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Factors that the Effect of Social Welfare Service on Poor Family Stress Reduction

Tie-Cheng SHAN¹, Hai-Tao WU², Jun LI³

Abstract

There is no choice for a person being born in a family. Currently, the situation of family poverty is getting serious. Lots of low-income population is children stuck in poverty. The weakness of family economy results in the bad development, e.g. low social economy, poverty, cultural capital, and family structure disadvantage, to affect children not receiving sufficient family resources in the enlightenment stage and being the inheritors of inter-generation poverty. Poverty gap drives clearer social stratification, and the adverse nature environment becomes a secret concern in children's future development. Aiming at poor families in Hubei, as the questionnaire analysis objects, 280 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 214 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 76%. The research results are summarized as below: Top five indicators, among 22, are sequenced in-kind subsidy, visit care, self-help groups, community activity, and sponsorship for education; Overall speaking, poor families receiving social welfare service show the highest satisfaction with financial subsidy; besides, sponsorship system is correlated with financial subsidy that poor families are satisfied with sponsorship system; Psychological behaviors involve in individual single parents and the children. Under the emphasis of single parents on the children and the support for single parents' personal emotions, single parents are obviously satisfied with psychological behavior service. According to the results to propose suggestions, it is expected to benefit the government promoting various social welfare services to fully take care of public welfare and promote people's quality of life.

Keywords: social welfare service, poor family, stress relief, critical factor, social policies, social economy, social stratification.

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Introduction

Life is not fair; a person has no choice of being born in a family. For this reason, the government attempts to achieve the fairness through policies for disadvantaged individuals being able to make changes. The effectiveness should be strictly inspected. Currently, the situation of family poverty is getting serious. Lots of low-income population are children stuck in poverty. The weakness of family economy results in the bad development, e.g. low social economy, poverty, cultural capital, and family structure disadvantage, to affect children not receiving sufficient family resources in the enlightenment stage and being the inheritors of inter-generation poverty. Poverty gap drives clearer social stratification, and the adverse nature environment becomes a secret concern in children's future development. In the Head Start Program promoted in 1964, the US government noticed that children from low-income families, under the effect of adverse conditions in the learning process, would drop into the loop of poverty. The program aimed to make up children's right for education and compensate victims struggling in unfavorable economic conditions. In addition to the US government intervening in the improvement mechanism, the UK also promoted the assurance plan in 1998 to help disadvantaged children under the age of four and the families with four major specific services of early childhood education, child care, family support, and health care. In comparison with the UK and the USA intending to eliminate individual learning and development difference resulted from the gap between the rich and poor, domestic government also invested large financial subsidy in disadvantaged families and low-income families. In the short-term goal, it aims to solve the problems in disadvantaged children care and education to achieve the vision of equity in education. In long-term speculation, it stresses on cultivating the basis of nation and accumulate national human capital to promote international competitiveness. Such disadvantaged children subsidy policies are obviously implemented in the intention of discrimination.

Past social welfare policies focused on overcoming poverty; various anti-poverty social policies emerged with diverse changes. Such policies appeared important and positive effects in the actual operation, but also encountered various obstacles. As a result, poverty was not eliminated, but even worsened. When western countries announced to build welfare states, they claimed that poverty would not return. Nonetheless, in 1970s in the 20th century, when the economy appeared stagnation and inflation (i.e. stagnation of economic growth and inflation of prices), poverty problems reoccurred and became more serious. In the mid-1990s, the poor population receiving government relief in the USA was 10% of total population, and it reached 16% in the UK. It had researchers start to reflect and question various social welfare policies in the past. The government, with discrimination idea, positively supported low-income families and disadvantaged families and invested in huge national treasury, expecting to shorten the gap with large amount of subsidies for the disadvantaged and further reduce poverty. It

reveals the importance of support policy making and assistance in disadvantaged poor families. However, effectiveness evaluation is essential to avoid wasting national treasury. Critical factors of social welfare service in stress relief of poor families are therefore discussed in this study to analyze the effect of the intervention of social welfare service on family stress relief, expecting to benefit the government promoting various social welfare services to fully take care of public welfare and promote people's quality of life.

Literature review

Poverty

Liu, Liu, & Zhou (2017) pointed out poverty as one of the most serious social problems in the society; in the civilized US society, one of seven people was poor. What is "poverty"? A lot of arguments about poverty regarded the poor as a group of population who constantly received government welfare benefit and relied on government welfare. Such an answer has not reached the final conclusion. Changes in economic and social environment in different time and space would present distinct meanings. Political systems for responding to poverty often remodel the definition. There is not a correct, purely scientific, and public agreeable definition of poverty; sometimes it covers political content. Nevertheless, a lot of researchers attempted to uncover the appearance of poverty from various perspectives. Lombardi (2017) regarded poverty as the basic and most serious social problem. Poverty stood for individuals or families with economic scarcity not being able to satisfy the demands for daily life and being threatened the needs for survival. Individuals or families in poverty often encountered bad living conditions due to low income or unemployment. Poverty would result in higher emotional disturbance to cause social problems; poverty would have an individual lack development in education, society, and economy or be excluded from the society; poverty would even result in low self-image, depression, desperation, or suicide. Graneheim, Lindgren, & Lundman (2017) pointed out common problems of lack of food, not having proper, or dirty, living environment, parenting, family members' health conditions, domestic violence, and child abuse resulted from poverty. Poverty would affect the physical and mental development, education, and employment opportunities of families with bad economic conditions to result in hereditary poverty and not being able to escape from the dilemma. O'Leary & Tsui (2019) mentioned that poverty was a controversial political idea; no poverty definition was completely scientific and correct. The definition of poverty was political construction; different nations revealed subjective/objective and relative/absolute differences. The poor used to be composed of the elderly, women, the handicapped, vagrants, and the unemployed who were lack of job skills or hard to be absorbed by the labor market. However, the poor population in Europe and

America changed since the middle and end of 1970s. Erlingsson & Brysiewicz (2017) stated that African Americans were the major underclass, where underage girls were pregnant out of wedlock and became single mothers, who dropped out of education and lacked proper skills, but merely relied on government bailout to become welfare dependence and further cause federal deficit. Relatively, males in the class abandoned wives and children, were dissolute on streets, would not take the responsibility for the families, and even engaged in underground economy and street crimes. Coincidentally, Kianpour *et al.* (2018) found out increasing female poor families, youngsters, middle-aged and aged unemployed people, and even unemployed but poor people, who required social assistance in Europe. Either in Europe or the USA, people who fell into social assistance were different from the poor in the past that they were labeled new poverty population to attract the attention of the society.

Source of family stress

Deng, O'Brien, & Chen (2018) indicated that poor families, when facing family destruction, would appear certain stress or dilemmas due to member change, reduced economic source, and parental role burden. In the beginning of an event, the family would make adjustment depending on the strength or resources; once the stress or dilemma accumulated to certain degree, with which the internal strength and resources of the family could not cope, it would seek for external support or receive external resource assistance to cope with family stress or dilemmas. Suradi *et al.* (2019) regarded poor family as a dynamic process in which parents encountered problems in economy, child care, life adjustment, housing, and work. The issue of poor family was concerned because poor families would encounter the problem in balancing work and child care; without supportive resources, the parents could not take care of work, child care, mental adaptation, social support, and role conflict and even indirectly or directly affected parent-child relationship to result in children or teenager problems. Bengtsson (2016) indicated that residence would also be affected by economic disadvantage to become a problem in poor families. Due to low socioeconomic status of parents, the poor had to sublet houses with others and live in insecure communities or older houses. It was discovered that a landlord not agreeing with a poor family moving into a household registration would directly affect the schooling of the children or the application of relevant welfare subsidy. The change in dwelling community forced a poor family to rebuild social support network and interpersonal relationship. In this case, stress and problems encountered by poor families were mutual affected. Agger & Sørensen (2018) indicated that economic problems were the mostly concerned problem of low-income poor families, and the degree of pressure encountered by parents of a poor family depended on the external resources. According to domestic and international studies, it was realized that economic scarcity, child care and parenting, employment dilemma, social

interpersonal relationship changes, emotional and behavioral performance, and needs for residence were the dilemmas or needs encountered by poor families. Nevertheless, poor families with different types, factors, and gender would suffer from distinct stress or dilemmas. Tarazona-Santabalbina *et al.* (2016) mentioned that poor families, due to structural limits, were lack of resources to cope with dilemmas of employment, parenting, and socio-psychological stress adaptation, compared to core or two-parent families. In comparison with general families, poor families could more easily appear dilemmas on actual life, including economic pressure and psychological insecurity, child care and work conflict, multiple parenting roles, alienation from original interpersonal network, self-isolation, social discrimination, and prejudice. The death and leave of family members or reduction of economic income would result in certain pressure on poor families. Silverstein & Golant (2018) pointed out welfare needs of poor families for financial subsidy, parenting and child care, employment service, and medical subsidy. Aiming at poor families of Hsinchu Municipal Hsiang Shan High School, Nandan (2017) pointed out family life dilemmas in economic problems, housing, mental adaptation, and psychological support. Dent, Kowal, & Hoogendijk (2016) divided poor family stress into dimensions of economy, parenting, social interpersonal relationship, emotional and behavioral, space and residence arrangement, and employment. Past research proved that poor families could more easily fall into high-risk families than general families, mainly because of pressure or effects of family economy, parenting, interpersonal interaction, emotion, and residence. As a result, by organizing researchers' studies, the stress and dilemmas of poor family contained economic problems, parenting and care, personal emotions and parental role adaptation, and social interpersonal relationship.

Social welfare service

Cao *et al.* (2016) explained that poverty economic support for families with economic dilemma was not restricted to poor families listed by the government, but lots of families encountering poverty were also supported. Since family support programs stressed on supporting poor families, the subjects contained poor families or single-parent families, and the service aimed to satisfy the needs of poor single-parent families, to assist poor single-parent pupils under the age of 18 in the continuous study through sponsorship systems, scholarship and grants, and emergency allowances, aiming to improve family economy and satisfy family welfare needs to rebuild the family function. Zeng (2019) analyzed types of needs for supporting poor families and discovered that supported poor families, due to family economy conditions and resource shortage, required different types of support from general families; welfare needs for supported poor families were therefore classified into economy, parenting, psychological counseling, social adjustment guidance, housing, and medical care. From the classification, it was realized that welfare needs for supported poor families were similar to those

derived from family stress. Liu, Liu, & Zhou (2017) indicated that the standards and service for poverty alleviation programs were updated along with social change and economic and social welfare changes. The poverty support standards were not definitely regulated, and the service simply stressed on economic provision and child care. After referring to the social assistance standards, the poverty support standards are now definitely regulated to cover economic support, guidance service, and recreation service and to extend single subject to the entire family. The service used to base on poverty alleviation programs, while multiple service programs are developed nowadays, such as head start program, college autonomous fishing program, and family life development account program. Assarroudi *et al.* (2018) indicated that the service objects of poverty alleviation programs were those living in poverty or families with disabled major economic producers. The family life of served objects was improved through social workers' home visit, financial subsidy, medical subsidy, individual meeting, and group activity to enhance children and the family environment adaptation ability. Liu, Guo, & Zhou (2018) mentioned that poverty alleviation programs mainly provided services through social work, case work, and group work; economic support contained sponsorship system, scholarship and grants, emergency aid, and in-kind subsidy; guidance service included group guidance, study adaptation and school work guidance, health and nutrition guidance, and community parent education lectures; and, recreation service covered community recreation activities, talent classes, and camp activities. Guo *et al.* (2019) stated that family poverty alleviation program service aimed at poor families with economic needs to provide living support for children or teenagers through sponsorship systems in order to relieve or supplement economic needs for single-parent families. In regard to parenting and care needs, guidance service was focused to conduct children and parent development groups, provide volunteer clinic and relevant health lectures, and community parent education lectures for supported poor families. Regarding social interpersonal relationship needs, community recreation activities in recreation service were stressed. In terms of psychological and behavioral needs, with case work, family members were provided psychological support and concern through social workers' home visit, and children or teenagers with deviant behaviors were given guidance or concern.

Methodology

Delphi Method

The AHP dimensions in this study are established based on Delphi Method. With Delphi Method, also called expert survey, problems requiring solutions are separately sent to experts through communications for the opinions, which are then collected and organized the comprehensive opinions. The feedback of such

comprehensive opinions and predicted problems are further sent to the experts for revising the original opinions. Through several runs of inquiry and opinion collection and organization, a comparatively consistent predicted result is acquired step by step.

According to the system program, anonymous opinion expression is adopted in Delphi Method, i.e. no discussion among experts, but simply contacting with the surveyor. After several runs of survey on experts' opinions about the questionnaire items and repeated inquiry, induction, and revision, the basically consistent opinions of experts are organized as the prediction result. Such a method presents broad representativeness and is more reliable.

Analytic Network Process

AHP, proposed by Saaty, has been broadly applied for more than 30 years. This chapter aims to discuss the applications, the applied fields, and the application to complicated problems of AHP. AHP is mainly applied to decision making problems. Analytic Network Process (ANP) is extended from AHP. Chang *et al.* (2015) mentioned that Saaty proposed ANP to cope with many decision making problems in real society not being able to expressed with structured AHP, as there were web-like mutual relations among upper, middle, and lower hierarchies in real situations, rather than simple top-down linear relationship. ANP proposed by Saaty was the mechanism including feedback into AHP and further interpreted to replace the hierarchical network proposed in McGraw-Hill's *The Analytic Hierarchy Process* in 1980. Both of them achieved the decision making with systematic methods. Furthermore, the major difference between AHP and ANP lied in the linear hierarchical structure of the former, but non-linear of the latter. ANP presented dependence and feedback and used super matrix for calculating weights. From past literature data, most people-related affairs or principles showed mutual dependency. For this reason, ANP is more appropriate and better meets the practical needs than AHP for this study.

Establishment of indicator

The questionnaire in this study is emailed to experts in different fields. The first-time feedback from the experts is organized the considered projects for social welfare service to poor family stress relief. The considered factors are further classified with similar properties and mailed back to the experts for opinions. The final agreement, with major categories, is achieved through several runs of inquiry. Finally, an expert meeting is called to make critical factors of financial subsidy, ecological environment, and social advance in social welfare service in poor family stress relief. Such critical factors are regarded as the ANP dimensions, and the ANP questionnaire is established based on the correspondent categories. The following principles are revised through Delphi Method:

- Financial subsidy: life adoption, in-kind subsidy, employment guidance, entrepreneurial loan, vocational training allowance.
- Care and education: sponsorship for education, scholarship and grants, school work guidance, career guidance, cultural activity.
- Medical assistance: insurance allowance, nutrition improvement, healthcare forum, volunteer clinic service.
- Psychological behavior: home visit, individual meeting, counseling group conducting, consultation meeting, children play therapy.
- Social adjustment: visit care, self-help groups, community activity.

Research object

The poor population in Hubei, including low-income labors, low-income or no-labor income disabled people and long-term patients, orphans, and widowers and widows without social insurance or other income, is distributed around four major mountains. After more than 20-year poverty alleviation, the poor population in Hubei is largely reduced; however, with restrictions to various factors, it is difficult for the rest poor population getting rid of poverty.

Solving “two no worry and three guarantees (no worry for food, no worry for clothing, guarantee of compulsory education, basic health care, and housing security) is the key points of poverty alleviation in Hubei to request the central government’s programs and practice opinions for timely solving the problems and comprehensively complete big doxxing and investigation for reconciliation village by village, household by household, person by person, and item by item.

Taking poor families in Hubei as the research objects, total 280 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 214 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 76%.

Results

After completing all hierarchical weights, the allocation is preceded according to the relative importance of indicators in various hierarchies to show the importance of indicators in the entire evaluation system as well as to generate the overall weight of critical factors in social welfare service in poor family stress relief, *Table 1*.

Table 1. Overall weight of critical factor of social welfare service in poor family stress relief

dimension	Hierarchy 2 weight	Hierarchy 2 order	indicator	Hierarchy 3 weight	Hierarchy 3 order	Overall weight	Overall order
financial subsidy	0.234	1	life adoption	0.206	2	0.048	6
			in-kind subsidy	0.288	1	0.067	1
			employment guidance	0.188	3	0.044	10
			entrepreneurial loan	0.146	5	0.034	21
			vocational training allowance	0.172	4	0.040	14
care and education	0.217	2	sponsorship for education	0.227	1	0.049	5
			scholarship and grants	0.202	3	0.044	11
			school work guidance	0.180	4	0.039	16
			career guidance	0.216	2	0.047	7
			cultural activity	0.175	5	0.038	18
medical assistance	0.168	5	insurance allowance	0.281	1	0.047	8
			nutrition improvement	0.243	3	0.041	13
			healthcare forum	0.212	4	0.036	19
			volunteer clinic service	0.264	2	0.044	12

psychological behavior	0.194	3	home visit	0.237	1	0.046	9
			individual meeting	0.205	2	0.040	15
			counseling group conducting	0.182	4	0.035	20
			consultation meeting	0.202	3	0.039	17
			children play therapy	0.174	5	0.034	22
social adjustment	0.187	4	visit care	0.352	1	0.066	2
			self-help groups	0.332	2	0.062	3
			community activity	0.316	3	0.059	4

Discussion

This study aims to understand the condition of social welfare service to poor family stress relief and discuss the relief effect of welfare service programs, family stress sources, and social welfare service for poor families on the family stress. It is expected to understand the cognition and use of single-parent families about social welfare service and further realize the condition of social welfare service to poor family stress relief for the reference of social welfare service program planning in the future. Overall speaking, poor families receiving social welfare service reveal the most satisfaction with financial subsidy, and sponsorship system is related to financial subsidy that poor families are relatively satisfied with sponsorship system. Although times and frequency of scholarship and grants and in-kind subsidy are not as many as economic support, poor families receiving social welfare service are satisfied with scholarship and grants and in-kind subsidy as they involve in money and reduce expenses. Psychological behavior is involved in single parents and the children. Under the emphasis of single parents on the children and the personal emotions being supported, single parents are apparently satisfied with psychological behavior service.

Conclusion

The empirical result analysis conclude that “financial subsidy”, weighted 0.3234 about 23.4% of overall weight, is mostly emphasized, followed by “care and education”, weighted 0.217, “psychological behavior”, weighted 0.194, “social adjustment”, weighted 0.187, and “medical assistance”, weighted 0.168.

Accordingly, financial subsidy is the most emphasized dimension in social welfare service to poor family stress relief. Among indicators in Hierarchy 3, the hierarchical weights of indicators are sequenced as below.

- Under financial subsidy, the indicators are sequenced in-kind subsidy, life adoption, employment guidance, vocational training allowance, and entrepreneurial loan.
- Under care and education, the indicators are sequenced sponsorship for education, career guidance, scholarship and grants, school work guidance, and cultural activity.
- Under medical assistance, the indicators are ordered insurance allowance, volunteer clinic service, nutrition improvement, and healthcare forum.
- Under psychological behavior, the indicators are ordered home visit, individual meeting, consultation meeting, counseling group conducting, and children play therapy.
- Under social adjustment, the indicators are sequenced visit care, self-help groups, and community activity.

From the overall weights of indicators in social welfare service in poor family stress relief critical factors, top five indicators, among 22, are sequenced in-kind subsidy, visit care, self-help groups, community activity, and sponsorship for education.

Recommendations

According to the conclusion, the following suggestions are propose in this study, expecting to provide definite guide and directions for promoting poor family stress relief.

- Economic pressure is first faced by poor families and would affect parenting and child care, and even indirectly affect personal emotions, role adaptation, and social interpersonal relationship adaptation. According to above research, relevant units are suggested to provide staged and multiple social welfare services aiming at poor families with distinct pressure and supported time. Aiming at poor families receiving different supported time and considering the source of pressure being number of raised children, actual number of people being able to work, and work income, multiple social welfare services could be developed to timely reduce pressure.
- Poor families to achieve the goal of being autonomous could be assisted through social welfare service. The relevant units are suggested to enhance the popularity of employment guidance and comprehensively provide employment guidance for poor families getting rid of poverty.
- To guide poor families to achieve autonomy on personal ability, personal adaptation, and economic autonomy, it is suggested that poor families, in the begin-

ning of receiving social welfare service, have to reinforce, cultivate, and dig out the autonomous conditions, e.g. special skills of parents, promotion of children education, and accumulation of family assets; afterwards, poor families are taught to actively propose the autonomy.

- Units offering social welfare service are suggested to concern and provide relevant services, to conduct parent-child touring activity, development courses, community forums or courses, aiming at the parents physical, mental, spiritual, and social interpersonal relationship, as well as to assist poor families in connecting with different resources in the community to encourage poor families walking out to re-build new social circle so as to relieve parents' individual pressure.

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