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Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol. 12 (4)

<https://jett.labosfor.com/>

Date of reception: 20 Apr 2021

Date of revision: 19 Aug 2021

Date of acceptance: 18 Oct 2021

Toan Dong Van (2021). The Perception of Migrant Workers About the Psychological Difficulties. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol. 12(4). 95 – 100.

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined migrant workers' perceptions of psychological difficulties in a sample of 689 migrant workers in Binh Duong province, Viet Nam. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to above 35 years old at several companies in Binh Duong province. This study was analyzed based on a questionnaire that measured the level of psychological difficulty. A three-step data analysis plan was indicated that included: mean and standardize, correlation, and t-test. Research indicated that (1) The factor of internal psychological difficulties of migrant workers more than the factor of external psychological difficulties. (2) There is a correlation between internal psychological needs and external psychological needs. (3) Gender differences in psychological difficulty were observed. In addition, this study shows the perception of migrant workers about psychological difficulties at work.

Keywords: migrant workers, psychological difficulties, perception, Binh Duong province.

INTRODUCTION

Among the challenges faced by the migrant workforce are issues related to work documentation, poor living working conditions (e.g., lack of minimum wage, cramped and dirty labor camps, accidents, as well as deaths occurring in the workplace due to lack of safety (Pessoa, 2009; Mirici, 2018). Furthermore, according to Nguyen Duc Loc (2014), the average age of migrant workers is 18-28 years old after graduating from either secondary school or high school. Moreover, young people in rural areas with problematic family situations, limited ability to study, and challenging job opportunities migrate to cities to seek better jobs (Nguyen Duc Loc, 2014). Therefore, migrant workers can encounter many psychological difficulties (Phung Thi Huong, 2010).

Firstly, previous studies found a higher likelihood of psychological distress in people who claimed to have been discriminated against at work (Brondolo, Halen, Libby, & Pencille, 2011). For these reasons, they may have fewer feelings of confidence, self-doubt, anxiety, depression, and alcohol addiction (Brondolo, Halen, Libby, & Pencille, 2011; Pham Van Quyet & Tran Van Kham, 2015). From the reasons mentioned above, it can compromise personal and organizational well-being (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2015; Di Fabio, Kenny & Claudius, 2016).

Secondly, there are several reasons for psychological difficulties, including internal psychological difficulties (e.g., and can cause serious harm to mental health as a characteristic of migration, psychotic manifestations, mood, and anxiety) (Nicola Mucci et al., 2020; Tarsitani et al., 2016; Mucci et al., 2020). On the other hand, outside, for example, abuse, bullying, human rights and health, vocational training for migrant workers and their children (Pham Van Quyet & Tran Van Kham, 2015; Dauvergne & Marsden, 2014), the relationship conflict is a disagreement between colleagues, siblings, low income, poor housing conditions, lack of spiritual and cultural activities, low wages, lack of learning opportunities, limited communication skills, poor entertainment needs, and stress relief harm workers' morale life (Nguyen Thi Phuong Hoa et al., 2012; Phung Thi Huong, 2010; Pham Thanh Thoi, 2013; Nguyen Thuy Diem Huong & Ta Thi Thanh Thuy, 2013). In addition, in research by Mason and Salverda (2010), they also indicated that migrant workers have low characteristics in terms of wage, skill, and quality of work (Mason & Salverda, 2010; Wright, & Clibborn, 2019). Moreover, migrant workers often work in challenging, precarious jobs, without protection and social protection networks, in an increasingly competitive and potentially discriminatory labor market trial (Bettin & Cela, 2014; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012).

Finally, this study aims to fill in the gap left by previous studies by evaluating the psychological difficulties of migrant workers. In this study, we examined the relative psychological difficulties of migrant workers in Binh Duong. Based on the above research evidence, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The factor of internal psychological difficulties of migrant workers is higher than the factor of external psychological difficulties.

Hypothesis 2: There is a correlation between internal psychological needs and external psychological needs.

Hypothesis 3: There is a difference between male and female migrant workers in terms of psychological difficulty.

DATA ANALYSIS

Participant and process

This study analyzed the data of 689 participants in Binh Duong province, Vietnam. There are 411 women (59.1%) and 278 men (40.3%) out of 689 Vietnamese people surveyed. In terms of age, those under the age of 20 comprised 76 (11%), those between the ages of 20 and 30, 537 (77.9%), and those over the age of 35 comprised 76 (11%). Regarding academic standards, the secondary school obtained 260 (37.7%), high school graduated with 398 (57.8%), and college was completed with 31 (4.5%). Regarding income, under 5 million Vietnamese dong was 19 (2.7%), from 5 to 8 million Vietnam dong was 210 (30.5%), from 8 to 10 million Vietnam dong was 374 (54.3%), above ten million Vietnam dong was 86 (12.5%). Finally, migration time was less than one year, 39 (5.7%), 1 to 3 years was 212 (30.8%), 3 to 5 years was 335 (48.6%), more than five years was 5 (14.9%), respectively.

Measurement

The questionnaire assesses the level of psychological difficulty related to subjective and objective factors of migrant workers with 34 items and seven groups, including Group 1: The accommodation conditions; Group 2: Confidence in relationships; Group 3: The efforts for myself; Objective factors include: Group 4: The terms of demand, job motivation; Group 5: The living and working environment; Group 6: The social relationships; Group 7: The living conditions with 20 items. Cronbach’s alpha of the original questionnaire was 0.80. To transform the discrete values into ranks, the distance value was calculated as $(Maximum - Minimum)/n = (5 - 1)/5 = 0.8$.

Table 1: The meanings of the ranking

Level	Mean
Never	$1 \leq \bar{X} \leq 1.8$
Seldom	$1.81 \leq \bar{X} \leq 2.60$
About Half the Time	$2.61 \leq \bar{X} \leq 3.40$
Usually	$3.41 \leq \bar{X} \leq 4.20$
Always	$4.21 \leq \bar{X} \leq 5.0$

Data analysis

We used SPSS 20.0 software to analyze all the data in this study. First, we used descriptive statistics, including the mean, and correlated the main variables. Secondly, we analyze the mean and standardize in the association between internal and external factors that cause the psychological difficulties of migrant workers. Thirdly, the correlation between internal and external factors that cause the psychological difficulties of migrant workers. Finally, we used the t-test for gender grouping.

RESULTS

The factor of internal psychological difficulties of migrant workers is higher than the factor of external psychological difficulties.

The results in table 1 show that the participants scored in the average range on psychological difficulty. Specifically, the mean score on the accommodation conditions that migrant worker's exception was ($M= 3.44$; $SD=0.73$). The confidence in relationships that migrant worker's exception was ($M= 3.06$; $SD=0.76$). The efforts for myself that migrant worker's exception was ($M=2.17$; $SD=0.84$). The terms of demand, the job motivation for migrant worker's exception was ($M=3.06$ $SD=0.76$). The living and working environment that migrant worker's exception was ($M=3.17$; $SD=0.62$). The social relationship that migrant worker's exception was ($M=3.62$; $SD=0.56$). The living conditions that migrant worker's exception was ($M=3.54$; $SD=0.73$). Mean, standard deviation, and percentage values about these variables are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 2: Subjective factors affecting the psychological difficulties of migrant workers

Variable	Level		
	M	SD	R
1. The accommodation conditions	3,44	0,79	3
2. The confidence in relationships	3,06	0,76	5

3.	The efforts for myself	2,17	0,84	7
4.	The terms of demand, the job motivation	2,47	0,53	6
5.	The living and working environment	3,17	0,62	4
6.	The social relationship	3,62	0,56	1
7.	The living conditions	3,54	0,73	2

M: Mean; SD: Standardize; R: Ranking

There is a correlation between internal psychological needs and external psychological needs.

The results from table 2 indicated that the accommodation conditions were significantly positively correlated with confidence in relationships, the living and working environment, social relationships, and the living conditions (.38 to .50, $p < .001$). However, the accommodation conditions were significantly negatively correlated with my efforts and the terms of demand, and my job motivation (-.16 to -.12; $p < .01$). On the other hand, the confidence in relationships was significantly positively correlated with my efforts, the terms of demand and job motivation, the living and working environment, the social relationships, and the living conditions (.14 to .57, $p < .01$).

The efforts I made for myself were significantly positively correlated with the terms of demand, job motivation, and the living and working environment (.15 to .65, $p < .01$). Furthermore, my efforts to improve myself were significantly negatively correlated with my social relationship ($r = -.43$; $p < .01$) and living conditions ($r = -.12$; $p < .01$). In terms of demand, job motivation was significantly positively correlated with the living and working environment ($r = .20$; $p < .01$). However, the terms of demand and job motivation were significantly negatively correlated with the social relationship ($r = .29$; $p = .01$) and the living conditions ($r = .43$; $p < .01$). The living and working environment were significantly negatively correlated with the social relationships and the living conditions (-.30 to .43, $p < .01$). The social relationship was significantly related to the living conditions ($r = .51$; $p < .01$).

Table 3: Correlation between subjective and objective factors affecting the psychological difficulties of migrant workers

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. The accommodation conditions	1						
2. The confidence in relationships	.39**	1					
3. The efforts for myself	-.16**	.14**	1				
4. The terms of demand, the job motivation	-.12**	.25**	.65**	1			
5. The living and working environment	.48**	.57**	.15**	.21**	1		
6. The social relationship	.50**	.19**	-.43**	-.26**	.30**	1	
7. The living conditions	.49**	.30**	-.12**	-.08*	.43**	.51**	1
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.							

There is a difference between male and female migrant workers in terms of psychological difficulty.

The results of the t-test in **table 3** show that there was a significant difference in the scores for men ($M = 11.25$, $SD = 1.55$) and women ($M = 11.10$, $SD = 2.00$) external factors: $t(1.1) = 23.36$, $p = 0.30$. There was no significant difference in the scores for men ($M = 9.65$; $SD = 1.60$) and women ($M = 10.82$; $SD = 1.24$) on external factors: $t(-10.77) = 28.50$; $p < .01$.

Table 4: Results of the T-test between men and women

Variable	Group				df	t	p
	Men		Women				
	M	SD	M	SD			
External factors	11.25	1.55	11.10	2.00	687	1.1	.30
Internal factors	9.65	1.60	10.82	1.24	687	-10.77	.001

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

DICUSSION

First, our results show that the psychological difficulty factor is higher on the outside than on the inside, which rejects **hypothesis 1**. This result considers with previous studies found an underlying determinant of psychological distress problems: low confidence, low self-efficacy, anxiety, depression, and either drug or alcohol addiction (Brondolo, Halen, Libby, & Pencille, 2011; Pham Van Quyet & Tran Van Kham, 2015; Dauvergne & Marsden, 2014). Therefore, this subjective factor directly affects the psychological difficulties of migrant workers in terms of awareness, attitude, and behavior. However, our study found that external factors

have a higher impact. Furthermore, in Vietnam, migrant work forms a significant workforce in many parts of the country. Many people work on daily wages or a fixed salary, with no job security (Singh, 2020; Mason & Salverda, 2010; Wright, & Clibborn, 2019). For these reasons, personal and organizational well-being can be compromised (Di Fabio, Kenny & Claudius, 2016). Specifically, to prove the above point through exchanges and interviews with three participants about psychological difficulties, they show that:

Sometimes there is a lot of pressure, which is not heavy. Still, because of the stressful time, strict rules ... sometimes I also intend to go out to work. Every day, my work is not very stable. The most pressure is time because every day you race, pick up your child to school..[NTA]

With the current salary and job, buying a house to settle down is just a dream, not knowing when to calculate the balance with the salary of the couple working as workers and money to pay for the cost of living, for children to study, for parties". [PTA]

Therefore, comparing subjective and objective factors' impact shows that inside elements have fewer difficulties than outside factors. To reduce difficulties, it is necessary first to solve the influencing factors, help migrant workers be aware of the difficulties caused by the factors, and help workers choose how to solve the problem and adapt to their own work and life.

Second, our results show a correlation between internal and external psychological needs, supporting **hypothesis 2**. Previous studies indicated the relationship between low income, the living conditions of culture, poor spirit, low salaries, lack of learning opportunities, limited communication skills, and loss of income. Moreover, the disadvantages of meeting the needs of entertainment and stress relief have a negative impact on the mental life of the workers (e.g., manifestations of mental disorders, mood, anxiety) (Nguyen Thi Phuong Hoa et al., 2012; Tarsitani et al., 2016; Mucci et al., 2016). These findings mean that external constraints have an impact on internal factors for migrant workers. More specifically, if external factors positively impact, it can lead to a positive psychological effect of citizens entering or vice versa.

Finally, this study also found a difference between male and female migrant workers in terms of psychological difficulty, which supports **hypothesis 3**, which is consistent with previous studies indicating that migrant workers often work in difficult jobs, with no protection or social protection networks, in an increasingly competitive and potentially discriminatory labour market (Bettin & Cela, 2014; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012). For these reasons, the mental health of migrant workers can be compromised (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2015; Di Fabio, Kenny & Claudius, 2016). In particular, women are more vulnerable than men, so the changes in their living environment, differences in culture, customs, and habits also affect migrant workers' psychological difficulties.

CONCLUSION

This study provides significant findings that understanding migrant workers are the starting point of analyzing why migrant workers experience psychological difficulties to help migrant workers be aware of psychological problems and the factors that cause them in their work. Furthermore, this study analyzed migrant workers' difficulty in understanding their psychological issues by building some suggested counseling programs to help migrant workers be aware of their psychological difficulties.

CONTRIBUTION AND LIMITATION

There are several limitations to this study that should be noted. First, this study is merely based on the perspective of migrant workers in Binh Duong. Future studies may consider collecting data from various provinces in Vietnam or cross-cultural in other nations. Secondly, data from the migrant worker side may allow researchers to conduct a comparative study on the gender of migrant workers, providing richer information on factors affecting the psychological difficulties of migrant workers. However, the research is still limited to only a small group of migrant workers. Future studies should replicate this study by expanding and comparing the larger sample to include all provinces in Vietnam. Finally, the design of the limiting cross-section determines the causal relationship between the variables. Future research should consider longitudinal or experimental design to examine the causal relationship between the variables further and monitor the psychological changes of migrant workers over time.

Our findings have several important implications for migrant workers. First, theoretically, the findings shed light on why migrant workers experience psychological difficulties to help migrant workers be aware of psychological difficulties and the factors that cause them in their work and life in Binh Duong province. Therefore, psychologists have a basis for developing a psychological counselling room, a reception room for workers when they need to exchange and meet to receive support to overcome psychological difficulties. Second, psychological difficulties encountered by migrant workers are factors for two reasons: inside and outside. This basis helps the public have stable jobs, a good income to afford to live, and policies to attract and treat migrant workers, participate in activities, and contribute to and enjoy insurance according to the employees' interests. Finally, the Youth Union Division organizes for migrant workers, engages in many

activities, creates a good environment, organizes cultural and sports exchanges, conferences, evaluating, and praising migrant workers for their work spirit.

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