

Choice of Chinese Farmers' Livelihoods under the Background of Family Life Cycle

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[Abstract] Changes in the income structure of Chinese rural households indicate that their livelihoods have shifted from agricultural livelihoods to diversified livelihoods based on migrant workers. This article believes that family factors, especially the stages of the family life cycle, give farmers different life tasks, which in turn brings diversity of livelihoods. The empirical survey in Henan Z village further confirmed the impact of the family life cycle based on life tasks on the livelihood of farmers.

[Key words] Life tasks; family life cycle; livelihood

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I. Research questions and research ideas

With the rapid development of China's industrialization and urbanization, great changes have taken place in rural society. The non-agricultural employment of agricultural labor and the continuous increase in farmers' income are the most notable features. Especially since the beginning of the new century, there has been a wave of migrant workers in rural areas. While the total income of farmers' households has continued to increase, non-agricultural operations and migrant workers' income have become key factors in the continued increase of farmers' income (Zhong Funing, 2007). The proportion of non-agricultural income is gradually rising, and the proportion of agricultural income is gradually decreasing (Zhang Fenglong, 2007). The landmark event of the development of this trend is the data on the income structure of farmers in 2013: wage income is 4,025 yuan, accounting for 45.2% of total household income, surpassing 42.6% of household operating income, and becoming the primary source of household income. Traditional farmers have formed migrant workers. A diversified income structure in which income and family business income account for about half. The livelihoods of Chinese farmers have changed from agricultural livelihoods to diversified livelihoods based on half-work and half-farming. Regarding the changes in livelihoods, the mainstream viewpoints in the academic circles have explained it from the perspectives of system and market. However, Chinese peasant families are an integral part of rural society. The choice of their livelihoods depends not only on the family structure formed by the specific life cycle, but also Affected by life tasks under a specific village culture. The research idea of this article is to start from farmer families, take Henan Z village as a sample, analyze the life tasks of farmer households in different life cycle stages under the dual employment pattern of urban and rural areas, and explore the mechanism of its influence on family livelihoods.

II. Family life cycle from the perspective of farmers' life tasks

First, the content of farmers' life tasks

The embeddedness theory believes that the economic behavior of social organizations is embedded in social relations. As the main element of the rural social structure, farmers cannot be detached from society, but interact and connect with other family organizations in the village, carry out production, life, and establish meaning and meaning of life under the influence of traditional Chinese culture and local norms. value. Under this social structure, the standard for the success of family management is to complete various compulsory and innate "fate" responsibilities, so that life can be considered "successful" and "no regrets." In Village Z, farmers are accustomed to expressing their understanding of family management and life history with "life tasks" and "burdens". There are many life tasks that people need to complete in their lives, but they are all related to family reproduction.

Give birth and raise children. Marriage is the starting point of the family, and having children is an important part of family expansion. Since ancient times, there has been a saying in China that "there are three unfilial piety, and no one is the greatest." Childbirth carries a special social connotation. Henan is a traditional agricultural area. The rural society still maintains strong tension and competitiveness. Farmers generally believe that having children (especially sons) is the reproduction of individual lives or the continuation of family life, which is the most important life task. After the child is born, the parent begins the task of raising the child, which requires long-term financial expenditure and emotional devotion from the parent family.

The children married and married. Marriage is an extremely important life course for everyone, and marriage of offspring is an important life task for parents. On the one hand, influenced by the family's intergenerational ethics, farmers believe that marriage of offspring is the core of family intergenerational responsibilities, and is the obligation that parents must assume to offspring. Only by successfully completing the "cultural ritual" for the offspring to marry and start a family can the "consummation" of life and the continuation of the family be realized. The end of life not only means the end of the family, but also the death of the ancestors. On the other hand, the increasing cost of marriage for rural boys highlights this life task. The task of completing the marriage of offspring is mainly reflected in a series of economic expenditures. Calculated according to the current average level of Village Z, the family expenses for a boy to get married are about 330,000 yuan. It can be said that the marriage of the children not only emptied the entire family, but also seriously overdrawn the peasant family.

Take care of grandchildren. China is a country that values family ethics, and intergenerational relations as the most important family ethics regulate the behavior of family members. According to the "feedback model" of China's intergenerational relationship described by Fei Xiaotong (1999), the fathers need to bear the responsibility of raising their children and establishing a family for them, and the children bear the responsibility of supporting their fathers. However, after the rise of the working economy, young couples went out to work while leaving their children under the care of their parents. As a result, inter-generational upbringing has become the "life task" of the parent family (Chen Jing, 2017).

End of retirement. "Hundreds of virtues and filial piety first" and "raising children to guard against old age". For thousands of years, in traditional Chinese culture, it is people's obligation under the "feedback-type" intergenerational relationship that children serve as fathers to provide for the elderly. In Village Z, the elderly usually live independently before they lose the ability to work. They start their stoves and rely on their own labor to support themselves. In the eyes of the elderly, they try not to be a burden to their children, even if they are sick, as long as the husband and wife can take care of each other, they will not trouble the children. Only when they lose the ability to work due to old age and illness, they lose their financial resources, and even cannot take care of their daily lives. At this time, their offspring begin to assume the responsibility for the elderly, including financial support, living care, and spiritual support. Consolation etc.

If old-age care is a life task regulated by family ethics, then sending the end is a solemn cultural ceremony. The funeral ceremonies in Village Z are cumbersome and expensive. Generally, the average exchange member with many brothers has to bear it alone for families with only children. In spite of the high expenditure, the children still have to work hard to make this ceremony well. On the one hand, it is related to whether the elderly can be buried in a decent way. On the other hand, the funeral is also a kind of competition, which is a manifestation of farmers' pursuit of social value. The funeral is not only a ceremony for the elderly to bid farewell to the villagers, but also an important stage for the offspring to demonstrate their abilities and family influence.

Second, life tasks and family life cycle

The above analysis of peasant households' life tasks follows the time sequence of family development and has obvious phase characteristics. As Duvall (1988) said, the family has different missions at each different stage and plays different roles. In order to better analyze the life tasks of farmers from the perspective of family development, we combined the family life cycle and life tasks to analyze, and reconstructed the classic family life cycle based on life tasks.

Based on life tasks, the life cycle of a farmer's family can be divided into five stages, namely the wedding period, the parenting period, the children's marriage period, the intergenerational parenting period, and the task completion period. There are only two people in the newly married family, and they have not yet given birth to any children, so there is basically no family burden. After the child is born, the family enters the parenting period, and young couples begin to feel all kinds of pressure from the family. At this stage, the main life task of the family is to raise the children and provide them for school. As the children grow up and the family enters the stage of their children becoming a family, the main life task facing the son is to marry and set up a family, including building or buying a house and completing marriage tasks for the children. At this stage, the family has the greatest pressure on various expenses and consumption. After the age of 50, families that have just completed their children's marriage tasks are faced with the task of looking after their grandchildren. At the same time, their parents are already old, and they have to take on the task of taking care of their children. After the age of 65, the family tasks have basically been completed, but he is also old and weak, and even needs the care of his children. The family has entered a period of decline or even collapse.

III. The dynamic changes of farmers' livelihoods in the family life cycle

We combined the family life cycle from the perspective of farmers' life tasks and their chosen livelihood methods to classify the sample data of 326 households in Z Village. The analysis results are as follows.

Wedding period. After the young couple get married, they form the couple's nuclear family. At this time, they have not yet given birth to children. The parents are young and have no life tasks to undertake. This is the most relaxed and comfortable stage of the entire family life cycle. In addition, young people yearn to live in the city and pursue higher economic income. All newlywed families in the sample choose the livelihood of husband and wife to work outside together.

Parenting period. After the birth of the child, the newly married family ushered in the first biological task, that is, raising the children. Specifically, on the one hand, it is the task of guardianship for the growth of the children; on the other hand, it is the economic task of obtaining economic income, providing better conditions for the growth of the children, and also material accumulation for the children in the next stage of marriage and family. In order to take into account these two aspects, most rural households chose the half-work and half-farming model. Among them, 21.6% of the households chose the part-work and half-farming based on the gender division of labor. The men went out to work while the women stayed at home. The intergenerational division of labor is part-time and part-farming. Young couples go out to work, and their children are taken care of by their parents. Further analysis of the data reveals that most families with younger children choose the gender division of labor. As the children's age increases, especially after the age of 3, the number of families choosing the intergenerational division of labor gradually increases (Figure 2). This shows that raising children is the central task of the family in this period, and the choice of livelihood is based on the logic of action to raise children and obtain more economic income.

When the children are married. As the children grow up, the family ushered in the most important life task-children, especially sons, get married and start a family. The completion of this life event is mainly reflected in a series of economic expenditures, including building or buying a house and completing the marriage ceremony for the children. This is the period when the family life cycle has the most expenditure and the greatest economic pressure. Therefore, the goal of family business at this stage is to obtain as much economic income as possible on the basis of material accumulation in the previous period. In addition, the children have grown up, and most of them have entered the labor market with their parents, except for some who continue to study. Family work has become the first choice for farmers in this period. At the same time, due to the high age of the parents, individual families have begun to assume the task of supporting the elderly. In order to balance family responsibilities and financial pressure, some families adopt part-work and part-farming based on gender division (males go out to work, females work at home and take care of the elderly), some families choose to work part-time in the village by receiving the transferred land, breeding, and commerce.

Intergenerational care period. After the children get married, the family life cycle reaches the age of 50. The family structure is mainly composed of parents, offspring, and minor grandchildren. Taking care of grandchildren and supporting the elderly becomes the main life task at this stage. Although the 50-year-old middle-aged person is still strong, he is limited by family responsibilities and cannot choose long-term and long-distance working life. He can only work at home and farm with part-time odd jobs. It is worth noting that some families overdrafted in order to complete the task of starting a family with their children, and owed more or less foreign debts. Making money to pay off debts is also an important task. In short, farmers at this stage must take care of their grandchildren and fathers, and cannot leave their homes. They must also obtain as much economic income as possible to repay their debts. In order to take care of these tasks, 62.9% of households choose to work part-time in the township, and 30.3% choose to work in part-time and part-farming livelihoods based on gender division.

Mission completion period. After the age of 65, as grandchildren grow up and their parents age, most of the peasant households' life tasks have been completed, family expenditures have fallen sharply compared to the previous period, and families have gradually declined and disintegrated. Theoretically speaking, it should be time to take care of life. However, due to the imbalance of intergenerational relationships in rural families, elderly farmers not only have to support themselves, but also continue to "worse" for their children, such as helping them with farming and doing some housework. In view of this, agriculture with low labor input and relatively leisure has become the main livelihood of elderly farmers. The sample data also confirmed that 79.2% of the elderly farmers during this period chose a single agricultural livelihood method and obtained their livelihood by cultivating their own land.

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