

Rural to Urban Migration and Mental Health Consequences in Urbanizing China

Authors : Jie Li, Nick Manning

Abstract : The mass rural-urban migrants in China associated with the urbanization processes bear significant implications on public health, which is an important yet under-researched area. Urban social and built environment, such as noise, air pollution, high population density, and social segregation, has the potential to contribute to mental illness. In China, rural-urban migrants are also faced with institutional discrimination tied to the hukou (household registration) system, through which they are denied of full citizenship to basic social welfare and services, which may elevate the stress of urban living and exacerbate the risks to mental illness. This paper aims to link the sociospatial exclusion, everyday life experiences and its mental health consequences on rural to urban migrants living in the mega-city of Shanghai. More specifically, it asks what the daily experience of being a migrant in Shanghai is actually like, particularly regarding sources of stress from housing, displacement, service accessibility, and cultural conflict, and whether these stresses affect mental health? Secondary data from literature review on migration, urban studies, and epidemiology research, as well as primary data from preliminary field trip observations and interviews are used in the analysis.

Keywords : migration, urbanisation, mental health, China

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