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Family-Member Migration and the Psychosocial Health Outcomes of Children in Moldova and Georgia

Michaella Vanore

Abstract:

This dissertation examines the relationship between the migration of co-resident family members and the psychosocial health of children who remain behind in Moldova and Georgia, two countries that have experienced rapid and sustained emigration flows over the past 25 years. The analysis of household survey data collected among over 3,500 households in Moldova and over 4,000 households in Georgia has suggested that migration is not as important a factor in the development of psychosocial health as has been suggested by much prior research and discourse. No negative association was found between family-member migration and the psychosocial health outcomes of children in Georgia. Among Moldovan children, only boys who had experienced the migration of a father (either singularly or in combination with that of a mother) expressed higher probabilities of having unfavourable psychosocial outcomes given parental migration. The results challenge many assumptions about how children growing up in transnational families develop and highlight how the context in which migration occurs—including who migrates, who assumes caregiving roles, and how caregivers interact with the children under their care—strongly influences whether and how migration corresponds to differences in child psychosocial health.