

Layers of Complexity: The Intersectionality of Parenting in Families of Female Migrant Workers

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Abstract: The overarching aim of this study is to explore how the interplay between gender, social structure, manifested in different classes, and status as a migrant affect the practice of parenting within Female Migrant Workers' Families. Given its novelty, the qualitative dimension of the research undertaken affords an overview of the life experiences and parenting strategies undertaken by Families of Female Migrant Workers. The research finds that the intersection of several forms and changing situations-socioeconomic, cultural-elevates their experiences with parenting into a plane unique and different from what other families endure. Female Migrant Workers find that they are constantly juggling work abroad with their cultural-defined roles as mothers back home. Accessibility to resources and structural social definitions on parenting comes into collision with the physical distance from the child. It thus becomes a variable in giving shape to their parenting patterns. This research distills from it the need for viewing the parenting experience against a larger background. Multiple forms of social, cultural, and economic disparity interplay simultaneously to develop complex life experiences. Policy recommendations link to the call for public policy able to address the needs of Families of Female Migrant Workers and to enact programs that can build upon women's capacity for personal and family development.


1 INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the phenomenon of international labor migration, especially women, has become one of the topics that has attracted the attention of various social, economic, and cultural studies. Many Indonesian women work abroad as migrant workers to support the economic stability of their families. Relationships within families that are separated by geographical distance for a long period of time present complex issues (Kusumastuti & Thiesmeyer, 2020). One of them, this phenomenon has an impact on family life, especially related to child-rearing patterns.

The family is the main environment in the development of values, norms, ethics that can become the identity and character of children (Santika et al., 2019). The many factors that can hinder the process of child socialization, families with migrant workers are certain to have a distance factor as a potential obstacle to child socialization so that they need a support system to maintain child development. The long-

distance relationship of a mother who is a migrant worker has the potential for changes in culture, values, and language so that the extended family becomes a support system in raising children left behind by their working mothers (Anindita et al., 2023). In the digital era where the influence of information technology enters every element, including the socialization of children, the role of extended family support becomes a determinant for the support system in migrant worker families (Ortiz & Jeri, 2024).

The role of the extended family in supporting migrant worker families is important to anticipate the impact of the loss of parental roles for children. The basic impact that can be experienced by children who do not get enough care from their families is the loss of parental figures as role models (Zai, R.K., & Oet, S., 2024). The absence of parents as role models for children makes it easy for children to be influenced by negative aspects of the external environment socially or from digital information media (Kucker, S.C., & Schneider, J.M., 2024). The loss of parental

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figures can also make children feel insecure and less confident, and inhibit the formation of positive values and good character (Miralles, P., et al., 2023).

The National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI) delivers data that women are the majority of the total Indonesian migrant with the number more than 70%. The majority of whom are mothers who leave their children at home, where in several areas with migrant worker bases such as Central Java, West Java, and West Nusa Tenggara, it was recorded that more than 50% of children from migrant worker families were cared for by grandparents or close relatives (OECD, 2022; National Commission on Violence Against Women, 2022). This pattern shows that the extended family plays an important role in parenting where they replace the role of mothers who work abroad. Furthermore, The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) showed the survey that around 40% of these children showed symptoms of anxiety, feelings of loss, and identity confusion due to being separated from their mothers for a long period of time (Mayang, et al., 2019). So that children from female migrant worker families often face emotional and social challenges. Thus, the condition of a family with a mother who is a migrant worker is not an ideal condition because the absence of a mother in the nuclear family is replaced by the role of a father who plays a dual role or an extended family who complement the presence of the family in children. Social and cultural norms that are developing can influence the role of fathers and mothers in childcare (Craig, L., & Mullan, K., 2011). Family development theory recognizes changes in gender roles in childcare (Usman, M., et al., 2023) so that in its development the involvement of fathers in care becomes important in the emotional and cognitive development of children significantly (Fahira, K. F., & Ahmadi, A., 2024).

In the context of a family environment with female migrant workers, the dynamics of these roles create unique challenges, especially in a society that is still heavily influenced by patriarchal norms, such as in Indonesia. The study that implies the ideal conditions of parenting practices that require the presence of parents and emphasize the importance of the father figure is faced with the reality of a number of communities with women migrant workers who force a mother to be separated from her child and husband so that the role of parenting is the role of the father or extended family, with dynamic social values and norms. This study takes a role in studies on female migrant workers by connecting various variables holistically. This study also specifically

studies childcare patterns in families whose mothers are working. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how the intersectionality of gender, social structure, and status as a migrant worker affect parenting practices.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

Based on the research objectives where this article will analyze intersectionally how gender, social structure, and status as women migrant workers carry out parenting practices, a qualitative approach with a case study method is carried out to obtain accurate data. Through a qualitative approach with a case study method, this study will obtain an in-depth picture of how parenting practices are carried out by families with women migrant workers.

Through the case study method, the subjects studied provide empirical data in the form of personal experiences, life journeys, interactions, and visuals that describe the lives of women migrant workers' families. Thus, data collection was carried out using in-depth interview, participatory observation, and analysis of relevant documents so that a comprehensive understanding of the case study being studied can be obtained.

The case study referred to in this study is the condition of parenting practices carried out by the nuclear family (father) or the extended family left by the mother who works as a migrant worker. By analyzing case studies that include the experiences and contexts of women migrant workers' families, this study presents meaningful findings that can contribute to understanding how to support children's needs intersectionally.

Fathers, children, and relatives in the extended family environment with women migrant workers became participants in this study located in Cipatat District, West Bandung Regency. The steps taken to achieve the objectives of this study are: First, conducting careful subject selection by selecting families of female migrant workers who meet the criteria; second, the researcher approaches them openly to obtain permission and trust from informants; third, collecting data by conducting observations, in-depth interviews with family members, and analyzing relevant documents. The data collection process pays special attention to the dynamics of interactions between fathers and children and the roles played by extended family members in parenting practices. Then the data is analyzed in depth with a focus on thematic patterns and variations that emerge from various case studies. The findings from

this analysis are then compiled and conceptualized into a cohesive narrative in order to present a comprehensive study of parenting practices carried out in families of female migrant workers analyzed intersectionally.

3 FINDING & DISCUSSION

3.1 Parenting Patterns in Women Migrant Workers Families

Parenting patterns affect a child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development (Robbiyah, et al., 2018). Three types of parenting patterns can be categorized as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (Kılıçkay et al., 2023). The three types of parenting patterns applied to families are influenced by the family's socioeconomic status and surrounding culture (Kadir, 2020).

The division of roles based on gender in parenting patterns is perceived in the way parents educate their children. The traditional view places the father as the provider of the family's financial needs as well as an authority figure who tends to be involved in activities that emphasize independence, resilience, and courage. Meanwhile, the mother is often considered the person responsible for the child's emotional and social development needs by teaching empathy, communication, and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the absence of a mother in the family of a migrant female worker can affect the pattern of interaction in the family environment because of the traditional values that are formed.

The absence of a mother figure in a family in a society that assumes that taking care of children is a woman's job then becomes a problem because the father is unable to optimize his role in parenting. The formation of a father's mindset that limits his role to the idea that raising children is not a father's job is illustrated in the statement of Mr Herman (42), namely:

As a man, my job is in the fields, like most men here in general. Housework is a woman's job. Children are also a woman's responsibility as a mother at home. Household chores and raising children are a woman's responsibility; my responsibility as a man is to work in the fields to earn a living for the family at home.

Herman is a husband of a wife who works abroad. Herman has been in a long-distance relationship with his wife for quite some time. In taking care of the household in a family left by a wife or mother,

Herman shares his story about raising children in their family. With such a view, the father does not have the ability to raise children. The care of children whose long distance relationship with his mother is eventually transferred to other women in the family, usually grandmothers as substitute mothers. Thus, the extended family contributes to the care of children by providing daily needs, including psychosocial. The extended family plays a role in consciously passing on family values and traditions that a child whose mother works needs a substitute figure to continue to care for, look after, and educate the child. Grandma Ema is the mother of a migrant worker woman. She helped raise her grandson even though the father figure is still directly present in his life. This was expressed by Grandma Ema (51):

It is our responsibility as Grandparents to protect our grandchildren. Mother's departure as a migrant worker abroad was a family decision, and as a family, we try to make sure that all the grandchildren's needs are met. They will not be with anyone else as long as we, the grandparents, are still around.

It is depicted that the extended family has a commitment to raising children left by their mothers to work. The high commitment of the extended family also supports the smooth career of women as migrant workers abroad. The parenting pattern is taken over by the extended family such as grandparents because they are considered more capable and have experience. So, the next challenge is emotional closeness and social ties with the family. The loss of a mother figure who is not accompanied by the presence of a father because of his reluctance to take care of children creates a lack of self-confidence and closeness with the family. Nino is a child who was abandoned by his mother who works abroad. Now he is 16 years old, he has felt life far from his mother since Nino was little. His age which has entered adolescence makes him really feel the longing for a mother figure directly. This was conveyed by Nino (16) that:

Sometimes I feel different from other friends. I feel like I don't have a mother, I'm not close to my father. Only with my grandfather and grandmother. I feel like I want to be like other friends who are accompanied by their mothers at home.

However, the parenting pattern of fathers in migrant women's families cannot be categorized. The parenting pattern of fathers is described in a table based on data collected using AppSheet (Wilodati, et al., 2024) as follows:

Table 1: Parenting patterns of fathers in female migrant worker families.

Parenting Style	Characteristics
Authoritative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide freedom with certain limits; • Parent firmly, but with love, warmth, tenderness, and intimacy; • Rules are made and explained in detail; • All decisions related to the interests of the child are communicated together; • Foster an independent attitude from an early age; • Respect the child's decisions and opinions, as well as the child's personality
Otoritarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rules made by the father must not be violated by the child; • The father never communicates clearly about the rules he makes; • The child must obey the rules set by the father; • The child must never question the rules implemented by the father; • If the child violates the rules made, the father will give a stern warning; • If the child violates the rules in the family environment, the father will give punishment (beating); • The father makes all decisions related to the child's needs himself; • All decisions related to the child's interests are always made by the father; • The child must obey all his father's wishes. The child is not allowed to voice his wishes and opinions.
Permissive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathers always give their children freedom to behave; • Fathers always involve themselves in their children's lives; • Fathers never demand anything from their children; • Fathers never exercise control when raising children; • Fathers never punish children when they make mistakes; • Fathers rarely interfere in their children's personal lives; • Fathers are always warm to their children, appreciate self-expression, and discuss all decisions made; • Fathers always follow their children's wishes and desires; • When raising children, fathers never control and pay attention to them.

The tendency of parenting patterns based on the table above by fathers in the environment of migrant female workers is authoritative with a democratic attitude that respects the existence of their children, understands their situation, and respects the decisions and opinions of their children.

Various types of parenting patterns need to be examined more deeply to analyze holistically how parenting patterns are formed in the context of families left behind by migrant women workers. Variables that can be considered based on these findings are regarding social class. Women who work

abroad also have economic needs issues so that caring for children is not something that is taken into account in the initial decision to become migrant workers. Therefore, the challenges faced by low-income families in arranging parenting patterns become complicated. The challenges faced by low-income

3.2 Social and Cultural Challenges

Migrant women workers are hard workers who struggle for their families. Working abroad is a demand for the economic reality they experience (Ford, 2008). The role of migrant mothers often creates conflict with cultural expectations (Robinson, 2002). Migrant women workers face criticism that they are considered to have abandoned their obligations as mothers. In addition, the traditional Islamic view in Indonesia increasingly strengthens the role of mothers as guardians of family morals (Wieringa, 2015). This religious teaching constructs the values of women's piety that expect mothers to prioritize domestic roles.

The paradigm of childcare that is shared with the task of one gender, in this case women, is a big challenge when the absence of women directly in care can be a disaster for the condition of the child. The absence of the mother can affect the child's self-confidence and ability to interact with their environment (Coleman, 2003). The statement of Mr. Herman (42) which has been conveyed above reflects the social construct that forms the view of how and who takes care of children has an impact on the emotional bond of the child to his family as expressed by Nino (16). So, indirectly what the child feels when his mother works abroad is that the child feels like he has lost the figure of both parents who are replaced by grandparents. The social construct that is already attached as above is not only conceptualized in a father, but also in the figure of the mother herself. Working far away abroad is not an ideal condition. Various factors such as the economy and the availability of jobs in the country which are not the main topic of this study force a mother to be far from her child and family. This non-ideal condition with such a social construct makes the mother's trust to delegate childcare not to her husband, but to entrust it to another female figure, namely her mother, to take care of the child. Tina is a woman who works abroad. She reluctantly left her children and husband in the village. Tina's decision to work abroad was not a decision based on personal ego. As conveyed by Mrs. Tina (37):

Honestly, my decision to work abroad was not my own desire. There are several things to consider, both

families are not about parenting patterns in the family, but rather by the pressure of parenting in the social system network that tends to invite parents (Sherman and Harris, 2012). Therefore, this discussion will be examined in next section.

from the immediate family between me and my husband, and the support from my parents. Because I believe, my parents will take care of my child while I work abroad, not my husband.

The statement by Mr. Herman (42) who feels that childcare is not a man's responsibility reflects a deep-rooted social construction. This view emphasizes that the father's role is more focused on providing a living and not on the daily care of the child. As a result, when a mother works abroad, the father often does not feel ready or is not expected to take over the full caregiving role. This has the potential to weaken the emotional bond between father and child because the father's involvement in care is very limited.

The consequence of this situation is that children from female migrant worker families, as expressed by Nino (16) who feel the loss of both parental figures. The absence of a mother because she works abroad combined with the father's lack of involvement in care makes the child feel isolated. Grandparents become figures who are relied on to fulfill their emotional and social needs. However, care by grandparents, although full of affection, is often unable to replace the presence of parents in their entirety.

The findings of Mrs. Tina (37) who entrusts the care of her child to her mother rather than her husband reflect the limitations of the father's role in a family system that is still dominated by patriarchal norms. This shows that even when the father is at home, mothers who work as migrants prefer to entrust their children to other female figures, in this case grandmothers, who are considered more appropriate to take care of the children. This decision is not solely due to the father's inability, but is more influenced by social constructs that dictate who is more entitled or more capable in caring for them.

This decision shows a systemic distrust of the father's ability to carry out the role of caregiving. Social norms that shape the perception that caregiving tasks are the domain of women, be it mothers or grandmothers, create gender inequality in the family. This underlines that changes in gender roles in caregiving have not been fully accepted in society, even though the situation forces fathers to be more involved when mothers work far abroad.

The mother's decision to entrust caregiving to her grandmother rather than her husband shows that the family support system remains more dependent on women. In fact, research shows that direct father involvement in caregiving has a significant positive impact on children's emotional and cognitive development (Fahira, K. F., & Ahmadi, A., 2024). Supportive fathering can mitigate the mother's absence but requires role adjustments within the family structure (Lamb, 2012). The father's lack of involvement not only affects the child but also the relationship between the father and child, which ultimately affects the family's overall well-being.

The parenting pattern of fathers who give freedom within limits is a form of control that can foster children's responsibility. The authoritative parenting pattern used by fathers in migrant female worker families provides an alternative character education that tends to have good social skills, high levels of self-confidence, and good emotional abilities (Wilodati et al., 2024).

Multidimensional Family Development Theory (MFDt) describe that family development is shaped by the interdependent relationships among family members connected through their respective stages of development (Crapo & Bradford, 2021). In the context of female migrant workers leaving their families behind, family support, particularly the role of husbands and extended family, becomes crucial. The family.

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Various types of parenting patterns need to be examined more deeply to analyze holistically how parenting patterns are formed in the context of families left behind by migrant women workers. Variables that can be considered based on these findings are regarding social class. Women who work abroad also have economic needs issues so that caring for children is not something that is taken into account in the initial decision to become migrant workers. Therefore, the challenges faced by low-income families in arranging parenting patterns become complicated. The challenges faced by low-income families are not about parenting patterns in the family, but rather by the pressure of parenting in the social system network that tends to invite parents (Sherman and Harris, 2012). Therefore, this discussion will be examined in next section. involves interactions between ontogenesis—such as individual

developmental needs—and the cultural context, which includes social norms and historical forces. Thus, the needs arising in the families of migrant workers often stem from the intersection of individual development and prevailing socio-cultural dynamics. The research location in the Bandung area, which is mostly Sundanese, needs to be supplemented with a study of how the values of the division of new roles between fathers and mothers in the family. Sundanese society prioritizes the role of mothers as the main caregivers and fathers play a role in earning a living. One of the Sundanese cultural values is the concept of *cageur*, *bageur*, *bener*, and *pinter* as a pillar in socialization to the next generation. Fathers with an authoritarian parenting style will impose the concepts of *cageur*, *bageur*, *bener*, *singer*, and *pinter* on their children with demands to obey their children. Fathers with an authoritative parenting style try to exemplify a healthy lifestyle and worship. While the permissive type will give the impression of making them do what they want. Open communication between father and child allows the exchange of information about cultural norms and values from father to child to understand complex information (Rahmayanty, D., et al., 2023). So that the application of Sundanese cultural values by father functions as a tool to facilitate holistic cognitive development.

This finding implies a discussion of the socio-cultural role in dealing with the reality of family life with migrant women. Gender roles constructed by local community values determine parenting patterns and family relationships in caring for children. From our findings that show migrant women in Sundanese society, I try to compare them with Javanese community values. Javanese culture places the role of the husband as the provider of control and determines the household situation. In the context of migrant women in Javanese society, patriarchal culture is still the principle of running household life so that the power structure in the household cannot be determined by women (Gumilang, 2009).

3.3 Technology in Maintaining Emotional Bonds

Migrant mothers use a variety of strategies to manage their responsibilities as breadwinners and caregivers, despite being physically distant from their children. One key strategy is to use communication technologies such as video calls or instant messaging apps to maintain emotional connections with their children. Tina (37), a migrant mother, explained:

I always make sure to call my child every night, ask about his day, and remind him to study.

In addition, migrant mothers often rely on extended family to help with childcare. Grandmothers play a significant role in providing for children's emotional and physical needs. As Ema (51), a grandmother, explained:

We, as an extended family, work together to make sure the children feel supported even though their mother is far away.

The absence of mothers as migrant workers causes children to feel a loss of emotional closeness. Nino (16) in his interview also told of the loss of a mother figure who went abroad. Technology can be a bridge that allows mothers to continue to participate in everyday life. Although long-distance communication does not really replace real face-to-face interactions (Lim, 2019), this interaction helps reduce feelings of alienation and provides comfort to children even though they are physically separated. Technology can also be used by caregivers at home, such as fathers or grandparents to involve mothers in daily decision-making regarding childcare. Mothers can still contribute to important decisions for the family even though they are not physically present.

In some cases, technology can also help fathers to be more involved in childcare when mothers work abroad. With access to digital platforms that support parenting education, fathers can gain the knowledge needed to better care for their children, especially in situations where fathers were previously unfamiliar with the role of caregiving. This can enrich the father's experience in understanding the emotional and psychological needs of the child, while encouraging more active father involvement in the family. However, it is necessary to be aware that there are potential problems when the use of technology is used in parenting. The digital divide, for example, has the potential to occur in the use of technology if the child is cared for by an extended family such as grandparents. The use of technology with minimal control can reduce the quality of emotional closeness between the child and the family.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The absence of mothers who work as migrant workers has an impact on childcare patterns. Children who are left behind lose a mother figure which can disrupt the child's development. This condition occurs when the father's role as a caregiver is not optimized due to lack of experience and because of social norms that consider caregiving as a woman's task. The care of children left behind by working mothers is shifted to

the extended family, especially grandparents. The role of the extended family is very important in maintaining emotional stability and social development of children. Grandparents not only provide physical needs but also ensure that children remain connected to the cultural values and traditions of the family. However, there are challenges in the form of generation gaps that can affect parenting patterns, where the approach used is often more authoritarian or permissive. This study confirms that gender, social structure, and status as a migrant worker create their own challenges in parenting practices. A structural approach can be an alternative to anticipate the challenges faced by female migrant workers who leave their families in their hometowns. Sympathetic and holistic policies can be implemented as in the Philippines which can provide protection through family reunification programs to provide support to families left behind by working. A more inclusive and adaptive approach is needed to ensure that the needs of children and the welfare of migrant worker families can be met holistically.

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