

# Migrant Nannies: Motivation, Treatment and Sacrifice

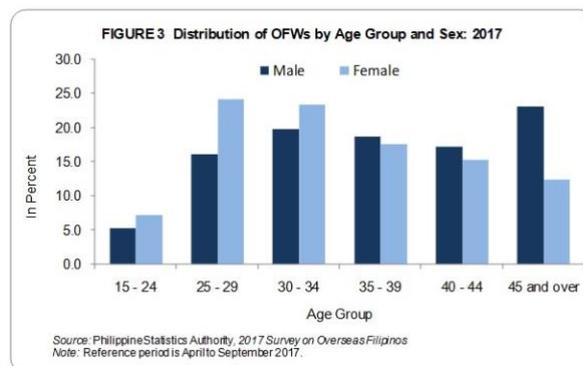
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In recent years the number of women choosing to migrate overseas for work has largely increased. There are numerous reasons as to why the migration of females has risen in some parts of the world, including employment opportunities, economic stability and more rights as a worker (Hofmann and Buckley, 2013). Previous studies have suggested that female migration was mainly attached to women moving overseas to reconnect with their family, because of a male relative having already migrated for work (Castles, Hein De Haas and Miller, 2014). However, this is not the case in the Philippines, as demonstrated from the graph inset (Psa.gov.ph, 2018) which shows that the Philippines has more female overseas workers than male.

The numbers are particularly high for women who are in their mid 20's to mid 30's, these women often take up domestic care work in European countries, including nannying. In this critical reflection, I aim to explore the sociological process that influences the growth of female migration. In particular Filipino nannies who migrate to western developed countries in order to provide for their families. Throughout my writing, I will identify major factors as to why women migrate as nannies, their experience as a migrant worker and finally, sacrifices they have made which create global care chains.

Neoclassical theory identifies that there are 'push and pull' factors as to why people migrate, these are largely based around the economic benefits to working in different places. Ravenstein, suggests that 'pull' factors for women often include finding domestic work opportunities, this is evident amongst females in the Philippines as millions of women move overseas for care work (Ravenstein, 1885).

However, Ravenstein's theory is somewhat outdated as his research states that men are more likely to travel overseas for work, whereas women migrate within their own country (Ravenstein, 1885). This is not seen in trends in the Philippines, as women are more likely to move overseas to undertake care work.



One of the major 'pull' factors for Filipino migration as nannies is labour demand. In recent years the need for childcare has increased and due to this, more employment opportunities have become available for females looking to work in this field (Zdravomyslova, 2010). A rise in "two-career" households is the key factor as to why childcare is in higher demand, two-career households are different to dual-earner households (Gregson and Lowe, 1995) as having a full-time career indicates large

amounts of time and effort are being dedicated to work, and therefore support is required for domestic work. The full-time employment of white middle class women has risen in recent years, this suggests that women are forced to decide to either not have children and succeed in their careers, or have children and employ nannies to help care for their families (Tronto, 2002).

It could be said that the rise of middle-class women in full time employment is done at the expense of low-skilled migrant workers. Migrant nannies are expected to commit to a family whilst often receiving low wages, long hours and poor treatment (Eisler and Otis, 2014). There is a contradiction in the fact that western women strive for equality and opportunity in the workplace, whilst also using and benefitting from cheap labour that exploits migrant women at the expense of their families.



One of the most prominent 'push' factors for leaving the Philippines is poverty. The Philippines is made up of over 7,000 islands and has a population of over 90 million. In 2011, The Guardian reported that 40% of the Filipino population lives on just \$2 a day, which largely compromises the education and welfare of citizens (Lichauco de Leon, 2011). By migrating as nannies, women are given the opportunity to work full time and with the money they earn, they send back remittances to help support their families.

Remittances are estimated to bring in \$31 billion a year to the Philippines (Almendral, 2018) and it plays an essential role in the country's development. Remittance is used by families in many different ways, including starting small businesses (McKay, 2005). By setting up businesses, families hope to supply a constant source of secure income that will

sustain their families. By having a secure income from a business, it also gives hope that those who are working abroad will be able to come home and be reunited with their families one day. For mothers who are not able to be there in person, remittance acts as a gesture of love and gives them a sense of motherhood from across the world. By sending back money, it indicates that their migration was done for the wellbeing of their families.

There remains a sense of irony in the fact that women are forced to leave their own children in the hand of other people to ensure that children in developed countries receive full time professional care. This reaffirms the idea that as a society, we value the upbringing and education of children in Western countries more than those who are arguably more vulnerable and in need of support in the developing world (Izadkhan and Hosseini, 2005).

Children who are privileged enough to grow up in developed countries receive surplus love, whilst those in the Philippines are forced to receive love through computer screens and phone calls. Filipino women have to make huge sacrifices in order to obtain work in developed countries, most often they will leave behind their own children in the hopes of providing them a better future. The children that are left behind in the Philippines are looked after by other female members of the family, such as a grandmother who is too old to work, or an aunt that has children of her own (Madianou, 2012).

This forms what Hochschild (2015) refers to as "global care chains". Global care chains are created by migrant workers who move overseas to care for another, therefore leaving behind their own caring duties. Hochschild states that those who employ nannies need

someone who will offer their child the love and support that they believe they are unable to provide, mainly due to work commitments (Hochschild, 2015). However, she suggests that this love is taken from someone else further down the care chain, and in this case the love is taken from the child that has been left behind in the Philippines.

In Hochschild's writing, one nanny states "it's very depressing the only thing you can do is give your love to the children. In my absence from my children the most I can do with my situation is give all my love to that child." (Hochschild, 2015: 249) This reaffirms the enormous personal sacrifice that mothers have to make in order to escape poverty and find employment. Though it is evident that global care chains do exist to some extent, they do not take into account the experience of transnational families and having to mother children from across the world.



The separation of a family for work comes with many sensitive and complicated challenges (Madianou, 2012). Global care chains suggest that a mother is giving her love to another child whilst leaving her own behind, however the sacrifice of her child is the biggest indicator of a mother's love. Everything that a mother is doing is to support and protect her own family and provide hope of a better future for her children.

It is evident that regardless of their sacrifice, Filipino nannies face different treatment to European nannies. Pratt's research suggests that nannies who are from an Asian background, particularly the Philippines are viewed less as professional care givers and more as "servants" (1999). Women from the Philippines are expected to take care of all

household duties including cooking, cleaning and childcare, all for the same hourly rate as European women receive for just childcare (Pratt, 1999). She further claims that the experience of recruitment for Filipino women is very different to women from a European, white background as they are seen more as semi-skilled workers who are not fully qualified for the job. This raises a question as to why families choose to employ nannies from the Philippines.

However, as previously stated, Filipino nannies are expected to cover all aspects of domestic work and are described as nannies who "offer only the very best child support, as well as flexibility to provide help around the home" (Little Ones London, n.d.). This could suggest

that families choose to employ nannies who migrate from the Philippines because they can underpay them for the work that they offer. Many families believe that by employing a woman from the Philippines, they are in some way 'doing them a favour' as they have limited employment opportunities.

Nannies do not only face poor treatment from their employers, but also from the Filipino government as the government both supports and condemns women for migrating for work. Women make up 2/3 of the Philippines migrant work force, which challenges the idea of a traditional, male breadwinner. Parreñas writing suggest that in the media, women are portrayed as both "economic hero's" and a "bad mother" at the same time (2003). She states that children who are left behind are seen having insufficient parenting (Parreñas, 2003), however they fail to mention in these reports that the determination to provide for their children is a large 'push' factor for migrant nannies.

It is evident that women are placed in a catch-22 position where they are constantly criticized for their choices. Remittance is needed and plays a major role in the country's economy, however when women migrate to provide for their families, their parenting comes into question.

In conclusion, it is evident that nannies from the Philippines face a difficult decision when it comes to migrating across the world for work. However, the constant income and hope of a brighter future for their families motivates them. Although their treatment is often poor, full-time employment is something they would not be able to obtain in the Philippines and therefore they are willing to sacrifice in order to provide for their families. The sacrifices and hardships faced by migrant nannies indicates the love that they have for their children and they are willing to face poor treatment, lower wages and criticism to provide and support for their families.



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