A Study on the Impact of Parental Migration on the Lives of Children Left Behind in Northeast China

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"Life isn't a matter of milestones, but of moments."

Abstract

Population mobility has become an inevitable trend in the process of social transformation in contemporary China. By comparing children with one or both parents migrating and children from non-migrant families, this thesis aims to examine the impact of parental migration on the development of left-behind children and its underlying mechanisms. Using a mixed-method approach, this thesis draws on an original survey of school children (N=933) and in-depth interviews with children, parents, grandparents, and teachers (N=58) in Hunchun City, Northeast China. Specifically, this thesis explores the impact of parental migration on children's education and psychological wellbeing, allowing for variation depending on the gender of the migrant parent and exploring children's social support (schools and extended family relationships) as sources of resilience in the context of parental migration. This thesis triangulates quantitative and qualitative data from different viewpoints and finds that, overall, maternal migration has a strong impact on children's development and, in particular, on children's psychological wellbeing, suggesting that the absence of mothers as primary caregivers based on the traditional gender division of labor exacerbates the vulnerability of left-behind children, despite the increasing feminization of migration. On the other hand, the findings show that schools and extended family relationships serve as sources of resilience for children's development to a certain extent, suggesting that children, as social actors, can use their social networks as support to adapt to the challenges posed by parental migration. By adopting a child-centered perspective, this thesis sheds a more positive light on the impact of distant parenting on children's development and enriches the literature on left-behind children in the Chinese context.

Contents

1 Introduction

> On the Chinese New Year's Eve, 27th January 2017, a 15-year-old teenager in a county in Yunnan Province who had both parents working in another city committed suicide by drinking pesticide. Before committing suicide, he noted, "I do not know why everyone else has a good family while I do not. Everyone else had a wonderful childhood in the company of their parents, while mine was spent only in the gloom … It would be a relief for myself if I die, and also a relief for you [parents]. The burdens of your life will be much lighter after I die, then you will not need to go out to make money anymore." (Sohu News, 2017)

Labor migration has become increasingly widespread worldwide, particularly in developing countries that experience rapid urbanization and severe regional inequalities (Paul, 2017; Zimmer and Van Natta, 2018). As China's urbanization and modernization accelerated, a high volume of people has joined the migration flows, as migration is often a family strategy to alleviate poverty (Stark and Bloom, 1985). The latest data from the seventh Chinese census indicates that as of 2020, the number of floating populations whose place of residence does not coincide with their household registration location and who have been away from their household registration location for more than six months reached 375.82 million, an increase of 69.73% compared to the 2010 census data (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). International migration has also increased: the number of Chinese migrating outside China has risen from 849,861 to 10732,300 from 2010 to 2020 (Annual report on Chinese international migration, 2020). However, migration is more complex than a simple geographic movement. It affects individuals in migration flows and has a broad and profound impact on family members who stay behind in their hometowns due to various migration restrictions. As a consequence of migration flows, left-behind children have also expanded with the increase of the migrant population and gradually become a societal issue in China's social transformation, which draws a great deal of attention.

In today's industrialized countries, as industrialization and urbanization increase the demand for labor in urban areas, migration from rural to urban areas becomes an

inevitable phenomenon in economic development (Gaude and Peek, 1976). With the significant increase in the rural migrant population and the institutional barriers to rural-urban migration, research on left-behind children in China has historically focused on children in rural areas, while children in urban areas have long been understudied.

However, as China's urbanization reaches saturation, the flow of rural outward migration has gradually decelerated, with urban outward mobility dominating, driven by the pursuit of broader career opportunities or better living conditions for families. By 2020, there were 26.74 million children aged 6-15 years separated from migrant parents, 12.90 million in rural areas and 13.84 million in urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021), indicating the large number of mobile populations in cities. The shift from rural outward mobility to urban outward movement is not exclusive to China, but also occurs in many other developing countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Chile, as well as in developed countries such as the UK, Italy, the Netherlands in Western Europe and the US and Canada in North America (Pérez-Campuzano et al., 2018). Similar to the literature in China, children left behind in urban areas in other countries have been less frequently studied.

By focusing on left-behind children in an urban setting, this thesis will fill the gaps in research on children in urban regions, further complementing the literature on left-behind children in the Chinese context. This thesis will also shed light on children of urban migrants more broadly, bringing to public attention children in urban regions who have long been overshadowed by children of rural migrants. Specifically, in this thesis, I examine the impact of parental migration on the development of left-behind children and its underlying mechanisms through a mixed-method study of children left behind in the northeastern area of China between 2019 and 2021. Unlike the bulk of research on this topic which mainly focuses on children left behind in rural areas, I focus on children of urban-urban migrants and include ethnic Korean populations - considering the specificity of Hunchun's population composition (Han majority and ethnic Korean minority), this thesis focuses on children left behind in Hunchun City

with parents migrating to other cities within China and children with parents migrating across borders (targeting South Korea). My thesis is attentive to gender differences in parental migration and takes a child-centered approach, focusing on broader social networks of left-behind children as sources of resilience and support. This chapter provides an overview of the primary literature I contribute, research questions, and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Children's Development in the Context of Parental Migration

Over the past two decades, globalization has driven millions of migrants from poor regions to work in better-off regions, resulting in many children being left behind in hometowns and separated from their parents. Therefore, the absence of parents in the development of children due to parental migration has prompted numerous studies to focus on this social group from multiple perspectives, which overall suggests that migrant parents face a paradox – parental migration is often undertaken to improve left-behind children's economic welfare, but it comes at the cost of children's emotional wellbeing (Bryceson, 2019).

Remittances sent by migrants are among the most researched topics in migration studies, particularly when investigating the impact of transnational migration on the economic wellbeing of migrant-sending countries (World Bank, 2019). As the main driving force of labor migration, remittances have also been demonstrated in the existing studies to act as a social safety net that makes an essential economic contribution to servicing family-related expenses of left-behind families (e.g., Ratha et al., 2018; Carling, 2014). Yabiku and Agadjanian (2017) even define migration success as the improvement in the living conditions of the left-behind families as a result of parental migration. On the other hand, left-behind children have been confirmed by much of the literature to benefit from remittances in terms of their education and welfare (Arif et al., 2018; Wen et al., 2015; Nakamuro, 2010; Mahapatro et al., 2017). Hoang and Yeoh (2015) suggest that remittances can assist children in constructing positive perceptions of parental migration despite the

difficulties they face being separated from their parents.

While parental migration can be economically beneficial to children, the distance makes it more difficult for migrant parents to provide "non-material" care for their children and to physically participate in children's development. The absence of family members inevitably implies a reduction in family control, which is to some extent detrimental to children's development. Studies argue that the absence of migrant parents changes family structures and care arrangements: it is "inherently characterized by rupture - a break, change, distance, division" in the family structures (Boehm et al., 2011) and can directly result in "displacement, disruptions, and changes in caregiving arrangements" in left-behind children's lives (ECMI/AOSManila, SMC and OWWA, 2004). As the significant others in children's primary socialization, parents play an essential role in nurturing, disciplining, and helping children develop their self-concept, acquiring social norms, values, and expectations, and adapting to social environments and social roles. Therefore, parental migration inevitably exposes children to increased uncertainty by placing them in challenging situations where parents are absent during their development.

The debate over the impact of parental migration on children's development has been ongoing in migration studies but without consistent results. In light of the literature, this thesis explores how the development of left-behind children is affected by parental migration in contemporary China, which is undergoing a social transition characterized by a rapidly increasing population of migrants.

Specific to the case of left-behind children in China, although multiple factors influence the development of left-behind children from place to place, such as cultural background, gender, age, and ethnicity, changes in family structure as a standard feature in the context of migration demonstrate certain similar effects of parental migration on the development of children left behind in China. Specifically, similar to research on left-behind children in other countries, current research in China finds that parental migration often brings economic benefits such as increased educational resources and improved living environments to left-behind children (Liang and Song,

2018; Liang and Li, 2021; Yue et al., 2020; Bai et al., 2018; Wu and Du, 2014). However, studies on Chinese left-behind children also question whether the economic contributions of migrant parents exceed the family disruptions caused by their absence. The remittances sent by migrant parents may be primarily targeted to the development of children associated with material resources, such as children's educational resources and physical health. However, parental absence in children's development may adversely affect children's mental health, cognitive abilities, manners, and behavior. Su et al. (2013) find that the presence of parents in children's daily lives can have a protective effect on children's loneliness, and high frequency of parent-child communication contributes to children's life satisfaction and wellbeing. Parental absence due to migration may result in children experiencing depression, anxiety, or loneliness more often than children from non-migrant families (e.g., Shi et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2014). While other studies demonstrate opposite findings: In the case of children left behind in Hunan Province, Luo et al. (2018) find no difference in delinquency between left-behind children and children from non-migrant families. Similarly, some studies report that parental migration does not affect children's depression (Xu and Xie, 2015; Yeung and Gu, 2016).

Existing studies on the development of left-behind children have yielded ambiguous results from the above literature, suggesting that the impact of parental migration on children can be affected by multiple factors. Therefore, this thesis will further investigate the mechanisms underlying this impact in terms of different aspects of children's daily lives to better understand whether and how left-behind children benefit or suffer from parental migration in the Chinese context.

1.2 Being Victims or being Resilient?

Mainstream sociologists justify the concept that children are interpreted as the objects of socialization in the family and school and are expected to be raised and developed to become social beings (e.g., Turner, 1992). Children are habitually structured as vulnerable, helpless, immature, and in need of protection, leading researchers to

overlook their agency and ability to construct their life course and shape their experience. Much of existing literature takes the perspective of migrant parents or left-behind partners - the experiences, perceptions, and adaptations of left-behind children themselves are less well-known (Christ, 2017).

As a result, left-behind children in multiple studies are constructed as "victims" of parental migration (e.g., Mondain and Diagne, 2013; Denov and Bryan, 2012; Vacchiano and Jiménez, 2012). Early studies on left-behind children in the Chinese context defined them as "problem children" who present a wide range of problems such as worse academic performance, negative emotions, and deviant behavior due to the lack of parental support (e.g., Ye, 2006; Li, 2004; Wu, 2004), some media even referred to them as "orphans with parents" (Luo, 2017). With the expanding waves of migration, the group of left-behind children has also gradually expanded. As a result, more analysis of left-behind children was conducted over time through different perspectives and methods in China, yet the negative perception of left-behind children has remained (Zhou, 2020; Wu and Li, 2015). Studies in China have shown that mass media and people around left-behind children tend to exaggerate the challenges brought by parental migration to left-behind children (Dong, 2016; Hu and Liu, 2009).

According to Becker (1963), labeling is more likely to put the labeled person into a situation in which he finds it difficult to return to the routines of daily life and causes him to produce behaviors that conform to the label to which he belongs. Later Rotenberg (1974) complemented that when the labeled person accepts and believes the social labels given to him by others, it triggers the emergence of self-labeling, i.e., the internalization of the social labels. Perceptions of discrimination can cause individuals to be aware of their disadvantaged status, negatively impacting their development. Studies on left-behind children in China demonstrate that the discrimination perception level of left-behind children is significantly higher than that of children from non-migrant families (Shen et al., 2009), and the discrimination perception can significantly increase negative emotions in left-behind children, which

in turn negatively affects their mental health and social adjustment (Su et al., 2015; Hu and Liu, 2009).

As left-behind children have been further studied, another view has been developed which assumes that children are social agents who can be instrumental in shaping their experiences of being left behind and are "actors and competent arbiters of change even in situations of exploitation" (Aitken et al., 2007). In other words, labeling children as vulnerable victims or stigmatized wrongdoers does not adequately reflect the experiences of left-behind children and ignores children's resilience. Family is a crucial social environment for children when challenges occur, as it provides children with resources to develop their resilience (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Li et al., 2018). Among these, both economic resources (e.g., money and stable income) and social resources (e.g., social networks, family members) constitute critical protective factors for the development of children's resilience (Hobfoll and Lilly, 1993). Although parental migration disrupts and weakens parent-child relationships and thus challenges children's resilience, there are other potential resources for children's resilience development. For example, Taylor (1999) finds that remittances sent by migrant parents can be a resource for child resilience if used to improve children's wellbeing and life chances. In the study of custodial grandparenting, Hayslip and Kaminski (2005) argue that one way to achieve resilience in children is through positive grandparent-grandchild relationships. In addition to resources from the family level, research further finds that schools play an essential role in developing children's resilience. For instance, using cross-sectional data collected in rural communities in two Chinese provinces, Liu et al. (2015) find that excellent teacher-student relationships positively impact children's emotional wellbeing and social adaption. Moreover, children's personality traits, such as high levels of self-esteem, can also play a protective role in children's resilience (Kliewer and Sandler, 1992). Thus, children with resilience can adapt to changes in family structure brought about by parental migration, despite the separation of children from their parents (Jordan and Graham, 2012).

It is evident from the literature mentioned above that duality is revealed in the general perception of left-behind children in the context of parental migration – they are either seen as passive recipients of the impact of parental migration or as social agents who can change their life trajectory. However, this duality ignores essential nuance. When discussing children's agency in parental migration, as Thompson et al. (2019) mention, there is a potential risk in recognizing children's agency by no longer treating them as vulnerable subjects. Instead, they are considered social agents with the same rights and responsibilities as adults and thus are negated from the special protection granted to children. While it is acknowledged that children are social agents in the context of parental migration, it is essential to recognize that children have limited perception and experience of action compared to adults (Ansell, 2009). Children do not always have the experience and access to information that adults do, which constrains them from acting with equivalent levels of consciousness and intention. As Cebotari (2018) states, the positive results of studies on children's coping strategies and resilience should not negate their vulnerability. Therefore, it is worth exploring the role social networks play in left-behind children's daily lives and the development of their resilience when considering children's resilience in the context of parental migration.

Therefore, this thesis will take a child-centered perspective and explore the life experiences of left-behind children in the absence of migrant parents through a non-binary perspective to better understand their vulnerability as children who can be affected in challenging environments as a result of parental migration and the resilience they develop as social agents in the face of adversity. Specifically, this thesis will analyze whether and how left-behind children demonstrate vulnerability to the adversity brought about by parental migration as described in previous literature by analyzing the impact of parental migration on the education and psychological wellbeing of left-behind children. My thesis will also recognize children's resilience and adaption despite adversity by exploring the role of social supports from schools and extended family relationships in the lives of left-behind children after parental migration.

1.3 Left-behind Children in the Chinese Context: The City of Hunchun

The rapid development of China's economy has led to two significant trends in population mobility: internal migration within China and international migration of Chinese, mainly to the US, Canada, and Japan (Annual report on Chinese international migration, 2020). This thesis addresses both forms of migration, focusing on internal Chinese movement and parental migration from China to South Korea.

Accelerated urbanization has gradually become a significant trend in terms of internal migration. In most cases, economic development has been accompanied by a continuous shift of population from rural to urban areas. With the development of industry, a large amount of labor is in demand in urban areas, and employment opportunities have expanded. Therefore, the population migration from rural to urban areas is an inevitable phenomenon in the economic development of the country (Gaude and Peek, 1976). However, since the early 1950s, China has adopted a two-pronged social and economic policy to achieve industrial development and maintain social stability by limiting population movement. It divided the population into two categories through the household registration system (*hukou* system): the rural population and the urban population. For rural-to-urban migrants, their rural household status prevents them from accessing urban public resources and benefits such as health care and retirement insurance (Fan, 2008). Their migrant status, on the other hand, makes them perceived as outsiders to the city, thus exposing them to multiple restrictions and exclusions in urban areas (ibid).

This social structure widens the gap in resource distribution between urban and rural areas, leads to the marginalization of migrants' social status in the cities, and restricts the bringing of children to the cities. As a result, the number of left-behind children in rural areas has rapidly increased. That, coupled with the poor environment in which rural left-behind children grow up, such as poor living conditions and inadequate educational resources, has led most existing research on left-behind children in China

to focus on children left behind in rural areas. In contrast, left-behind children in urban areas have long been understudied (Wang, 2017; Tong and Peng, 2016) as they are more likely to benefit from favorable family economic conditions, better educational environment and resources (Qin and Zhu, 2021; Duan et al., 2017).

This gap in the literature has become increasingly consequential. Since 2015, migration from rural to urban areas in China has decreased, while migration from urban to other urban areas has increased. It is estimated that as of 2018, there were 61 million urban-to-urban migrants in China, accounting for approximately 25% of the total migrant population (National Health Commission of China, 2019). The increase in urban-to-urban migration has resulted in a growing population of children left behind in urban areas. As the level of urbanization improves, the population of mobile migrants from small and medium-sized cities to big cities continues to increase. According to the seventh Chinese national census, as of 2020, there are about 26.74 million left-behind children in the stage of receiving nine-year compulsory education, including 12.90 million left-behind children in rural areas and a staggering 13.84 million left-behind children in urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Research on these left-behind children has remained little despite the increasing number of children left behind in urban areas. The lack of research on left-behind children in China restricts us from understanding urban children's wellbeing in the context of parental migration. By focusing on left-behind children in an urban setting, this thesis aims to fill the gaps in research on the development of left-behind children in urban areas, further complementing the literature on left-behind children in China.

Meanwhile, international migration in China has also been increasing. The 2019 UN DESA report on the global stock of international migrants shows that mainland China is the third-largest migrant-sending country globally, with 10,732,300 emigrants. Further from the distribution of destination countries, the report shows that as of 2019, there is no explicit change in the composition of the top 20 destination countries for immigrants exported from mainland China, with the US topping the list, followed by Japan and Canada. Due to the restriction of the household registration system within

China, international migration shares many of the same features as internal migration in the Chinese case, as the household registration system operates similarly to an international border. With the development of economic globalization, a large number of laborers have joined the wave of global migration, and ethnic minorities in China, especially the cross-border ethnic minorities, have fully utilized their ethnic and geographical advantages and joined the flow of international migration, among which the ethnic Korean minority concentrated on the border between China and Korea is representative (Piao and Fan, 2018; Zhang, 2018). This thesis is conducted in Hunchun City, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture of Jilin Province, Northeast China, where the ethnic Korean minority is concentrated – accounting for 26.31% of the total population of Hunchun (People's Government of Hunchun Municipality, 2020). Therefore, it also provides an opportunity for me to focus on the ethnic Korean minority with a significant migrant population in South Korea.

From the 1860s onwards, increasing numbers of people migrated from the Korean Peninsula to China due to war, famine, and political changes. Gradually, they settled in northeastern China (mainly in Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Liaoning provinces) and developed the ethnic Korean minority - one of the 56 ethnic groups in China. With the history of migration from the Korean peninsula, the ethnic Korean minority in China maintains a common language with South Korea (apart from minor differences: the development of the South Korean language has been influenced by the US since the Korean War and, as a result, their language contains more imported vocabularies from the US, while the language of the ethnic Korean minority has been influenced by Chinese), and this, along with the wage gap due to the high exchange rate of the currency between China and South Korea, has led to a significant number of ethnic Koreans migrating to South Korea rather than to other regions of China, even though the working conditions for them in South Korea are primarily abhorrent and described as "3D" - dirty, difficult and dangerous (Seol and Skrentny, 2009). According to the latest data from the seventh census of China's National Bureau of Statistics, 708,000 ethnic Koreans are living in South Korea as of January 2020, 100,000 more than the

Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, which has the most significant number of ethnic Koreans living in China (about 597,000) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Consequently, a significant proportion of children left behind in Hunchun is influenced by parents' international migration – longer duration of parent-child separation and less frequency of parent-child reunification than domestic migration (Wang and Tian, 2015). Even though many international migrant parents expect the separation to be temporary, they often delay it for several years (Nazario, 2007). In addition, like beauty, nursing, and catering industries are prevalent in South Korea, women are in high demand in the labor market, leading to an increasing number of ethnic Korean women joining the migration wave (Jang, 2018), which exposes a large number of ethnic Korean children to the absence of their mothers who are traditionally the primary caregivers in the household. Such separation may lead to a significant reduction in parental input and more disruptions in parenting during children's development.

However, given that the majority of left-behind children belong to the Han majority - the most populous ethnic group in China - much of the extant research on left-behind children in China has focused on Han left-behind children, with little attention paid to ethnic Korean left-behind children (Piao and Fan, 2018; Wang and Tian, 2015). Hunchun provides an opportunity to focus on left-behind children in the context of high population mobility and a distinct culture composed of the Han majority and ethnic Korean minority. In addition, a portion of the data collection for this thesis occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the outbreak prompted China to adopt various measures on travel and migration that affected both internal and international migration; therefore, this thesis will also explore the impact of parental migration on children's development in this context.

1.4 Research Questions

By comparing left-behind children with children from non-migrant families, this thesis is aimed to explore the life experiences of left-behind children under the

influence of parental migration as well as their adaption in response to the uncertainties and challenges brought about by parental migration to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of parental migration on children's development and its underlying mechanisms. By providing a systematic analysis of the life experiences of the left-behind children in the absence of parents, we can start addressing one of the pressing societal issues that contemporary China is facing and point to possibilities of an effective policy and support system. Specifically, this thesis focuses on the following research questions:

1. Are left-behind children disadvantaged in their development compared to children from non-migrant families, for instance, in terms of education and psychological wellbeing? How and to what extent does parental migration influence these outcomes? Does the impact of parental migration on children's development differ by which parent migrates?

2. What role do the social networks (e.g., schools and extended family relationships) play in the resilience development of left-behind children after parental migration? In what ways and to what extent can they support left-behind children to cope with the disadvantages of parental absence?

In order to answer these research questions, adopting a mixed-method approach – an original survey of school children and in-depth interviews with children, parents, grandparents, and teachers, this thesis will explore the impact of parental migration on the development of left-behind children from various perspectives of their lives. Moreover, I will further discuss the development of children's resilience in the face of the disadvantages associated with parental absence to better understand whether and how parental migration shapes left-behind children's development in the Hunchun context.

1.5 Empirical Contributions of the Study

This thesis makes empirical contributions to the literature on left-behind children by

analyzing the impact of parental migration on children's development and the underlying mechanisms. Specifically, this thesis will explore the mechanisms by which parental migration affects children's development through the following themes:

Inside the Nuclear Family: The Gendered Effect of Parental Migration on Children

Women, especially mothers, have been the focus of research when discussing gendered transnational family dynamics (Christ, 2017), and a major consideration in the academic tendency to focus on migrant mothers is the feminization of global migration: more women are on the move as labor migrants, while the role of primary caregivers in the household remains the dominant one expected of women, particularly in most of developing Asia (Arlini et al., 2019), and thus, maternal migration directly leads to their incapacity to continue providing childcare within the household, which results in a "crisis of care" for left-behind children (Fraser, 2016). The maintenance of caregiving within the household has become an ongoing issue in the absence of the primary caregivers, which has led to the gradual development of research on transnational motherhood (e.g., Peng, 2018; Vives and Silva, 2017; Fedyuk, 2012). The absence of mothers who are traditional primary caregivers in the household may exacerbate the vulnerability of left-behind children's conditions and place them in more challenging circumstances.

Furthermore, paternal migration and maternal migration can lead to different caregiving patterns for left-behind children. The gendered division of labor distinguishes mothers' tasks from fathers' when it comes to childcare, as Peng and Wong (2016) state, "providing economic support to his family is fundamental to a man's gender identity, as is his role as father" (2016: 2030). When fathers migrate, left-behind mothers often continue to play the role of caregiver in the household (Khoo et al., 2017). Whereas when mothers migrate, left-behind fathers tend to struggle to maintain productivity and masculinity by taking on the parenting role and additional household work (Lam and Yeoh, 2016) or transferring the childcare responsibilities to the extended female kin (Peng and Wong, 2016; Lam and Yeoh,

2014; Cabanes and Acedera, 2012). When children are forced to change their caregivers frequently, it can easily create an unstable environment for them to grow up. Therefore, the challenges faced by children whose mothers migrate are often perceived as more disadvantageous in various aspects of children's lives (e.g., Arilini et al., 2019).

However, increasing studies point out that migrant fathers have been sidelined in transnational family studies (e.g., Chereni, 2015; Åkesson, Carling, and Drotbohm, 2012) because migrant fathers are often perceived as "independent and non-relational" (Kilkey, Plomien, and Perrons, 2014) when compared to migrant mothers, and argues the significant impact of paternal absence on children's lives (Winters, 2014; East, Jackson, and O'Brien, 2006; McLanahan, Tach and Schnieder, 2013). For instance, it is found in a large-scale study of left-behind children in Ghana that paternal migration and the tensions between migrant fathers and left-behind children are associated with low levels of wellbeing (Mazzucato and Cebotari, 2017). In the case of a study on Mexican children with migrant fathers, the dropout rates are higher among left-behind children (Creighton, Park, and Teruel, 2009). Moreover, recent research on paternal migration is critical of how existing studies on paternal migration describe the separation of fathers and children in international migration as socially acceptable and are often perceived as simplistic (Poeze, 2019).

In light of the growing wave of migration in China and the increasing feminization of migration, it is unclear how migration affects the gendered division of labor in left-behind families and how the gender of migrant parent influences the development of left-behind children in a different way. This thesis will contribute to locating the impact on children's development within the different forms of parental migration by gender and restricting the study of left-behind children to the local context.

Beyond the Nuclear Family: Understanding the Adaptation of Left-behind Children

Although left-behind children experience separation from their parents, there may be sources of resilience for left-behind children other than receiving remittances from

migrant parents - children still live in the familiar network of family and school (Cebotari and Mazzucato, 2016), which may serve as support for developing their resilience and thus enable them to shape their perspective and experiences of parental migration. While parental migration implies a limited role for parents in children's development and exposes children to a disadvantaged environment, parents' selection of guardians to care for children after the migration is often a deliberate decision to provide additional support to children. Studies, mainly targeting African societies (Vives and Silva, 2017), claim that childcare provided by other family members when mothers migrate (i.e., collective fostering) can facilitates the development of new supportive networks and relationships for left-behind children to continue functioning well in daily activities, as it "can help children perceive their life in a transnational family through a positive lens" (Poeze and Mazzucato, 2014). Recent studies reveal no differences in emotional wellbeing between children cared for by other family members compared to children in non-migrant families in Ghana and Moldova when considering the primary caregivers of left-behind children after parental migration (Mazzucato and Cebotari, 2016). Similarly, Flouri et al. (2010) find that more emotional contact with grandparents reported by children is associated with reduced life stress and lower psychological difficulties.

Furthermore, influenced by China's reform and opening policy, an increasing number of grandparents have joined the families of young generations to provide intergenerational childcare. However, in the studies conducted so far on grandparenting in left-behind families, few have been compared with grandparenting conducted in non-migrant families, thus making the analysis insufficiently robust and the impact of grandparenting on the development of left-behind children challenging to identify. By comparing the role of grandparents in left-behind and non-migrant families, this thesis analyzes the impact of grandparents as one of the social supports for left-behind children and the sole caregivers of left-behind children's resilience development in the context of parental migration, which contributes to the studies of intergenerational interactions in migrant families.

As children start their schooling, school gradually plays a more significant role in their socialization and acts as an essential role in providing support to children, especially in the absence of protective factors from other environments (e.g., family environment) (DuBois et al., 1992). Research shows that schools are full of conditions that promote children's resilience. For instance, various studies state that teachers can serve as the most potent protective factor for plight children (Henderson, 2013; Wolin and Wolin, 1993). Studies find that peers within the school context are the most likely source of overall support for children (Daniel, 2006; Tefera and Mulatie, 2014). Children who feel cared for by people at school, such as teachers and peers, are more likely to show better academic outcomes and self-efficacy (O'Brien and Bowles, 2013).

It is therefore worth exploring whether and how these social networks function in the development of children with absent parents to support them in building resilience and constructing life experiences after parental migration. By addressing how social networks (schools and extended family relationships) contribute to children's development of resilience in the face of adversity caused by parental absence, my thesis contributes to a better understanding of the more positive outcomes of distant parenting due to migration.

1.6 Thesis Structure

Based on the above discussion of left-behind children, this thesis will be presented in the following chapters:

The current chapter is the introductory part of this thesis, which introduces the broader sociological perspective of this thesis, the central research questions, and the research focus of this thesis as the empirical contributions.

Chapter 2 concentrates on the research methodology of this thesis, including the introduction of the definition of left-behind children and relevant terms, the preparatory field work which includes the design of survey and interview guides, the

selection of the field sites, and the subsequent process of research participant selection. In addition, this chapter also demonstrates in detail the data collection process of both questionnaires and in-depth interviews, and the data processing, entry, and analysis.

The empirical analysis of this thesis focuses on the following three chapters, of which Chapters 3 and 4 primarily use quantitative analysis, triangled with qualitative interviews, and Chapter 5 is mainly based on qualitative data, applying a triangulation of different viewpoints. These three empirical chapters are linked to address different aspects of the central research questions, but each chapter is also intended to stand alone as a discrete paper.

Chapter 3 analyzes the impact of parental migration on children's study engagement by comparing left-behind children with those from non-migrant families. Study engagement in children's continuous and positive emotional state during study activities is an essential indicator of children's academic performance and educational quality. It is not only linked to children's progression to further their education but also influences their choice of future pathways and achievements. In this chapter, children's study engagement is selected as the dependent variable, and parental migration status is selected as the independent variable. By analyzing the various factors of parental support provided to children's development, which primarily focuses on parents' physical and financial support and emotional support for children, this chapter explores how parental migration influences children's study engagement and its underlying mechanisms. The results suggest that, contrary to expectations, parental migration has only a weak impact on children's study engagement, and I argue that this effect is primarily only when mothers migrate, as the association between parental migration and children's study engagement is not statistically significant, while the mediation analysis of maternal migration and the potential mediators selected in this chapter show significance. The findings demonstrate that parental migration directly results in parent-child separation, but that being left behind does not always have a negative impact on children's education. Moreover, among the factors explored in this chapter, the lack of emotional support resulting from maternal

migration has a greater impact on children's study engagement than the changes in children's quality of life brought about by remittances, indicating the importance of maternal presence on children's educational development.

Chapter 4 examines the association between parental migration and the psychological wellbeing of left-behind children and the role of schools in the plight of left-behind children in the absence of their parents. As the education of left-behind children, children's psychological wellbeing has also been the focus of various studies on left-behind children. Parental migration exposes left-behind children to adverse circumstances, placing schools, as another critical environment in children's socialization, in a more important role in children's development. By analyzing the impact of school support from three aspects - children's sense of school belonging, teacher-student relationships, and peer support - on the association between parental migration and the psychological wellbeing of left-behind children by comparing to children from non-migrant families, this chapter explores the potential support of schools in developing the resilience of left-behind children in the context of parental migration. The findings suggest that maternal migration has a significant negative impact on children's psychological wellbeing among the various types of parental migration. However, in addition to teacher-student relationships, children's school belonging and peer support can significantly buffer the negative relationship between maternal migration and children's psychological wellbeing. Therefore, it suggests that the presence of mothers plays an invaluable role in the development of children's psychological wellbeing and that schools, as part of children's social networks, provide a certain degree of support for children's psychological resilience to cope with the challenges in the context of maternal migration.

Chapter 5 explores the influence of grandparents in children's development as the preferred caregivers of left-behind children after parental migration. As the second source of defense against changes in family structure, Grandparents may be precious to the wellbeing of left-behind children and their developmental success when they are in the plight of parental absence (Ruiz and Silverstein, 2007). By comparing

grandparenting in left-behind and non-migrant families, this chapter aims to understand the role of grandparents in children's daily lives as the sole caregivers after parental migration and how they support children in the disadvantaged circumstances of parental absence. The results indicate that grandparenting has a positive effect on maintaining the parent-child relationship in the context of parental migration. However, grandparents are shown to face challenges in developing children's manners, life skills, and study-related activities, taking into account their outdated parenting experience and indulging in grandchildren shaped by the unique Chinese cultural context. That illustrates that although there are advantages for grandparents to be considered as the primary caregivers of children after parental migration, they appear to be powerless in replacing parents in children's development.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the thesis. In this chapter, I summarize the main themes and findings of the above chapters, that is, combine the methodology and empirical analysis to answer the research questions elaborated in this thesis and to address the question of whether and how parental migration influences the development of left-behind children as well as social networks as the sources of resilience for left-behind children. Overall, in comparison to non-migrant families, this thesis finds that of the multiple patterns of parental migration, maternal migration has a great negative impact on children's development in terms of both education and psychological wellbeing. While schools and extended family relationships, as the primary social networks for left-behind children after parental migration, are shown to provide specific support for children's resilience development in response to the challenges posed by parental absence.

2 Methodology

By employing a mixed-method approach, this thesis aims to understand the impact of parental migration on left-behind children's development and its underlying mechanisms through quantitative and qualitative data. Triangulation is used as the mixed methods design in this thesis. Triangulation can ensure "to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic" (Morse, 1991). That is, to combine the different advantages of quantitative methods (for instance, large samples, generalization) with those of qualitative methods (details, thick descriptions) (Patton, 1990). It facilitates the comparison of quantitative and qualitative data to yield convincing conclusions. Also, it is conducive to interpreting quantitative results with qualitative data.

In this thesis, I apply the quantitative and qualitative methods in the same time frame and give equal weight, although a batch of qualitative data was collected afterward due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Specifically, the quantitative data in this thesis were collected through questionnaires from students aged 9-15 in four selected schools in Hunchun City. Convenience sampling is used for quantitative data collection. Given that Hunchun is a county-level city with a small population (according to the data of the seventh census, as of November 2020, the resident population of Hunchun was 239,359), and that schools in Hunchun are operated by ethnicity (i.e. Han children attend Han schools; ethnic Korean children attend ethnic Korean schools), it makes highly recommended schools be concentrated in a fixed number - For ethnic Korean students, the NO.4 Primary School and the NO. 6 Secondary School are often the first choices for children to attend, while for Han students, the NO.3 Secondary School is one of the preferred choices. Therefore, although convenience sampling is used in this thesis, the quantitative data are representative to some extent, considering the origin of the sample from these schools and the sample size (N=933). Quantitative data can accurately present various information about left-behind children, such as the proportion of left-behind children with one or both parents away, the frequency and extent of parental involvement in the lives of left-behind children, the duration of time

children are separated from parents and the information of primary caregivers after parental migration. They can also provide opportunities to explore the possible effects of parental absence on children by comparing children from non-migrating families and distinguishing the effect from other factors that may impact children's development. Furthermore, by exploring the links between parental migration and children's life experiences, the quantitative method allows me to model the mechanisms that may emerge from qualitative findings.

The subjects of the in-depth interviews and the survey are consistent - both address the research questions, i.e., different aspects of left-behind children's lives, such as their study, behaviors, psychological wellbeing, and interactions with parents/teachers/peers/grandparents. The qualitative interviews were conducted with children, parents, teachers, and grandparents. Interviews with the children were selected from those who participated in the survey. That allows me to gain deeper insights into not only the life experiences of left-behind children but also their inner world, views on their parents' migration, how they feel and what actions they take and why, which provides a more comprehensive picture of the impact of parental migration on children's development, and validate or extend the quantitative results with qualitative data. The qualitative interviews from multiple viewpoints (children, teachers, grandparents, and parents) can assist me in better understanding the direction of the effect, given that the quantitative data in this thesis is cross-sectional, which is more likely to have endogeneity and reverse causality in the analysis of the associations between the variables.

However, there are challenges with applying mixed methods, the most critical of which are time-intensity (Creswell, 2009) and the researcher's skills to ensure that data collection and analysis are reliable and valid (Robson, 2011). Moreover, for the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods, inaccurate data from one method during the analysis does not necessarily reduce or offset inaccurate data from the other method. Therefore, the use of triangulation also poses a challenge to the researcher's skills. Considering these challenges, the quality and rigor of this design

were supported by the quantitative and qualitative training I undertook prior to the fieldwork, the projects I participated in that enriched my experience in applying such research methods, and the supervision I received from my two experienced supervisors. In addition, the timing was carefully considered and planned to ensure sufficient time was allocated for both quantitative and qualitative research.

2.1 Definition of Terms

Left-behind children

In China, the term "left-behind children" originally referred to "children whose parents have gone abroad to study" (Yi, 1994) and was mainly directed at the group of children who were separated from their parents before the founding of New China. After the founding of New China, the initial group of left-behind children were those whose parents were soldiers or engaged in secret work in the military. During this particular period, many soldiers and researchers were secretly sent to work in military restricted areas, resulting in their separation from their children. Since 1978, China has implemented a policy of reform and opening-up, from rural to urban areas, from pilot projects to widespread introduction, from economic restructuring to comprehensive deepening of reform, also known as "China's second revolution". That provided a large number of people with the opportunity to study abroad, while their children cannot follow parents abroad due to policies and were left behind in China under the care of relatives - this was the second group of left-behind children in China after the founding of New China. Later, with the implementation of the one-child policy, children other than the first child in urban families were secretly sent to the care of other relatives until the policy was relaxed, which was the third group of left-behind children (Jia, 2013).

Prior to 2016, left-behind children were defined as children under the age of 18 with one or both parents working outside the hometown for at least six months.[1] In 2016,

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[1] Zhongqingzaixian, http://mzzt.mca.gov.cn/article/nxlsrtbjlxhy/mtgz/201611/20161100887469.shtml,

the State Council redefined left-behind children as children under the age of 16 with both parents working outside the hometown, or one parent working outside and the other parent incapable of caring for the child.[2] It is evident that the extension of the concept of left-behind children is variable, and it encompasses different groups and characteristics of children in different historical periods.

According to the definition of a child in the United Nations Convention (1989), which states that a child is a person under the age of 18, and the definition of left-behind children by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, this thesis focuses on left-behind children aged 9-15 who have one or both parents working outside the hometown temporarily or permanently. For left-behind children in non-intact families, children with a deceased parent are excluded due to the small sample size.

Population mobility and migration

The UN Migration Agency (IOM) defines migration as the act of a person leaving his/her place of habitual residence and moving across an international border or within a country, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) the reason for the movement; or (4) the duration of the stay.[3]

Population mobility refers to various short-term, repeated, or cyclical movements of population from one area to another. According to the period of population movement, the population movement can be divided into (1) long-term population movement - people leaving the place of residence for more than 1 year, living in other places, while the residence permit stays in the region of origin. (2) Temporary population movement - people leaving the place of residence for more than 1 day and less than 1

2016-11-10
[2] Xinhuashe, http://mzzt.mca.gov.cn/article/nxlsrtbjlxhy/mtgz/201611/20161100887458.shtml
2016-11-09
[3] International Organization for Migration, Glossary on migration, IML Series No. 34, 2019.
https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/migration/index.html

year, living or staying temporarily elsewhere, while the residence remains in the original domicile area. (3) Periodic movement of population. That is, to leave and return to the place of residence on a regular basis. Regularly leaving and living in a new place for a period of time and then returning to the place of residence, also known as seasonal mobility. For example, farmers in certain areas of China go to the city for jobs after the harvest season, and return to hometowns to farm during the agricultural season. (4) Round-trip population movement - "Leaving early and returning late", i.e., leaving home for work in the morning and returning home in the evening, also known as pendulum-type population movement (Wu, 1997).

In this thesis, the categories of mobility of migrant parents focus on the first three categories, and the destinations of parental migration incorporate both domestic migration (migration to other regions in China) and transnational migration (migration to other countries, such as South Korea).

Guardians

Parents are generally the guardians of children. In the case of parents' death or lack of guardianship, children's grandparents, siblings with guardianship ability, and other relatives or friends who are close to children may also serve as guardians with the government's consent (Zou, 1991).

In this thesis, the guardians of the left-behind children refer to the adults primarily responsible for taking care of children's daily lives after one or both parents migrate. Specifically, for left-behind children in intact families, their guardian refers to the mother/father who stays in the household when one parent migrates; for left-behind children with both parents migrating, their guardians refer to grandparents, siblings, other relatives or teachers who care for them in daily lives. For left-behind children in non-intact families with parents divorced, this thesis focuses on children whose parent with custody migrates, and their guardians refer to the guardians of left-behind children with both parents migrating.

Ethnic Korean minority and Han majority

China is a multi-ethnic country with 56 ethnic groups. The Han Chinese is the dominant group, accounting for 92% of the mainland's population. In addition to the Han majority, China officially recognizes 55 ethnic minorities within China (State Council, 2014). As of 2010, the total population of officially recognized ethnic minorities accounted for 8.49% of the total population of mainland China (Wang, 2011). Ethnic minority populations are widely distributed but are mainly concentrated in the western and border areas. The ethnic Korean minority is one of the 55 minority groups, with the population concentrated in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province.

The Measures for the Administration of Registration of Ethnic Composition of Chinese Citizens stipules that the ethnic composition of a citizen can only be confirmed and registered according to the ethnic composition of his/her father or mother. The public security department is responsible for confirming the ethnic composition of the parents. Suppose that the ethnic composition of the parents is different (e.g., the mother is ethnic Korean and the father is Han Chinese), the ethnic identity of the newborn needs to be confirmed and registered based on the application form filled out by the ethnic composition signed by both parents, selecting Han or ethnic Korean for the child's ethnic identity, considering that each Chinese citizen can only have one ethnic identity.

2.2 Preparation for Fieldwork

2.2.1 Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire for this thesis is based on the project "Protection of Children under 18 in Jilin Province" organized by the Jilin Provincial Department of Civil Affairs, in which I participated as a research assistant in 2017. It has been modified and developed to use more standardized questions from the China Education Panel Survey (CEPS), a survey of 7th and 9th-grade secondary school students conducted by the National Survey Research Center of Renmin University in Beijing, and from PISA,

the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment, which measures the ability of 15-year-olds to apply their skills to real-life challenges.

The purpose of the questionnaire design is to understand the behaviors, attitudes, and wellbeing of children in different aspects of their lives. The questionnaire consists of five sections: The first section presents basic information about the participant, including information on age, gender, grades, and registration permit. The second section contains information about the participant's family, including the parents' occupation and education level, and the relationship and interaction between the child and the parents. A question to distinguish whether a participant is left behind - "Is any of your parents working out of your hometown?" is designed to compare the target group of left-behind children with a control group of children from non-migrant families. Questions about left-behind children's daily lives (such as the length of time their parents are away, the frequency of communication with their parents, and information about their guardians) are followed. The third part is school-related information; it includes participants' school performance, teacher-student relationships, and peer relationships. The fourth section is designed for participants' self-reported emotional wellbeing and life satisfaction, with questions such as "How much do you feel that people around you care about you?" and "Did you have any of the following feelings in the past seven days?" The questions are designed to enable a more comprehensive comparison between left-behind children and children from non-migrant families. The fifth section includes questions on child safety issues.

The questionnaire was tested with two target-age children (a 15-year-old boy and a 14-year-old girl, both Han Chinese): the girl came from a non-migrant family, while the boy had his father working in another city and mother staying in the household. The girl took 21 minutes (she skipped the questions designed for left-behind children because her parents were at home) and the boy took 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire (including the questions designed for left-behind children). Based on their feedback, I revised some questions to reduce ambiguity and made them more authentic in English-Chinese translation, and added more detail to some questions to

make them more understandable to children. For example, the question, "How often does your guardian do the following things with you?" A brief definition of a guardian was added: "A guardian is someone who lives with you and takes care of you when your parents migrate." Some questions were modified to fit the logic of everyday life: "When the following things happen to you, who do you choose to talk to first?" was designed in order of preference. New questions were added. For instance, the question "Who supervises your homework after school?" was added to the questionnaire, considering the possibility that parents cannot supervise homework when children are boarding at school.

2.2.2 Design of the Interview Guides

Four individual interview guides are designed for children, parents, guardians, and teachers, focusing on different perspectives of children's development:

a) The interview guide for left-behind children and children from non-migrant families focus on their attitudes toward family and school life, their interactions with people (parents, teachers, peers, and guardians), and their perceptions of everyday life. For left-behind children, new topics are added, namely their attitudes towards separation from their parents, the impact of their parents' absence on their lives, and their satisfaction with their life/living conditions.

b) The interview guide for parents focuses on parents' perceptions of their interactions and relationships with their children, such as "How often do you do (...) with your child?" and "How well do you think you know your child?". If the interviewee is a parent of left-behind children, topics from the guardian interview guide are additionally included.

c) In addition to topics such as the interaction between guardians and children, children's daily life and after-school studies, topics about the connection between migrant parents and children and how children are affected by parental absence are added to the guardian interview guide, such as "How close do you think the

relationship between children and the migrant parents is?", "How do children feel when their parents work away from home?". In addition, reasons why parents choose them to take care of children and their ability to raise children are included.

d) The teacher interview guide generally focuses on the children's school life and is based on a different perspective than that of parents and guardians. It includes children's performance in school/class and interactions with teachers and peers. For left-behind children, topics such as teachers' perceptions of parental absence and its impact on children's studies are added to the interview guide for teachers.

Details of the questionnaire and interview guides are attached in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, respectively.

2.2.3 Ethical Approval

Prior to commencing the fieldwork, I requested ethical approval for research involving human participants and provided relevant documentation: ethical approval forms, information sheets and consent forms for parents, guardians, teachers, and children, the research proposal, questionnaires, interview guides, and risk assessments (psychological stress through exposure to verbal abuse or exploration of child safety and other child-related issues was fully considered due to the fact that the research subjects were minors).

The child information sheet and consent form were divided into two copies to ensure the integrity and quality of the questionnaire and interview. One was prepared for children aged 9-12 with simple text, short sentences, and brief information, the other was prepared for children aged 13-15, taking into account the children's language ability at different stages and the situation of ethnic Korean children whose first language is Korean.

In order to obtain children's consent to participate in the survey, I first obtained the consent of the head of the school, followed by the consent of the teachers in the selected classes. I then introduced the survey to teachers to explain it to the children

better. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a consent form for children to sign only if they agreed to take the survey.

To obtain participants' consent to participate in the interviews, I first briefed each participant about my research, such as the purpose and content of the study and the subsequent storage, processing, and anonymization of the data. The interviews were conducted only after obtaining their verbal consent. For the children, considering that they were minors, I first obtained permission from their teachers, who then asked the children in private about their willingness to participate in this study, and only after they gave their consent were the teachers brought to the conference room to meet with me. I asked them again about their willingness before I formally started the interview after receiving their verbal consent.

The application was reviewed by the University of Essex Social Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee and ethical approval was obtained from the University Ethics Committee. The participant information sheet and certificate of consent are attached in Appendix 3.

2.3 Data Collection

2.3.1 Information about the Field Site

This thesis is conducted in Hunchun City, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province, Northeast China. Yanbian is inhabited by approximately 730,000 ethnic Koreans, accounting for 35.68% of the state's population and 42% of the nation's ethnic Korean population, hence its designation as the ethnic Korean autonomous prefecture (Yanbian Prefecture People's Government, 2021). Hunchun is a county-level city in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, bordering North Korea (North Hamgyong Province) and Russia (Primorsky Krai). By 2020, Hunchun had a registered population of 239,359 people. Of these, 64.95% of the population were Han Chinese and 26.31% were ethnic Korean (Hunchun Municipal People's

Government, 2020). Therefore, this fieldwork site provides a good opportunity to focus on both the Han majority and ethnic Korean minority.

As discussed earlier, due to the history of migration from the Korean Peninsula, ethnic Koreans maintain a common language with South Korea, which, combined with the convenience of living on the Sino-Korean border, facilitates cross-border migration, resulting in an increasing number of ethnic Koreans in Hunchun working in South Korea. Hunchun, as a city with a large mobile population, provides opportunities to focus on left-behind children whose parents have migrated internally and internationally in the context of a highly mobile urban population.

Another reason for choosing this region as the field site was my previous research experience and interest in ethnic minorities. I spent three years in Jilin Province while I was pursuing my Master's degree, which provided me with a good opportunity to learn about the people and culture of this region. Also, most of the projects I was involved in were conducted here, which made me more familiar with the group of children left behind in this region. Jilin Province does not have the most significant number of left-behind children in China, but as a region with an ethnic Korean population, it has an increasing number of left-behind children, especially in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture.

2.3.2 Sampling and Survey Conducting

There is a total of 11 schools (primary and secondary) in Hunchun City, of which the No.1 Experimental Primary School, No.4 Primary School, No. 5 Secondary School, and No.6 Secondary School are designed as ethnic Korean schools, and No.1 Primary School, No.2 Experimental Primary School, No.6 Primary School, No.8 Primary School, No.3 Secondary School, No. 4 Secondary School, No.7 Secondary School, and No.8 Secondary School are Han schools.

Table 2.1 Information on schools in Hunchun City[4]

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[4] This table is provided by the researcher Cao who collected data for the Bureau of Education in

	School name	Students number
Han schools	No.1 primary school	2722
	No.2 experimental primary school	2610
	No.6 primary school	1547
	No.8 primary school	718
	No.3 middle school	1330
	No. 4 middle school	1794
	No.7 middle school	305
	In total	**11026**
ethnic Korean schools	No.1 experimental primary school	1005
	No.4 primary school	768
	No. 5 middle school	486
	No.6 middle school	354
	In total	**2613**

The sampling method for the survey is convenience sampling. Schools in Hunchun (especially primary schools) allow few outsiders to enter the schools to ensure the safety of students. Therefore, the access to schools became a critical point. My contact, who is ethnic Korean, is the principal of Ying'an School located in a rural area near Hunchun City (about 20 minutes away) - introduced by my sister, as he is the father of one of my sister's students. Prior to working at Ying'an School, he was the principal of No. 6 ethnic Korean Secondary School for eight years, which allowed him to establish good connections with other ethnic Korean schools in Hunchun and to gain insight into the school's sampling. A total of four schools were selected. To make the survey more representative, one Han secondary school, one ethnic Korean primary school, and one ethnic Korean secondary school in Table 2.1 were selected for this thesis. In addition, one Han Chinese secondary school that does not appear in Table 2.1 due to its geographic location was also selected to increase the number of Han children participating in this thesis.

A pilot survey was conducted with 30 students in grades 7 to 9 at Ying'an School. Ying'an School is a combined school consisting of a primary and secondary school

with 60 students (including 4 ethnic Korean students) and approximately 15 students in each grade, which accepted both Han Chinese and ethnic Koreans until 2015 due to declining student numbers. Students took 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. I made notes and comments on questions/confusion the students encountered during the survey (e.g., questions they intentionally skipped, answers with unexpected requests, logic errors, etc.) to ensure the questions were appropriate and understandable.

Based on the total number of students in primary and secondary schools in Hunchun, and considering the limitations of the fieldwork, 10% of the students, i.e., a sample of about 1000, were selected on the basis of the following empirical scale:

Table 2.2 Empirical scale for sample size

population size	less than 100	100-500	500-1,000	1,000-5,000	5,000-10,000	10,000-100,000	more than 100,000
sample size	more than 50%	30%-50%	20%-50%	10%-30%	5%-15%	1%-5%	less than 1%

Source: Yuan, F. (1997) Social Research Methods. Peking University Press: 228.

527 questionnaires for children in the ethnic Korean schools and 532 for children in the Han schools were distributed afterward. Prior to the questionnaires, a meeting was organized by the teachers of the selected grade/classes and me, where I presented the basic information, purpose and requirements of this study, as well as the details of potential risks, informed consent, etc., to ensure that they helped the students better understand the whole process and children's right to refuse/withdraw.

Sampling in ethnic Korean schools

No. 6 Ethnic Korean Secondary School under the Hunchun City Board of Education is a public ethnic Korean secondary school with a three-year academic structure. It was established in 1986 and has been open to ethnic Korean students for 34 years. It is a semi-closed school that restricts students to leaving before the end of the afternoon session and provides lunch for students from the Board of Education budget. The school currently has 389 students, including 242 left-behind students who have one or both parents working outside of their hometown. Left-behind children here are defined as "children who have one or both parents working away from home during the current period".

Table 2.3 Information of students in No.6 Ethnic Korean Secondary School[5]

	Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Students in total	Left-behind students	Students in total	Left-behind students	Students in total	Left-behind students
Class 1	38	29	30	23	30	15
Class 2	38	31	30	22	28	16
Class 3	38	20	29	16	30	12
Class 4	37	25	29	17	32	16

389 questionnaires were sent to No.6 ethnic Korean Secondary School, where head teachers (one per class) in grades 7-9 were responsible for distributing the questionnaires to their classes according to the number of students. The questionnaires were distributed to students after class (usually after lunch: primary and secondary school students in Hunchun usually have an hour of free time in the afternoon before classes) and then collected and sorted by the teachers. Students took 25 minutes to complete the questionnaires. A total of 360 questionnaires were collected and returned to me, with a response rate of 92.54% (360/389) from No.6 ethnic Korean Secondary School. After review, 346 were valid, with a valid response rate of 88.94% (346/389).

No.4 Ethnic Korean School, an ethnic Korean primary school in Hunchun, has been the first choice for most ethnic Korean children due to the excellent quality of teaching. It consists of a primary school (grades 1-6) and a kindergarten (children aged 3-6). As of December 2019, the number of students at No. 4 Primary School was 846:

Table 2.4 Information of students in No.4 Ethnic Korean Primary School[6]

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[5] Provided by school administrators on November 20, 2019.

[6] From the Student Records Booklet dated December 20, 2019 from the Administrative Office. It records the daily attendance and absences of students.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Class 1	42	38	39	33	33	
Class 2	41	37	32	33	35	37
Class 3	41	35	39	36	36	38
Class 4	39	38	39	35	34	36
In total	163	148	149	137	138	111

Considering the timing of conducting the questionnaire (the end of December 2019 was the examination week for students) and the age characteristics of students in grades 1-4, students aged 9-12 in grade 5 were selected as the target population in consultation with the head of No.4 school (graduate grades were not considered due to midterm exams). 138 questionnaires were sent out and 120 were returned, with a response rate of 86.96% (120/138) in No.4 School. After review, 109 were valid, with a valid response rate of 78.99% (109/138).

Compared to No.6 Secondary School participants, students in No.4 School took more time to fill out the questionnaire - about 40 minutes - which I discussed with one of the fifth-grade head teachers, and the possible reason was a lack of ability to use Chinese. As this teacher described, ethnic Korean children formally begin learning Chinese in the first grade. Unlike Chinese for Han children, which is one of the three main subjects (English, math, and Chinese) in the nine-year compulsory education, Korean replaces Chinese as one of the three main subjects for ethnic Korean students, and their Chinese textbooks are less complex and have limited knowledge. As fifth graders in ethnic Korean primary schools, they learn/use Chinese at a slower pace than fifth graders in Han schools. On the other hand, compared to ethnic Korean children in secondary schools, fifth graders in primary schools have a shorter time to learn Chinese, so it is not surprising that they took longer to complete the questionnaire.

Sampling in Han schools

No.8 Han Secondary School is a secondary school for Han students, located at the edge of Hunchun city. As shown in Table 2.1, the data for No.8 Han Secondary School was excluded due to the location. Influenced by the "nearby school" policy,

children from nearby communities attend No.8 Han Secondary School after they graduate from primary schools. However, downtown schools are usually the preferred option for most families in Hunchun, especially for those who can afford to buy/rent a house in the downtown area. As a result, the number of students in No.8 Secondary School is small.

Table 2.5 Information of students in No.8 Han Secondary School[7]

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Class 1	22	19	25
Class 2	24	18	24
In total	46	37	49

As shown in Table 2.5, there were 132 students in No.8 Han Secondary School. 132 questionnaires were distributed to the students and 110 questionnaires were collected. Students took 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires, which was shorter than both No.6 School and No.4 School. 83.33% (110/132) of the questionnaires from No.8 Han Secondary School were responded. 95 of which were valid, with a valid response rate of 71.97% (95/132).

No.3 Han Secondary School is one of the largest secondary schools for Han students in Hunchun, with 1,380 students. It is located in the center of the city, adjacent to the No.4 School. The majority of students in No.3 live near the school, while few students from rural areas live in the boarding school in front of No.3 Han Secondary School.

Table 2.6 Information of students in No.3 Han Secondary School[8]

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6	Class 7	Class 8	Class 9	Class 10	In total
Grade 7	48	47	47	46	46	46	46	45	47	47	465
Grade 8	45	46	42	43	46	48	49	46	43	44	452
Grade 9	46	49	47	44	49	46	49	45	45	43	463

To better help left-behind children in poor living conditions, the Education Bureau has revised the definition of left-behind children since 2017, defining them into two categories: a) those who have rural household registration permits; b) those whose parents have moved out of Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture. The new definition of

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[7] Provided by the Student Management Office of No.8 Han Secondary School in December 2019.
[8] Provided by school administrators in January 2020.

left-behind children excludes children with household registration permits in the urban areas and those whose parents work in other cities in Yanbian. This change in definition does not conform to the definition of left-behind children in this thesis. Moreover, considering the small number of Han left-behind children in Hunchun and the large number of students in the third high school, it was therefore difficult to select a sample of respondents in No.3 School. Eighth grade students as the respondents were selected after I consulted with the director of the Student Management Office and the school principal. 400 questionnaires were distributed to the 8th grade classes, and 390 were returned. The response rate of the No.3 School was 97.5% (390/400). Among which, 383 questionnaires were valid, with a valid response rate of 95.75% (383/400).

2.3.3 Interviewing and Participant Observation

The interviews in this study are semi-structured, based on interview guides made up of a mixture of closed and open-ended questions, conducted one participant at a time and accompanied by follow-up "why" and "how" questions. Unlike the verbatim questions in standard surveys, conversations can focus on topics from the interview guide and may delve into totally unforeseen issues (Adams, 2015). I briefed participants on the purpose of the study, their right to confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study. Moreover, the schedule for archiving the anonymous transcripts was enumerated. All participants verbally agreed to participate.

In total, 58 interviews were taken during the fieldwork. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the restriction of the fieldwork, the interviews were conducted in two separate periods:

1) A total of 40 interviews were conducted in 2019-2020, which contains 18 interviews with children (12 with left-behind children, 6 with children in non-migrant families), 13 interviews with teachers (10 with the teachers in ethnic Korean schools, 3 with the teachers in Han schools), 6 with young parents (teaching as occupation) and 3 with grandparents in left-behind families.

The selection of children as interviewees was based on their parents' migrating status, which the head teachers mostly provided: children with one parent or both parents working outside and children with parents working in Hunchun City were selected by the head teachers separately. Headteachers were first considered for the teacher interviews, while other teachers were also included. Among which, 6 teachers completed both the teacher interviews and the parent interviews sequentially within a set period. Specifically, during the teacher interviews, I found that these teachers qualified as parents in non-migrant families; therefore, I conducted parent interviews with them after the teacher interviews. Inevitably, when teachers are interviewed as parents, their thoughts are more likely to be influenced by their views as teachers. For the grandparent interviews, the grandparents were selected with the help of the children I interviewed. At the end of the children's interviews, I asked for the children's help in checking with their grandparents to see whether they were available for an interview (with the approval of the head teachers). After the children expressed their willingness to help, I gave them my contact information and the participant information sheet for guardians to bring to the grandparents after school so that grandparents would be able to contact me directly and discuss the location and time of the interview if they were willing to participate.

Interviews with children were taken in the school's conference room at break time, and each interview was taken for about 30 minutes due to the restriction of classes. Interviews with teachers were taken in the places where teachers felt convenient, such as teachers' resting room, the canteen, the hallway, etc. Compared with the interviews for children, interviews with teachers were longer – about 1-1.5 hours, which were usually taken after teachers finished the whole-day teaching. Interviews with young parents took 30 – 50 minutes. Interviews with grandparents in left-behind families were conducted in locations that considered putting my safety first, so they were located close to home or in places they found convenient (e.g., parks, rest areas in supermarkets, etc.). Each interview took about 40 minutes to 1 hour.

2) A total of 18 interviews were conducted in 2021, considering the limitation of the initial interview pool, which contains 7 with young parents in non-migrant families (in occupations different from teaching) and 11 with grandparents (7 with grandparents in non-migrant families and 4 with grandparents in left-behind families). The recruitment of young parents and grandparents in left-behind families was assisted by my contact, who helped me with the fieldwork and the teachers recruited during the initial interviews. The recruitment of grandparents in non-migrant families mainly focused on the parents of the young parents who participated in these interviews for convenience. It is essential to consider that interviewing the participants within the same household involves some unique ethical concerns regarding the risk of exposure during the interview and the outcome of transmission (Tolich, 2004). Therefore, I scheduled the interviews with participants within the same household on separate dates to reduce the risks. Telephone/online (Wechat – one of the most popular social media for communication in China) interviews were conducted based on their availability: interviews with young parents were usually conducted after they were off work or on weekends, and interviews with grandparents were primarily conducted during the daytime when young parents/children were out for work/school. Each interview took 30 minutes to 1 hour.

The COVID-19 outbreak influenced my results in the following ways. As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, China has adopted a dynamic zero-COVID policy approach, meaning that rapid identification and treatment are required to break the chain of transmission and promptly extinguish the outbreak. As a result, in cities where there is an increase in confirmed cases, internal migration would be restricted, and all non-essential businesses would be required to close except for food stores and other essential suppliers, which is a massive challenge for internal migrants who do not have stable jobs. In cities without cases, people can live everyday lives, although masks are encouraged, and there is a greater need to use smartphones, for example, to display health codes and travel records, which on the other hand, creates more challenges for grandparents. Hunchun is a county-level city with a long duration of no

confirmed cases since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in China, which allowed people living in Hunchun to maintain relatively routine lives, except for the early stages of the outbreak in early 2020 when China was in a national lockdown. Children taking virtual classes at home presents additional challenges for grandparents in left-behind families regarding providing childcare alone, which requires more adaptation and application of skills that grandparents lack than before the pandemic, which has implications for the results of my thesis.

Meanwhile, China has also adopted a strict and burdensome policy for those traveling to China in the context of the pandemic - overseas travelers who are allowed to enter China are screened and sent to a government-designated hotel for a mandatory quarantine of at least two weeks (self-funded), followed by a period of monitoring[9]. This policy, combined with the cost of testing and the high price of airfare, makes it extremely expensive for cross-border migrants to return, thus significantly reducing the reunification of migrant parents with left-behind children, which are reflected in the interviews. On the other hand, grandparents in the left-behind families, as the sole caregivers, play a more critical role in the lives of left-behind children and parent-child relationships than before; this has implications for the results of this thesis. Moreover, the in-depth interviews were conducted in two different periods influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews during the pandemic were conducted online rather than face-to-face, resulting in the participants' reactions, emotional status, and body language not being observed well. That may lead to some inability to analyze these indicators, which potentially help me observe paralinguistic cues. However, the survey data was collected prior to the pandemic, and therefore it was internally consistent.

A triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data from different viewpoints will be applied in this thesis to increase the validity of the findings and more

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[9] BBC NEWS. https://www.bbc.com/news/59882774. 2022- 04-05.

comprehensively interpret the impact of parental migration on left-behind children's development.

In addition, I did approximately 9 hours of participant observation during the questionnaire distribution period from November 2019 to January 2020. Throughout the course of the fieldwork, I took notes on the observations and conversations with the children, their peers, teachers, and school staff. The field notes consisted of two parts:

a) Descriptive field notes: It includes what I saw and heard in real life, such as the location of the school/class, students' activities after school, the atmosphere of the class, students' conversations with teachers/peers, their body language and emotional expressions, etc.

b) Reflective field notes: It relates to the thoughts and feelings I brought to the process. It includes reflections on analysis (e.g., in the interviews with children, I found that many left-behind children were reluctant to share their feelings with their peers. Therefore, I added a new theme to explore this issue further), and reflections on the conflicts in the research. For example, many of the children were nervous at the beginning of the interview, so the small talk was extended and my status as a student was also emphasized to reduce distance).

2.3.4 Positionality in the Field

As a PhD student from a British university, my identity generally brought me both convenience and disturbance during the fieldwork. Considering that the doctorate is the highest academic degree, I was more likely to receive respect and cooperation from participants during the interviews, particularly parents, teachers, and grandparents. For example, during my interviews with teachers, many of them, after knowing my identity, shared with me many of their experiences and thoughts about left-behind children to ensure that I had a good grasp of the dilemmas they mentioned about the development of left-behind children, so that I may be able to make

suggestions for policies to help this group in the future. I remember what one of the teachers said to me in the interview, "We, as teachers, can only do trivial things for them [left-behind children] in their lives, but you have the chance to help this whole group on a broader level."

While my identity also caused me some trouble when I conducted participant observation, preventing me from being invisible in the classroom. For example, teachers would occasionally ask me to tell students about my academic experience in class to achieve the effect of encouraging them to study hard or invite me to speak English with children in the class. Such activities can make children notice my presence and thus may behave differently than usual. Furthermore, my identity may lead to social desirability bias for the participants. As Zerbe and Paulhus (1987) state, people need to present themselves as more altruistic and socially oriented than they are. As a dimension of social desirability bias, impression management results from conscious lying and pretending to make a good impression (Schoderbek and Deshpande, 1996). Thus, teachers in the interviews may exaggerate the poor performance of the left-behind children as it is more consistent with the public stereotype of left-behind children and may show more concern for the plight of the left-behind children. Grandparents and parents may tend to talk about their children's positive aspects and avoid negative ones. To reduce bias, I generally asked neutrally-worded questions during the interviews; for example, instead of asking teachers, "What do you think of the academic performance of the left-behind children in your class?" I asked them, "What percentage of the top 10 academic achievers are left-behind children in your class?". Moreover, I also tried to make sure my answer options were not leading.

In addition, as a Han Chinese, I had not previously gained a deeper understanding of the culture and lives of the ethnic Korean minority, which provided me with the opportunity to interview them from a non-biased and "taking for granted" perspective and to obtain more insight into the unique lifestyle and culture of the ethnic Korean populations. Whereas being a Han Chinese may hinder me in the following ways: I

may substitute my inherent concepts about the education and migration system among Han Chinese into the study of the ethnic Korean minority; my lack of knowledge of the ethnic Korean culture may cause me to miss details that I should not miss during my communication with the participants; the difference in identity with the ethnic Korean minority may cause them to have resistance to me, thus making them reluctant to share their opinions with me.

2.4 Data Entry, Cleaning, and Analyzing

Quantitative data

The questionnaire is designed as paper-based, considering that students in primary and secondary schools cannot bring smartphones on campus.[10]After all questionnaires were collected from schools, the original questionnaires were reviewed to check if they were complete and readable. The review was followed by data entry: the survey data were manually entered into Excel. The Stata software (version 16) was used for quantitative data analysis.

Table 2.8 Measures of data cleaning

Data dropped	Blank questionnaires with no response – dropped the questionnaire.	5%
	More than 10 required questions with no response (about 2 pages blank out of 6 in total) – dropped the questionnaire.	
	Questions with straight-line or the same pattern response – marked as missing.	3%
	Questions with unrealistic answers which could not be fixed – marked as missing.	less than 1%
	Ranking questions with logical problems that could not be fixed – marked as missing.	15%
Data changed	Responses in semi-closed and open-ended questions – categorized after the completion of data entry.	n/a

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[10] "Smartphones are not allowed on campus, which is the rule at most schools in Hunchun. Only calling/texting capable phones and smart watches with calling capabilities are acceptable in case students contact their parents for pick-up or any emergency after school." The principal of No. 4 ethnic Korean Primary School explained.

	Inconsistent responses – changed accordingly.	less than 1%
Data fixed	The feedback that does not meet the requirement in the open-ended questions – fixed accordingly.	1%
	The missing response could be reasoned from the context – fixed.	less than 1%
	Ranking questions with logical problems which could be fixed – fixed accordingly.	about 3%

As shown in Table 2.8, in this study, three different measures were used to clean the data according to the different types of responses. Careful consideration was given to the deletion of the entire questionnaire: questionnaires that were completely blank and those with more than 10 required questions that were not answered were dropped. Questions with straight lines (when the same answer option was repeatedly selected) or the same pattern of responses were marked as missing during data entry, such as question D3 "How satisfied are you with the following things?" and D5 "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" This frequently occurred with questions that used a 5-point Likert scale for responds. Questions with unrealistic answers were marked as missing, which cannot be fixed by context. In this questionnaire, there was only one ranking question B20 "Who would you tend to talk to when the following things happen to you? (Please list a ranking scale from 1 to 5: 1 indicates your first choice and 5 indicates your last choice), the responses were divided into three different categories: 1) blank. 2) one item checked in each question, no ranking. 3) not completed, only a few items ranked. During the data entry process, the first type of response was marked as missing, the checked items in the second type were changed to "first choice" and the rest of the rankings were marked as missing. The third type was either fixed (if applicable) or marked as missing (there was a logic problem that cannot be fixed).

After data entry, responses to semi-closed and open-ended questions were categorized. For example, A7 "Your nationality in China" was designed as a semi-closed question with three items, "Han majority," "ethnic Korean minority," and "other," with "Man

minority" replacing "other" after categorizing the responses to the third item. The only open-ended question in this questionnaire, D4 "Is there anyone you would most like to thank?" were categorized into seven items: 1) grandparents 2) parents 3) mothers 4) fathers 5) friends 6) teachers 7) no one. The seventh item here is for those who did not answer. The inconsistent answer "My parents work outside the hometown" was contradicted by the following few answers related to this answer: "How long have your parents or both parents worked outside the home so far?" The answer to this question was "not applicable, at home" for both parents. They were changed accordingly, depending on the context of the questionnaire.

The non-compliant feedback in the open-ended questions has been corrected accordingly. In D4 "Is there someone you would most like to thank?", some names were filled in without explanation. Based on the Chinese cultural context, for students, calling someone by their name mostly occurs among peers. Therefore, these responses were fixed on the item "friends". Some missing responses can be inferred from the context: when question A3 "Your grades and class" was not answered, I addressed this by checking the questionnaire before and after, since the questionnaire was sent to and collected from the class as a unit.

Qualitative data

In qualitative interviews, I used a small digital recorder (with the interviewee's consent) to help me engage more actively in the conversation and consider the next question, rather than focusing on writing down the interviewee's response. Interviews were later transcribed into text. Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo software (version 12), which included storing and coding the data and refining themes. Data analysis focused on the following steps: a) initial data exploration by examining interviews and memos; b) categorizing and coding the data and adding labels; c) validating the codes; d) combining the data with similar codes to extract themes from the qualitative data; and e) connecting each theme into a whole to construct cases containing abstractions and themes.

3 An Exploration of the Impact of Parental Migration on Children's Study Engagement

Among the challenges left-behind children may face due to parental migration during their formative years, education has always been at the top of the discussion and one of the main concerns (Intemann and Katz, 2014; Jamil, 2017). Education has been considered the cornerstone of social mobility; various studies find that education in intergenerational mobility persistence in China is very high (Deng et al., 2013). A possible reason is that higher-income families invest more in children's early education; in other words, this gap in early education investment leads to greater income inequality and less intergenerational income mobility (Yang and Qiu, 2015). Therefore, providing more educational resources and opportunities for children, as one of the main drivers of parental migration, has brought education to the forefront of research on children left behind in China from the very beginning. However, most of the literature on left-behind children's education in the early stage tended to focus on the challenges this group faced due to parental absence, which led to the fact that left-behind children in China appeared as "problem children" for an extended period (Tan, 2011). In recent years, a growing number of studies on left-behind children have begun to compare left-behind children with children from non-migrant families and examine the impact of parental migration on the education of left-behind children from different perspectives. However, there is still no consistent conclusion: some studies argue that parental absence due to migration has a significant negative impact on the education of left-behind children and success (e.g., Duan et al., 2014; Fan and Guo, 2015), while many other studies claim that no such negative impact exists between left-behind children and children from non-migrant families (e.g., Chen et al., 2020).

In addition, research on left-behind children's education points out that their education may be affected differently depending on which parent migrates. For instance, a case study of left-behind children in Sri Lanka indicates that children in families with migrating mothers are more likely to perform poorly in exams - as mothers are

involved in children's education in multiple ways, their absence can negatively affect children's educational performance (Dunusinghe, 2021). Moreover, many previous studies on left-behind children focus on exploring the association between children's education and parental migration while the underlying mechanisms have rarely been discussed. One such mechanism is children's study engagement, as a sustained, positive emotional state during study activities and a key indicator of their academic achievement and performance.

This chapter provides a first analysis of the association between parental absence and children's study engagement. By using the Baron and Kenny's (1986) method to test the mediation hypotheses and the bootstrap method to examine the mediation effect to address the questions of mechanisms, this chapter finds that there is a weak association between parental migration and children's study engagement, and I argue that this effect is primarily attributed to insufficient emotional support from mothers as a result of migration. As the analysis of this chapter demonstrates, the association between parental migration and children's study engagement is not statistically significant, while the mediation effect of maternal emotional support on this association is significant.

3.1 Literature Review / Background

Research on the association between parental absence and educational outcomes is equivocal, in large part because parental migration influences the home environment in various, often countervailing ways. Figure 3.1 outlines the pathways between parental migration and study engagement in this chapter. This background section summarizes study engagement, its causes, and correlations before describing the current state of the art on each causal pathway described in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 The theoretical model
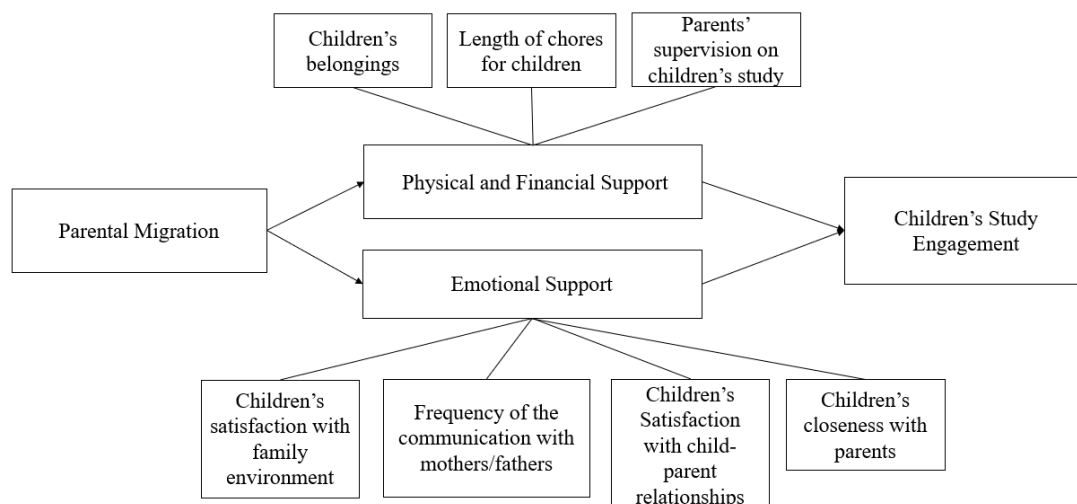
Following, I will present hypotheses about parental support for children from various aspects of their daily lives and examine the impact of parental migration on children's study engagement to understand the associations and the underlying mechanisms between parental migration and children's study engagement.

3.1.1 The Dependent Variable: Study Engagement

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of research conducted on children's study engagement, given its potential to tackle student boredom, low achievement, and high dropout rates (Ouweneel et al., 2011). Engagement is a broad concept that includes diverse goal-directed behaviors, thoughts, or emotional states (Fredricks et al., 2004). Newman (1986) claims it is challenging to define children's study engagement operationally, "but we know it when we see it, and we know it when it is missing". Willms (2003) identifies engagement as students' sense of belonging to the school and active participation in school-related activities. Further, Vibert and Shields (2003) define children's study engagement as:

> It is active. It requires the students to be attentive as well as in attendance; it requires the students to be committed to the task and find some inherent value in what he or she is being asked to do. The engaged student not only does the task assigned but also does the task with enthusiasm and diligence.

Study engagement is generally assessed and measured by adapting the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002) to a student-specific study engagement scale (Ouweneel et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2007). It consists of three major sections: (a) Vitality, which indicates that individuals are full of energy when they work and have positive attitudes when they encounter difficulties in work, such as "At my study, I feel strong and vigorous" (b) Dedication - characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. For instance, "I am enthusiastic about my study", and (c) Absorption - characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in work, whereby time passes quickly; the sample item is "Time flies when I am studying". Due to the limitations of the survey design, this scale is not used in this study. However, based on this scale, a self-constructed scale to measure children's study engagement is used, although the third component of engagement - absorption - is excluded because there is evidence that it plays a different role in the construct of engagement (Mauno et al., 2007). In summary, the items selected for the self-constructed scales in this study are mainly based on (a) children's levels of energy and resilience to study, their willingness to invest effort (targeting vitality); and (b) the sense of significance from studying, and their attitude towards study (targeting dedication).

While the definition of study engagement varies across studies, it is proven in many existing studies that there is a positive association between the study engagement and children's academic achievement (e.g., Furrer and Skinner, 2003; Klem and Connell, 2004; Zhang, 2012). For instance, in a survey of secondary school children's engagement in learning behaviors, Frederick (1977) finds that students with better academic performance in class are engaged in study for 75% of the time, while students with poorer performance are engaged for only 51%. Moreover, students with a higher level of study engagement are more likely to report higher self-control (Howell, 2009). Similarly, Schlechty (2001) finds that students with a better level of study engagement are delighted and more involved when they are engaged in their study, even in challenging situations, which, on the other hand, suggests that study

engagement is a form of resilience for children when faced with study-related challenges.

Study engagement is constructed by the context. Wang and Eccles (2013) find that children's close relationships with their parents lead to more active engagement in study. Parents provide the necessities in their children's daily lives, educate and assist them develop habits, internalize social norms, learn skills, and prepare them for social roles; children internalize values that shape their parents' expectations of their present and future performance. Parental involvement therefore plays a critical role in children's development, especially in the development of study engagement. Research has further found that children from families with better socioeconomic status have more active study engagement than children with lower socioeconomic status (Shi et al., 2013). Liu (2016) claims that the quality of family education and family environment can have a significant impact on children's study engagement. Therefore, it is critical to understand whether and how parental migration affects left-behind children's study engagement.

3.1.2 Pathways

Parent's Physical and Financial Support for Children

Migration is a family strategy diversifying risks and improving economic welfare (Stark and Bloom, 1985). The decision of parental migration is primarily driven by the intention to improve the economic conditions of the household (Xu, 2018) and to benefit children's education (Lam and Yeoh, 2018). Migration allows parents to send more remittances back home, contributing to the daily expenses of the left-behind families, and remittances, on the other hand, are invested mainly in children's education, thus positively impacting significantly on children's academic performance and quality of education (Arif and Chaudhry, 2015; Zhao, Murphy and Tao, 2014; Alcaraz, Chiquiar and Salcedo, 2012). Jamil's (2017) study demonstrates that remittances contribute to children's wellbeing by increasing school enrollment. Children with at least one migrant parent in the Philippines are more likely to attend

private schools than children from non-migrant families (Jampaklay, 2006). (McKenzie and Rapoport (2007) find that remittances are positively associated with children's higher educational achievement in transnational families in the Mexican context. Similarly, findings from a study of children left behind in Africa show that children's educational performance is sensitive to remittances - according to the earning potential of migrants, African migrants abroad have higher earnings and remittances than either continental or internal migrants, which leads to higher educational attainment for their children (Mazzucato, Boom, and Nsowah-Nuamah, 2008). Thus, in discussing why left-behind children are not disadvantaged compared to children from non-migrant families, much of the existing research identifies poverty as a potential source of family problems (such as low levels of children's education quality and poor education environment and resources). Nevertheless, parental migration is often an effective way to alleviate poverty and improve the developmental environment for left-behind children.

Moreover, since most migrants are labor migrants with low and middle economic status (International Organization for Migration, 2019), remittances often become the primary source of income for the left-behind families. Studies find that in addition to increasing family financial income and effectively relieving families of financial stress, parental migration can also free children from burdensome household chores (Liang and Li, 2021). Without remittance supported by migrant parents, left-behind children may be expected to take on more agricultural work or household chores, directly reducing their study time, thus positively affecting their academic performance and study-related improvements (Hu, 2008). However, there are studies suggesting the opposite: parental absence may result in children spending more time doing household chores - due to the reduced family workforce and the vulnerabilities of grandparents, who are often the preferred choice for caring for left-behind children, once the young parents, the primary workforce, are absent from the home due to migration, left-behind children are more likely to become the primary contributors to household chores (Zhang, 2009; Wang, 2007). "Children from poor families are

usually earlier adopted for housework", this example of the proverb describes the situation of children in families of relatively poor economic conditions in China. Similar findings are also found in a study of children left behind in Tajikistan - parental migration results in fewer adults in the household sharing responsibilities, and children, therefore, have to take on additional domestic work, implying that children of migrants may be more involved in the labor market rather than attending school (Cebotari, 2018). In the Philippine context, girls in the left-behind families are typically engaged in "caring activities" from an early age, including cooking, washing, and cleaning, while boys contribute to "strength-related activities," like agricultural work and repair (Papa, 2014). In this chapter, considering that farming is not suitable for most households in Hunchun City compared to rural households, and thus the amount of housework can be significantly reduced, I argue that parental migration can effectively improve the economic conditions of left-behind households and reduce the amount of time left-behind children spend on chores.

On the other hand, while remittances from migrant parents can be used to invest in the education of left-behind children, parental migration can provide an alternative to schooling for children (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2011; Buchmann, 2000). Remittances sent by migrant parents may serve as an incentive for children to join the migration trend, that is, it may make children realize that migration is a better earning option than schooling, thus reducing their motivation to study. Moreover, the long distance caused by parental migration hinders the ability of parents to participate in their children's daily lives, which may directly restrict them from providing the necessary assistance and supervision in various aspects of left-behind children's daily lives, particularly concerning their study-related activities. Studies show that prolonged absence due to parental migration is harmful to children's academic performance (Shen and Yuan, 2018; McKenzie and Rapoport, 2011; Lu, 2014). A comparative study of children left behind in Mexico and China suggests that parental migration has a negative impact on children's educational aspirations in both Mexico and China (Sun, 2020). In addition, parental migration results in the transfer of

guardianship to others, and grandparents, who are often the first choice for caring for children in their daily lives in China, show difficulties providing adequate support and supervision for their children's studies due to various restrictions (Wang and Mesman, 2015; Peng, 2020). In light of this, the capability of the migrant parents and the primary caregivers of the left-behind children after parental migration to devote to the supervision and guidance of the left-behind children's study is limited.

Therefore, in this section, I hypothesize that:

H1: Parental migration improves the economic conditions of left-behind families and the upbringing environment of left-behind children, which positively impacts children's study engagement.

H2: Compared to children from non-migrant families, parental migration shortens the time spent on household chores for left-behind children, contributing to better study engagement.

H3: Parental migration leads to a lack of parental supervision of children's studies, negatively impacting children's study engagement.

Parents' Emotional Support for Children

Although parental migration can be positive for the economic conditions of left-behind families and for the education resources of left-behind children, studies also find that the lack of parental involvement in children's daily lives due to migration can impose an emotional cost on left-behind children. Specifically, parental absence in the context of migration implies a shift in role models and caregivers for left-behind children, which can bring about issues such as feelings of abandonment and loss of self-esteem (Bornstein, 2015; Davies and Sturge-Apple, 2014). In Soyuz and Pandian's (2014) study of children left behind in India, they find that children whose parents are migrants report a range of psychological problems, and they argue that these adverse psychological outcomes may be related to family disruption caused by parental migration. Suárez-Orozco, Bang, and Kim's (2011) study on Mexican left-behind children suggests that anxiety persists in children separated from their

mothers, i.e., the longer the separation, the longer the duration of symptoms. Evidence from Graham and Jordan's (2011) study of children left behind in Indonesia also claims that children in families with migrant parents are more likely to have emotional disturbances than children from non-migrant families. It is well established that separation from parents can lead to behavioral and emotional problems that can negatively impact left-behind children's academic ability and performance, with disadvantageous consequences for their education performance (Liang et al., 2016; Hugo and Ukwatta, 2010). While studies also find that for both migrant mothers and fathers, financial support is an essential means of bonding with the left-behind children and a way to show their "presence" in the context of physical separation (Coe, 2011). Therefore, it is worth exploring whether and how emotional support functions in the association between parental migration and children's study engagement.

In addition, adolescence is a time of rapid physical and psychological change for children; children are immature in terms of self-awareness and emotional regulation, which can easily lead to their psychological balance being disrupted by the challenges and confusion they encounter during adolescence. Parental involvement in children's daily lives on the other hand can contribute to maintaining psychological balance and supporting children's psychological development. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) define parental involvement in children's daily lives as "a resource contribution from parent to children". They emphasize children's initiative, claiming that children are active processors of information rather than passive recipients. They further argue that parental emotional involvement is primarily about enabling children to experience an "inflow of the emotional resources", i.e., parents effectively expressing their love and care, interacting frequently, and communicating with children in their daily lives. Boutelle et al. (2009) find that children's emotional development is strongly related to high-quality parent-child interactions. The reinforcement of parent-child intimacy and the strengthening of the parent-child relationship are beneficial in preventing children from developing emotional problems in early adulthood. However, prolonged parent-child separation limits the emotional support of migrant parents to their

children, especially when children experience difficulties in daily life, which poses a challenge to parent-child interactions and may lead to a lack of belonging and thus more emotional resentment in children (Yang et al., 2014). Children who are separated from their parents are prone to more depression, which can negatively affect their studies (Liu, 2017). In addition, there are additional factors worth considering: on the one hand, as mentioned earlier, since one of the main motivations for parents to migrate is to improve children's upbringing and increase their children's educational resources and opportunities, this may lead parents to focus more on their children's education and neglect other aspects of development, transforming the dialogue between parents and children into a learning orientation, thus leading parents to underestimate children's emotional needs. On the other hand, limitations in education levels and parenting concepts may also result in migrant parents lacking the resources and capacity to support their children, which further disrupts their children's studies (Lu, 2006).

Therefore, in this section, I expect that:

H4: Compared to children from non-migrant families, left-behind children have worse relationships with their migrant parents, negatively impacting their study engagement.

3.1.3 The Case of Left-behind Children in Han and Ethnic Korean Families in Hunchun

As mentioned earlier, Hunchun is a settlement for ethnic Korean minority - the ethnic Korean population makes up 36% of the total population (Hunchun Municipal People's Government, 2020). Unlike many Han Chinese who prefer to migrate to other regions in China, the preferred destination for ethnic Korean migrants is South Korea because of the language access and Hunchun's unique cross-border location, combined with the long history of ethnic Korean migration. According to the latest data from the seventh census of China's National Bureau of Statistics, 708,000 ethnic Koreans were living in South Korea as of January 2020, 100,000 more than the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, which has the largest number of ethnic

Koreans living in China (approximately 597,000) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Moreover, influenced by the high volume of international migration and the large number of remittances sent back from migrants, Hunchun has gradually developed a consumer-oriented economic model that has promoted the development of retail, restaurant, and entertainment industries. Given the unique geographical location of Hunchun, the industrial economy has lagged behind, leading to the anomaly of consumption growth far outpacing local economic development (Guan, 2010). As a result, migration to South Korea is more encouraged among ethnic Koreans, as working abroad is often one of the best routes to achieve a higher socioeconomic status, especially for economically disadvantaged families.

However, the economic benefits of international migration may be more limited than expected, particularly in the short-term migration - international migration often leads to a more extended adaptation period for migrants compared to internal migration (Kandel, 2003). In addition, international migration is related to the legality of migration status, and the high costs and risky situations resulting from illegal migration may have a significant impact on the remittances of illegal immigrants. In the case of ethnic Korean migrants in South Korea, since most of the workers who migrate to South Korea are in the form of visiting employment, they are usually allowed to stay for three months, which results in many ethnic Korean migrants' status becoming illegal after three months without being able to obtain legal status (Quan and Yuan, 2021). This type of visa, on the other hand, restricts migrants to low-skilled, mostly heavy labor industries, such as mining, manufacturing, and catering, and fails to provide them with job security and benefits, making it more difficult for ethnic Korean migrants in South Korea to adjust and to defend their rights in the event of unfair treatment (Nan and Chen, 2020). Therefore, compared to domestic migration, transnational migration presents more challenges in terms of economic benefits to left-behind families. Hunchun provides an opportunity to examine how parental migration affects children's development on an economic basis.

Furthermore, the nature of the work often leaves migrant parents with little available

time, especially for ethnic Korean migrants working in South Korea, whose work environment is usually abhorrent (Seol and Skrentny, 2009). Prolonged parent-child separation can reduce parent-child interaction, making it difficult for migrant parents to participate in the daily lives of left-behind children. Unlike most Han migrants who migrate within the country, ethnic Korean migrants who migrate across borders need to cope with the time difference between South Korea and China. That makes it more challenging for them to connect with children during flexible hours, which may reduce the frequency of parent-child interactions and disrupt parent-child relationships to a greater extent, thereby having a greater impact on children's study engagement.

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 Dependent Variable and Independent Variable

Children's study engagement

As discussed earlier, the dependent variable in this section is constructed from a set of candidate items that measure children's study engagement:

1. Do you like to go to school? (5-point Likert scale: strongly dislike = 1; dislike = 2; neutral = 3; like = 4; strongly like = 5)
2_1. I'm always late for class. *[11]
2_2. I don't think studying is very important. *
2_3. High grades or not, I actually do not care. *
2_4. Even if there is something I want to do right now, such as watching TV, playing a game, etc. I will not do it until I finish my homework.
2_5. I feel that studying at school is boring. *
2_6. I have my timetables for my study after school.
2_7. I like to discuss my study with others.
2_8. I like taking part in school/class events.
2_9. The more my parents want me to study hard, the less I want to study. *
2_10. I want to get more attention from my teachers.
2_11. I do not feel I am part of the class. *

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[11] Questions start with "2_" are designed to explore children's attitude to school-related experience, which are coded as "strongly disagree = 1; disagree = 2; neutral =3; agree =4; strongly agree =5." Among which, the ones with * are recoded oppositely.

2_12. I think those who break the school/class rules are very cool. *

3. Which level are your grades ranking in the class? (5 categories: ranking in the last 10 = 1; worse than average = 2; average = 3; better than average = 4; ranking in the top 10 = 5)

4. How many books did you read during the last summer vacation? (5 categories: none = 1; 1-3 = 2; 4-6 = 3; 7-9= 4; more than 10 = 5)

In this case, exploratory factor analysis is used to determine whether the set of correlations can be considered to reflect or be generated by the number of hypothetical underlying factors. The procedure for factor analysis is to use principal component factor analysis with iterative and orthogonal variable axis rotation, and then examine the rotated factor matrix. The varimax rotation rotates the factor matrix to its maximum, thereby maximizing the contrast between the factors, which allows me to determine if a unique subset of items can be found within the set of candidates. I then selected items with high loadings (>0.5) on the factors that had a similar relationship to the concept of dependent variables in this section - and combined them into a single scale.

Table 3.1 Factor Loadings After Varimax Rotation

Variables	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3
1. Do you like to go to school?			
2.1 I'm always late for class.			
2.2 I don't think studying is very important.	0.6968		
2.3 High grades or not, I actually do not care.	0.6138		
2.4 Even if there's something I really want to do right now, for example, watching tv, play a game, etc. I will not do it until I finish my homework.		0.5436	
2.5 I feel that studying at school is boring.	0.5648		
2.6 I have my timetables for my study after school.		0.7127	
2.7 I like to discuss my study with others.		0.6624	
2.8 I like taking part in the school/class events.		0.6722	
2.9 The more my parents want me to study hard, the less I want to study.	0.5655		
2.10 I want to get more attention from my teachers.		0.5536	
2.11 I don't feel I'm part of the class.	0.6871		
2.12 I think those who break the school/class rules are very cool.	0.7037		
3. Which level are your grades ranking in the class?			-0.7162
4. How many books did you read during the last summer vacation?			0.7331

Note: Blanks represent abs(loading)<.5

From the factor analysis in Table 3.1, we see that three factors are created with a subset of candidate items loading strongly on them. Items 2_2, 2_3, 2_5, 2_9, 2_11, and 2_12 loaded strongly on factor 1; items 2_4, 2_6, 2_7, 2_8, and 2_10 loaded strongly on factor 2; and items 3 and 4 loaded on factor 3. Given these results, I create three separate scales in which items loaded on Factor 1 and items on Factor 2 are more associated with children's study engagement than Factor 3. Thus, I construct a scale of children's negative study engagement using six items on Factor 1 and a scale of children's positive study engagement using five items on Factor 2. In this chapter, I focus on the negative study engagement scale. However, all models are also replicated using the positive engagement scale. The results of this can be found in Appendix 6.

Cronbach's alpha is used in this scale to examine the internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha of children's negative study engagement is 0.784, making this variable a relatively reliable scale to measure children's negative study engagement.

Parental migration

The main independent variable parental migration is a 3-category variable measured by the following questions:

1. "Are any of your parents working out of your hometown?" with two options "yes" and "no".

2. "How long has your mother been working outside?" with seven options "less than 6 months" "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2 years", "3-4 years", "5 years or more", "not applicable, at home" and "deceased".

3. "How long has your father been working outside?" with 7 options "less than 6 months", "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2 years", "3-4 years", "5 years or more", "not applicable, at home" and "deceased".

Participants who select "no" in the first question are categorized as children from non-migrant families (=1). Children who selected "yes" in the first question and one of the options "less than 6 months", "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2

years", "3-4 years", and "5 years or more" in either the second or the third question while selected "not applicable, at home" in the other question are categorized as left-behind children with one parent migrating (=2). Children who selected "yes" in the first question and one of the options "less than 6 months", "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2 years", "3-4 years", and "5 years or more" in both the second and the third question are categorized as left-behind children with both parents migrating (=3).

3.2.2 Measures of Parents' Physical and Financial Support

Children's belongings

Children's belongings are measured by the question "Which of the following things are in your home?" with five items: a desk to study at; children's own room; books for studying; books children like to read (story books, science books, etc.); computer or tablet computers. Answers were designed with two options. If children selected "yes", one point was scored; if "no" was selected, no points were scored. The score is the sum of the variables for all five items; the more points children gain, the more belongings children have.

The length children spend on chores

The amount of time children spends doing chores in their daily lives is measured by two questions: "From Monday to Friday, how long do you spend doing chores?" and "On weekends, how long do you spend doing chores?" There are five options: Not at all = 0, less than 1 hour = 1, 1-2 hours = 2, 2-3 hours = 3, 3-4 hours = 4, and more than 4 hours = 5. The variables are aggregated from the points of these two questions and assess the amount of time children spend on chores: the more points, the more time they spend on chores.

The supervision of children's study after school

Supervision of children's study is measured by the question "Who regularly supervises your homework after school?". This question was measured by the

following items: "parents", "grandparents", "teachers", "siblings", "cram schools", "other relatives" and "no one". Considering that this chapter focuses on the influence of parents on children's study, the items were reduced to three categories: no one = 1, parents = 2, and others = 3.

3.2.3 Measures of Parents' Emotional Support

Children's satisfaction with their family condition

The question "How satisfied are you with your family conditions?" is used to measure children's self-reported satisfaction with their family condition, a categorical variable on a 5-point Likert scale: strongly dissatisfied = 1, dissatisfied = 2, neutral = 3, satisfied = 4, strongly satisfied = 5. Family conditions are various factors within the family that influence children's socialization and generally include economic conditions, quality of family life, and family environment (Deng, 2009). In this chapter, family condition focuses more on children's family environment and family life. This question is selected from the project "Protection of Children under 18 in Jilin Province" organized by the Jilin Provincial Department of Civil Affairs. "Condition" can have different translations and interpretations in the Chinese context, targeting different meanings: (1) when it is translated as "条件" in Chinese, it represents family economic conditions; (2) when it is translated as "环境", family condition refers to the family environment or atmosphere. The second translation is used in this chapter. In addition, to reduce participant confusion, it is designed as one of a set of questions about children's satisfaction with their life experiences and social interactions. It also includes children's school life, their personalities, and relationships with teachers/peers/parents.

The frequency of the communication with the mother/father

It is measured by the question "How often does your mother/father talk to you about the following topics?" Five items are selected to measure the frequency of communication with the mother and with the father, with the aim of measuring

different conversations children have with their parents in daily lives, including the child's behavior at home and at school; the child's daily life (e.g., food for dinner, after-school activities); relationships with peers/teachers; the child's feelings; and recent obstacles and challenges the child has encountered. Four options are provided: never=0, sometimes=1, often=3, and deceased=missing. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.8805. Communication with mother and father are summed as five-item scores to indicate the frequency of child-mother and child-father communication.

Children's satisfaction with the child-parent relationship

It is measured by "How much are you satisfied with the relationship with parents?" with a 5-point Likert scale response: "strongly dissatisfied=1, dissatisfied=2, neutral=3, satisfied=4, strongly satisfied=5.

Children's closeness with mother/father

The question "How close are you with your mother/father?" is used to measure children's closeness with mother and father separately, with five options: not at all close=1, not that close=2, neither not close nor close=3, somewhat close=4, very close=5.

In addition, this chapter controls for children's gender, age, grade, siblings, ethnicity, mother's highest education level, and father's highest education level. Descriptive statistics for all variables in this chapter are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Descriptive statistics for variables in the sample

	No parents away	One parent away	Both parents away
	Mean/percentage (SD)	Mean/percentage (SD)	Mean/percentage (SD)
Scores for child's negative study engagement	-0.111	0.053	0.009
	(0.952)	(0.969)	(0.913)
Child's age	13.338	12.963	13.093
	(0.944)	(1.405)	(1.343)
Belongings in child's family	4.412	4.412	4.326
	(0.834)	(0.780)	(0.951)
The length child spends on chores	2.670	2.462	2.395

	(1.784)	(1.648)	(1.654)
Frequency of talking to mother	7.777	7.688	7.744
	(2.173)	(2.277)	(2.234)
Frequency of talking to father	6.372	6.412	6.651
	(2.736)	(2.972)	(2.773)
Child's gender			
boy (%)	43.35	38.75	46.51
girl (%)	56.65	61.25	53.49
grade			
5th (%)	3.72	18.13	13.95
7th (%)	10.37	23.13	27.91
8th (%)	74.47	41.88	41.86
9th (%)	11.44	16.88	16.28
Number of child's siblings			
No siblings (%)	50.8	60	55.81
1 sibling (%)	44.68	37.5	41.86
2 or above (%)	4.52	2.5	2.33
Child's nationality			
Han (%)	75.53	15.63	16.28
ethnic Korean (%)	24.47	84.38	83.72
Mother's education level			
Middle school or below (%)	58.24	41.88	41.86
High school, technical middle/high school (%)	32.18	50	44.19
college or above (%)	9.57	8.13	13.95
Father's education level			
Middle school or below (%)	51.6	40	38.37
High school, technical middle/high school (%)	38.83	51.88	47.67
college or above (%)	9.57	8.13	13.95
Child's satisfaction with their family condition			
Strongly dissatisfied (%)	1.6	2.5	2.33
Dissatisfied (%)	2.66	3.13	5.81
Neutral (%)	23.4	18.75	27.91
Satisfied (%)	30.05	31.88	33.72
Strongly satisfied (%)	42.29	43.75	30.23
Who supervises child's study after school?			
No one (%)	29.26	35	32.56
Parents (%)	44.95	36.88	2.33
Others (%)	25.8	28.13	65.12
Child's satisfaction with child-parent relationship			

Strongly dissatisfied (%)	1.6	3.13	2.33
Dissatisfied (%)	4.26	5.63	12.79
Neutral (%)	15.96	14.38	18.6
Satisfied (%)	24.47	25	27.91
Strongly satisfied (%)	53.72	51.88	38.37
Child's closeness with mother			
Not at all close (%)	1.6	0.63	1.16
Not that close (%)	1.06	3.75	8.14
Neither not close nor close (%)	8.24	8.13	19.77
Somewhat close (%)	18.35	14.38	10.47
Very close (%)	70.74	73.13	60.47
Child's closeness with father			
Not at all close (%)	0.8	0.63	4.65
Not that close (%)	3.46	3.13	4.65
Neither not close nor close (%)	15.69	16.25	16.28
Somewhat close (%)	23.67	25	19.77
Very close (%)	56.38	55	54.65
Observations	376	160	86

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses.

3.3 Analysis

This chapter explores the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement by testing various potential mediating indicators from different aspects of children's daily lives. The analytical framework for this chapter is illustrated in Figure 3.2. In general, I hypothesize that parental migration impacts children's study engagement, but that other factors may explain partial effects; that is, parental migration influences children's study engagement through its impact on specific dimensions of children's lives. Here, controlling for mediating indicators, the effect of parental migration on children's study engagement is the direct effect. The indirect effect is the part of the effect of parental migration on children's engagement that can be explained by the mediating indicators. The direct and indirect effects are formed by total effect of parental migration on children's study engagement. Adopting this analytical approach, an attempt is made to examine the effects of parental migration on children's study engagement by specifying various mechanisms in children's daily lives.

Figure 3.2 Pathways of direct and indirect effects of parents' migration on children's study engagement through mediating indicators
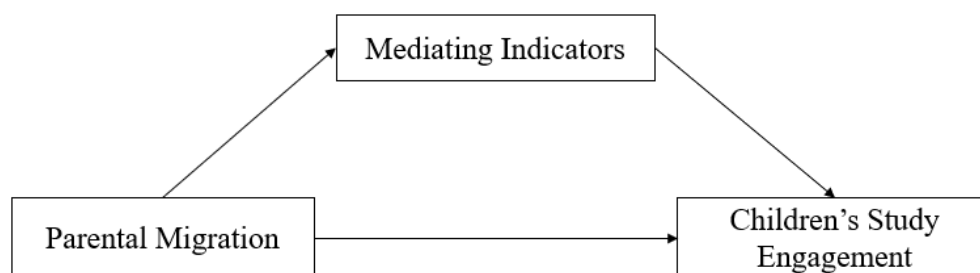
Based on a three-step regression approach (Baron and Kenny, 1986), the analysis in this chapter is divided into four steps. First, I explore the effects of parental migration on children's study engagement before and after controlling for sociodemographic variables to examine the relationship between them. Second, I analyze the effects of parental migration on the potential mediating indicators to test whether the relationships between parental migration and mediating indicators are statistically significant when controlling for sociodemographic variables, in order to find potential effects of parental migration on children's daily lives. This allows me to identify potential countervailing causal mechanisms between parental absence and study engagement, which may lead to a decrease in the overall association. Third, I analyze the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement while controlling the socio-demographic variables and the mediating indicators to test a residual relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement.

In addition, the mediation analysis in this chapter uses bootstrap method to examine whether any of the two pathways mediate the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement. Considering that the dependent variable parental migration is a three-category variable and bootstrap method is typically used for continuous variables, I recode the dependent variable parental migration into two different types of dummy variables for the mediation analysis: a. No parental migration = 0, one parent away = 1; and b. No parental migration = 0, both parents away = 1. The first dummy variable forms parental migration into a binary variable: children from non-migrant families and left-behind children with one parent away; the

second variable forms parental migration into children from non-migrant families and left-behind children with both parents away. Therefore, two types of mediated analysis are conducted: (1) mediated analysis for one parent migrates; and (2) mediated analysis for both parents migrate. In addition, two other types of mediation analysis are conducted to examine the different effects of maternal and paternal absence on children's study engagement. The aim is to better understand the different roles of mothers and fathers in children's lives and the effects of maternal and paternal absence on children: (3) for mother-only migrating; (4) for father-only migrating.

After removing observations with missing values of variables, the final sample size of this chapter is 622.

3.4 Results

Descriptive Results

The descriptive statistics for all the variables in this chapter are shown in Table 3.2. In this dataset, the proportion of ethnic Korean children with one or both parents away is larger than that of Han children. On average, children from non-migrant families have lower negative study engagement scores than left-behind children. Furthermore, more left-behind children with both parents away are less satisfied with their family situation, child-parent relationship, and closeness to their mother than children from non-migrant families. There are only slight differences between left-behind children and children from non-migrant families in terms of the children's belongings, the length of time the children spend doing chores, and the frequency of child-parent communication.

Regression Results

In Table 3.3, I report the results of the first step of the analysis, which explores the effects of parental migration on children's study engagement. Model 1 is a null model with no controls; control variables are added to Model 2. Model 1 shows that the coefficient is 0.164 for children with one parent away and 0.119 for children with both

parents away, which explains the higher negative learning engagement of 0.164 for left-behind children with one parent away and 0.119 for children with both parents away compared to children from non-migrant families. In model 2, the output shows that coefficient for children with one or both parents away become smaller, but the negative engagement of left-behind children (whether one parent or both parents migrating) remains higher than that of children from non-migrant families, holding all the control variables constant. However, the effect of parental migration on children's study engagement is not statistically significant between left-behind children and children from non-migrant families with or without controls.

Table 3.3 Models predicting the relationship between parental migration and study engagement

	Model 1 Child's negative engagement	Model 2 Child's negative engagement
Child with one parent away	0.164*	0.0929
	(0.0898)	(0.104)
Child with both parents away	0.119	0.0280
	(0.114)	(0.123)
Child is girl		-0.0812
		(0.0755)
Child's age		0.0629
		(0.0578)
Child's grade		0.179***
		(0.0677)
Number of siblings		0.0791
		(0.0654)
Child is ethnic Korean		0.352***
		(0.0965)
Mother's highest education level		-0.0389
		(0.0848)
Father's highest education level		-0.0752
		(0.0857)
Constant	-0.111**	-2.265***
	(0.0490)	(0.490)
Observations	622	622
R-squared	0.006	0.086

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

This initial analysis suggests that, on average, left-behind children do not have a more negative study engagement than those from non-migrant families. However, the null total association between parental migration and study engagement may obscure countervailing negative and positive causal pathways linking parental migration and study engagement, for instance in material conditions are improved at the same time that emotional support is reduced. To further explore such potential mechanisms, the second, the third step and the mediation analysis are illustrated in the following pathways considering the different mediating indicators.

In Table 3.4, I explore the relationship between parental migration and indicators of parental financial and physical and emotional support for their children. In these models, we can see that the log odds of having someone else supervise their studies is significantly higher for children with one parent away (0.597) than for children from non-migrant families, suggesting that children with one parent away are more likely to have someone else supervise their after-school studies. For children with both parents away, the log odds of both no supervision and supervision by others are significantly higher than for children from non-migrant families, 3.302 and 4.347, respectively, indicating that children with both parents away are more likely to have no supervision or supervision by others.

In addition, children with both parents away are significantly less satisfied with family condition (-0.406) than children from non-migrant families. Children with one or both parents away are significantly less satisfied with the child-parent relationship than children from non-migrant families (-0.247 and -0.519, respectively). Also, children with both parents away are less close to both mothers and fathers. In addition, children's belongings, the length of time children spend doing chores, and the frequency of child-parent communication do not differ significantly between left-behind children and children from non-migrant families.

Table 3.4 Estimated models of the relationship between parental migration and the factors of parental support

Parental migration (Ref: child with both parents in the household)	Model 1 Child's belongings	Model 2 The length child spends on chores	Model 3 The supervision on child's study (Ref: parental supervision) No one	Others	Model 4 Child's satisfaction with family environment	Model 5 The frequency of the communication with mother	Model 6 The frequency of the communication with father	Model 7 Child's satisfaction with child-parent relationship	Model 8 Child's closeness to mother	Model 9 Child's closeness to father
Child with one parent away	-0.0639	0.0324	0.510*	0.597**	-0.129	-0.455*	-0.0754	-0.247**	-0.125	-0.104
	(0.0921)	(0.190)	(0.277)	(0.297)	(0.106)	(0.247)	(0.315)	(0.113)	(0.0975)	(0.105)
Child with both parents away	-0.145	-0.0244	3.302***	4.347***	-0.406***	-0.368	0.157	-0.519***	-0.459***	-0.269**
	(0.109)	(0.225)	(0.765)	(0.761)	(0.126)	(0.293)	(0.373)	(0.134)	(0.115)	(0.124)
Constant	4.229***	4.914***	-0.813	-1.762	4.807***	8.179***	7.369***	6.043***	5.452***	5.382***
	(0.436)	(0.899)	(1.359)	(1.448)	(0.503)	(1.169)	(1.488)	(0.535)	(0.461)	(0.496)
Observations	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622
R-squared	0.066	0.071			0.071	0.031	0.026	0.069	0.042	0.047

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The socio-demographic variables are included in these models. Multinomial logistic regression is used in Model 3 considering parents' supervision is a 3-category variable, supervision from parents is selected as the base.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

In the regressions for parental migration and children's study engagement in Table 3.5, indicators of parental support are examined separately. The results show that the association between parental migration and children's study engagement remains insignificant when these factors are included separately. However, the coefficients on parental migration become very small when children's study supervision, child satisfaction with family condition, satisfaction with the child-parent relationship, and child closeness to the mother are added, suggesting that these factors may mediate the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement, and thus further mediation analysis is needed.

Table 3.5 Estimated OLS coefficients from a model of children's study engagement among children with different types of parental migration adjusting the factors of parental support

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Parental migration (Ref: child with both parents in the household)										
Child with one parent away	0.0929	0.0777	0.0948	0.0677	0.0575	0.0481	0.0881	0.0212	0.0548	0.0645
	(0.104)	(0.101)	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.0996)	(0.101)	(0.102)	(0.0987)	(0.0995)	(0.0997)
Child with both parents away	0.0280	-0.00626	0.0266	-0.0478	-0.0829	-0.00828	0.038	-0.123	-0.112	-0.0452
	(0.123)	(0.120)	(0.122)	(0.129)	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.120)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.118)
Child's belongings		-0.237***								
		(0.0445)								
The length child spends on chores			-0.0593***							
			(0.0219)							
Parental supervision on study				-0.280***						
				(0.0916)						
Others' supervision on study				-0.125						

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
					(0.0937)					
Child's satisfaction with family condition					-0.273***					
					(0.0378)					
The frequency of the communication with mother						-0.0985***				
						(0.0165)				
The frequency of the communication with father							-0.0635***			
							(0.0131)			
Child's satisfaction with child-parent relationship								-0.290***		
								(0.0351)		
Child's closeness to mother									-0.305***	
									(0.0412)	
Child's closeness to father										-0.272***
										(0.0384)
Constant	-2.265***	-1.263**	-1.974***	-2.091***	-0.951*	-1.460***	-1.797***	-0.511	-0.604	-0.800
	(0.490)	(0.515)	(0.499)	(0.490)	(0.505)	(0.495)	(0.491)	(0.511)	(0.521)	(0.515)

Observations	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622
R-squared	0.086	0.127	0.097	0.1	0.158	0.137	0.120	0.178	0.161	0.156

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The socio-demographic variables are included in these models.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Finally, a mediation analysis is conducted to examine the role of parental support factors in mediating the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement (see Table 3.6). As mentioned earlier, Table 3.6 presents four mediating analyses of parental migration and children's study engagement through parental support factors: (1) children with one parent away; (2) children with both parents away; (3) children with mother-only migrating; and (4) children with father-only migrating. Considering that children's study supervision is a three-category variable (no one = 1, parents = 2, others = 3), I recoded it as a binary variable in order to satisfy the bootstrap approach (parents = 1, other options = 0) and focused on exploring the effect of parental supervision.

The mediation effect of supervision on children's study is confirmed in the factor of parents' physical and financial support, which supports the third hypothesis that among the various types of parental migration, both parental migration and maternal migration for children with one parent away lead to a lack of parental supervision in children's study, which has a significant negative impact on children's study engagement. In terms of parental emotional support, children's satisfaction with family condition, satisfaction with the parent-child relationship, and the mother-child closeness are shown to mediate the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement. While for children with one parent away, the parent-child relationship and mother-child closeness mediate the relationship between maternal migration and children's study engagement, which suggests that for children with one parent away, maternal migration decreases their satisfaction with the child-parent relationship and the closeness with their mother, thus increasing their negative study engagement. Considering that parental migration is not significantly associated with children's study engagement, these mediators fully mediate this relationship.

Table 3.6 Mediation effects of parental migration on children's study engagement through factors of parental support

Mediation pathways	95% Conf. Interval (Point estimate in paratheses)	Effect interpretation
1. Parental migration – children's belongings are increased – children's negative study engagement decreases	(1) -.0211531 .083012 (0.029) (2) -.0296059 .0762567 (0.017) (3) -.0196724 .1401317	Including 0, no mediation effect.

	(0.054)		
	(4) -.0400035 (0.014)	.0672531	
2. Parental migration – children do less chores – children's negative study engagement decreases	(1) -.0243868 (-0.001)	.0212555	Including 0, no mediation effect.
	(2) -.0303847 (0.004)	.0351438	
	(3) -.064353 (-0.011)	.0285779	
	(4) -.0159293 (0.004)	.0282768	
3. Parental migration – Parents are unable to provide children supervision on their study –children's negative study engagement increases	(1) .0023726 (0.028)	.0646035	(1), (2) and (3) exclude 0, the mediation analysis is significant. (4) Includes 0, no mediation effect.
	(2) .026591 (0.109)	.192984	
	(3) .0013115 (0.045)	.1054551	
	(4) -.0043912 (0.020)	.0560716	
4. Parental migration – children have less satisfaction with family environment – children's negative study engagement increases	(1) -.0356966 (0.032)	.1078887	(2) excludes 0, the mediation analysis is significant. (1), (3) and (4) include 0, no mediation effect.
	(2) .0318728 (0.117)	.2113728	
	(3) -.0341265 (0.110)	.2858479	
	(4) -.0649696 (0.009)	.0769824	
5. Parental migration – children have less communications with mothers – children's negative study engagement increases	(1) -.015076 (0.041)	.1051013	Including 0, no mediation effect.
	(2) -.0201283 (0.040)	.1060234	
	(3) -.026622 (0.077)	.1849722	
	(4) -.0302398 (0.031)	.1042106	
6. Parental migration – children have less communications with fathers – children's negative study engagement is increases	(1) -.0376024 (0.002)	.0442189	Including 0, no mediation effect.
	(2) -.0571861 (-0.006)	.0397623	
	(3) -.0870736 (-0.017)	.0477304	
	(4) -.0401674 (0.007)	.0555754	
7. Parental migration – children feel less satisfied with the child-parent relationships – children's negative study engagement increases	(1) -.0080873 (0.061)	.1343904	(2) and (3) excludes 0, the mediation analysis is significant. (1) and (4) includes 0, no mediation effect.
	(2) .0639711 (0.163)	.2717103	
	(3) .042404 (0.173)	.3648736	
	(4) -.0475312	.1111611	

	(0.029)	
8. Parental migration – children feel less close to mothers – children's negative study engagement increases	(1) -.021078 .0866154 (0.030) (2) .0760966 .2808698 (0.173) (3) .0131337 .3083086 (0.142) (4) -.043803 .061898 (0.008)	(2) and (3) excludes 0, the mediation analysis is significant. (1) and (4) include 0, no mediation effect.
9. Parental migration – children feel less close to fathers – children's negative study engagement increases	(1) -.0309267 .0851728 (0.023) (2) -.0020292 .1680701 (0.080) (3) -.054363 .165076 (0.046) (4) -.0349835 .0762283 (0.015)	Including 0, no mediation effect.

Note: Considering that parental migration is a 3-category variable, I recoded it into four different types of dummy variables for the mediation analysis (Ref: children with both parents in the household): In the column of the confidence intervals and point estimates, (1) shows the result of the mediation analysis between children with one parent away and children's negative study engagement through the factors of parents' support; (2) shows the results for children with both parents away; (3) shows the results for children with mother-only migrating; (4) shows the results for children with father-only migrating. Furthermore, the supervision of children's study is also a 3-category variable (no one=1, parents=2, others=3), to satisfy the requirements of the bootstrap method, it is recoded as a binary variable (parents=1, others=0) to focus on the effects of parental supervision in the mediation analysis. Replications = 1,000.

In addition, considering that the survey data in this study are cross-sectional, it may not be possible to clearly describe the association between hypothesized exposures and outcomes clearly, making it impossible to determine the causal relationship between the variable associations with the quantitative data used in this chapter. However, qualitative data can provide support for understanding the direction of effect.

3.5 Interpretation

Overall, the qualitative data corresponds to the quantitative findings. Specifically, of the qualitative data that were transcribed through interview transcripts and content analyzed using NVivo to code, identify themes and analyses patterns and meanings in

this thesis, qualitative data from 34 interviews - 20 with children (14 ethnic Korean children and 6 Han children), 5 with teachers, 7 with parents and 2 with grandparents - were employed in this chapter. Data on both ethnic Korean and Han children was used in this chapter, so the qualitative findings apply to both Han and ethnic Korean left-behind children.

Parents' Physical and Financial Support

Overall, among the hypotheses exploring the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement through factors of parents' financial and physical support for their children, the hypothesis of parental supervision on children's study is supported.

Although in the existing literature, the priority of most migrant parents is to improve the economic conditions of their families and the upbringing of their children, this chapter finds no significant differences between left-behind families and non-migrant families in terms of their children's reported material possessions. One reason may be that the remittance benefits of parental migration are offset by poorer family conditions prior to migration. In addition, as China's economy has accelerated, living standards have improved significantly, which has narrowed the income gap between migrants and native workers. One teacher mentioned the economic situation of the left-behind families in the interview:

> "Those who work in South Korea generally work in the restaurants, like washing dishes, servicing, etc. Even though the exchange rate is high, they could not make much money like before. For example, before, the salary of most people who had stable jobs in China was only 2,000 - 3,000 RMB, while migrants could have had 6,000 RMB in South Korea, then, of course, they could make money after a few years. However, now the situation has changed; the salary of people who have stable jobs in China is about 6,000 – 7,000 RMB per month, while the salary for migrants remains at 6,000 RMB in South Korea. People used to say those who migrated to South Korea earlier are lucky. I also have students who have parents working in South Korea; their family condition is just like normal families here, not as rich as you think they are. (Then why do they still work in South Korea since they could only have the same salary level in China?) Normally it is hard for them to make 6,000 RMB per month if they work in China." (Informant 1603, teacher at NO.6 ethnic Korean Middle School)

In addition, left-behind children and children from non-migrant families do not show significant differences in the length of time spent doing chores, suggesting that parental migration does not affect children's chores. This may be explained by the

family environment and the concept of child rearing in the Chinese context. In 2015, China further relaxed the "one-child" family planning policy into a "two-child" policy to improve the balanced development of the population and relax the aging trend.[12] The one-child policy affects most families in China, and the families in this sample are more inclined to be one-child families, which can easily make the only child carry the hopes of the whole family. In addition, the migration of parents leads to a transfer of custody, and most guardians are responsible for the health and safety of children, which may limit the guardians from sharing chores with children in order to demonstrate "good care". In addition, education is one of the main trends in social mobility, which brings more pressure on children to study and correspondingly less time for household chores in their daily lives (Hu, 2008). Both Han and ethnic Korean students mentioned this when they were asked in interviews whether they did chores at home:

> "I do not have time for chores … I have to spend more time studying. Most of my classmates do not have much time to do other things anyway. If they do not attend any remedial classes, they will go take some classes for specialty." (Informant 0604, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School with both parents in the household)

> "My grandma does not want me to do chores; she always says I am too little to do that. Even if I do not study at that moment and try to help, she tells me to have a rest instead of doing chores." (Informant 0803, student at NO.8 Han Middle School with parents working in another city)

It is well established that parental involvement in children's education can effectively improve children's academic performance and prevent children from academic failure (Wang et al., 2018; Jeynes, 2007). However, parental involvement in left-behind children's study has changed due to parental migration; this change in family structure restricts parents from providing supervision and assistance to children's study after school, which greatly weakens the efficiency of parental involvement in children's education. Interviews with left-behind children and their guardians evidenced the dilemma of migrant parents' supervision of their children's study:

> "His parents are far away, could not supervise his homework … I am old, and I do not understand what he is studying now. So we [his parents and I] sent him to the remedial class." (Informant 4001, grandfather of a 14-year-old boy

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[12] China Economics (2015) Full implementation of two-child policy.
http://www.ce.cn/ztpd/xwzt/zhibo/2h/index.shtml.

at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School who has both parents working in South Korea)

"I do my homework by myself. My parents are working outside, and they cannot supervise me. If there is something I do not understand, I always try to check it with my phone." (Informant 0803, student at NO.8 Han Middle School with parents working in another city)

The interviews above, on the other hand, show that although migrant parents are unable to provide adequate supervision on children's studies, children can seek supervision from other sources to some extent, such as tutorials or social media, which on the other hand, demonstrates the adaptability of children in the context of parental migration.

In addition, the importance of parental involvement in children's study is often underestimated due to the limitations of parental education levels and child rearing concepts. During the interviews, some head teachers complained about the difficulty of discussing children's study with migrant parents:

"I sometimes talk to their parents on Wechat (a software for communication in China) and suggest they return to stay with the children for their important study period. For example, preparing for the high school entrance exam, many of them do not listen to me, and some tell me that they cannot even understand what children are studying now; even if they were here, they would not be able to supervise or do anything for their study. Instead of staying in Hunchun, it is better to get outside to make more money so that children could take more remedial classes." (Informant 1401, teacher at NO.4 Ethnic Korean Primary School)

"We have parent-teacher conferences once or twice per term. Migrant parents barely can make it to the parent-teacher conferences, and I understand, but at least they should check with me via Wechat or calls. Some migrant parents have never asked me about their children's behaviors at school. Every time we have conferences, only grandparents come. You know they are old and have trouble understanding the strategies we talk about to help children with their study, let alone the cooperation between teachers and guardians." (Informant 1802, teacher at NO.8 Han Middle School)

In summary, it is found in this section that the lack of parental supervision of children's study due to parental migration plays a more critical role in children's study engagement than the change in family economic conditions brought about by the remittances sent back by migrant parents.

Parents' Emotional Support

The analysis shows that for children with both parents away, children's satisfaction with family condition, satisfaction with the parent-child relationship, and child-mother closeness mediate the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement. For children with one parent away, parent-child relationship and child-mother closeness significantly mediate the relationship between parental migration and children's study engagement only when mothers migrate. However, no mediating effects are found with respect to the frequency of communication between children and parents.

Compared to children from non-migrant families, this study finds that children with both parents away are significantly less satisfied with their family condition. Children's development is a process nested within a series of environmental systems. As one of the environmental systems, a stable and supportive family environment is beneficial to children's development in different ways (Huang and Yang, 2019). However, parental migration breaks the stability of the original family structure, changes children's family environment, and leads to a lack of parental support in children's lives (Li and Liu, 2011). Meanwhile, migration leads parents to entrust their children to the care of others. Care for children should be based on a collective sentiment to ensure a healthy, safe, and stable environment for children to grow up in, which makes kinship the preferred resource for both parents to raise their children while migrating. "Kinship", in the Chinese context, stands for "close emotional attachment and solidarity". A new nuclear family is created by a couple from two different families, both of whom have parents and siblings who previously lived together. These individuals, although structurally disunited, remain emotionally connected. Therefore, when the couple decides to migrate, this emotional connection lends itself to sharing the responsibility of raising children. Thus, relatives become the most convenient back-up and the best option for childcare (Fei, 2008). Yin and Huang (2019) find that 86.7% of entrusted guardians of rural left-behind children are grandparents. However, 73.16% of them are over 60 years old and 64.52% have education levels of elementary school or below. The age gap and outdated childcare concepts restrict guardians from providing adequate supervision and guidance to children, focusing on taking care of children's daily lives instead of their emotional wellbeing and needs (ibid). As a result, changes in the family environment often make it difficult for left-behind children to receive adequate support and assistance from

both their migrant parents and guardians, which negatively affects their study engagement. This was confirmed in the interviews with the left-behind children:

> "I have lived with my grandpa since my parents went to South Korea 4 years ago. My grandpa and I do not talk too much; he cannot hear me clearly because of his ear; I always need to speak to him loudly. Even if he hears me clearly, we just talk about daily life stuff …When I ask him something about my study, he does not even have a look at it, just tells me to wait for the teacher to teach." (Informant 0607, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School who has both parents working in South Korea)

> "My parents are very busy; my mother talks to me at night before I sleep, but my father barely calls me, let alone helps me with my study … I sometimes feel jealous when my best friend tells me that he eats out with his parents on weekends, it is normal in every family, but I cannot have it." (Informant 0601, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School who has both parents working in South Korea)

Spatial distance from parents prolongs the physical and emotional space between parents and children. Studies find that frequent home visits by parents are beneficial in maintaining the relationship between parents and left-behind children (Tang and Fu, 2011). In other words, the farther parents are from home, the more difficult and less likely they are to return to their children for reunification. The prolonged absence of parents restricts children from seeing their parents for long periods of time, leading to a distancing of the parent-child relationship.

In addition, parental involvement is critical to problem identification and problem solving in child development. Parents communicate strategies for children to deal with problems and adapt to changes encountered in their lives, which may help build children's trust in their parents and a sense of belonging to them as being able to control situations and solve problems. When children embrace this idea, they can gain more confidence in controlling other aspects of their studies and life when they encounter challenges. Thus, parental migration can reduce children's satisfaction with the child-parent relationship, leading to a lack of ability to cope with challenges and increasing their negative involvement in learning. Supporting evidence can be found in interviews with children who are left behind:

> "I want my mother to come back to Hunchun to work. It is the same as working here or in South Korea; why does she have to work in such a distant place? If she came back here, we would be able to do many things together, just like what my classmates do with their mothers." (Informant 0602, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Secondary School who has his mother working in South Korea)

Furthermore, effective interaction between parents and children can improve children's academic performance and lead to more positive attitudes toward learning (Wu and Zhang, 2018; Chen and Ren, 2020). The analysis in this chapter finds that children with both parents away have lower parental closeness compared to children from non-migrant families, while only child-mother closeness mediates the relationship between parental migration and children's academic engagement. Given the Chinese social context, the frequency and impact of father-child interactions and mother-child interactions can differ. In general, mothers are often the primary caregiver for children and tend to be more frequently involved in all aspects of the children's educational life (i.e., homework help, school activities), whereas fathers play a more instrumental role, exposing children to the outside world and using challenging and cognitively stimulating strategies (Parke, 2002; Rogers et al., 2009).

Multiple studies have found that the role of mothers is more important than that of fathers in children's development (Deng et al., 2017). The absence of fathers may lead to a lack of disciplinary figures in children, while the absence of mothers is found that can incur substantial disruptions in children's daily lives that are more detrimental to children's development (Parrenas, 2005; Song and Feng, 2009). As discussed earlier, it is widely accepted that mothers are more closely involved in their children's education than fathers (Lamb, 2010; Lareau, 2003; Kim and Hill, 2015). Rogers et al. (2009) find that mothers' warmer, more supportive parenting style is conducive to children's academic improvement compared to fathers', which are more likely to be harsher and more achievement oriented. Thus, the mothers' presence is of great value to children's development, and closer relationship with mothers can greatly improve children's study, as mentioned in interviews with children and teachers:

> "There are not many children's parents working outside in my class, but as far as I know, most of them have a father working in another city. It is easy to see whether this kid has a mother or father outside. You can just look at what he looks like: if his clothes look clean and tidy, it is probably his mother who takes care of him. I do not see differences in the study between left-behind children with mother who stays in the house and children from non-migrant families. The academic performance varies among students, but these left-behind children with mother stays show better attitudes in the study." (Informant 1801, teacher at NO.8 Han Middle School)

> "I miss my mother and want her to come back to work. She told me that she went there [South Korea] to make more money so I could have a better life. However, I do not feel happy and do not know the meaning of her "better

life". Instead of having more money, I wish she could stay here with me. (Q: What about your father?) I miss him too. However, we barely talk, so I guess I am used to living my life without him." (Informant 0602, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School who has a mother working in South Korea)

Changes in family structure due to parental migration inevitably impact the daily lives of left-behind children. However, the results reveal that there is no significant difference in the frequency of child-parent communication between left-behind children and children from non-migrant families. That can be due to the development of technology. The development of technology has enriched the communication methods and facilitated the communication between left-behind children and their parents despite the distance. Compared to the past methods of communication - letter writing and phone calls - communication between children and parents today greatly reduces the waiting time and communication costs for left-behind families. Interviews with left-behind children confirmed this:

"I always talk to my mother via Wechat. All my classmates have smartphones, but we cannot bring them to school. It does not matter anyway; my mom can leave me messages when I come to school, then I check them once I go back home. If I have anything to say to her, I also leave messages to her; she will reply once she sees them." (Informant 0602, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School who has a mother working in South Korea)

Through social media, left-behind children can maintain regular interactions with their migrant parents, which on the other hand, demonstrates that left-behind children are not passively situated in the plight brought about by parental migration.

3.6 Discussion

The impact of parental migration on children's education has been one of the most controversial topics discussed by scholars for years. Generally, there are two main arguments. One argues that parental migration improves family economic conditions and provides children with more educational resources, offsetting the negative effects of parental absence as children grow up; the other argues that parental absence leads to insufficient parental involvement in children's education and that the remittances sent back by parents hardly compensate for this deficit. A key finding of this chapter is that, contrary to expectations, parental migration has only a weak effect on children's study engagement, regardless of parental migration status (one or both parents migrate), which I argue is mainly reflected in the migration of mothers. Among the potential mediating factors explored in this chapter, parental involvement

in children's study supervision and emotional wellbeing has a greater impact on children's study engagement than the improvements in children's quality of life that resulted from parental remittances. Specifically, the findings suggest that changes in children's belongings, length of time children spend doing chores, and frequency of communication with their parents do not have a significant effect on their study engagement due to parental migration, whereas parental involvement, particularly maternal involvement in children's study supervision and emotional wellbeing, play a key mediating role on their study engagement.

Financial remittances sent by migrant parents are often seen as an important contribution to improving the economic conditions of left-behind families and providing more educational opportunities for their children (Song and Glick, 2020; Clemens and Tiongson, 2013). However, this chapter finds that the belongings of left-behind children are not significantly different from those of children from non-migrant families, which is consistent with studies of migration in Mexico (Goldring, 2004; Mazzucato and Schans, 2008). They attribute this to the fact that remittances are not always sent to all left-behind families. Even when left-behind families receive remittances from migrant family members, it is not clear whether these resources are allocated to the children. However, based on the qualitative interviews in this chapter, one possible explanation is that poorer economic conditions offset the economic support that migrant parents received prior to migration and, in addition, it is possible that China's economic development has led to a narrowing of the wage gap between migrants and native workers.

Consistent with findings from the Philippines (Cortes, 2015) and Mexico (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2011) that parental migration reduces the frequency of parent-child interactions and limits parental involvement in children's daily lives, leading to a negative impact on children's study, this chapter shows that left-behind children with both parents away are significantly less satisfied with their family condition and parent-child relationship than children from non-migrant families, which leads to a negative impact on their study engagement rather than the advantage that parental financial support. Although children become estranged from their migrant parents, only maternal migration has been demonstrated to have a negative impact on children's study engagement. Multiple studies suggest that children separated from their fathers by migration are at greater risk than children from non-migrant families

(Creighton, Park, and Teruel, 2009). Also, a study of children's education in three African countries finds that African children can develop resilience and adapt to changing family configurations after maternal migration, which offset the negative effects of maternal absence (Cebotari and Mazzucato, 2016). However, this is not the case in this chapter: in most patriarchal societies, including China, childcare is associated with gender identity (Peng and Wong, 2016). Influenced by the gendered division of labor, fathers often represent the authorities in the household, which distances them to some extent from their children, while mothers usually play the role of primary caregiver in children's daily lives and education. Thus, instead of the absence of fathers being greatly affected in children's study, the migration of mothers shows to be more harmful, which is consistent with studies of children left behind in the Philippines (Battistella and Conaco 1998), and other societies, targeting Latin American and other Asian societies (Cortes 2015; Kandel and Kao 2001; McKenzie and Rapoport 2011).

In line with the existing studies (Meng and Yamauchi, 2017; Gao et al., 2018; Amato and Cheadle, 2005), this chapter has also found that parent-child separation directly leads to inadequate parental supervision of children's after-school study, which in turn negatively affects their study engagement. However, in the qualitative data I further found that children can adapt to such challenges by using other resources, such as social media or tutorials, which on the other hand illustrates their resilience and adaptability. Moreover, unlike many studies that find that parental migration leads to low frequency of communication between children and parents, which negatively affects children's study (e.g., Yao, 2011; Tan, 2011), the left-behind children in this chapter do not face additional difficulties in communicating with their parents. Compared to the past decades when left-behind children communicated with their mobile parents through letters and expensive phone calls, the difficulties associated with the limitations of communication methods have been resolved with the development of technology. The Technology provides multiple ways and more flexible time for daily communication between migrant parents and left-behind children, compensating for the dilemma of communicating over long distances.

Overall, the findings suggest that parent-child separation is a direct result of parental migration, but that left-behind children do not differ significantly from children from non-migrating families in terms of their study engagement. This also implicitly

reflects children's resilience, an argument I will elaborate on in depth in the next chapter. In addition, I argue that factors such as different child developmental backgrounds and family structures shape the different characteristics of left-behind children from one place to another, making it inappropriate to categorize left-behind children as a whole.

4 Constructing Children's Psychological Wellbeing: Sources for Resilience in the Context of Parental Migration

It is well established that migration contributes to the economic benefits for left-behind families (Liang and Song, 2018). Improved economic conditions for families often contribute to developing children's physical health and increased educational resources, which are often one of the main drivers for parents' decision to migrate. However, they may misjudge or neglect the emotional needs of their left-behind children. Scholars are concerned that the effects on children's emotional development of parental absence due to the migration may offset the economic benefits of parental migration (Duque-P´aramo, 2012).

As the most critical environment in developing children's primary socialization, family plays a crucial role in children's lives. Studies find that solid family bonds among family members are beneficial for children's mental health and help lower the risk of children's depression and other distress-related problems (Rawatlal, Kliewer, and Pillay, 2015; Harris and Molock, 2000). When children feel secure in their relationships with parents, they consider parents to be consistently available, sensitive, and responsive to their needs, yet when children fail to form secure relationships with their parents, they tend to show deficits in sensitivity (Lecompte et al., 2018). Therefore, parental migration leads to children being disadvantaged by the lack of parental presence in their growing-up process, which may significantly influence the development of children's psychological wellbeing from various aspects.

4.1 Literature Review / Background

Although a growing body of research has focused on the overall effect of parental migration on left-behind children's psychological wellbeing, much of it has been pessimistic. For instance, a study of children left behind in Colombia reveals that when children talked about their emotions and the impact of separation from their migrant parents on their lives, many used words like "scary", "sad", "very difficult", and "painful" to describe the separation from their immigrant parents, reflecting the profound pain they experienced and the emotional emptiness of their lives (Duque-Páramo, 2012). In the Chinese context, research shows that higher levels of parent-child communication are associated with children's better psychological

wellbeing and fewer behavioral problems (Ying et al., 2015), while psychological vulnerability and anxiety about parent-child closeness are proven to the common issues faced by left-behind children (Chen et al., 2015; Hu, 2009; Li, 2014). Moreover, studies claim that the negative impact of the disadvantaged situation (e.g., parental absence) on children's development is cumulative, leading to inequality gaps that increase with the age of the children (Zhao et al., 2020). The findings of the White Paper on Mental Condition of Left-behind Children in China (2015) reveal that left-behind children are more likely to have a deep sense of inferiority and an apparent tendency to be self-centered; a significant amount of them is resentful of parents and rebelled against them due to the long-term separation (Zhang, 2016). However, there are studies suggesting positive impacts of parental migration on children's psychological wellbeing: A case of children left behind in Thailand finds that children of migrant parents report more positive assessments of their wellbeing than children from non-migrant families, such as higher life satisfaction and more enjoyment in school (Jampaklay and Vapattanawong, 2013). A possible explanation is that left-behind children from these families have father-only migrating, which, on the other hand, makes it valuable to consider the role of gender of migrant parent plays in children's psychological development.

4.1.1 Heterogeneous Impact of Parental Migration on Left-behind Children by Gender

Generally, much of the extant literature suggests that maternal migration has a more negative impact on children's mental health than paternal migration because, based on the traditional gender division of labor, mothers are often the primary caregivers in the household (Lam and Yeoh, 2019; Wen and Lin, 2012). For instance, Pescaru (2015) finds that left-behind children tend to suffer from excessive alcohol drinking and smoking, and mental problems in the mother-migrant families. Similar findings are found in children left behind in Nepal (Adhikari, 2018). Jordan and Graham's (2012) study on Filipino left-behind children claims that 85% of children from non-migrant families reported that they were very happy or happy based on the general happiness indicator, compared to 79% in families where both parents migrated, 78% in families where fathers migrated, and 75% in families where mothers migrated. In the Chinese context, according to a nationally representative survey of Chinese children, Lu et al.

(2020) find that left-behind children with father-only migrating show no significant behavioral problems or cognitive issues compared to children from non-migrant families. Similar results are found in another survey on the attachment of junior high school students: children are more attached to their mothers than fathers, regardless of whether they are left behind or not (Fan et al., 2009). While there are exceptions to the impact of maternal migration on the psychological wellbeing of left-behind children - in Cebotari et al. (2018) study of secondary school children left behind in Ghana, they find that transnational family life leads to more wellbeing and school enjoyment for Ghanaian children when their mothers migrate.

In contrast, migrant fathers are often expected to be breadwinners and authorities in the household (Menjívar, 2012), and paternal migration, therefore, is more associated with improving the economic conditions of the family, while the impact of the fathers' absence on the children's psychological wellbeing has been relatively undervalued for an extended period (e.g., Castañeda and Buck, 2011; Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2013; Pribilsky, 2012). Recent research on migrant fathers has criticized the generalization of the role of fathers in the context of migration as not caring for left-behind children (Winters, 2014; Chereni, 2015). For instance, a study of paternal migration from Ghana to the Netherlands reveals that migrant fathers express a greater ideal of "involvement" in parenting while assuming responsibility for providing for their families - fathers seek to develop an emotional connection with the left-behind children and maintain an active role in the development of children's psychological wellbeing (Poeze, 2019).

In the Chinese context, based on the traditional gender division of labor, women's workspace tended to be focused within the household, on domestic work, child-rearing, and caring for the elderly, especially for those who were married. Marriage represented a shift in a range of social roles for women, such as being a wife and a mother, which led to the number of working hours decreasing while the time spent on housework and caring for the family increased significantly (Xu, 2018). For instance, Peng's (2020) study on migrant children reveals that it is often the mothers who sacrifice their full-time job to care for the children. While with the development of urbanization in China, an increasing number of people have joined the migration flow. However, the number of women involved in migration trends over the last few decades stayed small compared to the number of men involved in migration flows,

despite the economic pull from urban areas (Tan, 1997). In post-reform China, along with the accelerated urbanization process and the improvement of women's social status and gender awareness, more women have joined the migration trend, which has brought changes to the division of labor in the household. The feminization of migration empowers migrant women to link their role as primary caregivers to that of breadwinners, and migrant men are increasingly engaged in the emotional care of left-behind children in China (Choi and Peng, 2016). Choi (2019) finds that some migrant fathers even give up higher-paying jobs to take lower-status and lower-paying jobs in order to get more flexible leave arrangements to return home more often to care for the children. In light of the growing wave of migration in China and the increasing feminization of migration, it is unclear how migration further affects gendered parenting in left-behind families, particularly the gendered division of labor in caring for left-behind children.

Furthermore, the impact of parental migration on left-behind children may also differ by children's gender. Research has shown that left-behind boys and girls respond differently to the absence of their parents in the context of parental migration. Based on a nationally representative sample of left-behind children in rural China, Shen and Zhang (2018) find that migration of both parents results in severe disruptions in life satisfaction and family relationships for boys rather than girls. Nevertheless, maternal absence has a more detrimental effect on the subjective wellbeing of girls than boys (ibid). In contrast, Brooks-Gunn et al. (2002) suggest that boys are more vulnerable than girls to the adverse effects of non-maternal care arrangements. Similarly, some studies show girls have more protective socio-psychological qualities than boys when facing reduced parental input (Bertrand and Pan, 2013).

Therefore, it is crucial to consider the role of gender when exploring the impact of parental migration on the psychological wellbeing of left-behind children.

4.1.2 Risks and Children's Resilience

Existing research has revealed that individuals can cope with adversity with various resources to protect their wellbeing in a disadvantaged situation when faced with adversity. Through this adaptation process, they strengthen and enhance their ability to adversity, that is, resilience (Masten, 2011). Resilience is often understood as the ability to resist or thrive in the face of adversity (Bonanno et al., 2010), and it is

conceptualized in the context of two interconnected factors – adversity and positive actions or adaptation to the adversity (Luthar et al., 2000). Early research on this topic explored how personal characteristics promote good mental health and positive developmental outcomes despite exposure to adversity (Rutter, 1987). Later, the insights of resilience shifted to the social and cultural contexts in which these protective factors and resources may promote resilience. Resilience, therefore, is defined as the intersection between individual capacity and environmental responsiveness to provide the resources needed for development (Liebenberg and Ungar, 2009). Estevão et al. (2017) state that resilience is "a complex and multilevel process through which societies, institutions and individuals respond to sudden and large-scale environmental, social and economic shocks". Thompson et al. (2019) define it as "an individual's intrinsic capacity for intentional behavior developed within the individual's environment(s) and subject to environmental influences".

In much of the literature, left-behind children are interpreted as a homogeneous group - they are often the "victims" of migration who are left behind by those they care for and depend on (Mondain and Diagne, 2013). While children, rather than being "adults-in-the-making" (Holloway and Valentine, 2000), are also social actors, they can shape their lives and contribute to society's development rather than just adapting and internalizing. Fog (2003) argues that the wellbeing of children is not necessarily dependent on being taken care of by their parents. Parental migration changes the family structure and leaves children to one parent or others as guardians, which exposes children to a disadvantaged situation. However, the disadvantaged situations do not necessarily lead to psychological problems for left-behind children when forced to be separated from parents because of parental migration, especially when considering their resilience to encounter the difficulties and their adaption to challenging situations.

Existing research shows that children are more resilient than adults assume they are (Cebotari et al., 2016). Parental migration allows children to undertake independent activities, although to varying extents (Hoang et al., 2015). In their research, Wu et al. (2015) find that left-behind children have shown positive changes in their daily lives and can develop resilience from the experience of being left behind. Studies in China have also demonstrated the similar protective effect of resilience on left-behind children's mental health (Ai and Hu, 2016; Shi et al., 2016). Specifically, increased

family economic resources brought about by parental migration, as material resources that provide material security and instrumental support, support left-behind children's development of resilience (Morooka and Liang, 2009; Asis, 2006). Meanwhile, Kirby and Fraser (1997) claim that protective factors that help children cope with risk in their development come from a wide range of aspects of children's lives: protective factors from the environmental conditions are linked with the access to quality schooling; those from family, school, and neighborhood conditions are the existence of solid social support in children's lives, close parent-child relationships, and supportive adults involved in their daily lives, such as grandparents and teachers; and those from individual psychosocial and biological characteristics are associated with children's personality traits, such as high levels of self-efficacy and optimism.

4.1.3 Schools as a Source of Resilience for Children

Children are exposed to various risks in their growing-up process (Wu and Yang, 2011), but the probability of risks occurring will be significantly reduced if the protective factors in their development are adequate and the risk defense mechanisms are relatively robust. In other words, protective factors in children's development can assist them in defusing the risks. Among the different settings, family is always the first place and has the most direct and influential impact on the development of children's resilience. However, schools may play a more critical role in developing children's psychological wellbeing when family becomes a source of risk to children's development due to changes in family structure as parents migrate - as children grow older, schools become increasingly prominent in their socialization, providing a virtual environment for their development (Brooks, 2006; Henderson and Milstein, 2003). Schools provide an environment that draws on children's protective experiences from various resources; teachers and peers can also provide additional protective factors through caring and supportive environments and opportunities for meaningful engagement (Henderson, 2012). Esquivel et al. (2011) find that the malfunction of schools to provide the necessary support increases the difficulties faced by children. For children in disadvantaged situations, schools become a more critical environment in developing their resilience, especially when the protective factors from other environments are lacking (DuBois et al., 1992).

Parental migration upsets the balance of the environment critical for children to develop resilience, placing them at a disadvantage and making it difficult to access certain protective factors provided by their families. However, the ability of left-behind children to positively adapt to the adverse conditions of parental migration depends on the ability of children's environmental system to develop protective mechanisms to cope with the challenges posed by parental absence. Schools are considered a social environment consisting of child-centered structures of social interaction (Marshall, 2004). A social network is an essential factor influencing children's psychological wellbeing. Zuo et al. (2005) show that social networks are highly correlated with children's psychological wellbeing and that social support provided by schools (e.g., positive peer networks, good teacher-student relationships) can alleviate the crises of left-behind children due to parental absence and improve their ability to adapt to various stresses and life changes. Therefore, schools become an essential place for left-behind children to seek protective factors to develop their resilience in the face of adverse conditions brought about by parental migration.

Furthermore, in investigating the impact of schools on the development of children's resilience, it is argued that school quality also affects children's responses to risks. For instance, by analyzing longitudinal data collected by the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education project, Hall et al. (2009) find that attending high-quality schools protects children's cognitive development, contributing to their capacity to demonstrate resilience to risk. High-quality schools can provide additional support for developing children's resilience by providing more opportunities for positive social interactions among children and reducing dependence on aggressive interactions (Olweus, 1993). Also, the proportion of left-behind children in schools has been shown to impact the psychological wellbeing of children. Schools with a more significant number of left-behind children may provide more support for left-behind children. For example, Tan (2011) claims that schools with a higher proportion of left-behind children are more likely to offer psychological counseling courses to provide psychological support for children separated from their parents. In addition, when left-behind children are the majority of the class, they are more likely to accept their parents' migration and demonstrate a positive attitude to it (Tan and Peng, 2012). Therefore, school-level factors are also worth considering when exploring the relationship between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing.

Multiple studies on left-behind children in China have focused on the risk factors brought by parental migration that influence children's psychological wellbeing, while the protective factors in their daily lives have been relatively neglected (Luo et al., 2009). Moreover, few studies have explored the mechanisms of children's social networks in the context of risk factors (Tan, 2011). Therefore, in this chapter, I will explore the following research questions by comparing left-behind children with children from non-migrant families:

1. What is the association between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing? Does the influence of parental migration on children differ by which parent migrates?

2. Do schools play a role in moderating the relationship between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing? How and to what extent do schools support children in developing their resilience in the face of the disadvantages brought by parental absence?

3. Are the potential protective factors provided by the schools on children's psychological wellbeing associated with parental migration also influenced by other factors (e.g., school quality, the proportion of left-behind children in the class, gender of the children)?

The framework of this chapter is shown as follows:

Figure 4.1 Pathways for the interactive effects of parental migration on children's psychological wellbeing through the sources of resilience children obtain from schools
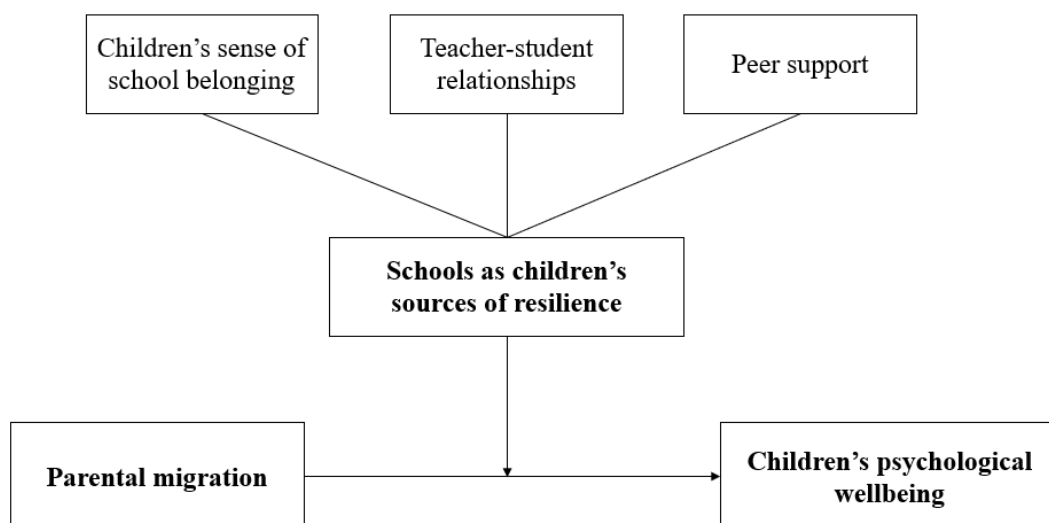
In the following, I will present hypotheses on three aspects of potential school-based support for children's psychological development and examine the effects of parental migration on children's psychological wellbeing to understand the associations between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing, and the underlying mechanisms.

4.1.4 Pathways

Children's sense of school belonging

The need to belong is considered a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). It is the perception and experience of the sense that the individual is accepted and identified with. There are different perspectives on school belonging, with Finn (1989) arguing that school belonging is "the sense that students feel part of the school, are respected by others and feel valuable to others". Wehlage et al. (1990) suggested that school belonging is a sense of identity in that students feel that they are part of the school. According to Goodenow (1993), school belonging is the sense that students feel accepted, respected, included, and encouraged by others (teachers and peers) in the school environment and that they are essential members of school life and activities.

Studies find that children's sense of school belonging is an essential indicator of students' school life and experiences, which is also linked positively to their wellbeing and life satisfaction (e.g., Huang, 2020; Liu et al., 2020). For instance, Peng and Chen (2011) point out that migrant children's sense of school belonging is significantly related to their school adjustment, which can release their anxiety when coping with changes in their developmental environment. Tan and Peng's (2012) research indicates a significant negative correlation between school belonging and the scores of children's psychological wellbeing, suggesting that children with a high sense of school belonging are more likely to have a low probability of psychological problems. In other words, a sense of belonging to school can positively contribute to protecting students' psychological wellbeing. Similarly, Arslan and Duru (2016) report predictive effects of school belonging on children's psychological wellbeing and loneliness, and school belonging is also associated with school-related wellbeing, such as academic efficacy and educational aspiration. High levels of school belonging can enhance children's identification with school values and therefore contribute to children's

tendency to devote more time and efforts to study-related activities, making them more likely to achieve the satisfaction of their developmental needs (Wei et al., 2016). Therefore, children's sense of school belonging is a good predictor of their subjective wellbeing (Wang et al., 2016; Feng et al., 2015).

Therefore, in this section, I hypothesize that:

H1: High levels of school belonging weaken the negative association between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing.

Teacher-student relationships

Teacher-student relationships are interpersonal connections between teachers and students, which are an essential part of children's school experience. The impact of teacher-student relationships on children is multifaceted and has a profound and long-term impact on their development, such as learning, cognitive, emotional, and social development (Davis, 2003). Prior studies illustrate that a supportive teacher-student relationship is associated with beneficial socio-emotional outcomes, such as reductions in suicidal ideation and emotional distress (Benjamin, 2016; Hughes, Cavell, and Wilson, 2001). Li et al. (2005) claim that positive teacher-student relationships can promote children's psychological wellbeing while conflict teacher-student relationships are more likely to impact children negatively. Connell and Wellborn (1991) suggest that the closeness with teachers is also associated with the social adjustment of older children and adolescents, and teacher support can help relieve some of the stress and offset the risk of adjustment difficulties for children (Pianta, 1999).

Research has further found that children in disadvantaged conditions are more likely to be affected by teacher-student relationships: children who have better relationships with their teachers have greater access to necessary guidance and support; this kind of support is particularly crucial for children who face challenges in accessing support due to their disadvantaged situations (Hamre and Pianta 2005), and good teacher-student relationships can contribute to supporting disadvantaged children in dealing with emotional problems (Wang and Bringkworth 2013). For left-behind children, studies find that a supportive teacher-student relationship can compensate for the negative emotions associated with parental migration by providing support for their emotional security and social identity (Yan et al., 2015).

Therefore, I hypothesize that:

H2: Good teacher-student relationships mitigate the negative correlation between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing.

Peer support

As children grow older, the role of parents in their socialization becomes less significant, and their reliance on parents decreases, while peers become more vital in their lives. As part of children's social capital, peer interactions contribute to the acquisition of children's social skills, attitudes, experiences, and support, influencing their social adjustment. In general, children choose peers independently rather than influenced by parents (Ali and Fokkema, 2015). Parents do not directly influence children's choices about their peers, although parents' education and income influence their socioeconomic status, the community in which they live, and the type of school they attend, leading to the fact that parents may determine the circle of children's potential peers, they are unable to decide who can be children's peers. Children's peer relationships ultimately depend on whom children choose and who chooses them (Harris, 2009).

Furthermore, Harris (2009) argues that rather than focusing on parents, we can better understand the development and achievements of children over time by considering their peers, those who are generally close to them, and those with whom they identify the most. Studies show that children become friends with each other based on shared traits and similar experiences (Hamm, 2000), and individuals tend to avoid relationships with others who are not similar or opposite to them in terms of their personalities. Various studies conclude that children's ability to face challenges and adversity is greatly influenced by their relationships with others, where peer acceptance is an essential protective factor for children's psychological development that can provide children with a variety of assistance and serve as a source of interaction and emotional support (Fabes and Martin, 2001; Ladd et al., 1996). Having someone to talk to and sharing daily life and feelings contribute to children dealing with the various stress they face in their lives (Haggerty et al., 1997). Similarly, Ye and Pan (2011) find that peer interactions play an important role in the lives of left-behind children and act as a motivator for the development of their psychological

wellbeing. Johnson and Johnson (2009) find that strong-tied peer relationships are positively associated with a range of psychological wellbeing indicators:

> It is positively related to emotional maturity, well-adjusted social relations, strong personal identity, ability to cope with adversity, social competencies, basic trust and optimism about people, self-confidence, independence and autonomy, higher self-esteem, and increased perspective taking skills. (Johnson and Johnson, 2009: 372)

In contrast, the lack of peer support can negatively affect individuals' psychological wellbeing, such as depression, loneliness, social anxiety, and other emotional problems (Van Zalk et al., 2011, Wang, 2006). Peer rejection is more likely to increase the possibility of children's psychological issues, while peer acceptance can act as a protective factor for the child's psychological development (Prinstein and Greca, 2004). Moreover, negative peer relationships may lead to more negative social interactions and cognitive problems, which are likely to hinder the development of children's psychological wellbeing (Zhao, 2013; Gooren et al., 2011).

For left-behind children, prolonged separation from parents due to migration forces children into premature independence from their parents, and peers can be an important resource for children's social connection and support in this adverse environment (Wen and Lin 2012). Therefore, good peer relationships may significantly affect children's psychological development, especially those who lack parental company.

Therefore, I hypothesize that:

H3: Strong peer support improves children's poor psychological wellbeing associated with parental migration.

4.2 Measures

4.2.1 Dependent Variable and Independent Variable

Children's psychological wellbeing

The dependent variable is measured by a depression scale - a set of items widely used in academia in China to measure students' depression (e.g., Guo et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2020). This scale draws on the China Education Panel Survey (CEPS) - a large-scale,

nationally representative, a longitudinal survey on the 7th-9th grade students' education, which consists of 6 items:

Did you have any of the following feelings in the past seven days?
1. I feel so depressed that nothing could cheer me up.
2. I feel my life is meaningless.
3. I feel nervous and anxious.
4. I feel restless or fidgety.
5. I feel hopeless.
6. I feel that everything is difficult to deal with.

By selecting "never", "barely", "sometimes", "often" or "always", participants' depression is measured by the points which are summated by these six questions: never=1, barely=2, sometimes=3, often=4 and always=5. The higher the score, the more depressed children feel. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale is 0.9131 (>0.8), suggesting high internal consistency.

Parental migration

The main independent variable is a 4-category variable measured by the following questions:

1. "Are any of your parents working out of your hometown?" with two option "yes" and "no".
2. "How long has your mother been working outside?" with 7 options "less than 6 months", "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2 years", "3-4 years", "5 years or more", "not applicable, at home" and "deceased".
3. "How long has your father been working outside?" with 7 options "less than 6 months", "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2 years", "3-4 years", "5 years or more", "not applicable, at home" and "deceased".

Participants who select "no" in the first question are classified as children from non-migrant families (=1); Those who selected "yes" in the first question, and one of the options "less than 6 months", "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2 years", "3-4 years", "5 years or more" in the second question, and "not applicable, at home" in the third question are categorized as left-behind children with mother-only migrating (=2); Children selected "yes" in the first question, and "less than 6 months", "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2 years", "3-4 years", "5 years or more" in the third question, and "not applicable, at home" in the second question are categorized as left-behind children with father-only migrating (=3); Children who

selected one of the options "less than 6 months", "more than 6 months but less than 1 year", "1-2 years", "3-4 years", "5 years or more" in both the second and the third question are categorized as left-behind children with both parents migrating (=4).

The distribution of children's depression categorized by parental migration is illustrated in Figure 4.2. From the graphs, we can see that 30.52% of children from non-migrant families have the lowest scores of depression, while the other three categories (children with mothers away, children with fathers away, and children with both parents away) have the lowest scores of 24.14%, 28.93%, and 29.41%, respectively, with the smallest percentage of children with absent mothers.

In graph "no parents away", "fathers away" and "both parents away", children's scores of depression essentially gathers in the range from 5 to 15, while there is a big proportion of children's scores of depression near 20 in graph "mothers away", which suggests that there are more children with mothers away showing higher scores of depression compared with children from non-migrant families. Moreover, the proportion of children with mothers away is relatively small, compared with the other three groups.

Figure 4.2 Distribution of depression scores in children
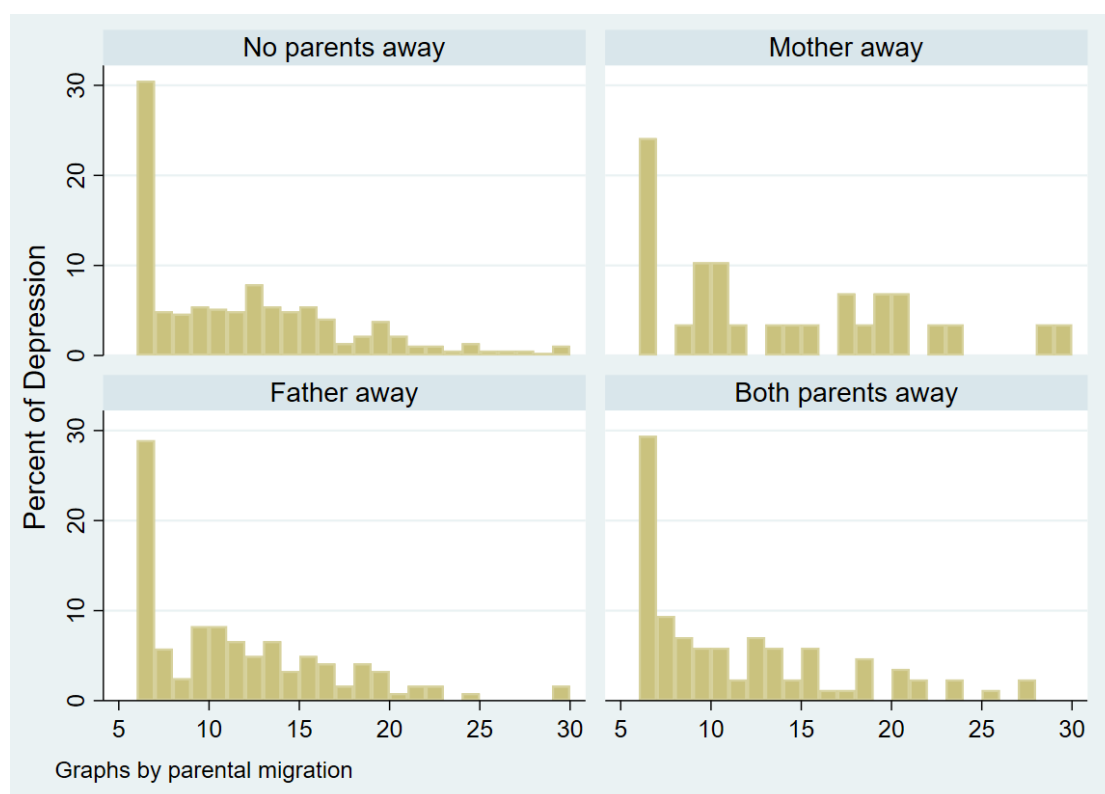
In addition, I control for the socio-demographic variables, including the child's gender, age, grade, numbers of siblings, ethnicity, and highest level of education of the mother and father. The descriptive statistics for all the variables in this chapter are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics for the variables in the sample

	No parents away	Mother away	Father away	Both parents away
	Mean/perc entage (SD)	Mean/perc entage (SD)	Mean/perc entage (SD)	Mean/perce ntage (SD)
Scores of child's depression	11.433 (5.568)	13.552 (6.983)	11.183 (5.269)	11.118 (5.687)
Teachers' attitude to child	0.082 (1.025)	-0.190 (0.881)	-0.167 (0.959)	-0.104 (0.961)
Child's age	13.322 (0.955)	12.828 (1.311)	12.992 (1.452)	13.071 (1.334)
Do you like to go to school?				
Strongly dislike (%)	1.36	3.45	1.67	1.18
Dislike (%)	2.72	3.45	3.33	3.53
Neutral (%)	25.34	20.69	25.83	24.71
Like (%)	38.42	34.48	35	36.47
Strongly like (%)	32.15	37.93	34.17	34.12
I feel I'm part of the class.				
Strongly disagree (%)	2.45		3.33	2.35
disagree (%)	1.09	3.45		2.35
Neutral (%)	5.99	3.45	10.83	3.53
Agree (%)	14.71	24.14	22.5	21.18
Strongly agree (%)	75.75	68.97	63.33	70.59
I prefer to listen to others' opinion other than sharing mine.				
Strongly disagree (%)	15.53	10.34	9.17	5.88
Disagree (%)	20.71	6.9	12.5	10.59
Neutral (%)	35.97	51.72	47.5	41.18
Agree (%)	18.53	17.24	23.33	27.06
Strongly agree (%)	9.26	13.79	7.5	15.29
I was excluded from activities last year.				
Never or almost never (%)	94.55	96.55	90.83	92.94
Few times the whole year (%)	3.81	3.45	5	4.71
Few times a month (%)	1.09		2.5	2.35
Few times a week (%)	0.54		1.67	
Satisfaction with teacher-student relationships				

Strongly dissatisfied (%)	2.18	6.9	4.17	3.53
Dissatisfied (%)	1.63	6.9	3.33	2.35
Neutral (%)	21.25	6.9	23.33	22.35
Satisfied (%)	34.6	27.59	31.67	36.47
Strongly satisfied (%)	40.33	51.72	37.5	35.29
How many best friends do you have?				
None (%)	1.09		0.83	
1-3 (%)	19.07	10.34	19.17	27.06
4-7 (%)	27.52	41.38	23.33	24.71
8 or more (%)	52.32	48.28	56.67	48.24
Closeness with classmates				
Not at all close (%)	1.63	3.45		1.18
Not that close (%)	3		2.5	1.18
Neither not close nor close (%)	13.9	10.34	8.33	15.29
Somewhat close (%)	35.15	20.69	30.83	35.29
Very close (%)	46.32	65.52	58.33	47.06
Satisfaction with peer relationships				
Strongly dissatisfied (%)	2.18	3.45	2.5	4.71
Dissatisfied (%)	2.45	10.34	1.67	1.18
Neutral (%)	11.72		10	14.12
Satisfied (%)	27.79	20.69	33.33	29.41
Strongly satisfied (%)	55.86	65.52	52.5	50.59
Child's gender				
boy (%)	43.05	37.93	39.17	48.24
girl (%)	56.95	62.07	60.83	51.76
Child's grade				
5 (%)	4.09	20.69	19.17	14.12
7 (%)	10.35	24.14	20.83	28.24
8 (%)	74.66	41.38	41.67	42.35
9 (%)	10.9	13.79	18.33	15.29
The number of siblings				
No siblings (%)	52.04	65.52	57.5	55.29
1 sibling (%)	44.14	31.03	40	42.35
2 or above (%)	3.81	3.45	2.5	2.35
Children's nationality				
Han (%)	75.75	20.69	12.5	14.12
ethnic Korean (%)	24.25	79.31	87.5	85.88
Mother's highest education level				
Middle school or below (%)	58.04	41.38	38.33	41.18
technical middle/high school (%)	32.7	51.72	51.67	44.71
college or above (%)	9.26	6.9	10	14.12
Father's highest education level				
Middle school or below (%)	51.23	37.93	38.33	38.82
technical middle/high school (%)	39.51	55.17	51.67	47.06
college or above (%)	9.26	6.9	10	14.12
Observations	367	29	120	85

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses.

4.2.2 Measures of the Potential Protective Effect of Schools

Children's sense of school belonging

Four indicators from different aspects of children's school life are selected to measure their school belonging: Questions "Do you like to go to school?" (1=strongly dislike, 2= dislike, 3=neutral, 4=like, 5=strongly like); "I feel I am part of the class" (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree) are selected to measure children's positive attitude to school/class life. High scores indicate a high sense of school belonging. Questions "When the teacher asks questions in class, I prefer to listen to other students or the teacher's summary rather than sharing my thoughts." (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). "How often did you experience being excluded from school/class activities last year?" (1=never/almost never, 2=few times in the whole year, 3=few times every month, 4=few times every week) are selected as children's negative attitude, high scores represent low sense of school belonging.

Teacher-student relationships

1. Teachers' attitudes towards children

Exploratory factor analysis is used in the following items that measure teachers' attitudes toward children: Items 2, 6, and 7 are strongly loading on Factor 1; Items 1 and 3 are loading on Factor 2. I, therefore, constructed a set of scales with the items loading on Factor 1 as teachers' positive attitudes to children, which are "Teachers asked me how my life is going on." "Teachers talk to my guardians about my study." and "Teachers give me compliments in class."

During the past 12 months, how often did you have the following experience at school?

1. Teachers cared about me less than other students.

2. Teachers asked me how my life was going on.

3. Teachers gave me the impression that they think I am less smart than I really am.

4. Teachers disciplined me more harshly than other students.

5. Teachers said something insulting to me in front of others.

6. Teachers talked to my guardians about my study.

7. Teachers gave me compliments in class.

Four response options are provided: never/almost never=1, a few times a year=2, a few times a month=3, once or a few times a week=4.

2. Children's satisfaction with teacher-student relationships

It is measured by the question "How satisfied are you with the relationship with your teachers?" with a 5-point Likert scale as response categories ranging from 'strongly dissatisfied' (1) to 'strongly satisfied' (5).

Peer support

Peer support is measured from three dimensions: the amount of best friends (Question "how many best friends do you have at school?" is selected to measure the range of children's best friends with four response options: none=1, 1-3 friends=2, 4-7 friends=3, 8 or more friends=4), children's closeness with classmates ("how close are you with your classmates?" with 5-point Likert response options: not at all close=1, not that close=2, neither not close nor close=3, somewhat close=4, very close=5) and children's satisfaction with the peer relationship (Question "How satisfied are you with the relationship with peers at school?" which has the 5-point Likert response options: strongly dissatisfied=1, dissatisfied=2, neutral=3, satisfied=4, strongly satisfied=5).

4.3 Analysis

This chapter analyzes the relationship between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing by testing various protective factors regarding different aspects of children's school life. First, I estimate models with no controls for children's depression other than parental migration, and gradually add controls. Second, potential protective factors from schools are included to test the main effect and 2-way interactions with parental migration to see whether any of these potential protective factors moderate the relationship between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing. Third, 3-way interactions of parental migration, potential protective factors, and gender (boy/girl) are examined to identify the difference between boys and girls. Furthermore, whether the association of parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing varies by the class composition (proportion of left-behind children in the class, mean of parental education levels in class) and school-level factors (the quality of schools) is also explored to understand further the

potential mechanisms underlying the association between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing. After removing observations with missing values of variables, the final sample size of this chapter is 601.

4.4 Results

Descriptive results

In Table 4.1, children with mothers away have higher depression scores than the other three groups. Moreover, regarding the different types of parental migration, the number of children with mothers away shows the smallest, the number of children with father-only migration shows the largest, indicating that father-only migration dominates among the left-behind families in this dataset. In addition, left-behind children generally have a lower sense of school belonging than children from non-migrant families, while similar to or even more positive than children from non-migrant families in terms of peer support.

Regression results

Table 4.2 shows the models of depression scores for children with different types of parental migration. In Model 1, left-behind children show no significant differences compared to children from non-migrant families, regardless of parental migration patterns. After controlling for sociodemographic factors in Model 2, children with mothers away have significantly higher depression scores than children from non-migrant families, while children with fathers away or both parents away do not show differences in their depression.

Table 4.2 The association between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing

Parental migration (Ref: No parents away)	Model 1 Scores of child's depression	Model 2 Scores of child's depression
Child with mother being away	2.118	2.694*
	(1.080)	(1.097)
Child with father being away	-0.250	0.143
	(0.589)	(0.675)
Child with both parents being away	-0.316	0.134
	(0.674)	(0.741)
Child is girl		1.081*

		(0.455)
Child's age		0.168
		(0.345)
Child's grade		1.109**
		(0.401)
The number of siblings		0.236
		(0.398)
Child is ethnic Korean		0.420
		(0.587)
Mother's highest education level		-0.0864
		(0.510)
Father's highest education level		-0.561
		(0.512)
Constant	11.43***	0.637
	(0.292)	(2.959)
Observations	601	601
R-squared	0.008	0.079

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. High scores of children's depression represents the worse mental health.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

This preliminary analysis suggests that, on average, left-behind children do not experience more depression than children from non-migrant families, with the exception of children with mothers migrating. However, these average effects may conceal differential associations based on the underlying resilience factors, and it is worth investigating the interaction of parental migration and school-related factors.

Table 4.3 demonstrates the model of children's psychological wellbeing among children with different types of parental migration status and the interactions of the school belonging. The result shows that children's feeling of being part of the class is negatively associated with their depression, which illustrates that the more children feel themselves being part of the class, the less depressed they are. The interaction between mothers away and children's feeling of being part of the class is significant and the coefficient is -3.320, which suggests that children feeling being part of the class can alleviate the negative impact of maternal migration on children's psychological wellbeing. Three indicators of school belongings from different dimensions (mentioned earlier) have also been analyzed, which illustrates the similar effect on the relationship between maternal migration and children's depression (see Appendix 5).

Table 4.3 The model of children's psychological wellbeing on parental migration - interactions with children's school belonging measures

Parental migration (Ref: No parents away)	Model 1 Depression
Mother away	2.987**
	(1.054)
Father away	0.0560
	(0.649)
Both parents away	0.189
	(0.710)
I feel I'm part of the class. (centered)	-1.903***
	(0.324)
Mother away X I feel I'm part of the class	-3.320*
	(1.385)
Father away X I feel I'm part of the class	0.918
	(0.608)
Both parents away X I feel I'm part of the class	0.470
	(0.739)
Constant	2.686
	(2.882)
Observations	601
R-squared	0.160

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The socio-demographic variables are included in this model. High scores of children's depression represents the worse mental health.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table 4.4 presents the models of children's psychological wellbeing with different types of parental migration and the interactions with teacher-student relationships. We can see that teachers' attitudes and children's satisfaction with the teacher-student relationships are significantly associated with children's depression, which indicates that the more positive teachers' attitudes toward children, the lower children's depression; and the more satisfied children are with the teacher-student relationship, the less depressed children feel. However, the interactions between parental migration and teachers' attitudes toward children/children's satisfaction with the teacher-student relationships are not significant, suggesting that these two indicators do not moderate the relationship between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing.

Table 4.4 Models of children's psychological wellbeing on parental migration - interactions with teacher-student relationships measures

Parental migration (Ref: No parents away)	Model 1 Depression	Model 2 Depression

Mother away	2.260*	2.495*
	(1.117)	(1.058)
Father away	0.0515	-0.364
	(0.680)	(0.657)
Both parents away	-0.00491	-0.250
	(0.740)	(0.716)
Score for teachers' attitude to the child (centered)	-0.566*	
	(0.277)	
Mother away X Teachers' attitude to the child	-1.405	
	(1.199)	
Father away X Teachers' attitude to the child	0.341	
	(0.589)	
Both parents away X Teachers' attitude to the child	-0.199	
	(0.678)	
Child's satisfaction with teacher-student relationships (centered)		-1.425***
		(0.295)
Mother away X Child's satisfaction with teacher-student relationships		-1.639
		(0.860)
Father away X Child's satisfaction with teacher-student relationships		-0.284
		(0.550)
Both parents away X Child's satisfaction with teacher-student relationships		0.690
		(0.650)
Constant	1.072	4.010
	(2.966)	(2.929)
Observations	601	601
R-squared	0.092	0.151

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The socio-demographic variables are included in these models. High scores of children's depression represents the worse mental health. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

In Table 4.5, among the three indicators of peer support, children's satisfaction with peer relationships is significantly associated with their depression, while the other two indicators -number of children's best friends and children's closeness with classmates - are not significantly associated. However, the interactions between mothers away and these three indicators are significant, suggesting a moderation effect on the relationship between maternal migration and children's psychological wellbeing.

Considering that the coefficient of the interactions is minus, these three moderators weaken the negative association between maternal migration and children's depression. Moreover, the interaction between both parents away and children's closeness with classmates is also significant, making children's closeness with classmates a moderator alleviating the negative impact on children's depression brought about by mothers away or both parents away.

Table 4.5 Models of children's psychological wellbeing on parental migration - interactions with peer support measures

Parental migration (Ref: No parents away)	Model 1 Depression	Model 2 Depression	Model 3 Depression
Mother away	3.079**	3.306**	2.621*
	(1.101)	(1.083)	(1.059)
Father away	0.169	0.343	-0.0116
	(0.674)	(0.668)	(0.653)
Both parents away	0.132	0.00469	-0.101
	(0.740)	(0.723)	(0.718)
Number of best friends (centered)	-0.0434		
	(0.352)		
Mother away X Number of best friends	-4.391**		
	(1.570)		
Father away X Number of best friends	0.0839		
	(0.703)		
Both parents away X Number of best friends	-0.181		
	(0.781)		
Closeness with classmates (centered)		-0.531	
		(0.307)	
Mother away X Closeness with classmates		-3.662***	
		(1.101)	
Father away X Closeness with classmates		-1.156	
		(0.718)	
Both parents away X Closeness with classmates		-1.582*	
		(0.753)	
Child's satisfaction with peer relationships (centered)			-1.411***
			(0.298)
Mother away X Satisfaction with			-1.952*

peer relationships			
			(0.920)
Father away X Satisfaction with peer relationships			-0.442
			(0.614)
Both parents away X Satisfaction with peer relationships			0.869
			(0.626)
Constant	0.735	1.928	2.098
	(2.965)	(2.901)	(2.868)
Observations	601	601	601
R-squared	0.092	0.130	0.149

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The socio-demographic variables are included in these three models. High scores of children's depression represents the worse mental health. *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

3-way interactions of parental migration*gender*children's sources of resilience from school are also examined, indicating that the 3-way interaction of parental migration*gender*children's closeness is significant among all the interactions. It is presented in Figure 4.3, considering the results of the 3-way interactions are challenging to interpret in table format. From Figure 4.3, we see that the depression of boys with both parents away shows the most decisive impact by the closeness with classmates, while the depression of those with mothers away also has a significant downward trend when their closeness to their classmates increases. For girls, the main difference between the closeness with classmates and children's depression is found for girls with mothers away; that is, the closeness with classmates can primarily alleviate the negative relationship between maternal migration and the scores of girls' depression.

Figure 4.3 Predicted scores of children's depression with the interactions of parental migration*gender*children's closeness with classmates

Predicted scores of children's depression
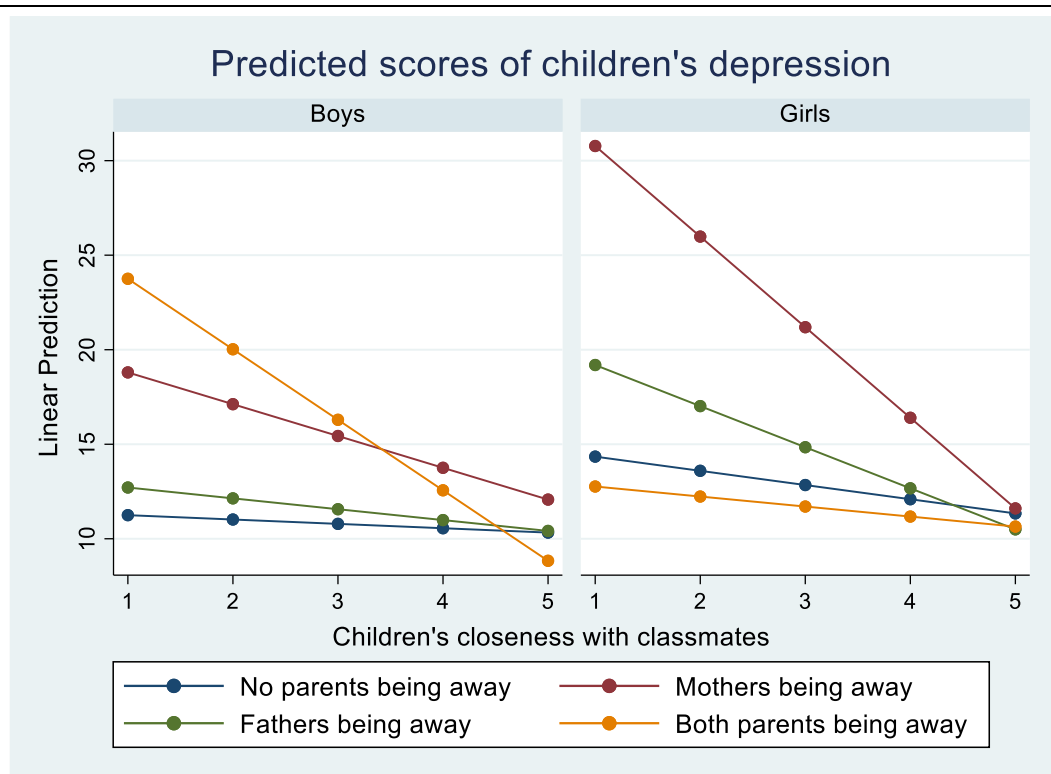
Interactions with the classroom composition and school quality are examined to explore further the mechanisms underlying the relationship between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing. Results illustrate no significant interaction between parental migration and classroom composition; in other words, the association between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing does not differ across classrooms with different mean parental education levels or with different proportions of left-behind children. Moreover, the association between parental migration and school quality is not significant either, suggesting that school quality does not moderate the impact on children's depression regardless of their parents' migration status.

In addition, considering the survey data in this study is cross-sectional, one of its major weaknesses is that it cannot demonstrate temporality, i.e., it cannot explicitly describe the temporal link between the hypothesized exposure and the outcome. The quantitative data used in this study do not determine the causal relationship between children's depression and their school belonging/peer support. However, qualitative data triangulated with quantitative data can support understanding the direction of the effects.

4.5 Interpretation

This chapter uses qualitative data from 29 interviews, including 17 with children (12 ethnic Korean and 5 Han children), 7 with teachers, 3 with parents and 2 with grandparents. Data on both Han and ethnic Korean children were used in this chapter, and therefore the qualitative findings apply to both Han and ethnic Korean left-behind children.

Results in this chapter illustrate that maternal migration is negatively associated with children's psychological wellbeing among the different types of parental migration. As discussed earlier, with the development of the feminization of migration, more women have joined the migration trend and share breadwinners' responsibilities with men, and men are expected to contribute to the family by sharing housework and childcare tasks. However, it has not shaken the social structure of gender and the traditional concept of the gendered division of labor. In other words, while gender stereotypes have been changing, women are still expected to accomplish double duty by balancing work and household responsibilities (Lam and Yeoh, 2019), particularly childcare responsibilities. The gendered division of labor in the family contains not only women's responsibilities but also the expectations regarding the role of women as wives and mothers (see Parke 2013). That is, the traditional division of care labor expects more emotional support and caring from mothers, which increases children's need for emotional support from mothers, and thus not surprisingly, this chapter finds that maternal migration has a significant negative impact on children's psychological wellbeing rather than paternal migration, which is consistent with other studies of migrant families in Asian societies (Xu et al., 2019).

In the following sections, the impact of school support on the association between children's psychological wellbeing and parental migration will be interpreted.

Children's sense of school belonging

Results in this chapter show that feeling being part of the class and having more willingness to go to school weaken the relationship between children's depression and mothers away. In contrast, a high frequency of exclusion from school/class activities and children's negative class performance aggravate the relationship between the scores for children's depression and mothers away. In other words, the more

motivated and enthusiastic children feel about school-related activities, the less they suffer from the depression associated with their mother's migration, which confirms that a high sense of school belonging can significantly alleviate the negative impact of maternal migration on children's psychological wellbeing.

It is well established that a high sense of school belonging is associated with children's positive academic experiences, reduced psychological issues, and improved adaptive capacity (e.g., Neel and Fuligni, 2013; Bond et al., 2007). For left-behind children, changes in the family structure due to parental migration restrict their sources of support from parents to a certain extent, while a strong sense of school belonging implies that children may shift their needs to school in the face of the disadvantages. Thus, a high sense of school belonging enables children to develop a sense of identity and values from school, alleviating the depression associated with parental absence. Interviews with both ethnic Korean and Han children related to this:

> My class has the best atmosphere! We always play games together after class. Sometimes I feel uneasy after my mom calls me and being with my classmates makes me feel safe. (Informant 0403, student at NO.4 Ethnic Korean Primary School with both parents working in South Korea)

> My grades are always in the top three in my class. I spent most of my time studying to keep it up. Sometimes I felt like going outside to play, like many other classmates did, but I hardly ever did because I knew it was more important to keep my ranking, I felt happier when my academic performance improved, and sometimes studying even helped distract me from my restless feelings when I missed my mom. (Informant 0803, student at NO.8 Han Secondary School with parents working in another city)

Given that parents migrate primarily to provide a better educational environment for their children (Mahapatro et al. 2017), daily conversations between migrant mothers and children are often study-related, which lead to a subconscious transfer of the notion of the importance of study to the children in relation to mothers' decision to migrate, which may serve as another source of children's focus on school-related activities to distract from the negative emotions associated with maternal migration:

> "My mother always tells me that she is working in South Korea for me, and I need to study harder so that we do not separate for nothing. I understand what she means, and I am studying hard and trying to behave the best of myself at school so that she can come back home earlier." (Informant 0607, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School who has both parents working in South Korea)

Thus, good school performance can be perceived by children as a means of reunification with their migrant mothers, and even as a reward for their mothers' migration.

Teacher-student relationships

Interestingly, and inconsistent with many existing studies (Baker 2006; Buyse et al. 2008), findings in this study suggest that teacher-student relationships do not moderate the association between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing, one possible reason is that the effect of teacher-student relationships on children's psychological wellbeing is influenced by different cultural contexts.

Influenced by Confucianism, the profession of teaching has always occupied a highly respected social status in China. Similar to the traditional Chinese value of "respect for seniority", teachers often have a certain authority in the education system and are the initial authority for children's social integration. The old Chinese proverb, "Once a teacher, always a father", demonstrates the importance of teachers as educators in children's socialization process, and indirectly reflects teacher-student relationships in the Chinese context: respect your teachers as much as you respect your father, even if they teach you for only one day. As a result, children growing up in such a cultural context are more likely to be in awe and fear of their teachers, which in turn hinders the teacher-student relationships from supporting children's resilience development. Interviews with children and teachers supported this:

> "They rarely come to me to share their feelings; they are somehow scared of me. I know how they feel about me, but I have to behave like this because if I do not, they will not obey the rules I set for the class, and they will not take my words seriously. It would be a failure for a teacher … I would say the basic thing for being a teacher is making students follow his guide." (Informant 1603, head teacher at NO.6 ethnic Korean Middle School)

> "(Do you share your feelings with your teachers?) No, I do not. None of us do … I do not particularly appreciate talking to my teachers in person because most of the time, they tell me to meet in the office; it is just to discuss what I did wrong in class. Feel scared to get to the office now." (Informant 0405, student at NO.4 Ethnic Korean Primary School with father working in South Korea)

Children can understand the characteristics of different rules and then predict that violating rules set by teachers will lead to more criticism, therefore, the more children obey teachers' authority over such rules in class, the more capable they are of building

a good relationship with teachers. However, children's perceptions of teacher authority are age-related (An and Chen 2003): gradually, children can evaluate teachers' performance and considering the validity of teacher authority, while refusing to identify with authority that they perceive is incorrect. Such changes can lead to the emergence of children's critical thinking about teacher authority, rather than implicit obedience to it, and may be a driving factor in the failure of the teacher-student relationships to support children's psychological wellbeing in the context of maternal migration. This occurred more frequently in interviews with older children in secondary schools:

> "I am not close to her [the head teacher]; she always tells me to study harder on the subject I am not good at while she ignores all my good behaviors in other subjects, always suppressing, rarely praising. I would not say I like this. I feel compliments and encouragement are better for me than suppression all the time." (Informant 0605, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School who has both parents working in South Korea)

Furthermore, given that most children keep their distance from teachers, those who are close to teachers can easily be excluded from the group and thus rejected by their peers as "outsiders" or even stigmatized as "snitches" in the class, thus making it necessary for children to consider the pros and cons first under peer pressure, as a teacher noted in the interview:

> "One day, she [a student in her class] came to my office crying. I asked her what happened; she said there were a bunch of classmates stopping talking to her because they said it was her who told me about the secret couples in my class. After this issue, I began to avoid putting students in such situations." (Informant 1802, head teacher at NO.8 Han Middle School)

Overall, influenced by the traditional Chinese culture, teacher-student relationships tend to be more of a manager-managed relationship, and thus children may feel more awe than closeness to their teachers, which interpretates the lack of teacher-student relationships to actively support left-behind children's psychological development.

Peer support

This chapter shows that the number of best friends, close relationships with classmates, and satisfaction with peer relationships are significantly associated with depression scores in children with maternal absence. It suggests that peer support plays an essential role in children's psychological development, i.e., robust and connected peer relationships provide children with more support and help in difficult

situations. That can, to a certain degree, mitigate the adverse effects of maternal migration and thus contribute to children's psychological wellbeing.

The long-term separation due to parental migration leads to the lack of parental presence and barriers for parents to provide prompt emotional support to children in daily lives, making children more inclined to choose friends as their emotional support. Adolescence is a period accompanied by physical and psychological changes that gradually provide children with a sense of adulthood, which may lead to an emotional disconnection between children and mothers, coupled with the additional challenges that mother-child separation poses to mother-child interactions in daily life, thus creating barriers for children to share their emotions with mothers. Interviews with children and grandparents supported the above statements:

> "I am old enough now to deal with problems on my own, not to mention that they are so far away that I still have to sort them out myself even if I tell them. Also, if I want to share some of my feelings with them, I have to tell them the whole story from the beginning because they did not even know why I have such feelings." (Informant 0601, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Middle School who has both parents working in South Korea)

> "She always has so much to talk about when she is with her friends. However, she seems to have nothing to talk about when she is on the phone with her mom. That is how kids are these days, I think, nothing to talk about with their parents, let alone her mom is far away." (Informant 4006, grandmother of a child with parents working in South Korea)

As discussed earlier, children's education as one of the main motivations for parental migration can predispose mother-child communication to study-related conversations, and in the interviews with children and grandparents, many migrant mothers motivate their children to study hard by constantly instilling in them the hardships of migration, which constructs children's perspective on the hardships of mothers' lives at their destinations and leads to a reluctance for children to express their emotions to mothers in order to avoid creating more worries for mothers. As left-behind children grow older, they are likely to seek less emotional support from mothers and instead become more empathetic to mothers' hardships and more focused on mothers' emotional needs, as shown in the interviews with children:

> It's hard enough for her just trying to provide a better life for me. She has a lot of work and I'm always worried that it might tire her out too much, so I don't want her to worry about me anymore. When my mom asks about my daily life, I always say it's going well, even if it's not. (Informant 0605,

student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Secondary School with both parents working
in South Korea)

However, one thing worth noting is that during the interviews, I found that the topics
left-behind children share with peers are selective. Although left-behind children are
willing to share their daily lives with peers, a large proportion of participants
expresses that they rarely share family issues, especially emotions related to maternal
absence, with their peers. This suggests that despite good peer relationships, the
negative emotions associated with maternal migration are ultimately handled by
left-behind children themselves. Fortunately, the quantitative results indicate that,
despite not sharing such feelings directly, the daily companionship and support of
peers is sufficient to distract left-behind children from the depressive emotions
brought about by maternal absence:

> Usually, I don't tell my friends how much I miss my mom, it is somewhat
> embarrassing to talk about such issues. I don't think they would understand, I
> don't think anyone would. (What do you do when you feel that way?) I just
> keep them to myself, sometimes I listen to music or do whatever I like until I
> feel better. (Informant 0602, student at NO.6 Ethnic Korean Secondary
> School with mother working in South Korea)

Finally, when exploring the various protective factors from school in the relationship
between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing, children's gender
is included to examine whether there is a differential impact of the protective factors
on the depression scores for boys and girls. Previous studies point out that girls invest
more time and effort in social relationships than boys and tend to perceive their
friendships as closer, more positive, and more critical; they can also experience more
peer support than boys (Bokhorst et al., 2010). Some other studies even claim that
social support significantly predicts depression in girls rather than boys (Katainen et
al., 2010). However, in contrast to the previous findings, peer support in this study
significantly impacts the relationship between parental migration and the
psychological wellbeing of boys and girls. Regardless of the gender, peer support
significantly decreases the scores of children's depression associated with maternal
migration, even more so for boys with both parents away, suggesting that the
importance of peer support is similar for boys and girls who are left behind. Possible
explanations for these findings are that there may be different types of peer
relationships and ways of expression between boys and girls, with boys' friendships

being more about group activities while girls' more emotional interactions, which may result in less detectable positive peer relationships among boys (Steinberg, 2007).

4.6 Discussion

Research on resilience started in the middle of the 20th century, which initially developed from the studies of crisis and stress coping (Zhang and Liu, 2021). With the increasing attention devoted to resilience, there has been a growing number of studies on resilience from various disciplines and perspectives, a large proportion of which have focused on children's academic resilience: research in this area has mainly focused on the impact of various factors associated with low educational achievement (Borman and Overman, 2004). The topic of children's resilience has only recently come to the attention of scholars of migration studies, and while there is a growing literature discussing children's resilience, much of it has focused on the resilience of migrant children (e.g., Thompson et al. 2019; Belloni 2020) rather than left-behind children (exceptions see Lam and Yeoh 2019; Nazridod et al. 2021). Furthermore, despite the significant attention given to migrant families in the literature, the spotlight of research has always remained unevenly spread across adult perspectives, less consideration has been provided to the practices and perspectives of children - as a group directly affected by their parents' migration. In response to this, recent studies have started to foster a more "child-inclusive approach" to the study of migrant families (Lam and Yeoh, 2019). With the expansion of migration flows and the feminization of migration in recent years, many children are exposed to the various disadvantages of parental migration. Multiple studies reveal that children's mental health is powerfully shaped by the resources provided by parents (Rawatlal et al., 2015; Goldberg and Carlson, 2014), but very little has been discussed about the access to the protective factors that children require to develop their psychological resilience when parents are absent. Additionally, Ungar (2008) indicates that most of the literature on resilience comes from developed countries; little is aware of children's resilience in the face of the disadvantages in other contexts. Therefore, this study explores the sources of left-behind children's psychological resilience from schools in a specific context in Northeast China.

Overall, the findings in this chapter demonstrate that among the different types of parental migration, maternal migration has a significant negative impact on children's

psychological wellbeing, further supporting the critical contribution of maternal presence in children's lives, which is consistent with extant research on migrant mothers (Zhou, 2014; Self, 2015). Correspondingly, inconsistent with the literature on father migration that growing up in a family with paternal migration can be associated with children's depression and life challenges (East, 2006; Smith et al., 2014), this chapter finds no evidence of the impact of paternal migration on children's psychological wellbeing. Thus, despite the increasing feminization of migration and the consequent changes in gender roles within the household, the traditional gender ideology of fathers and mothers assuming family responsibilities as breadwinners and primary caregivers, respectively, remains resilient.

However, left-behind children are capable of adapting to the changes in family structure brought about by parental migration, taking on an alternative arrangement for the overall benefit of the family - they can invest in coping strategies by using their social networks to assist them in responding to the challenges, which resonates with similar findings by Lam and Yeoh (2019) in Southeast Asia and Mazzucato et al. (2015) in Africa. Specifically, the findings in this chapter support the first and third hypotheses regarding school support for left-behind children's resilience development: apart from the teacher-student relationships, children's sense of school belonging and peer support can significantly buffer the negative relationship between maternal migration and children's psychological wellbeing.

In line with growing evidence that points out that school belonging plays a vital role in contributing to children's psychological adaptation (Anderman, 2002; Shochet and Smith, 2014), it is found in this chapter that school belonging can significantly reduce the scores for children's depression associated with parental migration. It is a crucial protective factor for children in the face of the disadvantages brought about by parental migration. Meanwhile, the results of peer support are in keeping with the hypotheses and suggest that strong-tied peer relationships can significantly alleviate the negative impact of parental migration on children's psychological wellbeing, which is consistent with studies on the positive associations between peer relationships and children's mental health (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Topping, 2005). However, some studies claim that high levels of peer support cannot replace low levels of parental support in promoting the development of children's psychological wellbeing (Buchanan and Bowen, 2008; Raja et al., 1992). The

qualitative findings in this chapter show that left-behind children selectively share their experiences and feelings with their peers rather than referring to family issues. Those related to parental absence support these studies that parental migration creates an "ambiguous loss" (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002) for left-behind children that cannot be compensated for by peer support despite its essential role in decreasing children's depression scores associated with parental migration.

Interestingly, this chapter has not found any moderating effect of teacher-student relationships on the association between parental migration and children's psychological wellbeing, one possible reason is that teachers in the Chinese context are more of a symbol of authority in class than merely mentors who deliver knowledge to children, which creates an invisible gap between children and teachers that discourages children from approaching teachers for support.

In conclusion, the findings of this chapter highlight the importance of schools as a protective environment for children's resilience development when faced with adverse conditions associated with parental migration, especially maternal migration and, on the other hand, indicate that left-behind children can use their social networks to shield themselves from depression associated with parental absence, providing additional evidence for children's agency (Kallio and Bartos, 2017; McKinney, 2014). However, in line with the findings of Cebotari (2018) on children's resilience and vulnerability in the Ethiopian context, this chapter argues that children's resilience does not negate their vulnerability as the findings further show that peers do constitute a degree of support for children's resilience development under the challenging conditions of parental migration, but it cannot replace the presence of parents, especially mothers, in children's development.

5 Grandparents as Caregivers: A Comparative Study on the Role of Grandparents in Left-behind families and Non-migrant Families

For left-behind families, parental migration, as a form of family structural transitions, has been shown in many previous studies to place children at a variety of disadvantages: as one of the risk factors in children's growing-up process, it has been identified to negatively impact children's development in many dimensions, such as children's mental health, academic performance, and social adjustment. However, there exist other sources that can serve as support for children's resilience development when their parents are absent, and grandparents, as the primary caregivers of left-behind children after parental migration and the second defense against family fractures and changes, may be particularly valuable to the development of children's resilience (Hayslip and Smith, 2013; Yarris, 2014; Selwyn et al., 2013). In this chapter, I will examine the role of grandparents in the development of left-behind children.

In many regions of the world, grandparents have become the primary caregivers of children in contemporary societies due to various reasons (Timonen, 2020; Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2017; Knodel and Nguyen, 2015; Chen, 2017). However, different cultures and social contexts can profoundly affect the nature, consequences, and impact of grandparenting from place to place (Arber and Timonen, 2012). In China, intergenerational childcare has been deeply rooted in the traditional culture for an extended period. Since the reform and opening-up in 1978, China has undergone tremendous social changes and transformations. Those changes are reflected in many areas, for instance, from a self-sufficient planned economy to a market economy in the context of globalization, from a total fertility rate of over 6 before the 1970s dropped to 2.43 in the 1980s[13] (Yang and He, 2014). These changes have had a profound impact on both society and individuals, with changes in family structure taking place in such a context. With the increased employment opportunities for women and the accelerating pace of life, young parents often find it challenging to raise children independently. In addition, China's currently underdeveloped

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[13] *Fertility rate from 6 to 1.3, what has China gone through?*
https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1699502018427106780&wfr=spider&for=pc. Accessed: 12 May 2021.

market-based childcare services have prevented social institutions from meeting childcare needs. That leads to a more significant role for blood-bonded intergenerational care in reducing the burden of childcare and easing the childcare stress of young parents and resulting in it gradually becoming a common choice for most new generations with children. For instance, Zhang and Mao (2017) survey 411 parents of children aged 0-3 years in Shanghai and find that intergenerational childcare has become the main pattern of childcare, accounting for 69.59% of the surveyed families. The increasing involvement of grandparents in childcare is not limited to China. The number of grandparents providing childcare for their grandchildren in UK households rose sharply in 2017, with nearly 3 million grandparents providing regular childcare (International Longevity Centre, 2017). Across Europe, it is found that 44% of grandmothers and 42% of grandfathers provide regular or occasional childcare (Glaser, 2013).

Along with the growth in the proportion of children living with grandparents, there has been a significant increase in the number of grandparents providing custodial care, i.e., serving as the children's sole caregivers as a result of the migration of young parents: Studies in Thailand show that internal migration from rural to urban areas, especially in the northeast, often result in children being left with grandparents at rates as high as 15 percent (Knodel et al., 2015). Similarly, in the case of children left behind in Australia, it is found that 92% of migrant families rely on grandparents for childcare (Da, 2003). In the Chinese context, the growing economic and social development provide more opportunities for promoting population mobility. That leads to a further increase in the scale of the floating population: results from the seventh population census show that the number of the people whose place of residence does not coincide with the place of registration of household and who have left the place of registration of household for more than six months reached 375.82 million by 2020, an increase of 69.73% compared to the sixth census data in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). While the group of left-behind children is a consequence of the significant increase in the population mobility: with an increasing population joining the flow of migration, a growing number of left-behind children are being entrusted to others, primarily grandparents, to care for due to the migration restrictions (Chen and Jiang, 2019). In the China Institute for Public Welfare of Beijing Normal University's China Child Welfare and Protection Policy Report 2019,

it is pointed out that as of August 2018, 96% of left-behind children nationwide were cared for by their grandparents in the context of migration of both parents (Wei, 2021). Thus, it is crucial to examine the role that grandparents play in children's development after young parents migrate. Using qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with children, young parents, grandparents, and teachers, and by comparing grandparents in left-behind and non-migrant families, this chapter aims to analyze how grandparents support different aspects of children's lives to better understand whether and how having grandparents as sole caregivers after parental migration benefits or harms the development of left-behind children.

5.1 Intergenerational Childcare in China

5.1.1 Shift of Childcare during the Social Transition

In the early stage of the New China's foundation, in order to encourage women to join the workforce for the development of productivity, the government implemented a series of preferential policies carried out under the state's planned economic system for women to participate in the social production (Yuan, 2008). A collective childcare system with the primary intention of releasing women from providing childcare was established in the early 1950s and rapidly developed (He, 2017). In response to national policies, enterprises established a range of essential facilities, such as schools and nurseries for employees' children, to lighten a load of childcare for women. The collective childcare system shifted childcare from family care to collective care, an inevitable adaptation in China during the planned economy when productivity was backward.

Since the 1980s, China has gradually shifted from a planned economy to a market economy, particularly with the transformation of the modern enterprise system, which shifted the welfare undertaken by enterprises to be supplied by the market, thus leading to the gradual replacement of the collective welfare system (Du, 1996). Therefore, collective childcare institutions declined primarily, with a 70% reduction nationwide from 2000 to 2005 (Pan, 2012). As a result, the family has returned as the primary place for childcare. In addition, China's social security and public service welfare policies for families are currently characterized by a gap-filling model that focuses on marginalized and vulnerable families (Peng and Hu, 2015). Many nuclear

families rely on kinship networks to perform various functions in this context, especially in elderly care and childcare. Data from the Yangtze River Delta Social Change Survey (FYRST) in 2013, which targeted people born in the 1980s, shows that at least half of families needed intergenerational support to take care of the children, and "intergenerational support" became an essential factor influencing young parents' willingness to have children (Peng and Hu, 2015).

5.1.2 Grandparenting in the Chinese Cultural Context

In China, the traditional ethic of familism is a value system that maintains and promotes the stability of society with the family as a basic unit. It emphasizes the altruistic spirit between family members, "putting the family members above oneself" (Liang, 2010). Intergenerational childcare, therefore, is a culturally influenced internalization of obligations and role expectations. The motivations for grandparents providing intergenerational childcare are rooted in the "habitus" of parent-child integration in China, in addition to the grandparents "having no choice but to help" when faced with institutional and realistic restrictions on their adult children: Tang (2017) finds that there is no clear boundary between grandparents' attitude of "difficult to refuse" and that of "being willing to help" when raising the grandchildren. In addition, studies show that in countries where socio-cultural norms require and expect high levels of intergenerational childcare involvement, intergenerational childcare is more conducive to grandparents' quality of life (Neuberger and Haberkern, 2014).

In addition, the parent-child relationship is "symbiotic" in traditional Chinese culture, where children are constructed as part of the parents' selves. Therefore, children are not only expected to repay parents for their nurturing but are also expected to "suppress themselves to obey and honor their parents" (Fei, 2002). However, since the reform and opening-up, China's society has undergone dramatic changes, and the traditional family culture has faced various challenges: with the development of modernization, traditional family concepts based on the obligations have been gradually declined while concepts of individualism have emerged, which emphasizes the loosening of traditions and obligations and gives attention to institutionalized individualism (Kemp, 2004). Some studies argue that the family in contemporary China has become a resource for individuals to achieve their goals and that

intergenerational relationships have shifted from being obligation-based to being based on individual affections, choices, and needs (Shen, 2013; Yan, 2012). As a result, grandparents' financial and service-related obligations to their adult children tend to intensify to meet their adult children's needs. However, due to the pressure of everyday life and the influence of individualism, the obligation of adult children to support their parents in their old age tends to diminish, which leads to an imbalance of rights and obligations between generations. The spirit of altruism in the family is more reflected in the contribution of grandparents to their adult children. The cultural traditions regarding the support of the elderly - as expressed in one proverb, "bringing up children for being looked after at an old age" - still influence grandparents to expect more support from their adult children in their old age, especially when the existing elderly care policies in China are underdeveloped so that the responsibility for elderly care remains primarily within the family. Research suggests that investment in grandchildren for grandparents is primarily about seeking reconnection with their adult children (Friedman et al., 2008). Therefore, intergenerational childcare is inevitable for grandparents, regardless of whether it is due to intergenerational exchange or internalized obligations. With young parents struggling to raise children independently, intergenerational childcare, a historically and culturally based childcare model, is widely accepted by families in contemporary China.

5.1.3 Types of the Intergenerational Childcare

As Block (2000) states, "just as there is no single role for grandparents, there is no singular grandparenting style". The definition and classification of intergenerational childcare can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as whether grandparents have custody, whether they live with grandchildren, the extent and duration of parental duties carried out by young parents, and the different content of intergenerational childcare provided by grandparents (general company or daily care). Therefore, Kleiner and Hertzog (1998) classify intergenerational childcare in the context of the US into three types based on the different roles of grandparents: 1. Grandparents with custody: grandparents have legal custody of their grandchildren and take full responsibility for the childcare, which often implies severe issues with the young parents, such as substance abuse, incarceration, and mental or physical illness. 2.

Grandparents living with grandchildren: grandparents provide childcare in daily life but do not have legal custody, as the parents may or may not be present in the household. That is often a role of "assisting" the young parents. 3. Intergenerational childcare on a daily basis: grandparents provide childcare while the young parents are occupied and then absolve it when they are back home after work.

While Zheng (2008) classifies intergenerational childcare in the Chinese context into four categories based on the extent to which the parents transfer their parenting responsibilities and the extent to which the transferred parenting responsibilities are assumed: 1. Partial transference, complete substitution. It can be divided into the following three conditions: first, three generations live in the same household, and young parents and grandparents share childcare responsibilities; Second, young parents and grandparents live separately but in the same neighborhood or close enough to each other so that they can share the childcare responsibilities; Third, young parents leave children with their grandparents for most of the week while bringing them home at weekends. In this case, young parents not only transfer the childcare but also supervise and guide grandparents providing childcare, thus making the intergenerational childcare more complete. 2. Partial transference, partial substitution. It is basically the same as the first type in terms of residential pattern, but young parents' cooperation with grandparents in child-rearing is worse than that of the first type, i.e., the responsibility for intergenerational childcare is partially and limitedly assumed. 3. Full transference, partial substitution. During a certain period, young parents transfer their child-rearing responsibilities to grandparents for specific reasons; they transfer childcare responsibilities from daily life care to children's development to grandparents while absent in children's lives. 4. Full transference, complete substitution. It is similar to the third type of parental absence, but the grandparents can provide adequate childcare despite the lack of parental involvement in the child's daily care.

It is evident that the classifications regarding intergenerational childcare are diverse, and the complexity of the childcare process further complicates the extent and consequence of childcare provided by grandparents. Therefore, clarifying the specific types of intergenerational childcare in this chapter is necessary for the following discussion of the role of grandparents in caring for children and their support on children's development: By Kleiner and Hertzog's (1998) classification,

intergenerational childcare in this chapter is focused on the second category - grandparents living with children without custody. This chapter concentrates on the intergenerational childcare in two types of families based on the migration status of the young parents. Therefore, the types of grandparenting are different from the first classification they proposed, where young parents cannot carry out the custody of their children due to severe disruptions, resulting in the transfer of custody to grandparents. Moreover, to better understand the grandparents who are the primary caregivers of the children in left-behind families, grandparents living with the children and taking care of their daily lives are selected as the comparison group in this chapter, rather than the third category in Kleiner and Hertzog's classification, where grandparents provide childcare only when the parents are at work.

Furthermore, the classification of grandparenting in this chapter adopts part of Zheng's (2008) classification framework on grandparenting; that is, grandparenting in non-migrant families in this chapter refers to a partial transfer of parental responsibility, as Zheng mentioned, and grandparenting in left-behind families is a complete transfer of childcare responsibility.

In summary, intergenerational childcare in left-behind families in this chapter refers to the grandparents' full responsibility for caring for the left-behind children after young parents migrate, which is well-known as custodial grandparenting in previous studies (e.g., Cox, 2000; Hayslip and Goldberg-Glen, 2000), and intergenerational childcare in non-migrant families indicates the care of children by grandparents living in the same household with the young parents, as a pattern of grandparent-parent co-parenting in the household.

5.1.4 Data and Methods

This chapter uses data collected from two different periods and triangulates four different viewpoints - interviews with children from both Han majority and ethnic Korean minority, teachers, parents, and grandparents. The interviews are used to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of grandparenting on children's development in families with and without absent parents. The data consist of 42 interviews (see Table 5.1 - 5.4 for informant information details), which contains 9 interviews with children (6 with children in left-behind families, 3 with children in non-migrant families), 14 with young parents in non-migrant families, 14

with grandparents (7 with grandparents in left-behind families, 7 with grandparents in non-migrant families) and 6 with teachers.

The initial interviews were limited due to the COVID-19 outbreak; thus, additional interviews were conducted: 1) 24 interviews were conducted in 2019-2020: 9 interviews with children (6 with children in left-behind families, 3 with children in non-migrant families), 3 with grandparents in left-behind families, 6 with young parents in non-migrant families and 6 with teachers. 2) 18 interviews were conducted in 2021: 7 interviews with young parents in non-migrant families and 11 with grandparents (7 with grandparents in non-migrant families and 4 with grandparents in left-behind families). Data collection is detailed in the methodology chapter (see pages 41-43).

The interviews with left-behind children and grandparents in this chapter are limited to left-behind families where both parents work outside the hometown and grandparents assume childcare responsibilities with no parents presenting. Research on grandparenting in the field of migration studies has long focused on childcare arrangements following the migration of one parent, particularly the mother as the traditional caregiver (see Lam and Yeoh, 2016; Arilini et al., 2019; Khoo et al., 2017), and the subsequent collaboration, conflicts and negotiations between young parents and grandparents in the provision of childcare (see Peng and Wong, 2016), and in the growing body of research on grandparents as sole caregivers, few studies compare them with grandparents in extended families where young parents are present, resulting in little reliable empirical evidence on sole grandparenting in migrant families, particularly in the Chinese literature. It is worth examining grandparents as sole caregivers of left-behind children as it contributes to a better understanding of the role of grandparents in children's life trajectory - how children benefit or suffer from the childcare provided by extended family relationships in the context of parental migration. By comparing with grandparents in extended families where young parents are physically present, this chapter will enrich the literature on grandparents as sole caregivers in migrant families, especially in the Chinese context.

Table 5.1 Informant Information for Grandparents

ID	Minority	Age	Education level	Occupation	Relationship with children	Family type	Family identifier	Basic information
4001	Ethnic Korean	54	Primary school	Farmer	Grandfather-granddaughter	Left-behind family	Informant 0601's grandfather	He has been taking care of the child (Informant 0601, 14-year-old boy) since the child was 6 years old, whose parents have been working in South Korea for 8 years. The child's mother works in a restaurant in South Korea, comes back to China once a year (mostly summer holiday). The father works as a manager in a factory in South Korea, comes back once every two or three years.
4002	Ethnic Korean	60	Middle school	Retired	Grandfather-grandson	Left-behind family	Informant 0607's grandfather	He has been caring for the child (Informant 0607, 15-year-old boy) for 4 years. The child's parents have been working in South Korea for 4 years and come back once per year (mainly during Chinese New Year). The mother works in a makeup shop, and the father works at a construction site.
4003	Ethnic Korean	58	Primary school	Not working	Grandmother-grandson	Left-behind family	Informant 0403's grandmother	She came back from South Korea 3 years ago and took care of the child (Informant 0403, a 13-year-old boy) with her husband for 6 months after the young parents went to South Korea.
4004	Han	54	High school	Farmer	Grandmother-granddaughter	Non-migrant family	Informant 3007's mother	She went to Hunchun from the village to take care of her daughter's child (9 years old) when the child was born. She went home when the child started kindergarten and then returned to her daughter's house 1 year ago to take care of the child due to her daughter being too busy.

4005	Han	53	Middle school	Not working	Grandmother-grandson	Non-migrant family	Informant 3011's mother	She has been living with her daughter and grandson (10 years ago) since her grandson was born; she went back home when the child started kindergarten, her daughter divorced 2 years ago, and she came to take care of the child again.
4006	Ethnic Korean	60	High school	Mill owner	Grandmother-granddaughter	Left-behind family		Her daughter and son-in-law went to South Korea to work 4 years ago, and she has been taking care of the child (14 years old) with her husband since then. The young couple always returns for the Chinese New Year.
4007	Han	56	High school	Retired	Grandmother-granddaughter	Non-migrant family	Informant 3013's mother	Due to the young couple's work, she went to her daughter's place to help care for the 10-year-old child 3 years ago.
4008	Han	55	Primary school	Plumber	Grandfather-grandson	Non-migrant family	Informant 3009's father	He shared part of his house and built new rooms for his son's family to live in the same household; the grandson is 10 years old.
4009	Han	55	Middle school	House painter	Grandfather-grandson	Left-behind family		He and his wife have been taking care of his grandson (12 years old) for 4 years, the child's mother went to another city to work 4 years ago, and after one year, the father went there too, and both of them come back once a year.
4010	Ethnic Korean	57	Primary school	Farmer	Grandmother-granddaughter	Left-behind family		The child's parents went to South Korea to work 1 year ago and entrusted the child (9 years old) to her and her husband, while she came to Hunchun to take care of the child, and her husband kept farming at home.
4011	Ethnic Korean	60	Middle school	Sanitation worker	Grandfather-grandson	Non-migrant family	Informant 3008's father	He and his wife have been taking care of the child (11 years old) for 6 months, and both of them are living with their daughter's family.

ID	Minority	Age	Education level	Occupation	Relationship with children	Family identifier	Basic information
4012	Ethnic Korean	54	Primary school	Taxi Driver	Grandfather-grandson	Left-behind family		He and his wife started to take care of the child (9 years old) 2 years ago, the child's father went to South Korea to work 5 years ago, mother went there 2 years ago when the child started schooling.
4013	Han	58	High school	Not working	Grandmother-grandson	Non-migrant family		She takes care of her son's child (12 years old). She took shifts with the child's maternal grandmother once a month until the child started schooling.
4014	Ethnic Korean	63	High school	Retired	Grandfather-granddaughter	Non-migrant family	Informant 3012's father	He came to take care of the child (9 years old) when the child was 7 before it was his wife providing childcare while she passed away 2 years ago.

Table 5.2 Informant Information for Young Parents

ID	Minority	Age	Education level	Occupation	Relationship with children	Family identifier	Basic information
3001	Ethnic Korean	40	High school	Teacher	Mother-daughter		She was a head teacher for 10 years but now teaches English to students in the 9th grade. She has a 9-year-old daughter, and the paternal grandmother (59 years old, she was a housewife) has been living with them since the child was born.
3002	Ethnic Korean	35	College	Teacher	Mother-Son		A head teacher in the 8th grade. She has a 9-year-old son, and the paternal grandmother (56 years old, retired) lives with them.

3003	Han	41	High school	Teacher	Mother-Son		She has been teaching physics for 12 years. She has a 10-year-old son, and the maternal grandmother (62 years old, she was a farmer) lives with them.
3004	Ethnic Korean	33	College	Teacher	Mother-daughter		She is teaching two classes in the 4th grade. She has a 9-year-old girl, and the maternal grandmother (55 years old, she was a housewife) lives with them.
3005	Han	34	College	Teacher	Mother-Son		She is the head teacher of a class in the 9th grade. She has a 10-year-old son and the maternal grandfather (63 years old, retired) lives with them.
3006	Han	32	College	Teacher	Mother-daughter		She is the head teacher of a class in the 7th grade. She has a 9-year-old daughter, and the maternal grandmother (52 years old, she is working in a section of government) lives with them.
3007	Ethnic Korean	34	College	Civil servant	Mother-daughter	Informant 4004's daughter	She and her husband both work in a government section; her mother is living with them to help take care of the child (9 years old).
3008	Ethnic Korean	33	High school	Accountant	Mother-son	Informant 4011's daughter	She and her husband work in two different companies, their son, is 11 years old, and her father is living with them.
3009	Han	30	Middle school	Plumber	Father-son	Informant 4008's son	His family has been living with his parents since he got married, his wife is a housewife, and their son is 10 years old.
3010	Ethnic Korean	41	High school	Not working	Mother-son		She has a 14-year-old son, and her parents-in-law live with them. Her husband is running a restaurant.

3011	Han	33	College	Sales	Mother-Son	Informant 4005's daughter	She has a 10-year-old son, and her mother came to her place to take care of the child when she divorced 2 years ago.
3012	Ethnic Korean	40	High school	Self-employed	Mother-daughter	Informant 4014's daughter	She and her husband own a small supermarket, their daughter is 9 years old, and her father lives with them.
3013	Han	35	High school	Secretary	Mother-daughter	Informant 4007's daughter	Her mother came to help her take care of her 10-year-old child 3 years ago due to their busy work.

Table 5.3 Informant Information for children

ID	Age	Minority	Grade	Guardians	Family status	Basic information
0601	14	Ethnic Korean	8	Grandparents	Both parents abroad	Both parents went to South Korea when he was 6 years old. His mother comes back to China once per year (mainly on summer holidays), and his father comes back once every two or three years.
0604	14	Ethnic Korean	8	N/A	Parents at home	Her mother teaches Chinese in NO.6, and her father works in government in Hunchun. The grandmother lives with them.
0606	14	Ethnic Korean	7	Grandmother	Both parents abroad	He was born in South Korea and came back to China when he was 4 years old, his father has legal permanent residency of South Korea and barely comes back to China, his mother comes back once every six months.

0607	15	Ethnic Korean	8	Grandfather	Both parents abroad	Both parents have been working in South Korea for 4 years, and they come back once per year (Chinese New Year).
0402	11	Ethnic Korean	5	N/A	Parents at home	Her mother works in the Bureau of Education, and her father works in the power plant. The grandfather lives with them.
0403	13	Ethnic Korean	5	Grandparents	Both parents abroad	Both parents went to South Korea 6 months ago.
0404	13	Ethnic Korean	6	Grandmother	Both parents abroad	Both parents went to South Korea when she was in kindergarten. They come back once per year.
0802	13	Han	7	N/A	Parents at home	His parents raise and sell mushrooms for a living. Grandparents live with them.
0803	13	Han	7	grandmother	Both parents are in another city	Her parents went to another city to work 4 years ago and returned once every two years.

Table 5.4 Informant Information for teachers

ID	Minority	Education level	Teaching subject	Basic Information
1603	Ethnic Korean	College	Math	A head teacher in the 8th grade.
1403	Ethnic Korean	High school	Math&Chinese	She has been a head teacher for 5 years, now teaching one class in the 5th grade.
1605	Ethnic Korean	College	Chinese	She only teaches one class in the 7th grade for now.
1401	Ethnic Korean	College	Chinese	She is in charge of the 1st – 6th-grade teaching management; meanwhile, she is the head teacher in one class in the 6th grade.
1403	Ethnic Korean	High school	Math&Chinese	She has been a head teacher for 5 years, now teaching one class in the 5th grade.

| 1405 | Han | High school | Chinese | She has been teaching as a Chinese teacher in the ethnic Korean school for more than 10 years. Now she is teaching students in the 6th grade. |

5.1.5 Children's Wellbeing and Grandparenting as a Source of Resilience

As discussed previously, grandparental involvement in nuclear families has been a common phenomenon in contemporary China. Unlike the custodial childcare of grandparents in left-behind families, where the full responsibility of parenting is transferred to the grandparents, grandparenting in non-migrant families implies the parent-grandparent co-parenting, where young parents and grandparents take on roles as partners in the process of raising children (Jia and Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011). The impact of grandparents as caregivers on children's development has been examined in multiple studies, but there is still no consistent conclusion. Studies show that grandparental involvement is positively associated with children's psychological wellbeing and pro-social behaviors (e.g., Wild, 2018; Tan, 2018; Profe and Wild, 2015). Li et al. (2016) claim that grandparental support positively impacts children's social and emotional development. While there are studies suggesting the opposite: By examining grandmother-mother co-parenting in low socioeconomic status families in the United States, Barnett et al. (2012) find that grandparental involvement leads to grandmother-mother conflict, which in turn creates severe behavioral problems for children. Similarly, Li et al. (2016) argue that conflict between grandparents and young parents in co-parenting prevents grandparental involvement in child-rearing from providing critical support for children's development.

For left-behind children, the selection of guardians after parental migration is often a rational decision made by migrant parents after consideration; that is, left-behind children are not entirely deprived of family support when parents migrate, and by adjusting the family structure and the division of roles among family members, the migrant parents build a new support system for the left-behind children (Han et al., 2016). Moreover, intimate relationships with significant nonparental family members, such as grandparents, are perceived to provide potential support for increasing children's resilience and better adjustment, especially in adversity (Luthar and Zigler, 1991). For instance, Levetan and Wild (2016) find that better grandparent-grandchild relationships are associated with children's fewer adjustment difficulties. Tan (2018) suggests that stronger grandparent-grandchild relationships are associated with children's lower levels of life stress. Sear and Coall's (2011) study establishes that grandparent involvement can be an essential source of support for children, especially

during and after personal life events or family structural changes. The presence of grandparents in particular, can buffer the adverse effects of parental migration in countries with extended solid kinship systems (Shen and Zhang, 2018), and it is constituted as "a reliable and effective support system" (Chang et al., 2011). Timonen and Arber (2012) even claim that grandparents can act as "child savers" by rescuing or caring for children whose parents cannot provide care. The literature above shows that grandparenting can be "highlighted as important in the development of resilience and positive outcomes for children" (Hunt, 2018).

While entrusting children to grandparents may also introduce many uncertainties in the children's development - the absence of parents redefines the traditional grandparent role, resulting in grandparents taking on the role of parents and the responsibility of raising grandchildren. In many existing studies, it is widely perceived that grandparents cannot assume guardianship responsibilities due to various restrictions (Peng, 2020; Landry-Meyer et al., 2005; Zhang and Chen, 2018; Zhang and Li, 2015). For instance, Caspar and Bryson (1998) find severe emotional and general health problems in children raised by grandparents. Bell et al. (2022) argue that grandparents as primary caregivers receive little or no formal or informal guidance to develop healthy lifestyle behaviors in children, negatively impacting children's development. Thus, grandparental support for children's development is worth further exploration, mainly when children are at a disadvantage of parental absence in the context of migration. In this chapter, I will explore the following questions by comparing the role of grandparents in left-behind families with that in non-migrant families: What role do grandparents play in terms of children's daily life, emotional life, and studies after parental migration? Whether and to what extent can grandparents provide support to children at a disadvantage? What kind of challenges do grandparents encounter when providing childcare? If they fail to provide adequate support for children, as discussed in previous studies, what makes grandparenting remain the preferred option for most migrant parents?

Overall, comparing left-behind families to non-migrant families, I find that grandparenting in left-behind families tends to be more intense rather than more complementary as the children grow up. That poses challenges for grandparents as primary caregivers in left-behind families. Despite their experience and expertise in caring for infants and younger children, grandparents' knowledge of adolescents'

educational system, social life, and material life is more limited. Specifically, their outdated parenting practices are detrimental to the development of the left-behind children in terms of food, clothing, and leisure activities. Grandparent-grandchild attachment influenced by the traditional Chinese culture results in a great tendency for grandparents to be more indulgent with children in daily lives, thus preventing children from receiving adequate discipline and supervision. The old-fashioned concepts of grandparents also make it difficult for them to adapt to modern society, especially to the development of technology which plays a vital role in children's lives, particularly in their studies. Moreover, it is found that left-behind children may need to provide "reverse caring" for grandparents when grandparents are in poor health. Nevertheless, grandparenting in left-behind families can positively affect children's development, i.e., grandparental involvement in children's daily lives contributes to support in bonding the relationship between migrant parents and left-behind children.

The findings will unfold in the following sections.

5.2 Grandparenting in Children's Life Course

Intergenerational support in left-behind families and that in non-migrant families have impacts and emphases on the different stages of children's life course: grandparents in non-migrant families are more likely to provide childcare throughout children's growing-up process, although their responsibilities as caregivers shift in stages depending on the needs of childcare. Specifically, grandparenting in non-migrant families is mainly focused on children's pre-school period and gradually diminishes as children grow up: According to the Beijing Municipal Education Commission's Preschool Education Department, only 12% of children aged 0 to 3 are enrolled in daycare institutions in Beijing, and at least half of the remaining 88% are raised by grandparents, while in rural families, grandparenting accounts for more than 70% (Mu, 2017). In addition, maternal (full-time) employment is positively associated with greater grandparental involvement in childcare (Vandell et al., 2003), which is also reflected in interviews with young mothers:

> "My mother-in-law came to live with us since my daughter was born later. I needed to get back to work after the maternity leave, so she started to live with us and take care of the baby. The baby was too little to go to those childcare institutions for the first few years, and we did not trust them anyway." (Informant 3001, teacher, mother of a 9-year-old girl)

"My mother came here when I was pregnant. After my daughter was born, my mother-in-law also wanted to come here to take care of the child, so after the child turned one year old, I arranged for her and my mother to take turns looking after the child for one month each. Before the child started kindergarten, this was the arrangement, and now we just need my mother to cook for her after school." (Informant 3006, teacher, mother of a 9-year-old girl)

Intergenerational childcare is an essential support in non-migrant families when children are in early childhood, as they most need intensive physical care that young parents have difficulties providing due to various restrictions. As children grow older, when physical care is no longer intensive and education becomes more critical in children's life, young parents gradually take on the child-rearing responsibility, with intergenerational childcare playing a more supplementary role, as discussed by young parents in the interviews:

"My mom came to take care of my daughter until she was three years old. Now that she is in kindergarten, she does not need much care like before, so my mom went back home … She is a big girl now and needs more guidance on her study, and her dad and I are responsible for that." (Informant 3004, teacher, mother of a 9-year-old girl)

"Although my wife is not working, there were many things she did not know when our child was a newborn, so my mom helped take care of him [the child]. However, now he spends most of his time at school, and my wife also drops him off and picks him up from school; my mom now only needs to make dinner for him, which is a lot less than when the child was a baby." (Informant 3009, plumber, father of a 10-year-old boy)

Furthermore, many studies show that grandmothers are more likely than grandfathers to be involved in childcare and children's daily life, especially when intensive care is considered (Aubel and Rychtarik, 2015; Horsfall and Dempsey, 2010), which was also supported by the interviews with both grandparents and young parents:

"I came to my daughter's house when she was pregnant and stayed until my granddaughter started kindergarten. There are too many risks for a woman to have babies, and I had to stay with her. Moreover, there were many things to do when the child was born and I had more experience taking care of babies, so I just did everything I could. (What about the farm work when you were in your daughter's place?) My husband was on it, he did not know anything about caring for newborns, so I asked him to stay at home to take care of the farming stuff." (Informant 4004, grandmother of a 9-year-old girl)

"When my son was born, my mother came to take care of the baby and me. There were many other things she could advise me on during that time, such as breastfeeding." (Informant 3008, accountant, mother of an 11-year-old boy)

From the quote above, we can see that grandparenting in the non-migrant families can also be shifted from grand-mothering to grand-fathering depending on the different stages of the children's needs: grandmothers are likely to perform more care work when children are younger, and grandfathers can serve as a supplementary role to grandmothers by becoming more involved in daily tasks such as meal preparation and picking children up from school when children get older - especially when they are no longer in early childhood. That also supports the earlier discussion of the reduction of grandparents' childcare responsibilities in the non-migrant families when children grow older, as mentioned in the interviews with grandparents in non-migrant families:

> "When he was little, my wife took care of him more, and I was not able to get involved. Now that he is grown up, so I usually drop him off at school before work and pick him up at the end of the day." (Informant 4011, grandfather of an 11-year-old boy)

Compared to grandparenting in non-migrant families, the pattern of grandparenting is more complicated for left-behind families. That can be mainly divided into two parts: (i) from nuclear to left-behind families, where the young parents transfer the childcare responsibilities to the grandparents prior to migration; and (ii) from extended to left-behind families, where the grandparents begin providing childcare after children's birth and continue to do so after the young parents' migration. Therefore, the pattern of grandparental childcare in left-behind families, regardless of whether they act as caregivers for the children before parents migrate, changes directly from parenting (for nuclear families) or co-parenting (for non-migrant families) to custodial grandparenting, which more frequently occurs during the period of the children's schooling, especially in the period of adolescence. As of 2015, the group of left-behind children aged 6 to 17 in China accounted for 60% of the total (Duan et al., 2017). That may be related to children's schooling making the family less central than before while schools become more critical in their socialization. Moreover, parents, especially mothers, prefer to migrate during this period because children's schooling implies the beginning of formal investment in education. It was mentioned in the interviews with both grandparents and children in the left-behind families:

> "I have started to take care of my grandson since he was 6. His mother wanted to stay with him a little longer when he was a baby; she used to say babies need more mothers' care. Once he started to go to the primary school, she went to South Korea to make money for him." (Informant 4001, grandfather of a 14-year-old boy whose parents work in South Korea)

"I remember my father went to South Korea first, and then my mother joined him there. Before she left, she told me she was going there to make more money for me and that I should behave well when I was with my grandparents … I was too little and can only remember these vague scenes." (Informant 0601, 15-year-old boy with both parents working in South Korea)

In summary, the child-rearing responsibilities of grandparents in non-migrant families are primarily focused on children's early childhood - the period when children require more intensive physical care. As children grow older and their need for physical care decreases, childcare responsibilities for grandparents in non-migrant families gradually decrease. In contrast, grandparenting in left-behind families is more critical in the children's adolescence rather than in early childhood due to the migration of young parents.

It is the period during which children are cared for by the grandparents and the period during which the parents take back the responsibilities for childcare that are essential factors affecting the effectiveness and the evaluation of the quality of grandparenting: when children are in early childhood, the indicators to measure the effectiveness of grandparenting are relatively simple and general, which is usually reflected in children's physical health, language skills, eating habits, etc. (Peng, 2015; Jiang et al., 2006; Shi and Chen, 2008; Ma, 2014). However, when children attend school, the indicators of the effectiveness of grandparenting become more complicated and specific, for instance, whether children have good manners, social adjustment ability, good academic performance, etc. (e.g., Yu and Wang, 2019; Huang, 2018). Since grandparenting in left-behind families is mainly focused on this stage of the children's life course, grandparents' conditions, especially their education and child-rearing concepts, directly impact children's development.

5.3 Grandparenting in Children's Daily Lives

5.3.1 "I Do This for Your Own Good": An Exploration of Grandparenting Styles

The traditional Chinese family child-rearing is highly functionalist, believing that children are meant to be raised as adults who adapt and contribute to society and that the main goal for children is to "learn to be an adult" and have good social adaptation skills to honor their ancestral lineage (Xiong, 2008). Mothers are often responsible for the "physical upbringing" of the children (Bao, 1997), that is, taking care of the children's everyday life, providing for the children's emotional needs, and building a

strong parent-child bond, etc. Fathers, on the other hand, are usually not directly involved in children's physical care but are responsible for the children's "social upbringing", for instance, disciplining the children to develop morals, dispositions, and skills. With the transformation of Chinese society, more grandparents have joined the nuclear family to provide intergenerational support, and this has led to a gradual change in the traditional division of labor in the family, with more of the "physical upbringing" previously undertaken by mothers shifting to the grandparents and mothers becoming more involved in the "social upbringing" of children within the extended families.

Therefore, whether in left-behind or non-migrant families, for most grandparents who are caregivers, providing physical care for children is the primary responsibility. Their extensive childcare experience makes it easier for them to take care of the children's daily lives, which contributes to lightening the burden of childcare in families with or without absent parents. However, due to the outdated child-rearing practices, grandparents experience challenges in providing daily care for the children: for example, children left behind in the care of grandparents, especially those in the care of grandfathers, are more likely to buy snacks or eat takeout after school, which is not common among children in non-migrant families. That may be related to the outdated cooking skills of grandparents who cannot satisfy children's tastes or that left-behind children are likely to have more pocket money than children in non-migrant families. Studies show that migrant parents tend to use pocket money and gifts to win their children's hearts to compensate for the absence in their children's lives (Parrenas, 2005; Madianou and Miller, 2012). It was mentioned in the interviews with left-behind children:

> "My grandfather is not very good at cooking, and he always cooks similar dishes, so I go out to eat sometimes. (Where do you get the money?) My parents sometimes give me pocket money to buy things I like, but most of the pocket money is from my grandfather. So I get two portions of pocket money to use." (Informant 0607, 15-year-old boy with both parents working in South Korea)

> "I prefer school meals because there are so many different types and tastes. My grandmother can only cook traditional cuisine, and even if she tries to cook the food I like, it tastes different." (Informant 0803, 13-year-old girl with parents working in another city)

While in non-migrant families, the presence of parents, especially mothers, effectively

compensates for grandparents' lack of culinary skills. Moreover, the presence of the parents also results in more discipline of the children's use of pocket money and the quality of their daily meals, as Informant 3007 explained:

> "My mom is in charge of making dinner for her because she usually eats lunch at school. Kids these days like to eat snacks a lot, so I do not usually give her too much pocket money. However, if she wants to eat other types of food, I usually make it or buy some for her." (Informant 3007, civil servant, mother of a 9-year-old girl)

Furthermore, grandparents in both left-behind and non-migrant families showed specific concerns about children's physical health, which is reflected in two main aspects: first, children's clothing. Many grandparents mentioned that children should wear as much as possible to avoid getting sick, especially in winter. Second, children's illness. When children are sick, grandparents tend to put them on medication immediately, even for illnesses like a cold that does not require medication, as the following interviews with grandparents and young parents showed:

> "I am usually the one who arranges what my child wears the next day. My mother always tries to overdress the child when the child does not need to wear that much. Children at this age all likes jumping and running, and it is easy to feel hot when you put on too much." (Informant 3011, sales, mother of a 10-year-old boy)

> "Children are easy to get sick when they are little, I want to give my grandson some medicine when he has a fever, but his mother always refuses to do so, saying that physical cooling works and there is no need to take medicine right away. I could not convince her anyway." (Informant 4005, grandmother of a 10-year-old boy)

In addition to the physical care of the children, grandparents in both left-behind and non-migrant families express specific concerns about children's safety, as reflected in the interviews with young parents and children:

> "I sometimes take my child to the water park; my mother-in-law is somewhat reluctant; she feels that children can be easily injured when playing in such places. Older adults just want the children to grow up healthily and safely; they think this kind of facility is dangerous and not necessary. She used to say there was no amusement stuff like this when my husband was little, but he grew up healthily and safely … I still take him to the places I think are good for him anyway." (Informant 3002, teacher, mother of a 9-year-old boy)

> "My grandpa does not like me to hang out with classmates on weekends; even if he allows me to do so, he often calls me to tell me to come home early. He used to say it could be dangerous for kids to stay outside late." (Informant 0601, 15-year-old boy with both parents working in South Korea)

Overall, grandparents' concerns about children's health and safety are more likely to be related to their outdated parenting concepts and the lack of understanding of the parenting concepts of young generations. Apart from these, grandparents in left-behind families showed other sources of concern compared to grandparents in non-migrant families: grandparents in the left-behind families, as the sole caregivers of the children in their daily lives, are entrusted with the full responsibility of the childcare, causing them to place the safety of children as much as children's physical health, as both of which are visible reflections of the quality of grandparenting, which is evident in the interviews with grandparents in the left-behind families:

> "His parents asked me to take care of him; I have to ensure his safety. You know kids at this age are very much into exploring new things, and accidents can happen. I do not know how to tell his parents if anything happens to him while I am in charge of taking care of him." (Informant 4002, grandfather of a 15-year-old boy whose parents work in South Korea)

> "I am always worried about her being sick because I do not know what to say to her mother, they leave their children in my care, and I feel like I have not taken good care of her." (Informant 4010, grandmother of 9-year-old girl whose parents work in South Korea)

In addition, the quotes in this section reveal the conflict between grandparents and young parents in non-migrant families about what can be perceived as "good" and "safe" for the children due to generational differences. However, as May et al. (2012) discuss, grandparents may feel that they should not interfere with parenting because they have raised their adult children with skills and values consistent with "good parenting". Moreover, with the development of modernization, the traditional intergenerational reciprocity in Chinese families - a non-immediate exchange based on parental nurturing and children's rewarding of parental nurturing - has been replaced by a new form of intergenerational reciprocity, which emphasizes the immediate reciprocity among family members and requires frequent interactions (Yao, 2012). Grandparents may be aware that the delayed intergenerational rewards they seek from younger parents depend on positive interactions between them in the present. Therefore, grandparents in non-migrant family are more likely to compromise and follow the decisions of younger parents, even though they do not identify with the younger parents' child-rearing practice.

In conclusion, it is found in this section that although grandparents have old-fashioned child-rearing conceptions in families with or without absent parents, non-migrant

families can overrule them by the presence of young parents so that children can still get what suits them (suitable clothes, interesting activities, different types of food, more appropriate treatment during illness). Whereas for left-behind families, the migration of parents prevents them from participating in the children's daily life and makes grandparents the sole caregivers, so grandparents can directly raise children with their child-rearing ideas, thus bringing disadvantages to the development of left-behind children.

5.3.2 Grandparent-grandchild Attachment in the Chinese Context

Influenced by Confucian culture, Chinese families are inextricably linked to blood ties. According to Yang (2006), "the Chinese value the continuity of life to a large extent … The purpose of having children is divided into two. One is to continue one's own life and that of one's ancestors, and the other is to honor the ancestors". And an old Chinese proverb says, "There are three things that make one unfilial while having no descendants is the worst of all," also describes the importance of having offspring to continue the biological life of parents and ancestors. The intense grandparent-grandchild attachment, therefore, makes grandparents more inclined to indulge the children, which on the other hand, may reduce the authority of grandparents in the grandparent-grandchild relationship to a certain extent, especially about children's needs, resulting in children being more likely to disobey grandparents when they are not allowed to act in a certain way. That is reflected in both left-behind families and non-migrant families, but in left-behind families, children are less likely to be disciplined due to the absence of young parents. As mentioned by both grandparents and young parents in terms of children eating:

> "His mother sometimes calls to ask me not to buy snacks for him too often, but he does not even overeat … no need to be this strict." (Informant 4002, grandfather of a 15-year-old boy whose parents work in South Korea)

> "I have told her many times to eat fewer snacks, but she will not listen. Then I called her mother to talk to her, but her mother is not here, so it did not help much." (Informant 4006, grandmother of a 14-year-old girl whose parents work in South Korea)

> "I usually do not let her eat snacks before meals. Otherwise, she would be too full to have meals. I also told my mother not to let the child eat snacks, but my daughter does not obey this rule anymore when I am not home. My mother spoils her too much, and she knows my mother will not say no to her,

so she always goes behind my back to ask my mother for snacks." (Informant 3007, civil servant, mother of a 9-year-old girl)

We can also see from the above quotation that in non-migrant families, young parents, as the principal caregivers of children's "social upbringing", are more inclined to discipline children by the modern child-rearing concepts. In contrast, grandparents, as the ones who mainly assume the responsibility for children's physical care, tend to satisfy children's natural needs (Fei, 1998), which leads them to implicitly "relieve the burdens" for children as they often perceive young parents to be too strict in their discipline in children's behaviors. That reflects the approach that grandparents adopt when they disagree with young parents about the child-rearing practices, that is, avoiding face-to-face opposition to young parents' childcare and shifting to backstage resistance to reduce direct conflict, which can also be interpreted as a balance between compromising with young parents and asserting their views for grandparents in non-migrant families.

However, there are exceptions to grandparental negotiation in non-migrant families, which are mainly reflected when grandparents can identify apparent mistakes in the way parents discipline their children, mentioned by Informant 4014 in the interview:

"I do not care how they usually educate their daughter; Young people nowadays have different thoughts; I cannot get involved anyway. However, she sometimes hits the child when the child does something wrong, which I absolutely cannot stay out of the way. No matter what my granddaughter does, it is wrong to hit her." (Informant 4014, grandfather of a 9-year-old girl)

It reflects that although grandparents have difficulty agreeing with certain parenting concepts of young parents due to the restrictions mentioned earlier, they are more likely to have an ambiguous attitude toward young generations' parenting concepts. They see most of the differences as a generational gap between the new and old generations, and therefore choose to compromise, adhering to the principle of being there without interfering (Breheny et al., 2013). However, they do not compromise on the parenting of young parents when they can conclude inappropriately. That, on the other hand, reflects the grandparent-grandchild attachment.

Overall, in this section, it is evident that regardless of the family types, grandparents' affection for children under the influence of traditional culture discourages them from disciplining children. However, compared to grandparents in non-migrant families,

whose responsibilities are mainly focused on children's physical care due to the presence of the young parents, grandparents in left-behind families face the dual challenges of being reluctant to discipline children and lacking sufficient authority even when they want to do so.

5.3.3 "I'm Too Old for This": Grandparenting in Modern Chinese Society

Support for children's perceptions of life

In the traditional Chinese family, parents always play the role of the educator and the children as the educated. However, due to rapid changes in society and the different adaptable capacities between parents and children in the face of such changes, the roles of parents and children have changed: the young generations show not only a keen interest in new things that appear in contemporary society but also a far greater adaptation than older generations. While for the older generation, the age gap and the lagging educational concepts, combined with their inability to adapt to social changes, lead to relatively poor performance in the investment in children's cultural capital, such as taking them on trips or to museums, which has a more significant impact on the left-behind families, as the absence of young parents in children's lives creates a vacuum for parents in developing children's perception of life. Furthermore, smartphones have become particularly important in the post-Covid period - displaying health codes and travel codes have become an essential process in people's daily lives in China, which has exacerbated the grandparents' weakness to adapt to modern society. The lack of providing access for children to explore new things can directly lead to a limited imagination, especially in writing, as evidenced by interviews with teachers and grandparents in left-behind families:

> "It is not that I do not want to take him out; it is too much trouble to go to those places. I took him to a museum once; I saw many people have booked their tickets online in advance and then went straight in after arriving at the museum. I do not know how to use the phone to book tickets, last time it took us a very long time to wait in the queue. I have to say, this era is not very friendly to the elderly." (Informant 4009, grandfather of a 12-year-old boy whose parents work in another city in China)

> "Many left-behind children do not know what to write when the topic involves where you went on your vacation, your favorite museum, etc. Because they hardly ever go, they simply do not know how to write it." (Informant 1605, teacher at NO.6 ethnic Korean Middle School)

However, in this case, grandparents in non-migrant families have little influence on

the development of children's perceptions of life due to the presence of young parents. Instead, grandparents play two different roles in such activities: First, they enact a more instrumental role - taking children out under the arrangement of young parents or providing additional childcare when needed by young parents, which was noted in the interviews with both young parents and grandparents:

> "Sometimes my wife or I take the child out to play; his grandmother also needs to go there because he is still little, always running around, it is pretty hard to watch over him by one person." (Informant 3009, plumber, father of a 10-year-old boy)

> "His parents sometimes work overtime on weekends, so I take him out to play; if we go to amusement parks that requires tickets, his mother usually books the tickets for us first, and then I take him there by bus." (Informant 4011, grandfather of an 11-year-old boy)

It is evident that although there is a particular division of childcare responsibility between young parents and grandparents, the boundaries of responsibility are dynamic and, in most cases, change according to the needs of the young parents, so grandparents often take on additional responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of childcare activities. Second, grandparents play a similar role to the children in such activities, that is, exploring and experiencing new things, as mentioned by young parents:

> "We used to travel on vacations, my mother has not been to many places before either, she has spent most of her time on raising me and my child, so I always ask her to go with us." (Informant 3003, teacher, mother of a 10-year-old boy)

> "It is also good for the relationship between my mother-in-law and me when we hang out together. We used to fight about my child's education, but later I found that if we had a better relationship, she would be more supportive of my way of educating the child rather than disciplining him in her way behind my back." (Informant 3010, not working, mother of a 14-year-old boy)

As we can see from the above quotes, young parents also consider taking grandparents on trips to pay them back for their contribution. Moreover, increasing the interactions between young parents and grandparents is a way to increase their closeness, thus reducing conflicts and enhancing the cooperation between young parents and grandparents in children's development.

Support for Children's Study Supervision

In modern society, education is an essential route for upward social mobility and a key

mechanism for social class reproduction, playing an influential role in social stratification. Accordingly, more and more families in contemporary China strive to increase the investment in children's education to provide them with more opportunities for upward social mobility. Moreover, for left-behind families, children's education is always placed as a higher priority. Parents migrate and leave children behind mostly to provide a better educational environment, resulting in great expectations and focus on children's studies by both grandparents and migrant parents. Nevertheless, grandparents' education in left-behind families becomes a significant factor influencing children's study compared to that of grandparents in non-migrant families. As grandparents in left-behind families are the sole caregivers of children after parental migration: better-educated grandparents can better support children's studies after school, while the lower levels of grandparents' education lead to the tendency for left-behind children to attend extracurricular classes to make up for the lack of supervision of children's study after school, as children and teachers stated:

> "My grandfather used to be a teacher, and he is very strict with me about my studies. Whenever I studied, he would be nearby to monitor. (Is he able to supervise you in your study?) He does not understand much about it, but he always stays with me when I do my homework." (Informant 0403, 13-year-old boy with parents working in South Korea)

> "Generally, children who live with their grandparents are more inclined to attend the extracurricular classes, even the type of extracurricular classes where there are no extra lectures but only monitoring and supervision of homework. Grandparents cannot help the children with their homework." (Informant 1405, teacher at NO.4 ethnic Korean Primary School)

It is also clear from the above quotes that grandparents' education plays a different role only in terms of grandparents' motivation and attitude to monitor children's studies. However, there is no significant difference in children's study supervision, which is evident in both left-behind and non-migrant families. Consistent with Peng's (2020) findings regarding grandparents' inability to supervise children's homework, in interviews with young parents and grandparents, I found that even grandparents with relatively high education levels are incapable of supervising children with their studies due to the renewal of knowledge, as grandparents explained:

> "I graduated from high school and could have taken the college entrance exam and then gone to college, but I was not qualified due to the policy. Then I taught in a primary school for a few years. However, what children study at school is different from what I have learned before; for example, now children start learning English in primary school, but I have not learned

English at all. Cannot supervise him." (Informant 4006, grandmother of a 14-year-old girl whose parents work in South Korea)

"I am now afraid to supervise him in his homework. There are some knowledge children learn that I understand, but I might teach them wrong. The last time he asked me how to pronounce a Chinese word, I realized after talking to him that the pronunciation of that word had long been different from what I had learned before." (Informant 4009, grandfather of a 12-year-old boy whose parents work in another city in China)

Compared with the importance of grandparents' education in left-behind families, grandparents' education in non-migrant families is not placed in a critical position concerning children's study. As mentioned previously, education occupies a significant part in children's development; it is therefore usually the young parents' responsibility to supervise children's study in non-migrant families, although grandparents with higher education levels may provide additional monitoring help:

"My grandmother does not supervise my homework; she just tells me to study after dinner, my mom checks if I finish it or not when she comes back home." (Informant 0604, 14-year-old girl with both parents in the household)

"I often feel exhausted after work, so usually my mother watches her doing homework, during which I have dinner and lie down on the sofa for a little bit, and then I check when she finishes her homework." (Informant 3013, secretary, mother of a 10-year-old girl)

In addition, with the advancement of technology and the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, an increasing number of study-related tasks have transferred online, such as children's virtual classes during the lockdown and the communication between teachers and guardians about children's study. That creates more barriers for grandparents to assist children's study: grandparents' concepts become more settled with age, which reduces their attention to new things. Also, their upbringing leaves this group with limited education experience, which prevents them from adapting to new things that are constantly emerging in contemporary society. Therefore, grandparents are not well equipped to assist children's study, which can be found in the interviews with teachers and grandparents in left-behind families:

"We usually inform students about their homework before school and then post it again in the group chat so that parents can better keep track of whether their children have completed all their homework. Nevertheless, many grandparents do not know how to use it, so it is hard for them to assist children." (Informant 1401, head teacher at NO.4 ethnic Korean Primary School)

"At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, children started to take online classes at home. I did not know how to set up the network for his class and had to call my son [child's uncle] to come over and help me get it done." (Informant 4009, grandfather of a 12-year-old boy whose parents work in another city in China)

Also, with the diversity of children's study curriculum, many after-school assignments combine online lectures and offline practice that require support and guidance, which inevitably creates additional challenges for grandparents, thus further weakening their ability to supervise children's study.

Support for Children's Study Habits

It is not only general abilities that children carry into a class that contributes to their academic performance - study habits, such as being present in class on time, completing homework in time, and reading study materials before class, may have an impact on their performance (Boyle and Boekeloo, 2006). Good study habits can develop positive academic performance, while ineffective study habits may lead to academic failure (Ayodele and Adebiyi, 2013). Moreover, many previous studies reveal a positive relationship between children's study habits and academic achievement (McManus et al., 1998; Wenger et al., 2009). Moreover, study habits also have an impact on children's study ability, while technological devices play a key role in the factors that influence children's study habits in contemporary society: a study by McGraw-Hill Education revealed that the use of mobile devices can help children's study. However, they also have a negative impact on it: online activities were a significant distraction for nearly 40% of surveyed children. In addition, over 50% of children confirmed using laptops, tablets, and smartphones to text their friends while studying (Belardi, 2013).

Many teachers mentioned in the interviews that not all children raised by grandparents in left-behind families have poor study habits, as reported in the media, but grandparents do fall short in supporting the development of their children's study habits. Grandparents generally lack attention and ability to the development of children's study habits, including training children in the management of their after-school time and fostering their positive attitudes toward study:

"Students are not allowed to bring phones at school, but we cannot do anything after school. Many students spend much time on smartphones; some play online games, which normally take 1-1.5 hours for a round. If parents

are at home, they can control children's phone time, but grandparents cannot. Then it all depends on children themselves when their parents are absent." (Informant 1403, teacher at NO.4 ethnic Korean Primary School)

"They [Grandparents] do not understand the impact of study habits on children's academic performance; they only focus on children's grades." (Informant 1803, head teacher at NO.8 Han Middle School)

In addition, the grandparents' neglect of the development of children's study habits may be due to their cognitive bias: many of them believe that children's study is fully supervised by the school and teachers, while guardians play a supporting role, such as checking whether the children's homework is completed. It is similar to the role of the grandparents in non-migrant families in the development of children's study habits, which will be discussed next, but the main difference is that grandparents in left-behind families see the primary disciplinarian of children's study habits as the teachers, while those in non-migrant families take it as the young parents. Thus, this affects to a great extent the effectiveness of the development of children's study habits.

"His parents entrusted him to me, and I am responsible for taking good care of him, but I cannot help him much with his studies, just asking him if he has finished his homework, and the school will do the rest." (Informant 4001, grandfather of a 14-year-old boy whose parents work in South Korea)

"Many grandparents think that we are in charge of children's study once they start schooling, this leads to a result where they feel that children's poor academic performance reflects teachers' poor teaching skills. I want to help children have better academic performance and study habits, but it requires the cooperation of teachers and guardians, and with so many children in the classroom, I cannot help every child with everything." (Informant 1801, head teacher at NO.8 Han Middle School)

Grandparents in non-migrant families have a less critical role in developing the children's study habits as their primary responsibility is providing physical care to children. In most cases, they only play a supplementary role in developing children's study habits.

"My mother used to read storybooks to him when he was little. (How did you get these books?) I bought them. Books read by children are now differentiated by age, so choosing books also requires consideration of the kids' age and the quality of the book, which is quite complicated. Moreover, we work during the day and do not have much time for the kid, so I used to have my mom read the books to him before I went to work." (Informant 3003, teacher, mother of a 10-year-old boy)

"After he finishes his homework, his mother always asks him to watch extracurricular videos for half an hour, and I usually stay with him in this case so his mother can take a break." (Informant 4013, grandmother of a 12-year-old boy)

From the above quotes, we can see that similar to the influence of grandparents in the supervision of children's study, they also play a monitoring rather than a guiding role in the development of children's study habits. That provides additional evidence that grandparents in families with or without absent parents have difficulties providing adequate support for children's study-related activities due to various constraints.

To sum up, this section demonstrates grandparents' struggle in modern society, especially in adapting to new technology and updated pedagogy. Due to the limitations of education and the lack of proper adaptation to modern society, grandparents show deficiencies in various aspects of children's development, particularly in study-related activities (children's perspectives of life, study supervision, and study habits). However, grandparents in left-behind families struggle more as the sole caregivers of children than grandparents in non-migrant families who play a supplementary rather than a dominant role due to young parents' involvement in children's development.

5.3.4 "Who Takes Care of Whom": Childcare and Reverse Care

Compared to children from non-migrant families, the development of life skills in left-behind children can be characterized as either stronger or weaker, depending mainly on the health status of their grandparents. On the one hand, grandparents in good health tend to indulge children, thus impeding children's development of life skills (Liu et al., 2019). As discussed previously, the traditional Chinese family culture emphasizes the continuity of blood ties; children, therefore, represent the future and hope of the whole family (Shen, 2001), coupled with grandparents' sympathy for the children's lack of parental companionship, increases their indulgence of the children in their daily lives. In addition, in the view of grandparents, being entrusted with the complete care of children by the migrant parents would imply providing exemplary care in terms of the children's daily life, for example, food and clothing. To have children do the housework "could be interpreted as not caring" (Mason et al., 2017); as grandparents explained:

> "I usually do all the laundry and cooking for him. Children are so busy with their studies nowadays that doing the housework would take away from their study time. I am in good health now; no need for him to help; besides, he is just a little boy." (Informant 4003, grandmother of a 13-year-old boy whose parents work in South Korea)

> "She is a poor kid with no parents being around; I do not want her to be distracted by the chores. Besides, her parents asked me to look after her, and I have to take good care of her daily life." (Informant 4006, grandmother of a 14-year-old girl whose parents work in South Korea)

On the other hand, grandparents in ill health may require more life skills from children to compensate, and therefore left-behind children in such situations are likely to demonstrate better life skills. In the study of grandparenting for left-behind children in China from 2000 to 2015, by comparing the fifth and sixth national censuses, Duan et al. (2017) argue that grandparents are the primary caregivers of left-behind children after parental migration experience differences in health status. When living with the grandparenting with poor physical conditions, left-behind children are more likely to take on the responsibility of caring for their grandparents in addition to their own daily lives, which is more like a form of "reverse care" (Wellard et al., 2017), as mentioned in the interviews:

> "Children in such families [living with grandparents with poor physical conditions] are more capable of living, and they usually share the housework with their grandparents. (How many children are in this kind of situation?) Not many; most grandparents are in good health and can take care of the children. Otherwise, parents would not choose them as guardians after they leave. Probably one or two students in my class are like this." (Informant 1405, teacher at NO.4 ethnic Korean Primary School)

> "My grandmother has back problems, and sometimes it gets so bad that she cannot even walk well, so I always help her with the housework so she can do less." (Informant 0601, 15-year-old boy with both parents working in South Korea)

From the statements above, we can see that even for left-behind children with solid life skills, their life skills are more likely to be developed based on the grandparents' health status - the grandparents' poor health and need to be cared for than being intentionally disciplined. However, grandparents play a crucial role in developing children's life skills in left-behind families when young parents migrate and cannot provide daily supervision.

In contrast to grandparents in left-behind families, grandparents in non-migrant families are expected to be less responsible for children's life skills development due

to the presence of the young parents. Along with social changes in China, cooperative parenting between grandparents and young parents in non-migrant families reflects the continuation of the tradition of intergenerational interaction within the family and indicates changes in the pattern of child-rearing practices. Grandparents are expected to join the nuclear family and provide physical care for children; the focus of childcare for young mothers gradually shifts to children's social upbringing (Bao, 1997). Specifically, young parents have the decision-making power in matters related to the development of their children, including decisions related to education and specific arrangements for children's daily life. In addition, young parents also have more authority in how children are raised, disciplined, and developed, which allows them to intervene when grandparents' practices are deemed inappropriate, as shown in the interviews with the young parents:

> "When he finishes playing with his toys, he never cleans them up, so his grandfather comes over to help him put them in the box. Then I stop his grandfather from collecting the toys for him; I tell him that those are his toys and that he has to clean up after playing with them and not expect others to help him." (Informant 3008, accountant, mother of an 11-year-old boy)

> "My son is pretty fussy at this age, so I usually make him come over after meals from his grandparents' rooms and do not bother the grandparents; they much better behave with me." (Informant 3009, plumber, father of a 10-year-old boy)

This section reveals that grandparents do not play an active role in developing children's life skills in either left-behind or non-migrant families. In left-behind families, children lack support in developing life skills due to the absence of parents, and the health status of grandparents greatly influences the children's independence. In contrast, in non-migrant families, the lack of grandparental support is better compensated by the involvement of younger parents in developing children's life skills.

5.4 Intergenerational Support for Children's Companionship and Parent-child Relationship

Studies find that the bonding between grandparents and grandchildren can promote children's development (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991), and the higher the level of closeness to grandparents, the fewer emotional issues children have (Ruiz and Silverstein, 2007). Especially in families with the absence of parents (e.g., parental

divorce, remarriage, etc.), intergenerational involvement can significantly decrease children's emotional problems (Yorgason et al., 2011). In this section, I will explore the companionship between grandparents and children and how grandparental involvement influences the parent-child relationships in both left-behind and non-migrant families.

Tables 5.6 and 5.7 from the survey data of this study show how children are close to their family members by asking, "When the following things happen to you, whom would you choose to talk to first?".

Table 5.6 The proportion of the first choice for children left behind with grandparents (%)

	Parents	Grandparents	Others
When you simply want to have a chat with someone	24.27	54.37	21.36
When you feel upset, anxious, or nervous	37.86	38.83	23.31
When you need help/ suggestions etc.	39.22	35.92	24.86

Table 5.7 The proportion of the first choice for children with parents in the household (%)

	Parents	Grandparents	Others
When you simply want to have a chat with someone	24.73	65.31	9.96
When you feel upset, anxious, or nervous	43.10	40.69	16.21
When you need help/ suggestions etc.	51.83	33.26	14.91

From the tables above, it is clear that 54.37% of left-behind children who are cared for by grandparents after parental migration and 65.31% of children with both parents in the household selected grandparents as their first choice to have a chat within their daily life, which indicates the closeness between grandparents and children and the high level of grandparental involvement in children's daily lives, regardless of left-behind or non-migrant families. Similar evidence from studies in Israel and the UK suggests that adolescents view their grandparents as important people in their lives to whom they are emotionally close (Tan and Buchanan, 2016; Attar-Schwartz and Kassabri, 2016). It is shown in the interviews with children and young parents:

> "My grandmother has been the only one who takes care of me since my parents went to South Korea, and I am always happy when I see her at the school gate waiting to pick me up. My grandmother is very kind to me and makes me feel at ease although my parents have gone to a faraway place." (Informant 0404, 13-year-old girl with parents working in South Korea)

"She often shares with us [parents and grandparents] what happens in school. Especially when she gets compliments from teachers at school, she will tell her grandma as soon as she comes back home." (Informant 3013, secretary, mother of a 10-year-old girl)

In terms of choosing whom to seek help and advice, 51.83% of children with parents in the household chose parents as their first choice, much higher than the 33.26% of those who chose grandparents, providing support for the fact that parents are more critical to children in seeking advice and help, while grandparents, as mentioned earlier, act more as physical caregivers. In addition, similar to children with parents in the household, left-behind children prefer to seek help from their migrant parents (39.22%) than their grandparents (35.92%), who are their primary caregivers in daily life with a slight difference in proportion, however. One possible explanation is that despite the absence of the parents, left-behind children's expectation of the parents' role as the significant others in their growing-up process remains. A survey on left-behind children in China shows that although friends are the preferred group to talk to (47.6% chose friends and 40.3% chose parents), the ranking of social support sources shows that parents are ranked first, while guardians and friends are ranked second and third respectively (Zhang, 2014). Thus, for left-behind children, although their parents are physical absent, the framework of the family exists, and parents are still part of their lives in specific ways, as explained by a teacher:

"We are more worried about children in divorced families than left-behind children. The divorce of parents is more devastating to children than parental migration, left-behind children perceive parental migration for the sake of the family, so they always have this sense of belonging and always talk to parents when they need help, while for those whose parents are divorced, they would feel abandoned." (Informant 1405, teacher at NO.4 ethnic Korean Primary School)

Another possible reason is that although the grandparents in left-behind families become the primary caregivers of children after parental migration, they, similar to the grandparents in non-migrant families, can only provide physical care for children instead of helping and advising them due to the various limitations such as low education levels and backward educational concepts. That is shown in the interviews with grandparents in left-behind families:

"I am just taking care of his daily life. I cannot make decisions on other things; he still has to discuss with his parents whether he goes to extracurricular classes after school. All such things need to be decided by his

parents; I do not know much about it." (Informant 4012, grandfather of a 9-year-old boy whose parents work in South Korea)

"If he needs advice or helps with something, I usually have him call his parents. I am old, and there are many things I do not understand. Also, it helps deepen their relationship for him to ask his parents for advice and help." (Informant 4002, grandfather of a 15-year-old boy whose parents work in South Korea)

The quote above also indirectly reveals grandparents' attitudes in left-behind families regarding parent-child relationships. Unlike the grandparents in non-migrant families, grandparents in left-behind families, as the sole caregivers of the children, play an essential role in the relationship between children and the absent parents, which could be either positive or negative (Wu and Qi, 2020). Attar-Schwartz and Buchananound (2018) find that grandparents can serve as the buffer to prevent the risk of maladjustment when children face family transitions. Grandparental involvement in left-behind families make it possible for migrant parents to be involved in children's life without being physically present: in the left-behind families, grandparents' daily conversations with children about their parents, such as explaining the reasons for their parents' migration decision-making, sharing parents' lives after migration, and telling stories about parents' childhood, etc., deepen children's awareness and understanding of parents' dedication to children, the meaning of parents' migration and the concept of family, and increase the frequency of parental presence in children's lives and the parent-child closeness, which was reflected in the interviews with grandparents and children:

"I always tell him that his parents were out making money to give him a better living environment and that they would be back soon … I always educate him to be grateful for his parents because they have been working hard outside for him." (Informant 4003, grandmother of a 13-year-old boy whose parents work in South Korea)

"My grandmother always tells me some interesting stories about my father when he was a child, makes me feel that he is still very close to me even though he has gone out to work." (Informant 0803, 13-year-old girl with parents working in another city)

In addition, returning to China from abroad has become highly complicated and expensive due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and China's subsequent adoption of the "Covid-Zero" strategy[14], which led to a decrease in the reunification of parents who

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[14] It is a public health policy that has been implemented by China during the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes

migrated to South Korea and left-behind children and a more significant role for grandparents in the bonding of left-behind children and their parents, as Informant 4006 stated:

> "Her parents used to return home during the Chinese New Year, but flight tickets are now costly, and they need to pay for their isolation in a hotel when they return, which will cost a lot of money and time. So they decided not to come back home this year. Although she [the child] said it was okay, I can see that she is quite upset. I try to talk to her about this to help her understand that it is not because her parents refused to come back to see her but were restricted by the pandemic." (Informant 4006, grandmother of a 14-year-old girl whose parents work in South Korea).

Grandparenting in left-behind families, on the other hand, can worsen the parent-child relationship to some extent when migrant parents return home: the long-term absence of migrant parents leaves grandparents as the sole caregivers of children, and grandparents are often less strict than parents in educating and disciplining children, which may turn the joy of parent-child reunification into a struggle as parents realize that their children feel ambivalent about being with them (Arnold, 1991), especially when children are in adolescence. Parents may resort to harsh disciplinary measures that make their children increasingly rebellious (Lashley, 2000), which therefore is more likely to worsen the parent-child relationship and makes left-behind children prefer to live with their grandparents rather than their parents, as both teachers and children explained:

> "Grandparents are generally not strict in educating children. In addition, the children are in adolescence, so when the parents come back to educate them, they would complain, 'You are only back for a few days; how can you do this to me?'" (Informant 1603, head teacher at NO.6 ethnic Korean Middle School)

> "(Are you happy to have your mom back?) Yes, I am, but if she comes back for a longer time, she will be very strict with me, I cannot do this, I cannot do that. I do not like it." (Informant 0404, 13-year-old girl with parents working in South Korea)

For grandparents in non-migrant families, the impact of grandparental involvement in childcare on the parent-child relationships is more ambiguous. As discussed earlier, grandparents in non-migrant families are primarily responsible for the care of the children's daily lives, while the education and discipline of the children are more of

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the use of public health measures such as contact tracing, mass testing, border quarantine and lockdown to cease community transmission as soon as the virus is detected, with the aim of returning the area to zero detected infections and resuming normal economic and social activities.

the responsibility of young parents. The socialization of children is a process of constructing and shaping their social identity through learning, understanding and practicing social norms and social expectations, and gradually weakening their nature, as Fei (2014) states:

> In the process of children's socialization, they would face different cruel environments, and parents who are afraid that children would be hit too hard by the environment are always willing to apply themselves as a buffer for children, which leads to the fact that children could have burned their hands in the fire and then learned a lesson from it. However, before the fire could reach their hands, children encountered the interference of parents. Parents discipline children and act as a soft wall between children's nature and the harsh environment, thus making children believe that their parents are the central opposing figure to their sense of self-awareness. (Fei, 2014: 256)

As a result, parental discipline coupled with the grandparental indulgence of children has caused certain challenges to the parent-child relationship within non-migrant families. Informant 3002 has a 9-year-old son being taken care of by her mother-in-law; her mother-in-law's high level of involvement in the child's life and the grandmother-grandchild closeness has gradually made her upset. Meanwhile, her mother-in-law also found it difficult to "give back" the child due to her high level of attachment to the role of caregiver and the intergenerational bond of closeness, which eventually turned into a "battle" between two generations over "whom the child loves more":

> "The child and my mother-in-law are very close, and I understand this since she is the one who takes care of his daily life, but sometimes he does something wrong, and I have to talk to him about it; he just goes to my mother-in-law, which makes me feel that he is closer to my mother-in-law than to me, it is somehow heartbroken." (Informant 3002, teacher, mother of a 9-year-old boy)

This section demonstrates that grandparent-grandchild relationships are reinforced by the intensive involvement of grandparents in children's lives in families with or without absent parents. However, the impact of grandparent involvement on parent-child relationships differs between these two types of families. Compared to the complicated and ambiguous effects on parent-child relationships, the presence of grandparents contributes to the relationship between migrant parents and left-behind children, although it may pose challenges to the parent-child relationship after reunification.

5.5 Discussion

It is evident from the findings in Chapters 3 and 4 that the changes in family structure brought about by parental migration have a significant impact on children's development, particularly their psychological wellbeing. In line with Chapter 4, where I further explored the role of other social support in children's lives - school support - on children's development in the context of parental migration, this chapter explores the impact of children's caregivers - grandparents - in children's lives to further understand whether and how grandparental care, another significant social support in children's development, can benefit or harm children's development in the absence of their parents. The role of grandparents as caregivers for children is one of their widely recognized contributions, and young parents generally prefer grandparenting compared to other forms of childcare. The traditional Chinese family culture, which emphasizes blood ties, is crucial for many grandparents acting as caregivers for children. In China, intergenerational childcare is mainly divided into two patterns: grandparenting in left-behind families, which is gradually formed with the development of urbanization, and grandparenting in the extended families due to the development of the market economy system. In the context of the gradual emergence of co-parenting between young parents and grandparents as the dominant family model in contemporary China, this chapter explored the influence of grandparenting in the daily life, emotional life, and study-related activities of left-behind children after parental migration through a comparison with grandparenting in non-migrant families in order to better understand the support of grandparents in left-behind families for children's development in the absence of parents.

Although grandparents in left-behind and non-migrant families have difficulties providing adequate childcare due to various restrictions, it brings more challenges for grandparenting in left-behind families than that in non-migrant families due to the absence of the young parents, which results in full responsibility for childcare being transferred to grandparents. Specifically, grandparental involvement in left-behind families and non-migrant families differs across the age range of children, reflecting that different stages of children's life course determine the different requirements for grandparenting: the underdeveloped public childcare system, combined with the fast-paced life and the pressures of young parents in contemporary society, makes parenting gradually become a challenging task for nuclear families in China,

especially when the children are in pre-school years. During this period, grandparents often become the caregivers in non-migrant families, which is consistent with previous studies in the US (Guzman, 2004; Silverstein and Marenco, 2001). Consequently, most of the intergenerational support that grandparents are expected to provide at this stage of children's life course is focused on physical and daily childcare, while their education and childcare concepts are less important. However, grandparenting in left-behind families is more intensive when children attend school, especially after mothers migrate, consistent with studies on mothers' migration which mainly target Asian, South American, and African societies (e.g., Yarris, 2014; Boehm, 2012). Schooling represents the beginning of the family's formal investment in children's education and the beginning of the school's influence on children's development. As a result, for many families with relatively poor economic conditions, parental migration is often a good option for providing more educational opportunities for children. While guardians' adequate and effective supervision and discipline occupy a more central place during schooling than during pre-school, thus posing additional challenges for grandparents in left-behind families without young parents present.

Furthermore, since the reform and opening-up, China's social transformation has caused old generations to struggle to adapt to changes in society, leading to various challenges in their child-rearing practices: the influence of traditional culture and their life experiences, coupled with the limitations of lack of formal education and relatively low education levels cause their child-rearing concepts and approaches to be significantly challenged in contemporary society, while young generations are more sensitive to and able to adapt to new things, and therefore leads to a shift in power in non-migrant families, that is, young generations have more authority than the old generations in the child-rearing practices (Zhou, 2000). In non-migrant families, grandparents enact a more instrumental and supplementary role in child-rearing practices due to the presence of the young parents. That is particularly evident in the daily care provided to the children, guidance, and discipline in the development of the children's life skills and behaviors: grandparents assume the primary responsibility given to the mothers in the traditional gender division of labor in the family - taking care of children's daily life, and similar findings have been identified in the previous study in American families (Silverstein et al., 2002). The intervention of the young

parents makes grandparents more inclined to negotiate and cooperate with the young parents' parenting in most cases. In line with the concepts of "being there but not interfering", Breheny et al. (2013) demonstrate by emphasizing that providing childcare for grandchildren is commonly a way of grandparent's "being there" while it would be interpreted as "interfering" if grandparents usurp the parental authority. While in left-behind families, parental migration results in full childcare responsibilities to the grandparents, which makes it more challenging to support children's development for grandparents with a lack of adaptation and outdated child-rearing concepts, as reflected in previous Chinese studies on grandparenting in left-behind families (e.g., Wang, 2018; Yu and Wang, 2019; Chang et al., 2017). Similarly, studies in Thailand (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2020) and Cambodia (Schneider et al., 2020) show that the responsibility assigned to grandparents as the primary caregivers is a significant concern for grandparents.

Despite these challenges, grandparental involvement in children's lives has been found to significantly increase the closeness of grandparents and grandchildren in families with or without absent parents, in line with prior research (Tan and Buchanan, 2016; Attar-Schwartz and Kassabri, 2016). In addition, in contrast to Ruiz and Silverstein's (2007) findings that grandparenting can be a complement to a well-established parent-child relationship rather than being compensation for a struggling parent-child relationship, it has been found in this chapter that grandparental involvement in left-behind families has a significant positive impact on the relationship between migrant parents and left-behind children, although it may present challenges to the parent-child relationship after reunification. Moreover, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic directly increased the difficulty of parent-child reunification, thus placing greater importance on the role of grandparents in the parent-child relationship in left-behind families. The involvement of grandparents in the lives of children serves more like the bond for the relationship between children and their absent parents; that is, grandparents bring the image of migrant parents into the lives of left-behind children through daily interactions, which contributes to the active involvement of migrant parents in children's lives without being physically present. It may be an important reason that explains why grandparents remain the most preferred option for migrant parents to provide childcare for children, even though grandparents fail to provide adequate support for many aspects of children's

development in left-behind families, consistent with prior studies which document the great significance of grandparenting among individuals or families in transitions (Cong and Silverstein, 2012; Knodel and Nguyen, 2015).

6 Conclusion

The impact of parental migration on children's development, in general, has been discussed among scholars in two lines of argument. The financial remittances sent by migrant parents are perceived as a resource for improving children's quality of life and wellbeing; However, parental absence can be disruptive and impose an emotional cost on children during the period when family education occupies a crucial position in children's life course. In light of the literature, this thesis has examined the effects of parental migration on children's life experiences in education and psychological wellbeing to better understand the impact of parental migration in different social backgrounds. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods is used in this thesis, which contributes to a different viewpoint to the analysis and make the findings more reliable - the quantitative data in this thesis is cross-sectional, and endogeneity and reverse causality are more likely to emerge when analyzing associations between variables. Qualitative data can contribute to a better understanding of the direction of the effect. Quantitative data, on the other hand, can compensate for the difficulty of extending findings to larger cohorts in qualitative data by providing representative data and using inferential statistics.

Overall, this thesis has found that the effects of parent-child separation resulting from parental migration on children's development cannot be simply categorized as positive or negative, particularly when considering the underlying mechanisms such as gender ideologies and children's resilience in adversity.

6.1 Effect of Gendered Migrant Parenting on Left-behind Children

Among the literature on migration studies, the gender of migrant parents is often considered one of the critical factors in the impact of parental migration on children's development. To better understand whether and how the gender of migrant parents differentially influences the development of left-behind children in the context of increasing feminization of migration in China, I have examined the differences in the impact of paternal and maternal migration on left-behind children in both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Specifically, in Chapter 3, I have explored the impact of parental migration on

children's study engagement by highlighting differences in the impact of paternal and maternal migration through testing two potential mediators - parents' physical and financial support and their emotional support. Findings have shown that although there is no significant overall effect between parental migration and children's study engagement, there are significant associations between especially maternal migration and the emotional wellbeing of left-behind children. That is, compared to the physical and financial benefits of parental migration, the lack of emotional support from migrant mothers has a greater impact on children's study engagement. As the analysis reveals that the association between parental migration and children's study engagement is not statistically significant, while the mediation analysis examining the association through maternal support is significant, with maternal emotional support rather than physical and financial support dominant. Similar to Chapter 3 regarding the differential impact of parental migration by gender, the absence of mothers has been found to have a significant negative impact on children's psychological wellbeing in Chapter 4 - children with migrating mothers have significantly higher depression scores than children from non-migrant families. In contrast, children with migrating fathers show no difference.

The findings of these two empirical chapters highlight the importance of maternal presence in children's development, providing additional evidence to the literature on the impact of maternal migration. Even though an increasing number of women have gradually become the provider of the family by joining the migration trend, sharing the role of breadwinners with fathers, and the increasing involvement of fathers in the emotional lives of children is found in recent studies (e.g., Choi, 2019; Cebotari et al., 2017; Peng, 2018), mothers remain the primary caregivers for the left-behind children, and thus their absence as a result of migration brings more disadvantages to children's development.

Specific to the Chinese context, the traditional Chinese family is structured by the Confucian ideals of collectivism and filial piety. The traditional family structure is a manifestation of patriarchy, i.e., fathers undertake the responsibility of providing for the family and participating in social activities outside the household, and mothers stay indoors to take care of family affairs, raise children, and care for the elderly. In post-reform China, society has become more accepting of mothers working, providing more opportunities for women to integrate into society. The "fathers outside, mothers

inside" family model, on the other hand, has become progressively less solid, as one of the prerequisites for maintaining this model is that the fathers' income is sufficient to cover the expenses of the entire family, which in contemporary China is found primarily in upper-middle-class families rather than in working-class families (Peng, 2020). As a consequence, more women have joined the migration trend. Although recent studies have argued that the increasing feminization of migration challenges traditional gender ideologies and the gender division of labor in the household, it is evident in this thesis that the role of mothers in the household is substantial and can have a significant impact on children's development, which is consistent with multiple studies on maternal migration, mainly targeting developing societies in Asia (e.g., Zhao and Hannum, 2021; Jampaklay, 2006; Parreñas, 2001; Arlini et al., 2019).

6.2 Constructing Resilience in Left-behind Children

Although the findings suggest that parental, particularly maternal migration, can negatively impact the development of left-behind children, this does not imply that children will passively accept such challenges. As discussed previously, rather than being "social zombies" (Hasina, 2011) that are passively affected by the changes in their lives, children are actively and competently involved in the construction of childhood as social agents (Mayall, 2002; Prout and James, 1997). In addition, it is well established that there are other sources of resilience in children's development in addition to parental support (see (Liu et al., 2015; Hayslip and Kaminski, 2005; Kliewer and Sandler, 1992). Therefore, this thesis further explores children's adaptation to the challenges posed by parental migration by examining children's social networks (schools and extended family relationships) in their daily lives as potential sources of resilience.

Overall, it has been found that left-behind children are more resilient than expected - parental migration alters the lives of left-behind children in multiple ways, yet it does not imply that left-behind children are entirely trapped in the plight and incapable of supporting themselves. Specifically, although both have various limitations, schools and extended family relationships, as important social networks in children's daily lives, can provide specific support for developing children's resilience in the adversity of parental migration.

Findings in Chapter 4 have demonstrated that maternal migration has a significant negative impact on children's psychological wellbeing. However, the further analysis suggests that children's school-related experiences can provide additional support for children's resilience development - left-behind children with a stronger sense of school belonging and greater peer support experience fewer negative impacts of maternal migration on their psychological wellbeing. It provides evidence of children's agency in the face of the challenges posed by parental migration, i.e., by accessing the support provided by schools, children can deflect negative emotions related to maternal migration to maintain good levels of psychological wellbeing; although in conjunction with the qualitative data, it is noted that children's peer support cannot counteract the negative emotions associated with their mothers' migration but rather is a means of distracting their attention from the negative emotions.

Moreover, the findings in Chapter 3 have indicated that the study engagement of left-behind children does not differ significantly from that of children from non-migrant families, which implicitly reflects children's agency on the other hand - although parent-child separation due to parental migration poses challenges for migrant parents to supervise children's study, participate in children's daily activities, and engage in adequate parent-child interactions, children can use other means to adapt to such challenges, such as by attending remedial classes to compensate for the lack of parental supervision of their study and by maintaining regular contact with the migrant parents through social media. Although parental migration changes the family structure, such actions contribute to developing children's resilience and adaption.

In addition, grandparents, as the primary caregivers of left-behind children after parental migration, have been found to serve as an essential source for the resilience development of children by providing emotional support for children in daily lives and bonding the relationship between migrant parents and left-behind children, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, when migrant parents, especially cross-border parents, have difficulty returning due to the subsequent responses, for instance, border closures, national lockdown measures, and flight reductions/suspensions. Moreover, the lockdown measures resulting from the pandemic has increased the significance of the family environment for children, leading to a decrease in the influence of other social environments (Zhang et al.,

2022). Therefore, grandparents, as the primary caregivers of children in the context of parental migration, play a significant role in the development of children in the post-pandemic period, despite the limitations of various reasons (e.g., backward parenting conceptions and pedagogy, lack of adaption to modern society) that render them in many cases inadequate support for the formation of children's personalities, behaviors, and school-related activities.

In line with the findings of Cebotari (2018) on children's resilience and vulnerability in the Ethiopian context, this thesis argues that children's resilience does not negate their vulnerability - the support from schools and extended family relationships under the unfavorable conditions of parental migration constitutes a degree of positive influence on children's resilience development, however, they show certain limitations and therefore cannot replace the presence of parents, especially mothers, in children's development.

By exploring children's adaptions and strategies in the context of parental migration, this thesis enriches the literature on the agency of left-behind children. Children's agency in migration studies has long been underestimated, and although there is a growing literature discussing children's agency recently, much of it has focused on migrant children (e.g., Thompson et al., 2019; Belloni, 2020; Ní Laoire et al., 2012) rather than left-behind children. Among the existing literature on left-behind children, much has focused on Southeast Asia (Lam and Yeoh, 2019; Hoang and Yeoh, 2015) and Central Asia (Cebotari, 2018; Nazridod et al., 2021), with very little conducted in the East Asian context, and particularly China. By adopting a child-centred perspective to examine how children experience and cope with parental migration, this thesis provides further evidence on the agency of left-behind children and shed more positive light on deconstructing the long-standing negative perceptions of children as victims in the migration literature, particularly in the Chinese literature, where left-behind children are perceived in much of the literature as problem children and even referred as "orphans with parents".

Furthermore, influenced by the majority of left-behind children belonging to the Han majority (the most populous group in China), most existing research on left-behind children in the Chinese context has focused on Han left-behind children whose parents migrate within China, while little attention has been paid to ethnic Korean

left-behind children whose parents migrate across borders (for exceptions, see Piao and Fan, 2018; Wang and Tian, 2015), and this thesis contributes to a better understanding of the situation of left-behind children of ethnic minorities and provides new empirical evidence to the literature on left-behind children in China.

6.3 Limitations of the Study and Further Research

I acknowledge that there are limitations in this thesis. First, due to the various limitations of fieldwork and the impact of COVID-19, this thesis lacks interviews with migrant parents, thus preventing me from gaining insight into how migrant parents view their children being left behind as well as their considerations in making decision of their migration, choosing caregivers for their children, etc. In addition, the survey in this thesis drew a relatively small sample, and the sample did not rigorously differentiate between ethnic Korean and Han children; the findings in this thesis, therefore, cannot be generalized to all ethnic Korean left-behind children or left-behind children in northeastern China as a whole. However, they shed some light on the conditions of left-behind children that need to be further investigated and addressed in a broader scope.

Second, this thesis has not considered the duration of parent-child separation and the frequency of parent-child reunion in the analysis process, both of which have been examined as necessary in the life course of left-behind children in previous studies. For instance, studies in China find that the life satisfaction of left-behind children who have more reunions with their parents is significantly higher than that of children with fewer parent-child reunions (Song and Liao, 2008). In a study of left-behind children in Guizhou Province, Liu (2016) claims that the psychological resilience of left-behind children tends to decrease with the low frequency of reunion with their parents. Moreover, she further points out the significant differences in the psychological resilience of left-behind children with different parent-child separation durations - children with parent-child separation duration within two years showed better psychological resilience than those separated for two to six years. Utilizing the longitudinal immigrant student data with adolescents from various countries, Suárez-Orozco, Bang, and Kim (2011) conclude that anxiety persists for a period for Mexican children who have been separated from their mothers. The longer the separation, the longer the duration of symptoms. Therefore, these two variables are

worthy of consideration in future studies on left-behind children.

These limitations may provide additional research directions for the further development of relevant studies. The impact of parent-child separation on left-behind children may be far more profound than the separation per se. That is to say, the absence of parents at a particular stage of left-behind children's development may have a long-term impact on children's entire life course, which makes longitudinal methods worthwhile to be adopted in future studies of left-behind children, as longitudinal studies can provide unique insights that may not be available in other approaches, enabling researchers to observe and investigate how parental migration affects children at different stages of their lives and to explore the mechanisms of those effects in a more comprehensive way.

Moreover, the data could be further analyzed, for example by ethnic group splitting, which would provide a better understanding of the situation of ethnic Korean children and also enable a comparison between Han left-behind children and ethnic Korean children whose parents migrate to different destinations, thus providing insight into the different benefits or harms of parental internal and transnational migration on children's development and the underlying mechanisms.

In addition, more focus should be placed on children's perceptions of parental migration in future studies. Discussions and investigations about what children need, how they develop, and what is appropriate to import from adults are derived exclusively from adult perspectives and practices rather than representative of children's viewpoints and practices (Mayall, 2000). Much research on left-behind children is drawn from adult research on children, contextualized and structured according to the adult's perspective and expectations in a given society. While "for children, childhood is the social mode through which they experience the world, and thus more a practice than a state of being" (Cheney, 2008). Therefore, considering children as social actors who can construct their own life experiences and shape their life trajectories will introduce a shift in thinking about the situation of left-behind children in the absence of migrant parents, and this shift may bring more innovative insights into the study of left-behind children.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Dear students,

Thank you for participating in the survey of the children protection, please choose the answer which is closest to your actual situation. Sincere answers could help you and your friends have a better grow-up environment and also help us know more about your real thoughts. We assure you that we would keep your answers confidential according to the relevant national regulations. Thank you for your support and cooperation!

Instructions:

1. This questionnaire is divided into single choice questions and multiple-choice questions. For those marked as multiple-choice questions, please select multiple choices.

2. No specific requirement, please tick the best option with √.

3. You may ask for help if you do not understand something or are not sure how to answer a question.

4. Your answers are confidential and will not be known to parents, teachers or any others.

A. Personal information
A1. Your gender:
    1) Male   2) Female

A2. Your age ___

A3. Your grade and class ___

A4. You have ___ siblings (if you don't have any, please put "0").

A5. Your current residence:

1) City   2)Town   3) Countryside

A6. Your registration permit type is:

1) Urban permit

2) Rural permit

3) I don't know

A7. Your nationality in China:

1) Han   2) ethnical Korean   3) Man

B. Family information

B1. What is your parent(s) activity status?

	1.Employee	2.Self-employed worker	3.Private owner	4.Temporarily out of work/ unemployed	5.Economically inactive (e.g., looking after household/family, long-term sick)	6.Never worked	7.Deceased	8.Don't know
Father								
Mother								

B2. Which of the following best describe the sort of work your parents do? (If not currently working, please report the last occupation.)

	Father	Mother

1.Professional and technical occupations (e.g., doctor, teacher, engineer, artist, accountant)		
2.Higher administrator occupations (e.g., banker, executive in big business, high government official, union official)		
3.Clerical occupations (e.g., secretary, clerk, office manager, bookkeeper)		
4.Sales occupations (e.g., sales manager, shop owner, shop assistant, insurance agent)		
5.Service occupations (e.g., restaurant owner, police officer, waiter, caretaker, barber, armed forces)		
6.Skilled worker (e.g., foreman, motor mechanic, printer, tool maker, electrician)		
7.Semi-skilled worker (e.g., bricklayer, bus driver, cannery worker, carpenter, sheet metal worker, baker)		
8.Unskilled workers (e.g., laborers, porters, factory unskilled workers, etc.)		
9.Farm workers (e.g., farmers, tractor drivers, fishermen, etc.)		
10.Not applicable		
11.Don't know		

B3.   Are any of your parents working out of your hometown?

1) Yes   2) No

(If yes, please continue with B4. If no, please go directly to B18)

B4. How long has your parent or both parents been outside so far?

	Mother	Father
1. Less than 6 months		
2. More than 6 months but less than 1 year		
3. 1-2 years		
4. 3-4 years		
5. 5 years or more		
6. Not applicable, at home		

7. Deceased		

B5. How often does your parent or parents come back home?

	Mother	Father
1. Every month		
2. Once every half year		
3. More than once every half year		
4. Once per year		
5. More than once per year		
6. Once every 1-2 years		
7. 2 years above		
8. Not applicable, at home		
9. Deceased		

B6. Where does your parent or parents work?

	Mother	Father
1. Other cities in China		
2. South Korea		
3. Japan		
4. Other countries		
5. I don't know		

6. Not applicable (Non-migrant)	
7. Deceased	

B7. How often do you talk to your absent parent or parents?

	1.Every day	2.Several times a week	3.Once a week	4.Once a month	5.Once in two months or above	6.Less than once in two or more months	7.Not applicable (Non-migrant)	8.Deceased
Mother								
Father								

B8. How do you talk to your absent parent or parents?

	1.Calls on the phone	2.Messages/ calls on Internet	3.Others (Please provide the details)	4.Not applicable (Non-migrant)	5.Deceased
Mother					
Father					

B9. How much does being separated from your parent or parents impact your daily life?

	1.To a very great extent	2. To a great extent	3. To a moderate extent	4. To a small extent	5. Not at all	6. Not applicable (Non-migrant)	7. Deceased
Mother							
Father							

B10. Do you want to go to live with your parent or parents in other cities or countries?

1) Strongly want

2) Want but not that much

3) Neither want nor not want
4) Don't want that much
5) Don't want at all
6) Unsure

B11. Do you want your parent or parents to come back home to work so that they could stay with you?

1) Strongly want
2) Want but not that much
3) Neither want nor not want
4) Don't want that much
5) Don't want at all
6) Unsure

B12. How do you feel about your parents' decision to work away from your current area of residence?

1) Strongly favor
2) Somewhat favor
3) Neutral
4) Somewhat oppose
5) Strongly oppose

B13. How are your grades after your parent or parents left home?

1) My grades are better than before
2) My study stays the same
3) My grades get worse than before

B14. Who is taking care of your daily life after your parent or parents went to other cities or countries to work?

1) Father
2) Mother
3) Grandparent or grandparents
4) Siblings
5) Teacher
6) Other relatives

B15. Where are you living now?

1) Parent's home

2) Grandparent's home
3) Other relative's home
4) Teacher's home
5) Classmates/friend's home
6) Others ___

B16. How often do your guardians do the following things with you? (A guardian is someone who lives with you and takes care of you if your parents are away.)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. To take care of my daily life (cooking, doing my laundry, etc.)					
2. To play games with me in the leisure time					
3. To help guide or solve my problems					
4. Have deep talks with me to know more about my feelings					
5. To supervise my homework					
6. To travel to other cities or countries					
7.To visit museums, zoos, etc.					
8.To watch movies, matches, etc.					

B17. Do your guardians take you to see the doctor once you get sick?

1) Yes   2) No

B18. What is the highest education level of your family members?

	1.Primary school or below	2.Middle school	3.High school	4.Technical secondary/high school	5.College degree or above	6.Don't know
Mother						
Father						
Guardians (Please skip to the next question if your parent or parents are at home)						

B19. How often do your parents talk about the following topics with you?

	Mother				Father			
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Deceased	Never	Sometimes	Often	Deceased
1.How well I'm doing at school								
2.What happened in my daily life (what I eat for lunch or dinner, what I'm doing after school, etc.)								
3. If I get alone with the teachers, classmates and friends, etc.								
4. My worries, anxiety and other feelings								
5. The difficulties that I meet in my life								

B20. When the following things happen to you, who will be your preference to talk to? (Please make a ranking list from 1 to 5. "1"

means your first choice, "5" means your last choice)

	Parents	Siblings	Grandparents	Friends/ classmates	Teachers
1. When you simply want to have a chat with someone					
2. When you feel upset, anxious or nervous					
3. When you need help/ suggestions etc.					

B21. What is your parents' expectation of your grades?

1) Ranking the first ten in the class

2) Better than the average

3) The average would be just fine

4) Have no specific expectation

B22. What is your parents' expectation of your education level?

1) Middle school

2) Technical school

3) Technical high school

4) High school

5) College level or above

6) It would be better to quit school now

B23. How do you feel about this kind of expectation?

1) Strongly stressful

2) A little stressful

3) Neutral

4) Not that much stressful

5) Not stressful at all

B24. Who always supervises your homework after school?

1) My parents
2) Grandparents
3) Teachers
4) Siblings
5) Cram schools
6) Other relatives
7) No one

B25. Which of the following things are in your home?

	Yes	No
1. A desk to study at		
2. A room of my own		
3. Books to help with my study		
4. Books that I like to read after school (story books, science books, etc.)		
5. Computers (desk computers, laptops, etc.), tablet computers (iPad, etc.)		

C School information

C1. Are you boarding?

    1) Yes   2) No

C2. Do you like to go to school?
    1) Strongly like
    2) Like
    3) Neutral
    4) Dislike
    5) Strongly dislike

C3. Have you ever repeated a grade?
    1) No never
    2) Yes once
    3) Yes, twice or more

C4. How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I'm always late for the class.					
2. I always skip classes.					
3. When the teacher asks questions in class, I prefer to listen to other students and also the teacher's summary than sharing my own thoughts.					
4. When my grades are lower than other students, I feel very upset.					

5. I don't think studying is very important				
6. High grades or not, I actually do not care.				
7. Even if there's something I really want to do right now, for example, watching tv, play a game, etc. I still will not do it until I finish my homework.				
8. I feel that staying at school is boring.				
9. I have a timetable for my study after school, for example, at night and at weekends.				
10. I like to discuss my study with others.				
11. I like taking part in the school/class events.				
12. The more my parents want me to study hard, the less desire I have to study.				
13. I want to get more attention from my teacher.				
14. I feel I'm part of the class.				
15. I think those who break the school/class rules are very cool.				

C5. Which level are your grades ranking in the class?
1) Ranking in the top 10
2) Better than the average
3) Average

4) Worse than the average
5) Ranking in the last 10

C6. How many books have you read during the summer holiday?

1) None
2) 1-3
3) 4-6
4) 7-9
5) More than 10

C7. From Monday to Friday, how long do you spend on the following things after school?

	Not doing it at all	Less than 1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4 hours above
1.To finish my homework						
2. To attend cram school/additional classes						
3. To hang out with my friends/classmates						
4. To watch tv, to play cellphone or to play video games						
5. To do the chores						
6. To read books that I'm interested in						

C8. How long do you spend on the following things at weekends?

	Not doing it at all	Less than 1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4 hours above
1.To finish my homework						
2. To attend cram school/additional classes						
3. To hang out with my friends/classmates						
4. To watch tv, to play cellphone or to play video games						
5. To do the chores						
6. To read books that I'm interested in						

C9. How many best friends do you have?
1) None
2) 1-3
3) 4-7
4) 8 or more

C10. How many of your friends are in the following conditions?

	None of them	Some of them	Most of them
1. Always have a good grade			
2. Study very hard			
3. Plan to go to college			
4. Skip the class			
5. Break the school/class rules			

6. Have fights with others			
7. Smoke/drink alcohol			
8. Quit school			

C11. During the past 12 months, how often did you have the following experiences at school?

	Never or almost never	A few times a year	A few times a month	Once a week or more
1. Teachers cared about me less than they cared about other students.				
2. Teachers asked me about my family life.				
3. Teachers gave me the impression that they think I am less smart than I really am.				
4. Teachers disciplined me more harshly than other students.				
5. Teachers said something insulting to me in front of others.				
6. Teachers communicate with my family about my study.				

7. Teachers praise me.				

D Psychological Condition

D1. How strong do you feel people around you at school care about you?
  1) Strongly concerned
  2) Concerned
  3) Neutral
  4) Unconcerned
  5) Strongly unconcerned

D2. Do you feel satisfied with being yourself?
  1) Strongly satisfied
  2) Satisfied
  3) Neutral
  4) Dissatisfied
  5) Strongly dissatisfied

D3. How much are you satisfied with the following things?

	Strongly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Strongly satisfied
1. My life					
2. My study ability					
3. My health					
4. My personality					
5. My family condition					
6. The relationship between me and my parents					
7. The relationship between me and my friends					

8. The relationship between me and my teachers				

D4. Is there anyone you would like to thank the most?
1) Grandparents
2) Parents
3) Mother
4) Father
5) Friends
6) Teachers
7) No one

D5. How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I hope my parents could care more about my thoughts and my feelings.					
2. I hope that I can get some help from my parents when I'm in trouble.					
3. I like to be alone.					
4. I want to have more abilities to take good care of myself.					
5. I'm always the one who stays quietly when I'm with my peers/classmates.					
6. I get alone with my classmates.					
7. Even if I have to deal with something difficult, I don't panic and always stay calm.					
8. I'm always confident that I can handle everything when I'm in trouble.					
9. I believe that I will succeed as long as I work					

very hard.					
10. If there's something that I can't deal with, I will try another way until I solve it.					
11. I always try to consider things from others' perspective.					
12. I feel needed in the class.					
13. I have faith in my own future.					

D6. How close are you with the following people?

	Not at all close	Not that close	Neither not close nor close	Somewhat close	Very close
1. Mother					
2. Father					
3. Siblings (please skip it to the next if you don't have any)					
4. Teachers					
5.Guardian (please skip to the next if your parent(s) are at home)					
6. Classmates					

D7. Did you have any of the following feelings in the past 7 days?

	Never	Barely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I feel so depressed that nothing could cheer me up.					

2.I feel my life is meaningless.					
3. I feel nervous and anxious.					
4. I feel restless or fidgety.					
5. I feel hopeless.					
6.I feel that everything is difficult to deal with.					

(Please continue to D8 if you experienced the feelings mentioned above. Please skip to Section E if you didn't have feelings mentioned above)

D8. What would you usually do if you have those feelings which are mentioned above?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I keep them in mind and always deal with them by myself.					
2. I talk to my parents about them and ask for help and suggestions.					
3. I talk to my grandparents.					
4. I talk to my teachers.					
5. I always share them with my friends.					

6. I prefer to watch a movie, listen to music or play video games to get rid of my bad emotions.				

E Security Situation

E1. During the past 12 months, how often have you had the following experiences in school?

	Never or almost never	A few times a year	A few times a month	Once a week or more
1. I was excluded from group activities organized by class or school.				
2. I was asked to give some money by other students.				
3. I was threatened by other students.				
4. Other students took away my belongings.				
5. I got hit or pushed around by other students.				
6. Other students spread nasty rumors about me.				

(Please continue to E2 if you've experienced the things above.)
E2. To whom do you talk to first when you experience things above?
  1) My parents
  2) Siblings
  3) Teachers
  4) Friends/classmates
  5) Grandparents

6) No one
7) Others ___

Thank you very much for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire!

Appendix 2 Interview Guides

1. Interview Guide for Children

A. Basic Information

A1. Personal information: sex; age; which grade at school; nationality; any physical disease; household registration permits status; personality/characters; habits;

A2. Parents information: age; their occupation; highest education level; physical conditions; marital status and income (if convenient); information of their migration (where they work, how long they've been outside, how often they go home, the condition of their work place, etc.);

A3: Guardians' information: the relationship between you and guardians; age; sex; their occupation; highest education level; physical conditions; how long they've been taking care of you; what they usually do for you in daily life;

A4. School information: number of students/left-behind children (if known), which type of school it is (if it's only for ethnical Korean students, etc.); how many students in your class, how many children who have one parent or both parents work outside of hometown; if you are boarding (if yes, how long you stay at school/at home and where you live on weekends/in holidays);

B. Family's information

B1: Relationship with parents
1. If you are close to your parents; how often you talk to your parents;
2. What you usually talk about (if you share your daily life with them, if you ask for suggestions and help; if you are always happy/expecting to speak to them, what topics they usually talk to you);
3. If your parents supervise your study;
4. If your parents give you pocket money and how you use it;
5. What you think of your parents' working outside and leaving you at home;
6. What influence you feel on yourself which was brought about by parents' leaving;
7. How much you think your parents know about your life;
8. What you think your parents' expectation for your study/future is
9. What your parents do with you when they come home;
10. How you feel when your parents come home/leave to work again (if you are happy to see them, if you are upset when your parents leave, etc.);
11. What your parents do for you to make up their absence;
12. If there are any differences between parents taking care of you and guardians taking care of you;
13. If you feel satisfied with your family life;

B2. Relationship with guardians
1. Why you think your parents chose them as guardians to take care of you;
2. If they supervise your study;
3. What you usually talk about with guardians (if you share your daily life with them, if you ask for suggestions and help, if you are always happy/expecting to speak to them, what topics they usually talk to you);
4. How much you think they know about you;
5. What you expect the guardians to do for you;
6. What you think your guardians' expectation for your study/future is;

7. How well you feel your guardians are taking care of you in daily life/study;
8. What you usually do with your guardians after class/on weekends/in holidays;

C. School life:

1. What you usually do at school; what you think of your school life;
2. If you finish homework in time, how you feel about homework;
3. If you attend any cram schools;
4. If you like participating in events/activities; if you like making friends/talking to others; what kind of friends you have;
5. What your attitude towards study/future is;
6. What is the relationship between you and your teachers/classmates/friends; if you feel your teachers/classmates/friends like you;
7. What you think teachers teach/say to you;
8. What you expect from your school/teachers/classmates/friends;
9. Who you always talk to when you feel happy/upset/confused and want to share;
10. If you feel you're different from other students; if yes, what makes you feel this way;
11. If you've ever been threatened/teased; if yes, what you would usually do with it;

D. Personal Expectations:

1. Education expectation (what grade/which educational level you want to have, what you want your family/guardians/school/teachers to help you on study);
2. Personality/characters expectation (what kind of person you want to be, what kind of personalities you want to have); what you expect your parents to do for you when they are not home/when they come home; what you think you can do for them;

2. Interview Guide for Parents

A. Parents information

A1. Personal information: age; how many children you have; highest education level; household registration permits status; your nationality; your occupation; marital status and income (if convenient); information of your migration (where you work, how long you've been outside, how often you go home, the condition of you work place, etc.); why not take children with you; your thoughts about the challenges and opportunities which were brought about by working outside and leaving children at home;

A2. Relationship with children:
1. How often you talk to your children;
2. What you usually talk about with your children (if your children share their daily life with you, if children ask for suggestions and help, if children are always happy/expecting to speak to you);
3. Any plans about the reunion;
4. What influence you feel on children that is brought about by your leaving;
5. How much money you always send home (if convenient);
6. If you give your children any pocket money and how you give it to your children (giving them directly or giving the guardians instead);
7. If you know how they spend the money;
8. How much you think you know about your children;
9. What you do with your children when you go home/ leave to work;

10. How your children react when you go home/leave to work again (if they are happy to see you, etc.);
11. What you think your children need;

A3. Expectations for children:
1. Education expectation (what grade you want your children to have, which educational level you want your children to have, what you want for your children's future/career, what you expect from school/communities for children);
2. Personality/characters expectation (what kind of person you want your children to be or what qualities you want your children to have when they grow up, what you can do to help them have these good personalities);

B. Children's information

B1. Personal information: sex; age; which grade at school; nationality; any physical disease; household registration permits status; personality/characters; habits;

B2. Social interaction: (parents at home & parents out of hometown)
1. Behaviors at home/school;
2. Relationship with parents/guardians/teachers/classmates/neighbors;
3. If they like participating in events;
4. If they like making friends; what kind of friends they have;
5. What they usually do after school/on weekend/in holidays;

B3. Education: (parents at home & parents out of hometown)
1. Children's grades at school;
2. If they finish homework in time;
3. If you supervise children's study after school;
4. If they attend any cram schools;
5. Children's attitude towards study;
6. What you think their thoughts about their study/future;
7. How many efforts you make on their study;
8. How often you talk to children's teachers;
9. What role you think schools/teachers play in children's life; what you expect schools/teachers to do for them;

C. Guardians' information

C1. Personal information: the relationship between you and guardians; age; sex; their occupation; educational level; physical conditions; how long they've been taking care of the children; what they usually do for children in daily life

C2. Connection with guardians:
9. Why you chose them as guardians for your children;
10. How often you communicate with children's guardians;
11. What kind of conversation you usually talk about with them (children's behaviors at home/school, what children do in their daily life, if they eat/dress/study well, if they meet any difficulties or challenge, etc.);
12. What you expect the guardians to do for the children;
13. How much you think they know about your children;
14. What you think the challenges/opportunities are for guardians to take care of

them;

15. If there are any differences between parents taking care of their children and guardians taking care of them, what do you think about this issue;

3. Interview Guide for Guardians

A. Guardians information

A1. Personal information: age; how many children you are taking care of; highest education level; household registration permits status; your nationality; your occupation; marital status and income (if convenient);

A2. Relationship with children:
1. What you usually talk about with children (if children share their daily life with you, if they talk about parents with you, if children ask for suggestions and help, if children are always happy to speak to you, if they come to you to have deep talks);
2. What you usually do with children (if have any travels, if play games together, if read them stories etc.);
3. If their parents send remittance home; how you usually use the remittance;
4. How much you think you know about the children (how many friends they have and what their habits are, if you know how they spend the money you give to them, etc.);
5. What their attitude about what you say is; how you feel they think of you;
6. What you think of their parents' working outside and leaving children at home;
7. What you think of being a guardian (challenges and opportunities);
8. What you think they need;

A3. Expectations for children:
1. Education expectation (what grade/which educational level you want them to have, what you want for children's future/career, what you expect from school/communities for children);
2. Personality/characters expectation (what kind of people you want them to be or what qualities you want them to have when they grow up); what you expect their parents to do for them when they are not home/when they come home; what you think you can do for them;

B. Children's information

B1. Personal information: sex; age; which grade at school; nationality; any physical disease; household registration permits status; personality/characters; habits

B2. Social interaction: (parents at home & parents out of hometown)
1. Behaviors at home/school;
2. Relationship with parents/guardians/teachers/classmates/neighbors;
3. If they like participating in events/activities; if they like making friends/talking to others; what kind of friends they have;
4. What they usually do after school/on weekend/in holidays;

B3. Education: (parents at home & parents out of hometown)
1. Children's grades at school;
2. If they finish homework in time;
3. If you supervise children's study after school;

4. If they attend any cram schools;
5. Children's attitude towards study;
6. What you think their thoughts about their study/future;
7. How many efforts you make on their study;
8. How often you talk to children's teachers;
9. What role you think schools/teachers play in children's life; what you expect schools/teachers to do for them;

C. Parents' information

C1. Personal information: the relationship between you and children's parents; age; sex; their occupation; highest education level; physical conditions; marital status and income (if convenient); information of their migration (where they work, how long they've been outside, how often they go home, the condition of their work place, etc.); why not take children with them;

C2. Relationship with children:
1. How often they talk to children;
2. What they usually talk about with children (if children share their daily life with them, if children ask for suggestions and help, if children are always happy/expecting to speak to them, if they listen to their parents);
3. Any plans about the reunion;
4. What influence you feel on children which is brought about by parents' absence;
5. How much you think they know about their children;
6. What they do with children when they go home;
7. How the children react when parents go home/leave to work again (if they are happy to see them, if they are upset when parents leave, etc.);
8. What their parents do to make up their absence to the children;
9. How often you talk to their parents, what you talk about with them;
10. If there are any differences between parents taking care of their children and guardians taking care of them, what do you think about this issue;

4. Interview Guide for Teachers

A. Information of the class/school

A1. Basic information: the school's information (number of students/left-behind children, which type of school it is, the teaching quality of the school, if it's only for ethnical Korean students, etc.); in which grade your class is; how many students in your class; how many left-behind children; their household registration permit status; if they are boarding (if yes, how long they stay at school/at home); how teachers contact students' parents; how often teachers meet/talk to students' parents;

A2. Relationship with students:
9. What you usually talk about with students (if they share their daily life with you, if they talk about family with you, if they ask for suggestions and help, if they are happy to speak to you, if they come to you to have deep talks);
10. What you usually do with your students (any events, games, etc.);
11. How much you think you know about them (how many friends they have and who their friends are, what their habits are, if they're happy or not, etc.);
12. What their attitude about what you say/teach is;
13. What you think of their parents' working outside and leaving children at home;

14. What you think of being a teacher of left-behind children;
15. What you think they need;

A3. Expectations for students:
3. Education expectation (what grades/which educational level you want them to have, what you want for their future/career, what you expect family/communities to do for the students);
4. Personality/characters expectation (what you want them to behave in class, what kind of people you want them to be or what qualities you want them to have when they grow up); what you expect their parents/guardians to do for them; what you think you can do for them;

B. Left-behind students' information

B1. Personal information: sex; age; nationality; any physical disease; personality/characters; habits

B2. Social interaction: (parents at home & parents out of hometown)
5. Behaviors at school/in class (if they like answering questions, if they are disciplined, if they have any bad habits, etc.);
6. Relationship with parents/guardians/classmates;
7. If they like participating in events/activities;
8. If they like making friends/talking to others; what kind of friends they have; if they have friends from outside of school;
9. What they usually do at school;
10. If you feel any difference between left-behind children and children from non-migrant families;

B3. Education: (parents at home & parents out of hometown)
10. Students' grades at school;
11. If they finish homework in time;
12. If they have people who can supervise their study after school;
13. If they attend any cram schools;
14. Their attitude towards study/future;
15. How many efforts you make on their study;
16. What role you think parents/guardians play in students' life; what you expect parents/guardians to do for them;

C. Parents' information

C1. Personal information: age; sex; their occupation; educational level; physical conditions; marital status and income (if convenient); information of parents' migration (where they work, how long they've been outside, how often they go home, the condition of their workplace, etc.); why not　take children with them

C2. Connection with children:
11. How often you talk to their parents, what you talk about with them;
12. What influence you feel on children that was brought by parents' leaving;
13. How much you think they know about their children;
14. What they do with children when they go home;
15. How the children react when parents go home/leave to work again (if they are happy to see them, if they are upset when parents leave, etc.);
16. What their parents do to make up their absence to the children;

17. If there are any differences between parents taking care of their children and guardians taking care of them, what do you think about this issue;

D. Guardians' information

D1. Personal information: the relationship between children and guardians; age; sex; their occupation; educational level; physical conditions; how long they've been taking care of the children; what they usually do for children in daily life

D2. Connection with children:
1. How often you talk to their guardians;
2. What kind of conversation you usually talk about with guardians (children's behaviors at home/school, what children do after school, if they eat/dress/study well, if they meet any difficulties or challenge, etc.);
3. What you expect the guardians to do for the children;
4. How much you think the guardians know about the students;
5. What you think the challenges/opportunities are for guardians to take care of them (if their guardians are able to supervise the children; if they could take good care of them in the daily life, etc.)

Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet and Certificate of Consent

A Study on the Impact of Parental Migration on the Lives of Children Left Behind in Northeast China

25 June 2019

PLEASE NOTE THE ORIGINAL FORM WILL BE PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS IN CHINESE. THIS IS AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

Invitation to our study

If you are between 9 and 15 years old, I would like to invite you to participate in this research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others including your parents if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or you would like more information.

Background on the research

This research is mainly about how migrant parents impact the children who stay behind in China in their life, which could help better understand the lived experience of this group of young people in rural China by analysing their lived experiences (such as their education performance, behaviours, status of wellbeing, etc.) in terms of their family life, school life and community.

Aim of the research

This study is aimed to analyze the teenagers' education performance, daily behaviours, and self-reported wellbeing.

By providing an analysis of the lived experiences of the teenagers whose parents work out of their hometown, I'm hoping that this study could help parents and children better understand each other and could help children grow up in a better environment.

Process

The research is requiring you to complete a questionnaire and an interview, which contains information of your family life, school life, safety issues, etc. The questionnaire will be taken in the classroom which will be organized by the teachers and the researcher, and the interview will be taken at your home or anywhere you feel safe and convenient. Confidential space will be made available for you.

The questionnaire and the interviews require you to spend approximately 30 minutes and 40 minutes separately to complete, which don't contain any questions that you have trouble to understand or answer. During the process, you will be given enough time and the comfortable environment to complete. The interview will be audio recorded but it will not be shared with any institutions or individuals (including your

parents, teachers or anyone around you). You can choose to skip it if you don't want to answer a particular question during the interview.

Potential risks

You would be asked to provide some information about your behaviours and performance at school/home, including whether parents are away from you, how you feel when parents are not around etc., your education behaviours which include the ranking of your grades and your thoughts about teachers/classmates' attitude towards you, your wellbeing, etc., which might make you feel uncomfortable or depressed and might have possibilities to be considered sensitive in the process of filling the questionnaire and having an interview. However, any information that you provide to this study will not be shared with any institutions or individuals including your teacher, school administration along with your name or any ID number which could have a possibility to reveal your privacy. This study will make sure of the anonymity of every single child. Therefore, any risks of these will be minimized.

Informed consent

Should you agree to take part in this research project, you will be asked to sign a consent form before the survey gets started.

Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary and you will be free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. If you wish to withdraw, you simply need to notify the principal researcher (see contact details below). If any data have already been collected, upon withdrawal, your data will be destroyed, unless you inform the principal researcher that you are happy for us to use such data for the scientific purposes of the project. However, if any of the findings have been published already, you should understand that these cannot be retracted anymore while only anonymized data will be published.

Data gathered

The following data for you will be collected from both the questionnaire and the interview: your personal information (for example, age, gender, information of your registration permit, etc.), your family situation (parents' expectation, if your parents stay with you, how often you talk to them, etc.), school information (what you do after school, your grades in the class, etc.), psychological condition (how you feel in the past few days, if you feel satisfied with yourselves, etc.) and security condition (if you have been bullied, etc.).

Data generated over the course of this research will be stored on the University of Essex's file server which is backed up nightly. The University's computer network is protected from viruses by a firewall and the Sophos anti-virus program. A copy of the data will also be stored separately in a secure location on a data storage device to ensure that two working copies of the data exist at all times. This secondary copy will be programmed to conduct a back-up on a nightly basis.

Signed consent forms will be kept separately from individual data and locked in a drawer in the researcher's (locked) office until the end of the research, at which point it will be destroyed.

Findings

After the end of the research, I will publish the findings of the research and complete my PhD dissertation (all used data will be anonymised).   I am happy to provide you with a lay summary of the main findings and with copies of the articles published if you express an interest.

Concerns and complaints

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the researcher of the project (see contact details below). If you are still concerned or you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction, please contact the supervisors of the principal researcher (see below). If you are still not satisfied, please contact the department manager (Camilla Thomsen) of the principal researcher. If the problem is still not resolved to your satisfaction please contact the University's Research Governance and Planning Manager Sarah Manning-Press (see contact details below).

Ethical approval

This project has been reviewed on behalf of the University of Essex Social Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee and had been given approval.

Contact details

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ASSENT FORM (for children)

Title of the Project: A Study on the Impact of Parental Migration on the Lives of
Children Left Behind in Northeast China

Researchers: Shuai Wang (PhD candidate, University of Essex)

Please initial box

1. I am sure that I have read and do understand the Information
Sheet for the above study. I have had the chance to think about the
information, ask questions and have had these questions
answered well.

2. I understand that I am free to choose if I want to participate or
not, and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time
without giving any reason and without penalty.

3. I agree that I can complete the questionnaire.

4. I agree for myself to be interviewed.

5. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

6. I understand that I would be asked to provide some information about my behaviours and performance at school/home, which could be considered sensitive.

7. I understand if any of the findings have been published already, they cannot be cancelled, only anonymized data will be published.

8. I understand that the recognizable information provided will be securely stored and only the members of the research team directly involved in the project can have access to it, and it will be always stored safely.

9. I understand that information collected in this project might be shared appropriately and for publication of findings and all the information will stay completely anonymous.

10. I am happy for anonymized data to be stored at the UK Data Service.

11. I agree for myself to take part in the above study.

Participant Name   Date   Participant Signature

_____   _____   _____

Researcher Name   Date   Researcher Signature

_____   _____   _____

Appendix 4 Information of Interviews with Children, Parents, Grandparents and Teachers

Table 1 Informant Information for Children

ID[15]	Age	Minority	Grade	Guardians	Family status	Basic information
0601	14	Ethnic Korean	8	Grandparents	Both parents abroad	Both parents went to South Korea when he was 6 years old. His mother comes back to China once per year (mostly summer holiday) and his father comes back once every two or three years.
0602	13	Ethnic Korean	8	Father	Mother abroad	His mother has been working in South Korea since he started his primary school (8 years old), comes back once every year.
0603	14	Ethnic Korean	8	N/A	Parents at home	Her mother is working as a physics teacher in NO.6, father is working in the power plant.
0604	14	Ethnic Korean	8	N/A	Parents at home	Her mother is teaching Chinese in NO.6 and father works in government in Hunchun.
0605	14	Ethnic Korean	7	A teacher (one cousin's friend)	Both parents abroad	Both parents went to South Korea when she was 8 years old. Her mother comes back once every one or two years and father rarely comes home.

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[15] The format of each case number is xxxx: the first one "0" represents interviews for students, the second one represents the school number, the last two represent every single interviewee's specific number in order.

0606	14	Ethnic Korean	7	Grandmother	Both parents abroad	He was born in South Korea and came back to China when he was 4 years old, his father has legal permanent residency of South Korea and rarely comes back to China, his mother comes back once every six months.
0607	15	Ethnic Korean	8	Grandfather	Both parents abroad	Both parents have been working in South Korea for 4 years and they come back once per year (Chinese New Year).
0401	13	Ethnic Korean	5	Mother	Father abroad	His father has been working in South Korea since he was very little and comes back once every two years.
0402	11	Ethnic Korean	5	N/A	Parents at home	Her mother works in the Bureau of Education and father works in the power plant.
0403	13	Ethnic Korean	5	Grandparents	Both parents abroad	Both parents went to South Korea six months ago.
0404	13	Ethnic Korean	6	Grandmother	Both parents abroad	Both parents went to South Korea when she was in kindergarten. They come back once per year.
0405	12	Ethnic Korean	6	Mother	Father abroad	His father has been working in South Korea for two years and comes back once every six months.
0406	12	Ethnic Korean	6	N/A	Parents at home	His mother works as the vice-principal in NO.4 and father works in a hydro-electric station.
0407	11	Ethnic Korean	5	N/A	Parents at home	Both parents work in government in Hunchun.
0408	13	Ethnic Korean	6	Mother	Father abroad	Her father went to work in South Korea when she was born and comes back to China once every two or three years.

0801	15	Han	9	Mother	Father in another city	She came to her mother five months ago from the grandparents' home. Her mother is a meat seller, her father works in another city but will come to them in one year.
0802	13	Han	7	N/A	Parents at home	His parents grow mushrooms and sell them for a living.
0803	13	Han	7	Grandmother	Both parents in another city	Her parents went to another city to work 4 years ago, comes back once every two years.

Table 2 Informant Information for Teachers

ID[16]	Minority	Teaching subject	Identifier	Basic information
1601	Ethnic Korean	English	Informant 3001	She was a head teacher for 10 years but now only teaches English to students in the 9th grade.
1602	Ethnic Korean	Chinese	Informant 3002	A head teacher in the 8th grade.
1603	Ethnic Korean	Math		A head teacher in the 8th grade.
1604	Han	Physics	Informant 3003	She has been teaching physics for 12 years. (Students start to study physics when they are in the 8th grade.)
1605	Ethnic Korean	Chinese		She only teaches one class in the 7th grade for now.
1401	Ethnic Korean	Chinese		She is in charge of the 1st – 6th grades teaching management, meanwhile she is the head teacher in one class in the 6th grade.
1402	Ethnic Korean	Chinese	Informant 3004	She is teaching two classes in the 4th grade.
1403	Ethnic Korean	Math&Chinese		She has been a head teacher for 5 years, now teaching one class in the 5th grade.
1404	Ethnic Korean	Chinese		She is teaching two classes in the 3rd grade.
1405	Han	Chinese		She has been teaching as a Chinese teacher in the ethnic Korean school for more than 10 years. Now she is teaching students in the 6th grade.

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[16] The format of each case number is xxxx: the first number "1" represents teachers, the second one represents the school number, the last two represent every single interviewee's specific number in order.

1801	Han	Chemistry		He has been teaching chemistry for almost 15 years, now teaching students in the 9th grade.
1802	Han	English	Informant 3005	She is the head teacher of a class in the 9th grade.
1803	Han	Chinese	Informant 3006	She is the head teacher of a class in the 7th grade.

Table 3 Informant Information for Parents

ID[17]	Minority	Age	Education level	Occupation	Relationship with children	Family identifier	Basic information
3001	Ethnic Korean	40	High school	Teacher	Mother-daughter		She was a head teacher for 10 years but now teaches English to students in the 9th grade. She has a 9-year-old daughter, and the paternal grandmother (59 years old, she was a housewife) has been living with them since the child was born.
3002	Ethnic Korean	35	College	Teacher	Mother-Son		A head teacher in the 8th grade. She has a 9-year-old son, and the paternal grandmother (56 years old, retired) lives with them.
3003	Han	41	High school	Teacher	Mother-Son		She has been teaching physics for 12 years. She has a 10-year-old son, the maternal grandmother (62 years old, she was a farmer) lives with them.
3004	Ethnic Korean	33	College	Teacher	Mother-daughter		She is teaching two classes in the 4th grade. She has a 9-year-old girl, and the maternal grandmother (55 years old, she was a housewife) lives with them.

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[17] The format of each case number is xxxx: the first number "3" represents interviews with children's parents, the last three represent every single interviewee's specific number in order.

3005	Han	34	College	Teacher	Mother-Son		She is the head teacher of a class in the 9th grade. She has a 10-year-old son and the maternal grandfather (63 years old, retired) lives with them.
3006	Han	32	College	Teacher	Mother-daughter		She is the head teacher of a class in the 7th grade. She has a 9-year-old daughter, and the maternal grandmother (52 years old, she is working in a section of government) lives with them.
3007	Ethnic Korean	34	College	Civil servant	Mother-daughter	Informant 4004's daughter	She and her husband work in a section in government, her mother is living with them to help take care of the child (9 years old).
3008	Ethnic Korean	33	High school	Accountant	Mother-son	Informant 4011's daughter	She and her husband work in two different companies, their son is 11 years old and her father is living with them.
3009	Han	30	Middle school	Plumber	Father-son	Informant 4008's son	His family has been living with his parents since he got married, his wife is a housewife, and their son is 10 years old.
3010	Ethnic Korean	41	High school	Not working	Mother-son		She has a 14-year-old son and her parents-in-law live with them. Her husband is running a restaurant.
3011	Han	33	College	Sales	Mother-Son	Informant 4005's daughter	She has a 10-year-old son, and her mother came to her place to take care of the child when she divorced 2 years ago.
3012	Ethnic Korean	40	High school	Self-employed	Mother-daughter	Informant 4014's daughter	She and her husband own a small supermarket, their daughter is 9 years old and her father lives with them.

| 3013 | Han | 35 | High school | Secretary | Mother-daughter | Informant 4007's daughter | Her mother came to help take care of her 10-year-old child 3 years ago due to their busy work. |

Table 4 Informant Information for Grandparents

ID[18]	Minority	Age	Education level	Occupation	Relationship with children	Family type	Family identifier	Basic information
4001	Ethnic Korean	54	Primary school	Farmer	Grandfather-granddaughter	Left-behind family	Informant 0601's grandfather	He has been taking care of the child (Informant 0601, 14-year-old boy) since the child was 6 years old, whose parents have been working in South Korea for 8 years. The child's mother works in a restaurant in South Korea, comes back to China once a year (mostly summer holiday). The father works as a manager in a factory in South Korea, comes back once every two or three years.
4002	Ethnic Korean	60	Middle school	Retired	Grandfather-grandson	Left-behind family	Informant 0607's grandfather	He has been taking care of the child (Informant 0607, 15-year-old boy) for 4 years. The child's parents have been working in South Korea for 4 years and come back once per year (mostly Chinese New Year). The mother works in a makeup shop and father works at a construction site.

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[18] The format of each case' number is xxxx: the first number "4" represents interviews with grandparents, the last three represent every single interviewee's specific number in order.

4003	Ethnic Korean	58	Primary school	Not working	Grandmother-grandson	Left-behind family	Informant 0403's grandmother	She came back from South Korea 3 years ago, has been taking care of the child (Informant 0403, 13-year-old boy) with her husband for 6 months after the child's parents went to South Korea.
4004	Han	54	High school	Farmer	Grandmother-granddaughter	Non-migrant family	Informant 3007's mother	She went to Hunchun from the village to take care of her daughter's child (9 years old) when the child was born. She went home when the child started kindergarten and then returned to her daughter's house 1 year ago to take care of the child due to her daughter being too busy.
4005	Han	53	Middle school	Not working	Grandmother-grandson	Non-migrant family	Informant 3011's mother	She is living with her daughter and grandson (10 years ago) since her grandson was born, she went home when the child started kindergarten, her daughter divorced 2 years ago, and she came to take care of the child again.
4006	Ethnic Korean	60	High school	Mill owner	Grandmother-granddaughter	Left-behind family		Her daughter and son-in-law went to South Korea to work 4 years ago and she has been taking care of the child (14 years old) with her husband since then. The young couple always returns for Chinese New Year.
4007	Han	56	High school	Retired	Grandmother-granddaughter	Non-migrant family	Informant 3013's mother	She went to her daughter's place to help take care of the 10-year-old child 3 years ago due to the young couples' work.
4008	Han	55	Primary school	Plumber	Grandfather-grandson	Non-migrant family	Informant 3009's father	He shared part of his house and built some new rooms for his son's family so they can live in the same household, now the grandson is 10 years old.

4009	Han	55	Middle school	House painter	Grandfather-grandson	Left-behind family		He and his wife have been taking care of his grandson (12 years old) for 4 years, the child's mother went to another city to work 4 years ago and after one year the father went there too, both of them come back once a year.
4010	Ethnic Korean	57	Primary school	Farmer	Grandmother-granddaughter	Left-behind family		The child's parents went to South Korea to work 1 year ago and entrusted the child (9 years old) to her and her husband, while she came to Hunchun to take care of the child and her husband keeps farming at home.
4011	Ethnic Korean	60	Middle school	Sanitation worker	Grandfather-grandson	Non-migrant family	Informant 3008's father	He and his wife have been taking care of the child (11 years old) for 6 months, both of them are living with their daughter's family.
4012	Ethnic Korean	54	Primary school	Taxi Driver	Grandfather-grandson	Left-behind family		He and his wife started to take care of the child (9 years old) 2 years ago, the child's father went to South Korea to work 5 years ago, mother went there 2 years ago when the child started school.
4013	Han	58	High school	Not working	Grandmother-grandson	Non-migrant family		She is taking care of her son's child (12 years old). She had been taking shifts with child's maternal grandmother once a month until the child started school.
4014	Ethnic Korean	63	High school	Retired	Grandfather-granddaughter	Non-migrant family	Informant 3012's father	He came to take care of the child (9 years old) when the child was 7, before it was his wife providing childcare while she passed away 2 years ago.

Appendix 5

Table 5 Models of children's psychological wellbeing on parental migration - interactions with children's school belonging measures

Parental migration (Ref: No parents away)	Model 1 Depression	Model 3 Depression	Model 4 Depression
Mothers being away	2.507*	2.261*	3.330**
	(1.047)	(1.096)	(1.106)
Fathers being away	-0.197	0.0897	0.0455
	(0.645)	(0.671)	(0.670)
Both parents being away	-0.120	-0.146	0.0353
	(0.706)	(0.759)	(0.733)
Whether I like to go to school. (centered)	1.553***		
	(0.304)		
Mothers away X Whether I like to go to school	2.807**		
	(0.999)		
Fathers away X Whether I like to go to school	-0.0362		
	(0.602)		
Both parents away X Whether I like to go to school	0.813		
	(0.697)		
When the teacher asks questions in class, I prefer to listen to other. (centered)		-0.335	
		(0.242)	
Mothers away X When the teacher asks questions in class, I prefer to listen to other		-2.435*	
		(0.968)	
Fathers away X When the teacher asks questions in class, I prefer to listen to other		-0.00333	
		(0.545)	
Both parents away X When the teacher asks questions in class, I		-0.430	

prefer to listen to other

			(0.613)
I was excluded from group activities organized by class or school. (centered)			2.231**
			(0.794)
Mothers away X I was excluded from group activities organized by class or school			13.28*
			(5.548)
Fathers away X I was excluded from group activities organized by class or school			-1.776
			(1.228)
Both parents away X I was excluded from group activities organized by class or school			0.173
			(1.791)
Constant	4.781	1.675	0.780
	(2.899)	(2.967)	(2.931)
Observations	601	601	601
R-squared	0.171	0.099	0.107

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The socio-demographic variables are included in these models. High scores of children's depression represents the worse mental health.

Appendix 6

Table 1 Models predicting the relationship between parental migration and children's positive study engagement

VARIABLES	m1 Positive engagement	m2 Positive engagement
Child with one parent away	-0.0753	-0.0238
	(0.0931)	(0.108)
Child with both parents away	-0.275*	-0.208
	(0.118)	(0.128)
Child is girl		0.0167
		(0.0786)
Child's age		-0.171**
		(0.0601)
Child's grade		-0.0623
		(0.0704)
Number of siblings		0.0254
		(0.0680)
Child is ethnic Korean		-0.261**
		(0.100)
Mother's highest education level		-0.0301
		(0.0882)
Father's highest education level		0.158
		(0.0891)
Constant	0.0722	2.682***
	(0.0509)	(0.510)
Observations	622	622
R-squared	0.009	0.084

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 2 Estimated models of the relationship between parental migration and the factors of parental support

Parental migration (Ref: child with both parents in the house in the household)	Model 1 Child's belongings	Model 2 The length children spend on chores	Model 3 The supervision on child's study (Ref: parental supervision) No one	Others	Model 4 Child's satisfaction with family condition	Model 5 The frequency of the communication with mother	Model 6 The frequency of the communication with father	Model 7 Child's satisfaction with child-parent relationship	Model 8 Child's closeness to mother	Model 9 Child's closeness to father
Child with one parent away	-0.0639	0.0324	0.510	0.597*	-0.129	-0.455	-0.0754	-0.247*	-0.125	-0.104
	(0.0921)	(0.190)	(0.277)	(0.297)	(0.106)	(0.247)	(0.315)	(0.113)	(0.0975)	(0.105)
Child with both parents away	-0.145	-0.0244	3.302***	4.347***	-0.406**	-0.368	0.157	-0.519***	-0.459***	-0.269*
	(0.109)	(0.225)	(0.765)	(0.761)	(0.126)	(0.293)	(0.373)	(0.134)	(0.115)	(0.124)
Constant	4.229***	4.914***	-0.813	-1.762	4.807***	8.179***	7.369***	6.043***	5.452***	5.382***
	(0.436)	(0.899)	(1.359)	(1.448)	(0.503)	(1.169)	(1.488)	(0.535)	(0.461)	(0.496)
Observations	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622
R-squared	0.066	0.071			0.071	0.031	0.026	0.069	0.042	0.047

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The socio-demographic variables are included in these models. Multinomial logistic regression is used in Model 3 considering parents' supervision is a 3-category variable, supervision from parents is chosen as the base.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 3 Estimated OLS coefficients from a model of children's positive study engagement among children with different types of parental migration adjusting the factors of parental support

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Parental migration (Ref: children with both parents in the household)									
Child with one parent away	-0.00927	-0.0262	0.0129	0.0112	0.0217	-0.0182	0.0399	0.0106	0.00366
	(0.106)	(0.107)	(0.107)	(0.104)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.104)	(0.105)	(0.104)
Child with both parents away	-0.176	-0.207	-0.0801	-0.0987	-0.172	-0.220	-0.0743	-0.0823	-0.138
	(0.125)	(0.127)	(0.134)	(0.124)	(0.124)	(0.125)	(0.124)	(0.125)	(0.124)
Child's belongings	0.227***								
	(0.0464)								
The length child spends on chores		0.0752***							
		(0.0227)							
Parents' supervision on study			0.354***						
			(0.0948)						
Other caregivers' supervision on study			0.0838						
			(0.0971)						
Child's satisfaction with family condition				0.270***					
				(0.0395)					
The frequency of communication with mother					0.100***				
					(0.0172)				
The frequency of communication with father						0.0740***			

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
							(0.0135)		
Child's satisfaction with child-parent relationship							0.258***		
							(0.0371)		
Child's closeness to mother								0.275***	
								(0.0433)	
Child's closeness to father									0.263***
									(0.0402)
Constant	1.721**	2.313***	2.469***	1.383**	1.864***	2.137***	1.122*	1.184*	1.266*
	(0.538)	(0.518)	(0.508)	(0.527)	(0.516)	(0.508)	(0.540)	(0.548)	(0.538)
Observations	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622	622
R-squared	0.118	0.100	0.106	0.149	0.132	0.127	0.151	0.140	0.144

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The socio-demographic variables are included in these models.
*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 6 Mediation effects of parental migration on children's positive study engagement through factors of parental support

Mediation pathways	95% Conf. Interval (Point estimate in paratheses)			Effect interpretation
1. Parental migration – children's belongings are increased – children's positive study engagement is increased	(1) -.012743	.0628381	(0.021)	Including 0, no mediation effect.
	(2) -.0373644	.0850965	(0.020)	
	(3) -.1614945	.0164675	(-0.062)	
	(4) -.0612384	.0355975	(-0.012)	
2. Parental migration – children do less chores – children's positive study engagement is increased	(1) -.0309433	.0271795	(-0.001)	Including 0, no mediation effect.
	(2) -.0404695	.0447623	(0.005)	
	(3) -.0319021	.0761015	(0.013)	
	(4) -.0318255	.0229665	(-0.005)	

3. Parental migration – Parents are unable to provide children supervision on their study – children's positive study engagement gets decreased	(1) -.0801662 (2) -.267163 (3) -.1650682 (4) -.0798274	-.0059825 -.0956681 -.0052497 .005399	(-0.039) (-0.179) (-0.070) (-0.030)	(1), (2) and (3) exclude 0, the mediation analysis is significant. (4) Includes 0, no mediation effect.
4. Parental migration – children have less satisfaction with family condition – children's positive study engagement is decreased	(1) -.0043369 (2) .0281403 (3) -.2295388 (4) -.0727981	.1224314 .2124745 .0354023 .0562466	(0.062) (0.112) (-0.094) (-0.008)	(2) excludes 0, the mediation analysis is significant. (1), (3) and (4) include 0, no mediation effect.
5. Parental migration – children have less communications with mothers – children's positive study engagement is decreased	(1) -.0075033 (2) -.0231114 (3) -.2176929 (4) -.0980783	.0956434 .1296891 .0266793 .0332103	(0.042) (0.049) (-0.087) (-0.030)	Including 0, no mediation effect.
6. Parental migration – children have less communications with fathers – children's positive study engagement is decreased	(1) -.040511 (2) -.0784476 (3) -.0792422 (4) -.0680307	.0418355 .0602764 .1302485 .0516089	(0.001) (-0.009) (0.027) (-0.009)	Including 0, no mediation effect.
7. Parental migration – children feel less satisfied with the child-parent relationships – children's positive study engagement is decreased	(1) .0359485 (2) .0521687 (3) -.2902286 (4) -.0968193	.1530263 .242936 -.0196363 .0412622	(0.090) (0.143) (-0.141) (-0.026)	(1), (2) and (3) excludes 0, the mediation analysis is significant. (4) includes 0, no mediation effect.
8. Parental migration – children feel less close to mothers – children's negative study engagement is increased.	(1) .0224806 (2) .0752569 (3) -.2633836 (4) -.0518637	.1165273 .2588242 -.0088973 .0420543	(0.068) (0.160) (-0.125) (-0.007)	(1), (2) and (3) excludes 0, the mediation analysis is significant. (4) include 0, no mediation effect.
9. Parental migration – children feel less close to fathers – children's negative study engagement is increased.	(1) -.0088874 (2) -.0022629 (3) -.1485821 (4) -.0717351	.0949423 .1667591 .0518988 .0408927	(0.043) (0.078) (-0.045) (-0.015)	Including 0, no mediation effect.

Note: Considering that parental migration is a 3-category variable, I recoded it into four different types of dummy variables for the mediation

analysis (Ref: children with both parents in the household): In the column of the confidence intervals and point estimates, (1) shows the result of the mediation analysis between children with one parent being away and children's negative study engagement through the factors of parents' support; (2) shows the results for children with both parents being away; (3) shows the results for children with mother-only migrating; (4) shows the results for children with father-only migrating. Furthermore, the supervision of children's study is also a 3-category variable (no one=1, parents=2, others=3), to satisfy the requirements of the bootstrap method, it is recoded as a binary variable (parents=1, others=0) to focus on the effects of parental supervision in the mediation analysis.

Replications = 1,000.