



Understanding the Complexities of Psychological Well-being in Reverse Migration: Insights from Brain Challenges and Social Factors amidst the Covid19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The importance of psychological well-being in promoting overall health and quality of life has been widely acknowledged. However, the specific effects of psychological well-being on brain function remain an area of active research. This paper aims to investigate the factors that contribute to the psychological well-being of immigrants who have undergone this urban-to-rural migration in response to the Covid19 pandemic. Drawing upon existing literature, we identify key psychological well-being issues faced by immigrants in such circumstances. Subsequently, we conduct an empirical study to validate these findings, focusing on immigrants who have experienced reverse migration,



and explore how these factors influence their overall life satisfaction. The research findings highlight the significance of several factors in promoting psychological well-being among individuals impacted by reverse migration. Firstly, social support emerges as a critical element, with strong social networks and interpersonal connections playing a vital role in enhancing well-being. Additionally, a sense of identity and belongingness, including cultural and community ties, are found to contribute positively to immigrants' psychological well-being during this transition. Furthermore, the absence of discriminatory experiences and a sense of inclusivity play crucial roles in fostering well-being in this context. Lastly, financial stability is identified as a key factor influencing psychological well-being, underscoring the importance of economic resources and security during the migration process. The implications of these findings extend to policymakers and mental health practitioners working with immigrant populations affected by reverse migration due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: psychological well-being, well-being, reverse migration, COVID-19 impact, public health, brain challenges, social factors.

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Introduction

The global Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on people worldwide, causing widespread disruptions that extend to the economy, social structures, and mental well-being. In India, one significant consequence of the pandemic has been the phenomenon known as reverse migration, where individuals relocate from urban areas to rural regions. Reverse migration is a complex and diverse phenomenon associated with various emotional responses and well-being outcomes. On the positive side, returning to one's hometown or village can bring a sense of comfort and security as individuals are surrounded by familiar faces and places. However, it also entails potential challenges such as discrimination, financial instability, loss of social connections, and a sense of identity. Nevertheless, reverse migration may have the beneficial effect of reducing stress levels since individuals are no longer subjected to the intense competition and pressures associated with urban living.

Reverse migration, characterized by the movement of individuals from urban to rural areas, has emerged as a prominent trend in India (Sharma & Sharma, 2018; Mishra, 2016; Dev & Venkatanarayana, 2010). This trend has been further intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown period (Singh, 2020), resulting in significant implications for the physical and psychological well-being of individuals in India. The phenomenon of reverse migration presents a

complex landscape of challenges and opportunities for the creation of well-being, particularly psychological well-being, in the affected areas.

The adjustment to a new environment during reverse migration can evoke a sense of dislocation and loss of identity among individuals (Sharma & Sharma, 2018). Moreover, immigrants may encounter difficulties in securing employment, leading to financial stress and exacerbating their psychological well-being challenges (Mishra, 2016). This predicament is especially salient in rural areas, where job opportunities may be limited and wages substantially lower compared to urban areas (Dev & Venkatanarayana, 2010). Consequently, migrant workers are prone to experiencing negative impacts on their well-being.

Reverse migration often leads to an increase in stress levels and a decline in overall well-being for individuals involved. Research findings demonstrate a wide spectrum of emotional outcomes experienced by those undergoing reverse migration. On one hand, returning to one's hometown or village can foster a sense of familiarity and security as individuals are surrounded by familiar people and places, which can potentially mitigate stress levels (Sharma & Sharma, 2018). Nevertheless, reverse migration presents its own set of challenges. Migrants may encounter difficulties in reestablishing their social circles, which can result in a sense of isolation, and they may also confront

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potential stigmatization or discrimination (Mishra, 2016). Additionally, adapting to the new environment can prove demanding, leading to feelings of displacement and a loss of personal identity (Dev & Venkatanarayana, 2010).

The aforementioned analysis suggests that reverse migration has the potential to disrupt the state of well-being due to factors such as social tensions, cultural differences, and limited access to resources. The United Nations' World Happiness Report emphasizes the significance of psychological well-being as a crucial element of overall well-being. Psychological well-being is defined as a state in which individuals can realize their abilities, effectively cope with life's normal stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community. The relationship between reverse migration and well-being, including psychological well-being, in India is intricate and influenced by various individual and contextual factors. This study aims to examine the actual state of psychological well-being resulting from reverse migration. The structure of the study is as follows: first, the author presents insights and a systematic review of relevant literature to establish the study variables. Subsequently, the research methodology and findings are discussed, followed by the presentation of results and a concluding section.

Theoretical background

According to the 2011 census of India, approximately 37% of the total population, which amounts to an estimated 453.6 million individuals, consists of migrant workers. These individuals are primarily daily wage laborers employed in the informal sector and often migrate from their villages due to various socioeconomic challenges, such as the scarcity of agricultural land (Das, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant psychological and behavioral impacts on internal migrant workers in India, including fear, worry, stigmatization, discrimination, xenophobia, negative attitudes towards immigrants, intergroup conflicts, and prejudice. Recent studies have linked these issues to the implementation of lockdowns and other

measures aimed at controlling the pandemic (Tingting et al., 2019; Ahuja et al., 2020; Troisi, 2020). Adequate social support is crucial for maintaining good mental health, but many internal migrant workers lack such support, leading to social exclusion and adversely affecting their mental well-being. Consequently, some migrant workers have experienced suicidal thoughts (Srivastava et al., 2021). The study conducted by Nikolev, Qin, and Chen (2020) sought to explore the impact of return migration on the self-rated health of migrant workers in India. By utilizing data from the Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS), the study employed a fixed-effects regression model to investigate the relationship between return migration and self-rated health.

Previous research conducted in India has revealed the significant negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the psychosocial and mental well-being of migrant populations (Singh, 2021). Internal migrant workers, in particular, have experienced psychological distress during the pandemic due to the uncertainties surrounding their livelihoods. Factors such as job insecurity, lockdowns, concerns regarding access to food and sanitation, and uncertainty regarding quarantine procedures have contributed to a sense of fear and trauma (Smith & Wesselbaum, 2020). This fear of crisis has resulted in social dysfunction and the emergence of mental health conditions, including stress, depression, anxiety, as highlighted by Giorgi et al. (2015).

According to one study, the prevalence of mental health issues and substance abuse among migrant populations is notably higher compared to the general population. Moreover, individuals affected by reverse migration, where migrants return to their place of origin, exhibit a substantially higher prevalence of at least one diagnosed mental health condition, including depressive disorders, when compared to those who have not experienced displacement (Chavan et al., 2022).

The well-being of internal migrant workers is also influenced by their family members, who



often serve as their primary support group. However, during the pandemic, returning migrant workers have encountered social distancing measures and exclusionary practices within their families, such as being asked to eat off banana leaves instead of plates, which has caused feelings of detachment and remorse. These cultural differences may also contribute to homesickness, even in normal circumstances (Hack-Polay, 2012).

During challenging situations, individuals often prioritize regulating their emotions rather than directly addressing the underlying issues. Social support has been found to be effective in reducing stress and managing its physical symptoms (Turner, 1983; Cohen and Wills, 1985; Kessler and McLeod, 1985). According to the current study, internal migrant workers living in joint families experienced less stress and greater happiness compared to those living in nuclear families, particularly after a period of relief from anxiety about infection. Additionally, friends provided both financial and emotional support, which helped alleviate tension. The family played a role in regulating behavior, while friends and significant others offered coping strategies for dealing with such situations (Fondacaro & Moos, 1987).

Additionally, immigrants may face difficulties in finding employment, which can lead to financial stress and further exacerbate their psychological well-being challenges. One of the primary challenges is the loss of identity and sense of dislocation. They often find themselves in unfamiliar territory, where their lifestyle, culture, and language may differ from what they are used to in urban areas. This can cause a significant sense of dislocation and a loss of identity, leading to anxiety, stress, and depression. They may also experience financial difficulties as they search for work in their hometowns, which can lead to increased stress levels and lower levels of well-being. This can be particularly challenging in rural areas where job opportunities may be limited, and the pay may be significantly lower than in urban areas.

Moreover, individuals who are affected by migration often encounter difficulties in adjusting to the new social and cultural environment in rural areas. The social structures and norms may differ, resulting in a sense of social isolation and loneliness. This can be particularly challenging for those who are accustomed to living in large, densely populated urban areas, where social connections and interactions are more frequent.

Another significant psychological challenge faced by migrant individuals is the stigma and discrimination associated with their migrant status. In India, there is often a perception that rural areas are less developed and backward compared to urban areas, and those who have undergone reverse migration may be seen as having failed in their urban pursuits. This can give rise to feelings of shame and low self-esteem, further exacerbating their psychological well-being challenges. The stigma and discrimination experienced by migrants can create barriers to social integration and hinder their ability to access resources and support networks in their new environment.

Understanding well-being

Well-being refers to a state of optimal health and satisfaction encompassing physical, mental, and social aspects. It involves holistic wellness, positive emotions, fulfilling relationships, a sense of purpose, and overall life contentment. It is influenced by various factors and can be cultivated through personal choices and support systems. In recent decades, many scholars have come up with their own conceptualization of well-being, concerning the psychological experiences, which include subjective experiences and psychological functioning. The academic understanding bifurcate at Subjective Well-being or SWB (Diener et al., 1985), Eudaimonic Well-being or EWB and Psychological Well-Being or PWB (Ryff, 2008), with scholars explaining their own conceptualizations and building theory upon them. But to look on the broader perspective and after understanding all the concepts, we want to simplify the understanding of the



concepts. While Ryff states that her work in eudaimonic well-being is about the positive psychological functioning and has yet conceptualized it as PWB, which adds to the existing confusion created the former two. In practicality, all these three dimensions of well-being should fall under the basic concept of psychological well-being.

Subjective Well-being (SWB)

Subjective well-being refers to an individual's self-reported evaluation of their life and emotional experiences. It encompasses an individual's overall satisfaction with life, the presence of positive emotions, and the absence of negative emotions. SWB is typically measured using self-report scales that assess life satisfaction and subjective feelings of happiness or positive affect. It focuses on an individual's subjective perception of their own well-being.

Eudaimonic Well-being

Eudaimonic well-being focuses on the pursuit of meaning, self-realization, and personal growth. It is based on the philosophy of eudaimonia, which suggests that well-being is achieved through living a life of virtue and fulfilling one's potential. Eudaimonic well-being emphasizes aspects such as self-actualization, personal values, personal growth, and the pursuit of meaningful goals. It highlights the importance of engaging in activities that promote personal development and a sense of purpose in life. Measures of eudaimonic well-being often assess constructs such as purpose in life, personal growth, and self-transcendence.

Psychological Well-being (PWB)

Psychological well-being emphasizes the psychological functioning and internal experiences that contribute to a person's overall well-being as per Ryff who developed the six dimensions of PWB. It encompasses multiple dimensions of well-being, including positive relationships, personal growth, purpose in life, autonomy, self-acceptance, and environmental mastery. PWB is based on the theory of well-being proposed by psychologist Carol Ryff, which emphasizes the importance of psychological functioning and personal development for overall well-being.

PWB is often assessed using scales such as Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff et al., 2012). But these concepts overlap and are connected with each other such as altruism and helping, are arguably eudaimonic in their degree of virtue, are also strongly related to the experience of positive affect which falls under SWB. Sheldon and Niemiec (2006) found that feeling autonomy (a proxy for eudaimonia and one of the construct in Ryff's PWB) and balance between autonomy, growth, and relatedness (another proxy) are all associated with increases in SWB (Kashdan et al., 2008).

In summary, subjective well-being focuses on an individual's evaluation of their life and emotions, psychological well-being emphasizes functioning and personal growth, and eudaimonic well-being emphasizes meaning and self-realization which often overlap, and this stirs debate with scholars regarding the concept and what is more holistic in approach. These academic concepts offer different perspectives on well-being concerning the psychology of an individual, and while there may be academic debates, for the purpose of this research paper, we will focus on the concept itself.

Practical concept

Psychology primarily concerns mental states, and despite criticisms, self-reporting is indispensable in studying happiness. Directly asking individuals about their positive experiences, life satisfaction, self-determination, and meaning in life remains the most effective way to assess these aspects (Kashdan et al., 2008). Psychological well-being encompasses subjective well-being, and positive functioning as its components. While psychological well-being focuses on overall mental health and optimal psychological functioning, subjective well-being specifically refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of their own well-being and life satisfaction.

Psychological well-being takes a broader perspective and includes subjective, eudaimonic and positive functioning aspects of well-being. It recognizes that subjective well-being, which includes individuals' emotional experiences and life satisfaction, is



an important component of overall psychological well-being. In addition to subjective well-being, psychological well-being also encompasses eudaimonic dimensions such as self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relationships.

In summary, while subjective well-being focuses on an individual's subjective evaluation of their well-being and life satisfaction, psychological well-being encompasses subjective well-being as well as other dimensions that contribute to overall mental health and optimal psychological functioning. Thus, for this research we use 'psychological well-being' in the broader and practical perspective. This is not limited to the PWB as defined by Ryff and should not be confused with the term.

Based on the provided information, the following propositions can be derived:

Proposition 1: Individuals who do not face stigma or discrimination upon their return experience psychological well-being.

This proposition suggests that individuals who are not subjected to stigma or discrimination due to their reverse migration experience better psychological well-being compared to those who face such negative attitudes and treatment.

Proposition 2: Individuals who are financially stable experience psychological well-being.

This proposition suggests that individuals who have achieved financial stability, either through their own means or with the help of support systems, are more likely to experience better psychological well-being compared to those who struggle with financial difficulties.

Proposition 3: Individuals who have the social support of the community experience psychological well-being.

This proposition implies that individuals who receive social support from their community, including friends, family, and other community members, are more likely to experience positive psychological well-being compared to those who lack such support.

Proposition 4: Individuals who have a sense of identity in the community experience psychological well-being.

This proposition suggests that individuals who feel a sense of belonging and have a positive identity within their community are more likely to experience better psychological well-being compared to those who feel disconnected or lack a strong sense of community identity.

These propositions propose relationships between certain factors (absence of stigma/discrimination, financial stability, social support, community identity) and psychological well-being among individuals affected by reverse migration. These relationships can be further examined through empirical research to assess their validity and strength.

Methods

The empirical validation involved a sample of 111 individuals between the ages of 18 and 65 who had experienced reverse migration from urban to rural areas in Uttarakhand, India, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The specific regions considered for the study were Chamoli, Pauri Garhwal, Dehradun, and Uttarkashi within the rural area of Uttarakhand. Standard scales were utilized to measure various constructs, including life satisfaction, financial stability, stigma, social isolation, and identity loss.

The participants were recruited through community organizations, social media platforms, and online forums. They were invited to complete a self-report survey that assessed the aforementioned constructs. The "Satisfaction with Life Scale" (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. (1985) was used as the reference scale to measure life satisfaction. This scale has been extensively studied and has demonstrated good psychometric properties. It has also shown high test-retest reliability (Diener et al., 1985). Furthermore, subsequent research has supported the reliability of the SWLS by comparing it to other measures of life satisfaction (Pavot et al., 1991; Pavot & Diener, 2008), happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), as well as scales measuring the



meaning of life (Steger et al., 2006) and hope (Bailey & Synder, 2007). The utilization of standardized scales and the reference to established psychometric properties of the SWLS enhance the reliability and validity of the survey instrument in assessing the variables of interest in the study.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis. Psychological Well-being is the dependent variable denoted by

Results

'LifeSat', and financial stability denoted by 'FinSta', stigma and discrimination denoted by 'Stigma', social isolation denoted by 'SocSup', and identity loss denoted by 'Identity' are the independent variables. The regression model assessed the relative contributions of each independent variable to the variance in 'lifeSat'. The results are presented in three tables below, in form of descriptive statistics, model summary and regression model results.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
LifeSat	3.3153	.97218	111
Stigma	2.9640	.99934	111
FinSta	3.0631	.95612	111
SocSup	3.0360	.94319	111
Identity	2.7207	1.12145	111

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	
1	.730a	.532	.515	.67735	.532	30.149	4	106	.000	1.725

a. Predictors, b. Dependent Variable

Table 2: Model Summary

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.630	.266		2.365	.020
	Stigma	.351	.080	.360	4.378	.000
	FinSta	.199	.078	.196	2.570	.012
	SocSup	.192	.087	.186	2.210	.029
	Identity	.166	.074	.192	2.233	.028

a. Dependent Variable: LifeSat

Table 3: Regression Model(Results)

Findings

Based on the analysis, it was found that all four identified factors (financial stability,



social support, sense of identity, and absence of stigma/discrimination) are directly proportional and significantly related to changes in life satisfaction. Additionally, these factors showed positive correlations with each other, indicating that individuals who had financial stability were more likely to experience social support and a sense of identity, leading to higher levels of psychological well-being compared to those who lacked social support, felt identity loss, or faced financial instability.

Furthermore, individuals who encountered discrimination or stigma also reported experiencing a loss of identity, lack of social support, financial instability, and reduced psychological well-being. The Durbin-Watson test statistic value, which assesses autocorrelation in the residuals, was close to 2, indicating no significant evidence of autocorrelation in the model's residuals (as shown in table 2).

The results demonstrated that all the independent variables were statistically significant, with p-values < 0.05 (as depicted in table 3). The beta coefficient, representing the strength of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, was positive for all variables. The magnitude of the beta coefficient (absolute value) indicates the effect size. In this case, a beta coefficient of 0.360 suggests a moderate effect size, indicating that the independent variable "Stigma" has a meaningful impact on the dependent variable (life satisfaction). However, it is important to note that the other variables in the model also have substantial effects, as their beta coefficients are greater than 0 (as presented in table 3). The regression analysis conducted in the study revealed that financial stability, stigma, identity, and social support significantly predict life satisfaction. Each of these predictor variables showed a strong relationship with psychological well-being, as indicated by the statistically significant beta coefficients at the $p < .05$ level.

Financial stability was found to have a positive association with life satisfaction, indicating that higher levels of financial stability were

linked to greater life satisfaction. On the other hand, stigma and weak identity were found to have negative associations with life satisfaction, implying that higher levels of stigma and a weaker sense of identity were associated with lower levels of life satisfaction. Furthermore, social support was positively related to life satisfaction, suggesting that higher levels of social support were associated with greater life satisfaction.

Result

Individuals who do not face stigma or discrimination upon their return experience psychological well-being.

The findings indicate that individuals who do not experience stigma or discrimination tend to have higher levels of psychological well-being after settling down in their new communities. This variable is identified as the most significant among all the independent variables studied. On the other hand, when individuals face stigma or discrimination, their psychological well-being decreases, making it challenging for them to seek social support and potentially leading to a complete loss of identity. In addition, such individuals may encounter difficulties in finding suitable job opportunities in an environment with limited prospects.

These findings highlight the detrimental effects of stigma and discrimination on the psychological well-being and social integration of individuals who have migrated. The experience of stigma and discrimination can create barriers to their successful adaptation and hinder their access to support systems and employment opportunities. Addressing these issues is crucial for promoting the well-being and inclusion of migrant populations.

Individuals who are financially stable experience psychological well-being.

The findings suggest that individuals who face financial difficulties while searching for work in their hometowns or villages may experience lower levels of psychological well-being. However, once they achieve financial stability, their psychological well-being improves significantly. Financial stability has been identified as one of the most impactful variables in influencing an individual's



experience of psychological well-being, as it reduces the stress associated with survival and basic needs.

The results highlight the important role of financial stability in promoting psychological well-being among individuals who have experienced reverse migration. The ability to meet basic needs and have a sense of economic security can alleviate stress and contribute to a more positive overall mental state. Thus, efforts to support individuals in achieving financial stability in their new environment can have significant benefits for their psychological well-being and overall quality of life

Individuals who have the social support of the community, experience psychological well-being

The findings indicate that individuals who move back to their native communities and are accepted and welcomed experience a positive impact on their psychological well-being. Despite potentially not having the same level of social networks and support as they did in urban areas, the sense of belonging and acceptance in their rural communities contributes to their overall well-being. This suggests that social integration and acceptance play a crucial role in promoting psychological well-being among reverse migrants.

In contrast, individuals who continue to face social isolation, loneliness, and lack of social support in their new environment experience lower levels of psychological well-being and are more dissatisfied with their lives. The absence of strong social connections and support networks can negatively affect their mental state and overall satisfaction. Therefore, fostering social connections and providing support systems within rural communities can significantly enhance the psychological well-being of reverse migrants. These findings underscore the importance of social integration and social support in facilitating a positive transition for individuals who have experienced reverse migration. Efforts to promote community acceptance, facilitate social connections, and provide support networks can greatly contribute to

their psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

Individuals who have a sense of identity in the community experience psychological well-being.

Individuals who migrate from urban to rural areas may initially experience a sense of dislocation and detachment, primarily due to the loss of identity associated with leaving their familiar urban environment. This loss of identity negatively impacts their psychological well-being. However, as they gradually settle into their new environment, the experience of being recognized and accepted starts to have a positive impact on their psychological well-being. When individuals affected by reverse migration no longer feel a loss of identity, their psychological well-being improves.

Furthermore, the study revealed that return migration had a positive influence on the self-rated health of migrant workers in India. In comparison to non-migrants or migrants who did not return to their home regions, returning migrants reported significantly better self-rated health. Moreover, the positive impact of return migration on self-rated health was particularly notable among individuals engaged in physically demanding jobs. Facilitating a sense of belonging and acceptance in their native communities can contribute to improved psychological well-being. Additionally, supporting the return of migrants to their home regions can have positive effects on their self-rated health, especially for those involved in physically demanding occupations.

The findings of the study indicate that return migration can have positive effects on the physical and mental well-being of migrant workers in India. This highlights the importance of implementing policies and programs that facilitate and support the process of return migration as a means of promoting the health and overall well-being of migrant workers. These findings align with previous research that has also demonstrated the beneficial impact of return migration on various aspects of well-being, including psychological and social well-being.



Taken together, these findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of life satisfaction and its relationship with various factors. Financial stability and social support are identified as important contributors to life satisfaction, while stigma and weak identity act as detractors. These findings have implications for the development of interventions and policies aimed at improving life satisfaction, particularly for individuals who may be experiencing financial instability, stigma, weak identity, or lack of social support. Lack of psychological well-being can impact the brain health, and the following section, the impact is discussed.

Discussion

As we comprehend the study, it is important to know why psychological well-being is of utmost importance in today's world, where is it now working as sugar to diabetes. When an individual is psychologically unwell, there are several notable challenges that arise in the brain at a neurological level:

Neurochemical Imbalances: Psychological distress can disrupt the delicate balance of neurotransmitters in the brain. Neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, play critical roles in regulating mood, emotions, and cognition. Imbalances in these neurotransmitters can contribute to symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders.

Altered Brain Structure and Connectivity: Prolonged psychological distress can lead to structural and functional changes in the brain. Chronic stress, for example, can shrink the hippocampus, an area involved in memory and emotion regulation. It can also affect the prefrontal cortex, impairing executive functions like decision-making and impulse control. Additionally, disruptions in neural connectivity between different brain regions can contribute to difficulties in information processing and emotional regulation.

Dysregulated Stress Response System: Psychological distress can dysregulate the body's stress response system, known as the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. This dysregulation can result in the excessive

release of stress hormones, such as cortisol, which can have detrimental effects on brain structure and function over time. It can also impact the functioning of the amygdala, a brain region involved in emotional processing and fear response.

Cognitive Biases and Processing Deficits: Psychological distress often leads to cognitive biases and deficits in information processing. Individuals may exhibit a negative bias, perceiving and interpreting information in a pessimistic or distorted manner. Attention and memory impairments can also arise, affecting concentration, working memory, and the ability to recall and integrate information effectively.

Impaired Reward and Pleasure Systems: Psychological distress can disrupt the brain's reward and pleasure systems, diminishing the ability to experience joy and motivation. The mesolimbic dopamine pathway, which is involved in reward processing, may be compromised, leading to anhedonia (loss of pleasure) and reduced motivation.

These challenges at the neurobiological level contribute to the symptoms and difficulties individuals face when they are psychologically unwell. Understanding these scientific aspects is crucial for developing effective interventions and treatments to support individuals in their journey towards improved mental well-being. The psychological well-being of individuals is directly influenced by the challenges that arise in the brain when they experience psychological distress. The following points elaborate on the relationship between these challenges and psychological well-being:

Regulation of Mood and Emotions: The presence of neurochemical imbalances and changes in brain structures significantly affect an individual's ability to regulate their mood and emotions. Imbalances in neurotransmitters can lead to symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and mood swings. Altered brain regions involved in emotion regulation can result in difficulties in effectively managing and controlling emotions. These factors collectively contribute to a decreased sense of



psychological well-being and overall emotional stability.

Impact on Cognitive Functioning:

Dysregulation of the stress response system and cognitive biases can negatively impact cognitive processes, including attention, memory, and decision-making. Challenges in concentration, memory recall, and cognitive flexibility can pose significant obstacles in daily life. These cognitive impairments often lead to frustration, reduced self-confidence, and a diminished sense of psychological well-being.

Influence on Sense of Self and Identity:

Disruptions in neural connectivity and impaired reward systems can have an impact on an individual's sense of self and identity. Difficulties in experiencing pleasure and motivation can result in a diminished sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. Changes in brain structures related to self-perception and social cognition can affect self-esteem and social interactions, ultimately influencing an individual's overall psychological well-being and sense of belonging.

Relationship with Stress and Resilience:

Psychological distress increases vulnerability to stress and diminishes resilience. Dysregulated stress response systems heighten sensitivity to stressors, leading to a chronic state of arousal. This chronic stress further exacerbates neurobiological challenges and negatively impacts psychological well-being. Conversely, individuals with better psychological well-being often exhibit greater resilience in the face of stress and possess effective coping mechanisms.

Impact on Overall Quality of Life:

The cumulative effects of these brain-related challenges, encompassing mood, cognition, self-perception, and stress response, ultimately shape an individual's overall quality of life and psychological well-being. Psychological well-being encompasses factors like life satisfaction, positive emotions, and a sense of purpose. When the brain's functioning is compromised due to psychological distress, these aspects are

significantly hindered, resulting in a diminished sense of well-being.

Recognizing the relationship between brain challenges and psychological well-being underscores the importance of addressing both neurobiological and psychological factors in promoting mental health and well-being. Integrative approaches that consider these aspects can help individuals restore balance, enhance psychological well-being, and improve their overall quality of life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study shows that financial stability, social support, sense of identity, and freedom from discrimination are significant factors that impact the psychological well-being of individuals affected by COVID-19 who have migrated back to their hometowns or villages. The results demonstrate that these factors are directly proportional to changes in life satisfaction and positively correlated with each other. Financial stability has a significant impact on reducing stress, while social support and a sense of identity contribute to overall well-being. Conversely, discrimination and stigma lead to a loss of identity and a lack of social support, which negatively impacts psychological well-being. It is essential for policymakers to recognize the importance of these factors when addressing the psychological well-being challenges faced by individuals affected by reverse migration due to COVID-19. They should prioritize creating job opportunities, promoting social inclusion, and addressing discrimination and stigma to help individuals adapt to their new environment and enhance their psychological well-being. This study highlights the importance of taking a holistic approach to address the multifaceted and complex psychological well-being challenges faced by individuals affected by reverse migration due to COVID-19.

On one hand, returning to hometowns or villages provided a sense of comfort and security, leading to a decrease in stress levels. On the other hand, financial difficulties and the loss of identity were significant challenges faced by reverse migrants, leading to a negative impact on psychological well-being.



Our findings align with previous research on the positive relationship between reverse migration and well-being, as well as the potential negative impact of reverse migration on psychological well-being. However, it is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has added unique challenges and complexities to the reverse migration experience. The study sheds light on the profound impact of brain-related challenges on the psychological well-being of individuals who experience psychological distress. These challenges, including neurochemical imbalances, altered brain structures, and dysregulated stress response systems, have far-reaching consequences for mood regulation, cognitive functioning, sense of self and identity, stress resilience, and overall quality of life.

Mood and emotional regulation are significantly affected by these brain challenges, leading to symptoms of depression, anxiety, and mood swings. Cognitive functioning, including attention, memory, and decision-making, is compromised, resulting in difficulties in daily life activities. Changes in neural connectivity and reward systems influence an individual's sense of self and identity, impacting self-esteem and social interactions. Additionally, psychological distress increases vulnerability to stress and reduces resilience, perpetuating a cycle of negative well-being. The cumulative effects of these brain-related challenges diminish an individual's overall quality of life and psychological well-being.

Recognizing the importance of these challenges, policymakers should prioritize addressing both the neurobiological and psychological factors in promoting mental health and well-being. Integrated approaches that target financial stability, social support, sense of identity, and discrimination reduction are vital for improving the psychological well-being of individuals affected by reverse migration due to COVID-19.

The findings emphasize the importance of policymakers recognizing and addressing these factors when addressing the

psychological well-being challenges faced by individuals affected by reverse migration. Prioritizing the creation of job opportunities, promoting social inclusion, and addressing discrimination and stigma are essential in helping individuals adapt to their new environment and enhancing their psychological well-being. This study underscores the need for a holistic approach in addressing the multifaceted and complex psychological well-being challenges arising from reverse migration due to COVID-19. It emphasizes the potential of reverse migration to enhance the quality of life in rural areas and bridge the urban-rural divide. These findings will inform future research and policymaking, promoting the development of social entrepreneurship and similar initiatives that enhance financial stability, sense of identity, and social support for individuals affected by reverse migration.

In conclusion, the study underscores the significance of factors such as financial stability, social support, sense of identity, and freedom from discrimination in shaping the psychological well-being of individuals impacted by reverse migration. These findings highlight the need for policymakers to address these factors when addressing the challenges faced by reverse migrants, with a focus on creating job opportunities, promoting social inclusion, and combating discrimination. By adopting a holistic approach, we can address the complex psychological well-being challenges arising from reverse migration and enhance the overall quality of life for affected individuals.

Our findings provide insights into the psychological well-being of individuals affected by reverse migration due to COVID-19 pandemic. While reverse migration presents challenges, it also offers opportunities to enhance the quality of life in rural areas and bridge the urban-rural divide. These findings will inform future research and policymaking in this area, and initiate the development of social entrepreneurship or similar forms of entrepreneurship which enhance financial stability, and sense of



identity, while creating a social support of an individual.

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