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Abstract

Moving Away from Origin: Does Migration Effect Health Risk Behaviors?

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The health of individuals is bound up with development though many studies related to development have ignored this component. On the other side, with the growing number of migrants, both internal and international, migration has become a fundamental and inevitable part of the development process of a place or a country. Therefore, the present paper brings the issues of migration and health together. It should be clarified here that migration and health in the present study is explored from a micro perspective.

Several studies have been carried out to understand reasons for migration in developing countries; yet little has been done to understand health consequences of migration. Using longitudinal data from 2000- 2003 Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System (KDSS) of the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Thailand, this paper explores whether migration has any effect on the health of migrants. Health risk behaviours, i.e., smoking, alcohol drinking and stimulant drinking are used as proxies for measuring health. The analyses made use of the data obtained from interviews of 20,280 individuals aged 15 and older, both male and female migrants and non-migrants. In order to assess the effect of migration on health risk behaviours, the analyses constructed three models using smoking, alcohol drinking and stimulant drinking as outcome variables. Ordinal logistic regression analyses, taking migration as the main predictor and socio-economic, demographic and environmental factors as control variables, reveal that migration does have positive and significant effect on health risk behaviours. Overall, the results presented in this paper suggest appropriate interventions aimed at reducing health risk behaviours among the migrants.