

Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia: Damages in Family Structure System in Their Hometown

Putri Sekar Sari

Master of Sociology Study Program, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Email: mdnputri@gmail.com

Rizabuana Ismail*

Master of Sociology Study Program, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Correspondence Author Email: rizabuana@usu.ac.id

Linda Elida

Department of Sociology, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Email: lindaelida1@gmail.com

Hadriana Marhaeni Munthe

Master of Sociology Study Program, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Email: hadriana@usu.ac.id

Henry Sitorus

Department of Sociology, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Email: sitorhen66@gmail.com

Devi Sihotang

Master of Sociology Study Program, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Email: devisihotang93@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper aims to examine how changes occur in the families of temporary migrant workers after they leave to work in Malaysia. A qualitative approach with case studies through collecting interview data was carried out to the families of migrant workers in Air Joman Village, Asahan Regency, Indonesia. Using 8 concepts of Bowen's family system theory as a data analysis technique on various cases of families in the villages of origin of migrant workers. The results of this study found several cases that caused the breakdown of the families of migrant workers who worked in Malaysia.

1) differentiation of self such as family estrangement, disharmonious husband and wife relationship, elopement, child and parent land disputes, entangled in family debts 2) Triangles like other ideal women, abuse of remittances by siblings and in-laws, affair with in-laws 3) Nuclear family emotional system such as: Domestic violence, infidelity 4) Family Projection Process such as Divorce, loss of parents 5) emotional cut-off such as child delinquency, splitting of the child-husband-wife relationship 6) Multigenerational transmission process such as working in Malaysia as a tradition, intragenerational mobility 7) sibling position such as orphans, replacement role by siblings 8) social regression such as new rich people and neighbors' pout. The emergence of this problem in migrant families should be overcome by involving facilitators directly with families in providing social assistance and counseling on family dysfunction to reduce conflicts that occur. The government can also be involved by providing policies related to increasing motivation, outreach and increasing job opportunities with an emphasis on local local wisdom without having to work in Malaysia.

Keywords: Migrant Workers; Family System; Family Bowen; Indonesian; Malaysian

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migrant workers is implicitly a scientific matter; therefore, this study involves various branches of science such as anthropology, sociology, politics, laws, economics, demography, geography, psychology, and cultural study (Brettell & Hollifield, 2014). Besides that, it was an anthropological and sociological study on how migrants influenced and changed the hosts and the migrants themselves (Favell, 2001; Xu & Palmer, 2011; Yancey, Ericksen, & Juliani, 1976). Furthermore, how the process of assimilation and integration applicable in the countries of destination (Banton, 1983; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Wang & Fan, 2012; Zhou, 1997). There is another broader coverage where this migrant aspect **implicitly** emphasizes the relation between economic resources and the availability of jobs identified as the weakness of a region (Edwards et al., 2016).

Talking about migrant workers is not a new thing in social studies today. The process of meeting the necessities of life and improving the economy are the basic reasons for families to work as migrant workers abroad. Various enabling factors, such as the short distance between the two countries and the almost similar religion, language, and culture, have caused the migrant workers to quickly adapt to their new environment (Ab Ghani, 2012; Rashid et al., 2019). The enabling and environmental factors such as the migrants who come from the same hometown, friendships,

families, or neighbors become the attractiveness that lures those who are looking for work (Boyd, 1989; Faist, 2000; Massey, 2015). Other factors are poverty and unemployment in the hometown, Indonesia, the difference in the rate of exchange between Indonesia and Malaysia, which makes the payment much higher in Malaysia, the frailty of the regulation system in Indonesia, lower sanctions, being easy to get false documents about a migrant worker's identity, and terrible coordination between the Ministries and the agencies in Indonesia (Hardani & Rahayu, 2019; Husna, 2014). All these factors can occur because it is easy to access the Immigration Office in Malaysia, plus the bureaucratic network, the conveniences of transportation, the opportunity to get semi-skill and lack of skill, and the weakness of control toward agencies (Farbenblum, Taylor-Nicholson, & Paoletti, 2013; KBRI Kuala Lumpur, 2015; Malaysian Employers Federation, 2014; Mei, 2006; Tuccio, 2017).

The factor or remittance has a tremendous influence on migrant workers and the foreign exchange for the countries of origin as the suppliers of migrant workers (Donato, 1993; Georgiana, 2018; Latapí et al., 1998; Ukhtiyani & Indartono, 2020). The data from Bank Indonesia (Siagian, 2022) revealed that remittance from the Indonesian migrant workers in foreign countries was US\$.2.28 billion in the 2nd quarter of 2021. This amount increased 0.75% compared with the 1st quarter of 2021 in the amount of US\$.2.26 billion (month to month/m to m). If the remittance was compared with the 2nd quarter of 2020, the cost of the Indonesian migrant workers grew 0.64% (year on year/y.o.y). The Indonesian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia contributed the most significant remittance in the 1st quarter of 2021 for US\$.706.65 million, followed by the Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia and Taiwan of US\$.640.37 million and 342.05 million, respectively.

The profession as a migrant worker does not only prioritize men but also women. The strength of migrating families also lies in the position of women who work as migrant workers. Migration carried out by female migrant workers has changed power in the family, namely the elimination of power in the form of domination over the final decision-making power within the family (Febrihapsari, Prihartanti, & Rahmanto, 2021). Economic recovery means increasing or even strengthening the bargaining position of women relative to men in the household. At

this level, the economy becomes the main determinant of change. In fact, the knowledge gained by women abroad is the main determinant of their social interactions with their husbands when they return to their hometowns. Nevertheless, in fact this is what can sometimes be the spark or friction for the emergence of disputes between husbands and wives. This is the basis of Bowen's theory where there are differences in attitudes among family members between intellectual and emotional in dealing with problems. The emotional closeness between members can cause discomfort and mutual rejection resulting in conflict and separation. The explanation above tends to analyze how the life of the migrant workers in the countries of destination. However, very few researchers study the life of the families left by the migrant workers, especially the temporary migrant workers. The objective of this research was to analyze the condition of the families left by migrant workers in their countries of origin. The study used Bowen's theory of the family system (Haefner, 2014; Hall, 2013; Regina, 2011). It was found that there were numerous cases in families in the hometown where the migrant workers came.

2. Literature Review

Bowen's Family System

This study formulates 8 concepts of Bowen's family system which are used to view migrant families, namely: (1). Differentiation of Self: self-differentiation/intellectual & emotional differences. Filled with addressing issues of anxiety or concern among family members who were left behind while working in Malaysia. (2). Triangles: the involvement of others in dealing with anxiety or emotional tension. This concept contains the intensity of involving other people (additional family/relatives) in dealing with family problems that plagued them while working in Malaysia and how to involve other people into household problems. (3). Nuclear Family Emotional System: is the basic pattern of emotional functioning in the family. The third pattern contains the condition of the household when left to work as a migrant worker (4). Family Projection Process: contains relationships with families in the village of origin (children, husband/wife) during their time as migrant

workers, changes in interaction/communication with family members and the constraints that often affect the integrity of the household in the village of origin. (5). Emotional Cut Off: is a way of emotional disconnection between family members, how to adapt both in the work environment and with families left behind in the homeland, how to maintain emotional closeness to children left behind in Indonesia, as well as the impact it has on children when they leave work. (6). Multi Generational System: is an interactional pattern from one generation to another. Filled with the background of working as migrant workers to Malaysia, the changes experienced when or after working as migrant workers, as well as the impact when generations in the family have a tendency to work as migrant workers. (7). Sibling Position contains the role of additional family positions when working, positive and negative impacts when involving siblings in the family position, as well as changes in the pattern of interaction that are shifted by the role of siblings when they become migrant workers (8). Social Regression: used to see social influences on family processes and the impact of family processes on society.

Bowen's examines conflict in the family through the concept of differentiation self where in general individuals differentiate between actions based on logic and feelings. In other words, the conflicts or problems that occur in the family are studied in depth by Bowen through a psychological perspective with the solution of doing psychotherapy and family movement. This is different from this study, where the "family" studied by Bowen is the general family, while in this study the "family" studied is immigrant families. The problems that exist in these migrant families are studied socially so as to find cases of migrant families or social facts. This research does not look at problems in the family in terms of self-differentiation but from a sociological perspective by finding the emergence of other influential aspects such as the economy, culture and religion. The eight (8) family process concepts put forward by Bowen become a measure in determining the level of dysfunction in the family and the situations or experiences that are felt by family members in every social situation or condition when conflict occurs. Sociologically, this study presents social problems that occur in migrant families. Not only when there is dysfunction or conflict in the family, but also when family members decide to divorce the family.

Research conducted by [Haefner \(2014\)](#) on a white family patient who experienced divorce. The impact of this divorce causes the child to experience depression. Writing from Haefnar shows how the application of Bowen's family system theory is in recovering the condition of the child and also other family members. Haefnar as a nurse tries to help restore this family condition by doing therapy and improving the behavior patterns of family members so that they can help recover the child. Similar research was conducted by [Fatma \(2019\)](#) who implemented Bowen's theory in families experiencing cases of polygamy in Indonesia. The use of Bowenian family therapy interventions is effective in overcoming dysfunction in families with cases of polygamy. The two studies above discuss the implementation and application of Bowen's family system theory through a psychological perspective, while this study examines it from a sociological perspective. In this study, the researcher explains every other problem that arises when dysfunction occurs in migrant families.

3. Methodology

This paper uses Bowen's family system approach through 8 family therapy processes ([Hall, 2013](#)). These eight (8) families therapy processes serve as guidelines for researchers in collecting data. Bowen uses these 8 processes in understanding and exploring the problems experienced by families. Even though Bowen uses this process as psychotherapy, in this paper the researcher uses it to describe and analyze the problems that arise in migrant families and the solutions carried out by family members. Data collection was carried out based on a qualitative approach, namely through in-depth interviews and observation. The samples were 20 families of migrant workers. The data were gathered by interviews with migrant workers, either wives or husbands who worked in Malaysia, and with the wives, husbands, children who were adults, or babysitters when the children were still juniors in Indonesia. The criteria of the migrants' families were as follows: when one of their family members was working in Malaysia, and he had a job there for 8 to 15 years continuously through years. He returned to Indonesia only when he took leave or on holidays.

The initial observation was done after a village was known as the “barn of migrant workers.” It meant that most of its inhabitants, husbands, or wives, had left their village to work in Malaysia. Besides that, the job was done from generation to generation, and it was ‘common’ for them to be migrant workers in Malaysia. They usually work as maids, assistants in the restaurant kitchens, servers, air condition installers, construction workers, nurses for the elderly, babysitters, hospital janitors, or door-to-door janitors. Their jobs are labor market segments characterized by low wages, low skills, and low job quality (Czaika & Parsons, 2017; Mason & Salverda, 2009; Wright & Clibborn, 2019).

In this study, the list of questions in the interview is directly related to the 8 concepts formulated by Bowen in the system family. This was stated in the interview guide and asked directly to the informant. Interpretation of this data is then carried out by involving data collection methods such as observation, interviews and documentation and then the data collection is followed by studying, reviewing again by linking theories that are interpreted qualitatively. In general, data analysis involves an open data collection process based on general questions and analysis of information from informants.

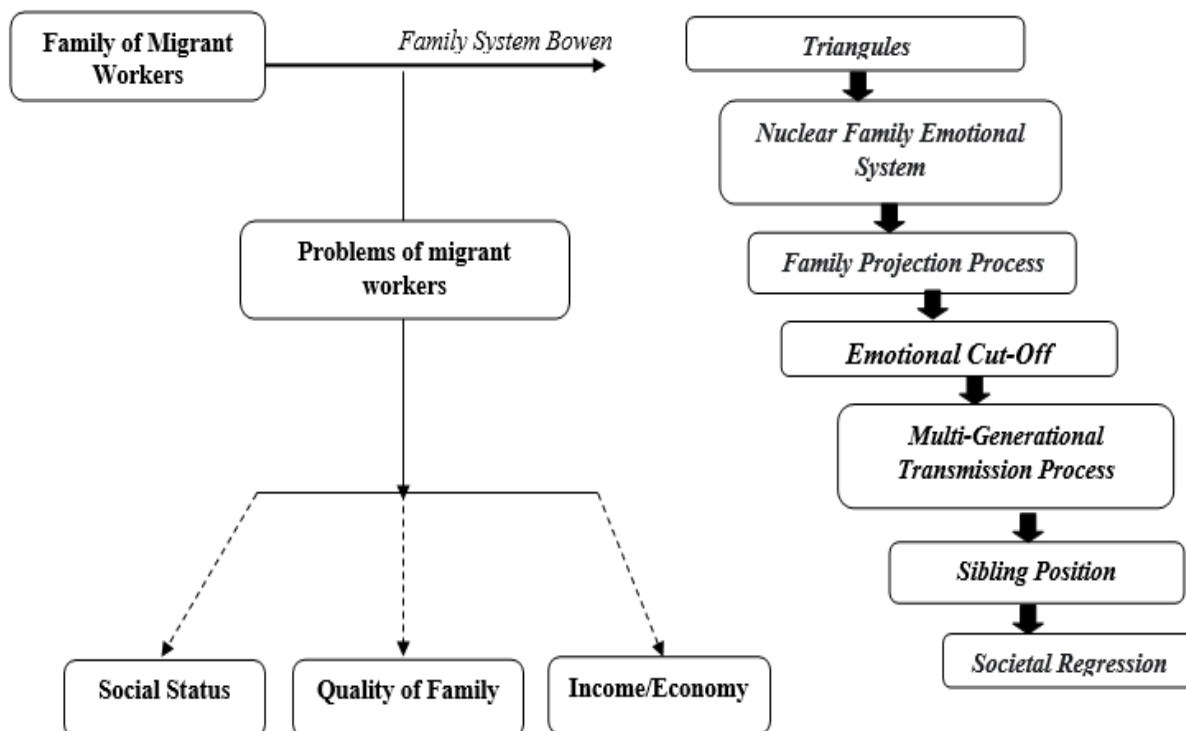


Figure 1. Framework of Family System Bowen's in Migrants Worker

4. Result and Discussion

Dilemma and problems of migrant workers in Malaysia who are concentrated in the “Barn of Indonesian Migrant Workers” were analyzed by using the concept of Bowen’s family system. It was found that there were some cases as follows:

4.1. Differentiation of Self

It is indicated as the capability of being able to differentiate from getting dependable on family even though being able to maintain thought in handling family problems or conflicts. Migrant workers are often positioned as a choice to avoid, limit, or anticipate all issues, especially in the context of family. This is why one becomes a migrant worker to improve the family’s economic condition and to take an opportunity to temporarily keep oneself away from beloved persons to reduce and manage a chaotic family condition. The choice of becoming a migrant worker and staying away from the family is made for various reasons.

a. Status of Marriage Duration.

For example, one of the cases in a migrant worker’s family is when the migrant worker was an adult but still single. The problem of one’s status today seems very sensitive to be talked about, so many of them will avoid or anticipate any questions related to their personal affairs. Some of them even choose to take the opportunity to stay away temporarily from other people to reduce and manage their families’ chaotic conditions; as one of the migrant workers in Malaysia, 38-year-old Nurasyiah (female), points out:

...” Since I was not married while I felt I was growing older, there were numerous oppressions and insults from neighbors and my parents. I wanted to get married and have a family of my own, but there was no marriage partner for me, so I felt I became a burden to my family. Therefore, to avoid anger and stress, thinking about what other people talked about me, I decided to go to Malaysia as a migrant worker. Besides preventing the problem of my weird status, it was better for me to be a migrant worker and find a mate there.

This informant revealed that she needed to stay away from other people and to temporarily set her mind at ease to avoid family problems and tension about her status

as an unmarried daughter. To be a migrant worker was a solution for her to prevent oppression and silly questions such as “when will she get married?”

b. Disharmonious Relation between a Married Couple

This condition allows the other family members to search for the solution in the form of flight or anticipation to curb the problems of the dispute between husband and wife caused by the financial crisis. The intensity of the quarrels between the married couple has caused uncomfortable and unsafe family life. This problem was encouraged by the Family's condition with many children, and the head of the Family could not afford to support them. Consequently, the wife took the initiative to be a migrant worker with a long-term work contract. Her decision to be a migrant worker had two impacts: 1) her Family's financial need from the earnings of working for some years, and 2) as a migrant worker, she was separated from her children and parents. The remarkable thing was that the relationship between husband and wife improved. This fact was pointed out by the informant, 37-year-old Mirna Sahfitri (female), as follows:

(...“In the beginning, I was afraid of working in Malaysia because it was far away, a new environment, and I had to be separated from my family. But, since there was a family problem, I thought that the solution was that I would give a chance to my husband and me to think it over, especially to my husband. I went to Malaysia as a migrant worker to avoid further disputes between my husband and me. I felt dizzy and stressed because we quarreled about trivial things. I wondered why we fought with each other. My husband worked as an unskilled worker with uncertain wages. Sometimes we quarreled because of lack of money and the children's school fees. This situation was the real reason for our quarrel. Therefore, I was determined to go to Malaysia. Besides voiding quarreling with my husband, I could also earn money to support my family. Let me go to Malaysia and not my husband. I was afraid if he would act dishonestly with another woman like what had been done by his friends who went to Malaysia.”)

The informant said that she could avoid squabbling and quarreling with her husband by working in Malaysia. She also thought her relationship with him was getting better, and they needed each other.

c. Elopement

Various problems in the migrant workers' families can be assumed as a form of defense or escaping from complicated family problems, such as the case of elopement. Destination to Malaysia is not merely prioritized for changing one's destiny but also an escape from complex family problems. The issue of elopement constitutes the background of the lack of agreement between the two families. Besides that, the problem of elopement is also related to the background of ethnicity or property ownership which makes the conflict between the two families concerning the blessing from one of the parties. Elopement, which occurs in a migrant's family, is usually caused by Married by Accident (MBA), making it difficult for the two families to agree on each other.

This case was revealed by the information of 48-year-old Agustino (male) as follows:

(... "The first time I wanted to go to Malaysia was that I wanted to get married with my current wife, but my mother did not approve it since my wife-to-be came from the Batakese family and neither did her family toward me. But, since love was sacrifice, both of us went to Malaysia as migrant workers with my wife's uncle. We worked as janitors in the Malay restaurant. We got married in 2016 without the approval of our parents. But now, thank God, both families agree on our marriage. Maybe we now have children, their grandchildren. It was a very bad condition at that time. We took only IDR.500.000 (five hundred thousand rupiahs) to Malaysia. Fortunately, we were helped by our friends in there.")

d. Land Dispute between Children and their Parents

Disputes between children and their parents usually occur in the people who work as migrant workers. One of the cases in this village was about a boy who stole his parents' land certificate. He pawned it, and the money was used to live with his friends in Malaysia. His parents contacted some friends in Malaysia to find the boy, but they failed. They finally found out that their son had married an Indonesian girl who worked as a waitress in Malaysia. Differentiation of Self-made by the families in this village has different backgrounds and needs. For them, working in Malaysia is not merely to improve or increase their economic condition but also to keep away

from others temporarily. It is intended to handle pressure and disputes until new problems occur in the families. The following event was revealed by the father of the offender, 56-year-old Wahyudi (male), as follows:

(... "He took the land certificate without our knowledge. But, when my wife came into the room to tidy up clothing and arrange documents, she did not see the land certificate. We searched for it but could not find it. We were suspicious of Warno (their oldest son) because he talked about borrowing some money the previous day, and we did not lend it because he liked gambling and prostitution. We then asked his friends, who said he planned to go to Malaysia to work and stay there. Our feeling told us that he was the person who stole it and pawned it to be used for living in Malaysia. We then accepted the fact. His brothers even did not care. We heard that he now works in Pasar Ikan in Malaysia. We currently lose contact with him...")

e. Family's Being Deep in Debt

Debt becomes an acute problem; it must be paid off. A person in a position of economic depression will automatically deal with the obligation to handle his financial situation. A family in a challenging economic condition will seek help from moneylenders to fulfill their needs. However, the financial problem cannot be settled as simple as that; borrowing from a moneylender will worsen a situation; besides that, the interest has to be paid each month. Therefore, a person will find a way to pay off his debt, as what occurs in the family at Air Joman that worked in Malaysia as migrant workers. In addition to the work done is relatively easy, the wages received are more. This solution is a form of differentiation to pay off debt from moneylenders. Besides that, sacrifice affects the families left by migrant workers and the struggles against money-lenders debt. The neighbors mock the family upon the case of "escaping" concerning their debt in the number of millions of rupiahs. This is not an escape but temporary differentiation of self while collecting money to pay off their debt so that the family's good image can be restored. This event is revealed by 48-year-old Suwandi as follows:

(... " When I went to Malaysia, my neighbors thought that I was escaping. The fact was that I was searching for a job to be able to pay off my debt to "Regar" (the name of the moneylender). But, you know, rumors cannot be stopped. I did not escape but stayed away

from them temporarily while collecting money. I worked for a long time in Malaysia. I would send the money to my family every year, paying off my debt little by little, along with interest. I had to sacrifice because of debt. I had to leave my pregnant wife and go to Malaysia because I did not want to be run after by that "Regar." I worked as a handyman in various jobs; I chose the job with high pay. I was afraid that my interest would increase each time. If I did not desperately need the money, I would not owe him because I was trapped! But I could do nothing; I needed money desperately. I heard that my family got a big problem when I was in Malaysia. All took pity on me and thank God; I owe nothing now. But I still work in Malaysia and feel relaxed now, not as I used to. My family also supports me although sometimes we quarrel with each other.")

4.2. Triangles

This concept of triangles is concerned with the readiness to act and determining the continuity of harmonious life during working as migrant workers in a foreign country. However, they are separated by distance and time. The connectedness among family members can be seen in their response to problems due to working as migrant workers. Tension spreads and establishes a triangle and creates the opportunity for a "different person who exits." Bowen also points out that emotional power in a triangle will continuously move between two persons, with one of them coming from outside. The pattern conveyed by Bowen is described as father-mother-child, followed by family tension. Spreading the pressure can stabilize the family system but cannot resolve its source.

a. Kept Woman

Distance and time become an important problem in families with migrant workers. Leaving their families in their hometown for a certain period needs sacrifice and help from other people, including relatives or "the third party." However, the third party may cause positive and negative impacts, as what is revealed by 45-year-old Suharno (male) as follows:

(... "When I worked in Malaysia for 18 years, I had a lot of experience, especially about my wife. We often quarreled, were suspicious of each other, and were full of an emotional

atmosphere that made me feel depressed. Honestly, I felt very lonely during my work in Malaysia. Sometimes, when I felt lonely and tried to eliminate my stress, I talked with my friends, I mean, women, only to make jokes and chat, to share my problems with them. In the long run, if I were egoistic and mean, I began to think that it would be better to divorce my wife and marry a woman, the same migrant worker in Malaysia. I believe that this third person's presence is the solution to not hurting each other so that we would be "free." There would be no suspicion, and I felt comfortable working here. I don't care if people say that my new wife is an evil woman. Having a new wife is my choice to protect my family from a lousy relationship.

b. Misusing Remittance by Brother and Brother-In-Law

The involvement of other people in handling family problems after the family is left by their family member as a migrant worker is considered essential and anticipated, and it causes a commotion among the brothers and sisters. It is expressed by 44-year-old Sukasih (female) as follows:

(..." I think that brothers and sisters are essential; they can help support my family while I am in Malaysia. I usually asked them to take care of my family, especially my children, so I would not be worried about them since I had left them for years. It is not guaranteed that they can cover or control everything, but at least they make me feel safe. I used to send money through them and knew that it could make a little bit conflict with them about the susceptible cash, you know it. But I had no choice since I needed their help. It was not uncommon that they embezzled the remittance, and I knew it but could do nothing. At least, they are my brothers and sisters.")

c. Having an Affair with Brother-In-Law

The involvement of family members does not automatically have a positive effect; an unexpected thing can happen when one of them becomes a migrant worker. Living together under the same roof (parents, parents-in-law, brothers, and sisters-in-law, etc.) can cause calamity in the family. One of the cases usually occurs is having an affair between the husband whose wife is a migrant worker and his wife's sister, and vice versa. This can happen because both intensely communicate, gradually

becoming close. It takes a long time for the wife to know this infidelity. She knew it from one of her neighbors who called and told her about the affair. This case was said by 45-year-old Halimah, who had just returned from Malaysia, as follows:

(... " Many people have told me about the affair between my husband and my sister, but I did not believe them. I send the money home for them. The neighbors said to me that they were suspicious of the relationship between my husband and his sister-in-law. I thought it was only a rumor, but my husband began looking for trouble; he always found fault with me! They had already gotten married. The funny thing was that he even evicted me from my own house. My sister did not defend me; she even defended my husband. Finally, we religiously and officially divorced in 2017. I then rented a house and returned to Malaysia as a migrant worker. I never thought that there was a wolf in sheep's clothing in my house, and it was my sister!")

4.3. Nuclear Family Emotional System

There are four primary patterns of emotional function in a family generation – conflict in marriage, couple dysfunction, a disorder in the only child, or even more emotional distance. Bowen moves in the dynamic context, which operates in a complete family, single parent, stepparents, and other nuclear families. It is undeniable that a family can face and react against stress and pressure. In Bowen's concept, stress replicates the previous generation and will be continuously repeated in the future.

a. Domestic Violence

The limitation of information and the lack of face-to-face intensity between a married couple and family members during their working as migrant workers can cause conflicts or tense situations in a family. The factors of loneliness and boredom trigger infidelity in the migrant workers. Length of service also influences the change in love and affection in married couples caused by a favorable environment. The creation of a new circle and social/friendship network in the migrant workers in Malaysia influences the security of marriage commitment, as what was revealed by 46-year-old Turmiati (female) as follows:

(... "While working as a migrant worker in Malaysia, I felt upset and depressed. On the one hand, I had to work for my boss according to the work contract. On the other hand, I had to deal with my husband, who was always suspicious of me and quickly got angry. In Malaysia, we used to quarrel violently for unreasonable reasons such as not answering calls. My husband was jealous, so it was challenging to work in different countries. He was full of suspicion and quickly got angry. I even underwent extreme domestic violence; I forgot the year when it happened. He heard a rumor that I had an affair with another migrant worker in Malaysia. When I returned to Indonesia, he suddenly cut up my right cheek with a cutter. Some neighbors felt sympathetic with me, but some others even provoked it. Since then, I began decreasing my social relationships with friends, especially males. I realized that it was hard and susceptible for a married woman to be a migrant worker in a foreign country, although I worked with my husband's consent to support my family. He should have known that I worked there sincerely...").

b. Infidelity among Migrant Workers

The problem of commitment in married life in which one the married couples are separated by distance and time can cause frictions or temptation from the environment. This case was revealed by 54-year-old Ngatiman (male) as follows:

(... "We cannot deny that we work in a foreign country for years, and being separated from our children and wife at home will undeniably cause problems. In the beginning, to kill time, I chatted with a female migrant worker, and then we had our lunches together. Meanwhile, my wife kept on being angry when she called me, liked to grumble and ask for a lot of money without thinking that I worked very hard in Malaysia. She was also a jealous woman, so I looked for a simple thing. I admit that I had a girlfriend in Malaysia; she was an Indonesian. I thought it was normal for a man like me who worked very hard during the day. Of course, we even had sexual intercourse without my wife's knowledge. I saw that most men who were migrant workers did the same thing as I did. However, my relationship with my wife has continued well until now. We must be wise in life, you know it...").

4.4. Family Projection Process

This family concept focuses more on family projection related to emotion in a nuclear family. The family projection is described by the existence of an interaction

pattern that appears in a family. Then it becomes an emotional power that can trigger the point of all family systems. In the case of migrant workers, the dynamic relation or energy between a child and his parents is robust so that they can influence each other.

a. Divorce

Lack of intensity in communication and the influence of the work environment can cause a married couple to be unable to be tied to a strong marriage commitment, so it is vulnerable to divorce and dissension. However, this is not as simple as that. The debate in a married couple also influences a family's condition as a whole, especially on children, such as anxiety disorder between parents and their children and children's mental health as expressed by 40-year-old Suhar (male) as follows:

(... "If I am allowed to say, the problem is that there is no believing in each other. My ex-wife is always suspicious, apprehensive, restless, and always thinks of weird things. While I worked in Malaysia, every bad thing about me was believed by her without any cross-checking. I was accused of gambling and having an affair with a woman, and I was not that kind of man. Once, she asked for a divorce because she said she could not stand being my wife since rumors spread by my neighbors about me. Initially, I did not respond, but finally, I had to divorce her. Consequently, our relationship with children became very bad. We used to quarrel on the phone. When I came home, my children were indifferent to me, so I felt that I was not a good father to them. The problem is that it is awful if there is no trust among us. Besides, I worked far away from home, which took a long time, plus a work contract. You should know that we, men, work so hard for whom?").

The informant said that the problem which arose when he worked in Malaysia was excessive suspicion and apprehension, which caused prejudice; consequently, he became stressed and uncomfortable due to the accusation by his wife.

b. Loss of Parents

Working in Malaysia at a particular time can also cause regret, especially about the problem between children and their parents who have left them for a long time in Malaysia. This problem was conveyed by 38-year-old Sundari (female), who worked as a migrant worker as follows:

(...“For me, there are the factor and the role of parents. I am a woman and still single. I became a migrant worker in Malaysia because my parents were old, and we were poor, so someone had to support the family. I was so close to my parents, so it was tough for me to leave them, and I believed they felt apprehensive about my being a migrant worker. After a few years in Malaysia, my parents asked me to come home and stop working. They worried about me, although I felt comfortable working in Malaysia since it was not too challenging and the pay was good. I told them again and again about my good condition here (Malaysia). My father got sick seriously. My mother said he always thought about me, who worked far away from home. Video calls did the communication between them and me until my father passed away without my presence and prayer for him. I thought he asked me to come home because he knew that he would die and I could take care of him before he died. Working in Malaysia has given me a lot of lessons on how to position between work (money) and devotion to parents...”).

4.5. Emotional Cut-Off

The increase in anxiety or the continuity of the same stress level strengthens the existing boundary and influences the system to develop new frontiers in a family. The emotional cut-off can be used as a device for facing the unification in an intimate relationship in a family. Every individual participating in emotional cut-off plays a role in a complex process. However, each party has vital needs for one another. No one can handle these needs effectively. This condition causes various negative impacts, such as:

a. Juvenile Delinquency

Concerning distance, it seems that a migrant worker’s job causes new things, so adapting to a unique atmosphere is necessary. The separation between a husband and his wife and between them and their parents and children obstruct the process of good emotional relationship with one another as what is conveyed by 47-year-old Sumarni (female) as follows:

(...“I think the real problem for a migrant worker is children. My children were left with my brother. They were naughty; they escaped from school, motorcycle races, and bla bla bla. And I, their uncle, was usually asked to come to school by the Counseling and Guidance teacher. Sometimes I felt ashamed of the children’s behavior, but I could do nothing. I never

forgot to send them money; they bought new motorcycles, cell phones, etc. I felt that we were not close enough to each other. Sometimes, they were closer to their aunt than to me. I realized that I only sent them money, not a warm heart. Usually, they express their complaint to their aunt or uncle. Working in Malaysia is like this: I am far from my family, especially my children. I even don't know what happens to them. Sometimes they are naughty, and I only advise them from here, Malaysia.").

Sumarni, the informant, revealed that the emotional closeness between her and her children did not run smoothly since they were separated by distance and time.

b. Relation Disintegration among Child-Husband-Wife

The difference in care patterns in which relatives change makes the informant worried about the growth of her children. It is not uncommon for there to be conflicts between her child and her brother. This case was revealed by 42-year-old Awaluddin (male), a migrant worker, as follows:

(... " I have to struggle hard to be a migrant worker in Malaysia. I have been chated by a tekong (agent), and I have quarreled with my wife's family, but I have to survive. That's life. I worked as usual in the beginning, but later on, I had a serious problem with my wife. It was about money, trust, and commitment. Separated in a long distance sometimes causes suspicion, especially from the wife's side. If I didn't answer her call, she would instantly be suspicious of me, and it made me upset. The result was that I hung over our relationship as husband and wife. We rarely communicated with each other, and I seldom sent her money. You know, it is hard to be rebuked by a wife without any reasonable reason. So, our relationship is not harmonious anymore since we have no similar perceptions. I won't divorce her. It seems my children are close to their mother; thank God they are cared for well. I can do nothing. I hope our relationship will be harmonious again...").

4.6. Multi-Generational Transmission Process

The multi-generation transmission process has more consequences than differentiation of self, nuclear family emotion, system, or family projection process. It describes and suggests the possibility of the result of differentiation of self, dependency on atomic family emotional system, and family projection in some generations.

a. Working in Malaysia Becomes Tradition

Working in Malaysia for a certain period, passing the border of different countries, interacting with foreigners, and leaving children and family are experienced by migrant workers. Nevertheless, it seems they are not an obstacle for migrant workers. They are lured by good pay. No wonder this job becomes a tradition that is done from generation to generation, as what was revealed by 37-year-old Rohayati (female), the informant, as follows:

(... "It is common for the people in this village to work in Malaysia. They quickly go to Malaysia to get jobs, probably because the pay is good. Besides that, the job is done from generation to generation. The migrants sometimes consist of a father, wife, and children. I am the 4th generation working in Malaysia. Almost all my family members are migrant workers in Malaysia. My oldest daughter has just departed to Malaysia, following her great aunt working in a restaurant. So, it is no wonder that most of my family members work in Malaysia. The jobs are not very difficult, though. First, we see our relatives who worked there, and then we follow them.").

Rohayati, the informant, revealed that she and most of her family worked as migrant workers in Malaysia. Besides that, she also said that working as migrant workers had been done from generation to generation. Therefore, it is no wonder if one of her family members who had graduated from senior high school directly became a migrant worker, following the other family members who had already worked in Malaysia.

b. Inter-generation Mobility

Working in Malaysia has become a favorite by all people such as a family that transmits it to its young generation. This condition was revealed by 43-year-old Adiyanto (male), the informant, who became a migrant worker in Malaysia as follows:

(... "My children did the same as me, working in Malaysia. My oldest son and daughter now work in Malaysia. She followed her friends working there. She sold fish in the market. Her earnings can allow her to buy a new motorcycle and renovate our house. The problem is that I don't know where she is now because I have lost contact with her; it makes us, her parents, worry about her. Some people say that she gets married to a Malaysian. I went to Malaysia to

find her, but I failed. I regret sending her far away from home. It is all my fault.”).

The informant said that being a migrant worker in Malaysia had caused calamity for his family. The informant had lost contact with her daughter, who became a migrant worker in Malaysia. The rumour said that he had been married to a Malaysian without the approval of him and the family.

4.7. Sibling Position

The position in a family determines how the interaction among the family members. Bowen has instilled these ideas in his theory that the oldest child tends to be a leader while the youngest child tends to follow him. This concept can help describe the different levels of position in a family.

a. Orphan

A person's position can determine and influence a condition in a family, especially in a migrant worker's family. This condition will cause a shift or change in the interaction pattern among the family members. The family that is left by one of the family members to become a migrant worker attempts to create a harmonious atmosphere in the family as a complete family, especially in the process of the children's growth and development. The change or the shift in care pattern provided by additional members (relatives) such as grandmother, aunt, uncle, or the oldest son in the family will indeed happen. Working too long a time in a foreign country because of the work contract can cause frictions in a migrant worker's family, as was revealed by 38-year-old Sartono (male) as follows:

(...“I am the oldest son, and I don't have any parents. As the oldest one, I have to be responsible for caring for my younger brothers and sisters. When I worked in Malaysia, my position was replaced by my brothers, who cared for the younger ones. My intention to work in Malaysia was to save money for their education. My position as the oldest son was also a big challenge for me. I had to control everything at home, although I also learned from the other brothers. Another problem arose when my brothers took care of the younger ones. It was about the difference in rules, how to educate the children, and how to explain to them. Sometimes it caused commotion among them. In addition to that, the money I sent them each month was

usually gone with the wind!").

The informant revealed that a position in a family influenced the stability in that family, and it would automatically become a challenge for someone to be able to change that position.

b. Substituting Role of Relatives

Therefore, there are many new obstacles and problems in the shift of position in a family. It was revealed by 50-year-old Saripah (female), the informant who worked as a migrant worker in Malaysia, as follows:

(..." Working in Malaysia is sometimes easy, sometimes hard, especially for me, a widow with many children; my husband has already died. Everything depends on me since I have to support the family. I left the children to their aunt at home. Sometimes there was a conflict between the children and my sister. Every child has their characteristics, you know it. Sometimes, my sister was hard to take care of them. This made me think about their condition at home while I was working in Malaysia. I was afraid that the change in care patterns could influence their behavior. So, now I try to call them as frequently as possible and chat with them; I also remind my sister not to be harsh or to spoil them. Wrong in every way, you know. If I remind her, I'm afraid she will get angry with me and accuses me of being insolent...").

4.8. Social Regression (Emotional Process in Society)

The emotional process in society represents the broad tension between individuals and families, between the nuclear family and its extended family, and between family and neighbors. Description of pressure in society is embodied in the relationship among families as it is described below:

a. Mockery on Nouvean Riche

This concept broadens Bowen's theoretical system about the social effect on the family process and the effect of the family process in broader society. The method of adaptation done by migrant workers seems to cause various problems and dilemmas in a family, especially in the condition or relationship among the family members. The social environment cannot give the influence family life of the migrant workers, such

as lifestyle, status, and wealth, so they yield new symbol (stereotype) in the family environment as what was revealed by 41-year-old Ponirah (female) as follows:

(... "It is useless to think about what other people talk about us. When I went to Malaysia at that time, they gossiped about me; they said that I did a terrible job, bla, bla, bla, which made me depressed. But I didn't care because I knew who I was. After I had worked for a long time, I could see the change in my family's life. I saved so I could buy an automobile, renovate my house, and buy a plot of land. My neighbors began to be kind to me. They began to ask me what I was doing in Malaysia, how to be a migrant worker in Malaysia, bla, bla, bla. You know, now they give a name to me, "makcik OKB" (Aunt Nouveau Riche). They talked about my new fashion style, my new house, and so on. I am always cordial toward them. It is a prayer, isn't it?..").

b. Neighbors' Derision

One of the informants revealed that working as a migrant in Malaysia got a bad image from neighbors. But finally, with the output (a large amount of money) earned from working as a migrant worker, the condition was reversely proportional to the previous situation. The informant's neighbors began to ask about the trick of getting all of these fortunes.

This condition was revealed by 44-year-old Suriyono (male), the informant, who also worked as a migrant worker in Malaysia, as follows:

(... " I think every work has its own risk, like in Malaysia. As a migrant worker in Malaysia, I was also influenced by my friends. Some of them incited me not to go to Malaysia because it was not safe. But some of them enthusiastically asked me to come along with them to Malaysia. It cannot be denied that working in Malaysia is much more worthwhile than working at home. First, we get helpful experience working in a foreign country and the experience can be practiced at home and do some businesses. I used to be mocked as a "ship boy" doing an errand because I went to Malaysia with a friend who was a sailor. But I didn't care; the important thing was that it was halal for my family. I have worked for a long time in Malaysia. After returning to my hometown, I ran a business in printing and photocopy. I learned from my friend who worked for a printing press while I was in Malaysia. The essence is like this: neighbors will come close to us if we are rich, and vice versa: they will keep away from us if we are penniless. They will ask us how to manage such a business and so on. The

important thing is that we don't respond to their malicious gossip. We have to prove that we are successful...").

The informant explained that he often became the object of a joke by his neighbors about what he was doing. However, he used their joke as a driving force for advancement. His neighbors were astonished at his success after returning from Malaysia as a migrant worker. "Hard work yields success" is an accurate saying for describing the informant now. Besides that, his neighbors now often ask him many things about his successful efforts.

5. Conclusions

A family member who works as a migrant worker often faces two opposite sides of a coin. On one side, he experiences life changes, especially in economic conditions. On the other side, he also faces family problems or conflicts that should be avoided. The result of the study and in-depth interviews showed that most of the families of the migrant workers in Malaysia underwent family conflicts such as divorces, escaping from pressures, infidelity, domestic violence, the change in care pattern, and education for the children left in the hometown. Divorce in a migrant worker's family is caused by excessive suspicion and emotion, and miscommunication between the two parties so that there will be a "legitimate" separation. Using Bowen's family system theory, the relations of dependable migrant worker's family will be entirely influenced if one of the family members. This can be seen from the change in the migrant workers' family position in Malaysia. The involvement of relatives or extended family in substituting the temporary position during migrant work in Malaysia has two different effects. On the one hand, it can control and oversee the condition and situation of the family to be always stable. On the other hand, it can create the opportunity for the incidence of disputes and conflicts in the family itself. Therefore, dilemmas and problems undergone by the family of a migrant worker in Malaysia can consecutively occur so that the family is incapable of choosing the priority. Working as a migrant family has its consequences, from happiness to sadness in the family. The increase in the family's economic condition of a migrant worker in Malaysia causes a decrease in the quality of a migrant worker's family in their

hometown. Examining Bowen's thinking further, the problems that occur in this family can be anticipated by involving the facilitator directly with the family so that they can carry out social consultations and interventions in calming the situation and conditions of the migrant worker's family who are experiencing tension. The government's role is also needed in anticipating conflicts within the families of migrant workers by creating and further confirming programs to increase motivation, outreach and increase employment opportunities with an emphasis on local wisdom without having to work in Malaysia.

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