

The Tragedy of Labor Mobility: Several Case Studies of Left-behind Children in Rural China

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ABSTRACT

The transfer of surplus rural labor to cities has brought a strong impetus to the process of urbanization and modernization in China. However, due to China's household registration system and other restrictions, most of the migrant workers who came to the city from the countryside cannot bring their children to live and study in the city. This has led to the emergence of a large number of left-behind children in rural areas of China, which has caused many social problems. Based on interviews, this article evaluates the status quo of the quality of life of the left-behind children in the surveyed areas from multiple aspects, and analyzes the influencing factors leading to the current situation, initially proposes the direction of the quality of life interventions for the left-behind children, and gives some targeted suggestions.

Keyword: *left-behind children, quality of life, case study; interview*

1.Introduction

The "2015 National Migrant Workers Inspection and Survey Report" shows that the total number of migrant workers in China is about 277 million, an increase of 1.3% over 2014 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Due to the household registration management system and economic conditions, the children of migrant workers cannot enjoy the same education, medical care and other public resources in the city, so most of them are left in the countryside to be raised by other elders in the family or the left-behind parent. This resulted in a special group of minors-left-behind children^a.

As an increasingly prominent social problem, left-behind children have attracted widespread attention from the government and scholars, and a lot of research has been done on it. The "Research Report on the Status of Left-behind Children in Rural China and Migrant Children in Urban and Rural Areas" released by the All-China Women Federation in May 2013 showed that: There are more than 61.02 million left-behind children in rural China, accounting for about 38% of rural children and 22% of children nationwide. They are also distributed throughout China including economically developed areas.

The rapid growth of this special group of left-behind children quickly aroused the close attention of the society. According to research findings, there are many studies on the mental health of left-behind children, but there are few

^a According to the "Opinions of the State Council on Strengthening the Care and Protection of Left-behind Children in Rural Areas" for the definition of left-behind children in rural areas, the object of this review is that both parents are migrant workers or one party is migrant workers and the other is incapable of guardianship and cannot live with their parents normally. Six-year-old rural household registration minor.

studies on their quality of life (physical health, social function, family environment, etc). This survey attempts to combine the two to take a more comprehensive view The living conditions of left-behind children.

2.Significance

As minors, the quality of life of left-behind children depends to a large extent on the adult society in which they live. Because both the material life and the spiritual life are connected with the family and family members to which they belong, with the school education and school life they receive, and with the community or society where they are located. The quality of life of left-behind children today is closely related to their adult life. They will join the main social production camp in more than ten or twenty years. The answer to this question will vary depending on how they will choose and what path. The clues can be seen from the germination of seeds planted in childhood. From this perspective, interventions in the early life of this group will also affect the social development for a longer period of time in the future. Therefore, paying attention to the lives of left-behind children and exploring the factors affecting the quality of life of left-behind children are of great practical significance.

Fan Xianzuo, Guo Qingyang (2015) and Sima Yiru (2015) From the perspective of reality and policy, left-behind children have certain problems in hygiene, safety, learning, psychology, and conduct, which affect their fair access to education. With the continuous emergence of social incidents of left-behind children, many scholars have begun to pay attention to the psychological problems of left-behind children and conduct research from different perspectives. Left-behind children have more serious emotional problems, and are significantly higher than non-left-behind children in terms of loneliness and low self-esteem.

China's research on the quality of life of children started late, and most of them are used in clinical or diseased children. At the end of the 1980s, China began to conduct localized research on the quality of life, combining Chinese cultural characteristics and national conditions to discuss the evaluation criteria and related issues of the quality of life. The research on children's quality of life started relatively late, and there were less than 50 relevant reports before 2003. With the continuous deepening of research, domestic scholars focus on the research of quality of life evaluation work, especially the development and application of the children's quality of life evaluation scale, but most of the existing scales are used, and the research objects are mainly limited to special patients.

3.Interview Cases

During the interview, every child we encountered was different in every aspect. We selected the most representative families of Student A and Student B for analysis.

3.1 Student A Case Study

Under the leadership of the child's principal and parents, we entered the home of Student A. When entering the door, Student A was watching "Anna Karenina" in his bedroom. This 13-year-old child showed a very calm attitude towards the arrival of a group of strange brothers and sisters and gave us a simple smile.

After explaining our intentions, we conducted one-on-one interviews with Student A and his parents. During the interview, we learned that he just graduated from a local elementary school this year and is about to become a junior high school student. In the past few years in elementary school, he has excellent academic performance and has been in the top five of the class for a long time. Parents are satisfied with their children's academic performance, but he himself believes that he needs to continue to improve. Student A usually focuses on self-study, and only asks the teacher for help when encountering problems that can't be solved. We learned that this is due to the parents' low level of education and they can only recognize some simple Chinese characters. It is difficult to tutor their children from the second grade. Fortunately, he performed well at school and was rarely criticized by his teachers. He also got along with his classmates more harmoniously. When he occasionally encountered problems, he said that he could solve the problems by his own ability and would not burden the family.

In terms of diet, the meals that Student A eats in the school cafeteria are mostly vegetarian. There are meat dishes at noon two days a week, which is somewhat insufficient for children who are in the developmental period. The family will also give him some pocket money, no more than five yuan a day. He uses the money more to buy food, and occasionally to buy books and school supplies.

In terms of accommodation, Student A usually lives in the school dormitory and goes home two days every weekend. Both the children and parents are satisfied with this lifestyle. When returning home, he will also help with housework at home and exchange feelings with his mother.

In terms of family, in the past few years, Student A's father often went out to work and came back once a month. But recently his mother's physical condition has deteriorated, and the health of his parents at home is also worrying. His father spends less and less time working outside, and now he spends about half of the year looking after his wife and the elderly at home. He also has an older brother who is 28 years old this year. He graduated from a 985 college in Shandong two years ago and worked in Jinan. Although there is no need for help from the family, the problem of starting a family is always his father's concern. Faced with such a large family burden, Student A's father seemed helpless and sad.

The family status of Student A is more common among the many families we surveyed. Most families with a single parent who go out to work are caused by the other party's inability to go out to work due to physical reasons. In addition, in the families surveyed, the parents' education level is generally low, and they are unable to counsel their children. The children's self-esteem and self-motivated are also relatively strong, and most of them are not satisfied with their academic performance, even if they are already among the top few in the class. They generally believe that studying hard can bring a better life to the family, make their parents easier, and let their parents who work outside come back to live with them as soon as possible.

3.2 Student B Case Study

When I first saw Student B, I mistakenly thought this was an introverted fourth and fifth grade elementary school student. When we started the survey, we discovered that he was 13 years old and was in junior high school. His parents have gone out to work for more than two years, and now live with his grandma, but his grandma is not in good health, so his parents can only work in Beijing nearby. Although he can see his parents once in a month or two, he misses them very much. His grandmother is not in good health, so the biggest impact on him from his parents going out to work is the lack of care in life, so he chose to live on campus, which can reduce the burden of grandma. The little boy gave me the impression that he didn't like to talk, and his eyes showed a trace of sadness, but every time he talked with him, he could express clearly and sincerely.

According to what he learned from the elementary school he just graduated from, Student B has very good grades in school and is very well-behaved, but he is not talkative. But when we asked him about his studies, his answer was unexpected and he was very dissatisfied. He said that there is a primary school in his village. There are three teachers in this primary school. There are almost 10 people in the school. They can only go to the third grade. Each grade learns in a classroom. The teachers are very hard. Due to the limited number of teachers, the teachers can only teach in turn. Almost all the teachers in this school are very old, and the youngest is 50 years old, so they are not particularly familiar with English and "fresh" knowledge. He said he wanted to study hard, but he didn't know what to do to study well. Both his parents were working outside, and his grandma was old and had no culture. For example, the current English course is his worst subject. He can't even practice pronunciation.

He also told us that he didn't want to go to the city to study and felt that he would not adapt. Teachers and classmates might look down on him, would not adapt to life in the city, and would feel lonely. We asked him what he wanted to do in the future. He said he wanted to be a chef. He said that I think chef is a great profession because he can make us children full... His answer made me realize that our research on the problems of left-behind children should not only be based on self-awareness, but should be considered from the perspective of left-behind children themselves. These more real and detailed issues deserve our attention.

Our team also conducted an interview with the parent (grandma) of Student B. Grandma said that the child is very well-behaved, but when he is old, he has been living on his own, and has had a cerebral thrombosis for ten years. The care for the child can only be "watching". I don't usually communicate with Student B. I don't know anything about the school. I don't know what I can do for him, but I support him in accommodation, so that he will study and live better at school than by his side.

In fact, we went to the local school and saw the children's dormitory. The conditions were okay, but some large rooms can accommodate more than 10 students, and the summer is also very stuffy. Children can't take a bath at school, they can only go home to wash every week, but some kids don't wash when they go home every week. I asked Student B about how often you took a bath. He said it would be a month, but I can't remember it. Taking a bath once a month is too long, which will affect the growth and health of the children.

We also communicated with the principal of a local rural elementary school, and the principal told us a lot. They said that they are getting older and the age gap between them and their children is getting bigger and bigger. They want the children to learn more, but the conditions and levels are limited. It has always been difficult to improve the awareness of parents in rural areas, and it is difficult to change the thinking that "reading is useless". Rural children are very introverted, fearful of life, and not talkative. In fact, they lack interpersonal skills and are very lonely. The principal also said that in fact, the situation in the village can be changed by the return of the people who went out of the village to study. But now, how many children can come back after going out is worth pondering.

4. Existing Problems

Through this survey of the families of left-behind children, I believe that the problem of left-behind children in some parts of China is still serious, and the main problems are concentrated in the following areas:

4.1 Psychological Problems

Due to the particularity of the guardians of left-behind children, many left-behind children are in a long-term *laissez-faire* state, and teachers cannot take care of all children. The lack of care from teachers and parents will make these left-behind children feel that they are not valued. Therefore, some of them will have bad psychology such as being tired of studying, violence, low self-esteem, and complaining about their parents. In addition, due to the lack of parental companionship and restraint, left-behind children are often reluctant to seek help from others when they encounter difficulties, which also increases the risk of school bullying and the severity of its consequences.

4.2 Learning Problems

Most left-behind children want to study hard, but they cannot find a way. First of all, the teachers in most rural schools are weak. Compared with teachers in cities, they are often at a disadvantage in terms of knowledge reserves and foreign language proficiency. Moreover, the teachers in these schools are often one teacher who teaches many kinds of courses, and they need to teach multiple grades, so the teaching pressure is relatively high. This makes it impossible for the teacher to teach every child meticulously. Secondly, the hardware facilities of schools in rural areas are also backward, often unable to adapt to new teaching methods. Finally, due to the low level of education of the guardian, it is impossible to provide good guidance on learning. For families where both parents go to work, grandparents are often the guardians of their children, and this effect is even more obvious.

4.3 Life Problems

With the development of society, left-behind children rarely go hungry. However, due to lack of care, the diet of left-behind children is often very unreasonable. In the case of this study, left-behind children eat less meat and lack sufficient nutrition. They are in a critical period of growth and development, and lack of nutrition will have a greater negative impact on their health and future development. In addition, because their parents are absent for a long time, the younger left-behind children lack self-control and often have many bad living habits. It is also possible to make bad friends in the society and even do things that violate the law.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

These problems of left-behind children are very common in rural areas of China. These problems are undoubtedly huge for left-behind children and their families. However, these children are also the future of the motherland, and they will also participate in the construction of the country in the near future. If their lives and studies do not have enough To guarantee, it will only become a greater hidden danger in the future. Therefore, it is necessary for us to wake up more people to pay attention to the problem of left-behind children, so that their problems can be solved, and the future of the country will be more promising.

First, establish a bridge between parents and students to communicate with each other. Because the parents of left-behind children go out to work, they don't know much about their children's growth status and school conditions, and they lack emotional communication with their children. The mutual communication between parents and students is conducive to the healthy growth of students' mental health, and at the same time reduces the inferiority and depression of this group. Parents can regularly contact the teacher through the Internet and make video calls with their children to understand their children's recent growth.

Second, set up a lecture on mental health. Rural schools can properly set up mental health class meetings so that students can consciously understand that they need to help others, get along with their classmates, and establish a correct awareness. At the same time, a mental health room can be established, with teachers specially equipped. When students are in difficulties, they can seek help from teachers to resolve conflicts quickly and effectively, so as to grow up healthy and happy.

Third, strengthen the help and support of all sectors of society for left-behind children in rural areas. Both spiritual and material support are important. It is not only necessary to improve the living standards of left-behind children in material aspects, but also to enable them to grow up healthy spiritually. Therefore, it is hoped that caring people from all walks of life can go to rural areas to communicate with children at close range, spread positive energy, and let children experience the warmth of the big social family.

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