

Considering the Role of Money and Gifts in the (Re)-construction of Motherhood and Family Among Indonesian Transnational Female Domestic Workers

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Abstract

Most studies on female migrants as money earners claim that this new context of labor exhibits two distinct realms of either the commodification of love and care or the expression of care where money and emotion intertwine in maintaining family relationships and in creating reciprocity and exchange. I explore different modes of using money and gifts in addition to the major framework of economization of emotion and the emotionalization of money. I differentiate the gifts from money as it refers to non-cash gifts or in-kind gifts. This paper investigates other cultural contexts and social-political dynamics that possibly induce the construction of different roles of money and gifts. It assesses the kinship strategies and mechanisms female migrants, and their stayed-behind children develop in response to physical separation by sending money and gifts and their resistance to the state's dominant version of the family and money. This paper elaborates how money and gifts connect to women's identity as transnational mothers to redefine their parenting roles as main economic providers and their identity as transnational family members. It has some bearing on creating a new identity as women that might be not akin to the state's gender politics and the politics of family as well as state maternalism. The study interrogates how sending and receiving money and gifts in a transnational family engenders transformation in the construction of the family and motherhood. I analyze how the practice of sending money and gifts challenges the state's politics of traditional family and gender by examining how sending money and gifts frequently gains legitimacy with the migrant mothers' claim of having a good family even though they do not adhere to traditional family norms.

Keywords: Money; Gift; Women's Migrant; Domestic Worker; Transnational Family

Introduction

I discuss the case of Indonesian women's migrant domestic workers by examining the practice of sending money and gifts among transnational families of migrant mothers. Beginning in the 1970s of the early development of the New Order era under President Soeharto, the Indonesian government applied economic development politics that targeted women for involvement in the foreign labor market which had a demand for cheap labor. Ever since, one major policy of the Indonesian government has been to encourage women to work abroad as domestic workers and has been an apparent economic strategy to promote sending female migrant domestic workers to reduce poverty, unemployment, and as a temporary national solution of economic crisis (Tirtosudarmo, 1999; Loveband, 2006; Gutierrez-Rodriguez, 2014). The government began

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"exporting" laborers as part of the national labor policy in the Five-Year Development Plan (*Repelita*) and the Long-Term Development Plan (RPKP) (Hugo, 1995; Tirtosudarmo, 1999; Rudnycky, 2004). World Bank Indonesia (2017) reported that in 2017, more than nine million migrant workers, three quarters of whom were "low-skilled laborers" and the majority were women employed as domestic workers previously known as maids who also work as a nanny. This number makes Indonesia one of the largest sending countries of migrant laborers in the world.

Migrant workers contribute greatly to the economic development of Indonesia, but they remain inadequately protected by current laws and practices (IOM, 2010). According to data revealed by Bank Indonesia (2020), in 2019 Indonesian migrant workers' remittances reached USD 11.4 billion. The government also received economic benefits via intermediary agents or brokers and even government institutions for making arrangements, recruiting, and "distributing" laborers by establishing the Indonesian Manpower Supply Association (IMSA), a labor recruitment agency licensed by the manpower ministry. The situation illustrates the importance of migrant labor for the Indonesian economy. However, the state's policies on migrant workers, with its emphasis on economic development and national income, does not take into account the personal lives and family relations of Indonesian migrant workers. Those policies ignore the key roles migrants' money and gifts play in personal and family life. This paper addresses social, cultural, political, and personal impacts of remittances (money and goods) on migrant mothers and their children.

The government of Indonesia deploys the paradoxical politics of family and gender. While on the one hand, it strongly campaigns for the traditional family and gender roles through the political project of the state maternalism or "state *ibuism*" (Suryakusuma, 2004) or the domestication of women primarily as a mother, the government also urges women's participation in the labor market. With the state *ibuism*, the New Order administration applied gender politics and the politics of the family to consolidate power role as the husband's extension and companion, the educator of children, the housewife, and as part of the large family of Indonesian society (Suryakusuma, 1996). The government issued some laws and policies to support the traditional family and gender norms, such as the 1974 Marriage Law and the 2004 Law of Domestic Violence, the 1974 Ministerial Decree of the Department of Internal Affairs on the Five Precepts or Panca Dharma Wanita (Five Duties of Women) and Family Welfare Movement. That social-political situation provided women with dilemma in being and becoming good women and good mothers and claiming about having a good family. Despite the opportunity to participate in the public job market, they became the target of social stigma and stereotype of not being good women and mothers. Migrant mothers face the worst dilemmatic situation as many of them need to leave their family, their husband, and their children to work abroad. Their crucial contribution to the economy of the country and family could not protect them from the social stigma and stereotype of irresponsible mothers.

This paper examines how transnational migrant mothers negotiate relationships and manage any tensions with their children through sending money and gifts. This study interrogates other roles of migrants' money and gifts which are deployed to re(construct) and mold a new identity for female migrant workers who transgress gender boundaries. It explores another role of sending money and gifts among migrant mothers and how transnational migrant

mothers and children built and construct identities of motherhood through the practice of sending and receiving money and gifts. More importantly, in this paper, I address and observe how, on one hand, personal experiences play a key role in reshaping identity and subjectivity and, on the other hand, "ordinary people" articulate an agentive capacity through their engagement in identity and subjectivity reproduction. As one of the unintended consequences of the dominant narratives as "the hero of remittance" campaigned by the state, personal narratives of migrant workers, women in particular, do not get serious public and academic attention that mainly focus on the economic dimension of labor migration.

This study will be an important contribution to the study of women's migrant workers, especially that focuses on studying money and gifts. This research sheds light on how the practice of sending money and gifts among transnational mothers appears to be a complex and dynamic experience as it examines the role of money and gifts in identity construction and the capacity of female migrant workers to challenge social and political structure through the money they earn and money and gifts they send. This research encourages the policymakers to take more serious consideration of the personal and familial situations of both migrant mothers and their children in the making of policies related to migrant workers.

Literature Review

This research engages in various bodies of scholarship in anthropology and closely related disciplines. The first is the anthropology of money and the gift in analyzing their different roles and meanings in different social, political, and cultural contexts. The second is the study on the issues of the family that highlights the transformation in family norms and practices with the rise and development of transnational families. Third, this research builds on the scholarship of remittances that studies their different forms and functions. Fourth, the study connects to anthropology or any studies on identity construction on women, particularly female migrant workers or transnational mothers. Finally, this research relates to specific studies, research, or issues on motherhood and social status as part of women's identities. Two reasons I address remittance here are, first, to give a broader context of a discussion on the migrants' remittances and, second, to examine misunderstanding on remittance focusing only on cash money and its meaning and to give a new understanding by broadening the focus on non-cash money called gifts.

Studies in anthropology and other social sciences examining the role of money and gifts sent among transnational migrant families analyze it by applying two major frameworks. The first scholarship is the studies on the role of money and gifts among transnational families in which transnational mothers send money and gifts to their children back home. Scholars studying money and gifts have examined the deep connection between economy and emotions and have identified how money and gifts are connected with love, care, and intimacy (Medick and Sabeau, 1984; Luxton, 1980; Thomas and Cole, 2009; Cole, 2009; Kim, 2015; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Mahler, 2001; Cabraal & Singh, 2013; Singh, 2016; Singh & Gatina, 2015; Suro, 2003; Olwig, 2014; Francisco-Menchavez, 2018; Wilding & Baldassar, 2018; Francisco-Menchavez, 2018; Ariza, 2014; Yount-André, 2018; Thai, 2014).

These studies came up with the ideas of the commodification of love and emotionalization of money. They explored and analyzed the role of money and gifts by analyzing them in the context of transnational migration, more specifically in the context of transnational family, as a signal or medium to express love, care, and intimacy to (re)compensate the mother's physical absences and make an effort to make them up by replacing their love and care with money and gifts sent (Parreñas, 2005, 2015; Folbre & Nelson, 2000; Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Hoang & Yeoh, 2012; Artico, 2003 among others). They contended that migration through sending money and gifts facilitates the commodification or economization of love and monetization of care. The scholars taking this analytical position said that to prove themselves good mothers, some women put much effort into commodifying their love and emotions by sending money or material goods and providing the best education for their children. Proponents of the commodification of love theory reiterated that migrant parents, mainly mothers, send money and gifts to compensate for their absence and replace emotional intimacy and presence with material goods and remittances.

Coe (2014) showed that migration might facilitate the commodification of love because migrant parents, specifically mothers, seek to compensate for their parental absence and replace emotional intimacy and presence with material goods and remittances. There is a "deficit of care". Migrant mothers need to compensate for a "deficit of care" (Parreñas, 2005). To prove themselves good mothers, some women put much effort into commodifying their love through material goods and the best education for their children. Clarke (2007) contended that a consumer culture transforms motherhood, leading women as mothers to be creative and competitive in mothering; this might create the commercialization of mothering. Many mothers feel it is unfair to leave their children without their caring and nurturing while they work as domestic help, mostly as both nanny and housekeeper, and start to alleviate the guilt feelings and shows that they do not abdicate their responsibility as mothers and parents by sending money and gifts.

In a similar vein, Hoang & Yeoh (2012) elucidated that migrant parents' (over)compensation of their physical money with money and gift engenders commodification of parents-child relationship. Artico (2003) delineated that migrant parents' absences give rise to business exchange instead of genuine parent-child love. Like the above scholars, Pessar & Mahler (2003) reiterated how sending remittances is a common strategy for instigating intimacy, though it is commodified. Miller (1998) elaborated how commodities become one of the choices of the technology of love in family relationships. Women as mothers use it as a tool to prove they love their children. In building their arguments, these scholars appear to center primarily on the language of capitalist commodification even in understanding the reasons and motivations behind it. Unlike these studies, this paper will examine the involvement of personal experiences, local socio-cultural, political, and religious contexts over the commodification of love and care. This research heeds the views and voices of migrant mothers and their children in understanding the role of money and gifts in the interpretation of the commodification of love and care. This view is disregarded by bringing up the conversation and narrative of identities, the transformation of motherhood, the establishment and maintenance of new social status, negotiation, and resistance to the state's mainstream politics of family and motherhood.

The other approach and analysis were taken and offered by other scholars like Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997), Mahler (2001), Singh and Cabraal (2014), Singh (2016), Singh and Gatina (2015), Suro (2003), Olwig (2014), Baldassar and Wilding (2018), Francisco-Menchavez (2018), Ariza (2014), Yount-André (2018), and Thai (2014) that argued that sending money and gifts is an expression of care and a signal of emotional attachment and closeness to families as a form of expressing love and care and reinforcing relationships. The money and gifts sent home are meant to articulate caring for the transnational family. The process of emotionalization of money and gifts shows a strong connection and intricate relationships between money and gifts, and emotions. Migrations provide money and gifts which are then used as a tool for enhancing and maintaining connection and interaction in transnational families. Money and gifts represent how migrant mothers abroad strategize to continue family lives without proximity to their children, keep their families alive and stay connected.

Zechner (2008) examined the role of money as a medium of communication and of expressing "caring about" and "taking care of" in a transnational family context. According to scholars such as Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) and Mahler (2001), money and gifts known also as remittances mediate family care. Singh and Cabraal (2014), Singh (2016), Singh and Gatina (2015), and Suro (2003) understood the meanings of sending remittances (monetary and non-monetary) and gifts as the circulation and medium of care and the expression of profound emotional bonds between the migrants and their family members. Olwig (2014) and Francisco-Menchavez (2018) saw it as the exchange of care and maintaining family relations in a mobile world of unequal social and economic opportunities. Meanwhile, Baldassar and Wilding (2014) understood it as caregiving exchange and practicing familyhood and or and Ariza (2014) approached it as an articulation of different forms of care and care circulation to be well-connected. Coe (2011) asserted that the materiality of care is important as a signal of emotional depth and closeness and to establish and reinforce relationships (Yount-André, 2018). Non-migrant relatives tend to view monetary support as a signal that their migrant family members care for and love them (Thai, 2014); it is a form of economic morality which is a normative expectation of material obligation and entitlement. This research benefits from these studies to understand the dynamic and complex meanings of remittances beyond economic development and economic terms that address a more social, cultural, political, emotional, and personal dimension of it.

The above existing studies have not explored the idea of money and gifts that may play an important role for individual migrant mothers and their children themselves since they have their subjective meanings of money and gifts. They also left out the discussion and analysis of other roles of money and gifts in transnational families that would represent the migrant mothers' identities in certain ways such as their identity parents both as "mothers" and "fathers" and a new identity due to their supposedly changing social status. Those studies also excluded children as the main participant in their studies and fieldwork, but those scholars talked about how money and gifts denote the relationships between transnational mothers and their children across borders. Therefore, following the research questions, I will explore the diverse roles of money and gifts not addressed in these previous studies, such as identity (re)construction of social status and sense of social belonging, motherhood identities and how

female migrant domestic workers call into question and challenge the state's politics of motherhood and the state's claim of "national hero of remittances."

Parreñas (2005, 2015) observed the paradoxical situation of women migrants caught between earning money to support their families and facing the emotional insecurity, particularly among their children, of the separation, giving rise to the commodification of love. Unlike in her analysis, this study focuses on the role of transnational mothers as the main economic providers or income earners and the negotiation process between migrant mothers and their left-behind children. It concerns establishing and maintaining identities as migrant mothers and transnational family members pertaining to gendered roles and social status through sending and receiving money and gifts.

Research for this study also draws from the body of scholarship in anthropology and other social sciences that delves into and analyzes changing family norms and practices in the current period. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) studied "transnational motherhood," referring to a variation in the organizational arrangements, meanings, and priorities of motherhood, and showed how migrant domestic workers reconstruct motherhood and rearrange matters to accommodate the spatial and temporal separation as they try to find a strategy of transnational mothering. Being transnational mothers are more than being biological mothers who raise their children. Therefore, it changes the practices, definitions, and meanings of traditional motherhood. Francisco (2015) examined how transnational mothering creates a new meaning of motherhood through imagined and material familial relations.

Going along with the above previous scholarship, it links to scholarly work on motherhood and the supposedly intertwined women's identity construction with the notion of motherhood. Short (2005) used "doing motherhood" to refer to the practices of mothers and the social expectations that can shape their lives as well as the emotional expressions of motherhood performed through the social relations of mothering. Motherhood itself is seen as a set of practices with specific relations of ruling and distinctive functions in the context of society and economy. These studies are important to grasp the different strategies migrant mothers use in navigating their lives to maintain their connection with their children left behind and in dealing with parenting and mothering since they are the main economic and emotional providers. In this research, I will investigate how migrant mothers (re)construct their motherhood identity through sending money and gifts in a transnational family context. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) claimed that motherhood is not biologically predetermined and fixed; it is historically and socially constructed. It is also culturally different and constructed, culturally located and shaped. Motherhood is about women's expectations and experiences as well.

In examining the impact transnational migration has in changing the family, the studies mentioned above did not analyze the specific role of sending money and gifts in transforming families and constructing identities of motherhood, challenging the state's politics of motherhood and the transformation of motherhood itself. Those studies did not address how sending money and gifts by the transnational family of migrant women challenges the state's politics of family and motherhood, let alone discuss the paradigm of parenthood. Instead, they departed from the framework of the gendered role of women as mothers. Therefore, this research observes and analyzes how money and gifts sent by migrant mothers' influence and

make a salient contribution to the construction of motherhood and their identity as mothers doing motherhood. It will examine how it challenges the state's politics of family and gender. In other words, unlike the scholarly studies that paid attention to the new practices of family as a result of transnational mobility, this research will look at how the new practices of families, centered in the complexities of sending and receiving money and gifts, challenge the state's construction of the family as well as the entrenched stereotype of motherhood.

This research draws from some scholars in motherhood studies such as Rich (1986), Glenn (1994), Villani (1997), O'Reilly (2004, 2010), Miller (2006), Hollway (1997). Those scholars address how motherhood is not only an experience but also an institution and ideology as well as having agency to make a change. However, those scholars who are concerned with motherhood and mothering, including identity as mothers did not talk of motherhood becomes women's identities and how identities are formed, constructed, performed, and maintained. They did not talk and discuss mothering and motherhood in a transnational family context which is more complicated since it has to be done across borders with physical and geographical separation. This study is significant to see and show the transformation of motherhood and how transnational mothers challenge the state images and representations of motherhood through its politics of family and motherhood. One of the state-of-the-art theories on the construction of motherhood that intrigues me is the study of exposing women negotiating their gender as part of their identities and gendered sense of self through their bodies which is gendered construction of fertility and infertility and the ability of them to be mothers. Those women challenged the notion of motherhood and negotiate their sense of gender and maintained their gendered sense of self and self-identifying as infertile as part of their identities as women. Those women managed identities to best suit their needs and purposefully rejected the dominant norms of motherhood and the definitive label and blaming word "infertility." Drawing from Nagoshi and Brzuzy's (2010) transgender theory, social identity for Bell (2019) is the dynamic of integration and interaction in lived experiences between social-construction and self-construction. This framework is pertinent to my study of identity construction as identities exist as a process of negotiation between personal/individual subjectivity and social aspects (socially and self-constructed). I examine the intertwined and intricate relationship between personal/individual and social identity. Most research on transnational families and mothers have not examined identity construction of motherhood and social status for transnational mothers in their home country, let alone how they negotiate with and to some extent challenge to conform the state politics of motherhood and the state assertion of "heroes of remittances" that do not fit in their identities and at some point reject that given claim while they are embracing their own identities.

Glenn and Chang (1994) revealed that motherhood in a different context that showed how mothers performed and managed multiple identities and how the meaning of motherhood is manipulated by a variety of system of power, such as ideology, economy, and government. Those different women were in an effort of expanding the notion of motherhood and resisted adhering to the dominant narrative of "normative" mothers. They become what O'Reilly (2014) called "non-normative mothers" and called into question the singularization of mothers and the idealization of "super single mothers" and any dominant form of mothering. This is what transnational mothers have done outright, not only transforming and negotiating

the notion and practice of motherhood but also challenging the state politics of migrant's identity and motherhood. In her other work, O'Reilly along with other scholars (2008) theorized motherhood from feminist perspective elucidating and analyzing how motherhood is not only seen as patriarchal motherhood that oppresses and constrain women's ability and capacity. Feminist mothering according to them is making an endeavor to challenge and change the traditional norms of patriarchal motherhood and to make change and empower themselves.

O'Reilly's and Glenn and Chang's study are quite similar to the prominent work of Rich (1986) in which motherhood is not only an institution, namely patriarchal institution and ideology that oppress women but also it involves policies (other external structural and social factors) influencing and shaping the concept of motherhood. Other than those, women's diverse experiences as an internal factor that engender designate the complexity and dynamic of women's perception of what motherhood is. The ability of women to transform and perform their own identities based on their own experiences and agencies necessitate them to allow them to resist. All those three studies are vital in the study of motherhood. Inspired by them and drawing from this scholarly work, I will utilize this framework in elaborating and examining how motherhood is not a single concept and practice since it has been influenced by many factors, therefore the identity of motherhood is not performed and managed singularly. Though policies and politics of the state through the government and social norms manipulate the meaning and concept of motherhood, however, women can transform and have their terms in defining and practicing motherhood.

They have the agentive capacity to negotiate and even challenge the traditional norms and the state policies on and the politics of motherhood to be non-conformist mothers or non-normative mothers and even have the power to not only expand the concept and meaning of motherhood but also change what motherhood is and what it means to be a mother. I will employ this critical analysis in transnational family settings in Indonesia. This work will illuminate the scholarship and ethnography of motherhood and social class as identities for transnational female domestic workers. Short (2005) mentioned that motherhood or "doing motherhood" is not merely about the practices of mothers, as an institution and social expectations shaping their lives, but it is also about identities. Unfortunately, identity construction of motherhood and social status of transnational mothers have not gotten much attention. On that account, it is important to purposefully elaborate and deliberately examine that particular subject.

Apart from some studies on motherhood, mostly theoretical foundation for studying the issue of motherhood, I am also inspired by one of the current ethnographic works undertaken by Oliveira (2018) who expounded on motherhood across borders or parenting from afar that have been divided the family but somehow, they are still connected. Transnational migration creates transnational families that shift the notion and practice as well as traditional understanding of gender and motherhood and inclined to negotiate the care work with other family members. Though this study is not about domestic workers and has not discussed identity construction of being transnational mothers and identity of a new social status not to mention the migrant mother's resistance to the state politics of migrant's identity and the politics of motherhood, it fleshes out the account of motherhood from afar and how the

relationship between migrant mothers and their left-behind children is negotiated. What is new from my research is the hitherto unaddressed and unexplored dimensions of the role of sending money and gifts as an influencing factor in constructing and maintaining transnational mother's identities of their motherhood and social status and challenge the identity defined and given by the state and how migrant mothers negotiate their identities, come to terms to their own identities and how they live their lives on their terms.

Among the studies discussing the transformation of traditional concept and practice of the family or as known as "modern family," one of them is referring to transnational families. Since transnational migration is one of the influential factors in transforming the family, transnational migration creates transnational families that have different practices than "the regular" form, structure, and relations of the past. Family members try to find ways to bridge the physical gap and make sense of the distance or separation they experience. Olwig (1999) described the family structure as family relations that involve social and economic exchanges of different kinds and forms that she called exchange relations linked through parent (mother)-child relationships. Coe (2014), Singh (2016), and Olwig (1999) studied the material exchanges or material support as expressions of love and care through the sending of remittances to the children left behind. Baldassar (2007) worked on family relations in transnational families by examining strategies to keep commitment and efforts to "stay in touch" to maintain emotional connections through the exchange of emotions, care, and moral support between parents and migrant children. Zelizer (2005) referred to this phenomenon as "connected live" as migrant workers and their children keep maintaining and negotiating their family and personal relationships. Diverging from those studies, mostly examining transnational families, this study focuses more on how being part of transnational family members create certain identities for women through the sending money and gift practices. The discussion about transnational families did not touch upon personal identities as migrant mothers and transnational families that connect with gender and social status. The previous studies often discussed social and cultural identities as a foreigner who has different culture and nationality with their employers' and the country where they live and work.

Another theme of studies of identity construction, as Wortham (2001), Fina (2003), Fina, Bamberg, and Schiffrin (2006), discussed, through action, and social practices such as telling narratives or stories, people can construct their world, subjectivity, and identities. Following Fina (2003), this research explores how identity is produced and constructed through social processes rather than given. I analyze how female migrant domestic workers re(construct) their own personal and social identities such as motherhood and social status identities through sending and receiving money and gifts and how they negotiate with and even challenge the state's politics of motherhood and the state's labeling of migrant workers as "national heroes of remittances". The identity construction of female migrant domestic workers is not given by the state, instead, it is a process of deliberate attempts and intentions of self-conception, self-awareness, self-belonging, and self-identification that shapes identities. I expand the study on identity construction to the context of female migrant domestic workers by deploying money and gifts to (re)construct and maintain their identities of motherhood and social status. Another engrossing idea of identities put forward by Kipp (1993) on conceptualizing identities of Karo, one of the ethnicities and indigenous peoples in Indonesia, stating that their identities

as between compromising to the state policies on one hand and an indication of social change on the other hand. This study is important to make sense of how powerful the state is in Indonesia in influencing and affecting people's/citizen's identities, therefore this research is relevant and significant to explore more about how the state policies and politics influences identity formation and the perception of identities as well as how transnational female domestic workers negotiate and even challenge the state's images and representations about them and their identities by (re)constructing their own identities.

This research engages with studies of remittances of migrant workers. The impact of remittances from migrant workers on development programs has been the dominant focus in the studies of migrant workers in various contexts (Chandavarkar, 1980; Stark & Lucas, 1988; Georges, 1990; Adams, 1991; Authokorala, 1993; Taylor, et al. 1996a; Taylor et al. 1996b; Taylor & Philip, 1996; Taylor & Philip, 1998; Taylor, 1999). The state's policies and politics of exporting migrant laborers only focus on lucrative economic capital for boosting the economic development of the country. In the context of Indonesia, the state glorifies migrant workers, mostly female domestic workers as "the heroes of remittance" to the index that they are the savior of the country's economic crisis and the fundamental contributor of the country's economic development with no legal protections. Those studies as well the state's policies neglect the personal dimensions of migrant workers in their experiences with money and gifts they make from their work, specifically for the creation of their identities.

Singh, Cabraal, and Robertson (2010) mentioned different types of remittances, such as routine remittances or the regular sending of money, occasional sending of money, and sending of gifts. Gallo (2013) analyzed remittances as the embodiment of obligations and loyalty between migrants and left-behind relatives, as a new way of conceptualizing transnational household relations. Remitting among migrants involves both material exchange and investment in social ties and networks (Gregory, 1982; Berry, 1989; Guyer, 1995; Godelier, 1999, Cliggett, 2005; Singh et al., 2010). Remittances epitomize a significant means through which migrants maintain connections with their homeland (Kurien, 2002). Following these studies, this research is concerned with meanings of remittances beyond economic ones or economistic interpretation of remittances by investigating their role in shifting mothering and family, challenging the state's policy of economic remittance and traditional motherhood. This study is concerned with money and gifts as part of sent remittances that would define the actor themselves through their identity construction, not the lucrative economic capital and the state gains for the development of the country and community or merely for the family's sake. However, it is beyond the economic benefits that prompt the transformation of motherhood, constructing identities, and challenging the state politics of motherhood.

Methods

This is a qualitative study exploring the dynamic role of money and gift women's migrant workers sent to their families. The discussion and analysis of the subject addressed in this study are based on qualitative data. This paper comes up with the main research question of *"What is the role of money and gifts among transnational domestic workers families in constructing and maintaining their identities of motherhood and challenge the government's*

assertion on the migrant workers' identity as "national heroes of remittance" and the state's politics of traditional motherhood?"

This study focuses on Indonesian female migrant domestic workers (IFMDW) working in Singapore, one of their most popular destination countries. I apply literature review, field notes, and case studies based on semi-structured and open interviews through audio recording, using WhatsApp as my primary method of collecting data. I concurred with Sibai (2015) deploying a qualitative approach to studying the narratives of Spanish Muslim women about the hijab as a tool to assert identity is useful for making IFWDWs' voices heard and giving the women space to narrate their own experiences and feelings. Sibai observed the subjective reconstruction and multiple constructions and recorded subjective, situated, and changing meanings by using narrative stories to allow these women to be "self-involved," using "I" to narrate a story. I side with Sibai's idea that the validity and quality of the narrative do not come from the number of persons we interview because personal experience is different from one person to another. I limit my data based on interviews with five participants and will not generalize all IFMDWs as having the same problems. Their experiences and perspectives are unique and part of the alternative stories and counterarguments of the pervasive narrative. For my method of data analysis, I used socio-cultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology analysis as well as feminist analysis based on narratives from my interviewees.

I applied snowball sampling by assigning my network as the key informant to approach others. I contacted a friend who has been working as an IFMDW in Singapore for more than 10 years. She responded to my project with enthusiasm and thought that domestic workers are an important subject of the study. She was pleased to call her fellow domestic workers, four of whom she introduced to me. My interlocutors agreed to use WhatsApp for telephone interviews, which took 30-40 minutes and focused on the topics of my project. I let the IFMDWs talk once I asked my questions. I listened carefully to what they said and followed with other questions. Though I had guiding questions, it was a semi-structured open interview. If I thought they had not answered my questions, I reformulated the questions.

I limited the interviews to five informants, so I could follow their stories in detail. I called the interviewees one by one, following a prearranged schedule. I introduced myself, explained the project, and asked if they had questions. I asked for their permission to record the interview and had them sign the consent form I prepared. They were excited about the project and felt elevated to be part of an academic project. I followed this step by asking questions.

Results and Discussion

I found that study and analysis on the complexity of the economy of female migrant domestic workers through the sending money and gifts contextualizing it as a site of negotiation and resistance for the women in dealing with such dilemma as a result of the contradictory state's politics is still very rare. This research interrogates how the practice of sending money and gifts is employed by the women's migrants to challenge the traditional family norms promoted mainly by the state to prove that they are still good mothers and have good families while they are partaking in transnational labors as transnational domestic workers. As I found in the interviews, women's migrant domestic workers claimed of being good and responsible

mothers and parents as they continued sending money and gifts to their children and other family members.

Studies in anthropology and other social sciences examining the role of money and gifts sent among transnational migrant families analyze it by applying two major frameworks. One approach elucidates how migration through sending money and gifts facilitates the commodification or economization of love and monetization of care (for instance, Parreñas, 2005, 2015; Folbre & Nelson 2000). They said that to prove themselves good mothers, some women put much effort into commodifying their love and emotions by sending money or material goods and providing the best education for their children. Proponents of the commodification of love theory reiterated that migrant parents, mainly mothers, send money and gifts to compensate for their absence and replace emotional intimacy and presence with material goods and remittances.

Meanwhile, Cabraal and Singh (2013), Singh (2013, 2016), Coe (2008, 2011, 2012, 2014), Olwig (1999), Baldassar (2007), Francisco-Menchavez (2018), Yount-André (2018), and Thai (2014) contended that sending money and gifts is an expression of care and a signal of emotional attachment and closeness to families as a form of expressing love and care and reinforcing relationships. The money and gifts sent home are meant to articulate caring for the transnational family. The process of emotionalization of money and gifts shows a strong connection and intricate relationships between money and gifts, and emotions. Migrations provide money and gifts which are then used as a tool for enhancing and maintaining connection and interaction in transnational families. Money and gifts represent how migrant mothers abroad strategize to continue family lives without proximity to their children, keep their families alive and stay connected.

I argue that money and gifts among transnational families might prompt other roles by considering the social, political, cultural contexts as well as different personal and familial experiences. This study explores the perspectives and views not only of female migrant domestic workers in comprehending what money and gifts mean in non-economic and non-market terms and interpretations. One respondent has a 14-year-old son going to a high school mentioned that fact that she was able to send money and gifts to her son brought her feeling and understanding that she was a responsible mother and even parent—since she is the primary breadwinner in the family—even though she needed to leave him in the home country. They used money and gifts as a tool or strategy to communicate and negotiate in their family.

Scholars studying money and gifts have examined the deep connection between economic and emotions and have identified how money and gifts are connected with love, care, and intimacy Parreñas (2005, 2015) observed the paradoxical situation of women migrants caught between earning money to support their families and facing the emotional insecurity, particularly among their children, of the separation, inducing commodification of love. As seen in the above case showing how sending money becomes the medium of claiming subjectivity of being responsible mothers and parent, my study focuses on establishing and maintaining identities as migrant mothers and transnational family members pertaining to gendered roles and class/social status through sending and receiving of money and gifts.

Some scholars addressed migration might facilitate the commodification of love because migrant parents, specifically mothers, seek to compensate for their parental absence and

replace emotional intimacy and presence with material goods and remittances. There is a "deficit of care" migrant mothers need to compensate (Parreñas, 2005). To prove themselves good mothers, some women put much effort into commodifying their love through material goods and the best education for their children. Clarke (2007) contended that a consumer culture transforms motherhood, leading women as mothers to be creative and competitive in mothering; this might create the commercialization of mothering. Many mothers feel it is unfair to leave their children without their caring and nurturing while they work as domestic help, mostly as both nanny and housekeeper. In a similar vein, Hoang & Yeoh (2012) elucidated that migrant parents' (over)compensation of their physical money with money and gift engenders commodification of parents-child relationship. Artico (2003) delineated that migrant parents' absences give rise to business exchange instead of genuine parent-child love. Pessar and Mahler (2003) reiterated how sending remittances is a common strategy for instigating intimacy, though it is commodified. Miller (1998) elaborated how commodities become one of the choices of the technology of love in family relationships. Women as mothers use it as a tool to prove they love their children. These scholars appear to center primarily on the language of capitalist commodification even in understanding the reasons and motivations behind it.

In my case, I found the involvement of personal experiences, local socio-cultural, political, and religious contexts over the commodification of love and care. The views and voices of migrant mothers and their children in understanding the role of money and gifts in the interpretation of the commodification of love and care as a crucial personal dimension are often disregarded by bringing up the conversation and narrative of identity, class formation, and maintenance, parenthood, negotiation of both transnational mothers and their children and resistance to the state's mainstream politics of family and the dominant narrative of migrants' money of sending and receiving money and gifts practices. This study shows the dynamic and complex meanings of remittances beyond economic development and economic terms that address a more social, cultural, political, emotional, and personal dimension of it. Two respondents told me during the interview, they did not want to be called/labeled as a hero of remittance or a hero of national development as the state authority often calls/labels them; for them, it is better to be called as hero of the family. This story provides evidence of how female migrants domestic workers resist and reject the state politics of migrant workers. Sending money and gifts by the transnational family of migrant women challenges the state's politics of family and gender, let alone discuss the paradigm of parenthood. I observe money and gifts sent by migrant mothers, influence and make a salient contribution to the construction of motherhood and family among transnational domestic workers and challenge the state's politics of family and gender. It shows how the economy of female migrant domestic workers through the sending money and gifts becomes a site of negotiation and resistance for the migrant mothers in dealing with such dilemma as a result of the contradictory state's politics and to challenge the state politics of family and motherhood. The practice of sending money and gifts is employed by the women's migrants to challenge the traditional family norms promoted mainly by the state to prove that they are still good mothers and have good families while they are partaking in transnational labors as transnational domestic workers.

Globalization and migration play crucial roles in transforming families. Both have shifted the traditional social construction of the modern family toward a transnational one that

reflects changes in family structure, including the notion and practice of motherhood and mother-children relations. Parreñas (2001, 2008) and Lutz (2011) mentioned that the main objective for most female migrant domestic workers is to keep their families alive and create a strategy to sustain their family lives or households. Therefore, the formation of transnational families is a structural and cultural process because they respond to the forces of economic globalization by relying on cultural resources such as kin networks. Female migrant domestic workers, for instance, sustain their households through virtual intimate relationships.

Transnational migration creates transnational families that have different practices than “the regular” form, structure, and relations of the past. Family members try to find ways to bridge the physical gap and make sense of the distance or separation they experience. Olwig (1999) described the family structure as family relations that involve social and economic exchanges of different kinds and forms that she called exchange relations linked through parent (mother)-child relationships in which migrant workers and their children keep maintaining and negotiating their family and personal relationships.

I concur with Short (2005) in using the term “doing motherhood.” For Short, it refers to the practices of mothers and the social expectations that can shape their lives as well as the emotional expressions of motherhood performed through the social relations of mothering. Motherhood itself is seen as a set of practices with specific relations of ruling and distinctive functions in the context of society and economy. These studies are crucial to comprehend the different strategies migrant mothers use in navigating their lives to maintain their connection with their children left behind and in dealing with parenting and mothering since they are the main economic and emotional providers. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) claimed that motherhood is not biologically predetermined and fixed; it is historically and socially constructed. It is also culturally different and constructed, culturally located and shaped. Migrant mothers turned to be what Lan (2006) mentioned “global cinderellas,” transnational breadwinners who reinforce and conform to gender boundaries to be “good” mothers from afar while geographically separated from their children. Following these arguments, I discover different strategies of mediating mother-children relationships and reconstructing motherhood through sending money and gifts in a transnational family context.

The government of Indonesia has deployed the conflicting and paradoxical politics of family and motherhood. While on the one hand, it strongly campaigns for the traditional family and gender roles through the political project of the state maternalism or “state *ibuism*” (Suryakusuma, 1996, 2004) or the domestication of women primarily as a mother, the government also urges women’s participation in the labor market. With the state *ibuism*, the New Order administration applied the politics of the family and motherhood to consolidate power role as the husband’s extension and companion, the educator of children, the housewife, and as part of the large family of Indonesian society. The government encouraged the development of Dharma Wanita as the subordinate institution of masculinized state bureaucratic structure strengthening the traditional roles of women as *konco winging* (subordinate companion) whose tasks are limited only in *sumur* (well), *dapur* (kitchen), and *kasur* (bed). The government issued some laws and policies to support the traditional family and gender norms such as the 1974 Marriage Law, the 1974 Ministerial Decree of the Department of Internal Affairs on the Five Precepts or Panca Dharma Wanita (Five Duties of

Women) officializing traditional gender roles of women in domestic sphere as housewife and men as the main breadwinner. That social-political situation provided women with dilemma in being and becoming good women and good mothers and claiming of having a good family. Despite the opportunity to participate in the public job market, they became the target of social stigma and stereotype of not being good women and mothers. Migrant mothers face the worst dilemmatic situation as many of them need to leave their family, their husband, and their children to work abroad. Their crucial contribution to the economy of the country and family could not protect them from the social stigma and stereotype of irresponsible mothers.

Labor migration alters families' structures since migrant workers or migrant mothers leave home and family, especially children, behind to work abroad. These practices break traditional patterns and norms of common, traditional family structures as women work outside their homes as main breadwinners, away from their children. The construction of motherhood as the main provider of emotional support, care, intimacy, and love has been undermined by new practices and arrangements of transnational families and transnational motherhood. As members of transnational families, female migrant workers seek to strategize with their children back home to negotiate how to navigate their lives and maintain personal relationships, kinship obligations across distance and national borders through sending money and gifts to their children. By sending and receiving money and gifts they and their children construct their identities of members of transnational families, good mothers, and new social status.

Scholars in motherhood studies or studies on motherhood (Rich 1986; Glenn, 1994; Villani 1997; O'Reilly, 2004, 2010; Miller, 2005; Hollway, 1997) provide a foundation framework in understanding how motherhood is not only an experience but also an institution and ideology as well as having agency to make a change. However, those scholars did not talk of how motherhood becomes women's identities and how identities are formed, constructed, performed, and maintained. They did not discuss mothering and motherhood in a transnational family context which is more complicated since it has to be done across borders with physical and geographical separation.

As O'Reilly asserted, motherhood is not only an institution, namely patriarchal institution and ideology that oppress women, but also it involves policies (other external structural and social factors) influencing and shaping the concept of motherhood. Following this framework in elaborating and examining how motherhood is not a single concept and practice since it has been influenced by many factors, through this study, I found that the identity of motherhood is not performed and managed singularly. By making various policies on and politics of family and motherhood the state through the government and social norms manipulate the meaning and concept of motherhood, however, women can transform and have their terms in defining and practicing motherhood. They have agentive capacity to negotiate and even challenge the traditional norms and the state policies on and the politics of motherhood to be non-conformist mothers or non-normative mothers and even have the power to not only expand the concept and meaning of motherhood but also change what motherhood is and what it means to be a mother. As some respondents stated, they often referred their ability to send money and gifts regularly to their children and other families as a form to claim their continuous familial relationship and bond with their children stayed behind in the home

country. They said that, by frequently sending money and gifts, they still felt that they lived in close familial relations and felt connected with their children and other family members even though they were separated by geographical distance.

Rich's study (1986) is important in challenging the assumption, perception, and representation of motherhood as well as its idealization within culture that has been circulated without confirming to the actors themselves. Her study suggests the need to understand and learn from mother's voices and experiences that are unique and different from one to another. Based on her insight, I argue that motherhood is also part of identity and subjectivity of women as mothers and we need to see motherhood from the main actors themselves, such as migrant mothers in this paper. Woodward (1997) explained that motherhood as identity is the main point to look at how women and mothers relate to others and cultural systems since identities are produced through symbolic systems. In my view, motherhood is not merely an ideal norm and ideology, but also a social reality, social action, and social practice and experience that has its own dynamic, dialectic, and dialog among mothers themselves and other social actors as a form of social-cultural production of identity. This paper explores dynamic and complex identities as transnational mothers formed and reformed through the practice of sending money and gifts. How does such a practice contribute to transforming the identity of being and experiencing motherhood of women's migrant workers? How does this identity transformation shape and shift the practice and norm of a family?

Using Fina's (2003) framework on how identity is produced and constructed through social processes rather than given, I found how female migrant domestic workers and their left-behind children re(construct) their own personal and social identities through sending and receiving money and gifts and how they negotiate their identities and negotiate the meanings or roles of money and gifts. As shown on the life stories of how the female migrant domestic workers I interviewed used the practice of sending money and gifts as a medium of negotiating their claim of being a good and responsible mother, this study shows the transformation of motherhood and how transnational mothers challenge the state images and representations of motherhood through its politics of family and motherhood that have not been explored yet in many studies. One of the state-of-the-art theories on the construction of motherhood that intrigues me is the study of exposing women negotiating their gender as part of their identities and gendered sense of self through their bodies which is gendered construction of fertility and infertility and the ability of them to be mothers. Once again, by frequently sending money and gifts to their children, those women challenged the notion of motherhood and negotiate their sense of gender and maintained their gendered sense of self and self-identifying as infertile as part of their identities as women. Those women managed identities to best suit their needs and purposefully rejected the dominant norms of motherhood and the definitive label and blaming word "infertility". Drawing from transgender theory from Nagoshi and Brzuzy (2010), social identity for Bell (2019) is the dynamic of integration and interaction in lived experiences between social-construction and self-construction. This framework is pertinent to my research and the study of identity construction as identities exist as a process of negotiation between personal/individual and social aspects (socially and self-constructed). Something that cannot be gainsaid is the intertwined and intricate relationship between personal/individual and social identity.

Female migrant domestic workers deployed the practice of sending and receiving money and gifts to negotiate with and even challenge the state's politics of motherhood and the state's labeling of migrant workers as "national heroes of remittances". In that respect, the identity construction of female migrant domestic workers is not given by the state, instead, it is a process of deliberate attempts and intentions of self-conception, self-awareness, self-belonging, and self-identification that shapes identities. Therefore, I expand the study on identity construction to the context of female migrant domestic workers by arguing about the deployment of money and gifts to (re)construct and maintain their identities of motherhood and social status.

Conclusion

This study is important to shed light on the roles of the migrants' money from being simply a tool for surviving economic and financial problems to more complex and dynamic strategies of social, cultural, and political experiences. This study provides significant insights into how sending and receiving money and gifts are key in constructing the family and motherhood and reconstructing new concepts, practices, and arrangements of families or, in Morgan's (1996, 1999, 2004, 2011a, 2011b) terms, "family practices" to refer to different family arrangement in adapting to new situations or contexts, and in this case, is transnational migration. The common construction of the so-called "modern family," stemming from either the state or the long tradition practiced in society has been disrupted by the new transformation of the family and motherhood.

This study provides a new perspective on how money and gifts are not always construed in a capitalistic way, with an impersonal market interpretation. It will examine the role and meaning of money and gifts other than their two major frameworks in the transnational family context, the economization of love and the emotionalization of money and gifts. In addition, this project offers another perspective on mothers and their children as the primary source showing how money and gifts mediate personal and familial relationships in South-South migration which have received little attention with inadequate data collection (Ratha, 2008, Ratha & Shaw, 2007). The project is vital to understanding the elaborate relationships and dynamics between migrant mothers and their stayed-behind children; how they deal with any conflict and tension occurring in conjunction with sending and receiving money and gifts. In a transnational family, money and gifts from transnational migration are not meant solely to sustain the family economically nor to save the country from the Asian economic crisis. They also fulfill kinship obligations as parents; maintain relationships from afar, and re(construct) new identities in gender roles, motherhood, social class, and a sense of belonging in transnational families.

This study contributes to emphasizing that personal aspect of migrants' money and gifts as a topic for policy advocacy to encourage government attention to the personal and family lives of migrant workers. Glorifying the women's migrants as "heroes of remittance" based solely on the economic perspective of the migrants' money, the government often neglects many difficulties and problems that occur within family, social, and personal relations, including being stereotyped and vilified as bad mothers. Through this research, I encourage the policymakers to take more serious consideration of the personal and familial situations of both migrant mothers and their children in the making of policies related to migrant workers, especially The Protection of Migrant Workers Law (UU PPMI).

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