



Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (JAHSS)

ISSN: 3006-9491 (Online)

Volume 2 Issue 1, (2025)

 <https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v2i1.388>

 <https://journals.stecab.com/jahss>

 Published by
Stecab Publishing

Research Article

The Overseas Filipino Workers' Families in Bolinao, Pangasinan

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About Article

Article History

Submission: February 19, 2025

Acceptance : March 21, 2025

Publication : April 04, 2025

Keywords

Educational Impact, Emotional Well-Being, Family Dynamics, Financial Stability, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the case of foreign Filipino families in Bolinao, Pangasinan, and its educational implications for school year 2024-2025. It particularly investigated their demographic and socio-economic characteristics, problems, and support mechanisms available. With a descriptive research design, survey questionnaires were administered to 100 families from 30 barangays that were randomly selected. Findings indicate that health problems and healthcare access are the most pressing concerns, typically leading to economic deprivation and emotional trauma. Separation from an OFW parent or spouse also leads to serious psychological issues, particularly among children. Economic security remains a concern because most families depend solely on remittances, rendering them vulnerable to economic insecurity. Other concerns are difficulties in child-rearing, strained relationships, and social isolation. Government and non-government organization support mechanisms help mitigate such challenges. Scholarships at school, cash, and medical care are provided by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), and financial education and guidance are provided by organizations like Atikha. These are nevertheless not yet accessible to the majority of families. This research discovers that the emotional and financial concerns of OFW families play an important role in their household welfare and stability. To address these, it calls for the establishment of mental health intervention programs, economic literacy training, and family therapy to make the OFW families better able to cope with the effect of migration and their overall well-being.

Citation Style:

Ramoran, D. L. C. (2025). The Overseas Filipino Workers' Families in Bolinao, Pangasinan. *Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science*, 2(1), 121-126.
<https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v2i1.388>



1. INTRODUCTION

Migration has been the Filipino way of life for centuries, with millions of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) working abroad to send money home to their families. Their financial contributions are the center of family livelihood and the Philippine economy. Beyond the economic, however, labor migration heavily impacts family relationships, particularly when mothers work abroad. In Bolinao, Pangasinan, most fathers become caregivers when their wives work abroad, inverting traditional family roles. This shift has promise and challenge as families must cope emotionally, be frugal with money, and assume parenting roles in an unusual arrangement. These shifts must be understood in crafting intervention that is responsive to the well-being of OFW families.

While the economic value of OFWs is staggering in terms of financial security, the social and emotional effects of migration are still under-explored. While economic remittances had dominated most of the research, little had been done on how parental absence would affect the school performance, mental health, and social relationships of children. Also, the current government as well as non-governmental initiatives might not be able to capture the particular problems of left-behind families. Psychological burden of children and evolving father role are areas that need further exploration. All these shortcomings reaffirm the necessity of an integrated understanding of OFW families' daily lives in Bolinao.

The present study is designed to investigate how OFW migration influences family composition, in terms of emotional, economic, and educational adaptations. With the examination of these aspects, the study tries to determine what lessons can be employed to guide policymakers, educators, and relief agencies in crafting the right interventions to enhance the welfare of OFW families.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the recent release of Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) The estimated number of OFWs who were employed abroad from April to September 2022 was 1.96 million, which was a 7.6% increase from the 1.83 million OFWs in the same quarter of 2021. Of the total OFWs, Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs) with current work contracts numbered 1.94 million. Conversely, the figure for other OFWs who were employed abroad without work visas or work permits, like visitors, tourists, students, and medical or other non-immigrant visa holders, but fulltime workers elsewhere, was put at 26,000.

While OFWs continue to grow in number and make valuable contributions, the challenges they undergo, such as exploitation, abysmal working conditions, and mental health problems, deteriorate every year. OFWs also represent a symptom of Philippine society's problems since it is feared that many competent workers are migrating abroad, at times engaging in lower-skilled occupations that have no relation to their qualifications (Asis, 2020).

One of the major issues OFWs face is in their employment and employers. Most OFWs assume physically demanding positions with long working hours and poor remuneration (Bautista *et al.*, 2020). Even with qualifications and expertise, they may find themselves in underemployment and unsatisfying jobs

that do not maximize their skills. Moreover, some OFWs encounter unfavorable treatment and abuse at the hands of employers, such as non-payment of salaries, substandard working conditions, and denial of legal action (Tamayo, 2021). It is further exacerbated by the fact that OFWs are usually situated in overseas nations with disparate legal frameworks and languages, which would complicate the pursuit of justice and fair treatment.

Millions of Filipinos emigrate to foreign countries to find work that will pay them better than they could back home, states Fonbuena and Ilagan (2022). But in many cases, they are not treated and compensated equally compared to the natives of their destination or those of advanced economies for similar work. Filipino sailors all over the world are also paid less than their counterparts in the West. While they are not at the lowest rung of the pay scale, they tend to earn higher than their counterparts from other regions of Southeast Asia.

The living conditions of OFWs can be quite varied, but most face tough and difficult situations. They might be living in crowded quarters, experience cultural and language difficulties, and lack access to social support systems. Environmental conditions of extreme weather events and dangerous living areas also make their struggles harder. Policy difficulties also have much to do in the lives of OFWs (Bautista *et al.*, 2020). While the government of the Philippines has put in place mechanisms to support its migrant laborers, regulation can be unequal, and policy in the destinations may not consistently match those efforts. The absence of strong international agreements and bilateral labor agreements may expose OFWs to exploitation and abuse.

OFW horror stories such as Demafelis's death abound in Philippine news. At worst, being an OFW is risking injury and even death. OFWs who escape such worst-case scenarios still experience harsh realities, such as unequal treatment in the workplace, racial discrimination, and ongoing financial struggles (Cabrera, 2022). Several toil in abysmal working conditions, surviving in small, substandard shelter with poor availability of basic commodities and social life. Long work hours and manually intensive labor put a strain on their physical as well as psychological health. They are sometimes subjected to abusive treatment and exploitation by their employers, which is compounded by unequal policies that benefit employers and hinder OFWs from pursuing justice and fair treatment (Pelongo, 2023). Even though they work the same jobs, OFWs are often underpaid compared to their host or high-income country counterparts. This wage gap, along with weak legal safeguards and labor rights, makes OFWs susceptible to exploitation and abuse, making it important that there be stronger policies and protections to secure their welfare.

Working abroad is often a choice motivated by the need to earn a better life for one's family. This is at the expense of being physically away from loved ones. The lack of a parent can have deep impacts on family life and child rearing. OFW children can suffer from emotional distress, behavioral problems, and poor academic performance because of the absence of parental guidance and presence. Securing the education of their children is a major concern for OFWs. Although remittances can be a source of support for educational purposes, the lack of a parent to monitor their studies and emotionally support them may



affect their educational performance and overall well-being. Moreover, children may experience stigma and pressure from society, adding to the difficulties of their schooling.

In the research by Dominguez (2022), even though they make huge economic contributions, labor migration tends to leave children away from their parents during their most critical years, which can jeopardize healthy development. A systematic review of 4440 peerreviewed articles and grey literature records identified 50 records that were eligible for inclusion. The study indicated that the left-behind children of migrating parents suffer a diverse array of adverse physical health consequences, ranging from general health, hygiene, illness, to nutritional problems. In addition to poor physical health, they are also exposed to poor mental health consequences, which encompass behavioral, cognitive, and emotional issues. Such separation exposes them to feelings of abandonment and emotional instability, affecting their general development. Moreover, 48 interventions were reported in 13 of the 17 geographic areas researched, which point to efforts to deal with such challenges, though these interventions have varying effectiveness and impact.

The psychological and emotional well-being of OFWs tend to be overlooked despite the attention given to their economic contributions. The stress of coping with the unfamiliar culture, job-related issues, and separation from family and loved ones can cause loneliness, anxiety, and depression. The unavailability of mental health resources in host countries may render it challenging for OFWs to access assistance and support. They are also burdened with the expectation that they should be the first choice for breadwinning their families. The stress of performing and providing is a liability to their mental well-being, causing them to become burned out and emotionally exhausted. Maintaining relationships with family members from afar can also be challenging, adding to their emotional strain.

According to the study conducted by Ramirez in collaboration with World Health Organization Global Research Agenda on Health and Migration (2024) depression and anxiety were prevalent among OFWs. In Macau, 25% of OFWs exhibited post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), while similar issues were noted in Qatar, Indonesia, Nepal, and China. The research also brought to light that mental health disorders are prevalent in nations where OFWs are located, with one out of every four people in the United Kingdom and one out of every six in Hong Kong experiencing diagnosable mental illnesses each year. OFWs display different degrees of mental disorders, such as anxiety disorder, depressive disorder, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, paranoia, panic attacks, fear, and distress

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study employs a descriptive research design to have a better grasp of the life situation of OFW families in Bolinao, Pangasinan. It aims to explore their socio-economic status, emotional and educational effect of migration on children, and how their families cope with them. The descriptive research design was employed since it allows for a detailed and actual description of these realities based on survey-based data gathering.

3.2. Participants and sampling procedure

100 households in 30 barangays of Bolinao participated in the study, which were randomly selected to represent diverse opinions. Fathers who took care-giving roles, OFW children, and other household members who were directly affected by parents' migration were included as participants. This was in order to get diverse opinions in the household to better analyze.

3.3. Research instrument

A questionnaire survey was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to collect socio-economic and demographic status, emotional wellbeing, financial well-being, and children's academic performance. It had closed questions for quantitative and open questions for qualitative analysis for the respondents to provide their experience freely. To ensure that it is valid and reliable, the questionnaire was pre-tested by social research experts prior to distributing it.

3.4. Data collection procedure

Questionnaires were filled out face-to-face by researchers, making sure respondents understood the questions in their entirety. The purpose of research and informed consent were explained prior to questioning and sufficient time was given to respond. Confidentiality was strictly kept under observation to enable participants to respond honestly.

3.5. Data analysis

Once collected, the data were then analyzed through descriptive statistical measures like frequency distribution, percentages, and weighted mean to determine patterns and trends.

Thematic analysis was used on open-ended questions, grouping typical experience and issues among OFW families. The mixed-method design enabled a deeper understanding of the data.

3.6. Ethical considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines. Participation by the respondents was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without any penalty. Confidentiality was assured, and all the responses were anonymized to preserve participants' anonymity. The data collected were used for research purposes only.

Through these approaches, this research guarantees an intensive and critical analysis of the impact of OFW migration on family formations in Bolinao, Pangasinan. The results will inform policies and programs to support OFW families and promote their general well-being.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic and socio-economic profile of ofw families

The survey conducted a total of 100 households from 30 barangays in Bolinao, Pangasinan. The survey revealed that the majority of the Bolinao OFWs were women (67%), who were primarily working as domestic helpers, caregivers, and health workers. The OFWs were predominantly 30 to 39 years old, which is an age group that is working at its peak earning potential. The overseas 5 to 10 years was the working duration,



and the majority of families based their main income on remittances.

Table 1. Demographic profile of ofws in bolinao

Demographic Category	Classification	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	33%
	Female	67%
Age	20-29 years old	25%
	30-39 years old	45%
	40-49 years old	20%
	50 years & above	10%
Employment Sector	Domestic Work	40%
	Caregiving	30%
	Healthcare	20%
	Other Jobs	10%
Years of Overseas Work	Less than 5 years	30%
	5-10 years	50%
	More than 10 years	20%

The research interviewed 100 families across 30 barangays in Bolinao, Pangasinan. The results showed that most Bolinao OFWs were female (67%), employed mostly in domestic work, childcare, and the health sector. Most OFWs were between 30 and 39 years old, which was the working age during the peak age of income. The average overseas work experience was 5 to 10 years, and most of the families depended on remittances as their main source of income.

4.2. Emotional and psychological impact of migration

Children of OFWs exhibited emotional distress due to the lack of parental presence. They were always lonely and separation-anxious, especially during the early years of parents' migration. Caregiving fathers manifested emotional problems, particularly in the area of giving emotional support and exercising discipline in the family. Table 1 indicates the prevailing emotional effects felt by caregivers and children.

Table 2. Emotional effects of parental absence

Emotional Effect	Percentage (%)
Loneliness	45%
Separation Anxiety	32%
Lack of Motivation	23%

4.3. Financial stability and economic challenges

While remittances brought monetary stability, 67% reported that they lacked financial management because remittances were unpredictable. Remittance-dependent families were highly susceptible to the vagaries of the economy. Table 2 shows the expenditure category of the households.

Table 3. Allocation of remittances in ofw families

Expense Category	Percentage (%)
Education	40%
Daily Needs	35%
Savings	15%
Emergency Funds	10%

4.4. Educational performance of children left behind

The majority of OFW children exhibited deteriorating school performance, particularly in courses that needed parental action, like mathematics and reading proficiency. Parent-absent children had higher rates of absenteeism and inattention, according to reports from schools.

4.5. Support mechanisms for ofw families

Government agencies like OWWA and DSWD provided financial aid and educational aid, yet the services were only adequate for 53% of the families. The majority of the respondents were not aware of the available programs or struggled to access them.

4.6. Discussion

4.6.1. Significance of major findings

The findings of the study highlight the complex and multidimensional impacts of OFW migration on family life in Bolinao, Pangasinan. Despite remitting money for support, the emotional and psychological impacts of parental separation create challenges for left-behind spouses and children. The findings of the study reveal that OFW children experience emotional distress, poor academic performance, and lack of parental guidance, which can affect their overall well-being.



The left-behind fathers who take on caregiving roles struggle with the demands of managing domestic work, finances, and emotional support. The findings of the study highlight the need for interventions specifically designed to strengthen family stability and improve coping mechanisms.

4.7. Implications of the study

The results show that existing government and non-government assistance programs, as helpful as they are, are still out of reach of OFW families to some extent. Lack of information or inaccessibility of money management programs, mental health clinics, and study aid were the reasons cited by most of the participants. These need greater outreach efforts and policy changes to narrow the gap between existing services and families in critical need of these. Families and schools are also important in reaffirming emotional and intellectual support to the left-behind children. Institutionalized reinforcement through purpose-designed programs may avoid the negative impacts of migration.

4.8. Hypothesis and practical applications

The research hypothesis that parental loss caused by OFW migration significantly influences family relationships, economic condition, and children's school performance—is well supported by the data presented. Results align with existing literature on migration and family but present new findings on the experiences of left-behind fathers, which have been understudied in existing research. By pointing to such gaps, the research establishes a basis for future research and practical interventions such as community counseling, financial education, and school intervention programs responding to OFW family concerns.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study authenticate that OFW migration is both positive and negative for the left-behind families in Bolinao, Pangasinan. While remittances provide economic security, the absence of a parent; most especially mothers, provides emotional anguish, school difficulties for the children, and additional caregiving burdens for the fathers. The findings emphasize that these families must experience tremendous adjustments, in most instances, without proper support.

One of the strongest findings of this research is that left-behind fathers cannot possibly balance work, care, and household responsibilities, and this impacts the overall quality of life of children. School life for children from OFW families is also adversely affected because they are not directly monitored by their parents. Even with government and non-government initiatives in the pipeline, the majority of the families are either unaware of such programs or fail to access these programs. Thus, the need for better outreach and implementation of support systems comes to the fore.

To address these findings, this study proposes the creation of specific interventions like financial literacy intervention, OFW children school-based mentoring, and mental health support services. These interventions have the potential to improve the ability of families to manage migration difficulties and improve caregivers' and children's health and well-being.

Future studies on the long-term effects of parental migration on the emotional well-being and well-being of children and how interventions from the community and government can be improved to assist OFW families are called for. This study can be replicated in other places to determine whether what is occurring with OFW families in Bolinao is indicative of national trends.

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