

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Digital Media “Application”: A Parenting System among Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The sending of migrant workers abroad results in neglected children. These children are prone to be ‘left behind’ due to the lack of care from their parents or foster parents (caregiver). This study aimed to examine collaborative parenting mediated by community cadres that involved the role of the migrant workers with the utilization of digital media to prevent the children from being left behind. **Methods:** This study applied the descriptive method by interviewing 39 informants. This research found that the community of migrant workers’ senders developed collaborative parenting to prevent the children from being left behind. Collaborative parenting referred to parenting of Migrant Worker’s Children mediated by community cadres by involving the role of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) living abroad and the use of digital media. **Results:** : The diverse media alternatives available today have made the parenting process more “natural”. In this sense, the parents can undergo the effective parenting process as in reality although living separately from their children. **Conclusions:** Media has transformed distant-parenting patterns enabling parenting styles closer to what they will normally do at home. Therefore, advanced communication has restored the parents’ ability to control and discipline their children as well as oversee them in more effective ways.

**Keywords:** Neglected children, Children left behind, Collaborative parenting, Negotiated provisional family, Poly-media

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## INTRODUCTION

Sending Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) raises many problems, one of them related to neglected children. Hence, IMWs generates negotiated provisional family to solve such issues. This term is introduced by (1) as part of a risk society (2), in this research faced by IMWs. Negotiated provisional family refers to a family where the husband and the wife maintain their marital status although they are living separately in different countries, for instance, women from southern migrating to the northern countries to work as domestic workers and left their children (3). This term has been rewritten in other words, such as multicultural families transnational

families and world families (3). Transnational families (4) (5), and world families (6)

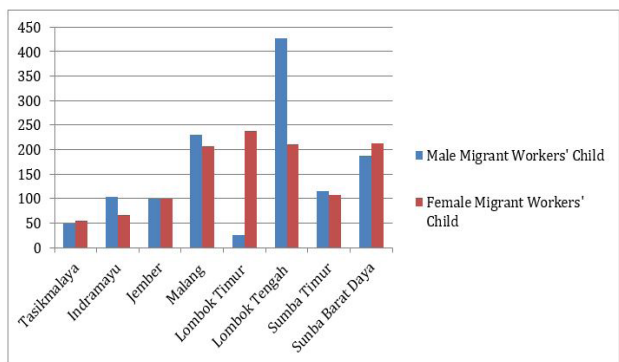
Negotiated provisional family is created through *freisetzung*, freedom in the individualization process (1). The freedom here concerns marital bonds, family, and neighborhood. *Freisetzung* constitutes emancipation, in which women workers dare to make decisions in marriage and family institutions to break traditional bonds, thus creating the negotiated provisional families (7). Accordingly, their children are left by one of the parents (this study will focus on the female parents) or both parents and they are the potential to experience abandonment due to the lack of care provided by either the parents or caregivers.

The migrant workers discussed in this study refer to Law Number 18 the Year 2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, consisting of documented

or undocumented domestic workers, nurses, and cabin crews. ILO reported that the number of global migrant workers is 2.2 billion. Alongside the Philippines, Indonesia contributes the highest number of migrant workers (8). About 11.5 million of the total number of migrant workers worldwide works in the domestic sector, while a quarter in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Three-quarters of them are low-skilled workers. As stated by Law Number 18 the Year 2017, Indonesian migrant workers consist of domestic workers, nurses, and ship crews, either the documented or the undocumented ones.

As reported by National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers the number of Indonesian migrant workers going abroad by the end of July 2020 is 4,304. This number is much lower than the data of July 2019 as much as 24,828. The decrease is mostly caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the stipulation of the Decree of the Indonesian Ministry of Labor Number 151 the Year 2020 concerning the moratorium of Indonesian migrant workers' placement. Despite the moratorium, some migrant workers had been living abroad and unable to return to Indonesia. They had left their families and had a more complex problem than those who migrated with all of their families. Migrant workers may not face the same problem, but they all have issues related to their children (50).

Data published by National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers in 2020 (9) stated that the majority of Indonesian migrant workers were female and working in the domestic sector. Most of them have worked for three years; 44% were married; 14.5% were divorced and 41.5% were single. About 58.5% have the potential to neglect their children. Neglected children refer to those children who are not looked after, are unkempt, abandoned, and unattended (10) (11). which are consequently prone to be 'children left behind' and lack of proper care from parents or foster parents (caregiver). Defines children left behind as a condition faced by children related to the disparity of material, educational, and health welfare when their parents migrate to work (12).



Source: The Institute for Social and Developmental Research (LPKP, 2019)

**Figure 1. Number of Migrants Workers' Children who were abandoned by their mothers or both parent in 8 districts in Indonesia.**

Based on the data released by the Institute for Social and Developmental Research (Figure 1) there were 3346 Indonesian children left by their mothers or both parents worked abroad. They are distributed mainly in four provinces and eight regencies, as presented by the diagram below:

They are Indramayu and Tasikmalaya Regencies in West Java Province, Jember, and Malang Regencies in East Java Province, East Lombok, and Center Lombok Regencies in West Nusa Tenggara Province, and East Sumba, and West east Sumba Regencies in Southeast Nusa Province. Migrant workers' children in Tasikmalaya consist of 50 boys and 55 girls. In Indramayu, the number of migrant workers children are 104 boys and 67 girls. In Jember, they are 100 boys and 100 girls, while in Malang 231 boys and 207 girls. In East Lombok Regency of West east Nusa Province, they are 26 boys and 238 girls, whereas in Center Tengah Regency 427 boys and 210 girls. In East Nusa Tenggara Province, the number of migrant workers' children is 116 boys and 107 girls in East Sumba regency, and 50 boys and 55 girls in West east Sumba regency. The total number of Indonesia migrant workers is 1692 boys (50.7%) and 1644 girls (49.28%) (51).

In the four provinces, 872 do not have birth documents, while 1032 do not have access to social assistance and education and 16 had experienced sexual harassment from their friends and neighbors. Children left by their parents to work abroad had lower cognitive ability than those living with their parents. Psychologically, the children of migrant workers tend to be antisocial and reserved (13). On the other hand, *Paguyuban Peduli Buruh Migran and Perempuan Seruni, Banyumas* in association with Tifa Foundation (14) revealed that the condition of children left behind raised patterns of undisciplined behaviors. Abandonment from parental care eventually implied their education (15).

Most of the remittance is allocated to family consumption. Accordingly, remittance does not always positively affect the decreasing of the poverty rate. A study conducted by Deb and Seck in Mexico and Indonesia showed a negative correlation (trade-off) between the increasing income and consumption of migrant worker family and the emotional/psychological condition of the family living in their homeland. Another study suggested that children, left by their parents to migrate when they were seven years old or younger, showed greater symptoms of depression and restlessness. This finding most likely occurs in children who are separated from migrated mothers or both parents.

The migrated father or mother also provides different results. Attempted to compare the effect of migrated fathers and migrated mothers on children (16). The findings showed that migrated mothers affected more negatively. The absence of mothers has more severe effects than the absence of fathers. The absence of

mothers in the long-term negatively affects the children's education in Thailand, the Philippines (17).

The children of migrant workers experiencing children left behind encounter numerous issues, such as the lack of care, husbands not caring for their children disintegrating traditional families. Some of these children even experience teenage pregnancy, consumerism, criminal gang involvements, drug abuse, poor academic achievements, a crisis of care provided by grandmothers, and other complicated social problems (18).

Imbalance family structure implies that the children of migrant workers' experience more complex problems if their mothers work abroad than that of their fathers. When a father works abroad, the children are easy to be supervised and protected by their mother. The findings of The findings of the Institute for Social and Developmental Research (2019) show there are 1623 children of migrant workers living under their mothers' protection, 584 under their fathers, 605 under their grandparent', and 524 under their relatives. It is very difficult for the children to access basic services (19). Hence, this study emphasizes the care provided by fathers, grandmothers, and relatives.

To prevent them from being children left behind, Indonesia applies several policies. The policies related to social welfare as stated in Law Number 11 the Year 2009. The law defines the implementation of social welfare conceptualized as directed, integrated, and sustainable attempts made by the central, regional governments, and society in forms of social facilities to implement basic needs for all citizens, consisting of social rehabilitation, social security, social empowerment, and social protection. Another policy is Law Number 35 the Year 2014 as the amendment of Law Number 23 the Year 2002 concerning child protection, which mandates all children, including the children of migrant workers, have the right to obtain protection.

Law Number 35 the Year 2014, the amendment of Law Number 23 on Child Protection states that parents refer to birth fathers/mothers, stepfathers/mothers, and foster fathers/mothers. As parents, they are responsible for

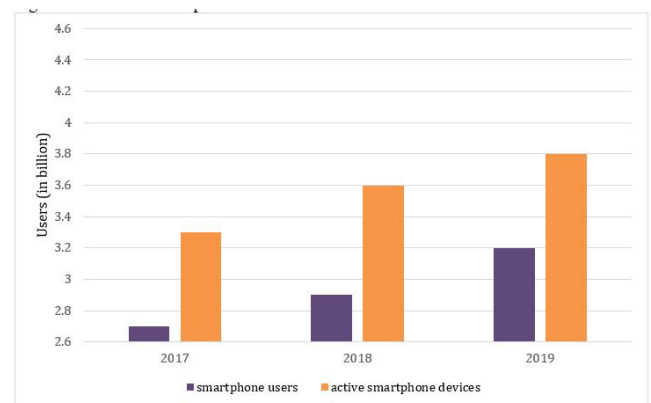
1. caring for, nurturing, educating, and protecting their children;
2. raising their children based on their potentials, talents, and interests. This policy should serve as the basis for preventing them from being children left behind in Indonesia.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years (20). In this study, the concept of migrant workers children is defined as a person under the age of 18-year-old who lives and grows in the absence of the mother or both parents. Their mothers or both their parents leave them to work as migrant workers abroad. As the children

of migrant workers, they have lost some privileges, such as not having birth documents, unable to access social assistance and services, and get protection from sexual harassment. The caregivers and relatives also have poor knowledge and understanding about the concept and rights of children so that they respond to the problems faced by migrant worker children as normal problems.

When a mother or both parents leave their children and work as migrant workers, a new system of a surrogate parent is needed. The system requires coordination between the stakeholders, families, society, NGOs, and the government (21). In this study, migrant workers children, community cadres, and IMWs collaborate to develop distant parenting by using digital media. From eight regencies in four provinces, only the Malang Regency of East Java Province implements distant parenting (19). This does not mean distant parenting does not occur in other areas. This study uses data from Institute for Social and Developmental Research.

Recently, digital media of interpersonal communication mostly use smartphones. The number of worldwide smartphone users continues to grow every year (22). In 2019, there were 3.2 billion users, an increase of 5.6% from 2018, while the number of active gadgets was 3.8 billion units. Indonesia is the sixth-largest country with active smartphone users after China, India, the USA, Russia, and Brazil with 73 million smartphone users or



Source: Newzoo (2019)

**Figure 2 : Number of Smartphone Users Worldwide**

27% of total smartphone users around the world.

Digital media in interpersonal communication greatly vary, not only the message conveyed but also the moral consequences in choosing the media used mentions polymedia. Polymedia is not only a technological shift but also social relations with technology. Indonesian migrant workers consider not only the cost and convenience but also the reasons behind selecting the media used as an activity that forms social relation that can be chosen based on the social condition of the users. This study explores the problems experienced by migrant workers from the perspectives of media and cultural studies. This study is similar to previous

studies on the options of media platforms by the urban community in Ghana (23), the use of media by Chinese students studying in Hong Kong to communicate with their fellow students and relatives in mainland China (24), the narration of literary works through Facebook by Indonesian workers in Singapore (25), the use of smartphones to organize a protest as a form of Indonesian migrant workers activism in Hong Kong (26), the use of digital media among Philippines workers with different purposes from the original functions of each of the media (27). The communication pattern of Vietnamese transnational family in Australia (28), and the use of media among migrants students in Singapore (29). This research emphasizes the relation between media and social relation in conveying emotions and morals between the identity as a mother and as a breadwinner for their family in nurturing and preventing them from being children left behind mediated by community cadres

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study applied the descriptive method with the qualitative approach by interviewing 39 informants. There were several stages applied in this study. The first stage was to employ purposive sampling in determining the location of the study. Donomulyo District, Malang Regency of East Java Province were selected for several reasons. First, based on the data released by Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Board, the number of Indonesian migrant workers working abroad by the end of July 2020 was 4,304 people. East Java was the province sending the largest migrant workers among 34 provinces in Indonesia. By the end of July 2020, the province has sent 2,093 migrant workers mostly from Malang Regency, and the Donomulyo district in Southern Malang is the one with the most migrant workers, as many as 185. Second, the IMWs was going to various countries, such as Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and Hong Kong. Such different countries result in different cultures, which in turn affected the different use of social media by the workers. Third, the assistance provided by the community cadres as a form of distant parenting for the children of migrant workers by involving the migrant workers through digital media use.

The second stage was data collection, conducted through observation to discover patterns of communication in a negotiated provisional family. The researchers attempted to observe the use of social media by the IMWs and to explore how the IMWs and their families navigated their social media and how both relational dynamics constructed these ways. It was important to capture cultural differences in the context of the relationship

between the IMWs and their families.

In addition to the observation, the researchers conducted Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Ten participants attended the FGD, one from Social, Labors, and Transmigration Office, one from Education Office, one from child protection institute, two represented NGO, namely the Institute for Social and Developmental Research and the Institute for Integrated Child and Women Protection and 3 community cadres.

The third stage was an in-depth interview with the family members whose mothers were migrant workers working abroad, and the children of the migrant workers. The interview applied the life history approach (30). The in-depth interviews targeted 22 family members of the migrant workers, consisting of 10 relatives, 4 husbands, and 8 children. The interviews were also conducted on 7 migrant workers working abroad via phone calls. This study adopted a qualitative method to obtain detailed information on the life history of migrant workers' children and prioritized individual social intimacy (31). Migration can be perceived as a process rather than as an event (30). The final stage was the data analysis. The collected data were classified and identified based on themes before being analyzed.

## **ETHICAL CLEARANCE**

This study was approved by Lembaga Inovasi, Pengembangan Jurnal, Penerbitan dan Hak Kekayaan Intelektual, Universitas Airlangga, and also approved by Institute of Research and Community Development, Universitas Airlangga.

## **RESULTS**

### **Collaborative Parenting**

It is not easy to decide the options of being migrant workers and leave their children. The decision originates from a phenomenon driven by compulsive conditions (32). The migrant worker situation is not a unique phenomenon that occurs only in Indonesia. It also occurs in several countries, such as Vietnam Mexico, the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh, China Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, countries outside Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, and Burma (33).

Economic underdevelopment, low education, and the lack of job opportunities are among the reasons why women migrate. Multiple burdens borne by the women to sustain the life of their family have driven them to work abroad (34). It is a different reason from this study that perceives migration as an individualization process. The individualization process occurs as a rational choice

of individual behaviors (35). The decision-making is very individual so that every person has plans for his/her life. One of the logical consequences of migrant workers is the shifting of a nuclear family structure into an unbalanced one. The nuclear family now consists of a husband/father and children without the existence of a wife/mother. However, this change is not accompanied by the awareness of gender roles in the husbands and their families. When the role of a wife shifts into the breadwinner to sustain her family life, the husband should have taken the role of a substitute mother to care for their children during her working abroad. However, the husband does not automatically take the role although he can play it if he is willing to. Only a few husband taking such responsibility to care for their children. This may be caused by the internalized gender roles of the patriarchal society categorizing caring for children as domestic tasks assigned to women (36).

A father could have the potential to take the role of a substitute mother in caring for and nurturing their children during his wife working abroad (37). However, only a few husbands took the role in such circumstances. Only one family out of 13 being observed with the husband and the oldest son as the substitute mother (38). The rest, 12 families, delegated the caring for their children to the members of their extended family members (i.e. grandmothers, aunts, or grandfathers) and caregivers outside their family (37).

This phenomenon also occurs in the sub-districts of Purwodadi, Kedungsalam, and Mentraman of Malang Regency. The care for children whose mothers work abroad is delegated to the husbands, grandmothers, or other family members who become the substitute family. The children lose their basic rights to receive care, nurture, and protection to grow their potentials, talents, and interests as mandated by Law Number 35 the Year 2014 on Child Protection. As the consequence, the children of migrant workers tend to create new problems in the society, such as children left behind including educational (dropping out of schools and low academic achievements), health (malnutrition and developmental disorders), psychological problems (communication difficulties, easily irritated, lonely, selfishness, spoiled, and undisciplined). The care for APM will be different if their birth mothers nurture them. The role of a mother is vital in nurturing and educating her children and preparing for their future.

To prevent children from being left behind, Donomulyo district of Malang Regency in its three sub-districts of Purwodadi, Kedungsalam, and Mentraman develops collaborative parenting referring to distant parenting for migrant workers' children mediated by community cadres by involving the role of the migrant workers by using digital media. The number of community cadres

in the district is 34, consisting of 12 cadres from the Purwodadi sub-district, 14 from Kedungsalam, and 8 from Mentraman.

The parenting for the children of migrant workers aims to strengthen and empower the children whose mother or both parents work abroad. Collaborative parenting is expected to be more effective, due to the involvement of all parties nurturing the children, than the parenting by the father, grandmothers, and other family members. The involvement of all parties will make it easier to monitor the children and eventually leads to positive values for child development.

The role of a cadre is highly essential in handling the children of migrant workers with problems. A cadre must be able to adapt to the situations concerning the problems of abandoned children in the sub-districts of Malang regency. The distant parenting process for children of migrant workers mediated by cadres and involving the migrant workers and family members is performed three times a week at the scheduled time, or the cadres visit the children with problems. The problem might worsen if not handled immediately.

The cadres seek assistance and counseling provided by legal aid agencies, child protection institutes, psychologists, local midwives, primary healthcare centers, hospitals, health offices, education offices, and demography offices. This aims to solve problems encountered by the children of migrant workers, such as difficulties in communication, easily irritated, criminal gang involvements, sexual harassment, drugs abuse, bullying (by calling bad names such as anak oleh-oleh - souvenir kids, anak gendongan - kids carrier, anak unta - camel kids, anak rerumputan- grass kids, anak Pakistan - Pakistani kids, anak Arab- Arabic kids and anak Hongkong- Hongkong kids), low self-confidence, and difficulties in accessing basic needs (e.g. birth documents, education, and health).

As told by Tuti, one of the cadres.

"I visit the migrant workers children) whenever I have time, especially those having problems. I talk to them and their family. If the mother is a migrant worker, I also contact her via and we talk about the children through Whatsapp".

The activity is similar to consultation among cadres, caregivers, and the migrant mother. This activity aims to facilitate and reach solutions for problems faced by the caregivers. This collaborative parenting will foster sensitivity and act as a form of participation as awareness of the surrounding community, the ability to solve problems on their own, maximize local potentials as well as to raise social and material supports from the surrounding community. Collaborative parenting as

egalitarian and informed parenting (39).

## DISCUSSION

### The Use of Digital Media in Parenting among Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers

Migration possesses negative impacts on the children of migrant workers; one of them is child left behind, yet, it may also bring positive impacts. The result of an assessment on migrants in the Ponorogo regency showed that there were children of migrant workers who were able to complete their higher education (40). Their participation in higher education does not only rely on economic supports given through remittance but also be supported by intensive parenting patterns applied by the parents and relatives. Most of these children are raised through intensive parenting patterns performed by their families. Commonly, these children do not live in a consumptive way because their parents strictly educate them. This parenting awareness is vital in controlling the impacts of parent absence for a long period (40).

It is necessary to take serious efforts to protect the children of migrant workers abandoned by their parent(s). The children have the right to receive care and assistance from their closest ones. Analyzed of care triangle consisting of children (children left behind), migrant parents, and caregivers (non-migrant parent/other caregivers). They found that in general, their relatives (mostly their grandmothers or fathers, if the migrant parent was their mother) fostered the abandoned children (41).

Some parents also paid caregivers who were usually their relatives living in their hometown resulting in successful children with outstanding academic achievements. This phenomenon occurs on our respondent, Nia (a pseudonym), a 28-year-old female migrant worker from Purwodadi, Malang. She did not finish her secondary education and migrated to Taiwan for 4 years working as a nurse and babysitter. Nia educated her son since her son at the age of nine by sending a private tutor to help her son study and finish his school assignments. Since sending a private tutor, her son's grades were very satisfying and he is accepted in a public middle school. As she told:

"Since I decided to work as a migrant worker in Taiwan, I have more confidence to send a private tutor from my village to educate my son. They study for two hours every day, except on Saturdays and Sundays. I pay (the tutor) IDR 400k every month. Thank God, my son has outstanding grades and is accepted at a public middle school. I usually call the tutor whether the lesson has finished or not. After the lesson finished, I call the tutor. I even video call my son when he is not tired".

Nia prefers to use a private tutor than a community cadre to educate his son because it is easier for her to monitor him every day. After the lesson, she usually communicates with the tutor about her son's education

through Whatsapp/WA. Sometimes, she video calls her son to talk about his lessons.

Nia's motivation to become a migrant worker is her dream to provide a better education for his son. When she decided to migrate to Taiwan, it defies traditional roles concerning social values and the family institution. The traditional values expect women to be inside the house and nurture the children. However, for Nia, family bonds are one of the reasons for her migration. She migrated to provide economic supports for her son as well as her family. Nia's father works as a farm laborer.

Remittance is a way to show care and emotions to her family. In this sense, her migration is a family strategy for justification and widespread acceptance. At the same time, she realized that their family network would appear after their children were assured about the quality of parenting and childcare provided by their family. Therefore, women can migrate when their children are very close to their families.

A similar phenomenon was experienced by Eny, a 48-year-old migrant worker from Kedungsalam, Malang. She graduated from a private university. She migrated to Singapore for the first time when she was 24 years old through a legal agency and worked as a nanny. Her motivation to become a migrant worker was to support her younger siblings studying at middle school and high school. After 4 years living in Singapore, she got bored and went to Hongkong. Afterward, she returned to her hometown and married a local man who worked as a chicken farmer. After being married for six months, she decided to migrate to Singapore for two years and returned to Malang to renew her contracts before returning to Singapore. Two years later, she decided to have returned to her hometown and had a baby. One and a half years later, she gave birth to her daughter, Erna.

When Erna was 12 years old, Eny's family experienced financial problems and did not have the money to send her child to private school. Eny thought private schools were better than public schools and wanted a better education for her children. Eny decided to become a migrant worker again and went to Hong Kong when her daughter was 12 years old. Eny decided to become a migrant worker to help Erna study. Eny decided to return to Hong Kong, because Hong Kong offered a higher monthly salary, as much as IDR 8.000.000. As Eny told: "I prefer sending my daughter to a private school because the lessons in private schools are better. In private school, my daughter competes with other students. Thank God, my daughter can compete with other students whose parents are not migrant workers. Every night Erna studies with my sisters. When I have time, I video call my sisters to check whether she studies seriously or not."

From her statement above, the video call can provide the fact whether her daughter studies or not. She even asks her daughter to show her the results of the school exams or her assignments. Although Erna always studies with her aunts, the community cadres only monitor her academic achievements and psychological conditions. Eny also asks her mother about how Erna sleeps and what she eats. She uses video calls to communicate with everyone, including her husband, daughter, sisters, parents, and relatives. They often video call for 1-2 hours. Eny's "words" become "sufficient" to make her "present" in front of her family although she is distant during their discussion.

One time, she asked her sister to call her daughter. She wanted to introduce Erna to her employer. She has a very close relationship with her employer. Erna introduced herself as Eny's daughter. She also talked about her education and academic achievements.

Her daughter admits Eny as her mother. The identity as a mother is very important for women. Eny feels her family in Malang respects and appreciates her decision to work as a migrant worker. They consider her decision to work abroad a blessing. Recently, Eny does not want to be a migrant worker because she feels that her physical condition is not as fit as it used to be.

Eny's life history reveals many reasons to migrate and continue migrating to different countries at every phase of her life. As a woman, she struggles for her sisters and daughter. Although she has returned to her hometown to dedicate herself to raising her daughter, economic problems have driven her to renew her contract as a migrant worker because it is difficult to find job opportunities in her hometown to support her sisters and daughter.

Although financial need is a significant factor, it cannot merely explain Eny's determination to migrate and work abroad. For her, living in Singapore and Hong Kong is a "blessing" so that she can support her sisters and daughter. Eny feels she can help her family better through sending the remittance to her family in her hometown and be appreciated with her new status as a family member helping her family as well as gaining respect.

Similarly, Gita, a 40-year-old migrant worker from the Mentraman sub-district, resigned from her old job as a primary school teacher; the job that she did for six years. She followed her sister to migrate to Hong Kong and worked as a maid for a boutique-owner family. Although she could not use her bachelor's degree, she felt appreciated for the recognition and respect her family gave her.

Gita did not only receive a salary from her employer.

She also had the opportunities to learn about financial management from her employer. Eventually, the skill she learned was able to improve the prospect of her work and received extra income from her employer. An individualistic ambition, an egoistic desire to fulfill her financial needs is a very strong reason that has become an obligation that she had to fulfill. Though Gita felt that she was overqualified for her job, she was able to send her daughter to a nursing school in Malang.

While interviewed at her home, Gita, who has lived for four years in Hong Kong, expressed her desire to return to Hong Kong. She has a 17-year-old daughter. Community cadres have assisted Gita's daughter both in her study and in solving her problems related to gang involvements, delinquency, and poor school attendance. While Gita lived in Hong Kong, her daughter cares for her husband and grandmother. As Gita told:

"Since I left for Hong Kong, my daughter has become delinquent. She hanged with her gang at coffee shops and never went to school nor studied. Community cadres informed me about my daughter. Since that time, I routinely call the cadres via WA and video call my daughter"

From her statement, the role of community cadres is very important when the children of migrant workers experiencing children left behind. The cadres invite psychologists to treat and solve the problems faced by Gita's daughter. The psychologist visits once a week for three consecutive months and the cadres visit three times a week to monitor Gita's daughter. Gita regularly communicates with the cadres and the psychologist to discuss her daughter. Since that time, her daughter was not delinquent and involved in gangs anymore. Gita actively communicates with her daughter through video calls. She even followed her daughter on Facebook and Instagram to monitor her. Gita also posted photos of her father and grandparents on FB. The Roman migrants living in the UK also applied the same method to communicate with and monitor their families (42).

Another migrant worker, Sumini, graduated from a middle school. Her husband worked as a schoolteacher. Her family encouraged her to become a migrant worker. Under the permission of her husband, she migrated and became a housemaid in Saudi Arabia. She left her 4-year-old son with her parents. Six years later, she returned to her hometown in Mentraman, Malang after experiencing sexual harassment by her male employer. Her son called her mbak/ big sister instead of calling her mom. As Sumini told us:

"It broke my heart when my son calls me mbak. I almost got raped by my male employer. Luckily, I was able to refuse and called for help and my female employer heard. I directly proposed my resignation and returned to Indonesia. What I found here was my son called me mbak I rarely video called my son. I thought he was too young. He always refused to video call with me. Since that time, I never video-called him."

From her statement, she felt devastated when her son called her mbak, not to mention the sexual harassment she experienced. Her son is ten years old now. He refuses to obey her, refuses to study, and plays his PlayStation all the time. Community cadres help her son with his study. Even her teacher husband could not educate him. Lisa, a migrant worker from Purwodadi, Malang, experiences a similar case. She migrated to Malaysia when her daughter was 10 years old. Two years later, she returned and found her daughter did not recognize her anymore. Lisa felt so devastated that she cried all the time when she was alone. Although Lisa and her husband have successfully rebuilt their communication with their children, she described her experience as incomplete parenting. Her daughter even asked Lisa to go to Malaysia and never return to her hometown. As she stated:

“When I lived in Malaysia for 2 years, I always gave what she (my daughter) wanted. It was true that I seldom communicate with my daughter. I only communicate using WA with her.”

From her statement, Lisa felt that her existence was not as a complete mother. Besides that, she felt that she failed to play her role as a mother that her daughter rejected her while her motivation to become a migrant worker was to provide a better living for her daughter.

Lisa's daughter had poor academic achievements. She rarely did her school assignment since her mother worked abroad and after her mother returned. Community cadres have assisted Lisa's daughter, but the results were not satisfying.

From the informants, their motivation to migrate is very classical when it is merely driven by economic reasons (43). Migration becomes increasingly individualized, as a very rational choice of every individual to plan his/her own life (44) by creating a negotiated provisional family (1). The informants also receive recognitions and self-improvements (45). The recognition comes from their family and society because a more stable social status may help their family while self-improvement is to provide a better future for their children.

The success achieved by Gita, Nia, and Eny is mostly caused by the utilization of digital media. Digital media access significantly rectifies asymmetrical communications. Apparently, digital media is widely used by migrant workers to communicate with their family, such as among Philippines migrants living in London (45), Philippines migrants in New Zealand (46), African migrant workers in Europe (47), and Australian migrant workers in Denmark (4).

Digital media-mediated communication made the interaction between the migrant workers and their children very similar to real-world interaction (48). The interaction has replaced their physical presence with the help of media convergence accomplished by digital

media (27). The presence of the closest ones as if they are being there with them made a warm and emotional feeling creating intimacy though the intimacy is merely a hallucination (49).

Different platforms with wider coverage imply privacy and surveillance, therefore different parenting styles by a mother from the authoritarian to the permissive one tend to determine the form of mediated parenting. The mothers are determined to restore their role as a parent. This made them put extra effort to manage and supervise their children.

In digital media, connectedness occurs as one of the characteristics of interpersonal communication. In integrating more people in interactions, digital media emphasizes the shared meaning rather than a connection only. At this point, the interpersonal connection is elaborated into group connection. The function of interpersonal communication to build closeness and intimacy is maintained within digital space. Digital media even creates new indicators of personal closeness through interaction. In the communication among family members, intimacy and closeness are measured from the length and intensity of digital space interactions.

The informants (Nia, Eny, and Gita) spent about IDR 300,000 on connectivity costs. For transnational parents living separately from their family, the cost they pay serves as a reward for the remittance they sent to sustain their family. The most important thing for them is internet access and the ability to communicate with their children and relatives in their hometowns. Furthermore, by using video calls, they can supervise the parenting patterns performed by the husbands, grandparents, relatives (sisters), tutors, community cadres, or psychologists.

Not all families of migrant workers live in an area with good internet connectivity. Sumini and Lisa's family live in an area with bad connectivity. They have to spend 10 minutes to reach the nearby coffee shop whenever they want to communicate by using cell phones. If they are reluctant to go to the coffee shop, the only way the children communicate with their mother is by SMS or WA which seems not so effective to control their children that they become the children left behind.

The informants Nia, Eny, and Gita use video calls to communicate with their children. By using video calls, they can see their children and feel assured that they are in a good condition. However, they choose to communicate with their children using SMS or WA when they are sad or have problems. They do not want their children to worry about them. The media use gives them safety and control over the communication. A person tends to avoid voices and images of bad news or during a quarrel to prevent their families from worrying about them and what happens in their workplace.



When Gita lived in Hong Kong, her behavior has changed. When she had her day-offs, she gathered and hanged with their fellow workers. If her daughter video called her when Gita was with her friends, she would reject the call. She told:

“When I was hanging out with my friends, I wore my make-up to look beautiful. If my daughter video called me at that time, I would reject the call. I had to understand the condition where we lived. If my daughter saw me wearing my makeup and it is too flashy for her, she would imitate me. I don’t want her to imitate me. My daughter is a girl after all”

Staying in Hong Kong for a long time has changed Gita’s behaviors. The changes are very contradicting to the culture in her hometown, Malang. Gita realizes her decision to work as a migrant worker brings consequences of experiencing cultural changes that may contradict her original culture. Concerning the behavioral change, she experiences, Gita chooses to hide it from her daughter by rejecting the video call her daughter made by using WA or SMS instead.

Each digital medium used possesses its advantages offered to its users. Parents commonly use video calls to communicate with their children for its visual aspect that well covers all the needs, including school and daily needs. Migrant workers use video calls to present themselves while helping their children do their school assignments, showing their children gifts they have for them, how much the salary they got, or the new clothes they bought. On the other hand, when the migrant workers are having problems, such as being sick, having problems with their employers or fellow workers, they tend to use SMS or WA for its phatic functions as an emotional reminder that is more effective than other forms of media. As a migrant worker, a mother does not show the difficulties she has while living abroad not to worry their family while the caregivers remind the children to tell their mothers only the good news in order not to make their mother worry. The mother tendency to hide their problems not only from their children but also from their relatives, resulting in more complicated problems.

Generally, digital media still become an alternative for both migrant workers and their children to express their feelings. The migrant workers prefer using digital media because of its synchronicity and mobility. The digital media enable spontaneous use, not requiring plans to make a call, and can be adjusted based on their work-hour. Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Instagram provide contexts and opportunities in social life for migrant workers’ children. Gita, one of the informants also uses this media as the control function for her children.

As a popular platform, the existence of digital media facilitates interpersonal communication between a

woman (who also has the identity as a migrant worker, a breadwinner for her family, and a mother) and her children. The migrant worker has to optimize her potentials as a woman and her role as a mother, namely independence, responsibility, control over interactions, supervision, and education.

Digital media serve as an alternative to communicating within a negotiated provisional family. It unites the perspective of a mother and her children and shows how the characteristic of family relation has changed. The theory of polymedia is developed as the main contribution to understanding the interconnection between digital media and interpersonal communication. Negotiated provisional family requires constant negotiations and performative adjustments. This means that negotiated provisional family requires the implementation of distant parenting that utilizes digital media with all its negotiations accepted by all of family members and mothers as migrant workers. The negotiated provisional family depends upon a collective awareness among the family members that they all put their efforts to fulfill family needs. In negotiated provisional family, negotiations among family members is a never- ending process.

Every digital media implies moral and emotional assessments on the suitability of each medium with various situations called polymedia. Polymedia is not merely a technological shift. It connects social and technology. As the consequence, polymedia effectively helps the re- dissemination of technology because the responsibility of the choice has shifted from technical and economic to moral, social, and emotional concerns. Polymedia is not “a freedom process depending on the cultural genre of moral and emotional power”. It means the process of digital media involvement entails some cultural specifications. Some features make the process “Malang-specific” and individual communication styles closely related to the family (27).

Women working as migrant workers experience reterritorialization ambivalence of their two identities, the identity as a mother and the identity as a breadwinner or migrant worker (27). Their separation from their children is motivated by their desire to provide for their children’s needs. At the same time, they chase their dreams and fulfill their personal needs through their jobs while providing care for their children.

The ambivalence between their professions and their family life often becomes the source of conflict for a woman. The conflict “the cultural contradiction of motherhood” . The migration affects the ambivalence between family life and their profession because of the reterritorialization experienced by the women. The ambivalence of a mother conflicts with the context of their daily needs as a worker when their children live in Malang, Indonesia while the care and the fulfillment of the daily needs are performed in other countries.

Migrant mothers experience a form of ambivalence as the result of reterritorialization. A mother migrates by negotiating with her husband and family and creates negotiated provisional family.

An interesting finding in this context is that the availability of various media alternatives has created a more 'natural' parenting for parents living separately from their children, meaning that the parenting performed by the parents is similar to reality. Media have tailored parenting patterns for parents living separately from their children. Therefore, advanced communication has become an effective surveillance device and restore the parents' ability to control and discipline their children.

## CONCLUSION

In general, the emergence of polymedia is the availability of various digital media alternatives where a user has at least several types of media that can help the migrant workers communicate with their children mediated by community cadres and tutors to prevent them from being children left behind. The user must have abilities and confidence in using digital media. The abilities and confidence in successfully delivering a message through the right media effectively and efficiently depending on how the user operates an application conveys the messages and understands the user device so that the message is timely delivered. The migrated mothers do them by negotiating with their husbands and family to educate their children in a negotiated provisional family.

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