

An Empirical Study on the Human Resource Development of “She” Women in Guangzhou from the Perspective of Language Development

Lipeng Tang*

Guang Dong Peizheng College, Guangzhou 510830, Guangdong, China

*Corresponding author: Lipeng Tang, liurunping@yvcct.edu.cn

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Abstract: Women are an important force in building a well-off society in a comprehensive way in rural areas, and also the main force in building a new socialist countryside. At present, the development of minority women’s human resources tends to ignore the value of their language and pay more attention to the economic value brought by their labor force. Women in “She” ethnic villages in Guangzhou generally have the ability of flexible code-switching in four languages, namely “She,” Cantonese, Hakka and Mandarin. Based on the field investigation and from the perspective of language resources development and utilization, this paper aims to help the development of human resources of “She” ethnic women in Guangzhou from the aspects of family language education, practical skills training, language information and tourism resource integration, and further promote the economic development of “She” ethnic villages.

Keywords: “She” ethnic group; Female; Ethnic minorities; Human resources; Language development

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1. Introduction

The most important, fundamental and critical task for rural revitalization is industrial revitalization ^[1], which cannot be achieved without investment in human resources. As the only ethnic minority village in Zengcheng District, Guangzhou, “She” Village is incompatible with the slow development of the village economy and the rapid loss of the ethnic population, which makes the village need to cultivate and develop new business forms, strive to find a road of characteristic development of minority villages, stimulate the active willingness of the displaced population to return and promote the integration and mutual promotion of ethnic unity and rural revitalization. Economic development cannot be separated from the investment in human resources, and the effective development of human resources for ethnic minority women is often neglected. “She” ethnic women in Guangzhou generally have the four-language ability of flexible code-switching in communication, namely “She,” Cantonese, Hakka and Mandarin. Based on this, from the perspective of language development, giving full play to the linguistic advantages of “She” ethnic women and helping the national revitalization of “She” ethnic

villages is the driving force for this study.

2. Analysis of the current situation and hindrance factors of female human resources development in “She” minority villages of Guangzhou

2.1. Current situation of female population in “She” minority villages of Guangzhou

As of September 2024, the village has 409 registered population, 182 permanent residents and 84 permanent female residents (Table 1).

Table 1. The overall situation of the population of “She” villages

Clan	Registered population			Permanent population	
	“She”	Han nationality	Other ethnic groups	“She”	Han Nationality
Male	209	2	Zhuang: 3	98	0
Female	114	80	Mulao nationality: 1	37	47
Total		409		182	

There are 409 registered population in “She” village, but only 182 permanent residents, and more than half of the population, whether male or female, has flowed out. A preliminary comparison of the data of the sixth and seventh censuses shows that when the county population decreases by more than 20%, it is already a serious population loss [2]. At present, the population of “She” minority villages is in the stage of serious loss and the hollowing out of villages is still intensifying. The population loss has led to changes in the social structure of “She” villages, especially the large outflow of young and middle-aged labor force not only has an impact on agricultural production and economic development in the village in economic aspects, but also has a profound impact on family structure and children’s education, household registration and social security, ethnic culture and inheritance, as well as mental health and social adaptation [3].

2.2. Analysis of the status quo and hindrance factors of female human resources development in “She” Village

2.2.1. Gender role and self-awareness

The so-called gender role is a kind of social role divided according to gender, including male role and female role. It refers to the appropriate position of an individual belonging to a specific gender in a certain social group and the behavior pattern defined by the society and the group [4]. In other words, the basis for determining behavior patterns is not acquired social status but innate physical characteristics, but the psychological and behavioral differences between men and women are mainly determined by sociocultural factors. Nowadays, with the improvement of women’s status and the change of gender relations in the developed regions of China, the traditional clear-cut gender roles are blur [5]. After the reform and opening up, due to the frequent communication with the outside world, women in “She” minority villages in Guangzhou are not a fixed psychological state. The roles of women in “She” minority villages not only have the commonalities of all women, but also carry the characteristics of national culture (Table 2).

Table 2. Gender role characteristics of women in “She” villages

Stats	Traits
Economic aspects	Selling litchi as the main source of income, or selling farm products in the village market, compared with her husband’s economic ability is poor.
Ideology	Basic “man leads outside, woman leads inside” model.
Parent-child relationship	Take more care of their children’s daily lives and education than their husbands.
Interpersonal interaction	Simple circle, neighborhood communication.

2.2.2. Current situation of survival and development environment

(1) Status quo of natural environment

Although “She” Village in Zengcheng District is located in Guangzhou, it is located in the corner of Guangzhou, deep in the mountains, resulting in a relatively closed geographical environment. The harsh geographical environment not only hinders contact with the outside world but also has a substantial impact on the maximum development of human resources of the villagers in the village, especially the “She” ethnic women whose labor value cannot be intuitively reflected. The influence of the natural environment on the development of “She” women is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

(a) The economic aspect

The relatively closed natural geographical environment makes the main source of economic income of the village is lychee planting industry, the industrial structure is single, the labor resources are often idle in the non-agricultural season, the economic development is relatively backward, and the development funds of women are insufficient.

(b) The propaganda

Natural environmental restrictions lead to the scattered living places of villagers. At present, “She” Village is composed of three villagers groups: Nanshui Village, Tongkeng Village and Rongshu Village. The scattered layout brings difficulties to publicity and education management.

(2) Current situation of human environment

(a) The quality of education

The quality of education plays a vital role in the development of human resources, even more important than the impact of natural environment^[6]. According to a random survey on the education level of 47 female labor forces aged 18–60 who live in the village, the education level of female labor forces in primary and secondary schools accounts for 78%. Very few individuals have received higher education or technical training in the system, and the education level is generally relatively low. With the popularization of compulsory education, the importance of education becomes more obvious. People also realize that the simple input of population resources can no longer meet the needs of economic benefits compared with the input of technical ability, so they begin to pay attention to the quality of education.

(b) Life style

The way of life is mainly determined by the way of production, and the way of life is generally divided into two kinds^[7]: the way of social interaction and the way of consumption. Most women in “She” villages have little contact with the outside world, resulting in a low level of social interaction, while women with a high education level go out more frequently to pursue a colorful and happy life as much as possible. In addition, due to the influence of education level, the consumption mode of

women in “She” village tends to be material consumption, but lack of spiritual consumption ^[8].

2.2.3. Current situation of their language resources utilization

Language is the spirit of a nation, and writing is the mission of a nation ^[9]. “She” Nationality Village is located in the mountains on the border between Guangzhou City and Huizhou city. The special geographical location and the marriage of Hakka women make the women in this village generally have the ability of four languages, namely “She,” Cantonese, Hakka and Mandarin, which can be flexibly used for code-switching in communication. If both husband and wife are “She” ethnic group, the choice of family language is “She” > Hakka > Cantonese > Mandarin. If the couple is a combination of “husband and “She” + wife and Chinese,” the choice of family language is determined by the wife’s language situation, the wife is Hakka, Cantonese communication is mainly, if the wife is not Hakka, Cantonese communication is mainly. In public places such as markets, governments and hospitals, the choice of social language is based on the language situation of the speaker, and Mandarin is the main language.

According to Sun (2006) on the vitality of China’s ethnic minority language ranking research, “She” language vitality is relatively poor, from the use of the scope of the focus on a small range of ethnic, from the economic attributes of the lack of development value ^[10]. For the poor vitality of ethnic languages are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

- (1) Do not master the mother tongue monolingual people, are bilingual or multilingual, often the second language is better than the mother tongue;
- (2) The intergenerational transmission of mother tongue is very serious, only the middle-aged and old people use their mother tongue, while the young and middle-aged have already switched to other languages;
- (3) There is no written record of the native language, no broadcast of the native language;
- (4) The mother tongue is used only in the home, not in markets, schools, and even less in government and legislative bodies.

The “She” nationality in Guangzhou basically conforms to the concrete embodiment of the lack of vitality of the languages listed by Sun (2006). Surrounded by strong languages, “She” nationality has the awareness of ethnic language inheritance, but the structure of her mother tongue is deteriorating due to the lack of proper communication media and narrow audience. “She” women are an important link of intergenerational inheritance of ethnic languages. “She” women have rich language ability, but they only regard language as a communication tool for production and life, and basically do not consider the exploitable property of language.

3. Development contents of “She” women’s human resources based on the perspective of language development

3.1. Improve the bilingual education model to help protect language and cultural diversity

Promoting standard spoken and written Chinese education is not only an important measure for the Party and the state to promote economic and social development and the quality and balanced development of compulsory education in ethnic minority areas but also an inevitable way for ethnic minority people to strengthen the sense of community of the Chinese nation and achieve common prosperity ^[11]. In response to the national language planning policy, “She” village primary schools mainly adopt the mode of “bilingual education, ” that is, teaching mainly in the national common language and teaching “She” languages in addition, to achieving the ultimate goal of protecting and inheriting the diversity of our national language and culture. However, there

are a series of problems in the full implementation of bilingual education, such as the shortage of bilingual teachers restricting the development of bilingual education, dealing with the tradeoff between the two languages and so on. According to the reality of “She” primary school, high-quality bilingual teachers engaged in “She” language education are still a scarce resource. Currently, the teachers engaged in “She” language education in primary school are local teachers in their fifties, and the teaching methods and modes have been slightly outdated. Due to the enhancement of campus popularization and parents’ flexible code-switching, children have become accustomed to Mandarin as the preferred language for communication ^[12]. According to interviews and surveys, parents intend to pass on the “She” language to their children. Still, children who have received compulsory education have negative control over the use of language at home. The children in the family must try to communicate in the “She” language, and both parents give cooperation. In this way, on the one hand, it is beneficial for women to play their language resources, supplement and perfect the bilingual education mode, and help the protection and inheritance of the “She” language, on the other hand, it is conducive to promoting the family status of women, occupying a dominant position in the language education of children.

3.2. Increase investment in education and pay attention to practical skills training

For the development of female human resources in “She” villages, it is necessary to “understand their wisdom” and the government and local governments should increase investment in education, which is the main way to improve the stock of knowledge and skills of human resources. Increase the investment in education and pay attention to practical skills training, which is embodied in:

- (1) Improve the practical skills related to agriculture;
- (2) Improve the effective skills of family language education. Due to the limited ability of women between 40 and 60 years old to receive educational knowledge, the first investment in education should be mainly in practical skills such as agricultural practical skills and new media network applications. The government should take the lead in carrying out the necessary cultural quality education, practical technical training and production skills training to realize the development and utilization of the potential human resources value of rural female labor force in minority areas.
- (3) Formulate a policy to support rural women’s education and extract a certain proportion of special funds such as agricultural special funds and vocational education funds every year as a scientific, technological and cultural training fund for rural women to ensure the capital investment for the development of female human resources in “She” villages and solve the economic difficulties rural women face in learning. Due to the relatively low educational level of “She” women, they cannot help their children acquire their mother tongue although they have language resources. Through skill training, women should pay attention to the guidance of children’s language learning and the creation of scenarios in family language education, and realize that language acquisition and dialogue are not one-way knowledge transmission, but two-way, interactive and dynamically constructed cognitive activities ^[13].

3.3. Improve scientific and technological literacy, and build a language digital platform

The inheritance and development of language resources should rely on the language digital platform. Based on the fact that “She” language is relatively weak and “She” women’s scientific and technological literacy is relatively poor, it is urgent to give full play to the posture awareness of “She” women owners and improve their information digital application ability. It is embodied in the following aspects:

- (1) “She” women are required to master the basic operational abilities of electronic device recording and

- social media information release;
- (2) “She” language digital sharing, derived language-related ancillary products, such as “She” electronic dictionary, “She” basic spoken language, “She” folk interpretation;
 - (3) Sell ethnic products through link platforms such as new media public accounts and short videos to show ethnic characteristics;
 - (4) Since there is no “She” language media broadcasting in the local area, the purpose of language inheritance and promotion can be achieved by arranging “She” nationality songs and dances and transmitting “She” language audio.

3.4. Integrate tourism resources and give full play to the advantages of language resources

In recent years, with the policy support, “She” villages have renovated the living environment and enhanced the facilities in public areas, such as improving the landscape of the main road and building a small park for the tomb of King Panhu, etc. While creating characteristic landscape nodes, tourism resources such as the ancestral hall of the “She” ethnic group, the tomb of King Panhu and the folk culture museum have been effectively connected, and the characteristic tour routes of “She” ethnic Group have been launched ^[14]. Based on the rich tourism and cultural resources, “She” women should give full play to their ethnic advantages, such as the performance of ethnic songs and dances, the explanation of the folk culture museum, the “She” language daily language experience class and so on. “She” villages should continue to rely on tourism resources, break the single traditional mode of relying on litchi as an economic source, carry out litchi culture festivals around the local litchi harvest season, plan litchi picking paths, and strive to cultivate and form a new development mode of “culture + industry + tourism,” and strive to find a road of characteristic development of minority villages.

4. Conclusion

Women are an important force in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects in rural areas and the main force in building a new socialist countryside ^[15]. This study conducted an in-depth interview with the female permanent population of the “She” ethnic village to investigate the current situation of the age structure of the female population and the development of human resources in the village. The research shows that the female permanent residents in the village are more affirming their social status in terms of self-awareness and pursuing economic independence. However, due to the limitations of individual ability and living environment, their human resources have not been effectively developed. Compared with men, women have more obvious advantages in language resources. Therefore, “She” ethnic women can find their value through family language education, practical skills training, language information and tourism resource integration, and human resource development can drive industrial revitalization and further promote the economic development of “She” ethnic villages.

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