ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Perspectives on Migrant Children's Mental Health Needs and Existing Services: A Qualitative Study Among Psychological Service Providers of Chinese Social Organizations

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Background: China is comprehensively promoting the construction of social psychological service system. Social organizations provide psychosocial care services to migrant children in China and hold important information and perspectives different from educators and parents on children's mental health. This study aims to analyze mental health service delivery to migrant adolescents for their psychological well-being, to explore how society responds effectively to their psychological needs and to support in better program implementation of mental health services for migrant children.

Methods: Following qualitative approach semi-structured interviews were conducted with community mental health service providers experienced in working with migrant children. The 15 individual interviews were conducted in Hubei province and Guangdong province, including professionals working with different social organization and social psychological service program in communities. The data were analysed through coding, comparing fragments, constant comparison and recognizing patterns.

Results: The analysis yielded 3 categories (Stimulate the internal strength, Reconstruct the support systems, Understanding and participate in social activities) and 6 sub-categories (Improve the understanding of "me" and explore excellent qualities, Clearly envision "my" future and clear career planning, Improve the parent-child relationship and understand the family environment, Improve subjective support and actively develop support system, Acquire reasonable cognition and behavior and interact with surrounding ecology, Take greater responsibility and cultivate a sense of ownership). The results found that individual traits, family, communities and multiple factors affect the mental health of migrant children and identified the urgent needs, and ways to improve mental health service in efficiently and economically. Social psychological service providers contribute in strengthening the psychological well-being of the migrant children.

Conclusion: Social psychological service sectors need to be strengthened to enhance the psychological well-being of the migrant children. The inherent gaps between the service required and service provided needs to be addressed through further studies on mental health needs of the migrant children.

Keywords: urban setting, adaptation, mental health, content analysis, ecological systems theory

Introduction

China's economic development has triggered an ever-increasing rural to urban migration trend and patterns of internal migrations are changing. One of the most notable structural changes is the trend of family migration ie, the change from single-member mobility to whole family mobility in most of the households. It has resulted in a large number of school-age children following their migrant parents to the city and becoming migrant children.[1] Such migration often occurs for more favorable economic circumstances, educational opportunities, and better lives. After China achieved the goal of full poverty alleviation in 2020, the purpose of migration changed from increasing opportunities to hope of better integration in urban settings. But for children, as a result of moving from one area to another, massive changes in their life occurred which required psychological

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support. The Government of China introduced Healthy China 2030 strategy and policy of Construction of National Social Psychological Service System in 2018 aimed at providing psychological support to address such needs of migrant children.[2] In the system of "building and sharing a healthy China", government encouraged multiple stakeholders to provide psychological services among which social organizations stand out in providing such services. Social organizations specialize in providing professional mental health management and collaborative support for migrant children in targeted communities which differs from such services provided at schools. Such an approach is crucial because evidences show that migrants in general make less use of psychosocial care services.[2]

Psychological Challenges Faced by Migrant Children in Adapting to Urban Settings

In China, migrant children are children of parents or other guardians who migrate from rural to urban areas, are under 18, and have left their Hukou registration place for 6 months or longer.[3] China's Hukou system, known as the household registration system instituted since the 1950s, plays a decisive role in many aspect of citizen's lives including housing, education and health care benefits of children. Hukou system shows the identification of the household rather than a particular individual, and indicates relationships and the origin of a household. Although such social welfare system are usually tied to where the Hukou of a particular household has been registered, the system and a series of policies are being reformed gradually to meet the needs or current social changes.[4] The change in environment and migration experiences have a profound impact on children's development. These children migrate with their parents, some attend school where their parents work, and some are even born and raised where their parents work. The unstable living environment negatively affects children's growth and development, while migration alters the family's interpersonal network and breaks the child's normal school schedule.[5] Firstly, they try to integrate into urban life and perceive the massive differences between regions; secondly, their lives have been in a "mobile state" since childhood, and they experience more "uncertainty"; thirdly, the concept of geography and bloodline gradually weakens. While they have no access to the local culture, they also lack the identity of urban groups and do not develop a sense of belonging to the cities where they migrate.[6]

As a result, children with migration experiences show typical group characteristics regarding ideology and psychological state compared with non-migrant peers. Moreover, migrant children have poorer mental health,[7] they generally lack a sense of security and belonging, and have less sense of responsibility to participate in urban public life.[8] In particular, the rupture of local culture makes the role and responsibilities of individuals blurred with insufficient social support and a high sense of interpersonal alienation, which is not conducive to psychological adaptation, social adaptation, and future development.[9] Moreover, these experiences leave migrant children with gaps in physical and mental health, peer relationships, emotional state, and cognitive functioning compared to their peers. Related studies have shown that migrant children have lower learning efficacy and self-esteem, lower levels of life satisfaction and subjective well-being, higher perceptions of discrimination, and experience more negative emotions such as social anxiety, loneliness, and depression.[10]

Social Organizations and Mental Health Services

Social organizations outside the government and enterprises are groups of two or more people or organizations that establish common activities to achieve specific goals and are characterized by public interest, professionalism, and volunteerism.[11] The Interim Regulations on the Registration and Administration of Civilian Non-Enterprise Units of China state that civilian non-enterprise units are social organizations organized by enterprises and institutions, social units and other social forces, as well as private citizens, using non-state assets to engage in non-profit social service activities.[12] Thus, according to the definition, social organizations have some overlap with NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and NPOs (Non-Profit Organizations) which are socially oriented, public benefit promoting, and voluntary,[13] but also have distinct characteristics in terms of both non-profit and non-state-asset funded organizations. Members of psychosocial organizations, usually full-time and part-time service providers with psychological expertise and skills, are exploring to design psychological interventions to address local needs.

The number of social organizations in China has grown steadily in the last decade. Still, there is a lack of relevant academic research and practice in child and adolescent mental health services.[14] Scholars have paid attention to helping needy children from different disciplinary perspectives such as policy analysis and the responsibility of government,[15] the impact of school environment and home-school cooperation.[16] But the studies on social organizations and social workers pay closer attention to the paradigm of children-related services, and the advantages of social organizations.[17]

Only a few focus on issues such as psychological services outside schools and promoting children's urban adaptation. However, compared with urban counterparts, migrant children had more mental health problems with less use of community-based children's healthcare services.[18]

In November 2018, National Health Commission (NHC) and other departments of China emphasized the establishment of psychological counseling rooms or studios in urban and rural community service (center) facilities. The relevant government departments emphasized exploring ways to support, guide, and cultivate social psychological service organizations. They called for such organizations to participate in providing mental health services by funding service providers and other forms of collaboration, gradually expanding service coverage, and providing public welfare services for vulnerable groups.[19] In recent years, based on the concept of "different bodies participating in community management", the community themselves solve the professional issues which arise in community work by embedding professional social organizations. Such services focus on the care of vulnerable groups in the community and explore how to shape community management and service through "emotion" and "warmth".[20] Thus, social organizations are important participants in the system of 'building and sharing a healthy China' program which started providing psychosocial services to the children in the communities while also supporting social adaption of migrant children and foster their sense of identity and belonging.

Theoretical Framework

The Ecological Systems theory served as the research framework for this study. The theory, which was put forth by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, acknowledges the ecology of human growth and development and refers to the intricate interplay of interpersonal relationships, sociocultural factors, and environmental factors among individuals (migrant children), to analyze and identify their mental health needs. According to Bronfenbrenner, the layers within the ecological model comprise the individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chrono-systems, all in concentric circles, the characteristics including physiological and psychological traits of children are the core of the system, and the elements must be considered regarding their existence at each level and their interactions with each system.[21]

In this study, the psychological services offered to migrant children were discussed along with their social context. The first ecological systems consider a person's immediate surroundings, the people they engage with (like parents, peers, and neighbourhood) and their interactions. It also takes into account the interaction between the person (a youngster or adolescent from a migrant family) and the mental health providers. The mesosystem, which comprises the second layer, fundamentally highlights and considers the relationship inside the microsystem. The interactions between two or more microsystems as a support network are anticipated to positively impact migrant adolescents. The larger social and cultural setting in which all other systems are found is referred to as the macro system. It is made up of the larger environment as a whole and derives from attitudes, ideologies, cultures, customs and policies that indirectly impact other institutions and people. Therefore, it involves the coping mechanisms of immigrant children, the resources available to them where assistance is given, cultural perspectives on psychological requirements, and their consequences on immigrant children as they move from adolescence to adulthood in the chronosystem. The EST has been modified holistically to assist in examining the effects of psychological services given to adolescents, which offers a framework for examining the interactions between various migrant children's ecological levels and their effects on the psychological services offered to them. This makes the fundamental structure valuable since it provides a multi-layered approach to data analysis and incorporates a multi-dimensional social environment.

Hence, in this study, we explored the challenges and ways to strengthen migrant children' mental health from the perspectives of professionals during mental health service delivery. The review of relevant literature indicated an obvious gap in information regarding mental health services targeted at this population. Thus, this study focuses on analyzing the existing services and identify gaps to better address the mental health needs of migrant children.

Methods

This study applied a qualitative approach using semi-structured questions and content analysis. The study aimed to analyze the existing psychological services for migrant children and identify their needs. For this purpose, a qualitative study was deemed the most appropriate method. Content analysis supports the analysis of data within a specific context given the meanings that an individual attributes to them.[22] Content analysis looks beyond the physically visible means of

communication. It draws on their symbolic properties to identify the causes, correlates, or effects of communications, making it possible to analyze data in its previously invisible context.[23] The data for this study was collected from November 2022 until March 2023. This study is part of a larger project called "An Empirical Study on Social Organizations Participating in Psychological Services for Migrant Children". The research ethics committee of Hubei University of Education approved the study.

Participants and Recruitment

A study of social organizations providing psychological services was conducted with the help of Wuhan Association for Social Psychological Service, Red Cross Society of Hubei Branch, Professional Board of Developmental and Educational Psychology of Hubei Psychology Society and other related organizations. 15 individual interviews were conducted with professionals providing psychological services to migrant adolescents in Hubei province and Guangdong province, the details of the participants are mentioned in the Table 1. They work with different social organizations and social psychological service programs in communities. All the interviewees in this study have similar experiences of working with migrant children, and received similar training to provide psychological services. The levels of interaction of all the participants were also similar. They were given written information about the study in advance, and were informed that they could terminate participation at any point. The participation was voluntary. Informed consent was collected before the interviews.

Interview Guide and Procedure

The individual interviews were conducted using a semi-structured topic list consisting of a set of key questions. The interview guide was discussed with experts in the field prior to interviews. The interviews took 1–1.5 hrs. All interviews were conducted in Chinese and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were then translated into English for coding and analysis.

Table 1 Demographic Details of the Participants

No.	Participant	Age	Education	Years of Participate in Psychological Services	Male/Female
1	JL	50–55	Bachelor's	3	Female
2	WJ	40–45	PhD	7	Female
3	FS	40–45	PhD	4	Male
4	HQ	40–45	Bachelor's	6	Female
5	LJ	35–40	PhD	7	Female
6	LH	40–45	Masters	10	Male
7	XQ	20–25	Bachelor's	3	Female
8	LQ	30–35	Masters	9	Female
9	ZJ	45–50	PhD	11	Female
10	SJ	35–40	Bachelor's	5	Female
11	LC	45–50	Bachelor's	3	Male
12	YJ	45–50	Masters	12	Female
13	CH	20–25	Bachelor's	2	Female
14	YS	50–55	Bachelor's	4	Female
15	CS	35–40	Bachelor's	12	Female

Notes: The names of participants mentioned in the table is a pseudonym.

The main questions were: (1) According to your experience working with migrant children, what is the biggest psychological or mental health need of migrant children? (2) What do you think are the typical psychological characteristics of today's migrant children? (3) What do you think are the important factors that influence the psychological support of migrant children? (4) How do you collaborate with stakeholders (eg school staff, parents) of migrant children? (5) How do you work with migrant children's mental health in your organization? (6) How have you been supporting migrant children? (7) How do migrant children come to get service at your place? (8) How do they find you, or how do they get referred? For each of the main questions, researchers prepared some follow-up questions.

The research team ensured an environment of privacy and safety for the participants where they could talk openly about the issues they felt were important. We stopped including new respondents when the data reached a point of saturation at fifteen interviews. Considering the fact that the number of mental health service providers focusing on migrant children are extremely limited, this number of participants was considered sufficient.

Analysis

Data were transcribed verbatim in Chinese and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. It was later translated into English with the help of a native speaker. All texts from the interviews were first read through to grasp the content.

All interviews were analyzed simultaneously. First, the authors identified the units of meaning. These could be sentences, phrases, or words related to the aim of the study. Secondly, the meaning-bearing units were condensed and shortened without losing the essence of the message. Third, each condensed text section was labeled with a code representing its content, which could be discrete objects, events, or other phenomena, and the codes were interpreted in relation to the context. The codes were continuously compared to identify both differences and similarities. Fourth, the codes were divided into subcategories that expressed the latent content of the text. Fifth, sub-categories formed 6 categories. During stages 4 and 5, the preliminary sub-categories and categories were discussed.

Results

The analysis yielded 3 categories and 6 sub-categories (Table 2). The categories were drawn from mental health service providers' views on challenges in migrant children' life and their psychological needs. The results found that the

Table 2 Presenting the Results of Categories and Sub-Categories

Categories	Sub-Categories	Details
Stimulate the internal strength	Improve the understanding of "me" and explore excellent qualities	Community hosting extra classes
		Mental health workshop
		Individual psychological services
	Clearly envision "my" future and clear career planning	Career development activities
Reconstruct the support systems	Improve the parent-child relationship and understand the family environment	Parent child courses
		Programs to reduce parents' psychological stress
	Improve subjective support and actively develop support system	Psychodrama
		Individual hobby based classes
		Assisting in enhancing communication skills
Understanding and participating in social activities	Acquire reasonable cognition and behavior and interact with the surrounding ecology	Familiarize with the city and visits to different places in the city
		Change in Opinion and knowledge
	Take greater responsibility and cultivate a sense of ownership	Participate in community management and events organization

individual, family, communities and other multiple factors affect the mental health of migrant children, identify the most basic and urgent common needs, and explore how to improve mental health service supply more efficiently and economically with limited resources.

Social organizations participate in various mental health programs including community participation and social integration, parent-child communication, extra-curricular counseling and mental health education programs. These public welfare psychological services are like buffers, which provide safety and accompany these children through an unfavorable environment outside their families and schools. These different themes are summarized by social organizations according to their effectiveness and efficiency and inspire the protective factors in the process of migrant children's adaptation and development.

Stimulate the Internal Strength

The data collected from professionals providing psychological services to migrant children indicate that most do not advocate treating migrant children as a particularly vulnerable group in urban society nor support exaggerating the differences. Instead, they emphasize integration as a process rather than problems from the perspective of positive psychology. From the perspective of social organization workers, on the one hand, migrant children do show psychological difficulties when integrating into the cities. On the other hand, psychological workers focus on the plasticity of mental health, pay attention to the cultivation and development of excellent psychological quality and pursuit in community psychological work, and develop their internal dynamic system.

Improve the Understanding of "Me" and Explore Excellent Qualities

The concept of "self" is of great significance, resulting from the individual's cognition of his own existence and the evaluation of his own social role. However, migrant children's self-evaluation and self-identity are low, and their self-concept is unclear. Being placed in a new environment suddenly creates shock for migrant children about themselves and their abilities. For an instance, some children who were well aware of their academic capacities in their hometown find themselves unable to excel in the urban setting which often forces them into a state of confusion as LH said:

> Many of them find the pressure to adjust too much. After moving to a new environment, they were shocked to learn that the performance in the first-semester exam was only average among the classmates. They also became aware of their shortcomings compared to their urban classmates, such as knowledge about pop culture and hobbies. (6.LH)

For migrant children, the "good" image of "self" is vulnerable to challenges, which threatens the integrity of self. Moreover, many are faced with few resources and less opportunity to find one's own position in the new environment. Therefore, psychological workers attempt to improve the level of children's self-efficacy, and enhance self-exploration along with affirmation through a variety of community activities, as explained in the interview excerpts below:

> [In the individual psychological services for migrant children] I don't think this kind of label should be highlighted. If migrant children see themselves as vulnerable groups, they are prone to negative feelings, which is not conducive to their social integration. We need to emphasize the developmental potential of children and believe in changes in their adaptive social behavior as they get older. (10.SJ)

> Because the community now has winter and summer camps during vacation, we will also intervene in the psychological part. It involves sinology as a part of the cultural, psychological intervention, not only to develop children's language ability but also from the classics to draw confidence and strength (2.WJ)

> We participate in the community's tutoring. Migrant children's parents mostly work low income jobs and long hours. Unlike ordinary urban families, migrant families often do not have grandparents to help take care of them. (5.LJ)

The psychological service providers also aim to support migrant children targeting their holistic development. It includes involving them in activities beyond school and their homes, engaging their free time in productive activities as explained by YJ below:

Through academics and the development of extra-curricular interests and skills, migrant children can experience self-development, improve self-evaluation in completing challenging tasks related to personal goals. Our mental health workshop also guides them to dialectically view the role of their personality characteristics in achieving goals. They can actively explore their excellent qualities such as resilience, independence, self-care, responsibility, etc. (12.YJ)

The above data shows that, based on the unequal educational opportunities and resources of migrant children and their families, as well as the needs of learning behaviour and living habits, multi-dimensional services are provided to enrich the after-school life of migrant children. Social organizations facilitate community transfer of knowledge, skills and habits to build children's educational and cultural capacities. And psychological service providers participate in services, such as hosting extra classes in the community, mental health workshops and individual psychological services, accompanying the children and promoting their mental health development.

Clearly Envision "My" Future and Clear Career Planning

Influenced by their personal life experience, migrant children have a strong sense of uncertainty about reality and future existence, and their career and family planning has strong expediency and speculation. The psychological service providers understand the migrant children, and emphasize that they are in a critical period of gaining knowledge and developing personality. Thus, the service providers work to enhance the willingness of migrant children to take the initiative in career planning with relevant theories of career development, as expressed by CS and XQ:

They are trying to seek the integration of self-identity and in the process of identity exploration, assessment and adaptation. At the same time, the migration experience is definitely a contributing factor, making them feel unstable and need to adjust to a new environment. The certainty of the future can help them feel stable and hopeful. In my community practice, I encouraged them to think about themselves and the future through Holland's theory which explores personality-career fit, and I discussed the social hot spots with children. (15.CS)

I used to be a migrant child. After studying psychology in college, I wanted to share what I learned and my career development with other migrant children to help them grow. (7.XQ)

Besides, psychological workers are concerned with the important stages of migrant children, such as making career choices at junior high school, and help adolescents to clearly understand that they have the responsibility and the possibility to grasp future development. Activities under the themes of education and career planning support to promote the development of the self-dynamic system. As excerpt YS described:

When we ask the migrant children about their imagination of the future, most do not know. However, more than half of the children who graduate from Grade three enter vocational education every year. The project I participated in was to carry out various activities to explore their interests and career directions, learn about various industries and share the guests' professional choices and career ideas, and finally understand their own education paths. We try to encourage migrant children to make responsible choices and support them to establish themselves in the city and develop independently. (14.YS)

From the above, it can be concluded that psychological service providers of social organizations inspired migrant children to combine professional development with future urban development through career theory education and practical cases. They are guided to understand different study paths and formulate career goals based on their own interests and constraints. In addition, the goal could conduct self-action management so that migrant children can constantly evaluate and excel themselves, exert their advantages and improve their deficiencies in knowledge and skills with positive actions to achieve goals.

Reconstruct the Support Systems

Social organizations' psychological service providers pay attention to the social support of migrant children because it is a protective factor that has a general advantage on individuals. Therefore, Lewin's theory of group dynamics is applicable in psychological service providers' work with migrant children since belonging to groups and perceiving how they influence the group or how the group supports them in easing their challenges play a pivotal role in their adaptation and

integration to city life. Bandura's social learning theory is befitting in explaining the learning processes of migrant children since most of their learning occurs through observation and modelling of the people in their surroundings once they are placed in urban settings. On the one hand, they encourage positively parent-child communication and improve the psychological state of migrant children's parents. On the other hand, they help migrant children create their social relationship network and enhance their perception of social resources.

Improve the Parent-Child Relationship and Understand the Family Environment

The close relationship between family members is the supporting factor for maintaining good mental health and social adaptability of individuals. However, due to the weakening of the family relationship based on geographical location, and the relatively little time and energy for parents to take care of and accompany their children, migrant children lack a sense of security and affection and have poor communication with their parents. As HQ and SJ stated:

> The guardians' limited capacity and the pressures of daily life partly [lead to] ignoring the children's difficulties. Moreover, the life path and values provided by the parents are difficult to meet needs of the environment, which can easily cause children to feel insecure and even complain about the family. However, family is still an important source of social support for migrant children, and children's perceived support has a greater impact on their physical and mental health than objective and material support. (4.HQ)

> In consultations with migrant children and their parents, communication difficulties between them can obviously be seen. When asked about their relationship with their parents, some children, especially teenagers, are silent. Parents are also frustrated and learned parenting knowledge online, hoping to understand their children's lives. But the child doesn't tell. (10.SJ)

Hence, the psychological services provide activities and spaces to guide parents to understand the law of the physical and mental development of children and learn practical ways to observe and understand the heart of children. Meanwhile, they promote migrant children's perception of family support and encourage children and parents to communicate positively with each other, to improve the quality of companionship and establish a warm and harmonious family atmosphere. As LQ and JL explain their activities design:

> Through family group activities such as parent-child psychological painting and parent-child reading class, we will enhance children's internal expression through issues such as affection and family, sharing and love so that parents can feel and listen to their children. (8.LQ)

> In combination with community activities and traditional Chinese festivals, we will carry out programs to express gratitude and write letters home. We also organize other activities to guide children to not only see their plight but also look back at their parent's hard work, learn to be grateful, and act as their parents' support. (1.JL)

Meanwhile, the interview excerpt recognize the need to relieve stress of parents in different aspects and answered their questions of parenting conundrum. By empowering parents, they give better support to migrant children. As WJ describe their work:

> Through mother workshops, dance therapy, quality fatherhood training camp, etc., we help parents to explore their inner selves, detect their emotions, release pressure. We started mom boot camps for anxious mothers who need work balance, and we have been in the community for a long time. (2.WJ)

From the above, it can be seen that the services for families with migrant children are mainly based on the lack of positive parent-child communication between migrant children and their parents, the improvement of parents' education methods, and the needs of parents' own mental health. The setting up of relevant projects, such as parent-child activities, parent training camps and psychological workshops empowering parents and promoting the parent-child relationship, which provide comprehensive support for migrant children and their families have been pivotal.

Improve Subjective Support and Actively Develop Support System

In addition to family relationships, migrant children generally have difficulties in social interactions, such as sensitive interpersonal relationships and low perceived social support. As experts LJ and FS have found migrant children are more inclined to play with their fellow villagers. Due to subjective feelings of disadvantage, the sense of alienation and low support, they need help to establish stable connections outside the family:

> Some migrant children will play together because they live close to each other and are fellow villagers. This social connection seems to satisfy their daily social needs but reduces their interaction with urban children. We introduce some extra-curricular music, art, and other interesting activities and community cultural activities and try to have fixed time and place for organizing community activities. These have a subtle impact on children, encourage migrant children to open their hearts, take the initiative to play with urban children, and get more city ownership. (5.LJ)

> Inadequate social networks exacerbate the social exclusion of migrant children. If children lack a sense of trust, it is difficult to establish a good relationship. In fact, some migrant children have objective material conditions and social relations. However, when faced with troubles, worries and difficulties, they subjectively believe that they do not have enough social support resources, lack the initiative to talk to friends around them and seek help. (3.FS)

In the process of encouraging migrant children to build friendships and experience trust in interactions with peers and service providers, social organization psychologists will help them to acquire ways to better communicate, listen, share and cooperate. Also, they will use professional psychology technology to understand the needs and expectations of migrant children, support them to find resources that can be relied on actively. As explained in the interview excerpts below:

> Addressing the common needs, we carry out some targeted services, such as teenagers and children's psychodrama, group counselling, group sandplay therapy, etc., to help migrant children learn positive and constructive communication and response methods, and social mutual assistance behavior, improve the social emotional development, and promote social interaction among peer groups. (9.ZJ)

> The community also pays special attention to improving the linkage and cooperation system so that migrant children can seek help when they encounter difficulties. We will provide mental health services to residents, including community orientation (such as posters, brochures, exhibitions, etc.), and cultivate children's ability and awareness to take the initiative to seek help. (11.LC)

From the above, we can concluded that psychological service providers of social organizations work to improve the ability of migrant children to comprehend social support in the meso environment and use various social support resources efficiently. While social organizations encourage them to actively weave interpersonal networks outside the family, experience intimate relationships and emotions, and gain recognition and a sense of integration, they also provide spiritual and instrumental support so that migrant children can ensure to have resources to rely on and seek help when they encounter difficulties.

Understanding and Participating in Social Activities

The interview data indicate social organization workers' strong motive to support migrant children in understanding the value of engaging in social activities and their expected advantages. The workers strive to guide migrant children in ways that help them acquire reasonable cognition and behavior, and enhance their awareness of social responsibilities that along with characteristic development and reality of migrant children's lives. Strengthening migrant children's belief in a just world in the macro environment guides them in facing real-life difficulties and challenges. The outlook towards a just world is expected to encourage them to take adaptive actions to deal with their challenges and actively assume their own social responsibilities.

Acquire Reasonable Cognition and Behavior and Interact with the Surrounding Ecology

While growing up, migrant children see the differences between hometown and city, different urban lifestyles, different cultures and opportunities, and different attitudes. According to the interviews with psychological service personnel of

social organizations, on the whole, the migrant population and their families have a higher degree of economic integration and behavioral integration than psychological integration. As CH and LC described:

> Many migrant children find the big cities they now live in beautiful and have better living conditions, but the process of social and cultural adaptation is relatively long, challenging for migrant children. Many have experienced migration-related stress to adjust to a new environment and rebuild their lives. (13. CH)

> Adaptation is not a process with clear boundaries, but rather an ongoing action and event in an individual's life. From my observation, the psychological conflicts and maladjustment of migrant children caused by cultural and regional differences are obvious. Some migrant children have vague cognition and lack recognition of mainstream social values, and are easily affected by some bad cultures. Some migrant children become withdrawn and hostile to those around them. (11.LC)

Thus, the psychological conflicts and maladaptation of migrant children caused by cultural and regional differences must be eliminated to cope with them actively. And service providers entirely exert the advantages of social organizations, and adopt the strategy of mobilizing social resources to directly or indirectly promote mutual understanding and communication between urban local residents and the migrant population. The interviewers WJ and LH introduced their activities and objectives for children as below:

> When migrant children enter the urban environment, the family peripheral system has undergone qualitative changes, and they need to re-understand and adapt to the new environment. We will organize children to cooperate with their local community counterparts to carry out some orientation. For example, we visited some units' scientific research departments and the museum nearby as integrative programs. (2.WJ)

> Many social organizations organize children to learn about the city's history and culture, understand the city's heroes, enhance the sense of belonging, and explore the relationship between themselves and the town through study tours. (6.LH)

In addition to a better understanding of the city and strengthening interaction, psychologists were concerned about the negative information processing of migrant children, as well as the underlying mechanisms leading to emotional distress and maladaptive behaviour, trying to help children adjust to cognitive biases and strengthen the belief in fairness. YJ explains their psychological work as follows:

> Migrant children may be unknowingly involved in forming self-impression based on others' opinions of them. They may tend to exaggerate their social disadvantages compared to others, have preconceptions that they will be treated unfairly, resulting in resentment or passive submission in the face of academic pressure and social competition. We attempt to guide children to express their ideas, list negative events in life, and recreate the scene through role-playing, psychodrama, and other forms so that children can see the perspective of others and understand the possible reasons for the occurrence of events. It helps them to give rational explanations to realistic dilemmas and take positive and adaptive actions (12.YJ)

The data shows that promoting a rational understanding of the macro environment can enhance migrant children's psychological adjustment ability in the face of concrete, practical problems based on helping them understand the new city and establish a just belief. After learning to view events from a multi-dimensional perspective, they understand that active, sincere and timely communication can play an important role, and comprehend themselves and their surroundings from a developmental view, make rational social comparisons, and form reasonable standard evaluations. It further enhances their life satisfaction, including positive experiences such as happiness and optimism. They gradually integrate cultural factors into the new environment.

Take Greater Responsibility and Cultivate a Sense of Ownership

Due to migration, migrant children rarely participate in the public life of their hometown. At the same time, their psychological integration into the city needs to be strengthened, and their identity has a certain ambiguity and duality. Therefore, they do not have a deep sense of immediate interests, and are prone to a weak sense of participation in public affairs and social responsibility. Psychological service providers of social organizations guides migrant children to pay attention to and respond to what happens in the community, emphasizes their identity as the master of the community and focus on cultivating migrant children's sense of responsibility. As XQ introduced:

> [In] the "master" education for migrant children, we will lead migrant children to find, analyze community problems and carry out activities together. They can participate in community affairs more actively and gain skills and a sense of accomplishment from the positive feedback of residents. They can cherish the community and city resources they live in more, and constantly enhance the sense of responsibility of participating in the community. (7.XQ)

Based on different community cultures and environmental characteristics, relevant activities were conducted to encourage migrant children to connect themselves with the community and society. This contains a positive growth orientation. Through actively contributing their ideas, suggestions and abilities to the activities, maintaining justice and volunteering service, the ways of the social practice were expanded, and the sense of ownership of the city was enhanced. As explained in the interview excerpts below:

> Our projects are primarily based on children's perspectives, aiming to provide children with opportunities to play and involve in experiential activities, promoting community engagement, social mobilization and diverse interaction. We also encourage children to independently plan, design and implement community-themed activities or themed learning groups designed and led by volunteers. (14.YS)

> Some youth teams, such as the "Mock Youth Police Team", are services carried out to cultivate a pioneering team of children, promote migrant children to understand and participate in the community, and meet their needs for community belonging. We will integrate the resources of local police stations, judicial offices, and community management bodies and focus on cultivating their abilities to co-build a harmonious environment. (11.LC)

It can be seen that psychological service providers mobilize migrant children to take part in community affairs instead of passively accepting services, promote them to participate in public services such as volunteer service and social welfare, and create favourable conditions for others, which can strengthen their interpretation and awareness of social responsibility. Meanwhile, it reinforces their sense of belonging to the city and realizing that everyone is a member of society. Migrant children learn to combine personal development with social development and shoulder the responsibility entrusted by contemporary times.

Discussion
Discussion of Results

This qualitative study explored the challenges migrant children face in adapting to urban settings and identified ways to strengthen their adaptation and mental health from the perspectives of professionals in social organizations. As China progresses towards a target of 70% urbanization by 2030, the urbanization imperative, improving better access to services for migrant workers and their children is pivotal.[24] Listening to the professionals' voices in the social organization and summarizing their work in communities contribute to the current state of research concerning migrant children's mental health and how health-promotive work can be strengthened.

Changes in the environment caused by mobility and a series of consequences thereafter affect the mental health of migrant children.[25] According to ecological systems theory, the individual is the core nested in the environment system, and the mutual influence of connection and interaction exists between the individual and the various systems.[26] Migrant children are in the critical period of exploring self-identity and developing personality, when moving into a new living environment, discovering the differences in lifestyles, cultures and attitudes between hometown and city, and facing the challenges around, they tend to confuse and have low self-evaluation, conducting a series of negative information processing of cognition at the internal level. Those cognitive deviations and maladaptive behaviors diminish their perceived social support at the layer of surroundings and weaken the network of relationships in the mesosystem, which also aggravate the alienation and difficulties in the city's integration at the macro environmental level. And the negative cycles continue under the interaction of the adverse inner state of mind and the unfavorable factors of the external environment at each level. Therefore, as per the psychological development needs and the various environment system of migrant children, psychological service providers of Chinese social organizations adopt the multi-layered approach to help migrant children better adapt to the city.

In social psychological service sector, service providers explore the path of migrant children's development with an adaptive positive mentality according to their psychological needs, and fully consider the social environment and the development characteristics of the cities. This is consistent with the view that in recent years, psychologists have generally paid attention to the cultural factors behind individual behavior, that is, individual behavior must be understood and explained in a specific social, cultural and historical context.[27] The Social organizations provide services to children and their families by linking resources for them and providing direct services. The provision of services makes up for the lack of comprehensive, in-depth and gaps inherent in existing agencies and enterprises in terms of service contents and methods.[28]

At the internal level of individuals, services need to focus on positive qualities to improve resilience and stimulate internal development momentum. The psychological work of social organizations focuses on improving the ability to guide migrant children to explore their own advantages and envision the future, to actively cope with the unfavorable factors brought by migration and the issues needed to cope with their development. According to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, the critical task during adolescence is to develop a sense of diligence and establish self-identity; otherwise, they will be unable to form personality strength, and will not be able to understand their own value and the true meaning of life.[29] In terms of academic achievement, identity and other issues faced by migrant children when they come to a new city, psychological service providers emphasized they should learn to pay attention to their positive psychological qualities instead of focusing on psychological problems caused by difficulties, and focus on the individual's ability to recover and adapt flexibly when coping with stressful events and life adversities, then gradually enhance the ability or trait to maintain good development.

Many studies have shown that positive personality traits are formed based on the interaction between innate potential and environmental education.[30] Positive personality traits, such as resilience, can help individuals calmly accept the present reality, have firm values and beliefs. It helps to improve individuals' prosocial behaviour, reduce maladaptive behaviors, and have a more accurate and positive cognition of interpersonal relationships; it is also highly correlated with happiness, can significantly negatively predict loneliness and academic frustration, and positively impacts urban adaptation.[31,32] Therefore, at the level of their own internal cognition, migrant children can be helped to shape their own psychological strength by exploring and improving their positive psychological quality and mental toughness. This would facilitate the process to weaken the negative emotions caused by self-stigma and upward comparison, stimulate their courage to overcome and face difficulties in life, and take the road of positive development.

At the social support level, focus needs to be given to improving the ability to understand social support and promote positive emotions such as gratitude. At the level of mesoscopic environment, social organization's psychological service alleviates migrant children's low perception of social support by helping them to discover the resources around them. Understanding social support is relative to the actual objective social support, referring to the individual's subjective sense of social support, and their own expectations and evaluations of social support. It can buffer the impact of disadvantage factors on individual mental health or adaptation.[33] However, because the perception of social support is a stress vulnerability factor,[34] the perception of stigmatization and other stressful events will reduce an individual's ability to understand social support, so social organization's service providers are very concerned.

The study of migrant children found that perceived social support can promote their mental health and prosocial tendencies.[35] Adolescents with a high level of understanding of social support can experience more support from teachers and classmates, and have positive emotional school experiences; thus, it forms a strong sense of school belonging and promotes improving their subjective well-being.[36] At the same time, perceived social support and gratitude are positively correlated. When an individual obtains material, interpersonal and emotional resources that enhance his mental health from the protective external environment, and feels more understood and supported in the interaction with the outside world, the principle of reciprocity in interpersonal communication is activated, prompting an individual to produce the emotional response of gratitude.[37] Therefore, improving migrant children's ability to comprehend social support in the meso-environment not only promotes them to experience more positive emotions such as happiness and gratitude but also supports them to actively obtain support and resources from interpersonal relationships, and increase prosocial behaviors such as cooperation and sharing in interpersonal interactions.

At the macro environmental level, services focus on improving the reasonable cognition and belief in justice and promoting the responsibility for society. In terms of the macro cognition of the city, migrant children should change the cognitive deviation of their situation, fully understand the city, and establish a fair world view. For migrant children who have just entered urban life, social organization workers guide them to understand and feel the city, and guide social forces to provide some paths to urban life. This helps to reduce the sensitivity of migrant children to environmental changes, eliminate distrust, and enhance the speed and quality of migrant children's urban integration. Besides, it has been confirmed that empowerment is one of the key processes for the migrant youth adjustment and well-being.[38] Thus, by organizing migrant children to participate in the community and promoting them to gain more recognition, they can be encouraged to continuously enhance their ability and complete their "citizenship" from inner to outer dimensions.

The "belief in a just world" proposed by social psychologists examines an individual's perception of justice, including the degree to which the world is fair to them, and the degree to which the world as a whole is fair, similar to the meaning of "good and evil are rewarded" and "no pains, no gains".[39] Belief in a just world is an essential psychological resource. Relevant studies have shown that individuals' belief in world justice is significantly positively correlated with self-esteem and gratitude, providing individuals with a sense of trust and control over the external environment, and promoting people's positive cognitive evaluation of the environment information.[40] Moreover, an individual's belief in a just world is clearly related to his sense of social responsibility, which can promote an individual's sense of social integration, make people more focused on long-term goals, act in accordance with social norms, increase a positive attitude towards life.[41] It can be seen that shaping migrant children's belief in a just world in the macro environment can help them build a positive and meaningful perspective of explanation, change their unreasonable cognition, hope to rely on their efforts to achieve development and happiness, and increase the awareness of altruistic behavior and dedication.

Strengths and Limitations

The innovation of this study lies in discussing the current situation of psychological services provided by social organizations to migrant children in China through dialogues with psychological workers in social organizations, and to increase the diversity of perspectives on the mental health work of migrant children. This study conducted semi-structured individual interviews which produced a rich data from a first-hand perspective of professionals working with migrant children themselves. This study analyzes the practical path of social organizations' effective participation in migrant children's mental health services, and provides a reference for future services for migrant children. And according to literature, there is limited mental health services research on detecting, mitigating, and addressing the effects of chronic loneliness related to discrimination, social isolation, and stigma for migrant youth on community-based providers.[42] The results of this study can provide reference for relevant countries and regions.

The limitations of this study is that, since the study spans the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, half of the interviews were conducted online, and not having the opportunity to meet the participants may make them more restrained in sharing their thoughts. Another disadvantage is that migrant children in China are distributed all over the country. This study only interviewed social organization workers in Hubei Province and Guangdong Province. Their service work is representative to a certain extent, but further research with in-depth interviews and case studies could further illuminate this field's understanding.

Conclusion

The integration of migrant children in an urban setting is a long-term, systematic and complex problem. It is necessary to mobilize not only migrant children, but also their family and social support factors, as well as the environment to form a complete loop. Analyzing the data from the professionals who work with migrant children gives valuable insights. Overall, we found that the professionals in the current study believe that using flexible methods and integrating psychological service into other work in the community would be a practical way of reaching out to migrant children in need of psychological services. Starting from the macro environment, meso environment and internal multi-level environment of migrant children, attention is needed not only in the psychological needs of children in the development stage, but also to the specific cultural and social environment of the city where migrant children live so that migrant children build a positive attitude with social and cultural adaptability. Such services will enhance the cognition, emotion,

belief and behavior of migrant children and integrate them into the city with better mental health. The results of this study provide insights on practical working methods, logic behind psychological support, help migrant children receive better psychosocial services, and promote the integration of migrant children into the urban setting. Through targeted services, long-term follow-up, regular family intervention and individual counseling, efficient mental health intervention strategies will be further refined and working mechanism suitable for local context will be formed.

Data Sharing Statement

Data are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Ethics Statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Ethics Committee of Hubei University of Education. Participants who were interested to participate in the present study signed informed written consent.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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