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# The Psychosocial Impact of Migration on Family Roles and Identity

Solmaz. Bulut[1] , Baidi. Bukhori[5] , Seyed Amir. Saadati[*3]

[1] MS, LPC, BHWC, Department of Counseling and Recovery Services of Oklahoma, Tulsa, OK, USA
[2] Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Health, Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia
[3] Master of Clinical Science, School of Health Studies Department, Western University, Ontario, Canada

**\* Corresponding author email address**: Ssaadat6@uwo.ca

A r t i c l e   I n f o

A B S T R A C T

**Objective:** Migration significantly affects individuals and families, reshaping identities, roles, and psychosocial well-being. This study aimed to explore the nuanced psychosocial impacts of migration on family roles and identity, seeking to understand the complexities of adjustment, identity transformation, and emotional well-being within the migratory context.

**Methods and Materials:** Employing a qualitative research design, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 participants from various migratory backgrounds. Theoretical saturation was achieved, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the experiences and perceptions of migrants. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and categorize the primary themes and concepts emerging from the data, focusing on the psychosocial dimensions of migration.

**Findings:** Three main themes were identified: Adjustment and Adaptation, Identity and Belonging, and Emotional and Psychological Well-being. Under Adjustment and Adaptation, categories such as Cultural Integration, Educational Challenges, Employment and Financial Stability, and Social Networks and Community Support were explored. Identity and Belonging encompassed Family Role Dynamics, Personal Identity Transformation, and Interactions with the Host Society. Emotional and Psychological Well-being included Stress and Coping Mechanisms, Intergenerational Conflicts, Loss and Grief, and Hope and Resilience, each providing insights into the emotional and psychological experiences of migrants.

**Conclusion:** The study highlighted the profound and multifaceted psychosocial impacts of migration on individuals and families, revealing the challenges and adaptations necessary for cultural integration, the renegotiation of identity and family roles, and the emotional and psychological experiences encountered. These findings underscore the necessity for supportive policies and practices that address the complex needs of migrants, facilitating smoother integration and promoting well-being.

***Keywords:*** *Migration, Family Roles, Identity, Psychosocial Impact, Adjustment, Emotional Well-being.*

# 1    Introduction

Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon that reshapes the fabric of societies, economies, and individual lives. It is a process deeply intertwined with global economic patterns, social structures, and personal aspirations. The decision to migrate, often rooted in the pursuit of better employment and living conditions, carries profound implications for the migrant and their family members, impacting their roles, relationships, and identities (Ojurongbe, 2023). The interplay of migration, family dynamics, and labor force participation has been a subject of considerable academic inquiry. Clark and Withers (2002) elucidate the complex relationship between migration, mobility, and labor-force participation, offering insights into the economic underpinnings of migratory decisions and their repercussions on family structures (Clark & Withers, 2002). Similarly, Cooke (2001, 2003) explores the dynamics of family migration, examining the labor-market participation of married women and the intricate balance between familial roles and economic activities (Cooke, 2001, 2003). These studies provide a foundational understanding of the economic motivations for migration and the resultant shifts in family roles and labor dynamics.

The psychosocial dimensions of migration extend beyond economic considerations, encompassing the emotional, psychological, and social facets of migrant lives. Dreby (2007) and Vathi and Duci (2015) explore the impact of migration on children and families, revealing how transnational family arrangements and return migration affect children's psychosocial well-being and identity formation (Dreby, 2007; Vathi & Duci, 2015). These works highlight the critical role of family dynamics in mediating the psychosocial outcomes of migration, emphasizing the importance of maintaining family cohesion and support systems amidst the challenges of displacement.

Health outcomes associated with migration further underscore the complex interplay between physical well-being and psychosocial health. Lu (2010, 2012) investigates the health implications of rural-urban migration in Indonesia, shedding light on the psychosocial stressors encountered by migrants and their families. The findings suggest that the migration process can exacerbate existing health disparities, with significant consequences for the mental and emotional well-being of migrants and their families (Lu, 2010, 2012). Similarly, Wen and Lin (2011) and Zhao et al. (2017) examine the long-term impacts of parental migration on children's development and

psychosocial health in China, pointing to the mitigating and exacerbating factors that influence children's well-being in the absence of their migrant parents (Wen & Lin, 2011; Zhao et al., 2017).

The literature on family migration and integration underscores the need for a comprehensive research agenda that addresses the multifaceted nature of migration and its impacts on family life and individual identity. Eggebø and Brekke (2019) call for a nuanced exploration of family migration processes, advocating for studies that consider the interconnections between migration policies, family dynamics, and integration outcomes (Eggebø & Brekke, 2019). This perspective is echoed by Mabandla, Marchetti-Mercer, and Human (2022), who examine the meanings and experiences of international migration within South African families, highlighting the diverse ways in which families navigate and make sense of their migratory experiences (Mabandla et al., 2022).

Building upon these insights, our study aims to contribute to the burgeoning field of migration research by focusing on the psychosocial impacts of migration on family roles and identity. Through a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with migrants and their families, we seek to unravel the complex web of emotional, social, and cultural transformations that accompany the migration journey. By examining the shifting dynamics of family roles, the renegotiation of personal and collective identities, and the emotional and psychological challenges faced by migrants, this study endeavors to provide a holistic understanding of the psychosocial landscape of migration.

In conclusion, the body of literature on migration, family dynamics, and psychosocial well-being provides a rich tapestry of theoretical and empirical insights that inform our study. By situating our research within this broader context, we aim to illuminate the nuanced ways in which migration shapes and reshapes family roles and identities, contributing to a deeper understanding of the psychosocial dimensions of migration and their implications for policy and practice.

# 2    Methods and Materials

## 2.1    Study Design and Participants

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the psychosocial impact of migration on family roles and identity. Given the complexity and depth of personal experiences related to migration, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate to capture the nuanced perceptions

and lived experiences of individuals and families undergoing migration.

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of migratory experiences, including variables such as country of origin, age, gender, migration status, and length of time since migration. The study aimed for theoretical saturation, with the recruitment process continuing until no new themes emerged from the interviews, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the research topic.

Participants provided informed consent, were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Personal identifiers were removed from transcripts to maintain privacy.

## 2.2    Measures

### 2.2.1    Semi-Structured Interview

Data were collected exclusively through semi-structured interviews, allowing for a flexible and in-depth exploration of participants' experiences while maintaining a consistent structure across sessions. The interview guide was developed based on a review of relevant literature and preliminary consultations with experts in migration studies. It included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives about the impact of migration on family roles, relationships, and individual identity. Interviews were conducted in a location chosen by the participant, ensuring a comfortable and private setting, and were audio-recorded with consent. Each session lasted between 60 to 90 minutes.

## 2.3    Data Analysis

The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. This method was selected for its flexibility and effectiveness in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Initial codes were generated by examining the data line-by-line. These codes were then grouped into potential themes, which were reviewed and refined in an iterative process, ensuring they accurately represented the dataset as a whole.

## 3    Findings

In this study, we engaged with a diverse group of 24 participants, each bringing forth their unique migration experiences. The cohort comprised 12 females and 12 males, ensuring gender balance in the perspectives gathered. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 55 years, with a median age of 35, reflecting a wide spectrum of life stages and experiences related to migration. In terms of residency duration in the host country, 8 participants had lived there for less than 5 years, 10 had a residency ranging from 5 to 10 years, and 6 had been in the country for over 10 years, allowing for a broad exploration of short-term versus long-term migration impacts. Educationally, the participants varied widely, with 8 having completed secondary education, 10 holding undergraduate degrees, and 6 possessing postgraduate qualifications, illustrating diverse educational backgrounds and opportunities.

**Table 1**

*The Results of Thematic Analysis*

| Categories (Themes) | Subcategories (Subthemes) | Concepts (Open Codes) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adjustment and Adaptation | Cultural Integration | Language barriers, Cultural practices, Religious observance, Dietary changes, Holiday celebrations |
| | Educational Challenges | School system navigation, Language proficiency, Peer relationships, Academic performance, Extracurricular activities |
| | Employment and Financial Stability | Job search difficulties, Credential recognition, Wage disparity, Financial support for family, Savings and remittances |
| | Social Networks and Community Support | Formation of new friendships, Engagement with diaspora communities, Access to community resources, Isolation and loneliness |
| Identity and Belonging | Family Role Dynamics | Shifts in parental authority, Changes in child-rearing practices, Gender role transformations, Elder care responsibilities |
| | Personal Identity Transformation | Sense of belonging, Dual identity, Loss of cultural identity, National pride, Personal growth and resilience |
| | Interactions with the Host Society | Experiences of discrimination, Solidarity and support from locals, Cultural exchange, Stereotypes and misconceptions |
| Emotional and Psychological Well-being | Stress and Coping Mechanisms | Migration trauma, Stress management strategies, Mental health services utilization, Spiritual and religious coping, Social support |
| | Intergenerational Conflicts | Parent-child cultural gaps, Educational aspirations, Language discordance, Respect for elders, Autonomy and independence |

| Loss and Grief | Nostalgia for homeland, Mourning lost relationships, Changes in social status, Grieving cultural loss |
| Hope and Resilience | Future aspirations, Positive adaptation, Strength in family unity, Community solidarity, Cultural preservation |

In presenting the qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews on the psychosocial impact of migration on family roles and identity, we organized our findings around three main themes: Adjustment and Adaptation, Identity and Belonging, and Emotional and Psychological Well-being. Each theme encompasses a range of subthemes, which are further delineated by specific concepts, reflecting the rich and nuanced experiences of our participants. Below, we detail these findings, incorporating illustrative quotes from interviews to provide depth and context to our analysis.

### 3.1 Adjustment and Adaptation

Participants described various facets of Adjustment and Adaptation to their new environments, highlighting challenges and strategies across four key areas:

Cultural Integration: Many participants spoke of the struggle to navigate language barriers, with one individual stating, "It's like starting life anew, where even buying groceries feels like a test of my language skills." Cultural practices, religious observance, and dietary changes were also significant, with another participant noting, "We try to keep our traditions alive, to remember who we are amidst all these changes."

Educational Challenges: Families with children pointed out difficulties in school system navigation and academic performance. "My daughter feels torn between the school culture here and our ways at home. It's hard for her to find where she belongs," shared one parent.

Employment and Financial Stability: The theme of employment surfaced repeatedly, particularly the issue of credential recognition, with one participant lamenting, "Back home, I was a teacher. Here, my degree means nothing." Financial support for families and the importance of savings and remittances were also emphasized.

Social Networks and Community Support: The role of new friendships and community resources was crucial for adaptation. "Finding people from our country here was a lifeline for us," said one respondent, illustrating the importance of diaspora communities.

### 3.2 Identity and Belonging

Under Identity and Belonging, participants expressed how migration influenced their sense of self and their relationships with both their countries of origin and the host society:

Family Role Dynamics: Shifts in family roles were common, often challenging traditional dynamics. "I used to lead our family decisions, but now my wife has a job, and I'm at home with the kids. It's different, but we're making it work," one father shared.

Personal Identity Transformation: Participants discussed the dual identity and the journey towards blending their cultural heritage with their new identities. "I feel like I'm both from here and there, but sometimes, neither," a young adult reflected.

Interactions with the Host Society: Encounters with discrimination were contrasted with stories of solidarity. "When my neighbor stood up for me, I felt welcomed for the first time," recounted one individual.

### 3.3 Emotional and Psychological Well-being

The theme of Emotional and Psychological Well-being captured the emotional landscapes of migrants, including:

Stress and Coping Mechanisms: The stress of migration was palpable, with one participant stating, "Every day is a struggle, but we find strength in our community and faith."

Intergenerational Conflicts: Differences between parents and children, especially regarding cultural and educational expectations, were highlighted. "My son wants to be American, but we don't want him to forget where he comes from," a mother explained.

Loss and Grief: Participants spoke of nostalgia and mourning for what was left behind. "I miss the sounds of my city, the smell of rain on its streets. It's a constant ache," shared one participant.

Hope and Resilience: Despite the challenges, many expressed optimism and resilience. "We've faced so much, but we dream of a better future here," said one, encapsulating a sentiment of perseverance.

## 4 Discussion and Conclusion

In the qualitative exploration of the psychosocial impact of migration on family roles and identity, the analysis yielded three main themes: Adjustment and Adaptation, Identity and Belonging, and Emotional and Psychological Well-being. These themes encapsulate the multifaceted experiences of migrants as they navigate the complexities of new social landscapes, renegotiate their identities and family roles, and encounter various emotional and psychological challenges. Each theme is further divided into specific categories, with Adjustment and Adaptation encompassing Cultural Integration, Educational Challenges, Employment and Financial Stability, and Social Networks and Community Support. Identity and Belonging comprises Family Role Dynamics, Personal Identity Transformation, and Interactions with the Host Society. Lastly, Emotional and Psychological Well-being includes Stress and Coping Mechanisms, Intergenerational Conflicts, Loss and Grief, and Hope and Resilience, offering a comprehensive view of the diverse impacts of migration.

The theme of Adjustment and Adaptation addresses the immediate and practical challenges migrants face upon relocation. Cultural Integration includes concepts such as language barriers and cultural practices, highlighting the efforts to blend into the new culture while preserving original identities. Educational Challenges cover the struggles of navigating new educational systems and achieving academic success, reflecting the importance of education in the integration process. Employment and Financial Stability touch on the difficulties of finding suitable employment and managing financial responsibilities, crucial for establishing a new life. Lastly, Social Networks and Community Support illustrate the significance of building new relationships and accessing community resources, underscoring the role of social support in adaptation.

Identity and Belonging delve into the deeper, more existential impacts of migration, examining how individuals and families redefine themselves in new contexts. Family Role Dynamics encompasses shifts in familial responsibilities and structures, showing how migration can alter traditional roles. Personal Identity Transformation explores changes in self-perception and the development of a dual or hybrid identity, reflecting the negotiation between past and present selves. Interactions with the Host Society highlight experiences of acceptance and discrimination, indicating the societal influences on migrants' sense of belonging.

Finally, Emotional and Psychological Well-being captures the emotional landscapes and mental health challenges associated with migration. Stress and Coping Mechanisms identify the sources of stress for migrants and the strategies employed to manage these pressures. Intergenerational Conflicts point to tensions arising from differing cultural values and expectations between parents and children, illustrating the family as a site of negotiation and conflict. Loss and Grief articulate the feelings of mourning for the life left behind, while Hope and Resilience underscore the optimism and strength found amidst the challenges, showcasing the human capacity to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity.

Our findings regarding the challenges of Adjustment and Adaptation resonate with Clark and Withers' (2002) analysis, which emphasizes the intricate relationship between migration, mobility, and labor-force participation. The struggle with cultural integration, educational challenges, employment, and establishing social networks echoes Cooke's (2001, 2003) exploration of how family migration influences the labor market participation of married women and underscores the significance of "trailing" family members' adaptation processes (Cooke, 2001, 2003). Moreover, the emphasis on social networks and community support in facilitating adaptation aligns with Lu's (2012) findings on the importance of social support for migrants' psychosocial health (Lu, 2012).

The theme of Identity and Belonging highlights the profound impact of migration on personal and collective identities. The narratives around family role dynamics and personal identity transformation mirror the observations made by Dreby (2007) regarding the power dynamics within Mexican transnational families (Dreby, 2007). Furthermore, our findings concerning the duality of identity and the quest for belonging among migrants contribute to the discourse initiated by Eggebø and Brekke (2019), who advocate for a nuanced understanding of family migration and integration processes (Eggebø & Brekke, 2019). The renegotiation of identity and belonging, as experienced by our participants, also aligns with Mabandla, Marchetti-Mercer, and Human's (2022) study on the meanings and experiences of international migration within families, illustrating the complex interplay between migration, identity, and familial relationships (Mabandla et al., 2022).

The reported impacts of migration on Emotional and Psychological Well-being underscore the critical need for support systems and interventions targeting migrants' mental health. The stress and coping mechanisms identified in our

study are consistent with Lu's (2010) research on the health outcomes of rural-urban migrants in Indonesia, which highlights the psychosocial stressors faced by migrants (Lu, 2010). Similarly, the narratives of loss, grief, and resilience found in our study echo the findings of Wen and Lin (2011) and Zhao et al. (2017), who examine the psychosocial well-being of children affected by parental migration (Wen & Lin, 2011; Zhao et al., 2017). These studies address the multifaceted nature of migration's impact on mental and emotional health, highlighting the importance of considering these aspects in migration policies and support services.

Our study's findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the psychosocial impacts of migration, offering insights that are both unique and affirming of existing research. For instance, the emphasis on the transformation of family roles and the challenges of cultural integration and adaptation are themes that have been extensively documented in studies such as those by Cooke (2001, 2003) and Clark and Withers (2002). Similarly, our exploration of identity and belonging adds depth to the discussions initiated by Dreby (2007) and Eggebø and Brekke (2019), further highlighting the complexity of migrant experiences in negotiating personal and collective identities in new social landscapes (Clark & Withers, 2002; Cooke, 2001, 2003; Dreby, 2007; Eggebø & Brekke, 2019).

Moreover, the emotional and psychological ramifications of migration, as delineated through our themes, align with the findings of Lu (2010, 2012) and underscore the importance of addressing the mental health needs of migrants (Lu, 2010, 2012). These parallels not only validate our findings but also reinforce the need for comprehensive migration policies that consider the psychosocial dimensions of migration.

This study illuminated the profound psychosocial impacts of migration on family roles and identity through the exploration of three main themes: Adjustment and Adaptation, Identity and Belonging, and Emotional and Psychological Well-being. Our findings revealed the multifaceted challenges migrants face, from the struggles of cultural integration and navigating new social and employment landscapes to the complex renegotiations of family dynamics and personal identity. Furthermore, the study highlighted the significant emotional and psychological stressors associated with migration, including loss, grief, and the ongoing quest for resilience and hope amidst adversity. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate processes through which

migration influences individuals and families, underscoring the necessity of supportive practices and policies.

The investigation into the psychosocial impact of migration on family roles and identity underscores the transformative nature of migration experiences. The findings reveal not only the challenges and adaptations required by migrants but also the resilience and dynamic reconfiguration of identities and family roles in the face of change. This study contributes to the body of literature by providing nuanced insights into the lived experiences of migrants, offering a foundation for more empathetic and effective support systems that acknowledge the complexity of migration's impact on individuals and families.

This study, while providing valuable insights, is not without its limitations. The qualitative nature and the reliance on semi-structured interviews limit the generalizability of the findings. The sample size, though sufficient for thematic saturation, represents a small fraction of the migrant population, potentially overlooking diverse experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, the focus on specific communities and migration pathways may not fully encapsulate the wide array of migration experiences globally.

Future research should aim to expand the scope of investigation to include a broader range of migrant experiences, potentially through quantitative studies or mixed-methods approaches that can complement the findings of this study. Longitudinal research could also provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of migrants' psychosocial experiences over time. Additionally, exploring the intersectionality of migration, including factors such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status, would deepen the understanding of the diverse impacts of migration on individuals and families.

The findings of this study have important implications for practice, particularly for policymakers, community organizations, and mental health professionals. There is a clear need for culturally sensitive support services that address the complex psychosocial needs of migrants. Policies should aim to facilitate easier integration into the labor market and educational systems, while also providing platforms for cultural expression and community building. Mental health services tailored to the unique experiences of migrants can play a crucial role in addressing the emotional and psychological challenges identified. Ultimately, the insights from this study advocate for a holistic approach to supporting migrants, emphasizing the importance of

community, identity, and well-being in the migration experience.

## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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The cooperation of all participants in the research is thanked and appreciated.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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