

Research on the Competence Dilemma and Countermeasures of Rural Youth Social Workers ——Taking City Z in Guangdong Province as an Example

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Abstract

With the advancement of the rural revitalization strategy, the importance of rural social work has become increasingly prominent. As the main force in this field, the competence of rural young social workers directly affects the quality of rural community governance and services. This paper takes rural young social workers in City Z, Guangdong Province as the research object, combines the competence theory, and uses the semi-structured interview method to collect data, analyzing the competence dilemmas of rural young social workers. The research finds that rural young social workers face multiple dilemmas in terms of competence, including insufficient theoretical knowledge, lack of practical skills, vague self-concept, weak personal traits, and declining work motivation. In response to these dilemmas, countermeasures are proposed, such as strengthening professional training, establishing a continuous learning mechanism, enhancing practical skills training, clarifying role positioning, strengthening professional ethics education, shaping personal traits, and improving work treatment and welfare, to improve the competence of rural young social workers and promote the development of rural social work.

Keywords

young social workers, competence, rural social work

1. Introduction

As an important force in grassroots governance, the social work talent team has received increasing attention from the state. The Sixth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee proposed “building a large-scale social work talent team” (China Government Network, 2008). The National Medium and Long-Term Talent Development Plan Outline (2010 - 2020) listed social work talent as one of the six major talent teams (China Government Network, 2010). The Opinions on Accelerating the Revitalization of Rural Talents clearly required “strengthening the construction of the rural social work talent team” (China Government Network, 2021). As an important force in rural community construction, rural young social workers not only undertake the responsibilities of transmitting policy information, coordinating community relations, and resolving residents' conflicts, but also shoulder the important mission of promoting rural community development and improving residents' well-being. However, due to historical, cultural, economic and other reasons, rural young social workers face many difficulties in terms of competency, such as insufficient professional ability, low professional identity, low social recognition, and unclear career development paths. These problems seriously restrict their role in rural community construction.

As a typical major agricultural city in Guangdong Province, City Z reflects the common dilemmas in rural areas of underdeveloped regions through its rural social management issues. In recent years, with the in - depth implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, remarkable achievements have been made in the rural community construction of City Z. However, a series of problems that urgently need to be solved have also emerged. Therefore, taking City Z as an example to conduct an in - depth study on the competency dilemmas of rural young social workers not only helps to reveal the common problems faced by rural young social workers in their professional development, but also provides useful references for improving the level of rural social work and promoting rural community construction. This study systematically reviews relevant domestic and foreign literature, uses the semi - structured interview method to deeply explore the competency dilemmas of rural young social workers and their causes, and puts forward corresponding countermeasures and suggestions. Through this study, it is hoped to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for improving the level of rural social work and promoting rural community construction, and contribute to the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy.

2. Research Design on the Competence of Rural Youth Social Workers

2.1 Theoretical Basis: Competency Theory

Within the framework of competency theory, an individual's competency is finely divided into three core dimensions: individual characteristics, behavioral characteristics, and work context. This theory provides a valuable perspective for gaining a deeper understanding of talent potential and performance. Individual characteristics serve as the foundation of competency, revealing the limits of human ability and patterns of thinking and behavior. They consist of five progressive levels: knowledge, skills, self-concept, traits, and motivation. Specifically, knowledge refers to the information and cognition that individuals have mastered in a specific field; skills are manifested as the actual operational ability to complete specific tasks; self-concept encompasses individuals' attitudes, values, and self-identity; traits reflect individuals' physiological characteristics and consistent response patterns to external stimuli; and motivation is the internal force that drives individual behavior. Among these five levels, knowledge and skills are relatively straightforward and easy to assess, while motivation, self-concept, and traits are more implicit. Their measurement and enhancement rely on individuals' profound experiences and continuous refinement in work practice. Behavioral characteristics, as the dynamic manifestation of individual characteristics in specific contexts, reveal how individuals apply their knowledge, skills, self-concept, motivation, and traits to address challenges, as well as the actual effectiveness of such applications. The work context emphasizes that competence is manifested and shaped in specific work environments, and different occupations, positions, and work environments have varying requirements for individual competence. Integrating competency theory into this study is highly relevant and instructive for the training and development of rural youth social workers. This theory not only provides a theoretical basis for identifying, assessing, and cultivating the key competencies required for rural social work, but also helps to understand the challenges faced by rural youth social workers and the underlying factors influencing them, thereby promoting improvements in their work effectiveness and professional competence.

2.2 Research Subjects

This paper focuses on a specific group—rural youth social workers—selected based on the following criteria: they are active in the field of rural social work and are between the ages of 20 and 35. In addition, participants have a thorough understanding of the role and work of rural social workers and participate in this study on a voluntary basis.

2.3 Research Methods

This study selected eight rural youth social workers aged 20 – 35 from Z City, Guangdong Province, as interview subjects. Using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling, rural youth social workers from different townships, positions, and years of work experience were selected for semi-structured interviews. This ensured that the interview subjects were representative and diverse, and could comprehensively reflect the current state of competence among rural youth social workers in Z City. Based on the five dimensions of

competency theory (knowledge, skills, self-concept, traits, and motivation), combined with the actual work scenarios and job requirements of rural youth social workers, a semi-structured interview outline was designed. Interview questions were adjusted in real-time based on the progress of the interviews to uncover the participants' inner thoughts and authentic experiences.

3. Analysis of the Dilemmas in the Competency of Rural Youth Social Workers

3.1 Lack of Theoretical Knowledge

Although some rural young social workers have a background in social work or related fields, their understanding of the unique social structure, cultural traditions, economic development models in rural areas, as well as the psychological characteristics of farmers, remains limited. This makes it difficult for them to accurately identify the needs and problems of rural communities and formulate effective service plans in their actual work. Moreover, with the rapid development and transformation of rural society, new social problems and challenges are constantly emerging. However, the knowledge system of rural young social workers is often updated at a slower pace, making it impossible for them to address these new problems in a timely manner.

Although I have studied social work, my understanding of the rural social structure and cultural traditions is still not in - depth enough. Sometimes when formulating service plans, I feel that they are somewhat out of touch and do not quite fit the actual situation in rural areas. (B7)

I found that I still have a great deficiency in understanding the psychological characteristics of farmers. Sometimes, it is quite difficult for me to fully understand and grasp their thoughts and needs, which has brought me quite a few difficulties in my work. (L4)

The rural economic development model is quite different from what I've encountered before, which often makes me feel inadequate when analyzing the needs of rural communities. I need more knowledge about rural economics to support my work. (M6)

I feel that the updating speed of my knowledge system is too slow to keep up with the rapid development and transformation of rural society. Sometimes when new problems arise, I don't know how to deal with them, which makes me very anxious. (L9)

In my work, I often encounter some social issues that I've never dealt with before, such as land transfer and rural e-commerce. These issues involve many new knowledge domains, and I feel that my knowledge reserve is seriously insufficient. (A8)

I found that I often encounter many unexpected difficulties when applying theoretical knowledge to rural practice. This may be because I don't have a deep enough understanding of the actual situation of rural society, resulting in a disconnection between theoretical knowledge and reality. (Y3)

B7 mentioned that despite having studied social work, the lack of in - depth understanding of the rural social structure and cultural traditions led to the disconnection between the service plans formulated and the actual rural situation. This reflects the absence of knowledge about the specific rural social and cultural background among rural young social workers. L4 stated that there was a deficiency in understanding the psychological characteristics of farmers, making it difficult to fully grasp their thoughts and needs. This highlights the insufficiency of rural young social workers in the knowledge of farmer psychology, which affects the communication with farmers and the service effectiveness. M6 pointed out that the rural economic development model was different from what they had previously encountered, resulting in a sense of incompetence when analyzing the needs of rural communities. This shows the short - board of rural young social workers in rural economic knowledge, limiting their service ability in issues related to rural economic development. L9 believed that the update speed of his knowledge system was too slow to keep up with the rapid development and transformation of rural society. This reflects the lack of continuous learning and knowledge updating among rural young social workers, making it difficult for them to address newly emerging social problems in rural areas. A8 mentioned that when encountering new problems such as land transfer and rural e - commerce in work, there was a serious shortage of knowledge reserves. This reveals the deficiency of rural young social workers in knowledge of emerging fields, which affects the service quality and effectiveness in these areas. Y3 found that when applying theoretical knowledge to rural practice, unexpected

difficulties often occurred, possibly due to the lack of in - depth understanding of the actual rural situation. This emphasizes the importance of combining theoretical knowledge with practice and the insufficiency of rural young social workers in transforming knowledge into practical abilities. In terms of theoretical knowledge, rural young social workers face problems of insufficient understanding of the rural social structure, cultural traditions, economic development models, and the psychological characteristics of farmers. Meanwhile, the slow update speed of their knowledge system makes it difficult to deal with new problems emerging from the rapid development and transformation of rural society. Additionally, rural young social workers also encounter difficulties when applying theoretical knowledge to rural practice, resulting in the disconnection between theory and practice.

3.2 Insufficient Practical Skills

Rural young social workers need to possess a variety of practical skills, such as communication and coordination, resource integration, problem - solving, and crisis intervention. However, due to the lack of training and practical opportunities, many rural young social workers are not proficient in these practical skills. Especially when dealing with complex rural family conflicts, neighborhood disputes and other issues, they often lack effective strategies and means, making it difficult to achieve the expected service results.

When working in rural areas, I found that my communication and coordination skills still need improvement. Sometimes when communicating with villagers, I feel that we have no common ground, and it is difficult to gain an in - depth understanding of their needs. (M6)

Resource integration is a challenge for me. The resources in rural areas are limited, and I lack experience in this area. Therefore, I often feel inadequate and don't know how to effectively utilize and integrate these resources. (A8)

When dealing with rural family conflicts and neighborhood disputes, I often feel at a loss. These problems are very complex and involve many factors. Sometimes I really don't know where to start. (F5)

I believe there is still significant room for improvement in my problem-solving abilities. Occasionally, when faced with thorny issues, I often lack effective strategies and methods, resulting in the problems not being resolved in a timely manner. (Y3)

Crisis intervention is a difficult point I encounter in my work. From time to time, some emergencies occur in rural communities. However, I lack experience and skills in this area, so it is quite strenuous for me to handle them. (X10)

I deeply feel that I lack skills in many aspects, such as communication and coordination, resource integration, etc. The deficiency of these skills seriously restricts the effectiveness of my work in rural communities. (L9)

M6 mentioned that when communicating with villagers, they felt that there was no common language, making it difficult to understand the villagers' needs deeply. This reflects the lack of communication and coordination skills among rural young social workers, especially when communicating with villagers with different cultural backgrounds and values. A8 stated that resource integration was a challenge for her because of the limited rural resources and lack of relevant experience. This highlights the insufficient practical skills of rural young social workers in resource identification, acquisition, allocation, and integration, which affects the quality and effectiveness of services. F5 felt helpless when dealing with rural family conflicts and neighborhood disputes, indicating that rural young social workers lack effective practical skills and strategies to handle and resolve complex social problems. Y3 believed that there was still much room for improvement in problem - solving, and often lacked effective strategies and means when encountering difficult problems. This reveals the lack of practical skills of rural young social workers in innovatively solving problems, formulating implementation plans, and tracking and evaluating results. X10 pointed out that crisis intervention was a difficult point in the work due to the lack of experience and skills. This emphasizes the short - board of practical skills of rural young social workers in responding to emergencies, providing emergency assistance, and offering psychological support. L9 deeply felt the lack of skills in multiple aspects such as communication and coordination, and resource integration, which seriously restricted the work effectiveness. This comprehensively reflects the lack of comprehensiveness in the practical skills of rural young social workers, and there is a need to comprehensively improve their abilities in all aspects. In terms of practical skills, rural

young social workers face challenges in communication and coordination, resource integration, problem - solving, crisis intervention, and other aspects. The lack of these skills restricts the effectiveness of their social work services in rural areas.

3.3 Ambiguous Self-concept

3.3.1 Role Positioning Level

The roles of rural young social workers are often ambiguously defined as “government agents” or “community volunteers.” This vague role positioning makes it difficult for them to find an accurate foothold in their work. On the one hand, they may lose their independence due to excessive reliance on government resources; on the other hand, they may have difficulty carrying out their work effectively due to a lack of sufficient authority and support. This dilemma in role positioning severely restricts the roles and influence of rural young social workers in rural communities.

Here, it seems that everyone regards us as the spokespersons of the government. Sometimes, they don't really believe what we say, thinking that we are on the government's side. (F5)

I feel that my role is rather ambiguous. I seem to be both an assistant to the government and a community volunteer. Sometimes I really don't know in what capacity I should carry out my work. (Y3)

Due to the unclear role positioning, I often feel overwhelmed at work. Sometimes I want to do something, but it's difficult to push it forward because of the lack of sufficient authority and support. (A8)

I found that I had become overly reliant on government resources, which significantly restricted our independence. Sometimes, the government's projects did not fully align with our work priorities, which was quite awkward. (X10)

The vague role positioning is indeed a major problem. Sometimes, villagers are unclear about our duties and powers, which often leads to obstacles and misunderstandings in our work. (B7)

I believe that we need clearer role definitions. Only in this way can we carry out our work with greater confidence and gain more trust and support from the villagers. (L4)

F5 mentioned that rural young social workers are often mistaken for government spokespersons in rural areas, leading to a decrease in villagers' trust in them. This misunderstanding restricts effective communication between rural young social workers and villagers, affecting their work effectiveness. Y3 stated that their role is both like an assistant to the government and a community volunteer. This ambiguity makes it difficult for them to find an accurate foothold in their work. The unclear role positioning leads to confusion and a sense of powerlessness among rural young social workers when performing their duties. A8 pointed out that due to the unclear role positioning, they often feel overwhelmed at work and lack sufficient authority and support to promote their work. This limits the possibility for rural young social workers to play a greater role in rural communities. X10 mentioned that over - reliance on government resources restricts their independence. When government projects do not align with work priorities, rural young social workers face an awkward situation. This dependence weakens the autonomy and flexibility of rural young social workers. B7 said that the vague role positioning makes villagers unclear about the duties and powers of rural young social workers, resulting in frequent obstacles and misunderstandings at work. This further exacerbates the difficulties of rural young social workers in rural communities. L4 emphasized that a clearer role positioning is needed to boost the confidence of rural young social workers and win the trust and support of villagers. This indicates that clear role positioning is crucial for enhancing the competence and influence of rural young social workers. From the perspective of role positioning, rural young social workers face dilemmas such as being misunderstood as government spokespersons, role ambiguity, feeling overwhelmed and lacking authority, over - reliance on government resources, and villagers' misunderstandings and obstacles. These dilemmas severely restrict the role and influence of rural young social workers in rural communities.

3.3.2 Value Level

In rural areas, traditional values and customs often conflict with modern social work concepts. Some young rural social workers may neglect the overall interests and traditional cultural values of rural communities due to an overemphasis on individual rights and freedoms, resulting in estrangement and misunderstandings

between them and the villagers. Additionally, some young rural social workers may pursue short - term results and neglect the long - term development of rural communities, which goes against the core value of social work - helping people to help themselves.

Sometimes, I overly emphasized individual rights and freedoms while forgetting to consider the overall interests of the rural community. This led to some estrangement between me and the villagers, and they thought I didn't understand their culture and traditions. (Y3)

I have found that I sometimes overly pursue short-term results while neglecting the long-term development of rural communities. This goes against the core value of social work - helping others to help themselves. I need to reflect on my practices and pay more attention to long-term planning. (X10)

While working in the countryside, I realized that my values sometimes conflicted with the villagers' traditional concepts. I over - emphasized modern ideas and neglected their traditional cultural values. This left me quite confused about how to balance the two. (M6)

I have encountered situations where individuals pursued their personal goals while neglecting the overall interests of rural communities. Later, I realized that such actions not only violated the principles of social work but also caused me to lose the trust and support of the villagers. Now, I place greater emphasis on communicating and collaborating with the villagers to jointly promote community development. (L4)

Y3 mentioned that overemphasizing individual rights and freedoms while neglecting the overall interests of rural communities has led to a rift with villagers. This reflects that some young rural social workers may have value deviations and fail to fully understand and respect the culture and traditions of rural communities. X10 stated that they sometimes overly pursue short - term results while ignoring the long - term development of rural communities, which contradicts the core values of social work. This indicates that some young rural social workers may lack the awareness of long - term planning in their values and need to pay more attention to sustainability and holism. M6 pointed out that there is a conflict between their values and the traditional concepts of villagers, as they overly emphasize modern concepts while neglecting the value of traditional culture. This shows that some young rural social workers may have difficulties in integrating into rural culture and traditions and need to be more open and inclusive in understanding different values. L4 mentioned that they once pursued personal goals while neglecting the overall interests of the rural community, resulting in the loss of villagers' trust and support. This indicates that some young rural social workers may lack a sense of collectivism and responsibility in their values and need to pay more attention to communication and cooperation with villagers to jointly promote community development. From the perspective of values, young rural social workers face dilemmas such as the conflict between individual rights and the overall interests of the community, the contradiction between short - term results and long - term development, the collision between modern concepts and traditional culture, and the balance between personal goals and the overall interests of the community. These dilemmas may lead to rifts, misunderstandings, and mistrust between young rural social workers and villagers, thus affecting the service effectiveness and community development.

3.4 Individual Traits Are Weak

Personal traits refer to the inherent qualities and characteristics of each individual. In rural areas, rural young social workers need to possess personal traits such as perseverance, a high sense of responsibility, and good empathy. However, due to the arduousness and complexity of the rural social work environment, some rural young social workers may find it difficult to adapt and persevere due to the lack of these traits. Moreover, some rural young social workers may have frictions and conflicts with farmers due to differences in personal personalities, values, etc., which affects the service effectiveness.

I believe that conducting social work in rural areas truly demands great perseverance and patience. Sometimes, I encounter particularly thorny issues, such as disputes among villagers and family conflicts, which all require me to spend a great deal of time and energy to resolve. However, I've found that I sometimes lack sufficient perseverance to keep going and feel somewhat overwhelmed. This might be related to my personal character; perhaps I'm not the kind of person who is extremely tenacious. (L4)

Working in rural areas, I deeply understand the importance of a sense of responsibility. However, sometimes I find it difficult to fully immerse myself in work due to certain personal or professional needs. In such situations, I feel sorry for those in need of help and begin to doubt my own sense of

responsibility. I believe this might be a weakness in my personal traits, and I need to better balance the relationship between my personal life and my profession. (F5)

I believe that empathy is a crucial aspect in rural social work. However, sometimes I find it difficult to fully understand the thoughts and feelings of the villagers. This may be because the environment in which I grew up is very different from theirs, which makes it hard for me to resonate with them in some aspects. In such situations, I feel a bit frustrated and also worry whether the effectiveness of my services can meet the expectations. (L9)

During my work in rural areas, I have encountered situations where frictions and conflicts arose with villagers due to differences in personal personalities, values, etc. Sometimes, I felt that my way of handling these situations might not have been appropriate, resulting in the problems not being resolved effectively. I believe this could be a challenge related to my personal traits. I need to gain a better understanding of the villagers' cultures and backgrounds to communicate and cooperate with them more effectively. (B7)

As mentioned by L4, when dealing with thorny issues such as disputes among villagers and family conflicts, they feel a lack of perseverance and find it difficult to persist in the long - term. This indicates that for some rural young social workers, perseverance is a personal trait that needs to be improved. F5 stated that they find it difficult to balance personal needs and professional responsibility. Sometimes, they cannot fully engage in work due to personal reasons. This conflict reflects that the sense of responsibility of some rural young social workers as a personal trait needs to be strengthened, and they need to better integrate personal life with career development. L9 pointed out that due to the differences in the growth environment between themselves and the villagers, they sometimes have difficulty fully understanding the villagers' thoughts and feelings, leading to a sense of frustration during the service process. This shows that empathy, an important trait in rural social work, may be relatively weak among some rural young social workers and needs to be further cultivated. B7 mentioned that due to the differences in personal personality and values between themselves and the villagers, frictions and conflicts sometimes occur, which affects the service effect. This reflects that some rural young social workers face challenges in adapting to rural culture and values. They need to better understand the villagers to enhance their cultural sensitivity and adaptability. Rural young social workers face challenges in personal traits, such as lack of perseverance, conflicts between responsibility and personal needs, lack of empathy, and differences in personality and values. The weakness of these personal traits may make them feel inadequate, frustrated, and uncomfortable during the service process, thus affecting their competence and service effectiveness.

3.5 Decline in Work Motivation

The work of rural youth social workers often faces numerous challenges and difficulties, such as low pay, high work pressure, and unclear development prospects. These factors may lead some rural youth social workers to lack sufficient motivation and enthusiasm for work, and may even cause job burnout. In addition, some rural youth social workers may lack clear career plans and goals due to insufficient understanding of rural social work, which also affects their work enthusiasm and competence.

When I first chose rural social work, I was full of enthusiasm. However, as time passed, I found that the salary was indeed much lower than expected, and the work pressure was extremely high. There were numerous things to handle every day, and sometimes I really felt overwhelmed. Coupled with the unclear future development prospects, I began to feel confused and frustrated. Sometimes, I would wonder if I had made the wrong choice. This kind of emotion has indeed affected my work motivation and enthusiasm. (Y3)

I believe that rural social work is truly meaningful and can help a great many people. However, sometimes I also feel exhausted and powerless. Perhaps it is because my understanding of this job is not profound enough, which leads to some confusion in my career planning. I don't know how to develop myself better, nor do I have a clear career goal. This sense of confusion makes me lack motivation and enthusiasm in my work, and sometimes I even feel a bit frustrated. (M6)

Doing social work in rural areas indeed faces many challenges. I think the biggest problems are the low pay and the unclear development prospects. This makes me feel very insecure and I don't know where

my future lies. Sometimes, I wonder if I were to work in other industries, perhaps the pay would be better and the development prospects would be clearer. This kind of thought makes me lack motivation and enthusiasm in my work, and I even have some thoughts of giving up. (A8)

I believe that rural social work is truly valuable. However, I must admit that sometimes I feel rather exhausted and frustrated. Perhaps it's because I had set overly high expectations for this job, while the reality is somewhat harsh. I've found that I lack a clear career plan and goals, and I'm also unsure how to improve myself more effectively. This sense of confusion and powerlessness has sapped my motivation and enthusiasm at work, and I've even had thoughts of escaping. (L9)

Y3, A8, and L9 all mentioned that the salary was much lower than expected, which was an important reason for the decline in their work motivation. In rural areas, the compensation for social work is often lower than that in urban areas or other industries, which makes some rural young social workers feel unfair and frustrated. Y3 described that the work pressure was high, with a lot of things to handle every day, and sometimes they felt overwhelmed. This high-intensity work pressure may lead to physical and mental exhaustion among rural young social workers, thereby affecting their work motivation. Both Y3 and A8 mentioned a sense of uncertainty about their future development prospects. The lack of a clear career development path and promotion opportunities made them feel confused and uneasy about their future. Both M6 and L9 said that they were a bit confused about their career planning, lacking clear career goals and improvement plans. This sense of confusion may cause them to lack direction and motivation in their work. L9 mentioned that the expectations for rural social work were too high, while the reality was a bit harsh. This gap between expectations and reality may lead to feelings of frustration and disappointment, further affecting work motivation. Rural young social workers are facing multiple dilemmas, including low pay, high work pressure, unclear development prospects, confusion in career planning, and the gap between expectations and reality. These issues not only affect their work motivation and enthusiasm but may also have long-term negative impacts on their career development.

4. Strategic Suggestions for Enhancing the Competency of Rural Youth Social Workers

In response to the dilemmas faced by rural youth social workers in terms of competence, this study proposes the following strategic suggestions to comprehensively enhance their service capabilities and effectiveness.

4.1 Enrich Theoretical Knowledge

To enrich the theoretical knowledge of rural young social workers, first of all, it is necessary to strengthen professional training in rural social work. By setting up specialized training courses that comprehensively cover key areas such as rural social structure, cultural traditions, economic development models, and the psychological characteristics of farmers, and regularly inviting rural research experts and senior social workers to give lectures and conduct seminars, the knowledge system of rural young social workers can be continuously updated. Secondly, a continuous learning mechanism should be established. Rural young social workers should be actively encouraged to participate in online courses, seminars, and academic exchange activities to ensure that their knowledge remains up - to - date. Thirdly, a learning fund can be set up to support them to study advanced social work experience and techniques at home and abroad. Finally, to deepen the combination of theory and practice, rural young social workers can be organized to conduct on - the - spot investigations in rural areas, enabling them to personally experience and understand the actual situation in rural areas. Meanwhile, a collection of rural social work cases can be compiled to provide them with valuable learning resources and practical references.

4.2 Enhance Practical Skills

To effectively enhance the practical skills of rural young social workers, multi - dimensional strategies need to be adopted. First, strengthen practical skills training. By regularly organizing training on core skills such as communication and coordination, resource integration, problem - solving, and crisis intervention, and introducing interactive teaching methods like simulation exercises and role - playing, the actual combat ability of rural young social workers can be effectively improved. Second, establish a mentoring system. Ensure that each rural young social worker can receive one - on - one guidance from an experienced mentor. The mentor will regularly evaluate their practical skills and provide targeted improvement suggestions. Finally, promote

cross - sectoral cooperation. Encourage rural young social workers to cooperate with experts in agriculture, economy, law and other fields to jointly address complex challenges in rural areas. Meanwhile, establish cross - sectoral cooperation platforms to facilitate information exchange and resource sharing among different fields, thereby comprehensively enhancing the practical skills of rural young social workers.

4.3 Clarify the Self-concept

To optimize the service effectiveness of rural youth social workers, first, their role positioning needs to be clarified. By issuing policy documents and carrying out official publicity campaigns, the roles and responsibilities of rural youth social workers should be clearly defined and widely publicized in rural areas to enhance villagers' awareness and understanding of this role. Second, strengthen value education. Improve the professional ethics and values of rural youth social workers, cultivate their collective awareness and sense of responsibility, and encourage them to deeply study and understand rural cultural traditions to enhance their cultural sensitivity. Finally, to continuously improve the service quality, an effective feedback mechanism can be established. Set up channels for villagers to provide feedback, regularly collect and listen to villagers' opinions and suggestions on rural youth social workers, and adjust service modes and strategies in a timely manner based on these feedbacks to ensure that the work of rural youth social workers is more in line with villagers' needs and maximize the service effectiveness.

4.4 Shaping Personal Traits

To shape the personal traits of rural young social workers, multiple measures can be taken. First, through activities such as team building and outdoor training, emphasis should be placed on cultivating the perseverance and patience of rural young social workers. They should be encouraged to maintain a positive attitude and persevere when facing difficulties and challenges. Second, strengthen professional ethics education. By sharing cases and other means, enhance their sense of responsibility, and establish a reward mechanism to recognize rural young social workers who demonstrate a high sense of responsibility in their work. In addition, empathy training can be carried out to teach them how to better understand and feel the thoughts and feelings of villagers, and encourage rural young social workers to build deep emotional connections with villagers, thereby enhancing mutual trust and dependence. Finally, to improve the cultural sensitivity and adaptability of rural young social workers, through activities such as multicultural education and team building, encourage them to respect and understand the differences in the personalities and values of villagers, and engage in work with a more inclusive and open mindset.

4.5 Stimulate Work Motivation

To effectively stimulate the work motivation of rural young social workers, some comprehensive measures can be implemented. First, through policy adjustment and financial support, efforts should be made to improve the salary and welfare levels of rural young social workers. Meanwhile, incentive mechanisms such as performance bonuses and year - end bonuses should be established to stimulate their work enthusiasm with tangible benefits. Second, work tasks should be reasonably allocated to ensure that they are not over - exhausted, and psychological counseling services should be provided to help them effectively relieve work pressure and emotional problems. In addition, clear career development paths and promotion opportunities can be set up so that rural young social workers can clearly see their future. At the same time, career planning and guidance services should be provided to help them formulate personal career development plans. Finally, to enhance professional identity, the social status of rural young social workers can be actively promoted through publicity, commendation and other means, and they should be encouraged to participate in social welfare activities, so as to further strengthen their social responsibility and sense of mission and comprehensively stimulate their work motivation.

5. Conclusion

Taking City Z in Guangdong Province as an example, this paper conducts an in - depth exploration of the competency dilemmas of rural young social workers through semi - structured interviews and puts forward corresponding countermeasures and suggestions. Through systematic analysis, the following main conclusions are drawn in this paper: Firstly, rural young social workers face multiple dilemmas in terms of competency.

The lack of theoretical knowledge, insufficient practical skills, vague self - concept, weak personal traits, and decreased work motivation are the main factors restricting their service effectiveness and career development. Due to the insufficient reserve of professional knowledge and skills, rural young social workers have difficulty in effectively coping with the complex rural community environment. Meanwhile, the unclear role positioning and the conflicts between their values and those of villagers affect their service effectiveness and professional identity. The differences in personal traits, as well as problems such as work pressure, treatment, and development prospects, further weaken their work enthusiasm and professional loyalty. In response to the above dilemmas, this paper puts forward corresponding countermeasures and suggestions. By strengthening professional training for rural social work, establishing a continuous learning mechanism, promoting practical skills training, clarifying role positioning, strengthening values education, shaping personal traits, and improving treatment and welfare, the competency of rural young social workers can be effectively improved. These measures not only help to solve the current dilemmas but also provide strong support for the career development of rural young social workers.

This study also has certain limitations. Firstly, the research sample mainly comes from City Z in Guangdong Province. The research results may be affected by regional differences and are difficult to comprehensively reflect the competency status of rural youth social workers across the country. Secondly, this study mainly uses the semi - structured interview method to collect data. Although it can deeply understand the inner world and real experiences of the interviewees, the sample size is relatively small, which may lead to certain biases. Future research can consider expanding the sample scope and combining methods such as questionnaire surveys to improve the accuracy and reliability of the research.

With the in-depth implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, the importance of rural social work has become increasingly prominent. Future research can further explore the competency characteristics and development laws of rural youth social workers in different regions and of different types, providing strong support for formulating more scientific and reasonable policies and measures. Meanwhile, deeper issues such as the mental health and career development paths of rural youth social workers can also be focused on to promote their all-round development and growth.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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