

Analysis and Thinking on Ethical Issues in the Practice of Rural Social Work

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Abstract: In the context of the rural revitalization strategy, the government encourages social organizations to enter the countryside to help revitalization, and social work can play its professionalism to promote rural revitalization. On the other hand, because the social work ethics code is not consistent with the "human touch" in the countryside in some specific situations, social workers will more or less face a series of Ethical dilemma when working in rural areas, this not only puts workers in an ethical dilemma, but also hinders the development of rural social work. This article attempts to analyze the ethical issues in the practical process of rural social work from the perspective of social workers and propose corresponding countermeasures.

Keywords: Rural Revitalization; Rural Social Work; Ethical Dilemma.

1. Introduction

In 2022, the No.1 document of the Central Committee, Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Doing a Good Job in Promoting Rural Revitalization in an All-round Way in 2022, pointed out that we should do a good job in rural development, rural construction and rural governance in a solid and orderly manner, promote new progress in rural revitalization and take new steps in agricultural and rural modernization. The countryside is an important area of the country's political life. Under the background of the rural revitalization strategy, the government encourages social organizations to enter the countryside to help revitalize the country. Social work entering the rural field can give full play to its professionalism and promote the rural revitalization. On the other hand, social workers will face a series of ethical dilemmas when working in rural areas, which will not only make workers fall into the situation of ethical choice, but also hinder the development of rural social work. [5] The practice and research of rural social work often involve ethical issues. Ethics is the established moral standard and code of conduct, which guides us to deal with social relations in ways that conform to the values of the public. In the practical work of social work, we often encounter various problems. Can social workers break their promises to the case owner and inform his family about the serious illness so that they can get better medical services? Should we take ourselves as the master in rural work and then give the villagers suggestions on determining the collective interests of the village?

Based on the author's past practice in carrying out social work service in Z village, Baoshan City, Yunnan Province, this paper takes the actual situation of social work service in Z village as a specific case of this paper's research and analysis, and analyzes the ethical dilemmas that social workers see, hear and think when they carry out practice in rural areas, so as to seek feasible methods for social workers to effectively deal with ethical dilemmas. Paying attention to the reflection on rural social work practice and constantly breaking through the dilemma of professional ethics is of great theoretical and practical significance for building the localization system of social work in China, accelerating the construction of new countryside and helping rural

revitalization and sustainable development.

2. Common Ethical Dilemmas in Rural Social Work

Every social worker will encounter all kinds of ethical problems and dilemmas in social work. In order to find out the causes of ethical dilemmas and put forward corresponding solutions, we must master its basic routines. Therefore, the exploration of ethical issues in social work practice is not only the requirement of social specialization, but also the affirmation of social workers' status. Frederick, chairman of the American Association for Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics Revision Committee, defined the ethical dilemma: "The so-called ethical dilemma is that when the professional core values require professionals to perform their duties and obligations, social workers must decide which values to give priority to." Simply put, "ethics" refers to a moral balance in people's minds, and "morality" is a code of conduct to deal with the relationship between people. [2] When social workers encounter ethical problems in practice, they will use ethics and morality to solve conflicts. It can also be said that social relations are the root of "ethical dilemma", and ethical dilemma is the inevitable product of social relations. There is a certain connection between them, which is mainly manifested in the differences between the obstacles of ethics itself and the value orientation of workers.

Social work professional ethics is the moral ideal and code of conduct put forward by the profession itself according to the professional values. In the actual social work practice, social work ethics is a "curse" to restrict workers and a criterion to regulate professional behavior. In the real social work service process, social workers will not stop their services because of the immediate ethical dilemma, and wait until they make a choice about the ethical dilemma before continuing. Once the real social work service starts, it will not stop. Social workers will give the service meaning according to the different transformation strategies of the scene and the actual situation of the service development. Based on this, the best way to analyze and answer ethical dilemmas and choices is to return to the real service process.

(1) Human feelings and the establishment of professional relations

Human feelings play an important role in rural life, which determines people's relationship orientation in interpersonal communication to a certain extent. In rural areas, human feelings are an important attribute of the existence and development of interpersonal communication. In the rural society full of human feelings, the development of acquaintance relationship is more common, which is a kind of relationship interaction derived from mutual trust and a bond of rural society. Social work requires social workers to uphold professional values and ethics in the process of establishing professional relations with clients, and to establish a professional concern with clients without personal feelings. The western social work values based on legal system and regulations conflict with the emphasis on acquaintance relationship to establish professional relationship model in rural society of China.

Case 1: Village Z, located in L County, Baoshan City, Yunnan Province, is a poor village with a serious problem of rural centralization. The working population in the village is mainly 50-70 years old, and most of the young and middle-aged people make a living outside. During their stay in Z Village Primary School, social workers gradually became familiar with many villagers in the village through visits. Many villagers regarded social workers as "guests" when they made home visits, and took out food at home to entertain them. If workers stopped this behavior, they would have the misunderstanding that "it seems that you college students who are literate look down on us rural people and dislike us". When social workers went to the village committee to communicate, the village director and the staff all said that if social workers encountered any difficulties in their work or life during their stay in Z village primary school, they could ask them, and they regarded social workers as children similar in age to their children. The actual situation is that although social workers do not directly carry out relevant service activities for the villagers, most of the villagers' children are children of social workers. The occurrence of these problems makes social workers fall into a situation where human factors influence and establish professional relations in the process of carrying out follow-up services for children.

(2) Difficulties caused by different loyal objects

Social workers have great responsibilities, and they must be responsible for different objects, including the case owner, social work institutions, social work majors, the whole society and themselves.[4] When different objects have conflicts of interest, social workers will also face ethical dilemmas. In Z village, social workers are mainly responsible for primary school students in Z village, followed by schools, and other villagers may also become potential service targets. In a pluralistic society, there are different objects, and different objects also have their own characteristics and needs. How to be loyal to social workers in practice and take loyalty as a code of conduct is also one of the ethical dilemmas.

Case 2: Social Work In the process of case counseling for students in the school, I learned that there is a risk of unregistered accounts in Xiaocui, the case owner. After recognizing this risk, social workers first visited Xiaocui's family. During the home visit, social workers learned that Xiaocui's mother was a Burmese woman. When the epidemic swept the world in 2020, Xiaocui's mother brought Xiaocui back to Myanmar without communicating with the school principal and teachers during the period when the school was closed and students were advised to be isolated at home. This incident led to the prejudice of the principal and teachers

against Xiaocui's mother. Through many times of communication, social workers learned that Xiaocui's mother had three daughters and one son, while the eldest daughter and two women were born when they were young and worked in the Northeast, and then they stayed in the Northeast and are not with them at present. Xiaocui is the third daughter. She is currently in the sixth grade, facing the node of junior high school, but she doesn't have a hukou at present. If she can't solve the hukou problem after entering junior high school, it will have an impact on all kinds of exams. Registered permanent residence, a student at school, needs a certificate from the school. Because Xiaocui and his mother went back to Myanmar before, the principal didn't care about issuing a certificate for Xiaocui. In this case, young social workers don't know how to deal with it, and there are many reasons involved. In the end, the risks faced by Xiaocui have not been solved, and the case service has been interrupted.

(3) Confidentiality and privacy

As one of the basic values of social work, the principle of confidentiality requires social workers to follow professional ethics, give priority to the interests of the clients, and protect private information from being leaked to the greatest extent. Confidentiality means that social workers will not disclose the information obtained from the clients to anyone without the permission of the clients (except in special situations).[3] The principle of confidentiality is of great significance in maintaining the professional relationship between social workers and clients. First of all, social work emphasizes respecting the self-determination of the case owner. It is the basic working attitude of professional social workers to disclose privacy without the knowledge or permission of the case owner, which is the best embodiment of respecting the case owner. This kind of professional ethics is conducive to establishing a trust relationship between social workers and clients, forming a benign interaction, laying a good foundation for the whole intervention process, and then helping the case owner solve his own problems and achieve the purpose of helping others and helping themselves. Secondly, the principle of confidentiality can effectively test the integrity consciousness and moral level of social workers. Practical skills and ethics are the wings of social work. To be a professional and excellent social worker, you must have high professional skills and high professional ethics sensitivity. In the face of the ethical dilemma of confidentiality, social workers can't judge and decide whether to act according to their own likes and dislikes, but make decisions from a professional ethical perspective. This not only reflects the professional level of social workers, but also reflects a certain sense of integrity and moral quality from the side. However, in the actual service process, social workers' identities are diverse, which should be oriented not only to the clients, but also to institutions, schools, society, government, news media and so on. At present, the laws to guarantee the confidentiality of social work in China are not perfect, and social workers are forced to provide records and information of clients from time to time.

Case 3: Social workers in Z village primary school are still young and have insufficient experience in social work service, so it is inevitable that they will encounter some thorny problems when carrying out case and group activities. When encountering problems, social workers will first communicate and discuss with other colleagues who live in Z village primary school to explore where and why the problems arise. If social workers can't give an ideal explanation to this

problem, they will seek the help of the supervisor by telephone or online communication. In the communication with the supervisor, social workers should describe the problems as clearly as possible, and sometimes they will also communicate with the supervisor some private things about the clients, which just violates the confidentiality principle in the social work ethics code. If you don't communicate with the supervisor, the problem of serving the object by virtue of the ability of the social workers in school may not be effectively solved; If you communicate with the supervisor, the privacy of the client will be exposed in the communication, which violates the principle of confidentiality. Both cases will cause ethical dilemmas.

3. The Analysis of the Causes of the Ethical Dilemma of Rural Social Work

In the practice of social work, the code of ethics has been playing an increasingly important role with its development, and social workers often encounter different types of ethical dilemmas in their work and must make certain ethical choices.

There are three main reasons for ethical problems in the practice of social work introduced in this paper.

First, the fundamental cause of ethical dilemma is the conflict of values. There are different types of values in social work practice, which will put social workers in a dilemma. In a society that pays attention to "human relations" in rural areas, it is not so easy to use the value requirements of social work to establish professional relations with clients. At the same time, social workers will be regarded as friends or other interested people by villagers. These misconceptions make the established professional relations not so pure. The clients have their own values. Most people in rural areas are warm and friendly, and don't emphasize too many rules. The professional value pursued by social work is inconsistent with the long-held views of the clients. The collision of the two values leads to the lack of a measure in a diversified social environment, so social work majors and values cannot be closely linked. Different values will play different roles and bring different influences in social work practice, which is constantly changing with the development of the times. In this diverse social environment, social workers face the need to balance different values. Despite their emphasis on human relationships and intimacy, professional standards for social work require clear boundaries and professional relationships. Therefore, social workers need to find a balance that is able to respect local cultural traditions and values while maintaining professional norms and ethical standards. This may require cross-cultural communication and understanding to ensure that the needs of the clients are fully met without violating the core principles of social work.

Second, the ethical dilemma is based on moral characteristics. Social work is a kind of moral practice. Social workers put the values they have always upheld into practice and consider human values in an important position, which means that social workers' understanding of problems contains moral significance. Social workers' understanding and definition of problems run through morality, and constantly improve their understanding of the clients in practice and surpass themselves in reflection. This unique moral trait is created and developed by social workers themselves: on the one hand, social work majors need to always take humanitarianism and altruism as the criteria for

action, which determines that social workers' activities are intermediaries for the welfare of others, and this intervention requires social workers to make judgments and choices based on their own moral conscience and moral responsibility. As Professor Wang Sibin of Peking University said: "The most profound essential feature of social work is the social interaction of altruism. Altruism is an ethical principle that selflessly cares about the welfare of others. Actors are characterized by dedication and do not ask for it. " On the other hand, the three contents of social major are "serving the weak and oppressed", "paying attention to the personal welfare society in the situation of the indigenous society" and "promoting social justice and social change".

Third, the direct cause of ethical dilemma is the particularity of professional service objects. Because the clients of social work major are a relatively disadvantaged group in society, they are mainly divided into two categories: (1) People who are disadvantaged in society due to physiological and social reasons. (2) People in non-mainstream cultural life forms.

Perhaps some scholars think that the second group of people are not all vulnerable, and some even hold important power, so when they become the main force of society, it will bring some incalculable consequences to society. Levy put forward the concept of "relative vulnerability": "The case owners have urgent needs and problems, and it is these needs and problems that lead them to seek the help of social workers. The case owner who is in crisis or desperate for various reasons is likely to be weakened in judgment and rely too much on social workers. " From this, we can see that social workers are more vulnerable to social restrictions because of their special clients, which is not conducive to the development of social work. When there is a conflict between the interests of the problem population and the normal population, it is very challenging for social workers to put forward a plan that satisfies both sides, so they are often caught in a dilemma. It is not easy to solve the contradiction between the normal population and the case owner as a problem population after there is a certain deviation in values and behavior. At this time, social workers should make clear their responsibilities and obligations and make decisions that meet the needs of both parties in practical work.

4. Countermeasures for the Ethical Dilemma of Rural Social Work

(1) The establishment of mutual trust in the localization of professional relations

At present, the concept, environment and communication mode of rural society have changed greatly compared with before. The villagers who have lived here for a long time are the embodiment of rural culture and the main force to change the current situation of rural economy. Rural social workers need to be "integrated into the community", that is, they need to be integrated into the local acquaintance society. The interpersonal relationship of mutual trust requires social workers to keep close contact with the local environment frequently, narrow the space distance between them and the villagers, and integrate into the residents' lives. [5] In the process of understanding and contacting the villagers, social work should gain the trust and recognition of residents by some "grounded" ways, and achieve the purpose of establishing professional relations by giving priority to establishing "acquaintance relations". However, when

establishing "acquaintance relationship", social work should always pay attention to restraining behavior and language, and should not deliberately narrow the distance with the clients because of the need to establish professional relationships, thus leaving ethical hidden dangers for follow-up services. If signs of a double relationship are found, social workers should refer or terminate the service depending on the circumstances to avoid potential harm. On the other hand, social workers should stick to the professional boundaries of service and flexibly provide services, but should not invest too much personal feelings, and should not refuse to serve the objects. Maintaining a moderate distance and sensitivity is critical in this process.

(2) Pay attention to multi-party cooperation and establish a sense of border

Social work needs multi-party cooperation in the process of rural development and construction. Social work is not a panacea. Social workers should first have a sense of boundaries when they intervene in social problems, and then look at and solve problems with professional social work methods and theories. [1] In the specific process of rural practice, social workers need to take this as the basis when providing social work services to every household, so as to "do what they can".

As a leader, the government mainly provides policy support and system guarantee, is responsible for overall coordination and plays a role of supervision and guidance. Autonomous organizations, including villagers' autonomous organizations and women's groups, stimulate members to actively participate in rural development and construction, give play to their linkage role, and cooperate and support each other. Social workers use their professional advantages to provide professional services, support the work of the government and autonomous organizations, and realize the goal of rural revitalization. Social workers need to flexibly use the professional methods of social work to provide personalized and diversified services for the clients according to the actual situation of each rural area. Make full use of the advantage perspective to face different groups and carry out targeted services. Social workers need to pay attention to the intervention methods used in the investigation process and the objectivity of the investigation data, minimize the subjective judgment of social workers, pay more attention to the voices and demands of the clients, and respect the value choice of the clients.

5. Conclusion

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China put forward the strategic goal of further promoting rural revitalization and development, and the participation of professional social workers is a key link in rural revitalization.

The state attaches great importance to professional social work in rural areas, which is not only the support for rural development, but also the concern and guarantee for the well-being of rural residents. With the gradual advancement of rural social work, it is particularly important to find problems and sum up experience in time, especially to pay attention to ethical issues in social work.

China, known as an acquaintance society, attaches importance to human feelings and the rule of courtesy, which provides important clues for understanding China society and an important starting point for developing rural social work. Rural areas are greatly influenced by traditional culture, and social workers often face ethical problems of professional relationship and acquaintance relationship. They are often in a dilemma in dealing with the balance between the self-determination of the case owner and the professional authority.

In the process of promoting the further development of rural social work, it is very important to combine the local characteristics of China and base itself on the countryside. Social workers can learn from the family values, affection and neighborhood relations emphasized in traditional culture and integrate these values into the practice of rural social work. At the same time, we should attach importance to the autonomy and self-management ability of rural communities and promote the enthusiasm and initiative of local residents to participate in social affairs. Based on these characteristics, social workers can sum up ethical principles applicable to rural areas in China, such as respect, fairness, justice and mutual assistance, so as to guide and standardize their behavior and ensure that rural social work is closer to actual needs, more effective and sustainable.

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