



Impact of Adult Migration on Psychological Wellbeing of Rural Elderly

KEYWORDS

Adult, migration, psychological, well-being, elderly

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ABSTRACT

The ageing population and massive rural-to-urban migration poses major challenge to elderly care in rural areas as the traditional method of inter-generational elderly support is under considerable pressure. This paper examines the impact of migration of adult children on the psychological well-being of rural elderly. The study was carried out in Utal village of Vijayapur district and Dadanatti, Kajjidoni and Sunag tanda of Bagalkot district of Karnataka. The total sample comprised of 102 elderly persons aged 65 years and above whose adult children had migrated to other places other than their place of origin. The scale developed and standardized by Sisodia,D.S. and Choudhary,P. was used to measure the psychological well-being of rural elderly. The scale consists of five areas namely satisfaction, efficiency, sociability, mental health and interpersonal relations with 10 items in each area. The results revealed that 53.92 percent of the respondents had low level of psychological well being leading to augmented feelings of loneliness and unhappiness.

Introduction

The growth rate of the older population is significantly higher than that of the total population and majority of elderly in India are staying in rural areas. Studies of migration and depression tend to focus on migrants moving from developing and restructuring countries to industrialized ones and rarely consider links between migrants and their households of origin (Swinen & Shelton, 2007). However, internal migration within low and middle income families, especially young adults moving from rural to urban areas, is a major feature of global population change. Very little is known about the impact on older adults left behind in rural areas. Added to it, the traditional family support is decreasing as urbanization and migration take young members of the family away. The collapse in family ties and structure also have negative effect on elders who used to enjoy support from extended joint families where traditionally the elders were respected and properly catered for (Asiyanbola,2009). In developing countries, off spring are the primary caretakers of parents and typically provide support though co-residence or geographic proximity. Yet migration, also a common phenomenon in developing countries disrupts this process when off spring move away (Abas et.al, 2009; Kanajau-puni 2000). The separation of families due to migration presents a stressful event for elderly parents who are left behind, with potential implications on older adults' mental health. Previous research suggests that the main determinants of mental health in later life are related to the families ability to provide instrumental care, the older adults' network of social support and his/her socio-economic conditions. Migration may affect though in two possible mechanisms. First a Child's absence caused by migration could lead to gaps in the proximate social or instrumental support received, thus negatively affecting parents' mental health (levkoff et.al, 1995). On the other hand, offspring's migration could signal the 'launching' of offspring and further increase support to parents if remittances are sent. A commonly held view is that outmigration of young people has starkly negative consequences for ageing rural parents, with loneliness, isolation and even loss of basic instrumental and economic support. Elderly persons are

more at risk since most of them are no longer in the economically active phase of life and the social security schemes for elderly pay a very meager amount which is almost negligible for their day to day living and health expenses. Moreover, many older people are unable to access social security services due to inability to prove their age. Hence the main objective of this study is to examine how adult offspring's migration affects the psychological well being of elderly parents who are left behind in rural areas.

Methodology:

The study on "Impact of adult migration on psychological well being of rural elderly" was carried out in Utal village of Vijayapur district and Dadanatti, Kajjidoni and Sunag tanda of Bagalkot district of Karnataka. The total sample comprised of 102 elderly persons aged 65 years and above whose adult children had migrated to other places other than their place of origin. The scale developed and standardized by Sisodia,D.S. and Choudhary,P. was used to measure the psychological well-being of rural elderly. The scale consists of five areas namely satisfaction, efficiency, sociability, mental health and interpersonal relations with 10 items in each area. Suitable statistical analysis was carried out.

Findings:

The age of the elderly ranged from 65 to 98 years. The number of female elderly were more compared to male elderly in the sample selected. Majority of the respondents were illiterate (85.32 percent). Very few (10.59 %) of the respondents were still working. In sub areas, 59.80 percent of the respondents had low level of satisfaction. Forty six percent of the respondents had low level of efficiency. More than half i.e. 52.94 percent of the respondents had high level of sociability. The mental health of 51.96 percent of the respondents was found to be low. The interpersonal relations of the respondents was found to be high among 41.18 percent of the respondents (Table-1).

Table-1: Distribution of the respondents according to various variables**N=102**

Level	Satisfaction	Efficiency	Sociability	Mental Health	Inter-personal relations
Very low (10-12)	17 (16.67)	6 (5.88)	- (-)	15 (14.71)	7 (6.86)
Low (12-16)	61 (59.80)	47 (46.08)	10 (9.80)	53 (51.96)	12 (11.76)
Moderate (16-43)	13 (12.75)	26 (25.49)	15 (14.71)	26 (25.49)	30 (29.41)
High (43-48)	11 (10.78)	14 (13.73)	23 (22.55)	8 (7.84)	42 (41.18)
Very high (48-50)	-	7 (6.86)	54 (52.94)	- (-)	11 (10.78)

Further, the overall level of psychological well being revealed that more than half i.e 53.92 percent of the respondents had low level of psychological well being. Only 4.90 percent of them had high level of psychological well being (Table-2).

Table-2: Distribution of the respondents according to their level of psychological well being**N=102**

Level of Psychological well being	Number	Percentage
Very low (50-58)	12	11.76
Low (58-83)	55	53.92
Moderate (83-217)	18	17.65
High (217-242)	12	11.76
Very high (242-250)	5	4.90

Life satisfaction (+0.185*), Efficiency (+0.135*), Sociability (+0.165*), Mental health (+ 0.170*) and interpersonal relations (+0.162*) had a positive and significant relationship at 5 percent level with the psychological well being of the rural elderly. Income had a positive and significant relationship (+0.203**) with the psychological wellbeing of the elderly. Financial support from children were positively and significantly related with psychological well being. Further it was observed that having enough money to meet daily and health needs, childrens' regular visit and financial support each contributed to the psychological well being of elderly. This is because most elderly people do not have the strength to work, therefore any financial assistance from the children goes a long way at alleviating their health and financial needs. Older elderly people (above 75 years) were more at risk of poor well being than younger elderly.

Similar results were found in a study conducted by Davin (1999) wherein he found rural to urban migration as the main cause of the reduction in the number of potential care-givers and a lower quality of family support, which leads to an exacerbation of the elderly welfare and health conditions in rural China.

Further one more study carried out by Abas et.al. (2009) in Thailand found depression in older adults to be associated with loss of close contacts with their adult children who have migrated to urban areas.

Conclusion:

In the study , it was found that more than half i.e 53.92 percent of the elderly had low level of psychological well-being. Outmigration of adult children has starkly negative consequences for ageing rural parents, with loneliness, isolation and even loss of basic instrumental and economic support.

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