

The Study of Rural Migrant Children's Education Problems

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Abstract: China have seen the most unprecedented economic growth in the human history. If it wasn't the continuous flow of labor, the migrant workers, migrated from the rural areas to urban areas that keep the economy productive, China would not be able to maintain such a high growth rate economically. However, these labor migrations are restricted by the dual system inside China's society. Although these migrate workers work in the cities, but they are still treated as rural peasants. This laid many restrictions to these migrate worker, and their own economic conditions, that made them decide to left their children in rural areas. Therefore, alongside the rising of the migrate workers, another socially vulnerable class in the Chinese society also rises "the children of the migrate workers." . The main content of this work is to study the causes of the education problem of the children of migrate workers, which includes a qualitative study using economic theories and education theories to analyse the causes of education problems theoretically. Then this work also used a qualitative method by using data collected by national bureau of statistic and other researchers in this field to get a more realistic reflection on the current situation of migrate worker's children's education. All in all, the education problem of migrate worker's children matters because it affects the overall quality of education and mental conditions that China's new generation of migrate workers would have, and the quality of labor would be the vital means that China's economy would have to rely on for continuous growth.

Keywords: The children of migrate workers, educational problem, Causes, mental health resolutions.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Value

Migrant workers migrate to cities to work because their identities are still rural farmers. Although these migrant workers bring economic growth to rural areas, they also cause new social problems, especially in the education and upbringing of their children. China's current census register and economic policies didn't give these rural workers influx into cities the same welfare treatment as the urban residents, so these migrant workers have trouble sustaining their lives in the city, not to mention their children's education in urban areas. As a result, these migrant workers often left their children in rural areas. So, along with the rise of migrant workers, another huge socially vulnerable group in

China also rises, the children of migrant workers. In 2013, the population of children of migrant workers in China is approximately 60 million [1].

The western developed countries didn't evolve any similar social problems like the children of migrant workers during their social transformation, this problem is unique to China, and the education problem of these children of migrant workers is a question that China is unable to avoid. The direct result of the education problem is the lack of family education because these children's parents migrate to cities to work, but the root comes from the dual economic system that the Chinese government imposes between rural and urban areas, which causes the urban areas to have better infrastructure, and education, and welfare system than rural areas. This inequality of development between the urban and rural areas causes the education problem for the children of migrant workers. The current situation of education for the children of migrant workers in China is not delightful. These children of migrant workers' education would greatly affect the development of rural agriculture, the quality of labor, and even the advancement of society in China. Therefore, studying the education problem of the children of migrant workers has significant value in terms of hypothetical and realistic meanings.

1.2. Literature Review of Studies in Children of Migrant Workers

1.2.1. Studies Were Done in Countries Other than China

Countries other than China rarely adopt such a dual system between the urban and rural areas, so the children of migrant workers is a phenomenon mainly unique in China. A similar concept of the children of migrant workers only appears in studies about immigrants.

The study of adopted children has a lot in common with those study the children of migrant workers in China, and their findings are also worth considering when doing studies on the children of migrant workers. United States of America (USA) has over 500 thousand children being adopted in 2004. These children are being deserted because of many reasons such as family violence, parents passing away or committing crimes, or economic reasons. Jennifer Ehrle and Rob Geen (2002) find that 11% of adopted children have severe behavioral and psychological problems (such as anxiety, and social phobia) which is higher than that of normal children. Because these children often feel a strong sense of no identity and care, their academic performance tends to be worse than normal children, which causes their education level to decrease naturally.

1.2.2. Studies in China

(1) left-at-home children's family education

According to studies done by most researchers, they tend to think that one of the parents or all of them migrating to the city to work would cause negative effects on their children's family education.

Li Gengshou and Miu Yunshen find out that what causes the children of migrant workers to lack family education is their Guardian situation. According to their research, most of the guardian's responsibility for the children of migrant workers is performed by the children's grandparents or relatives [2]. These guardians often only care about fulfilling these children's most basic needs such as food, cloth, and residence, but they are often unable to manage their education because they have enough time to do so at most times. This lack of regulation of their education at home caused these children of migrant workers didn't receive adequate guidance from their family members when they form their personal values or develop their personalities, which could easily make them deviate from normal values and develop abnormal personalities. Ling Hong proposed in his study that children need their Guardian's guidance the most when they are teenagers, but due to the lack of acknowledgment of the importance of education of guardians of these children, these children can easily become anxious, aggressive, eccentric, and lack of interest towards schooling, which severely

affected their normal growth [3]. Li Qinfeng and Ye Feng's study points out that the situation of parents migrating to the city to work has positive and negative effects on their children. The positive side is that these parents can earn more income than they are in rural areas when working in cities, which would improve their family's economic situation, ensuring better education and standards of living for their children. Furthermore, the work experience in cities would enhance the horizon of these parents, which would help their children's education. However, these children of migrant workers would mostly be guarded by their grandparents at home. One major problem of grandparents being the guardian is that they often spoiled the children, so these guardians often didn't regulate their children's behaviors, which can easily make these children rebellious and selfish. On the other hand, the parents working in cities would want to compensate their children for leaving their kids at home. They feel sad for their children, so they mostly choose to meet their material needs by giving them a large amount of money. Since these children didn't have an adequate family education on how to use money. This money can easily make them materialistic and immersed in pleasure.

(2) The schooling problem of the children of migrant workers

In the process of rapid urbanization, many rural workers migrate to urban areas in China. Although this migration improved many workers' economic conditions and allow them to afford better education for their children, there are more negative effects than positive ones. In a study of 17 middle and primary schools in ZaoYang city, Hubei province [4], the children of migrant workers are the social group with the highest dropout rate, which is about 5.5%. Furthermore, their academic performance is usually not good. 45% of left-at-home children have poor academic performance (less than 75% of all students), and only 11% of them have a very good performance. According to the interviews with their teacher, these children of migrant workers tend to have significantly lower performance on the quality and punctuality of homework, and in-class performance than the students who have their parents at home. The students who have their parents at home tend to finish most of their homework on time and with high quality. These students also performed more focused and active during classes. The students who didn't have their parents at home failed to hand in homework on time most times, and even plagiarize other people's work. From all these educational studies dedicated to the children of migrant workers, we can see that these children have a huge problem in their schooling.

(3) evaluation of studies in China

In conclusion, researchers in China have done some extensive work on the education problem of the children of migrant workers. These works have provided the adequate base for the studies following it and become the theoretical basis of this study. However, these studies still have the following drawbacks. First, the definition of 'stay-at-home children wasn't being clarified. Second, the current studies focused on using qualitative and quantitative methods to study the problem of stay-at-home children from a sociological, and psychological view. There should be studies using more viewpoints such as Statics, and economics.

1.2.3. Research Methods

(1) Innovativeness (research question)

This study will use the data and survey collected by Wang Juan in her study on the education problem of 'stay at home students' in the Wu Shan County of Chongqing province. She mostly uses qualitative and quantitative methods to study the problem of the children of migrant workers from a sociological, and psychological view. So the innovative point in this study will be a mixed-use of Statics, economics, sociology, and psychology theories to conduct a cross-discipline study of the causes of the education problem of 'stay-at-home children, and become a basis for future studies to use theories to suggest a possible solution to the psychological and behavioral problems of 'stay-at-home children identified in this passage.

(2) Limitations

This study is limited to the data and survey conducted by a researcher in her previous study years ago. So, this study cannot reflect the current situation of stay-at-home children.

(3) Theories about stay-at-home children

a. Cole berg's Morale development model

The key content of Cole Berg's development model is the '3 phase, six stages' theory proposed by Cole Bergs himself in 1969. A Chinese researcher Zhang Ninjuan [5] concluded it into 3 aspects: 1. The foremost concern of education on children's morale is to increase children's ability to identify morale, which could help them to think of questions critically. The final goal of education on morale is to enhance children's critical thinking ability and build up their actions based on morale. 2. The development of children's morale has stages, so knowing the current stage of their moral development can help with their education of morale on them. 3. The school, family, and government need to provide conditions that could provide varied and in-depth education on ethics to build a platform for students to develop their morale to a higher dimension.

b. Social ecology

Social disorganization is a theory derived from social ecology which is a study of the relationship between people and their living environment. Social disorganization is an important macro-criminal psychology theory to study crime issues of teenagers during rapid social transformation periods. The researchers of the Chicago school: Shaw, and McKay introduce social disorganization theory into the study of criminology of the teenagers [6]. They concluded that the root of the crime issue lies in Urban ecology, which proposes that in the co-existence environment between people, people's behavior is heavily influenced by their living environment. They propose that people's illegal actions reflect the passive environment they live in which restricted their legal actions extensively, and during the rapid industrialization, the formal and informal ethics of laws, and morale have collapsed, which makes the urban communities unable to form universal ethics. This social disorganization makes the communities unable to regulate teenagers' behaviors. The unregulated illegal behavior of teenagers causes a rise in the crime rate among teenagers.

Wang Guangdong and other researchers [7] concludes that the characteristics and conclusions derived from Shaw and McKay's results are highly linked with the social disorganization problem faced by the children of migrant workers in life. Their living environment lacks many important aspects of family, school, and community. The issues and properties that arise from these shortages suit the definition of social disorganization. Therefore, social disorganization theory is helpful for me to solve the stay-at-home children's problems from family, school, and community aspects.

2. Cause of Education Problem of the Children of Migrant Workers

2.1. The Systematic Cause of the Education Problem of the Children of Migrant Workers

The systematic cause education problem of the children of migrant workers is the macro and conclusive cause of it. Systematic causes have an effect on all children of migrant workers regardless of which rural area they are in. In the same fashion, this systematic cause won't be affected by the conditions of the children of migrant workers in certain rural areas.

2.1.1. Cause Derived from the Economic System

The direct cause of migrating workers is economic opportunities in cities which could improve their economic and living conditions.

The study of labor migration in China started after the economic reform in 1978. The economic theories used most frequently are the Lewis model and the Todaro model. The Lewis model has the most abundant effect on studies in China. Most economic theories only describe the labor migration

in China as ‘Migration of excessive labor in rural areas, but the Lewis model suggest it as caused by the dual economy, and researcher in China even proposed Triple and Tetra economy theories based on it. The Todaro model was also used extensively in China. For example, Gao Guoli particularizes the concept of difference in expected income in the Todaro model to a difference in the local development between the rural and urban areas and propose it as an important cause of labor migration from rural areas to urban areas [8].

These two are the common theories used to explain the cause of the education problem of the children of migrant workers in China. However, when the rural workers make their choice to migrate, they mainly think about their actual situations.

The income difference between the rural and urban areas is too big. Because of the current dual economy in China, the income difference between rural and urban areas has never disappeared. The income difference between the investigation of the rural and urban areas done by the world bank stated that the most common ratio is 1: 1.5 between income in rural and urban areas in most countries. However, according to the ‘Reports on China’s population and labor’ [9], the income difference in China increased over 12 times since the start of the economic reform in 1978. In 2020, the income difference between China is 26703 yuan, which means the income of urban citizens is about 2.5 times the average disposable income of rural workers (19000 yuan). This large difference in income between the urban and rural areas has surely drawn most rural workers to the city.

The guardians at home failed to regulate these children of migrant workers’ behaviors. But when these children lack regulations from their guardians, the teachers at school often failed to take responsibility as the regulator of the children of migrant workers’ behavior. According to the study, many children of migrant workers report that their teachers in school were unaware of their family conditions such as were their parents all migrate to the city to work or when their parents would come back from the city. Knowing this information about a student’s family would be the basis of effective supervision of children’s behavior. According to the study done by Wang Juan [10], 30.2% of the children of migrant workers think that their teacher knows their family conditions, which is significantly lower than that of normal students(38.5%);19.9% of the children of migrant workers think their teacher knows nothing about their family condition, which is also higher than that of normal students (15.1%); 49.9% of the children of migrant workers doesn’t know whether their teacher cares about their family condition, which is also significantly higher than the normal students (46.3%). This data proves that the teachers of the children of migrant workers were less willing to know about their conditions and tend to care more about normal students’ family conditions. This causes the teacher to fail to have more power to regulate the children of migrant workers, who need more care than normal students because they lack the regulation from their guardians.

2.2. The Non-systematic Cause of the Education Problem of the Children of Migrant Workers

The non-systematic causes of education problem for the children of migrant workers are causes which are single factors that affects one member of the children of migrant workers’ family. These factors often differ among families because of territorial reasons. According to the marginalization theories proposed by sociologist Parker, migrating workers’ special characteristics make them have different economic status, social status, and cultural backgrounds to be different urban residents. They work as urban workers, but they were seen as farmers. Therefore, becoming a huge marginal group between the worker and farmer class, position themselves in a political and socially vulnerable status. Thus, when considering their children’s residence and education, they were forced to leave their children back in the rural areas.

2.2.1. The Migrating Workers Usually Have More Unstable Jobs, and Live in Worse Conditions.

Under the dual economic system between rural and urban areas. The migration of rural workers to the cities is an established trend. In this age of economic and social development. The biggest characteristics of rural workers are their instability at work. The reasons for their job instability are 1. The employment contract between the rural workers and the employer cannot usually protect the rural worker's rights. 2. Rural workers choose these unstable jobs based on their conditions. Since the legislation of 'Labour law' in 1994, some companies started to sign labor contracts with the rural workers and more does it each year. However, there is still 35% of rural workers work for small enterprises without a contract. They just relied on oral agreements, thus vulnerable to exploitation. They choose to work without a contract because they are facing a perfectly competitive labor market in the cities. They have no choice but to choose jobs that have fewer barriers such as Restaurant servants, processing workers, and city builders. According to the statistics on job types of rural workers in cities from the National Bureau of Statistics, 51% of rural workers work in the retail, transportation, and residence industries, and 48% of rural workers work in manufacturing and construction industries. Their monthly income range from 3332 to 4699 yuan, which is significantly lower than that of average urban residents.

Compared to urban residents, rural workers tend to live in poor conditions. 90% of rural workers living in cities have a bad living condition, most of them live together with other rural workers in temporary apartments that are lack infrastructure, bad environment, crowded with people, and have cheap rents, which mostly located on the border between rural and urban areas [11]. Even though in such low rent, they still have to spend roughly 15% of their monthly income on rent. So, they always face the situation of Living in the city in reality, but lacking the appropriate policy to support them. As a result, these rural workers often have inadequate sleep time and bad living conditions. Therefore, they would logically decide to keep their children at home because of their bad living conditions caused by their instability of work.

2.2.2. The Rise of the New Generation of Migrating Workers, and the Theories of Education Being Useless

China's labor market was always at a status of rapid change. When the labor market wasn't saturated, the job selection in China is a bilateral decision between the undergraduates of colleges and the employers. However, after the massive expansion of college enrollments in 1999. The college undergraduates were often unable to find the jobs that suit their skills, or they have to wait a long time to find them. Therefore, many parents in rural areas exaggerate the negative effects of schooling, following the logic that since college graduates also face the same difficulties when finding jobs, then going to college is just useless. As a result, many parents in the rural areas left their children in rural areas, not sending them to the cities to attend college, and letting them start working as workers. They often think about waiting for their children to grow up and then taking them to cities to work [12]. And then left their children at home. As a result, most of the new generation of migrating rural workers often have a low diploma. In 2020, 70.1% of rural workers never have a high school diploma, such low diplomas have become their barrier to increasing their income. However, this new generation of rural workers has more goals to achieve in the urban areas than their parents. They wanted to be accepted into the urban community, but with such a low diploma. They might also end up being on the edge between rural and urban society, never have the chance to be accepted, and their children might just be the next generation of "the children of migrant workers".

3. Conclusion

The education problem of the children of migrant workers has slowly evolved from a widespread social phenomenon to a significant social problem. As an inevitable phenomenon under rapid urbanization and industrialization, the problem of the children of migrant workers has not only cause educational problems for a rural worker's children but also caused psychological trauma for a group of rural workers who were isolated by the society. Therefore, to solve this problem, we need all groups of people in the whole society to corporate with each other: revising the dual system between the rural and urban areas and harmonizing this problem through development.

The first conclusion is that the children of migrant workers in rural areas are an inevitable phenomenon under rapid urbanization and industrialization. From a macroeconomic view, the rural workers migrate to cities because of the change in economic structure and increase in income difference under the dual system. The rural workers make their rational decision under these changes. From a micro-economic view, the rural workers make this decision under a calculation of opportunity cost and benefits.

Second, the children of migrant workers often grow up with distinctive psychological characteristics. They often lack the essential care and regulation of behavior from their parents, teachers, and guardians. Therefore, their behavior and psychological health easily deviate from the normal route of growth, behaving more aggressively, hot-tempered, and disobeying.

Third, these problems are likely to be solved only by the continuous growth of the economy and society, which ultimately shorten the income difference between rural and urban areas. The early the society can distribute the welfare of development equally to urban and rural areas, the early the problem of the children of migrant workers' education problem could be solved.

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