Article

Household Split, Income, and Migrants' Life Satisfaction: Social Problems Caused by Rapid Urbanization in China

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Abstract: Household split between rural and urban areas has become an important social issue in China's urbanization process. This study analysed the influence of household split on migrants' life satisfaction and the differences between inter- and intra-provincial migrants. Using the data of the 2014 China Migrants Dynamic Survey, we found that the life satisfaction of inter-provincial migrants was significantly lower than that of intra-provincial migrants. For inter-provincial migrants, the life satisfaction of those who moved to the city with underaged children was significantly lower than that of those who left their children in their hometown. Moreover, the life satisfaction of migrants who were concerned about childcare in the hometown was significantly lower than that of those who did not worry about it. Chinese migrants face a dilemma: bringing their family members to the city despite the lack of social welfare support or leaving them in the hometown worrying about family care. We also found that family income does not have a significant moderating effect on the decline in life satisfaction owing to concerns about childcare in the hometown. Future policy concerning China's population should create external conditions for migrants to accomplish family reunion.

Keywords: household split; income; life satisfaction; migrant; China

1. Introduction

In the past few decades, China's economy has developed rapidly, and its urbanization rate has increased significantly. In 2018, China's urbanization rate (the proportion of the population living in urban areas compared to the total population) was approaching 60% [1]. However, while more than half of China's population already lives in cities, a large portion of it is constituted by migrants without urban hukou (registered permanent residence). Some scholars have found that the willingness of Chinese migrants to settle in cities is changing, and many migrants are not sure whether they will settle in their cities for a long time [2]. Some migrants may choose to return to the countryside, while many more will continue to move between different cities to find the most suitable place for them to live [3]. If a migrant is single and he/she finds a job in the city, he/she is likely to live in the city for a long time. However, if the migrant has a family, even if she/he gets a job in the city, there is no guarantee that she/he will be able to bring her/his children and elderly parents to live together in the city. In China, many families face the problem of being separated from family members, as some of them live in rural areas, whereas others have moved to cities looking for a job (household split). For instance, Wang et al. [4] found that the probability of permanent urban settlement intentions of migrant parents with children is 49% higher than those without children. In fact, household split between rural and urban areas has become an important social issue in China's urbanization process.

The interpretation of the phenomenon of the household split in the process of urbanization in China has generated some scientific controversies. Some scholars believe that migrant families actively

choose the separation between rural and urban areas (split-household arrangement) to maximize the economic benefits [5]. That is, some family members stay in the countryside to continue farming, while others go to the cities to earn money. However, with the decline of the countryside and the growing problem of rural left-behind children, some scholars have suggested that household split might be forced by external factors, instead [6]. The migrant household split has led to many social problems. Many left-behind children go astray without the care of their parents in the countryside [7], and migrant parents are also constantly worried about their children. We cross-analysed household split, income, and migrants' life satisfaction to address this controversy and propose a novel interpretation of this phenomenon.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Rapid Urbanization in China and Migrants' Household Split

Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, China's economy has developed rapidly, and its population urbanization rate has also increased significantly. In the past few decades, China has experienced a massive migration from the countryside to the cities. However, in the context of China's urban-rural dual structure [8], which was formed during the planned economy period, many rural migrants moved to the cities leaving their children and elderly parents in the countryside. The separation of migrant families between urban and rural areas is mainly influenced by institutional and economic factors. Among the institutional factors, hukou is one of the most prominent ones [9]. For most migrants, it is difficult to obtain urban hukou, and without it, they cannot have access to the city's public services and welfare (e.g., migrants' children cannot attend public schools in the city). The influence of economic factors is controversial. Some scholars regard household split as a long-term practice in Chinese rural communities, which is meant to maximize economic benefits, especially for migrants who do not intend to stay permanently in cities [3,5]. However, other scholars argue that household split leads to serious problems for left-behind children [10,11]. Migrants do not actively choose household split, but passively put up with it [6]. Whether they will return to the countryside or continue moving between different cities [12], they are looking for a place to reunite their families and a better life.

2.2. Migrants' Life Satisfaction in China

Life satisfaction is an important indicator of people's life quality. In the past few decades, China's rapid economic development has had a positive impact on people's life satisfaction, but the widening gap between the rich and the poor and environmental pollution have had a negative impact on it [13,14]. Many scholars have compared the differences in life satisfaction between migrants and cities' local residents in China and found that the life satisfaction of rural migrants is significantly lower than that of locals [15,16]. Most migrants are considered to have lived on the margins of Chinese society [17], as most have low incomes, poor living conditions, do manual work, and have difficulty obtaining urban hukou, which have been proved to have adverse effects on migrants' life satisfaction [18,19]. Besides, the socioeconomic status is a commonly verified factor affecting the life satisfaction of migrants, such as migrants' age, marital status, household income, and jobs [20]. For example, the research of Shen and Huang [21] revealed that job burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization have a significant influence on migrant workers' life satisfaction. Cheng et al. [16] found that the new-generation migrants are less satisfied with their jobs and lives than first-generation migrants, despite having a higher income. Chu and Hail [22] found that the wealthiest migrant workers were more concerned about gaining official city status (e.g., urban hukou) than increasing their income. As China's urban-rural developmental gap shrinks, it has been observed in previous studies that the influence of economic factors (e.g., income) on the life satisfaction of migrants in the city seems to be declining, while the influence of social factors, such as kinship, friendship, and family life, is increasing [23].

2.3. Research Framework

This study investigated the relationship between migrants' family life and life satisfaction. Family life has been proved as an essential impact factor on people's life satisfaction [24,25], but few studies have focused on the relationship between migrants' family life and life satisfaction in China. In China, the household split is quite common, and its effect on migrants' life satisfaction is still unknown. Some scholars believe that migrants may choose household split actively to maximize the economic benefits for the family [5]. However, other scholars argue that migrants are somehow forced to choose household split [6]. If migrants actively choose household split, economic benefits might have a little impact on their life satisfaction. However, if migrants endure household split passively, it might have a negative impact on their life satisfaction. In addition, income has been identified as an important factor affecting the life satisfaction of migrants [13,26], and household income may also have an impact on the relationship between household split and life satisfaction. Therefore, this study will first analyse the impact of the household split on the life satisfaction of migrants. Then, it will analyse the impact of migrants' household income on the relationship between household split and migrants' life satisfaction. The analysis of the relationships among household split, income, and life satisfaction of migrants can better address the academic controversy of whether Chinese migrants choose household split passively or actively, and also help us better understand the social effects produced by China's rapid urbanization process.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Data and Research Object

The data used in this study were taken from the 2014 China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDS 2014) (http://www.chinaldrk.org.cn/wjw/#/home), which is a large-scale sample survey of migrants in China conducted by the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China. We conducted this study using thematic survey data on social integration and health of migrant population collected in eight Chinese cities (Chaoyang District of Beijing, JiaXing, Xiamen, Qingdao, Zhengzhou, Shenzhen, Zhongshan, and Chengdu) (Figure 1). The questionnaire mainly consists of three parts: (1) the socioeconomic status of individuals and their families; (2) social integration; and (3) mental health status. The probability proportional to size (PPS) method is adopted for sampling. The respondents were residents aged between 15 and 59 without local hukou and living in the city for more than one month. After excluding the samples with missing information, there were 6642 valid samples.

The research object of this study is the internal migration in China. We compared data on the life satisfaction of two types of migrants, inter-provincial and intra-provincial migrants who move within the same province. In China, the level of economic development varies significantly across provinces. Compared with intra-provincial migration, inter-provincial migration involves not only a longer distance from the hometown but also the need to adapt to a new social and cultural environment (e.g., public service, diet, climate, social relations).
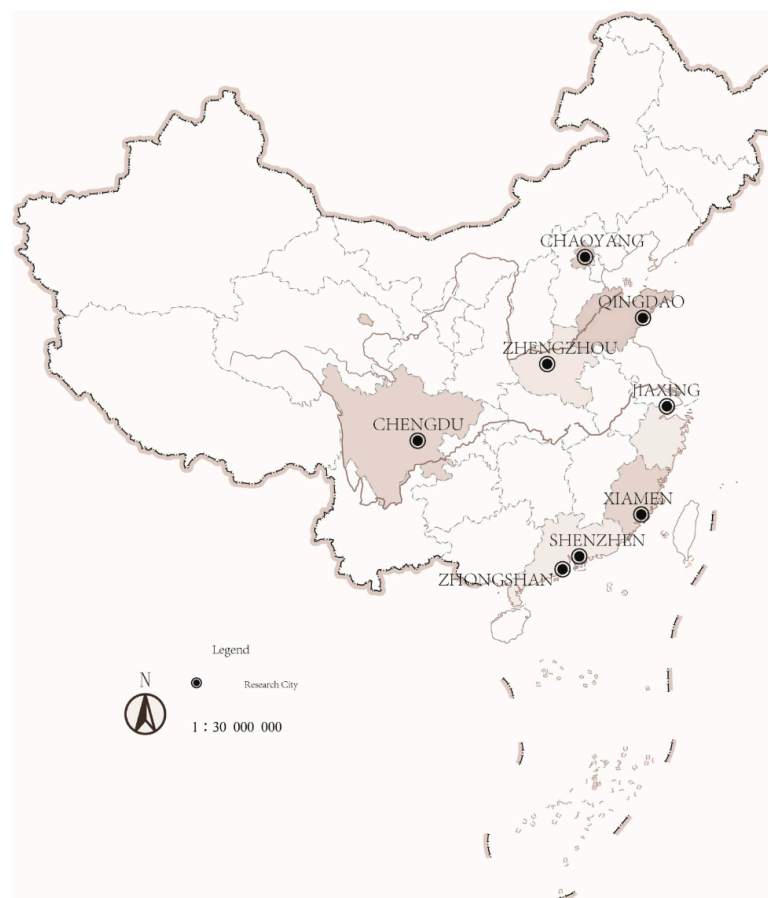
Figure 1. The distribution of the research cities in China.

3.2. Measures and Methods

In the 2014 China Migrants Dynamic Survey, migrants' life satisfaction was assessed by the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). This scale includes five items, and participants are asked to express their agreement on these statements using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree [27,28]. The items are: (1) in most ways my life is close to my ideal; (2) the conditions of my life are excellent; (3) I am satisfied with my life; (4) so far I have gotten the important things I want in life; and (5) if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing. The overall score of migrants' life satisfaction is the sum of the five scores of the above 5 items (the scale reliability coefficient of the 5 items is 0.85.).

Given that the score of migrants' life satisfaction is a continuous variable, we used a linear regression model to estimate the effect of independent variables. Household split mainly refers to the separation of adult migrants from their minor children and elderly parents in urban and rural areas. This study focused on the impact of the rural-urban separation of adult migrants from their minor children on their life satisfaction. We only selected the first child (<18 years old) of migrants as the independent variable. The independent variables include child in the hometown (ref: child in the city), worried about childcare in the hometown (ref: not worried about childcare in the hometown), child's gender (ref: male), child's age (continuous variable), and household monthly average income in the city (continuous variable). The control variables concerned migrants' socioeconomic status, which included migrants' age (continuous variable), gender (ref: male), educational attainments (ref: junior high school and below), occupations (ref: commercial, service and manufacturing workers), house property in the host city (ref: without house property in the host city), length of residence in the host city (continuous variable), general self-rated health (ref: not good), hours per day spent at work in the last month (continuous variable). We also used interaction analysis to estimate the effect of household

income on the relationship between children's living place and migrants' life satisfaction, childcare, and migrants' life satisfaction.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics of the sample. The mean value of migrants' life satisfaction was 22.15 (SD = 6.16). Figure 2 shows the distribution of migrants' life satisfaction scores. In the 2014 China Migrants Dynamic Survey, it was found that the life satisfaction of migrants from different places varied greatly. Intra-provincial migrants had higher life satisfaction (mean = 22.32, SD = 6.30) than inter-provincial migrants (mean = 22.02, SD = 6.06), as shown in Table 2. The proportion of migrants who left their children in the countryside was lower than those who brought them to the city (29.30% vs. 70.70%), and the proportion of migrants worried about rural childcare was also lower than those who did not worry about rural childcare (28.40% vs. 71.60%). Among the children, male children accounted for 52.83% and female children for 47.17%. The average age of these children was 7.71 years (SD = 4.59). In terms of migrants' socioeconomic characteristics, migrants' household monthly average income in the city was 7200 yuan (SD = 7300). The migrant respondents' average age was 32.91 years old (SD = 5.51). The proportion of male migrants was 53.58%, compared with 46.42% of female migrants. Most migrants had low educational attainments. The proportion of migrants with a junior high school degree or below was 70.67%, while those with a high school degree or above accounted for 22.90 % and 6.43%, respectively. In terms of occupation distribution, most migrants were engaged in commercial, service, and manufacturing industries, accounting for 61.77%, while the proportion of administrators (including managers, professionals, and technicians), civil servants (including clerks, and the self-employed), and unemployed workers was 6.47%, 19.66%, and 12.09%, respectively. Most migrants rented houses, while a few bought houses in cities (91.09% vs. 8.91%). Migrants' average length of residence in the host city was 5.73 years (SD = 4.40). The proportion of migrants who reported that they were healthy was 88.47%, while 11.53% reported that they were unhealthy. The average hours per day spent at work in the last month was 8.86 hours (SD = 3.14). Figure 3 shows the relationship between migrants' average life satisfaction and their children. Among them, the average life satisfaction of migrants whose children live in cities is higher than that of migrants whose children live in the hometown. Migrants who were not worried about their children's care in their hometown also reported higher life satisfaction than migrants who were worried about their children's care in their hometown. Migrants with male children reported slightly lower life satisfaction than those with female children. Figure 4 indicates that migrants with older children have relatively high life satisfaction.
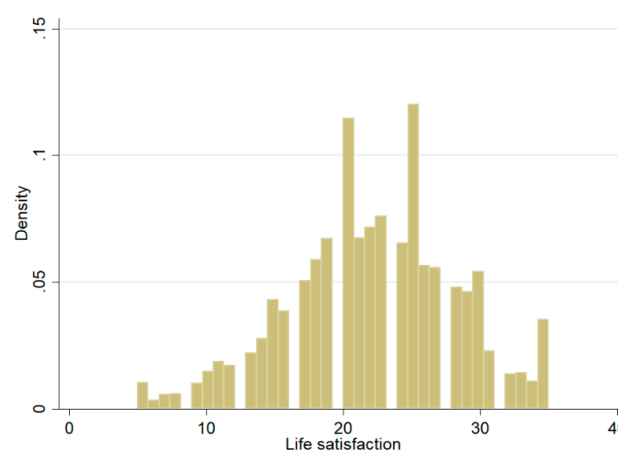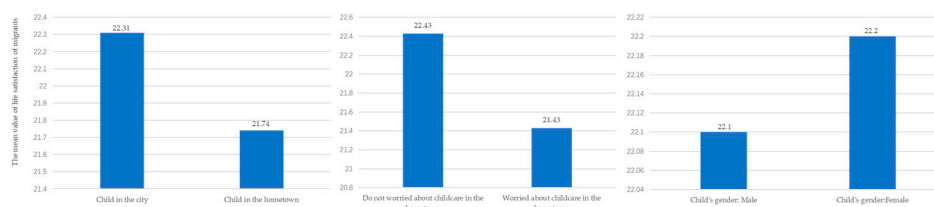

**Figure 2.** The distribution of migrants' life satisfaction scores.

Table 1. Summary statistics of migrants' characteristics (N = 6642).

Variables		
Life satisfaction (5–35)	Mean	22.15
	S.D.	6.16
Child's current place of residence (%)		
Child in the city		70.70
Child in the hometown		29.30
Childcare in the hometown (%)		
Not worried		71.60
Worried		28.40
Child's gender (%)		
Male		52.83
Female		47.17
The average age of children (1–18)	Mean	7.71
	S.D.	4.59
Household monthly average income in the city (10,000 yuan)	Mean	0.72
	S.D.	0.73
Migrants' average age (years old)	Mean	32.91
	S.D.	5.51
Gender (%)		
Male		53.58
Female		46.42
Educational level (%)		
Junior high school and below		70.67
Senior high school		22.90
College and above		6.43
Occupations (%)		
Commercial, service and manufacturing workers		61.77
Administrators, managers, professionals, and technicians		6.47
Civil servants, clerks, and the self-employed		19.66
The unemployed		12.09
Have house property in the host city (%)		
No		91.09
Yes		8.91
The average length of residence in the host city (year)	Mean	5.73
	S.D.	4.40
General self-rated health (%)		
Unhealthy		11.53
Healthy		88.47
Hours per day spent at work last month (hours)	Mean	8.86
	S.D.	3.14

Figure 3. The distribution of migrants' mean value of life satisfaction scores.

Table 2. The difference in migrants' life satisfaction between inter- and intra-provincial migrants in China.

Inter-Provincial Migrants		Intra-Provincial Migrants		T test
The number of respondents	Life satisfaction	The number of respondents	Life satisfaction	
3854	22.01 (SD = 6.06)	2788	22.32 (SD = 6.30)	−2.020 ($p < 0.05$)
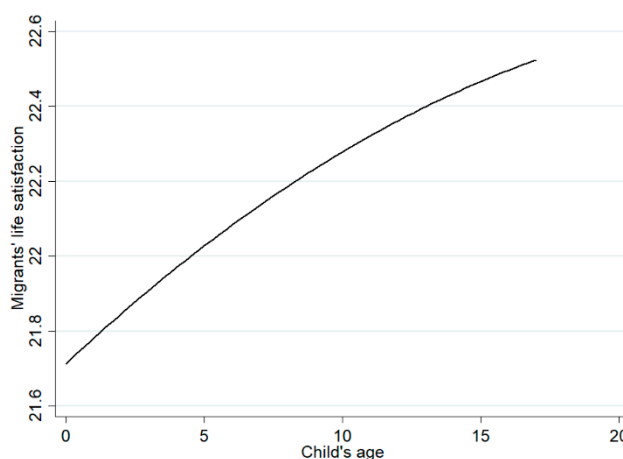
Figure 4. The curve of migrants' life satisfaction and their child's age.

4.2. Regression Results on the Relationship between Having "Left-Behind Children" and Migrants' Life Satisfaction

We used linear regression models to examine the associations between having left-behind children and migrants' life satisfaction. In Table 3, model 1 shows the result for inter-provincial migrants and model 2 for intra-provincial migrants.

For inter-provincial migrants, the life satisfaction of those who left their children in their hometown was a little higher than those who brought them to the city (coefficient = 0.473, $p < 0.10$). However, the life satisfaction of migrants who worried about childcare in their hometown was significantly lower than those who did not worry about it (coefficient = −1.089, $p < 0.01$). The former result indicates that moving to the city with the children might be overwhelming, while the latter reflects the fact that leaving them in the countryside might generate concerns about childcare in the hometown. The household monthly average income in the city was positively associated with migrants' life satisfaction (coefficient = 0.725, $p < 0.01$). In terms of socioeconomic variables, female migrants' life satisfaction was significantly higher than that of male migrants (coefficient = 0.622, $p < 0.01$). Compared with migrants who work in the commercial/service/manufacturing sector, those who work as civil servants/clerks/self-employed have a higher life satisfaction (coefficient = 0.732, $p < 0.01$), while unemployed people have a lower life satisfaction (coefficient = −0.985, $p < 0.05$). Migrants who have a house property in the host city have a higher life satisfaction than those without a house property in the city (coefficient = 1.306, $p < 0.01$). Healthy migrants have higher life satisfaction than unhealthy ones (coefficient = 3.018, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, the longer the daily working hours, the lower the life satisfaction of migrants was (coefficient = −0.110, $p < 0.01$).

For intra-provincial migrants, the variables concerning children's place of residence and childcare in the hometown had no statistical significance. However, the child's age was significantly related to migrants' life satisfaction (coefficient=0.084, $p < 0.10$). The older the children were, the higher migrants' life satisfaction was. This might be related to the fact that older children need less parental care than younger ones. As observed in the case of inter-provincial migrants, there was a positive correlation between household income and life satisfaction (coefficient = 0.407, $p < 0.05$). In terms of individuals' socioeconomic factors, migrants who graduated from senior high school had a slightly lower life satisfaction than those who graduated from junior high school and below (coefficient = −0.489, $p < 0.10$). Having house property and good health also had a significant effect on migrants' life satisfaction (coefficient = 1.545, $p < 0.01$; coefficient = 3.512, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Regression results on the relationship between having left-behind children and migrants' life satisfaction.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
Independent variables				
Child in the hometown (ref: Child in the city)	0.473 *	(0.274)	−0.077	(0.418)
Worried about childcare in the hometown (ref: not worried)	−1.089 ***	(0.269)	−0.431	(0.422)
Child's gender (ref: male)	0.103	(0.190)	0.136	(0.236)
Child's age	0.044	(0.034)	0.084 *	(0.044)
Household monthly average income in the city	0.725 ***	(0.127)	0.407 **	(0.182)
Control variables				
Age	0.024	(0.027)	−0.040	(0.037)
Female (ref: male)	0.622 ***	(0.204)	0.037	(0.255)
Educational level (ref: junior high school and below)				
Senior high school	−0.295	(0.236)	−0.489 *	(0.286)
College and above	−0.346	(0.435)	−0.498	(0.479)
Occupations (ref: commercial, service and manufacturing workers)				
Administrators, managers, professionals, and technicians	0.371	(0.409)	0.591	(0.492)
Civil servants, clerks, and the self-employed	0.732 ***	(0.266)	0.053	(0.295)
The unemployed	−0.985 **	(0.389)	−0.256	(0.505)
Have house property in the host city (ref: Without house property in the host city)	1.306 ***	(0.408)	1.545 ***	(0.367)
Length of residence in the host city	0.001	(0.024)	0.036	(0.028)
General self-rated health (ref: not good)	3.018 ***	(0.291)	3.512 ***	(0.385)
Hours per day spent on work in last month	−0.110 ***	(0.041)	−0.017	(0.050)
Constants	18.521 ***	(0.913)	19.490 ***	(1.224)
The number of individuals	3854		2788	
R^2	0.058		0.045	
adj R^2	0.054		0.039	
Log likelihood	−12294.816		−9024.911	

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

4.3. The Interactions between Childcare and Household Income for Inter-Provincial Migrants

Table 4 shows the result of interactions between child's living place and household income, and between childcare and household income, for the inter-provincial migrants in China. We observed a positive and significant coefficient on the interaction of child's living place and household income (coefficient = 1.005, $p < 0.05$). This result indicates that compared with migrants bringing their children to the city, migrants living them in the hometown had a stronger effect of household income on their life satisfaction. We also found that the coefficient on the interaction of childcare with household income was negative and significant (coefficient = −0.973, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the life satisfaction of migrants who were worried about childcare in their hometown was less influenced by household income compared to migrants who did not worry about childcare in their hometown. To some extent, these results suggest that family income does not have a significant moderating effect on the decline in life satisfaction owing to concerns about childcare in the hometown.

Table 4. Regression results on the interactions between household income and having left-behind children for inter-provincial migrants.

	Model 3	
	Coefficient	S.E.
Independent variables		
Child in the hometown (ref: Child in the city)	−0.233	(0.392)
Worried about childcare in the hometown (ref: not worried)	−0.404	(0.397)
Household monthly average income in the city	0.702 ***	(0.139)
Child's gender (ref: male)	0.093	(0.190)
Child's age	0.044	(0.034)

Table 4. *Cont.*

	Model 3	
	Coefficient	S.E.
Child in the hometown # Household monthly average income in the city (ref: child in the city # Household monthly average income in the city)	1.005 **	(0.401)
Worried about childcare in the hometown # Household monthly average income in the city (ref: not worried about childcare in the hometown # Household monthly average income in the city)	−0.973 **	(0.421)
Control variables		
Age	0.024	(0.027)
Female (ref: male)	0.619 ***	(0.204)
Educational level (ref: junior high school and below)		
Senior high school	−0.280	(0.235)
College and above	−0.397	(0.435)
Occupations (ref: commercial, service and manufacturing workers)		
Administrators, managers, professionals, and technicians	0.390	(0.408)
Civil servants, clerks, and the self-employed	0.732 ***	(0.265)
The unemployed	−0.976 **	(0.389)
Have house property in the host city (ref: Without house property in the host city)	1.329 ***	(0.408)
Length of residence in the host city	0.004	(0.024)
General self-rated health (ref: not good)	3.017 ***	(0.291)
Hours per day spent on work in last month	−0.109 ***	(0.041)
Constants	18.501 ***	(0.913)
The number of individuals	3854	
R^2	0.060	
adj R^2	0.056	
Log likelihood	−12290.956	

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

5. Discussion

5.1. The Difference between Inter- and Intra-Provincial Migrants' Life Satisfaction in China

In this study, we found that there was a significant difference in life satisfaction between inter-provincial and intra-provincial migrants, and the life satisfaction of the former group was significantly lower than the latter. Inter-provincial migrants are among the most vulnerable groups in Chinese urban society. Recently, there has been an increasing number of studies on the life satisfaction of migrants [15,16]. In line with these studies, we also found that the socioeconomic status of migrants has a significant impact on their life satisfaction. For example, income has a positive impact on the life satisfaction of migrants. For many migrants, leaving their hometown and families and moving to the city is all about finding a good job and earning more money. Therefore, some scholars use economic rationality to explain the phenomenon of Chinese migration [29]. However, existing studies have paid less attention to the impact of the household split on migrants' life satisfaction. We found that for the intra-provincial migrants, the child variable does not have a significant impact on their life satisfaction, which is primarily related to the fact that they are close to their hometown and can often go home to see their children. For inter-provincial migrants, the life satisfaction of those who moved to the city with their children was significantly lower than that of migrants who left their children in their hometown, but we also found that the life satisfaction of migrants who were concerned about childcare in their hometown was significantly lower than that of migrants who did not worry about childcare in the hometown. These results show that bringing children to the city may increase migrants' urban living expenses. Moreover, most rural migrants work long hours in the cities, and many do not have free weekends. Migrants would need more time to take care of their children, thus reducing their life satisfaction. However, for many migrants who come from remote and poor areas, leaving their children in the countryside is not a good family choice. Childcare in the hometown has always been a concern for migrants in China, which reduces their life satisfaction. Furthermore, the results of this study also show that Chinese migrants are in a dilemma at present. The lack of social welfare support

in the city causes concerns, but if migrants cannot bring their children to the city, they have to worry about family care due to the household split.

5.2. The Necessity of Household Reunion in China's Future Urbanization Process

In China's large-scale rural-urban migration wave, the rural migrants' household split has caused many social problems in China. For example, children in the countryside lack parental care, which is harmful to children's growth [30]. Wen and Lin [31] found that left-behind children were disadvantaged in health behaviour and school engagement in rural China. Migrants' household split also has a negative effect on the elders' health. Guo et al. [32] found that older parents with more children tended to have significantly more depression and lower life satisfaction in rural China. The family has not only an economic and social function but also cultural and emotional ones. Furthermore, the rapid urbanization process in China over the past three decades, which saw a large number of young rural people and rural elites leave the countryside, further contributed to the decline of the Chinese countryside [33,34]. Rural migrants have made important contributions to the rapid development of China's economy. However, Chinese internal rural migrants always face the problem of social integration and inequality in public welfare [35]. In the past, many migrants who worked in the city when they were young, would return to the countryside when they became old (e.g., healthy migrants) [36]. With the generational changes in migration, many migrants now increasingly want to be able to stay in cities and bring their children and parents with them. However, China's current urbanization process makes it difficult for migrants to accomplish family reunion in cities. On the one hand, housing prices in Chinese cities are now so high that it is difficult for migrants to afford the housing their families need. On the other hand, China's urban welfare system is not perfect. Many children and elderly migrants cannot get basic public welfare in cities, such as children's education and elders' pension insurance. Therefore, it has become an essential task in China's population urbanization process to create external conditions for migrants to accomplish family reunion. Overall, reuniting migrant households in cities has become a significant issue in China's social development.

5.3. Improvements to the Chinese Model: Toward Family-Friendly Cities for Migrants

We put forward that China's future urbanization process should enable most migrant families to achieve family reunion in the cities. Over the past decades, China's rapid economic growth has set a good example for developing countries. However, China's development is not balanced, and the gap between inter-provincial development and urban-rural development is still very large [37,38]. In this study, the problems of household split and low life satisfaction of Chinese migrants have been linked to the rapid growth of the Chinese economy. Since the reform and opening up, the gap between urban and rural development in China has been widening, and many resources, including rural labour force, have been concentrated in cities. For migrants from remote areas, it is difficult to bring all family members to the city. On the one hand, migrants do not get the same urban public services than local residents, such as children's education and medical care. On the other hand, compared with rural areas, the cost of living in cities is higher. If migrants bring their children to cities, it increases their cost of living. China's development model needs to be improved, narrowing the regional economic gap and developing a fairer basic public service system. In the future, we need to create a fairer and more suitable living environment for low-income migrants to achieve family reunion in cities.

6. Conclusions

We found that the life satisfaction of inter-provincial migrants was significantly lower than that of intra-provincial migrants. For inter-provincial migrants, the life satisfaction of those who came to the city with underaged children was significantly lower than that of migrants who came to the city leaving their children in the hometown, but we also found that the life satisfaction of migrants who were concerned about childcare in the hometown was significantly lower than that of migrants who did not worry about childcare in the hometown. Facing household split, Chinese migrants are in a

dilemma. They lack social welfare support in the city, which makes it difficult for them to be joined by their family members. On the other hand, if they cannot bring their children and elderly parents to the city, they have to worry about family care. We also found that family income does not have a significant moderating effect on the decline in life satisfaction owing to concerns about childcare in the hometown. The household split and life satisfaction of Chinese migrants are critical issues in Chinese society. For developing countries, solving social problems while the economy is developing rapidly is an essential step towards achieving sustainable development. In the past few decades, a large number of rural migrants in China have moved to the city. This is an important reason for the rapid growth of China's economy. However, there are also several problems linked to that, such as the household separation between urban and rural areas and the imbalance of regional development. We believe that a family friendly economic development model should be pursued in the urbanization process in developing countries. The current study has a limitation. We used the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to measure the life satisfaction of migrants. Although this scale has been widely used, there may be some deviation from the real status of residents. In the future, more measurement methods or in-depth interviews can be used to obtain more accurate data on China's migrants' life satisfaction.

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