

# A Study on the Impact of Parental Migration on Wellbeing and Mental Health of Left-Behind School Children

S. Pratheesha<sup>1</sup> and T. Vijayanka<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Language Studies, UNIVOTEC

<sup>2</sup>Department of English, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0009>

Received: 20 December 2024; Accepted: 28 December 2024; Published: 30 January 2025

## ABSTRACT

Parental migration has become increasingly common in Sri Lanka, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic crisis that has followed the pandemic, the loss of job opportunities, and the desire to improve one's standard of living have all contributed to this trend. This has led to a situation where mother or father has to go abroad leaving his or her family alone. This phenomenon has caused a significant number of children to be left behind. The objective of this study is to examine the effects of parental migration on the well-being and mental health of these children. BT/Puthukudiyiruppu Kannaki Maha Vidyalayam was selected to obtain quantitative data because it is a rural school in Batticaloa District with a significant number of left-behind children of parental migration. It is only one school in the village, and 90% of the parents in the village have enrolled their children in this school. Left behind children from Grade 6 to 10 of were surveyed to obtain the necessary data, which is nearly 45% of the total left behind in the school to receive required data, standard questionnaire was utilized and researchers used SPSS software to analyze the gathered data. The findings of the study showed that more than 58 % of the left behind school children were more likely to be irregular at school, to experience anxiety and loneliness, and to have lower educational attainment. The findings of this study clearly suggest that parental migration has a significant impact on the wellbeing, mental health, and educational performance of left-behind children. Future researchers can investigate this issue with massive population to develop interventions to support these children.

**Keywords:** left-behind, mental health, parental migration, school children, wellbeing

## INTRODUCTION

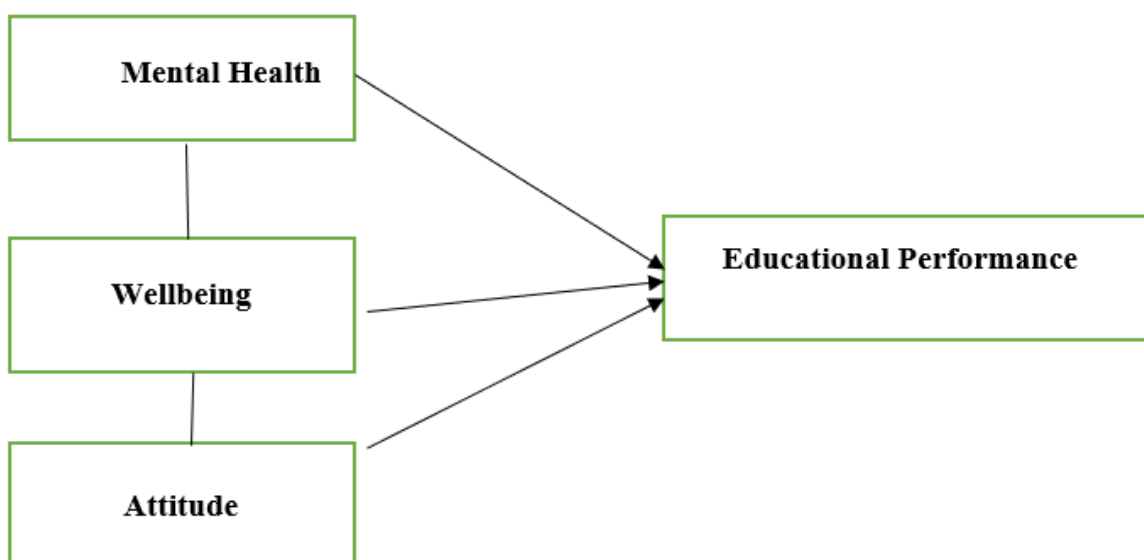
Migration has become increasingly common in Sri Lanka since the 2000s. People of all genders are moving from their homes in search of better economic opportunities. Poverty, unemployment, low wages, and political conflict are some of the factors that drive people to migrate. Foreign employment has become a major source of income for Sri Lanka. According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, remittances from migrant workers accounted for 8.4% of the country's GDP in 2022. Most of these remittances come from the Middle East, which is the largest source of migrant workers for Sri Lanka. Migration can have both positive and negative impacts on a country. On the one hand, it can help to boost the economy by bringing in much-needed foreign exchange. On the other hand, it can lead to brain drain, as skilled workers leave the country in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Overall, migration is a complex issue with both positive and negative impacts. It is important to carefully consider the potential impacts of migration before making decisions about how to manage it.

Migration can have both positive and negative consequences for families as well. On the one hand, it can provide economic opportunities for migrants and their families. On the other hand, it can also lead to family separation and challenges for the children who are left behind. A study by the World Bank found that people

who are likely to migrate are from rural areas and low-income families. This is because these families are often more likely to be affected by economic hardship and lack of opportunities. When parents migrate, it can have a significant impact on their children. Children who are left behind may experience physical, mental, and social challenges. They may also have difficulty in school and may not perform as well as children who are not left behind. However, it is important to note that not all children who are left behind experience negative consequences. Some children may thrive in their new roles as caregivers or breadwinners. Others may benefit from the financial support that their parents send home. The impact of parental migration on children depends on a number of factors, including the age of the child, the length of time the parent is gone, and the support that the child receives from other family members.

The Batticaloa District in Sri Lanka, once renowned for its paddy cultivation, experienced significant migration, with nearly 3,000 people leaving due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Reports from the Divisional Secretariat, Batticaloa). Puthukudiyirupu, a small rural area in the district, has a notable number of left-behind children. This paper examines the impact of parental migration on the educational attainment and mental well-being of school children. The study was conducted in a selected school within the Puthukudiyirupu Educational Zone, aiming to analyze the relationship between parental migration, children's education, and their mental health.

### Conceptualization



### Objectives

1. To identify the impact of wellbeing of the left behind school children on their education performance.
2. To identify the impact of the mental health of the left behind school children on their education performance.
3. To examine whether there are significant differences in the educational performance and emotional characteristics of children from migratory families.

### Research Questions:

1. Whether there is a relationship between wellbeing of the left behind children and their education performance?
2. Whether there is a relationship between the mental health of the left behind school children and their education performance?
3. Whether there are significant differences in the educational performance and emotional characteristic of children from migratory family?

## Significance

This study helps to identify the objectives of the survey and rectifies them. The study looked at both children of migrant families and children of non-migrant families. The study found that parental migration can have a negative impact on the educational attainment and mental well-being of children. However, the economic benefits of labor migration at the rural level can offset these negative effects. The study also found that the risk of psychological effects for early childhood development is heightened by parental migration. This is because left-behind children may experience separation anxiety, grief, and loss. They may also have difficulty in school and may be more likely to engage in risky behaviors. The study's findings suggest that there is a need for interventions to support left-behind children and their families. These interventions should focus on providing emotional support, improving educational opportunities, and reducing the risk of risky behaviours.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau (2013-2015), 80% of migrant women are married and 90% of them have children. Migration has become increasingly important in Sri Lanka in recent decades, and the number of migrants by age and sex has increased since 1990 says the reports from Unicef Migration Profiles. About 55% of female migrants are in the childbearing age group (25-44), and about 65% of male migrants are in the same age group.

About 24% of Sri Lanka's labor force, or 1.8 million people, are currently working abroad (SLFEB, 2015). Women make up nearly half of all migrant workers at 52% (Senaratna, 2011), and 89% of them work as domestic workers (IPS, 2013). The number of female migrants increased more rapidly than the number of male migrants until 2009. Changes in the policies and regulations governing female labor migration have led more men to migrate abroad.

Vygotsky's social learning theory (2004) says that children learn by interacting with their environment and with others. Families provide a supportive environment for children to learn the basics of social interaction, which lays the foundation for their relationships with others in society. In the context of transnational families, children have been recognised as a vulnerable population for several reasons, particularly for their dependence on parents or guardians for physical, psychological, social and economic needs (Cebotari 2020; Mazzucato et al. 2015; White, Leavy, and Masters 2003). The absence of the parent(s) can impact the child directly because of deprivation and indirectly because of the transformation of the physical and psychological environment of the child, resulting in problematic coping mechanisms, as chronicled in several studies (White, Leavy, and Masters 2003; Parreñas 2005; Dreby 2010; Graham and Jordan 2011; Mazzucato and Cebotari 2017; Kharel et al. 2021). Most notably, the long-term consequences of childhood care deprivation on brain development (Mackes et al. 2020), cognitive development (Nguyen 2016), emotional development (Mcfarlane et al. 2005; Slavich, Monroe, and Gotlib 2011) and their respective implications on psycho-social and behavioural impairments have been pointed out by research in psychology.

The interactionist perspective, developed by George and Edwards (1989) argue that children develop identity in response to interaction with others. This approach says children as being able to think for themselves and shape their own identities based on how they think others see them. When parents migrate, children lose important interactions with their closest caregivers, which can affect their identity development and their rights. The interpretive reproduction perspective, modeled by William (1997), argues that children negotiate, share and create culture with adults and each other. This approach finds children as being able to think for themselves and shape their own identities based on how they think others see them. When parents migrate, children lose important interactions with their closest caregivers, which can affect their identity development and their rights. The ecological perspective, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1986), maintains child develops competence within a social network. On this respect, family in collaboration with schools makes an important contribution to protect child rights. The critical perspectives, developed by Thorne (1987) and

James, et. al. (1998) argues children resist domination both actively and passively. This model assumes children as active agents who are powerless in the face of adult authority. Adults use their power to control and dominate children, and children resist this domination. However, children's interactions with adults, especially parents, can also shape their development and protect their rights.

In addition, psychological theory of behaviorism, emphasizes the role of reward and punishment play in children's learning process (Delprato and Midgley, 2002). This theory says children as passive recipients of adult influence. It could be assumed that children in parent-migrant families may receive less reward and punishment from their parents, which could affect their development and rights. The theoretical perspectives mentioned above highlight the importance of the family in shaping children's lives. Families, and parents in particular, play a critical role in shaping children's behavior and guaranteeing their rights, including the right to education.

Researchers are increasingly studying the impact of parental migration on the educational performance of left-behind children, with a focus on how it affects their time spent on studying and working, and their school attainment. For example, Antman (2013) found that Mexican children whose fathers migrate to the US spend less time studying and more time working. Chang, Dong, and Macphail (2011) used data from the Sri Lanka Health and Nutrition Survey to show that children in migrant households in Sri Lanka spend more time on household chores. However, the findings on children's school attainment are mixed. McKenzie and Rapoport (2011) found that older children left behind by Mexican migrants in the US are more likely to drop out of school. On the other hand, Antman (2013) found that paternal migration has a positive effect on the school attainment of girls.

In 2014, government of Sri Lanka makes it compulsory to submit a family background report when a married female intend to migrate for work.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive quantitative design to examine the impact of parental migration on the well-being and mental health of left-behind children at BT/Puthukudiyiruppu Kannaki Maha Vidyalayam, a rural school with many migrant children. Data was collected from 162 students (grades 6-10), with a 94.44% response rate (153 completed questionnaires). A stratified sampling method was used, and a 24-question questionnaire was administered to assess well-being, mental health, and related impacts. The findings aim to guide interventions for children from migratory families.

## DISCUSSION

Table 1: Age

| Age | Male | Female |
|-----|------|--------|
| 11  | 12   | 18     |
| 12  | 9    | 23     |
| 13  | 21   | 9      |
| 14  | 17   | 16     |
| 15  | 16   | 12     |

The table 1 shows the number of male and female left-behind students aged 11 to 15 years old due to parental migration. Female students outnumber males at ages 11 and 12, whereas male students dominate at ages 13, 14, and 15. This trend might reflect differing family roles assigned by age and gender. For example, younger females may be more likely to remain in caregiving roles, while older males may continue their education. Further investigation is required to determine whether parental migration contributes to a decline in female enrollment in higher secondary classes (grades 9 and 10) or if other socio-economic or cultural factors are at play.

Table 2: Number of migrated parents

| Migrated | Male | Female |
|----------|------|--------|
| Father   | 83   | 58     |
| Mother   | 9    | 3      |

According to the table 2, Fathers are substantially more likely than mothers to migrate, (141 vs. 12 cases). Male students outweigh female students among children left behind, indicating that families may choose to leave male children behind in order to uphold traditional roles or because of their perceived independence. Furthermore, none of the sample population's students have both parents who are moving, which may be due to economic or cultural barriers that prevent simultaneous parental migration. To investigate the underlying causes of these patterns, more qualitative research is required.

Table 3: Number of students living with

| Living with  | Male | Female |
|--------------|------|--------|
| Father       | 1    | 4      |
| Mother       | 94   | 29     |
| Grandparents | 6    | 6      |
| Relatives    | 6    | 7      |

In the table 3, the living circumstances of children who are left behind are displayed, compared to a somewhat lesser percentage of female children (29), the majority of male children (94) reside with their mothers. In this arrangement, four female children live with their father, but just one male child does. A tiny percentage of both male and female youngsters live with relatives (6 males, 7 females) or grandparents (6 each). Interestingly, none of the sample population's left-behind kids attend boarding schools. According to these results, substitute arrangements with extended family members are comparatively rare, and mothers are the primary caretakers for children who are left behind, especially male children. More research is necessary to determine whether cultural or practical factors play a role in the gender gap in living arrangements.

Table 4 Class rank of the left behind school children in their last term examination

| Class rank | Number of students |
|------------|--------------------|
| 1-5        | 7                  |
| 5- 10      | 16                 |
| 10-20      | 63                 |
| 20-25      | 67                 |

Only 23 students (15.03%) placed in the top 10, according to the table 4, while the bulk (86.27%) placed between 10th and 25th. This suggests that the majority of students that are left behind are not achieving at a high academic level. The low percentage of pupils in higher ranks emphasizes the necessity of interventions and focused academic support to improve their performance. This trend may also be influenced by other elements including emotional stress, a lack of parental supervision, and disturbed habits, underscoring the need for comprehensive teaching methods.

Table 5: Wellbeing of the left behind school children

| Wellbeing of the left behind school children | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree  | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|--------|----------------|
| a. I feel isolated                           | 6.53%             | 24.18%   | 18.95%    | 25.49% | 24.83%         |
| b. Less association in classroom activities  | 4.57%             | 5.88%    | 24.18%    | 46.40% | 18.95%         |

| <b>Wellbeing of the left behind school children</b>            | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Uncertain</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| c. I am not satisfied with my current educational situation    | 8.49%                    | 16.33%          | 24.18%           | 46.40%       | 4.57%                 |
| d. I feel comfort from the current living environment          | 10.45%                   | 47.05%          | 18.95%           | 14.37%       | 9.15%                 |
| e. I communicate with my parent always                         | 8.49%                    | 13.72%          | 18.30%           | 47.05%       | 10.45%                |
| f. I'm satisfied with the care and support given by my parents | 28.10%                   | 33.33%          | 23.52%           | 5.22%        | 9.80%                 |

Several important conclusions on the wellbeing of children who are left behind may be drawn from the table 5: Isolation: A considerable percentage of respondents struggle with loneliness, as evidenced by the 50.32% who agreed or strongly agreed that they feel lonely. Classroom Engagement: Most (65.35%) reported less participation in class activities, indicating a lack of interest that could have an impact on academic achievement. Educational Satisfaction: Of the respondents, half (50.82%) were unhappy with their educational circumstances, and 24.18% were unsure, indicating a lack of confidence or contentment with their educational setting.

Living Environment: The majority of respondents (57.42%) expressed dissatisfaction with their current living situation, highlighting possible difficulties in social or familial support networks. Parental Communication: Even though parents and children communicate frequently (57.50%), 61.43% of respondents are unhappy with the attention and support they receive, which indicates that emotional needs are still not being satisfied. These results highlight the complex difficulties experienced by children who are left behind and advocate for organized support networks that attend to their emotional and intellectual needs.

Table 6: Mental health of the left behind children

| <b>Mental Health of the Left-behind Children</b>   | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Uncertain</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| a. I feel sad, hopeless, or down   | 11.76%                   | 24.83%          | 21.56%           | 31.37%       | 10.45%                |
| b. I don't feel comfortable discussing my emotions and feelings with someone I trust         | 8.49%                    | 12.41%          | 30.06%           | 27.45%       | 21.56%                |
| c. Feeling lost and loneliness in the classroom  | 5.88%                    | 14.37%          | 32.02%           | 32.67%       | 15.03%                |
| d. Sometimes I feel a sense of guilt or responsibility for being separated from my parent(s) | 8.49%                    | 13.07%          | 21.56%           | 45.09%       | 11.76%                |
| e. Shows grief and anxiety in the classroom  | 5.22%                    | 3.92%           | 28.10%           | 40.52%       | 22.22%                |
| f. I am not confident in seeking help or support when I am struggling emotionally            | 3.92%                    | 16.33%          | 14.37%           | 40.52%       | 24.83%                |

The poll on mental health finds a number of alarming patterns: Negative Emotions: Significant emotional suffering was highlighted by the fact that more than 40% of respondents said they felt depressed, hopeless, or sad. Isolation in the Classroom: A high percentage of students (47.70%) reported feeling alone in the classroom, which suggests that they don't interact with their teachers or peers. Guilt and Responsibility: A significant portion of respondents (45.09%) felt a sense of guilt or responsibility for being separated from their parents. Classroom Engagement: A high percentage of students (65.35%) reported less participation in class activities, indicating a lack of interest that could have an impact on academic achievement. Educational Satisfaction: Of the respondents, half (50.82%) were unhappy with their educational circumstances, and 24.18% were unsure, indicating a lack of confidence or contentment with their educational setting.

**Engagement:** Most (65.35%) reported less participation in class activities, indicating a lack of interest that could have an impact on academic achievement. **Educational Satisfaction:** Of the respondents, half (50.82%) were unhappy with their educational circumstances, and 24.18% were unsure, indicating a lack of confidence or contentment with their educational setting. **Living Environment:** The majority of respondents (57.42%) expressed dissatisfaction with their current living situation, highlighting possible difficulties in social or familial support networks.

**Parental Communication:** Even though parents and children communicate frequently (57.50%), 61.43% of respondents are unhappy with the attention and support they receive, which indicates that emotional needs are still not being satisfied. These results highlight the complex difficulties experienced by children who are left behind and advocate for organized support networks that attend to their emotional and intellectual needs. **Responsibility:** Due to parental separation, a startling 56.85% of respondents felt guilty or responsible, which may have exacerbated anxiety or low self-esteem. **Reluctance to Seek Help:** A sizable percentage (65.35%) expressed a lack of confidence in asking for support or assistance when they were experiencing emotional difficulties, which suggests a serious lack of mental health services or confidence in caregivers.

The necessity of proactive mental health measures, such as peer support groups, counseling services, and parental participation, is highlighted by these findings.

Table 7 : Attitude and behaviour of the left behind children

| Attitude and Behaviour   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree  | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|--------|----------------|
| 1. Increased feelings of loneliness and isolation due to separation from parents or guardians              | 3.92%             | 9.80%    | 16.99%    | 28.10% | 41.17%         |
| 2. Express some physical health problems like fatigue, headache, etc.                                      | 2.61%             | 11.76%   | 18.95%    | 52.28% | 14.37%         |
| 3. Increased risk of developing mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and adjustment disorders | 2.61%             | 9.15%    | 12.41%    | 55.55% | 20.26%         |
| 4. Possible confusion about the role within the family and community                                       | 13.72%            | 15.68%   | 15.68%    | 31.37% | 23.52%         |
| 5. Possibility of facing stigma or discrimination from peers due to their status as left-behind children   | 6.53%             | 15.28%   | 16.33%    | 42.48% | 18.95%         |
| 6. The absence of parental financial support led to economic difficulties                                  | 7.18%             | 9.15%    | 30.71%    | 23.52% | 29.41%         |

According to the table 7, children that are left behind have significant behavioral difficulties: **Loneliness:** A noteworthy 69.27% of respondents said that their emotions of loneliness have increased as a result of parental separation. **Physical Health Issues:** More than half (52.28%) reported having physical symptoms, such as headaches and exhaustion, which may be related to stress. **Mental Health Risks:** The psychological effects of parental relocation were highlighted by the significant percentage (75.81%) who acknowledged a risk of mental health problems including anxiety or depression. **Role Confusion and Stigma:** Approximately 54.89% of respondents said they had experienced role confusion in their family and community, and 61.43% said they had encountered prejudice or stigma because they were left-behind children. **Economic Strain:** 53.23% of respondents experienced financial difficulties as a result of a lack of parental assistance, indicating a crucial area for intervention. These results demonstrate how behavioral, emotional, and social difficulties are interrelated and call for a multidisciplinary approach to support.

Table 8: Educational attainment left behind children

| Educational Attainment  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree  | Strongly agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|--------|----------------|
| 1. Parental absence affects the interest in learning process  | 3.92%             | 15.68%   | 15.68%    | 45.09% | 19.60%         |
| 2. Struggles with concentration and focus in school due to emotional stressors                          | 5.22%             | 8.49%    | 16.33%    | 33.98% | 35.94%         |
| 3. Decline in academic performance resulting from disrupted routines and a lack of parental supervision | 11.76%            | 10.45%   | 23.52%    | 46.40% | 7.84%          |
| 4. Challenges in building trust and emotional connections with teachers and classmates                  | 5.22%             | 20.26%   | 20.14%    | 42.48% | 5.88%          |

The information points to a number of difficulties with educational attainment: Interest in Learning: More than 64.69% of respondents said that their interest in the educational process was adversely impacted by their parents' absence. Focus: 69.92% of students reported having trouble focusing in class due to emotional pressures. Academic Performance: Due to interrupted routines and a lack of parental monitoring, the majority (54.24%) reported a drop in academic performance. Social Interactions: 48.36% found it challenging to establish trust with teachers and peers, indicating obstacles to fostering a positive learning environment. These findings highlight the necessity of improved systems of emotional and academic support in order to mitigate the compounding effects of parental absence.

Table 9: Relationship between the factors

| Variable                | Attitude & Behaviour | Mental Health | Wellbeing | Educational Performance |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Attitude & Behaviour    | Pearson Correlation  | 1             | .504      | .421                    |
|                         | Sig. (2-tailed)      |               | .000      | .000                    |
|                         | N                    | 153           | 153       | 153                     |
| Mental Health           | Pearson Correlation  | .504          | 1         | .547                    |
|                         | Sig. (2-tailed)      |               | .000      | .000                    |
|                         | N                    | 153           | 153       | 153                     |
| Wellbeing               | Pearson Correlation  | .421          | .547      | 1                       |
|                         | Sig. (2-tailed)      |               | .000      | .000                    |
|                         | N                    | 153           | 153       | 153                     |
| Educational Performance | Pearson Correlation  | .528          | .539      | .483                    |
|                         | Sig. (2-tailed)      |               | .000      | .000                    |
|                         | N                    | 153           | 153       | 153                     |

The table provides a correlation matrix that explores the relationships among four key variables: **Attitude & Behaviour**, **Mental Health**, **Well-Being**, and **Educational Performance**. Pearson correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) indicate the strength and direction of these relationships, while p-values confirm their statistical significance. A total of 153 participants were included in the analysis, ensuring robust findings. All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.001 level, suggesting reliable associations among the variables.

### 1. Attitude & Behaviour

Attitude & Behaviour play a significant role in shaping the mental health, well-being, and educational performance of left-behind children. The correlation between Attitude & Behaviour and mental health



( $r=0.504$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) indicates a moderate positive relationship. This means that children who demonstrate positive attitudes and constructive behaviours are more likely to experience better mental health outcomes. Positive attitudes, such as resilience, adaptability, and a proactive approach to challenges, can act as a buffer against the stress and emotional struggles associated with parental absence. Additionally, the moderate correlation ( $r=0.421$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) between Attitude & Behaviour and well-being suggests that fostering positive behaviours may contribute to a sense of life satisfaction and stability, although this effect might not be as strong as other influencing factors.

The strongest relationship for Attitude & Behaviour is with educational performance ( $r=0.528$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), underscoring its critical importance in academic success. Students with a positive mindset are more likely to engage actively in their studies, maintain discipline, and adopt effective learning strategies. These behaviours can translate directly into better academic performance. This strong correlation highlights the importance of developing initiatives in schools that encourage constructive attitudes and behaviours, such as time management skills, emotional regulation, and perseverance, to create a foundation for success in both academic and emotional domains.

## 2. Mental Health

Mental health emerges as a pivotal factor in this analysis, with strong connections to both well-being and educational performance. The correlation between mental health and well-being ( $r=0.547$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) indicates a robust relationship. This finding suggests that emotional stability, reduced anxiety, and improved mental resilience significantly enhance an individual's overall quality of life. For left-behind children, mental health challenges may stem from feelings of loneliness, guilt, or stress due to parental absence. Addressing these challenges can directly improve their well-being, creating a more stable emotional foundation for these children to thrive.

Mental health also demonstrates a moderate positive relationship with educational performance ( $r=0.539$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), reflecting the impact of emotional well-being on learning and academic outcomes. Students who maintain better mental health are more likely to focus on their studies, overcome stressors, and achieve higher academic results. This connection highlights the importance of integrating mental health support services into schools. Programs that provide counseling, stress management techniques, and peer support groups can empower students to cope with their emotional struggles, thereby enhancing their academic potential.

## 3. Well-Being

Well-being is another essential variable, strongly linked to mental health and moderately associated with educational performance. Its correlation with mental health ( $r=0.547$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) reinforces the idea that emotional stability and a positive psychological state significantly contribute to an individual's sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. For left-behind children, improving well-being requires addressing both internal factors, such as emotional resilience, and external factors, such as creating supportive environments at school and home.

The correlation between well-being and educational performance ( $r=0.483$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) suggests that life satisfaction and a stable emotional state positively influence academic outcomes. Students who feel emotionally secure and supported are more likely to concentrate on their studies and perform better academically. This moderate association underscores the need for schools to foster environments that prioritize student well-being through initiatives such as extracurricular activities, mentoring programs, and social engagement opportunities.

## 4. Educational Performance

Educational performance is significantly influenced by all three variables—Attitude & Behaviour, Mental Health, and Well-Being—with strong correlations observed. The relationship between educational

performance and mental health ( $r=0.539$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) highlights that emotional stability is a critical factor in academic success. Students with better mental health are better equipped to handle the pressures of academic life, stay focused, and achieve higher results. This finding emphasizes the importance of addressing emotional challenges to create a supportive learning environment.

Similarly, the correlation between educational performance and Attitude & Behaviour ( $r=0.528$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) indicates that positive behaviours such as discipline, perseverance, and engagement are equally important. Constructive attitudes not only enhance academic outcomes but also improve students' ability to form productive relationships with teachers and peers, further supporting their learning journey. The moderate correlation between educational performance and well-being ( $r=0.483$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) suggests that emotional stability and life satisfaction indirectly enhance academic success. Schools and communities should focus on holistic approaches that integrate emotional, behavioural, and academic support to maximize student potential.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of left-behind children's mental health and its impact on various aspects of their lives underscores the critical importance of addressing their emotional and psychological needs. The findings reveal strong positive correlations between emotional well-being, attitudes, behaviours, mental health, and educational performance. This highlights the interconnected nature of these factors and emphasizes that enhancing the emotional well-being of these children is pivotal for improving their academic outcomes and overall quality of life. To effectively support left-behind children, targeted interventions should be developed to foster positive attitudes and behaviours, promote open communication, and provide the necessary emotional support. Recognizing the complexity of their challenges, a comprehensive approach that addresses the multifaceted impact of parental absence on their mental health, academic success, and social integration is essential. Ultimately, prioritizing the emotional well-being of left-behind children is not only a moral imperative but also a means to empower them for a brighter future.

## RECOMMENDATION

Addressing the challenges faced by left-behind children requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach involving families, communities, schools, and government agencies. Parents should be encouraged to maintain regular communication with their children and visit them whenever possible, while also receiving guidance on supporting their children's emotional and educational needs. Schools should foster an inclusive environment, train staff to identify emotional distress, and implement mentoring programs. Mental health services should be available at schools, and awareness about mental health should be raised. Community organizations, NGOs, and local agencies should collaborate to offer resources and support, while organizing events to promote social interaction.

Awareness campaigns for parents, teachers, and the community about the unique challenges of left-behind children and the importance of education are essential. Governments should advocate for policies that protect the rights of these children, ensuring access to education and healthcare. Finally, empowering parents through workshops and vocational training can improve their ability to support their children's well-being. Through a holistic and collaborative approach, it is possible to enhance the well-being and educational outcomes of left-behind children, helping them thrive despite the challenges of parental migration.

## FUTURE RESEARCH AREA

Research can be done in a wide range as zones or district. Conduct long-term longitudinal studies to track the development and life outcomes of left-behind children over several years. This will provide insights into how their experiences in childhood influence their lives as adults. Evaluate the long-term impact of interventions and support programs aimed at left-behind children. Assess how these initiatives contribute to their overall wellbeing, educational attainment, and mental health.

## REFERENCES

1. Rui Chen, L. Z. (2021). Parental Migration and Psychological Well-Being of Children in Rural China.
2. Antman, F. M. (2013). The impact of migration on family left behind. *Journal of Population Economics*, 26(2), 361-398.
3. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22(6), 723-742.
4. Cebotari, V. (2020). Transnational migration and left-behind children: The role of caregivers. *Childhood*, 27(2), 234-250.
5. Chang, H., Dong, X., & Macphail, F. (2011). Labor migration and time use patterns of the left-behind children: Evidence from Sri Lanka. *The Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 14-27.
6. Delprato, D., & Midgley, B. D. (2002). Some fundamentals of B.F. Skinner's behaviorism. *American Psychologist*, 57(9), 710-713.
7. Dunusinghe, P. (2021). Impact of Parental Migration on Children's Educational Performance: Evidence from Sri Lanka. *Journal of Economics and Development Studies*, 35-49.
8. Dreby, J. (2010). *Divided by borders: Mexican migrants and their children*. University of California Press.
9. Graham, E., & Jordan, L. P. (2011). Migrant parents and the psychological well-being of left-behind children in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 73(4), 763-787.
10. James, A., Jenks, C., & Prout, A. (1998). *Theorizing childhood*. Polity Press.
11. Kharel, R., et al. (2021). Childcare and transnational families. *Journal of Migration Studies*, 5(2), 178-199.
12. Mackes, N., et al. (2020). Childhood deprivation and brain development in later life. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, 40, 100718.
13. Mazzucato, V., & Cebotari, V. (2017). Transnational families and child well-being: A comparative study. *Journal of Family Studies*, 23(3), 267-285.
14. Mazzucato, V., et al. (2015). The well-being of children in transnational families. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 3(1), 1-19.
15. McFarlane, A. C., et al. (2005). Trauma, PTSD, and mental health in children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46(3), 276-289.
16. McKenzie, D., & Rapoport, H. (2011). Can migration reduce educational attainment? Evidence from Mexico. *Journal of Development Economics*, 95(1), 118-124.
17. Nguyen, T. (2016). Migration, education, and children: Exploring causal pathways. *Migration and Development*, 5(1), 92-106.
18. Parreñas, R. S. (2005). *Children of global migration: Transnational families and gendered woes*. Stanford University Press.
19. Senaratna, B. C. V. (2011). *Female labor migration in Sri Lanka: Trends, patterns, and policies*. Migration Profiles, UNICEF Sri Lanka.
20. Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLFEB). (2015). *Annual Report*.
21. Slavich, G. M., Monroe, S. M., & Gotlib, I. H. (2011). Early-life stress, depression, and inflammation. *Psychological Science*, 22(5), 529-537.
22. Thorne, B. (1987). Re-visioning women and social change: Where are the children?. *Gender & Society*, 1(1), 85-109.
23. Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 42(1), 7-97.
24. White, H., Leavy, J., & Masters, A. (2003). Comparative research on migration and its impacts. *International Migration Review*, 37(3), 666-696.