

Karin Lund

Ersta Sköndal University College

Department of Social Work

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Supervisor: Johan Gärde

Examiner: Kenneth Sundh

Runaway Beauties

Coping Strategies among Returning Filipino Women who Experienced Labour Trafficking

Acknowledgements

What is described here is a field study conducted in the Philippines from March to May 2012.

The idea for this study was generated during an earlier stay in Autumn 2011. During this time I came in touch with the concept of labour trafficking and quickly realized how important and relevant issue it was in the Philippine community.

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of how Filipino female returnees cope with the experience of labour trafficking when reintegrated into their home communities, and how this coping relate to existing research on comparable returnee experiences. The empirical material consists of qualitative interviews with five returnees, conducted during an eight-week stay in the Philippines. The study identifies coping strategies adapted upon return, and analyzes them in the light of the local context and previous studies in the field.

The results of the study indicate that, according to the women's descriptions, strategies related to the escape/avoidance coping type are adapted to a higher extent than other types of coping strategies. These strategies seem to be highly related to the experience or fear of becoming victims of gossiping neighbours and/or patronizing family members. Distancing through humour was also appearing to a great extent in all the interviews, as well as seeking social support. It was found that the strategies expressed by the women were mostly emotion-focused or dysfunctional as opposed to problem-focused, but in many cases active as opposed to passive. The most common social support resources appearing in the interviews were the family, the church, and the supporting organization. The experiences of the respondents have a lot in common with the experiences brought forward in other studies in the same field, though it is important to be aware of the different social and cultural settings in which most of the existing research has been implemented.

With this study, the author hopes to contribute to a better understanding of what kind of support Filipino female labour trafficking returnees are in need of, and how to further develop the support system for them and similar groups.

Keywords: coping strategies, labour trafficking, migrant working, reintegration, Philippines.

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1. Introduction

This chapter consists of a contextual background regarding labour migration and trafficking, with a focus on the Philippines, followed by the purpose and research questions. At the end of the chapter, key concepts are presented and defined.

According to International Labour Organization (ILO), the estimated number of migrant workers worldwide equals approximately 175 million (ILO, 2013). For many decades, these migrant workers have made significant contributions to their own countries as well as to their host countries. Without migrant workers, many of the migrant sending countries' economies would have collapsed, and those of the receiving countries, not been able to attain their economic performance. These contributions have been made at an enormous cost to the life, health and well-being of the migrants and their families (Ujano-Batangan, et. al. 2011, p. 53). The Philippines has experienced waves of migration during the last 40 years. It is one of the countries with the biggest share of the population living and working abroad. The Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO, 2013) reports that the estimated number of Filipinos outside the country reached 10,450,000 people in 2011, which means that about 10 percent of the total population work or reside abroad.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2013), the highest number of Filipino migrants is living in the United States, and secondly the Middle East. During the past ten years, there has been an increase in the number of female migrant workers. Nowadays, women represent about half of the overseas labour force globally. These women go abroad to earn money for the future, to be able to send children to school, to reduce family poverty - often due to the scarcity of job opportunities in the home country (Ujano-Batangan, 2011, p. 59). One positive aspect of labour migration is that it has taken an estimated 850,000 families out of poverty (IOM, 2013).

Globally, an estimated 15-20 percent of the Filipino migrant workers are so called irregular workers – workers who are introduced and administered outside protective governmental and social bodies (IOM, 2013). Irregular labour migrants experience a greater vulnerability compared to legal immigrants. These workers are often victims of labour trafficking. Labour trafficking is described as a form of trafficking not necessarily involving prostitution (see the Key Concepts section, 1.3.). Globally, it is estimated that 2.5 million people are victims of some source of trafficking at any time. Out of these, 450,000 people, are considered to be victims of labour trafficking (UNODC, 2013).

Especially female migrant domestic workers experience various forms of discrimination due to their gender, race and class. Many are isolated and subjected to exploitation, physical abuse and

sexual violence. These experiences, and the strategies the women use to cope with their situation in their host countries, have been investigated in a number of research studies (Ujano-Batangan, et. al. 2011, p. 25-26).

When returning to their home countries, psychological, physical and economical support is in some cases provided by organizations working in the interest of migrant workers. One of them is Kanlungan Center Foundation (KCF) in the Philippines. According to this organization, victims of labour trafficking are facing a wide range of difficulties when reintegrating into their communities, which has an effect on their mental health (KCF, 2012). Mental health has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the “state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” (Ujano-Batangan, et. al. 2011, p. 23).

While there is existing data and interventions concerning labour rights violations and physical sexual abuse of women migrant workers, research on mental health related to the topic is very limited (Ujano-Batangan, et. al., 2011, p. 45.), especially regarding mental coping when reintegrating into the home communities upon return from the host country.

1.1. Purpose and Research Questions

With this essay I want to contribute to the understanding of how Filipino female returnees cope with the experiences of labour trafficking when reintegrated into their home communities and how these relate to other comparable returnee experiences.

I base my study on the following research questions:

- Which coping strategies appear in Filipino women’s descriptions of returning home after experiencing labour trafficking?
- How can these strategies be understood in the view of the local context of the returnees?
- How can these strategies be understood in the light of previous studies on comparable returnee experiences?

In order to answer my research questions, I conducted an interview study with Filipino female returnees who have experienced labour trafficking.

Learning more about these strategies in relation to the specific local context, and analyzing them in the light of previous studies can contribute to a better understanding of what these women need, and how to further develop the support system for them. Also, it may pave the way for further research, in the Filipino context as well as in other cultural and social contexts. I will address this

in the final discussion.

1.2. Limitations

For methodological reasons, this study focuses on women who have received basic support from a local organisation. I will come back to this in chapter 4.

This study focuses on coping strategies related to the process on handling the trauma of experienced labour trafficking as well as the experience of reintegration into the home community. The focus is on the psychological, and not physical or financial, aspects of coping and support.

Comparable returnee experience in this study is referred to as the experience of returning home after having lived in a fundamentally different social and cultural setting under uncertain and traumatic circumstances. This will be further specified in chapter two.

1.3. Key Concepts

In this chapter, I will go through the key concepts of my study.

1.3.1 Migrant workers

Labour migration is the process in which people go abroad to provide economical benefits for themselves or for people in their communities. The persons performing labour migration are defined as migrant workers. The *UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* states that “[t]he term migrant worker refers to a person who is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.” (UN, 1990)

1.3.2 Labour Trafficking

A proportion of irregular migrant workers becomes exploited during their time overseas, and thus becomes victims of labour trafficking. “Regular” migrant workers, as well, face problems regarding social and legislative restrictions and other kinds of labour protection. The UN identifies these problems and has addressed them within its regulatory framework. The definition of *Labour Trafficking* is based on the *UN Trafficking Protocol in Persons* (Article 3, paragraph a), where *Trafficking of Persons* is defined as

[...] the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (UN, 2013)

1.3.3 Reintegration

Reintegration is defined as the process during which the returning migrant worker reintegrates into the context from which he or she originated. In this essay, the reintegration processes is discussed from a problem-based perspective. Ujano-Batangan describes the concept of reintegration as follows: “Reintegration involves the period of return of the migrant worker to his or her country of origin and the corresponding adjustment and assimilation period.” (Ujano-Batangan, et. al., 2011, p. 13)

2. Existing Research

In this chapter, I will outline the existing research in the field, starting with an introduction, followed by a detailed description of previous studies, and ending with a short summary.

There is limited research on migrant worker returnee experience and reintegration, and even more so regarding female returnee experiences among victims of labour trafficking. In this chapter, I will mention four scientific studies related to the topic of this paper, which I find for different reasons to be of interest for the analysis of my study. Three of the studies relate to migrant workers' experiences, of which two investigate female returnees in particular (one of these focuses on female victims of labour trafficking). These studies focus mainly on the difficulties the women face when working in the host country, and to some extent how they cope with these difficulties. Stressors when returning to their home communities are also discussed by the authors, but not the coping strategies used to deal with those stressors. The reason I find these studies relevant for my analysis is because they may add to the understanding of the psychological, social and cultural trauma experienced by my respondents before returning home, and the stressors that may affect them upon return. The fourth study investigates coping strategies and perceived social support among former political exiles when returning back to their home community. The reason I choose to include this study in my analysis is because it, despite the difference with regards to the nature of the trauma before returning home, may contribute to the understanding of coping when reintegrating after having spent a long period of time in a very different cultural and social setting and under stressful circumstances.

2.1. Stressors and Mental Health among Migrant Workers

In *Cross-cultural factors in workers' mental health from the experiences of EAP services*, Murakami (2009) identifies stress factors among Japanese male and female migrant workers during their stay in host countries with cultures different from their own. Examples of stress factors are: adapting to an unfamiliar culture, heavy workload, communication problems, less social support, and separation from family members (Murakami, 2009, p. 60). The author argues that "having an effective system would lead to better prevention, early diagnosis and treatment, and smooth social rehabilitation." (ibid., p. 64).

In the report *Women and Migration: The Mental Health Nexus. A Research on Individual and Structural Determinants of Stress and Mental Health Problems of Filipino Women Migrant Domestic Workers*, Ujano-Batangan, et. al. (2011) seek to further enrich the knowledge of the psychosocial dimensions of overseas domestic work, focusing on female migrant workers. The report brings forward the lack of research on migrant workers' mental health and the support

needed. Returning migrant workers, especially those who have undergone distress and abuse, often return to their families and communities without receiving adequate and sustained psycho-social support (ibid., p. 22).

Ujano-Batangan, et. al. present data on the living and work conditions of Filipino woman migrant workers in their host countries, as well as their state of mental health. The authors used both quantitative and qualitative methods, conducting interviews with more than 500 Filipino women. The interviews focus on difficulties prior to departure as well as experiences (positive and negative) during the stay in the host country. Some identified pre-departure concerns were: financial problems, worries about family members that will be left behind, nervousness, and strained relationship with husband. On site, some women experienced concerns such as homesickness, poor work conditions, and difficulties in adjusting to the new culture. The most frequently used strategies the respondents used in their host countries were: turning to religion, focusing and venting of emotions; behavioural disengagement, mental disengagement, and seeking social support. Other common strategies were positive thinking, fighting back, and avoidance by focusing on work (ibid., p. 100). Examples of concerns upon return were: financial problems, no jobs available, and strained relationship with husband. Coping strategies to deal with these concerns when reintegrating into the home community are not further examined in the report, however, the authors recommend the “provision of services to women migrant domestic workers and their families (livelihood, counselling, among others)” to be developed further (ibid., p. 105).

In 2012, Abebaw Minaye published “Trafficked to the Gulf States: The Experiences of Ethiopian Returnee Women”, a scientific article about the situation for Ethiopian female returnees who experienced labour trafficking in the Middle East. The author did an interview study with eight Ethiopian female returnees. The result indicates that the women, when they were working within the domestic sector in the Middle East, were denied food, salary and medical treatment. They were often emotionally, sexually and physically abused, experienced various types of domestic confinement and were forced to work long hours without the possibility to rest or take breaks. To cope with their situation in the host country, the means they adopted were friendship networks, personal skills and spirituality (Minaye, 2012, p. 112).

When the Ethiopian women returned back to their home countries, they tended to sense what is described as a deep emotional pain, since they often returned without the economic gain they had hoped for before they left to work abroad, in combination with the memories of sexual and physical abuse – all of which in cohorts had the potential to lead to a state of depression and anxiety.

The result of the study also shows that the women in some cases did not want to return to their

home communities, due to the fact that they had not yet achieved the goal of financial gain. The study also indicates that when returning home, the women were often facing the traumatic experience of the rejection by their families, which made reintegration difficult. Minaye concludes that there was a high risk for the returning women to experience mental instability such as sadness, hopelessness, self-hate, and suicidal thoughts (ibid.).

The above summary shows that research on mental health related to migrant workers in general, and migrant workers who are victims of labour trafficking in particular, is a field that needs to be further explored. Existing studies tend to focus on the situation and coping strategies used in the host countries, whereas there is a gap concerning difficulties and coping strategies when reintegrating into the home communities.

2.2. Reintegration as a Second Culture Shock

In Zonke Majodina's study from 1995, "Dealing with Difficulties of Return to South Africa: The Role of Social Support and Coping", he focuses on the reintegration process involving expatriates returning to South Africa since 1990. The work is based on previous studies which propose that "[r]e-entry is thus considered a second culture shock where the experiences of the returnee do not match his/her expectations" (Majodina, 1995, p. 210). The paper also suggests that the adaptation part of the integration is best understood as a process depending on various factors, such as psychological and socio-cultural ones (ibid., p. 211).

Majodina concludes that a lot of research has been done on stress as a risk factor for mental health and that social support and coping have been identified as two important mediators of stress. Majodina investigates the problems that returning South African exiles experience at the individual, psychosocial level, and how reintegration is determined by these problems on the one hand, and by perceived social support and coping strategies on the other hand.

One result of the study is that re-entry problems were identified as the most significant variable for well-being in the reintegration process. Examples of re-entry problems includes difficulties upon return such as: money to live on, adjusting to changes in the new context, meeting family expectations, confronting changes in family, sharing exile experiences, being harassed, and being discriminated against (ibid., p. 220).

Social support was identified as the second most significant variable, with a positive outcome on the quality of life upon return. The forms in which the different types of social support appeared varied, but the three most common primary sources of emotional social support were: family, supporting organization (NCCR), and neighbours/friends. Availability of family support was proven to be the most significant, positive contributor to psychological outcome among the social

support factors (ibid., p. 221).

Problem-focused coping proved to be the third most significant positive contributor to well-being in the reintegration process. Emotion-focused coping proved to have a significant, but negative, effect on the well-being in the reintegration process, implying that "this form of coping is rather conducive to the development of psychological distress" (ibid., p. 224).

Majodina argues that more research should be done on

[...] individual, family and group strategies that returning populations have used to cope with their lives. Furthermore, the capacity of familial networks to provide effective support needs to be given more attention. Since institutionally based intervention is not always effective, repatriation programmes need to enhance the provision of support to communities where returnees go. This in turn requires that more research focus be given to how communities restructure themselves after being disrupted by movements of people in and out. (ibid., p. 225)

He stresses the importance of influence of returnees in the formation of the bodies assisting them, and that they should be involved both in the planning and the implementation of reintegration programs. Majodina also suggests that perceived social support should be incorporated as a central element in coping strategies on a theoretical level (ibid.)

2.3. Summary

The research in the field of migrant workers' reintegration process in general and female victims of labour trafficking in particular is very limited. The studies presented above, however, contribute to different aspects of the topic, such as stress factors and coping during the stay in the host country and upon return, the cross-cultural aspect, and the importance of social support upon reintegration. I will come back to these studies in chapter 5, to add to the understanding of the coping strategies identified in the interviews with the respondents of this investigation.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will outline the theoretical framework used for the analysis in this paper.

Coping theories are recognized by researchers within the psychological field. The theories have mainly been used in research on coping with stressors related to illness, but also to some extent to work related stress. Researchers in the Western world have developed the theories. (Snyder, 2001). However, as shown in chapter 2, coping theories have also been applied in other contexts and social and cultural settings. This suggests that coping, as a concept may be applicable on a broader range of human trauma and crisis experience. In my study, I have approached the theories with an open mind in order to adapt to the specific social and cultural context in which it takes place. Departing from the research questions, my focus has been to identify coping strategies and relate them to coping methods and resources for social support. The methodology will be further explained in chapter 4.

3.1. Coping Strategies

Coping is a psychological term that describes a person's ability to cope with stressful and emotionally demanding situations. The concept of coping can be defined as "the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Coping involves thoughts, emotions, and actions with the purpose of maintaining an individual's psychological state when it is threatened. Coping is "typically not a single response, but a series of responses, initiated and repeated as necessary to handle, the remaining, continued, or transformed nature of the stressor" (Snyder, 2001, p. 11) Hundreds of coping strategies have been identified (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). The theories and research models on coping are many, and need to be adapted depending on the context at hand (Bee & Bjorklund, 2004, Brattberg, 2008, Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010 Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, Folkman 1991, Snyder, 2001, et. al.,).

Richard Lazarus developed the concept of coping and has conducted research on the topic since the 1960's. Several researchers have built on his theories. Lazarus identified the following types of coping (cited and exemplified in Bee & Bjorklund, 2004):

- § Confrontative coping: I expressed my anger to the person who caused the problem.
- § Distancing: I made light of the situation; I refused to get too serious about it.
- § Self-control: I tried to keep my feelings to myself.
- § Seeking social support: I talked to someone to find out more about the situation.

§ Accepting responsibility: I realized that I brought the problem on myself.

§ Escape/Avoidance: I hoped a miracle would happen.

§ Deliberate problem solving: I made a plan of action and I followed it.

§ Positive reappraisal: I came out of the experience better than I went in.

Carver et. al. have identified three major categories of coping; *problem-focused coping*, *emotion-focused coping*, and *dysfunctional coping*. Problem-focused coping is described as any coping strategy that is directed towards reducing or eliminating external factors causing stress, focusing on what needs to be changed. Emotion-focused coping is strategies directed towards changing one's own emotional reaction to a stressor. Dysfunctional coping is characterized by avoidance of the problem (Carver et. al., 1989, Brattberg, 2008).

Some examples of problem-focused strategies that can be found in the literatures are: planning, information gathering, assertive confrontation, change of conditions, and interpersonal conflict resolution. Examples of emotion-focused strategies are: positive reinterpretation, acceptance, adaptation, and forgiveness. Examples of dysfunctional coping strategies are: denial, repression, distancing, and escape into work/drugs (e.g. Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, Brattberg, 2008, Passer & Smith, 2008).

Passer & Smith (2008) suggest *seeking social support* as a third aspect of coping, additional to problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, but it can also be sorted as a strategy under any of the other two (e.g. Brattberg, 2008). Passer & Smith also consider different forms of avoiding strategies as falling under the emotion-focused coping category (Passer & Smith, 2008, p. 45).

Coping strategies can be considered as *active* or *passive*. Active coping strategies are conscious, constructive, and goal-oriented (e.g. planning rehabilitation, consulting others), whereas passive coping strategies are unconscious, sometimes destructive, and focusing on escaping and avoiding distressing feelings (e.g. day dreaming, wishful thinking, self-blaming, drug abuse) (Brattberg, 2008, p. 36).

3.2. Coping Methods and Resources for Social Support

Coping strategies are further connected to different *coping methods*, such as resignation, analysis, positive thinking, new thinking, emotional blocking, and emotional relief (Brattberg, 2008, p. 45). For example, acceptance may be obtained by resigning to the fact that sometimes bad things happen, but it may also be obtained by thinking about the positive consequences of the traumatic experience, or by seeing one's situation with new eyes.

Which coping strategies that are used, and how, is related to the individual's external *coping*

resources. The resources available in the individual's network are thus an important factor for the ability to process stressful feelings and deal with traumatic experiences, in the past and in the present. Examples of external coping resources are family, friends, culture, religion, work, financial resources, and health care (Brattberg, 2008, p. 39). When it comes to social support, it is:

[...] more effective when it comes from those who are similar in values and characteristics, and who are facing or have faced similar stressors somewhat more successfully. [...] Empirical studies on social support substantiate the contention that support provided by a spouse and family members may take precedence over other sources of support (Ujano-Batangan, 2011, p. 36).

Social support influences self-esteem and self-regulation, which leads to increased well-being (ibid.). However, when interactions in the social support network are characterized by anger, criticism or undermining, they will have negative effects of the individual's well-being (ibid. p. 37).

As discussed in chapter 2, the perceived social support is an important factor for the individual's well-being in the reintegration process, which is why it was regarded as a key aspect when preparing and analysing the results of this study.

In this chapter I have described the theoretical framework used in my study. Coping is a broad term that has been developed by several researchers. Specific coping types help identify strategies that can be further understood through the category, method, orientation and resource used by the individual in the coping process. In chapter 4.4. I will explain how these elements were put into an analytical model.

4. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to prepare the study and to collect and analyze the empirical material.

4.1. Methodological choices

The choice of method is dependent on the purpose and the research questions. The purpose of my study is to contribute to the understanding of how Filipino women, in the light of the local context, cope with the experiences of labour trafficking when reintegrated into their home communities, and how these relate to other comparable returnee experiences. A qualitative research approach including a literature study and interviews was considered the most adequate method, which will be further explained below.

A qualitative focus is suitable when the primary objective is to understand the respondents based on their personal stories, experiences, thoughts and emotions (Neuman, 2006, p. 13, Dalen, 2008, p. 11). A qualitative study is mainly built on words and perspectives, rather than quantitative data, and could be described as interpretational, where the focus lies on the understanding of the social and cultural reality of the respondent (Bryman, 2009, p. 249-250). Since the objective of this study is to understand the women's coping strategies based on their stories and their descriptions of challenges and emotions related to a highly personal and sensitive topic, it was important to apply a method that enabled me to be flexible in my approach, to build trust and to ask follow-up questions during the process. Also, my previous knowledge of the cultural context as well as the phenomenon in itself was rather limited, and the existing research scarce, which further suggested that a qualitative interview study was the most suitable choice in order to answer my research questions. A survey study could have reached a higher number of respondents, however, I would not have been able to identify questions that would ensure highly valid and reliable results, and I would have lacked the necessary deeper understanding of the respondents' experiences (Bryman, 2009, p. 285).

In order to collect the interview material for the study, I lived in Baguio City in the Philippines and commuted to the community La Union (where the respondents live) between March and May 2012. The study was enabled by a Minor Field Study scholarship provided by SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency).

During my stay in the country, apart from interviewing a high number of female victims of labour trafficking, I met and spoke with their family members and with the staff personnel at the supporting organization. I participated in meetings, visited the women's homes and spent time in the community. I wanted to get an insight into the culture and the lives of my respondents, which

was facilitated by these non-structured observations. It also helped me in the selection process and enabled me to better prepare the interview guide, which will be further explained in the sections below.

4.2. Selection Process and the Respondents

With the research questions in mind, I chose to interview Filipino women who had been victims of labour trafficking and later returned to their home community in the Philippines. In order to get into contact with suitable respondents, I contacted the Kanlungan Center Foundation (KCF), which is an NGO focusing on supporting women returning from abroad with experiences of labour trafficking. I gained knowledge about this organization through my university, and came into contact with a staff member and social worker that became my key informant. According to Bryman (2009, p. 285), a key informant can be crucial in the research process by putting the researcher in contact with respondents and contributing to the understanding of the field. I spent a lot of time with my key informant and joined her at meetings and other activities. With her assistance, I was able to get into contact with possible respondents for the interview study.

In order to ensure a more homogeneous group of respondents with regards to the reintegration process, I selected women from the same home community (La Union) who had returned at least one year and a maximum of three years prior to my interviews. Another criterion was that they should have received some sort of basic support, social and financial from the programs offered by KCF. All of the respondents had experienced labour trafficking in a host country in the Middle East. It was also important that the respondents had an acceptable level of English, since the sensitive character of the topic required that I should not need an interpreter when interviewing the women. Five women were selected based on the criteria above.

My five respondents (Donna, Christine, Lucy, Sally, and Kelly) were between 30 and 50 years old and they all had children. They had one to two years of labour trafficking experience from the Middle East and at the time of the interviews it was less than three years since they had returned to their home community. The patterns of circumstances, which made them decide to go abroad for work, were similar; lack of job opportunities at home, expectations to raise a decent salary in the host country, and inspiration from successful returnees.

In order to understand the coping process upon reintegration, which is the focus of this study, I needed to get an initial idea about my respondents' experiences in the host countries, which in all cases included; over-working, denial of enough food, low or no wage, physical and mental abuse, and no possibility to stay in contact with their families. All the respondents escaped from their employer, and some of them were sent to prison in their host country because of that. Upon return

to La Union, they received emotional and economical support by KCF (see appendix 1). The nature of the difficulties experienced upon reintegration varies, but includes unemployment, loans, stranded education for the children, and illness in the family. The challenges will be further illustrated in the quotations in my analysis, since they form the necessary background of the coping strategies that appear in the women's stories.

I am aware that my results may be affected by the fact that the respondents have a connection to the same organization, from which they have received support. Feelings of loyalty may make them more inclined to stress the importance of the organization in their rehabilitation. Also, my key informant would probably not put me in contact with women who had a bad relation with the KCF, if such individuals exist. However, taking into account the criteria I had decided upon, it would have been very difficult to find and establish relationships with respondents through other channels or methods. I will return to this point in chapter 4.7.

4.3. Literature

In order to broaden my understanding of the topic, outline the theoretical and methodological framework and identify existing research to which I could relate my results, I searched books, articles and other publications by using keywords such as *coping strategies*, *reintegration*, *migrant workers*, *labour trafficking*, *returnee*, and *Philippines*. Besides library research at Stockholm University, Ersta Sköndal University College and Baguio City Library in the Philippines, I used the database at Ersta University College, including Libris, Diva, Academic Search Premier, and further research at Google Scholar, Google Book Search and SOCINDEX. Parts of the literature derive from organizations supporting migrant workers such as Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and KCF (KCF, 2012, OWWA, 2012).

As described in chapter 2, there is limited research on migrant worker returnee experience and reintegration and even more so regarding female returnee experiences among victims of labour trafficking. I found four scientific studies related to the topic of this paper, which I for different reasons find to be of interest for the analysis of my study. Three of these studies spread light on labour trafficking victims' experiences and coping in the host countries as well as stressors upon return (but not how the victims cope with these stressors). One of these is focusing on Filipino female returnees in particular. The fourth study contributes to the understanding of coping when reintegrating after having spent a long period of time in a very different cultural and social setting and under stressful circumstances (although it is not focusing on victims of labour trafficking in particular). The studies also handle the cross-cultural aspect of integration and reintegration and the importance of social support. I will come back to these studies in chapter 5.

The theoretical framework of this study, outlined in chapter 3, is based on recognized theories on coping and coping strategies. Lazarus' model has been interpreted and further developed by many scholars in many different contexts, which is why I had to turn to different sources to identify a model suitable for my study. I identified aspects that would deepen my understanding of the strategies brought forward in the interviews, and developed my analytical model based on that (as will be further outlined in chapter 4.4)

4.4. The Interviews

In order to broaden my understanding and to ensure the quality of the selection process, I started out by interviewing several returnees who had experienced work related trafficking or other forms of work related maltreatment abroad, their family members, and members of the staff at KCF and OWWA. I also interviewed psychiatrists at hospitals and participated in seminars together with migrant workers, self-help groups, group activities arranged by the organizations mentioned above, and meetings held by municipal politicians focusing on migrant worker support. Test interviews were conducted with five women in order to refine the interview guide (see appendix 2) that is important for the validity and reliability of the questions (see chapter 4.5). These preparatory interviews and unstructured observations were necessary because of my limited previous understanding of the cultural context, the sensitive nature of the topic, and the lack of existing research in this specific field.

After having selected my respondents, individual interviews were conducted as well as a group interview. The interviews were carried out in places selected in dialogue with the respondents, in their homes and in public parks. In order to promote a neutral environment, I considered it important to avoid undertaking the interview at the organization's facilities. A group interview was conducted, where three of my respondents participated. The interviews were conducted in English, lasted 45-60 minutes each and were recorded as agreed upon with the respondents. A letter of consent was signed by the respondents before the interview (see appendix 3).

The interview guide had been outlined with the coping theories in mind and consisted of semi-structured questions (see appendix 2) relating to both the reasons for leaving, the experiences in the host country, and the experiences and managing of challenges upon return. I started by asking background questions, followed by open questions, as suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 34). Leading questions were avoided in order to reduce my impact on the answers. The interviews were later transcribed word by word.

4.5. The Analytical Process

After having transcribed the interviews, I read them through several times in order to identify different coping strategies in the women's descriptions of returning to their home communities, keeping the eight coping types identified by Lazarus in mind and sorting the strategies according to these (see chapter 3). The distinction was made with regards to category (problem-focused/emotion-focused/dysfunctional), method (e.i. resignation, analysis, positive thinking, new thinking, emotional blocking, emotional relief, or other), as well as orientation (active/passive coping), based on the theoretical framework. These distinctions added value to the understanding of each strategy, and in some cases several alternatives were applicable to the same strategy. Lastly, social resources were identified. Taking into account the conditions of the local context, as brought forward by the women, was important in the process of defining and analyzing each strategy. The analytical model used during the process is shown below.

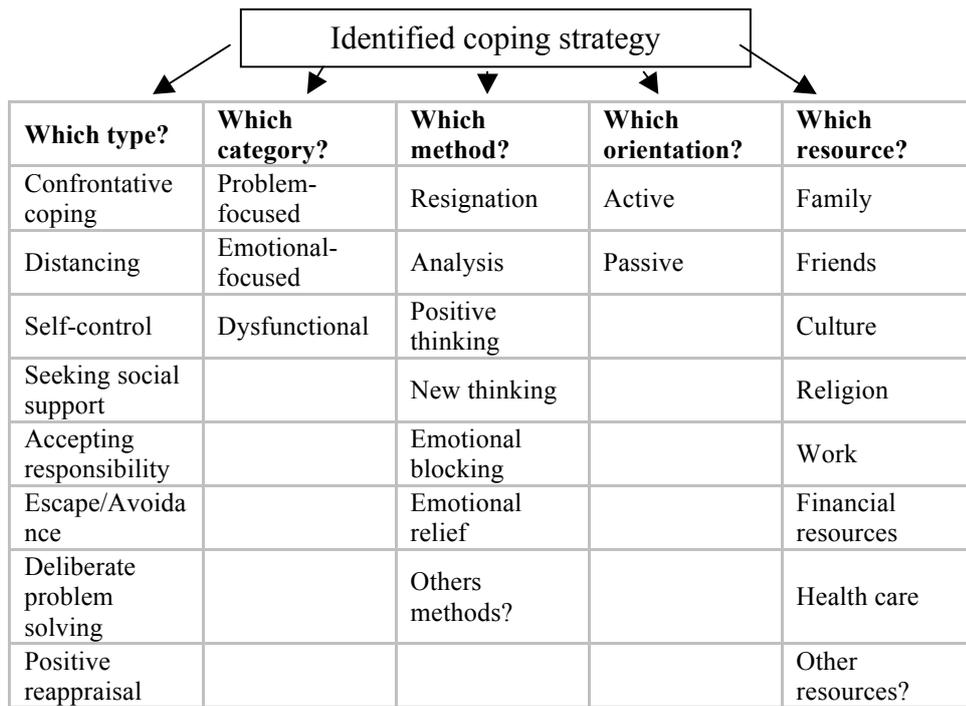


Table 1: The analytical model.

As explained above, the model is based on the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 3, where types, categories, and orientation have fixed options. I was aware that not all of them might show up in the material. When analyzing the methods and resources for each strategy, I was inspired by the methods and resources outlined by Brattberg and Ujano-Batangan, which the examples in the model show. However, taking into consideration the specific social and cultural context at hand, I was open to finding additional methods and resources for the specific strategies found in the material.

After having identified the strategies according to the model, bringing forward examples from the transcribed interviews, I analyzed my result in the light of previous research studies. Because of the unique context and point of departure of my study, the objective was not to *compare* my results with the outcome of other studies, but to merely understand them better based on relevant findings by researchers in the same field. This undertaking gave me further insights and perspectives on the general and particular aspects of coping processes, as well as ideas for future research.

4.6. Validity and Reliability

According to Neuman (2006, p. 177), validity and reliability are important issues of measurement in order to establish the credibility of the study. *Validity*, according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 213) describes how well the researcher measures what is intended to be measured, i.e. how well the results of the study answers to the actual research question. Quality controls need to be execut-

ed in order to ensure that the study is relevant in relation to the purpose. According to Neuman (2006, p. 183), *reliability* refers to the quality of the tools used, i.e. the consistency and dependability when collecting and analyzing the data.

In order to avoid systematic errors and ensure validity, I carefully selected the method best suited to the research questions (as described in chapter 4.1.), and developed the interview questions and analytical model based on theory. For the first and the second research questions, “Which coping strategies appear in Filipino women’s descriptions of returning home after experiencing labour trafficking?” and “How can these strategies be understood in the view of the local context of the returnees?”, I have developed interview questions based on established theories on coping (see appendix 2). The literature study was focusing on previous studies on coping in comparable context (as described in chapter 2), answering to the third research question: “How can these strategies be understood in the light of previous studies on comparable returnee experiences?”.

Apart from the interviews and the literature study, I have also carried out unsystematic observations in order to ensure the validity. This implies that I have applied *triangulation*, which according to Bryman (2009, p. 260) means that more than one method or source of data is used when investigating a social phenomenon. Through the observations, my understanding of the topic and the social and cultural context increased, which improved the quality of my interview questions and follow-up questions. Interviews were also carried out with people close to the women, such as family members and organization staff, which further added to my understanding.

The high degree of validity of my study is confirmed by the fact that the results corresponds to the strategies observed in the unsystematic observations as well as to what was mentioned in the interviews with the people surrounding the respondents. It also corresponds to certain aspects of the limited existing research in the field.

With more time at hand, I would have further strengthened the validity by interviewing more respondents, including women who had not been in contact with the supporting organization. To ensure reliability in my study, it was important to make sure to avoid unsystematic errors by minimizing the impact of myself, the environment, or other circumstances, on the respondents’ answers. Some of the respondents did not speak English very well, which may have had an impact on the reliability of the answers. However, taking into consideration the sensitivity of the topic and the trust I had built up with the respondents, the use of an interpreter was considered as having a bigger negative impact on the reliability. I adapted my vocabulary in order to avoid misunderstandings as a result of academic language, and I asked for clarifications whenever needed. I was careful not to ask leading questions. In some cases, the interviews were carried out in a noisy environment

such as a public park. This decreased the quality of the transcription, which may have affected the reliability in the coding. However, it was preferable to do the interviews on neutral ground and not in the organization's facilities. I was also careful to confirm the anonymity of the respondents, in order to minimize biased answers. The respondents were interviewed in groups and individually in order to identify possible differences in the answers and to enable them to speak as freely as possible. The interview situation did not seem to have an impact on the answers.

The interviews were carefully transcribed and I have used quotes in this paper to illustrate my findings and to give the reader the opportunity to validate the reliability of my analysis. A measure to further strengthen the reliability would have been to give the respondents the opportunity to read the transcriptions and the analysis, which for practical reasons was not possible. In this paper, I have tried to be as transparent as possible on how I conducted my study and I have described in detail how the conclusions were drawn from the empirical material at hand.

4.7. Ethical considerations

I have taken into consideration Swedish legal recommendations (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2003) regarding ethical review of research involving humans, which regulates the protection of the individual in relation to the potential public benefit of the research. Research must never risk physical or psychological damage on human beings. The Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) identifies four ethical principles: the *information requirement* (the informant must be informed of the purpose and questions of the study and the objective of the interview and her/his participation), the *requirement of consent* (the informant must give her/his consent to participate based on the provided information), *confidentiality obligations* (the informant must not be recognized by others) and the *utilization requirement* (the purpose and final result of the study must produce benefits greater than the potential damage) (translated from Vetenskapsrådet, 2010).

To fulfil the information requirement I informed all respondents clearly about my purpose, my methods and the fact that participation was optional. A letter of consent was handed out to the respondents as a formal instrument to ensure the requirement of consent. To fulfil the confidentiality obligations I informed all the respondents that their participation would be anonymous and that it would not be possible to identify them in the final version of the study. Their names and other personal information were altered in order to ensure anonymity. The respondents were further informed that they could terminate their participation at any time during the interview. I also informed them that the audio recordings would be erased after transcription. I consider the societal value of my study to exceed the potential discomfort that the interviews may

have inflicted on the respondents, especially since I was sensitive towards any signs of such impact. Because of the sensitivity of the subject, I was careful to emphasize that participation was optional and that they were not obliged to answer questions they did not feel comfortable with. Sometimes during the interviews I noticed that some topic or question was causing a level of discomfort and unwillingness to elaborate on further. In those situations, I decided to let the ethical considerations guide me to not insist but to proceed with other questions. I avoided altogether questions about sexual abuse in the host country, since I knew from my understanding of the cultural context that it would be too sensitive and that it would not contribute with enough value to the study to answer for the psychological discomfort of the respondents.

It is important to point out that all respondents are linked to a specific organization that provides financial and social support for them. This could be considered problematic from a consent perspective, since they may have felt compelled to participate because of loyalty reasons. I was very careful to point out to the respondents that neither the study nor I is tied to the organization, and that all information would be handled with a high level of discretion. Not all respondents agreed to participate, because of reasons of which I do not know all.

5. Results and Analysis

In this chapter considering research question one, I will first go through the different coping types and the strategies found in the interviews. It is important to understand that these women are coping with both the experiences of the host country and the experience of coming home, which implies that they use coping strategies to handle these two traumas simultaneously. As will be shown regarding question research two, the local context brought forward in the women's descriptions will be taken into account when understanding the strategies. In chapter 5.2 the key findings will be analyzed in the context of previous research with regards to research question three.

The table below is a summary of the strategies found, connected to coping type, category, method, orientation, and resource. It is an overview for the reader in order to facilitate the understanding of the analysis presented later in this chapter.

The main purpose of my analysis is not to quantify how much each strategy is being brought forward by the respondents, but to identify patterns in their stories that can pave the way for further research. This will be done with my three research questions as a point of departure.

Strategy	Type	Category	Method	Orientation	Resource
Accept trauma	Positive reappraisal	Emotion-focused	Positive thinking, resignation	Active	Family, supporting organization
Accept current living conditions	Positive reappraisal	Emotion-focused	Resignation, positive thinking, new thinking	Active	Family, supporting organization
Avoid distressing memories	Escape/Avoidance	Dysfunctional	Emotional blocking	Active	Work
Avoid confrontation/conflicts	Escape/Avoidance	Problem/Emotion-focused/Dysfunctional	Isolation, not talk openly, not answer to confrontation	Active/Passive	
Hope for better luck	Escape/Avoidance	Emotion-focused, dysfunctional	Positive thinking	Passive	Culture
Have faith in God	Escape/Avoidance	Emotion-focused	Pray	Passive	Religion
Confront gossip	Confrontative coping	Problem-focused	Answer verbally to confrontation	Active	
Use humour	Distancing	Emotion-focused	Emotional relief, positive thinking, emotional blocking	Passive	Supporting organization, culture
Talk to others	Seeking social support	Emotion-focused	Emotional relief	Active	Family, church, supporting organization
Help others	Seeking social support	Emotion-focused	Value one's own experience	Active	Supporting organization

Table 2: Summary of coping strategies

As outlined above ten strategies were identified in the material, connected to five of the eight types and eleven methods. All three categories and both orientation were represented. Six different coping recourses were identified. The analysis of each strategy is specified in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

Five of the eight coping types were found in the interviews. Self-control, deliberate problem solving and accepting responsibility were absent. Four of the ten strategies were connected to the escape/avoidance type, two strategies to the positive reappraisal type and two strategies were connected to the seeking social support type. One strategy was connected to confrontative coping and one to distancing. There is a strong emphasis on emotional focused coping. Six of the strategies

belong to this category, whereas one belongs to the problem-focused category, one to the dysfunctional category, one both to the emotional-focused and dysfunctional category and one belongs to all three categories. The majority of the strategies, six out of ten, are active, three are passive and one is both active and passive. The method most commonly used is positive thinking, which was used for three strategies. Resignation, emotional blocking and emotional relief were used for two strategies each. The other methods were used for one strategy each. Four of the strategies are connected to more than one method.

The resources most commonly articulated in the interviews are supporting organization and the family, which are used for five and three respectively.

Culture is used for two strategies whereas work, religion and church are used for one strategy each. For four strategies more than one resource are being used, whereas four strategies are connected to only one resource. In two cases no resources are applicable.

5.1. Coping Strategies

In this chapter I will go through the ten different strategies found in the material. The chapter is divided into sections according to coping type.

5.1.1 Positive Reappraisal

Coping strategies that fall under the Positive Reappraisal coping type in this study are *accept the trauma* and *accept the current living conditions*. The first one is directly related to the traumatic experience in the host country, as exemplified by Donna:

It is not yet healing because the pain is always here. If I sleep I will always dream that I will be there [in the host country]. In my whole life I will never forget what happened to me there. Because it is not easy to survive what happened to me, I am here and still alive and I will be strong for what happened.

While never forgetting what happened to her, Donna is expressing positive thinking and resignation as coping methods for accepting the trauma and looking ahead, seeing herself as stronger now than before the experience. This strategy can be interpreted as emotion-focused, directed towards her inner self, and active in the sense that it is conscious and constructive, looking ahead.

The second strategy under Positive Reappraisal is about accepting the living conditions that the women were seeking to change before they went abroad. Donna expresses also this strategy, connected to resignation, positive thinking and new thinking as methods:

You know, I am very good to my employer and I love generally to work, that is me, my personality. If my boss is good to me I am good, even if I work for 24 hours. I really love and respect my employer but they treat you so bad. [...] I have learned that even if you have ambition, it is not easy to be rich, not easy to build big house, if you got a life like this, you have to accept that. Don't be too much ambitious with your life. [...] I

longing to go to another country [before]. I see some people who are lucky and build houses when they come back from abroad. But that was not I. [...] My friends ask me if I want to work in another country again, you know, I am scared; I just want to live here in the Philippines with my family. I am older already, I should spend my time with my family, to grow up my children, give them a future. Even if I earn small money it is okay, we can buy food. I don't want to be rich and have a big house anymore. [...] My eldest son is very good, he works, don't smoke and drink, and he gives us salary. [...] The important is your family and to build a relationship and be strong, don't be thinking why you are poor, you know God give you children, a good husband which not buttered my children and me. I am also accepting what happened to me and to my family.

Here, Donna clearly shows how she, after her experience, by new thinking accepts that going abroad is maybe not the right means to change her family's living conditions. Others might succeed, but she accepts that she was not one of them. Furthermore, she has re-evaluated what is important in life. Before going abroad, materialistic aspects such as money and status symbols such as having a big house seemed to have been the key to happiness. After returning home, these aspects have lost their meaning to her, and building relationships with her family is prioritized. The strategy is emotion-focused and active, goal-oriented in the sense that the respondent is using it to build relationships that will make things better.

Christine and Lucy express the same reluctance to go abroad to work again, accepting the fact that they had a bad experience and that it is not worth the risk. Christine says:

I have learned not to always thinking for good in the future, just to find more money going abroad, I would not do that. [...] Even though we are poor I am with my family that is why I am happy.

Lucy says:

Before I was planning to go to Canada with my sister, but as I have been engage with this group with other OFW [overseas Filipino workers] I said that I am going to stay rather than go. [...] There is no more second time.

In the quotes above, the family and the supporting organization are the primary coping resources for *accept the trauma* and *accept current living conditions* as strategies.

5.1.2 Escape/Avoidance

Escape/Avoidance as a type of coping is expressed in different ways. The women use strategies of this type both to deal with the past (*avoid distressing memories*) and the day-to-day life after coming back (*avoid confrontation/conflicts, hope for better luck and have faith in God*). Christine exemplifies the first strategy by expressing the need women feel to keep themselves busy to avoid the bad memories: "I don't want to have free time so I can remember what happened."

The women express that, when coming home after having worked twenty hours or more per day, adjusting to a normal rhythm is provoking a lot of anxiety. Work becomes a resource for coping

with distressing thoughts and feelings. *Avoid distressing memories* can be considered a dysfunctional, active coping strategy, using emotional blocking as a method.

Avoid confrontation/conflicts is a strategy used by the women to escape being confronted with people in their communities who are judging and criticizing them. Christine explains how she preferred staying in a cottage in the mountains during the first months upon her return:

Because I did not give them more to gossip about [...]. I just stayed there in the mountain, after two months I went down to [the village].

All the respondents experience gossip as a big problem when trying to readjust to normal life. This implies that they choose to open up to a few trusted people and avoid talking to others. Christine again: “I just want to talk with the companion from the embassy and some of my family, the others just gossip.” And Sally: “If you want to speak with others you have to accept that early in the morning the day after, it is the best topic in town.”

Another example of this strategy is how the women choose to deal with direct confrontation with disappointed family members who see them as responsible for contributing financially. This is for example reflected in the interview with Christine:

Karin: Is your mother disappointed at you that you are with your family instead of going back abroad?
Christine: Yes, sometimes when they don't have any money. But I try then to just shut up. [...] I don't want to answer my mother, she will tell me more words just to hurt me, sometimes she tell me bad words [...] and I don't answer her then.

In the quote above Christine shows how she avoids talking about what happened and at the same time tries to avoid open conflict. Christine also avoids talking to other people in her community, because of feelings of shame and fear of gossiping:

You feel sometimes ashamed to the people if you tell them about the problems, because they are telling it to other people [...], they are telling to other neighbours, about your bad experience, that's why I want to be alone.

The same strategy appears when Donna talks about the unwillingness to talk to her neighbours about her experience:

I don't say anything. I do not want to tell them what happened in [host country], because I was not lucky. Just was not lucky, that is all. Our neighbours cannot understand me. They will just disappoint you. They do not believe you because they were not there.

The quotes above makes it clear that *avoid confrontation/conflicts* as a strategy can be regarded as active and as both problem-focused, in the way that it seeks to change the conditions for gossiping by selecting with whom to talk, emotion-focused, in the sense that it is directed towards dealing with inner feelings, and dysfunctional, in the sense that the women avoid confronting their feelings and the fear of criticism and judgement from some people around them. Isolation, not talking openly, and not answer to confrontation are methods used.

The third Escape/Avoidance strategy that shines through during the interviews is to *hope for*

better luck in a world that is defined by chance and destiny and where you should never give up on luck. This strategy is passive and strongly related to positive thinking as a method. Christine says: “Sometimes I have dreams that I will achieve my goal.” Kelly, who is considering going abroad again, says: “It’s because of the Filipino spirit, we try and try not just once, a second and third try as well.” Donna, who has two bad experiences of labour trafficking, explains why trying again could be a possibility in expressing a worldview, typical for the Filipino culture, where you are sometimes lucky and sometimes not: “Because maybe the second time you are very lucky.” Culture, thus, seems to be an important resource when adapting this strategy. It can be considered both emotion-focused, since it helps the women to see optimistically on themselves and towards the future, and dysfunctional, since it is somehow a way of avoiding to realize the magnitude of the trauma.

Religion is a fundamental part of the Filipino culture, and to *have faith in God* is an important coping strategy for the women in the study, when processing traumatic memories. Donna exemplifies this in the following quote:

My husband says you must forget but for me I will always remember, it is easy to say that to forget, but in real life it is not easy. You know I saw two Filipinas die in front of me, because someone said that they took the jewellery at the agency, which I am sure they did not. [...] I dream that I want to help them (...). For me Karin, it has been so important to be strong and to have a faith in God because if you don’t have a faith in God, you lose everything.

The same strategy appears when Christine is asked if she has forgiven her employer:

Sometimes but I commit my employer to God. God will guide my employer to change her bad attitude.

This strategy falls under the Escape/Avoidance coping type, since it reflects a way of hoping for a higher power to change things. It can be regarded as a passive, emotion-focused strategy that helps them to cope with inner feelings of hopelessness. The importance of religion is further developed in chapter 5.1.5.2.

5.1.3. Confrontative Coping

Avoiding stands out when it comes to handling latent or manifest conflict, however, there is one example of confrontative coping in the interviews. Christine says:

The other neighbours told me: You come back here to the Philippines, maybe you did not work good? They were telling me things like that. And I told to my neighbours: If you would go to [host country] I wouldn’t know anything about what had happened to you. And then they stopped the gossip.

In the situation explained above, Christine used confronting gossip as an active, problem-focused strategy to try to diminish the gossip as an external stressor. This strategy appears only in this case and, as shown in the previous section, Christine adapts quite extreme forms of avoiding strategies.

5.1.4. Distancing

Throughout the interviews the women express a lot of *humour*; they laugh and make fun of themselves and the situation. To use humour is a coping strategy used for distancing oneself from distressing feelings. It is a trait of the Filipino culture and a way of handling difficulties in everyday life. Lucy expresses this in the following quote, where emotional relief comes forward as a method:

Runaway beauties we called our group, and then we made a pausing, did a laughing. It releases the pain.

Positive thinking as a method related to this strategy is clearly expressed when Lucy talks about the family's hard living conditions:

About the electricity (they do not have any electricity anymore), my husband says: Good darling, now it is so romantic with the candle light and we have the moons and the stars. [...] And the kids say: Oh, it is so hot! On with the air-con [pretends to open the windows], then my husband says: What level do you want, slow or medium? (Laughing)[...] Sometimes Filipinas make fun of their own problems, that makes us unique.

Christine expresses this strategy, both when talking about the difficulties when confronting people around her, and when remembering the trauma:

They [her neighbours] were asking : Where is the chocolate? I said I am sorry, I have only my hair, my body! (Laughing) [...] I feel that maybe I just dream, what happened to me. (Laughing)

In the following quote, Lucy, Kelly and Jennie are talking in a humoristic way about Kelly's aspirations to go abroad to work again:

Lucy: And there you will meet your fiancée.
Kelly: I call you when I get married!
Jennie: He will be 85 years old. (Everyone is laughing)

And Lucy says, when asked if she is thinking about going abroad again:

Sometimes I make joke to my husband that I have applied (laughing). But seriously, he told me, as long as it is good and in a proper way, why not.

The quotes above illustrate that humour as a coping strategy is passive and emotion-focused (directed towards inner stressors). Methods used are emotional relief, positive thinking, and maybe also emotional blocking in the sense that the women in some cases use humour to diminish the problems.

5.1.5. Seeking Social Support

Seeking Social Support is a coping type that is strongly connected to the women's social network. Related strategies are *talk to others* and *help others*. Identified resources are the family, the church, and the supporting organization.

5.1.5.1. Family

All the respondents get some kind of emotional support from family members. Coming back and rebuilding relationships with their partners and children is connected to feelings of frustration and guilt and is an ongoing process. Especially Lucy has been struggling a lot with angry management when reintegrating with her family. She is talking to them as an active, problem-focused strategy to overcome external stressors (conflicts) and inner stressors (anger) by emotional relief:

I smashed them and even kicked them [her children]. But it is much better now [...] I write them love letters that I am sorry for what I have done, and with the support from my husband slowly, slowly we try to get to now see each other as a family. I don't want to hurt their feelings, so I put it in a love letter instead of shouting at them. And then my kids will also say sorry and we love you also mum. [...] My knight in shining armour [referring to her husband] is the one who counsel me, at night we talk a lot without the knowledge of my daughters. He says it is not good, that next time I have to manage, to control my temper, because they are not so mature and not capable to understand me, what I have been through, because they are just kids, and then to win them back and get them to respect you as a mother, you have to first respect yourself, he says. [...] So you have to gain respect from them, show that you love them, not that you only are good in talking and talking and shouting and shouting. Then they will listen to you, when you not just push them away. Do you want my daughters to run away from us? I do not want that to happen to my family. And then I learned, it is not an easy way to do that, but if you are willing, slowly... We have now the family home evenings in our house [...]. It is the time when we can open up each other.

Lucy receives important support from her husband and children, but other family members, such as her mother, have turned their back on her. As explained in chapter 5.2., problematic relationships of this kind is a common trait, and the woman choose carefully from whom within the family they seek emotional support. Another example is Christine, who before she met the other women in the self-help group, could only talk to her husband about her anxiety:

I didn't have any money, I didn't have anything, I didn't have any dress. That's why I wanted to kill myself. I talked to my husband: No, I cannot take it anymore, what is happening to my life. [...] I blame myself, but now it feels better. But if I did not go there, it would not be like this.

Christine shows how she uses *talk to others* as an active strategy to deal with inner stressors, such as hopelessness and guilt. Another strategy used to reduce these stressors is to *help others*. Lucy says, when asked what happened when she came home to her family:

Adjustment to my husband and to my daughters, especially my eldest daughter, it was harsh. I know it had bad effect on her, sometimes she tells me she was rejected and neglected. I do not know how to start with them, how to show my life for them. I just try to train them to be tough, that despite the hardship that will come to them they are already ready for it, and I want them to learn.

The quote above illustrates how Lucy uses value one's own experience as a method when helping her children to prepare for difficult experiences in life. Help others, in this context, appears as an emotion-focused, active strategy, directed towards the future.

5.1.5.2. Church

All respondents are religious and go to church regularly. The church is considered an important resource for emotional support. The women get support both from different group activities organized by the church, such as mass, singing gospel, and seminars, and through individual counselling with the priest. Lucy describes the lack of support from her community, and the help she gets from the church as a social support:

Karin: What did people around you think when you came back?

Lucy: First, people laughed at me.

Karin: What did they say?

Lucy: How can I translate it into English... They say that you are a crazy woman.

Karin: They did not support you?

Lucy: You feel like you have been so isolated from them that you have been detached from them. Also gossip, and it is like you have some illness.

Karin: Okay, like the pest or something?

Lucy: Yes, that they do not want to be in touch with me.

Karin: People around you as well?

Lucy: Yes, only people in church give me the real support and [supporting organization] also.

Lucy also describes how she has been using advice gained through the church in order to manage her anger and rebuild the relationships with her husband and children:

I want the anger to come out, because otherwise I will explode. And every time I get angry I always remember when I was still in [host country]. [...] The sacrifices I did [...], they did not appreciate it, and they were so hard-headed sometimes, and they forced me to get angry and pursue me to lose my temper. (When I remember this) I cannot control my emotions. I am trying to overcome that temper because it is not good, it is not good for my kids. Our president in church told me that, that is a part of my counselling. [...] I know it is not good, I hurt my kids feelings and it is so shameful for them, and I am not proud of that. I want to control but I do not know how to do. I want to be a friend to them, but instead of friend I become a monster, a threat to them. I want my kids to trust me as their friend, but in return I am their best enemy.

The quote suggests that Lucy adapts *talk to others* as an active, problem- and emotion-focused coping strategy.

5.1.5.3. Supporting Organization

All respondents engage in both individual counselling with the head of the supporting organization in the region, social worker Madame Rose, as well as in group activities such as seminars and meetings with other victims of labour trafficking. All women claim this support to be extremely important for their mental healing process. The self-help group in particular, is considered an indispensable resource for emotional support. Lucy says:

When I met Madame Rose it was good for me. I met other ladies and learned especially how I should manage temper in my family. In the beginning we do not even speak to each other because we were afraid, and now it feels like Christmas every time we meet. [...] We are now free to open up, to share our memories and our testimonies, and we give advice. And that's when Madame Rose says: Hey, this group is quite amazing, we act like one, we think like one. It helped me a lot to cope, and to be with them, because as you can see now we can stand in front of many people, and we are not ashamed to tell (each other) about our experience. [...] We

had no idea how we could go on with this life, we did not know how and where to begin, how we were going to trust again. [...] Slowly, slowly we found out that it is easier to cope with all those problems if you share it with others.

In the quote above, Lucy exemplifies *talk to others* as an active, emotion-focused strategy. As mentioned in chapter 3.2., social support tends to be more efficient if it comes from others who have experienced or are experiencing the same stressors. The self-help group seems to be especially important for the women because of the lack of support from relatives and other people around them, who, according to the women, would only blame them and gossip about their situation if they opened up to them. Lucy says:

How can you trust that people of behaviour? It is so hard. I can not even talk to my mother I or my sisters. Even your own family puts you down, it is so hard. It is better to talk with someone else than share it with your family, your neighbourhood and your own community. That is a sad part of our traits as Filipinos. We are known as a friendly people, but are also known for the gossip.

Jennie elaborates on the importance of talking to others who have experienced the same thing:

In this group you get big support. And we understand each other, because we know what we have been through. And I noticed that in every meeting we have, you can see a big transformation in personality. Slowly they gain their dignity and their self-confidence.

An important element of the organization is rehabilitation through helping other victims of labour trafficking. Lucy expresses the importance of this, and the *help others* strategy, in the following quote:

I found out the problems about their families and kids and I want to save their families. I want to strengthen their families, rescue the family, because I know that it is the basic element of the community, the basic group.

The women are also very enthusiastic in planning to inform other women in order to prevent them from becoming victims of labour trafficking. Donna says:

For me Karin, it is important to help other OFW and share my experience with others so that they will think before going and work in another country. It is very easy to say yes, but when you are there it is not easy. That is also our aim, to save OFW from human trafficking, from abuse, you have to rescue them when they are still in the Philippines, you have to give information. In the end it's they who make the decision, but at least we have done our part to tell them what it is like abroad, what you are going to accept and how to survive, about the discrimination of races. The runaway beauties then become the triumph ladies.

Help others can be considered an active, emotion-focused strategy (directed to release inner stressors), and value one's own experience as a method in adapting the strategy.

5.2. Understanding the Result in the Light of Previous Studies

When analyzing the interviews, there are several learning points to be made when looking into the limited, existing research in the same field (see chapter 2 and 3.2. in this paper). It is important to underline that one has to be careful when comparing results from studies focusing on very different

social and cultural contexts, which is the case for all but one of the studies presented below. I will come back to that consideration later in this paper.

As expressed by Majodina (1995), re-entry can be considered a second culture shock (following the first culture shock when trying to adapt in the host country, as explained by Murakami (2009)) in the sense that the returnee's experiences are not matched by her expectations. This is also shown in the interviews of this study. My respondents' experiences go in line with the findings presented by Ujano-Batangan, et. al. (2011) and Majodina regarding concerns upon returning, such as financial problems, unemployment, strained relationships with other family members, sharing exile experiences, being harassed, and being discriminated against. For example, the women in my study feel that they are victims of gossiping in their home communities, which becomes the root of many of the coping strategies. However, my study also brings up other important challenges that the women have to find ways to cope with. There are strong feelings of shame from not having succeeded in sending home money to the family members. The experience of feeling shame upon returning home was common among the Ethiopian female returnees in Minaye's (2012) study.

What stands out in comparison with Minaye's study is that the Filipino women in my study do not express feelings of deep hopelessness. Instead, they apply coping strategies such as accepting the trauma, having faith in God, and hoping for better luck. Positive thinking is a commonly used method.

Another interesting aspect that appears in the light of existing studies on returnee experiences is the strong emphasis on emotion-focused strategies in the Filipino women's stories. Only one identified strategy is exclusively problem-focused, and it was expressed by only one of the respondents. As Majodina points out in his study on coping among returning South African refugees, problem-focused coping has proven to be a significant positive contributor to well-being in the reintegration process, whereas emotional coping can have a negative effect on the individual's well-being in the reintegration process. I will come back to this in the last chapter of this paper.

Regarding the returnees' social network, as underlined by Majodina in chapter 2 and Ujano-Batangan in chapter 3.2., the family tends to stand out as a resource for social support and well-being, as in Lucy's case. However, if the relations are characterized by negative feelings such as anger and criticism, they can instead have a negative influence on the individual's well-being, as we have seen in chapter 5.1.2. As was also seen in Majodina's study, the supporting organization for returnees proved to have a significant, positive effect on the individual's well-being during the reintegration process. The author also argues for the importance of involving the returnees in the design and implementation of programs, which I will address further in the last chapter of this paper.

The analysis of the interviews with the Filipino returnees brought forward several aspects that have not been identified in previous studies. The concept of *luck* in the Filipino culture seem to play an important role in coping, as well as *humour*, which both stand out as connected to positive thinking, however in a very passive sense. Also, the fear of being victim of *gossip* is very strong among the respondents, and several of the coping strategies are related to that challenge upon re-entry. This underlines the importance of further research in the field, which I will return to in the last chapter of this paper.

5.3. Summary

Identified coping strategies in the interviews, sorted by coping type, were: *Accept trauma* and *accept current living conditions* (positive reappraisal), *avoid distressing memories*, *avoid confrontation/conflicts*, *hope for better luck* and *have faith in God* (escape/avoidance) *confront gossip* (confrontative coping), *use humour* (distancing), and *talk to others* and *help others* (seeking social support). Confrontative coping was expressed by only one of the respondents, whereas escape/avoidance strategies seemed to be the most commonly used strategies according to the women's descriptions. These strategies were found to be very much related to the experience or fear of becoming victims of gossiping neighbours and/or patronizing family members. Distancing through humour was also appearing to a great extent in all the interviews, as well as seeking social support. It was found that the strategies expressed by the women were mostly emotion-focused or dysfunctional as opposed to problem-focused, but in many cases active as opposed to passive. The most common social support resources appearing in the interviews were the family, the church, and the supporting organization.

The experiences of the respondents have a lot in common with the experiences brought forward in other studies in the same field, though it is important to be aware of the different social and cultural settings in which most of the existing research has been implemented. There seems to be a second culture chock upon re-entry, which stems from unfulfilled expectations and challenges such as financial problems, unemployment, strained relationships with other family members, sharing exile experiences, feelings of shame, being harassed, and being discriminated against. But instead of hopelessness, the Filipino women in my study seem to use several coping strategies that imply positive thinking. These strategies, however, are passive and not active. They are also emotion-focused, which is the rule in the analyzed material of this study. As other studies have shown, emotion-focused coping may have a negative impact on the individual's well-being in the reintegration process. The family seems to have a double-sided impact in the coping process, as has also been brought forward in previous research. It tends to stand out as a resource for social

support and well-being, but if the relations are characterized by negative feelings such as anger and criticism, they can instead have a negative influence. The supporting organization for returnees seems to be an important coping resource for the women in my study, as well as for the returnees investigated in previous research. Several new aspects of the coping process of returnees were brought forward in the analysis, such as coping related to the concepts of luck, humour, and gossip, which the respondents themselves consider to stand out as traits in the Filipino culture.

6. Discussion

The objective of this study was to identify different coping strategies appearing in five Filipino womens' descriptions of returning home after experiencing labour trafficking, and to analyze them in the light of existing, comparable research on returnee experiences upon reintegration. The respondents have all received basic support from an organization in the region that works in the interest of victims of labour trafficking.

There is a lack of research on the reintegration process after this kind of trauma, especially related to female victims of labour trafficking, and a better understanding of how individuals cope mentally with both the memories of the experience in the host country as well as other difficulties and stressors upon return, such as challenging family relations, disappointment, guilt, and gossip, may contribute further to the development of support programs and interventions for victims of labour trafficking. It is important to underline that the respondents in my study belong to a cultural and social context that is as unique as any other, and thus are also the results dependent on that context. I will come back to the generalization aspect at the end of this chapter.

When analyzing the interviews in this study, certain elements in the social environment appear as important factors contributing to the strategies used. Gossiping neighbours and difficult relationships with close family members and other relatives seem to encourage avoidance strategies among the returning women, suggesting that interventions should be more holistic in their approach, including information and awareness building at the community level. Previous research, as well as the interviews in this study, shows the key importance of close family members when coping mentally, suggesting that working on a family level could be of particular importance in programs designed to support the women in the reintegration process. As Ujano-Batangan points out, returning migrant workers, especially those who have undergone distress and abuse, often return to their families and communities without receiving adequate and sustained psycho-social support. Also Murakami stresses the importance of effective systems for rehabilitation to deal with the trauma of cross-cultural stress factors impacting the mental health of migrant workers. Since the supporting organization seems to play an important role upon re-entry, involving the returning women in the design and implementation of rehabilitation programs as well as proactive prevention programs could prove to be fruitful, both on the individual and community level.

Another important aspect to keep in mind is that, as Majodina points out in his study on coping among returning South African refugees, emotional-focused coping can have a negative effect on the individual's well-being in the reintegration process. The strong emphasis on emotion-focused

coping in the Filipino women's stories underlines the importance to take into consideration how to help the women to approach their internal and external stressors using more problem-focused strategies.

Further research is clearly needed in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities of reintegration after having been a victim of labour trafficking and other similar traumas. It would be interesting, for example, to interview returnees who have not received any basic support from an organization. Also, investigating the primary sources of social support in this study (the family, the church, and the organization) and how they interact would increase the understanding of how the immediate support system could be developed and improved. Another important point for further research is the mental effects of migrant working/labour trafficking on the people left behind, such as children and spouses, as well as the effects on the community level when people leave and come back.

When planning, implementing and evaluating research on returnee experiences, it is highly important to be aware of the characteristics of different social and cultural settings, both in the home country and the host country of the returnees. Existing research, this paper included, suggests that the cultural context is important in the reintegration process, and studies should be carried out in various cultural and social contexts in order to better understand the how these variables are related to returnee experience and reintegration. While taking this into consideration, the results of this study may partly be of interest also in other countries as well as other reintegration contexts in which the individuals experience similar internal and external stressors when returning to their home communities.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Kanlungan Center Foundation

Kanlungan Centre Foundation (KCF) is a nongovernmental and non-profit organization. The organization was formed in 1992 in order to help Filipino migrant workers who are survivors of human trafficking, illegal recruitment, workplace abuse and non-payment of wages, as well as their families and their communities. The aim of KCF is to establish structures of care to alleviate, resolve and prevent the occurrence of the negative consequences of migration.

Their vision with this organization is to envision a sovereign and democratic Philippine society where labour migration is just an and not the only option, and where overseas Filipino women and men enjoy the respect of peoples in other societies within the context of a just and egalitarian global order.

The mission of this organization is to uphold the rights and welfare of OFWs and their families, especially women migrants, through gender-responsive, holistic and empowering direct services, advocacy, organizing and capacity-building and engage in the prevention and fights against trafficking in women and children. Their third mission is to contribute to the creation of social, cultural, economic and political conditions where rights of OFWs and their families are protected, sustainable reintegration of OFWs is facilitated and alternatives to labour migration are available.

The organizations programs and services consist of feminist counselling for migrant women subjected to violence in their workplaces, as well as their families. The counselling is intended to immediately provide psychological intervention and eases her reintegration back to her community. Counselling services are also available to women and their families who have been deprived of Economic support by husbands working abroad.

The organization has legal assistance for victims of illegal recruitment and human trafficking, Contract Violations and unjust working terms and conditions. The personnel also give the clients education and training, focused on empowering migrant workers and their families.

Reference:

(<http://www.kanlungan.ngo.ph/>) 2012-07-30

Appedix 2: Interview Guide

This piece contains the guideline for the questions asked during the interviews. It was primarily used as a structural tool, rather than a schedule.

Background information

- Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Age, family, partner, living conditions, employment?
- Before I do I just want to make it clear that you can ask me to pause or you can end the interview at any time.

Questions regarding pre-departure

- Reasons to work as a migrant domestic worker?
- Preparation?
- Expectations?

Questions during the stay in the host country

- What did you work with?
- Which country?
- How long did you stay?
- How was your contact with your family in the Philippines?
- Could you please tell us/me your story?/share experiences?
- How to handle/Cope with the experiences?
- How do you define labour trafficking?

Questions regarding the return to the Philippines

- When did you come back? family, partner, living conditions, employment?
- Could you please tell me how it was to return to your community?
- What happened when you returned?
- How was it to meet your family/neighbours/kids? How did they support you?
- How did the environment/people/community around support you?
- What was the attitude?
- How did you cope with the experiences of labour trafficking when coming home?
- Can you tell me your experiences of the emotional support after returning?

Questions regarding the future

- What are your thoughts regarding your future?
- Do you want to work as a migrant domestic worker again?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?
- How did you feel about this interview?

Appendix 3: Letter of Consent

(The letter of consent was handed out to the respondents as a formal instrument of communication.)

Background

Most of the previous research about Female migrant workers coping with experiencing labour trafficking is situated in the host country. The purpose of this study is instead to gain a greater understanding how female migrant workers cope with their experiences of labour trafficking when they return to their home country. With this study I hope to contribute to find better support for OFWs who comes home after experiencing labour trafficking abroad.

Participation

If you choose to participate in the study I will interview you. The interview will, after your consent, be audio recorded and are planned to last around 40- 60 minutes.

Risks

Your participation is completely voluntarily. If you feel that you regret your contribution can at any time end without giving any explanation, then your statement will not be a part of my study. Taking part in this essay can bring back feelings and memories, which can be painful.

Handling the interviews and data

You as a participant will be anonymous and it will not be possible to identify you as a person in the final version of the study. Your name and other personal information will be altered in order to promote this. The audio recordings will be erased after they have been written down.

Responsibility

My name is Karin Lund and I am social work student at Ersta Sköndal University College in Stockholm, Sweden. These interviews are a part of a Minor Field study, which is based for my Bachelor essay that will be submitted to Ersta Sköndal University College.

Taking part of the study

You will be able to take part of the final essay by contacting me. If you have any other questions regarding this research you are welcome to contact me.

Karin.lund@student.esh.se

Consent

I want to participate in this study and I am aware that I don't get any compensation in return. I have read and understood the information above and give my consent to be part of this research study.

Date

Place:

Signature

Name

Thank you for your participation