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Research Article

RESEARCH ON THE CURRENT SITUATION AND COUNTERMEASURES OF THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN IN QINGTIAN COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

As one of the hometown of overseas Chinese, Fangshan township of Qingtian county is plagued by the social problem of the left-behind children. This paper taking the left-behind children in Fangshan town as the object of study, has made a research and discovered those children's current situations and the problems they are facing through questionnaires and interviews. This research shows that these left-behind children who spend little time with their parents tend to be shy in daily communication and are in great need of emotional communication with their families and social attention. So it is suggested to promote the implementation of Surrogate Paternalism and to carry out caring activities through the Internet.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s, the accelerated development of industrialization and urbanization in China caused a large number of rural labor force to flood into cities, which also resulted in the long-term social problem of left-behind children. The problem has aroused social concern and triggered discussion. Nowadays, with the gradual development of social economy and the change of rural economic model, some problems of left-behind children have been solved because local government has taken a series of specific measures, such as government, schools, families and society. are giving more understanding and care to left-behind children. However, whether the specific measures are in place remains to be verified. Especially after 2016, there are few research literatures on the problems and current situation of left-behind children, most of which are only conveyed through news reports, failing to comprehensively reflect the current situation of left-behind children.

In view of the number and geographical problems of left-behind children in China, this study selected Fangshan township, Qingtian county, Lishui city, Zhejiang province as the research object. Qingtian county, located in the south-central part of Zhejiang province, is one of the east gates of China's opening-up. In the early Qing dynasty, there were people who started living abroad. Qingtian, as a famous

hometown of overseas Chinese, has more than 220,000 overseas Chinese in more than 100 countries. With the increasing number of overseas Chinese in Qingtian county, the number of left-behind children whose parents go abroad is also increasing, and those children form a special group. On account of their parents' not being around for a long time, left-behind children have such problems as missing their parents, loneliness and capriciousness. Many scholars and teams have paid attention to and studied left-behind children from different perspectives, but new problems keep emerging in their education and growth.

As a special group of left-behind children, it is worth discussing about their living conditions, problems, school education and problems in the current environment. In order to clarify the above questions, this study took Fangshan Township Central School in Qingtian County as an example and investigated the left-behind children in the school through a combination of questionnaire survey and interview. We hope to make a modest contribution to the research on left-behind children in Qingtian county, the home town of overseas Chinese and thus all sectors of society can attach importance to and care about left-behind children.

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Review of Literature

Over the years, different scholars and teams have conducted investigations and studies on left-behind children from different perspectives, from the initial analysis of the current situation of left-behind children to the later studies on the implementation effect and adaptability of specific policies, reflecting the characteristics in different periods. By studying existing literatures and reports, scholars have shown a prospective perspective in the research and understanding of left-behind children in Qingtian, the hometown of overseas Chinese. In terms of research methods, the method of combining questionnaire survey and interview is universal and favored by scholars. The following is a brief overview of the research literature on left-behind children in Wenzhou city and Qingtian county.

Researchers on Wenzhou left-behind children include Pan Yujin, Tian Xiaoxia, Wang Yanrong and Zeng Chunyan. The team of Pan Yujin (2010) regarded the left-behind children of overseas Chinese as the research object. The team proposed that the family education resources of the left-behind children of overseas Chinese are far less than those of the left-behind children in China and un-left-behind children and they are deficient in personality and behavior. Meanwhile, the literature believed that the main reason for the problems of left-behind children is the lack of family education and parents' emotional communication. The literature through the comparison of the questionnaire survey of overseas left-behind children, the domestic left-behind children and un-left-behind children to explore the problems and reasons of left-behind children families. However, the number of left-behind children in this literature is relatively small, which cannot better reflect the differences among the three. And the team didn't put forward something related to the effective suggestions to solve the problem. Zeng Chunyan (2011) believes that left-behind children in rural areas of Wenzhou have extreme sensitivity in emotion, character and psychology. In addition, she believes that another major cause of emotional problems of Wenzhou's rural left-behind children is the contradiction between the large-scale transfer of rural surplus labor force and the urban-rural dual system barriers in the social development, which has been affected by the economic environment. She stressed that besides schools and families, the government should also play its role.

As for Qingtian left-behind children, earlier studies tend to reflect the status quo and countermeasures of left-behind children, such as He Yi (2007)³ analyzed and studied the current situation, existing problems, causes and countermeasures of left-behind children in Qingtian. He analyzed some typical problems and various reasons of the communication problems between parents and left-behind children, the drawbacks caused by inter-generational rearing and the problems in the personality and psychological development of left-behind children, and put forward countermeasures and thoughts from the perspectives of family, school, society and government. The team of Zhao dingdong, Lu Tingyue and Ge Yingying (2016)⁴ also studied the situation of left-behind children in Qingtian. This team studied the living conditions of the affluent left-behind children, the attribution of poor living conditions and the construction of protection mechanism strategies for the problems of the affluent left-

behind children. The affluent left-behind children are a special group of the normal left-behind children, among which the left-behind children in Qingtian and overseas Chinese villages are an important part. This study has important reference value for the research on the left-behind children in Qingtian, which is a higher-level summary and another perspective of the research on the left-behind children.

The above researches are also of great reference value to the research on left-behind children in Zhejiang province. However, there are few researchers that study the left-behind children from the microscopic and case perspective and most of the researches are from the macroscopic aspect. Therefore, on the basis of the above literatures, this paper takes the left-behind children living in Fangshan township of Qingtian county as an example to clarify their current situation and problems in their study and life, and work out corresponding solutions to the existing problems, so as to provide references for understanding the study and life of left-behind children in Qingtian county.

Research Methods and Results

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper takes the left-behind children who are now living in Fangshan township as the investigation object. The research was completed through a combination of questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was prepared by the members of the research group according to the relevant research scale. The design of the questionnaire took the content orientation of the subject as well as the practicability of the survey into account. The questionnaire consists of 10 objective questions and 27 subjective questions, including the basic information of the respondents, their parents' outing situation, their personal views and psychological activities, etc. A total of 48 questionnaires was distributed, 48 questionnaires were returned, and 48 were valid, with an effective rate of 100%. The interviewees are the headmaster of Fangshan Township School, 2 teachers in charge of relevant courses and 3 responsible personnel of each village committee. Interviews often average 35 minutes and are conducted in the school's conference room.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The following is a brief summary of the left-behind children's gender ratio, year of birth, feelings at school, cohabitant, the time spent with their parents, the feelings with parents, social support and their study at school. Tables 1 to 8 are based on the survey.

Table 1 the Gender Ratio Left-behind

Gender	Number	Ratio
Male	21	43.8%
Female	27	56.2%
Total	48	100%

As shown in table 1, there are totally 48 left-behind children in this questionnaire, among which 21 are male students, accounting for 43.8%, and 27 are female students, accounting for 56.2%. The number of female left-behind children is slightly bigger than that of male left-behind children.

Table 2 Year of Birth of the Left-behind Children

Year of Birth	Number	Ratio
2002	2	4.2%
2003	4	8.3%
2004	4	8.3%
2005	8	16.7%
2006	10	20.8%
2007	11	22.9%
2008	8	16.7%
2009	1	2.1%
Sum	48	100.0%

According to table 2, The total number of left-behind children in this questionnaire is 48, in which there are 2 children (4.2%) born in 2002, 4 children (8.3%) born in 2003, 4 children (8.3%) born in 2004, 8 children (16.7%) born in 2005, 10 children (20.8%) born in 2006, 11 children (22.9%) born in 2007, 8 children (16.7%) born in 2008 and 1 child (2.1%) born in 2009. The years of birth of left-behind children interviewed were mainly between the ages of 11 and 14 in 2005-2008.

Table 3 Left-behind Children’s Feelings in School

Programs	Number	Ratio
Relaxed	15	8.6%
Entertained	31	17.7%
Happy	35	20.0%
Safe	26	14.9%
Substantial	18	10.3%
Curious	15	8.6%
Bored	2	1.1%
Anxious	6	3.4%
Gloomy	3	1.7%
Depressive	3	1.7%
Comfortable	9	5.1%
Others	12	6.9%
Sum	175	100.0%

According to table 3, the total number of left-behind children in this questionnaire is 48. There are 175 answers, because it is a multiple-choice question. There’re 15 (8.6%) children feeling relaxed in school, 31 (17.7%) children feeling entertained, 35 (20.0%) children feeling happy, 26 (14.9%) children feeling safe, 18 (10.3%) children feeling substantial, 15 (8.6%) children feeling curious, 2 (1.1%) children feeling bored, 6 (3.4%) children feeling anxious, 3 (1.7%) children feeling gloomy, 3 (1.7%) children feeling depressed, 9 (5.1%) children feeling comfortable and 12 (6.9%) children have other different feelings. Referring to that, most of the left-behind children feel entertained, happy and safe in school, but a small number of people feel depressed, which indicates that the school provides a good atmosphere on the whole, but there are still some shortcomings needing to be improved.

Table 4 Cohabitant

Program	Number	Ratio
Grandparents	31	64.6%
Material Grandparents	10	20.8%
Aunts	4	8.3%
Parents	2	4.2%
Others	1	2.1%
Sum	48	100.0%

According to table 4, the total number of left-behind children in this questionnaire is 48. Because one child did not fill in, they were classified as others. Now, there are 31 (64.6%) children

living with grandparents, 10 (20.8%) children living with material grandparents, 4 (8.3%) children living with aunts, 2 (4.2%) children living with parents and 1 (2.1%) child living with others. The left-behind children interviewed live mainly with their grandparents, followed by their grandparents. It shows that most of the children are supervised by their elders, while their parents spend little time with them.

Table 5 Time with Parents

Time	Number	Ratio
Within a month	12	25.0%
One month	8	16.7%
One and a half month	1	2.1%
Two months	12	25.0%
Three months	7	14.6%
Others	8	16.7%
Sum	48	100.0%

According to table 5, the total number of left-behind children in this questionnaire is 48. Because eight children did not fill in, they were classified as others. There’re 12 (25.0%) children living with their parents for less than a month, 8 (16.7%) children living with their parents for a month, 1 (2.1%) children living with their parents for one and half month, 12 (25.0%) children living with their parents for two months, 7 (14.6%) children living with their parents for three months and we failed to know how long the rest 8 (16.7%) children exactly live with their parents. Left-behind children spend less than one month with their parents. It shows that most parents spend less time at home and mainly earn their living far away from home.

Table 6 Feelings with Parents (Unit: person)

Feelings	Number	Ratio
Love	11	22.9%
miss	15	31.3%
Queer	1	2.1%
Affective	3	6.3%
Abandoned	2	4.2%
Grateful	11	22.9%
Strange	2	4.2%
Indifferent	1	2.1%
Nothing	1	2.1%
Others	1	2.1%
Sum	48	100.0%

According to table 6, the total number of left-behind children in this questionnaire is 48. Because one child did not fill in the form, this one was classified as others. There’re 11 (22.9%) children loving their parents, 15 (31.3%) children missing their parents, 1 (2.1%) children feeling queered about their parents, 3 (6.3%) children think there’re family affection between their parents, 2 (4.2%) children feeling abandoned by their parents, 11 (22.9%) children feeling grateful for their parents, 2 (4.2%) children feeling unacquainted with their parents, 1 (2.1%) child feeling that their parents are indifferent and 1 (2.1%) child remains silent when asked about their feeling towards their parents. It shows that most children have positive attitudes toward parents while few of them have negative attitudes toward parents.

Table 7: Social Assistance (Unit: Person)

With or without assistance	Number	Ratio
Without	29	60.4%
Unknown	3	6.3%
With	12	25.0%
Others	4	8.3%
Sum	48	100.0%

According to table 7, the total number of left-behind children in this questionnaire is 48. Because four children did not fill in, they were classified as others. There're 29 (60.4%) not receiving social assistance, 12 (25.0%) children receiving social assistance, 7 (14.6%) children refusing to answer. Among them, left-behind children do not receive social assistance and the proportion of children who do not know about it is significant, which fully shows that our society doesn't do a very good job in providing assistance to the left-behind children. And children can not feel the social concern for them.

Table 8 The Study of Left-behind Children at School

Scores	Number	Ratio
Excellent	10	20.8%
Good	15	31.3%
Average	11	22.9%
Poor	7	14.6%
Not care	5	10.4%
Sum	48	100.0%

Table 8 is the personal evaluation of students' performance in scores. The total number of left-behind children in this questionnaire survey is 48. Among them, 10 (20.8%) have excellent performance, 15 (31.3%) have good performance, 11 (22.9%) have average performance, 7 (14.6%) have poor performance, and 5 (10.4%) don't care about their performance. Among them, students who score high in tests account for the majority, which indicates that students generally attach great importance to study and the fact that their parents work far away from home has little influence on them. However, there are also some cases where students' scores are not so good. And it suggests that these children need more attention from teachers and parents.

Investigation and Suggestions

Based on the above questionnaires and interviews, this paper makes a simple investigation and puts forward corresponding suggestions from the following five aspects: social communication barriers of left-behind children, time spent with their parents, emotional attitude, social assistance, safety and school study

Investigation

Social Communication Barriers of Left-Behind Children

From the above survey data, it can be seen that 76.6% of left-behind children feel happy at school, and 66.7% of left-behind children are afraid when they communicate with strangers, that is, the psychology of fear. It indicates that without the company of parents, children have a low sense of security, and they need parents to guide and communicate with them to help them overcome this fear and avoid social phobia. During the interview, we came across an old woman walking with her granddaughter. During the communication with the little girl, she chose to hide behind her grandmother for a long time and answered our questions in a very low voice.

Psychologically, children have a great sense of dependence on their parents when they are in infancy and the critical period of development. The younger they are, the more attached they are to their parents and the more they need to be cared for. However, the parents of left-behind children have been away for a long time. The younger the left-behind children are, the

more likely they are to feel the loss of family affection, and the more likely they are to have psychological problems, such as social anxiety disorder. The empirical study of Zhang Deqian (2007)⁵ found that left-behind children have certain interpersonal communication problems that are mainly affected by the time interval between their parents' going out to work and returning home. The longer the time is, the greater the impact will be. Xiao Fuqun (2009)⁶ found in his study in June that left-behind children whose parents go out for employment have lower peer communication ability than un-left-behind children.

In addition, the school's education and management of left-behind children is limited, which makes it difficult to guarantee the all-round development of left-behind children. Therefore, the guardian Should cooperate with the local authority to give more care and attention to the left-behind children's mental and psychological health. Besides, the guardians need to guide and help the children who have troubles or mental problems.

Time and Emotional Attitudes of Left-behind Children with Their Parents

Communication is the process of sending and receiving thoughts and feelings between children and parents. The goal is to reach a consensus of thoughts and unobstructed feelings, and the long-term separation of life with parents makes communication difficult. According to Table 4, we find that the left-behind children in the survey are mainly living with their grandparents, and only 4.2% of the children are living with their parents. According to table 5, parents of left-behind children mainly stay at home for a month or less. It shows that most parents spend less time at home and mainly work in other cities. Psychologist McKennon once proposed that the early parent-child relationship defined the behavior pattern and shaped all future behavior of children. As a direct recipient, left-behind children's inadequate communication with their parents or guardians would greatly shape their personalities and other aspects. Children are prone to resist their parents when they lack direct communication with their parents for a long time. Yu Yongting (2007)⁷ found that the life satisfaction of left-behind children is lower than that of un-left-behind children, and their subjective well-being is at a medium level, among which the negative emotion of left-behind children is higher than that of un-left-behind children.

He Ziqiao (2009)⁸ found that the longer the left-behind children are separated from their parents, the more unstable their moods are. According to Table 6, the left-behind children who were interviewed had a positive attitude toward their parents, and few of them have negative attitudes toward their parents. This is biased against our hypotheses. Left-behind children interviewed generally understand their parents' needs to work in another city. This is also different from the result of some other research cases. Yang Lijun (2009)⁹ holds that "the long-term absence of both parents or one of them prevents the left-behind children from communicating and interacting with their parents, resulting in the absence of affection", and even after that, their feelings with their parents "gradually become indifferent". Chu Tingting (2008)¹⁰ believes that left-behind children are emotionally unstable when their parents go out, "leading to blind resistance and rebellious psychology, and

even resentment against their parents". The reason for this difference may be due to the influence of regional and local humanistic concepts. Qingtian, as one of the hometowns of overseas Chinese, has a long history of a large number of villagers going out to work, which is also recognized by local people. Therefore, local left-behind children are also affected by this phenomenon, and can better understand their parents' going out to work than left-behind children in other regions.

For there is still a small number of left-behind children who feel "strange", "indifferent" or even "abandoned" to their parents, and therefore it is still necessary for parents or guardians to communicate with their children in time and seek solutions. Parents can make good use of communication technology to keep in touch with their children and guardians. With the development of the Internet and mobile devices, parents who work in other cities can directly communicate with their children through telephone, We Chat and other ways. Voice or video phone can also effectively promote communication. Parents can listen to their children's real thoughts and talk to their guardians. By doing so, they can help promote the mutual understanding and communication between guardians and children.

Social Assistance

In the process of field investigation, we cannot conduct face-to-face interview or questionnaire survey on the guardians and parents of left-behind children but interview the leaders of the village committees due to various objective obstacles. It is investigated that the villages did not provide special care for left-behind children materially, but mainly cared for the children from the spiritual level. For this, the village had planned to organize a volunteer team but failed for lacking volunteers. According to table 7, among the left-behind children surveyed, 60.4% have not received social assistance, 25.0% received and 6.3% not clear about whether they have received social assistance. This indicates that the society still pays insufficient attention to left-behind children. Visible in the process of the research, the school gives high degree of care to left-behind children, while villages and the society pay less attention to them, which is consistent with the view of the team of Chen Meifen, Chen Danyang and Yuan Yuan (2014) that left-behind children of overseas Chinese hometown receives relatively low social awareness compared with non left-behind children, while "social support can well predicts left-behind children's mental health". In this regard, unscheduled visits of village committee paid to the left-behind children in the village is necessary, which will enable them to know more about children's life at home. As for social assistance, it is suggested that organizations that specialize in psychological counseling regularly give guidance to left-behind children or carry out enlightening activities in schools.

Safety Issue

One of the disadvantages of the separate generation education is that it is prone to safety accidents. As described by Li Juncheng (December 2018), "the doting and laissez-faire attitude of cross-generation caregivers makes left-behind children suffer from such deviant behaviors as fighting, lying and cheating, and not returning home at night", left-behind children in the hometown of overseas Chinese are also facing such problems. "The children are under the guardianship of their grandparents, most of which are elderly and disabled in

action. In contrast, the children entrusted to their care are all in the golden age of growth and development with features of active and playful. This inevitably leads to the frequent occurrence of all kinds of child accidents." In addition, the teachers of Fangs an Township School put forward the requirement when they are interviewed that the guardian can ensure the safety of their children and pick up the children to and from school timely. Besides, both parents and teachers need to ask their guardians if they have arrived home safely so that they can take action in time to avoid accidents.

The Situation of left-Behind Children in School

When the principal and teachers of Fangs an Township School interviewed left-behind children about their academic performance, they said that there was no significant difference between left-behind children and non left-behind children, which differs from the point of view that He Yi (2007) mentioned in his paper that "75.0% of the children did not perform well in school except for a few sensible children. Many left-behind children with mediocre academic performance master only 60% of their knowledge, and 10.3% of them are not interested in or even afraid of learning." In addition, the general public believes that the performance of left-behind children is slightly worse than that of non left-behind children, which is inconsistent with the results of our questionnaire survey as well. Based on table 7 about the academic performance of left-behind children in Fangshan Township School of Qingtian County, left-behind children with level or upper level of good academic performance accounts for the majority of children surveyed, indicating that students attach great importance to their study and their parents' working condition has a relatively small impact on them. This phenomenon is closely related to the care of teachers in Fangshan Township School and the increasing popularization of the Internet. With the company of teachers and guardians, the negative impact on left-behind children caused by the absence of their parents diminished. The popularity of the Internet shortens the distance between parents and children and narrows the difference between left-behind children and non left-behind children.

Suggestions

From the above investigation and analysis, although the situation of left-behind children in Fangshan township, Qingtian county has been improved, there are still some problems. Whether these problems can be effectively solved or not is closely related to the healthy growth of local left-behind children and the construction and development of the local socialist harmonious society. Local schools, government and society should also pay more attention to it. Through a large number of surveys, research and analysis, as well as learning from the effective measures of other regions, we put forward the following suggestions, hoping to help solve the problems of left-behind children in Fangshan township, Qingtian county.

Implementation of Surrogate Paternalism: The school seeks a surrogate parent for every left-behind child. They often talk to left-behind children, especially children of low age, keep track of the ideological trends of left-behind students, pay regular home visits, care about life and help with their study, and guide their healthy growth. Let the left-behind children continue to grow in the care of acting parents, to compensate for the lack of

family education, so that they can get out of the loneliness and depression.

Implementation of left-behind children care "Internet + heart care" -- "Three One" Activity: Set up an "Overseas Chinese Childhood" and "Online Reunion Room" to ensure children and their parents can regularly chat on video every month. Set up a We Chat Official Account and carry out activities to care for left-behind children. The teachers update the physical and mental development of the children at school on the We Chat Official Account from time to time, so that the overseas parents can timely know the situation of the children and participate in their growth. Create a micro class, and provide some lectures on children's psychological characteristics, mental health construction of left-behind children, etc., so that foreign parents can learn and understand the laws of children's education and improve the art of family education and care.

Outlook

The investigation on the current situation of left-behind children in Fangshan township, Qingtian county shows that although the situation of local left-behind children has been greatly improved, there are still some problems, such as emotional problems, safety problems and attention problems, etc., which require family, school, government and society to pay more attention to, cooperate with each other and solve them in time. Through this investigation and study of left-behind children in Fangshan township, Qingtian county, we hope to attract the attention of the government and the society to left-behind children, better realize the quartet cooperation between family, school, government and society, and better solve the problems of left-behind children.

This study also has some limitations, such as the lack of research and analysis of the phenomenon of the loss of left-behind children; the sample size is not big enough; the number of students and schools involved is not big enough, etc. In the following research, we will continue to investigate and study such problems.

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