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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TRANSNATIONALISM BETWEEN GHANA AND PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement in information and communication technology, and transportation, international migration has taken a new form making it possible for immigrants to live in more than one country at the same time. Drawing from studies on transnationalism in Ghana and Philippines this paper analyzed the differences and similarities of transnational migrants and their families among Ghanaians and Filipinos. We focused on four main areas including the historical trends of transnationalism among the two countries, the transnational communication practices, the impact of transnational migration on the families left behind, and the assimilation methods adopted by these immigrants in their destination country. The analysis revealed much closeness in these areas among the two countries with difference showing in the way they assimilate into their new society.

Key words: transnationalism, Ghana, Philippines, transmigrants, migration

INTRODUCTION

International trails of labor migration play an essential role in the globalized economies of the 21st century, creating a complex web of connections and transactions between Global North and Global South. Labor migrants from Southeast Asia and African countries normally engage in impermanent contracts in more affluent countries that causes them to have less privileges of living in their respective countries. Contracts may be renewed, or new contracts taken up after brief visits home. Their experiences of sojourning and displacement (Lorente, Piper, Hsiu Hua, & Yeoh, 2005) are bounded by the uncertainties of 'return' and are producing new ways of realizing family across transnational spaces (Yeoh, Huang & Lam, 2005).

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Undeniably, considering the rapid economic and demographic changes across Asia elicited by the contemporary round of global capitalization, the family has been going through structural changes related to trends like rapid ageing, declining fertility and family sizes, and increased migration (Graham, Jordan, Yeoh, Lam, Asis, & Su-kamdi, 2012)

‘Transnational’ families are families who live apart but who create and retain a ‘sense of collective welfare and unity, in short “family hood,” even across national borders’ (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). These families offer a unique lens through which to explore processes and experiences of transnational migration. They are often formed through the coming together of individuals with different linguistic, cultural, social, and/or religious backgrounds. In doing so, they may contribute to processes of creolization whereby selected elements from the various backgrounds of family members and the places where they live are brought together in ways that give rise to new identities and cultural practices (Cohen, 2007). Such families are an inevitable consequence of migration and are hardly a recent phenomenon.

In this article, it aimed to explore the similarities and differences between Ghana and Philippines’ transnational families. It starts with the introduction of Filipino and Ghanaian’s transnationalism history. It also includes the transnational communication practices being used in 21st century; the impact of transnational migration on the left behind families; and as well as understanding transnational migrants’ assimilation to their new communities

History of Filipino transnationalism

Philippines, being a country of more than 7,600 islands, is one of the largest origin country migration for migrants. The social, economic, and cultural climate of the Philippines are where the long history of migration is embedded. The migration’s abounding history accounts the motivation of Filipinos to go abroad, the opportunities and the obstacles they encounter.

The Filipino diaspora is fast emerging with many expatriates, immigrants, and workers around the world. A large part is the community of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW). Today, the number of Filipinos living and working abroad represents about 11% of the total population of the Philippines (POEA, 2013).

It was in the year of 1970 when Philippines had started supplying various types of low-skilled, semi-professional, and professional workforces to the world’s more developed regions (Migration Policy Institute, 2006). The former President

of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos was the one who placed the emigration policy to accelerate the economy. Although this policy has been made temporarily, the labor migration has been progressively rising since then.

The main reasons of seeking overseas employment were because of high unemployment, poor living conditions, and the government policy of emigration. However, when President Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, it led the expatriation of his political adversaries. The vagueness of economic, social, and political status of the country under the Martial Law has pressed more people especially the Filipino bourgeois to depart the country. The occurrence of Gulf region, the economic rise of neighboring countries, and the modification of immigration policies of countries of destination have even invigorated the migration. Even up today, the Philippine government stayed even more contingent on remittances (Center for Migrant Advocacy, 2014).

History of Ghanaian transnationalism

According to existing literature the history of migration in Ghana has been in phases. The first phase of migration occurred in the 1960s where one could see that the most of emigrants were students and professionals. This was relatively small number of people moving from Ghana to other parts of the world especially to the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries due to colonial ties (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare et al. 2000). The name of this phase was minimal emigration period. As the name suggest the emigrants were fewer in numbers. Data from Immigration indicate that during this period only about 100 Ghanaian migrants could be found in Canada (Owusu, 2000).

The second phase which is called the initial emigration period started after 1965. This phase was precipitated by the unprecedented economic crisis in the country. During this period the country was hit with drought coupled with the structural Adjustment Program (SAP) under neoliberal policies of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank program (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). These led to balance of payment deficit, growing unemployment rate and social doldrums. As a result, the country became unattractive to both citizens and foreigners. By the end of 1970 many professionals such as teachers, lawyers and administrators had travelled outside the country in search of job (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare et al. 2000).

In the early 1980s the third phase began. In this phase both unskilled and semi-skilled Ghanaians joined the migration train in search for jobs in the neighboring West African countries (Anarfi, 1982). At the time when basic items such as food

was difficult to come by, the number of professionals travelling abroad also increased. To survive at that time individuals and families needed to migrate. This resulted in sharp increase in the average number of Ghanaians who migrated into Nigeria from 300 per day in the early 1980s to 150,000 as registered Ghanaians with the Ghana High Commission in Lagos by December 1980. The literature described this period as a 'diasporisation' whereby Europe and North America became the common destination for Ghanaians (Van Hear, 1998).

The most recent phase of the migration of Ghanaians is more importantly characterized by their diasporisation which had begun in the middle of the 1980s. In recent times Van Hear classifies Ghana as one of the ten countries involved in producing a 'new diaspora' (van Hear, 1998). Since the 1990s, large number of Ghanaians have moved to major cities like London, Amsterdam, Hamburg and New York (Black Tiemoko et al. 2003). Overall, there is a long history of emigration from Ghana to other West African States, as well as Europe and North America for various reasons including employment, education and training. (Nuro, 1999).

Transnational Communication Practices

New media technologies are becoming indispensable part of human lives. The everyday lives of people which means the family relationships, routines, cultural practices and spaces are fundamental in the study of media and culture (Lister et al., 2003, p. 220). The involvement of transmigrant communities in national issues and concerns has intensified in the field of internet. The internet enables two-way mass communication among Filipinos and Ghanaians. This provides the expression of emotions and opinions about certain issues. This medium helps in developing and reinforcing the social tie among the members of transnational community.

Filipino transmigrants' communication practices

According to Caguio & Lomboy (2014) Filipino communities do not solely communicate through face-to-face communication, but also with the internet. In the study of Opiniano (2005), he used face-to-face and Internet interviews in the analysis of the Filipino Diaspora philanthropy. According to him, Filipino Diaspora communities have used Internet as a way of communication and expression of their ideas. The use of internet became more prominent in the advent of social

media. This medium allows to create virtual communities and serve as the platform for discussions of different issues.

Asia is hailed as the world's biggest social networking markets and Philippines emerged as the highest rank with 93.9%. The top 3 Social Networking Sites (SNS) are Facebook, (93.9%) Twitter (16.1%) and LinkedIn (1.9%) (Russell, 2011). According to Ochoa (2011), families in the Philippines who have ages 20-65 spent approximately 2 hours in communicating with their OFW family members via Facebook. Furthermore, the main social media they use is Facebook. They communicate with their family abroad at least once every week.

Moreover, the length of time being spent in communication with their family shows the proximity (closeness/ distance) level of the transmigrant and their family back in the Philippines. This means that the more they spend time talking on the internet, the more it is that they have a relatively close relationship with each other.

The study of Ochoa (2011), which examined Facebook as a tool in relationship maintenance between transmigrant families shows that the different features of Facebook have a positive effect on maintaining the close relationship between the members of the family. For example, through Facebook, they can communicate with their loved ones abroad in different forms like live sharing/ tagging of pictures and videos, chat, posting on wall and making groups. Because transmigrants and their families often share pictures and videos, they are able to update their transmigrant families and vice versa about family affairs and gatherings. Through this they can feel the presence of their family because they were able to see each other. These features also helped by being a convenient tool in communicating or relaying the message that they wanted to convey, being accessible, achieving practical use of time, and making them feel each other's presence despite physical distance.

Children of migrant parents need 'concrete reinforcement of their parents' love' and that can be achieved by 'creating "bridges" of communication' (Parrenas, 2003, pp. 141–142). Through the use of text messaging, mothers in far-away countries are still able to provide nurturance for their kids by sending text messages. Because of this, they are able to become a 'mother' across geographical distances by asking them how their day was and whether school went okay, reminding them to eat dinner and do their homework, and bidding them goodnight almost as if they were there.

Furthermore, Parrenas (2005) found that mothering ties are maintained by sending remittances home, providing for the financial needs of children. Aside from this, they also regularly write letters and make phone calls. The growth of cell phone technology creates the concept of transnational mothering. It allows real-time and constant communication between mothers and children separated by time and space.

According to Morley, ‘communication technologies can function as disembedding mechanisms, powerfully enabling individuals (and sometimes whole families or communities) to escape, at least imaginatively from their geographical locations’ (2000, pp. 149–150). The instantaneity and mobility of cell phones and text messaging allow users to ‘forget’ or momentarily suspend their physical separation.

Ghanaian transmigrants’ communication practices

In order to maintain economic, social and emotional tie, transnational migrants have to communicate with the people they have left behind. This communication is not only telephone calls but comes in various forms. This may include sending remittance, clothing and food items. Transnational communication especially by telephone has by far been the common adopted by transnational migrants. This was evident in the work of Owusu in Canada. He found out that over 80% of his respondents make biweekly or more frequent phone calls to their relatives and friends in Ghana. He attributed the frequency and intensity of transnational communication to many factors including modernization of telecommunications systems in Ghana. Since the 1980s, availability and affordability of mobile phones and the availability of ‘communication centers’ where those without personal mobile phone can receive and make international calls have been contributing factors (Owusu, 2003). Also, because in general most people do not own computers coupled with the lack of access to internet in particular, the use of electronic emails as communication tool is very minimal among transnational migrants.

As mentioned earlier, cash remittances are also another form of transnational communication. According to Owusu, an overwhelming majority (92%) of his respondents remit money to Ghana on regular basis (Owusu, 2003). Remittances are very important not only in the livelihood of families but also for Ghana’s economy as well. According to World Bank (2015) report, official money transfers from Ghanaians living abroad to Ghana amounted to \$537 million in 2015. Aside

this unofficial money transfers which cannot be tracked also amount to millions of dollars (Owusu, 2003)

Parents, siblings as well as relatives in Ghana get financial support from these remittances. Apart from remitting money, transnational migrants frequently send items such as food, clothing, and electronics to their families in Ghana. In all, transnational communication serves as an important part in the lives of family members left behind in Ghana as well as strengthening the ties between transnational migrants and their families.

The Impact of Transnational Migration on Transnational Migrant's Family

The nature of working overseas results to being in distant with their families. Many of these transmigrants are parents. They result of being away from their homes which results to millions of children growing up without their father and/or mother's presence. They are mostly entrusted to the care of either left-behind solo parents or relatives in their home countries. Gender-differentiated labor migration is becoming a significant concept as a result of change in production and reproduction processes worldwide. This leads to the contemporary social transformation in the family. The nurturance- provider arrangements for children are also being transformed in transmigrant communities (Hoang, Lam , Yeoh, & Graham, 2015).

In case of left-behind families in Ghana

Most scholarships on the impact of transnational migration agree that the phenomenon has resulted in the profound shift of family lives leading to the dislocation in family practices and challenging of gender ideologies. Scholars agree that the separation of parents from their children have adverse negative effects on the children's psychological well-being. Research done by Mazzucato and her colleagues found that transnational families in Ghana characterized by the absence of women have more negative effects on the well-being of children than when the man is away (V. Mazzucato et al, 2015). This also support Parreñas study in the Philippines where children in families where the mothers are away expressed more emotionally affected by the absence of their mothers than in transnational families where the fathers are away (Parreñas, 2005). However, they differ in their attributions---while in Ghana it is explained by the higher possibility of divorce associated with female-only migration, in the Philippines it is ascribed to the dif-

faculty of children to accept the changed role of mothers as more economic providers and less of caretakers. In addition to this, migrant mothers may come across conditions abroad that may hinder their ability to care for the psychological well-being of their children as compared to migrant fathers (Mazzucato et al. 2015).

However, notwithstanding the above, it should be added that transnational families characterized by the absence of the father also disrupt or affect the well-being of children if the father is not supportive. The lack of support from the father mostly affect the educational lives of children. As observed by Cati Coe in her study in Ghana, the lack of male support may lead to the non-payment of school fees and examination fees. This can result in the children not being allowed to sit in for an exam or kicked out of school (Coe, 2011). For these reasons, children face a difficult life and an uncertain future.

Traditional gender roles have also been affected by transnational migration. In Ghana, traditionally, there is division of labor based on gender. In marriages, basically men are assigned the role of the head of the family responsible for financially supporting his family while women are responsible for nurturing the children and keeping the home. However, in the last decades scholars have identified that transnational migration especially of women has challenged the traditional gender roles. For instance, as I noted above, in Ghanaian traditional settings women are responsible for caretaking roles but due to their condition as transnational migrants they are unable to fulfil this responsibility. They either leave the children in the care of their fathers, grandmothers or paid caregivers among others.

Another impact of transnational migration can be seen as playing a role in the commodification of eldercare in Ghana. In Ghana, it should be noted that eldercare and childcare are reciprocal in nature. Once your parents took care of you when you were young, it is also the responsibility of the children to reciprocate this when their parents grow old. However, due to the fact that children especially are living abroad they are unable to perform their roles such as cooking, washing and bathing for their elderly parents. They therefore rely on other relatives or paid caregivers to perform these roles in their stead (Coe, 2011).

In case of left-behind families in Philippines

Although Philippine society has become familiar with international labor migration, the discomfort over the social costs of migration continues to put a shadow

on its supposed benefits. Most especially the topic on consequence of migration for migrants and their families.

Although remittances served as the number one benefit of migration, the family problems being created by migration tends to outweigh the positive consequences. In the court of public opinion, the separation of family members is feared to create instability, jeopardizing marriages and parents-children relationships. The absence of the parent/s due to overseas work has been linked to problems such as juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, dropping out of school, teenage pregnancy and early marriage among the children of migrants. It was also found out that remittances were associated in contributing to the families of migrants' becoming materialistic, losing initiative to work, and dependency on money received from abroad.

On the other hand, there is a recent study on the impact of parental migration on the health and well-being of children under 12 years old. It was found that the children of migrants and non-migrants do not have significantly difference in terms of health and well-being. This means that children of transmigrants were not disadvantaged when it comes to their health and well-being outcomes when compared with the children of non-migrants (MC, 2011).

These new findings are different from the previous study results in the Philippines saying that the fathers' lack of involvement in child care and young children in mother-migrant households results to children's poor performance, difficulties, and anxiousness in school compared to children in other migrant and non-migrant households (Battistella and Conaco, 1998; ECMI/ AOS-Manila, SMC and OWWA, 2004).

In CHAMPSEA-Philippines study, it was revealed that children in father-migrant households cared by their mothers tend to show good outcomes compared to children in other migrant and non-migrant households. Such households have better economic conditions made possible by the fathers' overseas employment and the least disruption in terms of child care because this is assumed by mothers.

When fathers migrate, mothers are commonly observed to continue socially expected role of being care givers and nurturers of their children. Though there are seemingly changes in caring arrangements, taking over the tasks traditionally performed by men adds to women's physical, economic and emotional stress, and may cost the quality of care left-behind mothers provide. While children appreciate and acknowledge the extension of their migrant fathers' breadwinning role overseas, they too may experience negative outcomes not only because of the

poorer quality of care they received, but also because in some cases they have to shoulder the burden of assuming extra agricultural/household tasks in their father's absence.

Parreñas (2005) found out in her study that Filipino children suffers an 'emotional gap', or some sense of 'social discomfort and emotional distance' in their relationships with their migrant fathers. However, for many of these children, their relationship can be repaired with their father. Thus, they prefer less time to spend with their fathers on their return.

There are many changes in living and care arrangements when mothers migrate. Many left-behind fathers seek the help of extended family member. They seek the help of their female kin, friends or neighbors to undertake caring or nurturance left by migrant mothers. (Gamburd 2000; Parreñas 2005a; SMC 2004). These 'other mothers' (Schmalzbauer 2004) undertake the role of migrant mother's duties of providing emotional support and physical care to those left behind.

Regardless of the efforts done by 'other mothers', the absence of the transmigrant mothers still may produce unfavorable outcomes for left behind children. Other studies claim that especially for left-behind daughters, they cope up by early withdrawal from their schools. Thus, they tend to create their own families by marrying early or unplanned pregnancies. (Gamburd 2000; Parreñas 2005a). Eldest daughter can be said to have the burden among the family left behind because they become in-charge of their siblings, house works, decision-making, and in providing the general well-being of the family (while sons become in charge in case of transmigrant households). (Parreñas 2005a). Some, especially those from poorer families, experience falling grades and a significant decrease in the quality of life after their mothers leave even as they pick up new skills and become more independent. Overall, while some girls resent the heavier burden, others accept it and readjust their daily lives in order to 'repay' their migrant mothers.

Assimilation of Transnational Migrants

Every transmigrant has a different story but all these stories just root from one thing which is poverty. Most of their reasons why they opted to work outside the country is their aim to give their family a better life thus pulling them out from the abyss of dearth and poverty. However, in exchange of this are misery and longing, gamble their relationships, lives and dignity to seek better opportunities abroad.

In case of Ghanaian transnational migrants

The integration of immigrants is extremely important in the economic growth of developed countries due to factors such as demographic transitions, including low birth rates and aging population and acute labor shortages. However, there have been challenges in the conceptualization of the term integration. Immigrants' integration is a multidimensional and complex process of economic, social, political and cultural incorporation into mainstream of the larger society over time. Essentially, integration means different things to different people in varying situations and is conceptualized differently in different places (Firang, 2011 p17). In literature, depending upon the receiving country's immigration policy, integration is sometimes used interchangeably with assimilation, acculturation, or incorporation (Alba & Nee, 2003; Brown & Bean, 2006). Despite, the ambiguity, scholars generally agree that integration is a process by which the characteristics of members of immigration group and host societies come to resemble one another (e.g., Alba & Nee, 2003; Anisef & Lanphier, 2003; Brown & Bean, 2006).

Housing is a basic need that promotes positive health and socio-economic outcomes for immigrants in the host society. To facilitate the resettlement and integration of immigrants there is the need and the availability of good-quality housing with security of tenure. However, due to discriminatory and exclusionary practices, Ghanaian immigrants in Toronto face challenges that hinder their economic and social mobility including successful labor market attainment and progressive housing career (Firang, 2011). It is also important to add that beside these discriminatory characteristics that hinder their housing career, Ghanaians in Toronto may in their own will choose to live in a low-quality and relatively inexpensive housing in their destination country because of their attachment to their homeland and the determination to invest more in both housing and other businesses in Ghana (Firang, 2011).

In order for Ghanaian immigrants to overcome the challenges of white supremacy, discrimination and exclusionary practices they need to find ways to help one another in the integration and resettlement in the destination society. They do this by forming associations which help them in their integration adaptation process. As examined by Owusu, among Ghanaian immigrants three types of associations are formed. These are township or hometown associations which is for members coming from the same town, ethnic associations for member emanating from one ethnic group and national association which is open to all Ghanaians (Owusu, 2000). Another observation made by Wong among Ghanaian women in Toronto

was their association with the church which served as a focal point in their everyday lives. She found that the church offered the women the opportunity to socialize and to share child-care responsibilities as well as filling an intermediary role between Ghanaians and the wider society by alleviating and accommodating some of the adverse aspects of adjusting to new place and environment (Wong, 2003 p1-2).

Integration and transnationalism can be seen as having both inverse and direct relationship. It is assumed that immigrants who are successfully integrated will have better opportunities to engage in transnational activities than new immigrants and refugees who do not have legal residence status. Similarly, immigrants who have attained higher paying jobs can mobilize financial resources to conduct cross-border activities but other immigrants without these resources cannot afford to do this. On the other hand, we can see that the relationship between integration and transnationalism is an inverse one. This can be seen in the scenario where immigrants who conduct regular cross-border activities may exclude themselves from full participation in their new country in order to direct their resources to their country of origin as in the case of Ghanaians in Toronto (Firang, 2011).

In case of Filipino transnational migrants

Not all transmigrants have good fortune in the foreign country. In case of Filipino transmigrants, there are issues like being abused verbally, physically, and emotionally, and some have led to death. In spite of knowing this situation, many people still have the will to go overseas and work. They need to gamble their life just to secure the future of their family.

Many Filipinos who opt to work overseas experience culture shock. The assimilation of Filipinos abroad has stages. The first cycle is when transmigrant Filipino workers gladly embrace everything about their country of destination, it's positive and negative sides. However, despite this they believe that their overseas life will be exciting and thrilling rather than dreadful and scary. Then after this period, there is the realization that the new environment that they are living in is so different from the country they used to live. Here, transmigrants start to feel homesickness. They miss their life back in their country of origin which makes them have negative feelings and doubtful. In this stage, it can make or break their careers. Those who cannot surpass the boredom and homesickness may result to going back to Philippines and be miserable. On the other hand, those who fight

the negativity by staying optimistic survives the cycle and eventually adapts to the changes (Caguioa & Lomboy, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Labor migrations has a fundamental impact in globalizing the economies in 21st century. Migrants from Southeast Asia and Africa would normally accept temporary work contracts in richer countries. They resist the pain of being away from their origin country, most especially from their families to provide them a better life and future. This is where the concept of transnational family comes from. These are the families who live apart but try to create and maintain the sense of collective welfare and unity even across geographical distances.

It can be observed that both Ghanaians and Philippines have the same reasons for leaving their countries and settling in other countries. They two countries both face economic instabilities resulting in poverty, unemployment, poor living conditions among others which force their citizens to migrate to other countries in search for greener pastures.

Ghanaian and Filipino transnational migrants share the same communication practices. For example, they both use remittances. They remit money on regular basis, which is at least every month. This is very important to the lives of their families which are left behind but as well in the economy of their respective countries. Another similarity is the use of technology to communicate with their families especially the use of telecommunication systems. However, for Filipinos, they heavily use social media (Facebook) to feel the presence of one another despite geographical distances.

About the impact of transnational migration on transnational migrants' family, both left-behind children in Ghana and Philippines have the adverse effect of transnational migrant mother on their children's emotions. However, they differ in their attributions; while in Ghana it is explained by the higher possibility of divorce associated with female-only migration, in the Philippines it is ascribed to the difficulty of children to accept the changed role of mothers as more economic providers and less of caretakers.

In case of assimilation of transnational migrants, Ghanaian immigrants surpass the challenges of the destination countries by forming associations to help them in their integration process. This is the opposite of Filipinos' case because they face their problem of assimilation by themselves. This can lead to two outcomes,

those who resist would eventually adapt to changes whereas those who could not would go back to their country thus breaking their careers.

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