Case Study on the Living Conditions of Disadvantaged Children in China’s Rural Areas

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Abstract. The living conditions of disadvantaged children in China attract attention of people. This study uses qualitative research method conduct investigation and case interviews for 35 rural primary and secondary schools, this paper analyzes four classic cases, from which we can see the current situation of life, study, family and psychology of disadvantaged children. We should pay more attention to the negative influence generated by factors such as poverty, family and social changes on this disadvantaged group, and are committed to working hard for a strong social support system.

Keywords: rural area; disadvantaged children; living condition; case study.

1. Proposition of Problems

"Disadvantaged children" refers to children who are disadvantaged in comparison with their peers in family life, social status, economic income, and psychological security and so on. [1] These children have developmental delays, learning difficulties, educational failures, and other risks due to poverty, low socioeconomic status, and lack of culture and other factors such. The author visited disadvantaged children in rural poverty-stricken areas (mainly mountainous areas, reservoir areas, old areas, and Soviet areas) in Guizhou Province, Heilongjiang Province, and Hubei Province, their living conditions, the overall situation of physical and mental development, as well as the influencing factors are understood through questionnaires and case interviews, the problems and difficulties of its existence are found out, and from the angle of positive psychology, together with the rural reform plan, the author puts forward some opinions and suggestions, hope to contribute to the development of poverty-stricken areas. Paying attention to disadvantaged children in rural areas means paying attention to the future of rural areas, agriculture and farmers.

2. Research Background

Since the mid-to-late 1980s, many peasants have left their homes because of poverty, and have gone to work in economically developed areas such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen. A large number of young and middle-aged goes out for work, on the one hand, it has brought about the improvement of the economic situation of rural family, but on the other hand, it has also created a large number of left-behind children and migrant children. Are their lives in "bright sunshine"? Did they realize the feeling of happiness? Are their living environments conducive to their growth? These questions deserve our deep thought. We really need to put the protection of disadvantaged children this vulnerable group in rural areas on the agenda and come up with practicable measures.

For this purpose, the author went deep into the rural areas to understand the current situation of these children's life, study, and psychology, and experience their feelings, and write down thoughts as a scholar.

3. Overall Situations of the Interview and Investigation

We found two extremes in the interview and investigation. A kind of disadvantaged children is very precocious, just as the ancients said that "children who grow up in families which are short of money are better prepared to deal with the problems of adult life", at the age of eight or nine, they can independently do housework, take care of their own lives, and are outstanding in their studies.
The other kind is recognized by the neighborhood and the teacher as a "small gang." These children are separated from their parents for a long time, their physical and psychological needs are not met, and the guardians sometimes fail to supervise and develop these children's willfulness, selfishness, loneliness, indifference, melancholy and suspiciousness, no civility and politeness, and various bad personality and habits. Obviously, the current situation is not conducive to the sustainable development of the economy and society. The survival and psychological problems of disadvantaged children in rural areas have become an important social issue in today's society.

In many interviews and exchanges, the author saw that too many children have difficulties in basic clothing, food, housing, and transportation. When asked, "Do you miss mom and dad?" "Are you happy at home?" these emotional topics, I can't help but feel heavy when see they are either indifferent or depressed.

4. Typical Cases and Analysis

The author visited 35 primary and middle schools in seven counties of Hubei, Guizhou and Heilongjiang provinces, and selected four cases with a certain representative from 105 interview cases for specific analysis.

4.1 Xiaohua's "Amazing Appetite" in the Middle Class of Kindergarten

Xiaohua (pseudonym), a student in middle class of kindergarten in a remote area, in Banchang Town, Yanhe County, Guizhou Province. As a student in a poverty-stricken area, he enjoys the free nutritious meal benefits provided by the "Rural Compulsory Education Student Nutrition Improvement Program". When the school lunch time was up, the students in the kindergarten have priority to queue up for dinner, we saw that the canteen staff filled the Xiaohua big lunch box with a lot of meat, and there were so many pieces of meat, that was more than a big guy can eat, we were surprised and asked the canteen staff, this amount is too big, the child can't finish it, will it be too wasteful? She said no, because the child was in a special situation, the class teacher told to pay special attention. So we asked the class teacher about the specific situation of this child, the class teacher sighed and said: "Xiaohua is very pitiful, because his family is poor, his parents gave birth to him and went to work in a very distant city, his grandmother took care of him, his grandma's eyes were blind and she couldn't take care of him, so the children didn't have breakfast, and even didn't have dinner after went from school at night, one meal a day, it is the school's lunch." After we listened to it, we were extremely sorry and feel pity for this child. Turning around and watching Xiaohua, he polished off big bowls of food as the wind rolls up the clouds, and he hiccupped and smiled with satisfaction. The class teacher got up and helped him wash the dishes, according to the teacher, if the teacher didn't help him wash the dishes; he came to school the next day, this child's tableware also had rice grains and oil, because his grandmother could not wash for him.

There are many such families in rural areas of China, the parents in the prime of life go out to work, and the weak elderly stay at home to look after the children, once they lose their health, the child is too young to take care of himself and has to be hungry, and neglected to be taken care of. Fortunately, there is national policy support, and the school teachers take care of them. These disadvantaged children have obtained certain social support to a certain extent, so that they can survive and persist in reading, hope that knowledge can change their destiny.

4.2 Xiaoming Give up Himself

We went to a rural primary and secondary school in Bahuang Town, Bijiang District, Tongren City, Guizhou Province for investigation and survey, and found that Xiaoming was already in the sixth grade, he did not know some words when filling in the questionnaire, and could not write some words. We looked at the column of the results and found that the score is poor, so we asked Xiaoming very curiously, can you understand what the teacher is saying in class? He shook his head, asked if his homework can be done independently, he still shakes his head, so we asked how his parents thought about his academic performance. He said: "my parents said, let me go out to work with them
after I finished junior high school." He seems to be very relaxed, we asked: "when you finish junior high school, you are at the age of 15, and are still so small. What can you do?" He looked down and thought about it. He immediately looked up and said, "I can't read anyway and do not care future". After listening, we sighed in our hearts. Then we learned about his specific situation from Xiaoming's class teacher, He said that this child is also a left-behind child, his parents graduated from primary school and earned money by working outside the home, they also didn't care much about his children’s academic performance, and they also thought that reading is useless, his grandmother at home couldn't control his study, so the child would write oneself off as hopeless and act recklessly. The teacher also said that during his 30 years of teaching, he found that more and more left-behind children were seriously weary of studying in the past two years, many children in junior high school, sometimes even stop schooling in elementary school, and it is very worrying. These children do not study, what will happen to the future fate? Replaying the life track of their parents and going out to work?

A group of left-behind children because their parents are not around for a long time, grandparents and grandmothers cannot manage their learning, which cause children with normal potential develop slowly, learn difficult, education fail. Children who grow up in poor families have lower cognitive ability and academic performance. Mother's supervision and participation in children's learning can improve children's social emotional ability and enthusiasm to participate in extracurricular activities, which contribute to improving children's academic performance. [2] Of course, parents can stimulate children's learning motivation and interest, so children will not end their education prematurely. Therefore, the intervention of disadvantaged children like Xiaoming should focus on improving their learning motivation and interest, and actively mobilize their parents to cooperate with school education and stimulate children's learning motivation and interest.

4.3 I am a big Sister, Don't Provoke Me.

The author visited a rural middle school in Xianfeng County, Enshi City, Hubei Province; I found that there were such a group of girls in the flower season, they were not normal in their words and deeds, they had several rings on their ears, and the clothes were strangely dressed and tattooed on their arms. And now they are only 14 years old and in the 8th grade.

Listening to the teacher of the school, these ten little girls often don't study together, long-term absent, go to the town to surf the Internet at weekends, and fall in love with social youths. Moreover, they also implemented school bullying, and even caught a female classmate in the same class; slap her in the face and beat and kicks, beat her concussion and tinnitus, and still stay at home, afraid to come to school.

Teachers' education has been ineffective for many times, no parents are asked to come to the school, some parents' phone cannot get through for a long time, some numbers are wrong. Faced with these parents, the school is also very helpless.

But when we conducted questionnaires and interviews with them, when asked what they wanted to do when they grew up, several of them filled in "airline stewardess."

Intimate friendship is an important source of happiness. [4] People often choose to be friends with people who are very similar in quality, skills and values. [5] Under the condition that disadvantaged children lose family surveillance, they are confused by the so-called "the code of the brotherhood", go for brothers or sisters into small groups; seek identity and security in small groups to improve subjective well-being.

In fact, misconduct reports of small groups of middle school students are frequently seen in the media. Among the disadvantaged children in rural areas, especially the junior high school children are at the most critical stage of puberty development. However, the development of physiology does not necessarily accompany the psychological maturity, the internal environment, especially the puberty of endocrine with strenuous exercise, it is the stage when it is most prone to negligence and lifelong regret events appear, for example, early love, juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, and drug taking.
In these cases, this group of "big sisters" tried to express themselves through distinctive clothes, words and deeds, reflect a superiority complex. Moreover, they built their "happiness" and "joy" on hurting others; this is a deformed "pleasure". Their happiness and values have actually entered a misunderstanding.

But they still have a relatively normal cognition, know that "airline stewardess" is good occupations that are accepted and envied by others. We should start from this angle, guide them to establish correct life goals, and do a good job in life planning, and gradually get rid of bad behaviors. Therefore, for the informal groups in which disadvantaged children exist, our families, schools, and societies need to study and guide correctly, and give correct guidance for characteristics of their small groups, so that they can develop toward good direction, thus improving their subjective well-being.

4.4 Do Own Things

Of course, disadvantaged children are not all bad. Although some children are disadvantaged, they will transform their disadvantages into resources and develop themselves. However, their emotional needs, you do not know the hunger and longing of their inner heart without deep understanding.

We visited student Xiaona (pseudonym), Xiaoqin (pseudonym) in a teaching point in a township of Baiquan County, Heilongjiang Province. Xiaona, 12 years old, 6th grade; Xiaoqin, 9 years old, 4th grade, a full-time teacher is responsible for teaching two sisters, the double teaching method is used, the relevant costs of learning are free. Dining enjoy the national nutrition meal subsidy; this teacher is responsible for cooking for them.

As soon as they went home, they immediately put down their schoolbags and cleaned the yard. Their father is farming at home and loves to drink little. Their mother went out to work because of poverty, and later refused to return. They lived with the 70-year-old grandmother, who was a hardworking and honest rural woman, she supported all the work inside and outside the house, sometimes she helps the villagers to do some work and support the family. A lot of vegetables and fruit trees were planted before and after the yard. Inside the yard, there are dozens of chickens, ducks, and goose. The two children worked very well and cleaned the yard a few times. Then they found out their clothes, grandma and dad's dirty cloth, scooped two spoonful of washing powder, put in a basin soaked. Immediately they went back to the garden, looked for some vegetables and got ready to cook.

Here are our conversations with them when they waited for the rice is cooked:

A: Do you miss your mother?
B, C: (do not make a sound, look downcast)
A: How about learning?
B, C: OK. (emotion relax)
A: What do you do grow up?
B: Enter a college and become a teacher.
C: I love to paint; I hope I can go to the art school and become a painter in the future. But I know that my family is too poor, I may not be able to read it. I can like sister to be a free teacher.
A: Is the teacher in the school good?
B, C: The teacher is very good, the school is very convenient. However, I do not worry that my grandmother is too tired and afraid that she is physically weak.

Human psychological development runs through the entire life cycle. People develop new skills, abilities, and power and find opportunities to promote their own growth and development. From this perspective, Disadvantaged children leave the protection of the family, in fact, it creates an opportunity for disadvantaged children to reach their full potential to cope with the challenges and develop their self-confidence and independence. This positive attitude is conducive to enhance their satisfaction with life and subjective well-being.

Obviously, they are such children. Faced with the abandonment of the mother, the father's inability, the hard work of the grandmother, the pressure of the poverty and life, they can use their own strength to help themselves adapt to the environment, "bitter in it" and "pleasure in it."

They remember the body of their grandmother; they know how to be grateful and learn to be grateful, it is also an important factor in improving subjective well-being. The ancients said that great
people are to be under severe circumstance before being great. In fact, the suffering of life is the cornerstone of the broader world.

It should be noted that they also have psychological gap that lack maternal love, so they need to be properly guided to learn to forgive their mother's choice. Of course, the mother has the right to choose her own lifestyle, but she cannot completely abandon her responsibilities as a mother, she should care more about her children, often call, or often come back to see the children, so that the child does not feel that the mother has left forever, don't love yourself. They will feel that their mother has been thinking about them, and loving them, and then make up for the gap of lack of mother's love. For all parents of this type of family, the above requirements should be fulfilled, so that the child feels that there is no lack of parental love and the mind is healthy, then the improvement of subjective well-being of such disadvantaged children is much easier.

5. Thinking and Enlightenment

Disadvantaged children are affected by the objective factors of deterministic forces such as family poverty, social mobility, uneven distribution of educational resources and uneven educational opportunities, which make them passively stay and flow, cannot choose their own living environment, this caused their living conditions to be poor to a certain extent. In life, they are often neglected to be taken care of; there is no guidance in learning, and there are difficulties; some people even have a feeling of being weary of studying. There are various problems in behaviors and conduct.

Due to their poor living conditions, disadvantaged children are more likely to feel life pressure in relation to children in normal living conditions; they become more sensitive and suspicious. In attribution style, they tend to attribute negative outcomes to intrinsic, self-factors. Faced with life difficulties, they often feel guilty, blameless, and powerless. Therefore, we must build a strong social support system for the living conditions of disadvantaged children.

We must strengthen the improvement of the living conditions of disadvantaged children from the government, schools, communities, various social organizations and families. The support and assistance policy have been increased at the government level. Schools should pay more attention to these children and strengthen cooperation between family and school. The community can establish the family guidance center and family service station, etc.; various social organizations can do "one-on-one" in the material, financial, and human resources as much as possible. The family should improve the custody and support ability of this group of children, pay attention to their emotional needs, learn to communicate and establish a good parent-child relationship.

In short, from society to individuals, our concern and support for disadvantaged children depends not only on the power of the government, schools, and families, but also on the strong social forces and participation of the whole people.

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