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Social networks and societal position are key drivers of the spiritual well-being of the parents of migrants in rural West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

India has been upholding the traditional custom of multigenerational co-residence and is well known for its spiritual legacy. However, the era of globalization and urbanization has reshaped family structures, with adult migration influencing older parents' spiritual journeys. The study investigates the differences in spiritual well-being among parents of migrants and non-migrants and the influence of social-familial position and social network on spiritual well-being using a cross-sectional survey conducted by 500 elderly parents. The study revealed that the mean score of spiritual well-being was significantly lower among parents of migrants compared to parents of non-migrants. Social networks enhance the spiritual well-being of elderly parents considerably. Social networks enhance spiritual well-being, particularly for parents of migrants, to a greater extent than among parents of non-migrants. Moreover, the study found that household decision-making roles emerged as a significant predictor of spiritual well-being, with more substantial effects observed among parents of migrants compared to non-migrants. Policymakers and social services providers should focus on strengthening social network structures for elderly parents, especially for parents of migrants. This could foster more robust social networks and empower older individuals to participate in household decision-making processes, which will ensure better spiritual well-being in the context of adult-child migration.

KEYWORDS

Ageing; multigenerational co-residence; social network; spiritual well-being

Background

Spirituality holds a central position in the study of aging in India as the increasing elderly population and its profound impact on the lives of older adults (Barman et al., 2022; Chokkanathan, 2013; Jaihind Jothikaran et al., 2023). Convictions, values, customs, and practices comprise spirituality, which is an inherent and dynamic characteristic of human beings. It facilitates the discovery of profound significance, intentions, and associations with existence, oneself, kin, society, the natural world, and matters regarded as sacred (Puchalski et al., 2014). Spirituality and religion often intersect, with religious

practices like prayer, meditation, and rituals serving as a pathway for self-realization (Edara, 2017). These practices deepen connections with the divine, promote inner peace, and facilitate personal growth. While spirituality extends beyond religious frameworks, religious practices provide setup, direction, and community support for spiritual journeys (Coleman et al., 2016). Previous studies have identified a positive correlation between spirituality and population ageing (Coleman et al., 2016). Despite societal secularization, older people continue to experience greater spirituality and religious participation in contemporary culture (Barman et al., 2022). Spirituality has positive effect on elderly physical, mental, and psychological health (Moberg, 2012; Salman & Lee, 2019). Holistic person-centered healthcare places a high value on fostering individual's inner peace, which is closely related to their spiritually based beliefs, values, and practices (Goh et al., 2014).

India is widely recognized for its profound spiritual legacy and the custom of co-residence of multiple generational families. The practice of religion has historically held a significant place in Indian society, influencing every aspect of life and being particularly noticeable among elderly person (Medora, 2007). The co-residence of multiple generations under one roof has been significantly impacted by the Hindu principle 'Law of Karma,' which fosters a sense of care and support among its members (Chadha, 2004). Although the practice of multigenerational families residing together is purportedly rooted in Hinduism, families following other religions also practice similar living arrangements (Niranjan et al., 2005). The traditional joint family system in India is being reshaped by socio-economic and demographic factors such as lower child numbers, higher life expectancy, and the involvement of young women in economic activities (Freed & Freed, 1982; Rajan & Kumar, 2003; Ram, 2012). The increasing migration of young individuals is reshaping family structures and economic dynamics and causing diverse changeovers in individual lives (Rajan & Kumar, 2003; Sonderegger & Täube, 2010). Adult migration also has an influence on the family position, social status, and social network of their parents (Srivastava et al., 2021).

The impact of spirituality on the lives of elderly individuals has been the subject of a multitude of studies that have attempted to quantify the association between spirituality and well-being. Studies revealed spirituality improved physical, mental, and psychological well-being of older adults (Mishra et al., 2017; Salman & Lee, 2019). However, only a small number of studies focus on factors associated with spirituality. Gender, faith, place of residence, and caste system are substantial determinants that might influence an individual's level of involvement in spirituality. Studies by Jahan and Khan (2014) and Chokkanathan (2013) revealed variations in spiritual beliefs and practices influenced by the support individuals receive from family members and others. A study by Simpson et al. (2008) found gender differences in spirituality. Nevertheless, the existing body of literature fails to address the

various factors that influence the spirituality of elders, specifically in the context of India. To fulfil this backdrop, this study aimed to address the question of whether a social-familial position and social network influence spirituality among parents of migrants and non-migrants.

Methods

Study site

Rural regions of the Koch Bihar district in West Bengal were the setting for this study. After Uther Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan, West Bengal ranks fourth in migration for employment purposes (Census of India, 2011); internal migration is also prevalent (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2012). In addition to having the lowest TFR in India (IIPS & ICF, 2021), West Bengal is predominantly rural, with a high proportion of elderly residents (IIPS, NPHCE, MoHFW, HSPH, & USC, 2020). Rural Koch Bihar is home to most of the state's elderly and has a higher outmigrant growth rate (Debnath & Kumar Nayak, 2018). Consequently, even more concern is warranted for older people who remain behind. 25°57'47"to 26°36'20" North and 88°47'44"to 89°54'35" East are the geographical extensions of the Koch Bihar district. Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar are in the North, while Assam and Bangladesh border it to the East, west, and south. Agriculture and remittances constitute the majority of the livelihood.

Koch Bihar, a kingdom ruled by the Koch Rajbanshi people from 1515 to 1949, experienced significant changes in population growth after the 1947 partition (Dutta, 2011). The 'Naxalbari revolt' in 1967 led to the 'jotedari-adhiari system', characterized by a contradiction between capital and labor (Bhattacharyya, 2009; Sarkar, 2006). The decline in the global coffee market in 1986 led to a rise in tea demand in North Bengal, which transformed agricultural land into tea plantation land. However, rapid urbanization and industrialization forced native Rajbanshi landowners to give up their property (Bhattacharyya, 2009). Land Acquisition Act reforms in 1953, 1967, and 1978–81 significantly impacted Rajbanshi jotedars (Adhikary, 2018), affecting their lifestyle and socio-economic status, particularly affecting elderly residents.

Data source and sampling design

This study uses primary data from a cross-sectional survey conducted in the Koch Bihar district of West Bengal from March to June 2023. We conducted our survey in the Koch Bihar district of West Bengal, which we deliberately selected and sampled in three stages to ensure that we reached our intended population. Subdivision is chosen in the initial phase, followed by villages and

individuals in the subsequent second and third phases. Twelve blocks comprise the five subdivisions of the Koch Bihar district: Cooch Behar Sadar, Dinhata, Mathabhanga, Mekhliganj, and Tufanganj. The Tufanganj subdivision was selected by simple random sampling because of the consistent socio-economic and demographic attributes of district. We classified villages into three strata according to their population size. The probability proportion to size (PPS) method was employed to select ten and eight villages from each stratum, respectively, from the Tufanganj-I and Tufanganj-II blocks. A total of 250 parents of migrants and 250 parents of non-migrants were interviewed through a systematic random sampling method, with 99% response rate. Furthermore, twenty case studies were conducted, and ten Key Informant Interviews provided their insights. This survey conformed to the proper research protocols to ensure the reliability and credibility of the data collected.

Variables description

Outcome variable

The outcome variable was Spiritual Well-being, which was in continuous form. This research adopted the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS), which was developed by Ray Paloutzian and Craig W. Ellison, for assessing spiritual well-being (Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991). Responses were gathered for each of the twenty items about SWBS using a six-point Likert scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Religious well-being (RWB) was assessed on ten statements that contained the word ‘God.’ Ten statements without religious meaning assessed Existential Well-being (EWB). These statements were related to life direction, purpose, and satisfaction. Half of the items were framed negatively to reduce potential response bias. Responses that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” were coded as 1 to 6. Responses to negatively framed items were recorded in the opposite direction, with 1 representing “strongly agree” and 6 representing “strongly disagree.” A simple count method was used to measure the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) by combining Religious Well-being (RWB) and Existential Well-being (EWB) (Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991). In this present study, the scale reliability coefficient for SWBS was 0.95.

Explanatory variable

The primary explanatory variables in the present study were social position and social networks. Social position was evaluated according to participation in social events and the involvement in household decision-making processes about the marriage of offspring, property transactions, significant purchases, education of children or grandchildren, organization of social events within

the household, and other related matters. Additionally, perspectives regarding the change of familial and societal roles were collected.

This study used a multidimensional model of social networks that reflects social networks with children, friends, family, and confidants, as well as the overall social network based on the sum of twelve items developed by Glass et al. (1997), which was also used by Singh et al. (2016) to measure the social network of Indian rural elders. In this scale, summary scores for each specific form of the network were constructed using the quantity and frequency of visual and non-visual contracts with individuals in each type of network. These four component network variables were added to create a total social network score by simple count methods. The overall social network scale reliability coefficient was 0.68 in this study.

Socio demographic characteristics

The respondent's age and years of schooling were recorded as continuous variables. The respondent's gender was classified as either male or female. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was applied to determine the household assets score. To check the adequacy of the sample, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used, obtaining an overall KMO score of 0.83. The respondents' marital status and living arrangement were recorded in a binary format to show their current marital status and living arrangements. Meeting economic needs was recorded as reliance on others vs. self-earning/bank balance/pension. Meeting economic needs and receiving old-age pension variables were coded in binary form to assess the financial dependency of older parents.

Analytical approach

The research used descriptive statistics to provide insights into the social position and social networks of elderly parents of migrants and non-migrants. A proportional test was used to evaluate the significant difference in spiritual well-being among parents of migrants and non-migrants. In addition, linear logistic regression was used to examine the relationship between social position, social networks, and spiritual well-being. The study included unadjusted and adjusted β coefficients with 95% confidence intervals. Model-I presented the unadjusted association between these two variables, whereas model-II presented socio-demographic and economic factor-adjusted β coefficients. The statistical analyses were performed using STATA-14.

Ethical statement

Ethical approval was obtained from the Students Research Ethics Committee of the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)

before conducting the survey. The objective and methodology of the data collection were explained to the district social welfare officer and Gramme Pradhan in order to secure their cooperation and consent. Respondent's were solicited and interviewed for their willingness to participate; we also explained the study's objectives, approach, and time to complete the schedule. The respondents were also informed about study confidentiality and the option to decline or end the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable answering any question. We were not given any incentives to respondents to participate in the survey.

Findings

Descriptive characteristics of elderly parents of migrants and non-migrants in rural West Bengal, India

Table 1 presents the profiles of socioeconomic status, demographic characteristics, social position and network, and spiritual well-being among 495 elderly parents of migrants and non-migrants, including 248 females and 247 males in this study. Among parents of migrants, the mean age was 66.24 years (SD: 0.38), while among parents of non-migrants, it was 67.40 years (SD: 0.52). About 54% of parents of migrants were male, whereas about 55% were females among parents of non-migrants. Among parents of migrants, the mean years of schooling were 2.52 years and 2.11 years for their counterparts. Approximately 54.33% of elderly parents of migrants were currently working, compared to 39% of parents of non-migrants. Approximately 62% of parents of migrants were married at the time of the survey, compared to 59.585% of parents of non-migrants. Around 37% of elderly parents of migrants live alone or only with their spouse, compared to 21.16% of their counterparts. Parents of migrants had average household assets score of -0.12 (SD:0.15), whereas it was 0.13 (SD:0.13) for elderly parents of non-migrants. About 30% of parents of migrants were dependent on others to meet their economic needs, and 53% received old-age pensions. Meanwhile, it was 36% and 57.68% among parents of non-migrants, respectively. Elderly parents of migrants, on average, had 3.36 living children, 2.70 close relatives, and 2.42 close friends, while parents of non-migrants had an average of 3.50 living children, 3.39 close relatives, and 2.25 close friends. Among parents of migrants, 75.98% had confidants to share their personal feelings, compared to 73% among parents of non-migrants. Around 25% of both parents of migrants and non-migrants had familial functional roles. Moreover, around 96% of elderly parents of migrants participated in social events, whereas 91% of parents of non-migrants did so. (Table 1)

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of elderly parents of migrants and non-migrants in rural West Bengal, India, 2023.

Background characteristics	Parents of migrants		Parents of non-migrants	
	Observation (N)/mean	Percentage (%) /SD	Observation (N)/mean	Percentage (%) /SD
Total	254		241	
Age	66.24	0.38	67.40	0.52
Sex				
Male	138	54.33	109	45.23
Female	116	45.67	132	54.77
Year of schooling				
Year of schooling	2.52	0.19	2.11	0.18
Currently working status				
Currently working	138	54.33	93	38.59
Currently not working	116	45.67	148	61.41
Marital status				
Currently married	159	62.60	144	59.75
Currently not married	95	37.40	97	40.25
Living arrangement				
Alone or only their spouse	95	37.40	51	21.16
With spouse & children or others	159	62.60	36	78.84
Household Asset score				
Asset score	(-)0.12	0.15	0.13	0.13
Met economic need				
Self-earning/bank balance/pension	179	70.47	154	63.90
Depending on others	75	29.53	87	36.10
Old age Pension				
Yes	135	53.15	139	57.68
No	119	46.85	102	42.32
Mean no. of living child	3.36	0.84	3.50	0.10
Mean no. of close relatives	2.70	0.11	3.39	0.21
Mean no. of close friends	2.42	0.11	2.25	0.12
Confidants				
No	61	24.02	63	26.14
Yes	193	75.98	178	73.86
Functional household head				
No	66	25.98	61	25.31
Yes	188	74.02	180	74.69
Social event participation				
Yes	242	95.65	219	90.87
No	11	4.35	22	9.13

Source: Authors calculated from Survey data.

Subjective well-being of elderly parents of migrants and non-migrants in rural West Bengal, India

The items and domain-specific mean scores of spiritual well-being (SWBS) among parents of migrants and non-migrants were displayed in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. Among parents of migrants, the item-wise mean scores ranged from 2.35 to 4.59, whereas among parents of non-migrants, it ranged from 2.67 to 5.58. Specifically, the mean religious well-being score (RWBS) was 38.85 (SD: 9.56) among parents of migrants and 42.98 among parents of non-migrants. The range of mean religious well-being scores (RWBS) was 13 to 55 for parents of migrants and 24 to 55 for parents of non-migrants. Similarly, for the parents of migrants, the mean existential well-being score (EWBS) was 36.19 (SD:

Table 2. Item wise Spiritual Well-Being Score (SWBS) among parents of migrants and non-migrants in rural west Bengal, India 2023.

<i>The Spiritual Well-Being Scale</i>	<i>Parents of migrants</i>		<i>Parents of non-migrants</i>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>A. I don't find much satisfaction in private prayer with God</i>	4.59	0.12	5.58	0.06
<i>C. I believe the god love's me and care about me</i>	4.09	0.08	4.32	0.06
<i>E. I believe God is interpersonal and interceded in my daily situation</i>	2.35	0.07	2.82	0.07
<i>G. I have a personal meaningful relationship with God</i>	3.93	0.07	4.17	0.07
<i>I. I do not get much personal strength and support from my God</i>	3.92	0.11	4.59	0.07
<i>K. I believe that God is concerned about my problems</i>	3.93	0.07	4.12	0.08
<i>M. I don't have personally satisfying relationship with God</i>	3.65	0.12	4.64	0.07
<i>O. My relationship with God helps me not to feel lonely</i>	4.04	0.07	4.17	0.07
<i>Q. I feel most fulfilled when I am in close communication with God</i>	4.20	0.06	4.34	0.07
<i>S. My relationship with God contributes to my sense of well-being</i>	4.10	0.06	4.19	0.07
Religious well-being (RWBS)	38.85	9.56	42.98	6.52
<i>B. I don't know who I am, where I came from or where I'm going</i>	2.39	0.07	2.67	0.08
<i>D. I feel life is a positive experience</i>	3.75	0.07	3.91	0.09
<i>F. I feel unfelted about future</i>	3.60	0.12	4.23	0.09
<i>H. I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life</i>	3.89	0.07	4.10	0.07
<i>J. I feel a sense of well-being about the direction my life is headed in.</i>	4.00	0.02	4.11	0.07
<i>L. I don't enjoy much about life</i>	3.74	0.11	4.52	0.08
<i>N. I feel good about my future</i>	3.67	0.08	3.89	0.08
<i>P. I feel that life is full conflict and unhappiness.</i>	3.58	0.11	4.64	0.08
<i>R. Life does not have much meaning.</i>	3.59	0.11	4.16	0.09
<i>T. I believe there is some real purpose of my life.</i>	3.95	0.07	4.08	0.07
Existential Well-Being (EWBS)	36.19	10.67	40.08	8.06
Spiritual Well-Being Score (SWBS)	75.04	19.79	83.06	14.20

Source: Authors calculated from Survey data.

Table 3. Domain wise Spiritual Well-Being Score (SWBS) among parents of migrants and non-migrants in rural west Bengal, India 2023.

	<i>Parents of migrants</i>			<i>Parents of non-migrants</i>			<i>Proportion test (z)</i>
	Mean (S.D)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (S.D)	Minimum	Maximum	
Religious Well-Being mean score	38.85 (9.56)	13	55	42.98(6.52)	24	55	0.3657
Existential Well-Being mean Score	36.19(10.67)	10	55	40.08(8.06)	20	55	0.3740
Spiritual Well-Being mean Score	75.04(19.76)	25	110	83.06(14.20)	47	110	0.0288

Source: Authors calculated from Survey data.

10.67) and 40.08 (SD: 8.06) compared to their counterparts. For parents of migrants, the range of mean existential well-being scores (EWBS) was 10 to 55, while for parents of non-migrants, it was 20 to 55. Notably, there was a significant difference in the mean scores of spiritual well-being (SWBS) between parents of migrants and non-migrants. Among parents of migrants, the mean spiritual well-being score (SWBS) was 75.04 (SD: 19.76), ranging from 25 to 110, whereas among parents of non-migrants, it was 83.06 (SD: 14.20), ranging from 47 to 110. (Tables 2 and 3)

Association of social position and social network with spiritual well-beings among parents of migrants and non-migrants in rural West Bengal, India

Table 4 presented the association between social position and social networks with spiritual well-being, both adjusted for socio-economic and demographic factors and unadjusted. β coefficients, adjusted and unadjusted, were estimated and presented at a 95% confidence interval to comprehend this association and significance level. The unadjusted β coefficient of SWBS was 1.50 ($\beta = 1.50$; 95% CI = 1.25–1.77; $p < 0.001$) for social network, whereas RWBS was 0.68 ($\beta = 0.68$; 95% CI = 0.54–0.81; $p < 0.001$), and EWBS was 0.83 ($\beta = 0.83$; 95% CI = 0.69–0.97; $p < 0.001$) among parents of migrants. Even after adjusting all the socio-economic and demographic factors one unit increase of social network score more likely to have mean spiritual well-being scale (SWBS) score was 1.23 ($\beta = 1.23$; 95% CI = 0.93–1.52; $p < 0.001$), mean RWBS was 0.56 ($\beta = 0.68$; 95% CI = 0.54–0.81; $p < 0.001$), and mean EWBS 0.67 ($\beta = 0.68$; 95% CI = 0.54–0.81; $p < 0.001$). On the contrary, among the parents of non-migrants after adjusting all the socio-economic and demographic factors one unit increase of social networks score more likely to have mean spiritual well-being scale (SWBS) score was 0.44 ($\beta = 0.44$; 95% CI = 0.22–0.67; $p < 0.001$), mean RWBS was 0.21 ($\beta = 0.21$; 95% CI = 0.10–0.32; $p < 0.001$), and mean EWBS 0.23 ($\beta = 0.23$; 95% CI = 0.11–0.36; $p < 0.001$). Social network in the form of children, close relatives, close friends, and having confidence significantly increased spiritual well-being among older parents, and this positive influence was more intense among parents of migrants or left-behind parents than their counterparts. Household decision-making role significantly increased the spiritual well-being of the older parents even after adjusting all the covariates. Among the left-behind parents, one unit increase in household decision-making roles score more likely to have mean spiritual well-being scale (SWBS) score was 1.70 ($\beta = 1.70$; 95% CI = 0.96–2.45; $p < 0.001$), mean RWBS was 0.83 ($\beta = 0.83$; 95% CI = 0.44–1.21; $p < 0.001$), and mean EWBS 0.88 ($\beta = 0.88$; 95% CI = 0.48–1.28; $p < 0.001$). Whereas, among parents of non-migrants one unit increased of household decision-making roles more likely to have mean spiritual well-being scale (SWBS) score was 0.96 ($\beta = 0.96$; 95% CI = 0.22–1.68; $p < 0.05$), and mean EWBS 0.63 ($\beta = 0.63$; 95% CI = 0.2–1.04; $p < 0.05$). Household decision-making roles were more important to increased spiritual well-being among parents of migrants compared to parents of non-migrants. Participation in social events does not significantly influence the spiritual well-being of both the parents of migrants and non-migrants. Female parents of migrants were significantly more likely to have a mean RWBS of 2.53 ($\beta = 2.53$; 95% CI = 0.12–4.92; $p < 0.05$) compared to male parents of migrants. Among those not currently working, the likelihood of a higher mean SWBS was 7.25 ($\beta = 7.25$; 95% CI = 3.01–11.49; $p < 0.001$) compared to those currently working among the

Table 4. estimated β coefficient by logistic regression to show the association of social position and social network on spiritual well-being among parents of migrants and non-migrants in rural West Bengal, India 2023.

	Model-I Unadjusted β coefficient			Model-II adjusted β coefficient		
	RWBS	EWBS	SWBS	RWBS	EWBS	SWBS
<i>Parents of migrants</i>						
Social network	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)
Household functional decision	0.68*** (0.54–0.81)	0.83*** (0.69–0.97)	1.50*** (1.25–1.77)	0.56*** (0.41–0.71)	0.67*** (0.50–0.82)	1.23*** (0.93–1.52)
Social event participation	1.09*** (0.72–1.45)	1.17*** (0.78–1.55)	2.26*** (1.54–2.97)	0.83*** (0.44–1.21)	0.88*** (0.48–1.28)	1.70*** (0.96–2.45)
Yes	–1.95 (–6.18–2.28)	–2.22 (–6.69–2.24)	–4.18 (–12.45–4.10)	0.87 (–3.36–5.11)	–0.43 (–4.83–3.98)	–1.29 (–9.48–6.88)
No						
Age				0.05 (–0.11–0.21)	–0.01 (–1.16–0.16)	0.05 (–0.26–0.35)
Sex						
Male						
Female						
Year of schooling				2.53** (0.12–4.92)	1.80 (–0.69–4.30)	4.33 (–0.31–8.97)
working status				–0.05 (–0.41–0.31)	–0.07 (–0.44–0.31)	–0.12 (–0.82–0.58)
Currently working						
Currently not working						
Marital status						
Currently married				0.04 (–2.44–2.52)	0.67 (–1.92–3.25)	7.25*** (3.01–11.49)
Currently not married				4.02*** (1.83–6.21)	3.23*** (0.94–5.51)	–2.09 (–6.29–2.12)
Living arrangement						
Alone or only their spouse						
With spouse & children or others				–1.29 (–3.47–0.88)	–0.79 (–3.05–1.67)	2.02*** (0.98–3.06)
Household Asset score				0.91*** (0.37–1.44)	1.11*** (0.55–1.67)	–0.17 (–4.71–4.37)
Meet economic need						
Self-earning/bank balance/pension				0.22 (–2.32–2.37)	–0.19 (–2.63–2.26)	1.50 (–2.31–5.32)
Depending on others						
Old age Pension						
Yes						
No				0.29 (–1.67–2.27)	1.20 (–0.85–3.25)	
<i>Parents of non-migrants</i>						
Social network	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)	β (95%CI)
Household functional decision	0.29*** (0.18–0.39)	0.34*** (0.21–0.46)	0.62*** (0.40–0.85)	0.21*** (0.10–32)	0.23*** (0.11–0.36)	0.44*** (0.22–0.67)
Social event participation	0.20 (–0.12–0.52)	0.41** (0.01–0.80)	0.61 (–0.08–1.29)	0.33 (–0.01–0.67)	0.63** (0.22–1.04)	0.96** (0.23–1.68)

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued).

	Model-I Unadjusted β coefficient			Model-II adjusted β coefficient		
	RWBS	EWBS	SWBS	RWBS	EWBS	SWBS
Parents of migrants						
Yes	-1.92(-4.77-0.92)	-2.24(-5.73-1.25)	-4.17(-10.30-1.96)	-286(-5.53 to -0.19)	-3.59(-6.78 to -0.41)	-6.47(-12.09to -0.83)
No						
Age						
Sex				0.03(-0.08-0.13)	0.05(-0.08-0.17)	0.07(-0.15-0.29)
Male						
Female				0.28(-1.80-2.35)	-0.01(-2.01-3.29)	0.26(-4.12-4.65)
Year of schooling				-010(-0.41-0.21)	-0.29(-0.66-0.08)	-0.39(-1.05-0.29)
Currently working status						
Currently working						
Currently not working				0.03(-2.18-2.25)	0.64(-2.01-3.22)	0.68(-4.01-5.36)
Marital status						
Currently married				-1.09(-3.01-0.82)	-0.93(-3.21-1.31)	-2.02(-6.06-2.01)
Currently not married						
Living arrangement						
Alone or only their spouse						
With spouse & children or others				0.50(-1.72-2.72)	0.56(-2.09-3.21)	1.06(-3.63-5.75)
Household Asset score				1.12*** (0.64-1.60)	1.62*** (1.04-2.19)	2.74*** (1.72-3.76)
Meet economic need						
Self-earning/bank balance/pension				-0.65(-2.66-1.36)	-0.71(-3.11-1.68)	-1.36(-5.61-2.87)
Depending on others						
Old age Pension						
Yes						
No				0.25(-1.44-1.93)	-0.16(-2.17-1.85)	0.09(-3.47-3.64)

RWBS; Religious Well-Being Score, EWBS; Existential Well-Being mean Score, SWBS; Spiritual Well-Being mean Score ***; if *p* value is < 0.01, ** if *p* value is < 0.05 Source: - Authors calculated from survey data.

parents of migrants. Among the parents of migrants, co-residing with children significantly increased the mean SWBS ($\beta = 2.02$; 95% CI = 0.98–3.06; $p < 0.001$). Currently married parents of migrants were associated with a higher likelihood of mean RWBS ($\beta = 4.02$; 95% CI = 1.83–6.21; $p < 0.001$) and EWBS ($\beta = 3.23$; 95% CI = 0.94–5.51; $p < 0.001$) compared to those who were currently not married among parents of migrants. A one-unit increase in household asset score, the likelihood of increased mean RWBS was 0.91 ($\beta = 0.91$; 95% CI = 0.37–1.44; $p < 0.001$), and EWBS was 1.11 ($\beta = 1.11$; 95% CI = 0.55–1.67; $p < 0.001$) among left-behind parents. Conversely, among parents of non-migrants, a one-unit increase in household asset score was associated with a higher likelihood of RWBS of 1.12 ($\beta = 1.12$; 95% CI = 0.64–1.60; $p < 0.001$), EWBS of 1.62 ($\beta = 1.62$; 95% CI = 1.04–2.19; $p < 0.001$), and SWBS of 2.74 ($\beta = 2.74$; 95% CI = 1.72–3.76; $p < 0.001$). (Table 4)

Discussion

India has been upholding the traditional custom of multigenerational co-residence (Rajan & Kumar, 2003) and is well known for its spiritual legacy (Medora, 2007). In the era of globalization and rapid urbanization, the Indian family structure has been reshaping, and one of the main reasons is adult migration (Jadhav et al., 2013; Samanta et al., 2015). With increasing age, people are more spiritual, with individual spiritual journeys influenced by the support they receive from family members and others (Chokkanathan, 2013; Coleman et al., 2016). The migration of adult children could influence the spirituality of their older parents. This study aimed to address the question of whether spiritual well-being differs between parents of migrants and non-migrants and whether the social-familial position and social network influence spirituality among parents of migrants and non-migrants.

The study was conducted in rural West Bengal, India, to examine the significant difference in spiritual well-being and the association of social position and social network with spiritual well-being among the parents of migrants and non-migrants. Using the spiritual well-being scale developed by Ray Paloutzian and Craig W. Ellison (Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991) in the context of children's migration, the study provided valuable insights into the spiritual well-being of elderly parents. Firstly, the study revealed that parents of non-migrants tended to have higher mean scores across various domains of spiritual well-being than parents of migrants. The mean score of spiritual well-being was significantly lower among parents of migrants compared to parents of non-migrants. Previous studies suggested that parents of migrants reported lower psychological well-being than parents of non-migrants, which confirmed this finding (Antman, 2010; Liu & Guo, 2008; Zhai et al., 2015). This spiritual well-being difference suggest that the potential difference of coping mechanism,

familial and social support system among parents of migrants and non-migrants. Secondly, the study investigated the association between social position, social network, and spiritual well-being among the parents of migrants and non-migrants. The finding revealed that social networks enhance the spiritual well-being of elderly parents considerably. Social networks enhance spiritual well-being, particularly for parents of migrants, to a greater extent than among parents of non-migrants. Existing literature has similarly discovered that factors such as the presence of close friends, regular contact frequency with close friends, and having confidants positively improve parents of migrants' mental health, which is closely associated with spiritual well-being (Dakua et al., 2023). Moreover, the study found that household decision-making roles emerged as a significant predictor of spiritual well-being, with more substantial effects observed among parents of migrants compared to non-migrants. A national-level study based on the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) data also confirms that functional household headship improves older adults' life satisfaction, which reflects elderly existential well-being (Srivastava et al., 2022). Older individual's decision-making power can empower them to exercise liberty and make decisions that uphold their dignity, enjoy the process of aging, and safeguard their self-esteem (Hsu et al., 2009; Srivastava et al., 2022). These findings underscore the importance of social support structures and family positions in shaping the spiritual well-being of elderly parents, especially in the context of adult-child migration.

Overall, the study contributes to understanding social networks and social position factors that influence the spiritual well-being of elderly parents in rural areas, particularly in the context of adult-child migration. The findings underscore the importance of considering social networks and familial functional power to support the spiritual needs of elderly parents, taking into account their socio-economic characteristics. The results of our study are limited by its cross-sectional design, which was limited to building casual relations between social networks, social positions, and spiritual well-being. The research is confined to rural West Bengal, India, potentially limiting the applicability of the findings to other cultural or geographical contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the significant influence of adult-child migration on the spiritual well-being of elderly parents in rural West Bengal, India. Additionally, the study highlights the vital role of social networks in improving spiritual well-being, particularly for parents of migrants. Furthermore, household decision-making roles appeared to be a significant predictor of spiritual well-being, with higher effects observed

among parents of migrants. This study emphasizes the importance of empowering older individuals to make decisions that uphold their dignity and self-esteem, particularly in changing family structures due to adult-child migration. Policymakers and social services providers should focus on strengthening social network structures for elderly parents, especially for parents of migrants. This could foster more robust social networks and empower older individuals to participate in household decision-making processes, which will ensure better spiritual well-being in the context of adult-child migration.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Data Availability statement

The study is based on primary data source only.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The study took ethical clearance from the Students Research Ethics Committee of the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) before conducting the survey. The purpose and data collection procedure were explained to the district social welfare officer and Gram Pradhan. Potential respondents were interviewed and informed about the study's objective, protocol, and time requirements. Confidentiality and inconveniences to answer any question(s) they can skip or end of the interview at any point in time were also explained to this protentional respondent. The study did not offer any incentives to respondents to participate.

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