The Impact of Parental Migration on the Health of Children Living Separately from Parents: A Case Study of Kanchanaburi, Thailand

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An increasing number of parents are migrating to seek jobs elsewhere while leaving young children in the care of others, and little is known about the consequences for children. This study examines the impact of parental out-migration on the physical health of children left behind. Data for this paper were taken from the 2007 survey of migration and health from Kanchanaburi, Thailand. A total of 11,241 children who have both parents were included in the survey. The study found that 14.5% of children had either one or both migrant parents. Overall, 25.5% of all children had an illness during the month prior to the survey. Analysis reveals that having one migrant parent was independently associated with a higher likelihood of an illness (odds ratio of mother migrant children = 1.37; odds ratio of father migrant children = 1.23) than those with no parents or both parents migrating. The findings suggest that strategies to alleviate the negative impact of parental migration as well as to maintain and enhance the well-being of families, especially of the children left behind are warranted.

Keywords: parental migration, children living separately, child health

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