
NEWSLETTER

Does Being Left Behind Estrange the Peer Relationship? An Empirical Analysis Based on CEPS

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PEER relationships can not only reflect the intimacy and harmony in children's interaction with others, but also represent an important aspect of children's socialization and a key indicator of social adaptation. The absence of family education from parents may lead to deviations in the behavior of left-behind children, making them more likely to be rejected by their peers in the process of socialization. This paper uses the data of 2013-2014 baseline survey, China Education Panel Survey (CEPS) and adopts the propensity score matching method (PSM) to explore whether staying behind will affect children's peer interactions? Is there a causal relationship, and to what extent? Is there heterogeneity among different groups?

This study defines the peer relationship as a dependent variable, staying behind as an independent variable, and staying behind as the state with one or both parents leaving home for employment, and other control variables including age, gender, and grade are used.

First, using the least squares method, with peer relationship as the dependent variable and staying behind as the core independent variable for regression, the results show that staying behind experience has a negative impact on the construction of students' peer relationships.

Then, using staying behind as the dependent variable and the selected covariate as the independent variable, the Logit model is established. The regression results show that male students whose ethnicity is Han, being only child and in seventh grade, and with fathers of low level of education are more likely to be left behind. The results of the probability model of propensity score show that there is a non-negligible heterogeneity between the left-

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behind and the non-left-behind. In order to ensure the accuracy of the result of propensity matching scores, this study carried out a balance test, and the matching effect and estimation results were good, and at the same time, the common support hypothesis was satisfied.

After that, by matching the samples according to different left-behind status, different grades, different genders, and whether they are boarding students, this paper studied the heterogeneity of the impact of staying behind on the peer relationship of students. It is concluded that the negative impact of staying behind on the peer relationship of students is more prominent among those seventh grade non-boarding boy students (the younger ones in the sample) with fathers leaving home.

Finally, based on the use of the PSM method, the propensity score is incorporated as a new variable into the regression model, to establish a regression model that effectively controls the sample selection bias. According to the results of Sharpley value decomposition, staying behind can contribute 3.75% to the explainable variation of peer relationships, that is, left-behind students are in a "relatively disadvantaged position" in terms of peer relationship construction.

Based on above findings, this research puts forward several suggestions:

- Strengthen psychological guidance for the key development stages of the socialization of left-behind children, because schools and teachers play a guiding role in the construction of student peer relationships.
- Emphasize parents' family education responsibilities to left-behind children, and guide migrant worker parents to pay attention to the mental health, peer communication and social communication of left-behind children.
- Further reform the urban and rural household registration system, solve the problem of schooling for children living with migrant parents, turn population mobility from "individual mobility" to "family mobility", and change the state of "parent-child separation".

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