



The difficulties as a mother: The influence of media effect on Taiwan's female intellectual disabilities

Zheng Yang-Yi

Assistant Professor, General Education Center, National Central University, Taiwan



Outline

The figures in Taiwan.

What is a good parent?

The influence of media on the image of people with intellectual disabilities.

The current situation in Taiwan.

The figures in Taiwan.

There are great differences in the degree of people with intellectual disabilities, the level can be divided into mild, moderate, severe and extremely severe. Based on this, their learning abilities are also quite different.

But the public often draw an all-or-nothing line to separate "normal people" from those with intellectual disabilities.

However, it is impossible to distinguish the level of intellectual disabilities if someone is excluded to the disability service system. The society views people with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities from a curious and sarcastic perspective.

第四節 Children's situation

自閉症、智能障礙、其他障礙、罕見疾病、慢性精神病患及頑性(難治型)癲癇症，「無生養育子女」者所占比率皆超過半數

18歲以上之身心障礙者「有生養育子女」的比率占 72.63%，其中子女人數 3~5 人者有 40.69%居多，2 人者有 20.06%居次，「無生養育子女」者的比率則占 27.37%。

若以障礙類別觀察，自閉症、智能障礙、其他障礙、罕見疾病、慢性精神病患及頑性(難治型)癲癇症，「無生養育子女」者所占比率皆超過半數，分別為 99.83%、83.73%、81.72%、58.98%、53.47%及 51.95%；失智症者「有生養育子女」的比率最高，占 94.89%，以生養育「子女人數 3~5 人」者為最多。以年齡觀察，有生養子女的比率隨年齡增加而遞增，從 18~未滿 30 歲者的 2.96%遞增至 65 歲以上者的 95.79%。(詳見表 2-1-8)

表2-1-8 18歲以上之身心障礙者生養子女情形-按障礙類別及年齡別分

項目別	total		number of children						none	不知道/ 拒答
	numbers	ratio	1人	2人	3~5人	6人以上	不知道/ 拒答			
								72.63		
100年調查	1,020,421	100.00	73.11	7.79	18.76	39.99	6.37	0.20	26.60	0.29
105年調查	1,114,497	100.00	72.63	7.23	20.06	40.69	4.52	0.13	27.37	-
障礙類別										
視覺障礙	56,236	100.00	81.58	8.63	19.09	47.79	6.06	-	18.42	-
聽覺機能障礙	120,036	100.00	89.53	5.23	17.96	57.14	8.89	0.32	10.47	-
平衡機能障礙	3,651	100.00	85.65	6.31	20.95	54.24	4.14	-	14.35	-
聲音或語言機能障礙	13,542	100.00	76.85	8.55	31.89	34.83	1.00	0.57	23.15	-
肢體障礙	368,375	100.00	81.57	7.85	24.02	45.05	4.57	0.09	18.43	-
intellectual disability	83,196	100.00	16.27	4.36	6.43	5.49	-	-	83.73	-
重要器官失去功能	151,489	100.00	86.99	8.07	26.96	48.55	3.12	0.28	13.01	-
顏面損傷者	4,575	100.00	70.98	9.84	26.70	31.73	2.72	-	29.02	-
植物人	3,986	100.00	75.60	8.75	22.70	38.17	5.98	-	24.40	-
失智症	49,104	100.00	94.89	5.25	14.68	61.02	13.69	0.25	5.11	-
autism	5,433	100.00	0.17	-	0.17	-	-	-	99.83	-
慢性精神病患者	124,741	100.00	46.53	9.05	17.13	19.48	0.80	0.07	53.47	-
多重障礙	117,640	100.00	68.17	6.41	15.85	40.60	5.31	-	31.83	-
頑性(難治型)癲癇症	4,612	100.00	48.05	9.96	23.17	14.53	0.40	-	51.95	-
罕見疾病	950	100.00	41.02	11.77	19.84	9.40	-	-	58.98	-
其他障礙	2,487	100.00	18.28	6.50	8.29	3.48	-	-	81.72	-
新制無法對應舊制類別	4,444	100.00	57.18	6.16	15.95	32.01	3.06	-	42.82	-
年齡										
18~未滿 30 歲	74,550	100.00	2.96	2.24	0.48	0.24	-	-	97.04	-
30~未滿 45 歲	153,699	100.00	30.69	9.34	15.14	6.07	0.15	-	69.31	-
45~未滿 65 歲	417,339	100.00	74.49	10.67	30.73	32.51	0.44	0.14	25.51	-
65 歲以上	468,909	100.00	95.79	4.26	15.28	65.75	10.31	0.17	4.21	-

附註：請參閱統計結果表 20-21。

This survey was formerly called "Survey on the Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities in Taiwan". The survey was conducted for the first time in 1983, and the name of the survey was changed to "Survey on the Living Needs of Persons with Disabilities" when it was conducted for the third time in 1989. This time (2016) is the seventh survey.

There are 83,196 people with intellectual disabilities, accounting for about 7.5% of 1,114,497 people with disabilities. Among the 83,196, about 13,536 people have children, which occupied 16.27% of the group of people with intellectual disabilities (about 4.36% have one child, 6.43% have two, and 5.49% have three to five), the other 83.73% have no children.

Besides intellectual disabilities, the proportion of people with specific disabilities who have no children are more than 50%, including autism, chronic mental illness, intractable (refractory) epilepsy, rare diseases, and other disorders. Excluding other disabilities that could not be carefully identified, only autism surpasses those with intellectual disabilities got the above proportion up to 99.83%.

It is worth mentioning that this survey started in 2010, and the questionnaires in 100 and 105 did not reveal any relevant information on whether people with intellectual disabilities had children. It shows that our country knows little about the reproduction and parenting of children with intellectual disabilities.

What is a good parent?

The social impression of people with intellectual disabilities as parents are negative overall. For example, they could not treat their children well and put them at risk; neglecting duty cannot be improved. Furthermore, these lead the public to give them the minimum support.

The studies abroad have found that families in which at least one parent is an intellectually disabled person are more inclined to not discipline their children, making it easy for children to break away from the control of the kinship network as they wish.

However, no research supports that parents with intellectual disabilities are necessarily negligent. The intellectually handicapped can still learn to parent and function, as long as they have the corresponding social support, just like the "normal people".

The criteria for a "competent" parent are difficult to define. Meeting basic needs, providing optimal care with only resources, and maximizing supplies beyond one's capacity can all be one description of competence. It shows that competence primarily comes from the interaction between family conditions and social expectations.

A pluralistic society allows people to raise their children according to their concept. According to Dutch standards, parents can raise their children as long as they meet the following minimum standards:

1. No apparent signs of abuse and neglect.
2. No intervention by child protection agencies.
3. No Court Ordered Foster Care

Citizens have the right to exercise complete parenting over their families.

However, the Netherlands is a more open and respectful society than Taiwan. The minimum standards and the definition of abuse are different in Taiwan. For example, in a parent-child co-learning family, society will criticise when children go out without clothes.

Expert Center Services: Provide general professional advice from an expert's point of view.

Family-centred Services: Provides individualized support based on the family's needs.

When social workers intervene, they must consider the interests of children and parents. However, when social workers supervise, inspect or assess whether they have neglected their duties on behalf of the government, parents' rights are often being ignored or deprived.

Parenting is not made up of ability , but also by the social environment in which the family owns the social network itself.

Research from the Netherlands shows:

1. The status of intellectual disability is not the indicator of parenting success
2. Inadequate professional support is a strong indicator of failure
3. Social networks that support parents with intellectual disabilities are strong indicators of success.

However, the Dutch media did not emphasize the ratio of 33% who showed good enough parenting. Instead, they magnified the ratio of 66% that was average or not good enough, which made readers preconceived that people with intellectual disabilities could not raise children well. So they are not willing to show support, which makes the 33% rate unseen and increased and threatened or even reduced by media coverage.

The influence of media on the image of people with intellectual disabilities.

The public's perceptions have a particular influence on shaping social norms and values, which is a significant emphasis in advancing people with disabilities.

As news media is one of the most dominant modes in which threads of social power are operated.

McLuhan, 1994

News media is also potentially one of the sites where inequalities are firstly made apparent, and better able to be challenged. Therefore, not only is it important in the study of media influence to focus on the representations given, but also to develop understandings of the ways in which these representations intersect with broader social structures, discourses and understandings.

Many of the articles collected in this were from regular weekly columns; in addition, numerous individual magazines and newspapers are dedicated to parenting and child rearing.

The prevalence of advice columns and advertising reports indicates a perception that parenting is hard work, requiring high level skill sets and constant interaction with 'experts', who include child psychologists, manufacturers, child care workers, pediatric professionals of all types and, occasionally, other parents.

However, the difficulty has two effects :

First, society believes that people with intellectual disabilities are incapable of dealing with this problem.

Second, people with intellectual disabilities will not pay attention to such problems because they won't watch these professional column shows. And the advertisement always conveys the picture like that: babies are always happy to play or sleep hard, are well-nourished, and almost never get sick.

People with intellectual disabilities are highly dependent on vision for learning information, therefore, the media often become a learning channel for people with intellectual disabilities.

The result of the media effect:

People with intellectual disabilities want to be parents, however, society does not think they are capable.

The current situation in Taiwan.

According to research (Chih-Hsuan Chen, 2013), from 2001 to 2010, Taiwanese media reports on people with intellectual disabilities presented the three following main images were portrayed:

1. dispirited (36.7%)
2. affirmative (32.5%)
3. needy (30.8%)

Of the subthemes pertaining to the dispirited image, “personal suffering” is the one most often described. The “need for charitable assistance” is most often associated with the “needy” image, whereas “normalcy” is a commonly identified attribute related to an “affirmative” image.

During this ten years, the pessimistic portrayal of people with ID (classified as the “dispirited” image) was most of the three kinds of images.

Although there is no follow-up study of this decade, searching the Internet for relevant news, the image of people with intellectual disabilities has not changed much.

The spouses of Taiwan female intellectual disabilities can be roughly divided into three groups:

1. Spouse with disability status which is including intellectual and physical disabilities
2. The average man who has passed the marriageable age but has not met a suitable marriage partner
3. Veteran (in Taiwan context)

Exchange theory:

Female intellectual disabilities provide sexual and reproductive functions in exchange for the care function of their spouses.

And through the marriage arrangement of the parents for the intellectual disabilities daughter, the responsibility of caring can be transferred to the spouse, so that the problem of caring for the female intellectual disabilities can be continued through the marriage arrangement.

The current research on the motherhood of female intellectual disabilities in Taiwan has presented several issues(Yi-Ting Wang, 2001; Ming-Xiong Huang, 2007; Chih-Lin, Huang, 2017):

1. Inability to raise children effectively because of inferiority.
2. Lack of ways to raise children.
3. Although has some knowledge about the development of children, it is difficult to adjust the parenting method according to the characteristics of the children.
4. Heavily influenced by patriarchal factors.
5. Passively participate in external activities.
6. Received little support from their in-laws and husbands, and even became a source of stress.
7. Encountered significant difficulties in the family economy.
8. Often rejected or viewed differently by the public.
9. Faced many difficulties, but their mothers provided strong and important support.

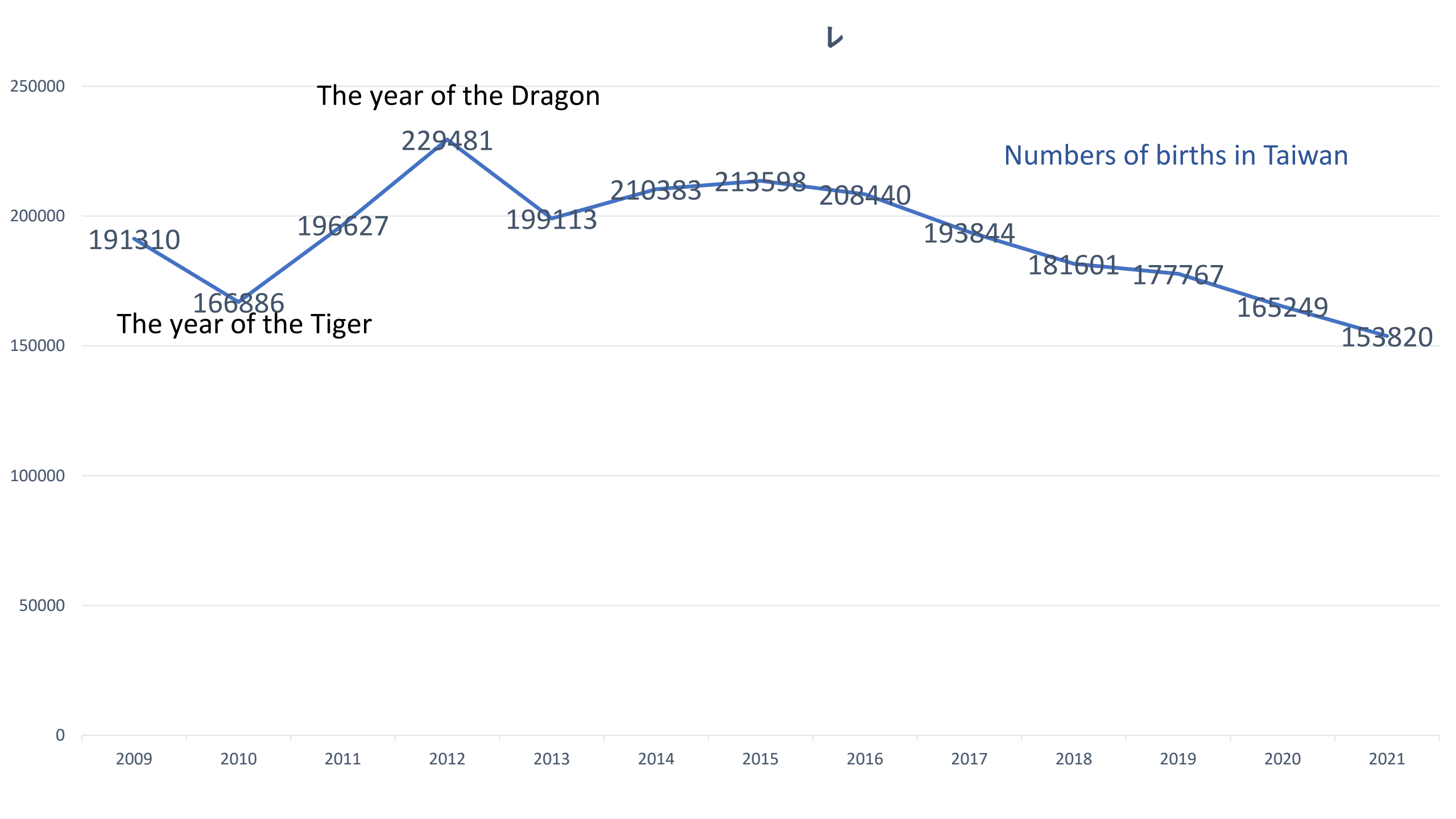
The analysis shows that the situation of female intellectual disabilities has not changed much in the past two decades.

Not getting much effective social support and female intellectual disabilities are still only dependent on females (their mothers).

Another important reason: declining birthrate.

The pressure of life and the emphasis on quality of life have led to fewer and fewer births in Taiwan.

The media is hyping up the declining birthrate, and society needs a “good population”, not a population that needs to be taken care of.



Limitations

Number of samples

Related literature