

The Feminization of Filipino Labor Migration: A Study on Overseas Filipino Workers' Remittances during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether sex differentially affects the remittances sent by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anchored on the feminization of transnational migration, it ascertains how global health risks compound gender and labor inequalities. Quantitative descriptive statistics were used to interpret secondary data from the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) 2020 Survey on Overseas Filipino Workers. Remittance data from earlier years were also used to compare and make sense of the primary dataset. The results reveal a gender gap in remittances between male and female OFWs. Although most employed OFWs during the pandemic were women, they took on primarily elementary occupations and only remitted half of what men did. As it stands, the COVID-19 pandemic coalesces into the gendered experiences of OFWs that worsen their already precarious working conditions. It is then necessary to reevaluate present labor policies, especially those protecting and recovering OFWs in times of crisis.

Keywords: Migration, Remittances, Feminization, COVID-19

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Introduction

Since the late 1950s, the Philippines has been at the forefront of labor migration and, from then, has become a significant source of labor export worldwide (Acacio, 2008). The Filipino diaspora is approximately 10% of the country's total population, with an average of 3,780 Filipinos migrating daily since 2012 (Tuaño-Amador et al., 2022). A great number of these workers fly to affluent countries, seeking better monetary opportunities.

Accordingly, the exodus of Filipinos emanates from a profit-driven decision to combat poverty and provide for their left-behind families (Paul, 2015; San Pascual, 2014). In most cases, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are usually parents or breadwinners who provide household support by sending remittances (Tan, 2006). These remittances—transferred cash or in kind—have been vital in the survival of OFW families and, consequently, the Philippine macroeconomy.¹ For instance, the World Bank reports that in 2022, the Philippines raked in 38 billion in remittances and was the fourth-largest recipient of money from overseas workers, trailing India, Mexico, and China (Porcalla, 2023).

However, although the Philippine remittance inflow has been broadly stable since 2010 (Tuaño-Amador et al., 2022), data shows a glaring disparity between male and female OFWs' remitting behaviors. It is observed that the former remits higher amounts of money than the latter, which has been the case for several years and is a firmly established pattern (Goff, 2015). Much misfortune lies in the fact that despite the increasing demand for female OFWs, they remain subjugated by unfair labor conditions that trap them in precarious and underpaid jobs.

Extant literature refers to this phenomenon as the gender gap in remittance and has documented it across various contexts (Marquardt & Ikeda, 2022; Orozco et al., 2006; Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005). The Philippines is a recurring sample in these studies, which suggests

¹ Remittances boost foreign currency resources, reduce pressures on the exchange rate, and deaden the need for foreign borrowing (Tuaño-Amador et al., 2022).

that the phenomenon is well-researched locally. Then again, a change in circumstances, most especially the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores the need to appraise the gender gap and investigate the effects of the global health crisis on Filipino labor migration and its implications on gender inequality.

This study addresses this research gap by analyzing the remittances of male and female OFWs during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. It contributes to contextualizing the gender gap, on the one hand, and expands previous conceptualizations of the phenomenon by interrogating new dimensions, on the other hand. While gender is a concept that is difficult to quantify, it is not entirely impossible (Behrman et al., 2014; Murnen & Smolak, 2010; Scott, 2010). In fact, in the context of gendered remittances, a quantitative approach captures linkages and dynamic patterns that are otherwise lacking in other methods (Marquardt & Ikeda, 2022). This paper adopts such a perspective and measures the gender gap using its more quantifiable indicator: sex. The paper's novelty lies in its examination of the remittance gap vis-à-vis the interplay among (a) sex, (b) finance, and (c) health.

Research Focus

As an overview, the term *gender* in the succeeding sections refers to the general gender gap discussed in the literature, which will be elaborated in this section. Conversely, *sex* refers to the study's primary variable and the data used for analysis. The latter is used to make sense of and infer the broader gender gap. In the interpretation section, results derived from analyzing data on sex contribute to insights into the gendered conditions of Filipino labor remittance.

A stable discussion about labor migration includes critiques against gender segmentation, specifically, labor practices that delineate employment distribution for both genders (Go, 1998; Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005; Tyner, 2002). Usually, men land higher-paying white-collar jobs while those available to women are low-paying blue-collar jobs (Azam et al., 2020). This deliberate yet covert gender segmentation in overseas work is called the feminization of

transnational migration, whose central tenet highlights the systemic disadvantage of female workers (Go, 1998).

Interestingly, the gender gap in remittance is alleged to be a manifestation of feminization. For instance, Hennebry et al. (2017) suggest that the gender disparity in remittance sending is a byproduct of the complex working conditions of female overseas workers, involving issues in wages, employment benefits, and power dynamics. Feminization as a concept originates from feminist perspectives and was appropriated into other areas like labor; because of this, there is no formal transnational feminization theory, but is, instead, generated based on an array of scholarship that coalesces a feminist worldview with migration studies (Donato et al., 2014; Piper, 2003; Yoshimura, 2007). This paper draws from these studies and adopts feminization as the backdrop for interrogating Filipino remittance, gender, and health.

Gender is a convoluted concept that functions as a structure for people's orientation, relationship, and social contract (Risman, 2017). On the one hand, it can refer to people's attitudes, practices, and interactions. On the other hand, it describes processes and arrangements that determine the former. In this study, the gender gap follows this perspective and looks at the individual and broad implications of any difference in Filipino remittance based on one's discernible gendered characteristics.

Unfortunately, very little data allow the researcher to capture these gendered characteristics, especially among OFWs, apart from deducing them from their sex. This study then interprets gendered remittances based on the remitting difference between male and female Filipinos but likewise further problematizes this limitation while continuing to provide insights on the matter.

In lieu of this, the paper seeks to answer whether the sex of OFWs differentially affects their remittances sent during the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, this paper aims to:

1. Identify the sex distribution of OFWs in the migrant workforce during the pandemic; and
2. Ascertain the gender gap in remittances of OFWs during the pandemic by comparing remitted income.

The subsequent sections detail existing knowledge and literature about the topic to properly contextualize the present study. Information herein will discuss the gendered dimension of Filipino labor migration, the gendered differences in Filipino remittance, and the adverse compounding effect of the pandemic on labor migration.

Gendered Perspectives in Filipino Labor Migration

Notwithstanding the previous composition of the Filipino labor force, there has been a steady and increasing demand for female OFWs, who, at present, comprise 60% of the total number of OFWs (Eugenio, 2023). Many scholars, like Parreñas (2015), spotlight this demographic shift, citing a constant decline in male OFWs and a rapid spike in females. Curiously, this shift precedes current circumstances, as some literature traces the demand for female labor migrants back to the early 1980s (Go, 1998; Tyner, 2002).

However, the increase in employment opportunities for women is associated with marked gender differences between female and male OFWs, especially their employment patterns, received salaries, and collar color distribution (Go, 1998; Tyner, 2002). Female OFWs are more commonly recruited for low-skilled, low-paid, and precarious jobs like domestic work and entertainment. Conversely, most men are given managerial-professional positions and manual-type occupations (Donato et al., 2014). Interestingly, even if both Filipinos come from very similar backgrounds in education and experience, men are still more likely to land high-paying jobs.

Ironically, studies that focused on gender differences between OFWs suggest that female overseas workers embody positive working traits. For instance, Orozco et al. (2006) echo previous findings about female OFWs and explain that they are more reliable and exhibit greater responsibility in their work abroad and with their left-behind families. Despite this, female OFWs are still preferred less by employers and are still stuck in low-paying care work industries, including domestic help, cleaning, and janitorial services. There can be many reasons for this, but Agesa and Agesa (1999) assert that the leading cause of this is the preferential treatment to men, which is hinged on the structural double disadvantage of migrant women, whose identity as a migrant and as a woman is admonished and trivialized in competitive sectors.

However, it is noteworthy that this gendered dimension to labor migration can also be a corollary to the efforts of the Philippine government to market female Filipinos as ideal overseas workers (Tungohan, 2021). According to Tungohan (2021), the Philippines deliberately markets female OFWs as selfless, grateful, and uncomplaining service providers to foreign employers. As a result, this has instilled a culture where female OFWs are “subservient to their employers, to their families, and ultimately, to the Philippine state” (Tungohan, 2021, p.37). The framing that female OFWs are the best fit to be helpers and providers has conditioned public opinion and, therefore, naturalized a gendered perception of labor.

One can also argue that the Philippines reflects norms and discourses that most Filipinos mutually constitute. To this end, other social units have also facilitated the ontology of female OFWs and are thereby ingrained within the social order. After all, Filipino families innately attached care work with women (Gotehus, 2022). Hence, Filipino labor migration is structural, institutional, and social.

***Gender Gap in Filipino Remittances:
Behavior, Methods, and Customs***

Research on the gender differences in remitting remains uncertain at the time of writing. While some studies show evidence that women remit higher amounts and more frequently than men (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005), others found the opposite and declared that the latter are better remitters than the former (Agarwal & Horowitz, 2002; Hoddinott, 1994). Regardless of either, such ambiguity impels the need to revisit these differences, especially given the added context of the pandemic.

There are many factors behind gender differences in remitting. One of these is what scholars point out as the labor conditions of overseas workers. Fleury (2016) reveals that labor migrant women experience poor work circumstances, where they remit less because they earn less. In a similar study, Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) suggest that since men make more money than women, they can send larger amounts of household remittances. More so, recent studies also show that remitting reflects personal circumstances; according to McDonald and Valenzuela (2012), men remit based on what they can share, while

women remit based on their needs back home. All these cited studies insinuate the social and corporeal elements of remittances.

However, there are also epistemic rules that fuel gender differences. According to Harper and Zubida (2017), remitting is affected by cultural and psychosocial motives. For example, altruism and family-orientedness are prevalent determinants of positive female OFW remittance behavior. Specifically, women are perceived to be more altruistic and caring to their families, which drives higher and more frequent remitting (Chant & Radcliffe, 1992). These determinants run contrary to the above-mentioned labor condition where female OFWs are economically more disadvantaged than male OFWs and, thus, have less capacity to remit.

Different reports and studies provide compelling insight into this paradox; accordingly, when looking at the number of remittances, they argue that the identifiers of high and low should be contingent on the percentage of the remitted amounts to earnings. Despite women earning less, they compensate by sharing a higher percentage of their remittance than men (Agcaoili, 2019; Asis, 2016). However, this contrasts with Semyonov and Gorodzeisky's (2005) finding, which shows that "men remit 60% of their earnings while women remit about 45% of their earnings." These contradicting findings necessitate revisiting the phenomenon and looking at current patterns to ascertain its manifestation in Filipino society.

Gender, Remittances, and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Unquestionably, the Philippines suffered from the decreased remittance inflow during the pandemic, affecting both OFW families and the national economy. However, some studies point out that the pandemic significantly threatened female OFWs and their remittances (Azam et al., 2020; UN Women, 2020). While little is known about the exact consequence of the pandemic on the remittances of women, there are important reasons to believe that they are vastly affected.

Among many, Azam et al. (2020) explain that the pandemic has hindered women's ability to remit. Accordingly, female labor migrants preferred sending remittances informally because formal methods are inaccessible or costly. Unfortunately, these sites have been shut down

because of the pandemic, which later affected women's remitting behaviors (Azam et al., 2020; UN Women, 2020). Similarly, Foley and Piper (2020) argue that even if women can remit during the pandemic, it comes at the expense of their added risk exposure. Accordingly, female labor migrants, who, in most cases, are in the health, social care, and domestic sectors, bear a double burden of trying to stay safe but also working to support their families.

One of the biggest hurdles for female labor migrants during the pandemic might be forced repatriation and dismissal. Intuitively, the women-dominated working sector, like the domestic care industry, was the most severely affected by the pandemic (UN Women, 2020). This and the fact that other women-dominated sectors were informal meant that they were easily stripped of a job and presumably sent home. Unfortunately, sparse literature discusses these gendered labor experiences of women in the Philippine context. Thus, it is fitting that they be researched to address a gap in the literature and, subsequently, localize findings.

Study Framework

This study is anchored on feminist perspectives on labor, specifically the concept of feminization of migration. To elucidate this concept, the researcher draws from Connell's (2002) gender relations theory and praxis-oriented approach (Connell, 1987). The former informs how gender is a social product that shifts and changes through the volition of social institutions, while the latter provides insights into how gender gains materiality through discourse, becoming embedded in everyday life. Additionally, this study adapts Nygren et al.'s (2022) intersectional risks theory to explain the relationship between public health and gender.

According to Connell (2002), gender relation is a complex social product that changes and transforms due to migration and settlement. In their discussion, the author posits four dimensions of gender relations (power, production, emotional, and symbolic relations) interacting in various social institutions, creating a regimen that shapes gender performances. Specifically, Connell describes gender relations as fluid and malleable to macro-structures such as global labor markets, which

forged gender interactions, norms, and practices. From this, it can be understood that the construction of gender dynamics (i.e., the roles assigned per gender) is controlled by macro-structures, which often represent conservative and stereotypical ideologies.

In the context of migration, the theory suggests that the segmentation of gender is part and parcel of a broader gender regimen that is elicited from capitalistic markets. On this front, it is unsurprising why female migrants are at a disadvantage, seeing that capitalistic structures are built through the lens of patriarchy and competition, which historically have described women as inferior to men (Hartmann, 1976).

Interestingly, Connell's (1987) praxis-oriented perspective recognizes that the social production of gender relations manifests as forms of discourses later assimilated into everyday life. Accordingly, gender is construed as the binary between men and women whose identities, skills, and personalities are juxtaposed and contrasted against each other. Because of this, binary oppositions (e.g., men are assertive, and women are submissive) become salient, integrating through the very fabric of social interaction.

Looking at gender segregation in factory work, Connell (1987) explains that the roles and tasks assigned reflect the discourses on binary oppositions. The unconscious practice of differentiating what a man and a woman can do is the material manifestation of gender relations that inhibit women's labor choices and opportunities.

Like the former's concern over broader social structures and power dynamics, Nygren et al. (2022) underscore the need for intersectional approaches to study the effects of risks and threats. Specifically, the authors accentuate that inequality in gender, race, and ethnicity is fluid, permeable, and entangled with the performative aspects of risks, including embodied experiences in health. This intersectional approach unearths the complex and adverse compounding effect of gender inequalities with risks and vice versa.

In this study, Nygren et al.'s (2022) theory suggests the mutually constitutive relationship between the pandemic and gender disparity. On the one hand, existing gender inequalities heighten risks to health, safety, and nutrition among gender minorities. On the other hand,

the pandemic has also worsened the effects of gender inequalities by adding yet another level of constraint. As a caveat, this relationship is not dichotomous and is influenced by other social factors.

Taking all theories together, the present study situates the gender gap in remittances as a byproduct of disruptive capitalistic gender relations that inhibit women's ability to land high-paying jobs and limit the number of remittances they can send home. This material discourse is worsened and exacerbated in the case of the pandemic, proving the pernicious effect of the COVID-19 virus on female Filipinos in the diaspora.

Methodology

This study is built on a positivist paradigm through quantitative methods. Using secondary data, the researcher employed descriptive statistics to ascertain the gender gap in Filipino remittances during the COVID-19 pandemic. The dataset used herein is the PSA 2020 Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF). Annually, the PSA conducts nationwide surveys to gather information on Filipinos abroad, including OFWs. Through survey results, the PSA estimates the number of OFWs, their sociodemographic characteristics, and the amount of cash and in-kind transfers received by left-behind families.

This study utilized three datasets from the SOF: (1) data on the distribution and socio-demographics of OFWs, (2) sex distribution of OFWs, and (3) data on the average and total remittances they sent home. Using a combination of statistical techniques, the PSA sampled their respondents by creating domains (provinces, urbanized cities, and other areas) and selecting primary units. The total national sample for the 2020 survey was 42,768, with respondents working abroad from 01 April to 30 September 2020.²

² A month after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a global health pandemic.

Results and Findings

Profiles of OFWs during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Results show that the number of OFWs from April to September 2020 was estimated at 1.77 million. The majority of these OFWs are female (59.6%), accounting for over 1.06 million of the total. According to age groups, the greatest number of OFWs are around 30 to 34 years old (22.4%) and 35-39 years (20.5%), respectively. Out of nine major occupational groups, 46.7% of OFWs were engaged in elementary occupations³, followed by those working in service and sales (14.4%) [Table 1].

Table 1. Summary Statistics of 2020 OFW Profiles

Variable	Dimension	%
Sex	Male	40.4
	Female	59.6
Age Group	15-24	3.8
	25-29	19.0
	30-34	22.4
	35-39	20.5
	40-44	15.2
	45 and over	19.1
Occupational Category	Managers	1.5
	Professionals	8.2
	Technicians and associate professionals	6.7
	Clerical support workers	3.8
	Service and sales workers	14.4
	Skilled agricultural forestry and fishery workers	0.4
	Craft and related trade workers	6.8
	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	11.5
	Elementary occupations	46.7

Looking at specific sex distributions, data shows that the greatest number of male OFWs are around 45 years or older (23.3%), while females are around 30 to 34 years old (23.3%) [Figure 1]. Similarly,

³ Tasks performed by workers in elementary occupations usually include selling, cleaning, cooking, and other simple routine tasks like those in hotels, homes, and public markets (Philippine Statistics Authority, n.d.).

among the 1.06 million female OFWs, a big majority (70.3%) were engaged in elementary occupations, while the greatest number of male OFWs (26.0%) worked as plant and machine operators and assemblers, and only 12% worked in elementary occupations [Figure 2].

Figure 1. Percent Distribution of Sex by Age Groups

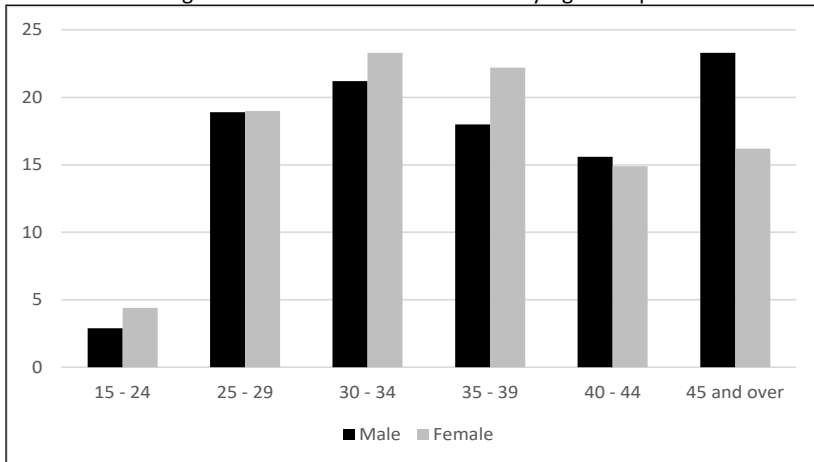
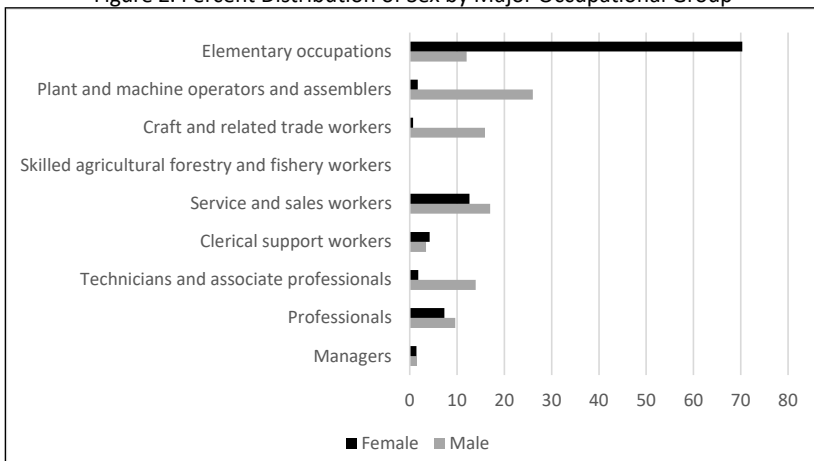


Figure 2. Percent Distribution of Sex by Major Occupational Group



Difference between Male and Female OFWs' Remittances during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The total remittance of OFWs from April to September 2020 reached ₱134.77 billion pesos, with an average of ₱86.81 thousand pesos per OFW. Notably, results show that the estimated remittance of male OFWs is ₱77.84 billion pesos and ₱56.93 billion pesos for female OFWs. On average, men primarily remit through sending cash (79.2%), and this is a similar instance for women, albeit higher (90.3%) [Table 2].

Table 2. Summary Statistics of the Average Male and Female OFWs' Remittances in 2020

Variable	Male		Female	
	Estimate	%	Estimate	%
Total	77,84	100	56,93	100
Cash sent	61,66	79.2	51,42	90.3
Cash Brought home	14,88	19.1	4,11	7.2
In kind	1,30	1.7	1,40	2.5

Discussion and Interpretation

Gender Structures as the Drivers of High Female OFWs during the COVID-19

It was shown that female OFWs were the most employed during the pandemic, and as argued earlier, this is partly due to the increasing demand for them. Parreñas (2015) outlines this demand as a product of globalization and the pervasive emigration in the Philippines. This demand is argued as two-way. Firstly, it is observed that female OFWs demand overseas work, as documented by earlier studies. Following the data above, it is seen that female OFWs braved the risks of working abroad despite the pandemic, which, as Orozco et al. (2006) suggest, underscores the inherent desire among Filipino women to provide for their families. Accordingly, some female OFWs are also motivated to work because it is a gateway to permanent residency in their host country for themselves and potentially their families, whom they wish to take with them abroad.

Secondly, this demand comes externally; according to Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005), Filipino women are perceived as more reliable and committed employees by international employers, partly explaining why many countries outsource and hire them. In the context of the pandemic, it can also be inferred that because of heightened risks, employers prefer dependable workers, especially in the case of domestic and care work, where their families are involved.

Following the study framework, such demand corroborates what Connel (2002) argues is the construction of gender dynamics based on global capitalism and conservative structures. It reproduces gendered attitudes that pigeonhole women's capabilities and, as an extension, inhibit their agency. For instance, Tang and Tang (2001) explain that women have internalized the views of others over what work suits them and how they should manage their income, usually privileging family needs over individual gratifications. In the Philippines, women are characterized as selfless for their families, which, as the data above shows, is seen in how female OFWs brave the risks of the global health pandemic to remit money back home.

This paper then argues that the choice to continue working abroad despite the pandemic is as collective as the individual. On the one hand, female OFWs might prefer to continue working because they recognize the need for a steady income amid the ongoing crisis. What is more, these OFWs often do not have any alternative jobs in the Philippines other than those with low pay (Lorente, 2012). On the other hand, it can also be that OFWs simply do not want to go home because they are aware of the difficulty in doing so, both for themselves and for their families. In the earlier months of the pandemic, the Philippines imposed strict lockdowns that inhibited travel and movement, making it hard to leave and enter (Hapal, 2021). These reasons underscore a tension where the female OFW stands in the situation, which, as described in the framework, is rooted in the capitalistic demand for women to care for their families at their own expense.

Interestingly, the high rates of female OFWs working during the pandemic dispute studies that female overseas workers are the first to be dismissed and sent home in times of crisis. For example, Van Den Bosch and Mavrotas (2022) assert that there are higher risks for dismissal among female OFWs, especially domestic workers, where

fear of infection causes employers to lay off their helpers. Then again, there is still a gendered dimension to this case; after all, it is uncertain whether the choice to stay and work is based on female OFWs' discretion when it can also be assumed that they were barred from ever leaving at all. Herein, Nygren et al.'s (2022) argument that women experience twice the danger during crisis lingers, especially since inadequate safeguards exist for them.

Gender Roles and Female OFWs' Allotment to Elementary Work

The results show a global preference for younger women and older men. Essentially, this proclivity is explained through the major occupational expectations among OFWs. Since women are more likely to handle domestic and care work, they must be younger to accommodate the demands and needs of their host families. Sayres (2007) explains that being a domestic helper entails being swift and efficient in regular activities like cooking and cleaning, which is harder for older generations. Conversely, because men are more likely to land professional and manual-labor jobs, it is pertinent that they are grown enough to handle heavy and complex tasks, which is usually attributed to older age (Maurer, 2001).

The above-mentioned data supports the idea that more women engage in elementary work than men. As elucidated in previous sections, women landing low-pay blue-collar jobs can be ascribed to the ongoing feminization of labor, which culturally and discursively links domestic and care work with female OFWs. In popular Philippine shows about OFWs, women are frequently portrayed as care workers, like Kathryn Bernardo in *Hello, Love, Goodbye* and Vilma Santos in *Anak*. It is precisely these portrayals that Connell (1987) argues to be the materiality of gendered discourse, where the recognition of the predominance of female domestic workers has inevitably assimilated into real-life labor conditions.

There seems to be a glorification of female domestic work in the Philippines: apart from shows that center their experiences, Filipino culture also attributes common domestic work characteristics to female features, gendering these behaviors. For instance, women are associated with housekeeping and child-rearing. These roles that have ever since compartmentalized women's capacities have meshed into

the very skeleton of labor, which, as the study framework elucidates, has covertly assimilated into reality.

It can also be that institutions in the country have long instigated women to be better domestic helpers than men, as seen in the country's labor export promotions. As Connel (2002) theorizes, gender relations are informed and curated through the conditions of a social site and its macro-structures. Then again, it should also be noted that women are innately disadvantaged in the workforce. Since most female OFWs lack formal education, their options for work are limited to elementary occupations that do not require diplomas or a specialized set of skills.

COVID-19 and the Exacerbation of the Gender Gap in Remittances

Undoubtedly, there is a gender gap in the remittances of OFWs during the early months of the pandemic. The data above shows that, on average, women remit less than half of what men do. Similar to findings in most studies, factors that induced this form of disparity are situated in a broader issue concerning labor conditions. For instance, the wage gap between male and female OFWs has continued to persist in recent years, while collar color segregation has only worsened (Schmid, 2023).

In a telling event, the state of Filipino labor migration has been coupled with challenges on abuse and exploitation of women. For example, some female OFWs narrate how their salaries were cut and delayed without prior notice (De Borja, 2021). Similarly, studies show that these working conditions factor in the constraints of female OFWs in earning and thereby remitting.

During the pandemic, Fisher and Ryan (2021) explicate the worsening of these conditions and the compounding of health risks with gender inequalities. For instance, informal methods of remitting are preferred by female OFWs since using these methods cuts costs and is OFW-friendly. However, the pandemic has made these informal methods inoperative, ultimately hampering remittance sending.

Similarly, McDonald and Valenzuela (2012) explain that the predominant occupations and status of female OFWs have exposed them to higher risks of being affected by the pandemic than male

OFWs. Case in point, domestic workers are easily susceptible given that they are unlikely to have access to social welfare and immediate healthcare. These pernicious circumstances also force some of these OFWs to take more jobs that subject them to higher risks of violence, exploitation, and infection (De Borja, 2021). As such, female OFWs remittances may be more vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic compared to male labor migrants.

Comparing the present data with previous Philippine remittances implies that the pandemic has worsened the gender gap. PSA remittance data in 2019 shows that, on average, men remit 64% thousand pesos more than women, while in 2020, there was a glaring 70% difference. Going further, the difference between male and female OFWs remittances in 2017 was only 52% on average. These comparisons suggest a reasonable basis to appraise the impact of the pandemic on labor and gender disparities. Specifically, looking at an intersectional lens, Nygren et al.'s (2022) theory provides a theoretical foundation for this finding, where the intersection of health risks and gender issues exacerbates the latter. However, similar to what the authors cautioned, other factors might be associated with the outcome.

Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

The results of this study reveal that the sex of OFWs differentially affected their remittances during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings show that more than half of the OFWs were female, aged 31–34, and a significant majority were engaged in elementary work, which altogether accentuates the gender gap. This gap, as interpreted, is part and parcel of prevalent gendered structures that insinuate harmful stereotypes like gender roles, which are worsened and compounded by the effects of the global health pandemic.

These findings implore public offices and relevant organizations to revisit policies and programs centered on OFWs. For legislators, there must be greater efforts to safeguard female OFWs against unfair labor practices that entrap them in precarious and low-paying occupations abroad. Likewise, concrete efforts to crack down on the gender gap in remittances, including the reevaluation of current regulations and strategies for promoting overseas workers, must be revamped.

Governments must start recognizing their role in gender segmentation and how they influence its consequences.

For researchers and the academe, the findings implore a new angle of studying the phenomenon, highlighting the seamless intersections of feminization, remittance disparity, and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this, the paper broadens discourses and possible theorizing of the feminization of labor migration, which prompts academics to further venture into the compounded and intersectional gendered experience of female OFWs.

Additionally, these discussions open readers' consciousness to the intersections of labor migration with other social spheres like health and policy. The findings not only forward the cases of female OFWs who have worked during the pandemic but also capture the primordial gendered experiences of OFWs; thus, the study elicits practical consciousness about them, raising further awareness.

Apart from the recognition of the difficulties faced by female OFWs that affect their remitting ability, this study recommends that institutions become proactive in their projects to support OFWs. For instance, there must be active efforts to capacitate workers through emergency subsidies, especially during unprecedented crises like pandemics. Ensuring a safety net for OFWs and their families protects them from undue harm, which, among many, dissuades them from working with risks abroad.

For future researchers, more specifically, this paper recommends including more robust statistical techniques to address the limitations of the present study. Although this paper tries to describe available remittance data, it does not in any way generalize the gender remittance gap, nor does it statistically infer the pandemic as a predictor of remitting disparity.

Similarly, future research should try to analyze data that more closely captures the gender spectrum and hopefully extend beyond sex as a discernible characteristic to ascertain the gender gap. As mentioned, the gender gap herein refers to the structural difference between males and females remitting, including the types of jobs they land and the amount of money they remit. Researchers are encouraged

to integrate multiple remittance datasets to substantially appraise whether sex or, ideally, closer data on gender differentially affects remittance. Moreover, it is also apt for future studies interested in the pandemic's effect to integrate other datasets as points of comparison in the analysis instead of purely using them to interpret remittance data in 2020.

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