

Subjective Well-Being among “Left-Behind Children” Of Labour Migrant Parents in Rural Northern Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Studies worldwide have shown that, besides positive economic and social impacts, labour migrant parents also cause negative effects to the well-being of those they leave behind, especially children. However, this study orientation has not generated significant interest in Vietnam. This article indicates the results of a survey on 469 left-behind children of labour migrant parents in rural areas by comparing them with a control group of 650 children living with their parents in three rural areas of North Vietnam including Phu Tho, Bac Ninh, and Ha Nam provinces. The Keyes’s Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) was used for this study. It is shown that children whose parents work away from home have lower subjective well-being than those living with their parents; children with migrant mothers or with both migrant parents also achieve lower scores of subjective well-being than those with migrant fathers. Factors such as a child’s self-assessment of his or her academic and life success and the relationship between the child and his or her migrant parents have significant influence to the child’s subjective well-being.

Keywords: Labour migrant parents, “left-behind children”, subjective well-being

INTRODUCTION

In Vietnam, it has been an obvious trend that the population in general and parents in particular leave the countryside to bigger cities or more developed countries for employment opportunities. According to the General Statistics Office, in 2015, the number of domestic migrants aged 15 years and older is approximately 1.24 million people in which women account for 57.7%, and up to 78.4% of them participate in the

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workforce. The majority of these people move to urban areas. Furthermore, by the end of 2015, 500,000 people in Vietnam were engaged in labour export to different 40 countries and territories (General Statistics Office, 2016).

Many migrant workers are forced to leave their children at home with caregivers, particularly in families with both husband and wife working away from home. Parental migration can provide positive socioeconomic impacts, especially in terms of financial support that helps maintain living and learning conditions of their children at home (Binh, 2012; Piper, 2012; Think, 2012). In addition to immediate socioeconomic benefits that can be seen easily, parental migration has also caused negative psychological effects to left-behind children in rural areas.

Labour Migrant Parents and Left-Behind Children

Labour migrant parents in this study is understood as fathers and mothers who have to leave their homeland—their permanent residential area to work in another province or city (in Vietnam, mainly to the Southeast, especially to Ho Chi Minh City) or to an entirely different country or territory (as exported labours). It was defined by author Nguyen Viet Cuong (2015) that parents are considered as migrant parents if they and their children have not met within 1 month or longer (Nguyen, 2015). In this study, we carried out the survey with only parents working away from home for 6 months and longer.

Left-behind children in this study is understood as those whose fathers or mothers (or both parents) migrate to cities or to a different country or territory for more than 6 months and are younger than age 18 years (Graham & Jordan, 2011). These children are left in their hometown and nurtured by caregivers who are usually their grandparents or fathers (in case of mother working away from home) or mothers (in case of migrant father).

Subjective Well-being

According to Keyes, the subjective well-being is the perception and evaluation of an individual on her or his life, emotional symptoms and psychological and social function. He supposed that the well-being is inclusive of three components of emotional, psychological, and social well-being (Keyes, 2002).

Emotional well-being is expressed through a series of signs reflecting positive emotional symptoms. It is measured by positive emotional state or life satisfaction in general.

Psychological well-being is reflected in the self-acceptance and self-satisfaction; positive relationships with others; personal development; life goals; master of the surroundings; and self-control. A person with psychologically well-being is satisfied with almost everything of herself or himself. He or she has warm and trustful relationships. He or she believes that he or she will become into a better person, being oriented in life, can control his surroundings to satisfy all his or her needs and make his or her own decisions (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Social well-being is shown by the satisfaction with interpersonal relationships and social surroundings. This dimension is evaluated through public and social criteria inclusive of social cohesion, social realization, social inclusion, social acceptance, and social contributions. People obtain social well-being when they find that operation of the society is meaningful and understandable for them and that society has the potential for human development; they can feel that they belong to the society and feel their contribution to the society (Keyes, 1998).

Overviews

Studies worldwide on the impacts of parents working away from home to left-behind children have been widely conducted in China and ASEAN countries because parental migration for employment has become very common in these regions. These studies indicate that working parental migration has negative influences to *children's learning*, particularly, their academic performance is reduced (Zhao, Yu, Wang, & Glauben, 2014), or their learning process is interrupted (Jia & Tian, 2010). Children find difficulty in communicating with their teachers and friends (Luo, Gao, & Zhang, 2011). Rural children having absent parents have *more negative emotions* than those living with parents. They feel lonely and bored (Jia & Tian, 2010; Jingzhong & Lu, 2011; Piper, 2012; Su, Li, Lin, Xu, & Zhu, 2012). According to Ye Jingzhong and Pan Lu (2011, p. 372), “loneliness” is the most common word that left-behind children

in rural areas used to describe their feelings; children with absent parents also show their worry, insecurity, and fear (Fan, Su, Gill, & Birmaher, 2010).

According to these studies, children of migrant parents have trouble in *self-assessment*, for example, they are un-self-confident, aloof, and isolated (Jingzhong & Lu, 2011; Shen & Shen, 2014). They also have low self-assessment (Wang, Ling, Su, Cheng, Jin, & Sun, 2014; Xiaojun, 2015). Parental migration due to employment does not only cause negative impacts to children's learning, emotions and self-assessment, but it also creates *negative behaviors* on left-behind children, boys tend to display more negative behaviors than girls (Fan et al., 2010; Hu, Lu, & Huang, 2014; Wen & Lin, 2012).

In terms of *the children's subjective well-being*, these studies show that left-behind children in rural areas due to parental migration have lower scores of subjective well-being than the group of children living with their parents. Graham and his colleagues carried out a survey with 3,876 parents/caregivers of children aged 3 to 12 years in four countries including Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam on the children's well-being. The researcher group revealed that children with migrant fathers in Indonesia and Thailand felt less happy than those living with their parents. However, the same evidence was not found in Vietnam and the Philippines (Graham & Jordan, 2011). In China, Wei Lu's research also showed that the quality of life of these children was reduced, and the conditions of

health care were not guaranteed (Lu, 2011). The evidence was also found in a study of Su S. et al, accordingly, children with both migrant parents in general achieved the lowest score of well-being in three surveyed children groups inclusive of children with a migrant father or mother, children of non-migrant parents and children with both parents working away from home (Su et al., 2012). A study by Wen and Line (2012) with 704 children aged 8 to 18 years in rural areas (including children with absent parents, children with absent father or mother, and those living with parents) in five districts of Hunan province (China), revealed that children suffered from parental migration were less satisfied with their life and academic performance than those in non-migrant households, especially children whose mothers worked away. Only 33.33% of children of migrant mothers were satisfied with their life and learning, this proportion was respectively 46.3% and 42.62% in children with absent fathers and those with both migrant parents (Wen & Lin, 2012). Similar results were also reported in a study by Donald J. Treiman and Qiang Ren when they noticed clear evidence showing that “children who have absent parents are the least happy and have the highest depression scores” (Zhao et al., 2014, p. 22).

In Vietnam, the studies on migrants have been focused in directions such as “migration trends,” “lives of migrants” and “research for policy recommendation” (ACTIONAID, 2012); or “the role of migrant workers to the social and economic development”; “social problems of migrant

workers”; and “proposing measures to help migrants access to social services” (Kham & Quyet, 2015a, b). A common characteristic of the studies on migrants in Vietnam is showing “disadvantages that migrant workers encounter in their work and daily life at the destination places. In terms of policy perspective, these studies emphasized a “blank” status of policies for migrants in urban areas” (ACTIONAID, 2012, p. 17).

It can be noted that studies on left-behind people including children and the elderly are less thorough. However, there are a few studies on the impact of working migrant parents to children left-behind. As aforementioned, Graham et al. (2011) carried out a survey with 3,876 children (aged 3–12 years) on well-being of children in four Southeast Asian countries (including Vietnam) based on opinions of caregivers. However, this study showed that in Vietnam, there was no difference in well-being between children whose parents work away from home and the group of children living with their parents (Graham & Jordan, 2011). Using data from the Young Lives survey in 2007 and 2009 with 7,725 children aged 5 to 8 years in four countries Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam, author Nguyen Viet Cuong supposed that migrant parents helped improve the financial situation of their families, but did not increase their children’s health and cognitive abilities. Parents working away from home were the cause of health and cognitive problems in children in Vietnam as well as in Peru and India. Children who suffered from long-term parental migration tended to be affected

more negatively than those with short-term migrant parents. The lack of communication between parents and children as well as parental care was the leading cause of nutrition and learning problems in children (Nguyen, 2015).

Thus, we can see that there have been very a few studies on negative impacts of parental migration to left-behind children through the self-assessment of these children. This is definitely a research gap in Vietnam. The purpose of this article is to (i) describe the current state of the subjective well-being of children whose parents work away from home through comparing them with a group of children living with parents; (ii) compare the subjective well-being among groups of children of migrant parents and; (iii) indicate individual and family factors that forecast the subjective well-being of left-behind children. It is assumed that the subjective well-being of children in families with parents working away from home is lower than the same children living with parents; children whose mothers migrate have lower well-being scores than those with fathers working away from home and factors relative to children's family can better predict the subjective well-being of left-behind children.

METHODS

Participants

This study involves quantitative cross-sectional research. Samples were selected by cluster and simple random sampling. The sampling process included three parts. First, three provinces in Northern Vietnam

having the highest percentage of migrant workers were defined by the researcher group. Then, we prepared a list of districts in these provinces, from which a district per province was selected randomly. Finally, communes of the district were also listed and one of these communes was selected as the study site on a random basis. Total number of surveyed samples include 1,119 children aged 9 to 15 years (469 children of migrant parents, 650 children of non-migrant parents). The survey was carried out in three sites in northern Vietnam, specifically in Lam Thao district, Phu Tho province; Gia Binh district, Bac Ninh province; and Ly Nhan district, Ha Nam province. The site selection is based on the fact that the ratio of local people working away from home in these sites is higher than that of other regions in the north of Vietnam. The questioned children were studying from 4th to 9th grade at primary and secondary schools. The study samples are described in detail in Table 1.

Materials and Procedure

Mental Health Continuum-Short Form/MHC-SF of Keyes was applied in the research. (Keyes, 1998, 2002). This short version is derived from the full form (Mental Health Continuum-Long Form) of 40 items, which was developed based on the Affect Balance Scale of Bradburn (1969), Psychological Well-being Scale of Ryff (1995), and Social Well-being Scale of Keyes (1998) (Ha, 2015a, 2015b). MHC-SF scales were Vietnamized by author Truong Thi Khanh Ha (2015a) and adaptable to

Table 1
Description of surveyed samples

Criteria	Classification	Left-behind children (N=469)	Non-Left-behind children (N= 650)	Total (N= 1119)
1. Sex	Male	50.1% (n = 235)	47.1% (n = 306)	48.3% (n = 541)
	Female	49.9% (n = 234)	52.9% (n = 344)	51.7% (n = 578)
2. Age	Aged 9–11 years	48.6% (n = 227)	48.8% (n = 312)	48.5% (n = 539)
	Aged 12–15 years	51.4% (n = 240)	51.6% (n = 333)	51.5% (n = 573)
<i>Mean (SD)</i>		<i>11.70 (1.59)</i>	<i>12.01 (1.68)</i>	<i>11.88 (1.65)</i>
3. Level of school	Primary school	49.3% (n = 231)	51.7% (n = 336)	50.7% (n = 567)
	Secondary school	50.7% (n = 238)	48.3% (n = 314)	49.3% (n = 552)
4. Length of parental migration	≤2 years	39.0% (n = 139)	-	-
	2- 5 years	33.4% (n = 119)	-	-
	> 5 years	27.5% (n = 98)	-	-
<i>Mean (SD)</i>		<i>4.24 (3.90)</i>	-	-
5. Who works far away from home	Father	39.4% (n = 176)	-	-
	Mother	23.5% (n = 105)	-	-
	Two parents	37.1% (n = 166)	-	-
6. Residential area of children	Phu Tho	23.9% (n = 112)	123.4% (n = 152)	23.6% (n = 264)
	Bac Ninh	32.8% (n = 154)	34.2% (n = 222)	33.6% (n = 376)
	Ha Nam	43.3% (n = 203)	42.5% (n = 276)	42.8% (n = 479)

Vietnamese teenagers. The questionnaire used for the survey is in Vietnamese. This study indicated that the MHC-SF subjective well-being scale has high reliability on samples of 861 students. In particular, the emotional, social, and psychological well-being scales have the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficients of 0.81, 0.81, and 0.78, respectively. The entire MHC-SF scale has the reliability of 0.88(Ha, 2015a).

The MHC-SF scale includes 14 items measuring three dimensions: emotional well-being (three items), psychological well-being (six items), and social well-being (five items). With each item there are six answer levels and are scored as follows: *not even once* = 1 point; *twice a month* =

2 points; *about once per week* = 3 points; *approximately once every 2, 3 weeks* = 4 points; *nearly every day* = 5 points; and *daily* = 6 points. Factor analysis of Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient indicates that three sub-scales and the grand scale have a coefficient of reliability that can ensure the deployment of the research, specifically, sub-scales of emotional, psychological, and social well-being having Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.767, 0.699, and 0.680, respectively, and the general well-being scale achieving Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.834. Well-being scale and sub-scales ensure the normal distribution based on Skewness and Kurtosis’ indicators, specifically as follows: emotional well-being (Skewness = -0.510 and Kurtosis = -0.160);

psychological well-being (Skewness = -0.827 and Kurtosis = -0.121); social well-being (Skewness = -0.197; Kurtosis = -0.752); and psychological well-being (Skewness = -0.578 and Kurtosis = 0.165).

A factor analysis was conducted in our research. Its results reveal that 14 items are clearly divided into three factor groups. Three factors have Eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining 48.29% of the data's

variability. The factor loading varies from 0.341 to 0.855, greater than 0.3. KMO coefficient is 0.88 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$. The correlation between the items ranges from 0.163 to 0.858. Items are divided into three factor groups inclusive of emotional well-being, social well-being, and psychological well-being, specifically as Table 2.

Table 2
Factor analysis of MHS-SF scale

You feel....	Emotional well-being	Social well-being	Psychological well-being
1. Interested in life	0.855		
2. Content/satisfied	0.819		
3. Happiness, joy	0.702		
4. That the way society works is logical		0.790	
5. That people are basically good		0.728	
6. That our society is becoming a better place for all people		0.644	
7. That you belong to a community		0.569	
8. That you have something important to contribute to the society		0.417	
9. That you experience things that will make you grow as a person			0.751
10. That you are good at managing responsibility for your daily life			0.618
11. That you have warm and confident relationships with others			0.597
12. That life has a purpose			0.565
13. That you have the confidence to have your own thoughts and that you dare to express them			0.561
14. That you like most of your personality			0.341

Research Process. First, we contacted and received the consent of selected schools' managing boards and homeroom teachers to carry out the survey with their students. Then, within each grade, the researchers

chose one group of children whose parents work away from home, and another group of children living with their parents in order to conduct the survey. Each student was received a survey sheet/questionnaires and

completed it on their own. The students gathered at a meeting hall of each school under the guidance of the research team's members.

Processing Techniques. The data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0).

RESULTS

As aforementioned, we have assumed that the subjective well-being of left-behind children due to parental migration is lower than that of children living with their parents, the results are shown in Table 3.

In general, scores of subjective well-being in children living with their parents is higher than that of children whose parents work away from home. The average scores of children living with their parents = 4.26, while scores of children of parental migration = 4.10. The difference was statistically significant with $t = 2.669, p < 0.001$.

Considering each aspect of children's well-being expressions, children whose parents work away from home showed lower emotional and psychological well-being than those living with parents. The average scores of emotional well-being achieved by left-behind children is 0.21 point lower than those of children of non-migrant parents ($t = 2.621, p < 0.001$).

Furthermore, the scores of psychological well-being of children suffered from parental migration is also 0.37 point lower than those of children living with parents ($t = 6.287, p < 0.001$).

One notable point is that there is no statistical difference in social well-being between the group of children with migrant parents and the group of children with non-migrant parents. The average scores of these two groups is 3.74 ($t = 0.034, p > 0.05$).

One of the hypotheses raised by the survey team is that children with mother or both parents working away from home have lower subjective well-being than those with migrant father. The results are revealed in Table 4.

Table 3
Comparison of subjective well-being of children of migrant parents with those living with their parents

Groups of children		N	Mean	SD	df	t	p																																
Emotional Well-being	LBC	422	4.37	1.31	1021	2.621	0.00																																
	Non-LBC	601	4.58	1.20				Social Well-being	LBC	452	3.74	1.18	1009	0.034	0.97	Non-LBC	586	3.74	1.14	Psychological Well-being	LBC	424	4.08	1.04	1021	6.287	0.00	Non-LBC	599	4.45	0.80	Well-being (Total)	LBC	358	4.10	0.98	870	2.669	0.00
Social Well-being	LBC	452	3.74	1.18	1009	0.034	0.97																																
	Non-LBC	586	3.74	1.14				Psychological Well-being	LBC	424	4.08	1.04	1021	6.287	0.00	Non-LBC	599	4.45	0.80	Well-being (Total)	LBC	358	4.10	0.98	870	2.669	0.00	Non-LBC	514	4.26	0.83								
Psychological Well-being	LBC	424	4.08	1.04	1021	6.287	0.00																																
	Non-LBC	599	4.45	0.80				Well-being (Total)	LBC	358	4.10	0.98	870	2.669	0.00	Non-LBC	514	4.26	0.83																				
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	Non-LBC	514	4.26	0.83																																			

Note: LBC- Left-behind children; Non-LBC- Non- Left behind children

Table 4
Comparison of subjective well-being of children of migrant parents (N = 464)

Criteria	Classification	Emotional Well-being			Social Well-being			Psychological Well-being			Well-being (Total)		
		Mean (SD)	t, F, df, p	Mean (SD)	t, F, df, p	Mean (SD)	t, F, df, p	Mean (SD)	t, F, df, p	Mean (SD)	t, F, df, p		
1. Sex	Male	4.38 (1.36)	t(420) = 0.053, p = 0.958	3.74 (1.19)	t(423) = -0.112, p = 0.911	4.02 (1.05)	t(422) = -1.196, p = .233	4.07 (0.98)	t(356) = -0.507, p = 0.612				
	Female	4.37 (1.27)		3.75 (1.18)		4.14 (1.04)		4.12 (0.98)					
2. Age	9–11 years old	4.64 (1.23)	t(418) = 4.024, p = 0.000	4.03 (1.07)	t(421) = 5.119, p = 0.000	4.16 (1.05)	t(421) = 1.500, p = 0.134	4.31 (0.93)	t(355) = 3.984, p = 0.000				
	12–15 years old	4.13 (1.34)		3.46 (1.21)		4.01 (1.03)		3.90 (0.98)					
3. Educational stage	Primary school	4.64 (1.23)	t(420) = 3.979, p = 0.000	4.02 (1.07)	t(423) = 4.808, p = 0.000	4.17 (1.05)	t(422) = 1.611, p = 0.100	4.30 (0.92)	t(356) = 3.871, p = 0.000				
	Secondary school	4.13 (1.34)		3.48 (1.23)		4.00 (1.04)		3.90 (0.99)					
4. Length of parental migration	(1) ≤ 2 years	4.29(1.30)		3.55(1.24)		3.88 (1.05)		3.91 (0.98)	F(2, 273) = 6.253, p = 0.000				
	(2) 2- 5 years	4.60 (1.16)	F(2, 319) = 2.039, p = 0.130	3.93(1.11)	F(2, 321) = 6.444, p = 0.000	4.32(1.00)		4.32 (0.90)	(3) > (2), p = 0.050				
	(3) > 5 years	4.55 (1.25)		4.11(1.09)		4.28(1.03)		4.33(0.95)	(2) > (1), p = 0.050				
5. Who works far away from home	(1) Father	4.59 (1.29)		3.85 (1.12)		4.24 (1.07)		4.25 (0.97)	F(2, 336) = 5.802, p = 0.000				
	(2) Mother	4.04 (1.41)	F(2, 399) = 5.336, p = 0.000	3.45 (1.22)	F(2, 402) = 3.671, p = 0.020	3.84 (1.06)		3.77 (1.02)	(1) > (2), p = 0.001				
	(3) Two parents	4.30 (1.28)		3.81 (1.21)		4.08 (1.00)		4.11 (0.97)					
6. Children's residential area	(1) Phu Tho	4.23 (1.25)	F(2, 419) = 1.577, p = 0.000	3.65 (1.15)	F(2, 422) = 27.70, p = 0.000	4.02 (1.00)		4.00 (0.90)	F(2, 355) = 33.95, p = 0.000				
	(2) Bac Ninh	4.84 (1.17)		4.29 (0.98)		4.50 (0.92)		4.58 (0.80)					
	(3) Ha Nam	4.06 (1.35)		3.36 (1.19)		3.76 (1.05)		3.69 (0.98)					
7. The frequency of communication between children and parents	Less frequent	4.22 (1.34)	t(416) = -2.620, p = 0.009	3.66 (1.17)	t(420) = -1.409, p = 0.160	3.97 (1.02)	t(419) = -2.349, p = 0.019	3.96 (0.99)	t(422) = -1.196, p = 0.010				
	Frequent	4.55 (1.26)		3.82 (1.19)		4.21 (1.06)		4.23 (0.95)					

The data in Table 4 illustrates that children having mother working away from home obtain lower scores on subjective well-being than those with father migrating, specifically, the average scores of these two groups, respectively, are 3.77 and 4.11 and $p < 0.001$.

In terms of migration time, the figures in Table 4 indicate an overall trend in which the group of children with long-term migrant parents have higher subjective well-being than those with short-term migrant parents. In particular, the average scores of children whose parents work away from home for more than 5 years, from 2 to 5 years, and less than 2 years are respectively 4.33, 4.32, and 3.91, and $F(2, 273) = 6.253, p < 0.001$.

The figures in Table 4 also reveals that children aged 9 to 11 years show higher subjective well-being than those aged 12 to 15 years, the average scores of these two age groups is 4.31 and 3.90, respectively, $t(355) = 3.984, p < 0.001$. However, considering each symptom of subjective well-being indicates that there is no difference in psychological well-being between the two children groups ($t(421) = 1.500, p > 0.05$).

In terms of the frequency of communication between children and their migrant parents, the data in Table 4 shows that children with frequent communication with their parents have higher subjective well-being than those of less frequent contact with their parents. Specifically, the average scores of these two groups are respectively 4.23 and 3.96, $t(422) = -1.196$ and $p < 0.001$.

Elementary students with migrant parents were reported to have higher scores on subjective well-being than the high school group (the average score= 4.30 and 3.90, $t(356) = 3.871, p < 0.001$). However, no differences are statistically significant in terms of psychological well-being between these two groups of children ($t(422) = 1.611, p > 0.05$).

Children with parents working away from home in Bac Ninh achieve higher scores on subjective well-being than those in Phu Tho and Ha Nam provinces. The average scores of the children in Bac Ninh, Phu Tho, and Ha Nam provinces are respectively 4.58, 4.00, and 3.59, $F(2, 355) = 33.95, p < 0.001$.

Considering the gender aspects of children with migrant parents, data in Table 4 shows that no statistical differences are found between boys and girls, $t(356) = -0.507, p > 0.05$.

One of our research questions is which individual and family factors could anticipate the children's subjective well-being?

In order to model the impact on children's subjective well-being, an analysis of multiple regression was carried out by establishing Enter's models (at the same time with putting the variables into the model). The formula of multiple regression model in this research is shown as follows:

$$Y_{w,b} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(X_1) + \beta_2(X_2) + \dots + \beta_k(X_k)$$

where “ $Y_{w.b}$ ” is the indicator of children’s subjective well-being; “ β_0 ” is a constant; “ β_1 ” is the regression coefficients; “ X_i ” is the independent variables included in the model; “ k ” is independent variables of the model.

We set up the regression model with two variable groups at individual and family levels: Model 1 includes only independent variables belonging to personal characteristics of children, specifically including age; self-esteem; sex; educational stages/level of school; self-assessment of academic performance; self-assessment of life success. Model 2 has the variables that had been included in the Model 1 and

additional independent variables of the children’s family, inclusive of the number of siblings living with them; length of parental migration; father or mother who works away from home; frequency of parents’ visits and frequency of communication between children and their parents. In total, six variables under the group of children’s personal characteristics and five variables of family group were analyzed in the models. Prior to the multiple regression, checking for assumption violations was carried out to ensure that the assumptions was basically met.

Application of multiple regression analysis has provided us in Table 5.

Table 5
Multiple regression model predicting the subjective well-being of children of migrant parents

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>						
(Constant)	2.030	0.786		2.584	0.010**	12.122	0.540	0.254	0.233
Self-Esteem	0.054	0.016	0.209	3.402	0.001***				
Ages	0.018	0.073	0.031	0.254	0.800				
Sex	-0.066	0.118	-0.033	-0.559	0.577				
1 Level of School	-0.481	0.231	-0.244	-2.081	0.039*				
Self-assessment of success in life (score scale 1–5)	0.173	0.064	0.161	2.715	0.007**				
Self-assessment of academic performance (score scale 1–5)	0.274	0.069	0.258	3.954	0.000***				
(Constant)	1.336	0.782		1.708	0.039*	10.150	0.590	0.348	0.314
Self-Esteem	0.040	0.015	0.153	2.583	0.010**				
Ages	-0.001	0.070	-0.001	-0.009	0.993				
Sex	-0.049	0.112	-0.025	-0.433	0.665				
Level of School	-0.310	0.223	-0.157	-1.391	0.166				

Table 5 (continue)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>						
2	Self-assessment of success in life (score scale 1–5)	0.202	0.063	0.188	3.192	0.002**			
	Self-assessment of academic performance (score scale 1–5)	0.303	0.066	0.285	4.582	0.000***			
	Number of siblings whom children living with	0.010	0.061	0.009	0.157	0.875			
	Length of parental migration	0.068	0.015	0.264	4.409	0.000**			
	Father or mother working away from home	-0.096	0.064	-0.087	-1.501	0.135			
	Frequency of parents' visit	0.057	0.057	0.059	1.014	0.312			
	Frequency of communication between parents and children	0.142	0.046	0.184	3.056	0.003**			

Note: Significance level **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001

Testing the appropriateness of the model showed that the *F*-statistic in both models is at a very high significance level (*p* < 0.001). Therefore, it can be confirmed that the database is appropriate for these two models. In Model 1, six variables of children's individual characteristics can explain 23.3% of variation of indicators of subjective well-being in children with migrant parents. In Model 2, when the variable group of family factors (five variables) is added, the adjusted *R*² increased to 31.4% compared with Model 1 which means that the addition of independent variables of children's family factors in Model 2 strengthen

the explanation for the influence of the independent variables to the subjective well-being of children of migrant parents.

Testing statistical assumption for regression coefficients in the models reveals that some hypotheses of this research on the effects of variables are confirmed ($\beta \neq 0$). However, the number of variables that can affect the statistical significance in each model is not the same in these models, specifically, three variables in Model 1 and five variables in Model 2. We believe that children's self-assessment of their school performance and success in life is the key factor affecting their subjective well-

being. Besides, other factors including the frequency of communication between children and their parents while they work away from home and children's self-esteem also have a proportional influence to subjective well-being of themselves.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the impacts of parental migration to their children. Various studies were conducted and published on this topic (Zhao, Yu, Wang, & Glaubien, 2014; Fan, Su, & Gill, 2010). Results of these studies showed that children of migrant parents experienced emotional, behavioral, and learning difficulties. They also showed lower level of subjective well-being than that of children who lived with their parents. However, the factors that could mitigate negative impacts of parental migration on children have not been fully mentioned. Moreover, as indicated in the overview, most published studies were carried out with only caregivers, while our study conducted the survey with children.

Our findings are in line with conclusions of previous studies on the same topic. Subjective well-being of children whose parents work away from home is lower than that of children living with their parents. A recent study in China also indicated that children with both parents migrating for employment obtained the lowest score of subjective well-being in the three surveyed groups including children with one migrant parent (father or mother), children in non-migrant households and children with both parents working away from home (Su et

al., 2012). Thus, the results of our study are relatively consistent with the findings of Su et al. (2012) despite of minor difference, in particular, children whose mothers work away from home have the lowest score of subjective well-being, compared to children with both migrant parents, and children of only migrant fathers.

Scores of subjective well-being of children with mothers migrating for employment are the lowest due to the fact that these children receive less care and love of mothers in their daily life. Characteristics of motherhood are love and warmth, while authority, control, and punishment are typical in father-and-son relationship when children have inappropriate behaviors (Collins & Russell, 1991). When both parents are working away, children lack mother's love, but are not controlled or suffered from punishment of the father, so children with both migrant parents obtain higher subjective well-being scores than those with only mother working away. The research also implies the important role of the mother in the psychological life of the children of migrant parents (Shen & Shen, 2014; Wen & Lin, 2012).

The research by Wang et al. (2014) based on a survey of 19 studies conducted in China, published in English in the period from 2006 to 2013 with a total of 13,487 children (aged 6 to 15 years) including 7,758 children left behind in rural China and a control group of 5,729 children indicated that left-behind children felt less happy than the group of children living with their parents; the group of girls and younger

children are less happy than the group of boys and older children (Wang et al., 2014). As compared with Wang's research, our results have similarities to affirm that children whose parents work away from home show lower subjective well-being than those living with their parents. However, in our research, the scores of subjective well-being are not different between boys and girls; this has also been demonstrated in a study by Proctor, Linley and Maltby (2008). In terms of age, in our study, children aged 9 to 11 years achieved higher scores of subjective well-being than those aged 12 to 15 years. The similar results have been also noted in some other studies, subjective well-being declines with age (Bradshaw, Keung, Rees, & Goswami, 2011; Klock, Clair, & Bradshaw, 2014).

Comparing our results with the findings of some other authors, both similarities and differences are found. This research reveals that children with migrant parents achieve lower scores of subjective well-being than those living with their parents (except social well-being), while Graham and his colleagues in their research indicated that there are no differences in statistical significance between the two groups of children. Another difference between our research with Graham's is that Graham evaluated the well-being of children through the judgment of caregivers (Graham & Jordan, 2011) while our approach is to directly ask the children.

To understand which elements can mitigate negative consequences of parental migration to subjective well-being of

children, we used a multiple regression model to examine factors within the children themselves and those within their families. The study found that the children's satisfaction in learning outcomes, their satisfaction in life, the length of parental migration, and the frequency of communication between children and their parents (Table 5) were the most influential factors that increased the children's subjective well-being. This finding is consistent with Vietnamese culture and the influence of science and technology on nowadays communication. In Vietnam, a child is considered a good student if he or she has good academic performance at school. Therefore, when the child achieves good academic achievement, he or she feels pleased and happy. In addition, when his or her parents work far away from home, physical conditions (housing, furniture, daily activities) are improved (Nguyen, 2015), making the child feel happier. Thanks to the social networking sites and the internet universalization to every household, the communication of children with their migrant parents is significantly improved, eliminating the feeling of separation between parents and their child. If parents working far from home spend more time calling and/or talking online with their children, the children's feeling of separation decrease and subjective well-being increase.

The strength of this study is to gather data from the child itself through questionnaires of MHC-SF. However, no comparisons and reconciliation was done between the children's subjective well-being

with the evaluation of their fathers/mothers (in case of children with one migrant parent) or caregivers (for children with both father and mother working away from home).

Results from this study confirmed the findings of previous studies on the impact of migrant parents to “left-behind children” in different cultures, such as China or ASEAN countries are correct. It is undoubted that children of migrant parents express lower subjective well-being than those of non-migrant parents; the children of migrant mothers have lower scores than those with fathers working away from home and the interactions as well as communication between children with migrant parents are important factors that have considerable impact on children’s subjective well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, psychological problems in general, and in particular subjective well-being of children with migrant parents have not been widely studied in Vietnam. Key findings from this study indicate that (i) the subjective well-being in children whose parents migrate for employment is lower than that in the group of children living with their parents; (ii) children with mothers working away from home have lower subjective well-being than those with migrant fathers; and (iii) the children’s self-assessment of their success in learning and in life, and the frequency of communication between the children and their parents significantly affect the children’s subjective well-being.

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