

# Impact of Migration on Families Left Behind: Psychological and Educational Perspectives

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**Abstract:** Migration, a critical socio-economic force, reshapes family structures globally. This study examines the educational and psychological impacts of migration on left-behind family members, particularly children and spouses. Through thematic insights and a bibliometric analysis using VOS viewer, the research reveals how migration influences academic performance, emotional well-being, identity, and support mechanisms. The paper synthesizes global case studies and bibliometric trends to offer a nuanced perspective on the interplay between migration and familial outcomes.

**Keywords:** Migration, Left-behind Families, Psychological Impact, Educational Outcomes, Emotional Well-being.

## 1. Introduction

Migration affects not just individuals who move, but those left behind. Families, especially spouses and children—often experience emotional, psychological, and educational disruptions. This paper explores these challenges through case studies and bibliometric mapping of global research trends, identifying themes and gaps for future inquiry. Migration has become a defining feature of globalization, impacting millions of families worldwide. While migration provides economic benefits through remittances, it also leaves families, particularly children and spouses, vulnerable to emotional distress and educational disruptions. This paper examines the psychological and educational consequences of migration on families left behind, using case studies from various socio-economic contexts.

### A. Thematic Analysis: Psychological and Educational Impacts

#### 1) Psychological Impact on Families Left Behind

While migration brings psychological challenges, strong

support systems can mitigate its negative effects. Community engagement, counseling services, and peer support groups help families adapt to the absence of a loved one. For example, in Mexico, organizations like "Red de Apoyo" provide psychological counseling to families affected by migration.

#### 2) Educational Impact on Children Left Behind

Refer table 2.

#### 3) Case Studies and Real-life Examples

##### 1. The Philippines: A Double-Edged Sword

The Philippines has one of the highest migration rates globally. While remittances contribute significantly to household income, children of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) often struggle with emotional instability and academic challenges. Studies have shown that some children excel academically due to financial stability, while others experience a decline in school performance due to the lack of parental guidance (Parreñas, 2005).

##### 2. Mexico and Central America: The Effect of U.S. Migration

In Mexico and Central America, migration to the U.S. is common. Families left behind often depend on remittances, yet children experience social and emotional difficulties. A UNICEF report (2019) found that many children in El Salvador and Honduras live in single-parent or grandparent-led households, affecting their emotional and educational development.

##### 3. India: Migration for Work and its Consequences

In India, internal migration due to labor demands affects millions of families. In states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, fathers migrating for work leave mothers and children to manage the household. Studies indicate that children in these

Table 1  
Different aspects of psychological impact

S.No.	Aspects	Explanation
1.	Emotional Distress and Anxiety	The absence of a parent or spouse due to migration often leads to emotional distress. Children may experience feelings of abandonment, anxiety, and depression. According to a study by Antman (2013), children in migrant households exhibit higher stress levels than those in non-migrant families. Additionally, spouses left behind may suffer from loneliness and mental health issues, particularly in societies where social stigma surrounds absentee parenting.
2.	Social Isolation and Identity Issues	Children and spouses left behind often face social isolation, as the absence of a parental figure can lead to limited social interactions. A case study in the Philippines revealed that children of overseas workers often struggle with identity issues due to prolonged separation from their parents (Battistella & Conaco, 1998).
3.	Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems	Children and spouses left behind often face social isolation, as the absence of a parental figure can lead to limited social interactions. A case study in the Philippines revealed that children of overseas workers often struggle with identity issues due to prolonged separation from their parents (Battistella & Conaco, 1998).

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Table 2  
Different aspects of educational impact

S.No.	Aspects	Explanation
1.	Academic Performance and Motivation	Research shows that migration can both positively and negatively affect children's education. On one hand, remittances improve access to better educational resources. On the other hand, parental absence can reduce motivation and academic performance. A study conducted in China found that children of migrant parents often lag in school performance compared to their peers with both parents present (Chen & Feng, 2017).
2.	Dropout Rates and School Attendance	In some cases, children left behind face an increased risk of dropping out due to a lack of parental supervision. A study by Cortes (2015) indicated that in Ecuador, children from migrant households were 20% more likely to drop out of school than those from non-migrant families.
3.	Educational Interventions and Policy Measures	Governments and NGOs have introduced various measures to counteract the educational disadvantages faced by children left behind. In Nepal, for example, community-based learning centers provide additional academic support to children of migrant workers, ensuring they remain engaged in their education despite the absence of their parents.

households face educational disadvantages, particularly in rural areas where school dropout rates are high (Desai & Banerji, 2008).

B. Bibliometric Analysis Using VOSviewer

1) Network Map Interpretation

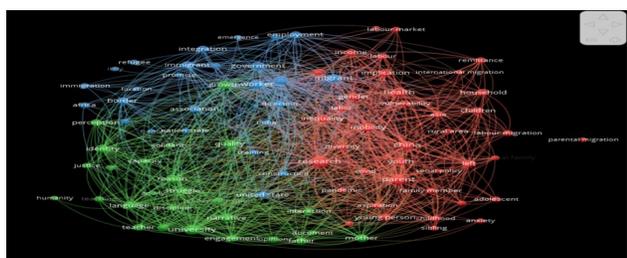


Fig. 1. VOSviewer Network map

The VOSviewer Network Map:

The VOSviewer network visualization shown in the figure-1 (a) out a bibliometric analysis of keywords or terms from a research dataset. The network consists of 91 items, 4001 links, and a total link strength of 21,728, indicating a highly interconnected field of study. The map is visually divided into three clusters, each color-coded—red, green, and blue—representing thematically related groups of terms. The size of each node (term) indicates its frequency or significance, while the thickness of the connecting lines reflects the strength of co-occurrence or relationship between terms.

The red cluster (right side) appears to focus on migration, labor, and family-related issues, including terms like labour market, health, inequality, mobility, children, parents, and China. These terms suggest a strong theme around labor migration and its impact on family structure and social policy.

The blue cluster (top) includes terms such as government, employment, immigrant, integration, refugee, and border, highlighting a focus on migration governance, policy, and international relations.

The green cluster (left side) comprises terms like identity, language, education, teacher, university, and justice, pointing towards educational and cultural dimensions of migration and identity construction.

Curved, colored lines show how these topics are interconnected, illustrating interdisciplinary ties between policy, education, and family dynamics in migration studies.

Interpretation:

This network visualization reveals a rich and multidimensional research landscape in the domain of

migration studies, where three major thematic areas dominate: (1) labor migration and familial impact, (2) governance and integration policies, and (3) educational and identity-related issues. The high density and strong link strength indicate that these themes are frequently studied together, suggesting an integrated approach in the existing literature. Researchers often examine how migration affects education, family, labor dynamics, and policy responses concurrently. This visualization thus provides valuable insights for identifying research gaps, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and understanding the core focus areas within the field.

2) Temporal Overlay Analysis (2016-2020):

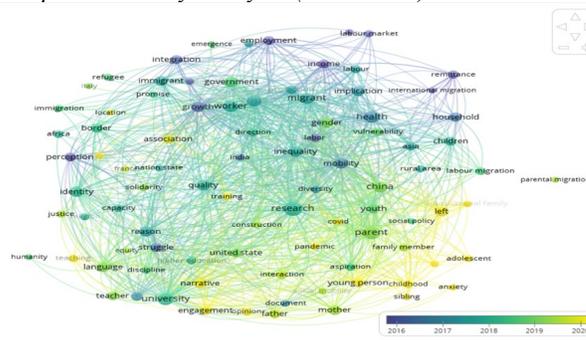


Fig. 2. Interpretation of the VOSviewer Overlay Visualization (Based on years)

The VOSviewer overlay visualization presents a rich keyword co-occurrence map showing how scholarly attention has evolved around migration and its effects on left-behind individuals, particularly focusing on educational and psychological well-being. The colors reflect the average publication year, with blue tones indicating older research (around 2016) and yellow tones representing newer research (closer to 2020).

Key Observations and Thematic Clusters:

1. Central Focus on Migration, Health, and Inequality: Terms like migrant, health, inequality, income, government, and employment occupy the central zone, suggesting that much research initially revolved around structural and socio-economic dimensions. These serve as anchor concepts, connecting various thematic clusters such as labour market issues, household impacts, and integration policies.
2. Cluster of Psychological and Emotional Terms (Right Bottom – Yellow Zone): Emerging terms such as parent, mother, father, childhood, adolescent, anxiety, sibling, and left are situated toward the yellow-hued

lower right quadrant, indicating increasingly recent scholarly interest (2018–2020) in the psychological well-being of children and family members left behind due to migration. The terms *youth*, *social policy*, and *family member* reinforce this shift.

3. *Educational Discourse (Lower Left – Blue/Green Zone)*: Keywords like *university*, *teacher*, *language*, *narrative*, *engagement*, *education*, and *teaching* are part of a more established (pre-2017) cluster. These reflect the pedagogical lens, often linked with justice, identity, and inclusion, but historically less connected to the specific challenges faced by the left-behind due to migration.
4. *Country-Specific Anchors and Emerging Regions*: China and India appear as mid-density terms closely linked to *household*, *children*, *mobility*, and *rural area*, reflecting growing interest in rural-urban migration and its consequences for left-behind children’s schooling and emotional security. The United States appears closer to *research* and *university*, suggesting its strong output in educational and interdisciplinary migration studies. Africa appears in a peripheral but connecting role, indicating underrepresentation but emerging significance in global south-focused studies. Italy and Germany are not explicitly labeled but are likely contributors through associated terms like *integration*, *refugee*, and *government*, situated in the upper part of the network, reflecting policies related to transnational families and psychosocial adaptation.
5. *Temporal Trend: From Macro to Micro Focus*: The overlay color gradient reveals a temporal evolution: Earlier studies (blue tones) concentrated on macro-structural issues like *migration*, *income*, *employment*, and *labour market*. More recent studies (yellow tones) delve into micro-level effects, including *parental migration*, *childhood*, *anxiety*, *family member*, and *social policy*, marking a shift toward psychological and educational impacts on left-behind populations.

This bibliometric map reveals a meaningful academic shift: from broad economic and policy discussions toward intimate family-level concerns—highlighting the psychological and educational vulnerabilities of those left behind due to migration. Recent years have witnessed a rise in research that connects child development, family disruption, anxiety, and learning outcomes within the migration discourse. For countries like India, China, and various African nations, these insights are especially timely, pointing to a growing awareness of how migration reshapes the mental and educational landscapes of children and families left at home. In contrast, nations like the United States, Germany, and Italy offer structural and policy-driven frameworks that can be adapted or localized to support these vulnerable groups. This progression shows how migration research is becoming increasingly personalized and nuanced, considering individual and family-level experiences beyond the traditional economic and political discussions.

### 3) Country-specific bibliometric networks

Table 3  
Comparative bibliometric trends across countries

Country	Research Output	International Collaboration	Key Strengths	Scope for Improvement
India	High (growing)	Moderate	Regional links, strong U.S. partnership	Broader European and African partnerships
China	Very High	Moderate (mainly U.S. and Asia)	High national productivity	Expand deeper collaborations with Europe/Africa
United States	Extremely High	Very Strong (global)	Global connector and leader	Sustain diversity in regional collaborations
Africa	Emerging	Limited but growing	Regional collaboration clusters forming	Strengthen global visibility and partnerships
Italy	High	Strong (Europe, U.S.)	Key European collaborator	Expand more ties with Asia and Africa
Germany	Very High	Very Strong (Europe, U.S., Asia)	European hub and international bridge	Further enhance collaborations with Africa

The comparative analysis highlights distinct patterns in research productivity and international collaboration among India, China, the United States, Africa, Italy, and Germany.

The United States emerges as the global leader with the highest research output and widespread collaborations across continents, reinforcing its central role in the academic network. The United States maintains its position as a global leader, with extensive research addressing mental health, child development, and educational challenges linked to family separation due to migration. Its strong global collaborations further enhance cross-cultural insights and policy relevance.

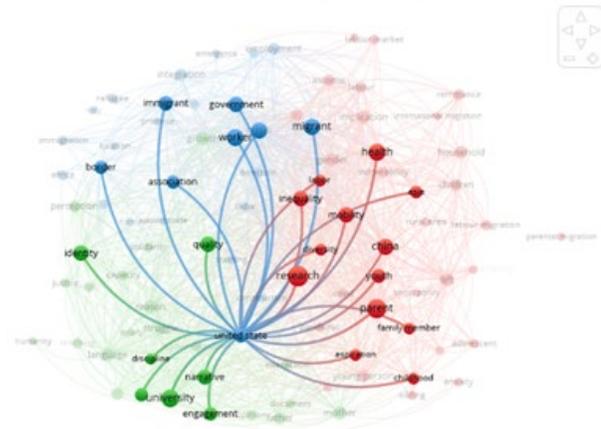


Fig. 3. United states

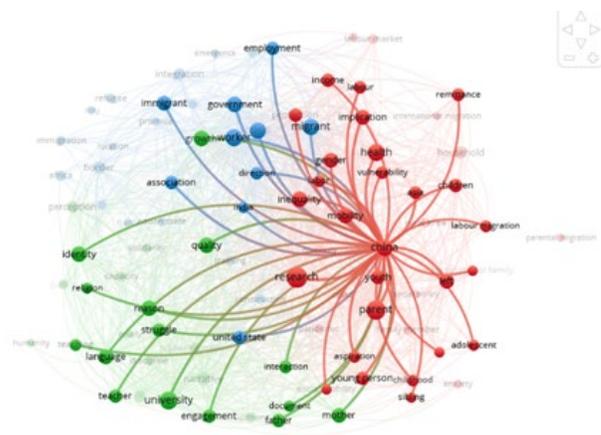


Fig. 4. China

China shows extremely high research productivity but

maintains moderately focused collaborations, primarily with the U.S. and Asian countries, indicating a strong but regionally concentrated research strategy. China, despite its high research output, tends to focus inward, addressing domestic migration (e.g., rural-to-urban) and its psychological impacts on left-behind children. However, international collaboration in this area remains relatively limited, potentially narrowing the scope of comparative studies.

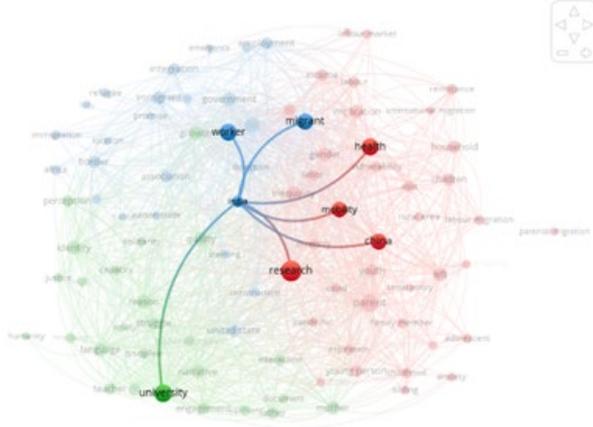


Fig. 5. India

India exhibits a rapidly growing research output with moderate international linkages, predominantly collaborating with the U.S., and shows potential to strengthen ties with Europe. India shows increasing research interest in the educational access and emotional well-being of children and women left behind in migration-affected households. While collaborations exist with the U.S. and Asian countries, there's room to enhance research exchange with Europe and Africa to contextualize local findings in global frameworks.

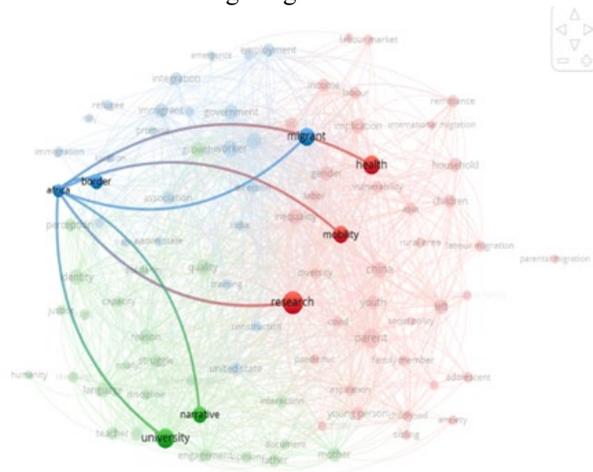


Fig. 6. Africa

Africa for broader visibility. In contrast, African countries, though emerging in research contributions, show limited but expanding collaboration clusters, highlighting a crucial opportunity to enhance global partnerships and visibility. Africa (especially Sub-Saharan Africa) presents emerging contributions in this field, largely focused on the socio-educational effects of labor migration. However, limited

publication volume and collaboration hinder comprehensive and comparative insights.

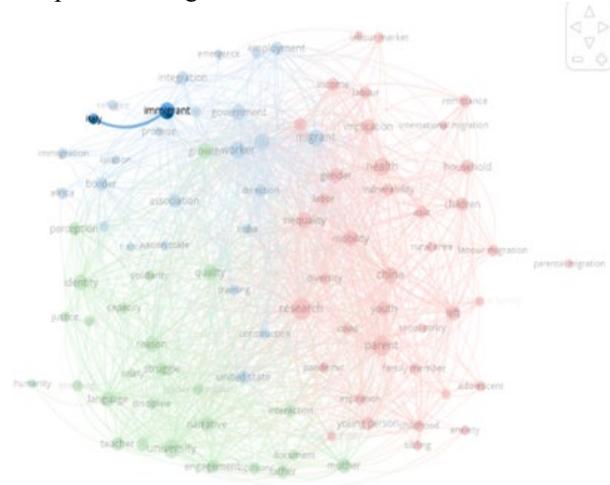


Fig. 7. Italy

Italy demonstrates high research activity with strong European and U.S. collaborations, and its next step could involve strategic expansion toward Asian and African collaborations. Italy actively explores the psychosocial consequences of transnational family structures, particularly among children and elderly left behind due to migration. Its strong regional collaborations support nuanced perspectives, though partnerships with Asian and African countries could enrich the cultural applicability of its findings.

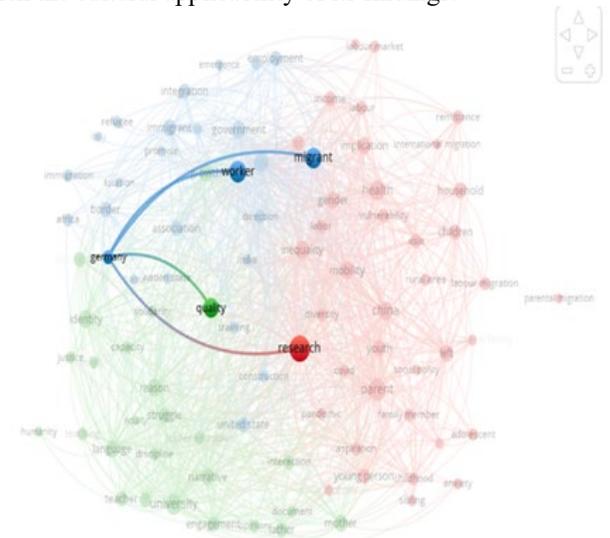


Fig. 8. Germany

Germany stands out as a major European research hub, showing very high productivity and strong international linkages, particularly with Europe, the U.S., and Asia, but could further enhance its influence by engaging more actively with emerging African research networks. Germany contributes robustly to psychological and educational studies within the migration context, particularly focusing on family dynamics, schooling, and integration policies in both sending and receiving countries. Germany's balanced global collaborations

make its research highly influential and contextually diverse.

Overall, while developed regions like the U.S., Germany, and Italy dominate in both quantity and connectivity, emerging research hubs such as India, China, and Africa display dynamic growth and present exciting opportunities for future global integration. In summary, countries with advanced research infrastructures (e.g., the U.S., Germany, Italy) tend to produce interdisciplinary, policy-relevant insights, while emerging economies like India, China, and African nations are vital in offering ground-level, culturally specific perspectives. Strengthening global academic collaboration will enhance understanding and intervention in the educational and psychological well-being of those left behind by migration.

### C. Policy Recommendations and Interventions:

To address the challenges migration poses to families left behind, the following interventions are suggested:

- *Psychosocial Support:* Schools should provide counseling services to help children cope with parental absence.
- *Educational Scholarships and Mentorship Programs:* Targeted financial aid and mentorship initiatives can improve children's motivation and academic performance.
- *Community-Based Parenting Models:* Encouraging extended family and community members to actively participate in child-rearing can help mitigate the absence of a parent.
- *Government Policies for Family Reunification:* Policies that allow migrant workers to bring their families or visit them regularly can reduce emotional distress.

## 2. Conclusion

Migration offers economic opportunities but leaves emotional and educational voids in families. Targeted interventions and policies are crucial to support left-behind children and spouses. This study's combined bibliometric and thematic approach provides a multidimensional view of migration's impact and suggests paths for inclusive research and practice. While migration brings economic benefits, its impact on families left behind cannot be overlooked. The psychological distress faced by children and spouses, coupled with the educational challenges of migrant households, requires targeted interventions. Governments, educators, and social organizations must work collaboratively to provide support systems that address these issues, ensuring that migration does not come at the cost of emotional and educational well-being.

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