

## Investigation and Countermeasures on the Rural Living Conditions of left-behind Elderly - Taking Shandong Zhangzhuang Village for Example

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### Abstract

*Since in the 1980 of the 20th century, with the process's acceleration of China's modernization, a large number of rural labor transfer to city, rural elderly problem have become increasingly highlighted, which make a severe challenge On China's modernization and social harmony. By the investigation and analysis of data of elderly left behind in Zhangzhuang Village in Shandong province, this article from the old man's bread and butter, changes in the intensity of Labor, life care, the ability of Grandchildren care and discipline , analysis the living conditions of the rural elderly, and then from a deeper analysis of the factors affecting rural quality of life of the elderly. Finally from developing family traditions, improving community services, perfecting the social security system made to address rural life of the elderly, such as solutions to problems.*

**Key words:** Rural elderly; Social security; Family pension; Community services

### Introduction

Nowadays the speed of our country aging population increase is more than our expected. The sixth national census data show that by the end of the November 1, 2010, there are 177.65 million old people aged 60 and above in our country, accounted for 13.26% of the total population. It expect By 2020, China's aging population will reach 248 million, aging level will reach 17%, entered the stage of severe aging in 2050, when China's aging population will reach 437 million, accounting for over 30% of the total population, then there will be an old man in the three or four people.<sup>[1]</sup>

Since China's implemented reform and opening up policy, China's urbanization and industrialization into the high-speed development period, the rapid development of economy makes the urban-rural gap is widening. City more jobs, higher economic income and the superior living environment, make a large number of rural labor force into the city Under the contrast work and life benefits , the social problem rural rear old man has arises, according to data In 2010, the number of old man over the age of 60 in our country has reach to 185 million people, more than a one hundred million old people in the countryside. With a large number of rural labor force to cities, left a lot rural left-behind old man . Data show that the rural left-behind elderly accounted for 37% of the rural elderly population. This means that every three rural elderly, was a left-behind elderly.<sup>[2]</sup>

The solutions for Rural left-behind elderly's life and social security , not only relates to our country for the smooth realization of the rural comprehensive security policy, also is related to the success of our modernization construction and the construction of a harmonious society.

### 1. The living conditions of the rural elderly left behind in Shandong province Zhang Zhuang village

Zhangzhuang village is in the southwest of Shandong province Cangshan country, in shandong and jiangsu border area, there are 1108 households and area of 1200 mu cultivated land in the whole village. People in the village made a living by farming land, income is relatively limited, many migrant workers.

This questionnaire survey with random sampling method issued 100 piece of paper and recovery in 94, the recovery rate is 94%. The object of investigation is mainly left-behind elderly aged over 60 years old (left-behind elderly refers to the village over the age of 60, their children, spouses migrant workers and not in the village all the year round living)

**Table 1:** The basic situation of the left-behind elderly Zhangzhuang village be investigated

	Category	Number of people	Percentage
Gender	Male	40	43%
	Female	54	57%
Age	60-69 years old	53	56%
	70-79 years old	32	34%
	Over 80 years of age	9	10%
Level of education	Illiteracy	44	47%
	Primary school	43	46%
	Junior high school	5	5%
	High school or above	2	2%
Marital status	Single	8	9%
	Have spouse	80	85%
	Divorced	6	6%

According to the survey data we carry left-behind old man's gender, age, culture level, and marital status, etc. Basic situation on the statistics.(1) the gender aspect: in the 94 valid questionnaire surveyed, 40 men, the percentage is 43%; Female 54 people, the proportion is 57%. Sex ratio of 0.75, the number of women slightly more than men.(2) age: investigate the age distribution for the left-behind elderly, 60 ~ 69 years old (young man) have 53 people, accounting for 56%, 70 ~ 79 years old (age old man)have 32 people, accounting for 34%; Nine people (aged 80 - year - old old man), accounting for 10%.(3) the degree of culture: the cultural level of the investigated left-behind elderly is very low, 93% of the left-behind elderly is primary school or below the level, the number of illiterate or semi-literate accounted for 47%; (4) Marital status: Married stay for the elderly and widowed elderly left behind proportion was 72% and 28%, Mostly older women left behind , accounting for 57%, no divorce left-behind elderly.

### 1.1 Mainly source of income is agricultural income and child support

According to the survey, 84% of left-behind elderly still engaged in agriculture, the contracted land farming income is still the main part of the family income, the proportion reached 38%. Their children economy support accounted for 36% in left-behind elderly family economic source, second to agricultural labor income. Children of migrant workers support for their parents mainly on form of monetary support, solve the cost of old people daily life need such as pocket money of everyday human feelings and the third generation of routine; And did not go out of their children is mainly food material support, including old people usually eat, drink, wear, etc.

**Table 2:** Zhang Zhuangcun surveyed source of family life

Family life source	Number of people	Percentage
Individual labor income	36	38%
Individual labor income	5	5%
Personal savings	9	10%
Child support	34	36%
Or the village committee to help society	5	5%
Social endowment Insurance	2	2%
Other	3	4%

Overall child support or give priority to with the economic supply of migrant children, but as a result of Migrant workers work is not stable, caused the economy of left-behind elderly support in time and the number is often not regularly and quantitative, the old man often in the contradiction between storage and consumption. As parents, most of the savings have been used for raising children and their marriage, etc. and now the most money of the child support have to meet the demands of the third generation of life, the education demand and other aspects, resulting in the left-behind elderly spend very thrifty in daily life. The reason ' ailments are reluctant to spend money, serious illness spend lot money is difficult to cure ' is results in the old man willing to save money. Therefore, surrounded by personal social spending and the third generation of personal medical expenses cost of living, the accumulation of pension left-behind elderly for itself is rarely.

### 1.2 Intensity of labor is generally larger

Rural responsibility farmland mainly by young adults who has a labor to farming, but in the case of a large number of young adults outflow, all these fields farming task have- falls to the left-behind elderly. Old people should sit enjoy old age, because of children go out have to cultivate the responsibility farmland their children left and bear the housework and farm work. Because rural left-behind old people generally not have fixed work, also does not have a pension. So most of them, so long as their still have labor ability will continue to engage in agricultural production in order to supplement the elderly daily life needs. According to the survey, in the village, more than 75% of the left-behind elderly no savings, nearly three-quarters of the left-behind elderly rely on farming to supplement the child support ensure his old life. Because of the limitation of culture level, it is difficulty for left-behind elderly to cultivate and harvest the economic crops which need technology and physical, especially the production work of economic crops has a certain limit in the season and time, it's for a short period of time, all this increases the Labor intensity and frequency for physical strength is not energetic left-behind elderly.

### 1.3 Lake of life care

According to the questionnaire, the lives of left-behind elderly care mainly rely on their own account for 42% , mainly because most of the left-behind elderly of the village is the young to the old, who have good health and self-care ability is quite high. Followed by relying on his wife take care, accounted for 31%. Children go out to work, only husband and wife mutual support, it reflects the marital status has important effect on left-behind elderly life care. In addition, the left-children, friends and neighbors take care's proportion is not high, 23% and 4% respectively. Although the left-children near the old man, but because the elderly's health and life habits have certain difference between their children, lead to children is only to provide the old man's daily clothing and food , the sanitation and health have been ignored. For it is a long interval that children visit the old man , generally in holiday or festival, if the old man lives appear accident they can't provide timely care.

### 1.4 Lack of spiritual comfort

**Table 3:** Rural left-behind elderly leisure time activities

Leisure time activities	Number of people	Percentage
Drop around and chat	36	59%
Watching TV	5	22%
Listen to the radio	9	9%
Reading books and newspapers	34	4%
Walking	5	3%
Other	3	3%

From the plan of leisure time activities, the main leisure activity of left-behind elderly is chatting and watching TV, a string of two activities accounted for 59% and 22% respectively, the second is listening to the radio (9%), and a small number of people reading books and newspapers or taking a walk. From the aspect of communication, left-behind elderly mainly to contact their children. Due to the children of migrant workers generally only go home during the Spring Festival or the case of an emergency, little contact between Children and the left-behind elderly and ordinary times by telephone communication. Survey found that children of migrant workers to many left-behind elderly telephone greetings frequency or more accounted for 34%, the average (32%), less or very little accounted for 19%, that is to say, nearly 20% of migrant children rarely call left-behind elderly, and even a few migrant children never contact the left-behind elderly.

In addition to the children not to go out, left-behind elderly interaction with other members of the family frequency is not high, Most of the relatives visit and communicate only when the holidays or weddings, funerals of every year.

Moreover, due to the rural cultural life is monotonous, lacks the elderly activity center, elderly association activities such as organization and location, the left-behind old people can't like urban elderly organize all kinds of fitness entertainment. Left-behind old people face the same face, the same space and the monotony of life every day, add the loneliness of missing children, the old man more psychological emptiness, mentally and lonely.

### **1.5 securities threatened left-behind elderly life and property safety**

For rural left-behind elderly, in addition to the problem of support and take care of , potential safety hazard of the left-behind elderly is also the society problem which now we must face and need to solve. Due to the status that rural left-behind elderly physique infirm, self-protection ability is low, Some criminals aim at their the implementation of fraud .These scams are generally limited in terms of money, but sometimes face of some old man's stubborn resistance , criminals even will harm the left-behind elderly body safety. Young children to go out, the decline of the old man's own physical strength caused that lack of ability to cope with the case. In addition, the young adults outflow, lack of Security issues regulation of the village, a certain extent give criminals an opportunity which pose a threat for left-behind elderly's life safety.

## **2. Deeply analysis of the rural left-behind old people life quality influence factors**

Rural left-behind elderly healthy living is a solid backing for the modernization and social harmony. Safeguard elderly health and longevity is not only the wishes of the children, but also Psychological security of the children work outside .We must study the reasons of the left-behind elderly, take measures to guarantee the left-behind elderly in later life. Economic differences between urban and rural areas is the fundamental reason for the problem of the rural left-behind elderly, In addition, it influence by many factors in the process of the development of modern society and some specific historical reasons.

### **2.1 Economic factors**

China's economic system reform first take place in the city, with advantages of the city itself and the reform and opening-up policy, the gap between urban and rural economic level is more and more big in the process of economic development. The education and cultural, medical social security resources, transportation is differs very big between urban and rural, the superior resources and conditions directly determines the disparity between urban and rural areas in the quality and level of life.Facing the progress of era and the rapid development of economic level, in order to further enhance the level and quality of life to change their own destiny, more rural labor transfer to large and medium-sized cities in young adults, the population is in the countryside push and pull of the city has transferred to the city..In addition, there are some children in rural areas in the city after studying, familiar and accustomed to the city of higher income, the superior working environment, under the survival benefit comparison results most choose to work and live in the city.

### **2.2 Institutional factors**

China's agriculture surplus labor force non-agriculture shift, prompted the dual economic structure gradually to reduce, the city as well as the increasing development of the modern industrial system, the traditional self-sufficient agricultural economy system without any advantage in the economic system. Of cultivated land quantity is limited, the excess of population, traditional agriculture department and urban and rural living environment, economic level and the superior development environment and so on various aspects, all of these factors will inevitably lead to a large number of rural population migration to cities, the production of large numbers of rural left-behind workers also subsequently.

The way and scale of floating population long influenced by the family planning policy in our country. Since our country began to implement the family planning policy, rural fertility has a relatively large decline, the nuclear family (means on the basis of marriage, parents and unmarried children live together ) is increasing, it's women and children also gradually joined the floating population.<sup>[3]</sup>

In this way, the flow of migrant workers mode has the original solo form gradually transition of the small family, while the old man of the family outside the flow line. The influence of the household registration system. As countries city is meticulous and strict restrictions on urban workers get less than urban household registration, migrant workers for many years as a result, they were in the outskirts of the city a lot of security.

Employment, medical treatment does not enjoy the relevant preferential policies to their children' education growth outlook not guaranteed, so in life safeguard scope under the condition of small, survival ability weak, mostly migrant workers take "first solo, many left-behind, transfer", in case, suffering with his family, and from unnecessary risk.

### **2.3 The cultural factors**

2.3.1 Born in thirties and rural left-behind elderly have strong agrestic complex, in their hearts they pay more attention to the psychological emotional compared with material conditions. Children of migrant workers out of economic conditions they do not want to do children' burden, even if the children in the outside economic condition is comfortable, not used to town comfortable, relaxed environment, left-behind old people prefer to stay in indigenous and rural self casual.

2.3.2 Compared with the developed areas in eastern the region's rural left-behind elderly cultural level is generally low, especially the old man's ideas and values is very backward which far away from human resource needed in modern society, the human capital and knowledge skills can't meet the requirements of the development of modern society, that make the rural left-behind elderly lost the conditions transfer to cities. And the children of migrant workers because of the economic pinch and various factors causing their bear ability is limited, large family migration is not possible, under the condition of the weigh the interests them have to left the old man stay in the countryside.

### **3. The countermeasures to solve the problem of rural left-behind elderly life**

#### **3.1 Continue to carry forward the fine tradition of family endowment**

The migrant rural men culture quality general is low, even though the atmosphere in the family Shared with the thought of filial piety, but in the rapid development of the ideas will get great impact of the city. Hurried pace of life, every day to the workshop of the world, the competition between everyone believe that each mutual suspicion, all of these are for migrant workers on the ideas and values to guide, they very easily in this living environment feelings for family neglect, aged respected tradition of forgotten. Therefore, to carry forward the traditional filial piety culture is more important for migrant workers and the key. To this end, the local government must formulate feasible policies and measures, in order to ensure support function of family endowment. Government can use the local advantages of resources to open factories in introducing foreign capital, attract and encourage migrant workers to study rural youth home business work, promote the prosperity and development of the rural economy. Having a local work, workers can be found in the old man appeared accident to take care of them in time, in the leisure time the children can chat or take a walk with old man to increase the old man's feelings, give comfort to the old man the spiritual life.

#### **3.2 Perfect the community integrated services**

Community is the main place to rural left-behind elderly life and it connected the family and society. Home-based care for the aged based on the traditional family endowment, relying on the community, can make full use of community resources, such as manpower, material resources, to provide professional services and quality social services for the nearest old people to .Home-based care for the aged as a new mode of pension still in its infancy. At present it mainly through two modes to provide services for the elderly: One is a collective pension in the form of support groups. It is mainly refers to the community old people help each other between activity form, embodied in has more than enough or idle old man of the house, volunteers took a house as public community for Help-Age service, and provide home economics, health, sports, entertainment and so on all kinds of help; One is to establish and perfect the elderly community welfare services network, such as community health care health posts, care, nursing homes, care center, cultural activity center, etc., put the elderly community welfare services network construction into community construction. The local government must play a leading role in the community service system, good contact with the local village committee and to maintain the region certain medical level, facilities, timely and accurately safeguard the old man's life. Out children shall provide sufficient funds timing and form external capital return, support the smooth implementation of community service in this area.

#### **3.3 Improve and perfect the social security system**

At present, although our country issued to people over the age of 60 fundamental annuities pension of 55 yuan per month, but the role of the security for rural not obvious.

First of all, from the perspective of the implementation status of security, due to the cultural level is low, rural left-behind old people do not understand how to receive procedures fundamental annuities, leading to appear delay, turbidity result. Moreover, 55 yuans for elderly who no retirement funds and no account of individual store the economically complementary effect is little, only in the old man cost of the severe accidents and diseases are no relief. Therefore, the government must be moderate gradually improve the left-behind elderly security funds based on the existing pension funds. For the reform of the new rural cooperative medical care. First of all, let the rural left-behind old people learn new farming and provide them with long-term protection and benefits, make its gradually accept the new cooperative , local village cadres should try our best to cooperate with the propaganda, let the villagers there know it is important to make it to join the new farming; Second, expanding the scope of the medical expenses and degree, a percentage of outpatient medical expenses reimbursement, let old people ailment of a serious illness may be in hospital, live up to the courtyard; Simplify the rural medical reimbursement program, it is left-behind elderly timely and quickly get reimbursement funds.<sup>[4]</sup>

### **3.4 Establishing the rural elderly groups, ruching elderly people culture life**

In 2013, the China youth daily conducted a survey of 3179 people. According to the survey, 89.0% of respondents felt the absence of empty-nesters emotions seriously, 71.5% of respondents called for children to strengthen the "spiritual support" of the old man. 91.4% of people said the old be raised is not confined to food.<sup>[5]</sup> Left-behind old people eager to exchange and communication with family members, especially children, they want their children to care for themselves, long lack of emotional communication will adverse effects on the left-behind old people's physical and mental health. How to rich the culture of the left-behind elderly life then highlight particularly critical and important.

Because of the economic, work time, and many other factors, at present most rural not have the public places for elderly activities and leisure, not to say the true sense of the elderly group. In response, all levels governments, especially the local township government should put establish and perfect the elderly into the overall planning of the new rural construction in this region, establish public places of entertainment and facilities for the old person, let the old people in spare time to expand their favorite recreational activities. In addition allow conditions to form elderly group such as elderly working committee , the elderly societies group and the elderly association to help each other, through the play collective strength to overcome the problem individual cannot solve, safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of rural rear old man, let old people to find a sense of belonging.

### **3.5 Strengthen rural public security comprehensive administration, improve the rural left-behind elderly security**

3.5.1 The government should attaches great importance to the problem, the safety of the rural areas, especially the criminals of left-behind elderly illegal behavior. Formulate relevant laws to warn criminals, to establish the rural security superintendent brigade, by the government, village people form a regular patrol inspection on the condition of the village, on a regular basis and control risk events occur: the village committee can be installed in major public zone electronic surveillance equipment, security incidents to make use of technology to control and management.

3.5.2 Promote rural left-behind elderly legal consciousness. Local courts should to take the lead, the party committees and local carders have to mutual coordination and cooperation to develop the franco-prussian education activities. Children of migrant workers also to remind parents of all kinds of contact potential safety hazard factors in the daily life, let the left-behind old people able to identify the criminals, with legal knowledge to protect their own legitimate rights and interests.

3.5.3 The social from all walks of life should focus on the protection of urban migrant workers' rights and interests, through the policy guarantee, on the basis of urban migrant workers have a stable income, provide a good working and living environment, in particular, to secure their psychological, relief workers. In addition, to put an end to appear unpaid wages or withhold phenomenon, make the children of migrant workers to give left-behind elderly stability, timely financial support.

Finally, For the left-behind elderly itself, their should to avoid the emotional distress which produce due to their physiological function decrease , take positive attitude to face his old life. The old man Spent all his life to work and foster children, in their old age should enjoy their elderly life. And children also hope that the parents to live their old age life comfortable and happy, so the elderly should abandon 'He was old and useless' wrong idea, left-behind old people to learn love yourself is of a kind of responsibility to the family.

Rural left-behind elderly is comprehensive product, it is the inevitable phenomenon in the process of economy and political progress. Rural men go out have to take more concern and attention on left-behind elderly living conditions, the government should carry out their responsibilities, in the future work must build up an Integrated old-age security of the network of social resources ,which on the basis of the family, the government as the main body, the rural community organization as the platform, the left-behind elderly self-help as supplement. All the factors in it complement each other, and it can provide the rural left-behind elderly with spiritual, cultural, entertainment Services, etc. Promote and improve rural rear old man's life, is the solid walls to improve the living standards in rural and urban modernization. Believe in the country and the government's concern and efforts, rural left-behind elderly will gradually get better treatment and comprehensive solution.

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### The questionnaire of rural left-behind elderly living conditions

Dear friend,

With the accelerated pace of China's modernization and continuous improvement of the level of urbanization, large number of rural labor force into the city, the outflow of young workers caused a problem of the elderly left behind in rural areas. For urban and rural harmonious development, understanding of rural basic living conditions of the elderly left behind, and on this basis to do in-depth research, especially to do the survey, your answers will give us a lot of help and support. All of the following issues are no right or wrong good or bad, and belong to secret investigation. The survey results only as a basis for the research and analysis, no have other purposes. Please have your Question your situation to play "√", no options, please answer questions directly on. Apologies for the delay your precious time, thank you for your actively cooperate with. I wish you health, happiness!

**Attention: This questionnaire and all questions answered by the respondents older people themselves, If the interviewed elderly people can't answer, can answer by family members of the generation.**

1. Your gender:  
A. Male B. Female
2. Your age:  
A.60-65 B.65-70 C.70-75 D.75-80 E. more over 80
3. Level of education:  
A. Below the primary level B. Primary school C. Junior high school D. High school E. University or above
4. Marital status:  
A. Single B. His wife alive C. Divorced D. Death of a spouse
5. The number of your children :  
A .No B. One C. Two D. Two or more
6. What is your physical condition:  
A . Health B. General C. Bad
7. Your main source of livelihood:  
A. Personal savings B. Individual labor income C. The children Supply D. Endowment insurance E. Social welfare and relief F. Other
8. The kind of house you live  
A. Tile soil, air leakage leaking B. Tile soil, can shelter the wind and rain C. Bungalow D. Building
9. You child's work place:  
A. Local working B. Working in the field

10. The number of third generation (grandchildren) you need to take care of:  
A. No B. One C. Two D. Two or more
11. Your third generation (grandchildren) per person per month to maintain basic living expenses:  
A. Below 50 yuan B. 51-100 yuan C. 101-200yuan D. 201-300 yuan E. More than 300 yuan
12. Your average monthly for food, clothing and other basic living costs:  
A. Below 50 yuan B. 51-100 yuan C. 101-200yuan D. 201-300 yuan E. 301-500 yuan
13. Your average monthly cost for medical:  
A. Below 200 yuan B.201-500 yuan C.501-1000 yuan D.1001-200 yuan E. More than 2000 yuan
14. All your average monthly savings (including children of supply) balance is:  
A. Negative number B. No, just enough to cost of living  
C. 50—100 yuan D.101—300 yuan E. More than 300 yuan
15. If you have not cure the disease for a long time, the main reason is that:  
A .Ills can not be cured B. Can be cured, but do not want to spend money  
C. Can be cured, But can not afford the medical expenses D. Other reasons
16. Your medical expenses:  
A. Can assume B. Difficulties C. Very difficult D. Basic unable to pay
17. You think to take care of the third generation (grandchildren):  
A. Within their ability B. Well enough C. A little pressure D. Can not and do not want to take care of their own
18. You feel the current living conditions:  
A. Very satisfied B. Satisfied C. Dissatisfied D. Very dissatisfied
19. When your child out, the average frequency of contact you once (including letters, telephone calls and other forms):  
A. Three days B. Ten days C. A month D. Three month E. Six months F. A year and over
20. How long you Child go home to visit your child each time:  
A. Every month B. Important holidays C. Spring Festival D. Time of emergency
21. The relationship between you and your child get along:  
A. Good B. General C. Very bad D. There are some contradictions
22. You most wish for your child to do is:  
A. Periodic economic material support B. Often go home  
C. Communication and contact telephone D. Their child-rearing E. None
23. Your village has specifically provided for the elderly venue you:  
A. Many B. General C. little D. No
24. The relationship between you and your neighborhood:  
A. Very harmonious, catching help solve B. General, just verbal greeting  
C. Discord, frequent small contradictions D. Contradiction great do with each other
25. The most important content of your daily life:  
A .Farming B. Chatting C. Sat at home  
D. Playing cards E. Care of grandchildren F. Other
26. You want local residents' committees to organize elderly cultural activities :  
A. Hope B. General C. Not want to D. Indifferent do
27. what form cultural activities you want to held:  
A. Artistic performance B. Chess and other games C. Sports game D. Other
28. Your opinion of children go out to work:  
A. Willing B. Reluctant C. Like but need often go home to see parents
29. The pension way you support:  
A Family pension B. Self-pension C. Government Pension D. Nursing home pension
30. The degree of attention leadership on the living conditions of rural elderly :  
A. Attaches great importance to B. Importance C. Generally D. Do not pay attention
31. You are most dissatisfied with life on the rear is:  
A. Physical weakness B. Poor material living unattended  
C. Left boring life D. Not caring and respect
32. The problems faced by the elderly left behind? [Multiple choice]  
A. Low level of economic security B .In poor health, lack of child care for  
C. Lonely D. Home is not complete E. Other

**The above is the entire contents of the questionnaire, thank you actively cooperate once again. I wish you a happy life in their old age !**