

## **Family Leisure Affair: A Qualitative Study on Negotiating Leisure in Families with OFW Parent**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the Philippines, more than 10% of the total Filipino population is working overseas in order to provide a better future for their families. While the purpose of parental migration is for financial stability, the compositional change in the family can bring adverse effects on the children left behind. The sudden change in family composition, that is, having a parent away could affect the children's well-being and upbringing. More often than not, leisure becomes an avenue for parents to compensate for such change, directing leisure activities for the children's well-being. Thus, this study discusses how a Filipino family with a parent working abroad negotiates its leisure as a family. Specifically, the study describes the family's leisure before and after the departure of one parent and delves into how family members with an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parent establish their respective role in deciding on their family leisure. The study utilised the styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict and the Integrative Analysis of Negotiation as theoretical anchors, and employed four Key Informant Interviews (KIIS) for parents, four KIIs for child only, and a Family Group Discussion (FGD). Findings show that families with an OFW parent usually employ three styles of negotiation, namely: Accommodation, Collaboration, and Competition. The negotiation depends upon the type of leisure, the budget allotted for it, and the parties involved in the activity. Parents, either overseas or left behind, tend to be accommodating of their children's leisure requests. However, between parents themselves, competition of ideas and suggestions may arise, while children tend to be more collaborative among themselves.

**Keywords:** Negotiation, overseas-parent, leisure, communication risks

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

With the advent of globalisation, going overseas has become an economic, social, and political process. This phenomenon greatly affects the composition of not only a community, but of the smallest unit in the society, the family, as well. In the Philippines, more than 10% of the total Filipino population is working overseas in order to provide a better future for their families (Reyes, 2008). While the purpose

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of parental migration is to search for better job opportunities for the betterment of the family, the impact of crossing borders cannot be confined to economic aspects only. Migration affects multiple aspects of the lives of those who move and those who stay behind, including the well-being and interaction of the members within a family (Tanalega, 2002 as cited in Reyes, 2008).

### ***1.1 Research Problem and Objectives***

Research problem: How does a Filipino family with a parent working abroad negotiate their family leisure?

*General objective:* To explore family negotiation in determining family leisure when one parent is working overseas.

*Specific objectives:*

1. To determine how a family with an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parent defines family leisure
2. To describe the family's leisure participation before and after the departure of the OFW parent
3. To understand how members of a family with an OFW parent establish their respective roles in deciding on their family leisure
4. To identify and describe the negotiation styles (i.e., competition, avoidance, collaboration, accommodation, compromise) used by a family with an OFW parent in deciding their family leisure

### ***1.2 Significance of Study***

Families, being the fundamental units of a community, are considered to be the foundation of any society. Efficient communal dealings can branch out from effective family functioning, therefore, activities that are bound to strengthen the relationships of the members, such as family leisure, are considered crucial to the overall functioning of the family (Harrington, 2005). However, the increasing number of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parents has led to a change in the family composition, therefore affecting the usual patterns of interaction among family members. This includes decision making in the family, including matters regarding leisure that help define the family's lifestyle.

Conversely, while the departure of one parent is for the family's financial stability, the compositional change can bring adverse effects to the children left behind. Oftentimes, the family's leisure becomes an avenue for parents to compensate for such change and make an effort to direct the leisure activities towards the children's well-being (Tanalega, 2002 as cited in Reyes, 2008).

In this light, the researchers put forward the importance of decision making among and within family members as they pursue leisure activities even with the departure of a parent.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This paper looks at the relevant studies on family leisure and its relation to the different aspects of family relationships. Studies about leisure in the context of family

negotiations and family functions are examined. The literature review also looked into the role of parents and children in negotiating family leisure, as well as other factors that affect leisure as a family.

### **2.1 Families and Their Leisure**

Families remain as the fundamental unit of the society and various researchers have hypothesised that this is the reason why they remain a stronghold in the community. They are considered to have importance in the socio-economic realm, furthering their contributions to the society (Shaw, 2008; Alesina and Giuliano, 2007).

Families, in order to maintain their relevant contributions, are assessed through family functions such as cohesiveness, adaptability, and communications, among others (Shaw, 2008). It has been noted that family functions are improved by leisure while family time, family activities, and family vacation locations contribute to the changing ideologies.

Family leisure is a “parental commitment, organised and constructed for the benefit of the children and the family as a whole” (Shaw, 2008). Parents always think of the benefits the children would gain in family leisure participation, thus, making their children the top priority in leisure decision making. Moreover, parents make use of family leisure to demonstrate to their children the sense of family and belonging as well as family life and good parenting (Shaw, 2008).

Family leisure plays essential roles in family life as it produces positive family experiences for both the parents and children (Elliot, 2010). Problem solving and other activities allow family members to bond with each other and strengthen their relationships (Agate et al., 2009).

### **2.2 Family Leisure, Family Functioning, and Social Roles**

As mentioned above, family leisure produces positive family experiences, which in turn sustains a healthy function of the family. In a study that looked at travel leisure in different family structures, the style and frequency of family leisure is seen to aid the development of the family as a unit (McCreedy et al., 1992).

Family roles influence decisions regarding leisure in the family and can either restrain or encourage this activity. In current times, changes in the family composition, including the absence of one parent, and changes in household resources, such as the source of remittances, could change leisure motivations and satisfactions derived from them (McCreedy et al., 1992).

In order to understand family leisure, it is imperative to consider the family as a whole rather than individuals, especially because the interconnectedness of the family members provides dynamic tendencies that cannot be observed at the individual level (Zabriskie and McCormick, 2003 as cited in Elliot, 2010). It has been found that family leisure participation and enjoyment among Turkish people have no significant effect on their family life satisfaction (Aslan, 2009). Their family life satisfaction, as reported, is affected by traditional backgrounds which are likely related to the strength of their family bonds.

Similarly, it is proposed that in understanding family dynamics, the whole family system, including the influence of family structure and organisation, should be considered rather than simply studying the individual members or subgroups of a family (Hodge, 2011).

### ***2.3 Family Leisure and Differences in Parent Motivation***

Over the years, the influence of the parent's gender in family leisure has been steadily gaining attention from researchers who are interested in family leisure as a way of strengthening family interaction and bonding.

Family leisure should be viewed as a "purposeful" activity in order to fully understand parent motivations and preferences regarding such activities (Harrington, 2005). Both fathers and mothers value family leisure as it creates situations that will not only make the entire family communicate and bond together, but will instill lifelong values in their children as well. However, parents differ with regards to aspects of life and values to accentuate. While fathers equally recognise the importance of leisure in strengthening family bonds, the execution of family leisure is more often associated with mothers.

Mothers tend to look at family leisure as a way to inculcate in their children the importance of interpersonal communication as well as other aspects that appeal to their emotional intelligence. Mothers expect their children to acquire values from their leisure activities that would contribute to their social growth and psychological well-being such as being sociable, being able to negotiate effectively with other people, and building high self-esteem (Harrington, 2005).

On the other hand, fathers tend to be more inclined on instilling the essence of skills and technical knowledge to their children by means of leisure, rather than the importance of having good interpersonal relationship (Harrington, 2005). Moreover, the trend of increased father involvement in family leisure actually prompts more family cohesion and adaptability, thus pointing to effective overall family functioning (Buswell, 2010).

Both mothers and fathers see leisure as a significant avenue for inculcating values in their children. The parents' personal preference with regards to their gender is often reflected from the type of leisure activity that they choose for their children; more technical activities for fathers and more socio-emotional activities for mothers. Moreover, aspects of life and virtues that each parent deem important to be instilled in their children's value system are often manifested in their preferences of the type of activities they decide to pursue (Harrington, 2005).

### ***2.4 Family Negotiation and Decision Making***

Decision making is important in considering family leisure activities (Aslan, 2009). A family, in a household setting, is a basic decision unit with unique decision makers. There will always be a "benevolent dictator" in the family that the other members will try to please (Palma et al., 2013). However, it has been noted that traditional and modern families differ when it comes to decision making. A traditional family prefers the father or husband to be the dominant decision maker, while a modern family

prefers joint decision making (Ekasasi, 2005). In nuclear families, women are freer to voice out their decisions, but are less able to do so in an extended family because decisions of in-laws and other family members have to be considered as well (Arooj et al., 2013).

It is suggested that people should begin dissociating family leisure from the idealistic image of “happy family”, and recognise that the “diversity of family forms and structures”, including the presence of both parents, or the absence of either the mother or the father, influences the execution of leisure within the family (Harrington, 2005).

Maternal absence is found to have a more adverse impact on children left behind compared with paternal absence, as pointed out in an exploratory study on the influence of the parent gender on children with regard to parental migration (Cortes, 2007; Cortes, 2011).

### **2.5 Resource Management**

When it comes to decision making on family resources, the distinction between parents’ preferences over goods may affect the bargaining power among decision makers within the household. Likewise, one parent’s overseas migration affects the appropriation of household resources, therefore affecting the outcome for the children as well (Atman, 2012 as cited in Owusu, 2013).

Expense management in the family is greatly affected by the migration of one parent. While women are responsible for overseeing the expenses of the family, the decisions regarding property management remain in the hands of their husbands (Khalaf, 2009).

Moreover, besides decision making on family property, fathers seem to have a greater influence with regard to decisions related to children’s welfare. Since fathers have the highest authority within the household, the length of their absence due to migration leads to a huge change in influence in terms of the family’s decision making (Khalaf, 2009).

### **2.6 Children’s Involvement in Deciding Family Leisure**

Children’s knowledge and specific influential behaviors regarding their requests affect their negotiation with their parents. Thomson et al. (2007) looked at the effect of personal and peer experiences, and information shared by other children in the Internet on the various stages of the family decision making process. Another study found that daughters can influence the parent’s decisions more than sons (Wante and Winchester, 2011). Furthermore, it should be noted that a child’s say is more likely to be considered in deciding leisure in families where parents spend more time at work than with the family. Thus, these parents compensate the lost time with their children by giving them a higher purchasing power (Ali et al., 2012).

### **2.7 Family Leisure in a Nutshell**

Shared leisure can be considered as one of the experiences that bring the family together. Findings show that “family leisure is positively related to family functioning, cohesiveness, satisfaction with family life, healthy couple relationships, healthy

relationships between parents and their children, and family strength” (Hawkes et al., 1991 as cited in Hodge, 2011:5).

In various studies on family leisure, both parent(s) and children are seen to have different roles in deciding family leisure. The type of parenthood greatly influences family leisure as well as the motivations in creating one. Consequently, family leisure may be affected by the dichotomy of traditional and modern families, the roles of each member of the family, and the involvement of children in the process of decision making.

### ***2.8 Looking at Leisure in the Context of the Family***

While there have been numerous cross-sectional and multinational studies on family leisure and its effects on different aspects of family relationships and functions, only a few looked at negotiations that occur between parents and children in terms of decision making for a family leisure activity. Also, as these studies are based on other cultures, the results may vary in the context of the Filipino family and culture. Likewise, since there are very few studies that focus on Filipino leisure and most of them are analyses at the individual level, there is a dearth of knowledge on how a Filipino family negotiates on a leisure activity together.

Most importantly, there has been no research concerning family leisure negotiations within families where one parent works overseas. Still, studies on single-parent negotiations with their children on family matters are relevant as it could be used as a framework in this research since it is similar to the context of one parent being physically away from the family. Presented with scant literature on family leisure in the Philippine context, the researchers believe that the topic of leisure experience of a family with an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) is a distinct study worth pursuing.

## **3. STUDY FRAMEWORK**

To understand family negotiation in determining family leisure, this study was guided by the Five Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict and the Integrative Analysis of Negotiation models.

### ***3.1 Five Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict model***

In 1976, the Five Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict model by Mary Follet (1940 as cited in Rahim, 2011) was reinterpreted to consider and include the intentions of another party and came up with five styles of handling conflicts, namely collaboration, accommodation, competition, avoidance, and compromise (Thomas, 1976 as cited in Rahim, 2011).

Collaboration involves openness and exchange of information between parties, as well as an examination of differences to reach a solution acceptable to all the involved parties. Accommodation is associated with emphasising commonalities among members to satisfy the concerns of other parties. This style also includes the element of self-sacrifice and may take the form of obedience to the wishes of the other party. Competition, on the other hand, displays high concern for self and low concern for others and adopts a win-lose orientation and forcing behavior to win one’s position.

Avoidance displays a low concern for self and others. This style is often characterised by neither failure nor satisfaction towards one's own or the other party's concerns. Lastly, compromise involves arriving at a mutually acceptable decision and seeking a quick, middle-ground position among concerned parties.

The conflict in the study refers to the determination of specific leisure activities that the family should engage in. Since the model is orientated around interpersonal communication, the study looked into what goes in the negotiation process between the OFW parent and the left-behind parent, between the left-behind parent and children, and between the OFW parent and children.

### **3.2 Definition of Terms**

- a. Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parent - father or mother who:
  - i. actively communicates with his/her family regarding family engagement
  - ii. has worked overseas for at least three years
  - iii. has gone home at least thrice within the span of time given
- b. Left-behind parent: father or mother who serves as custodian of the children after the migration of his/her spouse
- c. Children left behind: offspring who live with the left-behind parent
- d. Negotiation: interaction between family members that aim to arrive at a decision for their family leisure
- e. Negotiation style: a specific way of dealing with an issue in order to arrive at a decision for a family's leisure
  - i. Accommodation: emphasising commonalities among family members to satisfy the concern of the other party
  - ii. Collaboration: openness and exchange of information between parties as well as examination of differences to reach a solution acceptable to all parties
  - iii. Compromise: arriving at a mutually acceptable decision and seeking a quick, middle-ground position among and between concerned parties
  - iv. Competition: displays high concern for self and low concern for others
  - v. Avoidance: displays low concern for self and others

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

The study used a qualitative approach to determine the negotiation between parents and their children with regard to the selection and/or creation of their family leisure. The said approach helped elucidate the phenomenon by probing how families with one parent working overseas define family leisure, describing the differences in their family leisure before and after the departure of the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) member, identifying how each member of the family assume their role(s) in decision making, and illustrating the negotiation styles they used to arrive at their decision.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) and a family group discussion (FGD) was used to gather data for the study. The study employed two groups of KII, one for parents only and another for children only, and one family group discussion involving a left-behind parent and the child(ren) left behind.

Exploratory by nature, the interviews were conducted to gather information on their experiences, insights and opinions to the given inquiries.

#### **4.1 Concepts and Indicators**

To achieve the research objectives, this study was guided by the following concepts and indicators:

Concepts	Indicators
Elements of the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overseas parent</li> <li>• Left-behind parent</li> <li>• Children</li> </ul>
Factors when negotiating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of family leisure activity</li> <li>• Time to do family leisure</li> <li>• Family members involved in the family leisure activity</li> </ul>
Types of leisure activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leisure activities the family engages in</li> </ul>
Family interaction outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family leisure activity finalised</li> </ul>

#### **4.2 Research Instrument**

This study utilised an informal and semi-structured guide to interview both parents and the children to establish a comfortable atmosphere between the researchers and interviewees. The guide was semi-structured to provide space for the emergence and probing of new information. The instrument used was varied depending on who the researchers were probing (e.g. parent-only interview guide had slight differences from children-only interview guide).

#### **4.3 Units of Analysis and Sampling**

The researchers utilised purposive and snowball sampling methods to identify the respondents for the key informant interviews. Filipino adolescents and parents with an OFW family member were invited for the interviews. Despite the use of convenient sampling, the researchers trust that the accuracy and depth of data were not sacrificed.

The interviewees were parents and child(ren) from families where one parent worked abroad. The children group composed of adolescents aged 8 to 21. The researchers decided to analyse this age group because research literature proved that children's autonomous decision increases in this age bracket (Lundberg et al., 2008). The parent group composed of parents with an OFW wife/husband that acts as the custodian of his/her child(ren).

#### **4.4 Data Gathering and Analysis**

The interviews were conducted from October to November 2014. The interviews were carried out on dates and places deemed convenient for the interviewees. The researchers used recording devices and took notes during the interviews.

The researchers employed a thematic technique of deriving and analysing the concepts from the interviews. Using a matrix, key points, similarities, and differences

were further examined. The important insights shared by the interviewees were used to further corroborate the findings of previous studies.

#### **4.5 Scope and Limitations**

This study focused on how the members of a Filipino family with one parent working overseas negotiate their family leisure with reference to the point of view of the parent and children left behind. This study did not conduct interviews with parents abroad, and thus considers the responses from the members left behind as the representative statement of the family. Furthermore, this study only looked into the families of OFW parents who have been working abroad for more than three years and who returned home at least thrice within the aforementioned timespan.

### **5. FINDINGS/RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Leisure Activities Rolled into One**

Family leisure allows a more dynamic interaction among its members. Even though their recreational activities are diverse, the family's bond becomes stronger since family leisure gives opportunities for family conversations which consequently improve quality time among the members. Although each family desires that all members partake in their recreational activities, however, absolute participation is not a necessary consideration for them to continue such activities.

One common practice among the families interviewed is going to the mall. Once in a while, the families dine out, do window shopping, or buy necessities. For the families, the mall is a place suitable for any leisure activity that each of them desire. They go to the mall together, but once they are inside, they allow each member to pursue their individual interests. While the family commonly dines together inside the mall, each of them has the freedom to visit various stores, play games in hubs, watch movies, and shop or window-shop. According to Erika, a child of an OFW father:

*Enjoy ka kahit na anong gustong gawin, walang mag-aaway. Feeling ko mas masaya yun kasi kanya-kanya kami pero magkakasama [Everyone is free to do whatever we want. To me, it is more fun because despite our different interests, we would still spend time together.]*

Although going to the mall is a common leisure activity for the family interviewed because of its convenience with regard to travel and schedule, there are still families who sought activities that enabled the family to hang out together. Mr. Rodel, husband of an overseas worker, spends his weekends biking with his son. On a similar note, Mrs. Em, a wife of an OFW, invites her sons to jog or take aerobic sessions with her. However, since their recreational pursuits have become habitual through the course of time, their child(ren) convince(s) them to do their usual endeavors even if they, as parents, had forgotten. The parents are aware of their child(ren) asking for bonding experiences for the family, and at the same time, the child(ren) are finding ways to have recreational activities. This increasing awareness leads them to include leisurely activities in their routine and other commitments.

Furthermore, some of the families' ordinary activities become their leisure activity after the departure of one of the parent. To them, these usual activities can be a way of strengthening the bond between and among the members who are left behind.

There are some families who integrate bonding activities when they go to the supermarkets, grocery stores or department stores. Discussing over what to buy makes both the left-behind parent and their child(ren) focused on one activity. Going to the supermarkets, grocery stores, or department stores are often followed up with dining out. Doing so gives them time to catch up with each other and share stories that are not usually discussed when they are at home. Erika shared, "*Kami ni Mama, pamamalengke lang, bonding na yun.* [My mother and I consider going to the market as a bonding activity]."

Another way for parents to engage the family in leisure activities is through religious practices. Being the only Christian country in Asia, the families, born and raised in the Christian faith, take their religious practices seriously such as going to church on a regular basis (Miller, 1996). Religion is a binding force for families which explains why parents want to impart religious values to their child(ren). Moreover, it has become custom for families to visit other places, be it malls, parks, other relatives' residence, or even food establishments, after attending church services. As the Christian faith is the dominant religion, this practice is still manifested among the interviewed families. According to Mrs. Em, "*Nagsisimba kami at nag-lalakad-lakad.* [We go to the church and afterwards, we stroll around]." Adding to this, Mrs. Jen affirmed that, "*Kapag may kasama akong magsimba, diretso mall na kami.* [My child(ren) and I go to the mall after attending mass]."

Even in the perspective of the child(ren), religious activities pave a way for family leisure. According to Erika,

*Si mama kasi, gusto niya nachecheck niya kami. Eh kadalasan nga yung ganito, di kami sabay-sabay umuwi, hindi kami nagkikita. Yung update namin, text lang. So pag-ano, ginagawan niya ng paraan na, 'Oh guys samba tayo, para magkakitaan man lang tayo ng more than 2 hours.'* [My mother wants to check on us everytime. Lately, however, we rarely see each other and we only give updates through SMS. Thus, she would find a way to bring us together and sometimes tells us, 'Guys, let's go to church to have at least more than 2 hours with each other'.]

In some instances, businesses and money-making endeavors of the parents become a means for the family to bond with each other. For example, one mother-interviewee meets her son when she delivers the orders of her customers. Likewise, her child asks her when and where her delivery would be so that he could also spend some time with his mother. Ramil explained how his family leisure is different from the others:

*Kami kasi, wala na kami halos konsepto ng leisure, kasi bihira na lang kami magkita, so yung mga moments na nagkikita kami, parang ayon na yung kino-consider namin na bonding time... Saka kami kasi, hindi kami yung family na lalabas dahil gusto lang, hindi ganon. Kapag kami lalabas, kailangan may purpose tapos isasabay na lang yung*

*leisure namin sa purpose na yon. Wala na talaga yung nagpaplano na lalabas dahil lang gusto lumabas.* [We do not have that concept of leisure since we seldom see each other so we consider those rare moments that we see each other as our bonding time... We are not one of those families who go out just because they want to. We go out because we have a purpose, and leisure just comes after that purpose. We do not plan our leisure activities just because we want to.]

In addition, there are families who are involved in leisure because of tradition. They have a regular or semi-regular schedule as to when they will bond as a family. Parents feel that it is their duty to engage their child(ren) in leisure activities to give them an avenue to unwind. In the perspective of a wife of an OFW, Mrs. Tin,

*Basta kailangan once a month or twice, kailangan talaga yun. Parang yun na yung pinaka pang- unwind ng mga bata para di lang puro aral.* [We need to go out once or twice a month. That is the only way for the kids to have some breathing space from school activities.]

Leisure, as seen in the activities that Filipino families undertake, is still a parental commitment for the benefit of the whole family, and at the same time, satisfies the interests of every family member to some extent (Shaw, 2008). Although each family member still looks at leisure as a necessary activity for the family, it is a part of a bigger intention such as addressing the basic needs of the family, engaging the members in religious activities, and involving oneself in income-generating ventures. It should also be noted that regular activities have become the leisure activity for family members left behind.

Any activity that involves a more open and interactive communication among family members also helps the parent(s) demonstrate good parenting and assures the parents that their child(ren) are well (Shaw, 2008). Thus, despite different intentions, parents as well as the child(ren), try to find means for the family to spend some quality time together.

## **5.2 Considerations of Families in Negotiating Family Leisure**

There are three main factors considered by the interviewed families when deciding on their leisure activity. These factors are budget, negotiating parties, and the type of leisure activity.

### **5.2.1 Budget**

Parental migration usually connotes lack of financial stability. In this case, budget is most likely to be one of the major considerations when it comes to determining an OFW family's leisure activity.

Different types of activities require different expenditures and different types of negotiation as well. Parents usually accommodate activities that require low expenditure while those that cost more are carefully deliberated. On the other hand, activities that are regularly done is considered a constant expenditure and families appear to be prepared in allotting the required amount in order to push through with this type of activity.

*Siyempre pinag-uusapan yung budget. Kasi kung wala kaming budget, pag-uusapan namin kung pupunta pa ba or hindi. Pero pinagusapan namin iyan na may nakalaan talaga na budget para sa family bonding namin. [We always talk about budget. If we do not have enough money, we consider postponing the activity. But we really allocate a specific amount for family activities most of the time.]*

### 5.2.2 *Negotiating parties*

The negotiation styles that occur among family members vary depending on the parties that are involved in the negotiation. The left-behind parent and the parent working overseas usually deliberate carefully on the factors that need to be considered in order to execute a specific leisure activity. The family members involved in the negotiation are critical of every factor that might contribute to the performance of the specified leisure activity, leading to a negotiation process that is competitive in nature.

On the other hand, parents tend to be very considerate of the interests of their children. In this case, parents and children are likely to have a very accommodating negotiation process among themselves since parents use family leisure as an avenue for augmenting children's welfare.

Lastly, there appears to be a collaborative negotiation among the children of an OFW family. They seem to share the same needs and interests, therefore resulting in no or minimal conflict with each other with regard to negotiation of their family leisure activity.

### 5.2.3 *Type of leisure*

The interviewed family's leisure activities were classified into three categories based on the attendance of the members in a specific activity, namely Spontaneous Leisure, Committed Leisure and Planned Leisure.

#### Spontaneous Leisure

Activities that are products of spontaneity do not encourage a complete attendance from the family members. These activities are likely to be done by a parent with one or two of his/her children only, who most of the time, is/are the only one(s) who is/are available at the specific time of the activity.

#### Committed Leisure

There are activities that are regularly done by the family. These habitual activities, even though not expecting a perfect attendance from the entire family, involve the same members of the family every time. These types of activities do not take place without the presence of those committed to participate in such activities.

#### Planned Leisure

From time to time, the interviewed families aspire to share a leisurely experience with all the members of the family. As a result, these families plan activities that are likely to satisfy the interest and schedules of each family member in order to have, if not complete, at least maximum participation from everyone.

### 5.3 Purpose of Leisure for an OFW Family

Family leisure aids in the development of the family as a unit and helps in defining quality family life (McCreeley et al., 1992). Before the departure of a parent, the families are often engaged in family leisure activities, like going out of town, or simply strolling in the malls, that harness their bond as a family and strengthen their relationships with each other. For Mrs. Jen, “*Kailanganmakikitnaminsilalahat. Gusto koayunnga, machi-checksila.* [It is imperative that we see them all. I want to check on them.]”

Their leisure activity revolves around checking each other and involving the whole family in each other’s lives. This is consistent with Elliot’s (2010) finding that revealed family leisure is about producing positive family experiences for both the parents and children.

The leisure activities of the families barely changes after the departure of a parent to work abroad, although the departure of the parent does alter the frequency, purpose and motivations of the left-behind families in engaging with these activities. This is evident from Mrs. Amelia account,

*Noong nag abroad na yung asawa ko, parang hindi na kami lumalabas-labas madalas... Nakakawalang-gana na kasi.* [The time my husband went abroad, it seems that we don’t go out frequently... I just don’t feel like doing it.]

In the absence of one parent, the family members left behind may feel less motivated in pursuing leisure activities. This is in contrast with another study wherein a parent’s overseas migration resulted in frequent leisure activities because the family has a consistent source of income (Hidalgo, 2011). Monetary considerations is fundamental in a family’s leisure, but the strong bond with the family member abroad results in a lesser drive to indulge in leisure activities without him/her.

However, in the periods that the family does engage in leisure, the left-behind parent makes a point that the child(ren)’s well-being is given priority.

The leisure of the family with a parent abroad is geared towards making the child(ren) happy and satisfied regardless of what the left-behind parent wants or would want to. This could also be ascribed to the notion that bringing together a family through leisure is a part of their responsibility to become good parents to their kids. Furthermore, with the absence of one parent, the left-behind parent becomes more attuned to their child(ren)’s needs. As a child himself, Ramil said, “*Yung leisure time namin, umiikotnakapag may kailanganako.* [Our leisure time revolves around the things I need.]”

Satisfying child(ren)’s interests is major factor to parents as evident in a response from Mrs. Tin, “*Yung gusto ngmgabata, kasi para talagasakanilayun eh para makapag enjoy naman.* [What the kids want, since it is really for them (leisure time) so that they could enjoy.]”

In spite of this, it appears that every time the OFW parent comes home, the purpose and considerations in the leisure activities of the family changes. The OFW parent becomes the catalyst for the family to bond together. This is evident from

Erika's sharing, "*Si Papa kasi gusto niyanamagkakasama kami kapagnanditosiya. Ayawniyangkanya-kanya kami.* [Father wants us to be together when he's here. He does not want it if we work separately.]"

The OFW parent must see that his/her family is still intact even after he/she went away. Since all the family members are present, the consideration in deciding leisure activities deviates from being just meeting the child(ren)'s needs and interests to include everyone's, including both parents. Mrs. Tin shared this notion when she said,

*Syempre kailangan mag-enjoy ang lahat, lalo na kapag umuuwi si Papa nila, kailangan bonding time talaga ng buong family.* [Of course, everyone must enjoy, especially if their father is at home. It really is a bonding time of the family.]

Likewise, Ramil added,

*Pero pag nandito si papa, bonding talaga yun. Ang pinakamasaya na siguro na libangan namin kapag nandito si papa, ay kapag siya yung magluluto. Kasi parang once in a lifetime mo na lang matitikman yung luto niya dahil nasa ibang bansa nga siya. Tapos sabay-sabay kami kakain, ayun na yung pinakamasaya para sa akin kasi minsan lang mangyari yun.*" [When father is here, it really is our way to bond. The happiest leisure of our family is when father is with us and when he prepares our meals. It happens only once in a lifetime—me tasting the dishes he cooks, since he stays abroad. And then when we together, that's probably the happiest moment for me, because it rarely happens.]

As leisure activities are rare for a family with an OFW parent, the experience becomes even more special and worthwhile. For example, Ramil added that:

*Ang gusto kasi ni mama na parang ma-tight pa ang bonding namin (ni Papa) kasi yun, ang tagal noong panahon na hindi kami magkasama.* [Mama wants to tighten my bond with father because it has been a long time since we've been together.]

Due to the long duration of being apart from each other, families ensure that their interaction and relationships are strengthened. Thus, all the family members make it a point that they spend quality time with each other.

The purpose and considerations of families in engaging in family leisure differ whenever one of the parents is away and when all the family members are present. Oftentimes, parents are committed to bringing the family together through leisure. However, when their partners are away, left-behind parents focus more on satisfying their children's needs and not on bringing their children closer to them. Improving family bonds becomes a priority whenever the OFW parent comes home to his/her family.

This shows that the families interviewed see leisure as a parental duty to fulfill. OFW parents opt to work abroad in the hope that they could provide more for the needs of the children, and prioritising the child(ren)'s desires and interests is their way

of compensating their absence. Furthermore, engaging in different leisure activities is seen as a parent's obligation to the child. This engagement allows both the parent working overseas and the one left behind to feel that they have attended to the needs of their children in terms of giving them space to breathe in and focusing on their needs and wants.

#### **5.4 *Manifestation of Matriarchal Perspective***

Over the years, researchers acknowledged the dissimilarity that exists between the viewpoints of mothers and fathers regarding leisure in the family. Parents value family leisure as it gives opportunity for family interactions, thus, enhancing family functioning. However, mothers and fathers differ with regard to the values they expect to be inculcated in their family, specifically in their children, through family leisure (Harrington, 2005).

While both mothers and fathers recognise the importance of leisure in the family, fathers tend to highlight the purpose of leisure as a skill-enhancing avenue for the family while mothers put more emphasis on its function to strengthen family bond. This difference reinforces the separate roles of the parents in establishing the technical-emotional balance that they aspire to inculcate in their children (Harrington, 2005).

The interviewees with one of the parent working overseas seemed inclined towards the matriarchal perspective of leisure. Since most of the Filipino families have fathers working abroad, mothers are the ones who are left behind to look after the welfare of the entire family. This gives the mothers the opportunity to emphasise the values they wish to instill in their families, including the purpose of family leisure. Mrs. Jen commented that leisure is supposed to bring enjoyment to every member of the family:

*Syempre kailangan ma- enjoy ang lahat, lalo na kapag umuuwi si Papa nila, kailangan bonding time talaga ng buong family. [It is important that everyone is having fun. Also, it should really bind the whole family, especially every time their father is at home.]*

Surprisingly, some left-behind fathers show the same predisposition towards leisure as mothers. Although left-behind fathers try to integrate skill-enhancement activities in their family leisure, they also find leisure as a way to strengthen family ties. Mr. Rodel shared:

*Kada Linggo talaga kailangan mag ba-bike kami ni Cedric, hindi talaga pwedeng hindi kahit pagod sa trabaho, basta kapag Linggo kailangan magba-bike kami. [Sunday biking is already a commitment between me and my youngest child (son)...despite a hard week at work, we should still push through with our biking every Sunday.]*

Despite the technical nature of biking for leisure, this activity still provided him a way to strengthen his bond with his son, in addition to honing his child's physical and bodily capabilities. Moreover, he treats leisure as a way to lift the mood, rather than

just to improve the skills of his children. When asked about the role of leisure in his family, Mr. Rodel stated:

*Nakakagaan din ng loob kasi kahit papaano, nakakapag bonding-bonding kami. Kapag nasa bahay lang kasi makikita mo mga mukha nakasimangot. Kaya gusto ko silang niyaya para mapalapit ang loob nila sa isa't-isa kasi medyo malayo ang loob ng panganay ko. [It feels good to spare some time for family leisure. I love to take them out and bond with them because I can see the frown in their faces everytime we're at home and doing nothing. Also, I like to bring my children closer to each other...my eldest is so distant from her siblings.]*

The preceding statements reveal that left-behind fathers attempt to fill in the space of the OFW mothers in order to maintain balance in the family. Moreover, their attempts to continue the roles of their wives imply that fathers recognise the adverse impacts on children caused by maternal absence (Cortes, 2011).

Taking these insights into consideration, it is apparent that the matriarchal perspective towards leisure is manifested in the families interviewed. Stronger family bonds and more harmonious interactions among family members fall under the responsibility of mothers in the context of the Filipino culture. Due to this, opportunities that can strengthen family bonds such as leisure are supervised by mothers, thus, leaning more towards bringing the family members closer rather than enhancing their skills and abilities. As a result, decision making with regard to leisure depends heavily on mothers more than any other member of the family.

Despite the characteristic of a traditional family having a patriarchal leaning with regard to decision making and a modern family as a unit that prefers joint decision making (Ekasasi, 2005), mothers seem to be the “benevolent dictator” (Palma et al., 2014) when it comes to leisure. Filipino mothers are freer to voice out their suggestions, and their decisions over this matter are almost absolute, regardless of distance.

When asked about who among the members of the family has the final say in the decision making process in relation to family leisure, Katleen hinted, “*Kay mama siguro, kasi kapag ayaw ni mama walang magawa si Papa.* [I think it's my mother's decision. If she says no, it's final. Even my father can do nothing about it.]”

On the other hand, Mr. Rodel mentioned, “*Kay misis. Eh kung kayang kumbinsihin, kukumbinishin. Pero kung ayaw niya, eh ayaw niya talaga eh.* [My wife's decision is the final decision of the entire family. I may try to convince her sometimes, but if she says no, it's an absolute no.]”

While fathers continue to bear the authority within a family, it is apparent that mothers are starting to have their own sphere of influence, too. It also seems that Filipino families already acknowledge the importance of leisure as a fun approach to bring the members of the family closer.

### **5.5 Leisure Negotiation among OFW Families**

From the five styles of conflict management, three emerged as the most common negotiation styles used by the families interviewed, namely Accommodation,

Competition and Collaboration. These three usually depend on the budget, parties involved in the process, and the leisure activity that the family intends to engage in.

#### 5.5.1 Accommodation

Accommodation often takes place when the budget for a leisure activity is deemed to be low and the activity only occurs out of spontaneity. Furthermore, accommodation often involves negotiation between parents.

For families, budget is of primary concern. For them, as long as the expenses are not too much, they will pursue their desired leisure. Whoever has the money can invite the other members to go for a family activity. Mr. Rodel, when he wants his family to engage in leisure, considers the budget allotment for the said pursuit, "*Kapag may pera ako minsan nagyaya ako, 'Oh tara labas tayo, kain tayo sa labas. [I ask them to dine out whenever I have money to spare.]*"

It is almost imperative that the leisure activity that the families engage in is spontaneously planned to allow easy accommodation by any parties. When the activity involves interest, the OFW parent is more likely to allow the left-behind family members to indulge in this leisure. This is because the OFW parent has low chances of stopping the plans of his/her family. Mrs. Em's spouse is likely to accommodate the requests of the family. According to her, "*On the spot yun, pag naisipan, aalis kami. [We go out when we feel like going.]*"

Accommodation is also most likely the negotiation style used between parents and the children. Both the parent working overseas and the left-behind will likely accommodate the requests of their children. Katrina confirmed that even when one parent may contest the idea of the other parent, either one will most likely attend to the requests of the children. At times, the children are a means of supporting a parent's idea that is argued by the other parent:

*Tatanungin ni Mama si Gian kung gusto ni Gian mag-mall tapos si Gian magsasabi kay papa. Kasi pag si mama po nagsasabi, minsan di pumapayag si Papa kaya si Gian yung pinagsasabi. [My mother asks Gian if he wants to go to the mall, and in turn, Gian asks permission from father. There are times when father forbids us to go out when mother asks for his consent.]*

#### 5.5.2 Collaboration

Collaboration, as a negotiation style, often involves a different context for its considerations. Unlike accommodation, the type of leisure activity negotiated through collaboration does not need much discussion about the budget because it has already been allotted. This is common for leisure activities that have already been committed to. As long as the parties who are committed to this are involved, the leisure is possibly negotiated through collaboration. Other family members may or may not join them. Collaboration is often displayed when negotiation takes place among the children. Tita Jen noticed that in their family leisure negotiations,

*Yung mga boys may sarili talagang mundo. Pareho silang gusto. Sila yung masusunod sa mga gagawin. Si ate naman, susunod lang. [The boys have a*

certain mindset by which they are used to. Their preferences are of great similarity and so it's up to them what we are going to do, while my eldest daughter just follows through their plans.]

Similarly, Katleen shared that between her brother and her, they probably have the same leisure preference:

*Kasi kami yung mahilig gumala eh, saka parang wala namang pakialam si ate saka yung bunso namin go lang naman yun.* [It's us (brother and I) who love hanging out. Our eldest sister doesn't care much, while my youngest brother just comes with us whenever we feel like going out.]

Collaboration between the children is often a result of the similar leisure activities that they want to be involved in. The similarity in their interests allows the children to attain their leisure goals. As long as their interests are of similar nature, none of the family members lose in the negotiation process.

### 5.5.3 Competition

The last negotiation style commonly exhibited by the families is competition. This type of negotiation style often occurs between parents. One primary point of contention is the budget required for the said leisure activity. Thus, family leisure tends to be planned. Between Mr. Rodel and his wife who is working abroad, they often discuss family leisure:

*Pinag-uusapan na lang namin ulit, hanggang sa may pumayag. Pakulitan nalang kaming dalawa. Pero kapag hindi talaga pumayag ang asawa, wala akong magagawa.* [My wife and I talk about our plans until one concedes. But if she wouldn't give up, I might not have any other choice.]

Furthermore, Tita Jen acknowledges that when the family leisure involves a bigger budget, the family's discussion is more profound:

*Lagi ko siyang (husband) tinatanong, 'May extrang budget ba?' Ako ang final say kahit na nandito siya. Pag-uusapan namin palagi yan. Sa kanya ang pera, pero ako ang kumo-kontrol.* [My husband and I often talk about the budget. I have the final say even if we have strong discussions over it. He has the money, but I need to control the flow of it.]

Usually, planned leisure activities require a bigger budget since they often take place outstation or overseas. Furthermore, with planned activities, the aim is to get everyone involved which translates into a higher cost. Mr. Rodel and his wife who works overseas sometimes negotiate their differences in leisure preference in a competitive manner:

*Dapat pareho kaming pumayag. Kapag ayaw ni misis pero ginawan ko ng paraan, yung bunso na lang yung pinagtetext ko. Kapag bunso, ko o-oo ng o-oo yun eh.* [Both of us should consent to the idea. If my wife disagrees but I want to push through, I ask my youngest son to ask permission from my wife since she readily approves to our son's requests.]

Katleen also noticed the competition between her parents:

*Minsan, hindi na magcocontest si mama. Magtatampo pero hindi na magreklamo. Si mama at si papa na ang nag-uusap. Pero minsan, kapag pumayag si mama, payag na rin si papa.* [Sometimes, my mother no longer contests to the ideas; she might probably feel bad but she will not hint at disagreement. But there are times when both my mother and father agree to one certain motion.]

**Table 1.** The negotiation styles used by parents and the different considerations that are involved

Negotiation style	Budget allocation	Negotiating parties	Type of leisure activity
Accommodation	Low budget allotment	Parent and child(ren)	Spontaneous activity
Collaboration	Constant budget allotment	Among children	Committed activity
Competition	High budget allotment	Between parents	Planned activity

The families interviewed for the study negotiated mainly using the three negotiation styles described earlier. Avoidance and compromise rarely occur. If avoidance is used in negotiating, family leisure is terminated. On the other hand, compromise is less likely to occur because the OFW parent has little power in the family’s leisure due to distance. Moreover, both parents tend to focus on the children’s desires rather than their own in determining the family’s leisure.

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Based on the families interviewed, we can see that Filipino families lean more towards joint decision making with regard to their family leisure. Parents deem that leisure activities are relevant to instill values and hone the skills of their children, which allow them to exemplify good parenting. Thus, family leisure becomes an avenue to carry out their familial duties.

Going to malls is a main leisure activity as the mall environment enables them to spend their time together as a family (e.g. eating out, watching movie etc.) as well as pursue individual interests (e.g. leaving children at toy stores to buy grocery).

After the departure of one parent to work abroad, the leisure activities of the families often vary slightly. To some, their family leisure activities diminish as some activities must involve all the members of the family. Thus, the value of these activities lessens as the value for a complete family is heightened with the departure of one parent. Alternatively, some usual activities such as cooking and eating together become leisure activities every time the OFW parent comes home for a vacation.

While there is still a patriarchal notion in terms of who the breadwinner is, families with an OFW parent deviate from this as the findings reveal that mothers are the decision makers in terms of family leisure. Nevertheless, since modern families aim for a joint decision making, it becomes apparent that the left-behind parent keeps the OFW spouse updated about the family’s leisurely involvement.

Lastly, the findings reveal that negotiations for determining leisure activity usually employ one of these three styles, namely Accommodation, Competition, and Collaboration. The negotiation style depends on the type of leisure, the budget allotted for the activity, and who or what parties are involved. The parent who is overseas or left behind tends to be accommodating to their children's leisure requests. However, between the parents, competition of ideas and suggestions may arise, while children tend to be more collaborative among themselves. In addition, families still follow some traditional ways in deciding the family's leisure activities, but they are open to the modern method of decision making.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Various theories and models are used to explain the negotiation processes that occur among the members of a unit. In this study, the researchers used the Five Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict, an interpersonal communication model, as the core theory to illustrate the negotiation processes that transpire between OFW parents, left-behind parents, and children. This theory helped the researchers describe negotiation processes, but not exactly familial interactions. Thus, theories focusing on familial interactions can be integrated with the aforementioned model used in this study in order to make the analysis more relevant in the context of a family. An example is the Family Systems theory which specifically covers the elements of a family as a unit and the interaction patterns that occur within it. Moreover, in order to examine how parents working overseas are involved in the planning and execution of leisure activities, theories that emphasise mediums used in the process of negotiation can be utilised as well.

In this study, the researchers interpreted the negotiation styles of the family from the viewpoint of the family members left behind. Understanding the perspective of the parents working overseas can give richer data that will give a more complete picture of interactions that occur within a family. Furthermore, family group discussions that include all the members of the family can also illustrate the complexities that take place within the family more compared to personal and separate interviews with the child(ren) and parent(s).

Several changes can be observed from the time one parent goes away to work overseas. The lack of physical maternal or paternal presence, and changes in resources such as remittances and increased income could alter the motivations and satisfactions of the family members with regard to leisure (McCreedy et al., 1992). The remittance of the parent working overseas leads to enhanced financial capabilities of the family left behind. Also, the advent of technology combined with increasing buying power can be both beneficial and risky to families who wish to produce positive family experiences by bringing members closer to each other and strengthening familial relationship, through leisure activities. The emergence of the online sphere as a platform to bridge the gap between people who are miles apart makes it possible for families to remain attached to their parent working abroad. Through social networking sites, specifically Skype and Facebook, families left behind would still able to involve the OFW parent

not only in the organisation of their leisure plan as a family, but in the execution of the leisure as well. Some families put effort in designing a family leisure that highly requires the participation of the OFW parent. Some use video conference and do a musical jamming in front of the computer screen as a leisure activity in which all the members of the family are involved despite the distance. However, technological advances such as smartphones, laptops, internet connection, and emergence of various applications covering a wide spectrum of functions, can also lead family members to engage in individualistic activities. Children are no longer obliged to participate in their family leisure as each of them carries on with their own work. Likewise, the physical presence of family members does not necessarily guarantee their whole-hearted acknowledgment of the importance of leisure in the family. Some instances show that while family members are present during family activities, their attention is not directed towards the activities, but to their smartphones and other gadgets. These repercussions of technology on familial dealings give way to more complicated familial interactions and negotiations. While advanced technology may partly remove time and space restrictions with regard to keeping a family intimate, the family members should also be conscious of the adverse effects of such means.

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