

The Perspectives of Senior High School Students with Overseas Filipino Worker Parents

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ABSTRACT

Being left behind by parents is not easy. The absence of the parents can affect children in many ways especially when it comes to decision-making. This gives them a burden or additional pressure on the thinking process of teenagers. This phenomenological study described and gave relevant information about the experiences of the students with parents working abroad. The purpose of this qualitative research is to inform the millennial regarding the life experiences of senior high school students with Overseas Filipino Worker parents but to give them the knowledge to understand the life struggles of these individuals. In this study, the researcher conducted a series of interviews. The researchers developed four (4) sets of questions, one (1) central question and three (3) sub-questions or aide memoir to know the perspectives of senior high school students with OFW parents. These questions were answered by the participants aged 16-18 which is the average age of senior high school students enrolled in Polytechnic University of the Philippines. The data gathered were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). After analyzing the data, master themes, and superordinate themes were explored. Four (4) master themes were formed, namely: Factors that affect the student's decision-making, Coping strategies in parental absence, Factors that affect the attitude towards studies, and Development of behavior in the absence of parental role. From the findings generated, it is indeed recommended motivating the students to become disciplined individuals and proactive in life

Keywords

coping strategies, decision making, IPA, Overseas Filipino Workers, perspectives, senior high school

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Introduction

Poverty is one of the problems that the world is facing economic success. Poverty is the lack of access of the families to the necessities thus depriving them of food, water, clothing, and other resources that they may need for everyday living. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the biological and physiological needs of humans should be met first making these resources essential for families.

However, due to poverty, families, especially the parents tend to immigrate abroad to support their children's needs and for their future. Today, the Philippines is considered as one of the world's largest export of labor migrants, and these citizens who worked abroad were called Overseas Filipino Workers. Moreover, these OFWs helped our economy rise by simply sending remittances to their families, making the country's gross national income high. The number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who worked abroad at any time from April to September 2015 was estimated at 2.4 million (PSA, 2015). Also, millions of teenagers in the developing world grow up with at least one parent living abroad (Cortes, 2011).

It is not common nowadays for we call OFWs the "modern heroes". However, what happens to those teens that are left? Paradoxically, while parents work abroad for their children, their absence is associated with poorer outcomes. Those whose mothers were abroad, and those who employ avoidant coping, were particularly at risk (Acupan & Agbola, 2008).

From infancy to teenage years, some children just want to be loved and beloved by their parents. Since our parents are our

first teachers and we learn most of the basic things from them. We also got our values from them, and some even looked up to their parents as their role models when they grow up. However, sadly for those who did not grow up along with their parents and was raised by a relative, they do not know how they would have felt having been raised by their parents. As stated by Anonuevo and Sopena (2003) in their study, more than half of the OFW respondents like to work abroad and to take courses in higher education such as engineering, medicine/nursing, and even teaching. This leads to the children's desire to work abroad just like their parents. They are aware that working abroad means getting a higher salary even with or without having a college diploma. The teenager's social life is so much affected by having either one or both parents working abroad. Children whose parents are working abroad having difficulty in social adjustments and psychological development (Battistella and Conaco, 1996). However, in the Scalabrini (2003) study, the children had shown to be socially adjusted because of the strong social support from family members and relatives. Despite the parents' absences, teenagers tend to be more responsible in the household and more socially independent. The absence of parents creates "displacement, disruptions, and changes in caregiving arrangement." There will always be emotional and psychosocial effects on the teenagers left behind by their parents working abroad. Still, it is a good way for the extended family to look for the children. However, it will not change the fact that these children left-behind are longing for their parents' love, care, and presence (UNICEF, 2008). This research aims to know the perspectives of the teenagers, specifically the Senior High School students, and the effects on their behavior of having

parents working abroad. This study also aims to show the relationship of teenagers with their parents, and how the students cope with the problems without their parents.

Methodology

Research Design

This study focused on the qualitative type of research (case study). It is an examination that sought to answer the demands to clarify human conduct and involvements to discover the perspectives of students with OFW Parents (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Hoepfl, 1997).

Research Locale and Selection of the Study

The researchers conducted interviews in the respective classrooms of the interviewees. This is the uniformity and openness of the information that is now being collected. Co-researchers came from different classrooms particularly in the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Senior High School and ten (10) Senior High School students with parents working abroad were selected ranging from sixteen (16) to eighteen (18) years-old as long as it fits the scope and limitations.

Research Instruments

The following instruments were used to gather data:

1. Informed Consent highlighted the rights of the co-researchers and also the confidentiality and the nature of the interview. The researchers will look for approval from the respondents who participated in the study to look for agreement with their rights and benefits.
2. Voice Recorder is important to record the interview and to transcribe the data from the activity. It records everything about the co-researcher's important details and their experiences, to easily identify what they have stated.
3. An Aide Memoir or guide questions contains the list of questions that serves as the basis of the whole interview. Linking this instrument to the present study, the researchers used the aide memoir as a guide question to help the co-researchers explain their life as students with Overseas Filipino Worker parents. A licensed psychologist who excels in the field of qualitative research has already validated the entire instrument that the researchers have used.

Data Gathering Procedure

Qualitative researches aim to know the perspectives or the significance of how people define the word, how they respond to the happenings, what outlook they will give, and know their perspective and experiences. Hence, it focuses on real-life experiences rather than the given associations (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The researchers collected information through a series of in-depth interviews and analyzed them.

Data Analysis Procedure

The researchers employed an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. As said by Pietkiewicz & Smith (2014), studies of this kind of analysis are based on the perspective of the test of the personal involvements of an individual on how he/she gives sense to them. Likewise, it is expected that people are 'self-interpreting beings', who want to achieve in this type of analysis is to examine how an individual answer. The research used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the data. From specific to overall assumptions, IPA includes steps of data analysis: (a) development from the researcher ideas to what is shared among the co-researchers, (b) portrayal of the experiences that transfer to an elucidation of it, (c) allegiance to comprehend the members' minds and thoughts, and (d) psychological focus on how an individual makes sense to a specific life event inside a framework.

Results

The basis of this section was formed from the exploration of these master themes and their superordinate themes, with every subject represented by verbatim concentrates from the interviews. These themes did not cover all aspects of the co-researchers' experience and were chosen due to their applicability to the questions.

Table 1. Master Themes and the Related Superordinate Themes

Master Themes	Superordinate Themes
Factors that Affect the Students' Decision Making	Longing for Parental Care
	Guidance from Relatives
	Self-reliance
Coping Strategies in Parental Absence	Resiliency
	Appreciation of Parents' Hard work
	Peer support
Factors that Influence their Attitudes towards their Studies	Initial adjustments
	Inspiration from parents
	Determination and optimism
Development of Behavior in the Absence of Parental Role	Positive traits
	Negative traits

Factors that Affect the Students' Decision Making.

This master theme explains that even though their parents are not around, there is someone who can still help and guide them in making the right decisions.

Longing for Parental Care.

The students with OFW parents long for the love of their parents who earn a lot of money but do not have the time to be with their children. This can be a reason for not having communication with the parents and because of that; the students seek the parental love of their real parent by their side. In that way, they can earn more money and afford a private school, but cannot have one thing without sacrifice. The social behavior of teenagers can also be affected by the

migration of their parents. In the study by Battistella and Conaco (1996), children without their mothers showed poorer social adjustment and suffered from impeded psychological development. In contrast, the study of Scalabrini (2003) resulted in positive effects on the teenagers as they adjusted physically, mentally, and socially in a proactive way, because they have strong social support from the other family members and relatives. As stated by respondent T, "Sometimes it's sad because I'm not with my parents, but I think of what they are doing is for me." Longing for parents was manifested by depression, loneliness, the feeling of helplessness, and lack of affection. Regarding the impact on health, young adolescents or teens are experiencing physical separation. Children are fed incorrectly, being tormented by stomach diseases, cure migraine with, or even diabetes. Also, they are likely to get sick of various diseases, and they go to the doctor just in case of emergency (Youth Essentials, 2013). This was one of the experiences of respondent I, saying "It's hard because they're not here. It's still different when they're here, rather than they just give me what I need." The absence of parents creates "displacement, disruptions, and changes in caregiving arrangement." There will always be emotional and psychosocial effects to the teenagers who are left behind by their parents who work abroad. Still, it is a good way for the extended family to look after and take care of the children. However, it will not change the fact that these children left-behind were longing for their parents' love, care, and presence (UNICEF, 2008).

Guidance from Relatives.

This superordinate theme explains that they still get the guidance that they need, from their parents, sibling, or relatives who communicate and give them information and advice. The respondents also verbalized having strong connections with those who give them advice. They still seek those peoples' wisdom before they make decisions that can affect their lives, and according to respondent J, older relatives give advice because first of all they already have many experiences in life.

Hence, when a mother works overseas, her role is then filled up by the other relatives or siblings that could act like the teenagers' mother, especially female relatives, who would take the role of caregivers in the family (PIDS, 2008). Also added by the statement of respondent J, "My guardians also helped me in giving advice and they also carefully explained why my parents went abroad."

Self-reliance.

This superordinate theme explains that the co-researchers tend to keep their problems within themselves and don't seek help from others if they can handle the problems themselves. It can also be interpreted that some of the co-researchers only think of the outcome after they had done the action. This theme is supported by the statement of respondent A, "I do not expect if my decisions are always right because it is difficult to expect something. So, when I decide, I expect two possible outcomes: the positive and the negative. If it's positive then it is all right and if it's

negative, I should learn from it," and "I don't ask for advice from my parents sometimes."

Coping Strategies in Parental Absence.

This master theme talks about the coping or surviving strategies of teenagers with their parents working abroad. They seek the help of their friends and relatives whenever they encounter problems.

Resiliency.

This superordinate theme explains that the teenagers develop a sense of being strong by transforming problems or struggles as a motivation or lessons to learn for them to be tough when they encounter problems and struggles in the future. Regardless of whether the parents are present or absent, teenagers do basic responsibilities such as doing household tasks. Examples of these common tasks are cleaning the house, setting the table, washing dishes, taking care of their siblings, running errands, taking care of the plants and animals, and other tasks. Although these children have been reported experiencing difficulties and longing for their absent parents, they also acknowledge that they learned to be more independent in the process (UNICEF, 2008), proving the statement of respondent B, "if it is only possible that they would not go abroad again, but they come and go so it is okay."

Appreciation of Parents' Hard work.

This superordinate theme explains the coping strategy of teenagers of giving value to the work of their parents that they understand that this is for their future.

According to respondent C, "it is for us that they go abroad so their hard work should not be wasted." Some teenagers whose parent/s is/are working overseas tend to use their parent/s absence to good use. They also use it as a motivation and for a better outcome for their family. Some students tend to perform well in school even if their parents are not present, thinking of a good way to repay them by finishing school and eventually help their parents when it is time for them to retire and rest from the hardships (UNICEF, 2008).

Peer support.

This superordinate theme explains the importance of peer relationships for the students who encounter problems with their OFW parents. These will help them to lessen the pressure and struggle by sharing their problems with their friends or classmates which is according to the statement of respondent A. According to Lewin's Theory of Adolescence, some adolescents need to have a certain group of friends with whom they may share their thoughts and interests.

Factors that Influence their Attitudes towards their Studies.

This master theme indicates that the Senior High School students of the University of the East – Manila developed positive attitudes towards their habits in their studies. They take the absence of their parents as an inspiration rather than a hindrance to their academic performance. However, it was also noted that the students also encountered problems with adjustments in their school performance.

Initial Adjustments.

The co-researchers shared their experiences having on adjusting to their new environment where there are no parents to guide them as they learn in school. One of the examples that they have encountered was their difficulty to accept their situation at first, and having depression as the lack of parental role during their growth years and in their school performance that was experienced by the co-researchers. However, as time goes by, the teenagers slowly recovered as they already adapted to their new environment of not having the presence of their parents.

Inspiration from Parents.

This superordinate theme indicates the way the students perceive their situation of parents having to work abroad. The co-researchers explained and told the researchers that they see their parents' hardships and sacrifices as their inspiration and motivation to study hard.

Determination and Optimism.

Determination is important among students. This value motivates them to study hard and brings their best during their stay in school. The co-researchers also explained that they strive hard to finish their studies because of the sacrifices of their parents who work abroad. Instead of taking their situation negatively, the co-researchers explained that they optimistically took their experiences so that this kind of situation will not affect their studies. According to Lynn Scoresby (1987), families whose children consistently in school have provided a clear picture of the kind of family which promotes academic achievements. And as stated by Anonuevo and Sopena (2003) in their study, more than half of the OFW respondents liked to work abroad and like to take courses in higher education such as engineering, medicine/nursing, and even teaching. This leads to the children's desire to work abroad just like their parents, having aware that working abroad means getting a higher salary even with or without having a college diploma.

Development of Behaviors in the Absence of Parental Role.

The master theme explains the positive and negative effects of having OFW parents on the teenagers' attitudes and how they face and deal with it. The master theme also explains in what ways the co-researchers developed their behaviors according to the experiences that they went through.

Positive Traits.

The superordinate theme states that many of the co-researchers have become independent despite the absence of their parents, and because of that the foundation of their family has grown stronger as stated by respondent B. Many of the co-researchers have also realized that the teachings of their parents were not worthless and that it was for their good which is according to respondent C, "I also became bad at first, but as time passes, I thought that it is for us. So, I just study hard."

Negative Traits

The superordinate theme explains that the co-researchers tend to do things that are not good to the community due to the lack of guidance. Numerous investigations across disciplines have argued that growing up in a single-parent family had negative consequences on their school participation and the educational success of teens (McLanahan, 1985; Amato, 1987; Coleman, 1988; Beller and Krein, 1988; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994).

At the social level, the impact of migration was reflected in the risk of these teens because sometimes they are abused emotionally, physically, and sexually. Teens become aggressive and become very violent and therefore cannot establish friendships with their peers (Youth Essentials, 2013), such as the statement of respondent A, "it is because of the lack of attention of my parents that I became bad." According to respondent D, "the negative side is that they are not here to guide me so sometimes I lie." Besides, many of them have deviant behavior. They begin to smoke, take drugs, steal, drop out of school, and run away, although they have the means to finance their education (Youth Essentials, 2013).

Conclusion

The study aimed to know the perspectives of Senior High School students towards the absence of their OFW Parents. The researchers distinguished the factors that affect the students' decision-making and identified the struggles that the students encounter that are needed to be discussed with his/her relatives or friends. The researchers also distinguished that the students used the hard work of their parents abroad as inspirations to their studies, and also identified that there are positive and negative attitudes that the students develop because of the absence of their parents.

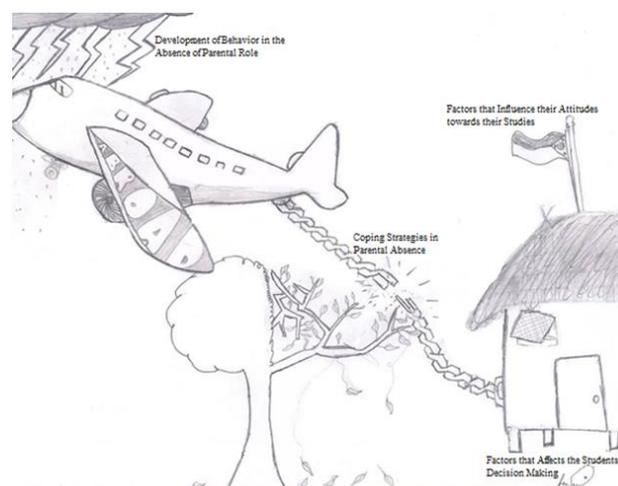


Figure 1. The Simulacrum of the Perspectives of Senior High School Students with

Overseas Filipino Worker Parents

Therefore, the researchers came up with an airplane, a house, a flag, and a broken chain which symbolized the different themes gathered through the conducted interviews. The flag represents the place where the child was left; the house represents the master theme, “Factors that affect the Students’ Decision Making” and the “Factors that Influence the Students’ Attitudes towards their Studies.” This means that despite the situation of the teenagers having OFW parents, they developed positive attitudes or traits towards their studies, thus making it an inspiration to strive harder. Moreover, the house also represents the relatives that support the teenagers, and also the independence of an individual, particularly the teenager in which he/she will stand firm and develop a better personality. As for the airplane, it represents the master theme, “Development of Behavior in the Absence of Parental role.” This shows the way how the teenagers perceive their parents going abroad where they look at the airplane (in this case, their parents) and think about how they work hard just to provide for the needs of those who need the demand the storm represents the struggles of parents working abroad. The broken chains represent the master theme, “Coping Strategies in Parental Absence,” showing the connection between the children and the parents’ relationships towards each other.

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