

# *Research on the Education of Left-behind Children in Rural Primary Schools—Take W Primary School in G County as an Example*

Chen Wenjing<sup>1</sup>, Yu Qi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Teacher Education, Xinyang Normal University, Xinyang, Henan, 464000, China

<sup>2</sup>Central School of Dendroshan Township, Guangshan County, Xinyang, Henan, 465450, China  
jsjychenwj@xynu.edu.cn

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**Abstract:** With the rapid development of domestic economy, the surplus rural labor force gradually flows to the cities, leading to an increase in the number of left-behind children in rural areas. Left-behind children have a series of problems during their growth, which seriously affect their physical and mental health development, not only affecting the quality of education and long-term development in rural areas, but also related to the future of the whole society. Taking W Primary School in G County as an example, this paper investigates the educational status of left-behind children from the aspects of their behavior habits, psychological status of left-behind children, comprehensive quality of guardians, home-school communication, situation of school teachers and school education management, and puts forward corresponding improvement strategies.

## 1. Introduction

Since the reform and opening up, China's economy has developed rapidly, and people's material life and cultural level have been significantly improved, but there are still large differences between urban and rural areas. With the acceleration of urbanization, most of the rural population gradually flows to cities. Many parents of rural children have to choose to go out to work in order to make a living, but under the reality of life pressure, consumption level and education cost, they choose to leave their children at home and give them to their immediate or collateral relatives for upbringing, resulting in the phenomenon that many underage children staying in rural areas to receive education. <sup>[1]</sup> Primary school stage is a critical period for children's growth, and children in primary school are more dependent on the influence of the external environment, so the educational environment has a particularly profound impact on them. If the problems in life and education caused by the left-behind children in rural primary schools due to the lack of parental care in their families cannot be reasonably solved, it will certainly cause the physical and mental development of left-behind children to be imperfect, and lead to a series of moral education problems, which are not conducive to the long-term development of rural areas and will affect the construction of a new socialist countryside. It even has a negative impact on social and economic development.

Therefore, solving the education problems of left-behind children in rural primary schools has

become the focus of social education today. It is of great significance to understand the current education problems of left-behind children in rural primary schools through in-depth investigation, and propose targeted optimization strategies to solve these problems, so as to further improve the education quality of left-behind children in rural primary schools and promote their physical and mental health development.

## 2. Concept definition

### (1)Left-behind children

In 2016, the State Council issued the Opinions on “Strengthening the Care and Protection of Left-behind Children in Rural Areas”, which clearly pointed out that: "Left-behind children refer to minors under the age of 16 whose parents work outside the country or one of them working outside the country and the other has no guardianship ability" <sup>[2]</sup>. It can be seen that left-behind children have the following two main characteristics: First, at least one of their parents leaves the place of residence to work; Second, left-behind children are minors who are still in the stage of basic education.

### (2)Left-behind children in rural primary schools

The left-behind children in rural primary schools involved in this article refer to the minors aged 7 to 12 years old who are unable to follow their parents to study in the place where they work when one or both of their parents go out to work, but remain in the rural areas of their original residence and are raised, managed and educated by other guardians.

### (3)Education of left-behind children in rural primary schools

The connotation of education is divided into narrow sense and broad sense. The narrow sense of education refers to the specialized subject education carried out in schools, while the broad sense of education generally refers to all social practice activities that affect people's physical and mental development and promote people's comprehensive quality.<sup>[3]</sup> The education of left-behind children in rural primary schools involved in this paper mainly refers to the social practice activities that affect the physical and mental development of left-behind children in rural primary schools and promote their all-round development of morality, intelligence, physique, beauty and labor, including school education and family education. It is a two-way interactive activity that requires the participation of schools and families.

## 3. Investigation on the current situation of left-behind children education in rural primary schools

This paper takes W Primary School in G County as an example to understand the education status of left-behind children in the school through interviews and questionnaires from March 2023 to June 2023. The interview is mainly to understand the learning and living conditions of left-behind children through communication with teachers, students and parents. A total of 200 students from grade one to grade six were selected as the questionnaire survey objects (200 questionnaires were issued and 198 valid questionnaires were collected, including 63 in grade one and two, 65 in grade three and four, and 70 in Grade five and six). We mainly understand the education situation of left-behind children in this school from the aspects of the investigated objects' left-behind situation, the behavior habits of left-behind children, the psychological condition of left-behind children, the comprehensive quality of left-behind children's guardians, the communication between home and school, the situation of school teachers, and the education management of the school, and focus on analyzing the data information of left-behind children in grades one to six. Through data statistics and result analysis, the following problems exist in the education of left-behind children in this school.

### **(1)Left-behind children generally have low academic performance and poor behavior habits**

Left-behind children in rural areas live and study without parental constraints, and have a poor sense of self-discipline. <sup>[4]</sup> Statistics show that 54% of left-behind children fail in Chinese, 38% fail in mathematics, and 76% fail in English. There is a significant gap between left-behind children and other students in English performance, mainly because they have not been exposed to this content before formally learning English. Some students are easy to confuse English and Chinese, resulting in learning difficulties, and elderly guardians at home are unable to provide active help. In addition, most families of left-behind children cannot provide conditions for them to attend English interest classes, unable to effectively stimulate their interest in English learning. Generally speaking, the academic performance of left-behind children in rural areas is generally low. In addition, due to the absence of parents for a long time and the limited restraint of grandparents' guardians on children, the behavior habits of left-behind children in rural areas are poor, which are specifically manifested in living habits and learning habits. Through the interview, we learned that some left-behind children do not pay attention to personal hygiene, and often continue to wear dirty school uniforms without washing; Some left-behind children have the phenomenon of scribbling and damaging public goods; Some left-behind children do not take the initiative to greet their teachers; Some left-behind children lack a correct view of consumption and often buy toys or snacks that are useless for learning during school, affecting their own learning and distracting others. In addition, the poor behavior habits of left-behind children are also reflected in learning. The survey found that 86% of left-behind children have bad learning habits to varying degrees, such as being unable to concentrate in class, not being able to finish homework before doing anything else after school, not being able to make plans to systematically complete the tasks assigned by teachers, being eager to seek answers from others instead of thinking on their own initiative when encountering difficulties, failing to preview and review the content on time.

### **(2)Left-behind children's psychological problems are prominent**

Due to the long-term absence of parents and the lack of parental care, many left-behind children even complain to their parents, which affects their physical and mental health to a large extent and causes some prominent psychological problems. <sup>[5]</sup> The questionnaire statistics show that 87% of the left-behind children hope to go to the city to live and study with their parents, which can be seen that they have psychological and life dependence on their parents. 72% of the left-behind children are depressed because their parents go out to work, and 65% of the left-behind children often think they are abandoned, cannot be accompanied, and often feel lonely. According to the interviews, some left-behind children are tired of learning, unwilling to complete their homework, and even unwilling to go to school; Some left-behind children are introverted, difficult to integrate into the big family of the class; Some often show anxiety and lack of security; There are also left-behind children who are emotionally unstable, irritable and easy to bully others, mainly because these left-behind children live with their grandparents' guardians from childhood, and the elderly often follow the children's instructions out of a spoiling mentality, and in the long run, children are easy to develop an outrageous character. Sometimes parents go out to work, often educating children not to suffer losses, and know how to fight back. Gradually, children will change from verbal violence to physical hitting, from hitting one or two classmates to bullying more classmates.

### **(3)The comprehensive quality of guardians of left-behind children is generally low**

According to the survey, 31% of the left-behind children's guardians are paternal relatives, and 60% of the guardians are ancestral relatives. This is mainly because the parents of migrant workers have no way to take care of their children, and most of them choose grandmothers, grandfathers and other elderly people who have no ability to work to help them look after children at home. The statistics found that 71% of guardians have a junior high school education level or below, of which

17% are illiterate, and only 19% of senior high school education level or above. Therefore, the guardian's cognitive level is limited and the educational concept is conservative, so most of the guardians of left-behind children cannot provide them with good family education. Moreover, 74% of the left-behind children feel that their guardians are more concerned about their daily life, but less concerned about their own emotions, which indicates that their guardians pay less attention to their children's thoughts in daily life. It is very important to pay timely attention to children's emotions in daily life and give correct guidance, but most guardians are difficult to help left-behind children sort out their bad emotions and establish correct ideas in a timely manner when children lack parental care. <sup>[6]</sup>

#### **(4)Lack of effective communication between parents and school**

Teachers generally bear heavy teaching tasks and educational affairs, coupled with various inspections and assessments by schools and education administration departments, which sometimes make them unable to timely feedback students' situation to parents. If parents can actively communicate with teachers about students' performance at home and school, it will be of great significance to children's development. According to the interviews, the guardians of left-behind children generally believe that they have fulfilled their greatest responsibility to let their children go to school, and the children's education can be handed over to the school. As for the quality of education, whether the children can become talented in the future depends entirely on the school and teachers. Some guardians of left-behind children think that their children's performance are not ideal, and communication with teachers will only attract teachers' criticism and make trouble for themselves; There are also guardians who think that communicating with teachers is to increase their own burden, reduce the burden of teachers, and it is their own loss; Some parents believe that their children have poor academic performance is because the children are not suitable for learning, even if they communicate with teachers, their children's performance will not be greatly improved. They think that communication with teachers has little significance, just let it take its course, or blindly believe that their children's performance can catch up next time. Some parents even have rough education methods, directly beating and scolding children, without specific analysis of the reasons for the decline in children's performance, which is not conducive to children's learning and physical and mental development. The questionnaire survey shows that only 12% of the guardians of left-behind children often communicate with teachers, and only 8% of the parents of left-behind children working abroad often communicate with teachers. The guardians of left-behind children also pay less attention to the parents' meeting of the school. Only 3% of the guardians of left-behind children attend every parents' meeting, and 10% of the guardians of left-behind children have never attended the parents' meeting organized by the school. It can be seen that the guardians of left-behind children do not have the awareness, time and energy to communicate with teachers about their children's learning, nor can they give timely and appropriate feedback when their children need help in learning and life. The guardians do not play a very good role in caring and supervising left-behind children's learning and life.

#### **(5)The school's teachers strength is weak, and is lack of professional psychological teachers**

The survey shows that 42% of the students' head teachers and course teachers are undergraduates, 53% of the students' head teachers and course teachers are junior college graduates, 5% of the teachers are below junior college graduates, and there are no teachers with master's degree or above. It can be seen that most of the teachers in this primary school have junior college diploma or below, and the cultural level of teachers is relatively weak. Moreover, through interviews, we know that teachers in this school lack professional quality, and most teachers fail to take care of all students in class. Sometimes, they only consider whether the teaching goals can be successfully completed and pay too much attention to students with good grades or active thinking, but pay insufficient attention to left-behind children with ordinary grades or introverted personality. When asked about

ways to effectively strengthen communication with left-behind children, help them open their hearts, improve their learning interests, change their learning habits, and improve their learning results, most teachers do not know from which aspects to answer, which also shows that teachers do not care enough about left-behind children and do not understand their characteristics. In addition, the investigation shows that the school has no special psychological counseling teachers, which is unable to solve the psychological problems exposed in the study and life of left-behind children in time.

#### **(6)School education management lacks due attention to left-behind children**

The growth and development of left-behind children cannot be separated from school education management. The investigation shows that the school has established the student status file, but did not specifically improve the file information for the left-behind children, the accuracy of the guardian's file information is not high, and the psychological health information of the left-behind children in the file is less, which fails to comprehensively and accurately reflect the psychological status of the left-behind children in rural primary schools. It cannot provide decision-making basis for schools to take measures to help left-behind children. The questionnaire survey shows that 81% of the left-behind children think that when they feel hard in the learning process, the teachers fail to find out and provide help in time. In the teaching process and daily life, if teachers do not find the difficulties of different students in learning and life in time and provide help to teach students in accordance with their aptitude, then the children's learning enthusiasm and learning efficiency will be poor. At the same time, the survey shows that 89% of the left-behind children have never been visited by teachers at home, which indicates that the school's management of teachers' home visits is not effective.

### **4. Strategies to solve the educational problems of left-behind children in rural primary schools**

In view of the current situation of rural left-behind children's education in W Primary School of G County, combined with various influencing factors, the following solution strategies are proposed.

#### **(1)Enhance the responsibility and education awareness of parents of left-behind children**

The government and education authorities should improve and effectively implement various policies and regulations at the stage of compulsory education in rural areas, strengthen the publicity of laws and regulations such as the Compulsory Education Law and the Juvenile Protection Law, pay more attention to left-behind children in rural primary schools, and guarantee the right of left-behind children to receive compulsory education. At the same time, the relevant administrative agencies of the government should strengthen the guidance and education of parents and other guardians of left-behind children in rural areas. The first is to enhance the concept of family education of parents, so that they understand that the education of children is inseparable from parents, because grandparents' education methods cannot meet the needs of modern society, guiding parents to correctly deal with the relationship between working to earn money and children's education.<sup>[7]</sup> The second is to encourage and guide parents and other guardians to participate in education training, fully understand the important value of family education, strive to improve their own cultural level and self-cultivation, and learn scientific education methods. The relevant management departments should encourage and supervise parents and other guardians to seriously practice in practice, and give positive guidance and regular feedback and return visits in the later stage, effectively enhance the scientific education concept of parents and promote the healthy growth of children. At the same time, parents should be guided to understand that their words and deeds have a great impact on children, so as to consciously resist the transmission of bad thoughts and behaviors, and set an example and exemplary role for children. The third is to encourage parents to communicate with their children. Parents should go home to accompany their children as much as possible. Even if they can't go home to get along with their children, they should

communicate with their children through the phone about the problems their children encountered in life and study, so that children can feel the care of their parents. In addition, parents should also explain some ways for temporary guardians to get along with children, so that temporary guardians can also form good relations with children, so that children can learn to live in harmony with elders other than their parents. [8]

### **(2)Take multiple measures to improve the comprehensive quality of teachers**

Schools should increase investment in teachers' professional development, encourage teachers to continue to learn new teaching ideas and teaching methods while doing a good job in teaching or class management, actively improve their academic qualifications, improve their comprehensive quality through a variety of ways, so that teachers can enhance their educational feelings and their ability to teach students in accordance with students' aptitude. [9] We can not only care for left-behind children with a loving heart, but also adopt hierarchical teaching methods. For students at different levels, we can adopt different teaching methods and put forward problems at different levels, so that the left-behind children can know and make progress at the corresponding level. In addition, teachers not only have the role of imparting knowledge to students, but also guide students to establish good behavior habits. Teachers should not only improve their own behavior and play the role of teaching by word and example, but also use rich reward and punishment mechanisms, such as praise, reward and criticism, to give timely feedback on the behavior habits of left-behind children. When students have bad behavior habits, teachers should point out their mistakes in time, and guide them to correct them continuously and patiently, so as to help students develop good learning and living habits such as being strict with themselves, and lay a good foundation for subsequent learning.

### **(3)Enrich the forms of educational activities and build a harmonious campus atmosphere**

School education plays a dominant role in the education of left-behind children. Left-behind children spend most of their time in school every day, getting along well with teachers and communicating with peers can make them relax physically and mentally. [10] Therefore, we must give full play to the advantages of schools, enrich the forms of educational activities, and build a harmonious and progressive school atmosphere. In addition to classroom teaching, schools should organize various forms of extracurricular activities that are popular with students and meet the current development needs of students, such as inviting outside experts to give lectures on popular science, holding cultural festivals, holding science and technology festivals, and carrying out questions and answers with prizes for knowledge. While students are completing their academic tasks, we should actively organize them to go out of the classroom, promote mutual understanding between teachers and students, and enhance teacher-student relationships in activities, help left-behind children eliminate psychological barriers, open their hearts, and give full play to the function of "second classroom".

### **(4)Establish the working mechanism of mental health education for left-behind children**

Schools need to strengthen the in-depth understanding of left-behind children and care about their physical and mental development. First of all, schools should establish mental health files for left-behind children on the basis of existing student files, comprehensively investigate and understand the number of left-behind children and the status quo of their family education, school education, life, emotion, psychology, behavior and other aspects, strengthen communication with left-behind children, improve understanding, and analyze the development differences of different left-behind children, and provide the basis for targeted education and guidance. Secondly, the school should set up a special psychological counseling room and arrange professional psychological counseling teachers to provide professional psychological counseling services for students, timely understand the psychological changes of students in study and life, effectively help them dispel bad emotions, and promote the development of children's physical and mental health.

### **(5)Perfect the form of home-school cooperation**

In the process of children's growth, school education and family education affect each other and are indispensable. It is necessary to enrich and improve the forms of family-school cooperation and

enhance the educational effectiveness. <sup>[11]</sup> First of all, we should strengthen the organizational construction of the parents' committee. The parents' committee is a mass organization composed of parents' representatives of the school, representing all parents' participation in the teaching and management of the school, with the goal of improving the quality of school education and the level of family education. The parents' committee can concentrate the power of parents and collect their suggestions to help schools improve their educational methods and strategies. The selection of parents' committee members should be representative, and appropriate amount of parents of left-behind children should be selected to participate, so as to improve their family education concept. Secondly, regular home visits should be carried out. Home visiting is an important means of communication between home and school. Through home visits, we can comprehensively and objectively understand the family environment of left-behind children, parents' educational concepts and methods, effectively guide guardians to supervise and manage left-behind children, help parents better understand the law of children's growth, and facilitate teaching in accordance with children' aptitude. Thirdly, parents' symposiums are often held. At the parents' meeting, teachers should not only report students' learning status to parents and introduce some family education methods to parents, but also encourage parents of excellent students to introduce their experience, so that parents can share and exchange their experience and learn from each other, which is conducive to promoting the overall improvement of children in different degrees.

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