

# Rural left-behind children drop out of school: "lack of money" or "lack of love"? ----Based on the perspective of family education

Bingbing Chen\*

Faculty of Education, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China

\*Corresponding author e-mail: cbb1345366319@163.com

**ABSTRACT.** With the implementation of nine-year compulsory education, the enrollment rate of basic education has steadily increased in my country, thereby promoting the rapid development of basic education. However, due to the economic gap between urban and rural areas and the impact of factors such as parents going out to work, rural left-behind children's dropout problem is prominent. Economic poverty, as a cause of rural left-behind children dropping out of school, does not capture the essence of the problem. For rural left-behind children dropping out of school, the lack of family education care and discipline is the main reason. Therefore, only by establishing a family education concept with care and discipline can we effectively reduce the dropout rate of rural left-behind children.

**KEYWORDS:** rural left-behind children; dropout; education poverty; education discipline

## 1. Introduction

Rural left-behind children are children under the age of the sixteen who are forced to stay in the countryside because their parents are out of work, so they can't be taken care of by their parents, and are taken care of by grandparents or other guardians[1]. With the increasing speed of urbanization, the number of left-behind children in rural areas is still relatively large. According to the "Research Report on the Status of Rural Left-behind Children and Urban Migrant Children in my country" released by the All-China Women's Federation in 2013, there are 61.255 million rural left-behind children in China. As of in 2018, there were more than 6.97 million left-behind children in rural areas. Compared with 9.02 million in 2016, the overall number of left-behind children in rural areas has dropped significantly. Although the number of rural left-behind children in my country is gradually decreasing, the number of rural left-behind children in my country is still relatively large. Left-behind children have received widespread attention from society. One of the important concerns is the current status of left-behind children's education, especially the problem of dropouts. According to the National Statistical Bulletin on Education Development, the rural areas have achieved the goal of basically universalizing the nine-year compulsory education in China. The dropout rate for rural primary and secondary schools is also within the range prescribed by the state, but currently left-behind children in rural areas Higher than the average dropout rate of rural children. In response to this problem, many researchers believe that the economic condition of the family is still the main reason for the dropout of rural left-behind children. However, some researchers also believe that with the implementation of nine-year compulsory education, it has helped many poor families to reduce the financial burden to a large extent, so the phenomenon of dropping out of school due to poverty is gradually disappearing. Therefore, according to relevant literature, whether economic poverty is the main reason for rural left-behind children to drop out of school remains to be discussed. The research in this article will focus on the relationship between the drop-out of rural left-behind children and economic poverty? What are the non-economic factors for rural left-behind children dropping out of school? What is the relationship between them and family economic poverty? And how to solve the drop-out of rural left-behind children? And other problems ?

## 2. Correlation between economic poverty and education of rural left-behind children

In recent years, many researchers have conducted a large number of empirical studies on the relationship between economic poverty and the dropout of rural left-behind children. However, the methods adopted are different, and the conclusions reached are also different. At present, there is no consensus widely accepted by the

academic community. The discussion about whether economic poverty is the main reason for rural left-behind children dropping out of school continues to this day.

### ***2.1 Strong correlation between economic poverty and enrollment of rural left-behind children***

Human capital theory believes that education investment is the core of human capital investment, which refers to the expenditure of formal school education at all levels in a certain period of time [2]. Education investment is an important way for children to receive school education to enrich their knowledge and improve their ability, thereby forming human capital. Therefore, the education level of rural left-behind children needs family education investment to support. However, due to the uneven development of urban and rural areas, many rural households are unable to receive compulsory education normally due to economic poverty and limited investment in education, which leads to the phenomenon of dropping out of school [3]. For this reason, the parents of many left-behind children in rural areas are also willing to provide more material input to their children so that they can receive a good education. However, driven by utilitarian human capital, on the one hand, they expect their children to change their socioeconomic status through education; on the other hand, when the education cost of their children exceeds a certain percentage of family income, the parent family will not let the children accept education. It can be seen that when the family is economically poor, the family education investment is insufficient, and the education cost is higher than the education benefit, the rural left-behind children can only choose to drop out of school to help the family avoid poverty due to education. Based on this, many rural left-behind children choose to drop out of school during the compulsory education stage, hoping to increase family income by dropping out of school to work.

### ***2.2 The weak correlation between economic poverty and the enrollment of rural left-behind children***

In addition to the family's economic income, factors such as parents' education level, children's academic performance, neighbors' attitude towards increasing children's education investment, and children's distance from school to home are significantly affected by the family's willingness to increase children's education investment [4]. From this, it can be seen that the family's willingness to invest in education is not only determined by the family's economic income, but also more from the mutual influence of multiple factors. The direct effect of family income and parental education level on the academic achievements of migrant children is significant, and both parental education expectations and family learning resources can play an intermediary role in the relationship between the family's socioeconomic status and the academic achievements of migrant children, improving the mobility of parents. The level of education can promote the academic achievement of left-behind children more than raising family income[5]. The improvement of the academic achievement of left-behind children can effectively reduce the drop-out rate of left-behind children in rural areas. After the implementation of the free compulsory education policy, the impact of economic poverty on rural left-behind children dropping out of school gradually reduced. At the same time, due to the continuous development of my country's social economy and the implementation of various agricultural benefits policies, rural children have a high school enrollment rate, but there are also dropouts. Although economic poverty is no longer the main reason for rural left-behind children dropping out of school, economic poverty still has a certain impact on rural left-behind children dropping out of school. With the in-depth development of poverty alleviation in my country, the impact of economic poverty on the drop-out of rural left-behind children is gradually decreasing, and other negative factors caused by parents going out to work have an increasing effect on the drop-out of left-behind children.

### **3. An important incentive for rural left-behind children to drop out of school: "lack of love"**

In 2018, General Secretary Xi pointed out at the National Education Conference: The family is the first school in life, and the parent is the children's first teacher. The child should be taught the "first lesson in life" to help with the button. Therefore, family education is extremely important for the growth of children. Family education, as the head of school education and social education, should shoulder the major responsibility of educating children, and provide and create a family environment suitable for children's physical and mental development. In addition, most left-behind children in rural areas are educated in different generations. The guardians of left-behind children have strict requirements on the surface, but in fact, the guardians do not have an in-depth understanding of the children's learning in school, and they do not really play a supervisory role [6].

### ***3.1 Lack of family care leads to low academic achievement of rural left-behind children***

According to the White Paper on the Mental Status of Left-behind Children in China (2015), about one-third of the left-behind children in rural areas of the country see their parents up to two times a year, while the fifteen percent of left-behind children one time. For parents working abroad, more than the fifty percent of parents can only go home once during the Spring Festival. The twenty percent of parents have to go home once every two or three years; some parents have never even returned home. Therefore, in the absence of parental care, rural left-behind children do not receive the appropriate care from their parents, and many problems arise in terms of academic attitudes, academic habits, and academic performance. Therefore, parents going out may make left-behind children lack discipline and instruction, and are more likely to perform poorly or drop out early in learning [7].

### ***3.2 The shortcomings of the intergenerational education cause the left-behind children to be tired of studying***

Parents of left-behind children in rural areas cannot take care of their children, and can only be supported by grandparents. Grandparents can take part in housework within their ability, supervise and guide the behavior of grandchildren, and provide a certain level of emotional support and life care [8]. Intergenerational education makes up for the lack of family education to a certain extent, but the way of intergenerational education will adversely affect the education of rural left-behind children. Therefore, left-behind children are supervised by their grandparents, lack of complete family education, limited knowledge level of grandparents, disconnected education and society, and inconsistent education with their parents. It is precisely because of the many shortcomings of the intergenerational education that the rural left-behind children have problems such as being tired of school, truant or even dropping out of school.

### ***3.3 The deviation of family education concept leads to lower education expectation of left-behind children***

The concept of education is that parents in the process of raising their children, through a certain way of behavior to understand children's physical and mental development laws, and then form an understanding of children's education. Parents' education of children in all aspects is subject to this educational concept [9]. To a certain extent, this educational concept will affect the attitude of rural left-behind children towards education. At present, rural areas are remote and influenced by traditional ideas. Many rural parents think that studying can not change their economic status. The idea of "useless reading" still exists in the vast rural areas. Induced by this educational concept, rural left-behind children's expectations for education have gradually decreased, and they are more expecting to go out to work.

## **4. Family care and education discipline: countermeasures to reduce the dropout rate of rural left-behind children**

Emotional care and education discipline in family education have an important impact on the dropout of rural left-behind children. These influences are reflected by the left-behind children's sense of academic achievement, school-weary emotions and educational expectations as intermediary factors. Therefore, the main reason for rural left-behind children to drop out of school is the lack of personal care and discipline of left-behind children. For the above reasons, rural left-behind children live in a family environment that lacks care and discipline, which in turn leads to academic problems and causes them to drop out of school. For this reason, it is particularly important to educate and train left-behind children.

### ***4.1 Family education in care: enhancing the academic achievement of left-behind children***

In the development of children, the roles played by parents are different. Affected by the traditional Chinese idea of "outside the male lead, inside the female lead", the mother's main task is to teach the child, that is, to take care of the child and supervise the child's learning, so as to increase the child's motivation to learn. The father mainly maintains the family's economic income through working, and provides material guarantee for the children to receive normal education. Therefore, parents should first consider their children when deciding to go out to work, not just economic factors. Mother's education of children is very important. Therefore, mothers should try to stay with their children as much as possible, so that they can not only take care of their children, but also avoid the adverse effects caused by intergenerational education. If one of both parents stays at home to take care of their children, especially the mother stays at home, through daily communication with children and

academic supervision, then the rural left-behind children will greatly improve their academic attitudes, academic habits and academic achievements, and thus improve his sense of academic achievement.

#### ***4.2 School education in the discipline: eliminate the boredom of left-behind children***

"Discipline" is the concept that the famous French philosopher Michel Foucault discovered and used for the first time in his own research process. In his view, discipline refers to "a special power technology produced in modern times, which is both a power intervention, training and monitoring of the physical body, and a means of creating knowledge" [10]. For rural left-behind children, schools, the education discipline can effectively make up for the bad behavior problems caused by the inadequate supervision of parents in China. In the intergenerational education, the ancestors were too fond of the left-behind children and left them alone, although it is conducive to children's natural development. However, left-behind children are still in an immature state in all aspects. The left-behind children lack a clear understanding of their own life value and cannot make favorable choices for their own development; they lack good self-control and judgment skills and cannot consciously circumvent them. Evil, animalistic desires or impulses, therefore, the discipline of school education is needed to guide left-behind children to develop in the right direction. Therefore, parents and their guardians can communicate with the teachers in the school about the difficulties encountered by the left-behind children in school, so as to find appropriate countermeasures to help the left-behind children to solve the academic difficulties.

#### ***4.3 Social education in watchmanship: raising educational expectations of left-behind children***

Generally speaking, the idea of "uselessness of reading" reflects the vulnerability of rural communities in the promotion of community culture in our country, but also reflects the serious lack of cultural resources provided by education to rural communities and the reduction of the function of education to promote cultural development. To a certain extent, it will increase the dropout rate of rural left-behind children [11]. Parents should assume the responsibility of educating their children, rather than blindly placing all of this responsibility for educating their children in school education. Migrant workers' parents go to work in cities and lack scientific family education for their children. Then the relevant education and training institutions in the city can carry out family education training for these migrant workers, and let them understand the role and importance of parents in family education in education, so as to enhance their first place as children's education responsible person awareness. And in the training, help parents effectively clarify the relationship between income, leisure time and children's education, prioritize, and gradually guide them to effectively deal with these relationships, so as to establish a family education centered on children [12]. For parents of left-behind children in rural areas, their children should be encouraged to move towards the goal of higher education, and by accepting higher education, they should change the destiny of themselves and their families.

### **5. Conclusion**

By sorting out the related issues of rural left-behind children dropping out of school, this article discusses the current status of rural left-behind children, the correlation between economic poverty and rural left-behind children's dropout, and other causes of left-behind children's dropout and their relationship with economic poverty, and draws the following conclusions: The main reason why rural left-behind children drop out of school is not economic poverty, but the lack of educational care and discipline in rural education for left-behind children. The research in this article is consistent with that of Yao Song. That is, "the individual's own characteristics have the most significant effect on rural left-behind middle school students' dropout decision; the impact of family social capital cannot be ignored, but appropriate family intervention can reduce dropout expectations." However, this study is inconsistent with the research of Yao Song in the following aspects. First, in terms of research methods, this article mainly analyzes the problem of rural left-behind children dropping out of school from the perspective of family education, so as to include the rural social problem of left-behind children in the category of family education and seek a new solution, the research of Yao Song only clarifies the main reasons for left-behind children in rural areas. He believes that the academic performance and self-confidence of left-behind children in rural areas are the main reasons for their dropout, and this article believes that it is mainly due to educational care and discipline in the family. Missing, causing them to drop out of school. The drop-out of rural left-behind children has always been an eternal topic of common concern for families, schools and society. Therefore, the government should formulate relevant policies and measures to attract migrant workers to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship and employment; in rural areas, they should also strengthen the promotion of the "Compulsory Education Law" and the "two exemptions and one

supplement" policy, so that more left-behind children in rural areas can enjoy to fair and quality education. However, this article fails to go deep into rural areas and conduct field investigations on left-behind children in rural areas. Therefore, it is impossible to conduct field investigations by staying in certain places to obtain more first-hand information in order to effectively confirm the content of this study and improve This study is realistic and scientific. Subsequent research should pay more attention to the education status of rural left-behind children, and consider discussing from the perspective of family, society, school education, etc., so that rural left-behind children can better receive education and prevent families from falling into the poverty trap. Fundamentally block the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

## References

- [1] Zhang Junliang, Ma Xiaolei. Discussion on the education of left-behind children in rural areas under the background of urbanization[J]. Rural Economy, 2010(03): 102-105.
- [2] Zhang Xuemin, Ye Zhong. Educational Economics (2nd Edition) [M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2014 (09): 37-38.
- [3] Niu Lihua. Education Poverty and Anti-Education Poverty [J]. Academic Research, 2006(05): 121-124.
- [4] Fan Zhuosi. Research on the Influencing Factors of Children's Willingness to Invest in Education in Poor Rural Areas—Analysis Based on Logistic Model[J]. Education Theory and Practice, 2016, 36(02): 27-29.
- [5] Zhang Yunyun, Luo Fang, Tao Sha, Luo Liang, Dong Qi. The impact of family socioeconomic status and parental education investment on the academic achievements of migrant children [J]. Psychological Science, 2015, 38(01): 19-26.
- [6] Shi Mengying. Analysis and countermeasures of education status of rural left-behind children[J]. Quality Education in Western China, 2018, 4(21): 256.
- [7] Ding Jihong, Xu Ningyin. The effect of parents going out to work on the health and education of left-behind children [J]. Population Research, 2018, 4(01): 76-89.
- [8] Xu Qi. The impact of parents' outing on the academic performance of left-behind children in rural areas [J]. Youth Research, 2018 (06): 39-51+92.
- [9] Yu Guoliang, Xin Tao. Research on the Concept of Parent Education in the Perspective of Social Cognition [J]. Journal of East China Normal University (Education Science Edition), 1995(03): 87-93.
- [10] (French) Michelle. Foucault. Discipline and punishment [M]. Liu Beicheng, Yang Yuanying translation. Beijing: Life. Reading. Xinzhi Sanlian Bookstore, 1999.375.
- [11] Deng Chunkao. Resources and path of community support for left-behind children in rural areas—Based on a survey of four provinces and two districts in the western region [J]. Education Development Research, 2013, 33(01): 12-17.
- [12] Yao Song, Dou Zhongchen. Analysis on the influencing factors of decision-making decision of rural left-behind middle school students and their policy implications [J]. Educational Science Research, 2018(09): 49-55.