LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN AND THE IDEA OF THE FAMILY

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Research on Families of Migrant Workers in Asia

Edited by **Benny Hari Juliawan, SJ**

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Introduction

Migration is a major political, economic, social and cultural concern in Asia Pacific. Countries in this region are major sources of migrants for the world. China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia are among the world's top 25 suppliers of migrants, with China and the Philippines in the top 10. Most of these go to other countries within Asia and to North America. Asia Pacific is also home to a large number of immigrants, with more than 10 million migrants, many of whom are from other countries within the region. Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand are among the top 25 countries in the world with the highest immigration rates. If internal migration is added to the picture, the number and proportion of migrants would increase greatly, especially in rapidly urbanising countries like China and Vietnam.

In 2010 the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) decided to take the issue of migration as a common priority in social actions. This decision was then followed by the establishment of the JCAP migration network in 2014 to facilitate better collaboration among various individuals and institutions working on the issue of migrant workers in the regions. Initially the network comprised of five institutions namely Tokyo Migrants' Desk, Yiutsari in Seoul, UGAT Foundation in Manila, Rerum Novarum Centre in Taipei and Sahabat Insan in Jakarta. In 2015 the office of the Vietnamese Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral

Care of Migrants and Itinerant People joined the network. This network complements the work of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) which has been around much longer and works for refugees and asylum seekers.

The member institutions in general are relatively small and in the beginning they offered specific services to specific target groups in various contexts. In the course of this new collaboration it soon came to the surface that research was never a strong point despite their deep and faithful encounter with migrant workers. That is why research became one early focus of the network, and it introduced a research grant scheme to encourage research in the area. Apart from building a research capacity within the institutions, this programme will hopefully enable them to reach out to academia and policy makers. The collection of articles in this book is the result of this effort. They are semi-academic in style and accessible to informed members of the general public.

For 2015, the topic of the research is about the left-behind children and the idea of the family. Each institution adopted their own methods in commissioning the research. Some advertised the call for paper publicly and awarded the winner, while the others appointed researchers either in-house or in collaboration with other organizations or individuals. This collaborative exercise has turned out to be very fruitful and will hopefully be followed by more similar publications in the future.

Organising Families across Boundaries

Migration defines and shapes the daily lives of tens of millions of people in Asia Pacific on a daily basis. Much of the reconfiguration of life is taking place in families. These are families whose one or both parents are in overseas employment.

The often overlooked element of migration is what happens to the children who are left behind by their migrant parents. Migration has created the notion of transnational families, in which activities that

are associated with parent-child relationships are now organised across national boundaries. The production and maintenance of transnational families require the reorganisation of familial relationships with consequences that are not always desired. How do the children cope with the absence of one or both parents? How are these children perceived by their community which still values traditional family and gendered roles? What does growing up with absent parents mean to children? Can the husbands whose wives are away take over the role of motherhood while accepting the fact that they are not the breadwinner in the family? How do migrant parents perceive their children back home while doing a care job looking after other children overseas? To what extent does migration change the idea of child welfare or parenthood?

The collection of articles in this book tries to answer those questions from country specific perspectives. In the Philippines the majority of migrant workers are female and they leave behind their husbands to shoulder the responsibility of parenting. The article from the Philippines examines the relationship between children and their fathers who take the role as the main carer. In a similar vein, the article from Indonesia delves into the worldview of left-behind children who have to cope with absent parents. Intergenerational relationships between children and their grandmother, mother and father form a core of the transnational family that is taking place on a daily basis.

In host countries, the issue of transnational families plays out differently. Japan allows foreign workers, under strict conditions, to bring their families to the country. This is especially true of migrants with Japanese origins or the so-called "Nikkei". This policy facilitates the mobility of children across countries which are not always favourable to the welfare of the children. The article from Japan explores this issue and offers an insight into the hardship endured by children of migrant workers.

Unlike Japan, Taiwan admits more foreign workers from various backgrounds but does not allow family reunion. Migrant workers have to adopt certain strategies to observe their parenting duties from a distance. The article from Taiwan investigates how macro factors (e.g. Taiwanese laws) and micro conditions (gender, age) as well as moderating mechanisms (ICTs and remittance) affect the care arrangement of overseas Filipino workers for their children.

The article from Vietnam is different from the rest in that it looks into the lives of child workers in Ho Chi Minh City. The article presents the result of a small survey that identifies the material and emotional environments of these child workers. Their deprivation has serious consequences on their wellbeing and psychological development later in life.

This publication documents the changing nature of many families in Asia thanks to the surge in people migrating for work in particular. Parenting and childcare are no longer taken for granted as family members switch roles and adopt new strategies to negotiate the new spatial and temporal setting. While families are quick to find new ways albeit with struggles, governments have been slow in adapting to the new environment. Their main concern is still overwhelmingly economic and limited to facilitating the flow of labour demand and supply across borders. This publication hopefully sheds light on different, more humane, dimensions of the migration, and encourages appropriate attitudes and policies.

Jakarta

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No Longer Just a Mother's Job: Filipino Fathers as Carers in Transnational Households

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ABSTRACT

The migration of women care workers has been framed as the critical node in the global care chain. Migrant women assume the care work of privileged women in the developed countries; in turn, migrant women pass on their caregiving responsibilities to other women in their home countries. Men as carers are absent in this scenario. Building on recent research in the Philippines, this paper sought to further explore notions and practices of care work and fatherhood by left-behind fathers and migrant fathers. The study found fathers engaged in care work, although they acknowledged that women are either better at it or fathers do it differently. Children saw their fathers as playing multiple roles, including taking care of them.

KEY WORDS:

father, carer, left-behind father, transnational household, Philippines

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Since my wife left for abroad, I'm here with the kids, I just focus on the children, even if you can pay a helper, you wouldn't be able to closely monitor the children. (Enrico, left-behind father)

He's the one who cooks breakfast for us, and when I'm sick he's the one who takes care of me. He's the one who launders the clothes. He attends meetings. He's okay but it's different if the mother is the one caring. Because the mother is of course the light of the home ... because Papa is doing a woman's work. When he goes out, he takes me along, whenever I like to go. (Eunice, Enrico's daughter)

Several years ago, when we presented the results of our study exploring the impact of parental overseas migration on the health and well-being of left-behind children, our finding that fathers were taking on the role as the primary carers of young children (i.e., below 12 years old), such as the accounts above indicate, was met with disbelief by some members of the audience. According to the sceptics, when mothers leave to work abroad, it is other women and girls in the family – grandmothers, aunts, daughters – who assume the responsibility of migrant mothers. Indeed, in an earlier study we conducted in 2003, the role of fathers as carers did not surface, and one of our recommendations was to propose programmes and activities through the schools as a means to involve fathers in the care of their children. In the academic literature on migration and the family, scholars talk about the global care chain, wherein women from developing countries migrate to the more developed countries to assume the care work of women, who are then freed to work in the paid labour market. In this chain, more privileged women pass on their care-giving responsibilities to women migrants, who, in turn, leave their own care-giving responsibilities to other women in their home countries. Men as carers are markedly absent in this scenario. The visibility of fathers as carers in the 2008 survey indicates that perhaps some change has occurred over the years, or that we (re)discovered more fathers performing care-giving roles because the study's methodology required collecting data from fathers. We realised that family-related studies do not involve fathers

as much as mothers. As was our experience, it was not easy to interview fathers; they were often not at home because of work. Also, compared to women respondents, they were not used to being interviewed, especially about family matters. The participation of fathers in the study provided us an opportunity to see fathers beyond their role as the pillar of the home.

The present research builds on the earlier findings from the CHAMPSEA research in the Philippines – specifically; it further explores how fathers are as carers and their understanding and practices of care. Data for the study came from various sources. We revisited the qualitative interviews conducted with nine fathers and three interviews with young children in Laguna as part of the CHAMPSEA project. These interviews were part of 48 in-depth interviews carried out in 2009, a year after the survey of 1,001 migrant and non-migrant families were conducted in the provinces of Laguna and Bulacan. We collected new data to update and expand these interviews. We did interviews with 13 migrant fathers who were home for vacation or were about to leave for another overseas assignment. The interviews were carried out in May 2015. A third source of data sought to explore children's views and experiences of their fathers' care. For this, we cooperated with Canossa Academy of Lipa. In connection with Father's Day (which fell on June 21, 2015), we invited Grade 6 students to write a letter to their fathers indicating how their fathers care for them, how they feel about their father's care, and what they would wish for their fathers. We collected about 150 letters. In reporting the findings, we have changed the names to protect the identity and privacy of our research participants.

Global Filipinos, Transnational Families

With 10.2 million Filipinos living and working in close to 200 countries and territories all over the world, and yearly departures of 66,000

permanent migrants and more than a million overseas Filipino workers (1.8 million in 2014), it can be said that many Filipinos have become at home with international migration. Working abroad is now part of livelihood strategies for Filipino families and households, and going abroad for studies, work or to experience another culture is a common aspiration for many young people. Despite this familiarity with migration, it has also generated unease over its less positive consequences. Since the beginning of large-scale labour migration in the 1970s, one persisting concern is the likely negative impact of the separation of migrants and their families. Through the decades, the social costs of migration have been represented by the iconic cases of *Flor Contemplacion* in 1995, a migrant mother who many Filipinos believed was unjustly executed in Singapore; Angelo de la Cruz, a migrant father of eight who was kidnapped and in danger of being killed in Iraq in 2004; and in 2015, Mary Jane Veloso, a migrant mother who was jailed by the Indonesian government for drug trafficking, and has been granted temporary reprieve as she may be a victim of human trafficking. These cases highlight the sacrifices migrants make, to the point of risking life and limb, to support their families. Although many other migrants have escaped the same fate, concerns over the separation of family members fester and the damage it might create for husband-wife relations and parent-child relations. Unlike permanent migrations to traditional countries of settlement (USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) where family reunification is possible, the temporary labour migration in Asia does not allow for that possibility, particularly for workers in less skilled occupation (e.g., those in construction or domestic work). This restriction has created transnational families, i.e., families whose members are separated in space. Under the labour migration regime in Asia, only migrant workers

are welcome in the destination countries while their family members are left-behind[4] in the countries of origin.

In the Philippines, worries about the well-being of children have undergone a shift in keeping with the changing profile of Filipino migrants. In the 1970s, it was mostly men who migrated for work, and the anxiety was over the potential negative impact of the migration of fathers on the wives and children. By the 1990s, women migrants have become more numerous, and in fact, after 1992, women migrants outnumbered the men among the new hires and land-based workers. Women's migration magnified the anxieties about the stability of the family, and most especially, the welfare of the children. As the light of the home, mothers are intimately linked to the care of children, and thus, their migration is seen as more detrimental to the children's well-being. Several studies in the Philippines have revealed that when fathers migrate, mothers rise to the occasion, learning and assuming the fathers' roles and responsibilities in the latter's absence. As mentioned earlier, until recently, fathers did not as readily assume caregiving responsibilities when it is the women who leave.

Fathers as "*Ilaw ng Tahanan*": Fathers' Voices

Survey data from the CHAMPSEA Project provide an overview of the caring arrangements in non-migrant and migrant (or transnational) households in the provinces of Bulacan and Laguna. Of the 1,001 households, half (49.1 percent)) were non-migrant households (i.e., both parents co-reside in the same house as the young children), and half (50.9 percent) were migrant households. Of the migrant households, 34.5 percent were households where the migrant was the father; 5.6 percent

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[4]   The term "left-behind" is contested. Some sectors do not recommend the use of the term because it seems to suggest abandonment of families who remain in the origin countries while others use the term, not in the sense of abandonment, but to drive home the point how migration policies force the separation of family members.

were households where the migrant was the mother; and 10.9 percent were households where both parents were working abroad. Strikingly, in non-migrant households, mothers were the primary carers, while in migrant households patterns of care-giving had obviously shifted because of the departure of one or both parents. Among migrant households, 67.9 percent had mothers as carers; 11 percent had fathers as carers; and 21.4 percent had other carers. Thus, overall, the dominant migrant household is one where the fathers are working outside the country and the mothers hold the fort; and the least common is that of mothers working abroad and the fathers are the primary carers.

The migration of mothers was a decision that husbands agreed to, sometimes with a heavy heart. If they had their way, they would prefer to be the ones to leave and work outside the country, but were constrained because of health problems or lack of employment opportunities. The idea of taking care of their children is something that fathers did not consider unusual. Romy was a long-time construction worker. He had to stop working abroad because he became ill. When their eldest son was about to start college, his wife convinced him that she would work abroad to support their son's education while he would take care of the children, especially the youngest, Joel. When asked what would have happened if he did not agree to this assignment, Romy exclaimed, "Is that possible? I don't think it would happen that you wouldn't agree to take care of your kids?" When their eldest son graduated from college, his wife returned from Hong Kong. Since there were many people than the auditorium could accommodate, he stayed outside and made sure his wife would have a place to see their son graduate.

Another father, Raul, did not have a hard time taking care of their three children during the more than six years that his wife was in Saudi Arabia. In reflecting on his role as a carer, he said, "I don't really have a hard time [taking care of my children], but what I feel bad about is my

failure to assume my responsibility. I should be the one working. Caring for the children should not be considered a job…it is a natural role for parents." At the time of interview, he was looking forward to his wife's return, and at 50, he was hoping to land a job abroad to provide for his family. He lost his job when his company shut down, which triggered his wife's initiative to work abroad. Mario is in a similar situation. "I don't have a job, so why shouldn't I take care of the kids? Let's be frank, if one does not have a job, how can he not take care of his children? That would make me an irresponsible husband. I am not contributing to the financial aspect; I'm not the one working." He did not have any hesitation in stating that his wife is the breadwinner, and he is, in his own words, the "implementer" of instructions from his wife, such as how remittances are to be spent.

In their role as "*inatay*" (mother and father)[5], one adjustment that fathers had to make was to cut their time with their friends. Mario admitted that it took will to modify his ways. "At first, there seemed to be a lot of obstacles. It's really the obligation of a parent to do what needs to be done for the children." In describing how they care for their young children, the left-behind fathers did what their wives used to do. Similar to the minutiae of everyday life that Enrico described at the beginning of this paper, Dante described how he takes care of their daughter, Janice. "I tell her to fix her hair and not to go out without having washed her face or even just gargled. [On school days] I wake up early; I prepare the food. Then her packed food (snacks). Her clothes need to be ironed. If the clothes had not been ironed on Sunday, I need to wake up early the following day."

Even with their best efforts, in playing the role of light of the home, some of them said that a mother's care is still different.

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[5]   In Filipino language, *inatay* is close to the term, *kinatay*, which means butchered. In Visaya, *kinatay* means damned.

> I don't take away the role of their mum. Even if the world turns upside down, she would still be their mum. And I don't make them forget that. (Eric)

> ... a mother's care is really different than what I provide because mothers are more knowledgeable. The way we take care of him is really different. (Ismael)

> (Q: Do you see any disadvantages of her mother's migration on Rachel?) There are really disadvantages. A mother can really take good care of her children. It's really different when it's a woman taking care of her daughters. (Raul)

Raul shared that he got scared when his sister told him that Rachel, the youngest of the three children (the two older children are already in their 20s), started her menstrual period. He did not know what to do, so he asked his sister to clean up Rachel, and he called his wife to talk to Rachel about this change in her life.

> Fathers who are working at home and outside the home have also experienced the double-shift women in a similar situation go through.

> My burden is double unlike before. When I was just playing the role of a father, when I get home, I can just lie down and sleep. Now when I come home, I still have to cook. (Eric)

As mentioned earlier, we also added the perspectives of migrant fathers, which are drawn from the interviews with migrants on vacation or about to leave for another work contract overseas. In the case of migrant fathers, they tend to see their role mainly as providers and the care of the children becomes the main responsibility of the mothers. Leaving their families to work abroad and secure a good future for their children is part of their role as the pillar of the home. Providing for their children's education is a primary motivation for Filipino fathers and mothers to work overseas. For the sea-based migrants, their jobs took them to different parts of the world; for the land-based group, their work assignments included Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Papua

New Guinea, and Afghanistan. Most of them considered providing for their families as the most difficult part of being a father. Several migrant fathers agreed that working abroad makes it easier to provide for their families, but the price is also steep. The separation from their families is hard on the fathers too. In many conversations we have had with women migrants in domestic work, it is not uncommon to hear them wondering about their own children – what they were eating, how they were doing in school – while taking care of other people's children.

Migrant fathers also wonder about their wives and children, although not with the same level of immediacy because of the different nature of their work. During the interviews, migrant fathers turned emotional when they talked about being apart from their families. A young father with one child was fighting back his tears during most of the interview; he kept saying how difficult it was to be away from his family. If he could only find work in the Philippines, he would choose to stay here. Most of the migrant fathers said that although they did not have problems with their children, somehow the separation had resulted to some emotional distance between them. According to Josue, "Before, when I was working in our place they were close to me, because I was always with them, but when I went to work overseas, they're not close to me, maybe I think they're shy… there's a gap, that's the big difference." Some of them also felt sad that they could not share the responsibility of rearing their children with their wives. And although they fulfil their responsibility as the family's provider, this is not enough. As Rodney put it, "Yeah, a good provider, maybe I'm a good provider, but maybe I'm not much of a good father. I am not always with them, that's why."

The separation between migrants and their families has been assuaged by communication, which they acknowledged, is a lot easier now because of mobile phones, *Skype*, *Facebook* and the like. One father said that when it is their son's birthday, he and his wife (who is

also working in the UAE) would take a day off so they can participate in the celebration virtually. The computer would be on the whole day so they could watch the proceedings and exchange pleasantries with family and friends present in the celebration. However, having access to communication is not enough. One father was misty – eyed when he related how hurt he felt when his young son did not want to speak with him on the phone – although he understood that the son was too young to have a conversation, it pained him that his son does not know him well. The extended absence makes reunions bittersweet. Several fathers revealed that the children would seem shy around them. Thus, they make an effort to spend time with their families when they are home: they would cook, they would bring them to school, and they would play with them. Eli, who has seven children, said that the family mostly spends time at home to bond, and especially in relation with his children, to really connect with them (as he put it, "*para makuha ang loob nila*"). Since he is a cook, he would cook for them and he would organise karaoke singing sessions where the winners would have prize money, which they will then use to treat the whole family to snacks. Josue has similar activities with his children. "When I go home, I talk to them, then I ask them what they'd like to eat, sometimes, because I also know how to cook, so I cook what they like […] I bring them to their *lolo* and *lola*… sometimes I teach them gardening, I water the plants, because I believe their mum does not teach them how to do gardening."

Echoing some left-behind fathers' thoughts on additional roles of left-behind parents, Felipe had this comment. "For a mother to be a father, it's okay. But for a father to be a mother, it's more difficult because you have to raise a kid like a woman . . . it is hard to raise a girl, it is hard because you cannot know what she wants, . . . what's going to happen."

While they have different roles, left-behind fathers and migrant fathers share the same goal of raising their children well. In the changing

geography of family life resulting from migration, fathers and mothers may have to shift gears. Their shared goals as parents and their similar principles and approaches in rearing their children provide some constants in the care of their children. Apart from seeing to it that the children are fed, clothed, and educated, the children's accounts in the next section reveal the different roles of fathers in their young life.

Fathers Are Also "*Ilaw ng Tahanan*:" Out of the Mouths of Babes

Turning to the children's experience of being cared for by their fathers, we draw from the CHAMPSEA qualitative interviews with four children in migrant mother households, and the children's letters to their fathers.

The interviews with the two girls and two boys suggest a different appreciation of how their fathers cared for them. Based on the interviews, Joel and Carl have adjusted to their mothers' absence, thanks to the care provided by their fathers, Romy and Eric, respectively. Joel is close to his father and prefers that his mother works abroad and his father stays home to care for him. In contrast, Eunice and Rachel, daughters of Enrico and Raul, respectively, would prefer their fathers to work overseas rather than their mothers. Both seem uncomfortable that their fathers are doing a woman's work. Eunice would prefer that her father works abroad, "Because if he's here, he doesn't do anything. That's it, he only cooks and launders clothes, only that." Interestingly, despite the long list of work that her father does in her mother's absence, Eunice does not see him performing "real" work, which in her mind, should presumably be earning a living for the family. This view can be extended to the general lack of appreciation for care work or work in the home that is traditionally expected of women. The care work done by mothers (and other women in the family) is a labour of love; it becomes unskilled work (and lowly paid work) when done by non-kin women and girls. When

fathers engage in care work, their foray into doing women's work may colour how others and they themselves view their masculinity.

Based on the letters that children wrote to their families, what is quite remarkable is the manifold and multi-faceted ways in which children view and relate with their fathers. Perhaps, this more nuanced picture came up since the guide questions in writing the letters were focused on how they see their fathers as carers and how they feel about how their fathers take care of them.

For all children, the role of fathers as providers is the most common image they have of their fathers. In their eyes, fathers are more than providers: they are also givers of life, carers, protectors, teachers, spiritual guides, playmates, encouragers and role models. The sentiments expressed below were shared and echoed by many children.

> Thank you for working hard to provide for me and our family. We never went without; we always had food on the table, a roof over our heads, clean clothes to wear. Thank you for all the sacrifices you have done not only for me but for the whole family. . . Thank you for sending me and my sister to school, for us to have quality education . . . Thank you for keeping us safe all the time . . . Thank you for raising us good and right. (Girl-WML, 11 years old)

> First of all, I want to say thank you for taking care of me. Thank you for working abroad just for our future. Thank you for giving me a nice life. Thank you for giving me all the things that I need. If you were not born, I will not be in the world. . . When I grow up, I want to be like you. You're the best dad because you know how to cook, wash the clothes, aside from that you are my provider and protector. (Boy-S-1, 11 years old)

For children whose mothers are working abroad, they were appreciative of how their fathers take care of them, as some examples below show.

> Our father takes care of my family cheerfully and sweetly. I feel really proud of my father. He always tries to take care of three kids without my mother (who is abroad). (Girl-B1, 11 years old)

Thank you for taking care of us, [for] cooking food for us every day because mummy is not here. You wash our clothes, wash the dishes and even clean our home. You are not only my dad, you are also my mummy. (Girl-B2, 11 years old)

The stresses, issues and problems that trouble their families were not lost on the children, and for those facing a rough patch, the children were like parents, expressing support for their fathers, or in some cases, reminding their fathers to be better:

Whatever problem you are facing, please remember that we, your family, are here for you to support you. You were the one who taught us not to give up in the face of problems. (Girl-WB3, 11)

Always pray and do not drink alcohol (please). (Girl-W3, 11)

My wish for my father is to be safe always, to be strong, not to be mad, and hopefully, not to fight with mum because it hurts the feelings of my brother and I. It is not obvious because we are playing with our gadgets. (Boy-AD, 11)

Memories of time shared with their fathers were gratefully remembered by the children. The details with which they recall family highlights, such as family trips and birthday celebrations, and ordinary events, such as her father watching her sing, or teaching him how to bike, or taking her to volleyball practice, reflect the power of building memories that children carry with them.

Conclusion

Findings from this study suggest that fathers are more involved in parenting, in general, and care work, in particular, than has been ordinarily acknowledged. From this exploratory study, fathers who perform care work while their wives work abroad take their care-giving role as part of their parental responsibilities. As one left-behind father articulated, he will be irresponsible if he will not take care of his children. And the migrant fathers who are constrained from providing actual care

to their children miss this role and compensate for it by engaging in care work when they are home.

The pillar-and-light-of-the-home template is not written in stone; what is more important is to ensure that the material and nurturing needs of the family are met. By law, the centrality of the family in Philippine society is specifically mentioned in Section 12 of the 1987 Constitution: "The state recognises the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. The natural and primary duty of the parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character shall receive the support of the Government." The task of rearing the youth is entrusted to parents, which is further elaborated in the 1987 Family Code of the Philippines. According to Articles 70 and 71 of the Family Code, both spouses are responsible for the material support of the family and the management of the household, respectively. Article 211 of the Family Code affirms the parental authority of both parents over their children, and where there is disagreement, the said article states that "the father's decision shall prevail." While there are laws concerning the responsibilities of fathers and mothers, laws that enable both parents to perform their duties have to keep pace with the myriad challenges facing parents and families of different configurations. It was only in 1996 when a 7-day paternity leave with full pay was granted to fathers whose spouses have given birth or suffered a miscarriage.

Beyond the Philippines, there is growing (re)discovery of men as fathers. Two recent publications, *Globalized Fatherhood* (2015), co-edited by Marcia C. Inhorn, Wendy Chavkin and Jose-Alberto Navarro and *State of the World's Fathers: A Men Care Advocacy Publication* (Promundo, Rutgers, Save the Children, Sonke Gender Justice, and the Men Engage Alliance, 2015), by Ruti Levtov et al., provide a survey of fathers and

fatherhood in different contexts. According to the latter publication, most research, policies and programmes concerning fatherhood have been implemented mostly in the western countries and more developed countries while in lower income countries, "the interest in fatherhood is more recent and tends to be framed as an entry point to improving reproductive health and preventing violence" (p. 39).

Involving, acknowledging and supporting the contributions of fathers, men and boys in care work will go a long way in raising children who will be caring and responsible adults. Among the many insights of the *State of the World's Fathers* report – and which also comes out of the present study— is that "the involvement of fathers or father figures in child-rearing, and quality of time spent by both parents, results in enhanced cognitive, emotional, and social development for both children and parents" (p. 78). It does take a village to raise a child, which in turn, enriches a village immeasurably.

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Contesting the Family and Parenting of Children of Migrants in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature addresses the concept of transnational family which reflects changes that are taking place in families of migrant workers. Such families are forced to adopt strategies to cope with the absence of one or both parents who work overseas. Most of the available literature, however, focuses on the perspective of the migrant parents. This paper seeks to understand the nature of transnational parenting from the perspective of the left-behind children. Using ethnographic methods in collecting data from Temon, a village in Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, this paper gains access to the interesting worldview of children who have to cope with absent parents with all its challenges.

KEY WORDS:

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A mother is a figure of worship for her children, regardless of the circumstances. She is a source of strength, a refuge and the first port of call when they are in distress. Such is the centrality of the role of mother in families as recognised in a lot of research on the sociology of family. The mother is indispensable in providing a primary environment for a child to get to know the world around her before she grows up and is capable of taking responsibility. In Indonesian society this role of socialisation traditionally falls on the mother. She is the first person to teach the child about prevailing norms and traditions in the family and society (Hughes and Blaxter, 2007). Society still largely perceives mothers as women who spend most of their time on domestic work and so it is only natural that they bear the responsibility of caregiving.

The emergence of industrialisation has changed that perception. The necessity to earn more income for the family has prompted women to join the labour market. Women are no longer solely in the domestic sphere and instead take up any job alongside their husbands, including as migrant workers.

Being migrant worker was uncommon in Indonesia before the 1970s (Massey et al., 1993). Rapid economic and social transformations in Asia have since affected the construction of family and international migration alike. The affordability of travel, advances in communication technology and the mobility of capital in a globalised world enable people to move across regional and national boundaries. Whether it is for work or family reasons, temporarily or permanently, migration is a common phenomenon. All this surely has consequences for the structure and function of the family.

In Asia, international migration in the past two decades has generated dramatic changes. Most research on this topic focuses on two things. First, migration is perceived from a developmental economic point of view, stressing its economic dimension while ignoring its social

causes and implications. Second, the unit of analysis is mostly either the individual or the structural at the macro level and pays little attention to the family and community (Hugo, 2002). Even when the focus in on the family, it adopts the perspective of the migrant mother (Peng and Wong, 2013). This article seeks to address the gap in literature by investigating contestations around the concept of the family and parenting in families of migrants from the perspective of left-behind children.

A child according to Law no. 23/2002 is a person who is younger than 18 years of age. The law obliges the family, especially the nuclear family, to guarantee and protect the rights of children so that they can fulfil their potential as human beings and participate in social processes. Ideally this duty is performed by both parents, but what if the mother is absent because of international migration? Specifically this article identifies the perception of children of migrants on family and parenting based on a fieldwork conducted in Temon, Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta in Indonesia.

In the fieldwork we interviewed nine children aged between 13 and 15 years old who were in junior high school. Secondary data were compiled from interviews with their fathers and grandparents. The duration of the mothers' absence varies between two to eight years. One of them was in Abu Dhabi, three in Hong Kong and the rest were in Malaysia.

Kulon Progo and the Feminisation of Migration

The inclusion of women in paid work is no longer an issue. A lot of research has been done to explain this. Harbirson (1981) proposes the theory of household survival strategy which describes this phenomenon as a strategy to augment income because the household is not earning enough. Another theory is put forward by Rodgers and Standing (1981), who argue that female workers emerged as a result of capital accumulation

in the beginning of industrialisation. Under the circumstance, an industry tends to hire female workers to suppress wages because women are willing to receive lower pay than men (Profil Gender dan Anak DIY, 2011).

Indeed female workers have to endure unfavourable social and working conditions when they join paid work. Ford and Parker (2008) mention that there are still discriminatory practices including unpaid work for women. According to Baker (2005) wage inequality and gendered division of labour challenge the accepted perception that women's participation in paid work is a step forward in emancipation and empowerment. In Indonesia and many other developing countries, women spend their lives on housekeeping and providing basic necessities in the household. Their decision to join paid work depends on how they are able to negotiate with traditions, the demands of making ends meet and the double burden of daily life. Capitalism, globalisation and local norms and culture are all interwoven to produce gendered patterns in employment and identity.

Indeed economic structure, ideology, religion and community have significant influence on popular perceptions of working women in Indonesia. These perceptions create myths, and the problem is to what extent these myths condition the decision to join paid work. Sarah Damaske (2011) interviewed a woman worker who was a mother of two. The woman conceded that women like herself should have remained in the house with the children. However, she had to work to provide for her children. Such economic reasons are common, and especially for married women the main motive is not their own empowerment but their children's welfare. In addition, by earning more women can improve the social standing of the family. The increased income gives them access to more social and cultural capital. Their decision to work is also determined by the employment status of their husbands. The lower their husbands' social economic status, the more likely women are interested

to work. Once they work, however, women may enjoy the freedom and empowerment that come with it.

Of all possible job opportunities, only few are open to women let alone those with low educational backgrounds and minimum work experiences. They often end up in low pay jobs such as domestic helper, shop keeper, cleaner and the like. In mid-1970s a new opportunity became available when oil prices rose markedly and fuelled the demand for foreign workers in the Middle East. Many Indonesian women took the opportunity and went abroad (Hugo, 2005). Working outside the household was a new experience for most of them, let alone working overseas, but the promise of high pay made them overcome the initial reservations.

Kulon Progo District is the second largest sending region of migrant workers in the Yogyakarta Special Autonomous Province. According to official statistics in 2011 42,345 households were classified as generally poor, of which 15,136 nearly poor, 20,581 poor and 6,628 absolutely poor. The National Social Economic Survey of 2004 recorded 12,915 migrants from this district (Karmilah, 2014).

It is safe to assume that the main motive behind international labour migration is economy. Limited job opportunities combine with increasing needs to create the pressure to leave the household. Interestingly, the composition of migrant workers has been dominated by women **(Table 1)** in the past five years.

Tabel 1. Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers by Sex, 2011-2014

Year	Sex				Total
	Man	%	Woman	%	
2011	210,116	36	376,686	64	586,802
2012	214,825	43	279,783	57	494,609
2013	235,170	46	276,998	54	512,168
2014	186,243	43	243,629	57	429,872

Source: bnp2tki.go.id (2015)

Table 1 shows that the number of female workers went down over the years while male workers tended to increase. Overall female workers still outnumbered their male counterparts. These national statistics also reflect what happened in Kulon Progo. According to the 2011 Survey of Village Potentials, 61 per cent (992 persons) of migrant workers were female.

Research by Mitra Wacana, a local NGO, mentions at least three reasons why these villagers went abroad for work. First, Kulon Progo is predominantly agricultural and farming is the most common employment. Unfortunately farming does not yield enough income and is no longer popular among young people. Ana's parents, for instance, worked in the city despite living in the countryside. Before leaving for Malaysia, the mother had worked in a wig factory while the father worked as a casual labourer in Yogyakarta city. Second, many families are too large to feed with meagre incomes. Sometimes two or three families live together in the same household. Third, migration is taken for granted in the community. It is common for them to have relatives or neighbours who work overseas. Ana's mother had a sister who had worked in Malaysia.

The latter is confirmed by Hugo (2002) who points out that migrant worker communities are usually concentrated in certain regions. This is called migration supply chain. Over time migrants build the network that connects their home villages with the destination countries, facilitating other people to take the same route. Reni's mother is a case in point. She worked as a nanny for a family in Abu Dhabi. The same family also employed a cook from her village; in fact in total there were three people from the same village in Kulon Progo working for this Abu Dhabi family. According to Zayuk, Reni's father, the Abu Dhabi family had specifically looked for people from Yogyakarta because they were known as docile and polite (Interview with Zayuk, November 2015).

Those three factors contribute to the prevalence of labour migration from Kulon Progo. The next question for the family is who will go. Most of the works on offer are women specific such as domestic helper, carer for the elderly and babysitter. Low skill jobs for men are few and far between such as driver and plantation worker and access is limited. Zayuk, Reni's father, said, "If only I could drive, I would work. But I cannot." (Interview with Zayuk, November 2015).

One Family, Different Countries

Becoming migrant workers for the mothers of Kulon Progo is not an easy choice. In the midst of economic difficulties and limited job offers the only viable option is to work overseas. This type of work requires low skill and normally migrant workers are not allowed to bring their families with them. As a result many families in Temon, Kulon Progo are forced to become transnational with absent mothers. This new structure has emerged in many other villages in Java and poses a challenge to scholars to rethink the concept of family.

The family is a social institution that makes up the fabric of society. A lot of activities take place within the confines of the family. It is constructed of relationships based on blood ties, marriage or adoption and the members live under the same roof. Some scholars define the family in changing circumstances but in essence they agree that it is a group consisting of two or more individuals bound by kinship. Other scholars prefer to emphasise the function of the family as a space to nurture culture and develop the physical, mental, emotional and social capacities of its members (Duval 1957, Spradley dan Allender, 2005). Parsons (1955) calls it "the family as a stabiliser of adult personality and socialiser of children."

These definitions centre on the structure and function of the family. Contemporary research has indicated that the structure is undergoing

transformation. Extended families are increasingly becoming nuclear ones (Hugo, 2001:15). The change is not so much about the place of residence as about how the family functions and where loyalty and responsibility of family members rest. In traditional extended families, loyalty is vertically organised to the parents and the elderly. That is why men control almost all aspects of life in the family. In nuclear families, loyalty and responsibility are mutual between parents and children. Decisions are taken individually whether it is for marriage, career and how to spend one's income. This transformation is taking place in Indonesia with the help of education and mass media and is indicated by the shrinking size of the family. We are now familiar with families that have no children, single parent families, migrant worker families and so on.

Charles Nam in his 2004 article seeks to counter that description by proposing two different approaches, namely demography and genealogy. According to Nam what really happened was not the decrease of the number of traditional families but a distortion in the definition of the family used in statistics and the way the data were collected. In demographic censuses the definition of the family in use often has double characteristics. The first characteristic is kinship based on blood ties, marriage and adoption. The second is kinship based on residence. These two are problematic when used simultaneously. The latter assumes two or more individuals living under the same roof as family while the former may rule that out as long as they are not kins or related by marriage or adoption. That is why, according to Nam, the conclusion about diminishing number of traditional families may actually be a result of the clash of definitions which cancel each other out.

Migration also plays a role in the changes of definition. The family in the traditional sense is normally situated within the same national boundaries. The physical house is a main indicator of the family (Bourdieu, 1996). That is why when talking about the family,

the spatial proximity between family members matters as it enables their interaction. This traditional definition excludes the possibility of familial relatedness across national boundaries. The idea of transnational family is simply dismissed or deemed impossible (Baldassar dan Baldock, 1999; Mazzucato dan Schans, 2008).

In reality geographical distance that separates children from one or both of their parents does not prevent the children in Temon, Kulon Progo from calling them family. All children who were interviewed for this study identified their parents when asked who their family was. Afterwards they added siblings. So influential was the idea of the nuclear family among these children that we had to ask them if they would include their grandparents as family. Reni quickly replied that her father, mother and brother were her family. When she was reminded of her grandmother who lived in the same house, she simply nodded in agreement. Rizki and Romli did not consider their grandmother a family member despite living only 100 metres away from their house. For them the family was their father, mother and siblings (Interviews with Rizki dan Romli, September 2015).

Emotional connections between family members overcome the distance and the duration of absence in defining the family. More than anybody else, for Ana, her mother was the closest to her. She missed her terribly, and the same applies to Rizki and Romli. For these two boys, March 2016 could not come soon enough because this was the date when their mother would come home.

These left-behind children perhaps were not aware that what they were going through was not "normal" as families. Although from the outset their families looked different from those of their peers, the children saw nothing unusual with their families. When asked to define the family, their responses were identical to those of their friends. For Bourdieu (1996) the explanation lies with the understanding of family as

a social construction and everyone is socialised into this through certain habitus including the division of labour in the family. In other words, the sense of belonging to family is nurtured through various social practices called family practices (Morgan, 1996). These practices include day-to-day activities as well as some extraordinary ones. Through them the duty to care transforms into the instinct to care and that is why each family member strives to show dedication, care, and belonging to each other. In essence the traditional institutional definition of the family should now give way to one that is defined by practices which transform a group of individuals into a family.

Parenting by Phone and the Commodification of Care

In sociological terms, the relationship between husband and wife in the family takes three forms. The first one is the "owner's property" where the husband is the breadwinner and the wife stays at home to care for the children and do domestic chores. Second, in a "head complement" relationship the role of the wife is to complement that of the husband and he is expected to meet the needs of the household and the wife as well. Third, as "equal partners" the husband and wife are equal and in terms of income both are considered breadwinners. They are equally important in the household economy (Kartika, 2005). In patriarchal societies, the first two types are more common with all the stereotypes. The husband is a respected father figure and enforcer of discipline who is remote. Meanwhile the wife is a gentle figure who is always there and ready to serve when needed. In the process, a special bond between the mother and the children is formed and the mother becomes an object of attachment for the children especially in the parenting processes.

Parenting is believed to be the centre of social reproduction in all societies although ideas and practices of parenting can be different from place to place (Anderson, 2006). In many societies child rearing is the

work of women and mothers are the primary actor. The traditional definition of parenting often covers things such as care giving, protection, love and introducing a child to the outside world (Arendell, 2000) through dynamic interactions between the mother and the child which further enhance the bond between them. (Oberman and Josselson, 1996). Parenting is also often described as activities to initiate a child into adulthood (Ruddick, 1989).

The feminisation of migration has altered this traditional description of parenting. The absence of the mother in the child's daily life forces the family to adopt certain strategies to compensate for it. In activities of parenting which needs a physical presence, the role of the mother can be replaced by the father, grandmother or any other woman in the family. It does not mean, however, that the mother is totally absent. In the era of technology like today, many migrant mothers perform their parenting duty by mobile phones. Intensive parenting which was almost identical with traditional face-to-face interaction, has now undergone transformation into a long distance practice through phone calls and text messages (Nicholson, 2006).

These mothers knew very well that they could not be with their children, but at the same time they did not want to be called irresponsible. This is what Karen Christopher (2012) calls extensive parenting in which the mother passes on some of her parenting duties to other people such as the father, the grandmother, the aunt and the like. At the same time she tries to paint a picture of a capable and responsible mother in the development of her children.

Mobile phones become a symbol that represents the presence of the distant mother. Striving to remain close to her child, Reni's mother rang her family in Temon, Kulon Progo almost every day. Similarly although not as frequent the mothers of Rizki, Romli, Ana, Wahyu, Yoga and Exsan made a phone call to Indonesia at least once a week. Romli did

not remember the frequency but his mother did call really often. When reminded of the expensive phone credit, these mothers said that making the call was a way to release work stress and to make sure that their family back home was alright.

The topics of the phone conversation varied a lot, from school to family matters. It seems that everyone took the issue of education very seriously that all children confessed that their mothers always talked on the phone about school. How they were doing in school, exams and difficulties in class became staple questions whenever their mothers called. So familiar were his mother's questions that Romli did not take them seriously and they would not make a difference in his studies. Once his mother hang up, he would return to his favourite TV shows and games.

Apart from education, through the phone calls, those migrant mothers also performed their function in socialisation and expressed their affection to their children. Once Reni's mother gave her guidance about the transition from childhood to adolescence. Just before she had her first menstruation, her mother explained to her over the phone what to expect and how to prepare for it. The same thing happened with Alif who lived with her cousin. Alif did not find it difficult thanks to her mother's instruction. Ana's experience was different. Before leaving for work overseas, her mother had explained about it quite thoroughly so when the time eventually came she was ready. Apart from sexuality, Ana also said that her mother always reminded her to watch her eating habit. Since the departure of her mother, she became quiet and lost her appetite. Her mother was worried about her health and moreover she was the only girl in the house.

Parenting by phone in the eye of these children is not very different from the traditional one. Their mothers talked about everything in minute details during the phone sessions. Reni told a moment when her mother taught her about manners in the company of neighbours. Once

Reni's mother learned that one of the neighbours was going to hold a festive reception. She reminded her and her father to attend the function and to contribute some money in the amount she dictated to them (Interviews with Reni and her father, Zayuk, November 2015).

These children were in their adolescence and began to experience love with the opposite sex. From a distance their mothers were never tired of warning their children of the limits they must observe in the relationship they might have. Alif often received advices from her mother on how to safeguard her virginity. She had been in relationship with two older senior high school boys and this was a cause of concern for her parents. Her parents knew that they were separated by a great distance from her and they could not watch over her closely. In the end they gave up from trying to control her and were satisfied with her answering their calls.

Teenage years are difficult for most people and it was no different with Wahyu (14 years old) in the relationship with his mother. His mother told him on the phone to keep good relationship with his friends both boys and girls but warned him not to date a girl for now. The same happened to Yoga (14 years old) who was told the same thing and to stay focused on his studies especially because he was the oldest and should be a role model for his two younger siblings (Interviews with Wahyu and Yoga, November 2015).

So often was the call that distance became a relative concept. The thousands of kilometres that separated them did not prevent Reni's mother from knowing everything that was going on in the family. The phone calls helped her and other migrant mothers to cope with their own feeling of helplessness being away from their children especially when it comes to the development as young boys and girls. However phones are just tools that transfer voice and not physical presence. The uneasy feeling of missing a family member may find a respite over the phone but the

lack of physical presence can be a cause of emotional tension. The more the mothers call, the more they feel the distance.

In his research (Parrenas, 2005) finds that the main problem encountered by an overseas working mother is emotional tension. This tension is also felt by the children. For Ana, her longing for her mother knew no limit but she could not express that. Moreover, her father often reminded her not to tell her mother when she had problems because it would only make her faraway mother worried. When her younger brother had an accident, she really wanted to tell her mother about it but her father forbade her. Eventually a week afterwards when he recovered, she broke the news to her mother (Interview with Ana, November 2015).

Being aware of their absence, the mothers tried to make up for it by granting the wishes of their children. Mobile phones and tablet computers for children of migrant workers are no longer luxuries. In fact these gadgets were the first items they bought with the early remittance that came their way. They were spoiled even more when celebrating birthdays or finishing high in school ranks. Their absent mothers did whatever it takes to please their children and in the process promoted some form of commodification of love (Ukwatta, 2010; Parrenas, 2001: 363). They compensated their absence with expensive gifts and other material substitutions.

> I often ask for money from mother because she never turns me down so that I can buy anything myself here, things like mobile phones, tablet computers, laptops, clothes. I also buy something for my younger sister. We go shopping together accompanied by uncle. When she comes home, I still ask for more from her. (Interview with Wahyu, November 2015).

We can always dispute whether gadgets or clothes as substitutes for love can be called parenting. Feminists in the past several decades have shifted their perception on parenting from "essentialism to poststructuralism," (Jeremiah, 2006: 21) in which parenting is understood

as a social construct that is always in the making and contested in specific historical and cultural contexts (Glenn, 1994). Patriarchy is one of such contexts. In the case of overseas migrant mothers, the interconnectedness between international migration, patriarchal ideology on gender and advanced communication technology has generated a context where multi-role womanhood as mother, breadwinner and migrant worker contribute in the construction of their identity (Peng dan Wong, 2013).

Grandmother, My Second Mother

International migration affects not only the mother-child relationship in parenting but also relationship between different genders and intergenerational one. The absence of the mother for a prolonged period of time unavoidably opens the door to the presence of other parental figures. Normally the substitute mother can be found in the grandmother or the aunt. Research by Lutz and Palenga-Mollenbeck (2012) on migrant worker families in Poland and the Ukraine shows interesting results. It points out that grandmothers are the most trusted parenting figures, who not only take care of the left-behind children but also watch over the young fathers whose wives are away. Other studies find that grandmothers in Rumanian migrant families do multiple roles simultaneously as nanny, mediator in family disputes and supporter of their working daughters (Pantea, 2012). International migration has in this case enhanced the intergenerational relationship between child-mother-grandmother but at the same time shifts more burden on to the grandmother and grandfather.

In his research Parrenas (2010) reveals that despite the elevated role of migrant mothers as breadwinner in the family, not much has changed in terms of the gendered division of labour in parenting. It is obvious from observing how the duties of the mother are delegated to the grandmother and other female members of the family (Lutz and

Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012; Mazzucato and Schans, 2011; Pantea, 2012). If the mother has to work overseas, the parenting duty becomes the responsibility of the grandmother or the nearest aunt.

Three out of nine children in this study were looked after by their grandmothers. The grandmothers took over the parenting duty to ensure the fulfilment of the physical-biological and schooling needs of the children. They managed to provide food, school fees and pocket money for various needs such as photocopying and internet access. Psychological needs were largely still within the purview of their mothers through phone communications. The intimacy between the grandmothers and their grandchildren was obvious in the way the children addressed their grandmothers using the term "*simbok*" which means mother in Javanese. Wahyu's grandmother said,

> … he and his younger brother are like my own sons. Probably because his mother left him when he was only nine months old. His brother was two and a half years old when the mother departed [for the second time]. They are now used to being left by their parents to work in Malaysia. At most they would ask for some pocket money to buy snacks, do photocopy, play internet and go to the beach or go shopping with their uncle or with their mates from school or from around here. Their mother calls them every week so no problem with missing the parents. As for me, I would just remind them to study, take school seriously and reprimand them when they make mistakes (Interview October 2015).

The confession above shows that there was no awkward relationship between the children and their grandmother. The kind of relationship nurtured by the grandmother was not very different from the situation when the parents were around. Weekly phone calls were considered sufficient in showing the parents' commitment to their children's welfare. The grandmother observed, however, that her young grandsons very seldom told their personal feelings to her. When the longing for their parents was unbearable, they would go out and play with other left-behind children in the neighbourhood.

As a substitute parent, the grandmother also taught her grandchildren about responsibility and house chores like sweeping the floor, doing the dishes, ironing and the like. Wahyu said that his grandmother often asked him to cook rice when she was busy. He would also buy side dishes from the food stalls around the house.

The grandmother also played the role of enforcer of discipline when both parents were away, a role which would normally be associated with the father. According to Yoga, his grandmother was never tired in reminding him to study and spend his time wisely. In case of breach of discipline, punishment was warranted but his grandmother sometimes did not have the heart to do it. Yoga never received heavy punishments.

> …I never get angry with my grandsons. At most I would reprimand them. It is often their uncle who is impatient and get angry with them, the uncle who lives in this same house. I feel sorry for Wahyu and his brother when they get stick from their uncle. They would lock themselves in their bedroom…I feel sad. Now I let them play but I would tell them when to go home, not to go too far, and I would ensure who they are going with. This is all for the sake of my grandsons (Interview with Wahyu's grandmother, November 2015).

The story above shows that the grandmother deliberately took over some of the roles in the family. Her readiness and capabilities in fulfilling the physical needs of the children was a clear effort to ensure their health and welfare. Her loving care filled the affective gap left by the absence of the mother that the children became close to her. She also acted as a bridge to introduce them to the world outside the family, teaching them norms and religion, manners and attitude so that they would one day become independent. As such the children did not feel a big difference when living with their grandmother instead of their mother or parents.

My Father, Mother and the Transformation of Gendered Roles

Very little has been written on the topic that explores the role of fathers in parenting when the mothers are away for work overseas. Existing

research focuses on how international migration is responsible for braking up families because men are forced into house work and parenting which are considered demeaning to their masculinity (Hoang and Yeoh, 2011; Parrenas, 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2006).

This study in Kulon Progo, however, came out with interesting findings. Rizki's father (Jamil) and Reni's father (Zayuk) were both examples of men who were comfortable with their new role as mother for their children. Since the departure of his wife, Rizki's father had assumed the role of both father and mother. His day job was a public transport driver but once home he cooked for the family, did the laundry and even sometimes ironed the clothes of his children. Rizki as the eldest often helped his father by ironing his own clothes. The absence of a grandmother and women generally in the family put his father in the position of doing all the house works which otherwise would fall on the mother.

Similarly, Reni's father looked after the daily needs of Reni and her older brother despite having a grandmother in the house. Not only for cooking, laundry and ironing, Reni was also dependent to her father for buying clothes and other school paraphernalia. If his father was away, she would ask her older bother to accompany her. Her grandmother was not involved in these tasks.

For Rizki, Jamil was a great father. He was a mechanic by day but spent his morning preparing breakfast for his two sons, Rizki and Romli. Jamil was a good cook and according to Rizki he could cook both simple and complicated dishes. Once the children were in school, Jamil would continue with cleaning up the house and did the laundry. Only afterwards he would go to the car repair shop where he worked with heavy machineries. For Rizki and Romli, their masculine looking father was also the person who lovingly looked after them every day.

The role of the fathers in the two cases above did not end with doing domestic chores. In the case of Reni's father, he was also helpful in the emotional development of his daughter. He was the first port of call when she was distressed. The long duration of her mother's absence made her reluctant to entrust her most intimate feelings to her mother. Even when her mother called, it was not easy for Reni to tell personal stories. She struggled to tell miscellaneous stories to her, let alone the more private ones. The phone sessions with her mother usually passed by with brief answers to her mother's various questions.

The findings in Kulon Progo reveal that fathers may not feel awkward to take over the role of the mother in the family. To an extent it changes the traditional division of labour which is normally heavily gendered, especially in low income families. Zayuk, Reni's father, for example, bore no hesitation when saying that he could do both roles simultaneously. He did not feel inferior or worried about people's view of his masculinity when doing what was considered as a woman's duty.

Zayuk's account further shows that gendered roles are interchangeable. Parenting is not the monopoly of the mother, and both parents have the same duty. However in traditional societies like Indonesia the two roles are often rigidly distinguished. The mother is tasked with emotional protection roles (feminine roles) whereas the father with enforcement of discipline (masculine roles). By saying that he was both the father and mother of his children, Zayuk deliberately exercised responsible parenthood, rather than just responsible manhood. Not only did he undermine the traditionally gendered division of labour, Zayuk asserted that parenting is more important than and should transcend gender.

Zayuk's apparent lack of concern for what his community said about his playing the role of motherhood may have come from his own status as an active worker. He confessed that his income was enough only

for putting food on the table. When bigger expenses, like school entrance fee and house repair, were forthcoming, he would ask his wife to send home some more money. Jamil, Rizki's father, was in the same position. His day job as a mechanic earned some income to help the family. The remittance sent by his wife was allocated primarily for the children's education. For both fathers their employment status helped keep their authority as fathers and husbands in the family.

Interestingly, the children did not feel disturbed by the mixed gendered roles that their fathers displayed. Rizki, Romli and Reni never thought that there was something wrong with their fathers and their families. They were at ease when telling how their fathers were busy in the kitchen preparing breakfast for them. They have internalised these important gender shifts in their daily lives.

As cited in Sitepu (2011) the research and development office of the Ministry of Social Welfare in 2006 conducted a survey that identified those shifts in gendered roles among parents. Relationships that had been predominantly masculine was slowly moving towards more androgynous ones. It is characterised by relatively non-sexist division of labour; the wife is no longer confined in the domestic sphere; the husband is not overtly disturbed by the increasingly public role of his wife; they now look more like equal partners; and parenting is a shared responsibility.

Despite the changes, one thing remains constant namely the role of the father as the head of the family who makes important decisions in the family. Research on gender often mentions that the authority to make decisions rests with the father's status as the breadwinner. As it turns out, even if the breadwinner status no longer applies, the father still keeps the authority. The migrant mother who is now the breadwinner remains secondary when it comes to decision making. This is similar to what Moran-Taylor (2008) finds in her research in Guatemala. In migrant worker families, the father retains the overall authority in the family even

when parenting is handed over to female family members such as the grandmother or aunt.

After her mother left to work in Malaysia, Ana's family became financially better off. They had owned just one mobile phone for the entire family but now each person owned a smartphone. Ana's younger brother who was just in grade five also had one. Her mother's significant financial contribution to the family, however, did not necessarily change power relations in the decision making. Whenever Ana asked for something to her mother, she would advise her to ask permission from her father. After all Ana's mother sent back remittances to her father's back account. So every time Ana and her sister wanted to buy something, clothes for instance, their father would have to be with them.

Conclusion

This paper investigates the perceptions of children, who have been left behind by their mothers to work overseas, on two things: family and parenting. Various definitions of family have been put forward and each one focuses on one particular aspect of the family. Some scholars emphasise the function while the others prefer the structure of the family. Almost all work on the assumption that family members share spatial and physical proximity. This paper seeks to reconsider this assumption by looking at situations where one or both parents are away for a prolonged duration.

Using depth-interviews with nine children from migrant worker parents, aged between 13 and 15 years, this study finds that the absence of the mother and great physical distances between them do not change their perception on their mothers as the most important figure in the family. Almost all of the families in this study subscribe to the nuclear family concept which consists of father, mother, children and sometimes grandmother. The absence of the mother does not make them resort to

an extended concept of the family. It is true that in some families the grandmother plays an important role but it is still under the control of the father. In cases where both parents are away, it is inevitable that the grandmother gets involved.

The idea of family for these children takes shape through various practices. An almost daily phone call from the mother, news about what is going on in the family and neighbourhood, gifts from abroad, the father doing domestic chores are all that make family. It does not have to be living under the same roof or being in close proximity. For them these practices engage them as family even if their families are different from other families.

Being separated by great distances also does not mean that the role of the mother is not relevant for the children. The advances in communication technology help enable some form of remote parenting by phone. Regular phone calls, at least once a week, are mechanisms for migrant mothers to have some control over the education of their children and to dispense practical advices on mundane matters. In other words these mothers exercise a form of extensive parenting as opposed to intensive one.

Even when the mother is able to do remote parenting, a physical presence is still found wanting. The first alternative is the father, whose love to the children is unquestionable. Husbands who are left behind by their wives take over the roles that are normally associated with their wives including parenting, and hence their double function as both father and mother for their children. This study in Kulon Progo is particularly interesting because the fathers were comfortable with the extra roles even if these were often seen as demeaning to their masculinity. And so were the children. They did not see anything strange in their fathers doing domestic chores such as cooking, laundry and shopping for clothes. It seems that in their community in Temon, among migrant worker families

at least, a shift in gendered roles in the family is underway; it is becoming more androgynous.

It could be the case that these men's sense of masculinity was not disturbed because they themselves were workers. They had day jobs while their wives were abroad. Although their income was meagre, it was enough to sustain their dignity as responsible husbands and fathers for their children.

The second alternative to the absent mother is the grandmother. In this study we found that grandmothers became carers only when both parents were away. When the father was still around, he remained the main carer in the eye of the children.

The way the grandmothers did parenting was not different from that of the parents. It involved physical as well as emotional proximity. Not only fulfilling the material need of the children, the grandmothers also taught basic norms and ethics in life. The involvement of the grandmothers strengthens intergenerational relations between the grandmother, father, mother and children.

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Philippine Migrant Workers in Taiwan: An Exploration into the Influential Mechanisms of Care Arrangement

Liu Hsiang Lan[1] – Stephana Wei[2]

ABSTRACT

Studies on care arrangements made by Overseas Filipino Workers in Taiwan (OFWs) for their own children have never been from the standpoint which combines their experiences and relevant policies. This study integrates interviews of OFWs and an analysis of relevant Taiwanese laws. The findings show that their care arrangements are a dynamic process. In addition, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as well as remittance services played key roles to facilitate the transfer of money and love between transnational family members, thereby enabling migrant workers to manifest a co-presence with their family. Until now, Taiwanese laws do not recognise OFWs' rights to parent their children and be united with their families. The implications and suggestions on related policies and services are discussed.

KEY WORDS:

migrant worker, transnational families, information and communication technologies (ICTs), family reunion, welfare of children

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After several decades of continually organised waves of migrant workers from the Philippines to Taiwan, OFWs' transnational families have increased between two countries. According to statistics compiled by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2015), the number of OFW sexceeded 8.36 million as of 2012; 60% were female and most of them worked in Canada and the United States. As of today, the Philippines has accumulated 40 to 50 years of labour-exporting experiences, which has contributed to the development of transnational families. This phenomenon has become a focus for both the academic field as well as practical living.

On the other hand, Taiwan has experienced a structural labour shortage since the mid-1980s (Lu, 2011). The use of migrant workers in Taiwan can be traced back to 1980 (Liu, 2014: 32). In 1999, The Philippine government signed a bilateral agreement with the Taiwanese government to formalise an alternative channel in hiring Filipino workers. According to statistics compiled by the Ministry of Labour, the number of migrant workers reached approximately 550,000 by Dec. 2014, which was an increase of 220,000 compared to the figure from 10 years ago (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, 2015). The type of job they performed also shifted from one that was predominantly manufacturing-based to one that is now highly needed in social welfare and care-giving based (Wei, 2010). At the same time an increasing trend towards feminisation of migrant workers was observed.

This raises the question of how those OFWs play the parental role, plan the care arrangement for their children, and what mechanisms affect the care arrangement of OFWs for their children in specific Taiwanese political economic context. To date, existing studies have ignored the intersection of personal experiences and structural contexts, especially missing the interaction of ICTs, remittance, and the guest worker policy

in Taiwan. This paper attempts to partially fill this gap by investigating how macro factors (e.g. Taiwanese laws) and micro conditions (gender, age) as well as moderating mechanisms (ICTs and remittance) affect the care arrangement of OFWs currently working in Taiwan for their children.

Literature Review and Research Issues

Several studies investigating OFWs have been carried out on basic labour rights and human rights in Taiwan, thereby many laws have been revised, such as personal safety laws, the Immigration Act, and the Human Trafficking Prevention Act. However, issues about the right to family reunion of migrant workers and the rights of their family members remain undiscussed. Up to now, apart from Lan (2010),Wang & Chen (2013) and Liu (2014), there is a general lack of research in exploring the interaction of policies and personal experiences relating to care arrangement of OFWs' families.

On the other hand, a few studies conducted in the Philippines have attempted to discuss and explain the needs and issues of OFWs' families (Asis, 2008), the need of OFWs' children (Graham and Jordan, 2011), the economic function of female OFWs for their families (Pario, 2007) and the role and function of ICTs used by OFWs (Parrenas, 2005; Madianou and Miller, 2011). The general features of OFWs in the world are well-known but it still misses the characteristic of OFWs working in Taiwan under specific guest worker policy.

In brief, considering all the evidence, it seems that there is a gap existing in the exploration of intersection between OFWs' care-giving, Taiwanese laws, and the role of the ICTs and remittance services. We propose the following questions: How do OFWs make care arrangements for their children prior to leaving their country? How do such care arrangements change after they arrive in Taiwan? What

are the mechanisms influencing the care arrangements? What role does communication technology play as migrant workers act as "distant" parents? What are the major factors influencing them? How do Taiwanese laws regulate the interaction and relationships between migrant workers and their families?

Research Methods and Process

As an exploratory study, this study adopted a qualitative research method and in-depth interviews were used and supplemented by an analysis of Taiwanese laws.

The participants of interview were derived from the Rerum Novarum Center for Migrants, the authors' social network, and those referred to by some participants of the interviews. In total 10 migrant workers were interviewed. The interviews werefrom mid-June to mid-July 2015. The number of interviews conducted for each migrant worker was based on his or her English proficiency. Most participants were interviewed twice. In principle, a one-on-one interview method was adopted. Married couples and participants who were friends were interviewed together during the first interview but separately and successively during the second interview. The interviews lasted 1.5–2 hours; they were fully recorded and crucial points were noted.

The demographic information of 10 migrant workers: eight documented migrant workers and two undocumented migrant workers (a married couple); five male and five female workers. The participants were between 30 and 50 years of age and the majority of them were college graduates. Three of the participants had come to Taiwan for the first time. Two female migrant workers were single, one female migrant worker was a widow, and the other two were married. Most male migrant workers left the responsibility of caring for their children to their wives, whereas three of the female migrant workers left the responsibility to

their mothers and one left it to her husband. The children of the two undocumented migrant workers, who had been born in Taiwan, were cared for by both parents.

In addition to the interviews, the research and analysis were done on migrant worker-related laws in Taiwan including of the Constitution of the Republic of China, the Employment Services Act, the Nationality Act, the Immigration Act, and the Civil Code.

Research Findings

Care involves love, money, and labour. This study looks at the ways in which OFWs provide for their children from a distance. The main framework, as shown in Figure 1, revolves around investigating the relationships between the type of job and different characteristics of OFWs (e.g., their generation, gender, and marital status,), markets (e.g. ICTs and remittances) and state (Taiwanese laws) in childcare.

1.   *OFWs' Care-giving Network*

All 10 OFWs came to Taiwan with the same goal namely to support their family and pay for their children's education. Since these are long-term goals, how migrant workers meet their children's needs is a crucial topic worthy of discussion.

The ways of OFWs' care-giving are direct and indirect. The indirect one involves a care network in the Philippines. In general, the care arrangement of OFWs involves a reorganisation of care division between family members across multiple generations. The operation of care network is differentiated by gender. Most male migrant workers contacted their wives because their wives were the primary caregivers for their children. All male migrant workers showed great consistency in the number and duration (10–30 min) of time spent talking to their family.

In the case of female OFWs, alternatives are possible depending on their husbands' capacities. If their husbands do not perform parenting or care-giving, they will choose relatives in a descending order (i.e. their mother "their siblings" their mother-in-law) to take care of their children. Such a choice indicates a hierarchy of care. Thus, female migrant workers demonstrated a care situation which is "network-based" and one in which they always "kept a close eye." The frequency and intensity of interaction with people to whom they talked were higher than those of male migrant workers and the content included understanding how every family member was doing, the daily needs of the children, the people with whom their children became friends, school-related issues, and other constantly changing information in the family.

In addition, care arrangements are changing as a result of inter-actions between various factors and events, such as marital relationships, gender, and family-related incidents. In addition, the needs of children vary at different stages (e.g., infancy, preschool, and adolescence). The care arrangement, made by OFWs, showed a cumulative gap in which OFWs failed to satisfy the children's needs.

Left-Behind Children and The Idea of The Family
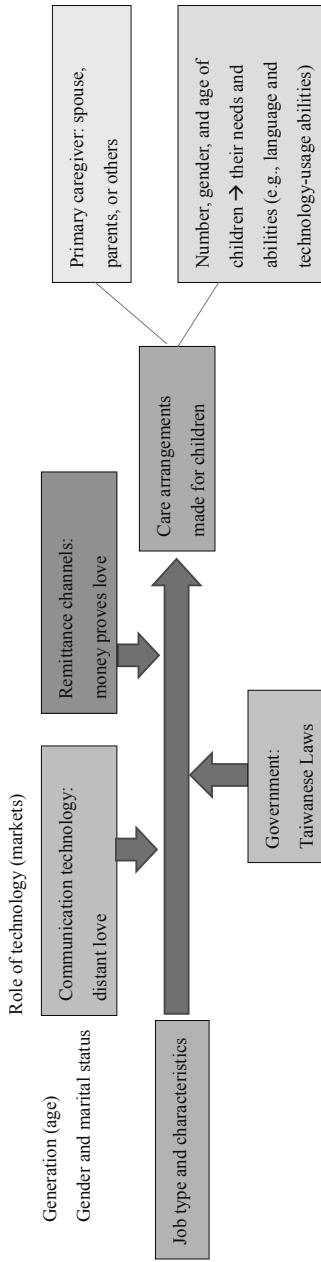
Figure 1. The relationship of individual characteristics, moderating mechanisms, and care arrangement of OFWs

Role of technology (markets)

Generation (age)
Gender and marital status

Communication technology: distant love

Remittance channels: money proves love

Job type and characteristics

Government: Taiwanese Laws

Care arrangements made for children

Primary caregiver: spouse, parents, or others

Number, gender, and age of children → their needs and abilities (e.g., language and technology-usage abilities)

2.   *Conditioning Love and Money?*

The content of care-giving directly provided by OFWs is money and love. The redistribution of love and money between OFWs' families is shaped by guest work system, work type, gender, age and is moderated by remittance and ICTs.

It is somewhat surprising that the expenditure of migrant workers contains a basic structure. Prior to working abroad, they are required to make a loan from a bank, lending company or so called "agency" (such a forced loan is essentially a form of placement fee) and pay back the loan in monthly instalments after they start working. In addition, they have to pay a monthly service fee to a Taiwanese agency, and send some money back home.

Assume a Filipina care-giving worker is required to take a loan of NT$100,000 from a lending company or "agency" (to pay for the placement fee and all other expenses; the lending company or "agency" charges a 20 per cent interest rate) and works in Taiwan for three years. To repay the loan, she would have to pay NT$7,000 a month for approximately 18 months. Assume that her salary is about NT$15,840 a month (minimum wage) and she has to pay off NT$7,000 in loans and NT$1,800 of the first-year agency service fee as well as to send NT$5,000 back home every month. What she has left is only NT$2,040 for her own living expenses every month. A factory worker's salary is about NT$20,000 a month (minimum wage). Having allocated NT$2,000 as forced savings and some other obligatory expenses, they would have approximately NT$4,000 for living expenses every month.

Therefore, the Filipina care-giving workers need 18 months to pay off their loan to work in Taiwan. After paying off their loan, they will be able to save NT$9,000 a month. Combining their forced saving of NT$36,000 from the first 18 months (NT$2,000 x 18 = NT$36,000) with the NT$162,000 that they will have saved from the following

18 months (NT$9,000 x 18 = NT$162,000), they will save a total of approximately NT$200,000 in three years, which will enable them to pay for their children's university education for only two years in a private university (the education of a private university in the Philippines typically costs NT$40,000 per semester).

However, the aforementioned scenarios do not take into account other possible real situations, which would make them even more complicated. They are listed as follows: (1) the amount of loan for foreign placement fee differs depending on sending countries and job types; (2) the annual service fee charged by Taiwanese agencies depends on the year of work in the contract; (3) salary differs significantly between different job types (e.g., caregivers make NT$15,840 a month, whereas factory workers make NT$20,008 a month with the possibility of increasing it to NT$30,000 if they work overtime; (4) various charges and fees, such as labour and health insurance expenses, certification fees, and passport fees, the employer's various deductions from their salary ; (5) the cost of providing care to family members in the Philippines depends on the number and age of family members; (6) family spending in the Philippines varies between different cities and counties; (7) loan interests charged by lending companies; (8) taxes to be paid to the Taiwanese government; (9) money needed for unexpected events; (10) daily cost of living in Taiwan (e.g., money to pay for food, housing, daily necessities, and entertainment); (11) other needs.

Whether migrant workers are able to achieve their goal is dependent on the length of time they work as well as other unknown factors. One female participant, who had two children and had been in Taiwan for 11 years, had to deal with various issues over the past 10 years such as her husband's affair and the news of his sudden death. Without any financial support from her husband, she was only able to help her eldest daughter complete her university education in 2015. As her work permit expires in

2016, she will be forced to return back home by then. However, she has not saved enough for her younger son's education.

3.   *The Role of Remittances: Money Proves Love*

In 2012, OFWs remitted approximately US$24 billion, accounting for 12.65 per cent of the Philippines' national GDP (Chen and Liu, 2013). The convenience of the currency exchange market facilitated the accelerated flow of money around the world, becoming a means for migrant workers to "prove" their love for their children. In the Philippines, five major companies (*iRemit, Ayannah, Xoom, PayPal,* and *Western Union*) offer various forms of remittance services.

In an attempt to solidify their position in the exchange and remittance market, these companies have significantly improved their exchange and remittance efficiency, proximity, and usage rate, offering services such as instant remittance, money deliveries, and remittances to mobile wallets. Such services allow the companies to generate a considerable amount of revenue from service charges. Concurrently, they reduce the distance between money senders and receivers, enable migrant workers' family to receive the money they need immediately, and showcase migrant workers' love and responsibility. The remittance does not represent only the monetary function but also an expression of the care of OFWs for their families (McKay, 2007).

4.   *Strained Love? Work Type Does Matter!*

Parrenas (2005) developed the concept of *long distance intimacy* to discuss the role of female Filipino migrant workers as financial providers, the reorganisation of care, the types of family communication used, and the impact of content changes (i.e., changes in ideas, information, financial conditions, money, and emotion) and technology. It is evident that the type of job, the pressure at work, and the degree of autonomy of migrant

workers influence the "structure" of family interactions (e.g., their length, energy input, and timeliness).

Family-based work features non-standardised work patterns, in which workers are able to contact their family members (e.g., sending and receiving messages) whenever they are "free" at work. Such work typically features irregular work hours and the migrant workers engage in shorter family conversations, as they are prone to be disrupted or they have to be cautious when they talk to their family. Institution-based (or factory-based) works feature time limits, entail specific, measurable output and quality, are teamwork-oriented, provide dormitories for workers, and set clear boundaries between family and work (i.e., family interactions often take place after work). For this type of work, work pressure influences parents' energy to interact with their children.

5.   *The Role of ICTs in Maintaining Family Relationships: Does Generation Matter?*

Baldassar (2008) performed analyses and found that transnational relationships are built on four different "co-presences" namely virtual, proxy, physical, and imagined co-presences[3] Technology significantly compensates the lack of physical co-presence, reducing the use of imagined or proxy co-presence. Thus, the use of ICTs by OFWs with the effects of the visual presence may replace physical presence. However, the communication patterns, frequency, and regularity of transnational families are dependent on whether reliable, affordable, and appropriate communication technologies are available. This section presents the findings of the use of ICTs across generations.

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[3]   Virtual co-presence is a stable, reliable, and affordable technology primarily used for people to keep in touch and stay in contact with one another, enabling them to exchange information, ideas, and emotions accurately and completely. Proxy co-presence uses tangible items (e.g., letters, cards, and gifts) as media to remind the recipient of the item giver; physical co-presence emphasises the importance of seeing ones' family members with their own eyes; and imagined co-presence exists in all of the three aforementioned co-presences.

a.   Migrant workers born in the 1970s: changing tools

The tools of communication have changed in the following order: letters → telephones → prepaid cards and text messages → information and communication technologies (ICTs). Their experience of using ICTs has fundamentally changed their pattern of family communication. In 2000, a time when mobile phones were still not common, care providers who worked at their employer's house, had to leave the house in the evening to make international calls at public telephone booths, which were inconvenient and costly. Similarly, writing letters or going to internet cafes was time-consuming and troublesome.

Once mobile phones became popular, most migrant workers switched to prepaid cards and text messages. The portability of mobile phones allows them to connect conveniently with their families. Recently, the use of *Skype, Viber, Line* and *Facebook* make family interactions of OFWs even more diverse.

b.   Migrant workers born in the 1990s: the use of multiple ICT products

In the 1990s, the global computer network showed rapid growth (Kuo, 1997). Some OFWs, who were approximately 30 years of age and whose children were still young at the time, learned how to use various communication technologies prior to their arrival in Taiwan. This significantly lowered the pressure of their having to learn from scratch while working overseas.

Migrant workers used various types of communication techno-logies interchangeably. For example, they used *Viber* or *Line* primarily during work breaks to encourage one another, and *Skype* and mobile phone-based video chats outside of work because they engendered a sense of reality during family interactions. In this study, a male participant indicated that the availability of communication technology allowed him to feel at ease while working overseas because it made him feel involved in

his family affairs and gave him the impression that he was not an absent father.

c. *The Role of ICTs in Maintaining Family Relationships: Does Work Type Matter?*

The use and cost of ICTs vary depending on the work type of OFWs. Because of the availability of laptop computers in the factory, the use of *Viber*, *Line*, *Tencent QQ*, video chats and *Facebook* also facilitated multiple-people interactions, forming close networks. Subsequently, phone calls were made only to discuss serious matters. Contrary to factory workers, family care-giving workers generally worked in their employers' houses. Usually employers disliked the use of computers by migrant workers, thus increasing the use of mobile phones. The emergence of *Viber* and *Line* also replaced e-mails because they offered various functions such as free calls, emoticons, and photo and file transfers. Now, *Skype* has gradually become a major means of communication because it features both image and communication functions. Female migrant workers mostly used mobile phone-based video chats, which support two-party communication only.

In spite of several new ICTs, their use was different between OFWs, by gender and work type. Family care workers were disadvantaged in the limited use of laptop, without free internet provision and found it difficult to have access to new developments of ICTs.

To sum up, this study shows that the development of remittance services as well as ICTs could satisfy the emotional and financial needs of migrant workers' families, facilitate the transfer of money and love between countries but at the same time contribute inequality and exploitation in different groups of OFWs. Female OFWs working in employers' homes in particular face difficulties because they only have limited access to the internet, suffer from the blurred boundary

of work and personal life and therefore cannot take much advantage of the network-based communication system. Moreover, differences in communication technologies result in inequality between cities and towns.

6.   *Taiwanese Laws: No Space for OFWs' Families*

In general, migrant workers' family rights and family reunion rights are currently not addressed in Taiwanese laws. Articles 22 and 23 of the Immigration Act, which are in accordance with article 46 of the Employment Service Act, state that white-collar or professional migrant workers (who meet the descriptions listed in article 46, paragraph 1, sub-sections 8-10 of the Employment Service Act) enjoy parental rights and right of abode in Taiwan. The said articles exclude blue-collar migrant workers and their family members as well as those without proof of identification. Such a phenomenon shows the differential treatment accorded to blue-collar, white-collar, and professional migrant workers. However, all migrant workers do not enjoy such rights in practice.

The Gender Equality Act ensures that pregnant migrant workers are entitled to rights such as maternity leave and pre-natal visits, which indirectly protect the baby's survival rights. However, in practice pregnant migrant workers still have to choose between abortion and returning home once they are pregnant because they may lose their jobs. Otherwise, female migrant workers who become pregnant and give birth would abandon their children in Taiwan and this would lead to the issue of neglected or unregistered children of migrant workers.

To summarise, Taiwanese laws pertaining to family rights and family reunion rights of migrant workers eliminate the possibility for migrant workers to parent their children and be reunited with their families.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The main finding is that the network for care-giving of OFWs' families changes over time, in which the care division is reorganised between generations. Our findings also point out the importance of remittance services and ICTs, in particular affecting family interaction and family operation. The use of ICTs may deepen inequality between different OFWs' sub-groups. In addition, the family integrity and family reunion of OFWs are ignored in Taiwanese laws.

This study concludes with the following suggestions for related policies and services: (1) set up preferential policies of communication, currency exchange, and remittance for OFWs; (2) encourage employers and non-profit organisations to offer free internet access; (3) organise communication technology-related education and training; (4) protect family communication rights of migrant workers in Taiwan; (5) offer university scholarships to children of migrant workers; (6) host short-term summer camps to facilitate family reunion; and (7) incorporate the Employment Service Act to enable migrant workers to parent their children and reunite with their families in any styles.

This study extends previous research on the care-giving of OFWs for their children by adopting generational and gender analyses while focusing on the role of ICTs and remittance services on family interaction. The results show that the use of communication technologies, currency exchanges, and remittance services not only have positive effects on OFWs families' operation but also may result in them being deeply exploited. Therefore, this study proposes some possible action-plans relating to relevant laws and services for reducing such exploitation. Future research can focus on the process and effects of moderating mechanisms on the care arrangements of transnational families and follow up the issue of unregistered children.

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No Room in the Inn:
Children of Foreign Workers in Japan

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ABSTRACT

Foreign workers are allowed, under strict conditions, to bring their families to Japan. This is especially true of people of Japanese descent, the so-called "Nikkei". In addition, due to a lack of manpower and Japan's ageing population there is a national policy to accept big numbers of welfare workers from several Asian countries. A common issue that all foreign workers face in Japan is the difficult Japanese language. Japanese schools are very expensive and workers cannot afford the cost. Their children's education follows the public Japanese education system, without any special programmes in the Japanese language. Japanese, in general, have a stereotypical image of foreigners. All these play against foreign workers and their children and make them sensitive to discrimination.

KEY WORDS:

children, foreign workers, discrimination, Nikkei, bullying

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The official population of Japan stands at 100,270,000 (2014) including 2,121,831 foreigners (1.6 per cent of the total). Nationality wise, the largest is the Chinese with about 655,000 followed by the Koreans about 501,000, Filipino 217,000, Brazilians 175,000 and Vietnamese 100,000. According to their status qualifications, 17 per cent have a special residence permit, about 31.9 per centwith permanent residence, 7.5 per cent with fixed residence and 6.8 per cent with spouse visas and others.

Permanent residents and those with special residence permits, or 40 per cent of all foreigners, normally live in crowded factory zones. The Japanese government in principle does not recognise "unskilled" foreign labourers, but because of pressure from business associations, it amended the immigration law in 1990 to accept third generation Japanese, granting them residential status. Such a last resort policy was meant to assure a labour force for the dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs (the so-called 3D jobs) rejected by Japanese people. It simultaneously opened the door to a new official residence status, without limits to be able to work. And as a result, "*Nikkei*" (Japanese) from Brazil and South America were accepted to perform "unskilled" jobs.

In fact, foreign workers are carrying out those useful tasks needed in industrial countries, like jobs in car and heavy machinery, subcontract factories, construction, food processing, door-to-door delivery services, etc. With regard to foreign workers, the government as well as factories had in mind only to fill the need of the 3D labour disliked by Japanese, without caring for the education of the children of those foreign workers. Twenty five years have passed since the revision of the immigration law, and even now the education issue of foreign workers' children remains unsolved.

Children whose parents are foreign workers sometimes become anti-system actors behaving as criminals. There have been crimes committed by second-generation Brazilians, like the murder of a middle-school girl

in Takarazukaby a Brazilian arsonist in the year 2010 and the death of a homeless person in 2003, also occasioned by a Brazilian. A common denominator in both instances was a combination of discriminations by Japanese society, insufficient support from schools, parents and local communities, and the loss of a place to stay.

On the other hand, foreigners sometimes suffer from violence at the hands of locals such as the case of a 14-year-old Brazilian boy who was beaten up by a group of 20 young Japanese in 1997, known as the Elcano incident. Apart from that, boys committing suicide for the lack of adaptation to Japanese schools, those refusing to go to school, and mental patients are often found among second-generation Japanese. Why did they lose a place in society? Their education is an urgent issue to be addressed, a social problem in Japan. We want to report on the situation of second-generation Japanese descendants living in the Kanto and Tokai regions.

Our Experiences with Children

1. Foreign Youths in Juvenile Corrective Institutions

Among the juvenile corrective institutions only the Kurihama Centre has an international section. About half of the youngters with foreign nationalities who have been sent there do not have the ability to speak fluently either their mother tongue or the Japanese language. As a result, they become insecure and isolated with a tendency to become delinquents and commit crimes.

There was a foreign boy who could not speak Japanese well or adapt to Japanese life. His family was poor and suffered domestic violence. After his arrival in Japan he dropped out from school because of bullying due to his poor Japanese. He committed a serious crime and, prior to a court decision to send him to a detention centre, he tried to kill himself. His unstable mental condition continued. The officials of the Centretried to

fix a place for him to stay, programmes to improve his Japanese, guidance to answer interviews and change his life habits. He also had counseling sessions. Little by little the youngster became mentally stable; his suspicious attitude began to melt; his distrust of adults softened, and the expression of his feelings appeared in his face. As his Japanese language improved, he deepened a feeling of guilt towards his victims and was able to manifest clearly his own distortion. Reflecting on his crimes, the youngster said, "I hated everybody and decided to torment weak people. I committed the crimes to show off my strength."

2.   *Foreign Children with Disabilities*

There are people with physical and mental disabilities among second-generation Japanese, but many others have developed depression and panic disabilities due to stress and bullying. A 28-year-old second-generation Japanese-Brazilian woman who had come to Japan when she was 15 years old developed an integration disease because of stress occasioned by the change of environment and the pain in separating from her Brazilian friends. She gave up high school and work. Since her family refused to accept her mental disability, she could not get any medical treatment for 13 years and secluded herself from the outside world. Again, there was a Peruvian middle-school student with little Japanese knowledge and progressive disability who attended a normal school. People like this need "special assistance" from the administration and schools. However, because the family could hardly read and write Japanese, government officials could not understand them. Furthermore, because of the difficulties in applying for official assistance and the lack of understanding of technical terms, in many instances the "special assistance" cannot be obtained, which has a bad impact on their children's future. In addition, in cases of mental disease and drug addiction, neither the patient nor the parents have correct knowledge of the disease or

disability, and because of their lack of intermediaries to obtain "special assistance" medical costs, such situations become a barrier almost impossible to surmount.

3.   *Young Children Unable to Readapt on Returning Home*

In the *Catholic Newspaper* of 26 January 2014, Ohmoto reports on the difficulties encountered by a 24-year-old Brazilian migrant worker returning to his country. He came to Japan together with his parents when he was a year-old baby. In his third year of public middle school he transferred to a Brazilian school in order to strengthen his Portuguese mother tongue. Nevertheless, since the parents did not show any sign of returning to Brazil, he quit school to work in a factory and preparedfor the graduation certificate from the former public middle school. Later, he entered a part-time high school but, because of the economic shocks of 2008, he lost his job and was unable to pay the school fees, so he was forced to drop out of school. He had a special talent as a soccer player and was invited to join a soccer club but since he was not receiving a salary, his economic situation worsened and he was forced to drop his dream of becoming a soccer player. This young person went back to a subcontracting factory to work as an irregular worker.

In the end, he decided to leave Japan, where he had been educated and had lived for 22 years, with the conviction that since there was no bright future for him, he didn't want to expose his three children to experiences similar to the ones he had had to undergo. In 2014 he went back to Brazil, joining a firm from Osaka that had started a personnel dispatch venture called "Pro Rocka Project." The concept of the project is to assist Japanese companies active in Brazil to send back there second-generation Brazilians who would act as regular intermediaries between Japanese managers and local workers. One year working there was enough for him to become discouraged at the sight of working conditions and

racial discriminations. As long as those companies retain their links with their Japanese parent companies, there is no way for migrant workers to get rid of their painful situation.

4.   Children Working under Hazardous Conditions

In his research Tsumura (2009) told about a 15-year-old boy studying at middle school, at a one-year inferior level, who was often absent from school because since his primary school days he had to take care of his infant brother and also had to accompany his parents to various government agencies to interpret from Japanese for them. His lack of knowledge prevented him from advancing higher. When they moved to a different area, he was admitted to the second year of middle school at the ordinary level for his age but was totally unable to follow the lessons. Due to "economic" reasons, he stopped going to school only after a few months and afterwards started working in a factory. He was introduced to his present job by a business subcontractor and remains there. Every morning he has to wait to see whether there is work that day and there are times when he is not sure where to go to work. Sometimes he leaves home for work at half past five in the morning and other times he has to work far away in other prefectures for three months without returning home. There are more children of the same age working together with him.

Japanese Society's Exclusion of Foreign Children

This section deals with cases of exclusion experience by foreign children that arise from various aspects of life in Japan.

1.   Problems at School

a.   Dropout rates related to teachers' attitudes

In 2010 Tsumura did a survey of 550 young second-generation Japanese migrants, aged 16 to 29, in terms of academic background. One of

the results was to learn that 20 per cent dropped out from middle public schools. And again 66 per cent of them answered that they had experienced bullying at school. 63 per cent mentioned that the reason for dropping out was lack of interest in studies, with 14 per cent mentioning bullying. The motive for lacking interest in studies was the teachers' attitude. Teachers treat these children as temporary stayers. "They are Brazilians and they don't need to study further and, after all, even if we teach them more, they will not understand." Being abandoned in this way by teachers, the children lose any interest in learning. The atmosphere created by the school, whereby foreign children are not given any hope, is deeply hurtful.

With regard to guidance for advancing to high school, teachers select Japanese students. Thus, there is a strong tendency to leave foreign students behind, guiding them automatically towards four-year part-time high schools or correspondence schools. Professor Tamaki Matsuo of Utsunomiya University remarks that there is an increasing trend among foreign students to enter Japanese public high schools, but by comparison with Japanese children the rate is almost 30 per cent lower and there is a greater percentage of dropouts from high school than among Japanese.

The survey mentioned above shows that 61.8 per cent of dropouts from middle school desire to obtain a certificate of graduation in order to renew their studies, but there are no opportunities for them to do so. The only choice left to second-generation Japanese workers with low education and lacking academic background is to become irregular three D-type workers in factories. Tsumura observed (2010) that, these workers were the first to be affected by the economic shocks of 2008; they had become the objects of employment adjustments.

b.   *Bullying and discrimination (loss of identity)*

In Japan, when foreign children want to enter a public school, they are placed in the same class with Japanese children oftheir own age, regardless of their Japanese language level. Their classmates laugh at them. Foreign born children end up always comparing themselves with their Japanese peers. There are some who cannot understand the language and become targets of mockery and bullying without even being aware of it. Others are violently treated or remain isolated. The result is that they are driven towards suicide or are ashamed of their foreign mothers. They do not want their foreign parents to come to school to observe them in class and, considering their mother's perceived inferiority, they fall into an identity crisis.

c.   *Assimilation pressures (club activities)*

The mistaken view that the Japanese are "one unique race" strongly prevails in Japanese society. In the social context of such a mainstream ideology, to be a foreigner, to possess a different culture, or to be multicultural means to be part of a minority group, to be untypical, strange, or even an enemy. Such social connotations tend to remain strong. This is why children of foreign roots are afraid of being part of a minority and reject their own culture and language, even their personality in order to become a typical Japanese.

Club activities are one of the venuesto enforce assimiliation. In all Japanese middle and high schools physical exercises are usually conducted daily every morning and after school. On Saturdays also there are often games and nobody is allowed to rest. Clubs are the place to learn how to cooperate and work together in groups within a rigid hierarchical relationship of senior and junior members. Children who have acquired such attitudes are easy to handle at school and easy to employ by companies. Thus, clubs are places to educate docile people needed to

work in companies. One may say that Japanese schools are places of learning, but the type of youngsters which club activities demand are not individual personalities. They prefer those who are able to assimilate to groups and become submissive.

d. *The isolation of foreign parents*

The NPO "Rainbow Ribbon" is a non-profit organisation assisting mothers of foreign origins. According to their findings, foreign parents who are unable to read and write Japanese cannot read notices sent by the school, and many of them worry about their children being exposed to bullying. A Malaysian mother was at a loss because she could not understand what the *mameshibori* (tiny towel) and *bento* (lunch) that her child should bring to the school's sport day were. Again, a Filipina mother decided to stop attending the parents' reunion out of a strong sense of isolation and exclusion because only the seat next to her was unoccupied. One day she gave a Christmas present to a classmate of her son, but she was shocked when the other child's parents returned the present.

A Chinese mother living in Tokyo could not read a notice from the school and had a quarrel with the home-room teacher. As a result, she gave up on educating her child in Japan and returned to China, leaving her husband alone in Tokyo. The family had already been settled in Japan, but now their double living expenses in China and Japan piled up and they were in a critical situation to maintain their family life. "If only we could read the letter from the school," the father lamented, "our family would remain united in Japan. "The schools' reception and exclusion of foreign parents, as well as the bias and discrimination by Japanese parents, affect the children and also produce bullying from classmates.

2. *Exclusion by Local Societies*

a. *Foreign Christian communities*

Many families of migrant workers come from Catholic countries like Brazil, and since 1990 the Catholic population in Japan has doubled its membership due to the increase of Catholic foreigners as many as 400,000. But the fact is that no exact survey has been made on their number. When they reach Japan, they do not register in churches and the Catholic Church in Japan does not conduct surveys to grasp their number. First-generation Nikkei Brazilians organised themselves as communities in churches to help each other, but the Catholic Church in Japan has neither plans nor signs to assist the second-generation Brazilians living here with so many difficulties concerning jobs, welfare aid, and education. The need to assist them has been transferred to local churches and individuals. The result is that they are invisible to the Church and thus their distrust towards the Church gathers momentum. The more their difficulties increase, the more they tend to leave the Church and look for help elsewhere.

The place where this attitude of the Church is more remarkable is in Catholic schools. These schools, basically, are supposed to care for the needs of children of Catholic families and many of these cannot continue their education because of economic restrictions. Nevertheless, Catholic schools require payment of school fees and are oriented towards higher education. On the other hand, due to the reduction of the number of children in Japan, schools face serious management problems. The fact is that foreign children who are unable to pay school fees and with low educational achievements remain out of the scope of these school seven though the children are practising Catholics.

The problem of the education of foreign children has been a social issue in Japan for at least 25 years, but neither the Catholic Schools

Federation nor the Committee for Catholic Education has ever taken up this issue for discussion.

b.   Schools and communities of foreigners

The Everest International School Japan was established in 2013 for second-generation children of Nepali workers. This was the first school in the world officially approved by the government of Nepal. The school follows Nepal's system of education so that when the children return, they can continue their education in their country. Even if their parents continue working in Japan, they can safely leave them with relatives. In many instances, once the parents become stable in Japan they call their children back to Japan.

When the parents pay short visits to their country after long years of absence, the children often cannot recognise their parents' faces, or when the children come back to Japan to live with their parents, they cannot understand Japanese and thus it is difficult for them to attend a public school. Due to such problems, there were great expectations regarding the above-mentioned school for Nepalis. Suginami Ward in Tokyo was home to about 400 Nepalis, but after the opening of the school the number rose to 1,000. The school clearly functions as a Nepali community.

On the other hand, at present the administrative body is a non-profit organisation (NPO). It runs a kindergarten which is not recognised by the Tokyo government and a primary school, which is in fact a private cram school (specialised after-school tutorial) supported by donations and fees.

This is also the case of Brazilian schools because some of them are running for profit and do not fulfill their objective of being a foreign community. Thus, these schools are not always perceived with credibility by second-generation Japanese Brazilians.

In localities where migrant workers live and work, the police power to stop and search in the street is a big concern. Legally speaking, the police can question suspects of crimes but, to suspect people simply because of their physical appearance is an abuse of human rights. In a survey (2009) done by Tsumura with 550 foreigners regarding this issue, 62 per cent answered that they had been questioned by the police.

Sample of answers: "The police are most disgusting. They stopped me at noon three times when I was cycling" (a 16-year-old boy). "When the police see foreigners, they always question them. I dislike this country" (21-year-old man). "There is no discrimination in the schools but in town the police are always discriminating against us" (18-year-old boy). "It was sad to be treated as a thief" (23-year-old man). It is because of such treatment that migrant workers have the feeling they are not welcome. Again, very often foreigners are denied from renting apartments and considered criminals in shops and other public places where cameras are always on the alert. Foreign language signs point out these cameras. A Brazilian migrant worker reported that in one drug store of Mie Prefecture a group of foreign thieves stole money and the owner posted a sign cautioning people about foreigners. So much that his presence in the shop raised the alarm which made him feel discriminated against. There was also the case of a high school boy holding a dual Brazilian and Japanese citizenship who passed the interview for part-time work. However, since his name was Okinawan, the employer guessed that he was a Brazilian and was consequently forced to decline the job after being harassed.

3.   Exclusion by the Educational System

a.   The school-age system: a big educational obstacle

Compulsory education in Japan uses the "school-age system" which means that children of the same age study together at the same level. Imagine an 11-year-old boy coming to Japan. Regardless of whether he understands Japanese, he is supposed to enter the fifth grade of elementary school along with Japanese children. As a result, he sits in a class without understanding anything but proceeds automatically to higher levels. No matter how low his learning level may be, he receives a graduation certificate from the middle school. A 16-year-old girl of Philippine-Brazilian parentage has been in Japan for 13 years but she cannot read kanji. She was in the Philippines during her first year of primary school and missed the opportunity to learn the hiragana and katakana writing. She returned to Japan for her second year of primary school but up to her third year of middle school she could not follow Japanese lessons and gave up higher education altogether.

The Education and Science Ministry declared in March 2009 an "emergency plan to assist children of foreign residents" and, taking into account the ability in the Japanese language for foreign children and students, permitted them to transfer to lower levels than their age. It also published an education guide in May 2010, allowing children whose age surpasses that of compulsory education to be accepted by public schools. The implementation of such programmes is in the hands of local governments. Again in April 2014, a new educational system was introduced giving guidance in Japanese for children and students in need of it. Nevertheless, the fact is that the system is not yet fully established.

b.   Public evening schools

There are public evening schools for young people of an age that does not allow them to pursue compulsory education. They are able to renew

basic education given at the middle school. But there are only 31 such schools throughout the country, and 39 prefectures are without one. In Tokyo alone there were eight such schools with 420 persons studying there by June 2012, of whom 92 per cent were foreigners. They enter for various reasons but a common denominator is discrimination formerly experienced at schools, and the need to work to support the family. Many graduate in about two years.

There has been a recent move to pass a law backed by a group of local politicians to establish at least one such school in the 39 prefectures that have none. Foreign students in such prefectures are practically forced to drop out from the middle school.

4. Social Exclusiveness in Japan

a. Hate speeches and slanders toward "Minority Youth in Japan" (MYJ)

Several discriminatory Japanese groups have been using public discriminatory "hate speech" campaigns in large Japanese cities, targeting especially Korean centres and schools. They even shout, "Throw them out of Japan!" This is very disturbing for Korean children. As a result, second-generation Korean Japanese have also been affected in their life and work. This is a sign of the historical ignorance in Japan with regard to policies involving foreigners and the lack of knowledge that foreigners living here are also tax-payers. This is, at the same time, a sign that weak sectors of society are being used as an escape valve for blowing off accumulated stress.

b. False images of foreigners

TV channels, newspapers, and mass media generally tend to project a bad image of foreigners as criminals. This has been quietly introjected into the attitude of many Japanese. Such an image contradicts the fact that about 98 per cent of crimes are committed by Japanese criminals. On the other hand, foreigners' lack of documentation has come to be considered a big

crime. Furthermore, the teaching of modern history, like the Japanese colonisation of the Korean Peninsula and policies of immigration, is absent from the compulsory education system.

c.   Job discriminations

Foreigners in Japan are excluded from being firemen and various other public jobs, like full-time regular teachers in public primary and secondary schools—with, of course, no opportunity to become principals, home-room teachers, etc.

d.   The control over foreigners

The revisions of the immigration law conducted in 2012 and 2015 give the Ministry of Justice a total control over foreigners living in Japan. In case foreigners' activities are not considered proper to their given visas, the immigration office has a free hand to cancel their status and even to deport them. The reasons offered for such a judgement are ambiguous. Ordinary Japanese themselves tend to get distorted images of foreign residents.

5.   A Chain of Negative Views

Japanese social structures give rise to "poverty and discrimination." This problematic situation has deep roots in the low-level education of children. It began with their parents who have irregular work and income which make their lives difficult and insecure. Consequently they cannot afford good education for their children. The children have to start working early with unstable jobs and remain usually on the fringes of society. New families follow the same roads of poverty and discrimination. This is exactly the pattern followed by second-generation Japanese immigrants.

The State, local administrations, citizens, and schools working together can create policies and programmes to solve the problems of

poverty and discrimination mentioned above. There is, for instance, a movement by local politicians to increase the number of public night schools to offer education opportunities to Japanese or foreigners who need toimprove their education and skills. On the other hand, although Japan has ratified the UN Treaty for the Abolition of Racial Discrimination, its implementation has not taken place and there is a need of national legislation to implement it. A Bill is in the way.

Concerning the opening of opportunities to students of foreign origins living in Japan to proceed to public high schools and further, there are a few examples taking place, like the initiative taken by Kanagawa Prefecture to accept a few high school kids in ten public schools.

Again, the Utsunomiya University (Tochigi Prefecture) has become the first public university to accept such young people living in Japan, by providing different kinds of examinations. This is a unique case for public universities. Utsunomiya University has also launched a special common project to translate difficult Japanese expressions used in middle-school textbooks into various languages for foreign children and their teachers. At the same time the university sends their students as volunteers to assist in guiding foreign children and students and to prepare them to enter high school.

Nevertheless, there is no guarantee of finding jobs after graduating from the university, and even if some companies keep places open for foreign students, there is no such thing for accepting foreign residents in Japan. The state as well as local administrations should take the initiative on this.

Conclusion: The Role of Catholic Schools

It is quite obvious that for a family to provide higher education it must possess three main resources, namely economic capital, cultural capital, and the social capital of human relations. Families of immigrants lack

all of these and are at a disadvantage from the beginning to compete in Japanese society. Even at the level of compulsory education there is no equality between Japanese and foreign migrants. In general, Japanese society places the responsibility for not breaking the social negative chain reaction of poverty and discrimination on the lack of effort from the side of the migrants themselves.

Here is where the role of private education comes in. Catholic schools in Japan are the biggest private educational organisation—229 juridical persons and 828 schools (2014). However, only a handful of those schools directly provide services to children of foreign backgrounds. Most probably they are limited to just three i.e. Jochi Hadano two-year college, Okinawa's Catholic Primary, Junior and Senior High School, and NanzanJunior and Senior High School in Toyoda City (Aichi Prefecture). In addition, the Adachi International Academy established by four religious congregations – the Mercedarians, Sisters of the Infant Jesus, Religious of the Sacred Heart, and the Society of Jesus – is also involved in providing after-school tutorials for these children.

In the United States 20 years ago the Jesuits started an educational model designed to improve the standard of children of migrant workers from low income backgrounds. The organisation is called the "Cristo Rey" schools. In collaboration with local businesses, they guarantee not only free secondary education, but also possibilities of employment. This type of school is also desirable in Japan and could serve as a model for future initiatives.

Struggling yet Hopeful in the Streets of Ho Chi Minh City: A Family Life Survey on Children of Poor Migrant Families

Joseph Dao Nguyen Vu, S.J[1]

ABSTRACT

The modern economy of Ho Chi Minh City requires a highly skilled workforce, while many families cannot meet this requirement because of lacking in skills and education. This has significant impacts on the lives and future of migrant children. Most working people in HCM City often put their children to work to earn a living. Under this circumstance, the children are not well taken care of and educating the children is not the priority of these migrant families. Comparing these children to their peers who have better resources confirms the centrality of the socio-economic background. However, both groups of children generally get pressure from their families. This can affect the emotions and the development of the children's mentality. However, both groups of children generally get pressure from their families. This can affect the emotions and the development of the children's mentality.

KEYWORDS:

child worker, migrant family, Ho Chi Minh, emotion, socio-economic conditions

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Due to difficult economic conditions, rural families tend to migrate to big cities to find work with a desire to improve their living conditions. Ho Chi Minh City (HCM City), Vietnam has the biggest economy in the country and jobs are the main factor that attracts people from other provinces. According to the General Statistics Office (2009), due to the growth in population, the city has the largest population with 7.95 million people (9% of the total population). In 1998, the percentage of people without permanent residence was 12.9% across the city. This proportion increased to 15.2% (730,878 people) by 2000. The mid-term census of HCM City in 2004 showed that there were 1,844,548 people of KT3 and KT4 category (KT category is a temporary resident classification. It is used to distinct HCM City permanent residents from those who have permanent residency from outside the city) who come from other provinces and cities. They accounted for 30.1% of HCM City's population. By 2011, this figure increases to 20%. Therefore, immigration is one of the major challenges of the HCM City today.

The modern economy of HCM City requires a highly skilled workforce, while many families cannot meet this requirement because of lacking in skills and education. This has significant impacts on the lives and future of migrant children. Most working people in HCM City often put their children to work to earn a living. They must work to feed themselves and their families; many children become the breadwinners for their families. Under this circumstance, the children are not well taken care of and educating the children are not the priorities of these migrant families. The studies in HCM City on young working children found that they are mostly migrant children with difficult family circumstances. According to the Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs in 2006, children aged 12 to 15 years had the highest participation rate of 42.22%, the age group of 15 to 16 years was 41.33% and children under 12 years was 17.33%. They mainly do simple tasks to help out

their families in the garment industries, small-scale footwear factories, or cottage production. Some help their parents by selling lottery tickets, shining shoes, selling noodles, etc. Overall, more boys than girls engaged in the children labor force. Needless to say, the children who often have to perform hard labour in hazardous and dangerous conditions are from poor and economically deprived families.

To protect the rights of children, the government, non-governmental organisations and individuals in recent years have attempted to support migrant children in their spiritual and material needs. In HCM City, the following social institutions are directly supporting migrant children: Thien An Parish, Thao Dan Social Relief Establishment, Duc Hien Inox Vocational Training Centres, Cay Mai Social Group, Mau Don Social Group, Ai Linh Charity School, Huong Duong Shelter, Truc Xanh Shelter, Tinh Than Club and many others.

To learn and paint a close picture of these working children we did a small survey. The survey aims to assess the children's family circumstances and their relationship with their parents or caretakers, their working environment, their performance in school and their desires in the future.

We interviewed 22 children (13 male and 9 female, aged 10 to 16) in five poor migrant families who live and work in the HCM City. The survey took place in the Binh Tan district, Tan Phu district, Third district, and First district. These areas have many hotels, restaurants, factories, supermarkets, seaports, bus and railway stations. These districts become homes for poor migrant families because of their diverse opportunities for children to find work such as picking up cans and bottles, selling lottery tickets, house cleaning, putting labels for the pharmacy, etc. In comparison to these young workers, we also interviewed five children from middle class migrant households in the Binh Hung Hoa and Binh Tan districts. We wanted to observe the difference in circumstances and future opportunities of these two groups of children. In addition

we visited and conducted interviews with the Thien An Street Children Group, Duc Hien Inox Vocational Training Centre and the Thao Dan Social Relief Establishment.

Duc Hien Inox Vocational Training Centre is a private foundation providing training in the area of processing and manufacturing of stainless steel established by Mr. Nguyen Duc Hien after witnessing children who lived on the street in 1980. The centre currently supports more than 20 children and migrant youths by providing accommodation, cultural learning (for those who need to go to school), life skills training, vocational training and job placements. In addition, the centre also helps poor pregnant teens.

The Thien An Street Children Group is a social outreach agency of the Thien An Catholic Parish in HCM City. It was founded in 2000 and is now under the leadership of Sister Thao. The agency currently supports 65 migrant children and 30 visual impaired children. The agency subsidises annual tuition and food for the children. The children learn life skills, ethics, English, martial arts, and commerce if needed.

Thao Dan Social Relief Establishment (TDSRE) was founded in 1992, in district three, HCM City. Its aim is to promote education and provide a happy and healthy environment for street children and other children with special circumstances. They create opportunities for the children to reintegrate into family and society; they promote and respect children's rights. At the moment, the establishment supports about 150 children, in which 35 children are trained to become the core support group for other children.

The Differences between Migrant Children of Poor and Middle Class Families

All the children we interviewed come from migrant families. They did not choose their fate, but the gap between these two groups of children shows

us the hardship that poor children have to endure. The five children from a well-to-do background were loved, nurtured, and protected by their families. When we compared the nutritional conditions of the children, we saw the difference between the two groups. For example, the children from poor migrant families only had 5,000 VND to buy breakfast which was usually some sticky rice, sweet potatoes, or may be on a good day a sandwich or leftover fried rice. Compared to the children from well-to-do families, they got 20,000 - 25,000 VND each to buy breakfast which includes beef noodles, broken rice with meat, and milk.

Regarding after school activities such as study groups, recreational groups, talent developmental groups, poor children were at a disadvantage. They could only participate in free activities or in ones which were sponsored by their own schools. The children of well-off families have more opportunities to be involved in various activities. One child put it this way, "Every week I get extra study hour at school, tutor at home and I get dancing lesson." Another said, "On the weekend, my parents often take us to the park, go shopping and eating out." Poor migrant children spent most of their time earning a living, whereas, children from the well-to-do migrant families "only help with house chores like washing dishes, cooking, or tidying up the house," and some children helped babysit their younger siblings. These are normal activities that children do at their age.

The survey shows that the difference between the two groups of children lies in the socio-economic background. One group lives in families with guaranteed material conditions, is loved, and protected. The other has to live a life of deprivation where their basic needs are not met and they have to labour to meet their needs. Having time to study, for leisure and rest are always a luxury for these disadvantaged children. However, both groups of children generally get pressure from

their families. This can affect the emotions and the development of their mental health.

Research Results

The study found that children from poor migrant families had to face changing social economic environments as they often had to adapt to a new living condition. Despite their young age, they have to work and even become family breadwinners. The economic necessities of their families weigh on their shoulders while living and working conditions affect their health, education and their future. Nevertheless, we see changes in the children and their families in terms of studying and social awareness as they move forward to the future. "I will study well to become a police officer to arrest all criminals and help my parents," T.D., who worked at Ben Thanh Market said. "I hope my child will have good education so that her life is better," mother of N.Y. in Binh Tan said. Moreover, we also see that the children have received support from families, communities and friends so that they can learn to protect themselves and overcome difficult challenges.

1. *Family circumstances*

a. *Who are they living with?*

As a family, most migrants live together in small houses on purpose to save money in rent. Unfortunately, a lot of children do not have their parents' care nor affection. Out of twenty-two children, seven children were without one of their parents, while four children did not live with their parents after they had separated or divorced. These children lived with their grandparents. We came across two children who did not know their fathers. One of them had a mentally ill mother and they lived with the mother's sister. The other child lived with her mother and her grandmother. Another child lived with his dad and the grandparents (his

mother had died of a heart attack), but his father was always at work and only came home once a week. Losing a parent or living in a separated or divorced family affects the child's development. The other children in the survey had both parents, but they lived in an unstable home where parents often argued over money. Typically the father worked during the day, got drunk at night and neglected the family.

b.   Family relationship

There were some poignant comments by the children about their parents and their family situations:

- "My father does not care about our family. He only gets drunk." – T.T.N.Y. (16 years old)
- "I love my dad because he has to work so hard." – H.D.D. (10 years old)
- "I hate my uncle and aunt because they always scold me." – B.P.H. (13 years old)

The aforementioned sentiments clearly express the children's true feelings of "love" or "hate." Nevertheless, their feelings still convey a connection with the family. They understand the difficult conditions of their grandparents and parents. They are aware of their responsibilities as sons and daughters, and they try their best to help their families, as expressed by the children, "I work to support my younger siblings," or, "I must work to help out my parents." They always have the appreciation and recognition of right and wrong about the fairness of the role of fathers, mothers, grandparents and other family members, "My dad is supposed to earn money so that he can help my mum."

Table 1. House ownership

Rented house	Own home	Homeless
16	4	2
73%	18%	9%

The houses were located around a market. Sanitary conditions were terrible as they lived near the waste dump for both the residential neighbourhood and the market. This has serious impacts on their health. The houses were really small for the number of inhabitants i.e. 3 to 12 m^2 area for two to five people, which means on average, each person occupied only 1-2 m^2. Family furniture and belongings made the space more cramped and stuffy, but they thought, "During the day the whole family goes to work and they only stay home at night." Rent was a top concern for the family. "Every month my family has to borrow money to pay rent," Miss T shared. Many families had to take loans with 25%-30% interest to pay the landlord. If they did not pay on time, the landlord would threaten to kick them out. By the end of the month, they had to cut down on food expenses to pay the rent as expressed by Miss H, "We have to eat frugally to save money to pay the rent or we will become homeless." However, some home owners were sympathetic to the plight of these families. One family said that their landlord occasionally gave them food, fish sauce, rice, and instant noodles.

For a few families who live in private homes, life is not much easier. We know an extended family consisting of two brothers, each with his own family sharing a home. The house belonged to the parents who gave to both brothers, but the younger brother took the house and force the older brother and his son (N.M.T. aged 15) to live in a tiny place of 6 m^2. Sharing the space with the younger brother's family was difficult.

Another family of a single mother and her son living in a 4 m² room, which is often flooded with a leaky roof.

For two homeless children at Duc Hien Establishment, they learned a trade while living with other students. They lived in an attic covered with wooden boards. One of them, Q, said, "During the day, the attic is very hot and uncomfortable, and we have too many people."

In material terms, these children's families do not have much. What properties they own are old. They own essential items such as television, mini gas stove, electric cooker, dishes, cups and mats. Five families have large gas stoves; two families have refrigerators, washing machines or computers which come from savings or donations. Transportation is still an issue for many families that do not own motorbikes, a common means of transportation in Vietnam. Bicycles are the main mode of transport that mothers and children use to go to work or school. As for clothing, parents buy uniforms for their children but sometimes schools give uniforms for free to those in difficult circumstances. The mothers would most likely buy second hand clothes or receive donation from their neighbours. Despite their poverty, these families try to keep their children clean and tidy as much as possible.

d.   Job, income, household spending

From the survey we learned that the occupation of the children's family members (except those who are too old or too young) was largely related to factory work or casual manual work. For men, they were masons, loaders, taxi drivers, scrap dealers, vegetable peddlers, electricians, street vendors, delivery men, painters. For women, they were breakfast sellers, scrap dealers, house cleaners, laundry women, garment makers, vegetable and fish sellers, lottery ticket sellers, and other kind of peddlers. They work hard every day with a meager income: a breakfast-seller makes 40,000 VND in five hours of work, a handy craft maker makes around

10,000 to 70,000 VND per day. A mason, a taxi driver or an electrician, earns anywhere from 50,000 to 200,000 VND per day. House cleaners and street vendors earn from 10,000 to 200,000 VND per day. Children working as vendors in the streets, markets, parks, craft workshops, etc. can earn anywhere from 10,000 to 200,000 VND per day although sometimes it means that they need to work up to 12 hours.

The unstable nature of these jobs brings in equally unstable income. They work when there is a job or when someone needs their service. In total, a rural family typically earns around 4-5 million VND per month and approximately 5-6 million VND per month for an urban family. With this income, they cannot meet the minimum daily needs of the family. In particular, housing rents (including utilities and garbage) cost them between one million to 2.5 million VND, while food expenses are between 2-4 million VND. One family reported that they must eat frugally to save money for their children to go to school, and to pay for the rent. Another person said, "When I sold more lottery tickets, I could buy fresh fish for my grandmother."

Housing and income conditions aside, many families have to spend more money for medical treatment. "Our grandmother suffered a heart attack and has high blood pressure. We have to pay 400,000 VND per month on medical bills, and we have to take her to emergency hospital today," a family reported. Another family stated, "My sister suffered burns. My parents had to take a 20 million VND loan for her treatment. And then we are in debt for many years."

For young migrants in wealthier families, playing and learning are considered routine activities of the children. They fully enjoy the living conditions in a loving family. However, for young migrants in difficult circumstances, money is always a burden on their shoulders and they do not receive enough care both in material and non-material terms.

2. *Children's working environment*

In addition to school work, the children also work to support their families, and their works take most of their time in an environment which is not safe or healthy.
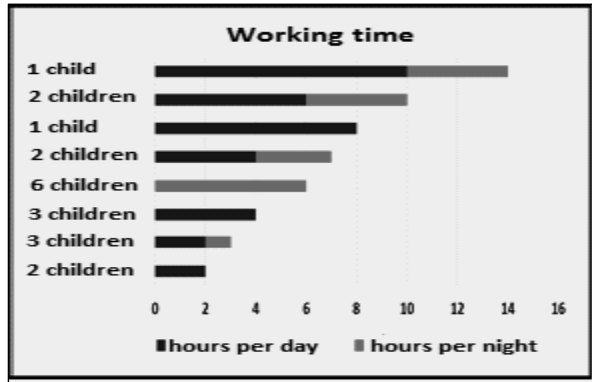
Figure 2. Children's working hours

a. *Work time*

Figure 2 shows the working hours of the children. Based on this figure, working time is one crucial issue related to the health and learning conditions that affect the children. Among the 22 children studied, we found two special cases. One child, who was selling coffee in Hoc Mon district, had to work for 14 hours a day. The other child (15 years old) who lived with her parents at the Binh Long market in Binh Tan district, had to work for a total of 10 hours per day (eight hours during the day and two hours at night). She gave her reason, "I saw my parents working till late so I could not sleep but helped them. Afterwards I went to bed." There were six children working for six hours at night with tasks ranging from selling toys, bottled water, food and coffee. Eight other children worked from two to four hours.

She is 13 years old and has to work until three in the morning

T's mother sold conical and different kind of hats at Ben Thanh City. Her mother has syringoma which appears all over her body that makes people stay away from her. T went to school in the afternoon, and after coming home at around five, T packed the rice and prepared it in the meal box for her mother and herself. Then together with her mother on a bicycle, they traveled for

Figure 3. T and her mother

two hours from the An Lac roundabout to the Ben Thanh Market. Around seven in the evening the pair went to a small corner near the Ben Thanh market to sell their wares. Everyday, T had dinner, did her homework, and she became a street vendor selling gums, toys, and hand fans to foreigners. At midnight, they packed up and biked home. The mother and daughter went to bed at around three in the morning.

b.   Income

The average income that the children make ranges from 8,000 to 10,000 VND per hour. Because of the financial situation of their families, they try to earn extra income to help their families. There were four children who had to do two or three jobs to earn extra incomes. Thus, every month they helped their families with two or three million VND, a big amount, and often their earning was the main income for the family. No wonder many families force their children to work every day thus affecting their health and education. In the children's mind, making money is more important than anything else. They do not know that it is not their responsibility at this young age. The adults put that burden on their shoulders. The children often earn more than their parents because

they are kids and people pity them. For those who are street vendors at the Ben Thanh Market, their earning may be more than five times over their parents'.

c.   Working environment

Due to the nature of their jobs, the children face a dangerous working environment, threats of sexual abuse, child prostitution, drugs and labour exploitation in the street. The children reported, "Many customers invite me to go with them for money." Another said, "In my work, I have to use glue and plastic so I have to inhale bad odour." One child said, "I feel exhausted, but I have to work." A child worker in a factory testified, "In the noisy factory, I was hit by a stainless steel rod. It made my leg bleed."

3.   Health

Economic circumstances and living conditions are major determinants of the health status of the children. Thus, we investigated these issues: nutrition conditions, physical health and mental health.

a.   Nutrition conditions

With a small income they only have 5,000 VND for breakfast. Sandwich, bread, pizza or hamburger that children of a middle class family enjoy at weekend are a luxury and a dream for them, as one put it, "I wish I can have a piece of hamburger or fries." Their daily meals often consist of soup, one cup of fish sauce and tofu or a fried egg. On a good day, the family would have meat or fish. The family must be careful on food expenses to pay for other monthly costs. However, some social agencies and people of good will have helped them ease the difficulty of the children and their families. These supports play an important role in the provision of food and clothing for poor families.

b.   Physical health

Due to malnutrition, most of the children were thin and pale. When we asked "how are you?" 31.8% of the children said they had poor health or some illnesses, 54.5% had average health, and 13.7% reported good health. The diseases they usually suffered were headache, stomach pain, aching joints (arthritis) and asthma. These diseases caused many difficulties for the children in their learning, living and working. When they get sick, they get the care of the family and some support from the social agencies. However, the most worrisome for us is their sexual health, primarily because family members share the same sleeping place. It affects especially young teenage girls. Most children have health insurance, but it does not cover much. Only when they become seriously ill that they go to the hospital.

c.   Mental health

Joining with the flow of migrants to the city, children do various jobs to survive and feed their families. Struggling to make a living makes them mature before their age, but they are still kids with common fears for sickness, police, family separation, not making enough money and not being able to go to school. They also face discrimination from relatives, friends and neighbours every day. The lack of love from parents due to death or separation is a big loss for the children. "I prefer to stay with my grandmother because my mother has a new family with two children," said a child. However, some of them do receive love from family, neighbours and those around them. "My grandmother loves me most, she saves everything for me." They are aware of the value of gratitude and sharing, as they said, "Later on when I have money, I will help those who have the same circumstance like me," or, "I wish to become a doctor to give free medical treatments for poor people."

4.   *Study condition*

Given the living and working conditions, it is difficult for the children to excel in school. Of the twenty-two children, six children were in primary school (27%) and sixteen children were in secondary school (73%), two of whom (9%) had just dropped out of school. Nine children (41%) had started school later than their peers (one to five years). Difficult family circumstances were responsible for this situation such as the lack of money, parents' poor health, psychological issues resulting from a family crisis, parental divorce or death. Consequently they performed poorly at school and struggled to catch up with their peers. In addition, their classmates and the parents of their classmates discriminated against them. In some cases, they simply lacked the resident registration card which is necessary to enrol in school.

Because of their work responsibility, they could only study at school or when they were not working. "I often do homework during the break and after school so that I can go to work," said a child. With a living burden on their shoulders, it was difficult for them to balance between work and study. They did not have opportunities like their peers to go to after-school programmes, nor had enough time to rest.

Despite the difficult conditions, their school results in recent years had improved. Two children (9%) achieved good marks, 10 children (45%) achieved above average mark, seven students (32%) were average, and one child (5%) had poor student mark. The remaining two children (9%) dropped out of school but they had had quite good grades in the past. These achievements were a reward for their hard work and they realised the importance of learning in order to move beyond their poverty level. "Only learning could help my parents in the future," said one of them.

Besides, we have to mention the important role of the family for the children. They are aware of the importance of education; despite much

misery, the families still try to motivate and encourage their children to go to school. They also receive help from social agencies to help with their studying. Unfortunately, many families do not care about their children's learning.

Thus it is possible to improve the children's education by promoting the positive aspects and removing the obstacles. We need the efforts of families, society and the children.

5.   The children's dream

Each child has his or her own dream but all their dreams boil down to the desire to have a life with enough food and a happy family.

Table 2. Children's dreams

Materials	Career	Dreams for themselves and their families
• Having a bicycle to go to school • Having a washing machine • Having a motorcycle so mother can take me to school • Having a beautiful house • Having lots of money to welcome mum home • Having a computer. • Becoming a billionaire • Having lots of money to help poor friends	• Becoming an auto mechanics • Becoming a flight attendants to travel and to make money • Becoming a soccer player like Messi • Becoming a doctor to treat the poor • Becoming a martial artist • Becoming a tailor • Becoming a singer • Becoming a chef to make delicious food • Opening a car garage to make money to help the poor	• Parents having good health • Watching movies and cooking on weekends • Going to university • Excelling in school • Having fun with friends • Being reunited with mother. • Having a happy family. • Healthy and happy family • Having friends to play together • Travelling with family

Materials	Career	Dreams for themselves and their families
• Having money to build a house where family members can be united • Selling out all products every day.	• Becoming a famous actor on TV	• Having hamburger, pizza, soda often with foreigners • Father having a stable job

The necessities of life and the needs of the family are always the concerns of the children. Their desires about material things and spiritual needs are real and meaningful. They hope they can have a house, a bike, a healthy and happy family and to bring good things to other people who are less fortunate. When we asked them about their material dreams, their desires were about having their own house and not worrying about being late in paying rent. They hoped to get a bike to go to school and to work every day. About their desires for career, the children knew that if they want to achieve their dreams, they must study. The wish of eating delicious food came from a child who had an experience of being invited by a foreigner for a free meal. After that he hoped he could have it again. For the dreams about having a happy family and healthy parents, they hoped to build a good family life. Also, the dream of helping the poor shows that these children have deep social connectedness and they understand the plight of poor people who are in the same situation as themselves. These are good values that our society needs to replicate to the younger generation.

6.   *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*

Based on the circumstances and conditions of the children, we can assess their needs using Maslow's hierarchy of needs:

a. Physiological needs

Physiological needs include the needs for air, water, food, clothing, shelter, and rest. Air and water pollution due to the lack of public awareness and industrial untreated wastes affect the health of children and families, especially young families living at the Binh Long Market, Binh Tan District.
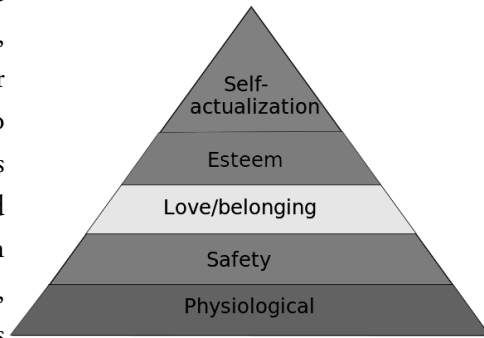

Figure 4. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Regarding the need for food, families still face with many difficulties as they have poor diet. On the needs for clothing, the children wish to wear "beautiful" and "new" clothes. As with the need for rest, they want to have more time to relax and enjoy their childhood. The children of Thien An Parish, especially, always desire to have a home so that they can have a family reunion.

b. Safety needs

The need to wake up early and to work long hours affects the children's health. They suffer from headaches when they work outside in the sun, leg pains when running too much and their untreated asthma. Children who work in a factory or workshop are at risk of being mugged and abused. N and T who worked at Ben Thanh Market were two out of four kids that often were treated to a meal by an American that their parents did not know about. Therefore, the need for safety should be guaranteed.

c. Love and belonging

The children are growing up in unsafe environments and having no safety net to help them explore the environment. At their age, they are supposed

to be loved and cared for. They also find it difficult to make friends with their peers while being away from adult family members.

d.   Esteem

Children whose basic needs are not met will have difficulties developing self-confidence. When children are not encouraged and motivated, they will doubt their own abilities. T is very agile and fun when she is being taught, but when her mother helps her with homework, she feels stressed and anxious.

Conclusion

Through our interaction with 22 children and visits to five families, we, the researchers, have a glimpse into the living conditions of migrant children and poor families. Almost every aspect of the children's situation is difficult and complex. Those who have both parents are better off, but their parents have to work all day. Those children who have no parents live with their grandparents; they have a tougher life because of their grandparents' failing health. Whatever situation they are in, they must work to help their families; in fact, some of them are the main source of family income. They try to combine work and school as much as they can. One other issue is that the educational background of the grandparents and parents are often very low and they have insufficient knowledge about the psycho-education for their children. As a result, the children do not receive a good care and education at home. Thus, the dreams of the children have too many barriers, "A future that seems too overwhelmed."

Although life is difficult, the children's ambition is always kindled in various forms such as becoming a teacher, doctor, martial artist, chef, mechanic, baker, owner of clothing factory, etc. Despite the circumstances, the children are generally happy and work hard. They do

not flinch from every day difficulties, nor bemoan their circumstances. They have hope to achieve something greater and to find meaning in their family and society. In reality, to achieve their dream is a big challenge because of the difficult conditions of their families. The family can't afford to change the future for the children. They feel anxious and guilty about the future of their children. The limited awareness of the family is a barrier for the children's ambition and dream. Despite living in difficult circumstances, some parents still hope that their children go to school. The classes at Thien An Parish, Thao Dan Social Relief Establishment and vocational training institution Duc Hien Inox always try to meet the aspirations of the children and young families. Without this support, these children and their families would find it difficult and face a risk of high dropout rates. Not only that, the children enjoys comprehensive support, advice and vocational training if needed. These organisations have a common purpose, "Children have a bright and good future."

Recommendation

This research helps us understand and acknowledge the problems of migrant children with difficult family circumstances so that we have a more positive view of the situation. Researchers and those who care about the lives of children and migrant children in particular, through the survey, wish that in the future there will be support activities, specific interventions, positive responses to the needs of the children. In order to ensure the rights of the children, it is necessary to provide them with food, health care, education and a voice in the decisions that affect their well-being. If we want to do it, we need to join hands comprehensively from policy, family, school and the community. Therefore, the survey team proposes some recommendations as follows:

- Reduce the procedures which prevent children from studying in public schools

- Assistance with scholarships for disadvantaged children
- Provide the children with personal papers and ID
- Collaborate with the family to care for the children
- Organise healthy events and recreation for the children
- Organise the work-study classes for the children, and ensure appropriate working time according to the child's age
- Provide assistance to improve the economic situation of migrant families such as saving account and credit card
- Provide career counselling, psychological counselling, life-skills training in order to protect themselves from dangerous situations, and often conduct thematic sessions on sex education and prevention of HIV/AIDS for the youths and their family

Notes:
- USD rate: 1 USD = 22,000 VND
- With 5,000 VND, in the suburbs one can buy: one steamed sticky rice or one large cup of sugar cane juice (350ml) or two sweet potatoes. In the inner city one can buy: half portion of steamed sticky rice, or sugarcane juice one cup (250ml) or one sweet potato.
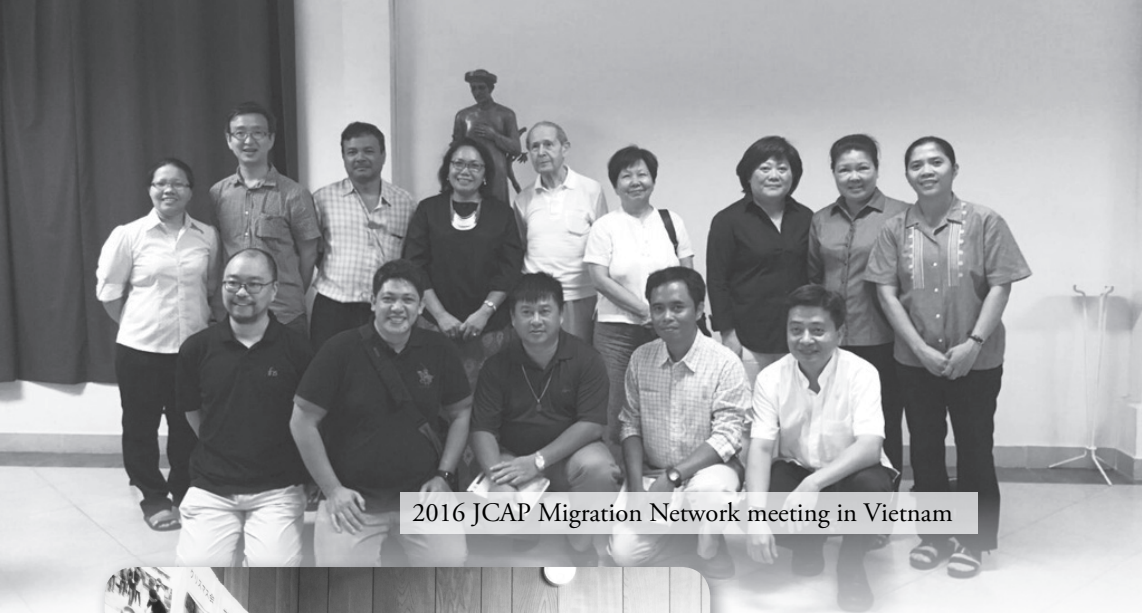
2016 JCAP Migration Network meeting in Vietnam

Fr. Ando Isamu SJ explains the work of Adaichi International Academy
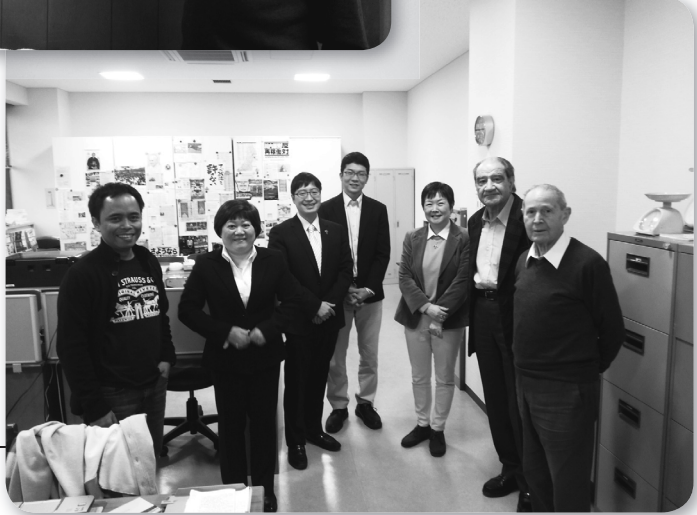
Staff at Tokyo Migrants' Desk

Vietnamese celebration of Mid-Autumn Festival organised by Rerum Novarum Center

Mandarin class in Rerum
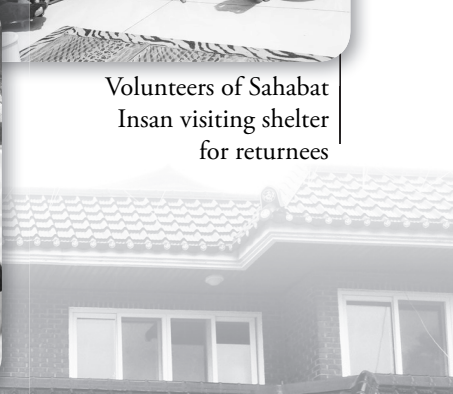Novarum Center

Welcome poster in Yiutsari office

Eucharistic celebration with Indonesian returnees from Malaysia

Seminar and workshop organized by UGAT Foundation

Volunteers of Sahabat Insan visiting shelter for returnees

Fr. Kim Chong-dae in front of the old office of Yiutsari