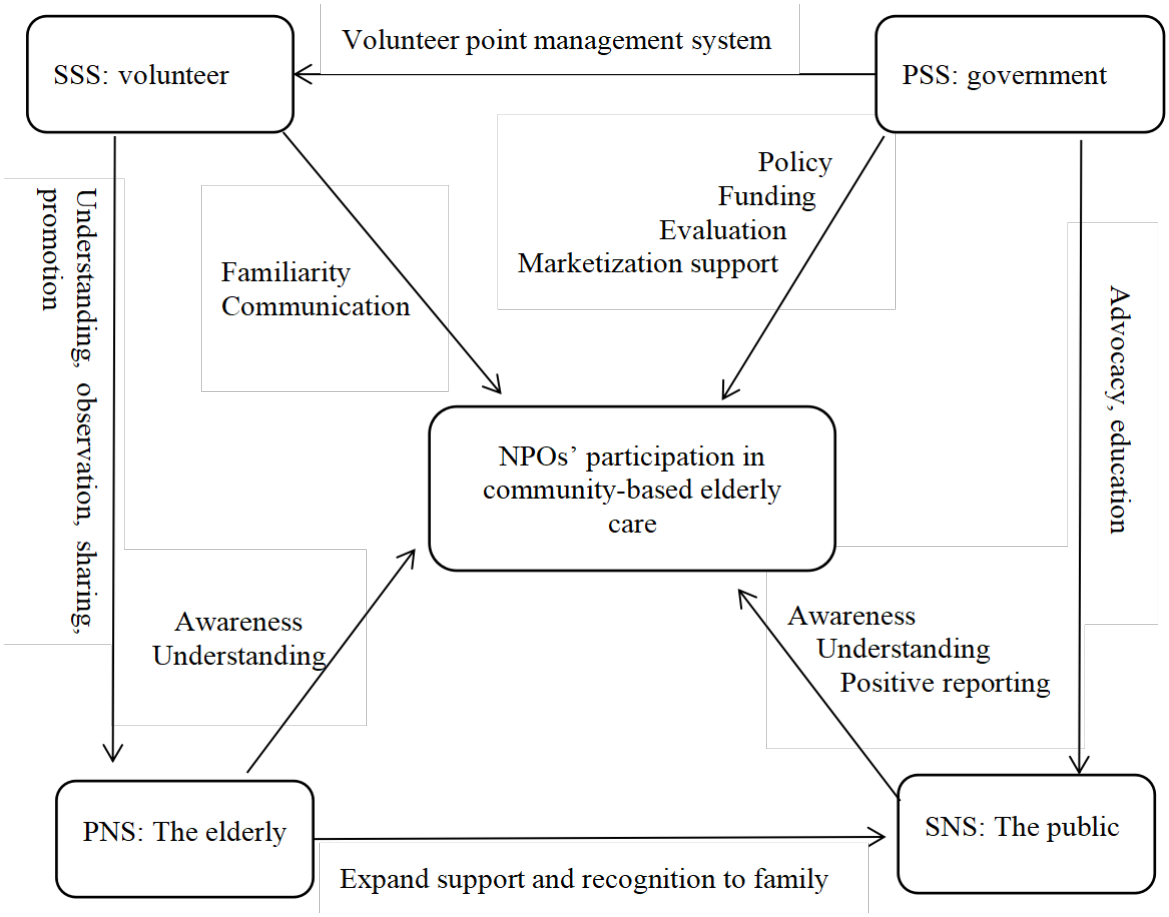

Figure 5.2 Efforts to be made by stakeholders to promote sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care

(1) Government

Chinese researchers Qin and Wu (2012) noted that the dominance of local governments in community-based elderly care is indispensable. Local governments' actions can indicate the direction and trend of social development to participating subjects and can also mobilize the confidence of and social resources from other participating subjects, building a secure foundation for the improvement of community-based elderly care. Though it is the function and responsibility of local governments to provide public services that meet the demand, it does not mean that local governments should take over all steps from production, to provision, and management. How to utilize limited resources to provide efficient and satisfactory services for the public is what governments should consider carefully. Lasker et al. (2001) also noted that if local governments act to combine the resources required for public services in a fair and just manner, construct a conceptual scenario in an overall consideration of the goals and interests of multiple stakeholders, and transform the multiple interests into a state of sustainable acquisition and development, a social collaboration model led by the government with multiple participants can be achieved.

Thus, in terms of promoting the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, the government should make efforts from the perspectives of policy, funding, evaluation mechanism and marketization support to NPOs, volunteer point management system towards volunteers as well as advocacy to improve the awareness and understanding in NPOs of the public.

First, the government should stipulate policies that recognize, protect, and guide NPOs, which is helpful for NPOs to carry out their elderly care services in the community. Besides, government endorsement can also strengthen the public's trust and confidence in NPOs. However, the government should not ignore the continuity of policies.

Second, the government's financial support is of great meaning to NPOs' sustainability in community-based elderly care participation. In terms of government funding, it is suggested that the government set up special funding departments to deal with NPO issues and speed up funding approval and distribution. Purchasing community-based elderly care services from NPOs is a feasible way as well. Besides, the government can provide state-owned spaces and facilities like empty factories and schools free or rent out to NPOs at a very low price.

Third, the government should have a reasonable evaluation mechanism for NPOs concerning their work in community-based elderly care. It is necessary for the government to set reasonable requirements and expectations for NPOs, attaching more importance to the process but not results or statistics.

Fourth, as it is mentioned in the previous part, exploring services that charge fees towards the open market within the permitted scope legally is a way for NPOs to seek self-sufficiency in funding, thus government's supportive attitude and substantial support in this regard are of great importance. The government should enhance the flexibility of policies and allow NPOs to deliver chargeable services.

Fifth, a volunteer point management system towards volunteers is a possible way to attract volunteers to be involved in community-based elderly care services. It is suggested that the government should improve the system based on advice from different groups like volunteers, making the reward and incentive mechanism more comprehensive.

Six, besides endorsement, the government's publicity and promotion of NPOs and their community-based elderly care programs can help enhance the public's awareness and understanding of NPOs, earning NPOs more recognition and trust from the public.

(2) Volunteer

As Bastiaens et al. (2007) and Wheeler (1998) pointed out that volunteers are the main workers of NPOs and their service skills directly affect the perception of the service group.

Therefore, they are important forces in facilitating NPOs to carry out community-based elderly care services and play a role in linking the elderly and NPOs. So as for volunteers, to promote the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care, volunteers are supposed to play their roles as well.

First, they need to get familiar with NPOs and the services through self-learning and training, mastering the service requirements and procedure standards and putting them into practice in the process of delivering elderly care services in the community.

Second, since the elderly is the main targeted group of the services, volunteers are supposed to understand the characteristics of the elderly and be patient with them. Volunteers can share their personal experiences in the service so that the elderly can relate to them more easily.

Third, to help NPOs recognize and clarify the needs of the elderly, volunteers can communicate and observe more during service delivery.

Fourth, in the view of the elderly, volunteers are also representatives of NPOs and their attitude, words and behaviour influence the impression of NPOs on the elderly. Thus, volunteers can help establish a positive image of NPOs in their touch with the elderly by sharing information about NPOs and the charity works that NPOs have completed.

Finally, sufficient communication with NPOs is necessary, which can help volunteers understand NPOs better and let NPOs master the real needs and expectations of the elderly so that NPOs can make relevant adjustments to improve satisfaction and recognition from the elderly.

（3）The elderly

The elderly are not only the recipients of elderly care services but also a stakeholder that influences the sustainable participation of NPOs. From the aspect of how to precisely meet the demands of the elderly, firstly, NPO staff and volunteers should be familiar with community-based elderly care services. As mentioned before, this can be achieved through training. Secondly, it is helpful that industry associations construct a set of scales for NPOs as community-based elderly care service providers to offer standardized guidance so that NPOs can scientifically and systematically segment the demands of the elderly and adjust their services. Thirdly, they should provide community-based services in a grid-based or block-based approach.

In terms of how the elderly can promote the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, understanding and recognition are of great help. The elderly can improve their awareness of NPOs and their services towards the elderly group. Besides, the elderly can share with family about their understanding of NPOs learned from their

touch with volunteers, full-time NPO staff, and peer seniors as well as their direct experience of receiving services from NPOs. More support and recognition from the families of the elderly can encourage NPOs to continue their course in providing community-based elderly care services.

（4）The public

To NPOs, understanding, recognition and support from the public are meaningful for NPOs' sustainable participation in community-elderly care. Apart from government endorsement and self-promotion of NPOs, these can be improved through media reporting. The media is supposed to have more positive reports on the charity work of NPOs, especially their contribution to society in the field of community-based elderly care. The awareness and understanding of the public in NPOs can be promoted in various ways, including paying a visit to the NPOs nearby in the community and following the official accounts of NPOs on different social media platforms. Furthermore, the public can also positively advise NPOs when they come out with any idea that would benefit their sustainable development. In all, the more awareness, understanding, recognition and trust from the public, the more motivation and persistence NPOs have in the operation of the community-based elderly care sector.

The sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care is a comprehensive but complicated work, which requires multidimensional cooperation. By considering the perspectives and collaboration of NPOs themselves, the government, volunteers, the elderly and the general public, the sustainable development of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care can be strengthened. This holistic approach will foster a supportive ecosystem that enables NPOs to thrive in the field of community-based elderly care and effectively contribute to the well-being and quality of life of the elderly in the community.

Based on the above contents, we can answer Research Question 4 "What are the strategies to address the issues of the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care?" Solutions include NPOs actively improving and learning from domestic and international best practices, enhancing service quality, increasing self-sufficiency, reducing dependence on government departments, and promoting transparency and openness to dispel doubts. The government should formulate policies to guide resources into the elderly care sector, focus on communication and feedback with organizations, make reasonable policy adjustments, and utilize media resources to promote a positive understanding of elderly care institutions. Policies should be implemented to encourage volunteer participation in elderly care institutions, along with strengthening volunteer organizations and training. NPO staffs should actively communicate with the elderly individuals, observe their daily lives, and understand their needs,

while collaborating with government and professional research organizations to obtain insights into the needs of the elderly population.

5.3 Practical implications

This study presents a systematic review of the current situation, challenges and reasons for the participation of Chinese NPOs in the community-based elderly care sector, and through semi-structured interviews with many interviewees who are managers of NPOs or the directors of NPOs' community-based elderly care programs, we have conducted in-depth research and analysis of the overall industry situation.

It also provides valuable and practical suggestions for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care in China based on the stakeholder conceptual model formed in the results of the literature review to clarify the relevant stakeholders concerning the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. This will be of great value for Chinese NPOs to evaluate their involvement in the sector.

Besides, this study discusses specific measures to improve the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care from the perspective of stakeholders. Thus, this study provides specific and insightful recommendations not only for practitioners working in NPOs in China, but also for other stakeholders, namely the government and its subordinate agencies (e.g., street offices, neighbourhood committees, CPC committees, and civil affairs bureaus), volunteer groups, elderly care service providers, and the public, on how to work together to do a better job in promoting the sustainable development of NPOs' community-based elderly care business and solve some of the listed elderly care problems brought about by population aging in China.

Overall, in terms of the implications of the practice, the results of this study, especially the suggestions, provide positive guidance and recommendations for the healthy and sustainable development of the NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care sector. The findings will help to facilitate the provision and improvement of community-based elderly care services and provide better care and support for the elderly in China in the community.

5.4 Strengths and limitations

This study has the following research strengths. First, the factors that affect the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care are divided into different stakeholders according to their respective nature and importance, and based on Wheeler's (1998) stakeholder theory, a conceptual model that is more suitable for the clarification of NPO stakeholders is proposed. This provides theoretical value and makes contributions to the NPO industry.

Secondly, the suggestions for improving sustainability are based on the challenges and difficulties that NPO practitioners have encountered in their practice over the years and have profound and practical implications. This study proposes a route that shows what efforts that NPOs themselves and their stakeholders can make and how they can cooperate to promote the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care. It will be constructive not only for NPO organizations and practitioners, but also for other stakeholders, i.e., the government, volunteers, elderly care service providers, and the public. It is hoped that the systematic improvement measures of different stakeholders can forge a synergy for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in the community-based elderly care sector.

There are certain research limitations in this study. For example, the findings in this study were produced from cross-sectional self-retrospective interviews. The data obtained may contain a certain degree of personal subjective bias, or missing facts in the retrospective process, which may not accurately reflect the logical and even causal relationships between challenges, causes and suggestions of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. Therefore, there is potential data imprecision in this study. Besides, this study adopted qualitative research methods and small sample interviews, thus limiting the applicability of the study findings to some extent. In order to increase the credibility and reliability of the study, quantitative research methods could be used in future studies to expand the sample size and to further validate and refine the stakeholder conceptual model. In addition, in future research, quantitative research methods can be used to validate and quantify the conceptual model presented in this study to provide more specific and actionable recommendations. In addition, because the development of the NPO industry in China is not unified across regions, and the policies or implementation are not consistent across regions, this study can only summarize the common problems that occurred in the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. As for individual cases and special situations, they are not included in the study.

5.5 Future research

Based on the research limitations mentioned above, in future research, it can be considered to conduct a longitudinal study and track the implementation and effectiveness of the suggestions put forward in this thesis, so as to propose more optimal countermeasures for the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, thus making the study more comprehensive. Secondly, quantitative research methods could be used in future studies to expand the sample size and to further validate and refine the stakeholder conceptual model. Furthermore, in future research, quantitative research methods can be used to validate and quantify the conceptual model presented in this study to provide more specific and actionable recommendations, because quantitative analysis may be applied because it can help to clarify the intrinsic connections and logical relationships among stakeholders. By verifying the logical relationship of each factor, we can identify the core and key elements that affect the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care, so that the problems can be pinpointed and targeted countermeasures can be implemented to improve the current situation and to overcome challenges faced by the industry.

Apart from the aspects mentioned, since the policies or implementation related to NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care are not consistent across regions, further studies can be made in separately discussing the specific situation of the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care in different regions or even as municipal level in China.

Through these future studies, it is believed that the sustainability of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care can develop more steadily and orderly in China.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter systematically reviews and summarizes the major research findings, including the conceptual model for stakeholder clarification and management regarding the participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care, the overall challenges faced by NPOs' sustainable development in the sector and the reasons, and the suggestions to enhance NPOs' sustainable development from the perspective of each stakeholder, namely, PSS (the government), SSS (volunteers), PNS (elderly care service providers), and SNS (the public), and the efforts to be made by NPOs themselves to provide a specific and insightful reference for the NPOs that have already entered or the NPOs that are going to enter the sector. While summarizing the analysis,

we link the theoretical framework and literature review in the previous chapters with the research findings or views of related researchers, thus creating a unification of theory and practice.

In addition, this chapter also reflects on the implications of the practice, and some of the research limitations in the research process and provides an outlook for future research, with the hope that the sustainable development of NPOs' involvement in community-based elderly care will be improved comprehensively.

Overall, the contents of this chapter provide the basis for an in-depth understanding of how each stakeholder influences the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care and the current situations, challenges, reasons and suggestion of the sustainable development of NPOs' involvement in the field of community-based elderly care and offer positive recommendations and guidance for relevant organizations and practitioners. It is hoped that this study will also provide a reference for NPOs and the practitioners that have already entered or want to enter the sector of community-based elderly care, for local governments to encourage and guide NPOs to offer community-based care through formulating policy measures, and for future formulation and adjustment of related policies so that government's regulation will be more targeted and the effectiveness of policies on NPOs will be enhanced.

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Annex A: Interview Outline

The interview outline is designed to discover the influence of various stakeholders on the sustainable development of Chinese NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care. Based on the theme of "current status, challenges, reasons and countermeasures", the interview outline consists of the following five modules.

Module one: Ice breaking questions

Main Question:

In general, how are the specific situations of NPOs in community-based elderly care?

Sub-questions:

Q1. Do you think it is feasible for NPOs to fully participate in community-based elderly care?

Q2. Does the participation of NPOs bring more benefits to community elderly care?

Module two: Questions about overall current status of the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

Main question:

Currently, how the stakeholders influence the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care?

Sub-questions:

Q1. Are there obvious difficulties for NPOs to participate in community-based elderly care?

Q2. Does the government provide enough support?

Q3. What is the situation after volunteers' participation?

Q4. Are the elderly people satisfied with NPO's participation and willing to take the services?

Q5. Does the public recognize NPOs' engagement in community-based elderly care?

Module three: Questions about challenges of the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

Main question:

What do you think is the key point that influences the sustainable development of the NPOs' participation in the community-based elderly care?

Sub-questions:

Q1.how do the NPOs themselves influence sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?

Q2. How does government influence NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?

Q3. How do volunteers as a group influence NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?

Q4. How does the elderly group influence NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?

Q5. How does the public influence NPOs' sustainable participation in community-based elderly care?

Module four: Questions about reasons behind the challenges of the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

Main question:

what are the causes that deter the sustainable development of non-profit organizations' participation in community-based elderly care?

Sub-questions:

Q1. In terms of NPOs themselves, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?

Q2. In terms of the government, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?

Q3. In terms of volunteers, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?

Q4. In terms of the elderly group, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?

Q5. In terms of public opinion, what do you think are the reasons that lead to the negative impact on the sustainable participation of NPOs in community-based elderly care?

Module five: Questions about reasons suggestions on the sustainable development of NPOs' participation in community-based elderly care

Main question:

What are the strategies to promote the sustainable development of non-profit organizations' participation in community-based elderly care?

Sub-questions:

Q1. How can NPOs themselves achieve the sustainable development of their participation in community-based elderly care?

Q2. How can the government support the NPOs to achieve the sustainable development of participation in community-based elderly care?

Q3. How to improve the quality and willingness of volunteers?

Q4. How to precisely meet the demands of the elderly?

Q5. How to eliminate the misunderstanding and dissatisfaction of the public?