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**TRANSNATIONAL MOTHERING: AN ASEAN PERSPECTIVE ON FILIPINO  
MIGRANT MOTHERS IN TORONTO, CANADA**

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## Acceptance Page

This thesis of **DARLA DENIELLE R. FELIZARDO** titled: **"TRANSNATIONAL MOTHERING: AN ASEAN PERSPECTIVE ON FILIPINO MIGRANT MOTHERS IN TORONTO CANADA"** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Management and Development Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree **Master of ASEAN Studies**.

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## **Biographical Sketch**

Darla Denielle R. Felizardo holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of the Philippines Diliman and a graduate certificate in ASEAN Studies from the University of the Philippines Open University. Currently based in Toronto, Canada, she works for a non-profit organization. Prior to her immigration to Canada, Darla gained experience working with the City Government of Muntinlupa, the Department of Education, and the Gokongwei Brothers Foundation. Her research interests focus on migration and diaspora studies.

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## **Abstract**

The feminization of migration has given rise to the phenomenon of transnational mothering, where mothers leave their native countries to work abroad, maintaining parental roles across borders. This research explores the lived experiences of Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto, Canada, through the lens of matricentric feminism and intersectionality. Employing a qualitative, phenomenological approach, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten Filipino mothers with various immigration statuses. The research reveals that while their core identity as mothers remains constant, their self-perception is reshaped by economic pressures, with downward occupational mobility impacting their self-worth. Despite their resilience, feelings of guilt and inadequacy persist. Family relations are influenced by their own upbringing, and they have a strong desire to create a better emotional experience for their children. The uncertainty of family reunification also complicates this. The preservation of cultural ties, on the other hand, focuses on transmitting values rather than consuming material culture, while addressing concerns about perceived cultural differences. Furthermore, their parental responsibilities are impacted by a complex interplay of economic, sociocultural, and political factors. This is evident in how low-wage and demanding jobs strain finances and limit social integration, and how temporary immigration status increases vulnerability to exploitation and discrimination. Transnational mothering changes household dynamics as financial contributions alter power relations. Mothers earn greater decision-making authority, but this shift creates tension with partners who may feel a loss of their provider status. These insights provide a lens for understanding similar patterns across other ASEAN countries that share similar cultural values. The research also highlights broader ASEAN themes, such as the primacy of the family and gendered migration. By connecting the mothers'

lived realities to the region's core pillars, the study contributes to ASEAN Studies through advocating for more inclusive and people-centered policies.

Keywords: Transnational mothering; Filipino migrants; Feminization of migration

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## GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
Collective Mothering	Communities sharing responsibilities of parenting.
Feminism	Array of movements and ideologies striving to institute gender equality across political, economic, personal, and social spheres.
Feminization of Migration	Refers to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the absolute number of female migrants as outgoing migrants or incoming migrants,</li> <li>2. the increasing participation rate of women in migrant work or the almost equal balance between the two sexes, and</li> <li>3. the dominance of women in certain sectors or specific migration streams.</li> </ol>
Gendered Migration	Pertains to how migration impacts women and men differently. It is deeply rooted in a globalized division of labor based on gender, where there exists a demand for female migrant workers in particular service sectors, including domestic and caregiving roles.
Intersectionality	The framework that examines the experiences of individuals belonging to social categories that face compounded disadvantages.
Left-Behind Children	Children whose parents, either one or both, have departed from their home countries for various purposes.
Matricentric Feminism	Places mothers at the forefront, acknowledging their experiences, needs, and concerns as the starting point for theory and politics.
Motherhood	The patriarchal institution governed and dominated by men that is oppressive to women.
Mothering	Emphasizes the active and performative nature of maternity.
Other Mother	A person who cares for a child that is not biologically her own.
Permanent Resident (PR)	Someone who has been given PR status by immigrating to Canada but is not a Canadian citizen. They get the most social benefits that Canadian citizens receive, except voting or running for political office or holding some jobs that need a high-level security clearance.

Social Capital	Refers to the network of social connections, relationships, and resources that individuals or groups possess, enabling society to function effectively.
Study Permit Holder	An individual who has been granted official permission to engage in academic, professional, vocational or other education or training that is more than six (6) months in duration at a designated learning institution (DLI) in Canada. Also referred to as an International Student.
Transnational Mothering	Occurs when mothers are compelled to leave their native country to work in the host nation. It is also the organizational reconstitution of motherhood that accommodates the temporal and spatial separations forced by migration.
Temporary Resident	Applies to those who are not Canadian citizens but are legally in Canada for a temporary purpose, including international students, foreign workers, and tourists.
Undocumented Migrant	An individual who has no authorization to reside and/or work in Canada.
Work Permit Holder	An individual who has been granted official authorization to work in Canada for a specified period of time and under certain conditions. Also referred to as a Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW).

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale

Mothering emphasizes the active and performative nature of maternity, which is an important concept given Western cultures' traditional view of the mother as passive and powerless (Jeremiah, 2006). Although they reflect different facets of maternal experience, motherhood and mothering are often confused with one another, especially in academic discussions. Rich (1976) defined motherhood as a patriarchal institution governed and dominated by men that is oppressive to women, whereas mothering refers to female-defined experiences of mothering. In matricentric feminism, motherhood is seen as social and historical constructs, with mothering being seen as more of a practice than an identity (O'Reilly, 2019).

Following this thought, women's own experiences of mothering can be a source of power. The misunderstanding of the difference between the institution and the experience contributes to the notion that maternity is exclusively a patriarchal entity (O'Reilly, 2019). Including the experiences of mothers in academic conversations does not reduce women's sense of self to being a mother, but it acknowledges that motherhood and mothering are vital to the understanding of the lives of women as mothers.

From these definitions of motherhood and mothering, the focus shifts to the intersection of these concepts with migration, giving rise to the phenomenon known as transnational mothering. Transnational mothering occurs when mothers are compelled to leave their native country in order to work in the host nation (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). In the context of transnational mothering, the traditional roles

and practices associated with motherhood and mothering undergo unique challenges and adaptations.

With globalization, changes in migration patterns became apparent as individuals, particularly women, are migrating internationally, driven by various economic, sociocultural, and political factors. This feminization of migration is a notable trend across Southeast Asia, with countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam serving as important sources of migrant labor. Within this broader ASEAN landscape, the Philippines stands out as a leading sending country for female migrants, making the experiences of Filipino transnational mothers critical for understanding the wider regional implications of this global trend. For many Southeast Asians, most especially Filipinos, Canada is a major country of destination. Toronto, the largest city in the country and one of the most ethnically diverse, is an ideal location to explore these realities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research adopts the view that mothering is important and plays a major role in the lives of mothers (O'Reilly, 2019). Without taking into account how becoming and being a mother shapes a woman's sense of self and how she sees and lives in the world, our knowledge of mothers' lives is inadequate.

This research generally aims to comprehensively explore and understand the concept of transnational mothering within the context of Filipino migrant mothers currently residing in Toronto, Canada, thereby contributing to the broader ASEAN Studies discourse. It asks the question, "What are the lived experiences of Filipino

transnational mothers in Toronto, and how do they navigate the concept of mothering across borders?”

Specifically, the research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the underlying meanings of transnational mothering on self-perception, family relations, cultural ties, and identity of Filipino migrant mothers living in Toronto?
2. How do economic, sociocultural, and political factors affect Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto in performing their parental responsibilities?
3. In what ways does transnational mothering contribute to the family and household dynamics and power relations within these Filipino families?
4. How do the lived experiences of Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto inform or challenge the development of an ASEAN community?

### **Scope and Significance of the Study**

The research tackles transnational mothers from the Philippines who are currently staying or residing in Toronto, Canada as work permit holders, students, permanent residents, and naturalized citizens. Filipinos are a well-established and accessible population in Canada, making them a suitable group for this research (see Table 2.1).

The study's main focus is in Toronto, where 46.6% of the population are immigrants (Government of Canada, 2022e). Toronto is also home to 13.9% of the new immigrants to Canada in the last decade (Government of Canada, 2022e). The

city's diverse population and established immigrant communities provide a rich environment for understanding the experiences of transnational mothers.

While the research initially aimed to include transnational mothers from select ASEAN countries, recruitment efforts encountered significant challenges in reaching mothers from countries other than the Philippines. Given the relatively small populations of these groups in Toronto compared to the large Filipino community, recruiting participants from these other ASEAN countries proved to be more difficult. Nevertheless, the focus on Filipino transnational mothers remains highly significant for the broader ASEAN perspective. The Filipino experience, characterized by strong familial ties, collectivist values, and a history of labor migration, serves as a case study for understanding similar trends and challenges faced by migrant mothers across culturally similar ASEAN nations.

Despite the growing prevalence of transnational mothering from the region, literature revealed that there is limited existing research on these experiences within the broader ASEAN context. While most transnational mothering studies look at migrant mothers from the Philippines, the Caribbean, and Latin America (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009), the research addresses this void by positioning itself as a vital contribution to ASEAN Studies. The research also adds to the academic discourse by expanding the scope beyond the traditional focus on these specific regions.

Moreover, considering that many transnational mothers are not just limited to labor migrants, I also included students, naturalized citizens, and permanent residents in the population. A wide variety of transnational mothers allowed the researcher to capture the intersecting factors between different types of social categories.

The insights gained from this can also guide and inform policies and interventions aimed at supporting migrant mothers and their families across ASEAN, addressing the challenges faced by them, and contributing to their overall well-being. Developing more effective policies and support structures promotes the rights, welfare, and integration of transnational mothers within the ASEAN community and in receiving countries globally.

### **Positionality**

In conducting this research on the transnational mothering experiences of Filipino migrants, it is crucial to acknowledge the researcher's positionality and how it may influence the study. Growing up, my grandparents and my aunts served as my *other mothers* while my parents were at work. I also spent my teen years having a transnational mother because she had to leave our family to study and work abroad for a time. And as a Filipino immigrant in Canada, I have encountered many individual stories of mothers leaving their children back in their own countries to work and settle in the host country.

I have also always been interested in migration and diaspora studies. For my undergraduate thesis, I examined the ethnic identity of second-generation Filipino immigrants. I wanted something similar, yet different, for my master's thesis, and this topic came to mind.

To evaluate one's positionality, a reflexive approach is both a prerequisite and an ongoing activity (Holmes, 2020). The commitment to reflexivity involves an ongoing process of self-awareness and critical examination of the influence of personal

experiences and beliefs on the research process (Cohen et al., 2011). While efforts are made to minimize bias, it is acknowledged that my background may shape the framing of questions, interpretation of findings, and overall study outcomes.

It is also essential to actively engage with the voices and experiences of the participants. According to Saeidzadeh (2023), there is always an unequal power relationship between the researcher and the subject of the study, which is why it is imperative to consider this unequal relationship throughout the research process. Transparency about the researcher's positionality enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, allowing readers to critically assess the study's findings within the context of the researcher's background and potential biases (Holmes, 2020).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Matricentric Feminism**

Matricentric feminism, as a theoretical framework, serves as a foundational lens for understanding the complexities of motherhood and mothering. It starts with the mother and considers mothering essential. This theoretical perspective places mothers at the forefront, acknowledging their experiences, needs, and concerns as the starting point for theory and politics.

O'Reilly (2019) proposed this school of thought and drew on the concept of matrifocal narrative in literary theory. She concluded that "a central aim of motherhood studies is to articulate and theorize 'the voice of the mother' — that is, to analyze becoming and being a mother from the perspective and subjectivity of mothers

themselves” (O’Reilly, 2019, p. 16). By capturing the lived reality of mothering, the study seeks to reveal the nature of motherhood from the voices of Filipino migrant mothers living in Toronto, providing a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the complex social, cultural, and economic implications of transnational mothering.

O’Reilly (2019) acknowledged that there is a demand for a theory and practice based on a specific identity of women. While she is not claiming that there is no feminist scholarship on motherhood, it continues to be ancillary to academic feminism. The little representation of motherhood in academic feminism is in contrast with the lives of women who become mothers at some point in their lives (O’Reilly, 2019).

Unlike other approaches to motherhood, matricentric feminism sees motherhood as something that is socially and historically constructed and mothering as a practice rather than an identity (O’Reilly, 2019). For her, the conflation of mothering and motherhood within academic feminism must be continually challenged. A critique of the maternalist perspective, which regards maternity as the foundation of female identity, is at the core of matricentric feminist thought (O’Reilly, 2019). Matricentric feminism questions the notions that mothering is instinctive and inherent to all women, rather than learned and developed through habit (O’Reilly, 2019). While maintaining a matrifocal perspective and highlighting the importance of mothering, matricentric feminism does not present a maternalist position.

Matricentric feminism is multi and interdisciplinary in its perspective. Matricentric feminist theory is informed by a wide range of academic fields, such as anthropology, history, literary studies, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and

sexuality studies, including established schools of academic feminism (O'Reilly, 2019).

In summary, the principles of matricentric feminism are as follows:

- maintains that thoughtful and ongoing academic research is warranted on the subject of mothers, mothering, and motherhood;
- considers mothering a significant and worthwhile work but stresses that mothering should not be fulfilled by mothers alone;
- strives to create an identity and practice that is empowering for mothers, challenging the patriarchal oppressive institution of motherhood;
- aims to rectify the prevailing child-centeredness in a large portion of motherhood-related research and instead develops such work from the viewpoint and experience of mothers;
- demonstrates a strong commitment to social justice and change, viewing mothering as a location of power and a socially engaged enterprise where mothers can impact social change through activism and childrearing;
- acknowledges that mothering and motherhood are culturally determined and variable and is dedicated to examining the range of maternal experiences that exist among people of different race, class, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, and geographical location; and
- seeks to establish motherhood studies and maternal theory as valid and independent fields of study (O'Reilly, 2019).

## **Intersectionality**

The concept of matricentric feminism underlines the interconnectedness of mothering experiences and the need to examine them in relation to other social

categories. In the transnational space, the experiences of transnational mothers are influenced not only by their roles as mothers but also by other factors. Matricentric feminism encourages a thorough exploration of these intersections, acknowledging the diversity of experiences among Filipino transnational mothers.

Intersectionality, as a theoretical and methodological framework, is applicable in comprehending the experiences of individuals belonging to social categories that face compounded disadvantages (Guittar & Guittar, 2015). Experiences are analyzed based on their intersection with ethnicity, race, class, gender, nationality, religion, sexuality, and any other social category that situates them in relation to power. For Amelina (2018), social classifications that relate to space, such as migration-related ones, can also create separate spatial axes of inequality. These overlapping categories simultaneously structure human experiences, even though a person's race, class, or gender may feel more prominent at any given time (Guittar & Guittar, 2015).

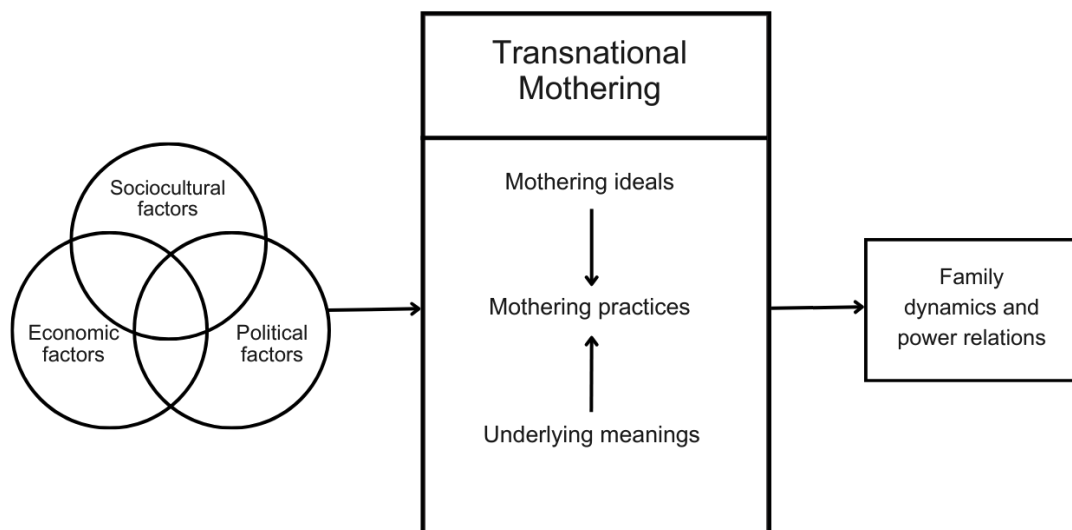
In using intersectionality as a method of analysis, one should not make assumptions about any differences or connections between categories beforehand, as they ought to be the focus of empirical research (Lutz et al., 2011; Matsuda, 1991). Three guiding principles underpin this methodology (Amelina, 2018, pp. 52-23):

- Social classifications are historically specific and contingent;
- Axes of inequality interact differently depending on specific historical and social contexts; and
- Despite their mutual influence and shaping, the various dimensions of inequality cannot be reduced to one another.

It is important to note that there is no universality in the lived realities of migrants, which is why contextualization is stressed above. Migrants, especially transnational mothers, interpret their experiences in a variety of ways.

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1. Intersectional framework on transnational mothering.



The presented diagram illustrates the application of matricentric feminism within the framework of intersectionality to explore transnational mothering. Drawing inspiration from the Transnational Intersectionality Framework proposed by Mahalingam et al. (2009), I made some adaptations to tailor the framework for this research. This framework comprises three distinct sections, each aligned with the first research questions guiding this study.

The first part shows how sociocultural, economic, and political factors intersect with one another, highlighting the compounded impacts they have on fulfilling women's roles as transnational mothers. The second part reveals the embeddedness of transnational mothering into the practices and experiences of migrant mothers, revealing its active and performative nature as informed by feminist literature. Mothering practices are shaped by idealized beliefs as well as beyond surface-level meanings given by transnational mothers to their situation. The depiction of mothering ideas positioned above mothering practices emphasizes the pressure to adhere to idealized beliefs, while the inclusion of underlying meanings below signifies the efforts of transnational mothers to ground their mothering practices within their lived experiences. The upward and downward arrows symbolize the balance that transnational mothers strive to achieve in fulfilling their responsibilities. The last part reveals how transnational mothering, along with sociocultural, economic, and political factors, contribute to the family dynamics and power relations within the study's geographical context.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research on the topic of transnational mothers and their families. Many studies have examined the complexities of transnational mothers and their families, including the left-behind fathers, extended family members, and children. However, the literature revealed that more studies are needed to be conducted about transnational mothering. The existing body of knowledge reveals the gaps in various dimensions of the phenomenon, from understanding and connecting the experiences of transnational mothers to changing family and household dynamics and power relations, especially in the context of ASEAN.

#### **Changing Migration Patterns**

The history of migration in the region is deeply rooted in cultural exchanges and trade. Early migrations, such as those of Chinese, Indian, and Arab communities, have left a lasting imprint on the region's diversity. The Chinese diaspora, for instance, played a crucial role in trade and labor networks, contributing to the economic and cultural development of countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand (Cheung, 2004). Indian migrants, also drawn by trade and labor opportunities in plantations during the colonial period, influenced the Malay Peninsula and Myanmar, leaving traces of their religion and culture through Hinduism and Buddhism (Jain, 2011). Arab traders and merchants established communities in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, enriching the cultural landscape by bringing Islam (Ahmadd, 1993). These historical migrations laid the groundwork for the multiculturalism and diversity that characterize ASEAN today.

In the modern era, the ASEAN region has witnessed dynamic shifts in migration patterns, driven by push and pull factors, which may be economic, sociocultural, and political in nature:

**Economic factors.** Economic opportunities, particularly in developed countries and those experiencing rapid growth, have led to a surge in migration. An intra-ASEAN example would be workers from countries such as Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam seeking employment in nations with expanding economies, like Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. The establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, which aims to enhance economic integration, further promoted the free movement of skilled labor within the region. Beyond intra-regional migration, ASEAN migrants also contribute to global labor markets and diaspora communities. Countries within the region serve as sources of a diverse range of skilled professionals, service workers, and caregivers (McAdam, 2020). These economic motivations demonstrate a desire for improved living standards and financial stability among individuals and families in the region.

**Sociocultural factors.** Several sociocultural factors influenced the changing migration patterns in ASEAN. First, evolving social attitudes about gender norms have seen an increasing number of women entering the workforce (Lutz, 2018). A more detailed discussion of gendered migration will be provided in the next section. Second, as societies place a growing emphasis on education, individuals seek opportunities for skill enhancement and higher education abroad (Myers-Walls et al., 2011; Saxena, 2014). Educational migration affects the composition of migrant populations, with students and skilled professionals contributing to the mobility of labor. And third, social networks and community ties facilitate the movements of individuals. Having

established diaspora communities also guides the decision to leave, with migrants relying on pre-existing connections for support and guidance (Lutz, 2018).

**Political factors.** The current political situation of one's country plays a role in ASEAN's migration patterns. Individuals may seek to migrate due to political unrest, conflict, or persecution, contributing to migrant and refugee movements in the region. On the other hand, migration policies and regulations of receiving countries also impact migration patterns (Donato & Gabaccia, 2015). The demand for foreign labor shapes the type of employment opportunities available to migrants. Policies and regulations involving visas and work permits influence the ability of ASEAN individuals to migrate, work, and maintain family connections across countries.

The changing context of migration in ASEAN is evident in how the countries in the region have changed over time. While pre-colonial migration was mostly based on trade, labor, and religion, contemporary migration is compelled by various multisectoral factors. As societies became more complex, reasons for migration also evolved. Individuals and families underwent transformations, especially with how migration disrupts conventional notions of familial proximity. Traditional household roles and division of labor are rearranged in the process. In navigating the challenges of geographical separation in the globalized world, women often find themselves in roles that extend beyond the confines of a domestic setting.

### **Gendered Migration and Globalization**

Studies on migration now attribute mobility to gendered phenomena (Donato et al., 2006). Migration is not gender-neutral; men and women have distinct motivations and face different risks and outcomes from migration. Data suggest that women who move to work abroad tend to go to places where more women are already working,

perhaps due to more job opportunities or more accessible job markets for women (Popova & Rakotonarivo, 2021). In addition, 60.8% of men and 60.3% of women who migrate for work end up in specific regions, including North America, Northern, Southern, and Western Europe, and the Arab States (Popova & Rakotonarivo, 2021). Men are evenly distributed across these regions, while women are more heavily concentrated in North America and Europe, with only 6.0% in the Arab States, possibly due to limited job opportunities for women, especially outside of the care economy (Popova & Rakotonarivo, 2021).

With globalization propelling transnational gendered migration, especially in the context of labor, ASEAN sees a shift in the landscape with an increased number of women leaving their home countries for employment opportunities, especially from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam (International Labour Migration Statistics, 2020). This phenomenon, referred to as the feminization of migration, can be used to describe various issues such as a) the absolute number of female migrants as outgoing migrants or incoming migrants, b) the increasing participation rate of women in migrant work or the almost equal balance between the two sexes, and c) the dominance of women in certain sectors or specific migration streams (Piper, 2008).

Historically, it is believed that pre-colonial Southeast Asia had a high status of women, although it is hard to discern their real status in the early days due to accounts being mostly oral and a lack of material evidence. For example, a relatively egalitarian culture exists among the Bugis, an ethnic group found in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. While many have moved to Malaysia and intermarried with Malays, Bugis values regarding female self-confidence remained one way or another through writing and publishing (Andaya, 2003).

Colonization and the diaspora of patriarchal societies introduced imbalances in gender relations in the region. For instance, the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia was predominantly male; the gendered division of labor allowed Chinese men to migrate for work and women to remain in China to take care of the family (Jiemin, 2003). Even citizenship sometimes favored men, as evidenced in the case of intermarriages. Marrying a Thai was acceptable for Chinese men, but for Thai women, marrying a foreigner meant losing their citizenship (Jiemin, 2003).

The case of Malaysia's modernity is quite interesting. As the country embraced modernity, local Malaysian women transitioned away from traditional domestic roles. Paradoxically, foreign women, often from neighboring ASEAN countries, are filling these roles (Shipper, 2010). Improvements in living standards and the rising participation of women in the labor market in these destination countries explain the increasing demand for female migrants to do domestic work. This occurrence reflects how globalization impacts gendered migration.

Donato and Gabaccia (2016) argued, on the other hand, that the feminization of migration is not a recent development. They explained that women have been migrating for years and that the biggest shifts toward gender balance happened before 1960. For them, data collection practices and the construction of categories measuring the relative numbers of female and male migrants have resulted in ambiguous definitions of feminization and hidden substantial differences in the gender mix of migrants.

Nevertheless, women's labor has become a much stronger demand among today's migrants than in the past, especially in developing countries (Goff & Maelan, 2016). Donato and Gabaccia (2016) observed that when coercive labor recruitment

mechanisms exist, gender imbalance in migration is more likely to take shape, like in the slave trade of the early modern days or in the recent guest-worker programs of developed countries.

While the female predominant migration presents economic opportunities, it also exposes female migrants to specific challenges. Women engaged in domestic work often confront precarious working conditions, limited legal protections, and gender-based violence (McAdam, 2020). These persistent issues reflect the broader gender inequalities within the labor migration framework.

### **Canada as a Destination Country of ASEAN Migrants**

Canada is a major country of destination for many Southeast Asians. Because of this, Southeast Asian immigrants and their descendants have added to the ethnocultural diversity of Canada. In the 2021 census of Statistics Canada, 19.56% of Canadians are of Southeast Asian descent (Government of Canada, 2022c; Government of Canada, 2022d). These individuals are either first or subsequent generations of immigrants who left their home region to settle in the country.

In terms of the immigrant population, Asians made up 63.5% of all new immigrants to Canada from 2017 to 2019 (Government of Canada, 2022a). It is projected that immigrants born in Asia may make up between 55.7% and 57.9% of all immigrants by 2036 (Government of Canada, 2022a). Data also show that the number of Southeast Asians who are coming to the country to live, work, or study has increased over the years. Two ASEAN countries accounted for two of the top 10 countries of birth of immigrants, with the Philippines ranking second and Vietnam ranking tenth in 2021 (Government of Canada, 2022b). For the Philippines, there was

a 22.31% increase in the number of immigrants from 2016 to 2021 and a 7.59% increase for Vietnam.

**Table 2.1**

*Admissions by Country of Citizenship, from January 2015 to September 2023*

Country of Citizenship	Permanent Residents	Temporary Foreign Work Program Work Permit Holders	International Mobility Program Work Permit Holders	Study Permit Holders	Total
Philippines	268,185	98,530	86,860	107,955	561,530
Vietnam	34,015	6,830	79,245	25,185	145,275
Thailand	4,070	8,255	10,230	3,250	25,805
Indonesia	4,155	1,070	10,535	4,395	20,155
Malaysia	3,095	510	5,315	4,175	13,095
Singapore	2,410	355	2,945	2,215	7,925
Myanmar	1,975	125	1,440	420	3,960
Cambodia	1,735	265	985	330	3,315
Laos	165	10	135	35	345
Brunei	40	0	120	20	180

*Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada*

It is important to note, however, that migration to Canada of Southeast Asians is not a recent phenomenon. It gained momentum in the late 20th century, particularly during the aftermath of geopolitical events such as the Vietnam War. The influx of refugees from countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos marked a significant chapter in Canada's migration history. Between 1979 and 1980, Canada accepted 60,000 migrants from Southeast Asia, the largest single influx of refugees admitted in a short amount of time (Hou, 2021).

## **The Emergence of Transnational Mothering**

Mothering manifests itself in diverse ways across cultures and contexts. Arendell (2000) highlighted a key theme in defining mothering: the social practice of nurturing and caring for others, usually dependent children. This act of providing care is how mothering is defined traditionally. Because motherhood is still largely characterized by biology, women are expected to develop allegedly natural relationships with their children through childbirth and nursing (Henriksson et al., 2023). But it becomes more complex when women migrants are also transnational mothers, characterized as women who migrate and leave one or more children at home (Millman, 2013).

Transnational mothering thus refers to the “organizational reconstitution of motherhood that accommodates the temporal and spatial separations forced by migration” (Parreñas, 2010, p. 1827). The experiences of women who migrate, leaving their children behind, form a distinct category within the broader framework of motherhood and mothering. Consistent with the changing migration patterns and feminization of labor migration, the emergence of transnational mothering is apparent in sending countries with huge populations of female migrants, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka (Gómez Cervantes, 2016).

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) argued, however, that being a transnational mother encompasses more than just being a mother with children living abroad. For them, it involves the destruction of beliefs that biological mothers should raise their own children. This instance, though, is not only limited to transnational mothers. Families, regardless of economic status, have relied on others to raise their children. Elites can employ nannies and send their children to boarding schools

(Wrigley, 1995), while poorer families go to their family members and “other mothers” (Collins, 2000). As a result, some scholars view motherhood not as biologically predetermined but as something that is historically and socially constructed (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; O’Reilly, 2019).

Illanes (2010) contended that motherhood exists within two realms: image and practice. This image is constructed historically and culturally and is then subsequently linked to a set of practices. Due to migration and its implications, women who find themselves mothering from a distance face tensions because these two realms of image and practice do not always align consistently (Millman, 2013).

### **Meanings and Lived Experiences of Transnational Mothers**

Contemporary meanings of transnational mothering have evolved to include dimensions of class, culture, and ethnicity. Gómez Cervantes (2016, p. 1) referred to transnational mothers as “coming from all backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, and social locations who live in different countries from their dependent children and maintain emotional, economic, and communication links across geographical boundaries”. In relation to this, Arendell (2000) proposed drawing attention to mothers’ identities, experiences, activities, and their understandings of each in studying mothering. He drew attention to two things: connecting the mothers’ personal beliefs and choices with their social situations and the influences of various political, economic, and other social arrangements on mothers’ activities and experiences. This view suggests that transnational mothers do not have a universal experience. Focusing on their individual circumstances allows for a more realistic and less normative understanding of the phenomenon.

The universalist approach to mothering is in stark contrast to the particularistic approach. Ruddick (1994) emphasized that mothers share a set of activities even though they vary as individuals across cultures. She also expressed that “mothers are identified not by what they feel but by what they try to do” (Ruddick, 1994, p. 34). This viewpoint, however, may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes and oversimplify maternal identities.

### **Exploring Beyond Economic Motivations**

According to Lockwood et al. (2019), transnational parenting is more commonly understood in a limited sense that is primarily motivated by financial necessity. Similarly, studies conducted on Asian migrants indicate that migrants are conditioned to view migration abroad as something that benefits the family (Yeoh et al., 2002).

There is still a lack of alternative explanations for women’s migration and transnational mothering in the current research available. This poses a huge gap in understanding the rich experiences of transnational mothers. Due to various state and immigration policies, transnational mothers now come in a variety of forms. Research on migration differentiates between the following types (as cited in Lutz, 2018, p. 14):

- Voluntary migration
- Forced migration
- “Betterment” migration
- Expert or career migration
- Interior and international/intercontinental migration
- Permanent, temporary, and circular migration
- Transnational migration

The current body of knowledge reveals the necessity of investigating the different types of transnational mothers according to migration status, as it is rarely taken into account when discussing family ties in transnational mothering (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009). The succeeding parts will have a separate review of how immigration laws and policies affect transnational mothers.

### **Challenges of Being a Transnational Mother**

The difficulties of being a transnational mother span across disciplines, ranging from the complexity of cross-border separation and caregiving to the demanding aspects of identity and societal expectations. The themes that follow shed light on some of the challenges that affect the transnational mothering of migrant mothers.

**Double disadvantage.** Transnational migrants from developing countries are more likely to be employed in low-paying and low-skill jobs (Goff & Maelan, 2016). There are many discriminatory factors behind this, such as not accepting diplomas obtained in their country of origin and a lack of familiarity with the language of the host country. However, female migrants may be affected by the “double disadvantage” of being both migrants and women (Goff & Maelan, 2016). The authors underscored the overrepresentation of transnational female migrants from developing economies in hospitality and domestic work. The informal economy of domestic work renders many migrant women unprotected as workers. Transnational women bear the burden of bad working conditions while seeking to meet traditional maternal obligations over physical distances (Gómez Cervantes, 2016).

**Emotional challenges.** Mothering from a distance has emotional consequences for both the mothers and the children they leave behind. For mothers, family separation creates feelings of helplessness, regret, and guilt, while for children,

it creates feelings of loneliness, vulnerability, and insecurity (Parreñas, 2001). Even when they are away from home, mothers are expected to take care of their families and maintain emotional bonds with their children (Alicea, 1997; Dreby, 2006). To cope with separation from their children, transnational mothers utilize various arrangements and strategies to redefine their gender role expectations, including but not limited to sending remittances, strengthening emotional connections, and being good role models (Gómez Cervantes, 2016).

**The “ideal” mother.** Despite the varying contexts in which mothering takes place, Western narratives of *good* mothers continue to dominate the cultural and political norms (Miller, 2005). These narratives are based on the concept of intensive mothering, which has been described as being child-centered and labor-intensive (Hays, 1996). The ideal mother in this ideology is detached from her own needs and interests and has dedicated herself to the care of others (Bassin et al., 1994). The concept of good and intensive mothering adopts a universalist view, neglecting one’s own feelings in the process. In Korea, motherhood is rooted in Confucian ideas, where mothers are supposed to maintain close relationships with their children (Finch & Kim, 2012).

On the contrary, Irawaty (2021) demonstrated the dilemma Indonesian women are facing in finding a balance between being good mothers and providing for their families economically. A hierarchy of mothering is created to discriminate against particular groups of women. As such, migrant women get stigmatized and stereotyped as *irresponsible* mothers.

**Paradox of transnational mothering.** Transnational mothers acknowledge the circumstances that have led to their position, but as human beings, their thoughts

on the matter can be quite paradoxical. Despite understanding that their absence provides for their children, women are troubled by their absence due to the limitations they face in providing care (Millman, 2013). Transnational mothering can be a source of power and burden at the same time. In addition, mothering can be an avenue for personal satisfaction and, on the other hand, the cause of emotional distress and turmoil (Ross, 1995). Arendell (2000) added that the ambiguity about the future and long-term outcomes of the left-behind children increases maternal ambivalence.

Perhaps one of the most interesting paradoxes is that many women migrants remain in the domestic sector in their destination countries, but they are caring for someone else's home or children instead of their own (Contreras & Griffith, 2012). In the case of Filipino migrant domestic workers, Parreñas (2001) described their contradictory class mobility wherein there is an improvement in the class standing in the Philippines, but at the same time, they find themselves in a disadvantageous situation in the receiving country.

### **Building and Maintaining Relationships**

The process of building and maintaining relationships emerges as a pivotal theme in the study of transnational mothering. As these women navigate the challenges of migration, their efforts to sustain meaningful connections with their children, families, and communities become integral to the narrative of their lived experiences.

**Communication technologies.** The advent of communication technologies has significantly shaped the ways in which transnational mothers maintain relationships with their children. Long-distance communication, usually through the phone and the internet, became a part of their daily routine (Madziva, 2016; Molina,

2015). It is one of the ways these mothers maintain their mothering responsibilities across the divide that physically separates them from their children (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). For Yeoh and Huang (2010), offering support and help through technological mediums is a mechanism to cope with societal ideals of good mothering.

**Remittances and gifts.** Southeast Asian countries have a high level of remittance dependency, but the Philippines—one of the top five recipients of remittances worldwide—has the highest level of dependence, with 9% of its gross domestic product (GDP) from remittances (World Bank, 2023).

There are two frameworks in which remittances and gifts are understood in the concept of transnational mothering. Dominant discourses see gift-giving as economic. Coe (2014) described how migration makes it easier for love to be commodified through material possessions and money in order to make up for their absence and lack of emotional closeness. Parreñas (2005) termed this a “deficit of care”. Motherhood is being transformed by a consumer culture, wherein migrant mothers become innovative and competitive in their mothering, and Clarke (2007) noted that this might contribute to the commercialization of mothering. Likewise, Artico (2003) saw these relationships as similar to a business exchange rather than genuine parent-child love.

On the other hand, Irawaty (2021) saw that gift-giving has social, cultural, political, emotional, and personal dimensions. The second framework emphasizes the emotionalization of money and gifts. Zechner (2008) investigated how money functions in a transnational family setting as a means of conveying care. And as Francisco-Menchavez (2018) explained, this exchange of care is an attempt to maintain family relationships in an unequal world of social and economic inequalities.

**Social support networks.** Transnational mothering necessitates building support networks across borders in fulfilling their roles. For migrant mothers, having a family member look after their kids serves as a helpful substitute for them when they are away from home (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009). In literature, they are referred to as other mothers (Schmalzbauer, 2004), foster mothers (Åkesson et al., 2012), or substitute mothers (Lan, 2003). The other mother takes up the caregiving responsibilities and household tasks left by the absent mother. Alternatively, a different type of mothering was developed by the Black community, called collective mothering, described as communities sharing responsibilities of parenting (Collins, 2000; Reynolds, 2005). A sense of indebtedness may develop between migrant mothers and their children's carers as a result of the shared mothering system between the two countries (Fresnoza-Flot, 2023). Like with their children, migrant mothers feel that they must express their gratitude to their childcare provider with gifts and remittances.

**Social class and economic class.** Studies showed that class affects the persistence of transnational ties across boundaries (Fresnoza-Flot & Shinozaki, 2017). The cases of skilled and highly skilled professional migrants indicate a link between social class and social capital, defined as "the ability to secure resources by virtue of membership in social networks or larger social structures" (Portes & Landolt, 2000, p. 532). Despite their low economic capital, migrants can occasionally be as adaptable as their more affluent peers due to their social capital.

Fresnoza-Flot and Shinozaki (2017) observed that social class and economic class are often interchangeable in studies on migration. Still, the meaning of class has been more closely linked to migrants' economic means and their ability to fulfill their needs and desires. For instance, Parreñas (2005) noted that limited material resources made the transnational communication between Filipino migrant mothers in

the domestic service sector and their children challenging. In contrast, transnational mothers from upper-class families enjoy financial security in addition to having access to resources like childcare and technology. Due to their status, they are able to visit their children on a regular basis and may even get visits from them (Gómez Cervantes, 2016).

### **Immigration Status, Laws, and Policies**

Fresnoza-Flot (2009) asserted that immigration status plays a vital role in shaping transnational motherhood. For instance, maintaining or strengthening transnational connections is considerably more difficult for working-class migrants when they have an illegal immigration status (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009). Sorensen and Vammen (2014) discussed how transnational families are influenced by state power through policies that either facilitate or constrain family contact and exchanges. Their undocumented status keeps migrants from being able to visit their kids across borders and stay emotionally connected. The inability to recognize the employment of transnational mothers in domestic work as part of the formal sector also impedes their ability to secure worker rights, which impacts their ability to send money back home and increases the length of time they must stay in the host nation (Gómez Cervantes, 2016). In short, family relations have been found to suffer from laws that prevent family reunification (Cohen, 2000). More permissive immigration laws can provide the option of deciding to bring their family to the host country.

Geography also plays a role in transnational gendered migration. Couples travel as equals in certain regions, whereas in others, men or women migrate separately for a variety of reasons (Shipper, 2010). The reason for this is government laws, which give men and women the chance to migrate abroad. Earlier waves of

female migration in Europe and North America were characterized by serial migration and family reunification in the host country, but it is becoming more common for parents to temporarily relocate to host countries and then eventually go back to their homeland. (Graham & Jordan, 2011). One reason is that some countries do not offer permanent residency or citizenship pathways to migrant workers, which brings them back home after their contract has ended. Only in a few countries are migrant domestic workers eligible for family reunification.

Immigration laws are getting stricter and more restrictive, usually to combat illegal migration and focus more on attracting skilled workers and foreign talents. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act in the US, for instance, has intensified the criminalization of migration and raised the deportation rate of women who attempt to enter the country illegally in order to work. Consequently, women may also choose to bring their kids with them illegally but ultimately decide not to because of the increased expense and danger of heightened border enforcement (Horton, 2009).

As discussed earlier, there are currently many different types of transnational mothers as a result of various immigration laws. Transnational mothers migrating for higher education have both similarities and differences with those migrating for employment (Gómez Cervantes, 2013). While some are from wealthy families, others are not. International postgraduate students may encounter lower income and higher study-related expenses (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). Additionally, even though certain visa types allow them to work, the jobs that were open to them were frequently categorized as unskilled labor (Lockwood et al., 2019).

There are many temporary migrant programs that deny mobility to women. Pratt (2012) described these positions as a kind of serfdom. This comparison invites critical reflection on the power dynamics inherent in such programs, rendering them vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and a lack of control over their lives.

### **Transformative Aspects of Transnational Mothering**

Multiple studies have highlighted that transnational mothers are constantly shifting and creating new meanings for mothering (Juozeliuniene & Budginaite, 2018). Despite the lack of physical presence, these women continue to transform relationships and dynamics in their own ways while acknowledging their responsibility for their children. During spatial and temporal separations, transnational mothers undergo a transformation in their sociocultural and personal perceptions of motherhood. The conceptualization of preserving, nurturing, and guiding their children takes on a new dimension, as highlighted by Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997). These support the view that motherhood is being renegotiated to accommodate migration and transnational mothering (Parreñas, 2005).

In addition to removing women from the home, transnational mothering forces a rearrangement of gender as it redefines traditional mothering (Parreñas, 2010). Traditional gender division of labor delegates men to work and women to the home. It is through migration that women's household chores are distributed to men, including childcare (Gamburd, 2000). Several studies have found that left-behind men in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka undertake greater caregiving duties after their wives migrate (Asis et al., 2004; Chantavich, 2001; Gamburd, 2000; Hoang & Yeoh, 2012; Hugo, 2005). However, Gamburd (2000) also noted that transnational households in Sri Lanka do not totally alter gender relations because

female kin take over the role of the mother. The same thing occurred in Mexico; men did not take on more childcare despite women migrating (Dreby, 2006). The complexity of transnational mothering requires a reevaluation of established gender norms in the context of migration, along with the changing of the defined limits of parental responsibilities.

### **Uncovering the Gaps in the Literature**

**Limited understanding of transnational mothering.** In spite of existing studies, a significant gap remains in the comprehensive understanding of transnational mothering. Transnational mothering experiences could be better understood through the intersection of various economic, sociocultural, and political factors.

**Alternative explanations for transnational mothering.** In current research, transnational parenting is primarily discussed in terms of economic motivations, leaving gaps in exploring other reasons behind women's migration and participation in transnational mothering. Further study of alternative explanations of transnational mothering is needed, including those based on social, cultural, and personal dimensions.

**Exploration of different types of transnational mothers.** The literature identifies various types of migration, but there is a lack of research that differentiates between these types in terms of their impact on family ties and transnational mothering experiences. Incorporating migration status, along with immigration laws and policies, into the study of transnational mothering could provide revelations about the diverse experiences within this phenomenon.

**Impacts of transnational mothering.** The literature review touches upon the transformative aspects of transnational mothering but shows the need for a comprehensive exploration of the impacts of family dynamics and power relations. Further research could examine how transnational mothering shapes relationships and identities, especially in the context of ASEAN.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Method**

The research used traditions of phenomenology and critical tradition. Phenomenology locates meaning in the essence of lived experiences, and this research aims to explore the meanings behind the experiences of transnational mothers. On the other hand, critical tradition assumes the contestation of meanings, and this research also aims to challenge the dominant meanings found in family and household dynamics and power relations within Filipino families through transnational mothering. By combining these traditions, the research intends to create findings that not only capture the lived realities of Filipino transnational mothers but also shed light on the broader societal implications and challenges embedded in mothering, migration, and power dynamics.

#### **Participants**

In selecting participants for this research, the following criteria was used as the population of the study: migrant women, regardless of their civil or marital status, from the Philippines currently living in Toronto, Canada for at least one (1) year as a permanent resident, temporary resident (student or worker), or naturalized citizen with a left-behind child or children in their home country.

The researcher interviewed a total of 10 respondents. Because of individual differences in personal experiences, the narrative's validity and quality are not dependent on the number of people interviewed. The research does not generalize

the lived experiences of transnational mothers but rather acknowledges the uniqueness of each of them, especially in the themes that arose in the analysis.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

**Data collection.** The research employed in-depth semi-structured interviews as the primary method to delve into the lives of Filipino transnational mothers who are currently living in Toronto, Canada. A total of ten interviews were conducted, with six taking place virtually and four in person, depending on the participants' availability and preference. In-depth semi-structured interviews offered an insightful understanding of their experiences, allowing for the exploration of elaborate details through probing and follow-up questions. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled flexibility while ensuring a focused exploration of key themes. Accuracy in the data collection was the goal to ensure the plausibility of the research. To establish this, I conducted a pilot test of the interview instrument (see Appendix A) with two individuals from the same population. This helped identify any ambiguities, misunderstandings, or issues with the instrument, allowing for refinement and improvement.

**Sampling methods.** To select participants, a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods was employed. Purposive sampling was utilized to identify individuals who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives, such as varied immigration statuses and diverse backgrounds. Initial recruitment efforts involved posting advertisements on different social media sites and emailing various organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. I mentioned in Chapter 1 that the research initially aimed to include transnational mothers from select ASEAN countries, but I encountered significant challenges in reaching mothers from countries other than the Philippines. Despite exhausting all feasible recruitment avenues, including offering

incentives to potential participants, no responses were received from non-Filipino transnational mothers. Consequently, a pragmatic decision was made to narrow the research focus to Filipino transnational mothers only, given their greater availability and the inherent time constraints of the study.

Given the challenging nature of accessing this population, the snowball sampling method was instrumental in leveraging existing connections to identify potential participants. This method enhanced the likelihood of reaching transnational mothers who may be otherwise challenging to locate.

**Data Analysis.** The research framework of matricentric feminism and intersectionality guided the analysis, recognizing the interconnected nature of social categories and their impact on the experiences of transnational mothers. Thematic analysis was employed as the primary method, enabling the identification of recurring themes and patterns within the interview responses. The first step in the analysis is data familiarization, which involved extensive reading of the transcribed interviews. This was followed by initial code generation, where I coded features of the data that are relevant to my research questions. I then began to collate the generated codes into potential overarching themes and refine them to ensure coherence. After each theme was identified, I started writing the discussion, selecting appropriate interview excerpts to illustrate each theme and relating the analysis back to the research question and the conceptual framework. All coding and data management were facilitated using a qualitative data analysis software. This method allowed for a systematic and in-depth exploration of the data, capturing the richness and diversity of the narratives shared by transnational mothers and providing a solid foundation for the study's findings and implications.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The research on transnational mothering among Filipino migrant mothers involved interviewing participants with diverse backgrounds, including temporary foreign workers, students, permanent residents, and naturalized citizens. To ensure the ethical integrity of the study, several considerations have been carefully addressed:

**Informed Consent.** All potential participants were provided with detailed information about the research purpose and procedures. Informed consent was obtained voluntarily through a signed consent form that was given prior to the interview. There are two copies of the consent form, one for the participant and one for the researcher. A copy of the consent form will be attached to the appendix section. Participants also had the opportunity to ask questions and withdraw at any stage without consequences.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity.** To safeguard the privacy of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to all individuals mentioned in the research. Any identifiable information, such as names, addresses, workplaces, etc., was carefully concealed or given general descriptions to prevent the disclosure of their identities. This measure is crucial, especially considering the sensitive nature of the topic and the potential legal implications for those at risk with their immigration status.

**Ensuring Cultural Sensitivity and Protection of Vulnerable Participants.** Given the cultural diversity and the diverse statuses of the participants, including migrants who may be in vulnerable positions, efforts were made to approach the research with cultural sensitivity and extra precautions. The interview questions and

methodologies were carefully crafted to respect cultural nuances, and I ensured that potentially distressing situations would be handled with care.

**Emergency Situations.** Protocols were established to address potential emergency situations during data collection, such as if a participant experiences distress or requires immediate support. Contact information for relevant support services, such as crisis hotlines or counseling resources, was readied in advance for the participants in case of emergencies.

**Data Security.** All collected data are securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Measures are in place to prevent unauthorized access, ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of the information gathered. Recordings will only be kept as long as necessary for the data analysis.

**Minimizing bias.** It has been acknowledged that the researcher's values and background are integral parts of the process and the outcome. For Galdas (2017), separation from this is neither possible nor desirable, and what matters is whether the researcher has been open and reflexive about the procedures used to gather, examine, and present the data. Nevertheless, to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the research, an iterative process was followed. Morse et al. (2002, p.17) emphasized that "a good qualitative researcher moves back and forth between design and implementation to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis". The entire research process was clearly documented to enhance transparency and trustworthiness.

**Validation.** Data validation was exercised to confirm the credibility, accuracy, and trustworthiness of the data collected and the interpretations derived from it. Validity was checked through multiple methods, including respondent validation,

theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Respondent validation involved returning the research findings to participants to verify their accuracy and interpretation. This allowed for direct confirmation that my understanding reflected their experiences. After my initial analysis, summaries of key themes were shared with some of the participants for feedback. For theoretical triangulation, I analyzed the data through the complementary lenses of matricentric feminism and intersectionality, enriching the interpretations by examining the mothers' unique challenges and how various social categories shaped their experiences. Furthermore, methodological triangulation was applied by employing both phenomenology and critical tradition, which allowed for the cross-verification of insights from different standpoints, strengthening the overall validity of the research.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### **Presentation of Data**

This section presents the collected data in two parts: through interview profiles and the generated themes and subthemes. The interview profiles provide a brief background of the respondents in this study, including their age, current and previous statuses in Canada, number of years abroad, occupation, marital status, and information about their children. The respondents were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the research, as laid out in the previous chapter. Interview profiles are essential in data presentation because they provide context and validate the suitability of the selected individuals. In a way, they also humanize the data by demonstrating that the research findings are grounded in the lived experiences of real people.

The presentation of themes highlights the most significant and relevant findings from the data. From the codes produced during the initial coding, the generated themes and subthemes allow for integrating the findings with existing theories, paving the way for the next section of this chapter, the analysis. Since this part includes extracted quotes from the interviews, possible identifiable information in the data was either censored or given general descriptions to uphold the ethical integrity of this research.

**Table 4.1**

*Profiles of the Participants*

<b>Participant's Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Current Status in Canada</b>	<b>Previous Status in Canada</b>	<b>Number of Years Abroad</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Children</b>
Divine	63	Naturalized Canadian Citizen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourist</li> <li>• Work Permit Holder</li> <li>• Permanent Resident</li> </ul>	19 years in Canada; 6 months as a tourist in 1992	Patient Observer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in Canada as a naturalized Canadian citizen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 children (1 in the Philippines and 1 in Canada)</li> <li>• Child 1 was 22 and Child 2 was 18 when the mother left for Canada (The children were 10 and 5 when she went as a tourist in 1992)</li> </ul>
Maricris	39	Study Permit Holder		1 year and 5 months (1 year and 4 months in Canada and 1 month in Dubai)	Student / Sales Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in Canada as a Spousal Open Work Permit Holder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 children in the Philippines</li> <li>• Child 1 was 18 and Child 2 was 15 when the parents left for</li> </ul>

							Canada
Grace	40	Postgraduate Work Permit Holder	Study Permit Holder	2 years and 8 months in Canada	Guest Relations Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in the Philippines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 child in the Philippines</li> <li>• The child was 10 years old when the mother left for Canada</li> </ul>
Ara	28	Study Permit Holder		2 years in Canada	Student / Part-time Room Attendant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in Canada as a Spousal Open Work Permit Holder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 child in the Philippines</li> <li>• The child was 2 years old when the parents left for Canada</li> </ul>
Wendy	26	Spousal Open Work Permit Holder		1 year and 9 months in Canada	Room Attendant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common-law</li> <li>• Partner is in Canada as a Study Permit Holder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 child in the Philippines</li> <li>• The child was 1.5 years old when the parents left for Canada</li> </ul>
Helena	66	Permanent Resident	Work Permit Holder	35 years (18 years in Saudi Arabia, UK, Taiwan, Singapore and 17 years in	Cleaner / Part-time Caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in Canada as a Permanent Resident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 children (2 in Dubai, 1 in the Philippines, and 2 in Canada)</li> </ul>

				Canada)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child 1 was 27, Child 2 was 25, Child 3 was 23, Child 4 was 18, and Child 5 was 16 when the mother left for Canada</li> </ul>
Princess	31	Study Permit Holder		1 year and 9 months in Canada	Student / Part-time Spa Attendant / Part-time Catering Service Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in Canada as a Spousal Open Work Permit Holder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 children (twins) in the Philippines</li> <li>• The twins were 2 years old when their parents left for Canada</li> </ul>
Cherry	33	Study Permit Holder		1 year and 7 months (1 year in Canada and 7 months in Dubai)	Student / Part-time Sales Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in the Philippines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 children (1 in Canada and 1 in the Philippines)</li> <li>• Child 1 was 12 and Child 2 was 2 when the mother left for Canada</li> </ul>
Carol	38	Permanent Resident		1 year and 9 months in	Trading Sales Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 children in the Philippines</li> </ul>

				Canada	/ Part-time Barista	the Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child 1 was 12 and Child 2 was 10 when the mother left for Canada</li> </ul>
Jade	49	Work Permit Holder	Tourist	12 years (3 years in Singapore and 9 years in Canada)	Domestic Worker / Part-time Caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Husband is in the Philippines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 children in the Philippines</li> <li>• Child 1 was 19, Child 2 was 18, Child 3 was 16, Child 4 was 14, and Child 5 was 12 when the mother first left for Canada</li> </ul>

## **Theme 1: Multifaceted Influences in Performing Parental Responsibilities**

This theme captures the factors that shape how Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto carry out their parental responsibilities. It is not only their roles as mothers that affect transnational mothers' experiences but also many other factors. These influences, however, are not defined by strict boundaries. The analysis in the next section will provide an understanding of how these factors interact and how their combined impact can affect these women as transnational mothers. These mothers' experiences are a direct reflection of the broader economic, sociocultural, and political currents that define labor migration across ASEAN.

### **Economic Opportunities and Constraints**

Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto struggle to find a balance in the dual nature of economic factors that impact their parenting. On the one hand, economic opportunities, such as access to higher-paying jobs and better career prospects, provide these mothers with the financial means to support their families. On the other hand, economic constraints, including expenses and the high cost of living in Toronto, pose significant challenges. These constraints can strain their financial stability and limit their ability to meet the needs of their family.

**Balancing higher wages with higher expenses.** Many Filipino families aspire to go abroad for a higher salary. To illustrate the difference in wages, Filipino families earned an annual average of ₱307,190 (approximately \$7,245.05) in 2021 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2021). Meanwhile, in the same year in Canada, the median household income of Canadians after taxes have been deducted was \$68,400 (₱2,900,160 (Government of Canada, 2023)). At the time of writing, \$1 is equivalent to ₱42.40.

However, many do not realize that the cost of living in Canada is also higher. Families and friends at home would be amazed to see the difference in salaries when they converted Canadian salaries to Philippine pesos. A common misconception is that everyone abroad is making a huge fortune. Grace, a former flight attendant in the Philippines who now works in a luxury hotel in Toronto with her post-graduate work permit, shared her thoughts on the reality of earning dollars in Canada:

*“Kasi dito sabi nila, ‘ay dollar ‘yan.’ Yes, you are earning dollars, but you spend dollars too. You can never compare how much you earn dito unless na hindi ka kakain or unless you go out or unless you don't buy anything na ano.”*

(Because here they say it's dollars. Yes, you are earning dollars, but you spend dollars too. You can never compare how much you earn here unless you don't eat or unless you go out or unless you don't buy anything.)

While the potential for higher earnings abroad is a significant motivator, the increased cost of living in countries like Canada can offset these financial gains, like in the experience of Cherry, a marketing manager turned international student and part-time sales representative in a telecom company:

*“Ngayon, pag malaki kinikita mo, pag pinadala mo, sulit naman. ‘Yan nga lang, pag nandito ka, parang ganun lang din. Laki pa rin ang expenses mo. Bills talaga ‘yung pumapatay sa tao dito tsaka yung tax.”*

(Now, when you earn a lot, when you send, it's worth it. But when you're here, it's almost the same. Your expenses are still big. Bills are really killing people here, besides the tax.)

Cherry earns minimum wage as a sales representative in Toronto, making \$16.55 per hour. According to the Wellesley Institute (Balasubramaniam, 2024), the

living wage or minimum required to cover basic necessities in Toronto is \$25.05 per hour. In addition, the report found that shelter, transportation, and savings account for the highest costs. Adding to these financial pressures are the taxes in Canada, which are perceived to be expensive due to social welfare programs, high public spending, sales taxes, and provincial/territorial and federal income taxes, among others. But as Cherry is the sole earner in the family, she is struggling to make ends meet:

*“Nahihirapan ako. Kasi stressed talaga ako. Kasi nag-aaral na ako dito, nagtatrabaho pa, tapos kailangan ko pa magpadala monthly kasi wala namang tumutulong sa’kin kundi sarili ko lang. So, nahihirapan akong i-balanse yung finances ko. Kasi, syempre may bills tayo dito. Diyos ko, napakalaki ng bills dito. Tapos, yung bunso ko pa eh, may mga therapy sessions and all. Gamot pa, gatas, diaper, bayad sa katulong. So, sobrang hirap.”*

(I’m having a hard time. I’m really stressed because I’m studying here, working, and I still have to send money every month since no one else is helping me, it’s just me. So, I’m struggling to balance my finances. Because, of course, we have bills here. My God, the bills here are so high. And then my youngest child still has therapy sessions and all. There’s also medication, milk, diapers, and paying for the helper. So, it’s really difficult.)

Toronto is one of Canada’s most expensive cities, but Wendy, a hotel room attendant who came to Canada as a dependent of her international student partner, chose the city because of the milder winter and higher salary compared to other provinces. She shared her reasoning:

*“Di ba parang ito ba yung pinaka-city? Capital? Dahil doon saka sabi nga nila before, parang compare sa ibang province, ‘yung snow mas malala daw doon sa ibang province. Tapos yung rate din ng sahod per hour parang mas mataas dito.”*

(Isn't this the main city? Capital? Because of those, and others said before that compared to other provinces, the snow is worse in other provinces. Then the wage rate per hour seems to be higher here.)

Wendy's choice of Toronto reflects a common consideration among Filipino migrant families, where the potential for higher earnings is weighed against the city's high cost of living. Like Wendy, Princess, an international student who works as a part-time spa attendant in a luxury hotel in Toronto, also benefits from a dual-income household. Her husband works as a restaurant manager, and they both earn an annual gross income of \$50,000 to \$60,000 each. While their combined Canadian income allows them to provide for their children, they still need to cut luxuries and unnecessary spending to manage their finances effectively. Their twin children are at an age requiring regular expenses for milk, diapers, and vitamins. Additionally, they are paying for two nannies to help care for their children and are in the process of saving up for their PR application, further straining their financial situation.

A dual-income household often provides better financial stability. However, for Maricris, despite her husband working in a factory in Toronto, it is hard for her to buy what she wants in Canada. Maricris is also an international student working as a full-time sales representative for a telecom company. She noted,

*“Siguro kung hindi ka international student. Panay tuition ka eh... ‘yun ‘yung nagpapahirap sa buhay ng mga international student. Kasi kung work-work lang, talagang kaya.”*

(Maybe if you are not an international student. You're always paying tuition fees...that's what makes life difficult for international students. Because if it's just work, it's a piece of cake.)

International students in Canada pay three to five times the domestic rate. Because of the high fees, Maricris took out a loan of two million pesos in the

Philippines to cover her living and school expenses. This loan has added a significant financial burden, compounding her expenses for rent, phone, and food.

Financial status varies significantly based on individual circumstances. Without the extra cargo that many transnational mothers face, some find that being in Canada is actually advantageous. Ara, for example, mentioned that she could buy what she wants and at the same time provide for her family in the Philippines. Ara is also an international student who works as a room attendant with her husband in a luxury hotel in Toronto. Reflecting on their life in the Philippines, she described that despite the modest amount of income back home, it still was not enough to sustain them.

When asked about their current finances, Helena, a former midwife in the Philippines now working as a mall cleaner in her 60s, stated that their household income is just enough to cover bills and other expenses. She emphasized that as long as one avoids excessive spending, managing finances is not that much of a problem. Similarly, Jade, a former public school teacher who now works as a domestic worker for an Iranian family, described her financial situation positively:

*“Okay naman. Kahit papaano, napoprovide na ‘yung needs. Minsan, nakukuha ‘yung wants. Lalo pa, tapos naman na ‘yung tatlo [kong anak]. ‘Yung dalawa na lang.”*

(It's okay. Somehow, the needs are being provided. Sometimes, you get what you want. What's more, my three [children] have graduated college. Only two are remaining.)

The difference between having young and adult children is notable. Parents with adult children who have already completed their education often experience less financial strain compared to those with younger children who require ongoing support.

**Necessity of supplementary income sources.** Due to the higher cost of living and the additional expenses transnational mothers in Toronto face, many turn to other ventures for extra income. More than half of the respondents have supplementary income sources.

Jade, for instance, works as a part-time caregiver in a retirement home. She even earns more as a part-time caregiver with a biweekly salary of around \$1,000 than her regular domestic work, which pays \$750 biweekly. Similarly, Helena has been working as a part-time caregiver for her previous employer for 14 years.

Ara runs a business with her husband selling *longganisa*, a Filipino sausage. She shared:

*“Actually, madami rin bumibili. Kasi ngayon, may binabagsakan kaming restaurant. ‘Yung [redacted] sa Bathurst. May umorder sa amin nito lang din na parang 500, worth 500 CAD. So, bibigyan namin sila ng ilang packs ng longganisa. So, ‘yung asawa ko rin gumagawa.”*

(Actually, there are many buyers. Because now, we are supplying a restaurant. The [redacted] in Bathurst. Someone ordered from us around 500, worth 500 CAD. So, we give them some packs of Longanisa. So, my husband also makes them.)

Although not regularly, transnational mothers working in the sales and hospitality industries often earn commissions and tips. For Cherry, her commissions help boost her finances:

*“And yet, nakakatulong ‘yun sa akin kasi may commissions ako. On top sa sinisweldo ko. Kahit na malaki ‘yung taxes, at least, meron akong bala.”*

(And yet, that helps me because I have commissions. On top of my salary. Even if the taxes are high, at least I have ammunition.)

Unlike in the Philippines, tipping is widely practiced in Canada. Grace shared her experience early in her career at the hotel when she was not used to receiving tips:

“Very seldom, very rare *na magbigay ng tips* but sometimes, you know, when I help guests getting their bags *sa storage, nagbibigay silang \$5*, sometimes \$10 so I'm not used to the tips. *So nung una*, I give it back to the guest services. Then I asked, *nakita ako* and then [my manager] said, ‘Why are you giving it back?’ And I said, ‘Am I supposed to keep it?’”

(Very seldom, very rare that I receive tips but sometimes, you know, when I help guests get their bags in storage, they give me \$5, sometimes \$10 so I'm not used to the tips. So at first, I gave it back to the guest services. Then I asked, [my manager] saw me and said, ‘Why are you giving it back?’ And I said, ‘Am I supposed to keep it?’)

As a guest relations agent, Grace also receives commissions from various sales and upgrades in the hotel.

**Change in the quality of life.** Moving to a different place can either improve or worsen the quality of life. Cherry and Princess, having worked previously in Dubai where there is no income tax and the cost of living is lower, had to adapt their lifestyles and spending habits drastically. Cherry explained:

“*Sa Dubai kasi walang tax. Or kung may tax man doon, 5% lang. Pero ‘yung salary mo, walang tax. So, buo mong nakukuha ‘yung sweldo mo doon. Tapos, ‘yung cost of living doon, mababa lang. ‘Yung tipong 100 dirhams mo, kayang tumagal ng dalawang linggo.’*”

(There is no tax in Dubai. Or if there is a tax there, it's only 5%. But your salary is not taxed. So, you get your full salary there. Then, the cost of living there is low. Your 100 dirhams can last two weeks.)

Princess further expressed the lifestyle changes she came across moving from Dubai to Toronto:

*“Ang difference kasi between Dubai and here is just sa Dubai kasi fixed salary unlike dito dahil per hour. Pero I can probably say na mas okay ‘yung sahod doon kasi as I said earlier na tax-free, mura ang cost of living at nagwowork kasi kami ng asawa ko together sa tatlong hotel na with accommodation, with transpo and food din sa work and sa bahay. So, hindi kami nahirapan talaga na mag- paano ba? Magluho, mai-provide ‘yung mga gusto ng family both side. Tapos, nabibili lahat ng mga gusto, parang ganoon. Unlike dito, kailangan mo talaga magtipid.”*

(The difference between Dubai and here is just that in Dubai the salary is fixed, unlike here where it is per hour. But I can probably say that the salary is better there because as I said earlier it is tax-free, the cost of living is cheap, and my husband and I worked together in three hotels with accommodation, transport and food at work and at home. So, we didn't really have a hard time being luxurious and providing what the family wanted on both sides. Then, we can buy what we want. Unlike here, you really have to save.)

In contrast to Princess and Cherry's experience, Helena's life changed for the better when she moved to Canada. In her case, the move from a developing country to a wealthy one gave her a newfound sense of financial security. She was able to afford things she could not afford when she was in the Philippines as long as you have a job in Canada. Helena expressed her sentiments:

*“Kasi siguro, ‘yan lang, sa Pilipinas hindi natin nabibili ‘yung minsan gusto natin, may gusto rin tayo pero hindi pwede. Kasi sa pamilya na*

*muna, sa mga anak mo. Pero dito kahit naibili mo pa yung anak mo, kahit na ano, may ma-ano ka pa rin sa buhay mo, mabibili mo pa rin 'yung gusto mo, ayun siguro ang kaibahan. Dahil dito may trabaho tayong sustain at minsan ang gobyerno may ano pa rin sa atin. Sa Pilipinas anong maasahan natin doon? Oo. Kaya 'yan lang, 'yan siguro, ganun lang ang tingin ko na nagbago na yung pamumuhay natin sa Pinas iba kaysa dito. Kasi dito mabibili mo, dahil may trabaho ka, pero kung wala kang trabaho 'yan lang, hindi mo rin ma-ano. Homeless ka na dito."*

(Maybe because in the Philippines, we can't buy what we sometimes want, we also want something, but we can't. Because the family comes first, your children. But here even after buying something for your children, you can still buy what you want. Maybe that's the difference. Because here, we have a sustained job and sometimes the government still has something from us. In the Philippines what can we expect there? Yes. So that's all, I think that's how our lifestyle has changed in the Philippines. It's different from here. Because here you can buy because you have a job, but if you don't have a job, you can't do anything. You'll be homeless here.)

Divine, a former speaker and trainer for a church-based organization in the Philippines, affirmed the importance of having a job in Canada. Despite their comfortable lifestyle, they still chose to come here. Divine has been working as a personal support worker for 19 years and is now a Canadian citizen. She emphasized the need for hard work and humility in the new environment:

*"Masarap ang buhay namin sa Pilipinas. Masarap talaga. Pero dito talaga magtatrabaho ka. Pero basta masipag ka lang dito. 'Yung tsaka talagang alisin mo 'yung yabang mo, 'yung pride mo na sa Pilipinas, ganito ako. Wala 'yun dito sa Canada. Hindi 'yun inaano dito. Kaya talagang magtrabaho ka lang."*

(We had a good life in the Philippines. It was really good. But here, you will need to work. But as long as you work hard here. And you really need to get rid of your arrogance and your pride that in the Philippines, this is how I am. That doesn't exist in Canada. That's not the case here. So just focus on your work.)

Many respondents had white-collar jobs in the Philippines but transitioned to physical labor in Canada. This shift often increases stress and fatigue, adding physical strain to their already emotionally challenging circumstances due to the distance from their families. Wendy described how different working in Canada had been for her:

*“Kung sa physical lang, mas mahirap sa Canada. Pero kung sa sahod, mas okay dito rin. Kasi sa Pinas, hindi naman per hour ‘yung bayad. Pero ‘yung work din naman doon, hindi rin siya physically nakakapagod talaga.”*

(If it's just physical, it's more difficult in Canada. But in terms of salary, it's better here too. Because in the Philippines, the payment is not per hour. But the work there is also not physically tiring.)

In Canada, workers are either paid hourly or by salary. Hourly workers receive a fixed rate for each hour worked, which can lead to higher earnings, especially with overtime. However, the variability in hours can sometimes be a disadvantage, particularly during slow seasons when hours are cut. On the other hand, salaried workers receive a fixed annual amount, providing a more stable income and often better work-life balance. Carol shared how being a salaried worker contributes to her work-life balance:

*“Kasi nga salaried kami so may mga moments na kailangan mong pumunta sa doctor, may personal errands ka that [my boss] is okay with as long as natatapos mo ‘yung trabaho mo. So ‘yun siguro kasi ‘yung isa din na ayoko. ‘Yung productivity mo is, ‘yun ‘yung isang*

*inayawan ko sa Pilipinas na 'yung productivity mo is measured by the hours you clock in and out which, yeah, no.'*

(Because we are salaried, there are moments when you have to go to the doctor, you have personal errands that [my boss] is okay with as long as you finish your work. So maybe that's the one I don't like. That's the one thing I didn't like in the Philippines, that your productivity is measured by the hours you clock in and out which, yeah, no.)

International students, like Ara, Cherry, and Princess, are only allowed to work up to 20 hours per week, except during scheduled breaks when they can work unlimited hours. This restriction means they are only allowed to be part-time employees, and part-time employees do not receive employment benefits.

Although Maricris is also an international student, her case is different. The Canadian government implemented a temporary policy in 2022 allowing foreign students to work full-time off-campus. This enabled Maricris to be legally considered a full-time employee and eligible for employee benefits. Maricris expressed satisfaction with her current job, a feeling she never experienced in her previous job in the Philippines.

Aside from being a salaried worker, Carol, despite holding two jobs, described how she enjoys a balance between her work and personal life:

*"...nung nasa Pilipinas ako, I have to work ng sobra, alam mo 'yun, just to get barely enough. Na dito, kaya din pinili ko yung parang office job kasi ayoko na 'yung parang sa university na parang halos everyday kang nagtatrabaho. Kasi before kahit sabihin mo ang klase mo lang is Monday to Friday pero 'yung preparation mo for lessons and stuff, even Saturday, Sundays after work hours, nagtatrabaho ka pa rin. So unlike dito na parang ang trabaho mo is 8 to 5, so 8 to 5*

*ka lang. The moment 5 o'clock hits, I'd be closing my laptop, or I'd be going home. So I would have to say na may work-life balance kahit na dalawa yung jobs ko."*

(...when I was in the Philippines, I had to work a lot, you know, just to get barely enough. That's why I chose the office job because I don't want the university experience where you work almost every day. Before, even if your class was only Mondays to Fridays, but your preparation for lessons and stuff, you are still working even Saturdays and Sundays after work hours. So unlike here, if your job is 8 to 5, you only work 8 to 5. The moment 5 o'clock hits, I'd be closing my laptop, or I'd be going home. So I would have to say that there is a work-life balance even though I have two jobs.)

**Supporting extended family members.** Like many Southeast Asian households, the Philippines is also a collectivist society. Supporting extended family members, even after having a family of your own, is not uncommon. Ara revealed how the practice sometimes impacts their budgeting:

*"Sa amin, ang effects...minsan kasi parang about financial, parang di na budget eh, gano'n. Kasi kunwari, 'yun nga. 'Di namin expected na magkakasakit 'yung mom nung husband ko. Nabigla kami na kailangan ng medical like this na ganitong halaga. Siyempre kami lang din yung i-expect nung parents niya. Ayun, 'yung pagbabudget ng pera kahit ang hirap din dito sa Canada."*

(For us, the effects...sometimes it's about finances; it's like the budget doesn't suffice. For instance, we didn't expect that my husband's mother would get sick. We were surprised by the need for medical expenses of such an amount. Of course, his parents also expect support from us. So, budgeting money is challenging, especially here in Canada.)

Carol, a former university instructor in the Philippines whose husband was a nurse in Saudi Arabia, learned from experience that supporting extended family members is not always sustainable, especially when their own family finances are impacted. She highlighted the necessity of making tough choices to prioritize their children's well-being and future over other familial obligations. Now a permanent resident, Carol works for a steel company as a trading sales representative. She recalled a conversation she had with her husband regarding the matter:

*“So parang sabi ko sa [asawa ko] parang pag dumating ‘yung point na tayo ‘yung maluwag, we should prioritize our family. Kasi parang naramdaman mo na ito, this is what's gonna happen if you don't plan for the kids' future.”*

(So I said to [my husband] that when the time comes that we are the ones who are well-off financially, we should prioritize our family. Because you've already experienced that this is what's gonna happen if you don't plan for the kids' future.)

Other respondents reported that while they do support extended family members financially, it is not done on a regular basis. For example, Helena and Princess only provide financial assistance when it is necessary, and similarly, Cherry offers help whenever she has extra funds available.

### **Sociocultural Expectations and Adaptations**

The sociocultural context in which Filipino transnational mothers live reveals the complexity of their already elaborate lives. It is not exclusively Filipino as it is deeply reflective of a broader ASEAN experience characterized by collectivist values and strong familial ties. Social connections become a necessity as they impact their ability to provide for their families and navigate their daily lives, and without such,

isolation and lack of support prove to be a threat. Various cultural adjustments also force these mothers to balance the need to preserve their cultural heritage, adapt to the new environment, and consider the best interests of their children. The clash of social norms pushes Filipino transnational mothers to engage in a constant process of negotiation and adaptation. This process shapes not only their parenting practices but also influences their emotional well-being.

**Power of connections and the consequences of isolation.** Connections, established through social networks, community groups, friendships, and family, provide essential support and resources to transnational mothers in adapting to their new environment. Leveraging these connections can mean the difference between isolation and integration.

Divine discussed the support she received from the sibling of her former boss's wife shortly after arriving in Canada:

*“Kasi ang kapatid ni [redacted], asawa [ng boss ko], nandito sila sa Canada. So noon dumating ako dito, in-endorse kaagad ako, ‘O, nandiyan si Divine.’ Tapos na-meet ko na. So kung anong kailangan, parang sila rin ‘yung naging second family namin. So hanggang ngayon naman kung anong kailangan. Kaya sabi nga, kahit saan ka magpunta, hindi maiiwasan ‘yung nagagamit ‘yung connection kahit papaano. Pero hangga’t maaari, wag na.”*

(Because the sibling of the wife [of my boss] is here in Canada. So when I came here, I was immediately endorsed, 'Oh, Divine is there.' Then I met them. So whatever is needed, it's like they have become our second family. So until now, whatever we need. That's why they said that no matter where you go, it's inevitable that someone uses connections somehow. But as much as possible, don't.)

Divine's brother also lives in Toronto. She stayed with him when she first arrived during her early years in the city. Similarly, Cherry relied on her husband's family members for support when she came to Canada. Although they were from the US, they drove to Toronto to help her get settled:

*“Plus, the mere fact na may kamag-anak yung asawa ko sa New York, sa States, which is malapit lang dito, ‘yun pa ‘yung isang, ano, isang kinonsider ko. At sila rin kasi ‘yung nag-help sa akin dito. Nag-sponsor. So, sabi ko, sige. Nung dumating ako dito, nagkaroon ng time na pumunta sila dito. Nag-travel sila by land para ma-meet nila ako dito.”*

(Plus, the mere fact that my husband has relatives in New York, in the States, which is close to here, that's one thing I considered. And they are also the ones who helped me here. They sponsored me. So I said, okay. When I came here, they had time to visit me. They traveled by land so they could meet me here.)

The presence of relatives in the area of destination is often a significant factor in the decision to migrate to a particular location. For Wendy and her common-law partner, Toronto was an attractive destination due to the support network of relatives already residing there. Knowing that family members were willing and able to offer assistance provided a sense of security. This familial presence not only eased their adjustment period but also played a crucial role in their decision-making process.

As discussed earlier, shelter accounts for one of the highest expenses for Toronto residents. Rent is so expensive that people are forced to share spaces with others to save money. For instance, Maricris rents a two-bedroom apartment that is shared between three families. When I asked how she ended up in that apartment, she said that one of her roommates was her friend's friend. They were both looking for a house at the time, and she just joined them as a roommate.

Utilizing her connections, Wendy was referred to her current job at the hotel by one of her roommates. Wendy shares a basement apartment with three other families. During her initial job search in Toronto, Cherry recounted a conversation with her classmates that led to an unexpected job opportunity. Curious about their work experiences, she asked, “*Uy, sa’n kayo nag-work?*” (Hey, where are you working?) The classmate mentioned a job at a cemetery, planting flowers. Wendy was intrigued and decided to join them in their work.

The concept of *utang na loob*, or a sense of obligation to return a favor, plays an important role in the lives of transnational mothers and their support networks. Maricris highlighted this cultural value by sharing her future plan to move to a different province in Canada, where she expects to be given employment assistance by somebody she has helped before:

*“Saka [sa Saskatchewan] madaming tutulong samin kasi madami na rin akong natulungan doon. Kasi di ba arte-artehan ako ng mga nag-aayos ng papel. So ayun, sila parang ang tatagal na sa Canada, hindi pa nila nakukuha mga kapatid nila, pamangkin nila. So ako nag-ayos ng papel ng mga ‘yon. Hindi na ako nagpabayad. Tas ang kapalit, ‘yun nga bibigyan ako trabaho. Kasi ‘yung natulungan ko doon, business owner siya doon. Dalawa business niya sa SK.”*

(In Saskatchewan, a lot of people will help us because I have already helped many people there. Because I help others with their papers. They have been in Canada for a long time, but they haven't gotten their siblings or their nephews yet. So I helped them with their papers. I didn't ask for payment. In return, they will give me a job. Because the person I helped there is a business owner there. They have two businesses in SK.)

While connections can be powerful, the lack of it can be isolating to transnational mothers. Unlike other respondents, Grace had no family or friends when she came to Toronto. She recalled how challenging it was for her, especially when faced with loneliness and isolation:

“Firstly, well, during the winter, I was so depressed. I'm always depressed, *'no? Walang sun, walang ganyan.* And then when you're feeling lonely, *hindi ka naman makalabas* because your friends are working. *Unlike sa atin, may huhugutin kang sister dun, kapatid, pamangkin na tara magkape nga tayo or tara kumain tayong kwek-kwek sa labas or tara.* And then you'll be okay. *Dito wala. Wala talaga.* Even if your neighbor *na*, even if you're close with your neighbor, you cannot just go there and try, 'Come on let's go somewhere.' No, *kasi* you see they're always at work, at work, at work. *Sabi ko nga, 'Hindi ba sila nagdaday off?'* Or am I taking too many days off? *Kasi* the two days, three days off is feeling *tas wala ka nang gagawin.* But I need it. *Kasi pag work ka lang nang work,* you're gonna be crazy. Especially sa hotel, you know that.”

(Firstly, well, during the winter, I was so depressed. I'm always depressed, right? No sun, nothing like that. And then when you're feeling lonely, you can't go out because your friends are working. Unlike back home, you can invite your sister, brother, or niece there to have coffee or to eat *kwek-kwek* outside. And then you'll be okay. Here there's nothing like that. Nothing really. Even if you're close to your neighbor, you can't just go there and try, 'Come on let's go somewhere.' No, because you see they're always at work, at work, at work. I said, 'Don't they take a day off?' Or am I taking too many days off? Because the two days, three days off is feeling like you have nothing to do. But I need it. Because if you just work, you're gonna be crazy. Especially at the hotel, you know that.)

Wendy mentioned that one of the things she misses about the Philippines is her friends and the fact that they can go out anytime or visit one another, something that is not possible with how busy people are in Toronto. Cherry echoed the same sentiments, emphasizing the difficulty of inviting people for drinks due to their demanding work schedules. This sense of isolation is a common experience among many transnational mothers in Canada.

Maricris felt this isolation acutely. Initially, she came to Canada alone, but after some months, she realized she could not handle being alone anymore. The emotional toll of isolation and the practical challenges of managing everything on her own made her understand the importance of having her husband by her side. Because of this, she decided to bring her husband to Canada as a tourist. They later had his status changed to a work permit.

Coping mechanisms vary widely among individuals, reflecting personal needs and circumstances. Divine, for instance, found solace in spending weekends with fellow Filipino caregivers, whose company helped her adjust to her new environment. Similarly, Wendy's support system extends beyond her common-law partner and his relatives to a tight-knit group of friends who share her experiences. She described their mutual support, saying, "*Sometimes nagkakaintindihan kami na ano lang, pinapalakas namin 'yung loob ng isa't isa na para naman din sa mga anak namin 'yung ginagawa namin.*" (Sometimes we have this common understanding, we draw strength from each other that what we do is also for our children.) Their shared understanding strengthens their character and helps them deal with the challenges of living away from their families.

**Adapting to a different culture and new environment.** Adapting to a new culture presents a unique set of challenges for transnational mothers. Unlike the more familiar and communal settings of the Philippines, Canadian culture often emphasizes individualism and a fast-paced lifestyle, especially in a big city like Toronto. Taking her experiences as a guide, Wendy discussed the differences between the Philippines and Canada:

*“Oo, culture shock kasi ibang-iba ‘yung environment dito kaysa sa Pinas. Dito sobrang tahimik, hindi gaya sa Pinas, maingay. Tapos sa weather din, ‘yung weather dito napansin ko yung kapag fall parang kasama din ‘yung feelings mo, lalo pag winter. ‘Yung weather dito sa Canada, ibang-iba kapag fall, winter, parang masyadong emotional din ako. Dahil siguro nasa loob lang ng bahay, tapos wala ka pang work kasi slow down.”*

(Yes, it's a culture shock because the environment here is very different than in the Philippines. It's very quiet here, unlike in the Philippines, it's noisy. Also the weather here, I noticed that when it's fall, it seems to include your feelings, especially in winter. The weather here in Canada is very different in fall and winter, I feel too emotional. Because maybe I'm always inside the house, and I don't have work because it's slow down.)

Aside from the weather, Grace found it most difficult to adjust to doing everything on her own. She recalled feeling more alone than she had ever felt before:

*“So, ‘yung pinaka-life-changing moment lang was that I'm doing all alone, all by myself, everything all by myself. I'm going to the grocery all by myself, going back home all by myself, going to work. The commute is not that hard kasi okay naman transportation sa atin, though I'm driving back home, mga ganun or hinahatid or sinusundo. Tapos, the thought na ikaw lang talaga mag-isa, no matter what happened, kahit gaano ka-especially when you're tired, uwi ka all by yourself, dadatnan mo, wala ka pang pagkain, that you have to cook pa kasi gutom ka na, ‘yun ‘yung*

*pinaka, I think for me...it's napakalungkot. Kasi sa atin, pag uwi mo, kahit gaano kakapagod, pag uwi mo, andyan yung family mo, sometimes kahit anong ulam, kahit hindi pa siya ganun kasarap, it's okay, may People from a social environment like the Philippines, where people are not used to doing things on their own, are susceptible to the emotional impact of a less interactive environment.kakainin ka. But dito wala, you have to cook. Or you can buy, if you have extra money, you can buy, but you cannot buy everyday.”*

(So, the most life-changing moment was that I'm doing [things] all alone, all by myself, everything all by myself. I'm going to the grocery all by myself, going back home all by myself, going to work. The commute is not that hard because transportation is okay, although I'm driving back home, like that or are either driven to or picked up. Then, the thought that you are really alone, no matter what happened, no matter how much you are- especially when you're tired, you go home all by yourself, you will arrive, you have no food yet, that you have to cook because you are hungry, that's the most, I think for me...it's very sad. Because in the Philippines, when you go home, no matter how tired you are, when you go home, your family is there, sometimes no matter what the dish is, even if it's not that good, it's okay, you have something to eat. But not here, you have to cook. Or you can buy, if you have extra money, you can buy, but you cannot buy every day.)

Maricris shared similar sentiments as Grace regarding the challenges of doing everything by herself and the difficulty of ordering food. She explained that before going to sleep, she would have to cook and clean, unlike in the Philippines, where she could simply order food if she were too tired. She also said ordering food in Canada is not a viable option due to the high cost.

Loneliness and feelings of isolation directly impact transnational mothers' emotional well-being and ability to cope. People from a social environment like the Philippines, where people are not used to doing things on their own, are more

susceptible to the emotional impact of a less interactive environment. As a result, transnational mothers may be unable to build a support network, which is crucial to enduring the experience as discussed in the previous subtheme.

Cherry experienced a contrast between her expectations of Canada and the reality she encountered upon arrival. Coming from a background of mid-level supervisory and office work in the Philippines, she was unprepared for the types of jobs available to her in the country. The shift from a supervisory role to what she described as being a "corporate slave" was a huge adjustment. Cherry's initial reaction was one of disillusionment and disappointment as she faced the challenging and often menial work that contrasted with her previous professional experience. She added:

*“Sabi ko, ba't pinagpalit ko pa ‘yung buhay ko sa Dubai, eh, ang laki ng kinikita ko doon. Pero, nasanay na lang din ako eh. Nasanay na ako sa gastusin, kung paano mabuhay dito, na pag nakatunganga ka, wala kang pera. Nasanay na ako sa ganun. Kaya siguro, sabi nila, masasanay ka rin. ‘Yun din naman laging salita ng mga tao rito, masasanay ka rin. Pag nasanay ka na, wala na ‘yun sayo.”*

(I said, why did I leave my life in Dubai? I was earning a lot there. But, I just got used to it. I'm used to the expenses, how to live here, that if you don't do anything, you don't have money. I'm used to that. So maybe, they say, you'll get used to it too. That's what people always say here, you'll get used to it. Once you get used to it, you don't have that anymore.)

In terms of encountering different aspects of Canadian society, Ara and Princess were taken aback by the visible presence of homelessness, with people sleeping on the streets and suffering from mental health issues. Additionally, Ara noted the assertive behavior of teenagers, and she was surprised to learn that physical discipline of children is prohibited.

Ara, Maricris, and Princess also had to adjust to the smell of marijuana in public.

This legality of marijuana in Canada was jarring for Princess:

*“I think sa Dubai kasi dahil illegal ang drugs, parang ang laki ng adjustment ko when it comes here na may makakasalubong ka na amoy weed, ganoon. Kasi ikaw, tayo, sige sabihin na natin mayroong nagdodroga sa atin pero ‘yung kasi mga taong ‘yun is hindi mo sila maaamoy and then hindi din sila ‘yung taong vulgar na mag-smoke, mag-take ng weed. At siguro dahil sa atin nga is illegal so walang place na mabibili mo sa shop yung mga ganong drugs.”*

(I think in Dubai because drugs are illegal, I had to make a huge adjustment here that you see someone who smells like weed, like that. Because let's say that there are people doing drugs back home, but you can't smell those people, and they are also not vulgar in smoking or taking weed. And maybe because in our country it is illegal, so there is no place where you can buy those drugs.)

Experiencing discrimination in a new country can be a disheartening aspect of the adaptation process. While applying for a job, Princess encountered this reality:

*“Kasi there are times na nag-apply ako sa one of the restaurant chain na parang sa tingin ko parang naging racist sila. Kasi nakita ko kasi sa virtual interview na most of us are Asian. And then all of a sudden, hinire lang nila is mga European. Tsaka puti. So parang starting from that time parang naging aware na ako na, oh pag alam kong English chain or ‘yung restaurant is more on puti, parang wait lang, kailangan ko muna mag-isip.”*

(There were times when I applied to one of the restaurant chains that I thought they were racist. Because I saw in the virtual interview that most of us were Asian. And then all of a sudden, they only hired Europeans. And whites. So from that time, I've become aware that when I notice an English chain or a restaurant has more white employees, I have to think first.)

Unlike more overt forms of discrimination, Cherry's frustrations stemmed from interactions with fellow Filipinos who, rather than offering support, exhibited behaviors that seemed exploitative or unwelcoming. She articulated her frustrations:

*"Ayaw ko mang racist ha, pero iba talaga ugali [ng mga Pinoy] dito. Lalo na kapag baguhan ka, tataktutin ka nila ng mga bagay na ano, parang iti-take advantage ka nila eh. Kasi una, wala ka pang alam, kasi bago ka lang dito. So basically, 'yung mga rules and regulations dito, feeling nila sila lang 'yung nakakaalam. 'Yung mga rights ng mga tao dito, feeling nila sila 'yung nakakaalam."*

(I don't want to be racist, but the attitude [of Filipinos] is really different here. Especially when you're a newcomer, they'll scare you with things, they'll take advantage of you. Because first, you don't know anything yet, because you're new here. So basically, the rules and regulations here, they feel they are the only ones who know them. The rights of the people here, they feel they are the ones who know them.)

Wendy, on the other hand, noted a different experience, appreciating the friendliness of strangers in her new environment. She remarked, *"Friendly 'yung mga tao dito na kahit di mo kakilala, makakasalubong mo, ngingitian mo, tatanungin mo, 'How are you?' Sa Pilipinas kasi hindi naman ganun eh."* (The people here are so friendly that even if you don't know them, you smile at them and ask them, 'How are you?' It's not like that in the Philippines.)

Differences in social norms can create a sense of unease among Filipino transnational mothers. The public display of social issues, such as the visible presence of homelessness, open drug use, and discrimination, clashes with their expectations of a safe and orderly society. This can lead to heightened anxiety about their children's safety and exposure to perceived negative influences as shown in the next part.

**Importance of cultural values in parenting.** Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto often grapple with the challenge of preserving their cultural values and identities amidst the new cultural settings. Helena emphasized this unwavering commitment to her Filipino roots that despite living in a different country, their Filipino way of life remains unchanged:

*“Walang ipinagbago dahil nandito tayo. Pero ang way namin, hindi. Filipino pa rin ang way. Hindi ‘yung nakarating ka lang dito, ibahin mo na. No. Filipino pa rin. Ang mga tradition natin ay hindi pwedeng alisin ‘yan. Kasi Pilipino ka. Pilipino pa rin ang blood natin. Nakarating lang tayo, ibahin? Hindi. Parehas lang ‘yun.”*

(Nothing has been changed because we are here. But our way, no. We still follow the Filipino way. It's not that you arrive here and change it. No. Still Filipino. Our traditions cannot be removed. Because you are Filipino. Our blood is still Filipino. Because we're here in Canada, we have to change? No. It should be the same.)

For Helena, instilling respect and proper manners in children remains a crucial aspect of parenting, even in a new cultural setting. She has observed a troubling shift in values among some Filipino families in Canada:

*“Kasi ‘yung ibang mga ano dito nakikita ko nga, ibang mga Pilipino, wala na. ‘Yung mga anak, walang respeto na sa ano. Kasi ang katwiran nila nandito na sila. Hindi pwede. Dapat papalakin pa rin niya na ‘yung may manners ba? ‘Yung pumunta ka diyan sa bahay nila, mag-hello po o kaya ‘yung parang wala lang. Sabi ko nga ‘yung aso, kumibo pa sa'yo. Pero ‘yung mga bata ditong iba, parang wala. Pumasok ka sa mga Pilipinong ano minsan, sa ibang mga Pilipinong family, makikita mo ang mga anak, hindi ka papansinin.”*

(Because the other Filipinos I see here, they've changed. Their children have no respect. Their reason is that they are here. No. They should still

raise them with manners. When you go to their house, say hello, they'll just ignore you. I said the dog is better, he paid attention to you. But some children here are different. You go into Filipino homes, in other Filipino families, you will see the children ignoring you.)

Jade also expressed her frustrations about the differences in raising children between Canada and the Philippines. The parenting and social dynamics in Canada are very different from what she experienced back home. She noted:

*“Tapos ‘yung mga anak, ay naku. Kaya ako na-ano minsan sabi ko na, ‘Stress mo ko.’ Sinasabi ko sa magulang kasi ‘yung mga anak ko iba. Pagdating naman sa paggalang sa matatanda, iba sa Pilipinas, iba ‘yung dito. Dito parang ‘yung school, tinuturuan nilang mag-rason kayo sa mga magulang ninyo. Explain ninyo sarili ninyo. Sa Pilipinas, ang advice natin sa school, igalang, huwag kayong sasagot-sagot. Ay dito, wala ‘yan. Sasagot-sagot. Kahit sigawan ka ng anak, parang wala lang. Iba. Iba talaga.”*

(And then the children, oh my. That's why sometimes I say, 'You're stressing me out.' I tell the parents because my children are different. When it comes to respecting elders, it's different in the Philippines compared to here. Here, it seems like schools teach children to reason with their parents. To explain themselves. In the Philippines, our advice in school is to respect and not talk back. But here, that's not the case. They talk back. Even if your child yells at you, it seems like nothing. It's really different.)

Similarly, Maricris, who is currently pregnant with her third child, discussed the differences she anticipates in parenting in Canada. Her two older children are in the Philippines, where she feels the cultural environment is more conducive to respectful behavior:

*“Siguro, mas magiging mahigpit dito [sa pinagbubuntis ko] kasi iba ‘yung culture dito. Kasi sa Pilipinas, talagang mababait ang bata doon eh.*

*Hindi naman lahat, pero kasi, kung 'yung magulang is okay, kahit hindi kagandahan 'yung environment at napuno mo ng pagmamahal at pangaral 'yung anak mo, hindi siya mapapariwara eh. Eh, dito kasi iba 'yung environment. Kasi, may mga nagkakwento sa akin, international students, na ang laki ng problema nila sa anak nila noong dinala dito. Tas 'yun hindi na nakapasok [sa school], 'yung sobrang naging palasagot na tapos in English pa kung sumagot. Tapos parang nakuha daw 'yung ugali ng mga bata dito. Ayun, kaya ang feeling ko mag-iiba. 'Yung itong nasa tiyan, iba 'to.'"*

(Maybe I will be more strict with this child because the culture here is different. Because in the Philippines, children are really well-mannered there. Not all, but if the parents are okay, even if the environment is not good, and you fill your child with love and advice, he will not turn out bad. Here, the environment is different. There are international students who have told me about the extent of their problems with their children when they were brought here. They don't go to school anymore, and they always talk back in English. It seems that they have acquired the behavior of children here. Well, that's why I feel it will be different. This one I'm carrying, it'll be different.)

Due to the stories Ara hears and her firsthand experiences with children in Canada, she has significant concerns about raising her child within the same environment. While they remain uncertain about their future plans, the advantage of free education in Canada is compelling. However, Ara emphasized that the primary challenge would be being mindful of the influence of their child's peers once they bring her to Toronto.

The sense of unease brought by the differences in the social environment made some respondents consider adopting more restrictive parenting practices. They may feel compelled to have more conversations with their children about topics that might have been less prominent if their parenting were done in the Philippines. Many also

feel ill-equipped as they struggle to find alternative disciplinary approaches that align with both Canadian norms and their own cultural values.

For Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto, however, maintaining cultural values is not just about instilling values in their children, but also providing support to extended family members and even adult children. Jade's approach to helping her extended family underscores the importance of proactive support. She believes in offering assistance without waiting for a request. Comparably, Grace shared her reflections on the reciprocal nature of family support:

"I grew up with knowing my sisters, even my sisters [now] have their own family. She's always there to give us *baon*, *gastos sa school*, and stuff like that. So, in return, it's my turn now to do the same thing *sa sister ko*, *sa mga pamangkin ko*."

(I grew up knowing my sisters, even my sisters [now] have their own family. She's always there to give us pocket money, school expenses, and stuff like that. So, in return, it's my turn now to do the same thing to my sister and my niblings.)

Furthermore, she encourages her husband to do the same for his family. Grace also gives money to her mother-in-law in appreciation for taking care of her son.

Even as adults, Helena's children continue to support their parents as a way of giving back. She explained:

"*Kapag ano, lalo na 'yung panganay 'yung sa Dubai. Ya, minsan nag-ano siya, bibigay ng regalo. Idinadaan lang sa regalo. 'Yan ganoon. Ya tutulong tayo, sino naman ang tutulongan natin? Sila. Oo. 'Yung i-ibigay natin na ano, di ibigay na ngayon.'*"

(When it comes to my eldest, especially the one in Dubai, yes, sometimes he sends gifts. He just expresses himself through gifts. That's

how it is. Yes, we help, who else are we going to help? Them. Yes. Whatever we're going to give, we should give it now.)

In Jade's case, the combined financial resources with her children showcased how collaborative efforts within the family can lead to significant improvements in their quality of life:

*"Ngayon, nung pumunta ko dito sa Canada, nagkapag-Japan rin 'yung anak ko. May mga pera-pera na sila. May pera na rin ako. Pinagsama-sama namin, nakapagbuo kami ng bahay nung pandemic. Naiba, hindi na ako nagpo-problema 'pag bagyo. Nakakaano na sila ng mga gamit kasi medyo nag-improve."*

"Now, when I came here to Canada, my child went to Japan. They have also earned some money. I have money too. We combined our resources and were able to build a house during the pandemic. Things have changed; I no longer worry during storms. They can now buy things because our situation has improved a bit."

On the other hand, sometimes the support comes from the opposite direction. Wendy acknowledged the vital role her in-laws play in providing support in times of need. She said:

*"At saka kung ano 'yung hindi nabibigay [ng partner ko], minsan pag may kanyang kanya kami, tas short din ako, nandyan din naman 'yung parents niya. 'Yung parents niya 'yung tinatakbuhan niya para mabigay 'yung kailangan namin."*

(And also if there's something that [my partner] can't provide, sometimes when we're short on money, his parents are there for us. He turns to his parents to get what we need.)

The same is true for Ara, whose mother helps alleviate her financial burdens by providing groceries and materials for Ara's daughter. She noted:

*“Kasi kumbaga pensionado [ang mother ko] as a retired soldier. Wala, pinaprovide niya ‘yung mga groceries, like that. Kahit sa baby ko. Kahit di na ako mag-provide, parang di na ako magbigay, okay lang sa kanya. Pero siyempre, nahihiya ka pa rin.”*

(Because, so to speak, my mother is a pensioner as a retired soldier. She provides the groceries and things like that, even for my baby. Even if I don't provide anything, it's okay with her. But of course, I still feel shy about it.)

### **Political Advantages and Challenges**

Canada's immigration policies are always subject to change depending on the political climate and situation. Many transnational mothers rely on these policies to fulfill their parental responsibilities, with the eventual goal of attaining permanent residency to have unrestricted access to healthcare, job security, and the ability to plan for their family's future. But these immigration policies present both opportunities and challenges in terms of visa applications, along with the age restrictions on child sponsorship. As a result, Filipino transnational mothers now entertain the idea of alternative pathways to secure their status and reunite with their families. The ever-changing nature of Canada's immigration policies directly impacts the human security of ASEAN citizens in the country which is a core concern of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC).

**Benefits of a permanent status.** The immigration status of a transnational mother plays a crucial role in shaping her ability to fulfill parental responsibilities. One significant aspect is access to healthcare. Jade, for example, spent three years in Canada on a temporary tourist visa while working as a nanny for her former employer. She highlighted the challenges of not having health benefits during this time: *“Sa tourist, wala kang OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan). ‘Yung mga benefits,*

*wala...Mahal [magkasakit]. Mahal 'yun eh. Bawal kang magkasakit kapag tourist.*" (For tourists, you don't have OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan). The benefits, none...It's expensive [getting sick]. That's expensive. You're not allowed to get sick when you're a tourist.)

Only work permit holders, permanent residents, and citizens are covered by the free healthcare plan offered by provinces. International students, tourists, and undocumented individuals are not eligible under this program. International students may be covered under OHIP if they are added as a dependent of their spouse or common-law partner under the spousal open work permit.

Another vital factor is legal and economic stability. Carol, who arrived as a permanent resident, emphasized the advantages of this status in planning for her family's future:

*"Pero 'yun nga, so the fact na may job ako, I'm paying less sa housing, tapos PR ako, I don't have to think about 'yung limitations sa paghanap ng work. So definitely, nakakatulong talaga siya to provide for the family and also like to plan, parang to start planning on securing the kid's future. My future, my retirement, our retirement and the kid's future as well."*

(So the fact that I have a job, I'm paying less in housing, then I'm a PR, I don't have to think about the limitations in finding work. So definitely, he really helps to provide for the family and also likes to plan, like to start planning on securing the kid's future. My future, my retirement, our retirement and the kid's future as well.)

Having a permanent status means having job security. Being a permanent resident offers job security, allowing Carol to avoid being limited to minimum-wage jobs. This stability enables her to save for her children's education when they eventually join her in Toronto. Additionally, Carol feels a sense of security knowing

that her husband's and children's PR sponsorship applications are already in process, which brings her peace of mind as she plans for their future together in Canada. Jade also summarized the benefits of permanent residency, stating, "You can work anywhere. You're free...and you will become free as a lark in some ways. In certain situations."

For international students like Maricris, obtaining permanent residency would offer long-term benefits, particularly in allowing her to focus more on work without the added burden of balancing it with school. She acknowledged the struggle of managing both simultaneously and sees permanent residency as a pathway to greater stability.

**Immigration policies as a double-edged sword.** Canada's immigration policies, including the leniency in approving visas and permits, also impact transnational mothers, much like their immigration status does. Grace's experience highlights the challenges imposed by these policies. Grace was supposed to come to Canada alongside her husband and son, but their visa applications were refused, forcing her to travel alone. She recounted the frustrating experience:

"But the plan was after a few months I arrived *dito, sabi ng agency ko, namin, na ia-apply sila* to come here with us. But unfortunately, well, we did. They applied for OWP and student, minor, for my son. But they got refused. *'Yun. So, di talaga sila nakapunta.'*"

(But the plan was after a few months I arrived here, our agency said that they would apply them to come here with me. But unfortunately, well, we did. They applied for OWP and student, for my minor son. But they got refused. That's it. So, they didn't go.)

Cherry was in a similar situation. Initially, she planned to move to Canada with her husband. However, when his visa application was denied, she decided to come

alone and apply for a study permit for her eldest child, while leaving the youngest in the Philippines. She explained:

*“Supposedly, dalawa naman talaga kami magkasama dito. Kaya lang, hindi kasi siya na-approve. So, nag-decide ako na ako na lang muna. And then, nung in-apply ko ng study permit ‘yung anak ko na panganay, na-approve siya agad. So, nag-decide ako na kunin na lang din siya kasi, sayang naman, libre ‘yung pag-aaral dito. So, kinuha ko na siya.”*

(Supposedly, there are two of us here together. It's just that he wasn't approved. So, I decided to be myself first. And then, when I applied for a study permit for my eldest son, he was approved immediately. So, I decided to just take him because, unfortunately, studying here is free. So, I took him.)

In Ara's case, she chose to apply for a student visa because of the perceived costs of applying directly as a permanent resident: *“Pwede naman daw parang immigrant papunta dito kaso nga lang medyo pricey nga daw. So ‘yung pinakaway na lang na medyo budget is ‘yung international student.”* (They say it's possible to come here as an immigrant, but it's a bit pricey. So the best way within budget is the international student.)

Jade worked for her former employer in British Columbia for three years while on a tourist visa. Originally, she had been employed by the family in Singapore, but when they relocated to Canada, they brought her along. Her employer suggested she come on a tourist visa, believing it would be easier to obtain approval. But when Jade could no longer renew her status, she decided to return to the Philippines rather than overstaying:

*“Hindi na pwede [mag-extend], sabi nila. Nakaano na ako? Naka-dalawang extend na ako. Pero naka-dalawang entry na ako. Sabi nung*

*lawyer nila, alagaan ko raw [‘yung passport ko]. Kasi may plano talaga silang pag naayos nila ‘yung status nila, gusto nila kong kunin. Alagaan ko raw. Kasi ‘yung passport ko raw, maganda ‘yung mga entry ko. Pumunta kami ng UK, kasama ako. Australia. Kung saan sila pumupunta, nakakasama ako. Kaya nung ma-ano nila, points mo ‘yan, sabi sa akin.”*

(It is not possible [to extend], they said. I've had two extensions already. But I did two entries. Their lawyer said, I should take care of [my passport]. Because they really have a plan that once they fix their status, they want to take me. They said to take care of my passport. Because in my passport, my entries are good. We went to the UK. Australia. Wherever they go, they bring me. They told me, those are your points.)

The political factors present in Canadian immigration policies directly influence the activation and deactivation of transnational mothering, as illustrated by the respondents' experiences. Opportunities presented by these policies can initiate and sustain transnational mothering while the threat of status loss or the inability to secure permanent residency can effectively end it.

Helena's situation highlights another challenge faced by many transnational mothers regarding age limits on child sponsorship. In Canada, a "dependent child" is someone under the age of 22 who is not married or in a common-law relationship. Before October 24, 2017, the age limit was under 19 years old. Despite attaining permanent resident status in Canada, Helena could only sponsor one of her children because most were already adults by the time she was eligible. She recalled:

*“...Hindi ko lang ‘yung ma-ano nga, hindi ko na maalala, kasi talagang strict noon na pagpasok noon dito, kapag ano, hindi na talaga pwede. Lapas ng 20, hindi na. At least, kung, nag-apply ka, halimbawa, sa cutoff nila ay nag-apply ka ng 19, o kaya gano'n ‘yung bata at saka na-process*

*nila, nakarating dito ano 'yan, 25, okay. Dahil na-process mo rin, di pa ano 'yung gano'n. Kaya talagang, ano 'yan, isa na lang [ang nakuha ko]."*

(...I just can't really, I don't remember exactly, but it was really strict back then. When you arrived here, if [the child] was over 20, it was no longer allowed. At least, if you applied, for example, before the cutoff, and the child was 19 when you applied, and it got processed, and they arrived here at 25, that's okay. Because you processed it, that's still fine. That's why I only got one [child here].)

Another way immigration policies affect transnational mothering is the ability to visit their children in the Philippines and vice versa. Except for those with tourist and undocumented statuses, temporary residents in Canada can generally leave the country without losing their status. Princess shared their vacation plans this year:

*"We're actually planning to go for vacation for this year para makasama sila at para ma-celebrate yung birthday nila sa India. Para ma-meet din sila ng in-laws namin. Although hindi ko pa naman actually nakita yung mga in-laws ko since naging kami ng husband ko."*

(We're actually planning to go for vacation for this year to be with them and to celebrate their birthday in India. So that our in-laws can also meet them. Although I haven't actually seen my in-laws since I became my husband.)

Maricris, on the other hand, applied for tourist visas for her mother and two children, all of whom were approved and visited her in Toronto for three months last year. She is planning to have them visit again in December to spend Christmas in Toronto.

Over the years, permanent residency has become difficult to obtain. Immigration policies keep changing, and aspiring applicants need to keep up with the changes if they want to stay permanently in the country. One common tactic among

temporary residents is relocating to a different province, where they might get an opportunity to become permanent residents through provincial programs. Grace, for example, mentioned that she might move to another province if her plans do not go according to plan.

Wendy also revealed a similar plan with her common-law partner in case things do not work out in Toronto:

*“...Ang pinaka-siguro future plan namin [ng partner ko] sa family namin is kung hindi kami palarin dito sa Toronto baka lilipat kami sa ibang province na mas madali kami makakuha ng paper. Tapos after nun pag okay na kami may mga paper na kami baka babalik din kami dito sa Toronto.”*

(...[My partner] and I's most likely future plan for our family is that if we are not lucky here in Toronto, we might move to another province where we can get papers more easily. Then after that, when we're okay and we have the papers, maybe we'll come back here to Toronto.)

Similarly, Maricris talked about her future plans and how difficult it is to get permanent residency while staying in Toronto:

*“Kasi meron kami kakilala doon [sa Saskatchewan]. Papasok niya ako sa hotel. Kasama hotel doon [sa program], di ba? Bahala na basta sino mauna, at least ma-PR lang kasi ang hirap nga kasi dito di ba.”*

(Because we know someone there [in Saskatchewan]. They will get me a job in a hotel. The hotel is part of the program, right? It doesn't matter whichever comes first, as long as I can get PR because it's really hard here, right?)

## Theme 2: Concepts and Practices of Transnational Mothering

This theme explores how the concept of transnational mothering is redefined to accommodate the reality of the situation, challenging traditional notions that a mother must be physically present to perform her duties. Mothering ideals and the underlying meanings behind the concept are examined to reveal how they reflect the continuous effort to balance their practices despite mothering from afar.

### Mothering Ideals

**Mother as culturally defined.** The role of a mother is deeply intertwined with cultural norms and expectations, shaping not only how motherhood is perceived but also how it is enacted across different societies. The table below shows how each respondent defines the role of a mother based on their understanding of Filipino culture.

**Table 4.2**

*Cultural Definitions of a Mother According to Respondents*

Respondent	Definition
Divine	<p><i>“Ah, dun [sa Pilipinas] talaga parang buong buhay mo, ilalaan mo sa pamilya mo, gagawin mo lahat para sa family mo. Hindi ba marami nga doon mga nanay na...noon ah, nung time na ‘yun, hindi na sila nagtatrabaho kasi sa bahay na lang sila, pamilya ‘yung inaasikaso. Hindi kagaya ngayon na medyo kailangan na talaga rin mag-work nung nanay-tatay. Iba...I mean, ‘yung noon, kung ang pananaw mo na ang mga nanay nasa bahay lang mag-alaga ng anak mo, hindi na nila napapractice ‘yung profession nila.”</i></p> <p>(Ah, in the Philippines, it was really like you would dedicate your whole life to your family, you would do everything for them. Many mothers back then, during that time, would stop working because they were focused on managing the household and taking care of the family. Unlike now, where it’s really necessary for both mothers and fathers to work. It’s different. Back then, if your perspective was that mothers stayed at home to take care of the children, they would no longer practice their profession.)</p>

Maricris	<p><i>“Maalaga. ‘Yung, di ba ‘yung pag sa Pilipinas, di ba parang siya talaga ‘yung focus sa anak niya, ‘yung mag-aalaga lang, hindi ka magtatrabaho, gano’n. Tapos, ‘yung mga trabahong bahay ka lang, gano’n.”</i></p> <p>(Caring. In the Philippines, the focus was really on the mother being dedicated to her child, just taking care of them without working. Then, you only do household chores.)</p>
Jade	<p><i>“Sa kulturang Pilipino, diyan ka lang sa bahay, manahi, magpatulog, kumain, maabutan ka ng asawa mo, nandyan nag-aalaga, chimay ka ng pamilya. Paglingkuran mo lang ang iyong pamilya. Oh my goodness. Wala. Kawawa. Walang asenso sa buhay. Maghintay ka lang kung magkano ibigay ng asawa.”</i></p> <p>(In Filipino culture, you stay at home, sew, put the children to sleep, eat, wait for your husband to give you money while you take care of the family. Just serve your family. Oh my goodness. There’s nothing, no progress in life. You just wait for how much your husband gives you.)</p>
Ara	<p><i>“Yun nga, good provider. Parang mabigay mo lang ‘yung kailangan ng anak mo. As a Filipino ah kasi I mean ‘yung ibang mother na parang as long makapagprovide ka pero di mo naman tinatawagan yung anak mo. Ano, nanay ka pa ba? Parang ganoon.”</i></p> <p>(Being a good provider means giving what your child needs. As a Filipino, I mean, there are some mothers who think that as long as you can provide, it doesn't matter if you don't call your child. Are you still a mother?)</p>
Wendy	<p><i>“Para sa akin, bigay ko lahat ng gusto ng anak ko. Tapos didisiplinahin sa mga tamang bagay. Tapos papagalitan kapag may masamang nagawa. Pero parang ako pag ako kasama ko ‘yung anak ko, parang hindi ako magiging parang physically mananakit, mamamalo.”</i></p> <p>(For me, I give everything my child wants. Then, I discipline him on the right things. He gets scolded if he does something wrong. But when I'm with my son, I feel like I wouldn't physically hurt or hit him.)</p>
Carol	<p><i>“In general kasi parang sa Pilipinas, although feeling ko a lot has changed over the years, pero ang feeling ko ‘yung traditional view na ang...I still have a few friends who are full-time housewives and that, alam mo ‘yun, parang feeling ko they don’t have a lot of say sa decision making and things like that. Marami pa rin ako, alam mo ‘yun, parang childhood friends na alam kong ganun ‘yung sitwasyon. But also I feel like, sa generation namin at least, nag-</i></p>

	<p><i>chchange na rin 'yung dynamics na parang hindi na lang 'yung dad or yung father 'yung decision maker, hindi na lang sila 'yung provider. Pero parang yung traditional talaga is mas 'yung father ang nag-pprovide at 'yung mom is nurturing them, raising the kids."</i></p> <p>(In general, in the Philippines, although I feel a lot has changed over the years, the traditional view still seems to be that... I still have a few friends who are full-time housewives, and, you know, I feel like they don't have much say in decision-making and things like that. I still have childhood friends in that situation. But I also feel that, at least in our generation, the dynamics are changing, and it's not just the dad or the father who makes decisions or provides. But traditionally, it was more the father who provided and the mother who nurtured and raised the kids.)</p>
Cherry	<p><i>"Mahirap 'yung definition na 'yan unang-una. Kasi, ang expected sa'yo pag mabuting nanay ka, hindi magkakasakit 'yung anak mo. 'Yun 'yung number one. Pag nagkasakit 'yung anak mo, masamang nanay ka na, napabayaan mo na. So, kailangan di magkakasakit nang malala yung anak mo. Tapos, matataba 'yung mga anak mo kasi kung payat 'yan, masamang nanay ka na hindi mo pinapakain nang tama. 'Yan 'yung isa sa mga mahihirap na i-define 'yung pagiging nanay mo...Parang, 'yun, ganun 'yung feeling na hindi mo maintindihan saan ka lulugar. Mag-work ka para makapag-provide. Pero hindi mo maalagaan 'yung anak mo. Dahil nagwowork ka. So, pwedeng masamang nanay ka na no'n kasi pinabayaan mo. Pero at the same time, mabuting nanay ka kasi nagpo-provide ka. Tapos naman, siyempre, laging healthy 'yung mga anak mo. So, pag nagkasakit 'yung anak mo, 'Ay, ba't pinabayaan mo 'yung anak mo maglaro nang gano'n? Edi nagkasakit ng ganyan.' So, hindi mo talagang mapiplease lahat ng tao. Kahit gano'n mo i-defend 'yung sarili mo na ginawa mo 'to para sa mga anak mo, pag may nakita sa'yo na ano, wala. Bad shot ka."</i></p> <p>"It's hard to define that in the first place. Because, what is expected of you as a good mother is that your child shouldn't get sick. That's the number one thing. If your child gets sick, you're a bad mother, you've neglected them. So, your child shouldn't get seriously ill. Then, your children should be chubby, because if they're thin, you're a bad mother who doesn't feed them properly. That's one of the difficult things to define about being a mother...It feels like you don't know where you fit in. You work to provide, but you can't take care of your child because you're working. So, you might be considered a bad mother for neglecting your child, but at the same time, a good mother because you provide. And of course, your children should always be healthy. So, if your child gets sick, people will say, 'Why did you let your child play like that? Now they're sick.' You can't please everyone. No matter how you defend yourself by saying you did it for your children, if someone</p>

	sees something wrong, you're still seen as failing.”
Princess	<p>“<i>Sa akin kasi ‘yung pagiging mother ko, kung ano ako before sa nakasanayan natin [sa Pilipinas], parang ganoon pa rin na hanggang ngayon...I think being a good mother is hindi sa pag-i-spoil sa mga bata. Kailangan ko rin turuan sila kung paano gumalang sa mga matatanda...So for me, being strict is also part of being a good mother. Kasi doon nila ma-re-realize na, ‘Oh, I am doing a wrong thing.’</i>”</p> <p>(For me, being a mother is still the same as how I was accustomed to [in the Philippines], even now. I think being a good mother isn’t about spoiling the children. I also need to teach them how to respect elders... So, for me, being strict is also part of being a good mother. Because that’s when they realize, ‘Oh, I am doing something wrong.’)</p>
Helena	<p>“<i>Disiplinahin ang mga anak, disiplinahin ‘yung mga ano...Kasi noon kami mga bata pa noon, ‘yung mother ko, may bisita lang kami hindi nakapagmano. Titingnan ka niya sa mata, titingin niya, alam mo na kung ano ‘yung ibig sabihin niyan.’</i>”</p> <p>(Discipline the children, discipline them... Because when we were kids, if we had visitors and didn’t greet them properly, my mother would just look at you in the eye, and you would know what she meant by that.)</p>
Grace	<p>“<i>Sa Philippines, I grew up na walang work ‘yung mama ko. Never naman siya nag-work. Only ‘yung father ko nag-provide. Nasa bahay lang siya. Well, hindi lang siya sa bahay, kasi nagmamahjong siya. Mostly housemaker talaga ‘yung role, ‘yung ganyan. Mostly. So we’re doing our best, I’m doing my best to be a housemaker and to work at the same time. Wonder Woman lang.’</i>”</p> <p>(In the Philippines, I grew up with my mother not working. She never worked. Only my father provided for us. She was just at home. Well, not just at home, because she played mahjong. Mostly, she was really a housemaker, that kind of role. Mostly. So I’m doing my best to be a housemaker and to work at the same time. Just like Wonder Woman.)</p>

Based on the table above, several mothers expressed a traditional view of motherhood rooted in Filipino culture, where a *good mother* is someone who dedicates herself to homemaking. This perspective emphasizes prioritizing the family’s needs

above all else, including any personal aspirations one may have. This goes well with the classic Filipino description of mothers as *ilaw ng tahanan*, which translates to the “light of the home”. However, some mothers like Ara and Cherry also acknowledge the changing realities of today’s society, with the added pressure of being good providers along with the traditional mothering ideals. Carol also highlighted how motherhood and family dynamics are evolving over time. Setting these baseline definitions will allow us to compare their mothering practices from these cultural definitions of a mother.

**Comparing mothering practices with cultural definitions.** Many respondents reported deviations from conventional expectations when comparing mothering practices with the cultural definitions presented above. Grace, whose long-distance relationship with her family limits her ability to fulfill her role as a mother, explained:

*“Ibang-iba [‘yung arrangement namin]. Because I believe na the kids or the children should have their mothers on their side all the way hanggang sa paglaki nila. For me, it's important. Lumaki kasi kami na andyan talaga ‘yung both parents namin. And then being away, now me being away with them is like, I don't know how does [my son] feel about that kasi hindi ko naman na-experience ‘yan. But all I can say, it must not be nice. Hindi siya maganda. It's not nice. But my thought about it is sacrificing a little comfort for a better future or for the future that we want to have. I think it would be worth it. I hope so.”*

([Our arrangement] is very different. Because I believe that the kids or the children should have their mothers on their side all the way until they grow up. For me, it's important. We grew up with both our parents. And then being away, now me being away with them is like, I don't know how does [my son] feel about that because I haven't experienced that. But all I can say is, it must not be nice. It's not good. It's not nice. But my thought

about it is sacrificing a little comfort for a better future or for the future that we want to have. I think it would be worth it. I hope so.)

Wendy, reflecting on her own upbringing, rejected the traditional use of corporal punishment in disciplining her child:

*“Kasi parang mga dati sa mga parents natin or kahit sa akin naabutan ko pa ‘yung sobrang strict talaga namamamalo. Ayun naabutan ko pa ‘yun sa parents ko napapalo ako. Kaya naranasan ko ‘yung mga ganung ginagawa nila. Ayokong gawin sa anak ko.”*

(Because back in the day, with our parents or even with me, I experienced how extremely strict they were, like hitting us. I went through that with my parents. That’s why I experienced those things they did. I don’t want to do that to my child.)

In discussing her approach to mothering, Cherry emphasized her focus on her own values and well-being over external judgments about not meeting societal expectations. She remarked:

*“Wala akong pakialam sa kanila. Kasi, the more na iisip-isipin ko ‘yung mga sasabihin ng iba’ng tao, the more na masistress ako eh. Kasi, alam ko sa sarili ko na pinaprovide ko ‘yung dapat sa mga anak ko at inaalagaan ko sila hangga’t sa makakaya ko.”*

(I don’t care about them. The more I think about what others say, the more stressed I become. Because I know for myself that I am providing what my children need and taking care of them to the best of my ability.)

Interestingly, Maricris noted that while her current practices diverge from traditional norms, she might conform to the role of a housewife under different circumstances:

*“Siguro kung sa mayaman ang asawa ko baka nag-conform ako. Kasi depende siya sa estado eh. Syempre kung mayaman na mayaman ako,*

*kaya naman ibigay ng asawa mo yung lahat. Aba'y eh di mag-conform ka.”*

(Maybe if my husband were rich, I might conform. It depends on the circumstances. Of course, if I were very wealthy, and my husband could provide everything, then I would conform.)

**Role model in parenting.** Ara, Grace, Princess, and Divine all view their mothers as their primary role models in parenting, inspired by the sacrifices their mothers made for their well-being. Divine, in particular, shared her admiration for her mother, who single-handedly raised six children after becoming a widow. She said:

*“Kasi talagang bibilib ka sa kanya kasi widow siya, one year old pa lang ako. So, siya na ‘yung talagang- anim kami eh. Talagang ginawa niya lahat para mapatapos kami lahat, maging maganda ‘yung buhay namin. Kaya nagpunta siya sa London. So, siya talagang ‘yung nililook up ko. Matapang, matibay. ‘Yung ganoon. Siya ‘yung role model ko.”*

(Because you'd really admire her since she became a widow when I was just one year old. So, she was the one who- there were six of us. She really did everything to make sure we all finished our studies and had a good life. That's why she went to London. So, she's the one I look up to. Brave, strong. Like that. She's my role model.)

Carol, on the other hand, draws from a blend of influences, particularly from both her parents, in shaping her parenting style. She reflected:

*“Kasi ‘yung mom ko, model ko sa parenting ‘yung mom ko in the sense na hindi niya kami pinanapressure mag-aral. Noong time na growing up, hindi niya kami pinanapressure mag-aral. Parang it was, parang she just provided us with resources like bibilhan niya kami ng books, bibilhan niya kami ng anything that we might need. Ganun. Para ma-enjoy namin ‘yung learning process. But she never, you know, like ‘yung helicopter parenting na you have to achieve this and that...‘Yung pagiging disciplinarian a little bit from my dad. Pero ‘yun nga kaya rin ‘yung*

*sinasabi ko earlier na I give [my children] a voice or I give them a chance to voice their side. Kasi growing up 'yung dad ko sobrang disciplinarian niya na hindi ka talaga pwedeng sumagot. Regardless nung sa tingin mo tama ka or what. Ganun. So a bit of 'yung pagiging disciplinarian ni daddy minus 'yung hindi ka pwedeng sumagot."*

(Because my mom is my model for parenting in the sense that she never pressured us to study. When we were growing up, she never pressured us about school. It was more like she just provided us with resources, like she would buy us books, or anything we might need. Like that. So we could enjoy the learning process. But she never, you know, did that helicopter parenting where you have to achieve this and that...The disciplinarian side I got a little bit from my dad. But, as I mentioned earlier, I give [my children] a voice or a chance to express their side. Because growing up, my dad was so strict that you weren't allowed to talk back, regardless of whether you thought you were right or not. Like that. So, a bit of the disciplinarian side from my dad, minus the not being able to talk back.)

Wendy, who spent much of her childhood with her grandparents and aunts due to her parents working abroad, expressed more admiration for her caretakers than for her parents, who were often absent during crucial times in her life.

Like Wendy, the absence of a consistent parental figure can leave a profound impact, leading to different coping mechanisms and choices in life. Cherry shared how growing up without her parents' guidance influenced her early decisions:

*"Lumaki kasi ako na broken family. Though, may lola at lola ako, hindi ako lumaki na kasama ang nanay at tatay kasi nag-hiwalay din 'yung parents ko. Ang nanay ko naman, single mom. Siguro siya [ang role model ko]. Pero, hindi 'yung the way na magpalaki siya ng anak. Kasi hindi ako lumaki sa kanya in the first place. So, hindi ko naranasan ko paano niya kapalakihin. Tapos, 'yung pagpapalaki ng lola at lolo ko sa akin, sobrang strict. Kaya siguro nung nag-college ako, nag-asawa ako*

*nang maaga. Kasi, parang nakulangan ako ng pagmamahal. Tapos, nung nakilala ko yung asawa ko, nabuntis ako agad kasi, gusto ko nang umalis sa pader ng mga lola at lolo ko. Parang nakawala sa koral. Ganun, ganun 'yung nangyari. Pero, siguro, kung 'yung mother ko yung nagpalaki sa akin, siguro, hindi siguro ako ganito. Kasi, 'yung bunso namin, mabait eh."*

(I grew up in a broken family. Although I had my grandparents, I didn't grow up with my mom and dad because my parents separated. My mom was a single mother. Maybe she [was my role model]. But not in terms of how she raised her kids because I didn't grow up with her in the first place. So, I didn't experience how she would have raised me. And then, my grandparents were very strict in raising me. That's probably why I got married early when I went to college because I felt a lack of love. Then, when I met my husband, I got pregnant right away because I wanted to get away from my grandparents. It was like escaping from a pen. That's what happened. But maybe if my mom had raised me, I probably wouldn't be like this. Because our youngest sibling is well-behaved.)

### **Underlying Meanings**

**Motivations.** Motivations of Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto can be categorized into two factors: push and pull. Push factors are the conditions or circumstances that drive people to leave their home country. Pull factors, on the other hand, are the positive attributes of a destination country that attract migrants. Most of their motivations were already discussed in the previous section on different factors. But to summarize, push factors can be any of the following: a) family and children and motivation; b) economic struggles; c) career challenges; d) social and familial pressures; and e) political situation. Pull factors may include: a) benefits; b) educational opportunities; c) family and peer influence; and d) quality of life and future prospects.

**Comparing familial situations to others.** Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto often find themselves comparing their own situations to those of other families. For some, the comparison fuels their insecurity for not following mothering ideals, as Maricris explained:

*“Lalo na pag, parang, sobrang, ano, parang pinagpala ‘yung mga magulang na parang lahat ng anak ang tatalino. Minsan...wala lang. Naisip ko lang na, ano, ano ba, ano ba ‘yung ginagawa nila? Siguro kasi nga nagtuturo sila sa anak nila. Tas ako ang tamad-tamad ko naman magturo, bakit ako nageexpect di ba?”*

(Especially when it seems like some parents are really blessed because all their kids are so smart. Sometimes...I just think, what are they doing differently? Maybe it's because they actually teach their kids, and here I am, too lazy to teach mine. Why should I expect the same results, right?)

Similarly, Wendy experienced envy towards her cousin in the Philippines, who is able to spend time with her child, while Wendy's own child remains in another country:

*“Kinocompare ko. Oo. Madalas. Kasi lalo na kapag magkakasama sila. Mayroon akong pinsan din kasi sa Pinas, halos ka-age ko tapos ‘yung anak din namin magka-age. Sila nasa Pinas siya, kasama niya ‘yung anak niya at asawa niya. While ako, hindi ko kasama ‘yung anak ko. Na kapag nakakakita ako ng mga posts nila parang nakakainggit. Na buti pa sila, kasama nila ‘yung anak nila. Pero minsan at the same time sinasabi din ng pinsan ko sa akin na buti daw ako, nandito ako sa Canada. Parang ganoon na oh nandito nga ako, di ko naman kasama ‘yung anak ko.”*

(I compare myself. Yes, often. Especially when they're together. I have a cousin in the Philippines who's about my age, and our children are the same age too. They're in the Philippines, and she's with her child and husband. While I'm here, not with my child. So when I see their posts, I

feel envious. They're lucky to be with their child. But sometimes, my cousin also tells me that I'm lucky to be here in Canada. It's like, yes, I'm here, but I'm not with my child.)

Princess told a similar story about her best friend, highlighting the internal conflict many transnational mothers face between pursuing opportunities abroad and fulfilling their roles as mothers:

*“Kasi mayroon akong best friend na mayroon na rin siyang anak, dalawa. Pero hindi kambal. Parang mayroon 2 or 3 years na gap. So dahil siya kahit na nag-wowork siya sa ibang bansa, ‘yung mga nag-aalaga ng baby niya, tutok na tutok sa mga kids niya. And then she realized na kailangan niyang gabayan ‘yung mga anak niya on her own. Kasi siguro naisip niya na enough naman ‘yung sinasahod ng asawa niya for 4 of them. So sinacrifice niya ‘yung trabaho niya just to be with their kids. Na sabi ko ay sana ganoon din ako. Yes, hindi siya ganoon mangarap like me having here in Canada na for settling down, for their future. Pero I think that's not really enough kasi hindi mo naman kasama ‘yung mga bata, hindi mo sila natututukan. ‘Yung mga good things na dapat ikaw ang gumagawa, ibang tao ‘yung gumagawa for your kids.”*

(I have a best friend who also has children, two, though they're not twins. There's about a 2 or 3-year gap between them. Even though she's working in another country, the people taking care of her kids are very hands-on. Then she realized that she needed to guide her children herself. Maybe she thought that her husband's salary was enough for the four of them. So, she sacrificed her job just to be with her kids. And I thought, I wish I could do the same. Yes, she doesn't dream as big as I do, like settling down here in Canada for the future. But I think that's not really enough because you're not with your kids, you're not there to guide them. The good things that you should be doing for your kids, someone else is doing.)

On the contrary, some transnational mothers view these comparisons as a challenge to strive for better outcomes. Ara, for instance, acknowledged that while some may find financial stability easily, for her, it requires effort and perseverance. She convinced herself that success often comes through hard work. Jade's experience showed this determination as she recounted the struggles and sacrifices she made to provide for her children's education:

*“Lalo na mga kaedad ng anak ko. Tapos nauna silang parang sa pamumuhay, may part na naiingit ako sa kanila. Meron sila, ‘yung mga anak ko wala. Tapos, bumigla, hindi nila pinagsisikapan na mapatapos nila. Makikita mo ang gaganda. May mga bagong bag. Pag opening ng school, mga anak ko, nahirapan pa ako. Tapos, kako ba’t ganoon, hindi man lang nila pinagtiyagaan. May anak na. Tapos, hindi pinagpatuloy. Kawawa ‘yung anak. Kami doon sa amin makikita na napakaano namin magpaaral. Nakita nila ang pagsisikap ko, sinabayan ako ng mga anak ko.”*

(Especially those who are the same age as my child. They seem to be ahead in terms of lifestyle, and I feel a bit envious of them. They have things that my children don't. Then suddenly, they didn't put in the effort to finish their education. You can see how nice their things are. They have new bags. When school started, I struggled for my children. I wonder why it's like that, they didn't even make an effort. They already have children but didn't continue. The children are the ones who suffer. For us, you can see how hard we work to educate our children. They saw my efforts, and my children supported me.)

**Impact of transnational mothering on self-perception and identity.** The duality of being both a mother and a provider from a distance can lead to a reevaluation of their perceptions and identities. Grace recounted how her initial arrogance and belief that everyone has a choice were shattered by the humbling experiences she faced after migrating to Canada:

*“Ang sabi nga nila, you will really start from the very bottom pagdating mo dito which is really true. Ako, I was able to experience a humbling moment or experience na makes me realize na if I'm not strong mentally and emotionally, I could have gone crazy. Which I was so arrogant when hindi ko ‘yan na-experience. Kasi back home, inisip ko, you always have a choice. Sa isip ko before back home, they always have a choice. You always have a choice. Kung choice mo magpariwara, then it's your choice. Kung choice mo na maging baliw, it's your choice. But now, when I came here and I have gone all through that emotional experiences na hindi ko ma-imagine na I was able to outgrow or maano. Then I realized, oh my gosh, now kinain ko lahat ‘yung mga sinabi ko before...Kasi when I was back home, I was so arrogant to be honest na sabi ko, ‘Ay di ako nagbibigay ng pera doon sa mga naglilimos,’ kasi sabi ko, ‘Huh, they always have a choice.’ They choose na maging beggar kasi ganyan. Pero pagdating ko dito, nakita ko, oo nga, sometimes walang choice. So ‘yun, naging generous ako, naging more generous ako sa kanila. I open my mind a little bit wider to bakit naging ganyan. Kasi na-experience ko ‘yung nag-iisa ka lang talaga.”*

(They say you really start from the very bottom when you get here, and that's so true. I experienced a humbling moment that made me realize that if I wasn't strong mentally and emotionally, I could have gone crazy. Before, I was so arrogant because I hadn't gone through that. Back home, I thought you always have a choice. In my mind before, back home, they always have a choice. You always have a choice. If you choose to ruin your life, then that's your choice. If you choose to go crazy, that's your choice. But now, when I came here and went through all those emotional experiences that I never imagined I could outgrow or overcome, I realized, oh my gosh, now I've swallowed all the things I said before...Because when I was back home, I was so arrogant, to be honest. I would say, 'Oh, I don't give money to beggars,' because I thought, 'Huh, they always have a choice.' They choose to be beggars because of that. But when I got here, I saw that sometimes there's no choice. So I became more generous, more generous to them. I opened

my mind a little bit wider to understand why they ended up that way. Because I experienced what it's like to be truly alone.)

Similarly, transnational mothering has influenced Helena's sense of self, revealing both her vulnerabilities and her strength, as she reflected on her tendency to offer help even when she has little to give:

*“Oo, kasi maano lang ako, maboka, maano lang. Pero loob ko ang baba ng ano ko. ‘Yung pag narinig kong may kailangan ganito, ganito, ako na ang kusang nag-offer. Kaya sabi ko nga, ‘Paano ko babaguhin ang sarili ko?’ Minsan kahit walang-wala ka na basta nagsabing, ‘O kailangan ko ng ganito, kailangan ko ng ganito.’ Parang ‘yung puso mo baga ano. ‘Yan sabi ko sa iyo, mabait na matapang.”*

(Yes, because I'm just talkative, just like that. But deep down, I am humble. When I hear that someone needs something, I'm the first to offer help. That's why I ask myself, 'How can I change myself?' Sometimes, even when I have nothing left, as long as someone says, 'I need this, I need that,' it's like my heart just responds. That's what I told you, kind but strong.)

Back in the Philippines, Maricris felt her identity was solely defined by her familial duties. Her journey to Canada was driven by her desire for personal growth. She explained how this changed her outlook:

*“Feeling ako ang strong strong ko [na]. Feeling ko ay meron pa pala kong...kasi parang sa Pilipinas kasi parang naisip ko doon, parang, kasi ‘yun na nga ‘yung pinasok sa isip ko ng mga tao sa paligid ko, na parang wala akong kwentang tao. Na parang, hanggang dito ka lang. Kasi, ilang years naman ako nagtrabaho sa ano, hindi naman ako na-promote.”*

(I feel like I'm really strong [now]. I feel like I still have something more because, back in the Philippines, I thought that way because that's what the people around me made me believe, that I was worthless. That this

is all I could ever be. Because, despite working for several years, I was never promoted.)

Jade's mindset has also changed after coming to Canada. She became more confident in her ability to overcome challenges:

*“Mas lalo akong parang ‘kaya ko ‘to’. Kahit nagmumukhang hindi kaya, nandito na ako, kaya ko ‘to. Malakas na ng loob kong pahiram mo muna ‘ko, may sahod ako eh. Kahit dun sa Pilipinas, ‘Humiram kayo. Humiram kayo.’ Madaling hiram ang tao. Kasi nakikita nilang may trabaho ka, nasa abroad ka. Madali. Pero nung wala pa ako dito, dun lang ako, ah mahirap. Nung nasa abroad na ako, parang ang lakas na ng kalooban ko, mag-aral kayo. ‘Yung ako nang bahala. ‘Ako na anak ang bahala, sige lang kayo.’ Parang naano ko ‘yung, ganito pala ‘to? Kaya naman pala. Nakarecover ka agad ako. Kasi nandun may mindset ako na dapat inaabot ko talaga.”*

(I felt even more like 'I can do this.' Even when it seemed like I couldn't, I was already here, so I knew I could handle it. My confidence grew to the point where I could lend money if needed because I had a salary. Even in the Philippines, I told them, 'Borrow money.' People would lend you money easily if they saw you had a job abroad. It was easy. But before I came here, I thought it was difficult. Once I was abroad, my confidence surged. I thought, 'Let them study, I'll take care of it.' It was like, 'Oh, this is how it is? I can actually do it.' I quickly recovered because I had the mindset that I needed to reach this point.)

On the other hand, Ara's reflection revealed a realization about the difference between her life in the Philippines and her new reality in Canada. This shift in perspective underscores the necessity of grind and hard work in her current environment. Ara's insight emphasizes how her drive and determination have intensified because success and survival are closely tied to continuous effort and initiative.

For Princess, her core identity as a mother remained unchanged, but her perception of her role has evolved. She feels her day is incomplete if she cannot talk to her children, highlighting the connection she maintains with them. Similarly, Cherry's identity remains constant as she continues to focus on her children's future, but her self-perception has shifted significantly due to the challenges she faces. She explained:

*“Dati kasi ano eh, naalagaan ko pa ‘yung sarili ko. ‘Yung mga skincare routine ko nandyan pa. Tapos, nakapag-diet pa ako kapag gusto ko. Tapos, nakapag-exercise pa ako. Ngayon, wala na talaga. Kasi paggising ko sa umaga, mag-aasikaso ng anak. Tapos, syempre, gusto mong matulog, so matutulog pa naman. Wala na time para mag-nails, magpagupit, magpakuloy ng buhok. Hindi, kagaya ng nasa, ano ko, Pilipinas, nasa Dubai ako, nagagawa ko pa na magpaganda, kahit pa paano. Ngayon, kung ano na lang maisiot mo, ‘yun na ‘yun. Syempre, pagpapasok sa school, medyo okay-okay pa. Pero, pag nasa bahay ka lang, tapos trabaho, ‘yun na ‘yun. Same old look na ‘yun. So, ang laking changes din nun. Parang tumanda ako ng ilang taon dito. Kahit sabihin nilang mukha pa rin akong bata, feeling ko, ang tanda ko na talaga sa dami ng problema ko sa buhay.”*

(Before, I used to take care of myself. I had my skincare routine, I could diet whenever I wanted, and I could exercise. Now, there's really no time for that. When I wake up in the morning, I have to take care of my child. And of course, you want to sleep, so you end up sleeping more. There's no time for nails, haircuts, or coloring my hair. It's not like when I was in the Philippines or Dubai, where I could still manage to look good, at least a little. Now, whatever you can wear is what you wear. Of course, for school, it's somewhat okay. But when you're just at home and working, that's it. It's the same old look. So, it's a big change. It feels like I've aged several years here. Even if they say I still look young, I feel like I'm really old because of all the problems in my life.)

Carol acknowledged a disconnect between her own and her family's perception of her strength. She admitted that despite appearing resilient, she has moments of weakness that she tries to conceal from her children. This reveals the challenge of maintaining a strong facade while grappling with internal conflict. Furthermore, Carol found validation in her role as a parent through her child's willingness to confide in her during times of emotional difficulty despite the distance:

"...*Parang* just the fact that my child comes to me in moments like those *na parang* especially for boys, *di ba, parang* for them and at their age to be open with their emotions *sa* parents. I feel like that is a sign that I'm being an effective parent. That my child comes to me instead of his friends in moments when he feels weak or when he feels overwhelmed."

("...It seems that just the fact that my child comes to me in moments like those, especially for boys, it isn't like them and at their age to be open with their emotions to parents. I feel like that is a sign that I'm being an effective parent. That my child comes to me instead of his friends in moments when he feels weak or when he feels overwhelmed.")

## **Mothering Practices**

**The Long-Distance Role of a Mother.** Even in the context of transnational mothering, Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto actively perform their roles. This is mainly fueled by deeply ingrained mothering ideals discussed earlier, often rooted in the Filipino notions of a mother's responsibilities along with their role models in parenting. However, the ways these ideas translate into mothering practices are also influenced by underlying meanings. This is evident in how some of the respondents play out their roles as if there is no physical space in between. These underlying meanings are shaped by experiences, cultural values, and uncertainties,

demonstrating that transnational mothering is a completely personal journey that differs from person to person.

The table below demonstrates how these mothers perform their roles despite the physical separation from their children.

**Table 4.3**

*The Long-Distance Role of a Mother According to Respondent*

Respondent	The Long-Distance Role of a Mother
<b>Maintaining Connection and Involvement</b>	
<p>Maricris</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Nako, syempre kailangan mo pa rin silang palaging kumokonek sa kanila...Alam mo ba na naka-alarm pa ako sa mga anak ko? Hindi, I mean, ‘yung naka-alarm din ‘yung phone ko kung anong oras ko sila gigisingin sa Pinas. Eh, sa mga tamad gumising. Nanay ko muna tatawagan ko kung kaya niya gisingin. Tapos, pag hindi kahit na nanay ko saka pa ako magtatawag.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(Oh, of course, you still need to always stay connected with them... Did you know that I even set an alarm for my kids? I mean, I set my phone's alarm for the time I need to wake them up in the Philippines. They are too lazy to get up. I call my mom first to see if she can wake them. Then, if she can't, that's when I call them myself.)</p>
<p>Grace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“I am still very involved at all the decision-making about my child, especially sa school, especially sa mga things na kailangan niya.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(I am still very involved in all the decision-making regarding my child, especially with school and especially with the things he needs.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“And then, every time he got upset, ako din naman, he calls me that he's so upset, ganyan-ganyan. So, wala lang physically na nandito, but we can always talk anytime naman. We can always call sa Messenger, we can call, nagviveocall kami every day, when I wake up, when they wake up, before we sleep, in the middle of the day. So, wala namang gap between sa ganun.”</i></li> </ul>

	<p>(And then, every time he got upset, me too, he calls me saying he's so upset, this and that. So, I'm just not physically there, but we can always talk anytime. We can always call on Messenger, we call, we video call every day, when I wake up, when they wake up, before we sleep, in the middle of the day. So, there's no gap in that sense.)</p>
Ara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Ako, parang pinaparamdam ko pa rin sa kanya na parang nandito pa rin ako lagi. Kasi tinatawagan ko siya umaga, gabi, before siya mag-sleep. Bago siya pumasok na sabi ko makinig siya lagi. Sabi ko, parang sinasabi niya, wala naman daw ako doon. Sabi ko ganyan, no. Sabi ko, nandyan ako. Ganyan. Parang, yan. Parang namimiss daw niya ako. Sabi ko ganyan, wait mo lang. Ganoon.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(For me, it's like I still make her feel like I'm always here. Because I call her in the morning, at night, before she sleeps. Before she goes to school, I tell her to always listen. She says things like, I'm not even there. I say, no. I say, I am there. It's like she says he misses me. I say, just wait.)</p>
Wendy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Kahit malayo naman ako sa kanya, everyday wala din namang palya na tumatawag kami sa kanya. Kahit minsan kahit hindi pa siya nakakaintindi, sinasabi namin sa kanya na kailangan naming mag-work.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(Even though I'm far from him, every day, without fail, we call him. Even sometimes when he doesn't understand yet, we tell him that we need to work.)</p>
Princess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“...Pag umaga doon, gabi dito, tawag ako sa kanila habang nagluluto ng pagkain, magprepare ng pagkain namin ng asawa hanggang sa makauwi siya. Halos parang hindi na ata umaabot ng 7 hours ang tulog ko para lang makausap ‘yung mga bata, makapagprepare dito. Like I have to wake up early in the morning para lang makausap ‘yung mga bata kasi parang hindi fulfilling sa akin na ‘yung buong araw na hindi ko sila nakakausap.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(When it's morning there and evening here, I call them while I'm cooking, preparing food for my husband and me until he gets home. I probably don't even get 7 hours of sleep just so I can talk to the kids and prepare things here. Like I have to wake up early in the morning just to talk to the kids because it feels unfulfilling to me to go the whole day without talking to them.)</p>
Carol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Kasi even before, even before nung time na nasa university ako and kasama ko sila physically, kasi ako parang I try to insert myself, hindi naman insert myself but</i></li> </ul>

	<p>I try to get involved <i>sa mga activities nila. Tapos even ngayon nung hindi ako physically kasama nila, I try to make sure na involved ako sa day-to-day na activities nila.</i>"</p> <p>(Because even before, even before when I was in university and I was physically with them, I was the type to try to insert myself, well not really insert myself, but I tried to get involved in their activities. And even now that I'm not physically with them, I try to make sure that I'm involved in their day-to-day activities.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Parang</i> to make myself present and felt in case they need me. <i>Kasi</i> there would be times they'd be stressed out, they feel burnt out, they feel pressured <i>sa academics. May mga ganung</i> moments and I feel like successful, I feel like <i>hindi man ako perfect na parent</i> but I feel like effective <i>na parent pa rin naman ako</i>. Regardless if I was physically there or even <i>nung nandito na ako sa Canada.</i>"</li> </ul> <p>(It's like to make myself present and felt in case they need me. Because there would be times they'd be stressed out, they feel burnt out, they feel pressured with academics. There are moments like that, and I feel like I'm successful, I feel like even if I'm not a perfect parent, I feel like I'm still an effective parent. Regardless of whether I was physically there or even now that I'm here in Canada.)</p>
Jade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Tawag-tawag. Ano, tulog na ba sila?"</i></li> </ul> <p>(Calling each other. So, are they asleep yet?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Ngayon, may video call na. Gusto ko nakikita kong sila lahat."</i></li> </ul> <p>(Now, there's video call. I want to be able to see all of them.)</p>
Divine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Araw-araw lang nagchachat. Araw-araw naguusap."</i></li> </ul> <p>(We just chat every day. We talk every day.)</p>
<b>Ensuring Discipline and Guidance</b>	
Grace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Yung mga things na, 'yung cousin may bike, gusto ko rin ng bike, mga ganun.</i> It's because I can provide it, I am capable of giving him the money, but I don't want him to grow up to be like <i>kung anong meron 'yung isa, ganun din kailangan</i> you have it. Or it's because we can afford it, <i>kailangan bilhin mo din</i> even if you don't really need it.</li> </ul>

	<p>Because I'm telling him not to buy, because we will never know, they're going here, right? So, I'm still very involved <i>doon sa pagdisiplina sa kanya.</i>"</p> <p>(Things like, 'my cousin has a bike, I want a bike too,' things like that. It's because I can provide it, I am capable of giving him the money, but I don't want him to grow up to be like whatever someone else has, you also need to have it. Or just because we can afford it, you also need to buy it even if you don't really need it. Because I'm telling him not to buy, because we will never know, they're going here, right? So, I'm still very involved in disciplining him.)</p>
Jade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Wala talaga akong naging problema sa mga anak ko kasi sa disiplina. Hindi sila nag... 'Yung una ko, panganay, na ano sila sa boyfriend-boyfriend. Pero at the end ako ang nasunod. Palagi kong pinaliwanag sa kanilang...itong ginagawa ko sa inyo. Kasi ako ang mas maano kaysa sa asawa ko."</i></li> </ul> <p>(I really haven't had any problems with my children when it comes to discipline. They didn't... My firstborn, the eldest, had those boyfriends. But in the end, they still followed me. I always explained to them... what I'm doing for you. Because I'm the stricter one compared to my husband.)</p>
Carol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Most of my peers and yung nasa immediate surroundings ko, feeling ko may pagka-strict ako. Especially when it comes to household chores. I feel like sa akin kasi parang that's part of being street smart, ano. And for you to do well in life, like you don't have, I mean, you need to know these things."</i></li> </ul> <p>(Most of my peers and those in my immediate surroundings feel like I'm a bit strict. Especially when it comes to household chores. I feel like for me, that's part of being street smart, you know? And for you to do well in life, like you don't have, I mean, you need to know these things.)</p>
Cherry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Ako 'yung pinaka-chill na nanay na kilala nila. Pero huwag lang ako 'yung talagang maaano, 'yung may malalaman ako na hindi maganda, na 'yung grades ng anak ko ganito, kung pasaway 'yung anak ko. Ibang usapan na yun. Kaya takot sa akin 'yung anak ko. Sabi ko, ikaw, pinagbibigyan kita, pero pag nakarinig ako na hindi maganda sa mga teacher, bubugugin talaga kita."</i></li> </ul> <p>(I'm the chilliest mom they know. But don't let me get really upset, like if I find out something bad, like my child's grades are this, or if my child is misbehaving. That's a different</p>

	<p>story. That's why my child is scared of me. I told them, I'm lenient with you, but if I hear anything bad from the teachers, I will really beat you up.)</p>
<p>Monitoring Children's Safety and Well-being</p>	
<p>Maricris</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Oo, naka-share [yung location]. Pag umiba yung location, tatawagan ko na yan, ‘Anak, nasaan ka?’ Explain siya, ‘Mama, nandito lang.’ ‘Ano nasaan?’ Malapit pa rin naman siya sa [school]. Pero hindi na lang sa loob ng [school]. Sabi niya, ‘Mama, nandito lang sa dorm ng ka-classmate ko.’”</i></li> </ul> <p>(Yes, the location is shared. If the location changes, I'll call her right away, 'Son, where are you?' He'll explain, 'Mama, I'm just here.' 'What "here"?' He's still near [school]. But not inside [school] anymore. He said, 'Mama, I'm just at my classmate's dorm.'))</p>
<p>Cherry</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Basta sabihin lang sa akin kung saan pupunta, anong oras, uuwi, sinong kasama, okay na ako do'n. Wala akong pakialam, basta huwag kayong magdadrugs. ‘Yun lang. ‘Yun ang lagi ko sinasabi sa anak ko. Kahit saan ka pumunta, mag-sleepover ka, basta kilala ko kung sinong kasama mo. Alam ko ‘yung number ng nanay niya in case of emergency, okay na ako do'n. Kunwari sinong... saan ka pupunta ngayon, ano oras ka uuwi, okay na ‘yun.’”</i></li> </ul> <p>(Just tell me where you're going, what time you'll be back, who you're with, and I'm okay with that. I don't care about anything else, just don't do drugs. That's it. That's what I always tell my child. Wherever you go, if you're having a sleepover, as long as I know who you're with, I have their mother's number in case of emergency, I'm okay with that. For example, who... where are you going now, what time will you be back, that's fine.)</p>
<p>Jade</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Hanggang ngayon, saan siya? Magpapaalam kayo kung saan ka pumunta. Anong oras ang pasok? Anong oras ang uwi? Papasundo. Dapat naka-alert ka sa phone kasi magpapasundo yung mga nag-duty. Wag silang papaghintayin ng matagal. Kasi napaka-delikado sa babae. Gano'n ako.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(Even now, where is she? You need to let us know where you're going. What time is your start? What time is your end? We'll have someone pick you up. You need to be alert on your phone because those who finished their duty will ask for a ride. Don't make them wait too long. Because it's</p>

	<p>very dangerous for a woman. That's how I am.)</p>
Divine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Talagang kailangan i-update ka kung ano na nangyayari. Communication talaga tsaka mahirap talaga pero tiwala lang. Tiwala talaga.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(You really need to be updated on what's happening. Communication is really key, and it's really hard, but you just have to trust. Really trust.)</p>
Mother as Provider	
Ara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Parang lahat, pinaprovide ko naman lahat ng gusto niya tapos pinaparamdam ko na lagi ako, parang di ako nawawala gano'n na di ako hahanapin.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(It's like everything, I provide everything he wants and I make him feel that I'm always there, like I don't disappear in a way that he would look for me.)</p>
Wendy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Sinasabi namin parang may pambili kami ng mga kailangan niya. Wala pa naman siguro siya masyadong nararamdaman kasi bata pa siya lalo nung iniwan namin. Pero kahit lumayo kami sa kanya, alam naman namin sa sarili namin na para sa kanya din ‘yung ginagawa namin.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(We tell ourselves that we have money to buy his needs. He probably doesn't feel it too much yet because he was still young when we left him. But even though we're far from him, we know in ourselves that what we're doing is also for him.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Bukod sa pagvivo video call, ‘yung naproprovide namin din ‘yung mga kailangan niya. Every now and then tinatanong namin kung may kailangan bang bilhin ‘yung anak namin o kaya sila magsasabi sa amin na paubos na ‘yung milk. May sarili naman ding account na ‘yung anak namin sa Pinas, may bank account din siya so doon namin nilalagay lahat ng para sa kanya. So pag may kailangan sila pag wala ng stock sa mga kailangan ng anak namin, doon namin pinapabawas lahat ng pambili.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(Aside from video calls, we also provide for his needs. Every now and then we ask if our child needs anything or they tell us that the milk is running out. Our child in the Philippines also has his own account, he has a bank account too, so that's where we put everything for him. So when they need something, when the supplies for our child run out, that's where we have all the money for buying them</p>

	<p>withdrawn.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Basta ‘yun lang din naman ‘yung goal namin na ‘yung mga in-eearn namin ditong pera para din sa anak namin.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(Basically, that's also our goal, that the money we earn here is also for our child.)</p>
Cherry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Tapos hindi ko naman inakala na magiging ganito yung sitwasyon. Aalis pala ako na malalayo pala [‘yung bunso ko] sa akin. So ‘yung pagiging nanay ko sa kanya, wala akong magawa. Financer na lang talaga ako sa ngayon para sa kanya.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(And I didn't expect the situation to turn out this way. It turns out I would leave and [my youngest] would be far from me. So, my role as a mother to her, I can't really do anything. I'm really just the financier for her right now.)</p>

While distance creates challenges, the respondents remain involved in their children's lives in various ways. Technology becomes paramount for daily interactions, maintaining emotional connection despite its virtual nature. Constant communication is also key to ensuring discipline and monitoring their children's well-being. Additionally, fulfilling their role as providers is a recurrent theme in transnational mothering, emphasizing that their efforts are ultimately for their children's welfare.

**Challenges of being a transnational mother.** Most cannot deny that being away from your children is difficult, but to what extent is something that those who have not experienced it cannot fully comprehend. Hearing the stories firsthand from Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto allows us to gain a better understanding of their struggles.

Carol recounted the moment she realized she felt left out because she was away:

*“Doon ko naramdaman din na parang ang hirap ‘yung malayo ka sa pamilya mo and then parang you want to be part of their everyday life. Ganon. So dumating ako sa point na I don't know how many months palang ako dito noon na parang alam mo ‘yung parang siyempre nandoon ‘yung homesickness and then makikita mo sila parang pumunta sila sa isang place. I mean I encouraged them to do that. But then also ‘yung feeling mo na parang, ‘Ah, I wish I was there.’ May ganon kang pakiramdam. But also I tried to think na parang it's their chance naman to bond with each other. Because I've been with the kids for some time. So ganon. Pero hindi mo talaga maiwasan din ‘yung pakiramdam na parang ikaw ‘yung left out. Habang sila parang nage-enjoy. Tapos siyempre ‘yung time zone magkaiba. Habang nasa galaan sila, nakatulog ka. Tapos makikita mo na lang magsend sila ng pictures sa'yo or things like that. But yeah, it's marami talagang challenges.”*

(That's when I also felt how hard it is to be away from your family and how you want to be part of their everyday life. There was a point when I didn't know how many months I had been here, and of course, homesickness was there. They had gone to a place I encouraged them to go, but I also had the feeling of, 'Ah, I wish I was there.' You experience that feeling. But I also tried to think of it as their chance to bond with each other because I had been with the kids for some time. Still, you can't avoid feeling left out while they seemed to enjoy it. And of course, the time zone difference made it worse—while they were in bed, you would fall asleep, and then you'd just see them send you pictures or updates like that. It's really a lot of challenges.)

Separation anxiety is what Princess has been experiencing ever since she moved to Canada. Especially with twins, Princess believes that when one of the twins gets sick, the other twin will also get sick. Her twins always get sick, and it gets to a point where she cannot sleep properly due to the distance between her children.

As a parent facing the challenges of being separated from a child with autism, Cherry shared her feelings of longing and concern:

*“Dito pag nakakakita ako ng baby na-mimiss ko ‘yung anak ko. ‘Yung ganun feeling. ‘Yung tipong mga kaedad ng anak ko, ‘yun, nakakamiss na meron akong baby na hawak-hawak. Ganun ‘yung feeling. Eh, wala eh. Gusto kong umuwi para makita ulit siya. Kaya lang, gann talaga. Tapos iniisip ko pa, syempre may condition ‘yung anak ko. Dapat ako ‘yung nandun. Ako ‘yung nag-aalaga sa kanya. Pero dahil mahirap ‘yung buhay ngayon, kailangan magtiis. Ganun palagi, kailangan magtiis. Kailangan ganito. In time, makakasama ko rin. Ganun na lang ‘yung lagi kong iniisip. Basta, laging safe ‘yung anak ko kasi nanay ko nag-aalaga. May peace of mind ako na ‘yung anak ko hindi napapabayaan.”*

"Here, when I see a baby, I miss my own child. It's that kind of feeling. Seeing children the same age as mine makes me miss having my baby in my arms. That's how it feels. But I can't do anything about it. I want to go home to see her again. However, that's how it is. And then I think, of course, my child has a condition. I should be there. I should be the one taking care of her. But because life is tough right now, I have to endure. It's always like that, I have to endure. This is how it has to be. In time, I will be with her again. That's what I always think. At least my child is safe because my mother is taking care of her. I have peace of mind knowing that my child is not neglected."

On the other hand, Ara has feelings of guilt for not being physically present to perform her roles. She said:

*“Kasi parang di mo malambing ‘yung anak mo. Pag kunwari hindi mo madisiplina ‘yung gusto mong i-disciplina. Gusto mong i-date siya. Gusto mong ilabas siya. Gusto mong kasama siya kung saan-saan. Parang naguigilty ako as a mother kasi di ko magawa ‘yun, parang ganun.”*

(Because it feels like you can't be affectionate with your child. For example, you can't discipline the way you want to. You want to take her

out on dates. You want to take her places. I feel guilty as a mother because I can't do those things, it feels like that.)

Jade, having adult children when she left for Canada, told a story of how she had to deal with *pamamanhikan* (parent marriage proposal) of her daughter's boyfriend, even though she was not physically with them at the time:

*“Namanhikan [yung boyfriend ng anak ko]. Sabi ko, eh nandun yung tatay [ng lalaki]. Sabi ko, ‘Ano kako, kailan na ‘yan papasok sa trabaho?’ ‘Ay, madali na po ngayon.’ ‘Siguraduhin ‘yun naman ah.’ Kasi ayoko yung anak ko. Sabi ko, dapat mapakain niya. Dapat. ‘Alam niyo naman, may trabaho na ‘yung anak ko, hindi ko ‘yan inaano. Hindi kami mayaman. Pero ayokong [magutom ang anak ko]. Dapat, mapakain mo siya. Kasi ‘yung anak ko, sigurado na mapapakain ka.’”*

(My daughter's boyfriend came to ask for her hand in marriage. I said, since his father was there, 'So, when is he going to start working?' 'Oh, it's easy to find a job now.' 'Make sure of that, okay?' Because I don't want my daughter to go hungry. I said, he should be able to provide for her. He must. 'You know, my daughter has a job. We're not rich, but I don't want [my daughter] to go hungry. You should be able to provide for her because I'm sure she can provide for you.)

### **Theme 3: Dynamics and Power within Filipino Transnational Families**

This theme examines how transnational mothering affects the Filipino household dynamics by rearranging roles and responsibilities, as fathers and extended family step in to fill the void left by the migrant mother. The newfound economic power of transnational mothers also influences family relations as they have greater decision-making authority, sometimes creating tension between their partners. Because of the geographical separation, these mothers are forced to utilize technology and gifts to maintain family relations. This kind of arrangement may lead to children forming closer bonds with other caregivers and experiencing negative emotional

effects. This theme explores how the contemporary family is being reconfigured by the forces of globalization, making these dynamics a crucial area of focus for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

## **Evolution of Household Dynamics**

**Shifts in roles and responsibilities.** As the mother leaves to work abroad, the remaining family members often take on additional duties that were previously shared or managed by the migrant mother. Divine, for example, described how her husband stopped working to focus on their children and their businesses:

*“Parang ano siya, mas naging nasa [asawa ko] na lahat ng responsibilidad. Kasi siya ‘yung naiwan sa Pilipinas...Hindi na siya nag-work doon sa [redacted]. ‘Yung taxi namin saka ‘yung, ‘yung naiwan na negosyo. Pero mas more on si [mother-in-law] ‘yung naglulook after [sa negosyo]...[Asawa ko] talaga, hands-on siya [sa anak namin]. Kasi hahatid niya sa school, tapos nagdadrive siya ng taxi pag ano, pag walang driver...’Yun, nagiging busy din siya...Hahatid niya [anak namin], tapos papasada siya, tapos uuwi na siya.”*

(Everything became my husband's responsibility since he was the one left in the Philippines...He no longer worked at [redacted]. He managed our taxi business and the remaining small business. But my mother-in-law was more involved in overseeing the business...My husband became very hands-on with our child. He would take our child to school, then drive the taxi when there was no driver...So, he became busy too...He would drop off our child, then drive the taxi, and then go home.)

Similarly, Carol's husband took over childcare duties when she relocated to Canada. She explained: *“So ang nangyari, my husband went back home sa Pilipinas, like April 2022, when I was supposed to go to Canada July. So nung nagpunta na ako dito, he stayed with the kids.”* (So what happened was, my husband went back home

to the Philippines around April 2022, when I was supposed to go to Canada in July. So when I came here, he stayed with the kids.)

The transition was not smooth for Carol's husband and children. She recalled how they faced a challenging adjustment period:

*“Pero siguro ‘yung dynamics lang na nagbago is mas kilala ko kasi [mga anak ko] than my husband. Because I was with them so I know kung ano ‘yung mga gusto nila, ano ‘yung mga bagay na na-eeenjoy nila. Alam ko ‘yung parang when they talk about certain things, I can relate... And then nung time na ‘yung asawa ko na ang kasama nila, ‘yung main na kasama nila, he had, siguro for a few months they had a rough time adjusting to one another. Especially ‘yung panganay ko medyo teenager na. So medyo parang may resistance sort of na parang he thinks for himself na. And so when my husband wants him to do something, parang may resistance from him. Like is this the right thing to do? Should I do this or not? And ‘yung asawa ko din parang hindi niya din sila kilala. ‘Yung little quirks nila, he's not used to it... So they had it rough for maybe like 5 months before they really got along well. But thankfully ngayon okay naman sila. Parang they understand each other better.”*

(But perhaps the only dynamic that changed is that I know [my children] better than my husband. Because I was with them, I know what they like, what things they enjoy. I know that when they talk about certain things, I can relate... And then when it was my husband who was with them, the main one with them, he had, maybe for a few months, a rough time adjusting to one another. Especially my eldest, who was already a teenager. So there was a bit of resistance, like he thinks for himself now. And so when my husband wants him to do something, there's some resistance from him, like, 'Is this the right thing to do? Should I do this or not?' And my husband, too, didn't really know them, their little quirks, he wasn't used to it... So they had it rough for maybe five months before they really got along well. But thankfully, now they're okay. It's like they understand each other better.)

Like Divine and Carol, Helena's husband took over childcare duties. She said, "*Kung anong ano, pinupunuan [ng asawa ko]. Syempre siya ang nandoon.*" ("Whatever is needed, my husband fills in. Of course, he's the one there.") In contrast, even though Cherry left for abroad, her husband did not assume her childcare duties. Cherry left their child with her mother in Olongapo. She explained:

*"Yung asawa ko kasi hindi siya 'yung tipo ng tatay na maano sa maliliit na bata. More on, attached siya pag nakakalaro niya na yung bata. 'Yung tipong malaki na nakakaintindi na. Ngayon, once in a while, dinadalaw niya. Actually, mas close sila eh. Kasi pag nakikita siya ng bunso ko, nagda-daddy siya eh. Pero ako, never ako natawag na mommy. Pero siya, panay ang daddy-daddy. Ganun. Pero once in a while lang nabibisita kasi nga nasa Manila. Tapos babiyahe pa ng Olongapo. So, siyempre, financial ano din. Kailangan pagpunta niya doon, may pera siya. Knowing nga na hindi naman siya sumusweldo nang malaki, wala rin siyang madala. So, 'yun."*

(My husband isn't the type of father who interacts much with young children. He's more engaged when the child is older and can understand more. Now, he visits once in a while. Actually, they're quite close because my youngest calls him 'daddy' whenever he sees him. But I have never been called 'mommy.' It's always 'daddy-daddy' from him. However, he can only visit occasionally because he's in Manila and has to travel to Olongapo. So, of course, there's also the financial aspect. When he goes there, he needs to have money. Knowing that he doesn't have a high salary, he can't bring much with him.)

The following set of respondents experienced unique changes in their roles and responsibilities since their spouses and partners are with them in Canada. Wendy, for instance, discussed how she and her partner now collaborate on all domestic tasks. Back in the Philippines, her husband stayed with their child while Wendy worked for a bank:

*“...Nagtutulungan kami sa lahat ng bagay sa loob ng bahay, sa pagluto, sa paglilinis, kung anong kailangan namin bilhin. Nagtutulungan kami financially, pati sa emotionally. Parang pag malungkot ako, sinasabihan niya ako, eh pag siya rin ‘yung may kailangan sa akin, nandito lang din naman ako sa kanya. Kaya okay naman.”*

(...We help each other with everything around the house, like cooking, cleaning, and buying what we need. We also support each other financially and emotionally. When I feel sad, he talks to me, and if he needs something from me, I’m always here for him as well. So, it’s okay.)

Ara’s husband also had to adjust to shared house responsibilities. Previously, her husband only focused on taking care of their child while Ara did most of the household chores. She discussed how this arrangement changed after moving to Canada:

*“Ano kasi minsan, kunwari, opening siya tapos ako closing. Kung sinong umuwi ng bahay nang mas maaga, siya ‘yung magluluto, ganun. Kunwari, ako naman ‘yung ganun, ako naman ‘yung magluluto. Pag sa laba, pag siya mas naunang umuwi, siya maglalaba. So, ako pa rin sa tupi. Ako lang sa tupi kasi di mo siya asahan sa tupi. So, sa grocery naman, nag-dedecide kami nang dalawa. So, para siyempre pag maramihan, magbubuhay, ganun.”*

(Sometimes, for example, if he’s on the opening shift and I’m on the closing shift, the one who gets home earlier will cook. It’s the same if I get home first, I’ll cook. When it comes to laundry, if he gets home earlier, he’ll do the washing. I handle the folding because I can’t rely on him for that. For groceries, we decide together, so that when we have a lot to carry, we both handle it.)

Princess, despite having her husband with her, continues to manage all household responsibilities while ensuring time for communication with her children:

*“Sa araw, pag gabi doon, tulog na [mga anak ko], magluluto ako, magprepare ako para sa husband ko or for me as well pag pumasok sa work sa school and then pag weekends, errands like groceries, linis ang bahay, laundry. And then pag umaga doon, gabi dito, tawag ako sa kanila habang nagluluto ng pagkain, magprepare ng pagkain namin ng asawa hanggang sa makauwi siya.”*

(During the day, when it's night there and my children are already asleep, I cook and prepare meals for my husband or for myself when he goes to work or school. On weekends, I handle errands like groceries, cleaning the house, and laundry. Then, in the morning there, which is evening here, I call them while cooking and preparing food for my husband until he gets home.)

**Presence of other mothers.** When spouses or partners are unable to take on childcare responsibilities, other mothers, such as relatives, step in to provide care and manage household tasks in their absence. It is common for grandmothers in the Philippines to assume this role, as evidenced by the experiences of the majority of the respondents.

Grace feels fortunate to have a supportive mother-in-law. She highlighted the role of her mother-in-law in managing household responsibilities:

*“When I decided to go here in Canada, and then my husband and my son has to be with his mom and the lola. So, most of the time, the lola does all the works for them. Siyempre, pagluluto, sometimes the laundry, but they ask my husband to do the laundry. Mag-laundry mat na lang sa labas. But the lola, you know, they're really into it, the laundry. Every time they see some dirty clothes ng anak ko, kahit isa, dalawang piraso, nilalabhan.”*

(When I decided to come to Canada, my husband and my son had to stay with his mom and grandmother. So, most of the time, the grandmother does all the work for them. Of course, she handles cooking,

and sometimes the laundry, though they ask my husband to do the laundry, often at the laundromat. But the grandmother is very dedicated to doing the laundry. Every time she sees even a single piece of dirty clothing from my child, she washes it.)

Maricris humorously recounted a school assignment where her child identified the grandmother as the primary caregiver:

*“May assignment doon na tinanong kung ano ‘yung role ng magulang. Kung sino ‘yung ano ng bahay, ‘yung mga ganun. Tapos sabi, ‘Sino ang ano tagapagalaga ng mga anak sa bahay?’ Ang sagot ng anak ko, ‘Lola’...Parang natanggap na ng mga anak ko, parang na since bata pa sila natanggap na nila na ‘yung lola nila ‘yung nag-aalaga sa kanya, at kami lang ‘yung nagprovide ng mga gusto nila.”*

(There was an assignment where they asked about the role of parents and who does what around the house. they asked, "Who takes care of the children at home?" My child answered, "Grandmother"...It seems like my children have accepted that since they were young, their grandmother is the one who takes care of them, while we just provide for their wants and needs.)

Cherry’s mother also took on their parenting duties, though she sometimes expresses frustration and exhaustion that despite being in her 50s, she still carries the primary burden of raising her granddaughter. She shared:

*“Pero minsan, sa sobrang pagod na rin ‘yung sa pag-aalaga ng anak ko, masasabi [ng nanay ko] na, ‘Dapat graduate na ako sa pagpapalaki. Pero dahil, babae ‘yung anak mo, gusto ko sa akin lumaki, kinuha ko yung responsibilidad, pero nahihirapan din ako.’ Dumating na kami sa point na ‘dapat nagsasaya na lang ako’ kasi 50's na siya eh. Dapat wala na siyang obligasyon. Pero dahil na sa kanya yung anak ko, ‘yung obligasyon na maging nanay, nasa kanya na naman. So, ‘yun. Tapos wala naman ako mabigay na other na pera sa kanya. Sakto, sakto lang*

*talaga 'yung budget ko. Pero kung tinutulungan ako ng husband ko, for sure medyo maluwag ako. Kaya lang, wala kasi, kaya ako lahat, kaya nahihirapan din ako."*

(But sometimes, due to the exhaustion from taking care of my child, my mother says, 'I should have graduated from parenting by now. But since your child is a girl, I wanted her to grow up with me, so I took on the responsibility, but it's also difficult for me.' We've reached the point where she should be enjoying life since she's in her 50s. She shouldn't have any obligations. But since my child is with her, the responsibility of being a parent has fallen on her again. And I can't provide any extra money for her. My budget is just enough. If my husband were helping me, it would definitely be a bit easier. But since he isn't, I'm doing everything, so it's tough for me as well.)

Princess's situation deviates from the previous respondents, with the added participation of a helper. While the twins were left in the care of their grandmother, the nanny handled the majority of the childcare duties. Princess clarified:

*"Sa mom ko [iniwan 'yung twins]. Pero meron silang nag-aalaga...Kasi that time, meron nang nag-aalaga sa baby girl ko. Kasi 'yung nanny no-hindi, 'yung kasamahan namin sa bahay, siya 'yung nag-alaga dun sa dalawang anak ni ate. So ngayon, dahil gusto namin silang i-keep at mapagkatiwalaan at ayaw na namin bumalik sa simula na naman, we have to train them, teach them na ganito, ganyan. Dahil naalagaan na nila 'yung mga pamangkin ko. So we thought na, 'O sige, kuhanin na lang din namin kayo for our kids."*

([I left the twins] with my mom. But there was someone taking care of them...Because at that time, someone was already looking after my baby girl. The nanny—no, the person who was with us at home—was taking care of my sister's two children. So now, because we want to keep them and trust them and don't want to start from scratch again, we have to train them and teach them this and that. Since they've already taken care

of my nieces and nephews, we thought, 'Okay, let's just hire them for our kids as well.')

As Carol mentioned, even though her husband is hands-on with their kids, they still have a nanny to assist:

*“Yeah, kasi even before, kahit noong ako palang ‘yung nandoon, we would usually have a nanny. Kasi pareho kaming kwan eh, may career. So we would usually have a nanny to oversee, ‘yun lang namang mga household chores. And to get the kids to school, ganyan. So for some time, nag-work ‘yung asawa ko sa isang hospital, but he's also staying with them. ‘Yun. So may kasama kaming nanny sa bahay, pero ‘yung husband ko, very hands-on pa rin siya with the kids. So ‘yun lang. Kasi parang pag nag-duduty siya ng gabi, they still need someone to be with them.”*

(Yeah, even before, even when it was just me there, we would usually have a nanny. Because both of us had careers, we would typically have a nanny to oversee the household chores and to get the kids to school, and things like that. For some time, my husband worked at a hospital, but he was also staying with them. So, we had a nanny at home, but my husband was still very hands-on with the kids. Because when he was on night duty, they still needed someone to be with them.)

**Handling conflicts in transnational families.** The physical distance of the transnational mother from their families requires a unique approach to handling conflicts within their households. To illustrate, Jade shared how she navigates family conflicts within the context of a group chat:

*“Wala. Pag galit ako, wala. Huwag kayong iimik, galit ako. ‘Mama naman.’ ‘Pag may mag-ano dyan sa group chat, tumigil ka.’ ‘Mamaya pwede na kayo.’ ‘Bakit diyan?’ ‘Basahin niyo muna yung message ko.’ Pag may nag-ano, naglileave the group ako. ‘Mama naman.’ Babalik ako. ‘Wag niyo muna akong ibalik. Kayo-kayo na muna.’ Nagagalit ako.*

*Sabi ko, galit ako. Tapos pag ibinalik na ako, hindi na ako magreklamo, okay na 'yun."*

(Nothing. When I'm angry, that's it. Don't speak, I'm mad. [They say] 'Mama, come on.' If someone says something in the group chat, I tell them to stop. 'You can talk later.' 'Why there?' 'Read my message first.' If someone does something, I leave the group. [They say] 'Mama, come on.' I'll come back. 'Don't add me back yet. You handle it first.' I'm mad. I say, I'm mad. Then when they add me back, I don't complain anymore, it's fine.)

Grace reflected on the arguments she had with her husband, noting that their conflicts often stem from minor issues, such as unanswered calls or forgetting to charge the phone. But one major conflict occurred when her husband and son were refused a visa to Canada. She said:

*"There was a time na, well actually it's not my husband's fault. Nung na-refuse sila, so nagalit ako. Nagalit ako. And then, I feel like I was abandoned. I feel like wala akong kasama. Syempre nag-iisa ka. 'Yan 'yung pinaka-major na sabi ko. Nag-away kami ganyan. Pero I realized, sabi ko, hindi naman ako nag-decide na na-refuse sila. 'Yung officer ng visa officer naman. Wala lang. Gusto ko lang ng someone na i-blame. Bakit?"*

"There was a time when, well actually, it wasn't my husband's fault. When they got refused, I got angry. I got angry. And then, I felt like I was abandoned. I felt like I was all alone. Of course, I was by myself. That was the major thing, I told him. We had a fight like that. But I realized, I didn't make the decision for them to be refused. It was the visa officer. I just wanted someone to blame. Why?"

To resolve the conflict, Grace mentioned that her husband and son would eventually calm her down. At times, she would also reach out to them because she could not bear to stay upset with them.

On the other hand, Wendy shared how monitoring her child through CCTV has sometimes led to minor disagreements between her and her husband:

*“...Pag napapagalitan pala [ng parents ng partner ko], napapanood namin sa CCTV nila doon sa Pinas. Nakacconnect sa phone namin, napapanood namin. Ayun lang minsan parang sinasabihan lang [ng partner ko] na huwag naman laging pagalitan o kaya pagsabihan nang maayos. E kaso daw, makulit daw eh. Kaya minsan, parang ako din, kaming dalawa, bandang huli kaming dalawa ni Kevin ‘yung conflict kasi anak ko ‘yun eh tapos nasa side niya, nasa parents. Kaya minsan sinasabi ko sabihan mo naman ‘yung parents mo na huwag naman, ako nga wala ako doon eh, di ko napapagalitan ‘yung anak ko tapos sila pa yung magagalit.”*

(When [my partner’s parents] scold the child, we can watch it on the CCTV they have in the Philippines. It’s connected to our phones, so we can see it. Sometimes, [my partner] just tells them not to scold the child too much or to speak to him nicely. But they say it’s because he’s really being naughty. So sometimes, I end up—both Kevin and I—having conflicts because he’s my child, and then he sides with his parents. So I sometimes tell him, ‘Please tell your parents not to be too harsh. I’m not even there to discipline my child, and then they’re the ones who end up scolding him.’)

Princess had a misunderstanding with her husband due to her son’s delayed speech. This experience underscores how care arrangements are vital to the child’s development. Princess recalled:

*“...As what I said to you earlier na naging late speaker ‘yung baby boy ko. So parang ako ‘yung sinisisi [ng husband ko] na naging mabait ako sa mga nag-aalaga kasi naging late speaker ‘yung baby boy ko kasi napabayaan nila. Na ang gusto niya mangyari is sacrifice ko ‘yung work ko, siya na lang mag-work, dalhin na lang nito ‘yung kambal pero like hindi naman umabot sa away pero ‘yung misunderstanding nandoon lagi*

*kasi ako 'yung lagi niya sinisisi kung baka nagkaganoon 'yung baby boy ko. Hindi naman siya autistic actually, naging late speaker lang talaga siya gawa nang natutok siya sa iPad saka sa TV. Pero 'yun nga, sinasabi ko nga dun sa nag-aalaga sa baby boy ko na try your best not to give him a tablet or manood man sa TV pero sandali lang para at least natututukan mo pa rin siya. In a way na turuan sa mga letters, sa mga colors, sa mga animals, magsulat, magbihis ng sarili, magpalit ng, magsuot ng diaper on his own. So parang sa ganung paraan nakikita naman 'yung improvement ng baby boy so nare-realize naman [ng asawa ko] na hindi naman sa lahat ng bagay is ako 'yung sisisihin."*

(...As I mentioned earlier, my baby boy was a late speaker. So, my husband blamed me for being too lenient with the nannies, thinking that's why our baby boy was delayed in speaking, as they didn't provide enough attention. He wanted me to sacrifice my job so that he could work instead and bring the twins here. It didn't escalate into a full-blown argument, but there was always a misunderstanding because I was constantly blamed for our baby's condition. Actually, he's not autistic. He's just a late speaker due to his exposure to the iPad and TV. I told the caregivers to try their best not to give him a tablet or let him watch TV for long periods, so they could still focus on teaching him letters, colors, animals, writing, dressing himself, and changing his diaper on his own. In this way, improvements in my baby boy's development were seen, and my husband eventually realized that not everything was my fault.)

In the previous section, I discussed the challenging period when Carol's husband and eldest son could not get along in the first few months of their new arrangement. Carol explained how she served as a mediator in resolving the conflict:

*"So I have to mediate. 'Yung tipong nag-aaway kami sa phone, mahirap kasi everything is virtual. So 'yan, kinakausap ko 'yung anak ko and at the same time kinakausap ko rin 'yung asawa ko. Ganun. So mas mahirap lang siyang gawin with lalo kung virtual tapos sila 'yung*

*magkasama, alam mo 'yun. Tapos malayo ako, patayan lang nila ako ng phone parang cut off na ako sa usapan. Pero 'yun. So talagang 'yung effort pa din to help them understand each other. Like for example ako, 'yung lagi kong ina-assure 'yung asawa ko na parang, "Your kid is not being disrespectful. Ito kasi 'yung point of view niya.' Parang ganun. Kasi parang being with them for 10 years, I know how he thinks. So ito 'yung point of view niya. Ganun. Tapos 'yung anak ko din naman, sasabihin ko siyang parang, 'This is how your father perceives what you're doing.' So parang, 'You have to be more vocal with him na hindi 'yun yung intention mo. Na hindi 'yun 'yung ibig mong sabihin. And if you can say it in a nicer way, then it would be better.'"*

(So I have to mediate. It's challenging because everything is virtual. So I talk to my child while also speaking with my husband. It's particularly difficult when everything is virtual and they are together, while I am far away. Sometimes, they just cut me off from the conversation by ending the call. Despite this, I still put in the effort to help them understand each other. For example, I often reassure my husband by saying, 'Your child is not being disrespectful. This is their point of view.' Having been with them for 10 years, I understand how he thinks. So I explain his perspective. Similarly, I tell my child, 'This is how your father perceives what you're doing. You need to be more vocal with him and clarify that this is not your intention. If you can express it in a nicer way, that would be better.')

Carol struggled with being the voice of reason for her family virtually. However, she believes that communication is the key to resolving conflicts and misunderstandings. In contrast, Maricris has a somewhat preventative approach to conflict. Her idea of managing family conflicts is through setting clear expectations for her children:

*"Ay nako, sobrang blessed ako sa mga anak ko sa totoo lang...Kasi alam mo, palagi kong sinasabi sa mga anak ko na, 'Anak, madaming*

*problema si mama at si papa sa Canada.’ Sabi ko, ‘Wag na kayong dumagdag.’ Kaya ayun sinasabi ko sa kanila. Lagi kong inaano sa utak nila na wag na silang maging problema. Kung meron mang magiging pahinga sa mga problema namin, sila na lang dalawa. Gano'n. Hindi biro ‘yun, ha? Bilang magulang tas ang layo mo na, ang layo mo sa mga anak mo. Tas problemado ka pa. Ang sakit sa dibdib.”*

“Oh, I am so blessed with my children, truly... Because, you know, I always tell my kids, ‘Kids, mama and papa have many problems in Canada.’ I say, ‘Don’t add to them.’ So that’s what I tell them. I constantly remind them not to be a problem. If there is any respite from our problems, it should be them. It’s not a joke, you know? As a parent, being far away from your children and still being troubled, it’s really painful.”

## **Maintaining Relationships**

**Building relationships across borders.** With the advent of technology, the use of the internet has become the primary method of communication between transnational families. Before video calls became popular, Alice had to rely on letters and prepaid calling. But today’s generation of transnational mothers benefit from the ease of communication technology provides, as Grace demonstrated:

*“But most of the time, video call talaga. Buti na nga, may video call, kasi long time ago, di ba wala. Sulat-sulat. So hard. Sobrang hirap siguro noon. But now, now you can see them, you can see everything. Kasi we have ‘yung CCTV and it’s connected in my phone too. So every now and then, if I have a chance, chinecheck ko ‘yung nakikita ko sila, nakikita ko mga tao. With the help of technology, ‘no? Amazing.”*

(But most of the time, it’s really video calls. It’s a good thing we have video calls now because, a long time ago, we didn’t, right? It was all about writing letters. That must have been so hard. It must have been really tough back then. But now, you can see them, you can see everything. We have CCTV, and it’s connected to my phone too. So

every now and then, if I get a chance, I check, and I can see them, I can see people. With the help of technology, right? Amazing.)

Despite her physical absence, Grace's son knows his mother is just a call away: "*Kahit malayo ako, he can always call me anytime na he needs to talk to someone, especially sa akin. Or if he needs money, if he needs something na hindi ma-provide doon sa...ng husband ko.*" (Even if I'm far away, he can always call me anytime he needs to talk to someone, especially me. Or if he needs money, if he needs something that can't be provided by my husband.)

Maricris shared how video calls help maintain their strong family ties and keep their children on the right path:

*"Video call. Kailangan may time ka pa rin sa kanila. Pero kasi, ang maganda lang sa mga anak ko, napalaki ko na sila kasi na mababait na bata. Hindi naman sila napariwara. Ano sila, kahit nandito na kami ng tatay nila, ano pa 'yun, magtatawag pa yun, 'Mama, pwede 'kong umalis?' Nagpapaalam pa sila. Kahit nasa Pilipinas palang kasi kami, 'yung family ties talaga namin, ganoon ka, buong-buo 'yung pamilya namin. Pagdating namin dito, hindi na kami masyadong hirap doon sa mga anak namin. Pero, kahit malayo kami, ma-aano sila, yung mababait sila, hindi sila pasaway."*

(Video call. You still need to make time for them. But the good thing about my children is that I raised them well. They're good kids. They didn't go astray. Even when their father and I were already here, they would still call and ask, 'Mom, can I go out?' They would still ask for permission. Even when we were still in the Philippines, our family ties were really strong. Our family was whole. So when we got here, we didn't have much difficulty with our children. But even though we're far away, they're still well-behaved, they're not rebellious.)

Jade's dedication to staying involved in her family's daily lives is reflected through her efforts: "*Kahit na malayo ako, malapit sa akin. Kahit nga masakit ang tiyan. Kaya lagi ako online. Any moment, titingnan ko yan baka may problema sa bahay. Updated ako masyado palagi...Ako pa gumawa ng group chat namin.*" (Even though I'm far away, I feel close to them. Even if someone has a stomachache, I'm always online. Any moment, I'll check in just in case there's a problem at home. I'm always very updated... I even created our group chat.)

Another way of sustaining relationships is through travel. Divine and Helena, for instance, would meet their left-behind children in different countries to bridge the gap. Divine shared how she and her family make the effort to come together, despite the challenges posed by visa restrictions:

*"Ako, umuwi ako nung birthday ng nanay ko, gusto niya doon mag-celebrate sa Pilipinas. So, umuwi ako noon. Pero most of the time, [yung panganay ko], kung gusto namin kitain, nagpupunta kami sa like sa London, sa Belgium kasi mas madali siya nakakuha ng visa. Dito nga [sa Canada] na-deny 'yun eh. So, gano'n. [Yung bunso] saka [yung panganay] nagkita sila sa Japan. So, sa ibang, kinikita na lang sa ibang lugar."*

(As for me, I went home for my mother's birthday because she wanted to celebrate in the Philippines. So, I went back then. But most of the time, [my eldest child], if we want to meet, we would go to places like London or Belgium because it's easier for him to get a visa there. In fact, he was denied a visa [in Canada]. So, that's how it is. [My youngest] and [my eldest] met up in Japan. So, we meet in other places.

For Helena, meeting her children and her mother in Dubai was more practical than in the Philippines because of the expenses. She mentioned:

*“Last year, Dubai. Halos nag-aano kami doon. Kasi ‘yung bata. Saka pinapupunta ko na lang doon si Mama, o kaya sinong ano pwede silang samahan doon. Magkita kami sa Dubai, kaysa magkita sa Pinas. Kasi mas magastos sa Pinas.”*

(Last year, Dubai. We always meet there because of my child. I even had my mom or someone else go there to accompany them. We meet in Dubai instead of the Philippines because it's more expensive in the Philippines.)

In the case of Maricris, she wanted to ensure that regular visits of her children to Canada became a priority. She shared: *“Sa ngayon, gusto ko na i-make sure na at least kahit once a year pumunta [mga anak ko] dito.”* (Right now, I want to make sure that [my children] come here at least once a year.)

**Compensating for absence.** Filipino transnational mothers often seek to mitigate the impact of their physical absence by compensating with financial support or gifts. Divine pointed out how the distance brought feelings of guilt, prompting her to compensate through financial aspects and efforts to make up for lost time:

*“Kasi noon nung nandun ka sa kanila, siyempre, nakatutok ka, lahat nagagawa mo eh, di ba? Nabibigay mo. Nung malayo ka na, marami ka nang hindi nagagawa. So, ‘yung guilt feeling napupunuan mo sa financial aspect.”*

(Back when you were with them, of course, you were hands-on, and you could do everything, right? You could give them what they needed. But when you're far away, there are many things you can't do anymore. So, the guilt you feel gets compensated by providing financially.)

Divine added, however, that this practice should not be done in an all-out manner: *“So, karamihan ganoon nga ‘yung ina-ano nila na punuan na lang financially. Pero mali ‘yun eh. Kaya hindi todo-todo. In a way, oo. Pero hindi ‘yung kagaya ng*

*talagang todo-todo.*” (So, most try to compensate financially. But that’s wrong. That’s why it’s not all-out. In a way, yes, but it’s not really all-out.)

Similarly, Ara talked about *bawi*, a practice where parents, strive to make up for their absence: “*Yun nga kailangan namin bumawi. Kaya inisip namin bumawi muna kami sa [anak namin] pag kinuha namin siya dito.*” (That’s why we need to make up for it. So, we thought we should make it up to our [child] first when we bring her here.)

Another thing that changed about Grace since becoming a transnational mother is that she became more generous with her son. She said:

“Yeah, I think, *naging more giving ako*. Generous. To make up with the absence. Yeah, trying to be really generous *sa [anak ko]*. *Pag may gusto siya*, as much as possible, *gusto ko rin ibigay*. Just to make up *sa absence na wala ako doon*. At least, yeah, ‘*yun*. A little bit.”

(Yeah, I think I became more giving. Generous. To make up for the absence. Yeah, trying to be really generous with my [child]. If he wants something, as much as possible, I want to give it. Just to make up for the fact that I'm not there. At least, yeah, that. A little bit.)

Wendy, on the other hand, shared how she and her partner try to use toys to capture his son’s attention and maintain a bond:

“*So ang ginagawa namin [ng partner ko] para maging connected [yung anak namin] para mag-pay attention siya sa pakikipag-usap, binibilhan namin siya ng mga toy. Dito. Bumibili kami ng mga toy. Ang dami na nga niyang toy dito tapos pinapakita namin sa kanya. Kaya nagpapay attention siya pag pinapakita namin ‘yung mga toy niya. Tapos sinasabi namin sa kanya na ‘yung mga toy niya kunin niya dito sa Canada. Makikipag-usap naman siya sa amin.*”

(So what my partner and I do to stay connected with our child and to get his attention during conversations is we buy him toys. Here. We buy him

toys. He already has so many toys here, and we show them to him. That way, he pays attention when we show him his toys. Then we tell him to get his toys when he comes to Canada. He does talk to us.")

Wendy acknowledged that these efforts, while helpful, cannot fully compensate for their absence. For her, it is the least thing she could do since she is already in this kind of situation.

**Impact of transnational mothering on children.** While transnational mothers attempt to bridge the relationship gap through regular communication, gifts, or financial support, the absence of their physical presence inevitably influences the child's upbringing and relationship with them.

Cherry's experience demonstrates the effect of this absence on her son, who was left in the Philippines. Cherry described the impact of her departure and bringing him to Canada:

*"Ang laki ng impact. Kasi iba pa rin 'yung nanay yung nagbabantay. Kasi ano siya eh, nagbibinata. So syempre 'yung simula, maliit siya, makananay talaga siya. Tapos all of a sudden iniwanan ko bigla. Ang laki ng impact kasi eh, hindi na siya, pagka hindi na siya naaalagaan nang husto. Naaalagaan siya, oo, pero basic needs na lang. Iba 'yung touch ng nanay eh, na may taga paalala na, o anak, ganito 'yung gawin mo, o masama 'yan, wag ganyan, wag ganito. Nag-iba 'yung ugali niya. Kaya nung kinuha ko siya, papunta rito, dun ko nakita 'yung difference ng pag-aalaga ko versus nung naiwanan ko siya. Kumulit, tumigas ang ulo, hindi na siya masabihan, sobrang naging moody, which is hindi siya gano'n nung nandoon ako eh. Kasi I make it a point na pag nasa bahay na ako, may family time kami dalawa eh. Alam mo 'yan, nagbabonding kami dalawa, lumalabas kami ganyan. Nung dinala ko siya dito [sa Canada], ang hirap niya nang kaladkarin kahit saan kami pumunta. Ayaw na. Sabi ko, hindi ko alam anong ginawa sa'yo, bakit*

*nagkaganyan ka. Ang tigas na ng ulo mo. Ganun na, sumakit na 'yung ulo ko nung nakuha ko 'yung anak ko. Pero ngayon, medyo nag-aadjust na siya. Medyo okay-okay naman na. Kaya lang nandoon pa rin talaga 'yun makulit talaga siya eh. Pasaway talaga."*

(The impact is significant. Because having the mother there to supervise is different. He was going through adolescence, and at first, he was very dependent on his mother. Then all of a sudden, I left him. The impact was huge because he wasn't being cared for as well. He was taken care of, yes, but only his basic needs. The touch of a mother is different—there's someone reminding him, 'Son, do this, don't do that.' His behavior changed. So when I brought him here, I saw the difference between my care and the care he received while I was away. He became stubborn, hard-headed, and extremely moody, which wasn't like him before. I make it a point that when I'm home, we have family time and bond together. When I brought him here [in Canada], it was difficult to take him anywhere. He didn't want to go. I said, 'I don't know what they did to you that made you like this. You've become so hard-headed.' It gave me a headache when I got him back. But now, he's slowly adjusting. It's a bit better, but he's still very stubborn and rebellious.)

Similarly, Cherry's left-behind daughter in the Philippines, who has autism spectrum disorder (ASD), struggles with recognizing Cherry as her mother. Cherry reflected on this challenge:

*"Unang una may current situation 'yung anak ko, feeling ko hindi niya ako kilala. 'Yung mother ko, 'yun 'yung feeling niyang mother niya. Kasi baby pa siya nung iniwanan ko eh. One year old, two years old. So 'yung tagal ng span, kahit sabihin mo sa akin pa na-breastfeed 'yung anak ko, wala na 'yan eh. Kasi lalo may condition 'yung bata. Hindi niya ako nakakasama everyday. Nakakausap niya ako, oo. Pero dahil 'yung level ng understanding ng aking bunso ay ano pa, pang-baby pa. So hindi niya ako kilala. So sinasabi, 'Mommy, mommy,' pero I don't think na kilala niya ako as nanay niya. Feeling ko nga pag nakita ko niyan ulit,*

*baka magulat siya sa akin eh. Baka hindi niya anuhin na sino 'to? Parang ganun 'yung mangyayari eh."*

(First of all, my child's current situation makes me feel like she doesn't recognize me. My mother is the one she feels is her mother. She was just a baby when I left—one or two years old. Given that span of time, even if I breastfed her, that bond might not be there anymore. Especially since my child has a condition. She doesn't see me every day. She talks to me, yes, but her level of understanding is still very much that of a baby. So, she doesn't really know me. She says, 'Mommy, Mommy,' but I don't think she recognizes me as her mother. I feel like when I see her again, she might be surprised and not know who I am. That might be what happens.)

Transnational mothering also affects the dynamics between parents and children. Divine noted how her daughter harbored resentment towards her during the time she was away: *"Before parang [yung bunso ko] may sama ng loob din. I think hindi maaalis sa mga anak. Bihira lang siguro 'yung makakaintindi talaga na bakit ka umalis?"* (Before [my youngest] seemed to have a grudge too. I think it cannot be taken away from the children. Maybe it's rare that people can really understand why you left?)

As a result of her absence, both her children became closer to their father. Divine claimed that they open up to him more and communicate with him better. Grace shared a similar experience with her son, who became more attached to his father:

*"So, before ako umalis, me and my son [were] really...ano ba tawag dito? Really close. So, I just noticed na when I left, na he started to, it's not a bad thing, no, he started to be really close to his dad rather than me. So, yeah, I always tell that. I always tell my husband, 'Oh, bakit palaging, ano na lang, hinahanap ka na lang niya instead of me?' Yeah, because when he was really little, he really monitors what time am I*

arriving, what time *ako uuwi* and stuff. But now, it turns like, 'Where's daddy? What time is he coming home? What time is it?' He always asks about the dad instead of me. Yeah, so 'yung maybe the years na I wasn't able to, I wasn't there for him, I don't know, *maybe nagkaroon ng kaunting, ano*, maybe he is more comfortable and more dependent sa dad than me. Because he knows that I wasn't there."

(Before I left, my son and I were really close. But I noticed that after I left, it's not a bad thing, but he started to become closer to his dad rather than to me. I always mention this to my husband, asking why our son seems to be looking for him instead of me. When he was very young, he used to monitor my arrival times and when I was coming home. But now, he asks about his dad, 'Where's daddy? What time is he coming home?' instead of asking about me. Maybe the years I wasn't there made him more comfortable and dependent on his dad. He knows I wasn't there.)

Like Cherry's daughter, Wendy's son has also developed a closer bond with his grandparents, reflecting the influence of his upbringing:

*"Parang mas close siya sa parents [ng father niya] na kasi pag tinatanong namin siya, 'Pupunta ka na dito?' 'Gusto ko kasama ko sila.' Pupunta daw siya dito [sa Canada] basta kasama daw niya 'yung parents [ng partner ko]. Eh wala, di rin naman namin masisi kasi doon siya lumaki."*

(It seems like he's closer to [his father's] parents now because when we ask him if he wants to come here, he says he wants to be with them. He'll come here [to Canada] as long as he can be with [my partner's parents]. We can't really blame him since he grew up with them.)

In contrast, Ara's child has developed a strong aversion to separations, reflecting the emotional impact of past departures. She explained:

*"Oo, 'yun nga 'yung parang natrauma siya every time na pag may umaalis, like 'yung father ko, 'yung mom ko. Na parang ayaw niya na*

*iniiwan siya, lalo na pag 'yung tita niya umaalis papuntang work. Umiiyak na siya. Ayaw niya yung iniwan siya, ganoon. Natrauma siya."*

(Yes, it seems like she's traumatized every time someone leaves, like my father or my mother. She doesn't like being left behind, especially when her aunt leaves for work. She cries and doesn't want to be left alone. She's traumatized.)

### Shifts in Power Relations

**Economic provider roles.** The table below shows the varied ways in which transnational mothering influences the economic provider roles within Filipino transnational families. While some mothers become the primary earners, others share this responsibility with their spouses. These instances lead to adjustments in household dynamics and sometimes psychological effects, such as feelings of empowerment or loss of traditional provider status, particularly for fathers.

**Table 4.4**

#### *Perception of Economic Responsibilities*

Respondent	Economic responsibilities	Perception
<b>Shared Responsibilities</b>		
Divine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Kasi, [sa] iba, hindi ba? 'Yung babae 'yung naghahawak ng pera. Kami hindi. Pera mo, pera mo. Pera ko, pera ko. Pero, 'yung mga responsibilidad na dapat sinasagot mo, huwag mong kakalimutan. So, meron siya 'yung mortgage, ganyan. So, wala kaming issue pagdating sa pera."</li> </ul> <p>(Because, with others, right? The woman is the one who handles the money. Not us. Your money is your money. My money is my money. But, the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"'Yung pagdating sa ganun, ako 'yung nagsabi nun. Kasi ayoko nung maka... Ano kasi ako eh, hindi ako umasa kahit kanino. 'Yung kahit before. Alam niya yan eh na ano pa. So, hindi ko pa papakialaman 'yung pera mo. Wag mo pakialaman 'yung pera ko. Pero, basta 'yung responsibilidad mo gawin mo."</li> </ul> <p>(When it comes to that, I'm the one who said that. Because I don't want to be...</p>

	<p>responsibilities that you should be taking care of, don't forget them. So, he has the mortgage, things like that. So, we don't have issues when it comes to money.)</p>	<p>Because I'm the type who doesn't rely on anyone. Even before. He knows that. So, I won't touch your money. Don't touch my money. But, just fulfill your responsibilities.)</p>
Princess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"<i>Actually, parang both lang kasi parang same lang din kami ng sinasahod. I can say that. So 'yun nga, as I said, siya 'yung nagpaprovide ng, siya 'yung nagbabayad ng rent dito, siya nagbabayad ng phone bills. Then ako, sa groceries and other expenses, pag gustong lumabas, kumain, saka sa allowance sa mga kids, groceries 'yun.</i>"</li> </ul> <p>(Actually, it's like both of us because we earn roughly the same amount. I can say that. So that's it, as I said, he's the one who provides for, he's the one who pays the rent here, he pays the phone bills. Then me, it's for groceries and other expenses, when we want to go out, eat, and also the kids' allowance, that's groceries.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"<i>Actually, napag-usapan naman namin 'yun before ako nag-work, na if I plan to work, this will gonna be our expenses division...And then, we find it more better actually, kasi kung, actually sa culture natin, ang babae ang humahawak ng sahod ni husband, tama? But for him, it's different. They don't believe in that.</i>"</li> </ul> <p>(Actually, we already talked about that before I started working, that if I plan to work, this will be our expenses division... And then, we actually find it better, because if, actually in our culture, the woman is the one who handles the husband's salary, right? But for him, it's different. They don't believe in that.)</p>
<b>Dependency and Role Reversal</b>		
Maricris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"<i>Ngayon, in terms of sweldo, ako.</i>"</li> </ul> <p>(Right now, in terms of salary, it's me.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"<i>Wala lang sa [asawa ko]. Hindi naman kasi issue sa amin ang pera ever since. Hindi kasi- nung ano nung sa Pilipinas kasi, more on siya naman...Tapos siyempre hindi naman palagi ano, di ba bilog nga ang mundo. Syempre umiikot siya.</i>"</li> </ul> <p>(It's nothing to [my husband]. Money hasn't really been an issue for us ever since. Because when we were in</p>

		<p>the Philippines, it was more on him...And of course, it's not always the same, right? The world is round. Of course, it goes around.)</p>
Grace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Well, as of now, <i>ako</i>, my husband works with the [redacted]. So, <i>ano siya</i>, by contract. If there is tournament, <i>minsan pupunta sila ng Vietnam or sa Taipei</i> to do the tournament for two weeks <i>na ganyan</i>. But it's not really consistently like a daily job thing to do. Daily <i>na job</i>.”</li> </ul> <p>(Well, as of now, it's me. My husband works with the [redacted]. So, it's by contract. If there's a tournament, sometimes they go to Vietnam or Taipei to do the tournament for two weeks like that. But it's not really consistently like a daily job thing to do. A daily job.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“I don't think he minds it. I don't think he minds. <i>Kasi lumaki kami</i>. I mean, in both of our families. My sister was the main provider. <i>Pero sa time, nagkaroon din ng time na</i> when my father doesn't work anymore, ‘<i>yung sister ko na</i>. So, <i>namulat kami sa the usual na ay hindi lang ang lalaki sa household ang main provider</i>. Anyone who is capable or having a job right now can be a provider. So, we don't really mind <i>na sino ang provider</i>.”</li> </ul> <p>(“I don't think he minds it. I don't think he minds. Because we grew up...I mean, in both of our families, my sister was the main provider. But there was also a time when my father didn't work anymore, it was my sister. So, we grew up seeing that it's not just the man in the household who's the main provider. Anyone who is capable or has a job right now can be a provider. So, we don't really mind who the provider is.”)</p>
Wendy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“<i>Ngayon kasi ako 'yung naka-open work permit e. Siya part-time, part-time lang</i>. More on study <i>siya nung mga nakaraan</i>.”</li> </ul> <p>(Right now, I'm the one with the open work permit. He's only working part-time, part-time. He was more focused on studying in the past.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“<i>Di ko din naman kasi pinaparamdam sa kanya na 'yung parang wala siyang naambag, ganoon. Napapagusapan naman namin. Tapos bawi na lang siya sa anak namin. Na ako din if ever kunwari sumbatan ko siya about money. Siyempre baka ibalik din niya</i></li> </ul>

		<p><i>sa akin na ako nga, ako 'yung nanay pero hindi ako hands-on sa anak ko kasi puro ako work. Balance naman."</i></p> <p>(I also don't make him feel like he doesn't contribute anything. We talk about it. And then he just makes up for it with our child. And I also, if ever I were to bring up money to him, of course, he might also throw it back at me that yes, I'm the mother but I'm not hands-on with our child because I'm always working. It's balanced.)</p>
<p>Ara</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Yung husband ko. Ano eh nag-cocooop pa ako, nag-aaral pa ako. So, almost siya lahat nagbabayad eh. Tapos last time, winter pa. So, yung hotel slow down. Wala akong schedule. Siya lahat nagshoulder ng bills."</i></li> </ul> <p>(My husband. Because I'm still in a co-op program, I'm still studying. So, he's the one paying for almost everything. And last time, it was still winter. So, the hotel slowed down. I had no schedule. He shouldered all the bills.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Yung mom ko...Kasi kumbaga pensionado siya as a retired soldier. Wala, pinaprovide niya yung mga groceries, like that. Kahit sa baby ko. Kahit di na ako mag-provide, parang di na ako magbigay, okay lang sa kanya."</i></li> </ul> <p>(My mom...because she's a pensioner as a retired soldier. She provides for our groceries,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Pero di na namin inaallow na magbibigay sila sa amin. Parang di na namin tinatanggap. Kasi parang sabi ko, kailangan ako yung bumabawi sa kanila. Parang ganon. At siyempre, matanda na sila ganun. Ganun na yung mindset ko kasi ayoko na sila yung...pera na nila yun, ayoko na yung...kasi may pamilya na kami. Medyo nahihiya rin 'yung..."</i></li> </ul> <p>(But we don't allow them to give us anything anymore. It's like we don't accept it anymore. Because I said, I need to be the one to give back to them. Something like that. And of course, they're old already. That's my mindset now because I don't want them to...that's their money, I don't want to...because we have our own family now. It's a bit embarrassing to...)</p>

	<p>like that. Even for my baby. Even if I don't provide anymore, even if I don't give anything, it's okay with her.)</p>	
<p>Cherry</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Ako. Kasi, nung time na 'yun, mas malaki kasi talaga 'yung sweldo ko kaysa sa asawa ko. So, lahat ng expenses nasa akin. I mean, ako yung nagprovide. Ilang years na. Nahinto lang ako mag-provide nung nag-buntis ako at nag-pandemic, wala akong sweldo. Pero after that, ako na uli. As in."</i></li> </ul> <p>(Me. Because at that time, my salary was really much bigger than my husband's. So, all the expenses were on me. I mean, I was the one providing. For several years. I only stopped providing when I got pregnant and the pandemic hit, I had no salary. But after that, it was me again. As in.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"May times na rin nag-away kami kasi feeling niya ahead ako sa kanya. Though pulis siya, pero 'yung status namin kasi ako ganito na 'yung level ng sinusweldo ko 'yung sa kanya ganito pa rin. So, malaki 'yung impact nun para sa kanya psychologically. Kasi alam niya sa sarili niya na 'Ay, dapat ako 'yung provider pero bakit ganun?' So 'yun, isa 'yun sa mga problema ng mag-asawa. 'Yung hindi na balanse yung ano eh. 'Yung buhay parang nakakangat na yung babae more than him. So, 'yun 'yung nafe-feel niya for sure, hanggang ngayon ganun pa rin. Kasi, alam mo 'yung mga police kasi sa atin mayroon silang pwede mag-loan. So, pag nag-loan sila at sinagad nila ang loan nila basically wala na silang susweldohin. And then 'yung loan na 'yun, pag naubos 'yun, wala na. So, 'yun 'yung nangyari. So, ngayon, lahat lahat ng burden nasa akin talaga as in."</i></li> </ul> <p>(There were also times when we fought because he felt like I was ahead of him. Even though he's a police officer, our status is that my salary level is already here, while his is still here. So, that had a big psychological impact on him. Because he knows in himself that, 'Hey, I should be the provider, but why is it like</p>

		<p>this?' So that's one of the problems of a married couple. When the balance is gone. Life is like the woman is already more financially stable than him. So, that's what he feels for sure, and it's still like that up to now. Because, you know how it is with police officers in our country, they can take out loans. So, when they take out a loan and max it out, they basically have nothing left to take home in their salary. And then when that loan is used up, it's gone. So that's what happened. So now, all the burden is really on me, as in.)</p>
<p>Carol</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Sa amin ngayon, ako. Kasi ‘yun nga ‘yung difference ng sweldo sa Pilipinas sa Canada. So dun sa Pilipinas, kasi nga dahil ex-abroad siya. So pagdating sa Pilipinas, ewan ko ha pero based sa sinasabi niya parang may discrimination somehow. So nag-work siya ngayon sa isang private hospital. Hindi siya nakuha doon sa government regional hospital despite his experience. So sinasabi niya may politics involved and blah, blah, blah. So nag-wowork siya sa isang private hospital. Ang sinesweldo niya is like in one month equivalent lang ng one and a half days na sweldo sa Canada.”</i></li> </ul> <p>(For us now, it's me. Because that's the difference in salary between the Philippines and Canada. So in the Philippines, because he's a former overseas worker. So when he arrived in the Philippines, I don't know for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Medyo nag-adjust din siya somehow. Meron din ‘yung pakiramdam niya na kunwari there would be talks about money. Mararamdaman mo sa kanya ‘yung pakiramdam na ‘I shouldn't have come home’. Parang ganun na parang dapat nag-stay na lang ako sa Saudi para hindi ganito yung pakiramdam ko. Kasi parang it's an insecurity for him na mas ako ‘yung kumikita. Pero I make it a point na to tell him na hindi naman laging monetary ‘yung what you bring to the table is not always monetary. So nung time na siya ‘yung main provider, ako ‘yung nasa kids, I make sure to tell him na the same way na nung ikaw ‘yung main na provider, what I bring to table it's ‘yung pag-aalaga ko sa kids which you wouldn't be able to do what you're doing, you wouldn't be able to provide what you're providing</i></li> </ul>

	<p>sure, but based on what he says, there's some sort of discrimination. So he's working now in a private hospital. He wasn't hired at the government regional hospital despite his experience. So he says there's politics involved and blah, blah, blah. So he's working in a private hospital. His salary in one month is equivalent to only one and a half days of salary in Canada.)</p>	<p><i>kung wala ako doon to oversee the kids. So parang ganun din 'yung sinasabi ko sa kanya even though I'm bringing more money now, pero the fact na ikaw 'yung hands-on sa mga bata, that's what you bring to the table. Parang ganun."</i></p> <p>(He also adjusted somehow. There's also that feeling he gets, like when there would be talks about money. You can sense in him a feeling like, 'I shouldn't have come home.' It's like he feels like he should have just stayed in Saudi so he wouldn't feel this way. Because it's like an insecurity for him that I'm the one earning more. But I make it a point to tell him that what you bring to the table isn't always monetary. So when he was the main provider and I was with the kids, I made sure to tell him that in the same way that when you were the main provider, what I brought to the table was my care for the kids, which meant you wouldn't have been able to do what you were doing, you wouldn't have been able to provide what you were providing if I wasn't there to oversee the kids. So it's like that's what I tell him even though I'm bringing in more money now, the fact that you're the one who's hands-on with the children, that's what you bring to the table. It's like that.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>"Dahil nga naranasan ko 'yung ako yung nasa kabilang</i></li> </ul>
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		<p><i>side, I tend to understand it more...So nung time na siya na 'yung nandun sa situation na 'yun, mas kwan ako. Mas understanding ako na even though hindi nga monetary 'yung contribution niya sa family. We're partners in this. So parang hindi dapat binibilang kung ano 'yung naikocontribute ko at kung ano 'yung naikocontribute mo. Because at the end of the day, if you're not there to do what I was supposed to do, parang hindi ko din magagawa kung hindi din ako makakapagtrabaho nang maayos."</i></p> <p>(Because I experienced being on the other side, I tend to understand it more... So when it was his turn to be in that situation, I was more... I was more understanding that even though his contribution to the family wasn't monetary, we're partners in this. So it's like we shouldn't be counting what I contribute and what you contribute. Because at the end of the day, if you're not there to do what I was supposed to do, it's like I also wouldn't be able to do it if I couldn't work properly.)</p>
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**Decision-making authority.** The decision-making dynamics in transnational Filipino families reflect a spectrum from traditional male dominance to female leadership, with many couples finding a balance between the two. This shift in power

relations, often influenced by the wife’s role as the economic provider, highlights the evolving nature of decision-making authority in transnational Filipino families.

**Table 4.5**

*Dynamics of Decision-Making Authority*

Respondent	Decision-making authority
<b>Husband as Main Decision Maker</b>	
Divine	<p><i>“[Asawa ko] pa rin. Lalaki pa rin siya. Pero, kinukonsult niya pa rin [sa akin]. Tinatanong niya kung okay lang. Oo.”</i></p> <p>([My husband] still is. He’s still the man. But he still consults me. He asks if it’s okay. Yes.)</p>
Princess	<p><i>“[Asawa ko]. Medyo may edad kasi siya kesa sa akin. Sometimes kasi mayroon pa akong pagka immature. 40. 32 lang ako...May parts naman na tinatanong niya ko na is this, what do you think this is better? What do you think this is not good? This is not good? What not? Ayun. Pero most most of the time siya yung nag-decision. Kasi mas may experience siya actually kumpara sa akin. Kasi he’s been out of the country for 20 years and I’m just 10 years in experience of work experience something like that. So mas mas mahalobilo siya sa sa ibang tao.”</i></p> <p>([My husband]. He’s a bit older than me. Sometimes, I can still be a bit immature. He’s 40, I’m only 32... There are parts where he asks me, like, ‘Do you think this is better? Do you think this is not good?’ Things like that. But most of the time, he’s the one who makes the decisions. Because he actually has more experience than I do. He’s been out of the country for 20 years, and I’ve only had about 10 years of work experience, something like that. So he’s had more exposure to different people.”)</p>
Wendy	<p><i>“Kasi doon sa ugali pa lang sobrang haba ng pasensya niya. Sobrang lawak din ng pag-iintindi. Ako kasi, ano ako eh konting kibot, wala. Parang nagpa-panic ako lagi. Parang feeling ko di magagawan ng solusyon. Dinadaan ko sa galit. Iyak. Ganun. Pero parang mas okay siya. Parang ano na lang. Parang mas matured siya kesa sa akin.”</i></p> <p>(Because even in terms of personality, his patience is incredibly long. His understanding is also very broad. As for me, I’m the type who with just a little movement, that’s it. I feel like I always panic. It’s like I feel there’s no solution. I resort to</p>

	anger. Crying. Like that. But he's more okay. It's like... he's more mature than me.)
<b>Wife as Main Decision Maker</b>	
Maricris	<p><i>“Ako palagi. Parang palagi siyang magtatanong sa kin kung ganito, ganito, bago siya magdecide. Tapos ako lang din naman ‘yung susundin niya. Pero pag nagkamali ako, ako papagalitan ng asawa ko.”</i></p> <p>(It's always me. It's like he always asks me if it's this way or that way before he decides. And in the end, he'll just follow what I say anyway. But if I make a mistake, my husband will be the one to scold me.)</p>
Cherry	<p><i>“Ako ‘yung boss eh. Ako kasi ay matured. Alam mo naman, ang mga lalaki kasi minsan matagal mag-mature. Yeah. 34 na siya, ako 33. So one year gap lang. Pero ‘yung maturity levels, Diyos ko, parang nag-aalaga pa rin ng bata. So, lahat ng decision nanggagaling sa’kin. Kasi, ako pag nag-isip kasi ako, lagi ‘yung future, ‘yung iniisip ko. Siya kasi, ang iniisip niya ‘yung ngayon lang. Masaya siya ngayon, ngayon lang ‘yun. Bahala na bukas. So, ayaw ko ng mga ganung bagay. Kaya, lahat na ng decision, sa kin na niya binibigay.”</i></p> <p>(Well, I'm the boss. It's because I'm mature. You know how it is, men sometimes take a long time to mature. Yeah. He's 34, I'm 33. So there's only a one-year gap. But the maturity levels, my God, it's like I'm still taking care of a child. So, all the decisions come from me. Because when I think, I always think about the future. As for him, he only thinks about the present. If he's happy now, that's it. Tomorrow doesn't matter. So, I don't like those kinds of things. That's why he leaves all the decisions to me.)</p>
Grace	<p><i>“Well pag sa decision-making naman, it's always shared. But most of the time, ako ‘yung main... So, every time, something is nagtatanong sa kanya and he said, ‘Oh, okay. I'll ask my wife.’ Ganun siya. ‘Oh, I'll ask my wife.’ And then if I say, ‘No, we don't need that.’ Or no, ‘I don't want that.’ Then it's a no. But on a fair ano naman, I always ask his opinion about it.”</i></p> <p>(Well, when it comes to decision-making, it's always shared. But most of the time, I'm the main one... So, every time something comes up, he asks her and he says, 'Oh, okay. I'll ask my wife.' That's how he is. 'Oh, I'll ask my wife.' And then if I say, 'No, we don't need that,' or 'No, I don't want that,' then it's a no. But in fairness, I always ask for his opinion about it.)</p>
Carol	<i>“Decision maker, I would say pareho kami. Pero ‘yung main na</i>

	<p><i>nag-iisip, 'yung nagpla-plan, it's more me. For example, if saan mapupunta 'yung pera? Anong investment 'yung maganda? Kung paano magsasave? How to manage the resources. Or how to, like 'yung pag-aapply dito. It's more me but then like laging in consultation with him. Kung hindi siya payag, parang wala din."</i></p> <p>(Decision maker, I would say we're both. But the main one who thinks, the one who plans, it's more me. For example, where will the money go? What's a good investment? How to save? How to manage the resources. Or how to, like applying here. It's more me but then it's always in consultation with him. If he doesn't agree, it's like it won't happen.)</p>
Ara	<p><i>"Sa amin...parang kasing ano eh. Kung mag-agree kaming dalawa, dun namin masasabing parehas. Kung ayaw niya, ayaw ko rin. Kumbaga parang balance lang. May disadvantage, may advantage. So, titingnan din namin yung parang negative and positive. Pero mas madalas, ako yung mas nagdedesisyon."</i></p> <p>(For us... it's like this. If the two of us agree, that's when we can say it's the same. If she doesn't want it, I don't want it either. It's like there's a balance. There's a disadvantage, there's an advantage. So, we also look at the negative and positive. But more often, I'm the one who decides.)</p>
Jade	<p><i>"Hindi ako nagpapatalo. Alam kong tama ito."</i></p> <p>(I don't let myself be defeated. I know this is right.)</p>

**Effects of arrangements on family dynamics.** The arrangements regarding who assumes the role of the main economic provider and decision maker impact family dynamics in transnational Filipino families. These can either reinforce traditional roles, create more shared responsibilities, or result in new dynamics.

In Divine's case, her husband took on the financial responsibilities when she had to stop working after her surgery. However, this shift in roles was met with some tension as she recalled:

*"Pero, may time na gaya nung na-operahan ako, so nag-stop ako ng work, [asawa ko] sumasagot lang ng [bills]. Pero, kasi hindi nga ako*

*sanay na humihingi. Nilalabas ko yung savings ko. So, minsan nagagalit siya. 'Sabi sa'yo, wag mo lang galawin yan.' 'Yung ganung ano. Pero, okay naman kasi ako. Siniguro ko talaga na kahit na ano mangyari, hindi ako mahihingi o aasa kahit kanino. Kaya nagagalit yan minsan kasi, pag may nakita siya, 'Oh, bilhin mo na yan. Gusto mo yan. Di ba? Bibilhin mo.' Ayoko. Hanggang sabi ko, bibili lang ako nung gusto ko pag pinaghihirapan ko. Kasi para sa akin, ganun ko rin minulat 'yung mga anak ko. Iba 'yung needs sa wants. So, kung talagang kailangan mo, sige. Pero kung gusto lang, hindi pwede. Kahit 'yung apo ko, you have to work for it. So, mulat sila sa ganun. Kaya, kahit 'yung mga anak ko, 'yung apo ko, hindi sila nanghihingi. Pag may kailangan sila, gagawan nila ng paraan.'"*

(However, there was a time, like when I had surgery and had to stop working, [my husband] took care of everything. But, since I'm not used to asking for help, I would dip into my savings. So sometimes he would get upset, saying, 'I told you, don't touch that.' Things like that. But it's okay because I made sure that no matter what happened, I wouldn't need to ask for help or rely on anyone. That's why he sometimes gets mad when he sees something and says, 'Buy it already, you want it, right? You should buy it.' But I don't want to. I always say, I'll only buy something I want if I've worked for it. Because for me, that's how I raised my children. There's a difference between needs and wants. So, if you really need it, then go ahead. But if you just want it, it's not allowed. Even with my grandchildren, you have to work for it. They're raised to understand that. That's why even my children, my grandchildren, they don't ask for things. If they need something, they'll find a way to get it.)

For Carol, her relationship with her husband has grown stronger over time due to the unique circumstances they have faced together. But she recounted how this journey towards becoming solid partners was not without its difficulties:

*"So parang it took [my husband] a while din to completely leave to me kung ano 'yung dapat gawin. Dati noon parang pag may binanggit ako*

*sa kanya or may sinabi ako sa kanya, kumukontra pa siya. He feels like, I don't know kung ano 'yung pakiramdam niya. Kung dahil ba feeling niya na not upstage, parang na-bypass ko 'yung authority niya or something. Pero parang lagi siyang kumukontra. So pag may sinabi ako, we should do this, we should do that, kumukontrahin niya. Parang no, I don't think so. Parang ganun. Tapos natanong ko siya what his reason is, parang eh wala lang."*

(But it took [my husband] a while to fully trust me with decisions. Back then, whenever I brought something up or made a suggestion, he would resist it. I don't know what he was feeling—maybe he thought I was bypassing his authority or something. But he would always disagree. So, when I said, 'We should do this, we should do that,' he would push back, like, 'No, I don't think so.' And when I asked him for his reasons, he wouldn't really have one.")

Similarly, the arrangements between Grace and her husband work well for them, but she revealed that being the primary economic provider and decision maker gets tiring sometimes:

"So far, it works for us. Sometimes, *nakakapagod lang*. And sometimes, I was asking [my husband] to, because I have a lot in my mind to carry, a lot of things. Sometimes, *nagbuburst out na lang ako ng no reason*. But I'm always honest with him. *Pag* I think, I feel like, *medyo heavy na*, I always tell *him na*, 'Oh, I don't feel comfortable *na*. *Bahala ka na diyan. Ikaw naman*.' And he's always ready to take over. '*Yun lang. Well, sa lalaki naman*, they will never know until *sasabihan mo*. But they will never see it *na* to have the initiative *na*, '*Ay, baka ako naman*' or no. No, you have to tell them. '*Yun 'yun sa akin*.'" (So far, it works for us. Sometimes, it just gets tiring. And sometimes, I ask [my husband] to take over because I have so much on my mind, so many things. Sometimes, I just burst out for no reason. But I'm always honest with him. When I feel like it's getting too heavy, I always tell him, 'Oh, I don't feel comfortable anymore. You take over.' And he's always

ready to step in. That's it. Well, with men, they'll never know unless you tell them. But they will never see it as an initiative like, 'Oh, maybe it's my turn.' No. You have to tell them. That's how it is for me.)

Princess, on the other hand, admitted that her own decision-making has not always been successful. She acknowledged that her partner is better suited for making decisions:

*"Oo, kasi I find it na mas maayos. Mas may isang salita siya. Like, pag kasi ako 'yung nag-decision, mayroon pa akong second choice. Mayroon pa akong third choice. 'Yung hindi ko talaga, hindi talaga direct to the point 'yung mga decision ko. 'Yun. Pero, okay naman. Okay naman siya na like decision maker."*

(Yes, because I find that he is more efficient. He's more decisive. Like, when I make decisions, I often have a second choice, even a third choice. I'm not really direct to the point with my decisions. But it's okay. He's a good decision-maker. No, because most of the time, I fail. I admit that.)

**Involving Children in Family Decisions.** When parents seek their children's input in making family decisions, it fosters feelings of inclusion and respect. Maricris, for instance, made it a habit to consult her children, especially when it has a direct impact on them.

Similarly, Carol allows her children to make minor decisions that do not have major repercussions, but not major ones:

*"With the kids, 'yung mga major decisions like moving to Canada or things like that, definitely parang wala silang choice kung hindi to, alam mo 'yan, parang to just to go with the flow. Pero yung mga little things that involves them directly na hindi naman, wala namang major repercussions kung ano yung maging choice nila, I make them choose. Choosing what shoes they want. Choosing what they want for lunch or*

something. *Alam mo 'yan, parang* when it comes to little things like that, definitely they have a say. *So kung saan niyo gusto pumunta*, 'How do you want to spend your birthday? Do you want to spend it with friends, or do you want to go out of town?' So they have a say on things like that."

(With the kids, when it comes to major decisions like moving to Canada or things like that, they definitely don't have much choice but to, you know, just go with the flow. But for the little things that involve them directly and don't have any major repercussions regardless of their choice, I let them choose. Like choosing what shoes they want, choosing what they want for lunch, or something like that. You know, when it comes to little things like that, they definitely have a say. So, for example, 'Where do you want to go? How do you want to spend your birthday? Do you want to spend it with friends, or do you want to go out of town?' So they have a say on things like that.)

In contrast, Grace shared how her son played an active role in her decision to stay in Canada:

"Actually, *nung* first few months *ko pagdating dito*, I was so sad *na parang gusto ko na umuwi*. I asked my son. I asked him *na siguro* after six months *ko na nandito, because uwing-uwi na ako eh. Hindi ko na kaya*. So I asked him *na*, should I go home *na lang?* 'Just let me know.' *If nag-yes siguro siya noon, umuwi na ako*. But he said no. 'No, because I wanna see Canada. I wanna go there.' *So nag-decide ako na sige wag na lang*. Because it's gonna be unfair *na 'yung comfort ko lang yung iisipin ko. Hindi ko man lang sila nabigyan ng chance na pumunta dito*. So I held into it. Most of the time, *in-involve namin siya. Kaming tatlo yung nag-decide*. 'So *anong gagawin? Any plans? Do you have any plan A, B, C?*' *Ganyan. In-involve talaga siya*. Because he needs to, he sacrificed a lot actually. He transferred schools...So we really involve him in every decision. *Kasi eh, magiging part siya eh. Part talaga siya. Kung anong outcome. Because bibitbitin talaga siya namin. Hindi siya pa-iwan. Ayaw naman niya.*"

(Actually, during the first few months after I arrived here, I was so sad that I felt like I wanted to go home. I asked my son. I asked him maybe after six months of being here because I was really homesick. I couldn't take it anymore. So, I asked him if I should just go home. 'Just let me know.' If he had said yes, I probably would have gone home. But he said no. 'No, because I want to see Canada. I want to go there.' So, I decided not to go home because it would be unfair if I only thought about my own comfort. I wouldn't have given them a chance to come here. So, I held on. Most of the time, we involve him. The three of us decide together. 'So, what should we do? Any plans? Do you have a Plan A, B, C?' Things like that. He's really involved because he needs to be. He actually sacrificed a lot. He transferred schools...So, we really involve him in every decision because he's going to be a part of it. He's really a part of it, whatever the outcome is. Because we'll be bringing him with us. He won't be left behind. And he doesn't want to be left behind either.)

When Divine came to Canada, one of her intentions was to bring her children and give them the opportunity to decide whether to stay or not. According to her, the ultimate decision should rest with her children. Carol noted, however, that while involving them fosters maturity and understanding, it can also lead to children feeling pressured to take on responsibilities beyond their years:

*"Parang 'yun din, may okay na effect siya but also I feel like hindi rin okay. Like for example, 'yung i-involve mo sila sa mga big decisions na sometimes okay kasi naiintindihan nilang nangyayari but at the same time parang feeling ko na force sila na mature na maaga. They feel like they have to be involved. They have to be part of the solution if something doesn't go well...And I feel like that shouldn't be part of your problem. You shouldn't be worrying about it. Kasi you just need to enjoy your life, you're kids. Just enjoy being kids. Just be kids. So feeling ko 'yun nga parang it's a good thing na involved sila but at the same time parang they tend to worry about it."*

(It's kind of the same, it has a good effect but also I feel like it's not good. Like for example, involving them in big decisions is sometimes okay because they understand what's happening, but at the same time, I feel like they're forced to mature early. They feel like they have to be involved, they have to be part of the solution if something goes wrong... And I feel like that shouldn't be part of your problem. You shouldn't be worrying about it. Because you just need to enjoy your life, you're kids. Just enjoy being kids. Just be kids. So I feel like it's a good thing to involve them, but at the same time, they tend to worry about it.)

## Analysis of Data

### Understanding Filipino Transnational Mothers in Toronto

#### a. On self-perception and identity

**Different types of transnational mothers based on motivations.** The narratives of Filipino transnational mothers show a wide range of motivations, often a combination of various push and pull factors. The data reveal different types of transnational mothers based on these motivations. Many mothers may be driven by a combination of these factors, as evidenced by the respondents' experiences.

One of the primary motivators for these transnational mothers is providing a better future for their children. I call them the *aspiring mothers*, as demonstrated by the experiences of Cherry, Jade, Divine, and others. The desire to secure much better opportunities for children is closely tied to the economic and political challenges in the Philippines, which include job insecurity, low wages, corruption, and the inability to effect change. The COVID-19 pandemic also had a profound impact on the families of many transnational mothers, such as Grace who was pushed to seek better economic prospects abroad due to the economic losses of the airline industry. These mothers, who faced economic and political struggles and limited opportunities in the Philippines, are the *striving* and *escaping* mothers. They view migration as an escape from challenging circumstances and a chance to create a better life.

The pursuit of personal growth and career advancement also emerges as a significant motivator. Some mothers, like Carol and Maricris, felt stifled in their careers in the Philippines due to limited growth opportunities and workplace politics. These are called the *career-oriented mothers*. As a result, they sought a more meritocratic and fulfilling work environment in Canada.

There is also a desire for family reunification, particularly for families who have been separated for a long time, as exemplified by Helena who spent 18 years in other countries before settling in Canada. These mothers are the *reuniting mothers*.

Of course, one can also not deny the attractiveness of Canada's benefits as a factor that played a role in their decision-making. Things such as universal healthcare, child benefits, free education, and the perception of a better quality of life made the country very enticing to prospective migrants who wish to bring their families along with them later on.

These findings affirm the research on migration that transnational mothers now come in a variety of forms, as seen in the following migration types: voluntary migration; forced migration, "betterment" migration, expert or career migration, interior and international/intercontinental migration, permanent, temporary, and circular migration, and transnational migration (as cited in Lutz, 2018, p. 14). However, what strikes me the most about these motivations is the mothers' willingness to make significant sacrifices, primarily separation from their children, to provide a better future for their families. Their motivations are rooted in a deep sense of love, responsibility, and hope for a brighter future. Although difficult, their determination to pursue their goals is something worth admiring them for.

**Wearing different hats.** The daily lives of transnational mothers in Toronto are characterized by a constant negotiation of multiple roles. They are tasked with balancing the demands of being good mothers and good providers, while also fulfilling their responsibilities as wives, daughters, sisters, friends, etc. The situation is further complicated for the respondents who hold study permits, like Princess who works two part-time jobs, one as a spa attendant and one as a catering service worker, in addition to being a mother, a wife, and a student.

This constant juggling act significantly impacts their mothering ideals and practices. For example, the economic pressures of their roles as providers may necessitate longer work hours, limiting the time they can dedicate to talking to their children. Similarly, the need to maintain social connections and support networks may require them to prioritize certain relationships over others.

While the unconventional mothering setup reinforces strength and resilience, it also reveals feelings of exhaustion and fatigue. Furthermore, they may also feel guilty and inadequate due to their weariness from performing so many roles. This aligns with Ross's (1995) observation that mothering can be both a source of personal satisfaction and a cause of emotional distress and turmoil.

**Mothering amidst change.** Data from this research support the view of multiple studies (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Juozeliuniene & Budginaite, 2018; Parreñas, 2005) that transnational mothering redefines the role of a mother (see Table 4.3.). Their experiences show that mothering can be done despite the physical separation created by migration through technology and by providing the resources necessary for their children's welfare. But as they engage in nontraditional ways of mothering, transnational mothers in Toronto are faced with an internal conflict between their mothering ideals and realities. These ideals include constant presence and unwavering support for their children while the realities reflect the barriers imposed by their current circumstances. Millman (2013) mentioned this in her study that the knowledge that their absence is beneficial does not alleviate the distress mothers feel due to their reduced ability to care for their children.

I also find that the transnational mothers in Toronto have an ever-evolving self-perception of their role, but their core identity as a mother remains the same. Their experiences in Canada—economic pressure, cultural shifts, and separation—have

reshaped their understanding of themselves. For instance, Grace's journey was a humbling one, while Maricris and Jade both found empowerment. There are also others who experienced a downward occupational mobility, from having professional roles in the Philippines to doing unskilled labor in Canada, which also impacted their self-perception. Goff & Maelan (2016) called this the "double disadvantage" of being both migrants and women and observed that transnational female migrants from developing countries are overrepresented in hospitality and domestic work. However, the effect on self-perception varies depending on time they have spent doing the unskilled work. Newer transnational mothers are more prone to feelings of diminished self-worth, unlike those who have already adapted and spent longer time in Canada.

#### **b. On family relations**

**Growing-up experiences and role models.** The influence of their own upbringing and role models, particularly their mothers, is evident in their parenting styles and decision-making processes. The mothers often draw inspiration from the sacrifices and strength their own mothers demonstrated, shaping their understanding of motherhood and resilience. Some transnational mothers also look up to both of their parents, gathering the best traits from each parent and applying them to their own parenting styles, as with the case of Carol. These experiences reflect a positive transmission of parental values.

On the other hand, the experiences of those who grew up with absent parents or alternative caregivers highlight the lasting impact of such arrangements on their views of family and their own parenting choices. As an adult, Wendy does not feel a close bond with her mother, something that she does not want to happen to her child. And Cherry, who grew up with strict grandparents, has developed a laid-back

parenting style, especially with her son. These signify the desire of these mothers to create a different emotional reality for their children than they had growing up.

**Uncertainty of family reunification.** Most Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto migrate to Canada with the eventual hope of reuniting with their families. As such, many see permanent residency as the ultimate goal. Securing this status would not only afford these women more options economically, but it would also allow them to bring their partners and children over. However, having permanent residency is not an assurance of family reunification, as seen with Helena and Divine who still holds the title of a transnational mother despite acquiring the status many years ago. The strict age limits on child sponsorship prevent families from reuniting, especially those with older children.

Because of the changing immigration policies in Canada, many find it harder to obtain permanent residency. Alternative strategies, such as relocating to different provinces or bringing the left-behind child to the country through a different pathway, are being explored by these mothers. If all else fails, some may have to confront the fact that the transnational arrangements may become permanent or that they may have to return to the Philippines one day in order to reunite with their children. These assert Cohen's (2000) stance that family relations have been adversely affected by laws that prevent family reunification. While Canada technically allows family reunification, the restrictions it places make it more challenging for affected families.

**Sense of duty to extended family.** Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto face another conflict between focusing solely on their children and supporting extended family members. This conflict stems from deep cultural ties and collectivist values from the homeland and many Southeast Asian cultures, especially among transnational families who turn to extended family members to care for their left-behind

children. This phenomenon corresponds to Fresnoza-Flot's (2023) account that migrant mothers might feel indebted to their children's carers and would express their appreciation with gifts and remittances. For some mothers, their transnational experience changed their view on supporting extended family due to the heightened awareness of their financial standing, either becoming more generous or more restrictive depending on their situation. There are times, however, where transnational mothers are supported by their extended family which show that duty can be a two-way street and can help alleviate the struggles of transnational mothering.

**Maintaining strong ties as priority.** Despite the many hats that the Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto wear, maintaining strong ties to their children remains their top priority. This is consistent with Gómez Cervantes' (2016) definition of transnational mothers as those who live apart from their dependent children while sustaining emotional, financial, and communication ties across borders. In Chapter 2, I mentioned the two frameworks in which remittances and gifts are understood in the concept of transnational mothering—gift-giving as economic (Artico, 2003; Clarke, 2007; Coe, 2014; Parreñas, 2005) and gift-giving as a social, cultural, political, emotional, and personal practice (Francisco-Menchavez, 2018; Irawaty, 2021; Zechner, 2008). The second framework seems more fitting based on the narratives provided by these migrant mothers. A case in point is how Divine actively provides financial support in response to the guilt she experiences due to separation. For these mothers, the money and gifts serve as reminders of their love and connection as well as their presence in their children's lives.

### c. On cultural ties

**Networks as sources of support and challenges.** Building networks is a vital process of the transnational mothering experience. The idea behind it is that networks

serve as a lifeline for migrant mothers in providing emotional and practical assistance, like how Fresnoza-Flot (2009) asserted that having a family member care for their children serves as a helpful substitute for them while away. However, the data reveal that the very same networks can also present challenges in their lives. Cherry described her observations of unwelcoming and exploitative behaviors among Filipinos in Toronto, which stem from the crab mentality phenomenon where individuals prevent others from succeeding even if it has no direct effect on them. Other toxic traits that can manifest within the Filipino community include gossiping which can undermine the sense of support mothers receive. The fear of judgment and the pressure to conform to societal expectations can influence the mothers' decisions and practices. These challenges are also one of the reasons why some mothers are hesitant to form connections with fellow Filipinos in the area.

**Preserving cultural heritage through values.** The preservation of cultural heritage among Filipino transitional mothers in Toronto is not so much about practicing everyday Filipino customs. Despite the large Filipino community in the city, many find it hard to continue subscribing to Filipino products and media due to high cost and limited availability. Instead, preserving cultural heritage is done through the transmission of Filipino values to their children. Helena's disappointment is apparent in the shift in values in some Filipino families in Canada, where children are not taught the same manners as those back home. As such, most perceive children who grew up in Canada to be disrespectful. The differences in Filipino and Canadian upbringing is one of the main causes of anxiety of most migrant mothers, especially for Ara who is having second thoughts about bringing her child to the country. This focus on values, rather than material culture, highlights how their mothering is shaped by their transnational lives.

## **Intersectionality of Economic, Sociocultural, and Political Factors**

The intersectionality of economic, sociocultural, and political factors creates compounded impacts that intensify the challenges faced by Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto. This analysis will only center on the intersecting factors and compounded impacts that were uncovered through the narratives of these migrant mothers.

**Economic factors with sociocultural factors.** Economic pressures in terms of personal and household income and expenses strongly overlap with sociocultural obligations. The Filipino cultural expectation of supporting extended family members, even after one gets married and has their own children, sometimes creates strain in the finances of these migrant families. They are sometimes forced to make difficult choices on how to distribute their income and allocate resources between their immediate and extended family.

The types of jobs transnational mothers hold also overlap with access to support networks and their ability to adapt to cultural changes. For example, those who engage in low-wage and demanding work with long hours may have less time and energy to build connections and immerse themselves in the community. In addition, access to support networks can also open the door for job opportunities, as seen in the experiences of mothers who found employment through connections. These findings are parallel to Fresnoza-Flot & Shinozaki's (2017) studies that class, both economic and social, plays a crucial role in maintaining transnational ties.

Education also extends over discrimination on the job market. Many migrant mothers, despite holding the appropriate qualifications and educational requirements, still face challenges in securing employment when discriminated against based on their ethnicity or gender. This leads to the downward occupational mobility as

discussed in the previous section, impacting not only their economic situation but also their self-perception.

**Political factors with economic factors.** One's immigration status in Canada deliberately shapes the economic opportunities available to these transnational mothers. Those with permanent residency status and citizenship have greater access to stable employment and benefits, allowing them to securely provide for their families and plan for their future. In contrast, those with temporary status are more likely to face restrictions on their work type and hours and access to benefits such as healthcare, creating extra difficulty in providing for their families back home. Gómez Cervantes (2016) recognized how transnational mothers' informal work limits their worker rights, affecting their capacity to send money home and extending their stay in the host country.

In addition, financial resources also open up opportunities to strengthen family ties across borders. Transnational mothers who are in great financial standing are able to afford the cost of travel and immigration costs for family visits and temporary family reunification. It is consistent with Gómez Cervantes' (2016) account that the mother's economic class allows her to visit her children on a regular basis and may even receive visits from them.

**Sociocultural factors with political factors.** The presence of support networks, mainly family members, in Canada can facilitate the immigration process either through sponsorship or by providing additional support for the application. This matches Portes and Landolt's (2000) insight that migrants can be as adaptable as more affluent peers, even with limited economic capital, due to their social capital.

Similarly, immigration policies can influence the cultural adaptation process for transnational mothers, especially when family reunification is the goal. The policies

concerned with reunification can impact their ability to maintain cultural traditions and values within their families. This can be seen in the earlier discussion on how the differences in the Filipino and Canadian upbringings cause anxiety and doubts for some mothers in bringing their children to the country.

Experiences of discrimination also overlap with immigration status. Migrant mothers with temporary status are more vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination in the work and social environment. They are less likely to report such cases due to fear of jeopardizing their chances of staying permanently in the country.

### **Transforming the Filipino Familial Landscape**

The effects of transnational mothering change not only individual Filipino families but the Filipino society as a whole, impacting household dynamics, power relations, and the very nature of family ties. The role of a mother has been traditionally defined by a commitment to the household and the children, sometimes at the expense of personal career development. But when mothers are physically removed from their homes to work or study abroad, a shift in household roles and responsibilities occurs. This echoes Parreñas' (2010) account on how transnational mothering forces a rearrangement of gender as it redefines traditional mothering. Oftentimes, the spouse or partner assumes the duties previously handled by the mother in the Philippines. However, there are also cases where there are more shared household responsibilities, especially when both parents are in Canada, demonstrating progress towards an egalitarian household structure.

The absence of the mother also leads to other women stepping in to take over the role, usually grandmothers. This reinforces the importance of extended family in Filipino culture and mothering. In some instances, nannies and helpers are employed

to assist with childcare. While not a new concept, this also highlights the significant role played by non-family members in raising the children.

Another way in which the Filipino family is transformed is through economic provision and decision-making. Many Filipino transnational mothers become the primary earners, and this shift also disrupts power relations in that economic power can translate to decision-making authority within the family. As a result, migrant mothers feel empowered when they become primary decision makers. This creates tension for some fathers as they feel the loss of their traditional provider status. The interviews, however, reveal that decision-making dynamics range from the traditional male dominance to female leadership. Many transnational families also try to achieve a balance in decision-making. Involving children in decision-making also shifts power relations within the family. While it promotes maturity and understanding at a young age, the children are also burdened with adult concerns.

Juozeliuniene and Budginaite (2018) emphasized that transnational mothers are constantly evolving and coming up with new meanings for mothering. This is evident in the vital role of technology in maintaining relationships across borders. To compensate for their absence, transnational mothers utilize financial support and gifts. Although these may alleviate feelings of guilt, they acknowledge that they still need to make up for their shortcomings. The data also reveal that physical presence remains important, with some families making efforts to meet in person, keeping in mind the visa restrictions and costs of travel.

The advent of female labor migration left children without mothers growing up. The physical absence of the mother affects the child's upbringing and their relationship with her. In the experiences of Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto, the left-behind children formed closer bonds with their other caregivers. In some cases, the

separation also had negative emotional effects, such as behavioral changes and trauma.

### **Situating Filipino Transnational Mothers in Toronto Among ASEAN Peers**

Many ASEAN countries share cultural values similar to those of the Philippines, such as the collectivist culture, strong family ties, and filial piety. In addition, many ASEAN countries, like the Philippines, acknowledge the significant role women play in both domestic and economic spheres and have a degree of social acceptance of overseas labor migration to support the family, especially in domestic work or other service sector jobs. In the context of Canada, Vietnam and Indonesia are two ASEAN countries that share similar experiences and cultural values with the Philippines regarding migration. Both countries also have a sizable community in the country, as demonstrated by Table 2.1. in Chapter 2.

But of course, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for transnational mothering. The rich diversity found in ASEAN means there are variations in specific cultural norms, values, or even communication styles among different countries, despite the similarities mentioned above. There are also differences in the socioeconomic contexts between countries, which could affect the pressures and opportunities faced by migrant mothers. Furthermore, immigration policies in Canada vary for different countries, which result in a variety of settlement experiences.

What does this mean for transnational mothers from these countries? The challenges faced by Filipino transnational mothers likely resonate with mothers from culturally similar ASEAN countries who are also away from their children. These could include the emotional distress from separation, the difficulty of balancing multiple roles, the potential for discrimination, the impact of immigration policies on family reunification, etc. Because of this, their coping strategies and support needs may also

be influenced by the shared values with the Philippines related to family and migration. The types of support systems used by Filipino transnational mothers could serve as models for developing and strengthening support systems for transnational mothers from other culturally similar ASEAN countries. The experiences of Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto also offer valuable insights for informing policy development in both the sending and receiving countries, which would contribute to the well-being of migrant mothers and their families.

The experiences of Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto shed light on the broader ASEAN regional themes: a) the primacy of family; b) gendered migration and shifting roles; c) economic drivers of migration; and d) cultural adaptation and identity. These themes highlight the following:

- The primacy of the family is a deeply ingrained cultural value. It emphasizes the strong influence of family structures and values on transnational mothering practices.
- The feminization of labor migration is a significant trend in the ASEAN region. It demonstrates the phenomenon of women empowerment through migration and also the challenges of shifting gender roles in transnational families.
- Economic disparities between ASEAN countries and developed countries like Canada remain a major driving force behind migration. It reveals the economic realities that shape migration patterns in the region and the role of transnational mothering in contributing to the economic well-being of their families.
- Because migration is an important aspect of the region, migrants from ASEAN countries always face challenges in adapting to new environments. This reflects the importance of understanding the processes of cultural adaptation and identity formation among transnational mothers.

## Relevance to the Three Pillars of the ASEAN Community

The lived experiences of Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto provide insights into the broader challenges and objectives of ASEAN. This part of the analysis situates the study's key findings within the three foundational pillars of the ASEAN Community, demonstrating the relevance of the research to the region's macro-level integration.

**Table 4.6.**

*Relevance to the Three Pillars of the ASEAN Community*

<b>ASEAN Pillar</b>	<b>Relevance</b>
ASEAN Economic Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="568 936 1418 1189">• The study reveals the consequences of the feminization of labor migration, a key trend within the AEC, showing how regional economic integration leads to the phenomenon of transnational mothering.</li><li data-bbox="568 1227 1418 1413">• The findings on downward occupational mobility challenge the AEC's focus on skilled labor, representing a loss of human capital for the region.</li><li data-bbox="568 1451 1418 1637">• Transnational mothers are economic actors whose remittances contribute to the economic stability of their home countries and the ASEAN region.</li></ul>

<p>ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research provides an analysis of the transformation of the family unit which is a core focus of the ASCC blueprint.</li> <li>• Transnational families as a vulnerable group require targeted social support, aligning with the ASCC's mandate for social welfare and protection.</li> <li>• The preservation of cultural heritage through values and manners reflects the ASCC's goal of fostering an ASEAN identity that is rooted in shared principles.</li> </ul>
<p>ASEAN Political-Security Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The policies of receiving countries can be direct threats to the fundamental right to security and family life of ASEAN citizens.</li> <li>• The findings highlight the importance of the APSC's commitment to upholding human rights and social justice, especially for women who face a double disadvantage.</li> <li>• The research validates the need for ASEAN to engage in stronger diplomatic advocacy and multilateral agreements with receiving countries to align with the APSC's role of protecting its people.</li> </ul>

## Summary

**Table 4.7.**

*Summary of Findings*

Research Objective	Summary of Findings
<p>Identify the underlying meanings of transnational mothering on self-perception, family relations, cultural ties, and identity of Filipino migrant mothers living in Toronto</p>	<p>Self-perception and identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While their core identity as mothers remains constant, these mothers' understanding of themselves is reshaped by economic pressures, cultural shifts, and separation from their families.</li> <li>• Downward occupational mobility also impacts their self-worth, especially for newer migrants.</li> <li>• Despite the challenges, their nontraditional mothering arrangements reinforce their strength and resilience.</li> <li>• However, performing multiple roles along with the physical separation also lead to feelings of guilt and inadequacy.</li> </ul> <p>Family relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family relations for these mothers are influenced by their upbringing and the role models they had, shaping their parenting styles and decisions. Some aim to create a better emotional experience for their children than they had.</li> <li>• A significant aspect is the uncertainty of family reunification due to strict Canadian immigration policies.</li> <li>• These mothers have a strong sense of duty towards their extended families, balancing this with their focus on their own children.</li> <li>• Maintaining strong ties with their children is still their utmost priority despite the distance.</li> </ul>

	<p>Cultural ties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networks within the Filipino community provide support but can also present challenges like crab mentality and gossiping.</li> <li>• The preservation of cultural heritage leans less on the consumption of Filipino products or adherence to everyday customs and more on the active transmission of Filipino values.</li> <li>• Some mothers express anxiety over the perceived differences in the values and upbringing between the two countries.</li> </ul>
<p>Examine how economic, sociocultural and political factors affect Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto in performing their parental responsibilities</p>	<p>Economic Factors with Sociocultural Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filipino cultural expectation of supporting extended family members strains finances, requiring difficult strategies in resource allocation.</li> <li>• Low-wage and demanding jobs limit time for building support networks and cultural immersion.</li> <li>• Access to support networks can lead to job opportunities.</li> <li>• Discrimination in the job market, despite qualifications, leads to downward occupational mobility.</li> </ul> <p>Political Factors with Economic Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigration status impacts economic opportunities. Permanent residents have better access to stable employment and benefits, while temporary status holders face restrictions.</li> <li>• Financial resources affect the ability to afford travel and immigration costs for family visits and reunification.</li> </ul> <p>Sociocultural Factors with Political Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support networks, especially family in Canada, can facilitate the</li> </ul>

	<p>immigration process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Immigration policies influence cultural adaptation, particularly in maintaining traditions and values when aiming for reunification.</li> <li>● Temporary status increases vulnerability to exploitation and discrimination due to fear of jeopardizing permanent residency chances.</li> </ul>
<p>Explore the contributions of transnational mothering to family and household dynamics and power relations within Filipino families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transnational mothering reshapes household dynamics by shifting traditional responsibilities, often leading to partners and extended family members assuming greater caregiving roles and fostering more egalitarian structures when both parents are abroad.</li> <li>● Transnational mothers as the primary earners alter power relations within the family by translating financial power into decision-making authority which can empower them and at the same time create tension for fathers who may feel a loss of their provider status.</li> <li>● Family ties are transformed through the role of technology in maintaining relationships and the use of financial support and gifts to compensate for their absence. However, mothers still feel the need to overcome these shortcomings and acknowledge the importance of physical presence.</li> <li>● The absence of mothers can lead to children forming closer bonds with other caregivers and may result in negative emotional effects in children, like behavioral changes or trauma.</li> </ul>

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Conclusions**

This study has comprehensively explored the concept of transnational mothering of Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto, Canada. It has shed light on their lived experiences and how they navigate mothering across borders. The following conclusions were drawn from the research.

First, the lived experiences of Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto are characterized by a paradox: they are striving to fulfill and redefine their maternal roles while being physically separated from their children. They do this by engaging in diverse mothering practices such as the use of technology and the provision of financial support and gifts.

Second, their mothering practices are shaped not only by idealized beliefs but also by underlying meanings. These below-surface meanings are found in their self-perception and identities, family relations, and cultural ties. While their core identity as mothers remains, their self-worth is impacted by the changes and pressures they face. These mothers also prioritize maintaining strong relationships and providing a better emotional experience for their children. Furthermore, preserving cultural ties for them involves the active transmission of values that is often accompanied by anxieties about cultural differences in Canada.

Third, Filipino transnational mothers are affected by the complex interplay between economic, sociocultural, and political factors in performing their responsibilities. Some examples include: economically, the pressure of supporting extended families and working low-wage jobs strains the finances and limits social

integration. Socioculturally, support networks can aid the immigration process. Politically, immigration status controls economic opportunities, with temporary status holders at risk for greater restrictions and vulnerabilities.

Lastly, transnational mothering alters Filipino family life through the formation of new household dynamics, with partners and extended family taking on caregiving roles, and through the reconfiguration of power relations, with mothers having greater decision-making authority due to their greater financial contributions. These changes create tensions in the relationship between their partners and children.

The experiences of Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto offer insight into understanding similar patterns across ASEAN countries, given shared cultural values like collectivism and strong familial ties. Despite the diverse socioeconomic contexts and varying immigration policies among countries, the challenges faced by Filipino mothers likely resonate with their ASEAN counterparts. Their coping strategies can serve as models for strengthening support systems for culturally similar countries in the region.

Moreover, this study has also revealed broader ASEAN themes of family primacy, gendered migration and shifting roles, economic drivers of migration, and cultural adaptation and identity. These themes are crucial for informing policy development to enhance the well-being of migrant mothers. The study also contributes to the field of ASEAN Studies by demonstrating the relevance of the findings to the ASEAN Economic, Socio-Cultural, and Political-Security pillars. By grounding regional policies in the lived realities of its people, the study provides insights into creating a more people-centered ASEAN community.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are forwarded by the study:

### **Policy**

#### **1. ASEAN as a Regional Bloc**

- a. Launch an ASEAN Initiative on Family-Inclusive Labor Mobility aimed at negotiating clauses to develop programs for temporary family visas for migrants in its bilateral agreements with receiving countries, addressing the distress caused by forced family separation.
- b. Integrate a Human Capital Protection Framework into the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint to create bilateral agreements on foreign credential recognition with receiving countries, moving beyond the limited, intra-regional scope of the current Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs).

#### **2. ASEAN Sending Countries**

- a. Operationalize the principles of the ASEAN Declaration on Gender Equality and Family Development by addressing the realities of transnational mothering through:
  - i. Enhancing pre-departure orientation programs to include more comprehensive psychological preparedness for transnational mothering.
  - ii. Developing social support programs for left-behind families, such as childcare, psychological counseling, and financial literacy training for remittance management.

- b. Optimize the proactive support services of embassies and consulates beyond traditional consular assistance to better handle the needs of transnational mothers.

### **3. Receiving Countries**

- a. Improve foreign credential recognition processes to prevent downward occupation mobility and ensure migrants can utilize their skills and education.
- b. Incorporate migrant well-being metrics into immigration policy, aligning with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to redefine policy success to fostering successful integration of migrants.
- c. Ensure anti-discrimination measures are in place in the workplace and broader society to protect migrants from exploitation and unfair treatment.
  - i. Fund and support culturally sensitive mental health and settlement services for migrant mothers, addressing their unique challenges.

### **4. Development Workers**

- a. Strengthen and localize existing empowerment programs to address the legal and economic vulnerabilities of migrant mothers by providing information on their rights, labor laws, and resources for career advancement and skill upgrading.
- b. Promote the creation of dedicated peer-to-peer community networks for migrant mothers, ensuring these spaces are not just social but

also encourage mutual support, mentorship, and exchange of best practices.

- c. Integrate and coordinate existing social and psychological services to offer holistic and accessible support to transnational families.
- d. Mainstream family-centric workshops and advocate for their inclusion in core settlement services, focusing on promoting shared parental responsibilities and challenging traditional gender roles.

## **5. Research**

- a. Expand research on transnational mothering across diverse ASEAN countries.
- b. Conduct empirical studies to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies in Canada and sending countries in supporting transnational mothers and families.
- c. Examine the experiences of transnational mothers who eventually return to their home countries.

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## Appendices

## APPENDIX A

### Research Instrument

Interview Questions	Research Questions		
	What are the underlying meanings of transnational mothering on self-perception, family relations, cultural ties, and identity of Filipino migrant mothers living in Toronto?	How do economic, sociocultural, and political factors affect Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto in performing their parental responsibilities?	In what ways does transnational mothering contribute to the family and household dynamics and power relations within these Filipino families?
<b>Demographic Information</b>			
What is your age?	✓	✓	
Where do you currently live?	✓	✓	
What are your current living arrangements? Do you rent/have a mortgage? How are the bills split?	✓	✓	
What is your marital status? What does your partner do for a living?	✓	✓	
What is your educational background?	✓	✓	
What is your ethnicity?	✓	✓	
What is your citizenship?	✓	✓	
Where is your hometown?	✓	✓	
What languages do you speak?	✓	✓	
<b>Children</b>			

How many children do you have? What are their ages?	✓	✓	
Where are your children located?	✓	✓	
How old were they when you immigrated to Canada?	✓	✓	
What are the care arrangements for your children?	✓	✓	
<b>Household</b>			
What are the living arrangements in your home country?			✓
Who is the main economic provider for your family? How do your family members perceive this arrangement?			✓
Do you support extended family members?			✓
Who is the primary decision-maker in the household, and what factors have led to this arrangement? How do your family members perceive this arrangement?			✓
What do you think are the effects of these arrangements on your family dynamics?			✓
<b>Status in Canada</b>			
How long have you been living in Canada?	✓	✓	✓

What is your current residency status?	✓	✓	✓
How did you immigrate to Canada?	✓	✓	✓
What is your motivation to move, work, or live in Canada?	✓	✓	✓
Why Canada? Have you ever considered other countries?			
What is your current occupation? How long have you been working? Tell me about your previous work experiences.	✓	✓	✓
How much are you earning? Are there any benefits?	✓	✓	✓
What Canadian benefits do you get as somebody who is living/working here?	✓	✓	✓
What is your current financial situation?	✓	✓	✓
How have your immigration status, employment status, and financial situation in Canada affected your capacity to provide for your children?	✓	✓	✓
<b>Self-Perception, Identity, and Cultural Ties</b>			
How would you describe your role as a mother while being physically separated from your children in your home country?	✓		

What are the challenges you have experienced?			
Can you share any specific moments or experiences that have shaped how you see yourself as a mother while living in Canada?	✓		
In what ways has being a transnational mother influenced your self-perception and understanding of your parenting role?	✓		
How do you think your family and children perceive you as a mother?	✓		
What are some cultural changes you experienced after moving here? Did you feel that cultural ties strengthened or weakened? What efforts have you made to continue practicing your culture?	✓		
How does your culture define a mother? What is the notion of a good mother according to your culture? Does your current arrangement differ from the cultural/societal definition of being a mother?	✓		
How do these affect you and your role as a parent? Have you encountered any difficulties maintaining these practices, and if	✓		

so, how have you addressed them?			
How did your self-perception and identity change before and after moving to Canada?	✓		
Who serves as your role model in parenting?	✓		
Do you compare yourself to other mothers/families? How do you think you compare?			
<b>Family Dynamics and Relations</b>			
How do you manage and perform your parental responsibilities while physically separated from your children?			✓
How do you maintain a connection with your family and children in your home country while living in Canada?			✓
How do you perceive power relations within your family?			✓
How does transnational mothering influence the roles and responsibilities within your family structure? How are the chores divided?			✓
Have you noticed any shifts in family roles or expectations? What changed before and after moving?			✓
How do you address potential conflicts or			✓

<p>misunderstandings within your family due to the distance between you and your children or due to being a transnational mother?</p>			
<p>What are your future plans? Do you plan on staying here until retirement? Do you have plans to go back?</p>			<p>✓</p>

## APPENDIX B

### Consent Form

I am Darla Felizardo, a graduate student at the University of the Philippines Open University, conducting a research study on transnational mothering among Filipino migrant mothers in Toronto, Canada, as part of my graduate thesis for the Master of ASEAN Studies program. The purpose of this study is to comprehensively explore and understand the concept of transnational mothering within the context of migrant mothers from the Philippines who are currently living in Toronto. This study seeks to answer the question, "What are the lived experiences of Filipino transnational mothers in Toronto, and how do they navigate the concept of mothering across borders?"

The participants of this study are migrant women from the Philippines who have been living in Toronto for at least one (1) year. This includes permanent residents, temporary residents (students or workers), or naturalized citizens who have left-behind child or children in their home country.

Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or discontinue your participation at any point during the interview. Rest assured that all the information you provide will be strictly confidential and anonymous. Recordings will only be kept as long as necessary for the completion of the research.

If you have any questions about the study or your participation, please contact me at [drfelizardo@up.edu.ph](mailto:drfelizardo@up.edu.ph).

\*\*\*\*\*

By agreeing to participate in this interview, you indicate that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. You voluntarily consent to participate in the interview and allow the researcher to use the data collected for academic purposes.

Participant's Signature:

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_