

The Social Impact of Female Labor Migration on the Families Left Behind in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Female labor migration has become a significant socioeconomic phenomenon in the Philippines, with many women working overseas to provide better opportunities for their families. This study examined the social impact of female labor migration on families left behind, focusing on family relationships, caregiving responsibilities, emotional well-being, and family adjustment. A qualitative phenomenological design was used to explore the lived experiences of husbands whose wives worked overseas. The participants were husbands residing in Bago City, Negros Occidental, who had firsthand experience of their wives' absence due to overseas employment. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews. The findings showed that migration improved families' financial stability, housing, children's education, and overall quality of life. However, husbands also experienced loneliness, anxiety, emotional stress, and marital difficulties while assuming greater responsibilities as caregivers, household managers, and decision-makers. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience through communication with their wives, faith, family support, dedication to work, and commitment to their children. The study concluded that female labor migration has both positive and negative social effects, highlighting the need for psychosocial support, family communication, parenting education, financial management, and community-based programs to strengthen transnational families.

Keywords: Female Labor Migration; Transnational Families; Social Impact; Family Relationship; Family Adjustment

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a defining feature of today's labour markets and a growing global trend. It has been characterized as the Philippine socio-economic landscape (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024). Millions of Filipinos seek overseas employment to support their families' needs and play an important role in the country's economy through remittances which contributes to household income and international development (International Organization for Migration [IOM], (2024) & Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas [BSP], (2024). Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority 2024 Survey on Overseas Filipinos, there are millions of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) contribute significantly to the national economy through remittances with a total of Php 262.20 billion in 2024. Among these Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are women who constitute 57.2 % of the total population of Overseas Filipinos.

According to Bayangos, V. F., & Lubangco, C. E. (2024) women migrant workers employed in domestic work, caregiving, healthcare, and other service occupations continue to make substantial contributions to the Philippine economy through the remittances they send to their families. These remittances provide financial resources that improve household consumption, children's education, healthcare, housing, and savings while serving as a stable source of foreign exchange for the country. Nevertheless, these economic gains are often accompanied by significant social and emotional costs associated with prolonged family separation, highlighting the need to balance the economic benefits of labor migration with policies that protect family well-being and support transnational households.

Additionally, Domingo, P. (2026) conveyed that despite the social and emotional challenges associated with prolonged family separation, many transnational families continue to persevere because of the economic opportunities created by labor migration. Families often demonstrate resilience by adapting to changing family roles and responsibilities, with left-behind spouses assuming caregiving and household management while maintaining family stability. Children frequently develop a deeper appreciation of their migrant mother's sacrifices, which can motivate them to pursue educational and personal goals. Moreover, advances in digital communication technologies, including video calls, instant messaging, and social media, have enabled migrant parents and their families to sustain emotional closeness, participate in parenting, and strengthen family relationships despite geographical distance. Recent studies emphasize that regular communication and shared caregiving practices contribute significantly to family cohesion and resilience in transnational families.

On the other hand, as I work at the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) every day, I deal with OFW concerns and documents on a daily basis. In reviewing their employment contracts, I have found that many overseas Filipino workers are being offered higher salaries, better benefits and more favorable terms and conditions than what is offered by local employment. In fact, returning workers express their willingness to stay abroad because they get better compensation and employment packages. Based on their feedback and the employment offers they receive, I have learned of the economic benefits and potential advantages of labor migration. However, aside from the promising gains, I became curious about the wider implications of it, particularly on the families left behind. This curiosity has led me to carry out this study to explore and understand the social impact of female labor migration on the families they leave behind in the Philippines.

Furthermore, recent research has highlighted that the experiences of family members who remain in the Philippines amid labor migration continue to require greater attention, particularly with regard to changing family roles and caregiving arrangements. Domingo (2026) explained that transnational migration reshapes family stability, interpersonal relationships, and caregiving responsibilities within Filipino families, while also requiring family members who remain at home to reorganize their roles and responsibilities. In the Philippine context, where caregiving has traditionally been strongly associated with mothers, the prolonged absence of a migrant mother may lead fathers, grandparents, and other relatives to assume greater responsibility for childcare and household management. These changes may contribute to the reorganization of parenting practices, family decision-making, and marital relationships. Parreñas (2005) likewise emphasized that the migration of Filipino mothers creates transnational family arrangements in which caregiving responsibilities are redistributed among fathers, relatives, and other members of the extended family. Consequently, husbands who remain behind may experience changes in their domestic and parental roles as they attempt to balance breadwinning, caregiving, and household responsibilities. Children may likewise experience emotional distress, although strong family support and regular communication can lessen the adverse effects of separation. Reintegration upon the mother's return also presents challenges as family members renegotiate authority, parenting roles, and emotional relationships (IOM 2024).

Despite existing studies on labor migration, there remains a need to further explore how maternal absence affects the overall functioning of families left behind. This study aims to examine the social impact of female labor migration on families left behind in the Philippines.

This study is informed by three complementary theoretical perspectives: Gender Role Theory, Transnationalism, and Resilience Theory. Together, these perspectives provide a multidimensional framework for understanding how female labor migration reshapes family life beyond its economic consequences.

Gender Role Theory provides a lens for interpreting the redistribution of caregiving and domestic responsibilities following the migration of wives. Gendered divisions of labor commonly associate women with caregiving and men with provider roles; however, these roles are socially organized and can change when family circumstances require adaptation. The participants' accounts demonstrate this process clearly, as husbands assumed responsibilities involving childcare, discipline, household management, educational supervision, and emotional caregiving while continuing to provide economically for their families. Their experiences therefore illustrate not the disappearance of gender roles but their renegotiation under conditions of transnational family life (Eagly & Wood, 2016).

Transnationalism explains how family relationships continue to operate across geographical boundaries. Physical separation did not terminate participants' relationships with their wives and children; instead, family life was reorganized through digital communication, remittances, shared decision-making, emotional support, and continuing parental involvement. The family consequently functioned across multiple locations, with members remaining socially and emotionally connected despite geographical distance. This perspective is consistent with contemporary conceptualizations of migrant transnationalism as the maintenance of cross-border social, emotional, and financial connections (Bilgili & Erdal, 2025).

Resilience Theory further explains how participants and their families adapted to the challenges associated with prolonged separation. Rather than experiencing migration solely as a source of disruption, participants mobilized individual, relational, spiritual, and social resources to preserve family functioning. Regular communication, faith, support from relatives and friends, commitment to children's welfare, acceptance of circumstances, and willingness to assume unfamiliar responsibilities served as adaptive resources. From a family resilience perspective, these processes demonstrate how families reorganize their functioning and mobilize relational and organizational resources in response to prolonged adversity (Walsh, 2016).

Taken together, the three perspectives suggest that the social impact of female labor migration is best understood as a process of role redistribution, transnational relationship maintenance, and adaptive family resilience. Gender Role Theory explains how responsibilities are renegotiated; Transnationalism explains how family relationships are maintained across borders; and Resilience Theory explains how family members adapt to the emotional, relational, and practical demands created by separation. These perspectives therefore provide an integrated interpretive framework for understanding the participants' experiences.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing in-depth interviews to explore the social impact of female labor migration on families left behind. The design was chosen to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies of participants, thereby providing nuanced insights into family dynamics and emotional well-being.

The study focused on seven male spouses residing in Bago City, Negros Occidental, whose wives have been working overseas for two to five years and who have two to five children. This purposive sampling ensured that participants had direct and sustained experience of maternal absence due to labor migration.

The inquiry concentrated on social and emotional dimensions of migration, including changes in family roles, caregiving arrangements, marital relationships, and coping strategies. Economic aspects such as remittances were considered only insofar as they influenced social experiences.

Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, allowing participants to narrate their personal experiences openly while enabling the researcher to probe for deeper insights. This method facilitated the exploration of complex family processes and emotional responses to migration.

Interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis, wherein recurring patterns, themes, and categories were identified and interpreted. This analytic approach provided a systematic means of understanding how families reorganize roles, sustain relationships, and cope with prolonged maternal absence.

The study's findings are limited by the small sample size, the specific geographic focus on Bago City, and the reliance on participants' willingness and ability to recall experiences. As such, results cannot be generalized to all families of female migrant workers but offer valuable qualitative insights into the phenomenon.

The researcher acknowledges that her professional position within the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) shaped her interest in and proximity to the phenomenon under investigation. Her work with overseas Filipino worker concerns provided contextual familiarity with the economic and administrative dimensions of labor migration and contributed to her interest in understanding its consequences for families left behind. At the same time, this professional proximity may have influenced the assumptions, expectations, and

interpretations brought to the research process. To address this potential influence, the researcher maintained reflexive awareness throughout data collection and analysis, allowing participants' narratives to guide the development of codes and themes rather than imposing predetermined interpretations. Participant accounts were treated as the primary source of meaning, and theoretical perspectives were used to interpret rather than dictate the findings. The researcher also maintained confidentiality and clarified that participation was voluntary and unrelated to the provision of government services or employment-related assistance. Reflexive attention to positionality was intended to strengthen the transparency, credibility, and ethical integrity of the inquiry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Participants

To protect participant confidentiality, pseudonymous codes were assigned to all participants and were used consistently throughout the presentation and interpretation of the findings. The participant profile and all corresponding quotations should use the same codes. The researchers cross-checked each quotation against the original interview transcripts to ensure accurate attribution and to prevent discrepancies. No participant code was altered solely for consistency without verification against the original interview record.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants.

Participants' Code Name	Age	No. of Children	No. Of Years Married	Length of Wife's Overseas Employment (Years)
Mr. A	44	2	18	4
Mr. R	42	3	14	5
Mr. L	43	4	17	2
Mr. M	45	2	16	2
Mr. O	35	3	16	4
Mr. C	43	1	15	5
Mr. D	32	2	5	4

The thematic analysis generated eight (8) overarching themes that capture the multidimensional social impact of female labor migration on families left behind: (1) Emotional Challenges Due to Prolonged Separation, (2) Transformation of Family Relationships, (3) Changes in Parenting Roles and Responsibilities, (4) Household Role Adjustment, (5) Economic Improvement coupled with Continuing Financial Pressure, (6) Marital Strain and Trust Issues, (7) Communication and Coping Mechanisms, and (8) Personal Growth and Insights. These themes demonstrate that female labor migration produces simultaneous gains and challenges rather than a uniformly positive or negative family outcome. Economic improvements were accompanied by emotional and relational costs, while the absence of migrant wives required husbands to renegotiate traditionally gendered responsibilities. At the same time, participants developed communication practices, social-support networks, faith-based coping, and new forms of parental involvement that enabled them to maintain family functioning despite geographical separation. The findings therefore portray transnational family life as an ongoing process of role negotiation, adaptation, and resilience.

Table 2. Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes.

Major Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Emotional Challenges Due to Prolonged Separation	- Loneliness, Longing, and Emotional Distress - Disrupted Family and Marital Relationships
2. Transformation of Family Relationships	- Changes in Spousal and Parent–Child Relationships - Redistribution of Family Roles and Extended Family Relationships
3. Changes in Parenting Roles and Responsibilities	- Increased Paternal Caregiving and Childcare Responsibilities - Changes in Discipline, Decision-Making, and Shared Parenting
4. Household Role Adjustment	- Redistribution of Household Responsibilities - Increased Paternal and Children’s Household Responsibilities
5. Economic Improvement Coupled with Continuing Financial Pressure	- Improved Household Financial Capacity and Living Conditions - Improved Access to Education and Family Needs
6. Marital Strain and Trust Issues	- Trust, Jealousy, and Marital Insecurity - Changes in Marital Intimacy and Spousal Roles
7. Communication and Coping Mechanisms	- Digital Communication and Maintaining Family Connection - Family Support, Adaptation, and Emotional Resilience
8. Personal Growth and Insights	- Increased Independence, Responsibility, and Self-Reliance - Emotional Resilience and Appreciation of Family Sacrifice - Changed Perspectives and Aspirations for a Better Future

Theme 1: Emotional Challenges Due to Prolonged Separation

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the interviews was the profound emotional burden experienced by husbands following their wives' migration for overseas employment. Across the participants' narratives, feelings of loneliness, sadness, worry, longing, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion were consistently expressed as immediate and enduring consequences of prolonged family separation.

Sub-theme 1.1: Loneliness, Longing, and Emotional Distress

The first subtheme that emerged was Loneliness, Longing, and Emotional Distress. Participants expressed feelings of sadness and longing resulting from the physical absence of their wives. For some, the emotional burden was intensified by seeing their children grow up without their mother’s daily presence. Although participants acknowledged that their wives' decision to work abroad was motivated by the desire to improve the family's financial condition, the emotional costs associated with physical separation were evident throughout their lived experiences.

For many participants, the initial departure of their wives marked the beginning of a difficult emotional adjustment. Participant A vividly described the sadness he experienced, particularly because of the absence of a mother in his children's daily lives:

"Budlay eh, nasubuan eh syempre para sa mga bata, wai sang iloy nga upod nila." (It was difficult. I felt very sad, especially for the children because they no longer had their mother with them.) Mr. A

His statement illustrates that his emotional distress was not solely rooted in his own loneliness but also in witnessing the emotional needs of his children. As the remaining parent, he became increasingly aware of the emotional void created by his wife's absence, making his own adjustment even more challenging.

Similarly, Participant R described the intense longing he experienced during the early stage of migration. He emphasized that one of the most painful aspects of being left behind was no longer being physically together as a family:

"Una gd, bilang mag-asawa ang kahidlaw gid nga gusto mo makaupod." (At first, as husband and wife, the longing to be together was very strong.) Mr. R

His narrative demonstrates that marital separation extended beyond physical distance. The absence of daily companionship, shared routines, and emotional intimacy significantly affected his emotional well-being, highlighting how migration disrupts the normal interactions that sustain marital relationships. Participant D likewise shared that his emotional burden gradually intensified as time passed:

"May dala kasubo kag ga amat-amat budlay." (There was sadness, and gradually everything became more difficult.) Mr. D

Unlike the expectation that emotional adjustment naturally becomes easier over time, his experience suggests that prolonged separation may actually intensify emotional distress, particularly when communication becomes infrequent and uncertainty regarding the marital relationship increases.

Interestingly, not all participants experienced emotional difficulties in exactly the same manner. Participant L acknowledged experiencing homesickness during the initial months of separation but explained that he eventually adapted to the situation.

"Sa umpisa syempre may kahidlawan gid pero na-manage naman." (At first, I really missed her, but eventually I managed it.) Mr. L

His experience demonstrates that emotional adjustment varies among individuals. Strong family commitment, effective communication, and mutual trust appeared to help him cope more successfully with prolonged separation.

Sub-theme 1.2: Disruption of Marital and Family Relationships

Beyond feelings of loneliness and longing, some participants experienced deeper emotional pain resulting from changes in their marital relationships while their wives were overseas. Participant A openly narrated the emotional devastation he felt after learning about his wife's involvement with another person:

"Pinakabudlay gid na mabal-an mo na may-ara to siya gali sang iban ya." (The most painful thing was discovering that she already had someone else.) Mr. A

Likewise, Participant R disclosed that his emotional suffering intensified after his wife admitted that she no longer had feelings for him and had developed a relationship with another man while working abroad. He described experiencing depression, disappointment, and a profound sense of betrayal.

These experiences indicate that emotional distress among husbands left behind extends beyond the challenges of physical separation. Marital conflicts, declining trust, reduced communication, and perceived infidelity created additional psychological burdens that significantly affected their emotional stability.

Another emotional challenge consistently expressed by participants was anxiety regarding their wives' safety and well-being while working abroad. Because they were physically distant, husbands were often unable to

provide immediate support whenever problems arose. This uncertainty contributed to persistent worry and helplessness. Simultaneously, participants also experienced emotional strain from carrying the responsibility of supporting their children through the emotional consequences of maternal absence.

Despite these emotional hardships, many participants demonstrated remarkable resilience. Several gradually accepted their circumstances and redirected their attention toward fulfilling their responsibilities as fathers. Participant A explained that, although the situation remained painful, he eventually learned to accept it:

"Accept ko na lang gid. Ato to siya sa gwa, ari ko di, kinahanglan batunon na lang gid." (I simply accepted it. She is abroad while I am here, so I have no choice but to accept the situation.) Mr. A

Acceptance did not necessarily eliminate emotional pain; rather, it became a coping strategy that enabled participants to continue performing their parental and household responsibilities despite ongoing emotional difficulties.

The findings reveal that emotional suffering is one of the most significant yet often overlooked social costs of female labor migration. While overseas employment generated economic opportunities for families, it also required husbands to endure prolonged emotional separation from their spouses. Feelings of loneliness, sadness, longing, anxiety, uncertainty, and emotional exhaustion were common experiences among the participants, particularly during the initial stages of migration.

The participants' accounts further demonstrate that emotional adjustment is a dynamic process influenced by several factors, including the quality of marital communication, the level of mutual trust, family support systems, and individual coping abilities. Participants who maintained regular communication and mutual trust with their wives appeared to adapt more successfully to the challenges of separation. Conversely, those who experienced declining communication, marital conflict, or infidelity reported deeper emotional distress, depression, and prolonged psychological suffering.

Another important finding is that participants' emotional burden was often intensified by concern for their children's welfare. Husbands not only struggled with their own loneliness but also experienced emotional pain when witnessing their children's longing for their mother. Consequently, they were required to regulate their own emotions while simultaneously providing emotional support to their children. This dual responsibility further increased their psychological burden and demonstrates the complex emotional realities faced by husbands left behind.

Recent research continues to demonstrate that physical separation does not necessarily end family relationships; rather, family members develop ways of sustaining familyhood across geographical distance. Domingo (2026), in a qualitative study of Filipino transnational families, found that family members continue to maintain cohesion through communication, emotional support, caregiving, and shared family responsibilities despite prolonged physical separation.

Recent Philippine research by Opiniano and Tan (2025) likewise found that remittances improve the economic conditions of migrant households while simultaneously affecting family relationships and emotional experiences. Their study showed that families attach emotional meanings to remittances and use them not only for economic purposes but also to maintain family connections despite physical separation. .

Theme 2: Transformation of Family Relationships

Another significant theme that emerged from the interviews was the transformation of family relationships following the migration of wives for overseas employment. The participants' narratives revealed that female labor migration reshaped family interactions in different ways. While many husbands reported developing stronger and more meaningful relationships with their children because they assumed greater caregiving responsibilities, relationships with extended family members, particularly in-laws and relatives, often became strained due to financial expectations, differing opinions, and increased family interference. These findings

demonstrate that migration not only alters the physical structure of the family but also changes the emotional and social dynamics within and beyond the immediate household.

Sub-theme 2.1 Changes in Spousal and Parent–Child Relationships

One of the most notable changes reported by the participants was the strengthening of father-child relationships. As mothers became physically absent, fathers assumed the dual responsibilities of provider and caregiver. This increased involvement allowed them to spend more time with their children and become more engaged in their daily activities, emotional needs, and personal development.

Participant A described how his relationship with his children became stronger despite the challenges of raising them alone:

"Daw mas naging mabakod pa gid eh kay amay kana iloy ka pa. Kinahanglan ipakita mo gid sa ila nga kaya mo gid nga ma-guidan mo man sila." (Our relationship became stronger because you become both a father and a mother. You have to show your children that you are capable of guiding and raising them.) Mr. A

His statement reflects how maternal migration encouraged him to become more emotionally available and actively involved in parenting. Rather than limiting his role to financial provision, he embraced nurturing responsibilities traditionally associated with mothers. Through this process, he developed a closer emotional bond with his children.

Similarly, Participant R shared that although his wife was abroad, he became both father and mother to his children:

"Sa pag-atipan sa mga bata, wai gid sang may nagbag-o, mas nag anu pa gid gani, kay ako na mismo ang amay ako pa ang iloy." (In taking care of the children, nothing became worse; in fact, I became both their father and their mother.) Mr. R

His narrative illustrates that caregiving responsibilities extended beyond providing basic needs. He became responsible for emotional support, discipline, guidance, and maintaining the stability of the household. This increased parental involvement strengthened his relationship with his children despite the absence of their mother.

Participant L likewise emphasized that his relationship with his children became even stronger because he became more dedicated to their upbringing after his wife left to work abroad.

"Para sa akon wai man epekto kay mas nagbakod pa gid gani kay syempre ang iya dedikasyon para sa mga kabataan na makaeskwela." (For me, there was no negative effect. In fact, our relationship became even stronger because of our shared dedication to giving the children a better future through education.) Mr. L

Sub-theme 2.2 Redistribution of Family Roles and Extended Family Relationships

Your findings show that when wives migrated, husbands assumed responsibilities that were previously shared with or primarily performed by their wives. He further explained that he became more involved in preparing his children for school, monitoring their education, and managing their daily routines. His account demonstrates that the migration experience encouraged fathers to become more engaged parents and strengthened family cohesion within the nuclear family.

Despite these positive developments, participants also acknowledged that maternal absence created emotional challenges for their children. Participant A observed that although he tried his best to care for them, his children continued to long for their mother's affection.

"Daw makita mo gid sa ila kis-a nga may lain gid ya eh, nga gapangita sila sang care sang ila iloy." (Sometimes you can clearly see that something is missing because they are looking for their mother's care.) Mr. A

This statement highlights that while fathers successfully assumed caregiving roles, the emotional presence of mothers remained irreplaceable. Children continued to experience feelings of longing despite receiving adequate care from their fathers, suggesting that maternal migration affects the emotional climate of the household.

In contrast to the strengthened father-child relationship, many participants reported deterioration in their relationships with extended family members. Financial matters emerged as one of the primary sources of conflict. Several husbands explained that relatives assumed that families with overseas workers had abundant financial resources, resulting in unrealistic expectations for financial assistance.

"Sa akon utod, feeling bala nga abroad ang imo asawa, abi nila kwartahan ka na." (My siblings think that because my wife is abroad, we are already wealthy.) Mr. A

He further explained that when he could not provide financial assistance to relatives, misunderstandings developed, eventually weakening their relationship. His experience illustrates how migration may unintentionally alter relatives' perceptions regarding a family's economic status, leading to conflict and strained interpersonal relationships.

Participant A also shared that although he needed support from his wife's family in caring for the children, differences in expectations and living arrangements created tension between them. This demonstrates that extended family support, while important, may also become a source of disagreement when expectations are not mutually understood.

Similarly, Participant R described how his relationship with his in-laws gradually deteriorated after his wife transferred to another country.

"Naglayo gid eh... ang pamilya niya sa akon kay indi ko komporme sang ila pamatasan." (Our relationship really became distant because I did not agree with their behavior.) Mr. R

He explained that he increasingly felt excluded from decisions involving his wife and believed that his role as husband was no longer respected. This strained relationship contributed to additional emotional stress and complicated his efforts to maintain family stability while his wife was overseas.

Interestingly, not all participants experienced conflict with extended family members. Participant L maintained a positive relationship with his wife's relatives throughout his wife's migration.

"Daw wai man epekto... close ang relasyon namon sa iya pamilya." (There was really no effect because we remained close with her family.) Mr. L

His experience indicates that positive family relationships can be maintained despite geographical separation when mutual respect, trust, and open communication exist among family members.

The findings indicate that female labor migration significantly transforms family relationships by strengthening bonds within the nuclear family while, in some cases, creating tension within the extended family network. As wives migrated abroad, husbands became more actively involved in their children's lives, resulting in stronger father-child relationships characterized by increased emotional closeness, shared responsibilities, and greater parental involvement. The participants' narratives suggest that the assumption of caregiving responsibilities enabled fathers to develop deeper emotional connections with their children and gain a stronger appreciation of parenting.

However, the findings also reveal that maternal migration may negatively affect relationships with relatives and in-laws. Financial expectations, perceived economic success, differing opinions regarding family decisions, and interference from extended family members contributed to misunderstandings and strained relationships. The belief that families of overseas workers automatically enjoy financial prosperity created

unrealistic expectations, placing additional pressure on husbands who were already managing household responsibilities alone.

Furthermore, while fathers successfully assumed many caregiving responsibilities, the participants acknowledged that children continued to experience emotional longing for their mothers. This finding suggests that although fathers can effectively provide care and guidance, maternal emotional presence remains an essential component of children's emotional development and family cohesion.

The findings strongly support Gender Role Theory, which argues that family roles are socially constructed rather than biologically predetermined. Traditionally, Filipino fathers have been viewed primarily as economic providers, while mothers have assumed caregiving responsibilities. However, the participants' experiences demonstrate that these traditional gender roles became more flexible following female labor migration. Husbands successfully assumed nurturing, caregiving, and emotional support roles while continuing to fulfill their responsibilities as providers. Their experiences illustrate that fathers are capable of performing both paternal and maternal functions when family circumstances require role adaptation. The findings also support Transnationalism Theory, which explains that family relationships continue despite geographical separation through sustained emotional, financial, and social connections. Although physical distance did not dissolve family relationships, it transformed how relationships were maintained within the household and across the extended family. The increased involvement of fathers in childcare strengthened family bonds within the nuclear family, while interactions with relatives became more complex because of financial expectations and changing family dynamics.

Theme 3: Changes in Parenting Roles and Responsibilities

Another significant theme that emerged from the participants' narratives was the transformation of parenting roles and responsibilities following the migration of their wives. The findings revealed that all participants experienced substantial changes in their roles as fathers, assuming responsibilities that were previously shared with or primarily performed by their wives. With the mothers working abroad, the husbands became the primary caregivers, taking full responsibility for child-rearing, discipline, emotional support, household management, and educational supervision. These changes required them to redefine their identities not only as providers but also as nurturers and caregivers.

Sub-theme 3.1: Increased Paternal Caregiving and Childcare Responsibilities

For many participants, the migration of their wives marked the beginning of a new phase of fatherhood that demanded greater involvement in every aspect of their children's daily lives. They described becoming solely responsible for ensuring that their children's physical, emotional, educational, and social needs were met. Unlike before, when parenting responsibilities were shared between spouses, they now carried the full burden of raising their children while simultaneously maintaining employment and managing the household. Participant R emphasized the magnitude of this role transition by stating:

"Sa pag-atipan sa mga bata, wai gid sang may nagbag-o, mas nag anu pa gid gani, kay ako na mismo ang amay ako pa ang iloy." (In taking care of the children, nothing became worse; in fact, I became both their father and their mother.) Mr. R

His statement illustrates the extent to which fathers assumed dual parental roles following maternal migration. Becoming "both father and mother" symbolized more than simply completing household tasks; it reflected his willingness to provide emotional care, guidance, discipline, and affection traditionally associated with maternal caregiving. This finding demonstrates that participants perceived parenting as a holistic responsibility that required both emotional and practical commitment. Similarly, Participant A explained that the responsibilities of disciplining and caring for the children became entirely his responsibility:

"Wai man pagbag-o, nagdugang lang mga responsibilidad eh. Ako man ya ang ga disiplina, pag-atipan nag doble kag akon man tanan eh ang pag-asikaso sa ila." (Nothing really changed except that my responsibilities

increased. I became the one who disciplines them, takes care of them, and handles everything for them.) Mr. A

His narrative demonstrates that fatherhood became considerably more demanding after his wife's departure. He not only assumed responsibility for maintaining discipline but also became actively involved in monitoring his children's education, attending to their daily needs, and ensuring their overall well-being. The phrase "nagdugang lang mga responsibilidad" ("my responsibilities increased") reflects how maternal migration significantly expanded fathers' parenting obligations.

Sub-theme 3.2: Changes in Discipline, Decision-Making, and Shared Parenting

The participants also described the challenges of disciplining children without the support of their wives. Several admitted that managing children's behavior alone was one of the most difficult aspects of parenting. Participant A shared:

"Ang pag disiplin sa mga kabata-an nga ikaw lang isa, kung paano mo sila tudluan kag kung paano mo sila tuytuyan." (Disciplining the children when you are alone—how to teach and guide them—is one of the most difficult parts.) Mr. A

Likewise, Participant R explained that disciplining his children became particularly challenging because of his work schedule.

"Ang pag disiplin sa mga bata eh, kay ti gaubra ko, indi ko na sila matagaan maayo sang attention." (Disciplining the children is difficult because I also have work, so I cannot always give them enough attention.) Mr. R

His account highlights the conflict between employment responsibilities and parenting duties. Although he remained committed to raising his children, balancing work demands with caregiving responsibilities created considerable physical and emotional strain.

Another major parenting responsibility assumed by the participants involved supporting their children's education. Fathers became responsible for preparing their children for school, monitoring their academic performance, attending school activities, and communicating with teachers whenever necessary. Participant L described how he adjusted his daily routine to meet his children's educational needs:

"Adjust lang gid ko sa oras para sa mga bata... Ako lang hands-on sa ila pag-abroad ni misis, maski ang paglaygay sa ila pag-eskwela." (I simply adjusted my schedule for the children. Since my wife left, I have been the hands-on parent, even in guiding them in their studies.) Mr. L

This statement demonstrates that fatherhood extended beyond financial provision to include active participation in children's educational development. Participants recognized education as one of the primary reasons their wives migrated, motivating them to ensure that their children remained focused on their studies.

Participants likewise emphasized the importance of providing emotional support for their children. Beyond meeting physical needs, they became responsible for comforting children who missed their mothers and helping them cope with the emotional effects of prolonged separation. Participant R explained that he encouraged his children to communicate openly with their mother whenever possible and involved her in disciplining them through phone calls.

"Ang ila iloy maski papano ga disiplin man sa ila kay kung magtawag ang ila iloy, ginahambalan ko sila nga isugid nila sa ila iloy ang rason ngaa ginaakigan ko sila." (Whenever their mother calls, I tell the children to explain to her why I disciplined them so she can still participate in guiding them.) Mr. L

This finding illustrates that despite geographical separation, fathers continued to involve mothers in parenting decisions whenever possible, thereby preserving shared parental authority within the transnational family.

Participants also acknowledged that managing multiple parenting responsibilities independently was physically demanding. Daily routines included preparing meals, accompanying children to school, supervising homework, attending to illnesses, performing household chores, and maintaining employment.

Despite these numerous challenges, participants consistently expressed determination to fulfill their parental roles. Rather than viewing caregiving responsibilities as burdens alone, they regarded them as expressions of their commitment to their children and to the sacrifices made by their wives abroad. Several fathers explained that their children became their primary source of motivation, encouraging them to persevere despite emotional fatigue and increased responsibilities.

The findings reveal that the migration of mothers significantly transformed fathers' parenting responsibilities. The absence of wives required husbands to assume full responsibility for child-rearing, including discipline, emotional caregiving, educational supervision, household management, and daily decision-making. Consequently, fathers experienced a substantial expansion of their parental roles, requiring them to balance employment, domestic responsibilities, and caregiving simultaneously.

The participants' narratives demonstrate that fatherhood evolved from a predominantly economic role into a multifaceted caregiving role. Fathers became actively involved in nurturing, guiding, protecting, and emotionally supporting their children while maintaining household stability. Although this transition was accompanied by physical exhaustion, emotional stress, and time-management challenges, participants consistently demonstrated resilience and a strong commitment to fulfilling their responsibilities.

The findings also suggest that fathers developed greater empathy for the work traditionally performed by mothers. Through firsthand experience, participants gained a deeper appreciation of the complexity of caregiving and recognized that raising children involves continuous emotional labor, patience, and sacrifice. Their experiences highlight the adaptive capacity of fathers to respond effectively to changing family circumstances brought about by female labor migration.

The recipients of this redistribution of care work. They assumed not only practical household tasks but also the emotional labor of comforting children, maintaining family routines, supporting educational development, and preserving family stability despite prolonged maternal absence.

Theme 4: Household Role Adjustment

Another important theme that emerged from the participants' narratives was the significant adjustment in household roles and domestic responsibilities following the migration of their wives. The findings revealed that the absence of mothers required husbands to assume full responsibility for managing the household, performing domestic chores, and maintaining the daily routines that were previously shared with or primarily carried out by their spouses. Participants described learning and performing household tasks such as cooking, washing clothes, cleaning the house, grocery shopping, budgeting, paying utility bills, and ensuring that the family's everyday needs were met. These adjustments represented one of the most substantial lifestyle changes experienced by husbands left behind.

Sub-theme 4.1: Redistribution of Household Responsibilities

Before their wives migrated, many participants admitted that they had limited involvement in domestic work because household management had traditionally been handled by their spouses. However, when their wives left to work abroad, they were compelled to acquire new skills and adapt to responsibilities that were unfamiliar to them. This transition was not only practical but also psychological, as participants had to change their perceptions of household responsibilities and redefine their roles within the family. Participant A summarized this overwhelming responsibility by stating:

"Ako gid tanan." (I do everything.) Mr. A

Although his statement is brief, it conveys the breadth of responsibilities he assumed after his wife's departure. He explained that every household task, from preparing meals and cleaning the house to taking care of the

children and managing finances, eventually became his responsibility. The absence of his wife required him to independently coordinate every aspect of household management while simultaneously fulfilling his role as the family's breadwinner.

Sub-theme 4.2: Increased Paternal and Children's Household Responsibilities

Further elaborating on his experience, Participant A explained that his daily routine became considerably more demanding because he needed to accomplish multiple tasks before and after work. Aside from earning a living, he was responsible for preparing food, washing clothes, cleaning the house, ensuring that the children attended school, and attending to their daily needs. These responsibilities often left him physically exhausted but also taught him valuable life skills that he previously had little opportunity to develop.

The migration of wives resulted in the complete redistribution of domestic labor. Tasks that were once considered maternal responsibilities became integral parts of the husbands' everyday lives.

Participant R likewise discussed the challenges of balancing domestic work with employment. He explained that after returning home from work, household responsibilities still awaited him. Cooking meals, cleaning the house, checking on the children's needs, and preparing them for school became part of his daily routine. Despite physical fatigue, he recognized that these responsibilities were necessary to maintain the family's stability while his wife was working abroad.

In addition to performing household chores independently, participants described learning practical skills that they had never previously mastered. Several husbands admitted that before their wives migrated, they rarely cooked meals or managed household finances. Over time, however, they became more confident in preparing food, budgeting family expenses, paying utility bills on time, purchasing groceries, and organizing household schedules.

Participant L explained that he gradually adjusted his daily routine by organizing his schedule around the needs of his children and household responsibilities. Rather than viewing household work as a burden, he considered it part of his responsibility as a father and partner supporting his wife's sacrifice abroad. His willingness to adapt demonstrates the flexibility and resilience developed by husbands left behind.

Another notable finding was the increasing participation of older children in household chores. Several participants explained that as their children matured, they began helping with cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, and maintaining the house. This shared participation eased some of the fathers' workload and encouraged cooperation among family members.

Participant A explained that his older children gradually learned to perform simple household tasks, allowing them to contribute to family responsibilities. Likewise, Participant L noted that assigning age-appropriate chores to his children not only helped manage the household more efficiently but also taught them responsibility and independence.

These experiences indicate that household management became a collective family effort rather than an individual responsibility. The migration of mothers encouraged greater cooperation among fathers and children as they worked together to maintain the home and support one another during prolonged separation. Despite the considerable adjustments required, participants consistently expressed determination to fulfill their household responsibilities. Although many admitted experiencing fatigue, stress, and occasional frustration, they regarded these sacrifices as necessary to support their wives' efforts abroad and to ensure their children's well-being. Their narratives reflect a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to maintaining a stable home environment despite the absence of their spouses.

The findings demonstrate that the migration of wives significantly restructured the division of household labor within the family. Fathers assumed primary responsibility for domestic management, including cooking, cleaning, laundry, budgeting, paying bills, grocery shopping, and maintaining the daily routines of family life.

Responsibilities that had previously been shared or performed primarily by mothers became the sole responsibility of husbands left behind.

The participants' narratives reveal that this adjustment involved more than simply completing household tasks. It required learning unfamiliar skills, reorganizing daily schedules, balancing employment with domestic work, and adapting to a lifestyle that demanded continuous multitasking. Many participants initially experienced physical exhaustion and emotional stress as they struggled to meet competing responsibilities. However, over time they developed greater confidence, competence, and appreciation for the complexity of household management.

Another significant finding is the emergence of collaborative household management involving children. As older children began participating in domestic chores, household responsibilities became more equally distributed among family members. This shared responsibility not only reduced the fathers' workload but also strengthened family cooperation, promoted children's independence, and reinforced a sense of collective responsibility within the household.

The findings further suggest that the experience of performing domestic work transformed participants' attitudes toward household labor. Fathers developed a deeper appreciation of the daily efforts required to maintain a household and recognized that domestic work constitutes an essential yet often undervalued contribution to family life.

Theme 5: Economic Improvement coupled with Continuing Financial Pressure

One of the most evident themes that emerged from the participants' narratives was the significant improvement in their families' economic condition following the migration of their wives. All participants acknowledged that overseas employment substantially enhanced their financial stability and enabled them to provide a better quality of life for their families. The regular remittances sent by their wives allowed them to meet their children's educational needs, improve their homes, purchase household appliances and vehicles, settle outstanding debts, and achieve financial goals that had previously been beyond their reach. However, despite these economic gains, participants also revealed that the financial benefits were accompanied by increasing household expenses, greater financial obligations, and the continuous challenge of managing limited resources. These findings demonstrate that while female labor migration created opportunities for economic mobility, it did not entirely eliminate financial pressures experienced by families left behind.

Sub-theme 5.1: Improved Household Financial Capacity and Living Conditions

The participants consistently described overseas employment as a turning point in their family's economic situation. Before their wives migrated, several participants struggled to meet their daily needs due to limited income and unstable employment. After migration, however, regular remittances significantly eased their financial burden and enabled them to provide more adequately for their children's needs. Participant L expressed how migration transformed his family's financial condition:

"Nadula ang problema ko sa pinansyal. (My financial problems disappeared.) Mr. L

He explained that before his wife worked abroad, their income was barely enough to support the family. Meeting daily expenses and paying school-related costs often caused financial stress. Through his wife's overseas employment, they were finally able to achieve financial stability, allowing them to budget more effectively and provide better opportunities for their children.

Participant L further emphasized that one of the greatest benefits of migration was securing the future of their children through education. He explained that his wife's primary motivation for working abroad was to ensure that their children could complete their education without financial interruptions. According to him, every sacrifice made by the family was intended to create better opportunities for the next generation.

Similarly, Participant A shared that the additional income enabled his family to purchase items that were previously considered unattainable.

"Nakabakal kami sang motor, refrigerator kag iban pa nga appliances nga indi namon mabakal sang una." (We were able to buy a motorcycle, a refrigerator, and other household appliances that we could not afford before.) Mr. A

He also explained that the family's improved financial condition allowed them to renovate portions of their house, creating a safer and more comfortable living environment for their children. These material improvements symbolized the tangible rewards of the sacrifices made by his wife while working overseas.

Several participants likewise reported using remittances to reduce or eliminate long-standing debts. Before migration, financial obligations frequently consumed much of the family's income, making it difficult to save money or invest in future needs. Through consistent financial support from their wives, participants gradually settled loans, paid outstanding obligations, and improved their overall financial security.

Participant R shared that remittances allowed him to prioritize both daily necessities and long-term investments for the family. Rather than spending money on unnecessary expenses, he focused on paying household bills, supporting the children's education, and preparing for future financial needs. His account illustrates how migration encouraged more deliberate financial planning and responsible budgeting within the household.

Although participants acknowledged these economic improvements, they also emphasized that financial stability did not completely eliminate economic challenges. Several husbands explained that the cost of living continued to rise, and household expenses increased as their children grew older. Educational costs, healthcare expenses, transportation, utility bills, food, and other daily necessities consumed a substantial portion of the remittances received from abroad. Participant A admitted that although their income had improved, the family's financial needs also continued to expand.

"Daw kulang man gihapon kay nagadamo man ang kinahanglanon sang pamilya." (Sometimes it still feels insufficient because the family's needs also continue to increase.) Mr.A

Sub-theme 5.2: Improved Access to Education and Family Needs

His statement demonstrates that financial improvement does not necessarily eliminate financial pressure. Instead, better economic conditions often lead to greater responsibilities and higher expectations regarding children's education, healthcare, and household maintenance.

Some participants also discussed the emotional burden associated with managing remittances responsibly. Because their wives worked abroad under difficult conditions, husbands felt a strong obligation to ensure that every remittance was spent wisely. They became more conscious of budgeting, prioritizing essential expenses, avoiding unnecessary spending, and saving money whenever possible.

Participant L explained that careful budgeting became one of his primary responsibilities after his wife migrated. He recognized that every peso represented his wife's hard work and sacrifice abroad, motivating him to become more disciplined in financial management.

Furthermore, participants revealed that financial success often created additional expectations from relatives and members of the community. Several husbands experienced requests for financial assistance because others assumed that families with overseas workers were financially well-off. This perception sometimes created additional economic pressure and contributed to strained relationships with relatives, particularly when they were unable to meet these expectations.

Another significant finding was that despite improved financial conditions, participants consistently emphasized that money could not fully compensate for the emotional sacrifices experienced by the family.

While remittances enabled them to purchase material possessions and improve their living conditions, they acknowledged that financial gains could never replace the emotional presence of a wife and mother within the household. For many participants, economic success was achieved at the cost of prolonged family separation, loneliness, and increased parenting responsibilities.

The findings demonstrate that female labor migration substantially improved the economic well-being of families left behind. Regular remittances enhanced household income, allowing participants to provide better housing, purchase essential household assets, support their children's education, reduce debts, and improve their overall standard of living. These financial improvements significantly reduced the economic hardships that participants had experienced before migration and provided greater financial security for their families.

However, the findings also reveal that improved income did not eliminate financial pressures. Increasing household expenses, rising educational costs, healthcare needs, and daily living expenditures continued to place demands on family resources. Consequently, participants became more careful in budgeting and financial planning to ensure that remittances were allocated effectively. The responsibility of managing family finances became an important role assumed by husbands while their wives worked overseas.

Another notable finding is that economic improvement was accompanied by increased social expectations. Participants experienced pressure from relatives who assumed that overseas employment automatically resulted in wealth. These expectations sometimes generated interpersonal conflicts and added another dimension to the financial responsibilities carried by husbands.

Most importantly, the findings indicate that participants viewed financial improvement and emotional sacrifice as inseparable aspects of labor migration. While migration significantly enhanced material living conditions, it also required families to endure prolonged separation, increased caregiving responsibilities, and emotional hardship. The participants consistently recognized that economic gains were achieved through considerable personal and family sacrifice.

Theme 6: Marital Strain and Trust Issues

One of the most emotionally significant themes that emerged from the participants' narratives was the effect of female labor migration on marital relationships. The findings revealed that prolonged physical separation reshaped the dynamics between husbands and wives in different ways. While some participants successfully maintained healthy and trusting relationships through regular communication, mutual respect, and shared commitment, others experienced marital strain characterized by declining trust, emotional distance, reduced communication, misunderstandings, and, in some cases, marital infidelity. These experiences demonstrate that female labor migration can either strengthen or weaken marital relationships depending on how couples manage the challenges associated with living apart.

Sub-theme 6.1: Trust, Jealousy, and Marital Insecurity

For several participants, trust emerged as one of the greatest challenges during prolonged separation. The inability to monitor each other's daily lives, coupled with limited opportunities for face-to-face interaction, created uncertainty and emotional insecurity. Participant A openly admitted that the trust that once existed in his marriage gradually disappeared.

"Pagsalig wai na gid." (The trust is no longer there.) Mr. A

He explained that his loss of trust stemmed from discovering that his wife had become involved with another person while working abroad. According to him, this revelation caused profound emotional pain and permanently altered his perception of their marriage. Although he initially remained hopeful that their relationship could survive the challenges of migration, the discovery of infidelity shattered his confidence and left him struggling to rebuild trust.

Participant A further reflected on the emotional consequences of this experience, explaining that the pain extended beyond feelings of betrayal. It also affected his self-esteem, his motivation, and his outlook on family life. Despite continuing to fulfill his responsibilities as a father, he admitted that rebuilding the marital relationship became extremely difficult once trust had been broken.

Sub-theme 6.2: Changes in Marital Intimacy and Spousal Roles

It focuses on how prolonged separation changed the emotional closeness, communication, partnership, and roles of husbands and wives. Similarly, Participant R disclosed that his marital relationship deteriorated after his wife developed a romantic relationship with another man while working overseas.

"Nag-amin siya nga may iban na siya." (She admitted that she already had another relationship.) Mr. R

He described this experience as one of the most painful events in his life. The emotional burden of prolonged separation was intensified by feelings of rejection, disappointment, and helplessness. He explained that the absence of regular communication and emotional intimacy gradually created distance between them, eventually leading to the breakdown of their marital relationship.

Participant R also expressed that the deterioration of their marriage affected other aspects of his life. He experienced emotional distress, difficulty concentrating on work, and feelings of uncertainty regarding the future of his family. Nevertheless, he continued fulfilling his responsibilities toward his children despite the emotional hardship he experienced.

In contrast, not all participants experienced marital deterioration. Participant L represented a positive example of maintaining a stable marital relationship despite prolonged separation. Throughout the interview, he consistently emphasized the importance of trust as the foundation of their marriage.

"Pagsalig sa isa kag isa." (Trust one another.) Mr. L

He explained that although he and his wife lived in different countries for several years, they remained emotionally connected through regular communication, mutual understanding, and shared family goals. They frequently discussed important family decisions, children's education, financial matters, and future plans. According to him, maintaining transparency and honesty prevented unnecessary misunderstandings and strengthened their commitment to one another.

Participant L further explained that whenever conflicts arose, they addressed the issues immediately through phone or video calls rather than allowing misunderstandings to persist. Their willingness to communicate openly enabled them to resolve disagreements before these developed into serious marital problems.

Another important finding was that several participants emphasized the importance of involving both spouses in family decision-making despite physical separation. Many husbands explained that before making major decisions regarding finances, children's education, or household matters, they first consulted their wives abroad.

One participant shared that despite living apart, they continued to make decisions together because they considered themselves equal partners in raising their family. This practice helped preserve mutual respect and reinforced the feeling that migration had not diminished either spouse's role within the family.

The participants' narratives also suggest that the emotional quality of communication mattered more than its frequency. While regular communication strengthened emotional intimacy, conversations characterized by openness, reassurance, and mutual support were particularly effective in maintaining trust. Conversely, inconsistent communication, secrecy, and unresolved misunderstandings contributed to emotional distance and weakened marital relationships.

The findings demonstrate that female labor migration significantly influences marital relationships, although the outcomes vary considerably among families. Prolonged physical separation created conditions that challenged emotional intimacy, communication, and mutual trust between spouses. Participants who experienced limited communication, unresolved misunderstandings, or marital infidelity reported feelings of betrayal, emotional distress, loneliness, and declining marital satisfaction. For these participants, the absence of trust became one of the most significant factors contributing to marital instability.

Conversely, participants who maintained regular communication, involved one another in family decision-making, and demonstrated mutual commitment reported stronger and more stable marital relationships despite living apart. Their experiences suggest that geographical separation alone does not inevitably weaken marriages. Instead, the quality of communication, emotional transparency, and shared commitment appear to determine how couples adapt to the challenges of transnational family life.

Another important finding is that trust functions as both an emotional and relational resource. Couples who preserved trust were able to sustain emotional closeness despite physical distance, whereas those who experienced betrayal found it extremely difficult to restore marital stability. This emphasizes that trust is not only a consequence of healthy communication but also a prerequisite for maintaining resilient transnational marriages.

Although migration separates spouses geographically, emotional connections can be preserved when communication remains consistent, trust is maintained, and couples continue participating jointly in family life. The experiences of Participant L illustrate that transnational marriages can remain stable despite prolonged separation when couples actively nurture their relationship.

Theme 7: Communication and Coping Mechanisms

Another important theme that emerged from the participants' narratives was the various communication practices and coping mechanisms they developed to manage the emotional, psychological, and practical challenges associated with their wives' migration. Despite experiencing loneliness, increased parenting responsibilities, and marital difficulties, the participants demonstrated remarkable resilience by adopting strategies that enabled them to maintain family stability and continue fulfilling their responsibilities. The findings revealed that frequent communication with their wives, focusing on their children's welfare, prayer and faith in God, participation in religious activities, support from relatives and friends, dedication to work, and personal resilience became the primary means by which husbands coped with prolonged separation.

Sub-theme 7.1: Digital Communication and Maintaining Family Connections

One of the most frequently mentioned coping strategies was maintaining regular communication with their wives. Participants explained that consistent communication helped reduce feelings of loneliness, strengthened emotional connection, and enabled both spouses to continue participating in family life despite living in different countries. Through mobile phones, video calls, and online messaging applications, couples were able to discuss family concerns, children's education, financial matters, and important household decisions.

Participant L emphasized that communication remained one of the foundations of their successful marriage during his wife's employment abroad. He explained that regardless of how busy they were, they made time to communicate regularly to update one another about their family's situation.

According to him, regular conversations helped maintain trust, prevented misunderstandings, and reassured both spouses that they remained committed to one another despite the distance. He further explained that discussing problems immediately rather than allowing misunderstandings to accumulate contributed significantly to maintaining harmony within their family.

Similarly, Participant R shared that whenever problems arose involving the children, he immediately informed his wife through phone calls so they could decide together on the appropriate course of action. Although

physically separated, they continued exercising shared parental authority by making important family decisions collaboratively.

Beyond communication with their spouses, participants consistently identified their children as their greatest source of motivation. Rather than allowing emotional difficulties to overwhelm them, fathers redirected their attention toward fulfilling their responsibilities as parents. Their children's welfare became the primary reason they persevered despite experiencing loneliness and emotional exhaustion. Participant L expressed this motivation by explaining that everything he endured was for the future of his children.

"Ang mga kabataan gid ang akon kusog kag inspirasyon. Para sa ila amo nga kinahanglan magpadayon bisan budlay." (My children are my strength and inspiration. It is because of them that I continue moving forward despite the difficulties.) Mr. L

His statement reflects the central role that children played in sustaining fathers' emotional well-being. Rather than focusing solely on their own emotional pain, participants found purpose in ensuring that their children remained healthy, educated, and emotionally supported. Participant A likewise emphasized that his faith became one of his greatest sources of strength throughout his wife's absence

"Pangamuyo gid sa Ginuo." (Always pray to God.) Mr. A

He explained that whenever he experienced loneliness, disappointment, or uncertainty, prayer provided comfort and renewed hope. Entrusting his problems to God enabled him to accept circumstances beyond his control and gave him the emotional strength to continue caring for his children.

Several participants echoed similar experiences, describing prayer not merely as a religious obligation but as an emotional coping strategy. Through prayer, they expressed their worries, sought guidance, and found peace during periods of emotional distress. Many participants also mentioned attending church services regularly, believing that their faith strengthened their resilience and helped them maintain a positive outlook despite prolonged separation.

Another significant coping mechanism involved immersing themselves in work and productive activities. Several participants explained that remaining occupied with employment helped reduce feelings of loneliness and prevented them from dwelling excessively on negative emotions. Work not only provided financial support but also served as a constructive distraction that allowed them to focus on fulfilling their responsibilities.

Sub-theme 7.2: Family and Social Support in Coping and Adaptation

Support from relatives, neighbors, and close friends also emerged as an important source of emotional and practical assistance. Although some participants experienced conflicts with extended family members, others received valuable support from parents, siblings, and relatives who occasionally helped care for the children, assisted with household chores, or simply offered encouragement during difficult times.

Participant L explained that having supportive relatives reduced some of the burdens associated with single parenting. Knowing that trustworthy family members were willing to help during emergencies provided him with reassurance and reduced feelings of isolation.

In addition to external sources of support, participants demonstrated considerable personal resilience. Many explained that they gradually learned to accept their circumstances and shifted their focus toward fulfilling their responsibilities rather than dwelling on their emotional pain. Acceptance became an important psychological adjustment that enabled them to adapt to their new family situation.

Participant A reflected that although the situation remained painful, continuously dwelling on sadness would not improve their circumstances. Instead, he chose to concentrate on raising his children and supporting his wife's sacrifices abroad. This perspective illustrates how acceptance became a form of emotional resilience that allowed participants to regain a sense of purpose despite prolonged separation.

Another notable finding was that several participants deliberately maintained positive thinking. Rather than viewing migration solely as a source of hardship, they reminded themselves that the sacrifices made by the family were intended to provide better educational opportunities, improved living conditions, and a brighter future for their children. This optimistic outlook helped participants endure emotional challenges while remaining committed to their family responsibilities.

The findings demonstrate that husbands left behind developed multiple adaptive coping mechanisms to manage the emotional and practical consequences of prolonged family separation. Regular communication with their wives helped preserve emotional intimacy, facilitated joint decision-making, and reinforced marital commitment despite geographical distance. At the same time, focusing on their children's welfare provided participants with a clear sense of purpose that motivated them to persevere through emotional hardship.

Religious faith emerged as one of the most significant sources of emotional strength. Prayer, church involvement, and trust in God enabled participants to manage stress, accept difficult circumstances, and maintain hope during periods of uncertainty. These spiritual practices served as important psychological resources that promoted emotional stability and resilience.

The findings also indicate that coping involved active behavioral adaptation. Participants immersed themselves in work, accepted new responsibilities, sought support from relatives and friends, and developed positive ways of interpreting their experiences. Rather than remaining passive victims of their circumstances, they actively adjusted to changing family roles and demonstrated resilience through continuous adaptation.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that effective coping is multidimensional. Emotional resilience resulted not from a single coping strategy but from the interaction of family support, religious faith, effective communication, personal determination, and commitment to children's well-being. Together, these coping mechanisms enabled participants to continue fulfilling their parental, marital, and household responsibilities despite the significant challenges associated with female labor migration.

Theme 8: Personal Growth and Insights

The final theme that emerged from the participants' narratives was personal growth and transformation. Although the husbands experienced numerous emotional, social, financial, and parental challenges throughout their wives' migration, they consistently reflected on how these experiences changed them as individuals. Rather than viewing themselves solely as victims of prolonged separation, many participants described becoming stronger, more responsible, patient, emotionally mature, independent, and family-oriented. Their experiences demonstrated that the hardships associated with female labor migration ultimately contributed to the development of resilience, self-confidence, and a deeper appreciation of family life.

Sub-theme 8.1: Increased Independence, Responsibility, and Self-Reliance

For many participants, assuming responsibilities traditionally performed by their wives became a valuable learning experience that transformed their understanding of fatherhood and family leadership. Through daily caregiving, household management, financial decision-making, and emotional support for their children, participants gained a greater appreciation of the complexity of parenting and the sacrifices involved in maintaining a stable family. Participant L summarized this transformation by reflecting on the lessons he learned during his wife's absence:

"Natun-an ko gid guru maging isa ka amay kag iloy." (I truly learned how to become both a father and a mother.) Mr. L

His statement illustrates the profound personal transformation that occurred throughout his wife's migration. Becoming "both a father and a mother" represented more than simply assuming additional responsibilities; it reflected his growth into a more compassionate, patient, and nurturing parent. He explained that caring for his children every day enabled him to understand the value of unconditional love, sacrifice, and consistent parental guidance.

Sub-theme 8.2: Emotional Resilience and Appreciation of Family Sacrifice

Participant L further shared that before his wife's migration, many household and parenting responsibilities were naturally performed by his spouse. However, after becoming solely responsible for these tasks, he developed greater confidence in his ability to care for his family independently. This experience strengthened his sense of self-efficacy and reinforced his belief that fathers are equally capable of providing both emotional and practical care to their children. Similarly, Participant A reflected on how the challenges he encountered made him emotionally stronger.

"Mas naging strong pa gid ko." (I became even stronger.) Mr. A

He explained that the emotional pain caused by loneliness, parenting responsibilities, household management, and marital difficulties initially overwhelmed him. However, as time passed, he gradually developed greater emotional resilience and learned to face life's difficulties with patience and determination. According to him, every hardship became an opportunity to discover strengths that he never realized he possessed.

Participant A further explained that becoming the sole parent at home forced him to make important decisions independently, solve family problems, and provide emotional stability for his children despite experiencing his own emotional struggles. These experiences strengthened his confidence as both a father and the head of the household.

Sub-theme 8.3: Growth as a More Responsible, Patient, and Involved Father

Participant R likewise described becoming more patient and responsible after assuming complete responsibility for raising his children. He admitted that before his wife's migration, many parenting responsibilities were naturally shared. However, caring for his children alone taught him the importance of patience, emotional control, and understanding, particularly when addressing children's behavioral and emotional needs.

Participant J also reflected that the experience changed his outlook on family life. He explained that he became more appreciative of the work previously performed by his wife and developed greater respect for the daily sacrifices involved in maintaining a household. Managing childcare, household responsibilities, and employment simultaneously enabled him to recognize that family life requires continuous cooperation, understanding, and mutual sacrifice.

Another important finding that emerged from the participants' reflections was their increased appreciation of family relationships. Several participants explained that prolonged separation made them realize the importance of spending quality time with their spouses and children. The physical absence of their wives reminded them not to take family relationships for granted and strengthened their desire to preserve family unity.

Participant L shared that although migration brought financial improvements, he realized that material success alone could not replace the happiness of living together as a complete family. According to him, the greatest lesson he learned was that family relationships should always be prioritized alongside financial goals.

Participants also acknowledged that the difficulties they experienced enhanced their decision-making abilities and leadership within the family. They became more confident in managing household finances, making educational decisions for their children, resolving family problems, and maintaining stability during periods of uncertainty. Several husbands explained that they had become more independent because they could no longer rely on their wives to manage everyday family concerns.

In addition, many participants expressed that the migration experience strengthened their empathy toward their wives. After personally experiencing the challenges of parenting, household management, and family leadership, they gained a deeper appreciation of the sacrifices their wives had made both before and during overseas employment. They recognized that migration required sacrifices not only from those left behind but also from the women working abroad under difficult circumstances.

Another meaningful insight shared by participants was the importance of perseverance and maintaining hope despite adversity. Several fathers emphasized that although migration presented numerous obstacles, giving up was never an option because their children depended on them. This sense of responsibility motivated them to continue striving for their family's welfare despite emotional hardship.

When asked what advice they would give to other husbands in similar situations, participants consistently emphasized the importance of patience, trust, effective communication, faith in God, and prioritizing the welfare of children. They encouraged other fathers to embrace their responsibilities wholeheartedly rather than viewing them as burdens. Their advice reflects the wisdom gained through their own lived experiences and illustrates how personal struggles can become valuable sources of learning for others, limited to role adjustment but also involved significant emotional growth, increased self-awareness, and a deeper appreciation of family relationships.

This study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the participants consisted of seven husbands residing in Bago City, Negros Occidental, whose wives were working overseas. The small and geographically bounded sample was appropriate for a phenomenological inquiry focused on lived experience but limits the transferability of the findings to other Filipino transnational families with different socioeconomic, geographic, cultural, or migration circumstances. Second, the study examined the phenomenon primarily from the perspectives of husbands left behind. The experiences of migrant wives, children, grandparents, and other caregivers were not directly examined; consequently, the findings represent the meanings and interpretations of the husbands rather than the experiences of the family system as a whole. Third, the sensitive nature of topics such as marital conflict, infidelity, emotional distress, and financial difficulties may have influenced participants' willingness to disclose certain experiences. Fourth, the retrospective nature of the interviews means that participants' accounts may have been influenced by memory, current circumstances, and subsequent interpretations of past events. Finally, because the study employed a qualitative phenomenological design, its purpose was to provide contextualized understanding rather than statistical generalization. Future studies may therefore examine diverse locations and family configurations and incorporate multiple family members to strengthen triangulation and broaden the transferability of the findings.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Female labor migration has both positive and negative effects on the lives of husbands left behind. While migration significantly improved the family's economic condition through increased income, better housing, educational opportunities, and financial stability, it also resulted in emotional distress, changes in family relationships, increased parenting and household responsibilities, and, for some participants, marital strain due to reduced communication and declining trust. These findings demonstrate that the social impact of female labor migration extends beyond economic benefits and profoundly affects family dynamics and the well-being of husbands left behind.

Husbands successfully coped with the challenges of their wives' migration by developing adaptive coping mechanisms that promoted resilience and family stability. Regular communication with their wives, prioritizing their children's welfare, prayer and faith in God, support from relatives, dedication to work, and personal acceptance enabled them to manage the emotional, parental, and household demands brought about by prolonged separation. These coping strategies helped them continue fulfilling their responsibilities despite the challenges of transnational family life.

The experience of being left behind became a journey of personal growth and transformation. The participants developed greater emotional maturity, resilience, responsibility, and appreciation for family life. They gained a deeper understanding of the sacrifices involved in parenting, household management, and marriage, while strengthening their leadership within the family. Overall, the study concludes that although female labor migration presents significant challenges, it also fosters adaptability, personal development, and a stronger commitment to maintaining family unity despite geographical separation.

Policy and Practice Implications

The findings suggest that migrant-family interventions should extend beyond employment facilitation and remittance management to address the relational and caregiving consequences of prolonged family separation. For the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and its partner agencies, three priority areas are recommended.

First, strengthen pre-departure and continuing financial literacy programs for migrant workers and their families. Financial improvements were among the most visible benefits reported by participants; however, improved income was accompanied by increasing household expenses, financial expectations from relatives, and the need to manage remittances responsibly. DMW may therefore strengthen financial-literacy modules that cover household budgeting, savings, debt management, emergency funds, responsible remittance use, and long-term financial planning. These services should include both migrant workers and their spouses or designated family members so that financial decisions can be made collaboratively.

Second, establish or strengthen accessible couples and family counseling services for transnational households. Participants' experiences demonstrate that physical separation may create loneliness, reduced intimacy, misunderstandings, declining trust, and marital insecurity. DMW, in partnership with qualified counselors and appropriate government and community institutions, may provide voluntary and confidential counseling services before deployment, during employment abroad, and during reintegration. Programs may focus on communication across distance, trust maintenance, conflict management, shared decision-making, emotional adjustment, and preparation for reunification.

Third, develop parenting and family-support programs for left-behind fathers and children. The migration of mothers required husbands to assume expanded responsibilities for childcare, discipline, education, emotional support, and household management. DMW may therefore provide parenting modules specifically designed for left-behind fathers, including positive discipline, child communication, educational monitoring, emotional support, and co-parenting through digital communication. Where appropriate, programs may also provide referral pathways for children and other caregivers experiencing difficulties associated with prolonged separation.

These interventions should be implemented through an integrated family-centered framework rather than as isolated services. Financial capability can help families manage the economic benefits of migration, couples counseling can protect marital and relational well-being, and parenting support can strengthen the capacity of left-behind fathers to sustain children's development. Taken together, these measures can help transform migration support from a predominantly employment- and remittance-oriented approach into a more comprehensive family-well-being strategy.

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