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Preliminary Study on Crime Prevention of Left-behind Children in Rural China

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Abstract In the process of social and economic development in China, there appears the inevitable problem of crime of left-behind children. Extensive researches and disputes prove that it is, to a greater extent, a social phenomenon resulted from social factors. It is recommended to improve the treatment of migrant workers and solve the problem of school admission for their children, provide effective legal education for those left-behind children whose problem can not be solved in a short term, and supplement the guardianship role to control the crime rate of left-behind children. Another more effective method is to resume effective control of people's social life through the rural cultural tradition, to fundamentally prevent crime of left-behind children.

Key words Rural China, Left-behind children, Crime, Prevention

1 Introduction

With the rapid development of China's economy and the acceleration of urbanization, a large number of rural surplus labor flows to cities from rural areas. Migrant workers appear in this situation and play an important role in urban economic development. However, there also appears series of problems. Left-behind children in China is the phenomenon of parents from the country's rural areas leaving their children when they move to urban areas to seek jobs. Children are left in the care of relatives such as grandparents, family friends or others. In some cases, the carer may be unsuited or unable to give adequate care for physical or financial reasons, leading to developmental issues such as vulnerability to becoming a victim of human trafficking, become involved in criminal activities or suffering depression.

A census identified over 60 million left-behind children with 40 percent of these under age 5 and 70 percent seeing their parents less than once a year. According to data of the *Sixth Population Census in 2010*, the whole rural area of China has 61.025 million left-behind children, accounting for 37.7% of total rural children, more than one fifth of total children in China. These rural left-behind children have many problems, such as more and more accidental injuries, poor learning performance, weak learning interest, and psychological problem, etc. However, many researchers care about the crime of left-behind children.

2 Disputes about crimes of left-behind children in rural China

There are basically two kinds of views about the current situations of crimes committed by left-behind children in rural China. One is that the present situation of the left-behind children in rural China is serious, which can be reflected from the following aspects:

many kinds of crimes, high crime rate, intelligent crime, and vicious crime increasingly serious, and younger children commit crimes. Most researches on this view adopted the questionnaire survey, statistical data of crimes in a certain region (generally, a county), and interview, to obtain the overall situation through inference.

The opposite view is that, despite these seemingly objective survey data, it is unscientific to describe the whole group in a case-by-case manner. Those who hold this view also believed that the first view is to draw attention of relevant department to solve related problems of left-behind children, but it objectively brings bad reputation to left-behind children in rural China, which is not fair for the children, and it is a kind of academic bullying^[1].

3 Analysis on crimes of left-behind children in rural China

3.1 Crimes committed by left-behind children becoming more and vicious crimes becoming more According to the relevant sampling data, types of crimes committed by left-behind children in rural China in five years ago mainly included theft, robbery, forcibly seizing, intentional injury, group affray, and crime of provocation.

Now, according to media reports, there appear cases of intentional homicide, kidnapping, rape and other more vicious crimes. There are even crimes of killing their loved ones, elders, teachers and cases in violation of the basic social norms and thought of human relations. However, concern of such cases is due to no previous report, it does not mean there is no occurrence of such cases. Therefore, it is not objective to reach the conclusion that there are many more kinds of and many more vicious crimes committed by left-behind children.

3.2 Increasing crime rate of left-behind children in rural China It is reported that the crime rate of left-behind children has been taking up 70% of crimes committed by minors, and there

is an increasing trend in recent years. According to the data issued by Laian Court in Chuzhou City of Anhui Province, compared with in 2008, the crime cases committed by minors accounted for 9% of all criminal cases in 2009, while the crimes committed by rural left-behind children accounted for 80% of the crimes committed by minors, growing to 28% compared with the same period in the previous year.

According to the report of the Procuratorate of He County in Anhui Province, from 2010 to 2012, in cases of public prosecution initiated by the Procuratorate of He County, the number of crimes committed by rural left-behind children was 8, 13, and 17 respectively, accounting for 33.3%, 40.6% and 47.2% of the crimes committed by minors. This set of data does show that the increasing trend of crime rate of left-behind children, and indicate the severe situation of crime of rural left-behind children to a certain extent.

3.3 Younger subjects and intelligent means of crime committed by rural left-behind children Younger subjects and intelligent means of crime are common topics in crimes committed by minors. According to reports, subjects of crimes committed by rural left-behind children are mainly 14 – 15 years old. Some reports also indicate that their means of crime showed preliminary anti-investigation characteristics, such as deliberately blocking the face, calling using the public telephone card, etc., but these means are not necessarily the original of these left-behind children.

These characteristics can neither explain the essential characteristics of crimes committed by rural left-behind children, nor prove that rural left-behind children have criminal tendency. Instead, they demonstrate the adverse influence of acquired social factors.

3.4 The problem of crime of left-behind children and guardianship Dong Shitan and Limei carried out a questionnaire survey and reached the conclusion that in rural areas of Shandong Province, the left-behind children accounted for 1/3 of all children, and the rate of their bad behavior and their crime rate are higher than non left-behind children.

For the crime committed by left-behind children, the crime rate of left-behind children guarded by the peer is the highest, up to 29.92% of the survey data, the next is 27.57% guarded by grandparents, then is 12.49% guarded by other elder generation, 8.88% guarded by themselves, and the lowest is 0.45% guarded by their mothers. However, from these simple data, we can get an impression that the crime of left-behind children has become a social phenomenon rather than an individual event, and the occurrence of such crime has been affected by factors such as guardians.

4 Recommendations for solving crimes of left-behind children in rural China

4.1 Reducing the left-behind children in rural areas to reduce the crimes of left-behind children (i) It is recommended to improve the treatment of migrant workers, and help them in

their children's school admission, to reduce and eliminate the problem of left-behind children. In real life, most of the parents have to leave their children behind in hometown, because they are confronted with two problems that can not be solved, one is the relatively low income of their parents and they do migrant work to increase the economic income. The other problem is the restriction of household registration in admission of urban schools. For a long time, rural children fail to enjoy the same education resources as urban children, and have to receive education in schools for children of migrant workers where the education resources are relatively backward. Compared with rural schools, these schools, if having high quality, may have high charges, if having low quality, may be considered unnecessary by parents. Therefore, after balancing the advantages and disadvantages, leaving children behind in rural areas becomes the only choice. To truly solve the phenomenon of left-behind children, improving the treatment of migrant workers and making their children enjoy the equal education resources as urban children are fundamental approaches.

(ii) It is recommended to make parents realize the importance of family environment, especially the parent guardianship, not leave children behind alone. Once the first method fails, this method can help parents overcome their difficulties and encourage them to live together with their children. In the *Whitepaper on the Psychological Condition of Chinese Left-behind Children*, if parents fail to meet their children once every three months, their children would show increasing upset and get worried about their living conditions. The family support of left-behind children becomes weakened, and top three sources of support are mother, classmates and friends, and father. In the top three sources of support for children not left behind, father ranks second, and classmates and friends rank third. Related psychological studies show that mother living together with children plays an essential role in the formation of psychological health of children.

4.2 Providing appropriate legal education and filling the gap of guardianship for left-behind children if failing to improve treatment of migrant workers Relevant studies have shown that the most crimes committed by children, especially left-behind children, are resulted from ignorance of laws. They said that they do not know they are violating laws and will be punished by laws. This is indeed related to education. However, we should ponder why such problem occurs to teenagers.

When parents do not live together with their children, other guardians fail to perform the obligation of providing necessary legal education, or even these guardians are people ignorant of laws. Similarly, when parents fail to fulfill their guardianship duties, lack of effective social guardianship is an essential reason for crime of left-behind children.

4.3 Resuming effective control of people's social life through the rural cultural tradition, to fundamentally prevent crime of left-behind children This approach may be difficult to solve the problem, but it has high value but low cost in the long run.

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The root cause for phenomenon of the left-behind population is the urbanization of China. It is at the cost of family happiness. The living space and survival mode of rural areas and farmers are squeezed and changed, leading to decline and depression of villages and collapse of rural community.

Then, the interpersonal control mode inherited through traditional culture and word of mouth inheritance will collapse accordingly. Therefore, it is an essential project to re-examine and build the rural cultural value, and interpersonal communication model in restricting crimes of left-behind children. In the process of urbanization in China, we should not ignore the decisive factor, cul-

ture, which is of greater significance for social stability and prosperity than economic factors.

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