

Internal migration's effects on older people and children: evidence from Vietnam

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Abstract:

The movement of working-age people from rural to urban regions, into industrial zones and export processing zones, causes a phenomena known as "generational defects," in which the elderly and children remain in rural areas. "Mid-generation" family flaws are caused by labor migration, which results in elderly people without children and children without parents living with or near their parents. It simultaneously causes changes in the conditions, living situations, and daily living habits of the elderly and children as a result of the primary economic, spiritual, and emotional core members of the household's lack of timely attention, care, and support. This study examines how internal migration affects older people's and kids' living conditions in Vietnam. The problems raised in the article might lead to the adoption of social protection laws that would cover migrant workers' families as well.

Keywords: Social security, migration, labour, elderly, children, Viet Nam

1. Introduction

Labour migration is an indispensable part of society and plays an important role in the socio-economic development process on the basis of meeting labor supply and demand. According to the World Bank (WB), Vietnam is one of the countries with the highest urbanization rate in Southeast Asia. The process of industrialization, modernization and urbanization, creating both thrust and attraction, leads to increasing labor migration flows from rural to urban areas, into industrial parks and export processing zones. According to the results of the 2019 population and housing census, the country has 6.4 million migrants (accounting for 7.3% of the total population), of which, 36.8% of people migrated for reasons of finding a job/starting a new job; 61.8% of migrants are in the age group of 20-39 years. (Dang, 2016)

The massive development of industrial zones required a large number of workers, and in the process of urbanization, a large part of peasants who lost their arable land became unemployed, needed to migrate for a living; Those are the top two factors driving migrant workers today. (Economic & 2020, n.d.) Currently, rural agriculture has about 7 million hectares of arable land, requiring a maximum of 19 million workers. However, in the agricultural sector there are about 25.5 million workers, and thus, there is an excess of about 6.6 million workers. Moreover, among employed people in rural areas, the rate of time use is only 70-75%, so the surplus of workers both relative and absolute is quite large (Ha, Shi, et al., n.d.) (H. D.-R. de I. U. del & 2022, n.d.) This development creates a great attraction for workers from rural areas to work in cities and industrial zones. In addition, during a time when farmers or households need an additional source of income to cover the expenses incurred, parents migrate to their children's places of study to earn money to support their families and pay for their children's education. With a relatively low income from agriculture, families of students of colleges and universities will find it difficult to cover the cost of their children's education; Therefore, finding new higher jobs becomes an urgent need.

Due to uneven development, the disparity in income and living standards between rural and urban areas is widening. The lives of many people, especially purely agricultural households and people in areas with unfavorable natural conditions, face many difficulties. The difference in living standards between rural and urban areas has created a major driving force for migration from rural areas to cities and industrial zones in search of jobs. This regularity is evident in labor flows from rural areas to big cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Binh Duong, Dong Nai and other key economic regions. (N. H.-R. de I. U. del & 2021, n.d.) (Law et al., n.d.)

Although cities and industrial zones offer many job opportunities and high incomes, it is not easy for migrant workers to integrate into the urban economy. But due to the expectation of getting jobs and better incomes, rural

migrant workers are still willing to take risks and challenges. The impact of labour migration is not limited to self-migrants. The migration flow of generational groups (of working age) from rural to urban areas, into industrial parks and export processing zones leads to the phenomenon of "generational defects", i.e. leaving the elderly and children in rural areas. Families with "middle generational defects" due to labour migration result in elderly people without children and children without parents living with or nearby. Parental migration creates changes in the conditions, living circumstances and daily living habits of the elderly and children. As a result, this group of people lacks the timely attention, care and support of the main economic, spiritual and emotional key members of the family. (Mathematics & 2021, 2021)

2. Methodology

Studies on labour migration in Viet Nam confirm that migration plays an important role in family economic development. However, how migration has had social impacts on members who stay: on the assignment of responsibilities within the family; on gender role change; on investment and educational opportunities for children; on the issue of protection, care and ensuring welfare... In this aspect, a study on migrant workers in ethnic minority communities by CARE (2020) showed that the elderly have no one to take care of them, they are responsible for caring, caring for and teaching their grandchildren in daily life, causing many cases of grandchildren staying with grandparents to play, poor grades, even dropping out of school (Law et al., n.d.)

Figure 1: Impacts of labour migration on children and the elderly



Source: Institute of Labor and Social Sciences, 2022

Internal labor migration leads to disruption of family structures, a decline in family size, from multigenerational families with elderly family members living dependent on relatives to families with generational disabilities (lack of groups of members of working age, Only the elderly and children remain) or the family of 1 generation (only the elderly remain), which in turn leads to a change in the role of the members who stay. Recent evidence from Viet Nam shows a similar trend with an increasing proportion of older people living alone and a decreasing proportion of older people who depend on relatives. Labour migration entails restrictions on the realization of basic rights and ensuring the social welfare of those who remain, children and the elderly. (Studies & 2016, 2016) Migration can not only disrupt traditional family structures, but also affect the lives of family members left behind because the multigenerational family model living under one roof plays an important role in caring for the elderly (Studies & 2016, 2016). Living with other generations under one roof has a positive effect on the psychology of older people and, at the same time, has an important role to play in supporting older people in lower-middle-income countries where social welfare systems including pensions and general health care are underdeveloped. (L. Kim et al., n.d.) This paper presents key analyses of labour migration in Viet Nam, labour migration

characteristics, employment status, income and labour migration contribution to families back home, based on data analysis from the National Internal Migration Survey 2022. The brief also provides recommendations for development policies in Viet Nam to take good advantage of the migration process, especially labour migration for national economic growth.(L. Kim et al., n.d.)

3. Result

Impacts of labour migration on older persons

The elderly, in accordance with the provisions of law, are guaranteed basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, travel and health care by their families, social communities and the State; be facilitated to participate effectively in cultural, social, educational, economic and political activities in accordance with aspirations, needs and abilities. In fact, the majority of the elderly, especially the elderly who are still able to work and the elderly with high technical expertise, still participate in income-generating labor, improving the quality of material and spiritual life for themselves, their families and society. In 2019, the elderly labor force reached 4.78 million people, accounting for 8.67% of the total labor force nationwide. Migration is not an individual decision, but a family matter, always decided by a family council. Through migration, a family can diversify its sources of income and mitigate risks posed by the effects of an unstable climate on agricultural production or economic and political instability on their business. (Niimi et al., 2008)

Migration can become a survival strategy of several families united under one main household – that is, of the father and mother of the migrant. Clearly, households with migrants largely have better material lives than those without migrants through remittances. More than 30 per cent of migrants send money back to their families within 12 months and more than 95 per cent of migrants send money back to their families within a 3-month period. In addition, the older the elderly, the greater the likelihood of receiving remittances from migrant workers because migrant workers are mostly positioned as children in relationships with the head of household, the older ones stay. Moreover, stemming from the concept of "children rely on fathers, old pry children" makes sending money to the elderly to stay as a duty and obligation of younger people who are of working age. Migrants aspire to fulfil their obligations as children to their parents back home. The urge to the extreme will motivate these migrant workers to return (Wang et al., n.d.) Through remittances from migrants, the material life of the elderly who stay is improved. Elderly people with migrant children have more permanent housing than other households and up to 75% of elderly households with migrant workers live in permanent housing. The living facilities of the elderly staying in these households are also more adequate. For example, the proportion of households with television accounts for 100%, the proportion of households with washing machines accounts for 97.5%, the proportion of households with water heaters accounts for 85% and the proportion of elderly households staying with air conditioning accounts for 50% of the total number of elderly households staying. (Thanh et al., 2018)

When the family's workers go to work far away, it is when all problems arising in their home country are placed on the shoulders of those who stay, in which, the elderly stay is no exception. At this time, in addition to economic activities, they are also involved in caring for and educating children, who are children of migrant workers. This participation, invisibly collectively, has changed the role of the elderly in the family. Some argue that the elderly who stay will take an active role in replacing migrants who care for children when they are left in their home countries. (Ha et al., 2023) They say they love grandchildren more than even the birth parents of the children, they know how to use traditional parenting methods and they have more time than the birth parents of the children. This view is completely understandable with explanations about the importance of grandchildren in the lives of the elderly as mentioned earlier. If the grandchildren also have to follow their parents to migrate, the life of the elderly who stay can become completely deadlocked. On the flip side, some researchers say it is very difficult for the elderly to stay behind when it comes to caring for their grandchildren. They see raising grandchildren as a very physically difficult job and see it as a burden that makes their lives even harsher. Many respondents complained that they were unable to take care of their grandchildren, especially those who could not yet walk. (L. A. T. Kim et al., 2012)

Figure 2: Working hours of the elderly

Unit: %

	Elderly people in the household [families with labor migrants]	Elderly people in households with no labor migrants
Over 8 hours/day	21.1	8.3
8 hours/day	1.1	16.7
7 hours/day	1.1	8.3
6 hours/day	1.1	25.0
5 hours/day	1.1	8.3
4 hours/day	7.4	-
3 hours/day	20.0	25.0
2 hours/day	25.3	8.3
1 hour/day	22.1	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Institute of Labor and Social Sciences, 2022

The survey results showed that for the elderly in households with migrant workers, their daily work was also busy and took on more jobs such as caring for children of labor migrants (31.6%), cleaning houses (29.5%), etc. grocery shopping, cooking (21.1%) and picking up children of migrant workers were 14.74%. Meanwhile, housework and caring for other family members of elderly people in households without migrant workers are at a much lower rate and are fairly evenly shared among jobs related to house cleaning, take care of children and take care of family meals. Because children work long distances, the elderly in households with domestic migrant workers also have less work sharing from relatives, during the day they have to do a lot of work. (Van Huy et al., 2010)

The working time of the elderly for housewives and caring for family members in both groups of elderly people in households with domestic labor migrants and elderly people in households without domestic labor migrants were answered quite similarly by the elderly. Among the elderly in households with migrant workers said that the time spent doing housework and caring for family members was appropriate (76.8%), very suitable (21.1%) and only a small number of elderly people said that the time spent at home and taking care of the family was inappropriate at 2.1%. Similarly, the majority of elderly people in households without labour migrants said that housework and family care were 75.0% appropriate and 8.3% suitable. However, up to 16.7% of elderly people in households without migrant workers said that current housework and caring for family members are not suitable for them. This has reflected the situation of elderly people in households with migrant workers in the country. Grandparents/parents "must be content to support their children, because there are 2 elderly couples at home, so there is no one to share household chores with them. (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Proportion of elderly people taking care of family members daily

Unit: %

	Elderly people in the household families with labor migrants	Elderly people in households with no labor migrants
Go to the market to cook	21.1	19.3
Housecleaning	29.5	28.3
Caring for children of labor migrants/ Child care	31.6	15.4
Transportation of children of labor migrants/ Transportation of children to school	14.7	10.7
Other	3.2	26.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Institute of Labor and Social Sciences, 2022

When the elderly live in households with internally migrant workers, housework and caring for family members must also be done by themselves without support from children/relatives. The group of elderly people in households with labor migrants due to the lack of work sharing from relatives is much more difficult than the elderly group in households without labor migrants because when the children go to work far away, parents at home have to arrange household chores and take care of grandchildren and great-grandchildren to help the children. The survey results showed that 25.2% of elderly people in households with migrant workers did not receive support from family members, nearly three times higher than older people in households without migrants (8.3%); 15.8 per cent of older persons in households with migrant workers received support from other children living close to home, nearly three times higher than older persons in households without labour migrants (8.3 per cent). (Niimi et al., 2009)

Impacts of migrant labour on children

Whether living in households with or without migrant workers, most children are not mobilized to perform the role of housewife, caring for family members, meeting the requirements of ensuring children's rights to the child's duty to "assist parents and family members in jobs suitable to them age, gender and development" (Haughton et al., n.d.). The majority of households explained that children do not have to do housework or take care of other family members by reasons such as they are young, too young to do these things (75.5% of children living in households with migrant workers responded that they do not have to do domestic work, caring for other members because they are too young and the proportion of children living in households without labor migrants is 72.7%) or these jobs are difficult or too much for the child. That fact shows that, even when there is a lack of direct care from parents at home, children always receive care and cover many aspects from members who stay in the household

Figure 4: Responsibility to assist in household chores of children

Unit: %

	Children in families with labor migrants	Children in families without labor migrants
Total	100.0	100.0
Don't know, don't have an opinion	-	2.3
Don't have to do it because I don't have time	-	2.3
Don't do it because Grandma/Grandma/Dad/ Mom doesn't let you do it	19.6	2.3
I don't have to do it because I'm too young	75.5	72.7
There is support for housework and taking care of other family members	4.9	20.5

Source: Institute of Labor and Social Sciences, 2022

It appears that children living in households with working migrants have not been motivated by relatives to take on the role of housewife, caring for other family members as much as children in households without migrants (4.9% vs 20.5%). In fact, in daily life, parents are the ones most responsible for their children's education, including teaching them to take care of household chores and caring for others, so that children in households without labor migrants have a higher rate of participation in housework support. (Haughton et al., 2018) According to this practical logic, children in households with migrant workers receive less instruction and reminders from their parents about promoting their roles, even in many families there is apprehension in reminding children to do household chores without their fathers. Young mother at home. The amount of time for children to perform household chores is also not much (Haughton et al., n.d.) However, in households without migrant workers, 6.8% of children still work an average of 8 hours / day and 2.3% work an average of 7 hours / day and this has a great impact on the time spent on studying, resting and playing of children. For children living in households with migrants, it seems that the unstable nature of the pace of life may be responsible for the lower rate and amount of time spent doing housework compared to children living in households without migrants [7]

Figure 5: Average hours spent on tasks during the day for children

Unit: %

	Children in families with labor migrants	Children in families without labor migrants
Average number of working hours/day	100.0	100.0
1 hour/day	5.9	-
2 hours/day	11.8	13.6
3 hours/day	2.9	9.1
4 hours/day	2.9	-
5 hours/day	-	-
6 hours/day	-	-
7 hours/day	-	2.3
8 hours/day	-	6.8
Don't know, no opinion	76.5	68.2

Source: Institute of Labor and Social Sciences, 2022

Among children who perform roles to support housework and care for relatives, the majority only need to spend an average of 2-3 hours a day. Children from migrant households have lower average working hours than children in non-migrant households. With this working period, the majority of children said they felt fit (44.1% of children lived in households with migrants and 38.6% of children lived in households without migrant workers). This difference may be due to the way family activities are organized. (Yen et al., n.d.) For households without migrants, family activities are stable, highly organized, and children in these households also need to spend more time to complete work. Meanwhile, households with migrants often have looser organizational structures, in many cases it can be considered that the current rhythm of life is only temporary, when migrant workers return, the rhythm of life will be stable. Therefore, there are things that children do not have time to do today or do not want to do, they can easily leave the next day. (Ha, Givens, Nguyen, et al., n.d.)

Children have the right to participate in developmentally appropriate social activities. In fact, this right of the child is guaranteed to be exercised with almost no difference according to household status with or without migrants. At children's age, activities at school, class as well as summer activities, holidays, Tet, Mid-Autumn Festival, ... There is always attraction in the locality, so the number of children who do not participate in these activities is only low (4.9% and 4.6% for both groups of children). This is fully in line with the law on ensuring children's right to participate in age-appropriate social activities, ensuring that children are "not prevented from participating in appropriate social activities". (Bélanger et al., n.d.)

The survey results show that children's access to education is always guaranteed by households at all levels of education (preschool, primary, lower secondary). In fact, it is not for the reason of living in a family with or without migrants that the child is deprived of this right. However, for children living in families with migrants, the support for children to exercise their right to access education (transportation, reminders and learning support,...) is mainly undertaken by grandparents and grandmothers. (Lin & Nguyen, 2021) As a result, the survey results show that 1.0% of children in migrant households do not attend school. This seems to reflect less attention to children's education in families with migrants due to a lack of day-to-day supervision from parents, although this may be an isolated case. In the group of children studying at primary and lower secondary levels, many children outside of regular school hours continue to participate in extra lessons at school or extra evenings at the teacher's house. However, the proportion of children in households with migrants without further education was much higher than children in households without migrants (43.1% compared to 18.2%). This parameter also reflects an aspect in which interest in children's education in households with migrants appears to be lower than in households without migrants. (Ha, Givens, Shi, et al., n.d.)

Figure 6: People supporting children with learning difficulties

Unit: %

	Children in families with labor migrants	Children in families without labor migrants
The person who reminds and guides children to study at home	100.0	100.0
Nobody	2.9	-
Grandparents	69.6	13.6
Parents	24.5	86.4
Siblings	2.0	-
Other	1.0	-
People who help when children have difficulty learning	100.0	100.0
Grandparents	61.8	13.6
Parents	28.5	63.6
Siblings	2.0	-
Friend	1.0	-
Teacher	7.6	22.7
Other	1.0	-

Source: Institute of Labor and Social Sciences, 2022

While the majority of children living in migrant households are reminded by their parents to study at home (69.6%) and supported by their parents when experiencing learning difficulties (61.8%), meaning they replace their role as parents to help them learn, In households without migrants, parents are the main supporters (86.4% of children are reminded by their parents to study at home and 63.6% of children are supported by their parents when they have learning difficulties) and grandparents only take on additional support roles when parents are temporarily away from home or busy at work. Therefore, when facing learning difficulties, children living in households with migrants often ask for support from their grandparents (56.86%), while children living in households without migrants often rely on their parents (63.64%). (fig. 6)

4. Discussion

Migration also brings many difficulties and challenges for households and migrants themselves. Through surveys of elderly households in migrant and non-migrant households as well as group discussions with local authorities and mass organizations, migration also brings many difficulties and challenges to those who stay. Raising children is difficult, facing illness without relatives' help, the elderly lack/do not have the attention and support of adult children, and at the same time have to take on more work of nurturing, caring for and teaching children,... Therefore, first of all, migrants themselves need to improve their responsibilities to their families and children such as regularly paying attention, monitoring their parents' health, learning and developing children's awareness when staying with grandparents. In order to serve the local management, migrants and their families need to be more proactive in implementing regulations on local population governance, specifically: Well performing the management of civil status and household registration: Migrants and those who stay are responsible for providing information to village heads about their destinations, The work of migrants to make a list of information of temporary absentees in the village shall send the list to the People's Committee of the commune. (Bach Duong Tran Giang Linh Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao et al., 2011)

Inform village or commune officials about their job search needs so that the commune's People's Committee can make a list of work needs and send them to the district. This can help workers connect local labor supply and demand before workers decide to migrate to work elsewhere. Stayers also need to maintain contact with local authorities for medical, educational, legal support, etc. Especially the elderly and children so that the locality is aware of the situation and has timely support when families face difficulties.(Trần et al., n.d.)

For the community

Attach importance to the preparation and management of lists of migrant and non-migrant households as a basis for providing immediate or regular assistance to disadvantaged children and the elderly; Increase mobilization of individuals in the community to join forces to help children and the elderly to be well cared for, well protected, study well and integrate well into the common life in the community. (Do et al., n.d.)

Establish clubs and groups to monitor and support families with migrants, especially families with both migrant parents with only children and the elderly at home to support and encourage each other, especially early detection of abnormal manifestations related to children in learning, social conduct, and the risk of sexual abuse, as well as illness of the elderly and children. (Tuan Huy Pham et al., 2019)

Building a friendly environment for the elderly and children in households with or without migrant workers needs to promote the roles of family (care for the elderly, child protection), community (propaganda and support for resources), enterprises (producing goods and services suitable for the elderly, children ...), the State (promulgating policies, laws and allocating resources) and the elderly themselves (striving to ensure their own living expenses, upholding the spirit of self-service...)

For political and social organizations

Enhance the role of women's associations, fronts and neighborhood groups by supporting and encouraging elderly people in families with migrant workers to participate in programs on propaganda, communication, cultural exchange and policy dialogue programs so that the elderly staying in households with migrants understand be advantageous and difficult when females migrate within the country. Actively build child- and age-friendly

environments in communities to support the needs of older people to achieve "active ageing" (healthy, active participation, social security). (Siu et al., n.d.)

Strengthen the promotion of members of the organization to promote the role of caring, protecting, assisting and sponsoring children living in migrant households with extremely difficult circumstances. Support activities do not stop at temporary support, encouragement and visitation but also need to be extended to activities to ensure the safe and healthy development of children in familiar environments, such as learning environment, family environment, common cultural environment... in the community.

Organize forms of consultancy support, provision of labor and employment information, career counseling, job placement, fostering and training on job search skills, working in the locality and other localities to help workers better orient their migration decisions.

For governments at all levels

Prioritize the development of sectors and sectors that employ a lot of labor and can be evenly distributed in regions in the province/throughout the country in order to create jobs for local workers; Focus on soft infrastructure development planning including mechanisms, policies and implementation plans aimed at protecting and caring for children, the elderly and the lonely and building good preparation for migrants so that no one is left behind. It is necessary to aim to transform the growth model towards the development of industries and fields with high technology content and high labor productivity to improve the economic conditions of localities, thereby reducing the number of local migrant workers. (Bélanger, 2014)

Strengthen the leadership of Party committees and local authorities in the work of children and the elderly, incorporate child and elderly goals into socio-economic development programs at all levels and ensure resources (financial, human, etc.) infrastructure,...) for the realization of goals.

Study and promulgate social assistance policies to ensure access to social services of the elderly and children, especially for the elderly and children staying in families with migrants in special circumstances and poor households, ethnic minority households,...

Develop support policies in the provision of social work services, elderly and child protection services at home, alternative care families, communities, schools and social assistance facilities,... Synchronously develop the network of providing social assistance services for the elderly and children in families, communities and service providers, linking and integrating with social work service delivery networks and health care networks in communities in order to best meet the needs of children and people to access social services the elderly, especially children and the elderly in special circumstances and at risk of falling into special circumstances; Children and the elderly are harmed and at risk of harm.(Vo, 2020)

Develop the contingent of social workers to provide child and elderly protection services in a professional and semi-professional manner in order to meet the demand for providing quality and effective child and elderly protection services

Socialize the mobilization of resources for the implementation of programs on care and protection of the elderly and children in the spirit of socialization and multi-sources including: Central and local budgets, mobilize support and assistance from businesses, social organizations, domestic non-governmental organizations and mobilize community contributions for implementation program. (Siu & Unger, 2020)

Formulate policies to mobilize the participation of enterprises and social organizations; Form a volunteer movement/volunteer network to participate in activities to implement the rights of children and the elderly. At the same time, strengthen the participation and contribution of families in accessing and enjoying social services for children and the elderly. Strengthen international, multilateral, bilateral and international non-governmental cooperation to enlist technical and financial assistance to improve legal systems and policies; approach to and promote the development of models for the implementation of the rights of children and the elderly(Lin et al., n.d.)

5. Conclusion

Social care for children and the elderly in our country has achieved many remarkable achievements. The system of legal documents related to the elderly and children such as the Law on Children, the Law on the Elderly and policies to support children and the elderly have been promulgated and implemented, contributing to raising awareness from the political system to the whole society and creating consensus, people's response in caring for and promoting the role of the elderly and protecting and caring for children. In addition, the system of providing services for children and the elderly was formed and put into operation in the following forms: at centers, in the community and at home. Many types of entertainment for children and the elderly: clubs, living areas, entertainment spots in the community ... also develop, gradually meeting the needs of children and the elderly. Disadvantaged child and elderly care staff have also grown in quantity and gradually improved the quality of care services in both centers, communities and families. In the context that the issue of labor migration in the country still has many consequences, the system of policies to ensure social security for children and the elderly will continue to be supplemented and improved. In the current situation in Viet Nam, the implementation of welfare policies for migrant workers should promote the position and role of the elderly, contributing to promoting the development of an aging society in a positive way. In addition, policies should also ensure a safe and healthy living environment for the comprehensive development of children.

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