

Psychological Health and Help-Seeking Behavior Decision Model for New Generation of Migrant Workers

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Abstract

At present, new generation of migrant workers is gradually becoming the subjects of migrant worker group and industrial workers. These subjects are difficult to blend in urban life due to various reasons. Thus, many help-seeking difficulties and psychological health problems are caused. This paper mainly discusses psychological health problems faced by new generation of migrant workers in urban life and their help-seeking behavior decision, lays a foundation for studying psychological help-seeking behavior of new generation of migrant workers and hopes to help them better blend in urban life, boost their psychological health development level and facilitate harmonious and healthy development of society.

Key words: New generation of migrant workers; Psychological health; Psychological help-seeking behavior; Psychological help-seeking behavior-decision model

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INTRODUCTION

On November 16, 2010, CCTV News in 30 Minutes reported *Spring* sung by two migrant workers (Liu Gang and Wang Xu) received attention and favor of all sectors of society. 2011 Spring Festival Gala Evening invited the combined band (Xuri Yanggang) to perform on the stage. These reflect new generation of migrant workers gradually becomes the group concerned and favored by the whole society. The events of jumping from a building occurred to employees of Foxconn Company in succession. This discloses psychological health status of new generation of migrant workers is worrying, except their material life and social status. “I am so close to the city, but the city is far away from me”. This reflects mentality of overwhelming majority of new generation of migrant workers. Psychological health status of special group (i.e. the generation after 1980s and 1990s) born in rural area and growing in urban area arouses extensive attention of the society again. Thus, No.1 file of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China – *Several suggestions on the State Council of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China enhancing balance of urban and rural development and further strengthening development foundation of agriculture and rural area* explicitly put forward the following requirement in 2010: “To adopt targeted measures and solve problems of new generation of migrant workers” (the State Council of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 2010). No.1 file of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2010 proposed the first time the concept of “new generation of migrant workers”. These migrant workers are represented by the generation after 1980s and 1990s, accounting for more than 60% of total number of migrant workers (152 million). They are a new generation of group growing under the reform and opening-up policy. Currently, new generation of migrant workers is gradually becoming the subjects of migrant worker group and industrial workers. These subjects are

difficult to blend in urban life due to various reasons. This paper mainly discusses psychological health problems faced by new generation of migrant workers in urban life and their help-seeking behavior decision to help them better blend in urban life, boost their psychological health development level and facilitate harmonious and healthy development of society.

1. PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH PROBLEM OF NEW GENERATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS

In accordance with the concept of “new generation of migrant workers” put forward in No.1 file of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and in combination of the definition of domestic scholars (Huan, 2010; Zhang, Yang, & Guo, 2011), this study suggests new generation of migrant workers refers to the young people with rural registered permanent residence who were born after 1980s and now are flowing migrant workers in urban area. At present, the number of new generation of migrant workers is about 1,000 million, almost accounting for 1/2 of 230 million of employees nationwide. New generation of migrant workers rises rapidly and has become a mainstream group of migrant workers. And, they mainly concentrate in manufacturing industry, construction industry, service industry, lodging and catering industry as well as wholesale and retail industry (Pang, 2011). New generation of migrant workers has special dual characters. On the one hand, their local complex is weak: most of them are single and basically have no experience in farming. After their graduation, they work directly and even lack fundamental common sense about agriculture. Their experience in farming is short, but their education level is high and they have weak identity of local complex (Luo & Wang, 2003). On the other hand, they are incompatible with urban atmosphere: since the new generation of migrant workers has no permanent urban residence certificate, there is a huge gap with urban citizens in terms of employment, life, medical treatment and education. Thus, the new generation of migrant workers is called “a rootless generation”. They are not accepted by urban area and have very weak rural complex. Thus, they are more misanthropic. New generation of migrant workers owns a strong desire to change current situation. However, due to the blow of realistic condition, their strong desire will be dissimilated to psychological imbalance, such as self-abasement, confusion, hostility and anxiety. If such psychological problems cannot be adjusted and relieved in time, their physical and psychological health will be damaged. Even they may move to the extreme and result in suicide and crime. This paper tries to analyze psychological health problems of new generation of migrant workers.

Researches show that fusion in urban area by the new generation of migrant workers is divided into three progressive levels: economic level, social level and psychological level. Only when new generation of migrant workers enjoys economic base and urban social circle can they be changes in the attitude at spiritual level and views (Li, Hu, & Huang, 2011). Therefore, in-depth fusion at the psychological level is based on the first two levels. When the first two foundations cannot be reached, inner contradictions at psychological level may be triggered. Since the new generation of migrant workers is under economic and social pressure for a long time and is not relieved through normal help-seeking channels, a series of psychological health problems are triggered.

1.1 Self-Abasement and Isolation

For the appellation of “migrant worker”, the new generation of migrant workers is more disgusted with it than their elder generation so that they feel self-abasement and anguish. The new generation of migrant workers left the farmland early and is incapable of doing farm work. They even have no contracted land. So, they cannot work and live stably in rural area. Awkward social situation makes them on the edge of urban society for a long term, and rejected by mainstream society. This deepens their inferiority complex.

Since the new generation of migrant workers has no permanent urban residence certificate, there is a huge gap with urban citizens in terms of employment, life, medical treatment and education. They cannot bear that they are not accepted by cities and cannot feel equality and dignity like urban citizens. Being discriminated is the general mood of new generation of migrant workers. Such discrimination is mainly reflected in two aspects: on the one hand, some urban residents look down upon new generation of migrant workers so that their personal dignity is damaged to some extent. Such damage will evolve to conflicts when it accumulates to some degree; on the other hand, factories and enterprises unfairly treat the new generation of migrant workers. Their health right, equal employment right, resting right and other basic rights regular employees enjoy cannot be guaranteed. This intensifies inferiority the complex of new generation of migrant workers. These discriminations cause that the new generation of migrant workers isolates from urban population, further influence their psychological health problem and give rise to social instability factors.

1.2 Hate and Hostility

The new generation of migrant workers does “heavy dirty, hard, tiring and dangerous” work many urban citizens are unwilling to do. They pay much, but harvest little. Even in the same organization, same work with different pay between the new generation of migrant workers and urban citizens generally exists. Besides, reduction of wages and arrears of wage often happen to

the new generation of migrant workers. Unequal income distribution and huge contrast in living standard make the new generation of migrant workers generate strong mentality of benefit deprivation. These may easily trigger serious dissatisfaction, hate, hostility and even anti-social mentality of the new generation of migrant workers for the real society. In recent years, the events of revenge on society and crimes in some cities have been often reported. The new generation of migrant workers cannot gain guarantee of government and organizations in cities. In addition, their equal income and other legal interests cannot be protected by laws. These trigger their strong hostility and rebel psychology. In their opinions, the government sector and enterprises violate their rights and interests through legal violence, so they can maintain their legal interest only through "stopping violence by violence". Under the function of self-rescue psychology, they frequently maintain their legal interest, give vent to their hate and finally commit crimes through destroying urban public facilities, stealing and mass brawl etc..

1.3 Loneliness and Helplessness

Except the difficulty in blending in urban society, very weak social support system and dull spare-time life result in psychological loneliness and helplessness of new generation of migrant workers. Firstly, new generation of migrant workers keeps away from their relatives, spouses and lovers. When they feel lonely and depressed, no relatives support and encourage them. There is short of effective social support system. Thus, small psychological problems seriously deteriorate. Most migrant workers of new generation are between 18 years old and 25 years old, suitable for contact with those of opposite sex and marriage. However, due to too low income, they have no ability to purchase housing in cities and even cannot guarantee a stable life. They cannot shoulder the heavy burden of a family. Hence, they suffer from torments in physiology and mentally and feel lonely and helpless. Secondly, their spare-time life is dull and their spiritual life is deficient. Many labor-intensive enterprises specify that workers can neither speak at will on the production line nor answer calls. They cannot leave their posts without others who replace them. In addition, many grass-roots managers show bad attitude. These make young people whose mentality, emotion and experience are not mature bear excessively heavy working pressure. They suffer torments mentally and feel at a loss. Just because of this, some individuals are sensitive and fragile. When they cannot bear depression, they will choose extreme modes. Spiritual bewilderment and psychological health problem of the new generation of migrant workers have become the problems which must be envisaged and solved.

As living conditions of new generation of migrant workers improve and their fusion in cities speeds up, how to shape their positive mentality and make them make proper help-seeking behavior and strategy in the

face of reality pressure is also a problem badly in need of solutions (Pang, 2011).

Existing researches show that a large number of people in need of help and even those in crisis state will not take the initiative to seek help. Compared with western people, oriental people (including Chinese people) is more negative during seeking psychological assistance (Matsuoka, Breaux, & Ryujin, 1997; Uba, 1994). For example, Andrews et al. finds through investigations of 10,600 people that although more than 20% of adults reached the standards of psychological disorder, 62% of them expressed they will not actively seek professional help [306 sought help]. Michael Phillips et al found among Chinese suicide death samples, those with psychological problems accounted for 63%, but only 7% of suicides sought psychological consultation help before their death (Phillips, Yang, & Zhang et al., 2002). In view of universality and severity of this phenomenon, international psychological consulting field and sociology field focus on help-seeking behavior when people encounter psychological problems and pay special attention to psychological problems of new generation of migrant workers.

2. HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR DECISION OF NEW GENERATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS

In line with existing researches (Jiang & Xia, 2006), help-seeking behavior of new generation of migrant workers refers to the process where those with objective psychological disturbance seek help from other forces except individuals in order to solve problems or relieve pains. It is necessary to explain this definition. Firstly, the extension of "help-seekers" is defined as those with objective psychological disturbance. In real life, many have psychological disturbance, but they themselves do not know it. This may be also one of the reasons why they fail to seek professional help. These should be included in the objects of study, because one of the tasks of psychological health is to awaken their demand. Secondly, help-seeking behavior aims to settle personal problems or psychological pains. Human help-seeking behavior owns multiple functions. Help-seeking behavior of some is of sociability, such as seeking help from a specific person to gain favorable impression. Plentiful help-seeking is non-psychological, such as seeking economic and safe assistance and protection. To avoid ambiguity, the behavior aims to relieve psychological pains or psychological problems. Thirdly, the objects of help-seeking are the forces except individuals, including professional and non-professional forces. Individuals seek help due to psychological problems. The objects of help-seeking are not limited to professionals. More helping behaviors happen among relatives, friends,

teachers, students and lovers etc. the help seeking except professionals is also a very important help-seeking channel.

2.1 Help-Seeking Behavior Tendency

With regard to help-seeking behavior tendency, both domestic and overseas researchers find that when individuals have psychological problems, they first seek help from themselves and then from others. Very few seek help from others without any attempt when they encounter psychological problems. As for the objects of help-seeking, most people are willing to gain help from relatives and friends, but unwilling to seek help from professional psychological consultancy organizations (Flisher & De Beer, 2002; Mei & Sui, 1998; Lin, 2002). The researches of Yu Xiaomin et al. also indicate most college students with psychological disturbance will take positive countermeasures, but still 1/4 of college students will adopt negative countermeasures. If they decide to seek help due to psychological disturbance, they will first seek help from friends and then from lovers and relatives. College students rarely choose psychological counselors and teachers (Yu & Jiang, 2004). Help-seeking behavior tendency of new generation of migrant workers presents more weakening tendency.

Firstly, help-seeking tendency of new generation of migrant workers from relatives and friends is hindered by realistic factors. They are away from relatives, spouses and lovers. When they feel lonely and depressed, no relatives support and encourage them. There is short of effective social support system. Thus, they cannot pour out their woes to others. Besides, their spare-time life is dull and their spiritual life is deficient. Hence, their emotional and psychological problems cannot be poured out, thus leading to deterioration of psychological problems.

Secondly, compared with college students, help-seeking tendency of new generation of migrant workers is weaker and their will be to seek help from professional psychological consultancy organizations is lower. This may be because: a) self-abasement and sense of isolation of new generation of migrant workers make them still further away from urban professional psychological consultancy organizations; b) charging standard of professional psychological consultancy organizations is higher than income level of new generation of migrant workers so that they further flinch; c) education level of new generation of migrant workers is relatively low; their self-control ability for psychological problems is low and their help-seeking channel is narrow. All these cause help-seeking tendency and will of the new generation of migrant workers lower.

2.2 Psychological Factors Influencing Psychological Help-Seeking Behavior

It is found from the research results that the factors influencing individual help-seeking from professionals ca

be roughly classified into three categories: population statistics factor, social and cultural factor, and psychological factor. This study mainly focuses on psychological health problems of new generation of migrant workers and discusses their emotion management ability, treatment fearfulness, interpersonal dependence, sense of shame and self-help behavior (Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001; Kusher & Sher, 1991; Cui, 2003).

(a) Emotion management ability is individual ability to perceive emotion, manage their emotions and deal with others' emotions with the modes accepted by the society. Ciarrochi studied the effects of emotion processing ability on individuals' seeking help from professionals and non-professionals when college students encountered emotional problem and suicide. The results show that those with high emotional processing ability were more willing to seek help from various resources. But, they preferred to seek help from professional psychological consultants when encountering suicide problem, rather than emotional problem (Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001). Some researches investigated the relationship between interpersonal relationship dependence and help-seekers with healthy body and found those with poor interpersonal relationship were unwilling to seek help (Bornstein et al., 1993).

Emotion management ability of new generation of migrant workers is worse than college students, and the ability of new generation of migrant workers to manage their own emotions and cope with others' emotions is worse, too. Hence, their ability to seek help from various resources is weaker. These lead to deterioration of loneliness and helplessness of new generation of migrant workers.

(b) Treatment fearfulness is researched often. Research results indicate that treatment fearfulness is a reason of hindering psychological help-seeking (Surgenor, 1985; Kushner & Sher, 1989). Kushner and Sher (1991) define treatment fearfulness as subjective worry generated from bad expectation of seeking and receiving psychological health services. Treatment fearfulness will affect individuals' attitude to choose treatment. The researched of Kushner and Sher show treatment fearfulness level of those with the need of seeking professional help who did not take actions was the highest, followed by those who considered they never needed psychotherapy; those individuals who needed treatment and had sought treatment had the lowest treatment fearfulness level (Kushner & Sher, 1989). Kushner and Sher summarize 6 kinds of treatment fearfulness: fear of awkwardness, fear of change, fear related to stereotyped image, fear related to past treatment experience, fear related to special problems and fear of social prejudice.

Treatment fearfulness of new generation of migrant workers is more serious than that of college students. New generation of migrant workers further tends to avoid psychological disorder. The reasons are as follows: a)

they more care about social prejudice, such as the labels of “psychological patient” and “mental disorder”; b) they blindly repel psychotherapy. Due to the limitation of education level, new generation of migrant workers unilaterally understand psychological counseling and psychotherapy as hypnosis shown in films and novels, so they fear psychotherapy; c) they have negative and stereotyped image for psychological problems, they will refuse active help-seeking due to awkwardness even if they badly need to treat psychological problems.

(c) The sense of self-efficacy is also a factor influencing help-seeking behavior (Jiang & Wang, 2003), including two kinds of sense of self-efficacy: a) the sense of self-efficacy of the party handling personal matters; such sense of self-efficacy means the party judges whether he has the ability to handle psychological problems when feeling psychological problems; b) the party judges whether he can be a “good” party to gain positive treatment effect when the party wants to seek professional treatment. Such research introduces two help-seeking backgrounds: a) assumed situation; b) real situation. The assumed situation is that the subjects are asked the degree of willingness to seek help if they encounter psychological and emotional disturbance; the real situation is that the subjects are asked the degree of willingness to seek psychological consultation due to psychological disturbance. The results show self-efficacy sense of the subjects during handling psychological problems plays an important role in real help-seeking situation, while self-efficacy sense of the subjects as the parties plays an important role in two help-seeking situations. This research also discovers that except the sense of self-efficacy, psychological health control source, the worry about social prejudice and psychological state impose effects on help-seeking behavior and will.

Self-efficacy of new generation of migrant workers is lower than the average level of Chinese citizens. Because they are rejected and discriminated by cities, their sense of self-efficacy lowers when encountering psychological and emotional disturbance. Thus, they feel lonely and helpless. All these results in the reduction of help-seeking behaviors.

2.3 Psychological Help-Seeking Behavior-Decision Model

In combination of existing researches (Jiang & Xia, 2006) and in accordance with psychological health problems of new generation of migrant workers and features of their psychological help-seeking behavior, this study proposes a theoretical model to explain psychological help-seeking behavior of new generation of migrant workers. Help-seeking behavior – decision model regards psychological help-seeking as an internal decision-making process. This internal decision-making process forms a complete process through a series of successive responses. This process can be divided into three stages. There are

different decision-making contents in each stage. Next, the three stages are described in detail.

Stage 1 “problem perception stage”. The main feature of this stage is that the new generation of migrant workers perceives psychological problems. In other words, they realize whether they have psychological problems or get in troubles. The specific expressions are as follows: “I feel uncomfortable”; “I’m sick”; “this is abnormal” etc. Maybe some migrant workers soon find their emotion, behavior or personal efficacy go wrong, or they live for a long time in troubles before they are aware of psychological problems. Besides, they have been used to such life and fail to feel psychological problems. Thus, problem perception of new generation of migrant workers may be triggered by a crisis, such as others’ similar problem, others’ reminding and even plots in literature works or films. Once individuals realize they may suffer psychological problems, they enter Stage 2.

Stage 2 “self-help evaluation stage”. Self-help evaluation means the new generation of migrant workers evaluates whether they have resources and ability to independently handle the problems. This extraordinarily resembles primary evaluation in Lazarus’s stress theory model (Lazarus & Launier, 1978). Several variables will influence the conclusions of self-help evaluation: (a) remission goal expected by new generation of migrant workers; (b) judgment of problem severity degree; (c) judgment of coping resources owned by new generation of migrant workers.

Remission goal expected by the new generation of migrant workers is the objective they want to achieve through self-help, such as feeling better, becoming happier and improving interpersonal relationship. The new generation of migrant workers will judge whether self-coping is feasible according to the possibility of achieving the goal. By experience, these goals are very personal. So, many problems deserve to research, such as individual or group differences of goals, goal determinants, goal nature and severity degree.

Judgment of problem severity degree by new generation of migrant workers refers to consciousness and evaluation of the parties to the severity degree of psychological problems. Researchers believe painful degree experienced by new generation of migrant workers is a significant factor influencing severity degree judgment. Besides, there may be consequence (result) severity degree judgment.

Resource judgment by new generation of migrant workers mainly refers to the parties’ judgment of their ability and experience about solving or dealing with difficulties. In this regard, individual sense of self-efficacy about handling psychological problems may be a key variable.

Severity degree judgment and coping resource judgment will certainly interact, but the two are not the same judgment, but a relatively independent process. As

for problem severity degree judgment, new generation of migrant workers may refer to general opinions or norms in society, such as medical standard or social norm. Coping resource judgment is purely personal. It is closely related to individuals' coping experience and sense of self-efficacy.

Some common expression forms of self-help evaluation include the following: "the problem is not serious"; "I can bear it"; "I can cope with it" etc. the conclusion of self-help evaluation may include (a) whether I can cope with it by myself; (b) if I cannot deal with it by myself, whether the problem may be ignored (whether the consequence is serious)? When the two answers are negative, the party may seek help from external forces. Then, they enter Stage 3.

Stage 3: Other-help evaluation stage. "Other-help" means the party seeks all external forces to help himself. These external assistances may come from relatives, friends, teachers, leaders or professional psychological consultants etc.. Other-help evaluation of new generation of migrant workers refers to a decision-making process in which the new generation of migrant workers decides which external force is adopted after they have decided to seek help from other forces.

One of the primary working content of other-help evaluation is to search "external help resources available". The research result is a list of objects that the parties may seek help from. Next, the new generation of migrant workers will assess and choose each help-seeking approach. This choosing process has very large individual differences. Some migrant workers will weigh all kinds of conditions and costs very calmly and then make a decision like a business decision. Some will be impulsive and make a decision according to simplicity rule.

Evaluation criteria and "parameters" the party will use during the evaluation may include the following: (a) convenience (space-time closeness degree of help resources and new generation of migrant workers); (b) economical efficiency (the cost for a help resource: time, money, burden of social image (making relatives and friends feel sad due to the problem and help seeking), personal self-esteem); (c) effectiveness (efficacy estimation of objects or approaches of help seeking); (d) self-efficacy of help recipients (the consciousness of new generation of migrant workers about whether they can be a good help-seeker when receiving specific help); (e) problem nature and severity degree perception (common life matter, medical or psychological difficulty); (f) social tolerance of problem behavior (in the consciousness of new generation of migrant workers, acceptance and tolerance degree of the public for psychological problems); (g) social tolerance of help-seeking behavior (in the consciousness of new generation of migrant workers, acceptance and tolerance degree of the public for help-seeking due to psychological problems); (h) previous help-seeking experience (including the experience in

effects and emotions; emotional experience refers to positive or negative emotional impression on previous help-seeking that new generation of migrant workers left).

It can be seen from the above models that there are some choices in each stage of help-seeking process. Seeking help from professionals is the final stage. Only when all previous schemes are denied will be new generation of migrant workers turn to professional psychological organizations and professionals. Therefore, this study considers this is the root course for very few help-seeking behaviors and a series of psychological crisis problems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above stage-decision model, this study suggests that the breakthrough of psychological help-seeking behavior research should be in Stage 3. In Stage 3, the new generation of migrant workers is aware of psychological disturbance and cannot effectively solve it. Thus, they generate the motivation of seeking help from external forces. If the new generation of migrant workers can be guided to actively seek help from professional psychology consultancy organizations and personnel in this stage, it is the optimal period to address their psychological crisis and implement psychological crisis in an effective and timely way. In one word, psychological help-seeking behavior-decision model of the new generation of migrant workers contains a large number of hypotheses. To check these hypotheses is the primary task of future researches.

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