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Filipina migrant domestic workers in Asia:

Mental health and resilience

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Abstract

Unfavourable economic conditions in the Philippines, combined with the enhanced preference of high-income countries to outsource housework, have led to an increase in Filipina women offering domestic services overseas. Indeed, the Philippine government encourages citizens to seek overseas opportunities due to a high internal unemployment rate, with host countries enjoying the benefits of low-paid foreign labour. However, Filipina migrant domestic workers are often subjected to restrictive and disadvantageous labour and migration policies, leaving these women vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This chapter presents a critical, non-systematic review of current literature examining mental health in Filipina migrant domestic workers, stressors faced by these workers, effective coping strategies that enhance resilience, and the complexity of mental health attitudes within the workers' community. Recommendations to scholars for future areas of study are also presented.

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Filipina migrant domestic workers in Asia: mental health and resilience

Due to poor economic conditions in the Philippines, an increasing number of Filipinos are offering domestic services overseas, which is matched by the increasing desire of high-income countries to outsource domestic household chores (Lindio-McGovern, 2003; van der Ham, Ujano-Batangan, Ignacio, & Wolffers, 2014). Estimates show that one third of Filipinos currently working abroad[1] are employed as domestic workers on short-term contracts for service-oriented labour in private households, with the top five host countries located in Asia[2] (Center for Migrant Advocacy [CMA], 2011; Commission of Filipinos Overseas [CFO], 2014; Garabiles, Ofreneo, & Hall, 2017). The majority of these are Filipina women (98%) (CMA, 2011). The Philippine government encourages its citizens to seek overseas opportunities in light of a high internal unemployment rate, and host countries enjoy the benefits of low-paid foreign labour[3] (Briones, 2008, 2017; Uy-Tioco, 2007; van der Ham et al., 2014). Nonetheless, Filipina migrant domestic workers (FMDWs) are often subjected to restrictive and disadvantageous labour and migration policies, leaving these women vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (ILO, 2012). Together with additional stressors pertaining to migration, employment, health, and interpersonal relationships, this presents high risks to the mental health and well-being of FMDWs. Indeed, studies indicate that FMDWs may be twice as likely to suffer from mental illness as local women in the host country (HOME, 2015;

Lau, Cheng, Chow, Ungvari, & Leung, 2009; McCurdy-Lightbound, 2014) and show significantly greater distress during employment abroad than before or after their short-term migration (van der Ham et al., 2014). Despite this, research exploring the impact of risk and protective factors is limited.

This chapter presents a critical, non-systematic review of current literature examining mental health in FMDWs, stressors faced by FMDWs, effective coping strategies that enhance resilience, and the complexity of mental health attitudes in the FMDW community. Enhancing resilience for FMDWs is not only crucial to improving their mental health and well-being within often systemically limited, aversive environments, but also bears positive economic and mental health implications for communities in the Philippines and host countries (Knapp, McDaid, & Parsonage, 2011; Suthendran, Wessels, Heng, & Shian-Ling, 2017).

Mental health profile

Mental health can be defined as a state of well-being in which individuals can balance the stressors of life while working productively and making a contribution to their community (World Health Organization [WHO], 2015). Statistics indicate that FMDWs report experiencing high stress during their overseas employment (Anjara, Nellums, Bonetto, & Van Bortel, 2017; McCurdy-Lightbound, 2014; van der Ham et al., 2014), with almost a quarter of female foreign domestic workers showing evidence of higher than average levels of distress (Humanitarian Organization for Miration Economics [HOME], 2015). Research from Hong Kong has suggested that over 60% of FMDWs admitted showed signs of acute and transient psychotic disorder, including symptoms of delusion (66.7%), depression (63%), mutism (33.3%), auditory hallucinations (44.4%), and visual hallucinations (18.5%) (Lau et al., 2009). This prevalence is double that of age-matched local women, indicating twice the vulnerability in FMDWs (Lau et al., 2009). Crucially, 90% of the presented psychiatric symptoms were found to be stress-related, with family and marital problems, vocational pressure, and financial worries as key stressors prior to psychiatric illness. These findings build on prior research in Singapore (Mahendran & Aw, 1993) and Kuwait (El Hilu et al., 1990), which revealed high occurrence of psychosis and depression among FMDWs, with family and migration stressors preceding hospitalisation. FMDWs are indicated to be prone to depression, fatigue (Bagley, Madrid, & Bolitho, 1997; Sayres, 2005), and suicidal ideation associated with stressors experienced in their employment conditions (Ayalon, 2012).

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However, some research has on the contrary shown that FMDWs indicate relatively good levels of overall well-being, job satisfaction, and quality of life while working abroad (Anjara et al., 2017; Humanitarian Organization for Miration Economics [HOME], 2015; van der Ham et al., 2014). Anjara and colleagues (2017) found that over 70% of FMDWs in Singapore reported good or very good quality of life and health satisfaction. The discrepancies in such self-reported well-being may result from various factors. One explanation is that mental health issues are under-reported and that self-reports are biased towards positive mental health, as admitting to mental distress can have negative economic and social consequences (Lau et al., 2009; Tuliao, 2014). For example, Lau and colleagues (2009) highlighted that 80% of domestic workers admitted to hospitals for acute psychiatric symptoms were returned to their home country shortly after treatment. Although some FMDWs may have chosen to return home, strong stigmas against mental health issues are likely to have motivated many employers to terminate contracts (Lau et al., 2009). Such mental health stigmas are also prevalent in the Filipino community and may skew opinions of which symptoms constitute poor well-being to more extreme expressions (Tuliao, 2014). In the same vein, Filipina women applying for domestic work through agencies may be denied application if they show signs of poor mental health (Desjarlais & Eisenberg, 1995) or report emotional distress, such as homesickness (Quizon, 2011). Moreover, FMDWs may have distinct beliefs around the concept of well-being. For instance, many FMDWs have a strong religious affiliation, whereby expressing distress may be considered ungrateful or unfaithful towards maintaining trust in higher deities (Nakonz & Shik, 2009). Likewise, FMDWs may judge their well-being comparatively to their families back home, emphasise gratitude for the opportunity of overseas employment, and find positivity in being able to support their families financially, thereby restricting themselves from reporting their own well-being negatively, despite experiencing emotional struggles (Raijman, Schammah-Gesser, & Kemp, 2003).

Risk factors

Migration stressors

Migration to a host country bears multiple stressors relating to adjustment in a foreign environment (e.g., Bhugra, 2004). For FMDWs, this stress can be exacerbated due to the restrictive migration policies placed on them compared to foreign workers in other occupations (ILO, 2012). For example, although citizenship may be obtained in Western countries, in the East, FMDWs are

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often precluded the right to permanent settlement, which is typically granted to foreigners who legally reside in the host country for a minimum number of years (Hugo, 2009). Moreover, in some host countries (e.g., Qatar), FMDWs are not permitted to terminate their employment contract and leave the country without their employer's written permission (Asian Migrant Centre) and may face detention if they are seen to be absconding from their workplace. Further, in case of termination, FMDWs often have no time (e.g., Saudi Arabia), or a very brief period (e.g., 14 days in Hong Kong), in which they can find a new employer before being returned to the Philippines (Chang & Ling, 2010). Thus, FMDWs often deal with instability and uncertainty regarding their length of stay (Arnado, 2010).

Policies preventing FMDWs from putting down roots in their host country or moving freely are likely to affect their acculturation and cultural identity (Berry & Sabatier, 2011). Explicitly, migration stimulates individuals to evaluate and potentially restructure their singular cultural identity (e.g., Filipino) to acknowledge their new experiences. This can have different outcomes, including separation, whereby the home culture is maintained; assimilation, whereby the host culture is adopted; or integration, whereby home and host cultures are mixed (Berry & Sabatier, 2011; Lai, 2011; Naujoks, 2010). Such restructuring can cause confusion and distress, especially in the initial stages, in which FMDWs are confronted with cultural beliefs and practices that may be unfamiliar and differ from their own.

Further, FMDWs have been shown to experience discrimination and alienation due to their heritage or occupation, particularly in countries emphasizing hierarchy (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Harris Bond, 2008; Loh & Estrellado, 2016). Such discrimination may not only occur in the FMDWs' micro-context, but also in the macro-context, including systemic discrimination in media and politics (Ladegaard, 2013a). Concurrently, the Philippine government promotes the image of FMDWs as heroes who make sacrifices to support their families and contribute to the Philippine economy through overseas employment (e.g., Briones, 2017; van der Ham et al., 2014). This empowering narrative can stand in stark contrast to many Eastern host countries' views on FMDWs, which may enhance psychological distress during migration (Loh & Estrellado, 2016). FMDWs have been shown to struggle with the lack of a sense of belonging (Straiton, Ledesma, & Donnelly, 2017), loss of home identity (Lai, 2011), low host-language proficiency, and failure to achieve satisfying bicultural identity integration (Chen et al., 2008), which are likely to result in high levels of stress and poor mental health. Notably, perceived discrimination has been shown to

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not only enhance mental distress, but also result in deterioration of physical health. This is attributed to various reasons, including elevated stress hormones, participation in unhealthy behaviours and lifestyles, and avoidance behaviours that delay seeking medical help due to internalised or anticipated discrimination (e.g., Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Tuliao, 2014).

Therefore, while cultural integration has been associated with the best mental health outcomes (Bernardo, Daganzo, & Ocampo, 2016; Chen et al., 2008), uncertainty and discrimination can make such integration challenging for FMDWs. Studies have rather shown that discriminatory migration pressures can encourage separation in the form of diasporic identities or coerce assimilation with the host culture to reduce likelihood of discrimination (Bernardo et al., 2016). Diasporic identities are characterised by living abroad while retaining an active connection and identity with the home country (Parreñas, 2000). Often reflective of cultural separation, diasporic identities can have dual effects on mental health and well-being. On the one hand, FMDWs have reported that maintaining close connections with the Filipino community in the host country can provide social support and a sense of identity, improving subjective well-being (Tillu, 2011; Yu, 2009). On the other hand, individuals may experience emotional distress as diaspora can enhance homesickness and feelings of loss post-migration as well as perpetuate reminders of burdening commitments in the Philippines (Chen et al., 2008; Lai, 2011; Mendoza, Mordeno, Latkin, & Hall, 2017).

Coerced assimilation often entails complete rejection of own cultural identity, especially in FMDWs with low self-esteem, which has been associated with isolation and distress (Straiton et al., 2017; Ullah, 2015). Such assimilation can further magnify internalised discrimination pertaining to the Filipino culture, which can negatively impact FMDW perceptions and behaviour (Cheung & Hardin, 2010; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Explicitly, research has shown that FMDWs who were primed towards their cultural identity and hold strong beliefs in favour of social hierarchy (i.e., social dominance orientation, SDO) valued their labour up to 25% cheaper compared to those with similar SDO beliefs but no immediate priming (Cheung & Hardin, 2010). During overseas employment, this may be triggered by various external factors, such as agencies who advertise FMDWs for domestic work by highlighting hierarchical and racial attributes (e.g., "Filipina helpers are obedient Supermaids.") (England & Stiell, 1997; Guevarra, 2014) and media which portrays FMDWs as an out-group (Ladegaard, 2013a). Crucially, internalised racism may

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not only cause distress for FMDWs, but can also contribute to maintenance of their economic status quo and uphold the system that perpetuates their discrimination.

Vocational stressors

Lindio-McGovern (2003) emphasises a structuralist view in understanding the motivations of Filipina women to seek overseas domestic work, which puts migration in a macro-context of structural and developmental factors of globalisation; that is, low-income countries supply labour force to meet the demands of high-income countries. This system often treats FMDWs as disposable individuals of little value beyond their services, and easily replaced due to a high supply (Ladegaard, 2013a; Lindio-McGovern, 2003). In line with this, compared to Western host countries (Bell & Piper, 2005), FMDWs in the East are commonly excluded from protective employment regulations (Garabiles et al., 2017). For example, FMDWs in Singapore are excluded from the Employment Act and Workmen's Compensation Act, and thereby, minimum holiday leave and wage requirements do not apply. Further, they are governed by strict regulations that prohibit them from falling pregnant, marrying a Singaporean citizen, becoming a permanent resident, or deserting employment (Loh & Estrellado, 2016; Ueno, 2009). To aid enforcement of these restrictions, employers in Singapore are forced to deposit $5,000, which is forfeited in case of violation (Tan, 2010). This puts FMDWs at risk of restrictive measures as employers attempt to protect themselves from financial liability, including limits on FMDWs spending time outside the home or using mobile phones (Ueno, 2009). Moreover, studies show that FMDWs consistently report being subjected to long hours in poor work conditions (Loh & Estrellado, 2016; Ueno, 2009). This is exacerbated when FMDWs are required to live with the employer, which can blur the boundaries of working hours and off-time (Ogaya, 2004). Further, patriarchal perceptions are common, that is, that domestic work is not considered "real work", but rather an extension of the traditional female role of managing the household (Iyer, Devasahayam, & Yeoh, 2004). In this context, being treated as "one of the family" can have mixed consequences for FMDWs: On the one hand, FMDWs are likely to benefit from more inclusive treatment. On the other hand, this can hold expectations of constant availability and involvement in chores not directly related to domestic work (Ogaya, 2004).

The isolating conditions of working in the home environment further contribute to increased opportunities for undetected psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, including humiliation, insults, privacy invasion, beatings, and food restrictions (e.g., Bernardo et al., 2016).

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Ullah (2015) interviewed 215 female migrant domestic workers (135 Filipina) in Hong Kong and revealed that almost half of the sample reported psychological abuse from their employer (including derogatory name calling [22%], denial of a rest day in the week [22%], or confinement [18%]), a quarter reported receiving physical abuse, such as pinching, pushing, or slapping, and many reported sexual abuse (including molestation [17%], rape [4%], or attempted rape [10%]). FMDWs further report being physically exhausted without adequate rest or nutrition (Bagley et al., 1997; Bernardo et al., 2016; Sayres, 2005) as well as being prohibited from having social contact with friends or family (Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004). FMDWs also indicate being underpaid or having to wait for their pay, which increases financial worries and helplessness, and decreases mental well-being (Bagley et al., 1997). Negative work conditions may be exacerbated by tension between family members and FMDWs, for example, wives perceiving them as threats to marital and parent–child relations (Ogaya, 2004; Ueno, 2009; Ullah, 2015). Likewise, FMDWs often have to perform tasks without adequate training (e.g., elderly care) or psychological support (e.g., after death of care recipient) (Lau, 2017). This can decrease physical safety, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction (Ayalon, 2012; Bai, Kwok, Chan, & Ho, 2013), while increasing suicidal ideation and attempts (Ayalon, 2012).

Despite such physical and mental health risks present at the place of employment, healthcare is not compulsory in many Eastern host countries, which can make FMDWs dependent on their employer's financial goodwill when falling ill or cause them to avoid taking time off for fear of negative consequences (Siddiqui, 2008). The resulting lack of treatment can lead to severe illness, long-term damage, or chronic conditions (Islam & Cojocaru, 2016). In line with this, many vocational pressures, including abuse, are borne by FMDWs without being reported, as regulations in Eastern host countries commonly provide these women with little recourse to unjust treatment. For example, employers often have the right to return their FMDWs within a certain time period with few, if any, negative consequences, while for FMDWs, leaving an employer even with good cause can result in high fines by the agency and involuntary return to the Philippines (Ueno, 2009). In addition, while some countries regulate how much agencies are permitted to charge for migrant domestic workers (e.g., Hong Kong limits this to 10% of the first month of wages; Employment Agency Regulations, Cap. 57A), reports indicate that charges are frequently significantly higher and FMDWs often accumulate high debt from compulsory training taken prior to migration. Thus,

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FMDWs are at risk of remaining in abusive working conditions and remain dependent on their hiring agencies and employers (Parreñas, 2000).

A further factor contributing to poor mental outcomes is the contradictory class mobility and identity narratives ascribed to FMDWs. Surveys demonstrate that over 20%–30% of FMDWs are university educated (Battistella & Asis, 2011), with some surveys indicating that over 60% had partial or full professional education (Bagley et al., 1997). This can be directly linked to decreased job satisfaction, distress, and negative sense of self when FMDWs feel overqualified for domestic work and have to grapple with the stigma attached to their new role (Bagley et al., 1997; Peralta-Catipon, 2012).

Interpersonal stressors

Research indicates that the loss of an immediate social support network in the Philippines can magnify feelings of isolation, loneliness, and homesickness (Aguilar, 1996). While this is linked to poorer adjustment and well-being for FMDWs (Bagley et al., 1997), interpersonal stressors may go beyond this to include navigating changes in traditional family roles and pressures placed on FMDWs by family, friends, and society.

Despite the strong economic impact the remittances of FMDWs have in the Philippines, the migration of daughters, wives, and mothers to become breadwinners abroad requires adjustments to the traditional gendered family roles commonly held in the Philippines (Asis, Huang, & Yeoh, 2004). Explicitly, men are expected to provide financially for the family, while women are expected to create nurturing family environments, including raising children and nursing the elderly (Tung, 2000). Such roles become blurred as FMDWs enter the workforce overseas, where they are paid for work traditionally considered their duty in the household (Lan, 2003) and additionally gain financial independence from their partners. This can cause tension between FMDWs and their families as they integrate these changes into their identities (Lai, 2011).

As financial providers but also family nurturers, FMDWs are often expected to send larger percentages of their income home than their male counterparts to support their immediate and extended families (Straiton et al., 2017). FMDWs have reported feeling overwhelmed, as fulfilling such financial demands is not always feasible (e.g., due to high living costs in the host country), resulting in guilt and distress when expectations cannot be met (Straiton et al., 2017). As a result, FMDWs may feel alienated from their families as they get the sense of being viewed in terms of their financial value rather than their personhood (Lan, 2003). Furthermore, FMDWs have

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highlighted concerns about their husbands, with some indicating that they feel their husbands are being lazy or unfaithful while they are overseas working hard and sacrificing for their families (Silvey, 2006). In particular, the loss of spatial proximity to children has been shown to contribute to high levels of homesickness, grief, depression, disempowerment, and anxiety (Pratt, Johnston, & Banta, 2017). This is further exacerbated by lack of financial resources and restrictive employment regulations which prevent reunification on a regular basis (Cruz, 2012; Uy-Tioco, 2007). Studies have highlighted that family stressors are most frequently cited by FMDWs in connection with poor mental health, especially by those who sought psychiatric treatment (Bagley et al., 1997; Lau et al., 2009).

Protective factors

Despite evidence for the multiple risk factors increasing FMDWs' vulnerability to mental health issues, there is a significant lack of research examining effective strategies for enhancing resilience (e.g., Windle, 2011). This is particularly relevant as health models are moving away from basic symptom management towards preventative measures and promoting healthy development (Garabiles et al., 2017). Resilience factors decrease negative effects of stress on mental health and well-being by encouraging flexible responses that facilitate stress management and effective adaption to changing environments (van der Ham et al., 2014). This can contribute to healthy development despite environmental adversity, healthy functioning during acute adversity, and healthy recovery following adversity (Vázquez, 2013; Windle, 2011). Coping resources that enhance resilience can be personal, social, or from the wider community (e.g., Saleebey, 2000).

While from a policy perspective, better migration and employment regulations would be desirable, from a mental health perspective it is essential to identify coping strategies that can enhance resilience for FMDWs within the limitations of aversive environments (van der Ham et al., 2014). This rings particularly true in light of the complexities surrounding migration. For example, FMDWs often choose overseas engagement in domestic work as a way of sustaining their livelihood and economic stability, which they cannot sustain in the Philippines. While improved migration policies may decrease vulnerability to exploitation and abuse (Lim & Oishi, 1996), these may also decrease the global appeal for low-paid foreign domestic workers. This threatens their opportunities for employment and, thus, their capability of achieving economic sustainability (Briones, 2011, 2017). Placing the focus on resilience, fostering internal capabilities,

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and aiming for goal attainment can promote empowerment and agency for FMDWs to write their own narratives rather than being categorised as passive victims or sacrificial heroes (e.g., Briones, 2017). Given the risk of available coping strategies having unintended negative effects (Chib, Wilkin, & Hua, 2013; Heras, 2007; Mendoza et al., 2017), it is crucial to reveal which strategies work best for whom, under which circumstances.

Personal resources

In terms of personal resources, FMDWs have been found to regulate emotions and responses to stressors, and employ active efforts to reduce stressful circumstances (Ullah, 2015), augmenting their sense of agency and self-efficacy (Lutz, 2002). Reasons that lead to migration can be major contributors to successful adjustment in the host country (Loh & Estrellado, 2016). Bagley and colleagues (1997) indicated that of 600 FMDWs interviewed in Hong Kong, those who were single, without children, and without debt, and who had higher education and saw their work abroad as an adventure reported lower stress levels and better psychological adjustment. Importantly, aspirations which emphasised domestic work as a means to securing a future were associated with enhanced mental well-being (Loh & Estrellado, 2016; Straiton et al., 2017). Comparatively, FMDWs with financial, vocational, or family stressors had higher stress levels and poorer mental health (Bagley et al., 1997). While original migration circumstances may not be modifiable, supporting FMDWs in gaining further education while overseas and structuring their future goals is likely to allow them to regain control, perspective, and well-being (Daraei & Mohajery, 2013; Lyons, 2004). In line with this, FMDWs show evidence of cognitive restructuring whereby they reframed challenging circumstances as a medium to financial outcomes and economic stability, helping them to achieve acceptance and endurance (Loh & Estrellado, 2016).

Religion has been identified as a coping resource, as it permits reappraisal of hardships towards giving adversity meaning and re-evaluating it as the key to salvation. Van der Ham and colleagues (2014) found that over 90% of FMDWs in their sample considered themselves religious, and many valued prayer and religion highly in coping with adverse situations (Humanitarian Organization for Miration Economics [HOME], 2015; Tuliao, 2014; van der Ham et al., 2014). FMDWs may choose to pray for divine guidance, giving them a sense of control in dealing with issues by handing over their problems to a deity (Nakonz & Shik, 2009). Thus, religious beliefs can improve mental health and well-being by promoting acceptance and relief in circumstances in which little actual change can occur. Importantly, religious involvement has been

Author's Copy

shown to correlate with high self-esteem, which can protect individuals when experiencing humiliation or abuse in their employment (Nakonz & Shik, 2009).

Ueno (2009) interviewed Filipina and Indonesian domestic workers and found that while FMDWs in the West may use more overt, assertive resistance strategies to deal with vocational stressors (Parreñas, 2000), FMDWs in the East would rather resort to covert, passive resistance. Indeed, FMDWs in the West have been known to draw benefits from the family-like relationships with their employers, who may help them by providing loans or legalising their immigration status. Whereas in the East, FMDWs may rely on everyday resistance, which is considered an oppositional act performed with agency by individuals in relation to a power relationship (see Scott, 1985). Everyday resistance has been suggested to redistribute power to those who have been marginalised, by undermining the power of the majority or oppressors (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). Indeed, scholars have highlighted that FMDWs may resort to performing acts of self-depreciation, disguising emotions, making excuses to gain permission to leave the house, talking ill about employers outside the home, completing only chores that employers will notice, taking food that goes unnoticed, and pretending to not understand a request (Lan, 2006; Ueno, 2009). Other subtle acts were directly aimed at regaining agency, such as choosing to identify themselves as domestic helpers or "DH" rather than the commonly used term "maid", thus allowing them to create their identity beyond that ascribed to a "maid". Everyday resistance utilising culturally aligned behaviours that adapt to oppressive circumstances has been considered a resilience factor associated with enhanced mental well-being (Chaudhary, Hviid, Marsico, & Villadsen).

Furthermore, self-efficacy has been linked to improved well-being (van der Ham et al., 2014). Explicitly, training in both the language and culture of the host country (Bai et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2008) as well as employment-specific skills (Ayalon, 2012) have been emphasised as key predictors to positive psychological adjustment during overseas employment. Language proficiency can decrease isolation, enhance integration with host culture and employers, and increase self-esteem (Paillard-Borg & Hallberg, 2018). Moreover, acquiring relevant skills when working with vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and young children, has been shown to buffer FMDWs from the effects of stressful situations pertaining to such care (Ayalon, 2012; Bai et al., 2013).

Moreover, FMDWs have been shown to manage their conflicted identities between national heroes and discrimination in host countries by regaining control and power back home.

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Explicitly, Lan (2003) interviewed 56 FMDWs employed in Taiwan and revealed that negative effects of discrimination due to domestic occupational status abroad can be buffered by employing local Filipino domestic workers in the Philippines to care for own children and families. Notably, overseas domestic work may allow FMDWs to pay for childcare and domestic help in the Philippines as well as support their families and communities (van der Ham et al., 2014). This can elevate their status, balance out the negativity of their occupation in the host country, and appease family demands (van der Ham et al., 2014).

Social resources

Improvements in technology have been able to ease some of the separation issues between FMDWs and their families by permitting affordable, covert, instant communication and so-called transnational mothering (e.g., Chib et al., 2013). FMDWs report that they can still play the role of mothers by being able to monitor their children and have daily exchanges with them, similar to what they would have if they were in the same space (Parreñas, 2005; Uy-Tioco, 2007). This has been found to create a sense of family memories, staying current with each other's lives, and nurturing secure attachments despite distance (Garabiles et al., 2017). This enhances resilience not only for the FMDW, but for the whole family unit.

Garabiles and colleagues (2017) investigated resilience in transnational FMDW families and highlighted that resilient families have high levels of communication among immediate family members and successfully restructure family roles, often with the father taking over an active parenting role. Furthermore, validation of each other's hard work and sacrifices, regular temporary family reunifications, and/or defined goals for permanent family reunification are revealed as crucial to family well-being (Asis, 2006; Garabiles et al., 2017; Hoang, Lam, Yeoh, & Graham, 2015). These findings are in line with models of family resilience which underline the importance of balancing family stressors and capabilities to enhance flexibility and adaptation to changing circumstances (Patterson, 2002; Patterson, Williams, Edwards, Chamow, & Grauf-Grounds, 2018; Walsh, 2003). Such protective effects of social coping resources are indirectly supported by findings that the majority (~ 70%) of FMDWs admitted to psychiatric hospitals were single (Lau et al., 2009).

Research has further highlighted the significance of maintaining friendships both in the Philippines and the host country. Social networks are a crucial source of informational, practical, and emotional support (Chib et al., 2013). In line with this, social support in the host country has

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been found to relieve emotional distress and manage adversity by means of the emotional expression of tears and laughter. This includes gossiping and ridiculing employers who have caused hardship (Lan, 2006; van der Ham et al., 2014) as well as using laughter as a medium to regain identity through humour, enhance social bonds, alleviate anxiety and, crucially, create superiority over adversities. In this sense, laughter can communicate suffering, but it can simultaneously be a curative process (Ladegaard, 2013b). Social relationships in interdependent cultures can also help individuals to understand their identity in relation to others (Peralta-Catipon, 2012). This can shift the sense of self from a FMDW with unfulfilled roles or perceived hierarchical inferiority (Lindio-McGovern, 2003) to sense of self within a diasporic society. Moreover, McKay (2007) indicates that technology as a new form of communication may hold unique benefits for FMDWs, such as facilitating the expression of emotion more easily via text than face to face.

Increasing cohesion of the family-and-friend network can decrease loneliness and homesickness and enhance mental health and well-being in FMDWs through providing social coping resources (van der Ham et al., 2014). Despite this, transnational communication can also be a source of stress when social pressures are creating demands or if FMDWs leave the Philippines to avoid difficult circumstances, such as an abusive marriage. Similarly, social networks can contribute to poor mental health when FMDWs avoid sharing concerns or answering questions about their migration or employment in order to prevent burdening their family and friends (Mendoza et al., 2017). Lai (2011) indicated that forgetting family ties and burdens could also be a buffer to emotional distress, which permits FMDWs to focus on themselves and be released from perpetual worry about family processes outside their control. Moreover, it can help to re-establish self-identity separate from a culture in which female identity and well-being are often subsumed by the well-being of the family as a whole (Lai, 2011). This can enhance well-being by providing anxiety relief, but also allowing FMDWs to grant themselves immediate rewards and pleasures with their earnings (Lai, 2011).

Community resources

While employed abroad, FMDWs use community resources to remain culturally connected, and regain space and power through group activism or resistance (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002). Seeking cultural connection with other FMDWs in the host country has been shown to improve mental health and well-being (Anderson, 2010). Hong Kong is a striking example of this, as evidenced in

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weekly Sunday group activities of FMDWs in public spaces. FMDWs report being able to recreate a sense of belonging and familiarity through shared cultural features and mutual heritage, such as food, language, and dance (Anderson, 2010; Straiton et al., 2017; Yu, 2009). Research has shown that strength of ethnic identification in Filipino American immigrants was not only linked to fewer depressive symptoms but also protected them from the effects of discrimination (Mossakowski, 2003). Although not directly tested, such cultural reinforcement in host countries may have similar protective effects for FMDWs. Likewise, shared experiences and shared burdens have been indicated as valuable by FMDWs. For example, church has been found to offer distraction from a stressful week as well as create a sense of cohesion (Nakonz & Shik, 2009). Religious ceremonies in host countries may be uniquely tailored to FMDWs' problems and lives (Nakonz & Shik, 2009). Such gatherings permit sharing of stories and emotions to relieve distress and be addressed by collective prayer, enhancing a sense of community or even, as some FMDWs refer to it, serve as a replacement family. These platforms often also provide free support in the form of counselling, legal aid, and healthcare through charities, in part run by Filipinas themselves.

Gatherings, church communities, and socialisation in public spaces can also become a political force and allow FMDWs to publicise their rights on a national and global platform (Yeoh & Huang, 1999). This has been shown to augment one's sense of control, agency, resistance, and well-being. Yu (2009) interviewed FMDWs in Hong Kong who emphasised the value of public gatherings for reclaiming autonomy and enabling them to define a space for themselves that is not conflicted by the blurred boundaries of employment and employer's home. Thus, these gatherings have the power to disrupt the hierarchical relationships of domestic work and facilitate the formation of diasporic networks on an equal platform (Law, 2001; Yu, 2009). In line with this, FMDWs indicate that not only do they frequently use the same space every week, but they also recognise the invisible boundaries of the spaces of neighbouring groups, establishing a form of home space (Yeoh & Annadhurai, 2008). Research has shown that individuals use their home environment interactively to both express and confirm their identity, for example, through decorations that express meaning and evoke emotions or memories (Qazimi, 2014). Social interactions in a communal space can contribute further to establishing self-identities in an interdependent context (Peralta-Catipon, 2012). Notably, this is not without challenges, as FMDWs report that both locals and other FMDWs in the host country may ascribe undesired stereotyped identities to them that can contradict what they wish to be seen as, resulting in distress

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and defensiveness (Chang & Groves, 2000; Paillard-Borg & Hallberg, 2018; Peralta-Catipon, 2012).

Conclusion

The demand for outsourcing domestic chores in high-income countries and the supply of low-paid domestic workers from low-income countries have evoked an increase in short-term migration of Filipina women employed as domestic workers overseas. Through this chapter, we sought to provide a critical, non-systematic review on current literature examining mental health in FMDWs, stressors faced by the FMDWs, effective coping strategies that enhance resilience, and the complexity of mental health attitudes in the FMDW community. FMDWs often face restrictive employment regulations, which leave them vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and extreme mental and physical abuse. Together with other stressors pertaining to migration, employment, and interpersonal relationships, FMDWs are exposed to many risks to their mental health and well-being. Despite the significant value of FMDWs to the economies of both their home and host countries, research that explores effective strategies to enhance resilience in FMDWs is scarce. Studies indicate that personal, social, and community resources can be beneficial in buffering FMDWs from the effects of stressors. Effective strategies include personal resources (e.g., religiosity), social resources (e.g., social networks both in the host country and of origin), and community resources (e.g., cultural connectedness, through identification). However, as highlighted, research is particularly sparse in regard to effective coping mechanisms. As such, future research is required in this area to improve the mental health and resilience of FMDWs. As mentioned, enhancing resilience for FMDWs is not only crucial to improving their mental health and well-being within often systemically limited, aversive environments, but it also bears positive economic and mental health implications for communities in the Philippines and host countries.

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[1] An estimated 10% of the Philippine population is currently employed abroad, contributing to approximately 12% of the Philippines' GDP (Bayangos & Jansen, 2009, 2011; Center for Migrant Advocacy [CMA], 2011; Commission of Filipinos Overseas [CFO], 2014).
[2] Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Qatar currently host the largest numbers of FMDWs (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration [POEA], 2011).
[3] Examples of average monthly salaries range in different countries (2017): France (1,700 USD), Canada (1,400 USD), Hong Kong (550 USD), and Saudi Arabia (400 USD). www.hlc.com.hk/en/domestic-helper.html