

MIGRANT MUSLIM WOMEN'S RESILIENCY IN COPING WITH THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Resiliency, in this study, was used to describe Muslim women's ability to regain her shape after going through crises or difficulties. Their ability to cope and do well in life despite of having to face many struggles. The study sought to determine the pattern of migration of the Muslim women residing in a barangay in Intramuros, Manila, Philippines, to identify their lived experiences and to recognize their resiliency in coping with traditional family practices by analyzing challenges and coping mechanism of these women while living out their traditional practices in a non-Muslim community. A phenomenological method using empirical observation, survey and unstructured interview is applied to gather data and information from Muslim key informants.

Keywords: Muslim women, migrants, Filipino resiliency, cultural practices

Introduction

Rural to urban migration invariably removes individuals from the familiar ways of life they are accustomed to and places them in situations in which traditional norms and values are often rendered irrelevant or unenviable. Moreover, kinship ties, as a consequence of the migration, may become so diffused and limited that these no longer provide the emotional and psychological support needed by the individual migrant in his/ her new settings (Lacar, 2008).

Muslim Migration in Manila

Muslim migration in Manila started from 1571 to 1898 but these migrants were mainly foreigners like the Turks, Arab, Persians, Indians and Indonesians. In 1903 according to Census of the Philippine Island as cited by Watanabe (2007), domestic Muslim migration to Manila started and there were only 95 local Muslim migrants. Muslim migration peaked in 1970's and by the late 1980s there were 27 Muslim communities found in Luzon and in the Visayas Islands. In Luzon, Manila was the most preferred destination of Muslim migrants (Miyamoto, 1990).

In 1920, the increase of Christians in Mindanao bring in conflict and tension which resulted to "land grabbing" by the new settlers and local Muslim strongmen according to CheMan (1990) as cited by Watanabe (2007). The tension in Mindanao encouraged Muslim to migrate to Manila which gives the Muslims a little opportunity for business and economic growth.

Patterns of migration of Muslims to Metro Manila and other provinces were vividly studied by different researchers. According to the study conducted by Ogena (2012) in thirteen (13) different Muslim barangays in Metro Manila, the pattern of migration of these Muslims was different from the others; from their province, they stayed and resided in other provinces and cities of Mindanao before migrating to Metro Manila. Most of her respondents were Maguindanaoans (Maguindanao Province and Cotabato), Maranao (Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte), Iranun (borders of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao Province), Yakan (Basilan) and Tausug (Tawi-Tawi, Palawan, Zamboanga

Muslim Migration in Brgy. 655 Intramuros, Manila

As of 2007, the population of Manila was 1, 660,717. Manila has fourteen (14) municipalities and six (6) congressional districts. Intramuros was one of the 14 municipalities of Manila, which has five barangays: Brgy.654, Brgy 655, Brgy. 656, Brgy 657 and Brgy. 658.

Barangay 655 had a total land area of 2000 square meters and was divided into two compounds: Plastican and Maisan. In November of 2010 to February of 2011, Community Service and Learning Center (COSeL) of Lyceum of the Philippines University – Manila, conducted a survey on the population of Barangay 655. From the survey, Plastican had 70 households and 280 residents while Maisan had 205 household and 824 residents for a total of 275 households and 1,104 residents. From the 505 residents who were interviewed by Community Service and Learning Center (COSeL), 227 or 45% came from the Visayas & almost equally with 216 or 42.77% residents came from Luzon while 62 or 12.27% came from Mindanao.

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Among the five barangays: Barangay 655 has the most number of Muslim settlers. This can be attributed to its local leader who was a Muslim (Tausug) himself. From the study of Watanabe (2008), migrant Muslims always made some consideration for settling: first was the mosque & second was the community. Sense of belongingness could be a factor which led to this Muslim to settle in this area of Intramuros.

Muslim Women's Resiliency

The concept of "resilience" came from physics and describes a quality of a material to regain its original shape after being bent, compressed or stretched. In this study the word resilience or resiliency was used to describe Muslim women's ability to regain her shape after going through crises or difficulties, the ability to cope and do well in life in spite of having had to face a number of impediments. In this study, the researchers would try to analyze how the Muslim women cope with the challenges they encountered while performing their traditional family practices in a non-Muslim community.

Stories about how Muslim women showed resiliency and how they empowered themselves despite of discriminations and prejudices really inspire a lot of readers. According to El-Haddad (2012), Palestinian women face their own unique challenges; they face an enormous burden in terms of not only raising their families, but rehabilitating those families in the aftermath of Israeli assaults like Cast Lead and the on-going blockade. Palestinian women were also increasingly becoming the breadwinners in their families. In this situation, the women were (as women usually do) taking on multiple roles and responsibilities. But despite the challenges, El-Haddad and the other Palestinian women still continued and took their responsibilities as a wife, a mother and a Muslim woman.

Becoming a Muslim woman and wearing the *hijab* could be challenging. According to Noyes as interviewed by Taleb (2014), every time a media pundit or politician makes a sweeping, negative statement about Islam or Muslims, she wonders if someone will deliberately target her because of the *hijab*. So, she takes a proactive approach like projecting a kind and helpful image. This coping mechanism of this Muslim woman was agreed by Albasha, according to her, she always welcomes curious questions she received from classmates. She added, "Whether you welcome it or not, you should know that it exists," she said. "It challenges me to understand what I believe in."

Challenges may be encountered by these Muslim women but at the end of the road they still remain peaceful and understanding. This was proven by Muslim women, Khan and Azzaidani as narrated by Machado (2016). Khan recalled an incident in which a man entered her house and began yelling at those who were inside. Upon leaving, the man used a piece of brick to break their window. Though the Seattle Police Department (SPD) was called, Khan and many others were not satisfied with their response.

These narrations of Muslim women may be the same experiences of the Muslim women in different part of the world. And despite of these challenges many still believed that they must live with their faith, belief, and abide with family and community traditions. And what makes these women unique was their resiliency. Despite of the multiplicity of culture in their new diverse society, they were able to cope with the challenges and changes, remaining faithful to their traditions and religion.

Muslim Woman and Traditional Family Practices

Literatures show that Muslim women were good followers of their cultural and religious practices. Performing the expected roles, particularly on being a wife, were quite intriguing for most people especially for non-Muslims. They were expected to be submissive to their husband as an important provision of their ethnic's culture and mostly of their religion. According to the Holy Qur'an,

"Obedience of the husband is compulsory on the wife. If, without any lawful reason, she refuses to obey the orders of her husband, she will be liable to the Wrath and Curse of Allah until she returns to obedience (Qur'an 9:71)".

Also, the Muslim community assumes that a Muslim woman should submit to the traditions of courtship and marriage. Courtship for the Muslim requires a rigid test to the loyalty and sincerity of the man. If a man wanted to woo a lady, he must propose to the family which was known as "khitbah" in Arabic language. If one would break the engagement without any reason, it will be considered as immoral and dishonest.

While courtship requires a rigid test, marriage for the Muslim is often regarded as parental arrangement. Along with the marriage was *mahr*, which often times mistakenly perceived as bride price and may lead to the notion that Muslim women were traded as property by their parents. *Mahr* was a 'bride gift'; a gesture of the husband-to-be to accept the responsibility of bearing all necessary expenses of his wife.

When marital problem arises, the Muslim couple cannot easily resort into separation or divorce. Divorce was not a privilege that can be enjoyed by anyone as divorce was believed to be the sole prerogative of the man in a Muslim community. The imam (local priest) can allow a Muslim woman to divorce her husband if she can prove that the husband cannot provide her needs. According to the Hadith, a husband who does not support his wife had no obligation to fulfill her obligations to him.

Another distinct practice of the Muslim was the practice of polygamy. According to Dr. Bilal, Muslims were often accused of being promiscuous because polygamy was legal. Islam "allows" Muslim men to marry up to four wives at the same time, provided that the man is fair and just in treating all his wives in an equal manner. The Quran says that if a man cannot meet this

condition, then he should be married to only one. On the other hand, Muslim women were not allowed to be married to more than one man at the same time.

It was quite interesting and challenging to study how these Muslim women were able to maintain and exercise their traditional practices despite the demand of their new environment. The researchers believed that the findings could eventually serve as a benchmark in formulating programs and policies to empower Muslim women.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed 1) to determine the profile of the migrant Muslim women in barangay 655 according to educational attainment, employment, place of origin, years of stay in Barangay 655, ethnic group, 2) to identify the Muslim women's reasons of migration in Barangay 655; 3) to analyze the lived experiences of Muslim women in terms of pre-marriage customs, family practices and personal challenges; and 4) to describe migrant Muslim women's resiliency in their traditional family practices.

This study however limits its scope to the Muslim women of Barangay 655, Intramuros, Manila, an adopted community of the Lyceum of the Philippines University.

Significance of the Study

Many studies discuss the way of life, traditions and religion of Muslim. However, not all focus on Muslim women and the challenges they experienced to the society, in their community and within their family. According to Gutoc (2005), Muslim women struggle in two folds: discrimination imposed by their community and the struggle against stereotyping among the Muslim women. The researchers believed that through this study it will create a society that will be more tolerant to other's culture and could bridge the gap between Muslim and non-Muslim groups. Specifically, the researchers purport to:

1. Recommend to the government and private unit programs and implement laws that promote equality of Muslim women in all aspects. To create a productive and harmonious society for Muslims women.
2. Clarify issues and misconceptions about Islamic practices that could encourage acceptance by non-Muslim community.
3. Enlighten Muslim women about their roles, statuses & rights as accorded by Islamic teachings vis-à-vis ethnical practices.
4. Encourage the academic institutions to review their curricula & incorporate a fair treatment with the Muslims (representing the other ethnic and indigenous groups).

Methodology

Research Design

The study used phenomenological method as the research design. The procedures used in gathering data and information were empirical observation, survey, and unstructured interview. To validate the information gathered, the researchers used focus group discussion (FGDs) with the informants and corroborated by Muslim key informants. According to Stan (1999) phenomenological methods were particularly effective at bringing out the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives with challenging structural or normative assumptions. Moreover, phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual enables to 'bracketing' taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving, thereby clarifying ambiguous information.

Data Gathering, Instruments and Procedure

Data were elicited through a data triangulation approach employing in-depth unstructured interview, empirical method, survey and citations of existing contemporary literatures and studies.

The researchers identified the Muslim families from the demographic profile provided by Community Outreach & Service Learning (COSeL). After identifying the possible informants, the researchers conducted an ocular visit to the barangay. By non-random sampling, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaires to Muslim women who were readily available to respond. In-depth interview was immediately secure with the guidance of local officials. Data collected were subjected for a validation through FGD by the informants and key informants from the national government unit.

The researchers were guided by some forms of cultural sensitivity & contextualization. De Vera (1976), as cited by Orozco (2009), advocates the same cultural sensitive approach through '*pakikipagkwentuhan*' or light moments of interaction. This build trust and rapport with the informants and thus, it assured a meaningful data gathered or result.

The Informants

The target informants were residents of Barangay 655, Intramuros, Manila; the most densely populated barangay with Muslims groups. From the data provided by LPU- COSEL, socio-demographic profile like educational background, employment, place of origin, and length of stay were initially identified. These served as initial data which was used to locate the target informants.

Ethical Concerns

The researchers ensured that *research ethics* was cautiously observed in the conduct of the study specially it concerns about Muslim women. Though Paredes-Canilao (2002) explained that there was no single set of rules governing researches, the researchers carefully consider that the confidentiality and privacy were indispensable rights of the informants (Kimmel 1996).

Results and Discussion

Most of the researches in the Philippines on Islam and Muslims in particular focused on issues related to the time immemorial armed conflict and its resolution in southern Mindanao and regrettably scarce on Muslim culture, migration and how this has affected women's agency (Millanos and Balmores: 2013, Tanduc: 2011 and Florendo: 2004).

From the eleven (11) informants, only one is single and the rest are married. Eight (8) of the ten (10) married informants are economically dependent on their spouses since no attractive educational background can back up their application for employment. Low level of literacy is likewise reflected as four (4) informants were able to reach college level; four (4) graduated from high school and three (3) graduated from elementary. This condition, as claimed by majority of the informants, was rooted from the prevailing poverty which hindered them from finishing their education.

Despite being unemployed, two (2) informants were able to support the family's needs by managing a small sari-sari store. Meager income somehow is associated with the small number of children that is common among informants.

All except one informant has affiliation with Maguindanoan tribe whose places of origin are Cotabato and Maguindanao. Most of the informants have been living in Barangay 655 for quite a long time; the longest is 27 years while the least number of period is seven (7) years.

Reasons/Factors for Muslim Women's Migration

The push-pull factors discussed in the earlier part of this paper is affirmed in this research. Specifically, the identified reasons were elaborated by the informants during the in-depth interview that paved the way for recognizing more complex grounds and issues as resulted by their migration.

Overseas Employment

Most of the informants regarded that overseas work is the trend (*uso* in Filipino) or status symbol in their home provinces which make some from the neighborhood envious about. An interesting and common to majority of the informants was their attraction to work abroad as a domestic helper (DH) which regard as the easiest and effective way to improve their economic condition. Muslims, compare to non-Muslims, has greater advantage in penetrating Islamic states in the Middle East.

Informants affirmed this as the common trend:

"Usong sa amin ang pag aabroad kaya sumama na rin ako sa Tita ko. (Working abroad is common trend in our place that's why I joined with my Auntie.)

Apparently, the expected economic progress eventually resulted to injustices encounter from foreign employers. One informant experienced sexual harassment from her employer as supported by this statement:

"Nakapag abroad nga ako pero nagpadeport ako kasi yung amo kong lalaki, mahilig sa babae, hinipuan ako kaya pumunta ako sa Embassy. (I was already working then abroad but I intended and asked for a deportation because of my male employer who likes women.)

Informants' stories reveal that even Muslim women are not exempted from these injustices in Islamic states. Charlene, Fatima, and Ada (not their real names) who were then 17, 15 and 16 years old respectively when they started working as DH using falsified papers or tampered passports. Almost all of them confirmed that application and processing of documents (i.e. birth certificates and passports), is much easier then.

Key informants affirmed this as an illegal practice. Muslim applicants, even minors, can easily apply and work abroad before. Recruiters are conniving with some personnel of government agencies particularly on passport processing make this illegal possible. They could change the name and the age since Muslim may take late registration of their new-born child. But they added, that due to advance technology, this illegal processing is no longer being practice nowadays.

Influences of Family and Relatives

Having families, friends or relatives who have settled permanently in Barangay 655 served as another influential factor to some of the informants to abandon their provinces.

"Kasi nandito na mga Tita ko, nakatira na sila dito. Siya ang tumulong sa aking mag apply sa abroad." (My aunts are permanent residents in this area. She even helped me in my application for abroad.)

Thus, the influx of relatives and "province-mates" is a common factor for Muslim women and this was confirmed by the informants during the focus-group-discussion (FGD).

Rido or Family/ Clan Feuds

Charlene narrates that her family was forced to transfer to their mother's relative after her politician father was killed by an unidentified criminal. The cause, she believed, could be politically motivated and linked to a purposive retribution from another clan. She explains:

"...ganoon na talaga ang sakit ng lugar naming. Parang family grudge..hindi matapos tapos." (That is the common problem in our place. Similar to family grudge... It won't stop.)

Rido or family feud, according to two (2) informants, still exists in their respective hometowns in Mindanao. And in order to avoid further killings from the family/clan, they left their provinces having no plans of coming back.

As a common sociological phenomenon, people migrate for various reasons using different patterns. Muslim settlement has been evident to almost every point of the country as they also take different patterns. In Tandug's (2011) paper, he wrote that migrant Muslim in the key cities of Batangas first settled in different places before living in Batangas. While majority of the migrant Muslim women in Barangay 655 directly settled in Barangay 655 from their respective point of origin. The distinction of the patterns employed by the two Muslim communities of Batangas and Barangay 655, manifest their flexibility and ingenuity as they are searching for a considerable place for a possible settlement even this could be totally diverse in terms of socio-cultural, political, economic, and religious aspect of the migrant Muslims.

Subservience as a highly-valued trait for Muslim Women

Discourses about Muslim women often regard them as passive or active objects who are mere recipients of religious perceptions, interpretations, ideology and beliefs (Millanos and Balmores, 2013). The four core functions of a Muslim woman put emphasis on her subordination to her family along with her obedience and submissiveness to God (Hashim, 2003, Millanos and Balmores, 2013).

Thus, performing the traditional practices makes a Muslim woman easily identifiable, even commendable. From material culture like wearing of veil (*hijab*), full and body cover dresses, down to the non-material culture such as values and behavioral traits (i.e. obedience), as long as it is within the bounds of Islam, a Muslim woman is expected to conform. But among Muslim practices concerning family relationship, the parental arrangement, dowry (*mahr*), subscription to polygamy and divorce are highly challenged. Most often than not, obedience to religion or cultural family practices is oftentimes symbolically reflected on Muslim woman's subservience to her husbands.

According to one informant, subservience to her husband is at all times observed. It is not only regarded as a cultural practice but one of the highly respected teachings in Islam. She was brought up by family who religiously observe what they thought is indeed an Islamic culture. From her childhood until now, she practices the custom and proud to be an obedient Muslim.

Accordingly, informant's different accounts reveal that being migrants, subservience is manifested in two kinds; that of passive obedience and obedience which has evolved assertions but with the maintained the trust and dependence to Muslim authorities like the *imam* (priest).

Passive Obedience to Traditional Family Practices

Muslim informants' passive nature on traditional practices such as arranged marriage, payment of dowry (*mahr*), polygamy and divorce are reflected in their narratives. Being submissive is what their ethnic cultural group and Islamic teachings dictate them so.

Common to all Muslim ethnic tribes, parents are the ones deciding and arranging the marriage of their children even at a young age. A Maguindanaoan informant explained the importance of conforming to parent's decision as she herself, is a product of parental arrangement. This passivity extends to her sons whose marriages were also based on parental arrangement. She recounts:

"...magsimula sa maliit, sumusunod kami sa mga magulang namin. Kahit ang mga anak ko ay mga lalaki, ako din ang pumili ng mapapangasawa nila..." (Starting from young age, we have to be obedient to our parents. Even to my sons, I was the one who chose their future wives.)

Payment of *mahr* (dowry) by the groom's parents to the bride-to-be is an indelible mark in Muslim traditional practices. Assigning the amount or value of *mahr* is an exclusive right of the woman or the bride to determine. And once given, it totally belongs to the wife alone (Sahir Bukhari; 1980).

Thus, according to one informant:

"Sa ganoong kabata (6-10 years old), mahal na mahal... Nakapagbigay ang asawa ko sa nanay ko ng isang ektaryang lupa, isang kalabaw, isang traktora, bahay na tinirahan naming, Php 10,000, yung kama at lahat ng gastos sa kasal." (At that age (6-10 years old) it is very expensive..My husband was able to pay 1 hectare of land, one carabao, one tractor, the house where we live, P10,000, luxuriously designed bed and all the expenses used in our wedding.)

Parental arrangement with *mahr* completes the pre-marriage requirement in Muslim culture and religion. A key informant who is a Maranao confirmed that these customary ways are still evidently followed by Muslims especially among Maranao tribe. Parents in Muslim society, she believed, play a vital role in their children's marriages because they could verify the family's background and the character of the potential groom:

"Lalo na sa mga Maranao, we're very strict with it even the payment of dowry. Flexible naman yun, walang fix for as long as nasusunod ang nasa Koran. And as long as there is consent from both parents." (Particular among Maranaos, we're very strict with parental consent even the payment of dowry. That can be negotiated as long as it found in the Quran. And as long as there is provided consent from both parents.)

Having no options, the concept of divorce for two (2) Maguindanaoan informants is insignificant as they are forced to just accept this practice otherwise, they will pay of what they believe is equivalent to fine/penalty. More so, divorce in a patriarchal kind of Muslim society provides a very slim chance for Muslim women to regain their freedom:

"Gusto ko ng humiwalay, pero kahit gusto ng babae kung ayaw naman ng lalaki, walang magagawa ang babae. Baka magbayad pa ako ng multa. Kung hindi pipirma ang lalaki sa ginawang kasulatan ng imam at ustadz, hindi puwede maghiwalay ang mag asawa." (I want to separate from my husband but as long as the man won't allow, there'll be no

chance at all. Worse is I'll pay a fine. If the husband will not sign the document prepared by imam and ustadz, divorce is deemed denied.

An obligation to pay a fine is a common belief for most of the Maguindanaoan informants as initiator of divorce. While being aware that Muslim women also possess the right to divorce their husbands (*khu'la*), informants are still restricted to rely on divorce because of their incapacity to pay a fine. At least for one informant, divorce should also be the remedy for Muslim women as she herself resorted on separation without paying anything. But this is far from the other tribe's traditional practice where processing divorce does not require a Muslim wife to pay fine. According to the key informant, the practice of divorce should be within the injunction of the Quran:

"Kasi nga sa amin, not until the man says, I divorce you and I return you to your parents, that is the only time that the girl can be separated. Kung ayaw ng lalaki, hindi puwede." (In Maranao tribe, not until the man says he will divorce his wife and will return her to her parents, only then when the wife can divorce his husband.)

Moreover, they claim that separation of Muslim couples has been rarely observed in a Maranao tribe. Physical abuse or any forms of domestic violence, which are common grounds for divorce, could have been avoided only if Muslims become subservience to an important practice i.e. parental consent before the marriage:

"Ang isang tunay na Muslim, hindi mo aasahan ng violence o physical beating, walang ganuon na problema, kung meron man, madalang. Dahil magkakaroon lang ng hiwalayan kung nasa kautusan ng Islam." (If they are true Muslims, you can't expect violence or physical beatings. There's no such kind of problems in Muslim, if there is, only minimal cases. Separation is avoided if they just conform the teachings of Islam.)

Different views and perceptions from these informants validate what Millanos and Balmores (2013) stated that Filipino Muslim women's experiences are said to be differentiated in various terms or conditions such as tribal affiliation (whether Tausug, Maguindanao, Maranao or other Islamized indigenous groups), class, educational background, location, and whether Muslim-born or converts (*balik-Islam*).

Tolerating or enduring domestic violence by women are commonly associated with one's religious faith where sufferings, like that of Christians, is equivalent to a belief of receiving rewards afterlife. More so, if this is observe in a Muslim society where passive obedience by Muslim women is highly valued and appreciated by that of society and mostly favoured by Allah. Similarly for Ferraro and Johnson (1989), as quoted by Ngales (2008), *"some women endure battering for the sake of some high commitment like that of Christians. Women should serve their husbands as men serve God is invoked as a rationalization to endure a husband's violence for later rewards in the afterlife."*

But from the informants themselves, no recourse at all only means an acceptance and suffering from continued abuse and violence by their husbands:

"Kung kelan siya magsawa na at magsabi hiwalayan na kita, dun na ako makakalaya..." (Only when he got tired and ask me for a separation, shall I gain my freedom.)

Obedience with Evolved Assertions

Evidently manifested in their narratives, the migrant Muslim women have modified if not, altered some of these traditional family practices involving courtship, parental arrangement, payment of dowry, and polygamy. This changing aspects has been attributed to various causes.

Among other factors of differentiation in migrant Muslim women's experiences, the location (whether residing in Mindanao or outside it) and ethno-linguistic affiliation (whether Tausug, Maguindanao, Maranao or some other group) (see Millanos and Balmores, 2013) are weighty to point out that could have led informants to such evolving traits. Similarly, migrant Muslims of Baguio City (Millanos and Balmores, 2013) identify themselves according to tribal affiliation rather than a Muslim, the informants in this research likewise reflects that culture outweighs Islamic laws. These are observable among Tausug and Maguindanao tribes.

Non-conventional way of Courtship among Muslim Migrants

Although courtship is not typical among Muslims due to observance of parental arrangement, informants have their experiences to share. It is short-cut, discreet and simple courtship which are at par from other practices of other ethno-linguistic group. One of the informants say:

"Walang nakakaalam nang maging boyfriend ko siya..Lihim sa lahat ang naging relasyon namin. Kasi hindi din naman iyon ang priority ko nuon..ang makabalik sa abroad." (No one knows that I have a boyfriend. It was a secret relationship because my priority is to work abroad.)

A key informant believed that migrant's tendencies to deviate from traditional practices is brought by the availability and access to various forms of communications like cellphones. Thus, courtship can just simply be done through exchange of text messages, which common to non-Muslims.

Waived Parental Arrangements and the Realization

Majority of the informants admitted that they have violated the strict customary practice on marriage particularly on parental arrangement. Generally, the informant's parents are no longer involved with the decisions of their marriages but were only informed when they got pregnant or had delivered their first born for fear of being punished. One informant said:

“Nalaman nila na nag-asawa ako nung nabuntis na ako sa panganay ko. Tinago ko kasi natatakot ako magalit sila eh.” (They have known that I’ll be marrying after knowing that I am pregnant already. I didn’t tell then because I was scared that I will be punished.)

Negotiated or Non-payment of Dowry (Mahr)

Giving due consideration to Muslim male’s financial capability paved the way for this deviation of Muslim practice. Having full acceptance that it is inevitable in a Muslim society, the value of the dowry has been negotiated depending on the financial capacity of the groom or the husband. But for some informants who understand the complete inability of their husbands, non-payment of dowry is being accepted provided that it remains confidential especially from community. Otherwise, it’s a disgrace for the family of the bride.

Informants have these statements to support the evolved perspectives;

“Wala siyang naibigay, naintindihan din naman nila (pamilya) na mahirap lang ang buhay ng napangasawa ko” (My family understands that he can’t afford to pay for they know how poor he is.)

Subscription to polygamy and divorce with assertions

Still obedient to Islamic teachings, migrant informants has reflected an evolving identity particularly when asked about polygamy and divorce. They openly subscribed to these practices as long as it would guarantee their rights. Informants know how to assert their rights as long as these are within the bounds of Islam.

Three (3) of the informants are aware about the Islamic teachings governing the practice of polygamy. As this requires the consent of the first wife before succeeding marriages (Chandrakirana: 2001), having no consent, then polygamy is not to be performed. With much confidence, the statement say it so:

“Kung mag aasawa siya, makikipaghiwalay na ako. Ayaw ko ng magulo. Hindi din puwede iyon kasi ang unang asawa ang tatanungin..kung papayag o hindi...pag hindi ako pumayag, wala siyang magagawa.” (If he’s going to marry another woman, I shall leave him. I don’t want a chaotic situation. He should ask the first wife’s consent and she denies it, there nothing he can do.)

A male key informant believed that this evolving character of migrant Muslim women comes in once socialization to various cultures especially to non-Muslim starts. This, he believes, result to vulnerability of the migrant Muslim women to complete or partial transformation:

“Kung sa probinsya, nasusunod pa din ng mga babaeng Muslim ang kanilang tradisyon o kultura maging ang utos ng Islam. Pero dun sa mga lumipat na nang siyudad, meron pa din naming sumusunod, pero hindi na lahat kasi iba ang kultura at relihiyon nang komunidad na kanilang ginagalawan. Kaya ito ang challenge sa kanila (Back in their provinces, Muslim women are obedient to Muslim cultural practices more so, the teachings of Islam. But for those who have transferred in the cities, there could still obedient women but not all. Certainly because of the different culture in the community they live. That’s the challenge for every Muslim woman).

Marital Issues and Challenges

It is clear for all migrant informants that a good Muslim woman is generally a good follower, first of her parents and later of her husband (Millalos and Balmores, 2013). But when this obedience and subscription to polygamous act is beyond the teachings of Islam, this prompts the informants to rethink the kind of life that they have.

One respondent recalls when she was betrayed by her husband. They were already married when she found out that her husband is also married to another woman back in the province. She admitted to be economically dependent but whenever she receives physical beatings rooted from unending jealousy issues, a life without her husband is what she prays for.

Infidelity issues in disguise of polygamy practice by Muslim men is interpreted by most gender related literatures as an assumption of a right or a privilege that men enjoys. As what Ngales (2008) stated *“males consider it a normal course invoking their male privileges as inevitable and normal.”* But because of being helpless, women simply accept this condition and deny victimization. This is true when women drew attention on what may be wrong with them instead of their husbands (Ngales, 2008). This is affirmed by an informant:

“Kahit nambabae na siya, kahit kinaladkad na ako sa daan, nandito pa din ako, parang umaasa kasi ako na may trabaho siya at mabubuhay niya kami ng tatlong anak ko.” (Despite of infidelities, and being dragged in public, I am still here because of so much dependence that he can support me and our kids financially.)

On the other hand, a Maguindanaoan respondent literally subscribes to polygamy whose husband is an *imam* (priest) and has two (2) *duwaya* (other wives). Tolerating the situation is reflected from this statement:

“Masakit pag may duwaya, lalo na pag dumating ang pangatlo, magkakatabi kami sa kama. Kung mabubuksan lang ang puso ko, durug-durog na.” (It’s really a painful situation especially when the third *duwaya* arrives. All of us are sleeping in one bed. If you can only open my heart and see that it’s completely crushed.)

However, these situations were clarified by a key informant who believed that Muslim women who can accept their polygamous spouse is highly appreciated by the Muslim community. On the other hand, according to another key informant, polygamy has been rarely observed among Maranaos. This can be attributed to the increasing number of women who acquired formal education.

Apart from issues involving polygamy, migrant informants identified problems concerning finances as another issue which provokes the informants to a heated confrontation, if not physical beatings .

Most cherished roles performed: as wife and a mother

A true and practicing Muslim recognizes the fundamental role of the Muslim played by woman. This is explicitly outlined in Islam. Thus, Muslim woman's significant role is the proper nurture of her children and in being a dutiful wife. Carrying out of such must reflect utmost devotion and enthusiasm. All of the informants take this role submissively as possible.

Subservience based on ethno-linguistic group affiliations

Generally, all traditional practices of Muslim are within the context of Islam. However, what had been practiced and demonstrated by most Muslims vary depending on the type of ethnic tribes. Similarly, another key informant agreed by stating:

"Depende kasi kung anong tribe kabilang. Kung mas matimbang ang pagsunod sa tradisyon ng tribe, malaki man ang halaga ng dowry, yung ang dapat sundin, pero sa Islamic law, walang nasusulat na laki ng halagang dapat ibigay ng lalaki, kahit ang 'prayers' ay sapat nang maging dowry." (This depends on the tribal affiliation. If conforming with the cultural practices weighs more, in case of expensive dowry, that would be prevailing. But under the Islamic law, there is no provision that would demand for an expensive amount or value, even a prayer is enough.)

With proper knowledge and enough education, Muslim woman could not only assert her rights but could also fully enjoy what is due to possess. Giving her an access to education can make her fully aware of her role not only within the family but also in the society.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings, the Muslim woman has more of the burden to bear not by being a Muslim, but by being a woman. The lived experiences revealed that migrants are more vulnerable to be influenced by other cultural beliefs and traditions that would challenge their family ties. However, as Muslim women demonstrates different forms of resiliency, the researchers present the following recommendations:

- ❖ National and Local Government Agencies
 - Conduct of Madrasah must be widely promoted to all ethno-linguistic tribes.
 - Creation of an office or organization which will focus on combating the discrimination and advance continuous education.
 - A policy of integration in the curriculum of Filipino's indigenous people (IPs) and Muslim that would bridge the gap with the dominant Filipino groups.
 - Conduct of seminars, fora, conferences and livelihood programs for Muslim women that will empower each participant.
 - A creation of guidance and counseling centers or support system that can be accessed by Muslim women who experience domestic violence.
 - Initiate a program and project that will enjoin Muslim and non-Muslim residents to promote peace, cooperation and harmony in the community.

❖ Media

A macro media campaign that will address stereotyping, prejudicial attitudes and discrimination against Muslim women and to promote positive images of the diversity of Muslim women and to normalise their participation even in non-Muslim community.

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