

Research Paper

Mental Well Being, Parental Stress and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation among Parents of Migrated Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The increasing migration of young adults has significant psychological and emotional implications for the parents who remain behind. This study employed purposive sampling and examined the mental well-being, parental stress and difficulties in emotion regulation among 250 parents (125 Fathers and Mothers) from Kerala. The data were obtained through the standardized, psychological scale of Mental well-being scale (WEMWBS), Parental stress scale (PSS) and Difficulties in emotion regulation scale (DERS-36). The data were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test Spearman's rank correlation. The findings revealed significant gender difference across all the variables examined. Compared with fathers and mothers experienced higher levels of Parental Stress and greater difficulties in emotion regulation, while reporting lower Mental Well being. Mental well-being was negatively associated with parental stress and difficulties in emotion regulation. This indicating that higher levels of parental stress and difficulties in emotion regulation are associated with lower levels of mental well-being. The results suggest the significance of promoting emotion regulation and resilience to enhance the mental well-being of parents of migrated young adults.

Keywords: *Young adults, Migration, Difficulties in emotion regulation, parental stress, Mental well-being*

In today's globalized world, migration has become a major social phenomenon. 'Migration' affects people across all age groups and populations. The migration of the children, particularly young adults, has a tendency to go outside for different purpose. The research studies show that the 50% of the young adults have already migrated and this trend is expected to increase in the future. During their schooling itself they think of migrating abroad.

In contemporary times, migration has become a prominent feature of globalization, strongly impacting family structures and interpersonal relationships. In regions such as Kerala, where youth migration rates are significantly high, the trend of young adults migrating abroad for higher education, career opportunities, and improved living standards has profoundly affected family life. The Kerala Migration Survey (Rajan, 2024) reported that approximately

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2.2 million Keralites were living abroad, with a substantial proportion consisting of young adults pursuing education and employment opportunities. Although migration often brings economic progress and enhanced social mobility, its emotional and psychological impacts on parents, particularly aging parents, remain largely overlooked.

Migration disrupts traditional family roles and responsibilities by creating prolonged physical separation, making it difficult to maintain emotional closeness and family cohesion. Although digital communication helps families remain connected, it fully replaces the emotional support provided by physical presence (Thenmozhi & Mohan, 2024). While youth migration contributes to economic stability and social mobility, it also has significant emotional consequences for parents left behind. Elderly parents often experience loneliness, anxiety, emotional insecurity, and reduced mental well-being due to prolonged separation from their children. (Ambadas Varma KC and Kotian, 2024). The growing prevalence of nuclear families further aggravates this issue, as parents with one or two children may experience increased emotional stress when their children migrate. Feelings of loneliness, insecurity, parental stress, and difficulties in managing emotions have become common, directly affecting parents' mental well-being. Although modern technologies such as video conferencing and social media enable continued contact, they cannot fully replace physical presence and emotional closeness.

This research arises from the need to understand the psychological and emotional consequences of youth migration on parents. Most migration studies focus on economic benefits and migrants' experiences, often neglecting the well-being of parents left behind. Examining Mental well being, Parental Stress, Difficulties in Emotion regulation is essential for developing supportive interventions, mental health services, and family-centered policies. The study is also significant for psychologists, social workers, policymakers, and community organizations in designing programs that strengthen coping skills and emotional resilience among parents. By addressing this emerging social concern, the study contributes to a broader understanding of migration, highlighting its impact not only on economic outcomes but also on family dynamics and parental.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the mental well-being of parents whose young adults have migrated.
2. To examine the associations among difficulties in emotion regulation, parental stress, and mental well-being in parents of migrated young adults.
3. To compare parental stress, mental well-being, and difficulties in emotion regulation between fathers and mothers following the migration of their young adults.

Hypothesis of the study

- **H1:** There is no significant difference in mental well-being between fathers and mothers of migrated young adults.
- **H2:** There is no significant difference in parental Stress between fathers and mothers of migrated young adults.
- **H3:** There is no significant difference in difficulties in emotion regulation between fathers and mothers of migrated young adults.
- **H4:** There is no significant relationship between the mental well-being and parental stress among parents of migrated young adults.

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- **H5:** There is no significant relationship between parental stress and dimensions of difficulties in emotion regulation among the parents of migrated young adults.
- **H6:** There is no significant relationship between the mental well-being and dimensions of difficulties in emotion regulation the parents of migrated young adults.

Sample

A sample is a representative part of a population selected for a research study. The sample consisted of 250 parents (N=250), including 125 fathers and 125 mothers, aged between 40 and 70 years, from diverse backgrounds (Urban, rural) and different socioeconomic statuses. The study focused on parents whose young adults children had migrated for purposes such as education, employment or family related reasons.

Measurement tools used in the study

- **Sociodemographic Data:** Prepared by the researcher to collect socio-demographic details of respondents, including personal information and migration related details influencing mental well-being, emotion regulation, parental stress.
- **Warwick - Edinburgh Mental Well-being (WEMWBS):** Developed by Sarah Stewart-Brown and Janmohamed Tennant and colleagues in 2007, is a 14- items scale designed to measure Mental Well-being. It assesses positive mental health and emotional functioning.
- **Parental Stress Scale:** Formulated by, Judith A. Berry and Warren H. Jones in 1995 is an 18-item scale used to measure parental stress and feelings about parenthood. It assesses the positive and negative dimensions of parenting by using 5 point response format.
- **Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-36):** Gratz and Roemer (2004) developed a 36-items Scale designed to measure emotion regulation. It comprises six dimensions: non-acceptance of emotional responses, difficulties in engaging in goal directed behaviour, impulse control problems, lack of emotional awareness, limited access to emotion regulation strategies, and lack of emotional clarity. An elevated score represent greater difficulties in regulating emotions.

Procedure

The present study aimed to examine mental well-being, parental stress, and emotion regulation difficulties. A quantitative method was adopted, and data were collected using standardized psychological tools, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being (WEMWBS), Parental Stress Scale (PSS), Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-36). Parents aged 40-70 years of migrated young adults were selected from Kerala. Collected informed consent from the participants, and their voluntary participation and confidentiality were ensured. The participants were provided with approximately the questionnaires, which required approximately 15-20 minutes. The researcher cleared all the doubts during the administration time. For statistical analysis of the obtained data, Mann-Whitney U test and Spearman's rank correlation were employed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of mental well-being scores of parents of migrated young adults.

variable	Range	Father (N=125)		Mother (N= 125)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Mental Well being	Very low (14-40)	12	9.6%	106	84.8%
	Below average (41-44)	3	2.4%	11	8.8%
	Average (45-59)	26	20.8%	2	1.6%
	Above average (60-70)	84	67.2%	6	4.8%

Table 1 presents the mental well-being of fathers and mothers of migrated young adults across four categories: very low, below average, and above average. The findings reveal a marked gender difference in mental well-being. Most mothers (84.8%) were classified in the very low category. These findings suggest that mothers experience significantly poorer mental well-being than fathers. The results are consistent with previous studies. Reported lower mental well-being among Indian women than men, while in the another study found that children's migration increased parental depression, with a strong impact of mothers. Similarly, Antman (2010) demonstrated that young adult migration adversely affect parents mental well-being by reducing emotional and social support, with mothers being disproportionately affected. Collectively, the findings suggest that gender has a significantly influence on the mental well-being of parents of migrated young adults.

Table 2: Gender difference in mental well-being between fathers and mothers of migrated young adults(N=250).

Variable	Gender	N	Mean Rank	U	P
Mental well being	Fathers	125	178.98	1128.000	<.001
	Mothers	125	72.02		

Table 2, present the Mann Whitney U test results comparing the mental well-being of fathers and mothers of migrated young adults. A significant difference was observed, with fathers obtaining a higher mean rank (178.98) than mothers (72.02), indicating better mental well-being among fathers. This difference may be attributed to variations in emotional attachment and coping strategies, as mothers often experience greater emotional distress following their children's migration. The findings are consistent with Tull et al. (2027), who reported significant gender differences in well-being, and with Tamers et al. (2002), who found that women are more likely to use emotion focused coping, whereas men tend to adopt problem - focused coping.

Table 3: Gender difference in Parental stress between fathers and mothers of migrated young adults(N=250).

Variable	Gender	N	Mean rank	U	P
Parental stress	Fathers	125	76.66	1707.500	<.001
	Mothers	125	174.34		

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Table 3 reflects of the Mann-Whitney U test analysing differences in parental stress between fathers and mothers of migrated young adults. A statistically significant difference was observed. Mothers had a higher mean rank (174.34) than fathers (76.66) indicating significantly greater parental stress. The finding may be attributed to mothers stronger emotional involvement greater concern for their children's safety and well-being, and reduced daily interaction following migration. It is consistent with Gross and Johns (2023), who reported higher stress levels among mothers, who found that women experience significantly higher chronic and daily stress than men. Similarly, Fida R, et al. (2023) Found no significant gender difference in stress, suggesting that parental stress may vary across contexts and populations.

Table 4: Gender difference in dimensions of between fathers and mothers of migrated young adults(N=250).

Variables	Gender	N	Mean Rank	U	P
Difficulties in emotion regulation	Fathers	125	71.37	1046.00	<.001
	Mothers	125	179.63		
Non acceptance of emotional responses	Fathers	125	84.01	2626.500	<.001
	Mothers	125	166.99		
Difficulty engaging in goal directed behaviour	Fathers	125	83.75	2593.500	<.001
	Mothers	125	167.25		
Impulse control difficulties	Fathers	125	73.97	1371.500	<.001
	Mothers	125	177.03		
Lack of emotional awareness	Fathers	125	105.99	1427.500	<.001
	Mothers	125	145.01		
Limited access to emotional regulation strategies	Fathers	125	74.42	5373.500	<.001
	Mothers	125	176.58		
Lack of emotional clarity	Fathers	125	88.50	3187.500	<.001
	Mothers	125	162.50		

Table 4 provides the difference in difficulties in emotion regulation between fathers and mothers of young adults who have migrated, as determined using the Mann-Whitney U test. Mothers had significantly higher mean rank than fathers. Significant gender differences were also observed across all the dimensions DERS subscales ($P < .001$), with mothers consistently reporting greater difficulties in emotion regulation. These findings suggest that mothers experience greater emotional regulation difficulties, possibly due to stronger emotional involvement with their children and increased concerns following migration. The results are consistent with Mink et al. (2022), although Gross and John (2023) reported minimal overall gender differences in emotion regulation. Overall, the findings indicate that mothers of migrated young adults experiences in emotion regulation. Overall, the findings indicate that mothers of migrated young adults experience significantly greater difficulties in emotion regulation than fathers.

Table 5: Correlation between mental well-being and Parental stress among parents of migrated young adults (N= 250)

		Parental stress
Spearman's rho	Mental wellbeing	-.726***

***Correlation is statistically significant at the level (Two tailed)

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Table 5, displays the relationship between mental well-being and parental stress based on the spearman's rank correlation. The results revealed a strong, statistically significant negative correlation, indicating that higher parental stress is associated with lower mental well-being among parents of migrated young adults. This relationship explained by increased worry, loneliness, and emotional strain resulting from separation from their children, which adversely affects mental well-being. The findings are consistent with previous studies by Abidin (1992) all of which reported that higher parental stress is associated with poorer mental well-being. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of reducing parental stress to promote better mental well-being among parents of migrated young adults.

Table 6: Correlation between mental well-being and dimensions of difficulties in emotion regulation among parents of migrated young adults (N=250)

	Mental well being
Difficulties in emotion regulation	-.796***
Non acceptance of emotional responses	-.558***
Difficulties engaging in goal directed behaviour	-.659***
Impulse control difficulties	-.802***
Lack of emotional awareness	-.308***
Limited access to emotional regulation strategies	-.834***
Lack of emotional clarity	-.411***

***Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.001 level (two tailed)

Table 6 illustrates the relationship between mental well-being and difficulties in emotion regulation. A significant inverse correlation was found between mental well-being and the dimensions of emotion regulation difficulties, indicating that higher levels of emotion dysregulation are associated with lower mental well-being. These results are in line with the findings of Gratz and Roemer (2004) and Gross and John (2003). Overall, effective emotion regulation appears to be a crucial factor in sustaining mental well-being among parents of migrated young adults.

Table 7: Correlation between parental stress and dimensions of difficulties in emotion regulation among parents of migrated young adults (N=250)

	Parental stress
Difficulties in emotion regulation	.914***
Non acceptance of emotional responses	.915***
Difficulty engaging in goal directed behaviour	.769***
Impulse control difficulties	.887***
Lack of emotional awareness	.579***
Limited access to emotional regulation strategies	.792***
Lack of emotional clarity	.631***

***Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.001 level (two tailed)

Table 7 displays the Spearman's rank correlation between parental stress and various dimensions of emotion regulation difficulties. The findings indicate that elevated parental stress is linked to increased difficulties in emotion regulation. Significant positive correlations were also observed across the dimensions of DERS, with the strongest associations for Nonacceptance of emotional responses and Impulse control difficulties. These findings suggest that parents experiencing higher stress have greater difficulties

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regulating their emotions. The results are consistent with Abidin (1992), Tull et al. (2007), who reported a positive association between parental stress and difficulties in emotion regulation. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of stress management interventions to improve emotion regulation among parents of migrated young adults.

Major findings

- A significant gender difference was found in mental well-being, indicating that Fathers scored higher in mental well-being compared to Mothers.
- A considerable gender difference was found in parental stress. Mother exhibited above average levels of Parental Stress, whereas fathers demonstrated very low levels of Parental Stress.
- The findings indicated that gender significantly influenced dimensions of difficulties in emotion regulation. Mothers scored higher on dimensions in emotion regulation than fathers, suggesting greater challenges in regulating emotions.
- Mental well-being was significantly and negatively correlated with parental stress, suggesting that higher mental well-being was associated with lower parental stress.
- Mental well-being was negatively and statistically associated with dimensions of difficulties in emotion regulation, indicating that better mental well-being was associated with fewer difficulties in regulating emotions.
- Higher levels of emotion regulation difficulties were observed alongside increased parental stress, suggesting a significant positive association between these variables.

CONCLUSION

The present study identified gender related differences in mental well-being, parental stress, and emotion regulation difficulties among parents of migrated young adults. Additionally, elevated parental stress and increased emotion dysregulation were found to be linked diminished mental well-being. Conversely, a positive association was observed between emotion regulation difficulties and parental stress, where parents with greater regulatory difficulties reported higher stress. Therefore, the Null hypotheses were rejected. The study is highly relevant, as Mental well-being, Parental stress, and Difficulties in emotion regulation are key psychological aspect affecting parents of migrated young adults. These factors strongly influence their psychological functioning. However, the study has certain limitations. It focused only on Emotion Regulation and Parental Stress without considering other potential factors such as financial and social challenges. Finally, the findings contributed to the existing literature on migration and psychological experiences of parents left behind by migrated young adults.

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Conflict of Interest

The author reports no potential conflict of interest.

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