

Study on the Influencing Factors of Social Support for Rural Children in China

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Abstract—This study was designed to investigate the influencing factors of social support for rural children as a whole in China. Responses from 2500 rural children throughout the Central China were collected through a survey research. The existing scale of social support was applicable to adults, which was not applicable for children even with some emendations. In this study, the data was analyzed by using factor analysis with new variables. Results indicate: The four factor model is the best explanation of the data. Parents' support is the most important factor that affects rural children and disposition education rather than examination- oriented education for rural children are needed. Teacher support is the second important factor on rural children and teachers are desired to help the rural children deal with the learning and psychology problems. Peer is another support for rural children and the peer interaction process of rural children should be paid attention to. School is an important organization support for rural children but limited, and supports from the social organizations are expected to play a more effective role in the growth of the rural children in the future.

Keywords—rural children; social support; factor analysis; China

I. INTRODUCTION

Study of children is always a focus of social science research in China and even in the world. In China, rural children need more concern due to underdevelopment, natural shortage of resources and incomplete social systems in rural areas. This paper focuses on the following issues: What kind of social support system are rural children living in? What factors affect the social support for rural children? Which parts need to be improved?

So far, the academic circles have carried out research on rural children's social support status, mostly on left-behind children. There are different dimensions on social support of left-behind children among experts and scholars at home and abroad, with no unified conclusion reached. Zhao argued in 2015 that social support includes not only subjective support and objective support but also the degree of utilization of the support [1]. In 2016, Chen and other researchers put forward that the social support for left-behind children can be classified into official social support and unofficial social support [2]. As for the source of social support, Lu in 2012 advocated to establish the "school-family-community" integrative social support network mode [3]. Yuan (2013) pointed out that the

scope of social support network includes the nation, enterprise cluster, community, non-governmental organizations, personal kinship, geographical relation and business relation, while the content of social support consists of material support and spiritual support [4].

Nguyen (2016) stated that social support refers to the perception or experience of a person being respected, which is part of a social network and is characterized by mutual obligations and mutual help [5]. Morrow and Vennam (2015) regarded social support as a kind of social capital, which exists in the personal, family and community relationship and is crucial to the growth of children [6]. Chernomas (2014) noted that social support refers to the perception or experience of a person being respected, which is part of a social network and is characterized by mutual obligations and mutual help [7].

To sum up, there is little systematic research on the factors of social support for rural children in academic circles. Therefore, this paper focuses on the study of the factors of social support for rural children, draws a conclusion and provides route optimization for countermeasures targeting rural children.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, a quantitative method was used to complete the survey from January 2016 to July 2016, and the data were collected and analyzed by STATA13.0.

In order to ensure the representativeness of the samples and improve the measurement reliability and validity, this investigation adopts random sampling method in the central region of China - Zhushan County, Shiyan City, Hubei province. Thirty seven primary and secondary schools in 17 towns were randomly selected, and 3,000 questionnaires were handed to students from the 1st grade to the 9th grade. Finally 2,741 effective samples were obtained, accounting for 91.37% of all.

Factor analysis method is used to analyze the variables of social support for rural children. Based on the study of the internal dependence among the variables, the multiple measured variables are transformed into a few irrelevant aggregative indicators (i.e. factors), and the dimensionality reduction is achieved by simplifying the data.

Fund support: Project sponsored by National College Students' Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program in 2017 (Project number: 20171049719005)

III. RESULTS

A. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Social Support for Rural Children

1) Data Test of KMO Value

The data were carefully tested and analyzed. The partial correlation between variables and the KMO test value is 0.8223, greater than 0.80. In statistical analysis, KMO value is greater than 0.7, indicating that factor analysis can be done, so this set of data is suitable for factor analysis.

2) Factor Analysis

Through the observation of the scree plot (Fig. 1), it was found that the data after the fourth factors show a significantly flat trend, so it was decided to extract the first 4 factors for principal factor analysis.

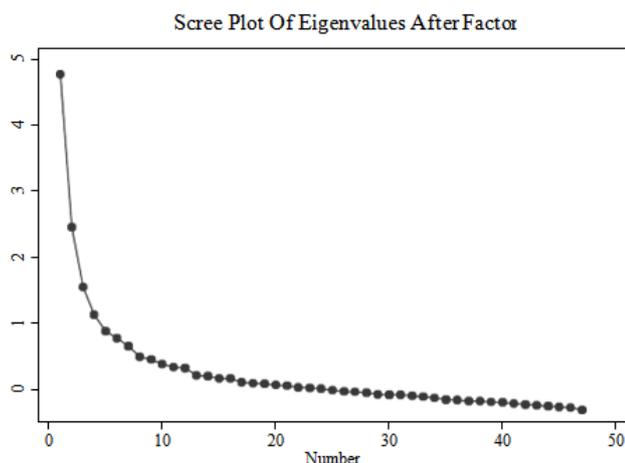


Fig. 1. Scree plot of social support for rural children

TABLE I. EIGENVALUE, VARIANCE CONTRIBUTION RATE AND CUMULATIVE VARIANCE CONTRIBUTION RATE OF COMMON FACTORS

Common factor	Eigenvalue	Variance contribution rate %	Cumulative variance contribution rate %
Factor1	3.50054	30.77	30.77
Factor2	3.30379	29.04	59.81
Factor3	1.59398	14.01	73.82
Factor4	1.47040	12.93	86.75

The calculation results of common factor eigenvalues show that there are four factors whose eigenvalue is bigger than 1, therefore, the four factors are retained. The explainable cumulative variance contribution rate is 86.75%, the unexplained information of variable is 13.25%, and the population variance's variable information explanation ability is relatively good. According to table 1, it can be found the social support for rural children is reflected more prominently in the first common factor, with the variance contribution rate as 30.77%; the other three factors in descending order is F2 (29.04%), F3 (14.01%) and F4 (12.93%) according to the contribution rate.

In order to highlight the differences among factors, the maximum variance method is used to rotate and the factor load matrix is obtained. It is found that the absolute values of

correlation coefficient between the principal factors and partial variables are relatively small and these variables are not representative. In order to better measure the social support for children and make the research more scientific and standardized, it is determined to exclude the variables whose load value is less than 0.4. In order to understand the correlation between public factors and social support for rural children, the scores of variables of these four factors are calculated, and the average score of the factors is calculated. The results are shown in table 2.

TABLE II. SCORES OF FACTORS

Indicator	factor			
	1	2	3	4
Resort to the school for help when encountering difficulties in life a1				0.31301
Resort to social organizations for help when encountering difficulties in life a2				0.36379
Long for more communication with the teacher a3		0.08746		
Long for trust from the teacher a4		0.09833		
Long for recognition from the teacher a5		0.18069		
Hope the teacher pays attention to your life a6		0.20698		
Hope the teacher treats you fairly a7		0.09611		
Hope the teacher knows more about your family a8		0.17048		
Hope the teacher supports your reading of extracurricular books a9		0.12572		
Classmates and friends have an influence on you personally a10				0.18123
Frequency of chatting with family a11	0.14856			
The degree of family's love for you a12	0.14902			
Degree of relationship with parents a13	0.18660			
How much your parents care about your learning a14	0.17387			
The frequency of contact with parents a15	0.15150			
When parents contact you, the most talked about thing is your school work a16	0.09680			
You have nobody to guide your learning because your parents have migrated to cities for work a17		0.10927		
You have nobody to take care of you in life because your parents have migrated to cities for work a18		0.11890		
You feel free when your parents migrated to cities for work a19			0.19740	
Average score	0.14395	0.13266	0.189315	0.33840

3) Factor Result Analysis

A total of four factors (including 17 variables) are extracted in exploratory factor analysis. The four factors of social support for rural children include parents' support, teachers' support, peer support and organizations' support, with details as follows:

Factor One includes six variables, i.e. a13, a14, a15, a16, a11 and a12. It mainly reflects the degree of relationship between rural children and their parents, parents' concern over rural children's study and their support for rural children. Therefore, the factor is named as "parents' support for rural children".

Factor Two includes seven variables, i.e. a3, a4, a5, a6, a7, a8 and a9. It mainly reflects rural children's status in learning, life and psychology when their parents are absent for work and their expectations for the teacher. Thus, this factor is named as "teachers' support for rural children".

Factor Three includes two variables, i.e. a10 and a19. It mainly reflects the personal influence of classmates and friends on rural children. A19 reflects the impact of parents' migration to cities for work on rural children. By integrating the characteristics of these two variables, the factor is named as "peer support for rural children".

Factor Four includes two variables, i.e. a1 and a2. It mainly reflects that rural children turn to the school and social organizations for help when encountering difficulties in life. Therefore, this factor is named as "organizations' support for rural children".

IV. DISCUSSION

Based on further reducing dimension for the data analysis, this paper obtains the four factors of social support for rural children, including parents' support, teachers' support, peer support and organizations' support. The specific details are as follows:

A. Parents' support

The scores of the six variables of Factor One are respectively 0.14856 points (a11), 0.14902 points (a12), 0.18660 points (a13), 0.17387 points (a14), 0.15150 points (a15) and 0.09680 points (a16), and their average score is 0.14395 points. Among them, variable a13 has relatively big correlation with Factor One.

As for the choices on degree, positive options are more than negative options, therefore, it is deemed that parents' support plays a positive role in the growth of rural children. Even though rural children cannot receive family care and support, parental support is still essential. The family care that rural children receive mainly comes from parental support. Current phenomenon largely shows that parents tend to focus on children's study when parenting. Wu and Li proposed in 2015 to cultivate parents' ability to conduct emotional communication with left-behind children, attach importance to the emotional exchange between left-behind children and parents, and facilitate the communication between left-behind children and parents by using more social resources or through other approaches [8]. The parents of rural children have changed their concepts on parenting. Apart from the call for the conventional parental companion, a new model of "parent quality education" should be put forward. The parenting quality is no longer measured simply by whether parents care about and accompany children. Instead, it is measured by the quality of parental care. More attention is paid to the emotional and psychological education by parents towards their children

rather than the school-work-focused communication. The all-round communication involving life, learning, emotion and interpersonal relationship is advocated. Moreover, parents need to further change the concept that "the school takes care of everything for children" so as to strengthen the positive role of family in children's growth.

B. Teachers' Support

The scores of the nine variables of Factor Two are respectively 0.08746 points (a3), 0.09833 points (a4), 0.18069 points (a5), 0.20698 points (a6), 0.09611 points (a7), 0.17048 points (a8), 0.12572 points (a9), 0.10927 points (a17) and 0.11890 points (a18). Their average score is 0.13266 points. Among them, variable a6 is most correlated with Factor Two.

School is the main place for rural children to learn knowledge and do activities, and school education has a great influence on the rural children. Teachers' support is particularly significant to rural children's physical and mental health, and the abundant support from teachers will improve rural children's social interaction, strengthen their self-confidence and enhance their activeness to communicate with others, thus benefiting their physical and mental health [9]. Therefore, with their parents absent for work, rural children usually expect to get support from teachers.

In addition to offering necessary help with study, teachers should give them more support in other aspects. They should pay attention to and strengthen communication with rural children in family life, mental health, school adaptation and other affairs. By doing so, they can get to know the changes of rural children on time, provide psychological counseling for problem children in rural areas in a timely manner, and guide them to face and solve problems with the correct and rational manner and attitude. This will help rural children cultivate a healthy and positive mentality and build a favorable school environment for them.

C. Peers' Support

The scores of the two variables of Factor Three are 0.18123 points (a10) and 0.19740 points (a19), and their average score is 0.189315 points. Variable a19 is more correlated with Factor Three.

In the factor of peer support of rural children, the load value of "classmates and friends have an influence on you personally" is higher than that of "you feel free when your parents migrate to cities for work". The results only mention the personal influence of friends and classmates, but do not mention the specific content of the influence. And the absence of parents leads to a sense of freedom of rural children. Meanwhile, the two variables have relatively high correlation with the same factor. Considering these reasons, it can be boldly concluded that peer group plays a more important role in satisfying rural children's sense of freedom.

Rural children's peer support includes the support from friends and classmates. With no access to parental love, weak restriction from parents and family as well as spoiling and poor guardianship from grandparents, rural children whose parents have migrated to cities to search for work naturally have a sense of freedom. Peer group plays an important role in satisfying rural children's sense of freedom. The influence

of classmates and friends on rural children is shown in two aspects: positive influence and negative influence. The positive peer group usually carries the social mainstream culture; the neutral peer group mainly carries the sub-culture and does not represent the mainstream culture of the society; the negative peer group transmits a culture that runs counter to social mainstream culture which is extremely detrimental to children's growth. Therefore, it is of great importance to pay attention to peer interaction of children in rural areas, establish a corresponding guidance mechanism and promote the benign development of rural children's peer interaction and life values.

D. Organizations' Support

The scores of the two variables of Factor Four are 0.36379 points (a2) and 0.31301 points (a1), and their average score is 0.33840 points. Of the two, variable a2 is more correlated with Factor Four.

Organizations' support includes support from schools and social organizations when rural children are faced with difficulties in life. It can be seen that organizations' support is a major way for rural children to solve difficulties. On the one hand, the school is an important place for rural children to live and study, and more rural children tend to get support of the school. At present, rural schools pay more and more attention to the development of children. They are able to provide support for them when rural children encounter difficulties in life, and are able to coordinate with parents to jointly help them deal with problems. Therefore, schools are one of the important ways for rural children to seek solutions. On the other hand, some rural children choose to seek help and support from social organizations. More and more social organizations attach importance to rural children, and take active measures to help rural children to solve problems of life, study and even psychological problems. With the gradual development of social work, the institutions engaged in social work continue to develop and greatly help rural children to solve problems. Professional social service institutions have played a positive role in the construction of social support for rural children. For instance, they integrate various resources by connecting schools, child custody institutions and communities to provide more support and service and promote professionalism of service for rural children; they strive to gain resources from the government and the society to support schools; and they also carry out social work directly towards schools, include teachers and rural children into their service scope, and conduct different interventions for different groups so as to create a good environment for the education and growth of rural children. Moreover, the social service institutions provide education for school teachers to enhance their quality, establish professional organizations for rural children service, and give play to the positive role of peer group.

V. SUMMARY

To sum up, rural children parents support has positive effect on children's growth, and the way rural parents give children the support will affect the health of the rural children. When unable to get timely access to the parents' support and help, rural children will more expect to receive the support of

the teacher. What's more, parents and teachers should pay attention to guide the children to choose can have a positive impact on children's peer groups, never associating with bad companions, prompt the healthy growth of the rural children. In organizations' support, school is the main organization to help rural children solve difficulties, and with the development of social organization, the social organizations' help will play a more effective role in the growth of the rural children in the future. Therefore, we should push forward the exploration of multi-social-support mode for rural children, establish a complete social support network, and provide all-around care for rural children. Family support, teacher support and social organization support should complement each other, and teacher support should be combined with peer support.

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