The Correlation Research Between Left-Behind Children’s TCM Five-Pattern Personality and Their Positive Traits in Junior High School

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Keywords: TCM Five-Pattern Personality, Left-Behind Children, Positive Traits, School Intervention

Abstract: Purpose To investigate the differences of positive traits between left-behind children and non-left-behind children, and to explore the relationship between left-behind children’s positive traits and their TCM Five-pattern personality. Methods With cluster sampling method, 458 students of junior high school were assessed with TCM Five-Pattern Personality Inventory and Positive Traits Scale. Results (1) There were no significant differences between the two groups of left-behind children and non-left-behind children concerning positive traits ($p > 0.05$). (2) TCM Five-pattern personality of left-behind children is associated with their positive traits. (3) The positive trait status of left-behind children with Taiyin personality was worse than that of other left-behind children ($p < 0.05$). Conclusions Left-behind children also have positive traits, which can be effectively predicted by TCM Five-pattern personality. In educational practice, the positive traits of left-behind children should be emphasized and left-behind children should be classified and be adopted with different educational strategies.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of market economy and the widening income gap between urban and rural areas, more and more rural labor force moves into cities and enter non-agricultural industries. Due to the economic reasons, a large number of migrant workers do not take their children with them when they go out for work, but leave them in their hometown under the custody of only one parent, their grandparents or relatives. Such children are called left-behind children [1]. China's sixth nationwide census in 2010 shows that there were 61.0255 million left-behind children and 154 million rural children in all, which means that approximately two-fifths of rural children are left-behind children. According to the Chinese Family Development Report 2015 issued by the National Health and Family Planning Commission, left-behind families have become normal families and the proportion of left-behind children reached 35.1%, rising about 10% over 2010. As we can see, the population of left-behind children is huge and is growing year by year. In addition, the reports on the problem of left-behind children are shocking, such as suicide, sexual assault, disappearances, accidental deaths and so on. Therefore, the psychological problems of left-behind children are widely concerned. The government attaches great importance to left-behind children’s education and launched a series of measures. In February 2016, the State Council issued the opinions on strengthening the care and protection of left-behind children. Eight ministries, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, carried out special care and protection actions for left-behind children.

It is worth mentioning that the fact is quite serious that we focus on students' psychological problems and ignore their positive traits. Psychological problems and their preventive solutions are common in research reports and students' psychological files. But reports and suggestions on the development of students' positive traits are rarely seen [2]. In particular, few scholars have studied the advantages of left-behind children. However, some studies even directly equate left-behind children with troubled kids.
Some schools provide special education for left-behind children in special classes. In addition, with the spread of the reports on left-behind children in the mass media, the public generally formed a stereotype of left-behind as troubled kids. We wonder if the impression is true or is just an individual phenomenon. Must left-behind children be troubled kids? If the answer is no, will left-behind children’s labelling and stigmatization lead to their psychological problems? According to the theory of social ecology, individuals adjusts their behavior by predicting social expectations for adapting to the social ecological environment [5]. Therefore, the labelling and stigmatization are harmful for left-behind children to develop while the attention to their advantages will give them positive expectations, so that they can go in a good direction to improve and adjust themselves. Since the emergence of positive psychology in the 1990s, many experts and professors have proposed that the future direction of psychological health education should take both positive and negative aspects into account, especially the positive aspects, which should be paid more attention to. If we only pay attention to the behavioral problems of left-behind children, we only can put forward countermeasures to overcome the bad aspects and maintain non-illness state to a certain extent, but we cannot steer in the positive direction. However, if we pay attention to the positive traits of left-behind children and strengthen and cultivate them, the traits of left-behind children can be further understood, and then we can provide appropriate training suggestions for promoting their physical and mental health.

Positive traits, namely character strengths, are defined as positive personal qualities reflected in our thoughts, feelings and behaviors, which are manifested in different degrees and can be measured as individual differences [6]. Virtues, explained by Peterson and Seligman, are the cores of positive traits. Virtues included six dimensions: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence [7]. According to the view of Park and Peterson, virtues are individual traits that can be observed in different situations and there is a theoretical correspondence between virtue and personality [8]. Therefore, we speculate that the positive traits are influenced, to a large extent, by personality. The present study aimed to illustrate the differences of positive traits between left-behind children and non-left-behind children and the relationship between positive traits and TCM Five-pattern personality (the full name is Five-pattern personality of traditional Chinese medicine) among left-behind children, so as to provide reference for the mental health education of left-behind children. What’s more, junior high school students are in adolescence, which is the transition stage of life from childhood to adulthood, the initial stage of the formation of life outlook, values and world outlook, and the turning stage of children's psychological development and change [9]. Cultivating the positive traits of the students at this stage has special educational meaning for individual growth and development.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

With cluster sampling method, 458 students from grade one to grade three of junior high school in Nanchang city of Jiangxi province filled in questionnaires. Through a strict screening, a total of 355 responses (230 non-left-behind children and 125 left-behind children, 149 females and 206 males, mean age = 13.53, $SD = 0.942$, age range = 11-16) were considered valid.

2.2. Instruments

2.2.1. Positive Traits Scale

Positive traits were measured by Positive Traits Scale, which is developed by Guan Qun, Meng Wanjin and so on [10]. It was assessed by 61 items, which includes six virtue dimensions: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. The wisdom virtue contains three positive traits: creativity, curiosity, and mindedness and perspective. The courage virtue contains two positive traits:
honesty and perseverance. The humanity virtue contains two positive traits: love and kindness. The justice virtue contains two positive traits: leadership and teamwork. The temperance virtue contains three positive traits: forgiveness, humility, and self-regulation. The transcendence virtue contains three positive traits: spirituality, humor, and belief and hope. Students were instructed to answer each item in relation to “whether the statement describes what you are like”, and responses are fully anchored on a five Likert scale (1 = very much unlike me; 5 = very much like me), with higher scores indicating a greater endorsement of the strength. In present research, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the scale were as follows: Wisdom (α = 0.76), Courage (α = 0.71), Humanity (α = 0.74), Justice (α = 0.79), Temperance (α = 0.78), and Transcendence (α = 0.83), showing excellent reliability.

2.2.2. TCM Five-Pattern Personality Inventory

TCM Five-Pattern Personality Inventory developed by Professor Xue Chongcheng and Yang Qiuli of the Chinese Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine was used to measure the TCM Five-pattern personality of participants, which includes five personality dimensions and one lying dimension [2]. The five personality dimensions are Taiyin personality, Shaoyin personality, Taiyang personality, Shaoyang personality and Yin-Yang balanced personality, which respectively measure the strength, flexibility, persistence, approachability, and balance of subjects' responses to things. The scale has 103 questions and the subjects only have to make the right and wrong choices. If the answer is "Yes", then one point will be scored while if "No", no points will be scored. Finally, the total score will be calculated and then convert the original score to T-score based on an equation that T=10*[X-M]/SD]+50. If the lying scale score is less than 5 points, the data should be eliminated because the integrity of the answer is not enough. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the TCM Five-pattern personality were as follows: Taiyang (α= 0.68), Shaoyang (α= 0.71), Yin-Yang balanced (α= 0.61), Shaoyin (α= 0.68), and Taiyin (α= 0.81), showing good reliability.

2.3. Design and Procedure

The questionnaire survey was conducted anonymously in a junior high school in Nanchang city, east China's Jiangxi province. With the cooperation of the class teacher, the researchers conducted the survey, read the unified instruction, and then provided the necessary instructions and guidance to the students. After the survey was completed, the questionnaires were collected, and all survey data were analyzed statistically by SPSS13.0.

3. Results

3.1. Comparison of Positive Traits of Left-behind Children and Those of Non-left-behind Children

To examine whether there are statistical differences in positive traits between left-behind children and non-left-behind children, the independent sample T-test was used. From the results, there was no significant difference in positive traits between left-behind children and non-left-behind children (p-values range from 0.085 to 0.842) (see Table 1). From the longitudinal data of left-behind children in Table 1, it is found that left-behind children’s top two virtues were temperance and transcendence while the bottom virtues were wisdom and courage.

3.2. Positive Traits and TCM Five- Pattern Personality

To examine the correlation between positive traits and TCM Five-pattern personality, the Pearson’s product-moment correlation was conducted. Results are presented in Table 2. Taiyin personality, Shaoyin personality, Taiyang personality and Shaoyang personality were independently significantly correlated with positive traits while Yin-Yang balanced personality was not. To examine the predictive power of TCM Five-pattern personality on positive traits, we conducted standard linear regression analysis. The
results are as presented in Table 3. A significant model emerged when the dependent variable of the overall positive trait was regressed on the independent variables of Taiyang personality, Shaoyang personality and Yin-Yang balanced personality, F (5, 119) = 17.405, p < .001). All the predictors together explained 28% ($R^2 = .284$) of the variance in the overall positive trait. TCM Five-pattern personality made a significant contribution to the model. Yin-Yang balanced personality made the largest unique and significant contribution ($\beta = .28, p < .001$). Both correlation and regression results indicate that TCM Five-pattern personality of the students is associated with their positive traits.

Table 1. Comparison Analysis of Positive Traits of Left-Behind Children and Those of Non-Left-Behind Children.

| positive traits * | Left-behind Children (M ± SD) | Non-left-behind Children (M ± SD) | t     | p value |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|
| wisdom            | 3.19 ± 0.73                   | 3.24 ± 0.63                      | -0.665| 0.506   |
| courage           | 3.12 ± 0.55                   | 3.22 ± 0.56                      | -1.730| 0.085   |
| humanity          | 3.48 ± 0.68                   | 3.57 ± 0.64                      | -1.198| 0.232   |
| justice           | 3.24 ± 0.70                   | 3.26 ± 0.70                      | -0.278| 0.781   |
| temperance        | 3.80 ± 0.69                   | 3.77 ± 0.65                      | 0.528 | 0.598   |
| transcendence     | 3.71 ± 0.64                   | 3.76 ± 0.73                      | -0.548| 0.584   |

Table 2. Bivariate Correlations Between Positive Traits and TCM Five-Pattern Personality.

| Positive characters * | TCM Five-pattern personality |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
|                       | Taiyang personality | Shaoyang personality | Yin-Yang balanced personality | Shaoyin personality | Taiyin personality |
| wisdom                | 0.490***              | 0.436***              | 0.401***              | 0.257**             | -0.063             |
| courage               | 0.469***              | 0.386***              | 0.339***              | 0.244**             | -0.011             |
| humanity             | 0.378***              | 0.344***              | 0.304***              | 0.213*              | -0.079             |
| justice              | 0.309***              | 0.292***              | 0.413***              | 0.282***            | -0.052             |
| temperance           | 0.189*                | 0.070                 | 0.318***              | 0.280**             | 0.081              |
| transcendence        | 0.348***              | 0.427***              | 0.261**               | 0.249**             | -0.102             |
| overall positive trait| 0.449***              | 0.402***              | 0.423***              | 0.316***            | -0.047             |

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 3. Predictive Relation Between Positive Traits and TCM Five-Pattern Personality.

| B value       | Taiyang personality | Shaoyang personality | Yin-Yang balanced personality | Shaoyin personality | Taiyin personality |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| wisdom        | 0.274                | 0.244                 | 0.215                         | 0.310               | 19.609***           |
| courage       | 0.368                | 0.204                 | 0.318                         | 0.239               | 20.445***           |
| humanity      | 0.274                | 0.208                 | 0.361                         | 0.162               | 12.972***           |
| justice       | 0.197                | 0.318                 | 0.194                         | 0.094               | 13.801***           |
| temperance    | 0.420                | 0.237                 | 0.226                         | 0.284               | 17.405***           |
| overall positive trait | 0.212            | 0.217                 | 0.281                         | 0.226               | 19.079***           |

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, independent variable: TCM Five-pattern personality, dependent variable: positive trait
3.3. Comparison of Positive Traits of Left-behind Children with Different TCM Five-Pattern Personality

In order to explore the situation of positive traits of left-behind children with different TCM Five-pattern personality, we firstly divided subjects into five styles according to the measurement data of the TCM Five-pattern personality Scale. Referring to the instruction manual of TCM Five-pattern personality test, the original scores were converted into T-scores, and the type with highest score is convinced as the subject’s personality. According to the present research, there were 13 left-behind children with Taiyang personality (10.4%), 20 with Shaoyang personality (16.0%), 25 with Yin-Yang balanced personality (20.0%), 24 with Shaoyin personality (19.2%), and 43 with Taiyin personality (34.4%).

With TCM Five-pattern personality as the independent variable and the six dimensions of positive traits as the dependent variables, multi-variance analysis was conducted. The results showed that the main effect of TCM Five-pattern personality to overall positive traits was significant (Wliks’ Lambda = 0.733, F(24, 402) = 1.56, p < 0.05, η² = 0.08). From the results of between-group test of multi-variance analysis, TCM Five-pattern personality had significant effect on wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, and transcendence. Further through the Post hoc Test, we can found that the left-behind children with Taiyin personality are weaker in wisdom and courage than other left-behind children, weaker in humanity than the left-behind children with Taiyang personality, Shaoyang personality and Yin-Yang balanced personality, weaker in transcendence than the left-behind children with Shaoyin personality, Shaoyang personality and Yin-Yang balanced personality, and weaker in justice than the left-behind children with Shaoyang personality and Yin-Yang balanced personality. Other differences are not significant.

4. Discussion

The study found that there was no significant difference in positive traits between left-behind children and non-left-behind children which indicates that left-behind children, like non-left-behind children, have the potential for good development. For the healthy development of children left in rural areas, we should not only pay attention to the realistic or potential psychological and behavioral problems of left-behind children, let alone simply and brutally equate left-behind children with "trouble kids", but should focus on their positive traits and contributing factors enhancing their inner strength and power. In the present study, left-behind children develop well in temperance and transcendence which shows us that due to the lack of parents’ company, left-behind children may face greater risks to personal growth, but this deficiency may also stimulate children to develop positive traits to adapt themselves to the environment. Left-behind experience does not necessarily lead to worse personal traits and behavioral problems, and may even lead children to be better in society to a certain extent. Zhao Fulin [11] found that in terms of family adaptation, left-behind children perform well to live independently with higher skill to do housework, and the resiliency of left-behind children, who are good in self-control, flexibility and endeavor, is better than that of non-left-behind children. In short, the social adaptability of the left-behind children may be slightly inadequate, but the overall adaptability is good.

In traditional Chinese medicine, Yang represents individual positivity, initiative, aggressiveness, optimism and so on while Yin is the opposite. In present study, Taiyang personality, Shaoyang personality and Yin-Yang balanced personality could positively predict overall positive trait, that is to say, the higher the Yang personality, the higher the positive traits. Besides, the study found that left-behind children with Taiyin personality were weaker in positive traits than others. It may be due to the fact that Taiyin individuals are worried, pessimistic, disappointed, lonely, conservative, selfishness and they always keep distance from others as well as dislike doing exciting things, and so on. These negative traits are harmful for children’s mental health development and personal growth. Therefore, in
the teaching management practice, we should focus on the group who has Taiyin personality, and carry out targeted education and training strategies to improve their positive traits, so as to promote their mental healthy growth.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

To sum up, left-behind children are not equal to trouble kids, but have positive traits. Their positive traits can be effectively predicted by TCM Five-pattern personality, especially Yang personality. Children with different TCM Five-pattern personality have different positive traits. In particular, there was a significant difference in positive traits between left-behind children with Taiyin personality and left-behind children with other personality.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, the generation and development of personality is affected by nurture and nature, and Yin and Yang can change in a certain range. Therefore, TCM Five-pattern personality has certain stability, but can change[9]. Besides, Yan personality can positively predict positive traits. Therefore, left-behind children can intentionally enhance their Yang personality to strengthen positive traits, such as taking part in exercise or other beneficial activities, making more friends, setting feasible goals and struggling for it, and so on. In addition, in teaching management practice, it is not appropriate to treat all left-behind children with a "one size fits all" attitude, but to adopt differentiated and personalized educational care strategies based on the different TCM Five-pattern personality of left-behind children. The left-behind children with Taiyin personality are the individuals with the lowest positive traits. Therefore, as for such kind of children, they should be paid more attention when in crisis situations.

Acknowledgment

This paper is funded by Jiangxi Provincial Education Science “13th Five-Year” planning project “The Correlation Research between the Five-pattern Personality of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Positive Traits of Left-behind Children” (NO.18YB183).

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