

Developmental Characteristics and Educational Promotion of Social-Emotional Competence among Rural Students with Learning Difficulties

Shiyan Liao

School of Education, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing, 526061, China

Email: liaoshiyan7578@163.com

How to cite this paper: Liao, S. Y. (2025). Developmental characteristics and educational promotion of social-emotional competence among rural students with learning difficulties. *Education and Social Work*, 3(1), 1-13. ISSN Print: 3079-515X; ISSN Online: 3079-5168.

<https://doi.org/10.63313/ESW.9094>

Published: 2025-12-15

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Erytis Publishing Limited.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Abstract

With the deepening implementation of the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and China's strategy for education modernization, social and emotional learning (SEL) has increasingly been recognized as a key pathway for promoting students' academic achievement, mental health, and positive social adaptation (Durlak et al., 2011; Mahoney et al., 2018). Against the backdrop of persistent imbalances between urban and rural education, rural students with learning difficulties—who are situated at the intersection of geographic disadvantage and academic struggles—have become a high-risk group whose social-emotional development and educational support systems require systematic examination. Drawing on both domestic and international literature, this article integrates the CASEL framework of social-emotional competence with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to analyze the major developmental characteristics of social-emotional competence among rural students with learning difficulties and to reveal the root causes of their developmental challenges. On this basis, it proposes an integrated framework for educational promotion grounded in the core ideas of cultural sensitivity and systemic empowerment.

Keywords

Rural students with learning difficulties; SEL; social-emotional competence; ecological systems; culturally sensitive intervention; family-school-community collaboration

1. Introduction

Recent high-level policy documents in China, such as the Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Deepening Educational Reform and Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Compulsory Education and China's Education Modernization 2035, emphasize the need to focus more on students' holistic development and to promote their physical and mental well-being. They call for a shift from a single focus on academic scores toward com-

petence- and literacy-oriented education. As a core component of students' key competencies, social-emotional competence has been shown to be closely associated with academic achievement, mental health, and positive social adaptation (Durlak et al., 2011; Mahoney et al., 2018). International meta-analyses of SEL indicate that systematic school-based programs can significantly improve students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors, and can yield an average gain of about 11 percentile points in academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011; Weissberg et al., 2015).

Within the structurally imbalanced pattern of urban–rural development in China, rural students—especially those whose academic performance remains at a low level for a prolonged period and whose learning motivation and strategies are constrained—face a distinct double disadvantage. On the one hand, factors such as parental migration, skipped-generation care, and economic pressure expose rural children to high risks in terms of emotional security, attachment relationships, and social support (Su et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). On the other hand, many rural schools are characterized by scarce curricular resources, insufficient teacher SEL literacy, and the marginalization of emotional education, which means that students with learning difficulties are “left behind” both academically and emotionally. Their social-emotional competence thus manifests ecologically embedded and structurally conditioned vulnerabilities (Shi et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2020).

In recent years, both international research and Chinese empirical practice have shown that embedding SEL in rural schools and adapting it in culturally sensitive ways can effectively improve children's mental health and social-emotional development. For example, Li et al. (2022) implemented a localized SEL training program in a poor rural primary school in central China and found that the intervention significantly reduced students' social, emotional, and behavioral problems. In a quasi-experimental study conducted in rural areas, Li and Hesketh (2024) reported that an adaptive SEL curriculum helped reduce psychosocial difficulties and enhance subjective well-being and interpersonal adjustment among rural children. Fu et al. (2024, 2025) implemented and tracked SEL projects in multiple rural primary schools, showing positive effects on self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills from the student perspective, and analyzing institutional barriers and enabling factors for the diffusion of SEL in rural schools from the teacher perspective.

Nevertheless, existing studies either address the psychological development and education of rural children at a macro level, or focus on students with learning difficulties in general or on urban samples. Few studies intersect the three dimensions of “rural context,” “learning difficulties,” and “social-emotional competence” to systematically map developmental characteristics, ecological causes, and operational educational promotion frameworks. Building on previous textual and practical ex-

plorations, this article aims to provide a theoretical integration and systematic analysis of the developmental characteristics of social-emotional competence among rural students with learning difficulties and possible pathways for educational promotion. Specifically, it seeks to answer three questions: (1) What distinctive patterns of social-emotional competence do rural students with learning difficulties exhibit across core dimensions? (2) How do family, school, peer, and community ecological systems interact to shape these patterns? and (3) In light of international evidence on SEL and local Chinese practices, how can a culturally sensitive and ecologically informed framework for social-emotional education for rural students with learning difficulties be constructed ?

2. Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Key Concepts

2.1.1. Social and Emotional Learning and Social-Emotional Competence

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social and emotional learning as the process through which children and young people acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to develop healthy self-awareness, manage emotions and behavior, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2023). Its classic framework includes five interrelated competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Weissberg et al., 2015). Multiple international meta-analyses have demonstrated that high-quality SEL programs produce medium-sized positive effects on students' social-emotional skills, behavior, and academic performance, and that these effects show some maintenance over time (Durlak et al., 2011; Mahoney et al., 2018; Weissberg et al., 2015).

In the Chinese context, researchers generally regard social-emotional competence as an integral part of students' key competencies, closely aligned with the goal of holistic development across moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor domains. Domestic meta-analytic studies have indicated that school-based SEL practices are significantly and positively associated with academic achievement, and that they exert beneficial effects on emotional stability, peer relationships, and school adjustment (Ren et al., 2021).

2.1.2. Students with Learning Difficulties

In this article, "students with learning difficulties" does not refer simply to students with intellectual disabilities. Rather, it denotes students whose intellectual functioning is basically within the normal range but whose academic performance remains significantly below expectations over an extended period due to constraints arising from non-cognitive factors such as learning strategies, motivation,

self-efficacy, family environment, and emotional and behavioral problems. This definition highlights the situational and malleable nature of learning difficulties and opens conceptual space for understanding students with learning difficulties from a social-emotional perspective.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation: Ecological Systems Theory

Research shows that rural educational contexts in China exhibit multiple forms of disadvantage, including high teacher turnover, shortages of curricular and psychological services, and widespread parental migration leading to parent–child separation. In rural settings, changes in family structure, weak school support systems, limited community resources, and culturally embedded beliefs such as “learning is useless” combine to place additional systemic pressure on the social-emotional development of students with learning difficulties (Zhao et al., 2017; Zhuang et al., 2024). These conditions contribute directly to delays in the social-emotional development of left-behind children (Shi et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2020), whose scores on life satisfaction, self-esteem, emotion regulation, and depression are significantly worse than those of non-left-behind peers (Su et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019).

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory posits that individual development results from the interaction of multiple nested systems, including the microsystem (e.g., family, school, peers), mesosystem (linkages among microsystems such as family–school connections), ecosystem (e.g., parents’ work, community resources), and macrosystem (cultural values, policy environment). The social-ecological perspective helps researchers clarify how multiple rural ecological systems shape the development of students with learning difficulties and informs the design of multi-level educational promotion strategies.

3. Developmental Characteristics of Social-Emotional Competence among Rural Students with Learning Difficulties

Drawing on the CASEL framework and existing empirical studies as well as front-line observations, the social-emotional competence of rural students with learning difficulties can be summarized in three prominent dimensions.

3.1. Negatively Biased Self-Perception and Weak Self-Management

Many rural students with learning difficulties experience repeated academic failure, which easily leads to learned helplessness. They tend to attribute failure to fixed and uncontrollable internal factors (e.g., “I am stupid,” “No matter how hard I try, it is useless”) and show low levels of self-efficacy and academic self-esteem (Yu & Li, 2020). On the one hand, such negative self-perceptions undermine learning motivation and create a vicious cycle of “effort–failure–withdrawal.” On the other hand, they weaken students’ capacity for emotion regulation and goal management.

In terms of self-management, rural students with learning difficulties often rely on a narrow range of emotion regulation strategies and show poor impulse control. When faced with examinations, peer evaluation, or criticism from adults, they are prone to anxiety, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior. With respect to goal setting and persistence, they often lack clear learning goals and the ability to break long-term goals into feasible steps, which is closely related to deficits in metacognitive and learning strategies (Jiang et al., 2005).

3.2. Biased Social Cognition and Weak Interpersonal Skills

Influenced by inadequate parent-child communication, the absence of emotional education in schools, and negative peer subcultures, some rural students with learning difficulties show a tendency to interpret others' intentions and social cues in hostile or negative ways. Their social cognition is clearly biased. They have limited ability to recognize and understand others' emotions, struggle to take others' perspectives, and display underdeveloped empathy.

At the level of interpersonal relationships, rural students with learning difficulties often occupy marginal positions within the class. Some are frequently subject to peer rejection and negative labeling, while others become "invisible students" who rarely participate and lack stable friendships and positive interaction experiences. Research shows that children in rural areas, especially left-behind children and those living in poverty, score significantly lower than urban children on peer acceptance, social influence, and social creativity, and that there is a bidirectional relationship between social status and academic achievement (Gu, 2009; Wang et al., 2019).

3.3. Delayed Development of Responsible Decision-Making

When dealing with learning tasks, peer conflicts, or the use of digital media, rural students with learning difficulties are more likely to adopt avoidant, submissive, or impulsive decisions rather than responsible decisions based on information gathering, consequence evaluation, and value-based judgment. This is partly due to limited cognitive resources and a lack of problem-solving experience, and partly a result of long-term exposure to "command-obedience" interaction patterns in families and schools, which deprive them of experiences of acting as agents and decision-makers. Overall, the social-emotional development of rural students with learning difficulties is characterized by both "weak foundations" and "structural imbalance." They lag behind across the five core competencies, with particularly pronounced deficits in self-perception and interpersonal skills. At the same time, they show an overdeveloped tendency toward negative self-focus and defensive sensitivity, but severe shortages in positive self-efficacy, proactive help-seeking, and cooperation. This constitutes a defensive and maladaptive pattern of social-emotional development.

4. Ecological Causes of Developmental Characteristics

4.1. Dual Deficits in Emotional Support and Educational Supervision in the Family System

The family is the primary setting for children's social-emotional development. Numerous studies have shown that parental migration, prolonged parent-child separation, and caregiver depression have significant negative impacts on the social-emotional development of left-behind children (Su et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2021; Ruan et al., 2024). In rural contexts, the families of students with learning difficulties often face both economic pressure and limited educational resources, which manifests in several ways.

First, emotional care is insufficient. Long-term parental absence undermines attachment relationships. Parent-child communication tends to focus on academic performance and behavioral norms, with little positive response to children's emotional experiences and psychological needs. Children are thus susceptible to feelings of loneliness, insecurity, and neglect. Second, educational supervision is weakened. Existing studies indicate that caregivers' educational expectations often exceed their concrete educational capacities; many grandparents providing care feel powerless with respect to academic support and emotional guidance (Zhang et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2024). Third, family stress leads to negative interactions. Academic difficulties aggravate family anxiety, and parent-child interactions can easily slide into blame or even harsh discipline, further damaging children's self-worth and emotion regulation abilities (Qiu et al., 2024).

4.2. Marginalized Emotional Education and Weak Support Ecology in the School System

Schools should serve as a crucial "second system" to compensate for family deficits. However, in many rural schools, emotional education faces three main challenges. First, curricular resources and institutional support are limited. Psychological health education has very few class hours and a narrow content scope. Systematic SEL curricula are largely absent, and social-emotional competence is often treated as an auxiliary task to be addressed only when time permits. Second, teachers' SEL literacy is insufficient. Many teachers lack professional training, are unable to identify the social-emotional needs of students with learning difficulties, and tend to respond with criticism, labeling, or disengagement. These practices make it difficult to build classroom climates that are simultaneously safe, trusting, and characterized by high expectations (Wang, 2019). Third, school climate and management culture can be problematic. Under "score-only" ideology and high-pressure management regimes, school environments may intensify competition and ranking, further marginalizing students with learning difficulties and weakening their sense of belonging and efficacy.

By contrast, localized SEL interventions implemented in Chinese rural schools have

demonstrated that when schools treat SEL as a core strategic goal and support it through systematic curricula, teacher training, and cultural restructuring, rural children show significant improvements in self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and mental health indicators (Li et al., 2022; Li & Hesketh, 2024; Fu et al., 2024, 2025).

4.3. Negative Peer Subcultures and the Non-Activation of Community Resources

At the peer level, rural students with learning difficulties tend to cluster in small “negative alliances” that share anti-school discourse and avoidance behaviors, mutually reinforcing negative attitudes toward learning and school. This further reduces their opportunities to access positive role models and constructive feedback (Zhao et al., 2017). At the community and macro-cultural levels, beliefs such as “learning is useless” or “it is better to work early to earn money” remain prevalent in some areas. At the same time, potential developmental resources for children—such as village rituals, traditions of mutual aid, and respected local figures—have not been systematically mobilized and transformed into educational resources.

5. An Educational Promotion Framework for Social-Emotional Competence among Rural Students with Learning Difficulties

Recent localized SEL projects in rural China have shown that when schools incorporate SEL into their core development goals and support it through systematic curricula, teacher training, and cultural reconfiguration, rural children’s self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and mental health can be significantly enhanced (Li et al., 2022; Li & Hesketh, 2024; Fu et al., 2024, 2025). Building on this evidence, the present article argues that educational promotion for rural students with learning difficulties must move from “single-point remediation” to “systemic empowerment,” grounded in four interrelated strategic dimensions to construct an integrated framework that is both culturally sensitive and ecologically informed.

5.1. School-Based SEL Curriculum Enhancement and Ecological Reconstruction

5.1.1. Constructing a Tiered, Rural-Contextualized SEL Curriculum

Based on the CASEL five-competency framework and rural children lived experiences and language styles, the SEL curriculum can be organized into developmental stages: lower grades (emotion recognition and sense of safety), middle grades (conflict resolution and social cognition), and upper grades (self-identity and responsible decision-making). Course content can be presented through storytelling, drawing, role-play, and traditional village games, focusing on authentic situations such as “expressing emotions toward migrant parents,” “seeking help in village conflicts,”

and “setting achievable goals for oneself,” thus avoiding abstract moralizing.

5.1.2. Deep Integration of SEL with Subject Teaching and School Life

Instead of treating SEL as an “add-on” course, it should be integrated into multiple aspects of school life. First, integration with subject teaching: for example, Chinese language classes can guide students to analyze characters’ emotions and perspective-taking, while moral and law courses can embed practices of conflict management and responsible decision-making. Second, integration with school institutions: class autonomy, student participation in rule-making, and other mechanisms can provide opportunities for practicing social responsibility and civic engagement. Third, integration with moral education and co-curricular activities: community service projects, letter-writing to parents, and other experiential activities can offer authentic contexts in which students practice empathy, cooperation, and reflection.

5.1.3. Reconstructing a “Warm” School Emotional Ecology

School leadership needs to exercise transformational leadership to incorporate “supporting students’ social-emotional development” into school development plans and evaluation indicators. By establishing student support teams, improving crisis intervention mechanisms, and creating visible spaces for emotional expression, schools can become emotional “safe harbors” and “secure bases” for rural students with learning difficulties.

5.2. Family–School–Community Collaborative Support Systems

5.2.1. Activating Family Emotional Education Functions

Through parent schools, home visits, and online communication, schools can help caregivers (including grandparents) understand the importance of social-emotional competence and basic skills for emotional education, such as listening, nonviolent communication, and constructive feedback. Evidence suggests that positive parent–child communication significantly buffers the negative effects of parental migration on children’s mental health (Su et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2021).

5.2.2. Integrating Community and Social Organization Resources

Schools can collaborate with village committees, resident working teams, and social organizations to develop initiatives such as “rural happiness classes” and “child-friendly spaces.” These initiatives can engage local leaders, returnee college students, and social workers as part of a support network, thereby forming an educational community in which schools, families, and communities mutually reinforce one another.

5.2.3. Building Institutionalized Coordination Mechanisms

At the township level, joint meetings for collaborative education involving families,

schools, and communities can be established to regularly discuss support cases related to students with learning difficulties. At the county level, partnerships between high-quality urban schools and rural schools can facilitate joint professional development, teacher exchanges, and the cross-regional flow of SEL curricula and resources.

5.3. Enhancing Teachers' SEL Literacy and Professional Learning Communities

Teachers are the most critical intermediaries in social-emotional education for rural students with learning difficulties. International research has shown that teachers' own social-emotional competence is closely related to classroom effectiveness (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Enhancing teachers' SEL literacy and building professional learning communities can indirectly promote the development of students' social-emotional competence.

First, an integrated "pre-service-in-service" teacher training system should be established to improve teachers' SEL literacy. Pre-service programs should include compulsory modules on social-emotional education, student developmental psychology, and classroom management. In-service training should focus on teachers' self-care and emotion regulation, early identification of students with learning difficulties, and group counseling skills, thereby helping teachers integrate the roles of educator, caregiver, and guide.

Second, cross-school professional learning communities should be cultivated to foster collective learning. Through online professional development platforms, master teacher studios, and joint district-level lesson study, the isolation of rural teachers can be reduced. Joint lesson planning and case-based discussions can support the accumulation of SEL teaching resources suited to rural contexts.

Third, SEL-related work should be incorporated into teacher evaluation and incentive mechanisms. Performance appraisal, promotion, and awards should explicitly recognize teachers' efforts to support students' social-emotional development and participation in collaborative projects with families and communities, so that SEL work is not viewed as an "extra burden."

5.4. Individualized Intervention and Multi-Dimensional Evaluation Based on the Needs of Students with Learning Difficulties

First, scientific screening and early-warning mechanisms should be established. By combining standardized scales with teacher and parent reports, schools can conduct regular screening of emotional distress, interpersonal adaptation, and behavioral problems among rural students with learning difficulties and identify high-risk cases. Collaboration between homeroom teachers and school psychologists can create a "detection-referral-follow-up" support cycle.

Second, interventions should combine individualized counseling and small-group

work. Depending on the primary difficulties faced by students (e.g., severe test anxiety, pronounced interpersonal conflicts, tense parent–child relationships), individual or group counseling plans can be developed, supplemented by peer mentoring and teacher–student pairing, allowing students to practice new emotional and behavioral patterns in safe relational contexts (McLeod et al., 2017).

Third, traditional evaluation systems dominated by test scores should be reformed. Comprehensive student assessments should treat social-emotional development as an important dimension. Portfolios, “strength lists,” and peer evaluations can help students with learning difficulties perceive their strengths and progress, broaden definitions of “success,” and weaken the control of single academic scores over self-worth.

6. Conclusion and Prospects

Drawing on authoritative domestic and international literature and Chinese rural practice, this article has provided a systematic overview and theoretical reconstruction of the developmental characteristics, ecological causes, and educational promotion pathways related to the social-emotional competence of rural students with learning difficulties. It argues that the difficulties these students face in social-emotional development fundamentally stem from the combined effects of fragile individual foundations and imbalanced support systems. They lag behind across core competencies—including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—and exhibit defensive, context-dependent patterns of functioning. Underlying these patterns are multiple ecological risks: inadequate family socialization, the marginalization of emotional education in schools, negative peer subcultures, and the failure to activate community educational resources.

Compared with traditional approaches that rely mainly on remedial instruction and behavioral correction, this article advocates a paradigm shift toward whole-child education anchored in SEL. It emphasizes the importance of constructing a comprehensive educational promotion framework for rural students with learning difficulties through school-based curricular and ecological reconstruction, family–school–community collaboration, teacher professional empowerment, and individualized intervention with multi-dimensional evaluation. SEL projects in rural China provide preliminary empirical support for the feasibility of this framework (Li et al., 2022; Li & Hesketh, 2024; Fu et al., 2024, 2025; Zhuang et al., 2024).

Future research can deepen this agenda in several ways. First, comparative and longitudinal studies are needed to examine the effects of SEL interventions for different subgroups (e.g., by gender, type of left-behind status, and school level) and to clarify “for whom and under what conditions” they are effective. Second, action research and mixed-methods designs can be used to capture the subjective experiences and agency of rural students with learning difficulties during interventions. Third, so-

cial-emotional competence indicators can be incorporated into national and local monitoring systems of rural education quality to support the development of more stable institutional mechanisms.

From a broader perspective, social-emotional education for rural students with learning difficulties is not only related to individual academic progress and well-being, but also to the intergenerational transmission of poverty and disadvantage, the rebuilding of social capital in rural communities, and the “human dimension” of rural revitalization. It is therefore both a complex systemic endeavor and an important mission shared by educators and society at large.

Abbreviations

CASEL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

SEL: Social and Emotional Learning

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express sincere thanks to the editorial team and anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions, which have helped to improve the quality of this study. Gratitude is also extended to Zhaoqing University for supporting this research through institutional funding.

Funding

This work was supported by the 2025 university-level research project of Zhaoqing University, “Application of Social and Emotional Learning in the Education of Rural Students with Learning Difficulties: Developmental Characteristics and Intervention Strategies.”

References

- [1] Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2023). What is SEL? CASEL.
- [2] Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>
- [3] Fu, L., Li, J., Ma, C., & Hesketh, T. (2024). Acceptability and preliminary impact of a school-based social emotional learning program for rural children in China: A quasi-experimental study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 154, 107319. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2024.107319>
- [4] Fu, L., Li, J., & Hesketh, T. (2025). Barriers and facilitators to implementing a school-based social emotional learning program in rural China. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-025-01460-z>
- [5] Gu, C. (2009). Primary school children's social creativity and its relationship with peer relations and academic achievement. *Psychological Development and Education*, 25(6), 60–67.
- [6] Jiang, J., et al. (2005). Achievement goal orientations and their relationship with learning strategies and academic achievement among secondary school students. *Psychological*

- Development and Education, 21(1), 60–66.
- [7] Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525.
 - [8] Li, J., Ma, C., Lu, Q., & Hesketh, T. (2022). A social emotional learning training program in a poor rural primary school in central China: A pre-post intervention study. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(11), 433. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12110433>
 - [9] Li, J., & Hesketh, T. (2024). A social emotional learning intervention to reduce psychosocial difficulties among rural children in central China. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 16(1), 235–253. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12481>
 - [10] Mahoney, J. L., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2018). An update on social and emotional learning outcome research. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(4), 18–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718815668>
 - [11] McLeod, B. D., et al. (2017). Cognitive-behavioral interventions for youth with anxiety disorders: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 20, 267–284.
 - [12] Qiu, X., et al. (2024). Parental harsh discipline, family stress, and left-behind children's social-emotional outcomes in rural China. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 156, 107312.
 - [13] Ren, P., Zhang, Y., Qin, H., et al. (2021). School social and emotional learning and academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Development and Education*, 37(3), 366–377.
 - [14] Ruan, Y., et al. (2024). Caregiver mental health and socio-emotional outcomes among left-behind children: The mediating role of home environment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 158, 107160.
 - [15] Shi, H., Wang, Y., Li, M., Tan, C., Zhao, C., Huang, X., Dou, Y., Duan, X., Du, Y., Wu, T., Wang, X., & Zhang, J. (2021). Impact of parent-child separation on children's social-emotional development: A cross-sectional study of left-behind children in poor rural areas of China. *BMC Public Health*, 21, 1694. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10831-8>
 - [16] Su, S., Li, X., Lin, D., Xu, X., & Zhu, M. (2013). Psychological adjustment among left-behind children in rural China: The role of parental migration and parent-child communication. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 39(2), 162–170. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2214.2012.01396.x>
 - [17] Sun, X., Tian, Y., Zhang, Y., Xie, X., Heath, M. A., & Zhou, Z. (2015). Psychological development and educational problems of left-behind children in rural China. *School Psychology International*, 36(3), 227–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034314566669>
 - [18] Tan, C., Zhao, C., Dou, Y., Duan, X., Huang, X., & Shi, H. (2020). Caregivers' depressive symptoms and social-emotional development of left-behind children under 3 years old in poor rural China: The mediating role of home environment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 116, 105293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105293>
 - [19] Wang, F., Lin, L., Xu, M., Li, L., Lu, J., Zhou, X., & Wang, M. (2019). Mental health among left-behind children in rural China in relation to parent-child communication. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(10), 1855. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16101855>
 - [20] Wang, Q. (2019). Teacher social-emotional competence and classroom management in rural schools. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 15(2), 45–53.
 - [21] Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present, and future. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg, & T. P. Gullotta (Eds.), *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 3–19). Guilford Press.
 - [22] Yu, G., & Li, Z. (2020). Self-perception among children with learning difficulties. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 28(8), 1309–1321.
 - [23] Zhang, Y., et al. (2019). Educational expectations, parenting styles, and academic adjustment among left-behind children in rural China. *Child and Adolescent Social Work*

Journal, 36, 567–580.

- [24] Zhao, C., Wang, F., Li, L., & Zhou, X. (2017). Care for left-behind children in rural China: A realist evaluation of a community-based intervention. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 79, 325–334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.06.038>
- [25] Zhou, Y., Sun, X., Wang, F., Li, L., & Zhou, X. (2020). Emotional and behavioral problems of left-behind children in impoverished rural China: A comparative cross-sectional study of fourth-grade children. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 67(5), 713–720. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.06.031>
- [26] Zhuang, J., Zhang, L., & Luo, R. (2024). Interventions for left-behind children in Mainland China: A systematic review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 158, 107157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107157>