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Labour migration of offspring and its effects on the psychological well-being of elderly parents

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Abstract

Elderly care in rural areas is facing significant challenges due to the ageing population and the widespread rural-urban migration, which is placing significant strain on the conventional approach of providing intergenerational assistance for the elderly. This study investigates the effects of adult children's migration on psychological well-being of elderly people living in rural areas. The research was conducted in three villages located in Vijayapur and Bagalkot districts of Karnataka. The sample consisted of 102 senior citizens (65 years of age and older) whose adult offspring had moved away from home. To gauge the psychological well-being of senior citizens living in rural areas, Sisodia and Choudhary devised and standardized a scale. There are ten items in each of the five domains on the scale: satisfaction, efficiency, sociability, mental health, and interpersonal ties. According to the findings, 53.92 percent of the participants reported low psychological well-being, which increased their feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction. There is a need to actively publicize the culture of filial piety, forming a good atmosphere of love and respect for the older adults and encouraging their children to provide support to meet the needs of the older adults. The rural social security system should be improved, the rural old age pension should be raised appropriately.

Keywords: Elderly, migration, offspring, psychological, well-being

Introduction

In the less developed countries of Asia, rapid population aging combined with the outmigration of young adults from rural to urban areas raise pertinent questions about the well-being of elderly dependents left-behind. On the one hand, migrant children can boost family income through remittance transfers and thereby allow elderly dependents to afford better living conditions. On the other hand, prolonged separation from children and attendant changes in familial responsibilities and care arrangements can cause psychological distress and fatigue among left-behind parents. The lack of adequate social safety nets or alternatives to family care can further exacerbate the unintended consequences of out-migration. It creates a care vacuum for left-behind aging parents who have functional limitations and do not have geographically proximate children who can address their daily care needs. It's unclear what the net impact on elderly left-behind in migrant households will be and the few existing causal studies on the subject provide mixed evidence. The purpose of this study is to address this empirical puzzle on how adult offspring's migration affects the psychological well-being of elderly parents left behind.

Methodology

Three villages in the districts of Bagalkot and Vijayapur

were the sites of the study (Fig.1). The sample as a whole consisted of 102 senior citizens, 65 years of age and older, whose adult offspring had moved away from home. Sisodia, D.S. and Choudhary, P. (2012) ^[8] developed and standardized a scale to assess the psychological health of senior citizens living in rural areas. The scale has ten items in each of the following five areas: interpersonal interactions, efficiency, sociability, mental health, and satisfaction. Strongly agree, agree, normal, disagree, and strongly disagree are the available alternatives. The gathered data was put to "t" and Chi-square tests to determine the relationship and difference between migration and seniors psychological well-being.

Results

The elderly in the sample ranged from 65 to 98 years old; more women than men made up the elderly population; majority of respondents were illiterate (85.32 percent); only a small percentage (10.59 percent) were still employed; in sub-areas, 59.80 percent of respondents reported low levels of satisfaction; 40.6 percent reported low levels of efficiency; 52.94 percent reported high levels of sociability; 51.96 percent reported low levels of mental health; and 41.18 percent reported high levels of interpersonal relations (Fig 2).

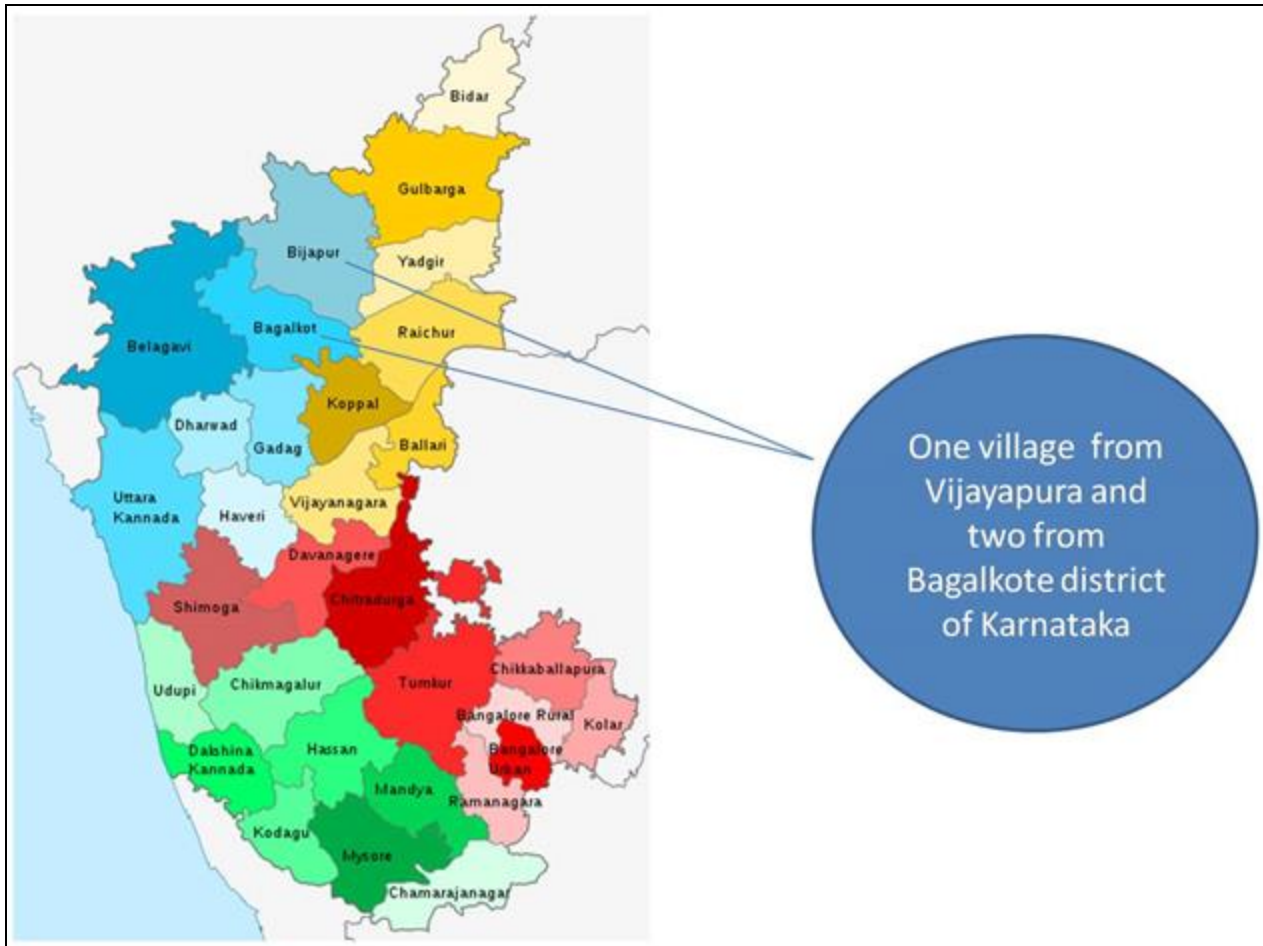


Fig 1: Locale of the study

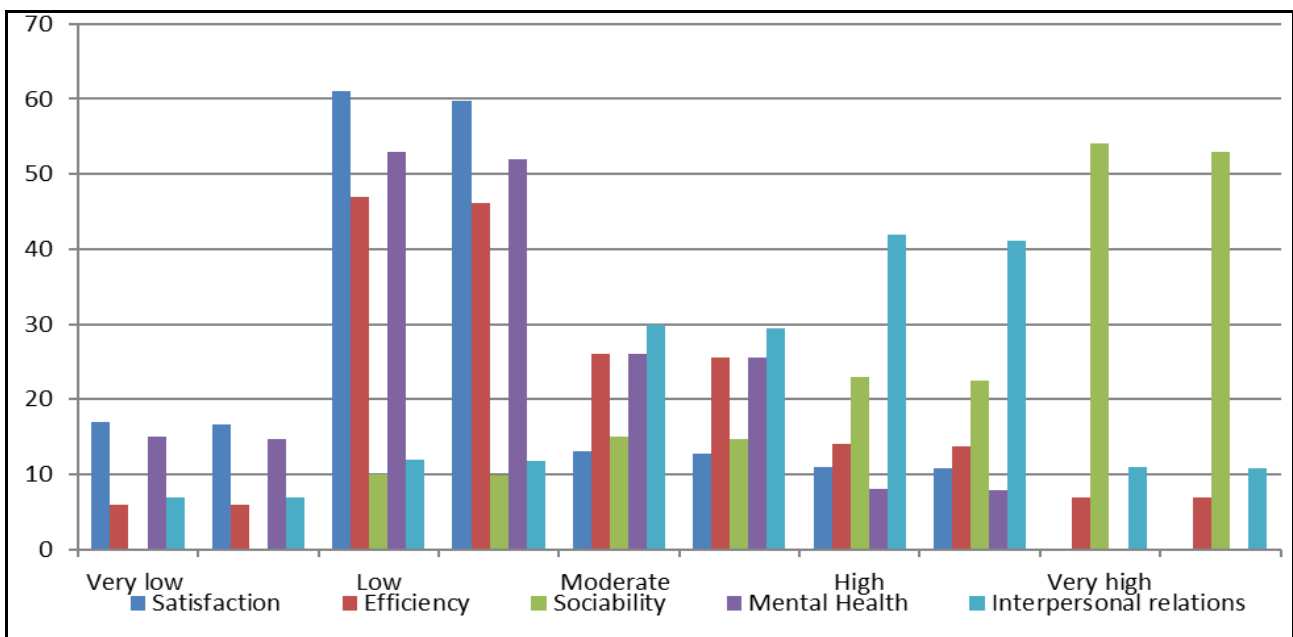


Fig 2: Distribution of respondents by different domains of psychological well being

The respondents' overall psychological well-being score showed that over half (53.92%) had low psychological well-being. Only 4.90 percent of them reported a high degree of psychological well-being (Fig 3).

In terms of psychological well-being of the elderly living in rural areas, life satisfaction (+0.185*), efficiency (+0.135*),

sociability (+0.165*), mental health (+0.170*), and interpersonal interactions (+0.162*) all showed a positive and significant link at 5 per cent level. The psychological wellness of the elderly was positively and significantly correlated (+0.203**) with their income.

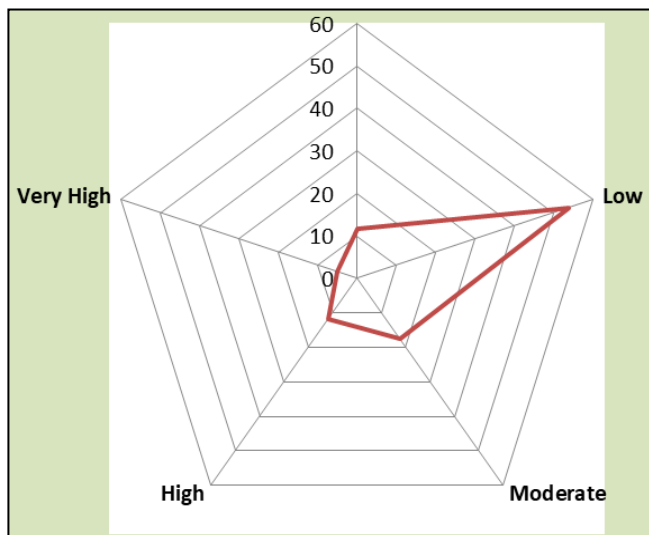


Fig 3: Distribution of respondents based on Psychological Well being

Discussion

It was found that regular visits from children, and receiving enough money to meet daily expenses and health needs helped to improve the psychological wellbeing of the elderly. This is due to the fact that majority of older people lack the stamina to work, thus any financial support from the children greatly improves their financial and health conditions. Individuals over 75 years of age were more vulnerable to poor health outcomes than younger seniors. Similar findings were reported in a 1999 study by Davin ^[1], who identified rural-to-urban migration as the primary factor contributing to the decline in the number of potential carers and the poorer quality of family support, both of which worsen the health and welfare conditions of the elderly in rural China. Another study conducted in Thailand by Abas *et al.* (2009) ^[2] discovered a correlation between depression in older individuals and the absence of close relationships with their adult children who have moved to cities.

Conclusion

The research revealed that majority of the elderly, specifically 53.92 percent, exhibited low psychological well-being. Adult child outmigration has severe negative effects on ageing rural parents, including isolation, loneliness and practical help.

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Declaration: The authors have no competing interests.

Data availability: Data would be made available on request.

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Appendix: The table, graph in jpeg format is for online visibility is submitted as an appendix.

Authors contribution

The first author submitted the proposal, got the funding and did the research work. The second author analyzed the data. The third author helped in writing and submitting the article.

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