

MIGRATION TO CITIES AND MENTAL HEALTH: TOWARD AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

¹Mr. Pratik Ashok Sarkale, ²Prof (Dr.) Ganesh Vishnu Lokhande

¹Asst. Prof. of Psychology, Chhatrapati Shivaji College, Satara

²Professor & Head, Department of Psychology, Chhatrapati Shivaji College, Satara

Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 15th Dec 2025 Accepted: 18th Dec 2025 Published: 20th Dec 2025 Keywords: <i>Migration, Mental health, Traditional Indian healing system.</i>	This paper develops an integrated theoretical framework to explain the mental health outcomes of migration to cities. Drawing on migration theory, urban stress models, and psychological adaptation perspectives, it conceptualizes how structural conditions, social environments, and individual coping processes interact across the migration trajectory. The framework highlights mechanisms of vulnerability and resilience, offering a holistic lens for understanding migrant mental health in rapidly urbanizing contexts.

Plagiarism Check Report:

Date of Report: Dec 17, 2025

Similarity Index: 4%

Remarks: No significant matching text. All citations and matches are properly referenced. The manuscript is considered original.

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

How to Cite: Sarkale, P. A., & Lokhande, G. V. (2025). *Migration to Cities and Mental Health: Toward an Integrated Framework*. *IIP: World Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IIPWJHSS)*, 1(VI), 2257–2262.

INTRODUCTION:

Migration to cities has become a defining feature of contemporary urbanization, reshaping social structures and individual life courses across the globe. While urban centers often promise economic opportunity and improved living conditions, the psychological consequences of migration remain complex and unevenly distributed. Migrants encounter multiple stressors, including social dislocation, cultural adjustment, economic insecurity, and exposure to demanding urban environments, all of which can influence mental health outcomes. Existing research has examined these factors in isolation, drawing variously from migration studies, urban sociology, and psychology. However, the absence of an integrated theoretical perspective limits a comprehensive understanding of how structural forces, urban contexts, and individual psychological processes interact throughout the migration experience. This paper addresses this gap by proposing an integrated theoretical framework that synthesizes migration theory, urban stress models, and psychological adaptation perspectives. By linking macro-level urban dynamics with micro-level psychological processes, the framework aims to advance conceptual clarity and inform future empirical research on migrant mental health in rapidly urbanizing societies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Bhugra, D. (2004).** Migration and mental health. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 109(4), 243–258. This study explains how migration acts as a psychological stressor, increasing vulnerability to depression, anxiety, and identity-related mental health issues.
2. **Berry, J. W. (1997).** Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5–34. The article presents acculturation strategies and their influence on migrants' psychological adjustment in urban environments.
3. **Wirth, L. (1938).** Urbanism as a way of life. *American Journal of Sociology*, 44(1), 1–24. This classic work theorizes how urban social structures create psychological distance, alienation, and stress among city populations.
4. **Evans, G. W. (2003).** The built environment and mental health. *Journal of Urban Health*, 80(4), 536–555.
The study highlights how urban environmental stressors such as crowding, noise, and poor housing affect mental well-being.
5. **Pearlin, L. I., Menaghan, E. G., Lieberman, M. A., & Mullan, J. T. (1981).** The stress process. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 22(4), 337–356.
This theory explains how social stressors and coping resources mediate the relationship between migration-related adversity and mental health.
6. **Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979).** *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
The socio-ecological model emphasizes the interaction between individual, social, and environmental systems shaping migrants' mental health.
7. **Lee, E. S. (1966).** A theory of migration. *Demography*, 3(1), 47–57.
This theory explains migration decisions through push-pull factors, which indirectly influence psychological stress and adjustment in cities.

8. **Castles, S., de Haas, H., & Miller, M. J. (2014).** *The age of migration* (5th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan. The book links global migration patterns with structural inequalities that shape migrants' social and psychological experiences in urban spaces.
9. **Elder, G. H. (1998).** The life course as developmental theory. *Child Development*, 69(1), 1–12. Life course theory explains how the timing and duration of migration influence long-term mental health outcomes.
10. **World Health Organization. (2014).** *Social determinants of mental health*. World Health Organization Press. This report highlights how urban poverty, exclusion, and inequality act as structural determinants of migrants' mental health.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine theories linking migration, urbanization, and mental health.
2. To explore how urban stressors affect migrants' psychological well-being.
3. To develop an integrated theoretical framework for migrant mental health.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The scope of this study encompasses a theoretical and conceptual examination of the relationship between migration to urban areas and mental health outcomes. It focuses on understanding how structural, social, and individual-level factors interact to influence the psychological well-being of migrants. The study draws upon migration theories, urban stress models, and psychological adaptation frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in urban migration. While the research does not involve primary empirical data collection, it synthesizes existing literature across disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and urban studies, to construct an integrated theoretical framework. The study is relevant for diverse migrant populations, including internal and international migrants, but emphasizes common psychological challenges such as stress, anxiety, depression, social isolation, and identity-related adjustment issues. By highlighting mechanisms of vulnerability and resilience, the study offers insights for policymakers, mental health professionals, and urban planners to better address the mental health needs of migrants in rapidly urbanizing environments. Its findings are intended to guide future empirical research and theoretical refinement in this field.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

The study of migration to cities and its impact on mental health holds significant academic, social, and policy relevance. Understanding the psychological consequences of urban migration is crucial as rapid urbanization increasingly exposes migrants to social, economic, and environmental stressors. By developing an integrated theoretical framework, this research provides a holistic perspective on how structural, social, and individual factors interact to shape migrants' mental well-being. The study is important for mental health professionals, urban planners, and policymakers, as it highlights areas where interventions can enhance psychological support, social inclusion, and resilience among migrant populations. Academically, it contributes to bridging gaps between migration studies, urban sociology, and psychology, offering a synthesized conceptual approach for future research. Furthermore, the study raises

awareness about the challenges faced by migrants, informing strategies to create healthier, more inclusive urban environments and promote sustainable urban mental health practices.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it is primarily theoretical and conceptual in nature, relying on existing literature rather than primary empirical data, which limits its ability to capture real-time, context-specific experiences of migrants. Second, while the study integrates perspectives from migration theory, urban studies, and psychology, it may not fully account for the diversity of migrant experiences across different countries, cultures, or socioeconomic backgrounds. Third, the focus on mental health outcomes is broad, and specific psychological conditions or variations among subgroups (e.g., age, gender, or legal status) are not explored in depth. Additionally, rapid changes in urban environments, migration patterns, and social policies may limit the applicability of the proposed framework over time. Finally, the study does not address intervention strategies or evaluate the effectiveness of existing mental health support systems, leaving scope for future empirical research to validate and refine the framework.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Objective No. 1: To examine theories linking migration, urbanization, and mental health

- 1. Identification of Relevant Theories:** Analysis of literature revealed that migration theories, urban stress models, and acculturation frameworks are most commonly cited in understanding migrants' mental health. This indicates a multidisciplinary approach is necessary to capture the complexity of urban migration.
- 2. Theoretical Patterns and Connections:** Theories consistently highlight that structural factors, such as housing, employment, and social networks, interact with individual psychological processes, shaping mental health outcomes. This suggests that mental well-being cannot be understood in isolation from urban context.
- 3. Gaps in Existing Literature:** Interpretation shows that while individual theories address specific aspects, no single framework integrates structural, social, and psychological dimensions comprehensively. This underscores the need for an integrated theoretical framework to better explain migrants' mental health in cities.

Objective No. 2: To explore how urban stressors affect migrants' psychological well-being.

- 1. Identification of Key Urban Stressors:** Analysis indicates that overcrowding, noise, pollution, and housing insecurity are frequently reported as major contributors to psychological distress among migrants.
- 2. Impact on Mental Health Outcomes:** Studies consistently show that these stressors are linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and social isolation, emphasizing the vulnerability of migrants in urban settings.
- 3. Role of Coping and Support Systems:** Interpretation reveals that access to social support networks, community resources, and personal coping strategies can mitigate the negative effects of urban stressors, highlighting pathways for resilience.

Objective No. 3: To develop an integrated theoretical framework for migrant mental health.

1. **Synthesis of Existing Theories:** Analysis of migration, urban stress, and psychological adaptation theories reveals overlapping constructs, such as stress exposure, social integration, and individual coping.
2. **Identification of Interaction Mechanisms:** Interpretation shows that structural conditions, social environments, and psychological processes interact dynamically, influencing mental health outcomes at multiple levels.
3. **Framework Proposition:** Based on literature patterns, an integrated theoretical framework can conceptualize these interactions, providing a holistic lens for understanding migrants' mental health in urban contexts.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE:

1. A longitudinal study in Indonesia found that rural-to-urban migrants' experienced significant mental health costs; female migrant showed increased depressive symptoms.
2. Data from 2,584 internal migrants in China revealed that rural-to-urban migrants has higher rates of depressive symptoms, lower perceived social cohesion, and poorer social adaptation.
3. A recent Chinese study showed that perceived degradations in neighborhood environments (e.g. social physical conditions) were associated with poorer mental health among rural – urban migrants.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. Heterogeneity of migrant experiences
2. Complex interaction of factors
3. Contextual sensitivity
4. Integration of Multi-level Factors

CONCLUSION:

Migration to cities significantly influences mental health through complex interactions between structural mental health through complex interactions between structural, social and individual factors. Existing theories address aspects of these dynamics, but no single framework fully integrates them. This study emphasizes the need for a holistic, interdisciplinary approach, proposing an integrated theoretical framework that captures urban stressors, social adaptation, and psychological processes.

RESULT:

- Increased Psychological Distress due to migration
- There is main role of social support in mental health of migrants.
- Impact of Acculturation in migration is larger.
- There are various structural determinants of migration
- There is need of integrated framework to maintain mental health of migrants.

REFERENCES

1. **Hwang, J.** (2024). *Urbanization and mental health: understanding the psychological effects of city living among migrant populations*. International Journal of Scholarly Research and Reviews, 5(1), 108–118. DOI included in publication. This explores cultural dislocation, acculturation stress, and migrant well-being in urban contexts. srrjournals.com
2. **Simon, J. C., Asror, A., Irwandi, Arevin, A. T., & Hariko, R.** (2024). *Mental Health in Urban Spaces: Societal Challenges and Public Health Responses*. Migration Letters, 21(S6), 1524–1534 – a qualitative review linking urbanization stressors to mental health challenges. Migration Letters
3. **Patel, V., et al.** (Year) *Migration, Urbanism and Health: Moving Toward Systems-Informed Policy and Practice*. A qualitative review arguing for integrated health frameworks linking migration and urban health. PubMed
4. **Björnberg, U., et al.** (2019). *Mental health, migration and the megacity*. International Health, 11(Supplement 1), S1–S7. Discusses methodological, psychological and social dimensions of migrant mental health in megacities. OUP Academic
5. **PubMed Systematic Review on Migration & Mental Health – Migration and Mental Health in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review**. Focuses on rural–urban migration and adverse mental health outcomes. PubMed
6. Springer Article (2025). *A conceptual framework for mapping urban environment indicators and mental well-being*. Discover Cities. Offers structured categories of urban determinants of mental health. Springer
7. Scientific Reports (2024). *Urbanization, loneliness and mental health model – a cross-sectional network analysis*. Shows how aspects of urban life (social cohesion, physical environment) interrelate with mental health. Nature
8. Integrating Urban Adolescent Mental Health into Sustainability Action. **PubMed article applying health prioritization frameworks like Shiffman & Smith to urban contexts.**
9. **Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health (2010)**. *Rural–Urban migration patterns and mental health diagnoses – case-control study analyzing migration patterns and mental health in Canada*. SpringerLink
10. **Journal of Affective Disorders (2019)**. *Rural-urban migration and mental health of Chinese migrant children: Systematic review and meta-analysis*. Highlights psychological vulnerabilities of migrant youth. ScienceDirect
11. **BMC Public Health (2025)**. *Finding the link of acculturation and neighbourhood environment on mental health among rural-to-urban migrants in China*. Empirical study of acculturative stress mechanisms. Springer
12. **Applied Geography (2025)**. *Healthcare accessibility and rural migrants' identity integration in urban China – Toward a socially resilient city*. A multilevel approach integrating health access and social integration. ScienceDirect
13. **Narrative Review of Resilience, Mental Health and Urban Migrants**. *The International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*. Reviews resilience capacities and ecological system factors. ScienceDirect