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Narrating Filipina Migration: Gendered Experiences and Identity Formation in Contemporary Filipino Migrant Narratives

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ABSTRACT

Public accounts emphasize sacrifice, danger, and exceptional care, while migrant women describe ordinary decisions. This qualitative study examines how gender and identity are represented in contemporary Filipino migration narratives and how those representations compare with the accounts of Filipina overseas workers. Fifteen purposively selected literary and media works released between 1995 and 2026, spanning film, documentary, journalism, poetry, music, and essay, were analyzed alongside semi-structured interviews with 15 current or former Filipina overseas workers. Feminist literary criticism, postcolonial studies, and diaspora studies informed three analytical constructs: representation and voice, power and working conditions, and transnational reach and identity. Each body was analyzed separately through reflexive thematic analysis before the two interpretations were compared across seven dimensions as convergent, complementary, or divergent. Three themes recur in the selected works: the devaluation of domestic and care work, exposure to harm alongside limited access to protection, and recognition conferred through caregiving. The comparison yields a distinction between recognition, the public acknowledgment of a contribution, and discretion, the range of choices a worker can exercise, since a woman may be honored while holding little control over rest or movement. The findings inform the proposed Digital Migration Identity and Gendered Remittance Agency (DIGIMIGRA) Framework, which links digital interaction, gendered inequality, mobility, and decisions about earnings to seven proposed service areas, and relates these conditions to Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8, and 10. The framework has not been piloted or tested; a future pilot, to be designed with migrant workers, is proposed to evaluate it.

Keywords: *Filipina migrants, Overseas Filipino Workers, gender, labor, identity, transnational migration, textual analysis, DIGIMIGRA Framework*

INTRODUCTION

When a Filipina worker sends earnings home, the transfer records one part of what her work makes possible. It reveals less about who looks after her children during her absence, who determines her working hours, or how she understands the decision to remain abroad. Those questions take different forms in a film about a returning mother, a report about a domestic worker in danger, and an interview in which a woman explains why she kept a job. Reading those accounts together makes it possible to study how gender and work enter the telling of a life, and it brings into view the differences between what families, employers, and public audiences recognize in the same act of provision.

Philippine labor migration is sustained by state deployment policy and by continuing demand for low-cost labor in the global market (Rodriguez, 2010; Sassen, 2001). The Philippine Statistics Authority

(2025) estimated 2.19 million overseas Filipino workers for April to September 2024, an increase of 1.5% over the 2.16 million recorded for the same months of 2023, of whom 1.25 million or 57.2% were women. The estimate fell to 2.05 million for April to September 2025, with 1.18 million or 57.7% women (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2026a). Most of the women among them work in elementary occupations, a group that includes household helpers among other jobs. Scholarship attributes the concentration of Filipina workers in domestic and care work to the gendered organization of care across borders rather than to individual preference (King-Dejardin, 2019; Parreñas, 2001b).

Legal protection for these workers is extensive. Republic Act No. 8042, as amended by Republic Act No. 10022, establishes protections for overseas workers and their families; Republic Act No. 11641 created the Department of Migrant Workers and assigned it responsibility for migrant worker affairs; and Republic Act No. 9710 commits the state to advancing women's rights (Republic of the Philippines, 1995, 2009, 2010, 2021). The International Labour Organization (2021), however, distinguishes the recognition of a right from its enforcement, and research on migrant domestic work documents conditions that persist despite formal protection (Blaydes, 2023; Constable, 2007). Whether a particular worker can reach an office, obtain a timely response, or use a remedy is an empirical question distinct from whether the entitlement exists, and it is one this study examines through workers' own accounts.

In this context, literary works and contemporary cultural and media texts are important sites for examining representations of migration. Narratives can convey the personal and collective experiences of Filipino migrants, especially women, as they leave home, earn a living, adapt, and form identities in transnational spaces. Literature reflects society and provides a setting in which the emotional, cultural, and ideological dimensions of migration can be discussed and examined. Narratives thus offer an important source for understanding how Filipina migrants are portrayed, which experiences receive attention or are overlooked, and how these representations shape understandings of their identities and circumstances.

Film, journalism, and interviews invite different judgments about a migrant worker's actions. A news feature may recognize a caregiver for one public act, while her own account may turn on who decides when she can rest or call home. Bringing these sources together allows this study to ask which forms of care receive public recognition and which decisions become visible when workers describe their own lives.

In response to these issues, this study examined how gender and identity are portrayed in literary works and contemporary cultural and media texts related to migration and how these representations relate to the lived experiences of Filipina Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). The study used textual analysis and semi-structured interviews to connect the representations found in the texts with participants' personal accounts. This approach sought to clarify the gendered experiences, labor challenges, emotional separation, adaptation, and processes of identity formation that emerged from the texts and participants' narratives.

Three scholarly traditions guide the reading of these accounts. Feminist literary criticism draws attention to whose labor receives recognition. Postcolonial studies raises questions about who may speak for a worker and who holds authority over her choices. Diaspora studies brings into view obligations that extend across households and borders. Together they support a comparison between what public accounts make visible and what workers themselves report, and they provide the basis for the support framework the study proposes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how literary and media portrayals and migrant workers' own accounts give meaning to gendered labor and identity in the context of Filipina migration. It compares whose perspective defines an act of care, what conditions shape a worker's choices, and how relationships across borders enter each account. A further aim of the study is to develop, from the findings these comparisons yield, a proposed framework to guide policies, welfare programs, protection mechanisms, and educational interventions for Filipina overseas workers and their families.

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Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What major themes related to gender, labor, and identity emerge across the selected literary works and contemporary narratives of Filipina migrants?
2. How do the selected works portray Filipina migrants' experiences of separation, sacrifice, adaptation, and transnational living?
3. How do the selected narratives portray changes in the identities of Filipina migrants across different social and cultural contexts?
4. How are power, marginalization, and agency represented among migrant women in the selected works?
5. How do representations of migration in the selected contemporary texts compare with the lived experiences of Filipina overseas workers as recounted in interviews?
6. How do the findings relate to contemporary issues of gender, labor, and global migration, particularly Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8, and 10?

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Feminist Literary Criticism, Postcolonial Studies, and Diaspora Studies to examine how gendered labor and identity take shape in narratives of Filipina migration. The study compares 15 coded literary and media entries (LT01–LT15) with accounts from semi-structured interviews with 15 Filipina migrant workers. As shows, each perspective contributes a question to the comparison. Who carries responsibility for care, and whose work receives recognition? Which institutions and labor arrangements shape the choices open to a worker? How do people sustain obligations and a sense of belonging across households and countries?

Postcolonial Studies examines how power shapes representation. Said (1978) relates the authority to describe other people to the institutions that produce and circulate those descriptions. Bhabha (1994) examines how cultural meanings and identities are negotiated in encounters shaped by unequal power. These ideas guide the reading of public accounts that describe a migrant worker as a hero, a victim, or a caregiver. The analysis asks whose voice gives each description its authority and which aspects of the woman's life receive attention.

Diaspora Studies addresses the formation of identity and belonging across places. Hall (1990) understands cultural identity as a continuing process shaped by history and representation. Brah's (1996) concept of diaspora space draws attention to how people who migrate and those who stay come to define belonging in relation to one another. In this study, these ideas direct attention to the people at both ends of a transnational relationship. A woman who works abroad and a child growing up in the Philippines may understand the same period of separation differently.

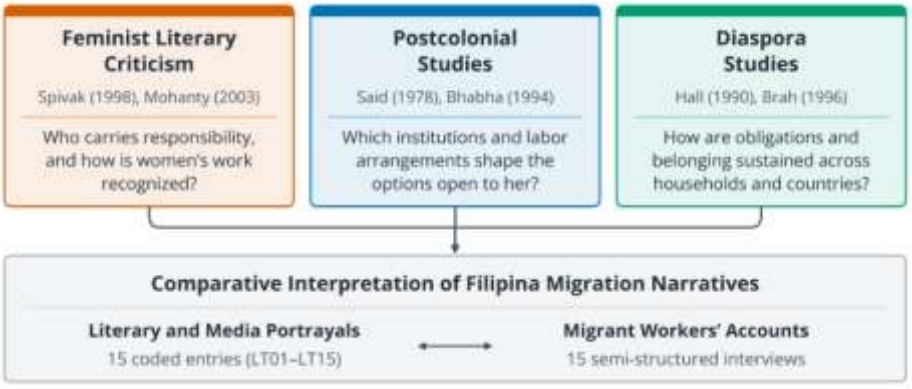


Figure 1. *Theoretical Framework for Comparing Filipina Migration Narratives*

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Each lens contributes one question to the comparison, as arranged in Figure 1. Feminist literary criticism examines how narratives represent women and assign meaning to their actions. Spivak (1998) considers how representations of women carry assumptions about gender and inequality, and Mohanty (2003) situates women's labor and agency within particular historical, social, and economic conditions. Together these insights draw attention to who speaks about a woman's work, which expectations the account takes for granted, and how her own understanding of a decision enters the narrative.

The three perspectives work together because a family obligation may extend across borders while the conditions for fulfilling it are set in a particular workplace. A mother may be expected to stay in touch with her children even when an employer determines her hours. In that situation, understanding what it means to be present for one's family involves identifying who carries responsibility for contact, who can decide when it takes place, and what the family can do together across the distance.

In *Anak* (LT02), a daughter's response to her returning mother gives weight to the emotional cost of separation. Participant OFW-MDV describes putting her four children through school as an achievement made possible by her earnings abroad. The accounts concern different families. Read together, they show how maternal care can be judged through a daughter's experience of absence and through a worker's understanding of what she provided.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework identifies the scholarly traditions through which this study reads its material. The conceptual framework specifies what the study derives from those traditions and how the resulting elements relate to one another: the constructs that direct the analysis, the operational boundaries that govern each coding decision, the focal areas in which the analysis is conducted, the two bodies of evidence in which those areas are examined, and the outcome areas the study is intended to inform. Each element is set out below in the order in which it appears in the framework.

Representation and voice derives from feminist literary criticism. Mohanty (2003) argues that women of the Global South are frequently represented as an undifferentiated category of victims, a portrayal that obscures the particular circumstances in which they act. Spivak (1988) examines what becomes of a woman's account when others speak on her behalf, and Tyson (2023) treats representation as an arrangement of power rather than a neutral description. In the Philippine context, Encinas-Franco (2020) demonstrates that public discourse can honor an overseas worker as a national hero while attaching shame to her circumstances. The construct directs analysis to whose contribution a source makes visible and whose judgment of an action the source carries.

Power and working conditions derives from postcolonial studies and from research on migrant labor. Said (1978) relates the authority to describe another group to the structures that sustain that authority. Rodriguez (2010) establishes how the Philippine state organizes overseas deployment, and Oishi (2005) relates state policy to the movement of women across Asia. Constable (2007) documents how power operates in the daily relationship between a domestic worker and an employer, and Blaydes (2023) reports the conditions described by domestic workers in the Gulf states. The construct directs analysis to the arrangements governing a worker's time, movement, pay, rest, and access to assistance.

Transnational reach and identity derives from diaspora studies. Hall (1990) understands cultural identity as a continuing process rather than a fixed condition, Brah (1996) describes diaspora as a space in which belonging is negotiated, and Bhabha (1994) locates identity in the meeting of more than one cultural source. Parreñas (2001a, 2005) establishes that maternal responsibility continues across borders through remittances, communication, and participation in decisions concerning children. Ang and Tiongson (2023) describe migration as a life cycle extending from pre-departure through employment abroad to return, and Vargas et al. (2020) demonstrate that identity changes across those stages. The construct directs analysis to the extent of a worker's obligations and identity across households and across the stages of migration.

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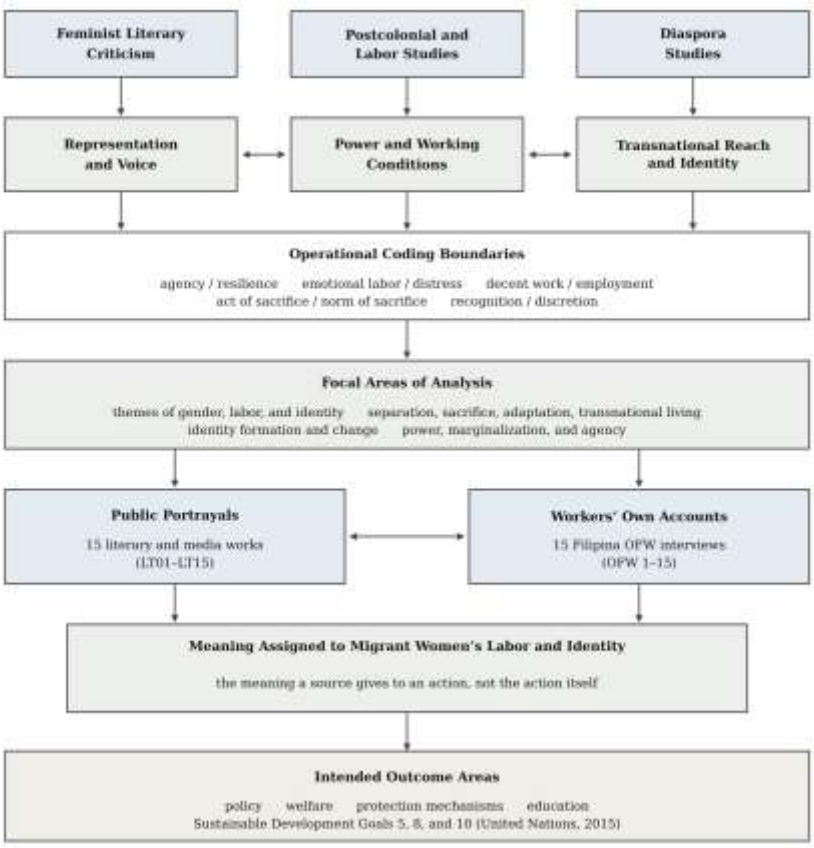


Figure 2. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

The framework is read from the top. The three theoretical lenses occupy the first level, and each yields a single analytical construct at the second. The relationship is one of derivation rather than application: the lens supplies a question that scholarship in that tradition has established as consequential, and the construct states that question in terms the present study can examine.

The three constructs are joined by two-way connectors, which record that they are mutually informing and that none is treated as prior to the others. Recognition cannot be assessed apart from the conditions under which a woman works, and identity cannot be assessed apart from who is permitted to speak about her. Intersectional analysis (Crenshaw, 1989) supports this arrangement, since gender operates here together with class, nationality, and migrant status rather than independently of them. A single source is therefore read through all three constructs rather than assigned to one.

The operational coding boundaries occupy the third level and render the constructs usable in coding. Each boundary states what the study declines to infer from a source. Agency, defined as a decision a worker made and acted upon, is distinguished from resilience, defined as continuation under conditions she could not alter. Emotional labor in Hochschild's (2014) sense, the management of feeling for a role, is distinguished from distress, which a source may portray without showing feeling being managed. Decent work, defined by fair income, safety, adequate rest, and the protection of rights (International Labour Organization, 2021; United Nations, 2015), is distinguished from employment, which establishes only that a paid position existed. An act of sacrifice is distinguished from a norm of sacrifice, in keeping with Mohanty's (2003) caution against treating self-sacrifice as a property of migrant women. The fifth boundary, between recognition as public acknowledgment of a contribution (Encinas-Franco, 2020) and discretion as the range of choices a worker could exercise in practice (Constable, 2007), was refined during

coding rather than fixed in advance; reflexive thematic analysis treats such development as part of the analysis rather than as a departure from it (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021).

The focal areas of analysis occupy the fourth level and state where the constructs are brought to bear. They correspond to the first four research questions: the themes of gender, labor, and identity that emerge across the selected material; the portrayal of separation, sacrifice, adaptation, and transnational living; identity formation and change across social and cultural contexts; and the representation of power, marginalization, and agency. Placing the focal areas below the boundaries rather than beside the constructs records the sequence of the analysis: a claim in any focal area had first to satisfy the relevant boundary.

The two bodies of evidence occupy the fifth level. The 15 literary and media works and the 15 interview accounts are shown side by side because each was analyzed separately through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021, 2024), so that the themes developed in one did not determine the themes developed in the other. The two-way connector between them represents the comparison addressed by the fifth research question, in which the relationship between the sources is recorded as convergence where the two assign a shared meaning, complementarity where one supplies detail the other does not, and divergence where the two differ in emphasis or interpretation.

The object of analysis occupies the sixth level and states what is compared. The unit is the meaning a source assigns to an action rather than the action itself. This specification is what permits a portrayal and a remembered decision to be examined together without any claim that they describe the same event, and it keeps the comparison within the limits of interpretive inquiry: the framework accounts for what a source makes visible, not for whether the events a source recounts occurred.

The intended outcome areas occupy the final level. Policy, welfare, protection mechanisms, and education are the domains the study is designed to inform, and Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8, and 10 (United Nations, 2015) supply the external reference against which the findings are considered, as addressed in the sixth research question. These are areas of intended contribution rather than results. The framework states what the study set out to produce; what it produced is reported in the Results section.

Two exclusions are deliberate. The framework contains no findings, since its function is to state what guided the inquiry rather than what the inquiry yielded (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). It also makes no causal claims; the connectors represent derivation, mutual influence, sequence, and comparison, and none asserts that one element produces another. The framework accordingly guided the construction of the interview guide and the inclusion criteria, the coding of both bodies of material, and the organization of the discussion in the Results section.

Migration and Global Labor

Understanding migration as a global phenomenon requires attention to the structure of the global labor system, which continues to shape the flow of labor between countries. Within this system, workers from countries such as the Philippines occupy a position in a global division of labor in which the needs of more developed economies, or the Global North, are met through low-cost labor from the Global South. In migration research, Sassen (2001) emphasizes the role of global cities as centers of global capitalism where unequal labor structures emerge, particularly through a reliance on migrant labor in the lower tiers of the economy. de Haas et al. (2019) extend this perspective by situating local migration experiences within a global system of interrelated countries of origin, destinations, and social and political policies that shape migration flows worldwide.

Philippine labor migration connects employment abroad with household decisions at home. The Philippine Statistics Authority estimated 2.19 million overseas Filipino workers for April to September 2024 and 2.05 million for the corresponding months of 2025, with women accounting for 57.2% and 57.7% respectively (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025, 2026a). A subsequent advisory confirmed the 2025 estimates (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2026b). These figures describe the national workforce during two survey periods. Studies of domestic and care work address how particular occupations came to be associated with migrant women and how the terms of employment affect their daily lives (Lan, 2006).

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In the Philippines, migration has become part of the country's economic structure. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2025) classified 68.4% of the 1.25 million female overseas workers in elementary occupations during the April to September 2024 survey period. The corresponding figure was 63.4% of 1.18 million women for April to September 2025 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2026a, 2026b). The denominator in both years is women who worked overseas during that period. The occupational group includes jobs beyond domestic work. Research on Filipina domestic workers examines how gender shapes access to and the valuation of paid care (Parreñas, 2001b).

Ang and Tiongson (2023) emphasized that migration can be understood as a life cycle comprising interconnected stages of pre-departure, deployment, employment abroad, and return and reintegration. At each stage, institutions, programs, and regulatory mechanisms seek to manage migration and protect migrant workers' welfare. From a broader perspective, Robyn Magalit Rodriguez (2010) shows that Filipino workers form part of a transnational labor system shaped by policies, institutions, and global labor demand.

Research on global labor migration identifies the feminization of migration as a major feature of the current phase of globalization. The increase in the number of women migrant workers is associated with growing demand for domestic and care services in countries with aging populations and high levels of women's participation in their own labor markets. Filipinas thus become an important part of the global care chain. Their work involves caring for families abroad while leaving their own families in the Philippines (Hochschild, 2014; Sabio et al., 2022).

Studies of paid household work in Taiwan and Hong Kong describe how employment arrangements shape migrant workers' access to protection and their bargaining power (Constable, 2007; Lan, 2006). A different form of evidence comes from Tarinay's (2025) report on a United States press conference, where caregivers recounted unpaid overtime and the risk of losing hours or work after making a complaint. These sources identify mechanisms through which work can offer an income while limiting a worker's ability to contest its terms. The press accounts give context to the present study and do not enter the 15-work analytical corpus.

The literature situates the movement of workers between countries within a wider global labor system shaped by capitalism, gender, and international power relations. Filipina migrants' personal accounts of departure and work must also be understood as part of a global structure that continues to constrain and reshape their identities, opportunities, and living conditions. This perspective points to the need to examine the gendered dimensions of migration, the focus of the next section.

Gendered Experiences of Migration

Migration is an economic process deeply rooted in gender issues that shape the experiences of Filipino workers, particularly women. Feminist migration scholarship emphasizes that global labor migration affects men and women differently because care work and reproductive labor have historically been associated with women under patriarchal social arrangements (Parreñas, 2001b). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007) also shows that global demand for domestic and care work creates social and labor relations structured by gender, class, and migration, with migrant women becoming the primary providers of paid care work. Filipinas' entry into the global labor market thus offers employment opportunities within a broader social structure that shapes their identities as migrant workers and caregivers.

Care work crosses the boundary between paid employment and the work of maintaining a household. Parreñas (2001b) examines how Filipina domestic workers enter transnational arrangements of care. Sabio et al. (2022) describe how tasks and responsibilities are distributed within global care chains. Parish and Montsion (2018) connect emotional labor with the places and social arrangements in which care is performed. Read together, these accounts raise a practical question about a worker who is expected to be available in an employer's home while people in her own household also depend on her. The distribution of time and responsibility helps explain why an account of migration cannot be reduced to earnings.

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Feminist and postcolonial scholars emphasize that migrant women's experiences encompass work, power, representation, and identity. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) calls for recognizing women from the Global South as active agents who negotiate patriarchal and neocolonial structures, challenging portrayals of them as a single, homogeneous group of victims. The departure of Filipina OFWs can be understood both as a means of economic survival and as an active effort to build a better future for their families, even at personal and emotional cost.

This agency is exercised under conditions of vulnerability. Studies of migrant domestic workers across different countries identify abuse, discrimination, and inadequate labor protection. Lan (2006) and Constable (2007, 2009) showed that migrant women in domestic work often work within the employer's "private sphere," where access to legal protection and external support systems is limited. These conditions deepen their involvement in relationships marked by unequal power.

Legal protection and exposure to harm can coexist. Eugenio (2023), writing in the Harvard International Review, discusses the public recognition of overseas workers alongside accounts of low wages, abuse, and discrimination. These conditions bear on a woman's options when a placement becomes unsafe. Separation introduces a further difficulty for families whose income and daily care depend on people living in different households. Employment, protection, and family life therefore enter this review as related questions, each requiring evidence appropriate to the claim.

Research on Filipina migrant workers links workplace difficulties with conditions that shape women's choices before and after migration (Albert et al., 2023). According to Mawby and Castañeda Camey (2023), gender is an important factor in shaping migration decisions and experiences, particularly amid growing climate-related and economic pressures. Gaps in gender mainstreaming and a lack of adequate data continue to limit migration governance, resulting in unequal protection for migrant women.

The literature shows that the gendered experience of migration involves a complex interplay of agency and constraint. Migrant women are simultaneously important economic actors and vulnerable workers within the global labor system. Their personal sacrifices are part of a broader structure of global inequality rooted in gender, class, and the global division of labor. The next section considers how their identities form and change in the diaspora.

Identity Formation in the Diaspora

Leaving one's country of origin initiates a more complex process of identity formation and reconstruction within the diaspora. In diaspora studies, identity is understood as a continually changing process shaped by history, culture, and the experience of moving across spaces (Hall, 1990). Filipina migrants participate in the global labor market while continually negotiating their sense of "self" between their country of origin and the country where they work.

Migration extends beyond a worker's departure from the country. It is a continuing cycle of movement, adaptation, and the formation of new identities across different workplaces and cultural settings. Albert et al. (2023) emphasize that Filipino migration forms part of a broader global labor system that brings economic benefits together with substantial social costs, including family separation, complex transnational relationships, and emotional consequences for overseas workers and their families.

Studies of diaspora and transnationalism show that migrant identity takes shape in "in-between spaces" where the cultures of the country of origin and the host country meet. According to Homi Bhabha (1994), this "third space" becomes a site of hybridity where individuals create forms of identity that are only partly rooted in either culture. The identity of Filipina OFWs is shaped by the simultaneous presence of Philippine culture, experiences in foreign societies, and transnational family ties.

Local research on the Philippine diaspora has emphasized that Filipinos overseas continue to form communities that extend their "imagined homeland." Through organizations, churches, and digital platforms, Filipino migrants maintain their culture, language, and practices despite their physical distance from the Philippines. Identity endures, changes, and expands within the transnational space of the diaspora.

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Forming a hybrid identity can be difficult and fraught with tension. Many studies of migrant identity identify conflicts between "belonging" and "otherness," as migrants may feel torn between their origins and the places to which they now belong. Stuart Hall (1990) showed that diasporic identity is always in a state of "becoming" rather than "being," continually shaped by experiences of displacement, nostalgia, and reintegration.

For Filipina migrants, gendered expectations of being mothers, daughters, and family providers complicate this process. Their identities are personal and tied to their roles in family and society, where "success abroad" is often measured by remittances and the family's success in the Philippines. Migrant women's identity therefore becomes both a personal and a collective project.

The literature presents the diaspora as a space where identities continually take shape, are reconfigured, and sometimes fracture. Filipina migrants inhabit spaces between countries and actively create transnational identities rooted in leaving home, adapting, and participating in global society. The following section examines how these representations emerge in literature and contemporary media.

Representation of Filipina Migrants in Literature and Contemporary Media

Literature and contemporary media are important sites of representation where the experiences of Filipina migrants can be portrayed and interpreted within a broader social discourse. Literary works, films, documentaries, and digital narratives recount migration as a personal experience and reflect collective concerns about labor, gender, and identity. Beyond its aesthetic dimensions, literature offers a critical space for understanding the power structures that shape Filipino migrants' lives.

Feminist literary criticism emphasizes that representations of women are often framed by discourses of sacrifice, care, and moral responsibility. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) argues that Western discourses often appropriate or frame the narratives of women from the Global South as accounts of "victims of patriarchy," obscuring their agency in shaping their own lives. In many works about Filipina migrants, the OFW appears as a mother sacrificing for her family, with emphasis often placed on the emotional experience of leaving and longing for home.

Analyses of selected works in Philippine literature show Filipina migrants portrayed in various roles, including domestic workers, caregivers, mothers, daughters, and sometimes symbols of national hope. Studies of contemporary Filipino texts identify themes such as the sadness of family separation, discrimination abroad, and struggles for dignity at work. These representations convey the dual image of the OFW as a "modern-day hero" of the nation and an individual who continues to face vulnerability.

In global media, migrant women's stories also appear in news reports, documentaries, and digital storytelling. Some international media reports and academic analyses portray Filipina domestic workers within narratives of sacrifice and resilience. These narratives can confer recognition and also reinforce stereotypical representations. Studies of media representation show that this framing can limit understanding of the more complex identities of migrant women as active participants in the global labor system.

The rise of digital platforms has expanded opportunities for migrant self-representation. Social media, blogs, and online communities allow Filipina migrants to tell their own stories outside traditional media. This digital space offers an alternative setting where OFWs are both the subjects of representation and the authors of their own stories.

Two features of a portrayal are especially consequential here: who is allowed to speak and how much time the account covers. The public essay by David (2024) juxtaposes the labels bayani and biktima, or hero and victim, to make a critical argument about work and protection. In the documentary Sunday Beauty Queen, repeated participation in a pageant gives viewers access to a different timescale of collective self-presentation (Villarama, 2016). Both are public sources, yet their genres invite different readings of what a migrant can do.

The literature shows that the representation of Filipina migrants in literature and media is contested by dominant and alternative narratives. Images rooted in sacrifice and victimhood persist alongside

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narratives of agency, resistance, and transnational identity. The next section examines how relations among gender, power, and discourse further shape these representations.

Gender, Power, and Postcolonial Discourse

The migration of Filipina workers is inseparable from wider questions of gender and power rooted in postcolonial social structures. From the perspective of Postcolonial Studies, migration arises from economic need and from historical relations of domination rooted in colonial experience that persist as global inequality. Edward Said (1978) argues that representations of people from former colonies are often shaped by discourses that position them as the "Other," resulting in unequal assessments of their identity and capabilities.

In this context, migrant women from the Philippines often find themselves within intersecting structures of patriarchy and neocolonial power. Feminist postcolonial scholarship shows that their labor has economic significance and symbolizes a global division of labor based on gender and race. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) emphasized that women from the Global South are often portrayed as a single, homogeneous group of victims, obscuring the varied ways in which they exercise agency and struggle within oppressive structures.

The participation of Filipina OFWs in the global labor market can be understood as both empowerment and subordination. Migration creates opportunities for families to improve their economic circumstances and for workers to develop personally. It also exposes workers to low wages, job insecurity, and forms of discrimination rooted in race, class, and gender. Studies of the global care economy show that women migrant workers often occupy jobs, such as domestic work and caregiving, that are largely invisible despite their importance to social reproduction (Parreñas, 2001b; Hochschild, 2014).

From a postcolonial perspective, migration perpetuates unequal relations between the Global North and the Global South. As a former colony and a labor-sending country, the Philippines continues to occupy a position in the global economy as a source of low-cost labor. Within this system, migrant women's bodies become sites of both economic value and symbolic marginalization.

Studies have also shown how migrant women actively create spaces for resistance and agency within oppressive systems. Through transnational networking, digital communication, and collective organizing, they assert their rights and redefine their identities, moving beyond the role of victim to participate actively in global society.

The literature shows that gender, power, and postcolonial discourse are central to understanding the experiences of Filipina migrants. Their position in the global labor system reflects both historical inequality and contemporary forms of globalization. Structures of patriarchy and neocolonialism continue to shape their opportunities, representation, and identity. The next section examines existing policies and mechanisms for the protection and reintegration of OFWs.

OFW Policies, Protection, and Reintegration

The experiences of OFWs, particularly migrant women, are shaped by global labor structures and by the policies and institutions established by the state to govern migration. The Philippines has long recognized migration as an institutional part of the national economy, supported by laws and agencies intended to protect migrant workers and safeguard their welfare. These include Republic Act No. 8042, or the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, which was strengthened by Republic Act No. 10022. Both laws aim to expand OFWs' rights and protection against abuse and illegal recruitment (Republic of the Philippines, 1995, 2010).

Philippine policy has organized the overseas deployment of workers since the 1970s (Rodriguez, 2010). Section 2 of Republic Act No. 8042 distinguishes the recognition of remittances from a policy of promoting overseas employment as a means of sustaining economic growth (Republic of the Philippines, 1995, 2010). The distinction matters to the present study because it separates the acknowledgment of a worker's contribution from any commitment to deploy workers as an instrument of economic policy.

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Republic Act No. 11641 created the Department of Migrant Workers. Ang and Tiongson (2023) distinguish stages of the migration life cycle that include preparation, overseas employment, and return. A worker seeking information about a contract before departure faces a different practical question from a returnee seeking training or a livelihood referral. UN Women (2017) offers a rights-based basis for considering women's access to support across these stages. The availability of a formal service and a worker's ability to use it are separate questions for the empirical analysis.

The Department of Migrant Workers describes legal, employment, and reintegration assistance for returning workers (Department of Migrant Workers, n.d.). Parreño's (2022) mapping for UN Women examines how reintegration programs address employment and economic security and how family circumstances and gendered expectations affect return. A listed service establishes that support is contemplated. It does not establish its reach, continuity, or suitability for the women in this study.

An economic measure such as access to livelihood assistance captures one part of reintegration. Parreño (2022) traces needs across the migration journey, including working conditions abroad and relationships after return. This helps explain why a business established with skills learned overseas and the emotional work of resuming family life warrant distinct questions. A worker may make progress in one area while continuing to seek support in another.

The UN Women (n.d.) guide to gender-responsive implementation of the Global Compact for Migration sets out practical options for public institutions. A policy can define a route to assistance while leaving unanswered whether a worker has the time, privacy, or freedom to use it. That distinction also matters for digital services. A phone may make contact technically possible even when a conversation with a provider is difficult to conduct safely or privately.

Digital Migration and Identity Formation

Digital communication connects several parts of migration that may otherwise be studied separately. Messaging can help a worker sustain family relationships, maintain ties to other migrants, and learn about jobs or services. Remittance platforms can change how earnings are sent home. These activities make different demands on a worker's time, access to a device, and ability to act privately. In this chapter, digital migration refers to digital practices that accompany transnational lives, including how migrants communicate and present themselves while living and working across borders.

Studies of the digital diaspora identify technology as an important means of "co-presence" between migrants and their families in the country of origin. Video calls, social media updates, and instant messaging help keep OFWs and their loved ones from losing contact altogether. Studies of mediated communication emphasize that digital connectivity only partly substitutes for physical presence and creates new forms of emotional labor and relationship management that migrants must sustain in daily life (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

For Filipina migrants, digital spaces are important sites of identity negotiation and self-representation. Through Facebook, Instagram, and other online communities, OFWs can share their lives abroad as workers, mothers, daughters, friends, and active members of the global Filipino community. This process creates a "networked identity" continually shaped by digital interactions and feedback from their social networks in the Philippines and elsewhere.

Studies of the digital diaspora also show that online platforms provide spaces for support, shared experiences, and collective reflection on the challenges of migration. Online OFW communities provide information, emotional support, and sometimes advocacy against abuse and discrimination. Digital migration is thus a technological phenomenon and a social process that creates new forms of community across national borders.

Digital engagement also poses challenges, particularly in relation to emotional labor and surveillance. The ongoing pressure to be "present" online for one's family while working abroad creates additional work that often goes unrecognized. Digital visibility can also raise issues of privacy, identity performance, and social comparison that may affect migrants' mental and emotional well-being.

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Research on care across borders further shows that a successful call depends on arrangements at both ends. A relative may provide a device or help a child speak privately, while the parent abroad has to find time during a workday. Acedera and Yeoh (2021) document how differential access to communication affects the relationships among migrants, children, and nearby caregivers. This question of access connects digital ties with gendered labor and helps explain why contact with family and access to a protection service call for distinct evidence.

The literature shows that digital migration adds a dimension to the experience of overseas Filipino workers. Technology serves as a means of connection and as a space for new forms of labor and emotional responsibility. Filipina migrants' identity formation is increasingly transnational, networked, and digital, continually shaped by interactions between physical and virtual worlds. The following section turns from these everyday uses of technology to the digital platforms through which information, assistance, and protection are delivered to migrant workers.

Digital Platforms and Migrant Support Services

The preceding section examined how migrants use digital technology in everyday life. A separate body of work examines digital platforms as instruments of service delivery, through which information, assistance, and protection reach migrant workers. The distinction matters for this study because the capacity to keep in touch with family does not establish the capacity to reach a service when a placement becomes unsafe.

Bock et al. (2020) analyzed 47 digital platforms built for refugees and migrants, classifying the services each provides, the functions each uses, and the extent to which intended users take part in design and later revision. Most of the platforms supported two-way rather than one-way communication, and a substantial proportion relied on information contributed by users. The authors set out preliminary conditions under which such initiatives endure rather than lapse. Their analysis indicates that design and user participation, rather than the availability of technology, distinguish initiatives that are sustained.

Thinyane et al. (2021), in a study conducted for the International Labour Organization with the United Nations University Institute in Macau, examined why and how migrant workers use digital technology across several migration corridors. The research combined a desk review, a survey, focus groups, key informant interviews, and an analysis of the digital products already directed at migrant workers, including applications, websites, portals, and information services. It treats digital technology as a potential instrument of worker protection while documenting uneven awareness and use of the products available, and it situates those products within the recruitment process, where the difference in information held by a worker and by an agency is widest.

Research on peer support addresses a different service function. Ho et al. (2022), in a scoping review of peer support for migrant domestic workers, distinguish mutual aid from para-professional trained peer support and report that workers turn mainly to peers for emotional comfort. They also identify barriers to implementation, including concern about the transmission of distress among peers and worry about the disclosure of personal information. Cheng and Vicera (2022) analyzed four months of posts in one of the largest online peer-support groups for Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong and classified the support provided as informational, emotional, and instrumental, with informational support the most frequent and emotional support the most widely engaged with. Their material also records practical limits on participation, including workers who can use a telephone only after their work is finished.

In the Philippines, the delivery of migrant services has itself moved onto a digital platform. The Department of Migrant Workers has integrated the Overseas Employment Certificate into a digital travel pass generated through a national government application, which returning workers present as exit clearance (Department of Migrant Workers, 2025). This indicates that digital service delivery for overseas workers is established policy rather than a proposal, and it raises a corresponding question about which workers can reach such a service and under what conditions.

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The financial dimension of digital service delivery has received separate attention. The United Nations Capital Development Fund (2024) reports action research conducted with remittance providers across Africa and Asia, including senders based in the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, and the Republic of Korea, and examines household decision-making about remittance channels alongside gendered patterns of access to digital financial services. The report argues that products and policies designed without attention to gender may exclude women and reproduce existing disparities. This work connects the use of a digital channel with the question of who decides how remitted earnings are directed, which the present study treats as a dimension of agency.

Taken together, this literature establishes that digital platforms can carry information, assistance, and financial services to migrant workers, and that their reach depends on design, on the participation of intended users, and on the conditions under which a worker can use a device. What it does not supply is an account connecting these questions of service to the gendered meanings examined in the preceding sections. Studies of platforms report what a service delivers, and studies of representation report how a worker's contribution is recognized. The relationship between public recognition and a worker's practical ability to obtain help remains unexamined. Acedera and Yeoh (2021) show that access to communication is unevenly distributed even within a single family, which indicates that this relationship cannot be assumed.

Synthesis

The literature on Filipino migration presents it as a multidimensional phenomenon rooted in relationships among economics, gender, power, culture, and technology. Studies of global labor migration show that the Philippines remains a major labor-sending country. Migration functions both as a temporary employment strategy and as an institutional part of the national economy and global labor system (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025; de Haas et al., 2019).

The literature identifies the feminization of migration as a central feature of contemporary migration, with Filipinas employed in large numbers in domestic work and caregiving. This pattern reflects economic need and a global care chain that shapes the distribution of emotional and reproductive labor worldwide (Hochschild, 2014; Parreñas, 2001b; Sabio et al., 2022).

Studies of diaspora and identity formation show that migration leads to the ongoing formation of hybrid and transnational identities. Migrant identity changes continuously in the "in-between spaces" where the cultures of origin and host countries meet (Hall, 1990; Bhabha, 1994). Filipina migrants experience displacement and nostalgia while recreating their sense of self in a global context.

Migration is an important cultural theme in literature and media, where Filipina migrants are often portrayed in narratives of sacrifice, resilience, and the "modern-day hero." Feminist and postcolonial analyses show that such representations can confer recognition while reinforcing stereotypes about women migrant workers (Mohanty, 2003; Lan, 2006; Constable, 2007).

Philippine migration law defines responsibilities for protection. Ang and Tiongson (2023) and Parreño (2022) identify practical questions that remain for workers seeking support across stages of migration. Reintegration involves employment, family relationships, and the renegotiation of roles after working abroad. The present interviews can illuminate how participants experienced particular transitions. Program coverage and the effectiveness of state enforcement would require administrative evidence alongside those accounts.

The literature also shows that digital migration is becoming an important part of migrants' lives, with technology serving as a means of connection, emotional labor, and transnational identity. Its benefits come with new challenges concerning privacy, emotional burden, and identity performance in digital spaces (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

The literature on digital service delivery develops along a separate line. Platform studies and policy reports examine what a service provides and whether it reaches its intended users (Bock et al., 2020; Thinyane et al., 2021; United Nations Capital Development Fund, 2024), while studies of peer support examine what workers obtain from one another online (Cheng & Vicera, 2022; Ho et al., 2022). These

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accounts of service provision have not been brought together with the accounts of representation and gendered labor reviewed above. The relationship between the public recognition a worker receives and the range of choices she is able to exercise therefore remains unexamined, and it is this relationship that the present study addresses.

These bodies of work leave room for a comparison at the level of a decision. In a transnational family, a decision about schooling can reveal how care is shared among the parent abroad, children, and people who look after them in the Philippines (Acedera & Yeoh, 2021). A film may organize conflict around the same kind of decision and give relatives different memories of the consequences. In an interview, the worker can say what she wanted to accomplish and which alternatives she considered possible. Comparing narrative accounts at this level directs attention to how they make an action intelligible to a reader or listener.

Studies of migrant domestic work and transnational families explain how care is distributed across households (Parreñas, 2001a, 2001b). Research on pageantry in Sunday Beauty Queen also shows how workers make identities beyond paid care (Piocos, 2022). The question pursued here is how these public representations compare with the decisions women recount about employment, family obligations, and the use of their earnings. Reading both sources together also provides a basis for considering which needs a digital service might address.

The International Organization for Migration (2023) examines the dominant narratives in Philippine news coverage of overseas Filipino workers across three periods. Its account of news framing gives a point of comparison for the journalism in this corpus. The present study also reads film, poetry, and other cultural forms alongside first-person accounts. At that scale, a theme such as sacrifice can be examined through the particular voice, scene, or decision that gives it meaning.

The research gap concerns how a particular account makes sacrifice or agency persuasive. A film can let relatives disagree about what years apart meant. A headline gives an action a public name, and an interview lets a worker explain the options she had at the time. Meanings attributed by different speakers may therefore converge without taking the same form. the Methods section explains the source selection and the procedures by which themes were developed and compared.

METHODS

Research Design

This qualitative study combined textual analysis with semi-structured interviews. It examined representations of gender and identity in selected migration narratives alongside the accounts of Filipina overseas workers. The design treated a media portrayal and a participant's recollection as evidence for different questions. The portrayal can show how audiences are invited to understand a worker's actions. A personal account can show how one worker describes choices and relationships in the circumstances of her own employment and migration.

A qualitative approach was appropriate because it allowed for in-depth examination of the meanings, perspectives, and experiences in the texts and participants' narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018, 2024). This approach brought attention to gendered experiences, labor challenges, emotional separation, adaptation, and identity formation in the context of migration.

The study used comparison across sources as an interpretive strategy, not as verification. The texts and the interviews concern different people and events, so agreement between them is not treated as confirmation. The comparison examined agreement, differences in emphasis, and details contributed by one source. Some similarities connected profoundly different circumstances. A public account and an interview can both connect paid work with care, for example, while locating the significance of that work in the judgments of different people. The design therefore preserves the source and context of each claim before bringing evidence together.

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Sample and Sampling Design

The study draws on two bodies of evidence that were sampled separately: selected literary works and contemporary cultural and media texts on migration, and interviews with Filipina overseas workers. Both were assembled through purposive sampling, which selects cases for their relevance to the research questions rather than for statistical representativeness (Creswell & Poth, 2018, 2024). The sampling of each body of evidence is described in turn.

The textual corpus comprises 15 coded literary and media entries. It includes film, documentary, journalism, poetry, a song, and a public essay. Entries were purposively selected for their relevance to gender, labor, migration, and identity under the inclusion criteria described in the section on document analysis below. Each entry carries a code from LT01 to LT15 that identifies the version, or the set of related reports, treated as a single unit of analysis.

The corpus spans 1995 to 2026. Four entries are screen narratives, comprising three feature films and one documentary; seven are journalism; three are poetry or music; and one is a public essay. Six of the 15 appeared in 2022 or later. Dating follows the edition analyzed rather than the event recounted, and where an entry carries more than one date the date of public posting is used. Figure 3 presents the composition of the corpus by form and year.

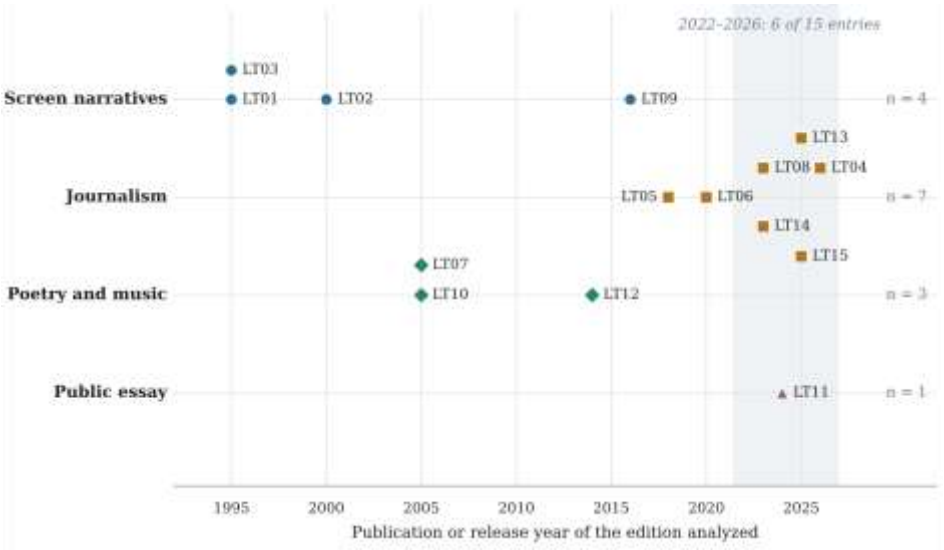


Figure 3. *Composition of the Textual Corpus by Form and Year of Publication (N = 15)*

Each labeled marker in Figure 3 represents one work, and the dates refer to the edition analyzed. The shaded band covers the period from 2022 to 2026. The seven journalistic entries include the set of related articles grouped under the single code LT15. The coding record for each entry, with its initial codes, developed themes, gender dimensions, and interpretive lenses, is held in the coding records compiled during Phases 2 and 3.

Materials were purposively selected for relevance to migration, work, family, and identity. The inclusion criteria checklist used for the selection required a work to meet at least five of seven criteria. The criteria address the subject and the perspective of the work as well as the nature of the source and its analytical relevance. The study register identifies the versions analyzed and separates them from related coverage of the same case. The coding records record each source code alongside the initial codes, developed themes, gender dimensions, and theoretical lenses assigned to it.

The checklist combined criteria about subject, perspective, source, and analytical usefulness. Its five-of-seven threshold allowed the selection of works across genres, including works that addressed

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migrant labor without centering a Filipina protagonist. The historical rule allowed two criteria to be unmet and assigned no mandatory individual item. The analysis accordingly limits each claim to evidence available in the cited edition, and the study register separates the editions analyzed from related coverage.

The corpus includes several genres to examine how different forms give meaning to work, family responsibility, and migration. A feature film can develop a conflict over time, a news report can emphasize a single event, and poetry or music can express an experience through form, voice, or mood. The primary purpose was thematic interpretation across the selected works. Genre helps explain differences among portrayals, and the purposive sample supplies the basis for those specific readings.

Some works in the corpus focus specifically on Filipina migrants, while others address migration and migrant labor in a broader context. The latter were included because they contain themes directly relevant to the research questions, such as labor, sacrifice, loss, transnational living, and identity formation. Selection was therefore based on thematic relevance to the research questions, with no requirement that every character or persona be a Filipina migrant.

The interview sample comprised 15 Filipina current or former overseas workers selected for their experience of migration and employment. At least one work setting is recorded for each participant, and some described employment in more than one country.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their status as Filipina OFWs, age, experience working abroad, and willingness to participate. The criteria were (1) twenty-four (24) years of age or older, (2) current or previous employment abroad, (3) at least one (1) year of labor migration experience, (4) voluntary agreement to participate through informed consent, and (5) the ability to participate in an interview and recount experiences in Filipino or English.

These criteria gave the study accounts from participants with direct experience of overseas employment and time to reflect on it. Purposive selection supported comparison of circumstances and meanings across the 15 accounts. The interview evidence describes the experiences of those who took part, with participants' prior and current employment identified where those circumstances matter to the interpretation.

Context and Participants

The study is set in the context of Philippine labor migration, in which overseas employment is organized by state policy and sustained by demand for domestic, care, and service work abroad (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025, 2026a; Rodriguez, 2010). Participants worked in destinations governed by markedly different employment regimes. Research on the Gulf states documents arrangements in which a worker's legal status is tied to a sponsoring employer and in which unfair treatment is widely reported (Blaydes, 2023), while studies of Hong Kong and Taiwan describe live-in requirements and employer discretion that shape a worker's time and movement (Constable, 2007; Lan, 2006). These differences form part of the context in which participants' accounts should be read.

The variety of countries of employment and experiences helped clarify the different social and cultural contexts that shaped participants' lives as migrant workers. Their accounts identified experiences related to gender, labor, family, adaptation, and identity formation in the context of migration.

The fifteen participants were current or former overseas workers whose employment included domestic work, caregiving, hospitality and resort work, and teaching. Participants' ages ranged from 33 to 59 years (median 40). Each participant is identified in the findings by a code composed of the prefix OFW and an abbreviation for the place of work, and names are not reported.

The participants are identified in Table 1 by code, employment setting, and occupation.

The participants were distributed across ten countries of current or most recent employment, with five participants (OFW-DXB 1–5) employed in the United Arab Emirates and the others in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, China, Thailand, the Maldives, Israel, and in Japan and Vietnam. Domestic work and caregiving account for the largest group, which is consistent with the concentration of Filipina migrants in paid care documented by Parreñas (2001b) and King-Dejardin (2019). Teaching, hospitality and resort

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work, and jewelry work also appear, so the accounts are not confined to a single occupational setting. Several participants changed employer, occupation, or country during their time abroad, which is why a single occupational label does not describe a whole working life and why the analysis follows the sequence of a worker's employment rather than her job title alone (Silvey & Parreñas, 2020).

Table 1.*Work Settings and Occupations of Interview Participants*

Participant code	Employment setting(s)	Occupation(s)
OFW-SVA	Saudi Arabia	Domestic worker / caregiver
OFW-KWI	Kuwait	Nanny / household worker
OFW-MULTI 1	Japan / Vietnam	Former model / worker
OFW-CN 1	China	English teacher
OFW-CN 2	China	English teacher
OFW-BRN 1	Bahrain / Dubai	Housekeeper / jeweler
OFW-BRN 2	Bahrain / Dubai	Housekeeper / shop worker
OFW-BKK	Thailand	Math teacher
OFW-MDV	Maldives	Resort secretary
OFW-DXB 1	Dubai (UAE)	Domestic worker
OFW-DXB 2	Dubai (UAE)	Domestic worker
OFW-DXB 3	Dubai (UAE)	Domestic worker
OFW-DXB 4	Dubai (UAE)	Domestic worker
OFW-DXB 5	Dubai (UAE)	Domestic worker
OFW-ISRL	Israel	Caregiver

The occupational labels in Table 1 summarize the work each participant reported at the time of the interview. Because several participants changed occupation or country during their migration, the table identifies the setting of each account and does not describe a whole working life.

Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used to explore participants' experiences of migration, employment, family relationships, challenges, and changes in identity. The interviewer conducted the interviews and interpreted the accounts alongside the selected literary and media works. The open-ended questions allowed participants to describe priorities, disagreements, and choices in their own terms. Familiarity with migrant work helped make everyday references intelligible, while also calling for care when interpreting accounts of work undertaken for family reasons. The analysis distinguished a participant's stated reason for a decision from an interpretation framed around sacrifice. This distinction kept participants' explanations visible when their accounts were compared with public portrayals of migrant women.

The coding records preserve the link between an observation and its source. For the literary and media entries, they identify the work, the initial code, the developed theme, and the interpretive lens. For the interviews, they identify the participant and the account on which a theme rests. Together, these records allow a reader to trace how a comparison draws on two separately interpreted sources.

An audio recording device was used only for interviews in which participants gave permission to record. Where recording was approved, the recordings supported transcription and analysis of participants' accounts.

The interview records list the setting of each interview. Facebook Messenger is recorded for ten participants, WhatsApp for one, and Dubai as the place of interview for three; the record for the remaining participant does not state the medium. Interviewing remotely allowed participants working in different countries to take part, but it also meant that the interviewer could not always see the circumstances in which participants spoke.

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Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected through document analysis and interviews. The document analysis identified and examined selected texts related to migration, gender, labor, diaspora, and identity formation. Interviews gathered the personal accounts of Filipina OFWs so their experiences could be compared with the representations identified in the texts.

Each source retained one identifier throughout the analysis. The literary and media entries carry the codes LT01 to LT15, and a single code designates one work or one set of closely related reports treated as a single unit of analysis. The interview accounts carry participant codes composed of the prefix OFW and an abbreviation for the place of work, such as OFW-DXB 1 for the first participant employed in Dubai. A code was assigned once and did not change when a source supported more than one theme or appeared in more than one dimension of the cross-source comparison. Because each identifier is fixed, any claim in the discussion can be followed back to the particular work or participant that supports it, including where one source contributes to several themes.

The 15 corpus entries include three feature films, a documentary, seven journalistic accounts, a poem, a collection of poems, one musical recording, and a public essay. Each entry has one persistent LT code. The material ranges from dramatized scenes to reported events, first-person literary voices, and public argument. The genre of a source determines what can be attributed to it. For example, a headline can document a public characterization of a worker. It cannot by itself reveal how she described her identity.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from participants. Prepared questions guided the interviews, and participants were also given opportunities to recount their experiences of migration, labor, family, and identity formation in greater depth and in their own terms.

The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 35 minutes. They were conducted in person or through online platforms such as FB Messenger, WhatsApp, and Google Meet, depending on each participant's location and ability to participate. This approach helped gather accounts that clarified the challenges, perspectives, and gendered experiences of Filipina migrants. The accounts were used to identify themes that could be linked to and compared with representations in the texts.

Participants could respond in Filipino, English, or both. The interview record documents the dates of the interviews and the responsibilities for interviewing, transcription, and transcript checking. The first author recruited the participants directly. They are overseas workers whom he had worked with or met during his own time as an overseas worker, so he knew them before the interviews, and his interest in the study grew out of their stories. Quotations originally given in Filipino appear in English translation. The second author prepared the translations so that the accounts would be accessible to a global readership, particularly the families of overseas workers. The extracts on schooling, on work as a mathematics teacher, and on learning jewelry work were checked against the corresponding Filipino passages.

Data Analysis

Both bodies of material were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019, 2021, 2024). The analysis proceeded through the six phases described below. Each phase was carried out separately for the literary and media corpus and for the interview transcripts, so that the themes developed in one body of material did not determine the themes developed in the other.

***Phase 1: Familiarization with the data*.** Each work was read, viewed, or listened to in full, and each interview transcript was read repeatedly before any coding began (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Notes recorded first impressions, passages that appeared significant, and the questions each source raised. The screen narratives received a second viewing devoted to scenes in which one character states a judgment of another, such as the daughter's account of her mother's absence in Anak (LT02). For the interviews, the transcripts of OFW-SVA and OFW-MDV were read alongside one another at this stage because both describe departure in terms of family provision.

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Phase 2: Generating initial codes. Codes were applied systematically across the full corpus and the full set of transcripts. Each code recorded what a passage showed rather than what it was taken to prove. Examples from the corpus include employer sets working hours (LT08), worker praised in public after a rescue (LT15), and collective activity outside the employer's household (LT09). Examples from the interviews include early end of contract (OFW-DXB 1), limits on time and movement (OFW-DXB 3), and change of employer after strain (OFW-KWI). Every code was recorded with its source so that an observation could be traced to a particular work or participant.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes. Codes were grouped into candidate themes on the basis of shared meaning rather than frequency (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The codes concerning hours, movement, and rest were grouped as a candidate theme on workplace control, while codes concerning school fees, debt, and remitted earnings were grouped as a candidate theme on family provision. Codes that fitted no candidate theme were retained rather than discarded, since they often indicated where a theme required revision.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes. Each candidate theme was checked first against its coded extracts and then against the full source from which those extracts came. A candidate theme on sacrifice was divided at this stage, because the extracts combined decisions that participants described making with an expectation attached to migrant women in the public narratives; the two were separated into an act of sacrifice and a norm of sacrifice. A candidate theme on emotional strain was merged with exhaustion, since the extracts supporting each did not distinguish them.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. Each retained theme was given a definition stating what it covered and what it excluded, and the coding boundaries set out in the conceptual framework were applied here. Continuing in an unchanged situation, as in the account of OFW-ISRL, was defined as resilience rather than agency, while changing employer, as in the account of OFW-KWI, was defined as agency. Sadness portrayed in a poem (LT10) was not coded as emotional labor, whereas composure maintained for an employer's household was.

Phase 6: Producing the report. The written analysis presents each theme with the extracts that support it and relates the interpretation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Reflexive thematic analysis treats the researchers' interpretation as part of the analysis rather than as a source of error (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021), and the discussion therefore states the grounds on which each judgment rests and names the work or participant from which it comes.

The coding of Anak (LT02) illustrates the move from observation to interpretation. The coding record for that film links maternal sacrifice and emotional distance to a reading of care and fractured motherhood. For OFW-MDV, the interview record documents the worker's account of educating four children through earnings abroad. The cross-source comparison brings the two readings together under family provision. The film supplies the daughter's judgment of absence, and the interview supplies the worker's judgment of what her labor achieved.

Interpretation of the themes was guided by the three questions stated in the theoretical framework. A claim about recognition required attention to the voice or narrative perspective that gave an act its value. A claim about institutional power depended on a rule, relationship, or employment condition that the source described. A claim about belonging drew on how people maintained, contested, or renegotiated obligations across distance. A passage could support more than one reading, and each reading remained tied to an identifiable detail.

Counts in the figures describe the evidence each discussion cites. Counts of opening examples use the works explicitly named when a theme is introduced. Counts of works by dimension use the supporting-

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work field recorded for that dimension, and counts of interview support distinguish examples discussed in the thematic narrative from cases drawn explicitly from the participant profiles. For the cross-source comparison, counts record the distinct codes named within each of the seven dimensions, and the repeated use of one code within a dimension counts once. Counts therefore record the distinct sources cited for a dimension. The classification follows the comparative analysis of the selected material. Reflexive thematic analysis assigns importance through interpretation of meaning and context (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021, 2024). A theme illustrated by three participants may therefore be central to the research question.

The sample sizes describe different units. The corpus contains 15 coded entries, including one code for two reports of the same Hong Kong fire. The interviews contain 15 participant accounts, some covering several placements. A code counts once in a figure's denominator even if it recurs across comparisons. The seven comparison dimensions summarize how material from these units is interpreted. They can therefore include the same work or participant without implying a new event or a new interview.

The evidentiary detail varies among accounts. A direct quotation allows a reader to inspect a participant's translated wording. A profile can establish that a case was coded for a theme but gives less access to the sequence or the exact language of the exchange. For the same reason, a theme absent from a short profile cannot be treated as an experience the participant never had. The figures identify the evidence cited in this discussion, and the full profiles and interpretive columns of the coding records allow readers to examine how each comparison was assembled.

The unit of comparison is the meaning assigned to an action in its source. A film scene, a reported event, and an interview response can each support a reading of care, for example. The evidence key and code lists let readers check which source supports the reading. When an interpretation concerns opportunity or constraint, the relevant detail is the action and the alternatives a source describes, including whether those alternatives changed between placements.

The cross-source comparison brought together 15 coded literary and media entries and 15 semi-structured interviews, one per participant. The unit of comparison was the meaning attributed to an action or condition in its original context. A film and an interview could both illuminate family provision even when they concerned different households.

Themes developed within the two bodies of material supplied the seven dimensions used in the cross-source comparison. The coding records preserve the identifiers for the works and participants behind each comparison. Within a dimension, the analysis examined who framed the issue, what options the account described, and which consequences became visible over the period it covered.

Three relationships guide the cross-source reading. Convergence identifies a shared meaning, such as care expressed through family provision. Complementarity identifies information one source adds, such as the practical arrangements of maintaining contact. A difference in emphasis identifies what a public account foregrounds and what a participant foregrounds. In each case, the question is what the sources allow the reader to infer. A source that leaves a question unanswered supplies no counterexample by its silence.

The value of comparing the sources is clearest when their emphases diverge. An account of a rescue gives public visibility to care at a particular moment. An interview may give equal weight to the ability to decide when to rest or visit family. Each example changes the question asked of the other source. Agreement between a work and an interview supports an interpretation about shared meanings in the selected material. Evidence about an event or its frequency would come from records or a different sampling design.

Ethical Considerations

Accounts of employment abroad can contain sensitive disclosures. Before each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to decline questions or withdraw. All 15 participants gave informed consent to participate. Audio recording required separate permission. The interview record documents the administration of the interviews and the safeguards applied to the reporting of participant accounts.

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The findings use participant codes. A destination, occupation, and distinctive family history can nevertheless make a profile recognizable to someone familiar with the case. Participants gave informed consent to take part. They also gave permission for the publication of translated verbatim quotations and brief profiles of their work under participant codes, and their names are not reported. This consent and permission were obtained by written message about one month before the interviews, which were conducted on June 28 and 29, 2026. Before each interview, the interviewer explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to decline any question or withdraw at any time without negative consequences, and the confidential handling of what participants shared; this explanation is recorded in the interview records for 13 of the 15 participants. Any further sharing of original records would require renewed consideration of consent and the possibility of identification. No institutional ethics committee reviewed the study. All 15 participants consented in writing about a month before the interviews, and the three authors reviewed the study design and consent procedure together.

Researcher positionality and reflexivity. All three authors are themselves overseas Filipino workers. The first author conducted the interviews while living in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where five participants worked, and led the coding and theme development. He recruited the participants directly and had worked with or met each of them before the interviews, and his interest in the study grew out of their stories. The second author, based in Arizona, transcribed the interviews and translated the Filipino passages into English, and the third author, also based in Arizona, checked the transcripts. Shared status as overseas workers and the interviewer's prior acquaintance with participants may have encouraged openness, and they may also have led participants to frame their accounts for a familiar listener. The interpretation reflects the authors' own understandings of migration and work abroad.

Data availability. The interview transcripts contain personal information, and sharing them would require renewed consideration of participants' consent, so they are not publicly available.

In analyzing literary works and other references, the study acknowledged the authors and sources of the materials to respect their intellectual property rights. It also sought to preserve the accuracy of quotations, interpretations, and the presentation of findings in accordance with principles of academic integrity.

The study register identifies the public source versions and separates related coverage from the entries analyzed. The coding records hold the comparison records. The source location for each quoted interview passage is identified by the participant code and, where it is relevant to the interpretation, by the subject of the interview question.

RESULTS

The findings address a difference in perspective. Public narratives give particular visibility to sacrifice, danger, and exceptional acts of care. Workers also locate agency in decisions about ordinary matters, including when to seek another job and how to provide for children. This chapter is organized so that Sections 1 to 6 each address one of the six research questions stated in Chapter 1. Sections 1 to 4 examine the selected literary and media works, Section 5 compares those works with the interview accounts, and Section 6 relates the evidence to gender equality, decent work, and inequality. Section 7 presents the framework the study proposes, which was developed from the findings reported in the preceding sections.

Gendered Work, Vulnerability, and Recognition

This section addresses the first research question: What major themes related to gender, labor, and identity emerge across the selected literary works and contemporary narratives of Filipina migrants?

Reflexive thematic analysis of the 15 selected works identified three recurring ways of representing the relationship among gender, work, and identity (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021). The first concerns how domestic and care work is valued. The second concerns exposure to harm and limited access to protection. The third concerns recognition through caregiving and through family or community ties. The source-level analysis records the initial code, the developed theme, the gender dimension, and the

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interpretive lens for each entry. The examples in Figure 4 indicate where the discussion introduces each theme.

Across the selected works, value attaches to a worker for different reasons. A domestic worker may be recognized for what her earnings make possible at home, for confronting danger, or for meeting an employer's need for care. Each emphasis leaves a different question open about the terms of her work. This helps explain why the themes overlap. A story about sacrifice can register a family achievement while giving little attention to the worker's freedom to rest, change an arrangement, or define herself beyond it.

The works named at the opening of each theme are mapped in Figure 4. Five illustrate gendered labor, seven illustrate vulnerability, and six illustrate identity through care. LT03 and LT05 link labor with vulnerability, and LT02 and LT13 link labor with care. The opening examples for vulnerability and care have no codes in common, although vulnerability and care can coexist in a work or in a worker's life. The essay LT11, for example, discusses both sacrifice and abuse even though the discussion introduces it under gendered labor. The display therefore describes a choice of illustrations. It does not establish that the corpus divides women into mutually exclusive images of injury and care.

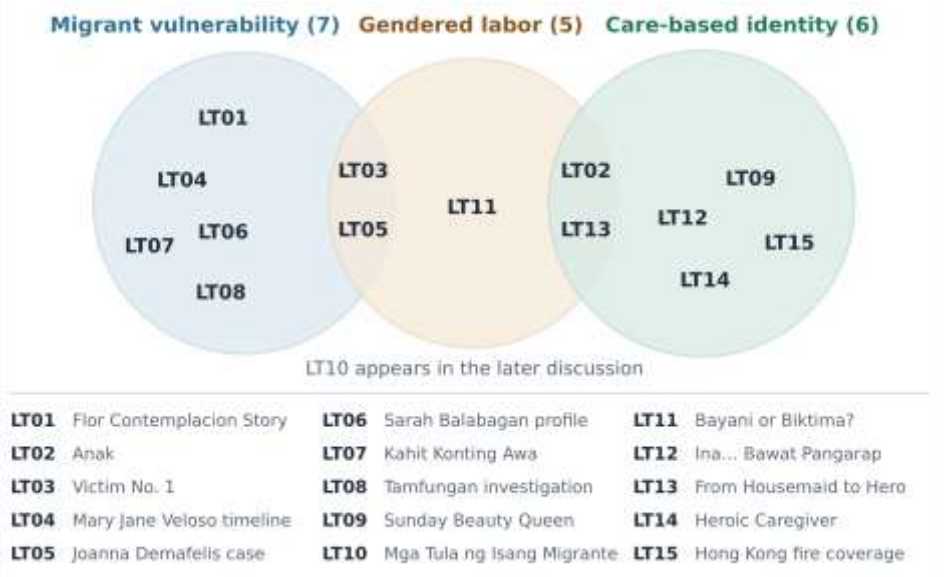


Figure 4. *Opening Examples for the Three Themes of Gender, Labor, and Identity*

Circle membership in Figure 4 shows which works are cited when each theme is introduced, and an overlap marks a work cited in two openings. Circle size carries no numerical meaning. LT10 is not among the opening examples and enters the analysis later. The works and the interpretive lenses applied to them are given in Appendix E (Tables E1.1–E1.4).

Philippine Statistics Authority data (2025) provide additional context, showing that women constitute a large share of the OFW population and that many are employed in elementary occupations. These figures serve only as contextual background. The main themes were derived from the selected narratives, without making statistical generalizations about all Filipina migrants.

The Value Assigned to Domestic and Care Work. The selected contemporary migration narratives showed that Filipina migrants' labor is rooted in economic need and shaped by social expectations and gender norms. This is evident in LT02 (Anak; Quintos, 2000), LT03 (Victim No. 1: Delia Maga [Jesus, Pray for Us!]; Caparas, 1995), LT05 (Joanna Demafelis Case; CNN, 2018), LT11 (Filipina Migrant Workers: Bayani or Biktima?; David, 2024), and LT13 (From Housemaid to Hero; Almario, 2025), which

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portray Filipina migrants as domestic workers, caregivers, and their families' main providers. The works differ in how they portray these labor experiences. Some emphasize sacrifice, endurance, and heroism, while others expose exploitation, abuse, and inadequate recognition of workers' rights. These representations suggest two related dimensions of Filipina migrants' labor. It is an important means of meeting families' economic needs, yet it can also be an arena of unequal power relations and gender-based differences in how work is valued.

In addition to portraying jobs commonly performed by Filipina women, the narratives expose social assumptions that treat caregiving, endurance, and service as inherent to womanhood. When domestic work and caregiving are treated merely as extensions of motherhood or womanhood, their demands in skill, time, and emotional investment and their claim to fair compensation can go unrecognized. Gender is both an attribute of the worker and a factor in how society values her work. It is therefore important to examine the roles Filipina migrants take on and the social norms that determine how their work is recognized, valued, and rewarded.

The value ascribed to work changes with the terms used to recognize it. A family may value income and an employer may value care, yet neither valuation necessarily names the skill, time, or bargaining position of the person doing the work. The cases bring that difference into view by placing recognition and working conditions in the same account.

Workplace Risk and Access to Protection. Selected contemporary migration narratives, particularly LT01 (The Flor Contemplacion Story; Lamangan, 1995), LT03 (Caparas, 1995), LT04 (Mary Jane Veloso Timeline; Du, 2026), LT05 (CNN, 2018), LT06 (Sarah Balabagan Profile; Honculada, 2020), LT07 (Kahit Konting Awa; Saturno, 2005), and LT08 (Lured to the UAE by Bonuses and Big Money, What Happened to Vergie Tamfungan?; McQue, 2023), reveal forms of social and institutional vulnerability that Filipina migrants may experience when leaving home, working, and living abroad. The works depict workplace abuse, the risk of human trafficking, imprisonment, gender-based violence, and limited control over conditions that directly affect their safety. LT08 raises particular questions about recruitment and the family's search for answers concerning Vergie Tamfungan's death. LT07, a song recorded by Nora Aunor, voices a worker punished for a crime she says she did not commit and asks for mercy on behalf of overseas workers who are called heroes, which joins vulnerability to a plea for recognition. Despite differences in form and presentation, the works show that the risks faced by Filipina migrants are inseparable from social relationships, working conditions, and mechanisms for protection in the country of employment.

The findings suggest that migrant vulnerability is best understood as a structural condition, extending beyond personal misfortune or individual decisions. The narratives indicate that risk can increase when workers have limited bargaining power, depend on employers for their livelihood or residence, and lack adequate access to institutions that can help. These conditions are particularly important in domestic work, which takes place in private homes and can be difficult for the relevant institutions to monitor. Isolation from the wider community, fear of losing one's job, and barriers to reporting abuse may reduce a worker's ability to refuse exploitative conditions or obtain immediate protection.

The public descriptions differ in how they locate responsibility. The Veloso timeline (LT04) organizes a legal history around decisions by institutions. McQue's investigation (LT08) follows recruitment and a family's efforts to obtain answers. Both can illuminate vulnerability, but the narrative question differs: a legal chronology makes formal decisions visible, while an investigation can make uncertainty and unanswered questions part of the evidence. Neither source licenses an assumption about the cause of another worker's experience.

Another finding was the distinction between representing the Filipina migrant as a victim and recognizing her as a survivor. Some narratives center suffering, loss, and powerlessness. Others, such as LT06 (Sarah Balabagan Profile), place greater emphasis on recovery, continuing with life, and meeting challenges. Personal resilience on its own cannot establish that the structures that created the risk have been

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overcome. Recovery can demonstrate individual agency, while employers, recruitment agencies, and institutions remain responsible for workers' safety and welfare. The investigation in LT08 keeps the circumstances of recruitment in view even as the family describes its response to uncertainty. This distinction helps keep institutional accountability in view when celebrating women's capacity to endure and carry on.

A legal case and an account of abuse in a household both make failures of protection visible, but they point to different responsible parties and different opportunities for intervention. A worker's capacity to endure hardship can be recognized in either account. It supplies little evidence that institutions responded promptly or that future workers would be protected.

Caregiving, Motherhood, and Self-Definition. The analysis of selected contemporary migration narratives, particularly LT02 (Quintos, 2000), LT09 (Sunday Beauty Queen; Villarama, 2016), LT12 (Ina… Sa Likod ng Bawat Pangarap; Medalla, 2014), LT13 (Almario, 2025), LT14 (Heroic Caregiver; ToI Staff, 2023), and LT15 (Hong Kong Fire: Heroic OFW; Borbon, 2025), revealed the complexity of how Filipina migrants' identities are constructed and represented. Two related dimensions emerged. First, the works associate the Filipina migrant with motherhood, caregiving, and being the person who makes the greatest sacrifices for her family's welfare. Second, they portray her as an individual who can build relationships, express feelings, participate in her community, and act in situations that require initiative and judgment. Responsibilities to family and work remain important to her identity, and her sense of self extends beyond those roles.

The findings show that identity formation among Filipina migrants entails sustaining aspects of an earlier identity across geographical distance and continually negotiating family expectations, working conditions, and new relationships in the country of employment. A Filipina can be a mother, the family's main provider, a worker, and a member of a migrant community at the same time. These roles do not always align. The time and energy demanded by work may conflict with the desire to be with one's children, while financial responsibility for the family may limit opportunities to attend to one's emotional and personal needs. Identity becomes a site of continual adaptation, relationship-building, and making sense of one's experiences.

One dimension of this process appears in *Sunday Beauty Queen* (LT09), a documentary about Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong. Their collective participation in cultural activities can be read as a space for connection, self-expression, and collective identity formation. These activities may give workers opportunities to form relationships beyond their work and duties to employers. They can show aspects of themselves beyond their role as service providers to other families. Patterson (2019) reads the film alongside another Hong Kong documentary, asking how accounts of domestic workers make their gendered and racialized labor visible. This reading shows that identity formation can take place through collective experience, creative expression, and community participation. Migrant women's opportunities to participate in such activities may vary according to working conditions, time off, and access to social spaces.

From Housemaid to Hero (LT13), *Heroic Caregiver* (LT14), and Hong Kong Fire: Heroic OFW (LT15) link Filipina migrant identity to caregiving, sacrifice, and heroism. Accounts highlighting the help or rescue she provides show her ability to act decisively and take initiative. Such portrayals may also reinforce expectations that women are naturally caring, self-sacrificing, and willing to put others' needs first. The repeated pairing of care with heroism makes protection of others publicly visible while also suggesting that self-sacrifice is expected of women. When her value is tied primarily to her capacity to care and sacrifice, other aspects of her identity may be overlooked, including her own needs, aspirations, and right to live safely and with dignity.

Agency is distinct from resilience or heroism alone. Resilience may refer to the ability to persevere through difficulties, while agency concerns the ability to act, decide, negotiate, and make meaning of one's

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experience within existing constraints. A Filipina migrant may exercise agency by maintaining family connections, building social support, participating in cultural activities, or refusing exploitative conditions. Her capacity to act and make decisions deserves recognition independently of any portrayal as an exceptional hero. Recognition of her resilience is compatible with acknowledging the constraints she faces and her need for institutional support. Agency can be seen in the ways a person acts and negotiates within conditions she cannot fully control, even where her freedom is limited.

Caregiver, mother, and provider are roles in relationships that can shift over time. The pageant in LT09 shows women undertaking a shared activity away from the duties for which they were employed. It gives the reader a concrete reason to ask when a woman can define a role for herself as well as perform one expected by others.

The three readings meet at the point where care becomes a public identity. Recognition can draw attention to skilled work, yet it can also make the capacity to endure a poor arrangement seem like a personal obligation. The distinction matters across the genres represented in this corpus.

Separation, Sacrifice, and Life Across Borders

This section addresses the second research question: How do the selected works portray Filipina migrants' experiences of separation, sacrifice, adaptation, and transnational living?

The reflexive thematic analysis of selected contemporary narratives of Filipina migrants (LT01–LT15) shows that separation, sacrifice, adaptation, and transnational living are interconnected dimensions of Filipinas' migration experiences. In the narratives, leaving for another country involves physical separation from family and changes in caregiving, the fulfillment of responsibilities, adjustment to a new environment, and the maintenance of identity. Migration is thus a complex process in which personal aspirations, family responsibilities, working conditions, and social structures intersect, affecting women's ability to make decisions and act.

The analysis identified six dimensions, each characterized by an underlying tension that remains unresolved within the narratives. Table 2 presents these dimensions alongside their corresponding key tensions. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive, as a single narrative may reflect multiple dimensions depending on the experiences depicted, the narrator's perspective, and the broader social context in which the work is situated.

Table 2.*Six Dimensions of Migrant Experience*

Dimension	Central tension	Supporting works
Separation	Living apart while continuing to care for family	LT01, LT02, LT08, LT10, LT12
Sacrifice	Choosing to provide under economic and social constraints	LT02, LT03, LT05, LT07, LT08, LT10, LT12, LT13
Emotional labor	Managing feelings while carrying fatigue and emotional burdens	LT02, LT09, LT10, LT12, LT14
Adaptation	Adapting to a new environment while maintaining a sense of self	LT01, LT03, LT06, LT08, LT09, LT10
Transnational living	Living abroad while participating in family and community life at home	LT02, LT08, LT09, LT10, LT11, LT12
Women's agency	Seeking room to decide, negotiate, and act within structural constraints	LT02, LT06, LT09, LT10, LT13, LT14, LT15

The work codes presented in Table 2 identify the literary and media sources associated with each dimension, establishing a clear connection between the thematic findings and the corresponding textual evidence.

The tensions recorded in the table are not incidental to migration but constitutive of it. For separation, the central issue is how care continues in the absence of physical presence. Sacrifice appears as

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love and responsibility in some accounts, while restricted opportunities give it another meaning in others. Emotional labor concerns the management of feeling required by a role; expressions of sadness establish an emotional experience and do not by themselves demonstrate that requirement. Adaptation and transnational living involve negotiating how to retain one's identity, participate in a new environment, and maintain ties to the homeland.

***Providing for Family Across Distance*.** In the selected contemporary narratives of Filipina migrants (LT01–LT15), separation involves both a woman's physical distance from her family and changes in how she fulfills family responsibilities. Financial support and communication may continue, but they can only partly make up for the loss of physical presence and daily care. Migration creates a tension between the need to earn a living for one's family and the desire to remain part of its life. Understanding that tension requires attention to the reasons for leaving, the conditions that shape women's choices, and the costs of migration.

Katie McQue's (2023) investigation of Vergie Tamfungan (LT08) connects a decision to change jobs with a family's difficulty obtaining information. Tamfungan had worked in Saudi Arabia before accepting an offer of higher pay and a bonus in the United Arab Emirates. The report relates the offer to her plans to pay for her four children's education and build a family home. After her death, much of the family's information came through intermediaries, including the recruiter. The investigation describes concerns about recruitment and documentation and records questions the family was still trying to resolve. Those unresolved questions help explain why protection includes access to timely, reliable information for workers and their families.

LT08 portrays sacrifice through a decision made with incomplete information. The offer gave higher earnings an immediate meaning because the family had education and housing goals. The questions relatives asked afterward concerned matters whose answers were beyond their control. The report's movement from an attractive offer to the family's search for information makes the two problems visible together. The case adds a specific condition to the analysis of choice: how much a worker and her family can learn about a placement and whom they can reach if something goes wrong.

Read together, the investigation and the documentary give different weight to the time available to workers. The investigation follows a placement decision and the family's unanswered questions afterward. The documentary follows women who use time away from paid work for a shared activity. This contrast shows why time matters to two parts of the findings. Urgent decisions about changing jobs may depend on receiving accurate information, and participation in a community depends on being able to use some time outside a placement.

The documentary *Sunday Beauty Queen* (LT09) offers a different perspective. It portrays Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong who gather, organize, and participate in a beauty pageant on Sundays. LT08 *(Lured to the UAE)* brings the risks of migration and constraints on workers' choices into focus, while LT09 shows how migrant women build relationships and communities amid their working lives abroad. Participating together in cultural and social activities can offer opportunities for self-expression, connection with others, and a sense of belonging even when far from family and homeland. The workers are portrayed as people who provide services to other families and have interests, abilities, goals, and relationships of their own. Transnational living encompasses work and family responsibilities and can create opportunities for adaptation, community building, and sustaining identity. Relationships in the country of employment offer only a partial substitute for being physically present with family, and the difficulties of migration may persist. LT09 shows how separation and connection can coexist, as can the limits of working life and migrant women's ability to create spaces for themselves and others.

Separation involves physical distance and changes in how women meet family responsibilities and form relationships. LT08 reveals the links among sacrifice, economic need, and risks migrant workers may face. LT09 draws attention to the possibilities for building community and sustaining a sense of belonging

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abroad. Together, the examples show that migration can open opportunities for families and individuals, while the conditions that determine the possibilities and limits of care and participation warrant examination.

***Sacrifice as a Choice and an Expectation*.** In narratives of Filipina migrants, sacrifice can provide a central way of making sense of leaving home, working abroad, and fulfilling family responsibilities. Migration may be portrayed as a way to improve the family's circumstances, pay for children's education, or pursue dreams that are difficult to realize at home. Medalla's poem (LT12) gives material provision a maternal meaning. The connection between caring and giving is a feature of the portrayal, and the reading cannot assume that every woman would attach the same meaning to the work.

The family disagreement in *Anak* (LT02) places two standards of good mothering beside one another. Providing for the household can express care in the mother's account. Being available in person matters to the daughter's understanding of that care. Neither perspective by itself explains the relationship. Their disagreement brings the costs of a valued decision into view, including costs that a public celebration of maternal endurance would have difficulty expressing.

Distress and emotional labor have different evidentiary requirements. Distress concerns what a person reports feeling. Emotional labor concerns the management of feeling or its expression as part of a social or occupational role. The distinction matters when applying Mohanty's (2003) transnational feminist perspective alongside de Borja's (2021) study of migrants who lost work in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Doha during the pandemic. An expression of grief in a poem can support a reading of loss. An inference about emotional labor also needs evidence of an expectation about how the speaker is supposed to behave or appear to others.

Medalla's (2014) poem Ina… sa Likod ng Bawat Pangarap (LT12) can be compared with Rory B. Quintos's (2000) film *Anak* (LT02), starring Vilma Santos, in their portrayals of sacrifice and the responsibilities of motherhood. LT12 opens with the memory of an airport farewell and closes with the children finishing school. Its movement from separation to a fulfilled promise gives the mother's absence a meaning that emerges over time. In *Anak*, Josie's return brings her face to face with Carla, who experienced the absence as abandonment. The poem's retrospective account and the film's family confrontation give the same act of provision different emotional meanings. The comparison shows how sacrifice is portrayed as an expression of love and a fulfillment of responsibility, as well as its emotional cost to family relationships. The two works distinguish a provider's purpose from the effects that family members may experience. Working abroad does not necessarily bring about the hoped-for unity or advancement.

A valued goal can make hardship intelligible to the person who undertakes it. It does not make every condition attached to that goal acceptable. In the accounts of schooling and family provision, a worker may have good reason to remain abroad while also having good reason to want more predictable working hours or time with her children. Recognizing both claims preserves the woman's judgment about her priorities and the cost of acting on them.

Sacrifice can express love and agency, and it can function as a social standard that ties a woman's value to her ability to give and endure. It is therefore important to examine the sacrifices depicted in the narratives and the conditions that give them meaning and set their limits.

***Adaptation, Community, and Belonging*.** In selected contemporary narratives of Filipina migration, adaptation and transnational living can be understood as processes that continually shape Filipino workers' identities, social relationships, and sense of belonging in their countries of employment and origin. Migration involves moving elsewhere to earn a living and can change how migrants relate to others, build communities, and interpret their experiences. This perspective examines how migrants adapt to new environments while sustaining, changing, or redefining their identities and ties to family and society.

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Baby Ruth Villarama's (2016) documentary *Sunday Beauty Queen* (LT09), which follows Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong, illustrates this process. The gatherings and pageants on their days off can be understood as spaces where migrant women express themselves, form relationships, and take part in activities beyond their roles as workers and caregivers. Cultural activities thus matter as recreation and as part of identity and community building in migrant life.

LT09 can be compared with Noel Malicdem's (2005) *Mga tula ng isang migrante mula sa Saudi Arabia* (LT10) to extend the discussion. The works differ in genre and context, yet both offer opportunities to examine migration, identity, and belonging. LT09 highlights community building and creative expression among Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong. LT10 exposes problems experienced by an OFW in Saudi Arabia, including abuse, delayed wages, and barriers to seeking protection. In "OFW sa gitna ng disyerto," the speaker moves between a collective voice and a first-person account of unpaid wages. The public language of heroism sits uneasily beside the prospect of a family going hungry. The poem supplies a migrant labor perspective. The speaker's gender is unspecified (Malicdem, 2005).

LT10 shows that transnational living encompasses maintaining family ties in the Philippines and can also reveal tension between improving the family's circumstances and the conditions a worker faces in the country of employment. The poem links OFW identity to family responsibilities, endurance, and struggle amid workplace and institutional difficulties. LT10 offers a particular representation of migrant life, rather than evidence of conditions common to every migrant, and can be compared with LT09's emphasis on community and self-expression.

Adaptation and agency are distinct. Adaptation can mean adjusting to existing conditions and relationships in a new environment. Agency can be seen in making decisions, seeking alternatives, negotiating, forming relationships, and interpreting one's experiences. In LT09, community building and participation in cultural activities can be examined as possible expressions of agency. In LT10, delayed wages link the speaker's account of work to the household obligations that those wages were meant to meet. Endurance alone is insufficient evidence of agency, since it can also indicate limited options.

Adapting to another country and sustaining ties to the Philippines involve processes that shape identity, a sense of belonging, and a migrant's ability to act within the conditions she faces. LT09 shows possibilities for community building and self-expression amid working life. LT10 shows how family responsibility and workplace constraints intersect in the OFW's experience. Migration is thus a complex process in which personal decisions, relationships, and the structures that define the possibilities and limits of migrant life coexist.

Thirty-seven links between works and dimensions are recorded in Table 2 and plotted in Figure 5. Fourteen of the 15 works are listed for at least one dimension, and 10 of those 14 are listed for two or more. Malicdem's poems (LT10) are cited for all six dimensions, Anak (LT02) for five, and McQue's investigation (LT08) for four. The Veloso timeline (LT04) has no entry in these six rows, although it is central to the discussion of legal vulnerability. The measure describes the scope of the citations rather than the weight of any interpretation. The contrast between the long-form investigation and the other journalism suggests that the focus of a particular work matters, although the purposive corpus cannot separate the effects of genre, length, case selection, and analytic emphasis.

The six dimensions group into four broader experiences. Separation, sacrifice, adaptation, and transnational living are read together rather than in sequence, since one may intensify or qualify another. Table 2 also identifies emotional labor and women's agency as dimensions in their own right, each supported by its own set of works.

A migrant mother and her child can remember the same separation differently. For the mother, paid work may mark the years in which she provided for a household. For a child in the narrative, those years can be recalled through occasions when the mother was absent. The difference turns on whose account is heard.

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Figure 5. *Works Cited for Six Dimensions of Migration*

Note. A symbol marks a work cited for a dimension in Appendix E, Tables E2.1–E2.2. Shape and color identify source form. Empty cells identify unlisted combinations. The upper bars count works per dimension. Row-end bars count dimensions per work.

Separation gives care two time scales. Sending money can meet a need at the moment it arises. The meaning of years spent away may only become apparent when a family reunites or a child explains what was missed. A narrative that follows one time scale will give a different account of responsibility from one that holds both in view.

Changes in care also change the terms of belonging. A worker may remain responsible to a household in the Philippines and build relationships through a community abroad. Paid work, time away from it, and access to contact determine which of these relationships she can sustain. That connection between practical arrangements and a sense of self leads into the analysis of identity.

Identity Formation in Migration Narratives

This section addresses the third research question: How do the selected narratives portray changes in the identities of Filipina migrants across different social and cultural contexts?

Reflexive thematic analysis of selected contemporary narratives of Filipina migrants (LT01–LT15) showed that migration involves a change in residence or workplace and a process of forming, transforming, and redefining women's identities. Moving abroad can sustain, change, or give new meaning to existing roles as daughter, mother, wife, or community member. Other identities emerge at the same time, including those of migrant worker, family provider, diaspora member, and individual negotiating social and cultural conditions in the country of employment.

The following discussion addresses three interconnected dimensions: identity and representation, gender, class, and nationality, and agency and redefining the self. Table 3 sets out these dimensions, the primary focus of analysis for each, the theoretical lens applied, and the related scholarship used for comparison.

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Table 3.*Dimensions of Identity Formation and Transformation Among Filipina Migrants*

Dimension	Primary Focus of Analysis	Relevant Theoretical Lens	Related scholarship
Identity and representation	Portrayal of the migrant as worker, victim, survivor, and hero	Feminist Literary Criticism	Vargas et al. (2020); Encinas-Franco (2020); IOM (2023)
Gender, class, and nationality	Unequal relationships, social stratification, and expectations of women	Feminist Literary Criticism; Postcolonial Studies; Intersectionality	Encinas-Franco (2020); IOM (2023); Mohanty (2003)
Agency and redefining the self	Decision-making, negotiation, participation, and identity transformation	Diaspora Studies; Feminist Literary Criticism	Vargas et al. (2020); Turnbull and Wu (2025)

These dimensions were developed from the analysis of LT01 to LT15, the theoretical framework of the study, and the related scholarship named alongside them in Table 3.

Each dimension of identity formation is read through one of the three lenses introduced earlier. Within the analysis of gender, class, and nationality, Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality helps explain how these aspects of a worker's position act together. It matters, for example, whether a portrayal locates authority in an employer's household or in a legal proceeding, since the institution involved changes what an account can show about the worker's room to act.

Designations of Worker, Survivor, and Hero. A central question in analyzing Filipina migrant identity is how women's own interpretations of their experiences differ from the ways they are represented by other people, institutions, and society. A woman may view migration as a way to earn a living, provide for her family, or achieve personal goals. The same experience can be told as a story of sacrifice, suffering, abuse, resilience, or heroism. The wording of a title and the sequence of events invite a reader to recognize particular aspects of a worker's identity.

Identity is multiple and changing. Worker, victim, survivor, and hero can therefore be examined as distinct but related positions in a narrative. Victimhood may refer to suffering harm or experiencing a violation of rights. Being a survivor may emphasize carrying on with life and dealing with the consequences of adversity. Agency refers to the ability to act, make decisions, and participate in shaping one's life. These can coexist, as a woman may experience abuse and still exercise agency.

The Flor Contemplacion Story (LT01) dramatizes a legal case, while the Veloso timeline (LT04) arranges reported decisions in sequence. The account of Joanna Demafelis (LT05) brings the dangers of household employment into public view through a reported death. Each presents vulnerability through a different narrative form. The features on family provision (LT13) and caregivers in emergencies (LT14 and LT15) give public recognition to action. That recognition is evidence of how the writer frames a case. It is only one part of what can be known about the woman's own understanding of it.

The title *Victim No. 1* (LT03) places a category before Delia Maga's name. From Housemaid to Hero (LT13) gives a different order to its labels, introducing a worker through an occupation before naming a public judgment of her actions. The titles place the reader in different relationships to the people they describe. Neither title supplies a complete account of the woman's experience. Their wording supports a more specific claim about how the reader is first invited to see her.

Gender, Class, and Nationality. Beyond personal experience and external representation, Filipina migrants' identities are shaped by social categories that position them within their families, workplaces, and countries of employment. These include gender, social class, nationality, and migrant worker status.

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The categories can intersect and reinforce one another, giving rise to different opportunities, constraints, and forms of recognition for women.

Family provision and exposure to risk do not enter every story at the same point. In *Anak* (LT02), a mother's position in the household is central to the conflicts that follow her return. In the Veloso timeline (LT04), institutional decisions organize the sequence of events. Both narratives concern Filipina workers. What the audience can learn about family or employment varies with the circumstances and the perspective the work makes available.

The label applied to a migrant can carry different consequences depending on who uses it. In LT13, a journalist's account makes family provision publicly recognizable as heroism. In OFW-BKK's interview, professional identity emerges through her distinction between the working conditions of mathematics and English teachers. The speaker and audience therefore matter to an account of recognition. The occupational comparison remains the participant's observation, not an independently measured salary difference.

The pairing of bayani and biktima in David's public essay (LT11) makes the national language of heroism itself an object of debate. Being recognized as a provider can give dignity to paid work and family support. The same praise can make continued endurance seem like an obligation attached to being Filipina. The essay is evidence that these competing meanings circulate in public argument. It gives no basis for attributing either meaning to every reader or every worker.

Gender, class, and nationality shape the terms on which a migrant worker may be recognized, yet they do not determine the meaning of an action in advance. The student of these narratives can locate that meaning more precisely by identifying the relationship at issue, whether it is with a child, an employer, an institution, or a public audience.

Redefinition of Women's Roles. External categories leave room for a woman to give her circumstances a different meaning. In Sunday Beauty Queen (LT09), workers use time away from domestic employment to participate in a pageant. They meet one another and appear before an audience in a role that their occupation does not define. The difference is visible in what they do together. Whether any individual understands the event as a lasting change in identity is a distinct question.

Agency and resilience are distinct. Resilience refers to the capacity to persevere or recover despite difficulties. Agency concerns the ability to make decisions, negotiate, set boundaries, and participate in shaping one's life. A woman can be resilient while her choices remain limited. She can also exercise agency through a small but meaningful decision even when her story does not end in success.

In Sunday Beauty Queen (LT09), Filipina domestic workers prepare for and take part in a pageant on their weekly day off in Hong Kong. The film gives time on screen to the work of presenting themselves to one another and to an audience. Choosing how to appear in public gives the participants a voice in how they are seen. The opportunity depends on having time away from employers, a condition the interviews show can vary between households.

An interview gives a worker space to name what matters to her, even though the researcher selects which passages appear in the discussion. A journalistic account can convey the views of relatives, officials, or an employer alongside or in place of that voice. In the Hong Kong fire coverage (LT15), public praise for the worker's actions is clearly documented. That praise establishes how others recognized her. A claim about her own sense of identity requires words or actions attributable to her.

Redefining the self can mean retaining an earlier responsibility while giving it a different place in one's life. The pageant participants in LT09 remain domestic workers while developing another public role together. In *Anak* (LT02), the returning mother remains a provider while she and her daughter confront different memories of the separation. Both works show identities changing through relationships that continue.

The three dimensions of identity are read through the perspectives set out in Table 3. Intersectionality supports the analysis of gender, class, and nationality within the three-lens framework

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presented in Figure 1, so that gender is examined together with class, nationality, and migrant status rather than apart from them (Crenshaw, 1989; Mohanty, 2003).

Across these representations, the word used for a woman depends in part on who tells the story. A family can recognize a provider, an employer a caregiver, and a reporter a hero. Each term selects an aspect of her life. Their coexistence is especially apparent when the woman describes priorities that a public account leaves unspoken.

The accounts locate identity in relationships with particular audiences. A public portrayal may cast a caregiver as a hero. The terms on which she is employed, her ties to relatives, and the identities she claims for herself become visible only where a source records them. Attention to gender, class, and nationality helps explain why the same occupational label can carry different expectations across settings.

External recognition and self-understanding need not coincide. A worker can describe a frightening or restrictive experience and still identify a decision she made within it. A public audience may call a caregiver a hero while knowing little about her working arrangements. Holding these descriptions together preserves the difference between how a person is named and what she can do.

These portrayals make identity visible as a relationship among the worker, the people who depend on her, and those who have the power to describe her publicly. The balance changes with genre and audience. A worker's own explanation carries particular weight when an external label supplies only a partial description of her life.

Institutional Power and the Limits of Choice

This section addresses the fourth research question: How are power, marginalization, and agency represented among migrant women in the selected works?

Analysis of the selected contemporary narratives of Filipina migrants (LT01–LT15) situates migrant women's experiences within social and institutional relationships marked by unequal power. Moving from one country to another places women in relationships with the state, employers, legal institutions, and global labor structures. Within these relationships, individuals and institutions vary in their ability to set working conditions, control opportunities, provide protection, and recognize migrant workers' rights.

Three relationships organize the evidence in . Institutions and employers can set conditions that a worker has limited power to change. Public descriptions make some claims to rights or recognition easier to hear than others. Individual and collective actions can create alternatives even while constraints persist. These relationships can be present together in one work.

These dimensions were developed from the theoretical framework of the study, the analysis of LT01 to LT15, and the comparative references named alongside them in Table 4.

Power, marginalization, and agency prove to be interconnected rather than separable. Unequal power relations establish conditions that limit women's opportunities and rights, and women exercise different forms of action and negotiation within those constraints. Feminist literary criticism emphasizes relationships among gender, representation, and power; postcolonial studies examines historical relationships and global inequalities; and diaspora studies focuses on relationships, identity, and belonging across places (Bhabha, 1994; Brah, 1996; Tyson, 2023). These lenses may inform more than one dimension and can be used together where the works provide evidence to support their application.

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Table 4. *Dimensions of Power, Marginalization, and Agency Among Migrant Women*

Dimension	Primary Focus of Analysis	Relevant Theoretical Lens	References for Comparison
Power and institutional control	State, employers, legal systems, and global labor	Postcolonial Studies; Feminist Literary Criticism	Oishi (2005); Constable (2007); Bhabha (1994)
Marginalization and unequal recognition	Vulnerability, discrimination, rights, and representations of women	Feminist Literary Criticism; Postcolonial Studies	UN Women (2017); Tyson (2023); Bhabha (1994)
Agency and negotiation	Action, decision-making, resistance, helping others, and dealing with constraints	Feminist Literary Criticism; Diaspora Studies	Constable (2007); Brah (1996); Tyson (2023)

Control Over Conditions of Work and Movement. Across the selected narratives, unequal authority matters in encounters with employers, recruitment intermediaries, and public institutions. Workers, employers, the state, and legal institutions vary in their ability to set conditions or decide matters directly affecting migrant women's lives. In some situations, institutions authorized to enforce policies or laws have more influence over the outcome than the woman involved. The key difference is who can make or challenge a decision and whose explanation of it reaches the reader.

In LT01 (*The Flor Contemplacion Story*), LT04 (*Mary Jane Veloso Timeline*), and LT05 (*Joanna Demafelis Case*), the analysis considers how the works portray women's relationships with institutions that can affect their safety, freedom, and rights. The events and legal and social contexts differ from one work to another. Each work can be examined to identify who can set the terms of the situation, who supplies the official interpretation of events, and how much opportunity the woman has to present her own account. LT07 differs in one respect, because the song is voiced in the first person by a worker, although its words were written and performed by others. The distribution of voice and authority within the narrative thus becomes an important part of the analysis.

Control also has a temporal dimension. A legal decision changes the course of a public case at a named moment. An employer's power can appear as a recurring limit on when someone may leave a household or take time off. The two situations differ in authority and consequence. Reading them together clarifies why a person can make some decisions for herself while having little control over conditions that shape the rest of her day.

The clearest evidence of institutional power is the decision the account attributes to a particular actor. In LT04 it is possible to locate decisions by authorities in a sequence. In workplace narratives, authority may be visible in who sets hours, permits leave, or responds to a complaint. The distinction identifies what kind of protection or opportunity to challenge a decision is at stake in each case.

Unequal Protection and Public Recognition. A key finding from the selected contemporary narratives of Filipina migrants (LT01–LT15) is that marginalization concerns both the conditions women experience and how their experiences are recognized and recounted. Marginalization goes beyond individual weakness or vulnerability. It is a social process that places certain individuals or groups in positions with limited access to protection, opportunity, recognition, and influence over decisions about their lives. In migration, it can be linked to employment status, gender, nationality, legal status, and conditions in the country of employment. These factors can overlap and produce different forms of discrimination and inequality.

The Flor Contemplacion Story (LT01) portrays a worker through a dramatized legal case. LT04 traces the institutional decisions in the case of Mary Jane Veloso. The report on Joanna Demafelis (LT05) places domestic work and a worker's death in the foreground. Grouping them under vulnerability identifies

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a question they share. The mechanisms represented, and the evidence each supplies for a worker's own perspective, differ. A dramatization, chronology, and news account must therefore carry different evidentiary weight in a comparison of experience.

Marginalization can extend to whose account is heard. A chronology makes the exercise of formal authority legible, but dates of official action say little by themselves about everyday life between those dates. Investigative reporting on Tamfungan (LT08) gives space to the family's search for answers. Their uncertainty is part of what the report documents. It supports a reading of the limits on family knowledge while leaving the cause of unresolved events open.

A rights-based reading of LT01, LT04, and LT05 brings a particular distinction into focus. A reported outcome can show that a worker suffered harm or that an institution made a consequential decision. It does not, on its own, establish what assistance was available beforehand, who could use it, or whether the worker could seek it safely. These are the practical questions raised by the accounts. Resolving them across a jurisdiction would require evidence about implementation beyond the literary and media corpus.

The features on caregivers in Israel (LT14) and Hong Kong (LT15) recognize decisions taken in emergencies. Both give the woman's action a public audience. In Borbon's (2025) Hong Kong report, the writer also describes the worker's injury and the response of officials. Public recognition thus coexists with evidence that the caregiver herself needed protection. The report cannot establish what ordinary employment protections were available to her before the fire.

A central question is whether a woman is recognized on the basis of her rights as a person or seen as more deserving of recognition only when she makes an extraordinary sacrifice. If a narrative centers on exceptional assistance or confronting danger, it is worth asking whether it also attends to other aspects of her personhood and the conditions affecting her life. A work that portrays her actions alongside her rights, needs, and constraints can offer a broader understanding of her identity. The difference can be traced in the contrast between a title that names a victim and one that names a hero.

Unequal recognition has material and narrative dimensions. A worker may have a limited opportunity to obtain protection and also have little opportunity to give her own account publicly. Public attention after a crisis can make both issues easier to see. It does not establish the opportunities she had before it happened.

***Negotiation and Collective Action*.** Migrant women may live within structures marked by unequal power and retain the capacity to act and make decisions. Analysis of the selected contemporary narratives of Filipina migrants (LT01–LT15) examines the constraints women face and the ways they act, decide, negotiate, and interpret their experiences. Agency is understood as the ability to act within circumstances the individual may only partly control.

Agency, resilience, and success are distinct. Resilience is the ability to persevere or face difficulties, while success can mean achieving a particular goal. Agency is broader and can be seen in making decisions, resisting, negotiating, adapting, asking for help, or asserting boundaries. An action can show agency even if it does not succeed. A woman can retain the capacity to act without openly resisting. Each action must therefore be examined in light of the context, available alternatives, and constraints faced by the woman portrayed.

A rescue can be presented as exceptional courage and as an extension of an expected caring role. In LT15, the report describes the worker shielding an infant and also records her own need for assistance. Reading both parts of the report prevents the child's safety from becoming the only outcome that counts. The worker acted on another person's behalf and remained a person whose safety mattered in its own right.

For a worker with constrained choices, the presence of action alone says little about the quality of the alternatives. The participation documented in Sunday Beauty Queen (LT09) matters because it creates a public role outside paid care. In the Veloso timeline (LT04), official decisions delimit the alternatives

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available to the individual. Reading the two examples together shows how one analytical vocabulary can describe substantially different degrees of scope for action.

In *Sunday Beauty Queen* (LT09), organizing and participating in pageants depends on other workers being present and on time available outside paid employment. That setting makes a collective form of action visible. People can act for and with one another without gaining control over every condition of work. The opportunity to gather is therefore part of the interpretation of agency, alongside the choices the documentary presents on screen.

From Housemaid to Hero (LT13) gives family provision a public name. The caregiver features (LT14 and LT15) give prominence to decisions in a crisis. All three recognize initiative, but they use different measures of it. Building a life for a family takes time and its effects may be visible chiefly to the people involved. A protective act during an emergency can become public almost immediately. The difference concerns the horizon of recognition as much as the action itself.

Heroism is a judgment made by someone about an act. Agency concerns what the person could do and the conditions under which she acted. A journalist's choice to praise a worker supplies evidence for the first claim. An attributed decision, description of an alternative, or account of a constraint gives a basis for the second. Keeping the two claims distinct preserves the significance of the act without treating public acclaim as a measure of freedom.

In *Sunday Beauty Queen* (LT09), the workers' pageant provides a setting for cooperation, continuity, and self-presentation in Hong Kong. An audience can recognize them as members of a community organized around an activity they value. Their identities in the documentary therefore extend beyond their relationship to an employer. The continued need for time away from work places a material condition on that opportunity to participate.

The title of LT03, *Victim No. 1: Delia Maga (Jesus, Pray for Us!)*, names the domestic worker but introduces her first as a numbered victim. That order frames the audience's encounter with her through the harm done to her. The title supports an interpretation of how victimhood is represented. Evidence of agency requires an identifiable action or decision in the film.

A decision to participate, seek assistance, or pursue another livelihood can show agency even when the outcome remains uncertain. Interpreting the act requires attention to the options visible in that particular account and to the people whose cooperation it required. This is why the discussion treats the acts of workers and the structures surrounding them as related throughout.

Power, marginalization, and agency stand in a determinate relationship to one another. Social and institutional structures shape the opportunities and constraints available to migrant women, and within those conditions women exercise agency through different forms of action and negotiation. Marginalization and agency interact in both directions, and a worker's situation may change while the wider constraints persist. Table 4 defines the three dimensions.

The comparison shifts the focus from whether a woman acted to what she could reasonably do in the circumstances. The selection of a job, an attempt to secure help, and an act in an emergency each entail decisions, but the available alternatives and the power to change them differ.

Power becomes visible in the acts people are permitted to undertake and in the decisions reserved to others. The timeline of Mary Jane Veloso's case (LT04) makes institutional authority particularly visible. *Sunday Beauty Queen* (LT09) gives more space to workers' participation in an activity they organized outside paid employment. The contrast in emphasis helps locate the claim about power in each source.

Each of these relationships can be located in a specific account of migrant work. The Veloso timeline illustrates institutional control, the Hong Kong fire report illustrates public recognition, and the documentary Sunday Beauty Queen illustrates agency exercised in collective activity. Each of these works can support more than one of the three interpretations that Table 4 defines, which is consistent with Constable's (2007) account of power as something exercised in daily relationships rather than in single decisive events.

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Unequal authority can persist after an action succeeds. A worker may secure assistance in a crisis or become publicly recognized for protecting someone else. The outcome of that act gives little information about her capacity to negotiate working hours, refuse a demand, or obtain continuing protection. Those questions become more accessible through workers' accounts of routine decisions.

For the reading of migrant narratives, the practical implication is to name both the act and the conditions surrounding it. The terms victim, worker, and hero identify distinct features of a case. A title, a reported event, and a worker's own account perform different kinds of evidentiary work, even when they refer to similar relations of care and dependence.

Public Portrayals and Workers' Accounts

This section addresses the fifth research question: How do representations of migration in the selected contemporary texts compare with the lived experiences of Filipina overseas workers as recounted in interviews?

This section compares 15 coded literary and media entries (LT01–LT15) with 15 migrant workers' accounts. The questions in guide attention to who assigns value to a woman's labor, what arrangements shape her choices, and how responsibilities extend across households. A scene or a report supplies evidence about a portrayal. An interview supplies a participant's account of what happened and why it mattered to her.

The participants are identified throughout this discussion by code. Their employment settings and occupations are those recorded in the participant profiles compiled for the study, and the complete profiles and the themes coded for each participant are given in Appendix E (Tables E3.1–E3.4). Five participants worked in the United Arab Emirates (OFW-DXB 1–5), and the others worked in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, China, Thailand, the Maldives, Israel, and in Japan and Vietnam. Their occupations include domestic work and caregiving, hospitality and resort work, teaching, and jewelry work, and several participants moved between occupations or destinations during their time abroad.

Figure 6 shows the support for the five interview themes, which comes from the thematic discussion and from the participant profiles. Six participants illustrate family or livelihood concerns, six illustrate workplace control, four illustrate mothering across distance, five illustrate emotional strain, and three illustrate agency and adaptation. All 15 participants contribute to at least one of these themes, and seven contribute to more than one. The Thai mathematics teacher supplies a contrasting case within the discussion of workplace conditions. For OFW-CN 2, the profile locates borrowing and unstable income in the Philippines before migration; those circumstances inform the financial context of departure rather than documenting adverse working conditions abroad.

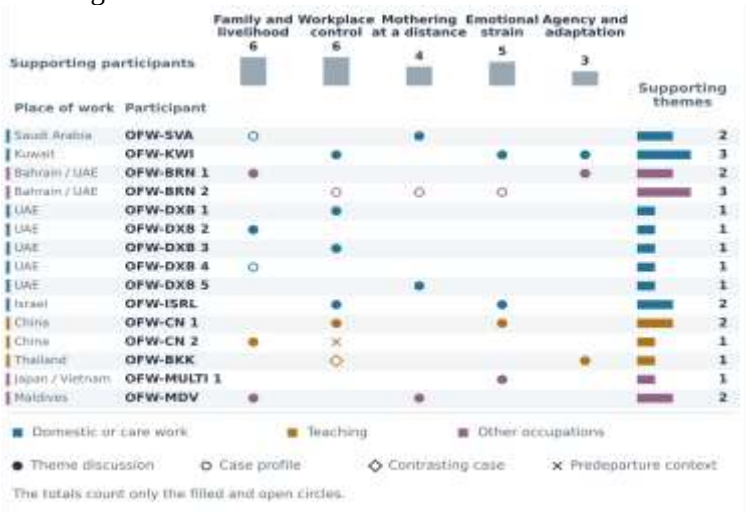


Figure 6. ***Interview Accounts Supporting Five Themes, by Place of Work and Occupation***

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Note. Filled circles identify examples in the thematic discussion. Open circles identify additional support from participant profiles. A diamond marks a contrasting case. A cross marks predeparture circumstances. The marginal totals count the filled and open circles.

Livelihood and Responsibility for Family. The synthesis of 15 accounts from Filipina OFWs shows that decisions to migrate and increase one's income are rooted in interrelated conditions: economic need, family responsibility, limited livelihood opportunities, and the pursuit of a more stable future. The accounts of OFW-BRN 1, OFW-CN 2, OFW-DXB 2, and OFW-MDV reveal different financial and family motivations for working abroad, including educating children, dealing with debt, and establishing a more secure livelihood.

Two profiles extend this comparison. The Saudi-based caregiver (OFW-SVA) described poverty as narrowing the alternatives to departure. OFW-DXB 4 described paying debt and supporting a child's education. These two profile-based examples support the same theme alongside the four accounts named above. Debt has different meanings across the cases. A reason offered for leaving and a financial problem described later in a worker's account should be distinguished.

"I've been away a long time, but I put up with it all for my children's education" (OFW-CN 2).

"My family in the Philippines and my dream of building a livelihood for them" (OFW-BRN 1).

These statements show different aspects of the relationship among migration, finances, and family responsibilities. In the first, endurance is explicitly linked to the goal of educating children. In the second, family and the dream of establishing a livelihood give meaning to the participant's efforts abroad. Taken together, the accounts show that migration responds to immediate needs and aims to build the future participants envisage for their families.

Control Over Working Conditions. The workplace accounts describe several forms of restriction. OFW-DXB 1 reported a strict employer and an early end to a contract, OFW-DXB 3 described limits on time and movement, and OFW-ISRL described verbal abuse and tight employer control. OFW-KWI experienced strain with a first employer and later moved to a different job. OFW-CN 1, an English teacher in China, reported accent-related discrimination and sexual harassment. The profile of OFW-BRN 2 adds a further case: she described having no days off in Dubai and some easing of her workload after moving to Bahrain. The financial instability described by OFW-CN 2 preceded her overseas employment and helps explain why migration was considered.

OFW-DXB 3 described what control over time meant in one placement. She said, *"I don't have a regular day off, and I'm there to look after the person in my care almost twenty-four hours a day."* The phrase "almost twenty-four hours" describes her sense of continuing availability. It is meaningful evidence about rest and the expectation to remain on hand. It supplies no time sheet from which exact working hours could be calculated.

OFW-BKK's account describes greater stability and opportunities for professional growth. As she explained:

"As a math teacher, I don't think I've faced much discrimination" (OFW-BKK).

OFW-BKK described little discrimination in her own mathematics teaching and distinguished it from what she observed in English-language hiring and pay. This is a participant's comparison of how credentials and language status are valued. Read beside OFW-CN 1's first-hand account of accent-related discrimination and harassment in an English teaching role, it shows why the occupational label teacher can conceal differences in reported treatment. Establishing a pay gap across subjects or destinations would require salary and hiring data.

The accounts reveal the tension between migration as a source of livelihood and as a setting that can restrict workers' freedom. A woman may earn an income for her family while experiencing control, discrimination, or insufficient rest. Assessing the benefits of migration requires considering income and

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length of stay abroad alongside working conditions, safety, and the worker's capacity to make decisions for herself.

Mothering Across Distance. One of the most prominent dimensions of the narratives is the continuation of motherhood despite physical separation from family. OFW-SVA remained deeply concerned about her children in the Philippines. For OFW-DXB 5, online communication was important for maintaining family ties, while putting her four children through school remained central to OFW-MDV's efforts abroad. The women continued to be mothers after leaving, and the ways they practiced motherhood changed.

The OFW-BRN 2 profile also identifies her three children as central to the meaning of her work abroad. This adds a fourth case to the comparison. The cases illuminate different aspects of care: concern for children at home (OFW-SVA), contact at a distance (OFW-DXB 5), provision for schooling (OFW-MDV), and the effort to keep working for children despite fatigue (OFW-BRN 2).

Mothers express care under these conditions by sending money, communicating with their children, worrying about their well-being, and making decisions about their futures. The effects of distance can persist. An OFW may continue to fulfill her family obligations while experiencing longing, worry, and emotional strain because she cannot be physically present at important moments in her children's lives.

Digital communication helps explain how transnational care continues in practice. OFW-DXB 5's profile describes her reliance on online contact to sustain family ties. That contact can help a mother participate in family life across distance. Longing persists when the worker cannot be there for important occasions or respond in person to what happens at home.

Emotional Strain and Exhaustion. Financial and family goals help explain migration, and the emotional difficulties that accompany it are integral to understanding participants' experiences. OFW accounts describe emotional exhaustion, longing, worry, and experiences of abuse and unsafe working conditions. These difficulties can be related to working conditions and the obligations participants must continue to meet as well as to their personal circumstances.

OFW-MULTI 1 described a controlling relationship in Japan and harassment in Vietnam, and OFW-CN 1 experienced discrimination and sexual harassment at work. These cases show that alongside the challenge of adapting to a new environment and culture, migration can expose women to relationships that restrict their freedom and affect their emotional well-being. OFW-KWI and OFW-ISRL show how workplace tension and abusive treatment can become part of workers' everyday struggles.

OFW-BRN 2's profile connects fatigue to the absence of days off in one placement and describes some relief after a move. This within-person contrast adds to the accounts of strain by identifying a change in working conditions the participant herself reported. It does not establish how much of that change was attributable to a new country, employer, or set of duties.

Several participants described experiences they found frightening or exhausting. The term emotional strain identifies what they reported about worry, fatigue, and their circumstances. The interview accounts provide evidence about the meanings of those experiences in the participants' lives. Clinical diagnoses would require a different assessment. The distinction matters particularly where an account combines a difficult family situation with demands at work.

Changing Jobs, Learning Skills, and Redefining Work. Participants described vulnerability, sacrifice, and emotional hardship as well as opportunities to gain new skills, find alternative employment, advance professionally, or establish a livelihood. OFW-BRN 1 started as a housekeeper, later learned jewelry work, and established a small business in the Philippines. Her experience shows how migration can broaden opportunities. OFW-BKK's account shows professional and personal growth during a long stay in

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Thailand. After a difficult first job, OFW-KWI moved to another employer and found a different way to pursue her financial goals.

Resilience and agency are distinct. Resilience is the ability to carry on or recover through difficulties, while agency is the capacity to decide and act in a particular context. An OFW may show resilience by continuing to work despite exhaustion. Agency is clearer where there is concrete evidence of taking initiative, changing jobs, learning a skill, or seeking an alternative source of support. Working conditions, financial needs, and family responsibilities can still constrain the scope of agency.

OFW-KWI distinguished two placements when she said, *"Things were better with the second one, and I was treated well."* The comparison is within the same person's work history. It supports her assessment that the treatment changed between employers. It also qualifies a country-level account of vulnerability, since a single destination includes both the difficulty she described and a later placement she judged more favorably.

The difference between learning a skill, remaining in a profession, and choosing a new placement is consequential. Skills can expand the occupations a worker can consider. A change of employer can improve immediate conditions within the same kind of work. Professional continuity can matter to how a worker understands her identity even when she stays in one occupation. These are distinct forms of agency in the interviews, each dependent on the alternatives available to the participant.

These experiences help explain changes in migrant women's identities. Their accounts portray coexisting roles as mothers, workers, professionals, family providers, and individuals with aspirations of their own. Moving abroad can create opportunities to learn and advance and can also create tension between personal needs and family expectations. Filipina migrant identity extends across different roles and is continually shaped by experiences, decisions, relationships, and adaptation to different environments.

***Intersection of Work and Family Obligations*.** The main finding across the interview accounts goes beyond the sacrifices Filipina OFWs make and the hardships they endure for their families. Their accounts show how they give meaning to migration, manage competing obligations and personal needs, and act under conditions they cannot fully control. Their experiences reveal connections between the capacity to act and social constraints, between opportunity and risk, and between material advancement and emotional sacrifice.

This reading moves beyond two simplified views of migration as a direct path to success or an experience defined solely by exploitation. It recognizes Filipina migrants as individuals with goals, the ability to make decisions, and the capacity to adapt, while accounting for the structures that shape their opportunities and constraints. This synthesis provides a basis for the next section, which compares these themes with representations of migration in selected contemporary literary and media texts, as summarized in Table 5.

Table 5 organizes the comparison around seven dimensions that emerged from the two bodies of material. For each dimension, the second column names works that emphasize it, the third column names interview accounts that add to it, and the fourth column states what the two share or where they differ. Codes in parentheses identify the sources: LT01–LT15 for the works and participant codes for the interviews. The example in each row pairs one public work with one participant for whom the same dimension is visible, which lets a reader see how the two kinds of source speak to each other. The descriptions of the paired examples are paraphrases of the sources, the final column gives the authors' reading rather than a finding about all Filipina migrants, and the lists of works and participants in each row are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The complete coded comparison for every row, including each work and participant cited, is given in Appendix E, Tables E4.1–E4.4.

In the complete comparison in Appendix E, the number of sources cited differs across the seven dimensions. For workplace vulnerability, the comparison names five works and eight participants. For structural limits on freedom it names five works and seven participants. The care-work dimension names

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six works and four participants, and the agency dimension names five works and three participants. These differences indicate where the fuller set of examples lies. The breadth of cited evidence and the strength of a particular interpretation remain separate judgments, and several pairs differ in emphasis even where they share a theme.

Table 5. *Seven Cross-Source Comparisons*

Dimension	**What selected works emphasize**	**What interviews add**	**Shared or distinct meaning**
Sacrifice and family responsibility	Leaving to provide for relatives (LT02, LT07, LT10). Example: LT02 Anak, in which a daughter remembers her mother's absence.	Earnings for children's schooling (OFW-MDV). Example: her earnings put four children through school.	Provision carries material and emotional costs, including time spent with children.
Abuse and vulnerability at work	Migrant labor abuse and unpaid wages (LT03, LT05, LT10). Example: LT05 Joanna Demafelis case, which recounts violence in domestic work.	Limited rest and discrimination (OFW-DXB 3, OFW-CN 1). Example: OFW-CN 1, an English teacher, reported harassment at work.	Workplace arrangements can compound vulnerability, in different forms across households and schools.
Gender, care, and emotional labor	Motherhood and caregiving in a crisis (LT12, LT14). Example: LT12 Medalla's poem, in which providing for children gives absence meaning.	Care of children or older adults alongside family obligations (OFW-SVA, OFW-KWI). Example: OFW-SVA cared for a child while away from her family.	Paid care and family care can make simultaneous demands.
Longing and separation	Family absence and longing (LT02, LT10). Example: LT10, Malicdem's poems, which describe setting aside personal happiness to support family.	Maintaining ties through online contact (OFW-DXB 5). Example: online contact helped sustain family ties.	Distance requires ongoing emotional and material work, and contact can coexist with longing.
Agency and adaptation	Collective action or rescue (LT09, LT15). Example: LT09 Sunday Beauty Queen, in which a pageant makes self-expression public.	Learning a trade or changing an employer (OFW-BRN 1, OFW-KWI). Example: jewelry work helped OFW-BRN 1 start a business.	Agency can occur through a single act or develop over time, including through a change of livelihood.
Identity and recognition	Migrant labor dignity and public heroism (LT07, LT10, LT13). Example: LT13 From Housemaid to Hero, whose headline recognizes the worker as a hero.	Professional growth and family provision (OFW-BKK, OFW-MDV). Example: OFW-BKK described growth in her professional life.	Public labels can obscure roles that coexist.

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Dimension	What selected works emphasize	What interviews add	Shared or distinct meaning
Inequality and freedom	Legal and economic limits on choice (LT01, LT04, LT07, LT11). Example: LT04 Mary Jane Veloso timeline, which illustrates legal vulnerability.	Limited rest, movement, or control over work (OFW-DXB 3, OFW-ISRL). Example: OFW-DXB 3 described limits on time and movement.	Similar concerns arise through distinct institutional conditions, and legal institutions and employers restrict choice in different settings.

Note. Each example pairs one public work (LT) with one interview participant (OFW). The short descriptions are paraphrases.

Read across the rows, the works and the interviews most often agree on what is at stake in a theme and differ in the kind of detail they supply. The interviews add the day-to-day conditions behind a theme, such as rest, debt, schooling costs, and online contact, while the works supply a public frame, such as heroism, rescue, or a legal case. The rows on identity and recognition and on inequality and freedom show most clearly that a public label and a worker's own account can coexist without describing the same thing.

Noel Malicdem's *Mga tula ng isang migrante mula sa Saudi Arabia* clarifies some of these conditions by portraying migration as a response to poverty and a means of providing for family. The poems also expose nonpayment of wages, abuse, limited protection, and lack of recognition for OFWs' contributions. They bring a worker's perspective to the examination of migration as an experience of sacrifice and hope shaped by working conditions and structures affecting safety and dignity.

Providing for Family. One of the clearest themes in the integrative comparison of literary and media texts (LT01–LT15) and accounts from 15 Filipina OFWs is the link between migration, sacrifice, and family responsibility. In the first dimension of the comparison, the narrative works LT02, LT10, LT12, and LT13 portray women's departures in relation to love, obligation, and hopes of improving family circumstances. The song LT07 contributes the idea of lives given to the nation, joined to a plea for mercy. Malicdem's poems portray leaving the country as a response to poverty and a way of meeting family needs. The poems also show a desire to secure the family's future even at the cost of temporarily setting aside personal happiness.

The interviews show what these responsibilities involve in practice. For OFW-SVA, OFW-DXB 2, OFW-DXB 5, OFW-BRN 2, OFW-MDV, and OFW-CN 2, important goals of migration include educating children, sending support, repaying debt, and maintaining a livelihood.

In these examples, provision is both a use of earnings and a judgment about family obligation. Malicdem's poems locate that obligation in poverty and limited opportunities at home. The schooling account gives a worker's own measure of what her earnings achieved.

OFW-MDV described the outcome she valued when she said, *"Working here let me put them through school and help them get ahead in life."* In context, she was speaking about her four children. For this participant, the achievement is visible in what her earnings made possible over time. Read beside the daughter's sense of absence in *Anak* (LT02), her statement shows why the value of provision and the cost of a parent's absence need to be interpreted from more than one position in a family.

Parreñas (2001a) describes how transnational motherhood distributes care across households. A feminist reading of the film asks why a mother remains answerable for her absence even when she leaves to provide. A diasporic reading brings both sides of the arrangement into view. Earning school fees abroad and growing up with a parent elsewhere belong to the same question about family care, although the film and the interview speak for different families.

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Exposure to Harm at Work. The second dimension is abuse and vulnerability at work, as seen in LT03, LT05, LT06, LT10, and LT11 and in the accounts of OFW-KWI, OFW-DXB 1–4, OFW-BRN 2, OFW-CN 1, and OFW-ISRL. The interviews describe strict employer control, insufficient rest, verbal and emotional abuse, discrimination, and sexual harassment. Vulnerability can result from the physical demands of a job and from unequal power between the worker and employer.

Malicdem's poems specifically portray going unpaid for several months, indifference to the worker's circumstances, and limited protection from institutions expected to help OFWs. In these representations, vulnerability can arise from the actions of an abusive individual and from systems that limit migrant workers' ability to assert their rights and obtain adequate help.

The public works locate vulnerability at different points. A dramatized case can concentrate attention on an abusive relationship or a legal decision. Malicdem's account of unpaid wages brings a continuing employment arrangement and how one anticipates help into view. By comparison, OFW-DXB 3's description of irregular time off identifies the expectation of remaining available for care. These portrayals and accounts give different kinds of evidence about who controls a worker's time, resources, and access to assistance.

Providers of Care and the Terms of Provision. The third dimension is the link between gender and care work, as shown in LT02, LT03, LT05, LT12, LT13, and LT14 and in the accounts of OFW-SVA, OFW-KWI, OFW-BRN 2, and OFW-ISRL. Both corpora offer grounds for examining how women are associated with caring, serving, and attending to other people's well-being. In the interviews, care work involves looking after children or older adults in the country of employment and continuing to act as mothers and providers for families in the Philippines.

Care has two sides in these accounts. It provides a livelihood and enables workers to meet family needs. It can also cause severe exhaustion when workers are expected to provide continuous physical and emotional services without adequate rest or recognition. Women who care for other families may keep worrying about their own families in the Philippines. Care thus crosses national borders and links different households and families.

The selected works differ in the attention they give to the time, skill, and emotional investment that paid care requires. Portraying women as naturally caring can obscure the fact that care is labor deserving recognition and protection. Portrayals of fatigue, responsibility, and constraints make the relationship among gender, labor, and the unequal distribution of responsibility clearer.

The proposed comparison helps distinguish valuing care from protecting the person providing it. A crisis account such as LT14 can credit a worker's judgment under pressure. A household account about persistent fatigue makes a different demand on the reader, because it asks what rest, relief, or support a worker can obtain during ordinary employment. These readings explain why recognition and protection both matter, and why one cannot be inferred from the other.

Family Experiences of Separation. Longing and emotional separation connect the representations in LT02, LT10, and LT12 with the experiences of OFW-SVA, OFW-DXB 2, OFW-DXB 5, OFW-BRN 2, and OFW-MDV. Interviewees experienced longing as part of being away from their children, spouses, and other family members. This feeling of loss can also be tied to worry about the family's situation, being unable to share in important events, and tension between the need to earn a living and the desire to be with loved ones.

Literature and media can represent separation through memory, symbolism, longing, or dramatic scenes of parting and reunion. In Malicdem's poems, the emotional burden of migration appears in descriptions of putting aside personal happiness and enduring life abroad for the family that remained at home. The poems depict the emotional sacrifices of leaving the country, including in poems that do not focus on missing a particular person.

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Interview accounts identify practical ways to remain involved with family: keeping in touch online, sending support, and contributing to decisions from abroad. The meaning of contact depends on who can make time for it and who provides care locally. Acedera and Yeoh (2021) show how communication depends on relationships among migrants, children, and caregivers in the Philippines. Read against that work, the interviews establish how the participants describe their own side of these arrangements. The responses of people at home are visible only where a narrative or participant conveys them.

Technology has limits in sustaining family ties. Video calls and other digital platforms help maintain communication and only partly substitute for physical presence, direct care, and participation in daily life. In some cases, communication can make problems clearer without immediately resolving them, such as a child's needs or a family conflict. Technology is therefore a means of sustaining relationships across distance, with limits on how much it can ease longing.

***Changing a Livelihood*.** The fifth dimension draws on LT06, LT09, LT13, LT14, and LT15 and on accounts from OFW-BRN 1, OFW-BKK, and OFW-KWI to examine migrant women's ability to act and decide within their circumstances. In the interviews, agency appears in learning new skills, changing jobs, starting businesses, and continuing a professional career. OFWs can seek opportunities to improve their circumstances even when conditions are imposed on them.

Asked about her work after moving to a later placement, OFW-BRN 1 described going from household work to employment with a jeweler. *"That's where I learned how to make and handle jewelry,"* she said. She then linked that experience to saving and opening a small shop. The order matters for the interpretation. The work arrangement made a skill available, and that skill became part of a livelihood she could pursue. The account locates agency in the decisions and opportunities that connected these stages.

The Hong Kong fire coverage (LT15) makes initiative visible through the emergency rescue. Sunday Beauty Queen (LT09) complicates a division between public portrayals and interviews. As the documentary follows workers organizing a pageant on their days off, it makes agency visible through coordination and relationships. The sequence in OFW-BRN 1's interview also matters, although her account ties together changes in placement, learning a trade, and earning independently. Together, these cases indicate that the evidence for agency depends on what an account follows and whose activity it shows.

***Recognition of a Worker's Identity*.** The sixth dimension, identity transformation, appears in LT06, LT07, LT09, LT10, LT11, LT13, and LT14 and in the accounts of OFW-BRN 1, OFW-BKK, OFW-MDV, and OFW-CN 1–2. The interviews show that participants can hold multiple roles. They may be mothers, workers, professionals, family providers, entrepreneurs, and individuals with aspirations of their own. Migration can offer opportunities to learn new skills, experience another culture, and reassess one's abilities and goals.

Literature and media portray migrant women as heroes, victims, family providers, or individuals seeking recognition and dignity. Malicdem's poems depict the OFW as a worker who strives to improve the family's circumstances and may experience exploitation, inadequate protection, and a lack of recognition for their contribution. Although the poems address migrant workers more broadly, they shed light on migrant worker identity and the tension between the heroic image of OFWs and the problems they face.

These representations can meaningfully recognize migrant workers' sacrifices and can simplify their identities when a single role receives all the attention. A woman consistently portrayed as a self-sacrificing mother, for example, may receive little recognition for her professional aspirations, personal needs, and desire for a life of her own beyond family responsibilities.

The interviews make the coexistence of multiple identities more readily observable, together with the tensions it produces. A professional OFW may advance in her career while continuing to carry family

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responsibilities at a distance, and the two commitments are described in the same account rather than in sequence.

***Restrictions on Movement and Choice*.** The seventh dimension concerns structural vulnerability and limits on freedom, as seen in LT01, LT04, LT05, LT07, and LT11 and in accounts from OFW-KWI, OFW-DXB 1–4, OFW-CN 1, and OFW-ISRL. In the interviews, freedom is restricted by strict employer control, unsafe working conditions, insufficient rest, and circumstances that make it difficult for workers to leave an unfavorable situation immediately. These experiences show that OFWs make decisions under constraints and in unequal circumstances.

The Veloso timeline (LT04) shows restrictions through successive decisions by public authorities. The interviews describe other ways options can narrow, including the need to keep earning, responsibilities to family, and limited access to alternative jobs. Staying in a difficult placement can reflect a calculation about income and the possibility of securing another job. The question is which alternatives were available to that worker at the time and who could affect them. The sources give different levels of detail about those alternatives.

In LT04, the limits on movement are tied to a legal case. OFW-DXB 3 described a different restriction arising from the demands of an employer and the need to remain available for care. The comparison concerns who controls movement and time. Similar language about freedom does not make an employment arrangement equivalent to detention or establish an interview participant's legal status. This distinction preserves the gravity and institutional setting of each account.

***Recognition Across the Two Sources*.** The comparisons reveal a difference between recognition and discretion. Recognition concerns who sees a woman's work and how they value it. Discretion concerns what she can decide about her time, movements, earnings, or work. An act of care may be highly visible to a family or a public audience while the conditions under which the worker acted receive little attention.

The comparison records preserve the source of these judgments. The three questions set out in Figure 1 also help locate where the sources fall silent. A worker can describe paying school costs without describing who decided the amount to remit. A report can document public praise for a rescue while leaving the worker's ordinary employment arrangements unknown.

Across these cases, the period a narrative covers also matters. A rescue can be recognized in a single headline. Providing for a family, learning a trade, or organizing a community event takes a sequence of actions for its significance to emerge. The documentary *Sunday Beauty Queen* (LT09) follows that longer timescale in a public work, just as an interview can center on a single turning point.

The *Gulf News* headline makes public praise part of the Hong Kong fire story (Borbon, 2025). The headline in *The Chosun Ilbo* centers the child's rescue (The Chosun Ilbo, 2025). The titles make both the act and the recognition it receives visible. The interview with OFW-BRN 1 supports an additional question about the opportunities through which she learned a skill and used it independently. Reading the sources together connects the public visibility of an action with an inquiry into the working conditions that gave the person room to act.

The comparison also raises a practical question about recognition. Public praise for sacrifice establishes little about whether a worker can obtain rest, report a problem privately, or reach someone with the authority to respond. These are specific questions of gender equality, decent work, and reduced inequalities, and they provide the link between the qualitative findings and the selected Sustainable Development Goal targets.

Comparing cases also identifies where a parallel ends. The news account of a worker in danger takes its form from a reported event. An interview about control over time describes a recurring arrangement of work and rest. Both can illuminate unequal power. Their consequences cannot be equated simply because

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the study uses the same thematic term. This distinction protects the more ordinary experience from disappearing within the headline and the more extreme case from becoming a proxy for all workers.

Gender Equality, Decent Work, and Inequality in Migration

This section addresses the sixth research question: How do the findings relate to contemporary issues of gender, labor, and global migration, particularly Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8, and 10?

The integrative analysis of contemporary literary and media representations (LT01–LT15) and interviews with 15 Filipina Overseas Filipino Workers (participant codes as listed in Table 1) shows that migrant women's experiences are rooted in interconnected issues of gender equality, decent work, and reduced inequalities. Migration enables workers to earn an income, support their families, and meet livelihood goals, while safety, dignity, and equal treatment remain uncertain. The findings show a tension between the economic opportunities migration brings and the social, gendered, and institutional conditions that can limit women's freedom and welfare.

The selected Sustainable Development Goal targets give a policy context for the findings on discrimination, working conditions, and access to protection. Each target is paired below with the evidence that bears on it and with the implication the study draws. The following sections examine each goal in turn.

Each selected target is paired in Table 6 with the evidence from the two bodies of material and with the implication the study draws.

One target is engaged by evidence of markedly different kinds. For Goal 5, the public narratives supply cases of abuse and legal uncertainty, while the interviews supply the routine control of rest and movement that no case report records. For Goal 8, the distinction between holding a job and holding decent work is visible in both sources, which is consistent with the International Labour Organization's (2021) separation of a recognized right from an enforced one. For Goal 10, the evidence indicates that safe migration cannot rest on individual resilience alone, since the conditions a worker meets are set by employers, agencies, and states rather than by her own capacity to endure. The target descriptions paraphrase the United Nations 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015), and the links drawn here are interpretations of the selected works and accounts rather than measurements of any Sustainable Development Goal indicator.

***SDG 5 and Gender Equality*.** The findings show that Filipina migrants' experiences are tied to social expectations and roles associated with women, particularly caregiving, domestic work, and maintaining family welfare. Literary and media representations such as LT01 (The Flor Contemplacion Story), LT04 (Mary Jane Veloso Timeline), LT05 (Joanna Demafelis Case), LT07 (Kahit Konting Awa), and LT11 (Filipina Migrant Workers: Bayani or Biktima?) present situations involving abuse, legal uncertainty, and limited ability to defend oneself. Some domestic workers and caregivers in the interviews experienced strict employer control, verbal abuse, insufficient rest, and emotional exhaustion.

The interviews also reveal opportunities and forms of agency. OFW-BRN 1 used skills she had acquired to start a small business in the Philippines, showing how migration can increase economic independence and expand opportunity. OFW-BKK experienced professional and personal growth during a long stay abroad. These cases suggest that migration can be a setting for learning, developing skills, and transforming identity.

Individual advancement and full gender equality are distinct. The ability to save, start a business, or continue working amid difficulties demonstrates agency, while conditions that can lead to discrimination and abuse may persist. Agency is the ability to make decisions and act within existing constraints.

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Table 6. *Study Findings and Selected Sustainable Development Goal Targets*

SDG and target	Representations in texts	Accounts in interviews	Implication
SDG 5, Targets 5.1 and 5.2: end discrimination against women; eliminate violence and exploitation	Abuse, legal uncertainty, and limited ability to defend oneself (LT01, LT04, LT05, LT11)	Strict employer control, verbal abuse, insufficient rest, and emotional exhaustion among domestic workers and caregivers; new skills and a business (OFW-BRN 1) and professional growth (OFW-BKK)	Empowerment requires both recognition of women's capacity to act and protection of their safety, dignity, and equal treatment
SDG 8, Targets 8.5 and 8.8: decent work for women and men; labor rights and safe working environments, including for migrant women	Migration as a response to inadequate livelihoods and family need	Education, debt, and livelihood as motives (OFW-SVA, OFW-CN 2, OFW-DXB 2, OFW-MDV); control, abuse, insufficient rest, and job insecurity (OFW-KWI, OFW-DXB 1, OFW-DXB 3, OFW-ISRL); harassment in a professional setting (OFW-CN 1)	Employment abroad should be judged by fair treatment, rest, safety, and rights as well as by income and remittances
SDG 10, Target 10.7: orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration	Legal uncertainty, exploitation, and limited protection	Conditions that vary by occupation, employer, and destination; limited control over time and movement; discrimination reported by one English teacher in China; agency through changing employers, learning skills, and starting businesses	Safe migration should not depend on individual endurance; it requires pre-departure information, clear contracts, complaint mechanisms, and enforcement

SDG 8 and Decent Work and Economic Growth. Literary and media representations and interviews show that migration can be a response to inadequate livelihood opportunities and the need to support one's family. OFW-SVA, OFW-CN 2, OFW-DXB 2, and OFW-MDV described educating children, repaying debt, and sustaining a livelihood as important reasons for working abroad. Migration becomes a strategy for meeting needs that may be difficult to meet in their communities of origin.

The findings show that employment abroad can come with poor working conditions. OFW-KWI, OFW-DXB 1, OFW-DXB 3, and OFW-ISRL described strict employer control, verbal and emotional abuse, insufficient rest, and job insecurity. OFW-CN 1 experienced another form of vulnerability, including discrimination and sexual harassment in a professional setting. Risks can arise in different types of work, with their form and severity varying by workers' positions and the specific conditions of employment.

Employment and decent work are distinct. A job can provide an income. Decent work also requires fair treatment, a safe environment, adequate rest, respect for rights, and protection from abuse. Evaluating the success of migration entails looking at the employment contract and regular remittances alongside whether the job provides fair and safe conditions for the worker.

The economic contribution of Filipina OFWs also matters. Earnings and remittances can pay for children's education, home construction, debt repayment, and starting a business. These goals are visible

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in the accounts of OFW-CN 2, OFW-MDV, and OFW-BRN 1. Migration expanded these families' financial capacity and created opportunities that might have been difficult to secure in the Philippines.

Migration can contribute to economic growth and create opportunities for families, while exacting a high personal cost when labor protections are inadequate. The main implication for SDG 8 is the need to promote migration that generates income, provides decent working conditions, and recognizes workers' rights and dignity.

SDG 10 and Reduced Inequalities. SDG 10 raises questions about access to protection, recognition of skills, and freedom of movement. The legal circumstances depicted in a selected text do not establish a participant's legal status. In the interviews, OFW-DXB 3 described restrictions on her time and movement, and OFW-CN 1 described discrimination in an English-teaching position in China. OFW-BKK's account of mathematics teaching in Thailand gives a different perspective on subject specialization and opportunities. The contrasts identify questions about rights and workplace arrangements that can be examined in other settings.

Two teachers make the limits of an occupational category especially clear. OFW-CN 1 described accent discrimination and harassment. OFW-BKK, a mathematics teacher, reported a different experience and distinguished her position from that of some English teachers. Their accounts show how language, subject specialization, and employer expectations can matter within teaching. A comparison of two accounts cannot identify a general difference between national systems or establish relative salary levels.

The interviews also show that OFWs can take steps to improve their circumstances. Changing employers or countries, developing new skills, and starting a business demonstrate agency within constraints. The ability to adapt can coexist with persistent inequality. When workers' safety and welfare depend solely on their ability to endure, avoid abuse, or find another job, deeper power imbalances remain unresolved.

***The Terms on Which Migration Offers Opportunity*.** Literary and media representations and the lived experiences of Filipina migrants provide different kinds of evidence. The works have their own narrative purposes, selection of details, and ways of giving meaning to events. The interviews are based on the experiences and interpretations of 15 participants. Convergence helps identify interconnected issues, while experiences can differ among migrant women. Differences between the corpora can reveal experiences that are emphasized, simplified, or given little attention in literature and media.

Personal success and fair migration conditions are distinct. Learning new skills, starting a business, and helping one's family are significant achievements, and conditions that limit workers' freedom and welfare still warrant attention. Resilience shows the ability to persevere amid hardship. Institutions remain responsible for providing protection and enforcing fair labor standards. Progress can therefore be assessed through OFWs' ability to send remittances and save money as well as their ability to work safely and make decisions free from fear, abuse, or lack of alternatives.

The study's main contribution to discussion of SDGs 5, 8, and 10 is showing that Filipina migration creates opportunities within relationships marked by unequal power. Integrating literary and media texts with interviews reveals gender, labor, and inequality as interconnected forces shaping Filipina migrants' decisions, experiences, and identities. Meaningful development requires opportunities to earn and improve one's livelihood and conditions that recognize women's rights, dignity, safety, and capacity to act.

Safe and fair migration is an individual achievement of OFWs and a social and institutional responsibility. The experiences and tensions identified provide a basis for the next section, which proposes the DIGIMIGRA (*Digital Migration Identity and Gendered Remittance Agency*) Framework. It connects digital ties, migrant women's identities, and agency within family and economic relationships. The framework must draw directly on patterns and relationships identified in the data to broaden understanding

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of Filipina migrants' experiences while accounting for the social and institutional conditions that shape their lives.

The Proposed DIGIMIGRA Framework

This section presents the framework the study proposes. It was developed from the findings reported in the preceding sections and is offered as a basis for policies, welfare programs, protection mechanisms, and educational interventions for Filipina overseas workers and their families.

***Rationale for Migrant Support*.** The comparison in Figure 1 informs a practical question. If a worker is praised for care yet has little control over rest or opportunities to seek help, what kind of support could she actually use? The proposed DIGIMIGRA Framework takes up that question. The following section links accounts of working conditions, family contact, and changes in livelihood to possible services and questions for a pilot.

The findings show that Filipina migrants may experience varying levels of opportunity, discrimination, vulnerability at work, and emotional separation from their families. Their accounts also show an ability to adapt, find alternative opportunities, develop skills, and continue pursuing family and livelihood goals. The conditions shaping their lives remain partly outside their control. Migrant women exercise agency within the opportunities and constraints created by families, labor markets, institutions, and transnational relationships.

Digital communication and online relationships matter to staying connected with family, exchanging information, building communities, and seeking support. OFW-DXB 5's reliance on online family contact helps explain the proposed emphasis on connection. Extending a platform to rights information or confidential referrals would serve a further purpose and requires a pilot. Addressing migration challenges through these platforms requires reliable services, accurate information, data protection, and mechanisms responsive to migrant workers' actual needs.

DIGIMIGRA organizes the findings around digital interaction, gendered inequality, migrant mobility, and gendered remittance agency. These dimensions connect the conditions workers described to decisions about support. For example, an account of sustaining family contact online can inform the design of a contact channel. Whether that channel is private enough to use for a referral remains a question for a pilot.

Seven operational pillars are proposed based on these four dimensions: Digital Protection, Empowerment, Psychosocial Support, Identity and Community Building, Participation and Feedback System, Research and Monitoring, and Reintegration and Return Support. The pillars are intended to translate DIGIMIGRA's conceptual insights into possible strategies and programs for institutions, migration organizations, universities, and OFW communities.

The DIGIMIGRA Framework is a proposed conceptual and applied contribution whose effectiveness has yet to be demonstrated in practice. Its main contribution is to connect digital ties, unequal working conditions, mobility, remittance agency, and identity formation in one integrative framework. It can provide a more systematic basis for designing gender-responsive, people-centered, and technology-enabled programs that recognize Filipina migrants' rights, dignity, and capacity to make decisions.

***Purpose and Objectives of DIGIMIGRA*.** DIGIMIGRA links digital ties, gender equality, mobility, and decisions about earnings in a proposed framework for worker support. Its design concerns protection, access to services, psychosocial well-being, and identity. The seven objectives below describe the functions that workers and prospective partners could examine during development.

Describe how digital interaction, gender inequality, mobility, and gendered remittance agency relate to Filipina migrants' experiences.

Identify possible digital mechanisms for increasing access to reliable information on rights, protection, and migration services.

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Propose strategies to strengthen OFWs' capacity in education, financial management, skills development, and preparation for reintegration.

Propose mechanisms for emotional support, maintenance of family ties, and building migrant communities whose members care for one another.

Promote meaningful OFW participation in evaluating and improving programs and services intended for them.

Set out proposed mechanisms for research, monitoring, and evaluation to assess the accessibility, usefulness, and potential effects of programs based on DIGIMIGRA.

Relate proposed strategies to SDGs 5, 8, and 10 while considering migrant workers' dignity, safety, and rights.

These are design objectives for a future pilot. Implementation would supply the first evidence about whether workers could reach a service, receive a response, and use the support offered. A claim that the service improved worker welfare would require further evidence on outcomes.

Connection Between the Framework and the Findings. Figure 7 traces the path from the empirical basis, the two bodies of evidence, through the four interpretive dimensions and seven service pillars to the proposed pilot outcomes.

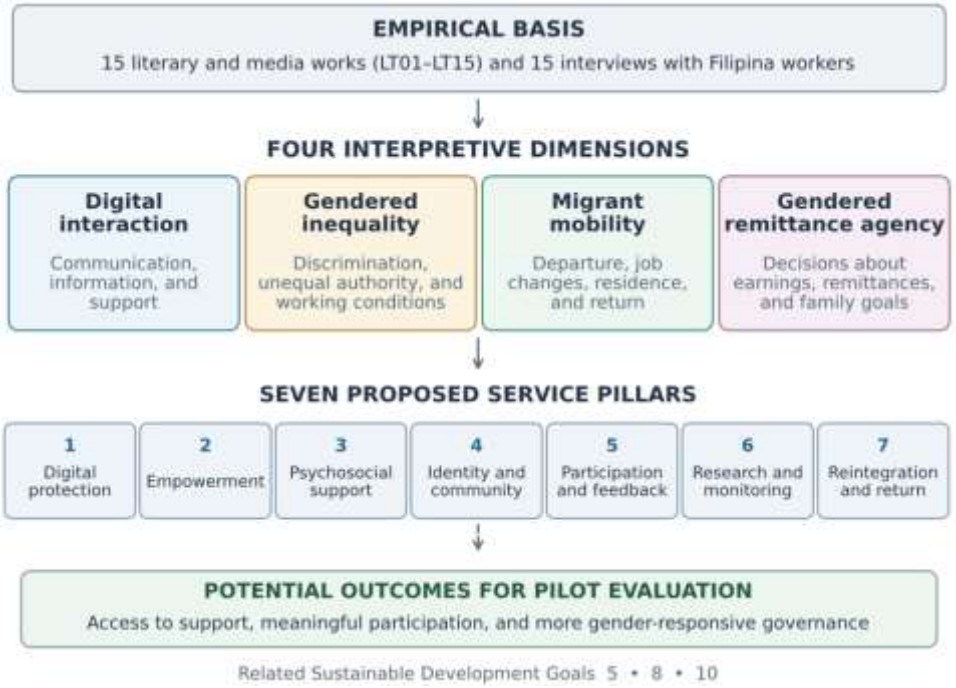


Figure 7. *Proposed Conceptual Structure of the DIGIMIGRA Framework*

Four interpretive dimensions drawn from the 15 works and the 15 interviews connect to seven proposed service pillars, as set out in Figure 7. The broken link indicates potential outcomes that a future pilot would evaluate rather than results the present study reports, and the arrows organize the conceptual proposal.

The dimension of gendered remittance agency has the least support in the interview data. The interview guide did not ask who decides how remitted earnings are used, so this dimension draws on the literature and on participants' accounts of family provision, and it is offered as a proposal to be examined with workers before any pilot.

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The relationship between the dimensions and the proposed services is practical rather than abstract. A worker's ability to act on information received online depends in part on privacy, time, control over earnings, and access to a receiving institution. A referral pathway could therefore be evaluated at initial contact, at acknowledgment, and at follow-up, since each step answers a different question about whether assistance can be reached and used. The findings support developing and testing that pathway with workers and participating organizations.

A referral pilot could report the number of initial contacts, the share of eligible referrals acknowledged within the agreed service interval, and the share of agreed follow-ups completed when due. Count in the timeliness denominator only referrals received in the reporting cohort for which the full service interval has elapsed by the reporting cutoff. The size of the population with an unmet need may be unknown, so initial contacts are a measure of use. Workers who choose to give feedback could say whether they had enough privacy to make contact and whether they received support they could use. These measures would help identify at which stage access breaks down.

Evidence and Proposed Services. Figure 7 draws on the 15 literary and media works and the 15 workers' accounts. Digital interaction concerns information and support. Gendered inequality concerns discrimination, authority, and the conditions of work. Migrant mobility covers departure, residence abroad, changes of employment, and return. Gendered remittance agency concerns decisions about earnings, responsibilities, and livelihood. The seven proposed service pillars translate these dimensions into possible areas for a pilot, with access to support, meaningful participation, and gender-responsive governance as the intended outcomes for evaluation.

Digital interaction can help migrants obtain information about their rights and maintain family ties. An OFW's ability to act on that information can still be affected by working conditions, access to help, and the degree of freedom in the country of employment.

***Proposed Services and Indicators*.** The proposed services and their illustrative indicators are proposals rather than measured results. Digital protection would provide verified information on rights, contracts, and complaint mechanisms, and could be monitored by the number of referrals sent to the appropriate service. Empowerment would offer training in financial literacy, livelihood skills, and career preparation, monitored by training completion. Psychosocial support would connect workers and families with qualified counseling and peer support, monitored by recorded access and voluntary feedback, an approach consistent with evidence that workers turn first to peers (Cheng & Vicera, 2022; Ho et al., 2022). Identity and community would support digital storytelling, cultural activity, and safe migrant communities, monitored by participation and by feedback on a sense of belonging. Participation and feedback would provide accessible and safe ways for workers to comment on policies and services, monitored by the share of feedback reviewed and addressed. Research and monitoring would assess needs, accessibility, service quality, and potential outcomes, monitored by the completeness and quality of reporting. Reintegration and return would connect returning workers with skills, livelihood, and transition services, monitored by service participation and by follow-up on work or livelihood. The full strategies and the prospective partners for each pillar are set out in the implementation materials prepared for the framework.

Each proposed service is paired with one example of what a pilot could monitor, so that delivery and outcome are recorded separately rather than together.

- ***Interpretation of the Proposed Indicators*.** Digital services should complement in-person assistance, official legal services, and immediate intervention in cases of danger. Consideration should also be given to privacy, informed consent, cybersecurity, the digital divide, and the safety of workers who may be at risk if employers discover their contact with support channels.

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Strengths and Risks of a DIGIMIGRA Pilot. An assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was made before any pilot. The principal strength is that the framework is grounded in the findings of the study and brings gender, labor, digital relationships, and identity into a single design that could be linked to existing services. The principal weaknesses are that the framework is untested and that digital literacy and internet access are unevenly distributed, so clear governance and evaluation standards would be required. The opportunities lie in the expansion of digital services, in existing migrant communities, and in possible collaboration with government, academic, and migration organizations. The threats include online scams, misinformation, data breaches, cyber exploitation, and restrictions on access to digital platforms in some countries. The four responses proposed for these factors are design judgments rather than findings, and evidence on access, service use, unintended effects, and worker-reported outcomes would come from a future evaluation.

These judgments identify where the proposal would need evidence rather than where evidence already exists.

Pilot records can distinguish whether a service was delivered from whether the worker's situation changed. A timely acknowledgment concerns delivery. A worker's reported ability to use the service privately concerns access. Whether a complaint was resolved on acceptable terms concerns an outcome. Recording these separately gives workers and prospective partners evidence about where a proposed service needs attention. The monitoring instrument proposed for the framework likewise keeps responses about implementation separate from measures of knowledge, confidence, and worker outcomes.

- ***Implications for Pilot Design.*** DIGIMIGRA's initial direction is to develop programs that can be tested, evaluated, and revised based on OFW feedback and actual implementation outcomes.

Development and Evaluation. The following process is proposed to strengthen the basis of DIGIMIGRA.

Strengthen the conceptual basis. Clarify the definitions and boundaries of the four dimensions and explain how the framework differs from existing migration studies and models.

Seek expert validation. Obtain systematic feedback from specialists in migration, gender studies, digital communication, social work, and public policy.

Consult overseas workers about the seven proposed pillars. Ask workers what they currently do to obtain information, contact support services, or resolve problems, and which barriers remain. Include workers with varied work schedules, occupational histories, and access to private communication. Document how their feedback changes the planned services and which design questions remain open before pilot use.

Conduct a pilot test. If sufficient capacity and authorization are available, test a limited part of the framework, such as digital rights information and the referral system, before implementing the full model.

Monitor and revise. During a pilot, track the proportion of referrals acknowledged within an agreed service interval, using eligible referrals received in the reporting cohort with the full service interval elapsed at the reporting cutoff. Ask workers whether they could use the service privately and what happened after a referral. Review these accounts alongside response times before deciding on expansion.

A pilot could establish whether workers can reach a service and whether the receiving organization can act on a referral. Record the service interval before the pilot. For eligible referrals that have reached the end of that interval by the reporting cutoff, divide the number with a documented acknowledgment within the interval by the total eligible referrals in that group. Report referrals still within the interval and referrals that do not meet eligibility criteria separately. Use voluntary follow-up to understand access, safety, and worker experience. Longer-term claims about improved protection would require an outcome measure, follow-up, and consideration of other changes that may have affected participants.

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Contribution and Limits of DIGIMIGRA. The DIGIMIGRA Framework recognizes that Filipina migrants' experiences encompass more than economic need and physical relocation abroad. They also involve gendered expectations, working conditions, family responsibilities, identity formation, and the ability to make financial decisions within the constraints of migration.

The interview evidence is more direct for some parts of the framework than for others. OFW-DXB 5 describes using online communication to stay in touch with family. OFW-CN 1 reports accent discrimination and harassment at work. OFW-BRN 1 recounts changing countries and occupations before starting a business in the Philippines. These cases illustrate digital interaction, gendered inequality, and mobility, respectively. OFW-MDV's account of financing four children's schooling identifies a use of earnings she valued. The profile gives less information about who decided the timing or amount of transfers or how competing claims were negotiated. A pilot could ask workers about a recent decision over earnings and how much discretion they felt they had. That question would examine remittance agency more directly.

The framework recognizes limits to digital connectivity and individual agency. Access to social media or online information is insufficient to ensure protection against abuse, fair working conditions, or equal opportunity. The ability to send remittances, save, and support the family can coexist with limits on economic independence. Digital strategies therefore need effective institutional support, protection of rights, and safe mechanisms for seeking help.

As a proposed framework, DIGIMIGRA provides a basis for further evaluation, consultation, and possible implementation. Its usefulness depends on the range of concepts it brings together and on its ability to maintain a clear connection to the evidence, recognize technological limits, and advance Filipina migrants' rights, dignity, and ability to make decisions.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation in Relation to Prior Research

This interpretation is consistent with Parreñas (2000), who discussed the relationship between the global economy and the transfer of reproductive labor among women of different classes and economic circumstances. In this arrangement, households with greater economic resources may entrust care work to migrant women from countries such as the Philippines. In turn, the families these women leave behind rely on others to fulfill care responsibilities in their own homes. Women's migration thus involves the movement of workers between countries and the redistribution of care responsibilities among families connected across places.

In a qualitative study of Filipina migrant domestic workers in Taiwan, Lan (2006) showed that gendered expectations persist as women move from providing care in their own homes to working for pay abroad. Even within a formal employment relationship, their work may remain tied to roles traditionally associated with women. Paid employment may perpetuate those expectations under a new economic arrangement. A central question in reading the selected narratives is how they portray care work: as professional labor deserving fair working conditions, or simply as a natural expression of a woman's care and willingness to sacrifice.

Blaydes (2023) provides further empirical support for this interpretation. In a study of migrant domestic workers' working conditions in Arab Gulf countries, many Filipina and Indonesian respondents experienced unfair conditions, including excessive working hours, delayed wages, and denial of a weekly day off. The study focused on lived working conditions rather than literary representation, providing additional context for problems portrayed in the selected narratives. This makes it especially important to examine how domestic work and caregiving are portrayed and whether they are recognized as valuable labor that merits fair pay and decent conditions.

Feminist literary criticism asks how gender norms organize a portrayal and whose work those norms make visible (Donovan, 1989; Kolodny, 1975; Spivak, 1998). In *Anak* (LT02), the same labor that

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enables a mother to provide for her children also takes her away from them. A judgment about whether she has been a good mother therefore depends in part on which member of the family is speaking. Medalla's poem (LT12) gives provision a public language of maternal dedication. Together, the film and the poem show why recognition of sacrifice need not include recognition of the time, skill, and working conditions that made provision possible.

Said (1978) links representation to the power to define another group, while Spivak (1988) asks what happens when others speak for a person whose own account is difficult to hear. The distinction is concrete in *From Housemaid to Hero* (LT13). Its title makes the journalist's act of recognition visible to readers. It establishes how the feature presents the worker and leaves open how she would name the same achievement. A postcolonial reading can trace that inequality in public voice. Establishing a historical chain from colonial institutions to a particular employer's conduct would require a different set of sources.

Sayres's (2005) report for the International Labour Organization (ILO) documents the working conditions of Filipino domestic workers at home and abroad. It helps explain the risks of work in private households and of employment arrangements that can expose workers to exploitation, forced labor, and human trafficking. LT03 (Victim No. 1: Delia Maga [Jesus, Pray for Us!]) and LT05 (Joanna Demafelis Case) can be read as portrayals of the severe consequences of unequal power relations in the workplace. LT01 (The Flor Contemplacion Story), LT04 (Mary Jane Veloso Timeline), LT06 (Sarah Balabagan Profile), and LT07 (Kahit Konting Awa) raise broader questions about migrants' vulnerability within legal and institutional systems that greatly influence their freedom, safety, and prospects of obtaining justice. The cases differ in their causes or outcomes, illustrating different ways in which specific social and institutional circumstances can shape a migrant woman's exposure to risk.

Galam and Siruno's study (2025) of undocumented Filipino migrant domestic workers in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands during the COVID-19 pandemic offers a contemporary perspective on migrant vulnerability. Drawing on 40 interviews, the researchers found that workers used various strategies of adaptation, cooperation, and resistance to deal with challenges related to their circumstances. This finding relates to the narratives analyzed in the present study by showing that migrants can experience vulnerability while retaining some ability to act and negotiate within limited opportunities. The cases documented in LT01–LT06 and the respondents in Galam and Siruno's study belong to different contexts. Their research provides additional support for the interpretation, with due recognition that migrant experiences vary.

A Feminist Literary Criticism reading can show how these narratives expose unequal distributions of power rooted in gender and employment status. This perspective examines portrayals of Filipina migrants as victims of abuse or violence together with the institutions, social relationships, and gendered expectations that may restrict their capacity to act and decide. In accounts of domestic workers, for example, a central issue is the intersection of being a woman, being a migrant worker, and having limited power in relation to an employer. In cases involving imprisonment and encounters with the legal system, the analysis also considers how gender and migrant status may affect an individual's ability to defend herself and receive fair treatment. The lens locates vulnerability in social and institutional conditions that can create or deepen insecurity, moving away from the idea that vulnerability is inherent to women (Mohanty, 2003).

Parreñas (2005) provides an important basis for understanding transnational motherhood and the maintenance of family ties through migration. Her research shows that emotional ties between migrant mothers and their children can persist through physical separation. The ways mothers express care and fulfill parental responsibilities change under conditions shaped by gender and economic circumstances. Motherhood can be enacted through physical presence in the home, communication, financial support, decisions made for the family's well-being, and continued involvement in children's lives. These practices can partly compensate for physical absence, and the emotional difficulties of separation can remain.

Presto (2026) examined how Filipina mothers working as migrant domestic workers maintain relationships and responsibilities toward their families despite physical separation. The study showed that

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these mothers must balance financial duties and caregiving while negotiating the challenges of caring for children from a distance. This is consistent with the readings of LT02 (*Anak*) and LT12 (*Ina… Sa Likod ng Bawat Pangarap*), in which motherhood across distance is central. It also supports an understanding of Filipina migrants' identities as continually constructed through family responsibilities and social and economic conditions. Migrant mothers' experiences can vary with family circumstances, work, and the country of employment.

Graham et al. (2012) reinforce this understanding through their study of the experiences of children and families in transnational migration. The research suggests that when a parent leaves to work abroad, caregiving arrangements, the division of responsibilities, and relationships among family members may change. Understanding transnational motherhood therefore entails considering remittances and communication alongside the emotional effects of separation, the role of caregivers who remain at home, and how the family negotiates changes brought about by migration. In LT02 (*Anak*) and LT12 (*Ina… Sa Likod ng Bawat Pangarap*), central questions concern how maternal love and responsibility are portrayed in the absence of physical presence and how sacrifice and care are understood in those circumstances.

Diaspora Studies offers a way to understand Filipina migrants' identities as continually formed and transformed, extending beyond a fixed identification with the country of origin. Hall (1990) understands identity as a process of becoming, in which the self is continually shaped by history, culture, representation, and experience. In migration, this perspective suggests that the identity of a Filipina migrant develops through continued engagement with the Philippines, the country where she works, and the communities to which she belongs. Communication with family, memories of home, relationships with fellow migrants, and participation in cultural activities can sustain a sense of home and belonging. New experiences, responsibilities, and relationships abroad may also change how she sees herself (Hall, 1990).

The concept of global care chains complements this analysis by describing how care work is linked across families and countries. A Filipina migrant can devote time and energy to caring for her employer's family while her own family relies on other relatives or caregivers to perform some of the tasks she previously handled. Care is a personal responsibility and part of a wider global labor system in which time, effort, and duties are distributed across families. This experience can take different forms among migrants, and the circumstances portrayed in each work must be considered.

Parreñas's (2001a) concept of transnational motherhood helps explain how motherhood is sustained and transformed across geographic distance. A mother's responsibilities continue after she leaves. The ways she fulfills parental duties may change through financial support, communication, and involvement in decisions concerning her children. Continuing to take responsibility must be distinguished from the practical ability to participate in daily family life. The analysis therefore considers both a mother's efforts for her children and how the narrative portrays the possibilities and limits of caring at a distance.

Hall's (1990) account of cultural identity helps explain how migrants form and change their identities through experience and relationships. Brah's (1996) concept of diaspora provides a way to understand the relationship among departure, memory, home, and belonging. Family and place of origin may remain important to the identities of Filipina migrants even as their place of residence and work changes, and the meaning of home varies from one woman to another. The analysis therefore identifies how each work portrays the maintenance of relationships, the formation of community, and changes in the meaning of belonging.

Mohanty's (2003) transnational feminist perspective emphasizes the need to understand women in their distinct historical, social, and economic contexts. Applying it to the narratives calls for attention to a range of portrayals beyond the image of Filipina migrants as inherently self-sacrificing and always focused on their families. The meaning of sacrifice can vary with the character's relationships, available opportunities, and goals. The analysis therefore considers both the act of sacrifice and the conditions that give it meaning.

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Hochschild's (2014) concept of global care chains places sacrifice within the wider context of global labor and care. When a woman works abroad as a caregiver or domestic worker, other relatives or caregivers may take on some duties in her own family. Care responsibilities continue and are redistributed among people with different positions in the family and the labor market. A migrant woman's sacrifice can therefore reflect both her personal decision and a wider distribution of time, labor, and family responsibilities.

Constable's (2009) study of the commodification of intimacy can also help examine links between labor and emotional value. Care work may require physical service alongside displays of concern, self-restraint, and appropriate emotional conduct. Each narrative must be examined for evidence of how such expectations are portrayed. Where the text offers insufficient evidence that feelings are managed as part of a job or duty, terms such as emotional burden, homesickness, or emotional distress are more appropriate. The song LT07 is not cited for emotional labor. Its lyrics speak of lives given to the nation and of a plea for mercy, so it is read for sacrifice and for recognition. The evidence for family separation and transnational living comes from works and interviews that describe those circumstances directly.

Mohanty's (2003) account of women's historically situated choices helps explain why sacrifice carries different meanings across these works. Medalla's poem (LT12) presents provision for children as purposeful maternal work. The investigative reporting on Vergie Tamfungan (LT08) places family aspirations alongside the risks surrounding recruitment. The first gives sacrifice an affirmative meaning. The second brings the conditions surrounding a difficult decision into view. The readings can stand together without assigning a single motive or an identical range of options to all migrant women.

Piocos's (2022) study, *The queer promise of pageantry: queering feminized migration and the labor of care in Sunday Beauty Queen*, provides scholarly support for this reading of LT09. It examines how the documentary challenges conventional views of Filipina domestic workers as primarily bound to care work and family responsibilities. It shows how pageantry and community building can create alternative spaces for relationships, self-expression, and forms of care that extend beyond biological ties or family duties. Migrant women fulfill expected roles at work and in caregiving while creating relationships and activities that give meaning to their own lives (Piocos, 2022).

Bhabha's (1994) concept of the third space helps explain identity formation through the meeting and negotiation of different cultural influences. In LT09, it can be used to examine how migrant women express themselves and form relationships beyond their identities as domestic workers or mothers. Earlier identities can persist alongside others. A person may simultaneously identify as a worker, mother, friend, and community member. Identity in this reading is a process continually shaped by experience and relationships.

Hall's (1990) concept of cultural identity provides a further basis for analysis by emphasizing the role of history, experience, and representation in ongoing identity formation. Brah's (1996) concept of diaspora helps explain the relationship among leaving, memory, home, and belonging. In LT09, participation in a pageant allows workers employed by different households to make cultural ties visible in Hong Kong. The documentary gives that shared event a public form while leaving room for participants to attach different meanings to home.

This interpretation aligns with Vargas, Garabiles, and Hall (2020), who examined the narrative identities of Filipina domestic workers in Macao. Their study showed that migrants can hold multiple identities before and during migration and in the period they anticipate afterward. Identities included that of a caring mother, a mother who feels she has fallen short in her duties, a warrior, and a worker who sacrifices for her family. These findings suggest that identity is a process shaped by experiences, relationships, and expected roles at different stages of life.

Encinas-Franco (2020) showed that representations of OFWs as heroes can coexist with discourses grounded in gender and national shame. Her analysis of political and media texts about two OFW cases revealed how gender norms and national values influence recognition of migrant workers. The International

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Organization for Migration (IOM, 2023) likewise examines how Philippine media construct migration narratives and which voices and experiences receive the most attention in *Emotions and Economics: An Analysis of Philippine Media Coverage of the Filipino Migration Experience*.

Turnbull and Wu (2025) provide further empirical support through a narrative analysis of accounts from 15 Filipina domestic workers with breast cancer in Hong Kong. They found that participants held multiple, changing identities as they engaged with migration systems, family, work, health care, and social relationships. Although the study focused on illness, it offers insight into how identity changes as a migrant's circumstances change.

Amrith (2023) offers an additional empirical perspective in an ethnographic study of Filipina migrant care workers in Singapore returning home. Reunion with family can bring joy and reveal differing expectations, tensions in relationships, and a sense of unfamiliarity in one's own home. These findings matter for the analysis of identity because they challenge simple portrayals of migration as either family breakdown or total sacrifice for loved ones. Migrants' understanding of themselves, family, and home may change with experience. In the analysis of LT01–LT15, the study serves as a point of comparison for examining whether the texts present complex identities or primarily define women as victims, survivors, or heroes. In Anak, disagreement between the returning mother and her daughter makes that tension part of the story itself.

Encinas-Franco (2020) offers empirical support, showing that discourse about OFWs can apply different standards to women and men. Her analysis shows that migrant women can be recognized as heroes and associated with ideas of national shame at the same time. Recognition of migrants is thus bound up with gender norms and national values, which can also affect the roles women are expected to perform and how their decisions are interpreted.

Blaydes's (2023) study of migrant domestic workers' working conditions in the Arab Gulf states provides concrete empirical context. A survey of Filipina and Indonesian women who had worked as domestic workers in the region found at least one form of unfair treatment in more than half the households where participants had worked. Common problems included excessive working hours, delayed wages, and being denied one day off per week. The study shows that migrant women's experiences are shaped by personal decisions and by conditions and unequal power relations at work. Through Feminist Literary Criticism and Intersectionality, these findings provide a point of comparison for how LT01–LT15 depict relationships among gender, employment status, and power. The findings concern the Gulf states studied, and the works depict a range of settings whose conditions must be assessed individually.

The IOM (2023) report examines how Philippine news coverage frames migration. In the Hong Kong fire account (LT15), the headline identifies the worker as a hero. The action associated with that word is an act of care for an infant during a fire. Reading the headline beside the action shows how care becomes visible to a public audience through an exceptional event (Borbon, 2025).

Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality directs attention to how features of a worker's social position operate together. The genre and the details reported matter to that interpretation. A domestic worker employed in a private home encounters authority under conditions that differ from those of a worker confronting a legal proceeding. Gender, occupation, nationality, and migrant status enter the two accounts in different combinations. A shared label such as "migrant woman" can obscure who controls a decision in each setting.

Postcolonial Studies allows for an examination of how nationality and migrant workers' positions relate to broader power relations in global labor. Mohanty's (2003) *Feminism Without Borders* provides a basis for examining the relationships among gender, difference, power, and the global economic order. This perspective calls for attention to diverse portrayals of Filipina migrants beyond a single image of women who are inherently self-sacrificing or incapable of deciding for themselves.

Diaspora Studies understands identity as a process continually formed and transformed through history, representation, and social relationships. Hall's (1990) essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*

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presents cultural identity as both an inheritance and a process continually shaped by history and representation. In migration, this perspective helps examine how a Filipina migrant sustains and changes her understanding of herself as she participates in family life in the Philippines and forms new relationships in her country of employment.

Acedera and Yeoh (2021) examine relationships among migrant mothers, children, and people who provide care in the Philippines. A phone call can bring a parent into a decision and at the same time require someone at home to arrange the contact or put a decision into practice. Unequal access to communication therefore matters to whose concerns are heard. This reading clarifies the family disagreement in *Anak* (LT02). The years of work acquire different meanings for the person earning abroad and the child living with her absence. Physical presence, financial provision, and a voice in family decisions are related dimensions of care.

Turnbull and Wu (2025) offer an additional empirical comparison through their narrative analysis of accounts from 15 Filipina domestic workers with breast cancer in Hong Kong. They examined how participants incorporated serious illness into their understanding of themselves as workers and members of different social networks. Although their study takes place in a different context from the present corpus, it helps explain identity as a process that changes with migrants' experiences, relationships, and circumstances. Their participants' accounts illuminate the relationship between work and self-understanding in that medical setting. The present study draws its claims about particular works from the selected corpus.

Constable's (2007) *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Migrant Workers* provides an empirical basis for understanding these relationships. Through an ethnographic study of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, Constable showed how power is exercised in everyday relationships between workers and employers and how workers adapt and resist within their circumstances. Oishi (2005), in *Women in Motion: Globalization, State Policies, and Labor Migration in Asia*, examined the relationships among globalization, state policy, and women's migration in Asia. The two studies offer complementary perspectives on power. One examines everyday relationships, and the other addresses the wider structures and policies shaping migration.

Bhabha's (1994) treatment of power and representation helps locate a migrant's position in the relationship between persons and institutions. In the Veloso timeline (LT04), decisions by public authorities organize the chronology. The reader encounters an individual life through successive exercises of authority over movement and legal status. This is direct evidence of the timeline's institutional focus. The work alone cannot establish a colonial cause for every decision it records.

Oishi's (2005) *Women in Motion: Globalization, State Policies, and Labor Migration in Asia* provides an empirical comparison through its examination of globalization, state policies, and women's migration in Asia. It situates the role of institutions and policies in shaping migrant women's opportunities and constraints within a wider context. In the present study, it informs an examination of how LT01–LT15 depict institutional conditions and their effects on the choices of the women portrayed. Oishi's work provides a basis for comparison and contextualization. Direct evidence of events in the selected works comes from the works themselves.

Constable's (2007) ethnographic study, Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Migrant Workers, provides another point of comparison. It examines the experiences of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, including power relations between workers and employers and how workers adapt and resist within their circumstances. This perspective helps explain how power can appear in everyday employment relationships, especially when the parties have unequal ability to set terms and negotiate. That study supplies a comparison for the asymmetry in institutional authority depicted in LT04. The cases and the evidence remain distinct.

Silvey and Parreñas (2020), in *Thinking Policy Through Migrant Domestic Workers' Itineraries*, provide further context by examining Filipina and Indonesian migrant domestic workers in the United Arab

Emirates. Their analysis shows how existing policies and inadequate protections can form part of a wider set of conditions affecting workers' welfare at different stages of migration. It helps examine how LT01 (*The Flor Contemplacion Story*), LT04 (*Mary Jane Veloso Timeline*), and LT05 (*Joanna Demafelis Case*) portray relationships among individuals, institutions, and legal or government processes. The study provides context and a basis for comparison. Direct evidence of specific events described in the selected works comes from the works themselves.

UN Women (2017) recommendations on the protection of women's human rights in migration provide a policy basis. They emphasize considering gender and other factors that affect migrant women's risks, needs, and rights. Here they offer criteria for examining portrayals of women's access to safety, justice, protection, and recognition of their rights. The recommendations define rights and institutional responsibilities, while the corpus supplies direct evidence about the events portrayed in the selected works.

Blaydes's (2023) *Assessing the Labor Conditions of Migrant Domestic Workers in the Arab Gulf States* provides empirical context on marginalization. Based on a survey of Filipina and Indonesian former migrant domestic workers in Arab Gulf countries, the study examined working conditions and forms of unfair treatment, including excessive working hours, delayed wages, and denial of a weekly day off. The findings clarify possible forms of inequality to look for in narratives of migrant women. They can be used to examine how LT01, LT04, and LT05 portray limits on protection, rights, and recognition in specific cases. Findings about working conditions must be distinguished from questions of legal accountability or treatment of the women involved in cases portrayed in the corpus. Marginalization can arise from different conditions and mechanisms.

Acedera and Yeoh's (2021) *When Care Is Near and Far: Care Triangles and the Mediated Spaces of Mobile Phones Among Filipino Transnational Families* provides a point of comparison on agency and negotiation. They examine how communication and digital technologies connect care provided by migrant parents with hands-on care by people looking after their children in the Philippines. Their analysis shows how family relationships can involve negotiating the responsibilities, needs, and expectations of different members. This perspective helps examine how selected works portray migrant women's decisions, maintenance of family ties, and efforts to fulfill or reconsider their roles across distance. Conclusions about agency must draw on actual scenes and statements from each work. Continued communication and fulfillment of family roles can coexist with limits on freedom to decide.

Constable's (2007) *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Migrant Workers* provides another contextual comparison by examining the experiences of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong. The ethnographic analysis helps explain how power operates in daily life and how workers respond to their circumstances. Applied to this corpus, it allows for an examination of whether women's agency is visible in open resistance, negotiation, adaptation, or other actions particular to their circumstances. Constable's observations provide a basis for comparison, and experiences in the LT01–LT15 corpus must be established from each work.

Rodriguez's (2010) account of the state's role in organizing and promoting migration as part of the national economy helps situate personal narratives within the wider economic and social system that shapes workers' departure. The interviews do not directly verify all institutional mechanisms discussed in that account. They provide concrete examples of how individuals experience economic need and family responsibility that may influence their decision to go abroad.

The concepts of gendered labor and the global division of care work are important to this analysis. Parreñas (2001b) and Constable (2007) show the importance of examining how gender, migration, and social relationships intersect at work. Their perspectives help interpret accounts of domestic workers and caregivers who must continue working despite difficult conditions. Financial need and unequal employment relationships can converge, making it difficult for workers to protect their welfare without risking their livelihood.

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Parreñas (2001a) describes the challenges of motherhood in transnational families, where family responsibilities continue while family members live in different countries. This perspective helps explain why a migrant mother's role extends beyond sending remittances. Material support goes together with continued involvement in family life and the emotional effort of maintaining relationships across distance.

King-Dejardin's (2019) analysis of migration, gender, and the care economy provides a basis for examining how care work becomes an important part of the global economy while the workers who perform it may receive inadequate recognition and protection. This lens helps interpret the accounts of domestic workers, caregivers, and housekeepers, whose work demands physical effort, emotional restraint, constant adaptation, and responsiveness to others' needs. Risks can vary by occupation, and migration can have outcomes other than exploitation.

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021) report supports distinguishing formal recognition of rights from their enforcement in practice. For domestic workers, the existence of laws or formal contracts must be considered alongside whether mechanisms effectively protect workers on the job. The interviews show that some problems can persist once a worker is employed abroad. Individual accounts provide a starting point for assessing possible gaps between expected protections and lived experiences. On their own, they cannot establish how widely laws are enforced in each country of employment.

The ILO (2021) analysis of gaps in legal coverage and enforcement of protections for domestic workers is relevant here. When rights are recognized in law and poorly enforced, workers' ability to seek help and obtain justice can remain limited. This perspective situates experiences of control and abuse in a wider context beyond disputes between employers and workers. Such experiences can also point to problems with enforcement of labor standards, access to complaint mechanisms, and adequate support for migrant workers.

Across 15 literary and media works and 15 interviews, the meaning of migration depends in part on who recounts the work and which period of a life comes into view. Public accounts give visibility to sacrifice, danger, and care. Participants describe the family obligations, income needs, unequal opportunities, and hopes for the future that made particular decisions intelligible to them. Their accounts connect the decision to leave with the conditions under which they could continue working, return, or choose another livelihood. The summary below follows the order of the six research questions addressed in the Results section, and the distinctions it draws guide the conclusions and the proposed responses that follow.

The selected literary and media works bring public attention to sacrifice, heroism, abuse, discrimination, and the pursuit of justice. The interviews give detail about adapting, working, saving, sending remittances, maintaining family relationships, and seeking alternatives. Both sources depict difficulties at work and responsibilities toward relatives. The accounts also record changes between employers and differences in the resources participants could draw on. These differences make it possible to compare what a public portrayal brings into focus with what a worker says was at stake in a particular decision.

Across the sources, gender shapes the work that is expected of migrant women and the circumstances under which their contributions are recognized. Some participants described control over rest and movement or verbal abuse in domestic and care work. One teacher reported sexual harassment and discrimination, while another described unstable earnings before leaving the Philippines. Other accounts document career growth, a job change, and opportunities to save or start a business. Keeping these timelines and attributions separate preserves the variation that a single description of vulnerability would conceal.

Another finding is that women's roles as mothers and family providers continue across physical separation. Through remittances, digital communication, and continued participation in family decisions, Filipina OFWs fulfill responsibilities at home from abroad. Technology can only partly substitute for physical presence, and longing, worry, and tensions in family relationships can persist. Digital connectivity

is a means of sustaining relationships and receiving emotional support, with limits on how much it can address the effects of migration.

The accounts show that Filipina migrants can act, adapt, negotiate, and seek alternatives within difficult circumstances. Developing new skills, changing employers, saving money, starting a business, and seeking better opportunities show their agency in taking steps for their welfare and their families' futures. This resilience can coexist with persistent structural problems. The study shows that women can exercise agency while facing discrimination, unequal power relations, and inadequate protection.

Analysis of SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) shows that gender equality, decent work, and safe migration are interconnected. Full development requires more than a job abroad or the ability to send remittances. It also requires fair wages, sufficient rest, a safe working environment, protection against discrimination and abuse, and effective access to information, legal assistance, and complaint mechanisms. The findings suggest that achieving the SDGs requires concerted action by individuals, families, governments, employers, and institutions responsible for protecting the rights of migrant workers.

The findings motivate DIGIMIGRA, a proposal for migrant support across seven service areas. An account of maintaining family contact online supports attention to communication. An account of employer control raises questions about whether a worker could seek help privately. Taken together, they suggest what a pilot should examine, including whether a referral receives an answer and whether the worker can use the assistance offered.

A worker's ability to provide is only one part of the picture these accounts present. The same years can bring material gains for a household, a child's experience of separation, and limits on a worker's time. Assessing what migration made possible in a particular case depends on identifying whose assessment is available and which choices the source actually documents.

The comparison supports a specific claim about recognition. In the Hong Kong fire report, the emergency supplies a visible moment when care becomes publicly recognizable. In the interview with OFW-BRN 1, the relevant change is cumulative: skills learned in one setting become a livelihood in another. With OFW-DXB 5, the continuing work of contact matters even when there is no public event. Together these cases show how the time scale and audience of an account affect which actions a reader is able to recognize as agency.

Limitations

This study examines representations of gender and identity in contemporary Filipino migration narratives, with particular attention to the experiences of Filipina migrants. It analyzed 15 selected literary works and contemporary cultural and media texts on migration, including films, a documentary, journalism, poetry, a song, and a public essay. The texts were selected for their relevance to themes of gender, labor, sacrifice, adaptation, transnational living, and identity formation. These themes provided the main basis for examining how Filipina migrants' experiences and circumstances are portrayed in different forms of discourse.

Fifteen women with current or previous experience of overseas employment were selected through purposive sampling. Their work histories cover Bahrain, China, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, the Maldives, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam. Some women described work in more than one country. Each participant contributes one account to the comparison with the public narratives. This distinction matters when a change of country, employer, or occupation forms part of a single woman's account.

The study has several limitations. Its scope is confined to the experiences of Filipina migrants, excluding systematic analysis of the experiences of Filipino men or migrants of other nationalities. Its focus is qualitative, examining representations and personal narratives about gender, labor, migration, and identity. Large-scale statistical analysis of Filipino migration is outside its scope.

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The findings concern the selected texts and the experiences of the 15 interview participants. Purposive sampling gave the study material for close interpretation of particular experiences. The number of accounts citing a theme provides no basis for estimating its distribution among Filipina migrants, and the small, varied sample offers limited grounds for comparing occupations and destinations. Interpretations of the selected works depend on their form and on the theoretical lenses brought to the reading. The evidence also varies in detail. Some comparisons can draw on participants' words, while others use summaries in the profiles. Rendering accounts in English may further narrow meanings carried by terms and idioms in the original language. The interview guide also did not ask directly about the alternatives a worker had, about who decided how remitted earnings were used, or about hours, rest days, contract terms, and pay. Evidence on discretion and on decent work therefore comes from what participants volunteered in answer to broader questions, and the remittance-agency dimension of the proposed framework is not grounded in interview data collected for that purpose. The fifteen participants were recruited by the first author from among overseas workers he had worked with or met, and most of them worked in Gulf countries as domestic workers or caregivers, so the accounts do not represent Filipina migrants as a whole. The first author both interviewed the participants and led the coding, and he knew them beforehand, which may have shaped what participants chose to say and how their accounts were read; all three authors contributed to the interpretation of the findings.

The corpus was selected because its works address migration, work, family, or identity. Recurrence of these subjects therefore cannot establish that they are the most common themes in Philippine film, poetry, or journalism as a whole. A more defensible comparison asks what function a subject serves within a selected work. Sacrifice, for example, may supply the motive for leaving, a judgment made by relatives, or a public label applied after an emergency. Those differences remain open to analysis even when the topic influenced selection.

Several entries also share a narrative history. The two 1995 films can illuminate different ways of portraying related events, while the two reports behind the Hong Kong fire entry cover one case. A second representation can add an interpretive angle without supplying an additional independent event. Similarly, a participant may contribute to several themes. These dependencies guide the reading of every figure that counts works or people.

CONCLUSION

The study's contribution is to show how judgments about care and agency change with the speaker, the conditions of work, and the relationships that extend across borders. The conclusions draw on the selected portrayals and participants' accounts. They also identify which claims about migrant support still need to be tested.

1. Gendered labor, vulnerability, and identity through care recur across the selected works. Domestic and care work becomes recognizable through the income a woman provides, the care she delivers, or her response to exceptional danger. Gender shapes the value assigned to those activities and enters the portrayal of wages, expectations, and power at work. The study's readings show how a woman can be seen as a provider or caregiver while the demands and skill of her work receive less attention.
2. Separation, sacrifice, and transnational living recur in the selected works. In Anak, a mother's intention to provide and a daughter's memory of absence give different meanings to the same years apart. The participants also described ways of continuing to care across distance. The importance and cost of separation varied with family circumstances.
3. Migration can change how women understand and present their identities. The label attached to a worker depends in part on who is speaking about her and which activities the account shows. Relatives may recognize a provider, an employer may see a caregiver, and a news report may frame a woman as a victim or hero. The interviews and the documentary also make room for identities

formed through professional work, community relationships, and new livelihoods. These positions can coexist across settings and across the course of a life.

4. Unequal power shapes what migrant women can do in the selected works. Public recognition tends to follow visible acts such as protecting someone in a crisis. Smaller decisions also matter. Choosing an alternative placement, saving earnings, or seeking help can alter a worker's options even when the broader conditions of employment persist.
5. The comparison yields an analytical distinction between recognition and discretion. Recognition concerns whose contribution becomes visible and to whom. Discretion concerns the options a woman reports having when she acts. A worker may be recognized for her contribution while still having limited influence over rest, movement, or a change of placement.
6. The findings identify concerns relevant to SDGs 5, 8, and 10. Participants described limits on movement, rest, and access to support, alongside examples of assistance and improved working conditions. These accounts raise questions about gender equality, decent work, and access to protection. Assessing enforcement or national progress would require administrative records or other evidence beyond this study.
7. DIGIMIGRA links digital interaction, gendered inequality, mobility, and decisions about earnings in a proposal for migrant support. Its seven proposed service areas give workers and prospective partner organizations a starting point for co-design and pilot evaluation. The evidence is strongest for the importance of family contact, access to protection, and employment choices. A pilot would also need to ask how workers negotiate decisions about remittances and whether access to a service changes what they can choose or do.

Transfer of this interpretation depends on the setting. It is most plausible where accounts of paid work are read beside accounts of unpaid family responsibility and workers have ways to describe choices in their own terms. Studies with different occupations, less visible forms of work, men, returnees, or other destination settings could ask whether the same relationship between recognition and agency holds. Comparing accounts from the same placement could help identify which choices arose from the employment arrangement and which became visible through the narrator's standpoint. Occupational context, changes of employer, and the time period visible in each account provide starting points for that comparison.

Three limits matter to the conclusions. Topic-based selection gave the study material for a close reading of gender, work, and identity, and a differently selected corpus might foreground other experiences. The accessible interview evidence also varies in detail. Analysis of some examples could be refined with verified original-language extracts or fuller case records. Finally, the framework turns the qualitative findings into a design that depends on local labor and service arrangements. A pilot with workers and providers could examine access, feasibility, and outcomes under those conditions.

A follow-up study could compare public coverage of one event with accounts from workers involved in it, where participation and disclosure are ethically appropriate. Holding the event in common would clarify how speakers and genres give meaning to the same action. A study designed to compare employment sectors or destinations could examine how labor arrangements affect the options workers describe. These questions extend the interpretation to settings the current purposive sample can illuminate only through particular cases.

Recommendations

The recommendations follow three needs documented in the analysis: being able to make decisions at work, sustaining care across distance, and accessing support when a placement becomes difficult. The proposed responses operate at different levels, including workers' own choices, family support, and the institutions able to respond to a request for help. Their usefulness depends on consultation with the people using the services and evidence from implementation in the settings where it is proposed.

1. Strengthen gender-responsive policies and labor protection programs. In light of the prominence of gendered labor and migrant vulnerability, strengthen gender-responsive labor policies to address migrant women's particular needs, especially in domestic and caregiving sectors. Strengthen monitoring of workplace exploitation and discrimination.
2. Expand family-centered support programs for migrant families. Because separation and sacrifice are central to OFWs' experiences, provide programs for migrants and their families, such as structured support for family communication, parenting-at-a-distance programs, and psychosocial interventions for children who remain at home.
3. Develop identity-building and reintegration programs for OFWs. In response to migrants' fluid and hybrid identities, offer programs that strengthen identity, including cultural reaffirmation activities, reintegration seminars, and livelihood transition support that recognizes OFWs' changing identities at different stages of migration.
4. Strengthen protection and legal empowerment mechanisms for OFWs. Given the structural limits on agency, provide more accessible legal aid, rapid response mechanisms, and 24/7 migrant protection hotlines coordinated with embassies, the DMW, and OWWA to support immediate intervention in cases of abuse.
5. Develop the proposed digital support service with OFWs. Begin with one function, such as verified rights information or a confidential referral. Ask workers whether they can use it privately. Use the pilot findings to guide expansion to counseling access, a community space, and mobile or social media access.
6. Improve coordination across migrant services. The proposed centralized database is one possible design and would require agreement among the DMW, OWWA, DFA, and other participating agencies. A narrower pilot could test whether a receiving office acknowledges a referral and offers follow-up using only the information a worker agrees to share. Evaluation should consider whether the worker could make contact privately and whether the receiving service was available. These are design questions for consultation with workers and prospective partners.
7. Evaluate DIGIMIGRA as a basis for institutional adoption. A pilot should examine worker access, referral follow-up, and participant-reported outcomes. These findings would inform decisions about adopting the framework for policy, welfare programs, and academic interventions concernin

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