Review and Reflection on the Local Research of Social Adaptation of Migrant Children in China

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Abstract: The paper examines and reviews research on social adaptation of rural- urban migrant children in China in the past 30 years from several aspects such as clarification of key concepts, theories and methods used by the study, the main contents and conclusions of the research. Based on the review, the paper reflects on the research in this field in China, and presents the direction of future research. The main reflections embody in: to promote the development of social adaptation theory on the basis of empirical research, and to form an integrated theory system of social adaptation of migrant children; to develop effective evaluation methods of social adaptation, including the establishment of a relatively consistent index measurement system; to expand the countermeasures and practical research of social adaptation interventions; and to construct a research framework for social adaptation.

1. Introduction

The research on floating population in China, especially migrant children, generally follows the national policies and the periodical characteristics of social transformation, and it mainly has three stages. The first stage is the phase of gradual liberalization of floating population, which began in 1984, marked by the policy of allowing farmers to enter towns or market towns to work and do business, and supported by the reform of identity management and food supply system, active promotion of Central Government is the key impetus. The average age of migrant workers at this stage is younger, and the problem of migrant children has not yet been highlighted as their number is small.

The second stage is the phase of the concept of population equity proposed and implemented, which had endured about 10 years from 2003, with "Certain Opinions on Solving the Problems of Agriculture Labour" issued by the State Council as the important basis, and with the upsurge of the real estate market and urbanization as an opportunity, the local government became the main power actively drawing farmers into the city. At this stage, the trend of "family floating" of migrant workers emerges, meanwhile, various issues of children with migration are highlighted as the figure increases, and the educational problems and mental health of migrant children gained people's attention.

The third stage is the duration of comprehensively promoting civilization. Starting with the proposal of view of "the Citizenization of Agricultural Population Transfer" in the report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, and with the system reform to break down the barriers of floating population as the main content, all parties have been unanimously promoted and fully implemented the measures of substantive equity since 2013. At this stage, migrant population increased first and thereafter gradually decreased, subsequently entered the adjustment period when the proportion of migrant children basically remained stable. The research on migrant children was more in-depth and more diversified, and the issue of social security and urban adaptation became the focus of attention.

A large number of research on rural- urban migrant children has been carried out in academia for more than 30 years, which provides enriched material for using literature methods to discuss the

social adaptation of migrant children. Three main disciplines of the study in China are summarized: the first is to make the quantitative analysis of the social adaptation status and influencing factors of migrant children from the psychological perspective, which accounts for the largest proportion in the document retrieval; the second is to discuss the educational equity and educational policy from the perspective of pedagogy, mainly qualitative research; and the third is the sociological perspective, including social work, to explore the intervention of social adaptation and recommendations. The basic route of research from psychological perspective involves establishing the hypothesis of the relationship between the relevant factors and social adaptation, measuring social adaptation by the specific scales, and then collecting the data and verifying whether the hypothesis is true. The paper reviews literature from key concepts, research theories, research methods, research contents and conclusions through retrieving the research on social adaptation of migrant children in the past 30 years in China, and finally makes academic reflection on the research in this field.

2. Clarification on Key Concepts

2.1 Definition of Migrant Children

Migrant children usually refer to the children who move from the rural to the city and live and study in cities with migrant workers. To verify migrant children means ascertaining the two attributes, the "floating" and the "age". The "floating" attaches great importance to the feature of leaving the registered residence and migrating with their parents. Some studies have made it clear that "floating" refers to temporary residence for more than six months with parents or other guardians in the inflow area;[1] and other studies have avoided specifying how long children inhabit the city. The researchers express disagreement with the "age" of migrant children. Some researchers adopt the provisions of relevant education policy, "Interim Measures for the Schooling of Migrant Children and Adolescents", and take the children of 6 to 14 years old (or 7 to 15 years old) as subjects to study their social adaptation. While other scholars disagree with the viewpoint, and consider a wider age range to engage in research. They suggest all migrant children of the ages of 0 to 17 (or 0 to 18) should be included in the research of social adaptation.[2]

The researchers usually define the age of migrant children based on their research objectives and designs. According to "the Convention on the Rights of the Child", and provisions of relevant law in China, a child refers to anyone under 18 years old, while the medical profession generally defines the child as 0-14 years old. It is necessary for the academia to have a consensus on the attribute of the "floating" and the "age" of migrant children, which helps to protect the rights and interests of migrant children, not only in the aspect of the equality of compulsory education, but also the fair rights and interests of the development of mental health.

2.2 The Concept of Social Adaptation

The concept of social adaptation and its operationalization is more complex and diverse in empirical research, which can be divided into three categories in general. The first one is to emphasize the process of social adaptation. Many scholars mainly employ the definition in the "Psychology Dictionary", written by Chongde Lin, which defines social adaptation as the process of the individual's cognition and behavior style make changes adjust to the environment when social environment changes.[3] The second kind of concept focuses on behavior representation and mental state and psychological characterization which the individual adapts to the social environment. [4] The third kind of concept is related to cultural norms, mainly from sociological definition. Social adaptation is defined as the degree to which individuals in the process of developing social functions and realizing socialization goals are expected and accepted by cultural norms.

Social adaptation is a complicated and comprehensive social psychological phenomenon, and the researchers generally recognizes that social adaptation should be studied from three aspects, including social adaptability, the process of social adaptation, and social adaptation behavior, which constitutes the integral whole. Some studies suggest that the social adaptation of migrant children

consists of psychological adaptation and of sociocultural life adaptation. The former refers to the state of mental health in the process of new cultural adaptation, while the latter involves the level of social and cultural skills that migrant children acquire in the new cultural environment.[5] Other scholars further distinguish school adaptation and cultural adaptation from the concept of sociocultural life adaptation.[6] This classification is more specific and targeted in empirical research.

The operationalization on social adaptation explicates how to set the dimensions and design index measurement of social adaptation. Tao Hu systematically discussed the social adaptation of migrant children from eight aspects, including environmental satisfaction, learning initiative, activity participation, life independence, interpersonal friendliness, interpersonal coordination, social identity, and social vitality.[7] Qingyu Xu analyzed multiple scales of social adaptation and refined the common elements, finally summarized five indicators including the capability of independence and self- care, learning adaptation, living environment adaptation, interpersonal adaptation and mental energy.[8]

The researchers have not reached consensus on these key concepts, especially in terms of what are the aspects of social adaptation of migrant children, and how to operationalize on this concept. The index and dimensions of operationalization of social adaptation is generally presented in the various scales, and because the researchers use the different scales or measurement tools to conduct the study, which brings about inconsistent conclusions of evaluating social adaptation of migrant children.

3. Summary on Research Theories and Methods

3.1 Relevant Research Theories

The local research on the social adaptation of migrant children lacks an integrated theoretical framework and the theoretical support is relatively weak. Many studies are based on a self-evident premise that migrant children migrate to a new environment with their parents, and the new environment that is heterogeneous to the previous living circumstance will inevitably affect the social adaptation of migrant children. However, this presupposition is precisely required for concrete argument, and needs to be explained by systematic and integrated theory.

Salient theories used by researchers can be categorized as explanatory theory and intervention theory. Explanatory theory involves discussing the reason and impact factors of social adaptation. Theory of social exclusion and social integration, focusing on the institutional and environmental causes of social adaptation problems, explains why migrant children bring about poor social adaptation. Some scholars believe that under the urban- rural dual structure system and environment, when migrant children and families enter the city, they often encounter rejection from social relations, culture, welfare system and quality education resources, and these social exclusions make individuals feel helpless and lost, and bring a series of psychological problems. [9]

The other explanatory theories are relevant to psychology explanations, focusing on heterogenous theoretical models of various impact factors, which mainly explores what factors are and how they influence social adaptation of migrant children, such as the theoretical model related to social cognition and the theoretical model related to personality. Zhonghui Wang illustrated the effects of migrant children's psychological resilience on cultural adaptation by using the social structure model of adolescent mental resilience.[10] Jingzhi Wang utilized the self-control dual-system model to discuss the impact of self-control on social adaptation.[11]

From the perspective of social work intervention in social adaptation, the second type of theory is mainly applied to guide researchers how to engage in intervention practice in order to improve migrant children's social adaptation level, such as social learning theory, cultural adaptation theory, social support network theory. Yuan Li enlightened by Bandura's social learning theory, took "Learning - Experience - Adaptation - Promotion - Integration" as the main line of practice, planed and organized a series of plate activities to assist migrant children to learn and apply the relevant knowledge and skills which are beneficial to urban life.[12]

The theories applied by the local researchers are mainly middle-level theory and theoretical models. Although they provide explanations about some aspects of social adaptation of migrant children, they lack systematic and integrated framework, which leads some studies in discussing the impact factors of social adaptation only to see partially rather than the whole, and could not comprehensively find complex relations and interaction effects among those factors. For example, some studies regard social identity as the mediator factor of psychological resilience and social adaptation, while others take psychological resilience as the mediator factor of self-control and social adaptation. Causal effects or correlations between these factors are not clarified, but make people more confused. The study on social adaptation of migrant children is weak and inadequate in theoretical development, although a large number of empirical studies have obtained many valuable research conclusions, these conclusions have not been further refined and developed to form advanced theory, which may become an important research direction in this field.

3.2 Research Methods

The research methods of social adaptation of migrant children mainly include questionnaires, in-depth interviews, participation observation and ethnography. Surveys employing questionnaires with scales account for the largest proportion in the study. The researchers apply scales or questionnaires to assess the overall level of social adaptation and score of each item in adaptability. The majority of researchers use a scale which is revised on the basis of existed social adaptation scale, such as "Social Adaptation Scale for Children and Adolescents"(SASCA). Researchers from psychological perspective tend to combine this kind of gauge with other kind of scales mainly psychological scales such as personality scales or/and cognition scales to survey migrant children. Because of the diversity of scale types, heterogeneous in measurement dimensions and indicators, content validity and structural validity are quite different, which results in the conclusions of different researchers on the local adaptation of social adaptation of migrant children lack comparability. Developing comparability of research requires designing unanimous measuring standard of social adaptation, which points out direction of further research development.

The literature on using other survey methods to study social adaptation of migrant children is infrequent. Changhui Shi used interview and observation to study urban adaptation of migrant children. Xiaohao Shi adopted the ethnographic method of chasing the narratives of individuals to interpret the urban adaptation structure of migrant children.[13] The research method determines the nature of the study in a sense. In general, the researchers who use the interview, observation and ethnography method are prone to do a qualitative study, while the scholars who use measure questionnaires and scales tend to do a quantitative analysis. Experimental method is an effective method to evaluate the improvement of social adaptation behavior of migrant children through the establishment of the baseline standard, but this kind of process study of improving migrant children's social adaptation is relative scarce in China.

Most of the research on social adaptation of migrant children are horizontal research, which is designed to explore their behaviors, condition, or psychology of different children by simultaneously observing them at a specific time. Only a very small number of research, less than 10% of the literature shows researchers employed longitudinal study or follow- up study. The researchers used pre- test and post- test to study the correlation between migrant children's social adaptation and self-improvement over time. Compared with longitudinal studies, cross sectional studies do not reveal the dynamic changes in the psychological development of migrant children. Nevertheless, because of the time span, it is difficult for researchers to control the environmental factors and form an effective experimental environment, thus researchers requiring being more prudent in designing research route and design and drawing conclusions.

4. Review on Research Content and Conclusions

4.1 Types of Research

According to content analysis of literature retrieval, research on social adaptation of migrant

children can be divided into three types, descriptive study, explanatory study and exploratory research. Descriptive study focuses on describing basic status and characteristics of social adaptation of migrant children. Changhui Shi studied the cultural adaptation of migrant children in Beijing in details, involving language, cultural activities such as reading books and newspapers, surfing the Internet, shopping, extensive hobbies, doing odd jobs and social relations, and pointed out migrant children have developed language adaptation and cultural activities which are similar to children in the city, but are rejected in terms of social relations by city. [14]

Explanatory study focuses on discussing the causal relationship of social adaptation of migrant children. Some scholars believe that to explore the social adaptation of migrant children is actually to some extent to discuss the impact of the external environment and internal psychology' changes on children. The impact factors discussed involve direct factors and mediators. Some direct factors include urban identity or social identity, self-improvement, discrimination, school factors, family factors, etc.. The research suggests that the mechanism that these impact factors play roles is complex, and researchers have to give up considering some factors to give priority to discussing limited several factors. Some scholars proposed that the social identity crisis of migrant children can contribute to many adaptation difficulties and may affect interpersonal adaptation and behavior adaptation.[15]

The majority of empirical researches are relevant to explaining how intermediary variables or factors play roles in the relation between other factors and social adaptation. First, specific personality traits as mediators are discussed, such as perseverance, mental resilience, self-esteem and so on. Some scholars believe that perseverance has a regulatory effect in the relationship between social exclusion and school adaptation.[16] Other researchers illustrated the protective role of self-esteem in coping with stress and maintaining good social adaptation.[17]

Second, researchers explored the intermediary role of social cognitive factors, mainly include discrimination perception, identity and social identity. The researches demonstrate that the mediation effects of these cognitive factors are intricate, especially social identity of migrant children, which plays roles between mental resilience and social adaptation, but also have effects between discrimination and psychological adaptation. Yuan Sun pointed out that "social perception responses, in other words, perception of the concerns of important others (parents, teachers, peers) and changes of perception regulate the relationship between residential stability and positive social adaptation.[18] Some scholars proposed the effects of resilience on social adaptation are produced through integration of city identity and hometown identity. And other researchers found that urban identity exerted a reinforcing function and hometown identity had a buffer effect in the negative prediction relationship between discrimination perception and social adaptation.[19]

Third, researchers analyzed the intermediary effects of a group of positive psychological traits, including resilience, hope and optimism, competence, self-confidence, self-discipline, affection and compassion and so on. The study reveals positive psychological capital, such as resilience, hope and optimism play positive mediator roles between family intimacy and socio-cultural adaptation,[20] and self-confidence, self-discipline, affection and compassion perform positive function between parental support and social adaptation.[21]

Exploratory research mainly discusses reasonable methods and pathways of how to intervene in the social adaptation of migrant children. The researchers explore interventions and possible action plans that can promote social adaptation of migrant children, including experimental research on systematic educational activities, the exploration of cultural practices, and adopting professional methods of community social work or group social work. Some scholars discussed the role of life skills education in promoting school adaptation for primary school students, as well as the significant improvement of peer communication and behavior controlling.[22] Other scholars analyzed why and how to engage in etiquette practice as an intervention strategy to strengthen the migrant children's sense of belonging to the city and the group identity, and enhance their cultural adaptation level.[23]

4.2 Comparative Study and General Conclusions

Whether migrant children, as a special group, hold the differences in social adaptation compared with other types of children and what the distinctions are, which has become the research focus and orientation of some scholars. A comparative study is carried out amongst different types of children, such as migrant children, left-behind children, general children and urban children. These comparative studies are horizontal comparisons to analyze the social adaptability of different types of children, in contrast, longitudinal study is scarce.[24] Some studies compared social adaptation behaviors between migrant children and other types of children in the environment where they get along with each other. The research demonstrates significant differences in peer rejection among urban, rural and migrant children.[25] Other researchers discussed the social adaptation performance of different types of children in different social environments. For example, Xinghua Fan surveyed the scores of social adaptations of ordinary children, left-behind children and migrant children, and pointed out that ordinary children get the highest score, migrant children are superior to the left-behind children, and complete left-behind children are the worst.[26]

In general, researches show three types of views in academia on the assessment of general social adaptation of migrant children. The first standpoint suggests migrant children in the evaluation indicators of social adaptation behavior are universal worse than urban children. The second opinion points out social adaptation of migrant children is partly adaptation, and which is shown as lower score than that of urban children in certain indicators or items of social adaptation, which is the mainstream viewpoint. The third one proposes there was no significant difference in social adaptation between migrant children and urban children, and fewer researchers hold this view.

Local research on social adaptation of migrant children shows the following features: first, the research gives priority to the analysis of impacting factors on social adaptation, and discussion on the mechanism of influencing effects, but do not pay enough attention to exploratory study and experimental research on intervention strategies. Second, researchers show large enthusiasm to cross- sectional research and longitudinal study is insufficient. Third, there are a large number of empirical studies on the mental factors as intermediate variables like social cognition and personality traits, but the exploration on theoretical development and promotion of these studies and their conclusions are inadequate. Forth, researchers have recognized importance of comparative study, however, these studies need further advance in research depth and breadth, or in research design.

5. The Reflection on the Local Research of Social Adaptation of Migrant Children

By combing and summarizing the research on the social adaptation of migrant children in past 30 years in China, the part reflects from the aspects of the development of the theoretical system, the construction of valid evaluation methods, the expansion of intervention research, constructing a framework of social adaptation research and considerations on the future research.

5.1 Construction of an Integrated Theoretical System of Social Adaptation

The theoretical support of local study on social adaptation of migrant children mainly embodies in the theoretical model to interpret the influencing factors. The theoretical model, as the lowest theoretical type in the theoretical system, mainly reflects the correlation or causality among the relevant variables, and its concept is operationally strong, but its theoretical construction is relatively scattered and weak. For example, under the guidance of the social cognitive theory model, some researchers have conducted empirical studies from hypothesis to hypothesis verification, and have come to the conclusion that some cognitive factors influence social adaptive behavior, however, these studies lack further theoretical thinking and theoretical upgrading. On the basis of summarizing the existing research, it is necessary and urgent to analyze, summarize, refine the conclusions of the empirical research for promoting the development of theory.

Numerous empirical researches have produced abundant results mainly in two aspects. First, it discusses various psychological mechanisms of social adaptation of migrant children, and draws the

conclusion on the relationship between psychological factors such as personality, attitude, social cognition and social adaptation. Second, a considerable number of studies have discussed the impact of family factors, social support and school environment on the social adaptation of migrant children. However, these studies seem to form two separate chunks which lack organic and systematic integration. How to combine the environmental factors such as families, peers, schools and social environment with the psychological factors such as individual personality and cognition, and study the mutual effect mechanism of psychological and social environment on social adaptation, this is an important research idea and orientation of current and future research. It is an important attempt to develop and construct the integrative theoretical system of the study on social adaptation of migrant children.

Compared with the general children, the "floating" attribute of migrant children means that this group is not only experiencing the periodic characteristics of the psychological and physiological development of the general children, but also facing special psychological and behavioral changes that may occur due to the changes in their environment. The particularity of this group requires researchers to consider the relationship and process of children's psychological development in the context of their living environment and its changes. Based on the relationship between human and environment, the ecological system theory expounds the interaction between human and environment at different levels, and puts forward a more suitable integrated interpretation framework. But this theory is a frame theory in the general sense, and it pays little attention to the personality and psychology of the individuals. In order to construct the integrative theory system of social adaptation of migrant children, the theory of ecosystem and the theory of children's psychological development could be organically combined.

The theoretical system involves different levels. Firstly, starting from the main function of theory, the theoretical system should include explanatory theory and practical theory. Explanatory theory is a causal study on why migrant children have social maladjustment problems, or the causes and mechanisms of the social adaptation of this group. Practical theory is mainly a structural description of the concepts, principles, procedures and technical methods of how to carry out social adaptation intervention activities, providing the greatest practical direction. Practical theory should be based on explanatory theory. Second, the interpretation of the theoretical level of explanatory theory should identify both personality and cognitive psychological traits, should also fully recognize the different levels of living environment of migrant children, from the most closely grieving families, schools, teachers to medium level of schools, organizations, communities, and macro level of society and even the institutional environment of system. And it is crucial to explore how the external environment acts on personality and psychological development of children, then directly or indirectly affect migrant children's social adaptive behavior or condition.

5.2 To Develop Effective Evaluation Methods for Social Adaptation

The social adaptation gauges for migrant children or questionnaires used in the current research show variety in type, dimension and index, which not only provides abundant research results, but also leads to confusion in the concept and the index of social adaptation. Thus, it is difficult to grasp the overall situation of social adaptation of migrant children. Moreover, some studies with the same or similar contents have reached opposite conclusions because of different measuring instruments. Thus, to consider developing effective evaluation methods for social adaptation is imperative work.

Firstly, a unified evaluation system of social adaptation indicators for migrant children should be established. This is related to the content validity and the structural validity of the social adaptation scale for migrant children. The general concept of social adaptation and its operational index system for general children is not completely in line with the basic situation of migrant children. The existing researches separately stress partial aspects of psychological adaptation, school adaptation and cultural adaptation for investigating migrant children. Therefore, starting from the concept of social adaptation of migrant children and taking psychology, learning, city life and culture as the basic dimensions, index system of social adaptation suitable for migrant children group may be established, in order to accurately measure the social adaptation of this group.

Secondly, the baseline study on social adaptation of migrant children in different age stages and living environments should be carried out. In assessment of social adjustment status of migrant children, the existing studies generally compare migrant children with other types of children, and take general children or urban children as the reference standard to discuss the problem of social adjustment of migrant children. In fact, the social adaptation of migrant children is a complex process that changes and develops with the change of environment and psychophysiological development, and the establishment of baseline standards is a key link in conducting experimental studies, intervention studies, and assessing the change of social adaptation. There are two principal types of baseline standards. One is to take migrant children living in cities for half a year as the reference and investigate their social adaptation level according to their age, and the data could be considered as baseline standard or baseline data. The other one is to employ other types of children of the same age as a reference, and to gather data of their social adaptation as a comparative standard.

Thirdly, developing effective evaluation embraces conducting process research to evaluate the dynamic changes of social adaptation of migrant children. The cross-sectional research method and the existing social adaptation scale cannot accurately assess whether the status of each item is changed due to the factor of "floating", and cannot assess the effect of "floating" on social adaptation. Process research, longitudinal study or tracking research methods can assess the impact of the environment relatively clearly and examines effectively the dynamic changes in social adaptation of migrant children. Comparatively speaking, the study of adaptive process has higher research value than the study of state. However, it should be noted that in order to reach a more scientific and rigorous conclusion of causality, relatively strict experimental studies are needed and "noise" or interference factors require to be effectively controlled.

5.3 To Expand Intervention Research

Some scholars have recognized the problem of insufficient intervention countermeasures and practical research.[27] At present, there have been many achievements in exploring the factors influencing the social adaptation of migrant children, however, the follow-up intervention researches have stagnation and deficiency. For example, some research found that there is a strong relationship between psychological resilience and social adaptation, but there is scarce research on how to improve the resilience level of migrant children to promote the development of social adaptation.

The ultimate aim of every attention to the problem of migrant children is to promote the robust growth of this group. The fundamental goal of the study on social adaptation of migrant children is to find out the intervention strategies and methods to solve social adaptation issues of migrant children, as to effectively improve their adaptive ability and enhance their social adaptation level. The future research on social adaptation intervention could be enlightened in the following considerations.

First of all, according to the causal relationship conclusions found in previous studies, researchers could explore emphatically the measures or the countermeasure to change the factors affecting social adaptation, discuss on the practice path of promoting social adaptation, so as to enhance the social adaptability on the whole.

Secondly, researchers could collect data of migrant children with larger sample through quantitative research, then on the basis of measuring social adaptation level researchers should focus and discuss on those children with poor adaptability and severe problems of adaptive behavior. To engage in social work practice or psychological counseling is useful intervention methods in improving the social adaptability in individual cases or small groups, and this is the field that is worthy of exploring.

Thirdly, migrant children and families have their own social adaptation strategies and methods, but the research on this aspect has not been clearly conducted. It is a different approach to study adaptive strategies and adaptation mechanisms of migrant children and their families, and to intervene in social adaptation of migrant children from the perspective of cultural subjectivity and

actors' initiative.

Fourthly, regarding intervention study on social adaptation of migrant children, researchers can not only study the countermeasures and methods of intervention, but also discuss the evaluation of the process and results of intervention.

Interventional research helps to protect the interests of migrant children and protect the rights and interests of migrant families. In terms of research design, researchers need to establish a systematic and three-dimensional intervention framework, which requires top-level design, involving overall social policy research, but also needs specific practical exploration and intervention research for children and families with social adaptation difficulties in urban communities. Interventional research should not only apply quantitative analysis method with certain breadth, but also employ qualitative analysis method that can reflect the research depth. It will be an important direction in future research to carry out intervention research on those migrant children with poor social adjustment status and evaluate the effect of these interventions.

5.4 Constructing the Framework of Social Adaptation Research

The term "social adaptation", first put forward by Herbert Spencer, refers to the process during which individuals gradually accept the existing social ethics and codes of conduct, and respond to social stimuli in the environment within the scope allowed by the norms. Later the term was widely used in psychological and sociological research. If individuals do not agree with society, they will have a psychological state of incompatibility with their environment. Therefore, it is necessary to construct the research framework of social adaptation based on three dimensions.

The first dimension is the temporal dimension. Social adaptation is a continuous process of responding and adjusting in the environment. It is a time-oriented concept, which means that time structure must be considered. The temporal dimension of social adaptation embodies in the changes of psychological and behavioral status of migrant children before they leave their domicile, when they live in cities for a short time, and living in cities for a long time.

The second dimension is the environmental dimension. Social adaptation is not only a psychological activity of individuals, but also a psychological and behavioral process of interacting with and responding to the environment. Environment not only constitutes the background of social adaptation, but also a vital factor affecting social adaptation, which means that environmental structure must be taken into account. For migrant children, their living environment includes micro, mezzo and macro levels.

The third dimension, the representational dimension, is the external behavioral representation. Finally, social adaptation should be represented and reflected by certain external behaviors. Children are still in an important period of psychophysiological development, their psychological characteristics are not as stable as adults, and their perception and understanding of the inner psychological state is not as clear as adults. Therefore, researchers mainly conduct social adaptation research on the basis of objective representational behaviors and behavioral responses.

5.5 Considerations on the Future Research

The emergence of migrant children and problems in China is influenced by national population policy and institutional structure. With the development of the social policy and the change of the big social environment, whether the migrant children group that migrates from rural areas to cities will have new characteristics, such as prosperity of the second generation of urban immigrants, or increase of inter-city migrant children, or emergence of migrant children returning home. For another example, with the promotion of education equity policy and other social security policies, will the school adaptation of migrant children be greatly improved? These new changes will also lead to a new direction in the research contents and approaches regarding social adaptation of migrant children. Especially whether the research orientation will be shifted, from the "pathological" research idea of adverse situation leading to social maladjustment, to the research path that positive personality development will bring about positive social adaptation based on the perspective of empowerment and strengths.

From the literature analysis spanning 30 years, it can be found that the attention of migrant

children's social adaption research orientation has indeed changed, such as, from the study of the factors affecting discrimination to the study of positive psychological quality, from the study of the direct influencing factors of a single variable to the study of the complex mechanism of the intermediary variables, from the description of the social adaptation of a single group to the comparative study of the social adaptation of multiple groups. These abundant research results promote the study in this field to a broader and deeper direction. At present, the sample data collected by the research are mostly migrant children in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Is it necessary to further enlarge new research area and the sample? Is it necessary to conduct a special study on the floating children of ethnic minorities and whether the ethnic difference of social adaptation is greater than the regional difference? How to study adaptation strategies and behavioral choices of migrant children and families? How to conduct more specific research on social adaptation intervention including intervention evaluation? Researchers should have sociological imagination and research acuity, pour attention to the dynamic development relationship between structural transformation and migrant children, and explore new research contents, ideas, paths and methods from different directions.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of the literature retrieval and reviews, the paper finds research on social adaptation of migrant children presents the following characteristics: first, researchers lack consistency in defining and employing key concepts, especially in terms of operationalization of social adaptation. Second, quite a few empirical research not only is insufficient in theory support, but also lacks further development and refinement of theory. Third, the figure of quantitative research is more than the number of qualitative research, moreover, cross- sectional research goes far beyond longitudinal research. Fourth, explanatory research accounts for the largest proportion, and researchers focus on discussing effects of intermediary factors but neglect intervention research.

Based on the above analysis, the paper proposes a few reflective standpoints: first, it is imperative to summarize and refine the conclusions of the empirical research for promoting the development of theory and forming integrative theoretical system of the study on social adaptation of migrant children. Second, it is necessary to consider establishing unified index system of social adaptation suitable for migrant children group, and developing effective evaluation methods by baseline study and process research. Third, intervention research is a new study trend, and could be expanded by studying those children with poor adaptability and interpreting adaptive strategies of their families. Fourth, constructing the framework of social adaptation research from three aspects of "temporal", "environmental", and "representational" dimension, which could make the contribution to research on social adaptation of migrant children.

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