THE IMPACT OF ART CHOIRS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT OF LEFT BEHIND CHILDREN IN RURAL CHINA——A CASE STUDY OF THE "XIAOXILIU" CHOIR

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Abstract

Rural children faces a series of problems such as survival, psychology, socialization, and learning due to being left behind in China. The study aimed to see whether there are any differences in the mental health of children who are in the choir and who did not participate in the choir, including self efficacy, self-confidence, resilience. As well as whether participating in a choir will have an impact on the parent-child relationship of left behind children.The study adopted LevVygotsky's Social Development Theory for children, which emphasize the importance of social interaction in children's cognitive development. This study takes the "Xiaoxiliu" choir of Dongcun Central Primary School in Xinyu City of China , as an example, and uses questionnaire surveys. 44 students who participated in the Choir and other 44 students of similar age 9-12, were selected for the questionnaire survey. 88 primary school pupils in all, and data analysis is done using SPSS software. The finding shows that participating in the choir has a positive impact on left behind children to varying degrees in terms of self-efficacy, confidence, resilience, and parent-child relationship. Additionally, the students of the choir are more lively, outgoingand confident than before in their studies and daily lives.

Keywords: Choir, Left behind children, Self efficacy, Confidence, Resilience, Parent-child relationship

1.Introduction

"Left-behind children" are children under sixteen who reside in rural areas and whose parents either depart together for work or one departs while the other loses guardianship (Yang, 2022). Most of these disadvantaged children are raised by grandparents or other family members. In rural China, about one in three children under the age of 18—over 41 million—have been abandoned by their immigrant parents (Fan F *et al.*, 2022). China saw the greatest rural-urban migration in history during the prior forty years as industrialization and urbanization increased. 250 million people nationwide, or three percent of the working population, are migrants from rural to urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2019).

Due to being left behind, a number of issues pertaining to survival, psychology, socializing, and learning are currently impeding the overall development of children living in rural areas. In addition, it is made worse by the twofold division of rural and urban areas, the disparity in regional development, the unequal growth of rural and urban areas, the marginalization of rural culture, and the urbanization of rural education. These issues not only hurt families, but they also pose serious concealed risks to the advancement of society. （Zhu & Bo, 2020).

The "Opinions on Further Improving the Care and Service System for Left Behind Children and Children in Difficulties in Rural Areas" (hereinafter referred to as the Opinions) were jointly released on May 27, 2019, by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Education, and ten other departments. The opinions clarify the functional positioning of juvenile assistance and protection institutions and child welfare institutions, as well as the general requirements for strengthening the construction of grassroots children's work teams. The agenda item for the comprehensive development and support system construction of left behind children in rural regions is the clarification of the roles and requirements for the establishment of professional institutions and team members in the Opinion.

Due to ongoing national and municipal regulations, a lot of people have associated art with children who are left behind. For instance, the Sina Yangfan Public Welfare Fund-supported Yangfan Left Behind Children's Art Classroom project seeks to address the issue of abandoned and lonely children after school by partnering with professional training facilities to offer extracurricular art, music, and dance classes taught by teachers. It gives kids more attention and company, improves their psychological well-being, develops a stable personality, and develops their creative, intellectual, and aesthetic potential. 38 schools across 12 provinces in China were included in the project in 2018 (Sina Philanthropy, 2018).

The Cultural Volunteer Initiative: Planting Art Seeds for Children Who Are Left Behind in Remote Locations. The Hunan Provincial Cultural Museum is the organization and operator of the Art Assistance Program, a well-known public welfare cultural initiative. They concentrate on providing for the needs of abandoned children in isolated mountainous regions and employing art instruction, cultural events, and exhibitions as means of delivering top-notch art education to abandoned children. Sow the seeds of creativity deep within children's hearts. throughout 8000 abandoned children in distant locations have received 11000 art workshops throughout the course of this ten-year project (China Cultural Daily, 2023).

Due to the country's growing urbanization and industrialization, over 41 million children in rural China experience the issue known as "left-behind children," which has grown to be a significant social concern. Due to this enormous migration, these impoverished children now confront a variety of difficulties, such as problems with learning, socialization, psychology, and survival. Their situation is further made worse by the division of urban and rural areas, the disparities in regional development, the unequal growth of urban and rural areas, the marginalization of rural culture, and the urbanization of rural education. The Chinese government, working with multiple departments, released the "Opinions on Further Improving the Care and Service System for Left Behind Children and Children in Difficulties in Rural Areas" in 2019 after realising the urgent need for action.

The objective of this initiative is to enhance the establishment of children's work teams at the grassroots level and to improve the overall development and support network for children who are left behind. Numerous art-based projects, such the Yangfan Left Behind Children's Art Classroom project and the Cultural Volunteer Action, have arisen in response to this dilemma. These programme use art instruction, cultural events, and exhibitions to offer top-notch art

classes while offering care, companionship, and emotional support to children who are left behind. These programme seek to mould the creative personalities of these kids, impart a positive perspective on life, the world, and values, and support their overall development as significant contributors to society by integrating art instruction into their daily lives.

Therefore, providing art education to left behind children is beneficial for shaping their artistic personality and establishing a correct outlook on life, world, and values in the atmosphere of art. Establish the right personality and grow into a useful person for society.

2. Study Aim

The current study aims to learn whether the choir that promotes art in rural areas has a positive impact on the mental health of left behind children and whether there are any differences in the mental health of children who are in the choir and who did not participate in the choir, including self-efficacy, self-confidence, resilience. As well as whether participating in a choir will have an impact on the parent-child relationship of left behind children.

3. Theory

Lev Vygotsky's work has served as the foundation for a great deal of research and theory on cognitive development over the past few decades, particularly that which has come to be known as Social Development Theory. Vygotsky believed that social interaction was essential to the development of cognition. As per Vygotsky's (1994) assertion, community plays a crucial role in the process of meaning-making. He included faults in the purview of social notions, believing that defects only become impediments or abnormalities when combined with a certain social context. Special needs children experience the social consequences of defects, perceive the conflicts and discomforts between the body and the environment caused by defects, develop negative emotions and psychological problems such as inferiority and lack of value, and physiological defects become barriers to social adaptation. An Examination of Vygotsky's Ideas on the Development and Education of Children with Special Needs.

As he said, "Blindness only becomes a defect, deficiency, and disease under certain social conditions for the survival of blind people".Vygotsky's unique understanding of defects is embedded in the complex interplay of body, psychology, and environment (Duan & Lei, 2022). Childhood is a critical period for personal growth and development, where physical and mental development is in an unbalanced state, and psychological growth can experience multiple crises. Parents going out to work, lack of family companionship, and weakened family education function have become important factors affecting the psychological health of left behind children. This not only affects their interpersonal relationships, but also leads to more anxiety and depression experiences than ordinary children. The younger the age of left behind children in rural areas, the greater the impact of this experience on their anxiety level, and even lead to anxiety type personality. As age increases, the level of depression shows a gradual upward trend (Zhao *et al.*,2018).

Left-behind children are in a key stage of emotional development, and their yearning for family affection and separation from their offspring causes emotional biases. As a result, left-behind youngsters have limited cognitive empathy skills. In the lack of family attachment, their parents cannot assist them through their increasing difficulties and bad feelings. Psychological and social development issues have a direct impact on children's health and happiness (Jiang and Yan 2018). A person's psychological blossoming, development, and even formation all take place during the key era of childhood. The crucial period is the most sensitive or preparatory period for the acquisition of specific abilities or behavioral patterns. Nowadays, left-behind children in rural areas are more vulnerable to a variety of psychological issues.

Therefore, the understanding of the psychological growth of left behind children in rural areas needs to be brought into the interaction with the social environment.

4. Material and methodology

This study takes the "Xiaoxiliu" choir of Dongcun Central Primary School in Xinyu City, China, as an example, and uses questionnaire surveys. 44 students who participated in the Choir and other 44 students of similar age 9-12, were selected for a questionnaire survey. 88 primary school pupils in all, and data analysis is done using SPSS software. Among them, there are 33 boys and 54 girls, with their ages mainly concentrated at 10 and 11 years old, and relatively fewer at 9 and 12 years old, most of whom are fourth and fifth grade students.

When designing the questionnaire, analysis and distinction were done according to whether or not they were members of the "Xiaoxiliu" Choir. If so, additional analysis was done according to whether or not they were children who were left behind. The questions were chosen with consideration for primary school pupils' receptive abilities, falling within an acceptable range for 9–12 year olds. This guaranteed both the validity and reliability of the questionnaire data as well as the students' ability to finish it on their own. Apart from demographic details like age and gender, the poll primarily concentrates on resilience, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and parent-child dynamics. Ultimately, pertinent conclusions were reached after a thorough analysis and comparison of the data gathered via the questionnaire.

5. Results

TableI:Group statistics

		Counting	Average	St.deviation	St.error
Self-confidence Percentage	Participating in choir	43	45.3488	17.47091	2.66429
	Not participating in choir	49	32.6531	21.77303	3.11043
Resilience Percentag	Participating in choir	40	54.7656	11.77776	1.86223

e	Not participating in choir	41	54.1159	17.25044	2.69407
self-efficacy Percentage	Participating in choir	39	72.5427	13.06186	2.09157
	Not participating in choir	40	59.4792	17.50019	2.76702

Of the 88 pupils who took part in the study, 49 were children who were left behind, making up over 50% of the sample as a whole.The data is studied in two groups: those who choose to be left behind as children and those who choose to join a choir. On a percentage scale, students who were involved in choirs generally scored better than their non-choir peers in terms of self-efficacy, resilience, and self-confidence; self-efficacy showed the greatest difference. The average percentile values between children who were left behind and those who were not are not very different in these three areas, and there are not many distinctions between the former group and the latter group in terms of resilience, self-efficacy, and self-confidence.

Table II : Group statistics

		Counting	Average	St.deviation	St.error
Self-confidence Percentage	Left-behind children	49	39.8305	22.32144	2.90600
	Non-left-behind children	32	35.9375	17.89023	3.16258
Resilience Percentage	Left-behind children	49	55.7598	15.31406	2.14440
	Non-left-behind children	39	51.9397	13.75948	2.55507
self-efficacy Percentage	Left-behind children	49	66.2500	17.29779	2.44628
	Non-left-behind children	38	65.9226	15.95928	3.01602

5.1 self-efficacy

The frequency of parent-child interaction has a significant impact on children who are left behind in the choir. This is evident from the coefficient tablebelow, which measures children's self-efficacy through self-evaluation. Participating in choirs has a significant value of 0.001 (less than 0.05) in this regard.

Table III : Coefficientsa

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	41.482	25.468		1.629	0.108		
Gender	4.098	4.135	0.122	0.991	0.325	0.791	1.264
Age	0.765	2.339	0.037	0.327	0.744	0.911	1.098
Level of parental concern	3.309	4.596	0.087	0.720	0.474	0.817	1.224

	B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Left-behind children	-1.611	3.875	-0.046	-0.416	0.679	0.966	1.035
Participating in choir	13.705	4.139	0.411	3.311	0.001	0.776	1.289
a.Dependent Variable: self-efficacy percentage							

Table IV：Coefficientsa for the left behind children participating in choirs

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1(Constant)	9.582	37.704		0.254	0.801		
Gender	7.021	5.712	0.194	1.229	0.226	0.734	1.362
Age	1.520	3.388	0.065	0.449	0.656	0.872	1.147
Level of parental concern	8.389	7.454	0.178	1.125	0.267	0.728	1.374
Participating in choir	6.909	6.256	0.190	1.105	0.276	0.619	1.614
Frequent parent-child interaction	13.819	5.583	0.380	2.475	0.018	0.778	1.286
a.Dependent Variable: self-efficacy percentage							

The question "I like to meet many people and make friends with different people" shows a significant difference between students who participate in choirs and those who do not. The survey results show that students participating in choirs account for a total of 84.1% of the options for completely conforms and comparatively conforms. Only 9.09% of students who did not participate in the choir chose completely confirms. Compared to students who did not participate, they prefer to meet many people and make friends. They are more outgoing, lively, optimistic, and positive.

5.2 self-confidence

Table V : Coefficientsa

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std.Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	70.727	29.662		2.384	0.019		
Gender	10.241	4.799	0.244	2.134	0.036	0.741	1.350
Age	-2.491	2.667	-0.094	-0.934	0.353	0.947	1.056
Level of parental concern	-8.198	5.035	-0.171	-1.628	0.107	0.872	1.146
Left-behind children	4.471	4.383	0.102	1.020	0.311	0.968	1.033
Participating in choir	19.732	4.814	0.470	4.099	0.000	0.734	1.362
a.Dependent Variable: self-confidence percentage							

TableVI : Coefficientsa for the left behind children participating in choirs

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std.Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	87.872	42.850		2.051	0.046		
Gender	11.006	6.517	0.248	1.689	0.098	0.721	1.388
Age	-1.743	3.923	-0.058	-0.444	0.659	0.905	1.105
Level of parental concern	-17.506	8.015	-0.311	-2.184	0.034	0.765	1.306
Participating in choir	18.522	7.582	0.402	2.443	0.018	0.573	1.745
Frequent parent-child interaction	9.522	6.477	0.214	1.470	0.148	0.728	1.373

a.Dependent Variable: self-confidence percentage

The significance value of choir participation in terms of self-confidence is 0.00, which has a considerable impact, as can be observed from the preceding coefficients. It doesn't matter enough, though, whether or not children who are left behind experience large changes in their self-confidence. The degree of parental worry and care for their left-behind children who are involved in choirs also influences their self-confidence to some degree.

In the question "Are you very confident and filling to perform as a choir", students who join in choirs account for 38.64%, whereas students who do not participate account for only 9.09%. 59.09% of students who did not join the choir refused to perform or give a statement on stage, indicating that they are more introverted and lack confidence. As a result, students who engage in choirs have greater confidence and dare to express themselves.

5.3 Resilience

Table VII : Coefficientsa

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std.Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	26.838	24.418		1.099	0.275		
	Gender	2.836	4.026	0.096	0.704	0.484	0.723	1.384
	Age	1.183	2.186	0.064	0.541	0.590	0.939	1.065
	Level of parental concern	3.640	4.055	0.111	0.897	0.372	0.876	1.142
	Left-behind children	4.153	3.611	0.134	1.150	0.254	0.976	1.025
	Participating in choir	1.520	4.141	0.051	0.367	0.715	0.683	1.465
a. Dependent Variable:resilience								

TableVIII : Coefficientsa for the left behind children participating in choirs

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics

		B	Std.Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	32.079	37.763		0.849	0.401		
	Gender	2.811	5.910	0.085	0.476	0.637	0.711	1.406
	Age	2.283	3.490	0.107	0.654	0.517	0.853	1.173
	Level of parental concern	-.686	7.096	-0.017	-0.097	0.923	0.761	1.314
	Participating in choir	13.607	7.449	0.403	1.827	0.075	0.470	2.127
	Frequent parent-child interaction	-10.731	6.098	-0.328	-1.760	0.086	0.660	1.515
a. Dependent Variable:resilience								

From the table data, it can be seen that in terms of the significance of resilience, both left behind children and those who participate in choirs have significant values exceeding 0.05. The impact of whether or not they participate in choirs and are left behind children on resilience is relatively insignificant. The degree of parental care and the frequency of parent-child interaction have a less significant impact on resilience.

According to the answer to the question "If there are some difficulties that can be avoided, choose to avoid", 54.55% of the students who participated in the choir chose the options of somewhat inconsistentand completely inconsistent, while 38.36% of the students who did not participate in this option. From this perspective, the proportion of students who participate in choirs being able to face difficulties directly is higher than that of students who do not participate in choirs. It can be seen that the resilience of primary school students nowadays is generally low. From the perspective of facing difficulties alone, among left behind children, students who participate in choirs are more willing to face difficulties than those who do not.

5.4 Parent-child relationship

Left behind Children are still impressionable, have experienced prolonged separation from their parents, communicate poorly, do not receive the love and attention that their parents need to provide, and are more likely to create walls between parents and children, which perpetuates the generational divide. The results show that 93.81% of kids think that being in a choir helps them get closer to their parents. Because kids take part in choral performances, they and their parents have more conversation topics and interactions. The parent-child relationship is further restricted since, even if their parents work outside the home, they can still learn about their children's growth and progress through photo films, online live broadcasts, and other means.

6. Conclusion

Parents, as role models, are helpful in educating children who have fallen behind during this critical stage of psychological development. However, as the contemporary economy has expanded, the parents of the children who were left behind have moved away from them and have been working outside for years without returning home. Children who are left behind during this critical period suffer psychological consequences as a result of their parents' absence.

Children that are left behind often don't get to interact and communicate with their parents in isolated areas. When they encounter challenges in their personal or academic lives, they cease communicating with others and nobody starts to listen to them. However, some children are able to hear music, relate to the emotions it evokes, and derive some tiny spiritual comfort from it. Positive and happy music helps people overcome adversity by erasing melancholy, discovering the goodness, truth, and beauty in life, and bolstering their resilience. When these children succeed in matching artistic activities, they will have a high sense of satisfaction and success. Furthermore, when the parents of the children who were left behind learn of their children's successes, encouraging and praising them will also play a big part in helping these kids change from negative to positive personalities, which will strengthen the bond between parents and children.

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