Path and Value of Rural Left-Behind Children from Perspective of College Students Volunteer Service

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Abstract
Rural left-behind children problem is a social problem arises with the accelerating development of China’s socialist market economy and industrialization and urbanization. To solve the problem of rural left-behind children is related to the coordinated development of the rural economic and social development. Therefore, Shandong Women’s University organizes college students volunteers to carry out on-spot investigation to the village primary school around Jinan City in summer and winter holiday as well as holidays. They develop series of activities to care for the left-behind children. In addition, they try effort to make some beneficial attempt to solve the problem of rural left-behind children, which is of great realistic significance.

Key words: Rural left-behind children; Colleges and universities; College students; Volunteer service

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of China’s economy, more and more young rural people go to cities for works, which result in a phenomenon that a special group of children come into being who are called “left-behind children”.

As a growing number of China’s rural people who go to work in cities, the number of children left behind in rural areas is also on the rise. There are about 58 million left-behind children in rural China and over 40 million of them are under 14 years old, according to a report concerning the status of the left-behind children released by the All-China Women’s Federation early this February. In some rural labor-exporting provinces, left-behind children in the local share of the total number of children is up to 18-22%. A report finds more than half of the children who are left behind don’t live with either parent. The telephone is often the only way they can contact with their mothers or fathers. The report indicates that 8.7% left-behind children have no contact with their parents at all. The survey also finds 49.7% of left-behind children prefer to live with their parents, and 24.25% of left-behind children do not speak much with their caregivers.

What’s more, these children are staying at a critical stage of growth. Almost children at this age should be still doted by their parents, but the left-behind children are without the company from their mothers and fathers. Their immature but strong souls have to bear their parents’ absence and boundless miss. They can’t benefit the enough guidance and help on thinking and doing from their parents and lack of the parental concern and emotional care since they are in the care of a single parent, grandparents or other relatives, which may easily cause the abnormal psychological development. So the problem of left-behind children has become a striking social issue that needs to be attended to.

Another problem in left-behind children is that their health from physical and psychological. A survey in a western labor-exporting in large number province shows that 70% left-behind children’s parents’ times of going back home is less than three times and some parents even return home once in several years. Since parents’ long time going out, left-behind children’s emotional need can not be met and the psychological problems are not solved in time, which easily result in the formation of their personality distortion and physical health risks,
such as poor behavior, psychological imbalance, action out of control even criminal tendency. A survey in southern coastal province shows that 19.6% of the left-behind children feel inferior to others and 11.4% fell discriminated again. A survey in a northern province shows that the proportion of juvenile crime in the left-behind children is as high as 20%.

This is a song to her mother and father from a little left-behind child. It is written that “dad and mum, since you leave home, I have learnt self-care, I have learnt cooking, I have learnt feeding pigs and chickens. Dad and mum do not worry about me because I can do my homework by myself, I can wash my cloth and I can comb my hair. I know you do not want to leave me alone and have to do it. I know how much you love me. Please take good care of you and work without any anxiety about me. I promise I will study hard and listen to my grandfather’s words. I will grow up soon...” These words touch many people’s heart from society. It reflects a kind of sadness. At same time, it also attracts a lot of attention from people in society. People realize their existence gradually. They, the left-behind children, let people know that not all the people can live a happy life in present society, especially the people in poor rural area.

With the continuous development of China’s socialist market economy and the accelerated process of industrialization and urbanization, the problem of left behind children in rural areas has attracted wide attention from all walks of life. How to solve the problem of healthy growth of rural left behind children, not only affect the quality of rural population and rural economic and social development, but also affect the stability of the whole country and social sustainable development. At the beginning of 2013, Ministry of education and other five ministries issued Opinion on Strengthening of Care and Education of Rural Left-behind Children in Compulsory Education Stage and put forward the specific requirements for “three priorities”, “four strengthening”, “three supporting” care education for left-behind children in the form of No. education basic document. All initiatives are to promote the healthy growth of the majority of left behind children, and constantly enhance their sense of well-being of life (Liu & Sui, 2013). Therefore, as a local institution of higher learning, Shandong Women’s University integrates the profession characteristics with volunteer service and organizes college students to carry out “care for left-behind children” social practice activity in summer and winter holiday for 5 successive years, based on its own application oriented resource advantage, relying on he education, psychology and other professional disciplines. In the process of expanding the practical teaching of the ideological and political theory course of our college students, we actively guide our college students into the rural areas around Jinan. We explore an effective path to serve the rural construction and solve the problem of rural left-behind children and also expand and extend the moral construction in colleges and universities.

1. PRESENT SITUATION OF THE RURAL LEFT BEHIND CHILDREN

The National Women’s Federation in 2008 Research Report of Current Status of Rural Left-behind Children show that China has about 58 million left-behind children in rural areas, including over 30 million rural left-behind children in the stage of compulsory education (Liu & Zhou, 2011). Let’s take Wande Town Changqing District Jinan City as an example, the statistics show that by the first half of 2014, there are 17 primary schools of the 75 villages in the town with total students 3500 at school and there are 2 middle schools with the 1100 students at school. The total number of students in primary school and middle school is 4600, among them, there are 1158 left-behind children, accounting for 25% of the total number. It is found that the mainstream values of left-behind children are positive and correct. They are healthy in their study and life, but they have more problems in education, security, life, psychology and emotion than non-left-behind children, which cannot be ignored.

1.1 Lack of Home Education

At present, the guardianship situation of left-behind children lacks necessary tutoring atmosphere, empty nesters and left-behind children are the most common left-behind mode in China today. Their grandparents only focus on bringing up and pay little attention to education. Their home education is only limited to warmth and they hardly take their responsibility of education. Due to the lack of parents’ guidance and help, the left-behind children can easily lead to the lack of ideological and moral education, resulting in deviation of values and abnormal personality development.

1.2 The Weakening of Moral Education and the Indifference of Emotion

In the context of examination-oriented education, many schools and parents of left-behind children have a one-sided understanding of education and they narrowly regard education as only intellectual education. They pay too much attention to learning investment and academic performance and ignore the importance of moral education. They attach great importance on intellectual education but neglect moral education, resulting in the lack of child personality and the formation of bad moral behavior habits.

Healthy moral emotion is the catalyst for the all-round development of left-behind children in rural areas. In the development of morality, children are in the transition from “heteronomy” to “self-discipline”. Most of the moral judgments of children stay at the stage of heteronomy. The development from “heteronomy” to “self-discipline” is inseparable from the cultivation and internalization
of moral emotion and supervision and discipline of adults. However, due to the long-term separation with their parents, the left-behind children are lack of normal emotional communication with parents and most rural left-behind children are indifferent. It is mainly reflected in the following aspects. On one hand, because the left-behind children are lack of moral emotion, they show no interest in life and they gradually become indifferent to family love. On the other hand, due to the low awareness of self-discipline of the left-behind children, the moral will is weak and they have weak ability to distinguish the right from the wrong. Because of the absence of effective guide and supervision, the left-behind children are vulnerable to social factors, which can lead to moral problem. Some even do something against the law.

1.3 Value Orientation Distortion
Some of the left-behind children’s parents are away from them all the year round, leading to lack of family love, psychological imbalance, learning loss of education and other issues. These parents often make up for the missing family love by using money and try their best to meet the child’s material desires as much as possible, which is easy to breed the hedonistic ideological tendencies for children. According to the survey, 16% of the left-behind children define the value of life in money, power, status and enjoyment of life and think that they will be migrant worker just like their parents. Due to the lower cognitive ability of the left-behind children in the immaturity stage, they may not be able to understand the parents’ care and thought. The material dependency alone can not satisfy the emptiness of the child’s spiritual world. It may also bias and distort the value orientation and develop a bad habit of extravagance and waste.

1.4 Learning Life to be Guided
In the aspect of learning, on one hand, due to the limited education level of left-behind children’s family and lack of necessary education knowledge, they cannot give effective guidance for children. On the other hand, the parents of left-behind cannot supervise their children in person, which will bring adverse effect on children. When they encounter some difficulty, they cannot get timely help and they have nobody to tell about their trouble, which will add to the possibility of study-weariness to a help and they have nobody to tell about their trouble, they encounter some difficulty, they cannot get timely

1.5 Psychological Feelings to be Diverted
It is founded that in the investigation that due to lack of communication and dredge channel, the left-behind children are self-abased, depressed, self-enclosed, unsociable and eccentric. Some children even have the abnormal state of mind of hate and violence (Pan & Ye, 2009). These left-behind children are longing for affection and they are in long-term emotional hunger. The negative impact on mental development, personality and mental health is difficult to be avoided.

2. COUNTERMEASURES TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF RURAL LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN
Care for rural children left behind needs the effort of the whole society. The relevant government departments, schools, families need to cooperate with each other. According to the practical needs of left-behind children, relevant measures should be taken. Colleges and universities have the advantages of manpower, intelligence and knowledge resources. We should give full play to the advantages of colleges and universities and students’ sense of social responsibility. Both for rural and university, is a “win-win” choice. At the same time, we should explore an effective path to promote the balanced development of compulsory education, and serve the grassroots rural areas.

2.1 University Students Volunteer Provide Zero Distance Love Service for Left-behind Children
Our universities have carried out practical activity of caring for left-behind children in the surrounding towns in Jinan since 2010. It gives full play to its advantage characteristics and integrates profession characteristics and volunteer service. As far as the author is concerned, these measures play a significant role in solving the problem of rural left-behind children.

2.1.1 Hand in Hand with Friendship
Through the activities of organizing school-building activities, students are arranged to work as a “one-to-one” pairing activities for left-behind children. They provide all round way guidance for left-behind children in study, life, thought and emotion. They accompany and care for left-behind children so that children feel the love of caring.

2.1.2 To Make Friends Sincerely and to Carry out Spiritual Care
Every year in Going to the Countryside Engaged in Three Kinds of Service, volunteer team will carry out the “Colorful Classroom Dreaming” activities, and provide music, dance, art, English, reading, safety and group counseling for the left-behind children. In the “my five samples”, “heart has thousands of knot”, and other group auxiliary game, the team members guide children to feel the most precious things in life, to promote the formation
of the correct world outlook on life and value. In reading class, the volunteers lead the children to read, taste, and exchange, experience the fun of knowledge, share the joy of reading. In English class, the volunteers lead the left-behind children to learn English by playing games and performing English stories and arouse their interest and enthusiasm for learning. Music, dance, art and other courses can improve the students’ artistic sentiments and hobbies. In addition, our university also organizes the volunteers to arrange art programs, have a get-together with the left-behind children, have home visit in order to help children eliminate bad mood and regain the sunshine in their heart.

2.1.3 Inspirational Education and Setting of Ambitious Goals
The volunteer team leads the left-behind children and their guardians to visit their campus, experience the rich cultural atmosphere as well as the elegant environment and set ambitious goals by adopting “invite left-behind children to visit the campus”, “youth forum” and “dream wall”. The left-behind children listen to the growing experience and struggling process of the elderly. The volunteers lead the left-behind children to write their dream in their heart, the future plan, struggle for dream and other spiritual education. They encourage the children never to give up in frustration, have healthy and optimistic attitude towards life, and cherish the opportunity, work hard to realize the value of life.

2.1.4 Regular Return Visit and Exploration of the Normalization Mode
In addition to summer camps, the volunteer team also carries out regular return visit to needy children on weekends and holiday. They give guidance in their learning and arrange program for the left-behind children. It not only enhances the friendship between college students and left-behind children, but also makes the practical activity normalization and explores the long-term mechanism for caring for left-behind children.

2.2 College Volunteers, Teachers and Parents Join Hands to Care for Children
On the one hand, in the process of practice, college students go deep into the left behind children, to give the left behind children family care, life care, art education and safety protection, etc. At the same time, they have timely communication with the teachers and parents on some prominent problems to let them know children physical and mental change and growth development. They also put forward some reasonable suggestions on the existing problem of lack of family love and education oversight, in order to eliminate the gap between left-behind children and teachers and parents as much as possible. They create smooth communication channels between parents, schools and left-behind children. On the other hand, colleges and universities can select psychological and legal teachers and volunteers to the countryside to carry out education training, such as family education and psychological healthy education among local teachers and guardians of left-behind children. They provide them with the knowledge of education, so that they are fully aware of their own educational responsibilities and improve their ability of guarding and education management. They should burden the responsibility of education among left-behind children together.

3. VALUE OF CARING FOR LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN

3.1 For Rural Left-behind Children, They can not only Find People to Tell about Their Heart but also Find a Model for Success
People are hungry for friends and confident and so are the left-behind children. But they have little communication with parents who are migrant workers. Their guardians only care whether they are full or whether they are warm and they pay less attention to their psychology and emotion. The true love of the volunteers makes the left-behind children open up their mind. The left-behind children often consult common sense and learning method from the volunteers, try to communicate with people around them. The empty family love is gradually made up and psychological problems have slowly been eased. In addition, the volunteers often tell the left-behind children about the wonderful world outside and their struggle process. They tell them knowledge changes life, help the children to set up their goal, activate their enthusiasm and bring love and sunshine to them. The college students also become the spiritual sustenance and growth model for the left-behind children.

3.2 For College Students, They not only Learn to Cherish and be Grateful but also Understand Love and Responsibility
Volunteers also go deep into the home and school of left-behind children, participate in real life, get close to vivid real examples and their hearted are greatly touched. Many college students realize that they enjoy a superior and happy life, which leads to a strong desire for self-education. The innocence and enthusiasm of rural left-behind children, as well as their desire and hardships to study enhances a strong sense of social responsibility for college students and they really play the role of exercise. These perceptual practices cannot match with simple ideological education activities on campus. It provides a lively and vivid education material for contemporary college students understand the social, national conditions and perceived responsibility.

3.3 For University and Society, It not only Activates the Awareness of Self-education of College Students but also Provide a New Path to Care for Left-behind Children
As the main body of self-education, college students enter the real social classroom, carry out the role of self-education experience, interaction, and ideal blend, change the boring theoretical situation and improve pertinence and practicality of moral education. It will not only help the local government to solve the weak rural basic education and imbalance of urban and rural educational resources and other livelihood issues, but also ease some social contradictions and pressures for the whole society. It also plays a promotional role in establishment of perfect and harmonious service system of caring for left-behind children.

CONCLUSION

Care for rural children left behind needs the effort of the whole society. The relevant government departments, schools, families need to cooperate with each other. According to the practical needs of left-behind children, relevant measures should be taken. Colleges and universities have the advantages of manpower, intelligence and knowledge resources. We should give full play to the advantages of colleges and universities and students’ sense of social responsibility. Both for rural and university, is a “win-win” choice. At the same time, we should explore an effective path to promote the balanced development of compulsory education, and serve the grassroots rural areas. For rural left-behind children, they can not only find people to tell about their heart but also find a model for success; For college students, they not only learn to cherish and be grateful but also understand love and responsibility; For university and society, it not only activates the awareness of self-education of college students but also provide a new path to care for left-behind children.

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