Emotional Well-Being: A Study among the Parents of Migrant Youth

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Abstract

The study examines the emotional well-being of parents aged 45–65 in Ernakulam district, Kerala. Emotional well-being refers to a person's emotional quality, including happiness, sadness, and anxiety, and is essential for mental health, stress management, relationships, and life purpose (Sophie C. Feller, 2018). This study investigates the factors influencing the emotional well-being of parents experiencing youth migration (Kristabel Stark, 2022). A descriptive research design and qualitative approach were used, with data collected through a semi-structured questionnaire. Simple random sampling identified respondents, focusing on their socio-demographic characteristics and the emotional consequences of their children's migration. The study explores how communication frequency, social support, and family structure contribute to parental emotional well-being. Thematic analysis was used for data interpretation. The findings provide insights into how migration-related separation affects parents emotionally and highlight social work implications relevant to their well-being. Based on the results, the study suggests social work interventions to support these parents, promote mental health, and help them cope with emotional challenges. These implications guide the development of community-based programs offering emotional support, counselling, and awareness of mental health struggles caused by youth migration. The study also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being.

Keywords: *Youth migration, Emotional Well-being of Parents, Sustainable Development Goal, Mental health, Social Work Implication*

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1. Introduction

Emotional well-being is a cornerstone of mental health, reflecting an individual's capacity to manage emotions, maintain meaningful relationships, and derive satisfaction from life (Feller, 2018). It encompasses a spectrum of experiences, from joy and fulfilment to stress and anxiety, and serves as a critical determinant of overall quality of life. For individuals aged 45–65, emotional well-being takes on heightened significance as this life stage often entails navigating personal and familial transitions, including changes in relationships, health, and social roles. (Shuman, 2024).

In this context, parents of migrant youth face unique challenges which directly impacting their emotional well-being. Migration, often driven by aspirations for better economic or educational opportunities, introduces physical separation that fundamentally alters family dynamics. For parents, the absence of their children—who often serve as primary sources of emotional and social support—can result in heightened feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and stress (Stark, 2022). These challenges or consequences are particularly evident in Kerala, a state marked by its high rates of international migration, where families frequently grapple with the dual realities of economic benefits and emotional strain (Rajan & Zachariah, 2019).

The emotional well-being of these parents is shaped by various factors, including the frequency and quality of communication with their children, the strength of their social support networks, and the structure of their family units. While modern technology facilitates regular communication, it cannot fully replace the emotional comfort derived from physical presence (Marion Heyeres, 2021). Similarly, social networks comprising extended family, community groups, and religious institutions play an important role in mitigating emotional challenges, yet their

effectiveness varies widely across individual circumstances (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

Despite its significance, the emotional well-being of parents of migrant youth remains an underexplored area of research. Most studies on migration focus on its economic and social dimensions, overlooking the intricate emotional consequences for parents left behind. This study seeks to focused and address this gap by investigating the emotional well-being of parents in Ernakulam district, Kerala, who are navigating the challenges posed by their children's migration. Using a descriptive research design and a quantitative approach, the research examines the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and explores the factors influencing their emotional health.

By shedding light on the emotional experiences of these parents, the study highlights the need for targeted social work interventions. Counselling services, community support initiatives, and enhanced awareness are crucial in helping parents manage the emotional consequences of migration-induced separation. These findings focused the importance of adopting a holistic perspective on migration—one that prioritizes not only economic gains but also the emotional and psychological well-being of families. (Gregory, 2024).

2. Objectives of the study:

- To study the socio-demographic profile of respondents.
- To study the emotional wellbeing of the respondents.
- To study the social work implication in relevance to emotional wellbeing of the respondents.

3. Review of Literature

Pakistan is encountering a massive adult migration that is affecting its social fabric in various aspects. The study focused on the context of the adult migration impacts on the elderly left

behind in Pakistan, Particularly, the study examines the social, psychological, and economic reciprocity of the elderly left behind owing to their adult (children) outmigration. It has focused to explore the prevalence of social, psychological, and economic well-being of the elderly left behind, to find out the dynamics of the social, psychological, and economic well-being of elderly left behind by demographic variables e.g., gender, residence. etc. Mainly identify the interrelation of the social, economic, and psychological well-being of the elderly left behind in District Rawalpindi, and considering this, to propose a Tri dimensional Model of the well-being of elderly left behind and to suggest some measures for improve the social, psychological and economic wellbeing of elderly left behind. The tri-dimensional model of well-being employed the quantitative research design in order to map out the adult migration impact on parents. The study has been conducted in the Rawalpindi district of Punjab Pakistan. The researcher used the self-administered questionnaire and collected the data from the targeted elderly left behind through the multistage sampling technique. The sample size of the study was 400 elderly left behind from the different areas of Rawalpindi. The study concludes through its findings that its findings there is higher reciprocity between social well- being and psychological well-being, economic and social well-being has a strong association, but economic and psychological well-being has not been found significant. The study suggests there is a dire need to devise policies for the well-being of the increasing elderly population (D.M.F, 2022).

The number of elderly people living alone is growing by the day. They are experiencing a variety of issues. The purpose of this study was to look at the socioeconomic status and mental health concerns of the rural elderly who are empty-nesters. This study used a quantitative approach, with a survey and questionnaires.

Data were obtained from 32 empty-nesters, including males and females aged 60 and up. In this study, researchers chose three villages in Shailkupa Upazila, Jhenaidah District, Khulna Division, Bangladesh (Zhao, December 8, 2011).The three villages are: Ananto Badalsho, Badalsho, and Aushia. Data were obtained with informed consent from June 14 to June 29, 2017. In this study, the majority of respondents' socioeconomic conditions were favourable. All of the respondents expressed loneliness. The majority of responders experience mental anxiety. Their children reside far away, and they have major health problems, which are the primary reasons of their mental distress. Because their children live so far away, they cannot care for them during their illness. This time, people rely on either neighbours or others. (Rani, 2022)

This study has three goals: to identify the socioeconomic differences between the nest and non-empty nest rural elderly, to differentiate them based on their relationship with their children, and to distinguish the patterns of mental worries between them. Data were collected using the social survey approach. The researcher chose three communities in the Jhenaidah district for the elderly who are empty-nesters. The non-empty-nest elderly researcher established Satoli village in Naogaon district. Purposive sampling with informed consent was used to obtain data from 132 respondents (100 non-empty nests and 32 empty nests).

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to obtain data. In this study, the majority of empty-nest respondents had adequate socioeconomic situations, whereas non-empty-nest respondents did not. In both cases, the highest-ranking (empty-nest and non-empty-nest) respondents' relationship with children was positive and did not differ. The fundamental distinction is in the situation of service providers. The majority of the non-empty-nest elderly did not experience loneliness or

mental anxiety. On the other hand, all empty-nest respondents reported feelings of loneliness, and the majority experienced mental anguish. GOs and NGOs should establish adult recreation centres and old-age homes, as well as train elders to communicate with youngsters using current technologies (Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, Skype). It will reduce their loneliness and mental anxiety (Beggs, March 1993).

Using a purposive sample of 550 Chinese older persons in Beijing, China, this study investigated the potential impact of children's out-migration, either internally or internationally, on intergenerational connections and parental well-being (Khanang, 2023). By comparing older persons in nonmigrant, internal migrant, transnational, and hybrid (with both migrant and non-migrant children) homes, we discovered that children's out-migration only harmed intergenerational contact and instrumental support, but not monetary or emotional support. Older adults from various family types reported similar levels of despair and life satisfaction. Internal migrant families were the most likely to indicate financial concerns, whereas transnational families were more likely to worry about a lack of care. The impact of children's out-migration was exacerbated by parents' coping abilities. The findings indicate that the vulnerability of the "left-behind" elderly may have been overstated. Future research will distinguish between different types of migration and the diversity among older parents with migrant children (M.Lin., 2018).

This study focusses on the so-called 'zero generation': parents of first-generation migrants who are initially left behind in the migrant country of origin and may later accompany their children on migration or engage in transnational back-and-forth movement (Kadam, 2009). We question the dominant view of the left-behind older generation as dependent and in need of care, emphasising instead their active participation in migration

and the provision of care and support to their children and grandchildren. We examine their evolving patterns of mobility, intergenerational care, well-being, and loneliness in Albania and abroad using interviews with primarily zero-generation Albanians and some first-generation migrants in several geographical contexts (Albania, Italy, Greece, and the United Kingdom). In recounting the often-overlooked tale of the zero generation, we show both their fragility and agency in diverse settings and eras, impacted by family structure and the ageing process (R.cela, 2014).

This study empirically examines the association of migration of an adult male child (ren) on the mental health of the older parents left behind. It also examines the interaction effects of sex of older parents and male child migration on major depression to explore whether there is a gender differential in the possible association.

The data for the study were obtained from the first wave of the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI, 2017-2018). The total sample size for the present study was 27,248 older aged 60 years and above (male-12,624; female-14,624). Descriptive statistics along with cross-tabulation were presented. Proportion test was used to evaluate the significance level of differences in depression by sex. Additionally, binary logistic regression analysis was used to find out the associations. Major depression with symptoms of dysphoria, was calculated using the Short-Form Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI-SF).

About 10.5% and 9.0% of older males and females had migrant sons. Found that there was significant gender differential in depression in older age (male: 7.5% and female: 9.7%; $p < 0.001$). It was further found the prevalence of depression was found among older men (9.3% vs. 7.3%) and women (12.5% vs. 9.4%) with migrant son. Older adults with migrant son had 26% significantly higher likelihood to be depressed in reference to

older adults with non-migrant son (AOR: 1.26; CI: 1.02-1.56). Further, older women with a migrant son had 76% significantly higher likelihood to be depressed in reference to older men with migrant son (AOR: 1.76; CI: 1.32-2.39).

This study invites policymakers' attention towards migration of young children and its potential effects on mental health of left-behind old parents in community-settings and in women in particular. Policies should focus on spreading awareness to migrant children of older adults on maintaining frequent contacts and visits to their ageing parents (T.Sulaiman, 2022).

4. Materials and Methods

The present paper uses a qualitative research approach and has adopted holistic case study design to gain a comprehensive understanding. A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the specific cases within the context, considering various interconnected factors that influence educational outcome. The universe and population for the study from Ernakulam district, Kerala. The descriptive research design is used for the study and adopted Convenient sampling techniques. Semi structured interview schedule was used in tool for data collection. Thematic analysis was done to derive findings for the qualitative data.

5. Discussion

The migration of youth often leaves parents navigating a complex emotional landscape. Financial burdens arise not only from the costs associated with migration but also from ongoing support parents might provide. This creates a dual challenge: managing household finances while ensuring their child's stability abroad. Additionally, the physical separation can lead to a weakened parent-child relationship, as regular interactions are often replaced by infrequent calls, causing emotional disconnect and a sense of loss. Such changes heavily impact

parents' emotional wellbeing, with many experiencing anxiety, loneliness, or even depression as they adapt to a new family dynamic.

Despite these challenges, parents demonstrate resilience through various coping mechanisms. Maintaining consistent communication with their children through technology, participating in community or spiritual groups, and focusing on personal hobbies are common strategies. However, uncertainties about their child's safety, job prospects, or emotional well-being abroad often weigh heavily on parents' mental health. These fears, coupled with societal pressures and a lack of accessible mental health support, highlight the importance of addressing the emotional wellbeing of parents left behind in migration narratives. Effective interventions could include community-based counselling programs or peer-support networks to help parents process their emotions and navigate this transitional phase.

6. Findings

- Parents often face additional financial stress due to remittances, funding their child's migration, or supporting their child in a foreign country.
- Migration creates physical distance, often leading to reduced communication and emotional disconnect between parents and children.
- Many parents report feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and sadness due to their child's absence, compounded by concerns about their well-being in a foreign environment.
- Parents struggle with feelings of abandonment, societal expectations, and the lack of immediate support systems to process their emotions.
- Parents adopt strategies such as staying connected via phone or video calls, seeking social or religious support,

and engaging in activities to distract themselves from feelings of loss.

- Fear of their child's safety, job security, or cultural adaptation in a new country adds to parents' stress and impacts their emotional stability.

7. Social Work Implication

7.1 Supportive Interventions for Emotional Resilience

Parents of migrant children face immense emotional stress due to separation, uncertainty, and concerns about their children's well-being. Supportive interventions, such as counselling and emotional health workshops, can help parents build resilience. These programs can equip parents with coping strategies, improve their emotional regulation, and provide them with tools to maintain mental health, thus creating a stable family environment despite physical distance.

7.2 Advocacy for Parental Rights and Benefits

Advocacy efforts can focus on ensuring that parents of migrant children receive adequate social and economic support. By leveraging research findings, social workers can push for policies that provide financial assistance, affordable mental health services, and legal protection for parents dealing with challenges like workplace inflexibility or discrimination due to their migration status.

7.3 Mental Health Support Services

Stress and anxiety are common among these parents, making mental health services a critical need. Accessible mental health programs, including individual counselling, peer support groups, and stress management workshops, can address their specific emotional challenges. Creating safe spaces for parents which they can share experiences and seek assistance without stigma will help enhance their emotional well-being.

7.4 Community Engagement and Awareness Programs

Engaging the community to support parents of migrant children can help reduce feelings of isolation. Social workers can organize community awareness campaigns that foster empathy, educate about the struggles faced by these parents, and encourage collective support. Building local networks also can provide parents with practical help, such as childcare and emotional companionship.

7.5 Monitoring and Evaluation of Well-being Programs

Regular monitoring and evaluation of interventions targeting the emotional well-being of parents of the migrant children are essential. By assessing the efficiency of programs like counselling sessions or community initiatives, social workers can identify areas for improvement and adapt strategies to meet evolving needs. This makes sure that the programs remain impactful and relevant.

8. Conclusion

The migration of children, often undertaken for better career prospects and improved living standards, has profound and multifaceted implications on the lives of parents left behind. While it symbolizes progress and opportunity for the younger generation, it creates a void that parents must navigate, often without adequate societal acknowledgment or support. This study highlights the complex interplay of emotional, financial, and social challenges parents face due to their child's migration, shedding light on the often-overlooked experiences of those who stay behind.

One of the most significant findings is the emotional toll of migration. The physical distance creates a palpable absence, leading to reduced communication and a sense of emotional disconnect. Parents frequently experience feelings of loneliness, sadness, and anxiety, exacerbated by constant worries about

their child's well-being in a foreign environment. The emotional landscape is further complicated by fears of their child's safety, job security, and ability to adapt culturally, which often overshadow the pride and hope they feel for their child's achievements.

Financial stress also emerges as a recurring theme. While migration may alleviate some long-term financial burdens through remittances, many parents initially face significant economic strain. The costs associated with funding their child's migration, repaying educational loans, or supporting them in an unfamiliar country often add to their stress. This dual burden of emotional and financial strain underscores the sacrifices parents make to secure a better future for their children. Despite these challenges, the resilience displayed by parents is remarkable. They adopt various coping mechanisms, such as maintaining regular communication through phone or video calls, engaging in hobbies to channel their emotions, and seeking support from social or spiritual communities.

However, the study also highlights the need for targeted interventions to support parents during this transitional phase. Community-based counselling programs, peer-support networks, and accessible mental health resources can also play a vital role in helping parents process their emotions and adapt to the new family dynamic. Additionally, creating awareness about the emotional and psychological impact of migration on parents can foster a more empathetic societal approach.

In conclusion, the migration narrative cannot be complete without acknowledging the profound sacrifices and silent struggles of parents. Their journey is one of resilience, adaptation, and unwavering support, even in the face of emotional and financial challenges. By addressing these realities and providing holistic support systems, societies can ensure that migration becomes a shared story of growth and well-being for

both generations, it bridges the gap between opportunity and enduring bonds of family.

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