

# Does Absence Make the Heart Grow Fonder? An Exploratory Study of the Marital Quality of Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong

Linda H. K. Tsoi\*, Wing Lam, Cheuk Kiu Lau, Ki Chi Wong

Department of Sociology, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong S.A.R., China

Email: \*tsoihangki@gmail.com, lamwing881@gmail.com, cklmadeline@gmail.com, wong51891617wong@gmail.com

**How to cite this paper:** Tsoi, L. H. K., Lam, W., Lau, C. K., & Wong, K. C. (2024). Does Absence Make the Heart Grow Fonder? An Exploratory Study of the Marital Quality of Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong. *Sociology Mind*, 14, 245-265.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/sm.2024.144014>

**Received:** July 19, 2024

**Accepted:** September 21, 2024

**Published:** September 24, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

In an increasingly globalized world, foreign domestic helpers have become a common phenomenon in many regions. These sojourner migrants are often women from developing countries who leave their families to become guest workers in wealthier societies. Labouring in the shadows of their host countries, foreign domestic workers have been similarly rather neglected in migration studies. This research explores the case of Filipina foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong and focuses on a fundamental component of well-being which is the quality of their marital relationship. Being physically separated from their husbands usually for several years, qualitative interviews reveal negatively impacted marital quality sometimes including major communication difficulties, emotional detachment, financial management, and marital infidelity. Our research identifies several coping strategies including focusing on shifting remittance management to children and extended family, obtaining help from extended family members, and satisficing based on religious faith. The widespread availability of video calling using smartphones apparently does not adequately compensate for being physically distant in marital relations for this group of Filipina domestic workers.

## Keywords

Filipina Migrant Workers (FDWs), Long-Distance Marriages, Transnational Family, Financial Management

## 1. Introduction

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) represent a remarkable migrant group globally. Each year, millions of Filipina seek employment abroad to secure improved economic opportunities. In Hong Kong, there are approximately 190,000 Filipino

Domestic Workers (FDWs) who diligently work to send remittances, thereby providing critical financial support to their families in the Philippines (Census and Statistics Department, 2022a).

However, maintaining long-distance relationships is difficult, especially for Filipina maids who live with their employers and can only return home every two years as per their standard employment contract (which is known as “ID407”) which lasts for two years. Most domestic helpers are allowed to go home only at the end of contract or when it is being renewed (Hong Kong Immigration Department, 2024). Despite harsh working conditions, FDWs are still willing to work overseas due to the limited job opportunities in the Philippines and the heavy financial burdens they bear for their families.

Official data from the Hong Kong government indicates that 28.8% of FDWs had never married, 57.5% were married, and 13.7% were widowed, divorced, or separated, suggesting that over half were married (Census and Statistics Department, 2022a). Furthermore, 92.6% of these married FDWs did not live with their spouses, highlighting the prevalence of long-distance marriages among female FDWs in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2022a). In the Philippines, divorce is not legally available; couples can only pursue annulment or legal separation (Philippine Commission on Women, 2020).

Seeking employment in the Philippines can be challenging, even in the case of college graduates. The economy is overly dependent on the service sector, showing signs of deindustrialization and reduced agricultural development, which is atypical for developing countries (Ofreneo, 2015). In 2023, the unemployment rate was recorded at 4.3%, with an underemployment rate of 12.3% (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). The country also faces a critical poverty issue, with 16.4% of families, or 4.51 million households, living in poverty. On average, a family with five members will need at least PhP 13,797 per month, which is the poverty threshold to meet their minimum basic food and non-food needs (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023a). Therefore, Filipina are often willing to make sacrifice even though they are facing numerous challenges in maintaining their marriages. With the barrier of distance, unsatisfying marital relationships are commonly observed among FDWs. Because divorce is not an acceptable norm in the Philippines, which is a highly Catholic society, FDWs often seek to maintain their marriages by adopting various psychological and social strategies.

With 355,700 households employ domestic helpers in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2022a), FDWs thus have a significant influence on families and make substantial contributions. However, the mass media in Hong Kong and local social media often portray them negatively. For instance, FDWs are described as being notorious for poor financial management, often borrowing money from usurers, and are depicted as lazy and careless in child and elderly care (So, 2015). Most research in Hong Kong SAR and Singapore focuses on the impact of domestic workers on their employers’ families and how FDWs contribute to unleashing the labor force. While some may find it difficult to get along with a

“stranger” at home, leading to stereotypes and misunderstandings, the high demand for domestic services is evident with a female labor force participation rate of 52.9% (Census and Statistics Department, 2022b). FDWs often become part of the family, building strong bonds with dependents, especially children (Chan, 2005). Therefore, it is crucial for employers to manage good relationships with them.

Additionally, due to prolonged separation and distance from their husbands, many FDWs find it challenging to maintain quality relationships. They often face opposition from their children and husbands for leaving them. Meanwhile, both partners need to manage suspicions and rumors of infidelity. Moreover, FDWs must convince themselves that leaving their families for financial stability and a better future, rather than providing companionship, is the preferable choice (So, 2015; Acedera & Yeoh, 2019).

To gain a deeper understanding of one of the major foreign groups in Hong Kong, we conducted research on FDWs’ marital relationships to address the following research questions:

- 1) What challenges do FDWs face in maintaining their marital relationships while working abroad, and what are the potential impacts of these challenges on their marriages?
- 2) How do FDWs and their husbands react to these challenges, and what strategies do they use to overcome them?

In short, our research objective is to explore the ways in which FDWs cope with marital challenges. Our investigation thereby seeks to contribute to a more enhanced perspective on understanding of the social circumstances of the “stranger” at home.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Background on Filipina Domestic Workers

In the Philippines, working abroad is very common. According to the data provided by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023c), there are approximately 1.83 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) during the period of April to September 2021. For the gender distribution, the majority of the OFWs were women, there were 60.2% of the OFWs are female, only 40.4% were male in 2021 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023a).

Regarding occupation, about 43.2% of the OFWs were engaged in elementary occupations in 2021, especially females, with 64.8% of female OFWs in such roles. Elementary occupations involve simple and routine tasks like cleaning, washing cars and windows, and basic food preparation (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023c).

For working destination, the majority of the OFWs chose to work in Asia. About 78.3% of them worked in Asia in 2021. Among all of the OFWs, 24.4% of them were working in Saudi Arabia. Only 6.7% of them worked in Hong Kong in 2021 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023c). Although the proportion of OFWs

in Hong Kong is relatively minor, according to data provided by the Hong Kong government, Filipina are the largest ethnic minority group in Hong Kong, comprising 32.5% of the ethnic minority population (Census and Statistics Department, 2022a). There was a total of 201,291 Filipina in Hong Kong in 2021, with 191,783 of them being FDWs (Census and Statistics Department, 2022a). Over 95% of Filipina in Hong Kong are domestic workers. As there were significant differences in gender distribution among FDWs in Hong Kong and 97% of them are female (Census and Statistics Department, 2022a). Therefore, the research decided to primarily focus on the marital relationships of female FDWs and they are most approachable group for the public in Hong Kong.

## 2.2. Social Mobility and Economic Stability

In the Filipino context, working overseas is crucial for the survival of the extended family. OFWs make significant sacrifices to improve their family's quality of life, especially for their children. This practice is deeply ingrained in Filipino culture, with remittances playing a vital role in transnational families (OECD & Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017).

Working overseas can also facilitate the improvement of social class through increased income. Albert et al. (2023) claimed households with an OFW member are more probability to achieve social mobility especially from low-income households to middle class which indicates that remittances from OFWs can alleviate financial difficulties. However, these households' income sources are precarious, as OFW members need to continuously renew their contracts to maintain a stable income for their families (Bird, 2009).

The reason behind is lacking comprehensive welfare system in Philippines. OFWs household often face insufficient income for education, social, and healthcare needs, prompting reliance on overseas work (Saksela-Bergholm, 2019). These families typically depend on governmental social protection systems to address immediate economic needs, while remittances serve as a critical component of informal social protection, supplementing formal systems over the long term (Saksela-Bergholm, 2019). According to Saksela-Bergholm (2019), the benefits of remittances for Filipino families depend on allocation strategies, often aimed at improving long-term living conditions through education and healthcare. Remittances are also used for investments or retirement savings, influenced by the family's social context. This allocation involves reciprocity between senders and receivers, such as caregivers in the Philippines caring for migrants' children while migrants work abroad (Carling, 2014; Saksela-Bergholm, 2018).

As FDWs have limited control over the allocation of remittances once they are sent home, financial management often becomes a source of ongoing disputes within their families (Hall et al., 2019). The recipients of remittances, therefore, reflect the trust migrant domestic workers place in certain family members (Rahman & Fee, 2009). In their study of Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong, Rahman and Fee (2009) found that mothers and fathers were the most common

recipients, while only a small proportion of these workers sent remittances to their husbands. A significant number chose to remit funds to their sisters, brothers, and children, indicating that trust is closely tied to blood-related relatives.

In summary, working overseas is vital for Filipino families, providing financial stability and enabling social mobility. Remittances are essential for education, healthcare, and long-term investments, though managing these funds can cause family disputes, with trust influencing recipients' allocation (OECD & Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017; Saksela-Bergholm, 2019; Rahman & Fee, 2009).

### 2.3. Extended Family and the Child-Centered Society

The nuclear family is a fundamental family structure that exists in two forms. The "Family of Orientation" includes the family into which individuals are born and raised, comprising parents and siblings. The "Family of Procreation" consists of the family individuals create through marriage, typically including spouses and children. An extended family, on the other hand, consists of two or more nuclear families that expand the parent-child relationship rather than the husband-wife relationship (Murdock, 1949). The extended family serves three major functions: recognizing kin relations beyond the nuclear family, sharing responsibilities among family members, and maintaining emotional and expressive relationships (Castillo, 1979). Strong ties with the extended family are a significant characteristic of Filipino families. This network includes a wide range of relatives, such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, who share a strong sense of solidarity through financial and emotional support and shared responsibilities. These bonds often extend into the neighborhood, as many Filipinos tend to stay in the areas where they grew up, frequently visiting each other (Medina, 2015). Filipino families commonly engage in joint activities with their extended family, even if they live apart (Castillo, 1979).

In urban areas, where the cost of living is higher, extended family households are more common. These households typically consist of a nuclear family living with other relatives (Castillo, 1979; Medina, 2015). Social interactions among siblings are emphasized, with elder siblings taking responsibility for younger ones, who in turn must respect and obey their elders (Medina, 2015). These responsibilities and support networks often continue even after siblings marry, maintaining strong ties with extended family. The extended family provides a crucial social network that supports marital satisfaction and mental health, offering financial assistance, practical services, and emotional support (St. Vil et al., 2018; Keefe et al., 1979; Schmeckle & Sprecher, 2003). However, it can also have negative effects on marriage, such as demands for help, inter-family conflicts, and criticisms from extended family members (Nguyen et al., 2016).

In traditional Filipino culture, childbirth is considered a natural outcome of marriage, with strong cultural pressures and social expectations for couples to have children (Medina, 2015). Life is generally seen as more fulfilling with children (Antonio et al., 2017), and married couples are expected to become parents

without hesitation. Typically, couples have children within one or two years of marriage (Yu & Liu, 1980). The arrival of children transforms family dynamics, granting new identities and roles to parents and extended family members, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. From an economic perspective, children provide additional labor and financial support, aiding with housework and contributing to the family's socioeconomic status as they grow older (Medina, 2015). Higher education and good jobs for children can elevate the family's socioeconomic status and ensure future security for aging parents (Medina, 2015).

Filipino families are child-centered, with close and intimate parent-child relationships (Medina, 2015; Miralao, 1997). Parents are affectionate, sometimes overprotective, and willing to sacrifice for their children's better future (Morillo et al., 2013). Observing their parents' sacrifices, children are obedient, respectful, and dependent, often seeking parental advice for important decisions. Wives often believe that having children strengthens marital bonds and helps maintain family unity. For the sake of their children, parents strive to keep the family intact, with children often acting as peacemakers during conflicts (Medina, 2015). Children are perceived as bringing luck to the family and are regarded as gifts from God. Couples without children are considered unfortunate and may be encouraged to adopt (Medina, 2015). Despite improvements in contraceptive services by the Philippine government, abortion remains illegal in all circumstances due to strong opposition from the Catholic Church, which defends the sanctity of life and the "culture of life" (Finer & Hussain, 2013; Natividad, 2019).

In essence, the Filipino family structure is deeply child-centered, with strong bonds in both nuclear and extended families. Children are seen as blessings, providing emotional and economic support, and are central to family unity and marital satisfaction, despite the challenges posed by extended family dynamics (Medina, 2015; Castillo, 1979).

#### **2.4. Religion and Marriage in the Filipino Context**

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023b), 78.8% of the household population in the Philippines report Roman Catholicism as their religious affiliation, making it the predominant religion. Religious practice is deeply ingrained in daily life, with significant trust in Biblical doctrines, particularly concerning marriage and family values. Catholicism's influence extends into the political realm, shaping policies that prohibit divorce and abortion and restrict access to contraceptives. However, conservative ideologies are reportedly declining among the current population. Filipinos generally demonstrate a strong belief in God and the Bible. Many view the Bible as the literal word of God and turn to their faith for guidance on moral issues (Abad, 2001). The adherence to these standards varies with the strength of individual faith, but Catholic doctrine continues to significantly influence moral standards in the community (Agaton, 2015).

Catholic doctrine heavily influences marriage values, providing guidelines for maintaining fulfilling relationships. Effective communication, respect, understanding,

and self-awareness are emphasized as key components of a successful marriage (Mackey & O'Brien, 2005). A 2018 study found that approximately 75% of Filipino college students desired a Catholic marriage. They identified personal factors—such as infidelity, character issues, and lack of communication—as reasons for marriage failure, while mutual love, fidelity, and good communication were seen as keys to success. Additionally, 30% of participants highlighted the importance of a personal relationship with God in achieving a successful marriage (Tyson et al., 2018). Despite debates about legalizing divorce, the law has not gained majority support. Many Filipinos hold conservative views on marriage, seeing it as a lifelong commitment to one's partner and to God. Ending a marriage is perceived as contrary to these fundamental beliefs. "Commitment is very important to them as it should be a lifelong promise that does not change over time" (Cornelio, 2017).

However, conflict between doctrine of Catholic Church and the reality would cause ambivalent among Filipino. According to Acedera and Yeoh (2019), left-behind husbands cheat to reclaim their masculine identity and address the erosion of their traditional family role, while migrant wives' infidelities stem from unmet emotional needs and long-distance relationship strains. Despite these behaviors, religious and societal expectations impose a heavy burden of guilt and shame, particularly on women, for deviating from prescribed moral standards.

Consequently, Roman Catholicism profoundly shapes Filipino family and marriage values, emphasizing lifelong commitment, fidelity, and communication. Despite conservative views, conflicts arise between doctrine and reality, especially with infidelity among separated spouses, leading to significant guilt and societal pressure (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023a; Acedera & Yeoh, 2019).

### 3. Methodology

Qualitative methods were employed to gain a detailed understanding of the challenges and strategies that Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) and their family members use when facing challenges. A total of 20 female interviewees, aged between 28 and 61, participated in this in-depth research. They were all married or separated, had between 5 and 32 years of experience working overseas, and were currently experiencing commuter marriages while working in Hong Kong. Purposive sampling was applied in this research to ensure participants had experience in marriage (Lune & Berg, 2017: p. 39). Researchers targeted common and well-known locations visited by FDWs during their day off, including Causeway Bay, Admiralty, Tsuen Wan, and Shatin. The interviews were conducted in fast food shops. Researchers conducted the interviews face-to-face. In the Philippines, where legal divorce is unavailable and annulments are costly and difficult to obtain, therefore, marital status depends entirely on the consensus between married couples.

The main objective of interview questions was to allow FDWs to share their personal experiences of maintaining family unity despite the absence of physical intimacy and shared indexicality in their home country. Due to geographical



separation, the marital status and quality of marriage rely solely on the statements provided by the FDWs. The interviews focused on identifying challenges in their marriages, factors influencing their responses, and strategies to overcome these challenges. Four primary questions were posed:

- 1) Why did you choose to work overseas?
- 2) Could you share your story about how you met your husband?
- 3) Can you tell us about your children?
- 4) Have you experienced any disagreements or arguments with your husband since working abroad?

**Table 1.** Interviewees' data.

	Age	Duration of working overseas (years)	Marital status	Number of children	Religion
Interviewee 01	47	23	Married	1	Roman Catholic
Interviewee 02	43	6	Married	1	n/a
Interviewee 03	61	11	Married	2	n/a
Interviewee 04	42	10	Married	2	n/a
Interviewee 05	39	12	Separated	4	n/a
Interviewee 06	52	32	Married	1	Christian
Interviewee 07	47	8	Separated	2	n/a
Interviewee 08	55	18	Married	5	n/a
Interviewee 09	34	9	Married	3	Roman Catholic (PH) Christian (HK)
Interviewee 10	42	12	Married	2	Roman Catholic
Interviewee 11	38	10	Separated	2	Roman Catholic
Interviewee 12	42	12	Separated	1	Roman Catholic
Interviewee 13	38	10	Married	1	Christian
Interviewee 14	34	n/a	Separated	2	Believes in God
Interviewee 15	34	8	Married	1	Roman Catholic
Interviewee 16	31	5	Married	1	n/a
Interviewee 17	28	5	Married	1	Roman Catholic
Interviewee 18	59	20	Married	4	Christian
Interviewee 19	41	6	Cohabitation	2	Roman Catholic
Interviewee 20	54	23	Married	2	Roman Catholic

Four factors affecting marital quality were identified: extended family, family status, children, and religious beliefs. The purpose of the first question was to understand the financial struggles or burdens among the interviewees, including the composition of their extended family and future plans after ceasing domestic work. The second question sought details about the marital relationship, such as when and how they met their husbands, the nature of their marriage (love or



economic necessity), and the level of trust and understanding between spouses. The third question focused on children, examining parenting responsibilities, tuition fees, allowances, and the impact of parenting agreements or conflicts on marital harmony. The fourth question investigated religious beliefs, particularly the influence of Catholicism, marital honesty, and attachment to the church, which serves as a crucial component of social control and support.

This research highlights the various strategies FDWs and their families employ to maintain marital relationships and family unity. The findings underscore the importance of extended family, family status, children, and religious beliefs in shaping these strategies. The interview flow largely depended on the interviewees' responses, with the interviewer guiding them to focus on their challenges, the four identified factors, and potential strategies (**Table 1**).

## 4. Findings

As physically separated between couples, the interviews reveal the negative impacts on marriage such as communication difficulties, emotional detachment, financial management, and marital infidelity. In order to save the marriage, FDWs adopt different coping strategies including focusing on children, emphasizing the improvement in the family status and economic benefit, obtaining help from extended family members, and satisficing based on religious faith to remedy the problems in their marriages and safeguard the completed family and their coping strategies significantly influence the outcome of their marriages.

### 4.1. Financial Management

Financial management is a significant challenge among FDWs and a major source of conflict with their husbands. Based on interview responses, we identified two strategies: dividing household expenses with husbands and managing remittances through children and extended family, excluding husbands. Effective money management involves multiple stakeholders in a transnational context, making communication and the allocation of remittances crucial.

#### 4.1.1. Joint Financial Decision-Making in Household Expense Management

Among the interviewees, most of them earn more than their husbands and act as the primary breadwinners in the family. As the pattern of authority in Philippine families is mainly egalitarian, they usually make decisions together; however, the husband is still considered the head of the family (*Medina, 1991*). Therefore, many interviewees would send remittances to their husbands to manage. One common approach is an even division of household expenses: some interviewees cover significant costs like tuition and housing, while their husbands handle daily expenses such as food and children's allowances.

Interviewees 13 and 18 exemplify clear divisions of household expenses and joint financial decision-making, including significant investments such as constructing houses or purchasing land. Interviewee 18 and her husband take turns

working overseas and discuss money management together. Her husband's overseas income is allocated to house construction, while her income covers daily expenses and children's tuition. She also mentioned that she primarily makes financial decisions, but they communicate and seek each other's approval on spending.

An unexpected case is that Interviewee 16's husband is the main breadwinner at home. Interviewee 16 is the sole case where the husband earns more than the interviewee. Her overseas salary is primarily for herself and her original family, while her husband manages daily household expenses, their daughter's allowance, and financial support for her original family. Despite his sufficient income, she monitors household spending due to his prodigality and chooses to work overseas for financial independence. This case highlights the importance of financial autonomy for some FDWs.

#### 4.1.2. Remittance Management by Children and Extended Families

Some interviewees do not have effective communication with their husbands about financial management, leading to prevalent arguments and conflicts, and they have already separated. As a result, many FDWs assign their children or extended family members to manage remittances due to conflicts with their husbands or distrust caused by marital infidelity. Several reasons contribute to FDWs switching remittance management to their children or extended family, including husbands' bad habits, loss of trust due to marital infidelity, or overly generous financial management. When an interviewee realizes that her husband is incapable of managing the remittances, the responsibility of holding and distributing finances is allocated to others.

For instance, Interviewee 05 discovered that her husband borrowed money from his extended family, promising repayment upon her return to the Philippines without prior discussion. She was shocked and disappointed, especially since her salary covered daily necessities and children's tuition. Her husband later admitted to using her money elsewhere without consulting her.

*Interviewee 05: "I don't know he borrowed the money...he promised when I go (back Philippines), I come I pay. I said I am angry. Why am...I'm very disappointed. Because how come you can borrow your money? ... Monthly salary I give all to you for the children so how come you... What did you do to the money? I cannot see anything you buy these, you buy them?"*

Interviewee 20 occasionally argues with her husband when he fails to follow their financial plan without informing her. Interviewee 12 faces more serious conflicts: as the family's breadwinner, she wants to support her parents' medical expenses, but her husband, who manages the finances, consistently opposes this. In the case of Interviewee 02, she mentioned that her husband has delayed sending remittances to her daughter.

As a result, remittances are sent directly to the children if they were grown and capable to manage. If the children are too young to manage finances, surrogate caregivers, such as extended family members, are often used as alternatives. Some FDWs assign remittance management to extended family members, especially

when they serve as primary caregivers for their children. There are two main scenarios: First, the FDW-led financial management, where the FDW divides the remittance for specific expenses, such as tuition and extracurricular activities, and asks extended family members to handle the payments.

For instance, Interviewee 11, separated from her husband, sends money to her children's grandparents but still manages the allocation herself. Second, the caregiver-led financial management, where the FDW sends remittances to extended family members, who then decide on the expenditure for child-rearing. Interviewee 19, whose mother is the primary caregiver, sends money directly to her mother, who manages the children's expenses based on their needs. In some cases, FDWs choose this approach due to a lack of trust in their husbands, often because of bad habits or marital infidelity. For example, Interviewee 01 sends money to her mother instead of her gambling-prone husband.

Regardless of who manages the remittances, FDWs typically retain control over how much money is sent and how it is allocated. Interviewees often pre-allocate budgets for various expenses before transferring the funds. This system ensures that the FDWs, as the primary breadwinners, maintain control over their financial contributions while relying on trusted family members to assist with day-to-day management.

## 4.2. Communication Difficulties

Communication challenges are inevitable among the families of FDWs. Although the concept of time-space "distanciation"<sup>1</sup> (Giddens, 1984) suggests that time and space should be perceived as closer, it still cannot fully bridge the gap between FDWs and their families. FDWs and their husbands are situated in different countries, which means they belong to different social groups.

Their communication topics mostly revolve around their children and financial issues. They lack a sense of security because they do not know what their husbands are doing. Interviewees claim that they try to learn more about their husbands' routines through extended family members. Even with the presence of instant communication, interviewees found that living in different locations makes it difficult to be familiar with their husbands' daily lives. They need to discuss with their husbands about when to call and the duration of the calls.

### Dissatisfaction on Communication and Physical Intimacy

Some interviewees have indicated that there is a disagreement with their husbands regarding communication, primarily due to the quality of communication, such as its duration and timing. Another reason for the disagreement is that their husbands feel that online communication cannot replace physical intimacy, such as cuddling, holding hands, and sexual activities. Research by Leavitt and Willoughby (2014) indicates a positive association between physical intimacy and relationship quality among couples. Satisfying sexual activities can strengthen their bond and

<sup>1</sup>Time-space "distanciation" is introduced by Anthony Giddens which refers to the stretching of social systems and interactions across different times and places (Giddens, 1984).

reduce conflict. Additionally, there are gender differences in physical intimacy; men tend to express their sexual desires more straightforwardly than women (Leavitt & Willoughby, 2014).

Interviewee 02 and her husband experience communication disagreements due to his busy factory job. They rarely talk, usually only on weekends, via text messages and 30-minute phone calls. Interviewee 02 is dissatisfied because she is the one initiating calls, and her husband seldom calls her or answers because he is busy or asleep. Similarly, Interviewee 01 faces issues due to a lack of physical interaction. Video calls and texts cannot replace her physical presence, which her family believes is crucial to prevent her husband's infidelity and protect their emotional well-being.

*Interviewee 01: My husband told me this when he is drunk, and he can tell me what he feels. He said that he has been single for many years and he has already tired of being single.*

Interviewee 01 faces additional challenges as her husband is not talkative and rarely expresses his feelings. During conversations, she does most of the talking, while he shares very little. He needs physical intimacy to feel satisfied in the relationship, preferring her presence in the Philippines over phone calls, as he feels lonely without her. Many FDWs, including Interviewee 01, seek understanding from their husbands. They hope their husbands recognize the significant sacrifices they make, such as missing out on parenthood and time with family. FDWs desire comfort and acknowledgment in conversations, understanding of their motivations for working overseas, and tolerance of their absence, with husbands taking care of the family in the Philippines.

### 4.3. Marital Infidelity

Marital infidelity is commonly encountered in long-distance marriages among FDWs. The lack of physical intimacy, which is often present in cohabiting relationships, can lead to misunderstandings and a decrease in trust within the marriage. Consequently, infidelity among FDWs' husbands is a common challenge that they must confront. Responses from extended family, children, and the influence of religious beliefs can vary, thereby affecting the strategies used to address the affair and the eventual outcome of marital status. The major strategies they have applied in dealing with marital infidelity include prevention, restoration of marriage, separation, and denial or avoidance.

Among our interviewees, there are 8 who found and confirmed their husbands cheating. Five of them decided to conduct informal separation, such as stopping living with their husbands. Their children would either be taken care of by one of them or by an extended family member.

#### 4.3.1. Prevention

Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) employ various strategies to prevent marital infidelity, with the most prevalent approach being the use of their social networks in the Philippines to monitor their husbands. Interviewee 17 exemplifies this

strategy, stating that she has never suspected her husband of infidelity due to their mutual trust, which is reinforced by their shared social circles. Her friends in Hong Kong are her relatives, and her husband's friends are their neighbors. Her husband also seeks her permission before socializing with friends. The overlapping social circles exert social control on wives. In the case of Interviewee 17, her social circle consists of her relatives, meaning her extended family is aware of her behavior in Hong Kong. This overlap provides her husband with a sense of security, trusting that his wife will not engage in an affair overseas.

The Catholic church serves as a powerful instrument of social monitoring, as its followers are closely integrated into the social circles established within the church. They live in accordance with Catholic doctrine, sharing a common understanding of marriage. Should they deviate from Catholic teachings and face marital problems, other followers and priests may intervene or even expel them from the church.

Interviewee 06 and her husband are highly devoted to their church, practicing a form of Christianity that provides social control similar to the Catholic Church. They attend church weekly, and her husband works as an assistant to the priest, with his social circle predominantly comprised of church members. Interviewee 06, a firm believer in God, attends church every Sunday in Hong Kong. Both seek assistance from fellow churchgoers and clergy members to resolve marital conflicts.

*Interviewee 06: "If they (church) know that your husband is having another girl, you know, they always talk to your husband or is not good. You know, they kick you out."*

Infidelity among devout Christians often leads to expulsion from their social circles, as it is considered a serious and unforgivable sin by both God and the church. In the Catholic Church, higher moral standards on marriage intensify this consequence. Disloyal Catholics face moral criticism from both the church and fellow Catholics, who are regarded as brothers and sisters. The strong attachment between church and members, combined with the fear of criticism, makes infidelity less likely.

According to social bonding theory, individuals with stronger social bonds are less likely to engage in deviant behavior (Schreck & Hirschi, 2009). Husbands with close ties to their extended family and children experience higher levels of social control through attachment. Daily interactions with family members result in any deviant behavior likely being met with criticism, acting as a deterrent.

A husband's commitment to the Catholic Church, children, and extended family helps deter marital infidelity by influencing his reputation. The personal cost of infidelity is increased due to the emotional and financial support derived from these social networks. Strong commitments to the church, family, and children reduce the likelihood of affairs due to the fear of damaging one's reputation, disappointing children, and jeopardizing careers (Schreck & Hirschi, 2009). Infidelity could also result in exclusion from essential social support networks

### 4.3.2. Restoring Marriage and Intervention by the Extended Family

Restoring the marriage is a common strategy employed by FDWs when facing infidelity from their husbands. To maintain the integrity of the marriage and for the sake of their children, FDWs often attempt reconciliation, such as spending more time at home with their husbands.

Many interviewees discovered their husbands' affairs through various channels, particularly social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, and online game chats. Some interviewees spent months monitoring their husbands' company accounts for suspicious interactions. Besides social media, information often came from family members, including parents and in-laws, as well as neighbors and friends who observed close relationships with other women. Thus, wives in Hong Kong have multiple avenues to uncover infidelity.

Interviewee 11 discovered her husband's infidelity twice. The first incident occurred in 2010 while she was working in the Netherlands. Her mother-in-law informed her of the affair, prompting her to return to the Philippines to save the marriage. The second incident happened while she was working in Hong Kong. Her mother reported that a family friend saw her husband with another woman. Both her family and her husband's family advised her to save the relationship, emphasizing the well-being of her children.

*Interviewee 11: "The mom of my ex-husband tried to ask for forgiveness, but it doesn't work. She told me that I am not the only one who has this kind of experience, but I said enough. For the first time, they told me to save the relationship for the kids. I listen to them for the first time."*

Despite initially heeding their advice, she chose to separate the second time due to her husband's repeated infidelity. Additionally, her husband sought help from her friends to save the marriage, however, she rejected to get back to her husband.

Interviewee 9 faced a similar situation. After separating from her husband for two years, her three daughters asked if she might accept their father again, as they did not want a broken family. Her husband, described as "a kind, good, and responsive father," had built a close relationship with the children. Their pleas, coupled with promises from her husband's extended family, led her to consider restoring the marriage. These cases highlight how the opinions of extended family, friends, and children significantly impact decisions in marriage, reflecting the child-centered culture in the Philippines.

### 4.3.3. Acceptance

While some FDWs adopt constructive approaches to rebuilding their marriages, others resort to detrimental strategies such as tolerating their husband's infidelity. This mode of coping with marital betrayal is prevalent among FDWs.

Interviewee 01 discovered her husband's infidelity through online Messenger when his mistress contacted her, claiming she had his child and demanding financial support. To avoid potential repercussions for her husband, Interviewee 01 financially supported the mistress and child for three years. She rationalized her husband's actions as merely satisfying sexual desires, stating she could accept this

as long as he didn't acknowledge the mistress and child as part of their family.

*Interviewee 01: "When I come back to Hong Kong after a few months, he did again. But I am tired of getting angry, so I just let him do it. It is hard to stop if he is still doing it, especially when I am far away."*

Interviewee 01 initially accepted her husband's infidelity, believing it was purely for sexual needs. However, when he began keeping his affairs secret and developed emotional bonds with other women, she saw this as a threat to their marriage and eventually separated from him.

Some FDWs negotiate with their husbands regarding infidelity, asking for honesty if they become involved with someone else. They acknowledge the difficulty of satisfying their husband's sexual needs due to physical separation. Interviewee 15's marriage has not experienced infidelity, but she has discussed hypothetical scenarios with her husband. She recognizes the importance of physical intimacy for men and requests honesty from her husband if he cannot remain faithful.

*Interviewee 15: Some boys need pleasure. You cannot deny that. It is hard for us to be cheated. We couldn't provide for the needs of our husband. I am here. He's there. So, I talk to my husband if you cannot endure it just talk to me.*

In the predominantly Catholic Philippines, strict moral standards on marriage typically make it hard to imagine a wife accepting her husband's infidelity. However, the unique circumstances faced by FDWs, including long-term separation, lead to a shift in attitudes.

FDWs often form new social circles overseas and share experiences about their marriages. The prevalence of infidelity among FDW couples normalizes the issue, leading some FDWs to view their tolerance as a necessary sacrifice. These cases illustrate the complex strategies FDWs adopt to cope with marital infidelity, ranging from tolerance to negotiation. This shift reflects a new norm influenced by their unique circumstances, distinct from the traditional Filipino view on marriage. However, their bottom line is that they cannot build an emotional bond during the affair, and it can only be a purely sexual relationship.

#### **4.3.4. Denial and Avoidance**

Another strategy some FDWs use to cope with marital infidelity is denial or avoidance. Unlike those who actively seek evidence of their husband's infidelity through social media, friends, or family, some choose to ignore signs of unfaithfulness.

Interviewee 20 heard rumors from her neighbors in the Philippines about women visiting her home, but she chose to ignore these warnings. During a vacation home, she personally witnessed suspicious behavior. Early one morning, she found "very sexy" women knocking on her door while her husband was still asleep. Upon questioning him, he claimed they were only there to borrow money and denied any relationship.

*Interviewee 20: "And then, I go home, I think (it is the time for) my vacation. After two days, there were some girls coming to my home. (They were) very sexy and it is early in the morning. When they were knocking on the door, he was still sleeping. I woke up and checked that. And then my husband woke up and talked*



*to those girls. I hurt (the interviewee slightly beating her chest) and asked my husband who's that girl. My husband told me that's only to borrow money and deny they have relationship."*

Despite the evidence and her own suspicions, she took no further action to investigate her husband's behavior. Although she professed trust in her husband, her description of the women as "sexy" indicates a negative perception of their relationship with him. Instead of seeking reassurance from her husband, Interviewee 20 turned to emotional healing through her faith.

Her case exemplifies a more passive approach to dealing with marital infidelity, characterized by denial and avoidance. Her lack of proactive measures contrasts sharply with other FDWs who actively seek to confirm or address their husbands' unfaithfulness. Denial and avoidance are coping strategies employed by some FDWs in response to suspected infidelity. This approach often involves ignoring warning signs and refraining from confrontation or investigation, highlighting a different facet of how FDWs manage marital challenges.

#### **4.3.5. Separation**

Another approach FDWs adopt to deal with their husband's infidelity is separation. Given the absence of divorce laws in the Philippines and the difficulty of legal separation, many FDWs opt for private separation, living separately or ceasing cohabitation with their husbands. In a unique situation, despite the separation, interviewee 08 continued to share the same residence and treated each other as strangers at home. To avoid the stigma of a broken family, they pretended to be a couple in front of extended family members.

Interviewee 12 discovered her husband's infidelity while working in Hong Kong. Encouraged by her employer, she returned to the Philippines to confirm the affair. She struggled with the decision to maintain the marriage for the sake of her son, believing that a complete family was crucial for his growth. Upon confirming the infidelity, Interviewee 12 decided to separate. However, this separation meant her son had to move to the province to be cared for, leaving his friends and school behind. After consulting others and discussing with her son, who encouraged the separation, she decided to end the relationship.

*Interviewee 12: "After the separation, I asked my son 'Okay, I will give your daddy another chance.' My son asserted that... 'I'm happy now. I'm not going to see you crying the whole day. So what for, if you're just going to do it for me, ... all my friends have broken family and they still happy?'"*

Interviewee 12's case underscores the importance of children's opinions in their parents' decisions about marital separation. With support from her son, who cares deeply about her well-being and happiness, she becomes brave enough to address problems in her marriage, such as arguments and infidelity, and eventually separates from her husband. He fully supports his mother in whatever decisions she makes and reassures her that he will be resilient, even if he comes from a broken family.

In conclusion, although children's perspectives are often not highlighted in

interviews, if they actively express their viewpoints, they can significantly impact their parents' choices. Separation, both formal and informal, is a common response to marital infidelity among FDWs. These decisions are heavily influenced by considerations for their children's well-being and opinions, illustrating the complex dynamics at play in these challenging situations.

## 5. Discussion

Among the interviewees in the research, extended family is one of the most significant factors in maintaining the marriages of FDWs. Many interviewees use this social network to help solve the challenges of remote marriage, including marital infidelity, financial management, and childcare.

The extended family plays a crucial role in the marriage, as FDWs greatly value their suggestions during marital crises. Their influence can be decisive in whether FDWs choose to continue their marriage. In cases of marital infidelity, extended families assist by monitoring and controlling the husband's behavior through increased involvement in his daily life, especially if they live nearby or in the same household. This network provides wives with information about their husbands' activities and any unusual behavior, helping them detect potential affairs or other issues. Both the wife's and husband's families may contact FDWs to offer guidance, which can be pivotal in their decision to either separate or continue the relationship.

In terms of childcare, extended families are instrumental. They often provide childcare services, reflecting strong familial bonds and close living arrangements common in Filipino society. This support helps FDWs manage childcare if their husbands are unavailable or unable to care for the children. Additionally, extended family members assist with financial management. Since they often handle childcare, FDWs send remittances to them to manage child-related expenses, ensuring that financial contributions are used appropriately.

Children significantly impact their parents' marriage decisions, reflecting the Philippines' child-centered family culture. Parents often sacrifice for their children, viewing them as future protectors. This cultural norm explains why children are a decisive factor in marital relations. Childcare and parenting require long-term effort, and according to social control theory, high involvement in parenting reduces deviant behavior, sustaining marital loyalty in long-distance relationships. Social exchange theory suggests that acknowledging each other's contributions—such as fathers handling household duties and FDWs providing financially—fosters positive emotions and intimacy, increasing marital solidarity. While children and extended family are decisive factors in marital decisions, children's influence is more passive. Although all interviewees consider their children's welfare, not all directly seek their children's opinions before making decisions, possibly due to the children's age or the challenges of discussing sensitive topics from abroad. Nonetheless, children remain central to these decisions despite their passive role.

The influence of the Catholic Church among FDWs is relatively less than assumed, as infidelity is common in their marriages. However, the Church's doctrine still significantly influences Filipinos in maintaining resilience and bonding among FDWs. While many interviewees identify as Catholic, only a few draw strength from their faith, and regular church attendance or seeking church counsel is uncommon while working overseas. The Church's primary influence on marriage is through core values and legislation. Initially, religion was thought to play a significant role in regulating behavior and providing moral standards. However, interviewees emphasize trust, understanding, and communication as key to a successful marriage—values influenced by, but not exclusive to, the Church.

Catholic values are not always decisive in their marriages. Infidelity, financial disputes, and bad habits are commonly encountered. Even though the Church emphasizes that a broken family is unconstitutional, immoral, against Filipino culture, destructive to families, and detrimental to children, FDWs and their family members often ignore the "Family Code" and separate despite the Church's guidance to maintain marriage (Gloria, 2007). Traditional Filipino values, particularly the stigma of a broken family, drive many to maintain marriages for their children's sake, contrasting with some Western perspectives. Family-centric values compel FDWs to endure unhappy marriages to safeguard their children's perception of marriage. Despite infidelity and other issues, interviewees exhibit tolerance and forgiveness, rarely engaging in deviant behaviors themselves. The financial necessity of working overseas often outweighs the benefits of returning home to maintain marital quality.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, this research aims to understand the major challenges and strategies in remote marriages, particularly among FDWs in Hong Kong. The three primary challenges identified are marital infidelity, financial management, and communication difficulties. These challenges are influenced by factors such as extended family networks, children, family status, and religion, which in turn affect marital status and satisfaction. Marital infidelity is the primary threat, reducing trust between spouses. Other challenges, while less direct, can still increase marital conflict. Extended family networks and children significantly impact marital relationships. Close bonds with children and extended family expand coping strategies, aligning with social bonding theory principles of attachment, involvement, and commitment, fostering trust and stable communication despite the distance.

FDWs' overseas work limits direct monitoring of their families, reducing their influence. Catholic beliefs provide emotional support rather than strict behavioral guidance, with FDWs adjusting expectations due to their circumstances. Sharing experiences with compatriots in Hong Kong leads to a focus on preserving family rather than adhering to religious doctrine. Social ties act as informal social control, preventing deviant actions. However, if husbands disregard these ties, few solutions remain to restore marital status. Ultimately, maintaining marital status depends

largely on relationships with social networks like children and extended family, which offer both challenges and solutions. Overcoming these challenges can sustain long-term marital relationships.

## Acknowledgements

We thank Dr. Arthur Sakamoto for helpful comments in this research.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## References

- Abad, R. G. (2001). Religion in the Philippines. *Philippine Studies*, 49, 337-367. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42634448>
- Acedera, K. A. F., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2019). 'Until Death Do Us Part'? Migrant Wives, Left-Behind Husbands, and the Negotiation of Intimacy in Transnational Marriages. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46, 3508-3525. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2019.1592414>
- Agaton, S. I. (2015). Morality and Religiosity: A Filipino Experience. *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 3, 85-97. <https://doi.org/10.32871/rmrj1503.02.07>
- Albert, J. R. G., Habitan, M. T., Tabuga, A. D., Vizmanos, J. F. V., Muñoz, M. S., & Hernandez, A. C. (2023). *Long-Term Effects of Labor Migration in the Philippines: "Napakasakit, Kuya Eddie!" PIDS Discussion Paper Series No. 2023-17*. Philippine Institute for Development Studies.
- Antonio, J., Dimapilis, M., & Sullano, M. (2017). *Marital Satisfaction Among Couples with and without Children*. <http://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.14918.91201>
- Bird, K. (2009). *Philippines: Poverty, Employment and Remittances—Some Stylized Facts*. BSP International Research Conference on Remittances: The Macroeconomic Consequences of Remittances: Implications for Monetary and Financial Policies in Asia, Mandaluyong City, Philippines. [https://www.bsp.gov.ph/Media\\_And\\_Research/Events/2009/ircr/downloads/papers/BSP\\_11\\_bird\\_paper.pdf](https://www.bsp.gov.ph/Media_And_Research/Events/2009/ircr/downloads/papers/BSP_11_bird_paper.pdf)
- Carling, J. (2014). Scripting Remittances: Making Sense of Money Transfers in Transnational Relationships. *International Migration Review*, 48, 218-262. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12143>
- Castillo, G. T. (1979). *Beyond Manila: Philippine Rural Problems in Perspective*. International Development Research Centre.
- Census and Statistics Department (2022b). *Women and Men in Hong Kong: Key Statistics (2022 Edition)*. [https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat\\_report/product/B1130303/att/B11303032022AN22B0100.pdf](https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/B1130303/att/B11303032022AN22B0100.pdf)
- Census and Statistics Department, & Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2022a). *2021 Population Census Thematic Report: Ethnic Minorities*. <https://www.census2021.gov.hk/doc/pub/21c-ethnic-minorities.pdf>
- Chan, A. H. (2005). Live-in Foreign Domestic Workers and Their Impact on Hong Kong's Middle Class Families. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 26, 509-528. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-005-7847-4>

- Cornelio, J. S. (2017). *Being Catholic in the Contemporary Philippines: Young People re-Interpreting Religion*. Routledge.
- Finer, L. B., & Hussain, R. (2013). *Unintended Pregnancy and Unsafe Abortion in the Philippines: Context and Consequences*. Guttmacher Institute.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Polity Press.
- Gloria, C. K. (2007). Who Needs Divorce in the Philippines? *Mindanao Law Journal*, 1, 18-28. <https://doi.org/10.3860/mlj.v1i1.315>
- Hall, B. J., Garabiles, M. R., & Latkin, C. A. (2019). Work Life, Relationship, and Policy Determinants of Health and Well-Being among Filipino Domestic Workers in China: A Qualitative Study. *BMC Public Health*, 19, Article No. 229. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-6552-4>
- Hong Kong Immigration Department (2024). *Employment Contract for a Domestic Helper Recruited from Outside Hong Kong—English Version*. <https://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/forms/forms/id407.html>
- Keefe, S., Padilla, A., & Carlos, M. (1979). The Mexican-American Extended Family as an Emotional Support System. *Human Organization*, 38, 144-152. <https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.38.2.575482483n134553>
- Leavitt, C. E., & Willoughby, B. J. (2014). Associations between Attempts at Physical Intimacy and Relational Outcomes among Cohabiting and Married Couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 32, 241-262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407514529067>
- Lune, H., & Berg, B. L. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (9th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Mackey, R. A., & O'Brien, B. A. (2005). The Significance of Religion in Lasting Marriages. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging*, 18, 35-63. [https://doi.org/10.1300/j496v18n01\\_04](https://doi.org/10.1300/j496v18n01_04)
- Medina, B. (1991). *The Filipino Family: A Text with Selected*. University of the Philippines Press.
- Medina, B. T. G. (2015). *The Filipino Family* (3rd ed.). The University of the Philippines Press.
- Miralao, V. A. (1997). The Family, Traditional Values and the Sodocultural Transformation of Philippine Society. *Philippine Sociological Review*, 45, 189-215.
- Morillo, H. M., Capuno, J. J., & Mendoza, A. M. (2013). Views and Values on Family among Filipinos: An Empirical Exploration. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 41, 5-28. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-12341278>
- Murdock, G. P. (1949). *Social Structure*. MacMillan Co.
- Natividad, M. D. F. (2019). Catholicism and Everyday Morality: Filipino Women's Narratives on Reproductive Health. *Global Public Health*, 14, 37-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2018.1471145>
- Nguyen, A. W., Chatters, L. M., & Taylor, R. J. (2016). African American Extended Family and Church-Based Social Network Typologies. *Family Relations*, 65, 701-715. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12218>
- OECD, & Scalabrini Migration Center (2017). *Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development in the Philippines*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264272286-en>
- Ofreneo, R. E. (2015). Growth and Employment in De-Industrializing Philippines. *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, 20, 111-129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13547860.2014.974335>

- Philippine Commission on Women (2020). Adopting divorce in the Family Code: A Policy Brief.  
<https://pcw.gov.ph/assets/files/2020/03/PCW-WPLA-PB-09-Adopting-Divorce-in-the-Family-Code.pdf?x16895>
- Philippine Statistics Authority (2023a). *Highlights of the 2023 First Semester Official Poverty Statistics*.  
<https://psa.gov.ph/system/files/phdsd/Highlights%20of%20the%202023%201st%20sem%20Official%20Poverty%20Statistics.pdf>
- Philippine Statistics Authority (2023b). *Religious Affiliation in the Philippines: 2020 Census of Population and Housing*.  
<https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>
- Philippine Statistics Authority (2023c). *2022 Survey on Overseas Filipinos (Final Result)*.  
<https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos>
- Philippine Statistics Authority (2024, September 6). *Labor Force Survey*.  
<https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/labor-force-survey>
- Rahman, M. M., & Fee, L. K. (2009). Gender and the Remittance Process: Indonesian Domestic Workers in Hong Kong SAR, Singapore and Malaysia. *Asian Population Studies*, 5, 103-125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441730902992059>
- Saksela-Bergholm, S. (2018). Liens contraignants et interdépendants entre la Finlande et les Philippines: Les transferts réciproques au sein des familles philippines transnationales [Bonding and Binding ties between Finland and the Philippines: Reciprocal Remittances in Filipino Transnational Families]. *Migrations Société*, 172, 119-132.  
<https://doi.org/10.3917/migra.172.0119>
- Saksela-Bergholm, S. (2019). Welfare Beyond Borders: Filipino Transnational Families' Informal Social Protection Strategies. *Social Inclusion*, 7, 221-231.  
<https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i4.2309>
- Schmееckle, M., & Sprecher, S. (2003). Extended Family and Social Net-Works. In A. L. Vangelisti (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Family Communication* (pp. 349-375). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Schreck, C. J., & Hirschi, T. (2009). Social Control Theory. In J. M. Miller (Ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook* (pp. 305-311). SAGE Publications, Inc.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412971997.n35>
- So, M. (2015). *Foreign Domestic Helpers: Strangers at Home (First Hong Kong Edition)*. Joint Publishing (Hong Kong) Company Limited.
- St. Vil, N. M., McDonald, K. B., & Cross-Barnet, C. (2018). A Qualitative Study of Black Married Couples' Relationships with Their Extended Family Networks. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 99, 56-66.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1044389418756847>
- Tyson, L., Sarmiento, P. J., Sibug, N., Ignacio, R., & Masbang-Velasquez, J. (2018). Till Death Do Us Part: The Concept of Catholic Marriage among Filipino College Students. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies*, 13, 15-24.  
<https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-008x/cgpr/v13i03/15-24>
- Yu, E. S. H., & Liu, W. T. (1980). *Fertility and Kinship in the Philippines by Elena Yu and William T. Liu*. University of Notre Dame Press.