**Migrant Muslim Women’s Resiliency**

**In Coping With Traditional Family Practices**

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**Introduction**

Migration is a movement of people from one place to another for different reasons. They go from one country to another or from one place to another within a country because of poverty, violence, economic opportunity, better living conditions or for greater security. This phenomenon is identified as push - pull factors of migration (Tandug, 2011).

Muslim migration started from 1571 to 1898, Muslim migrants in Manila are mainly foreigners like the Turks, Arab, Persians, Indians and Indonesians. These foreign Muslims are retail traders, wholesalers, night watch and peddlers. According to Census of the Philippine Island as cited by Watanabe (2007) in 1903 domestic Muslim migration started and there are 95 local Muslim migrants in Manila.

In 1910 during the American occupation the Pensionado system was imposed towards Muslims and other indigenous people. They encourage the children of the Muslim wealthy family to study in Manila or in Washington under the Pensionado system. According to Census of the Philippine Island (1920-21), as cited by Watanabe (2007), out of 285,306 population of Manila, there are 14,215 Muslims (12,981 males and 1,234 females). Most of these Muslim migrants are males who left their family in the province or arrived single in Manila.

Muslim migration concurrently increases and this was evidently observed when the government resumed the Colonization movement (started in 1920) in Mindanao. The increase of Christians in Mindanao bring in conflict and tension which resulted to “land grabbing” by the new settlers and local Muslim strongmen according to CheMan (1990) as cited by Watanabe (2007). The tension in Mindanao encouraged Muslim to migrate in Manila since they observed that situation in Mindanao with its deteriorating peace and order will bring a little opportunity for business and economic growth. In 1950, there are 40 Maranaos and Tausugs in CortaVitarte in Malate according to Miyamoto (1994) as cited by Watanabe (2007). Other Muslim migrants settled in Zaragoza Street (pier-side) in Tondo, Divisoria, San Andres and Sampaloc (Matuan, 1993). Most of these Muslims were engaged in trade and dealers of antique, pearls, jewelleries and fabrics. Muslim merchants went to Manila seasonally or for short periods of time to work as migrant workers and left their families at home. Only when their work environment improved or their business had become successful were they able to call their families and relatives to Manila (Watanabe,2008)

According to Helen Kadil (1986) as cited by Watanabe (2007) there are two major reasons for Muslim migration: first is for better economic opportunities and second is the problematic peace and order in war affected areas in Mindanao.

Migration in Manila became a phenomenon from 1903 up to the present. Most of these Muslim migrants settled in Manila due to its economic advancement, better living, better job opportunities and easy access to different government agencies. The word Manila came from a white flowered mangrove plant called Nilad which is abundant in the area. Maynilad – “where the nilad grows” is a wealthy Muslim community which is ruled by Rajah Sulayman. Before the coming of the Spaniards, it is already the center of trade which made it a prosperous community. As of August 1, 2007 the population of Manila is 1, 660,717 it has 14 municipalities and 6 congressional districts. And one of the municipalities of Manila is the Intramuros where some migrant Muslim women live with their family. The word Intramuros means inside the walls. On June 24, 1571 Miguel Lopez de Legaspi captured the area from Rajah Sulayman. The 64 hectares area became the headquarter of the Spanish colonial government.

Intramuros has five barangays: brgy.654, brgy 655, brgy. 656, brgy 657 and brgy. 658. Barangay 655 has a total land area of 2000 square meters and is composed of two compounds: Plastican and Maisan. In November of 2010 to February of 2011, Community Service and Learning Center (COSeL) of Lyceum of the Philippines University – Manila, conducted a survey on the population of barangay 655. From the survey, Plastican has 70 households and 280 residents while Maisan has 205 household and 824 residents for a total of 275 households and 1,104 residents. From the 505 residents who are interviewed by COSel, 227 or 45% come from the Visayas and almost equally with 216 or 42.77% residents come from the Luzon group while Mindanao had a 62 or 12.27%.

(Barangay 655 Evaluation Study, 2011)

This study focused on the migrant Muslim women in brgy.655 where researchers have found out, from the conducted a survey, that among the five barangays, it has the most number of Muslim settlers. This can be attributed to its local leader who is a Muslim (Tausug) himself. From the study of Watanabe (2008), migrant Muslim always considers the place for settling, first is the mosque and second is the community. Sense of belongingness could be a factor which led to this Muslim to settle in this area of Intramuros.

Figure 1. Illustration of the migration pattern of Muslim women in Brgy.655

As years passed by, not only men migrated in Metro Manila but also the Muslim women. Some of this women migrated due to economic opportunities, family influences and rido or clash of clans (Magundaca, 1990). Employment is mostly observable factor; they are motivated to seek employment because it brings in economic and social status to their family (Magundaca, 1990).

With the increase of Muslim women migrating in Manila, the researchers would like to understand the challenges they encounter and how they cope with the new environment. Muslim women are always a victim of stereotyping - shy, long-haired and Malay clad lady to a Kris (sword of Muslims) fierce looking Muslim men. According to Santanina Rasul, there is no such as a typical Muslim woman, because she is the product of her society where she lives in. The culture she has imbedded, her education, economic status she enjoys, the social position she occupies- all of these leaves there imprint in every woman – regardless of her religion.

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

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

Also, the Muslim community assumes that a Muslim woman should submit to the traditions of courtship and marriage. Courtship for the Muslim requires a rigid test to the loyalty and sincerity of the man. If a man wanted to woo a lady, he must propose to the family which is known as *“khitbah”* in Arabic language. The moment a Muslim woman accepted verbally the “khitbah”, it would now be considered an engagement and a mutual pledge for marriage. If one would break the engagement without any reason, it will be considered as immoral and dishonest.

While courtship requires a rigid test, marriage for the Muslim is often regarded as parental arrangement. Since parents believed that when the seed of love is planted it would continue to bloom after the marriage. Men and women who are ready to get married may meet their future spouse through family or friend since many couples believed of the marital bliss of parental marriage. Along with the marriage is *Mahr*, which often times mistakenly perceived as bride price and may lead to the notion that Muslim women are traded as property by their parents. Mahr is a ‘bride gift’; a gesture of the husband-to-be to accept the responsibility of bearing all necessary expenses of his wife. According to the Islamic jurisprudence, without Mahr, the marriage cannot be solemnized and completed. In Bukhari, they believed that one of the most essential conditions for the legality of marriage is the presence of Mahr.

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

Another distinct practice of the Muslim which sometimes creates negative thought from the non-Muslim community is the exercise of polygamy (10-15% in Muslim countries). According to Dr. Bilal, Muslims are often accused of being promiscuous because polygamy is legal. Islam "allows" Muslim men to marry up to four wives at the same time, provided that the man is fair and just in treating all his wives. The Quran says that if a man cannot meet this condition, then he should be married to only one. On the other hand, Muslim women are not allowed to be married to more than one man at the same time.

Abiding with family and community traditions is a challenged for Muslim women. But what makes these women unique is that their resiliency- resiliency is a dynamic process that enables an individual to respond or adapt under adverse condition which includes social, spiritual, economic, or political aspects. Despite of the multiplicity of culture in their new diverse society, they were able to cope with the challenges and changes, remaining faithful to their traditions and religion.

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

**Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed to establish the migration pattern and lived experiences of the Muslim women in Barangay 655, Intramuros Manila.

Specifically, the following are the specific objectives of the study:

a) To determine the profile of the migrant Muslim women in barangay 655 according to:

a. educational attainment

b. employment

c. place of origin

d. years of stay in Barangay 655

e. ethnic group

b) To identify the Muslim women’s reasons of migration in Barangay 655.

c) To identify the lived experiences of Muslim women in terms of family practices once settled in Barangay 655 specifically:

a. Pre – marriage customs

b. Traditional family practices

c. Personal Challenges

d) To recognize migrant Muslim women’s resiliency in their traditional family practices.

**Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study limits its scope to the Muslim women of Barangay 655, Intramuros Manila. As one of the adopted community of the Lyceum of the Philippines University, Barangay 655, in Intramuros, is selected for this study. Frequent visit to the barangay gave the researchers an idea of how these Muslim families settled in the community. Factors were considered in choosing the locality of the study: a. presence of Muslim women in barangay 655 and b. nearness of the community to the researchers.

The researchers decided to focus on Muslim women because prior to this research, the researchers were originally part of a research spearheaded by the CHED trough a consortium of different universities within the university belt in Manila. The research supposedly is about the challenges encountered by the Muslims and non-Muslims who are living together in the same locality. The researchers started to gather literatures about the study; unfortunately, the research did not happen due to irrepressible factors.

Using the initial data gathered from the first topic and the interesting information collected from the supposed Muslim respondents, the researchers came across issues and problems which are noteworthy to discuss—resiliency of the migrant Muslim women with their traditional family practices.

Most literatures show that there are instances which Muslim women had to change their appearances or anglicise their names in order to be consider in the mainstream of the society like employment. Some Muslim women cannot ride in a taxi because drivers wouldn’t like to take them while others would tend to avoid any encounter with Muslim women and/or treating them unpleasantly. All of these experiences were attributed to their ethnic or religious affiliation as reflected by wearing a hijab– the visual identifier for Muslim women.

Thus, the above-cited issues and challenges that a migrant Muslim woman encounters can possibly be validated by themselves through their shared life stories. And for the researchers to shed light to the dim part of these issues, they started with the profiling of the informants and eventually collected significant stories that manifest their resiliency as they are to maintain their cultural and spiritual practices relative to family life. The traditional practices in this study focused on:

1. Pre Marriage with parental marriage, courtship and dowry
2. Marriage with the issues on polygamy, subservience, and divorce

**Significance of the Study**

Many studies discuss about the way of life, traditions and religion of Muslim. However, not all focus on Muslim women and their challenges in the society, in their community and within their family. According to Gutoc (2005), Muslim women struggle in two folds: discrimination imposed by their community and the struggle against stereotyping among the Muslim women.

The researchers believed that this study can:

1. Recommends the government and private units to formulate programs and implement laws that promote equality of Muslim women in all aspects. With this step it will create a productive and harmonious society both for Muslims and non-Muslim group.
2. Clarify issues and misconceptions about Islamic practices that could encourage acceptance from non-Muslim community.
3. Enlighten Muslim women about their roles, statuses and rights as accorded by Islamic teachings vis-à-vis ethnical practices.
4. Encourage the academic institutions to review their curricula and incorporate a fair treatment with the Muslims (representing the other ethnic and indigenous groups). This may include the significant names of Muslim women who had a remarkable contribution to the society as a whole. This, in turn, believed to lessen the erroneous perceptions or stereotyping about Muslim women.

The most importance of this study is to bridge the gap between the Muslim and non-Muslim group. The researchers believed that through this study it will create a society that is more tolerant to other’s culture.

**Methodology**

*Research Design*

The objective of this study is to determine the factors/reasons of migration of the Muslim women in barangay 655, identify their lived experiences and to recognize their resiliency in coping with traditional family practices. Hence, this study used phenomenological method as the research design. The instrument used in gathering data and information were empirical observation, survey, and unstructured interview. To validate the information gathered, the researchers used focus group discussion (FGDs) with the informants and corroborated by Muslim key informants. Generally, this study is a qualitative research.

According to Stan (1999) phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing out the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives with challenging structural or normative assumptions. The experiences and perceptions mentioned were the lived experiences of the Muslim women who migrated in barangay 655. The researchers believed that phenomenological method is the most appropriate research design in dealing with studies concerning lived experiences since it has no restrictions to numbers and to questions asked. At the same time it brings out information that is taken for granted by some researchers. In support with this, Stan (1999), cited that phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, ‘bracketing’ taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving and thereby clarifying ambiguous information.

In the study, bracketing is identifying themes which will be the focus of the researchers for their study. From these themes, the researchers will shred information which will set as a guide questions for the FGD. These themes are answers from the informants which several times revealed from the interview conducted.

**Data Gathering, Instrument and Procedure**

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

Two major data are collected through the in- depth interview approach: the transformative narratives (life stories) and the subservience to traditional practices. These are taken through written and audio recorded documents and guided by a set of unstructured questions. The researchers are guided by some forms of cultural sensitivity and contextualization. As Pe-Pua (1985) cited by Orozco (2009), the level of interaction or relationship that exist between the researcher and the informants significantly determines the quality of the data obtained. De Vera (1976), as cited by Orozco (2009), advocates the same cultural sensitive approach through ‘***pakikipagkwentuhan’*** or light moments of interaction. This build trust and rapport with the informants and thus, it assured a meaningful data gathered or result.

The researchers identified the Muslim families from the demographic profile provided by COSeL (Community Outreach and Service Learning). After identifying the possible informants, the researchers conducted an ocular visit to the barangay to introduce themselves to the officials and to conduct an initial observation to the community. Then, the researchers visited the Muslim women to conduct profiling. By non-random sampling, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaires to Muslim women who are readily available to respond. While waiting for the questionnaire, the researchers made use of the chance to observe the place, their behaviour and activities. Some of the questionnaires were left under the custody of the Barangay Secretary who can identify the most active and participative Muslim women. Three (3) days after, the questionnaires were ready for pick up at the barangay hall.

The researchers went back to the informants on July 14, 2012 to conduct an in depth interview using an unconstructed questionnaire. The conversations were taped, noted and transcribed for precision and consistency. The method was believed to be flexible as the informants were more relaxed and encouraged to express themselves about different concerns, based on their expectations, motivations, background, interests and experiences.

After the interview, the researchers gathered all the information provided by the informants and bracket the results into themes.

In order to test the validity of the data, an FGD on July 10, 2013 was conducted in two separate schedules and groups. First with the informants and the second was with the selected key informants which were held a month after the informants’ FDG. The first FGD was participated by six (6) informants of whom the two (2) were not part of the in-depth interview. Gastardo-Canaco (2002) suggests that FGD is advisable if the research aims to describe, understand, and theorize about women’s lives in the context of the women’s experiences and from their own perspectives as it is an opportunity for a freewheeling, but not directionless, sharing of views. Moreover, the tool does not only engage the informants in critical analysis of life situations but also arrive at negotiated facts and informed opinions.

The schedule was quite untimely since it was Ramadan and most of the invited informants from the initial in-depth interview were absent.

The second FGD was August 13 and 16, 2013, it was held at the National Commission on Muslim Filipino (NCMF) with the accommodations of two (2) NCMF Commissioners and a senior technical staff. They are Commissioner Salem C. Demuna of Davao and member of Kagan ethnic tribe, Commissioner Bai Omera D. Dianalan- Lucman of Lanao del Sur and a distinguished Maranao and Ms. Nena Balindong, a Technical staff and a Maranao. The key informants validated the results of the FGD validated from the informants. Also the key informants shared some information which gave light to some gray areas of the initial findings.

**Subject and Respondents**

The target informants are selected from the Barangay 655, Intramuros, Manila; the most densely populated barangay by Muslims groups. From the data provided by LPU- COSEL, eighteen (18) were initially surveyed informants provided the following significant data introducing their educational attainment, employment, place of origin, years of stay in Barangay 655 and the ethnic group from which they are affiliated. Important part of the profiling is to identify the reasons/factors why Muslim women migrated in Manila.lythe selected key informants. y engage t TheseT This information, in turn, is to be linked to various life stories shared by informants.

The researchers were able to identify eleven (11) informants from the eighteen (18) Muslim women residents of Barangay 655 with various academic background; three (3) are elementary graduates, four (4) are high school graduates and four(4) have a college units. Nine (9) informants are unemployed while three (3) are owners of a sari-sari store. In addition, five (5) from the informants had been employed abroad. With regards to their place of origin, eight (8) are from Cotabato, two (2) from Maguindanao and another two (2) from Zamboanga. Maguindanaon tribe (9) dominated the group with only two (2) from Tausug tribe. The average stay of informants in Barangay 655 is from seven (7) years to twenty seven (27) years.

**Ethical Concerns**

The researchers ensured that research ethics was cautiously observed in the conduct of the study specially it concerns about Muslim women. Though Paredes-Canilao (2002) explained that there is no single set of rules governing researches, the researchers carefully consider that the confidentiality and privacy are indispensable rights of the informants. As Kimmel (1996), cited by Paredes-Canilao (2002), stated that Psychology was the first discipline to institute research code which has a total of 11 codes used around the world but noted of one commonality, “ each ethical code surveyed revealed an overriding high regard for the well-being and dignity of research participants and users of psychological services.”

Thus, with respect to informant’s well-being and dignity, an informed consent was initiated with the informants about the nature of the research. Moreover, the researchers adopted the following essential guidelines (Kimmel 1996)

* Muslim women’s right to privacy as to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent of information about them is shared with or withheld from other.
* Right to confidentiality as private data will not be reported without the informant’s consent.
* Benefits and reciprocity as to what assure that the research will not only benefit the researchers but also bring benefits to the research informants as well in terms social improvement, policy or legislation and empowerment (Paredes-Canilao 2002).

Use of pseudonyms to safeguard the informant’s identity

**Results**

The data which basically served the intended purpose of this study was derived from the life stories shared by the migrant Muslim women. This further directs the researchers to establish the migration pattern and their resiliency in coping with the traditional family practices.

Focusing on migrant Muslim women is a result of an initial research study sponsored by Commission on High Education (CHED) to member colleges and universities of U-belt Consortium in Manila which was headed by De LaSalle University. The study aims to evaluate the relationship of Muslim and non-Muslim as they live in one community. However, it did not materialized due to overlapping tasks and conflicting events that were assigned to involved researchers. Fortunately, this paved the way to a more interesting and quite relevant type of research topic that could increase awareness about the cultural diversity in urban area and understand one of the marginalized group, the Muslim women.

**Profile of the migrant Muslim women in Barangay 655**

From the 2011 demographic data provided by Lyceum’s Community Outreach Service Extension Learning (COSEL), it reveals that Barangay 655 has the most number of Muslim families compared to other four (4) Barangays in Intramuros which has few or none at all. The identified Muslim community in the said Barangay was considered for this study on two grounds: first, the respondent Muslim women are migrant in an urban area and second, the community is basically dominated by non-Muslim residents. The settlement and accommodation of Muslim families by Barangay 655 somehow is linked with the Barangay Captain who is also a Muslim and a Tausug.

A total of eighteen (18) Muslim women responded to the initial survey conducted on July 14, 2012-- sufficient to be the subjects/informants for a qualitative research. The table below shows the preliminary profile of the 18 migrant Muslim women.

**Table 1**

**Initial Profile Muslim Women**

**in Brgy 655 (COSEL, 2011)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Aliases** | **Age** | **Civil Status** | **Educ.** | **Work** | **# of child** | **Husband’s employ.** | **Place of Origin** | **Years of Stay** | **Reason of Migration** | **Ethnic Group** |
| 1 | Claire | 28 | M | Elem. | None | 3 | Security guard | Cotabato | 12 | work | Maguindanaon |
| 2 | Lora | 32 | S | BSSA |  | NA | NA | Zamboanga | 11 | work | Tausug |
| 3 | Vina | 23 | M | HS | None | 1 | Security Guard | Maguindanao | 6 | Work | Maguindanoan |
| 4 | Marie | 26 | M | BS Agri under-grad | None | 3 | Security guard | Cotabato | 8 | work | Maguindanao |
| 5 | Charlene | 41 | S | College level | Sari sari owner |  | NA |  | 5 | work | Maguindanao |
| 6 | Candy | 30 | S | HS | none |  | - | Cotabato | 2 | work | Maguindanao |
| 7 | Janice | 32 | M | Elem | Sari sari store owner |  | Security | Cotabato | 12 | work | Maguindanao |
| 8 | Vilma | 44 | M | Elem | Sari sari store owner |  | Ex OFW | Cotabato | 5 | work | Maguindanao |
| 9 | Lina | 40 | M | Elem | none | 8 | Recruiter agent | Cotaato | 25 | work | Maguindanao |
| 10 | Fatima | 31 | M | College level | none | 3 | Security guard | Zamboanga | 12 | work | Tausug |
| 11 | Jane | 21 | S | HS | none |  |  | Cotabato | 5 | Family | Maguindanaoan |
| 12 | Angela | 29 | M | HS | none | 2 | Security guard | Za,boanga del Sur | 7 | work | Tausug |
| 13 | Ada | 33 | M | HS | none | 4 | Security guard | Cotabato | 12 | War and work | Maguindanoan |
| 14 | Gara | 34 | M | Elem | NA | 3 |  | Cotabato |  | work | Maguindanaoan |
| 15 | Ysa | 35 | S | AB | Carinderia owner | NA | - | - | 5 | work | Tausug |
| 16 | Tata | 43 | M | College level | none | 3 | Driver | - | 12 | work | Maguindanaoan |
| 17 | Yda | 39 | Separated | College level | Recruiter agent/ vendor | 3 | - | N. Cotabato | 18 | work | Maguindanaoan |
| 18 | Rea | 37 | M | HS | none | 3 | - | Cotabato | 10 | work | Maguindanaoan |

Out of the 18 initially profiled, eleven (11) Muslim informants agreed with the in-depth interview. Table 2 presents Muslim women’s civil status, educational attainment and employment.

**Table 2**

**Informant’s Profile**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Aliases** | **Civil Status** | **No. of Children** | **Education** | **Employment** |
| *Vina* | M | 1 | High School | None |
| *Marie* | M | 3 | BS Agriculture  Undergrad | None |
| *Charlene* | S | NA | College undergrad | Sari-sari store owner/  Recruiter |
| *Janice* | M | 2 | Elementary | Sari-sari store owner |
| *Vilma* | M | 2 | Elementary | Sari-sari store owner |
| *Fatima* | M | 3 | College undergrad | None |
| *Angela* | M | 2 | High School | None |
| *Ada* | M | 4 | High School | None |
| *Tata* | M | 3 | College Undergrad | None |
| *Rea* | M | 5 | High School | None |
| *Lina* | M | 8 | Elementary | None |

From the eleven (11) informants, only one is single and the rest are married. Incidentally, eight (8) from the ten (10) married Muslim women are economically dependent with their spouses since no attractive educational background can back up their application. Low level of literacy is reflected because only four (4) informants have reached college level; four (4) graduated from high school and three (3) graduated from elementary. Majority of the informants claim that it was poverty incidence which hindered them to finish their education.

Despite of being unemployed, two (2) informants were able to support the family’s needs by managing a small sari-sari store. This situation could be linked with the reason why majority of the married informants are cautious to have two (2) to three (3) children.

Table 3 describes the cultural background and migration data of the informants as it traces the place of origin, reason for migration, duration of settlement in Barangay and the ethnic group affiliation of the 11 Muslim informants.

**Table 3**

**Informant’s Cultural and Migration Data**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Aliases** | **Place of Origin** | **Years of Stay in Barangay 655** | **Reason of Migration** | **Ethnic group affiliation** |
| *Vina* | Maguindanao | 8 | Work | Tausug |
| *Marie* | Cotabato | 10 | family/relative’s influences | Maguindanaoan |
| *Charlene* | Cotabato | 7 | Work | Maguindanaoan |
| *Janice* | Cotabato | 14 | Work | Maguindanaoan |
| *Vilma* | Cotabato | 7 | Work | Maguindanaoanunatore owner/recruiter |
| *Fatima* | Zamboanga | 14 | Work | Maguindanaoan |
| *Angela* | Zamboanga del Sur | 9 | Work | Maguindanaoan |
| *Ada* | Cotabato | 14 | War and work | Maguindanaoan |
| *Tata* | Cotabato | 14 | Work | Maguindanaoan |
| *Rea* | Maguindanao | 10 | Family/relative’s influences | Maguindanaoan |
| *Lina* | Cotabato | 27 | Work | Maguindanaoan |

Majority of the informants have affiliation with Maguindanoan tribe. Nine (9) of them cited Cotabato or Maguindanao provinces as their places of origin while the remaining two (2) informants are from Tausug group and originated from Zamboanga province. Most of the informants have been living in Barangay 655 for quite a long time; the longest is 27 years while the least number of period is seven (7).

When asked about the reason form migrating to Manila, majority cited that application for work or employment lured them to leave their provinces given that the poverty exists in their home provinces. On the other hand, the other Muslim women were just influenced by the family or relatives who had settled in the area for years.

**Reasons for Migration**

Muslim informants specifically identified the following reasons why they were prompted to leave their provinces and settled in Barangay 655 of Intramuros:

**a. Overseas Employment**

Not just employment but an overseas work opportunity enticed the nine (9) informants to migrate. Most of them even regarded an overseas work as a trend *(uso* in Filipino*)* or status symbol in their provinces that caused feeling of resentment within the neighbourhood. While the place of Manila which supposed to be a temporary settlement, it then became their new-found community.

**b. Influences of Family and Relatives**

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

Marie personally admits that the information she heard, read and watched from television and newspapers about Metro Manila encouraged her to aspire living in Manila and thinking that a better opportunity awaits them once they had migrated. This was later affirmed by her father:

*Marie: Tatay ko ang unang nakarating dito. Bumalik na lang siya ng probinsya para isama na kami. Pero gusto ko na nuon pa man makapunta ng Maynila, kasi sa mga naririnig at napanood, masaya at maganda ang buhay dito.*

Similarly, Ada was influenced by her relatives who had no plans of returning to their province as they have settled already in Intramuros. She was persuaded by her relative who had gone abroad and brought her family in Barangay 655 to live permanently.

*Ada: Kasi nandito na mgaTita ko, nakatira na sila dito. Siya ang tumulong sa aking mag apply sa abroad.*

For Vilma, after deciding to separate from her husband, she went straight to Manila and never came back in Cotabato. While staying in Manila, where she met a friend and a relative, she was encouraged to try her luck in the new-found place:

*Vilma: May mga nakilala ako kaibigan at kababayan dito kaya dito ako kumuha ng mauupahan.*

Thus, the influx of relatives and “province-mates” is a common pattern for Muslim which was confirmed by the informants during the FGD. Those influences or connections pulled them to permanently stay in Barangay 655.

**c. *Rido* or Deadly Family/Clan Feuds**

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

*“…ganoon na talaga ang sakit ng lugar naming. Parang family grudge..hindi matapos tapos.”*

An almost identical experience was shared by Tata:

*“..nang nabaril ang asawa ko nandito na siya sa Maynila, dahil yung Tito nya may kaaway sa probinsya, pinatakas niya yun sa bintana kaya siya ang binaril.”*

*Rido* or family feud, according to two (2) informants still exist in their respective hometowns. And in order to avoid further death from the family/clan, they left their provinces and never came back.

**Discussion**

The findings, which are mainly based from the stories narrated by the Muslim informants, were reconciled with the secondary data: the Hadith, related studies about Muslim women, and the holy Quran’s injunctions. Data thereafter, are being clustered into themes which were subjected to the validation of Muslim women themselves and by selected key informants through personal interview.

As a common sociological phenomenon, people migrate for various reasons or goals using different ways or patterns. It could be from one country to another or migrating within the country. Filipino overseas-contract-workers (OFWs) is the best example of the first pattern on the ground of economic benefits.

Migration of Muslims has been evident to almost every point of the country. In his study, Tandug (2011) recognized that migration of Muslims in key cities of Batangas is a prevalent phenomenon. But the migration pattern established from Tandug’s study is different from the pattern identified rom the Muslim informants of Barangay 655. Batangas is not the direct destination of Muslim migrants as they have had their first settlement to other areas before living in the key cities of Lipa and Tanauan while majority the Muslim women settled directly in Manila i.e. in Barangay 655 from their respective point of origin. But, except for two (2) migrants who lived shortly in their relative’s house in Taguig and one who had rented a room in Malate before deciding to settle in Intramuros. Difference of the pattern employed by the two Muslim groups manifests their flexibility and ingenuity as they are searching for a considerable place for a possible settlement even this could be totally diverse in terms of socio-cultural, political, economic, and religious aspect.

Although the two Muslim groups differ from the patterns, there is a common denominator found in their migration--that the economic opportunity is the primary factor which triggered them to leave their provinces. Muslims forced decision to migrate to a place which is totally different from their origin only manifests that poverty indeed is a severe problem of the Filipinos in Mindanao. Statistics supports the migrant’s stories. According to the 1st Semester 2012 Poverty Statistics of National Statistical Coordination Board, Lanao, Cotabato, Zamboanga and Maguindanao provinces are among the cited 15 poorest areas in Mindanao region. Thus, without option at all, they were pulled by the urban cities in Luzon where economic opportunities are possible. And Barangay 655, Intramuros, which is in the heart of the busy city of Manila, now serves as Muslim women’s new community.

Another interesting findings and common to majority of the informants is their attraction to work abroad as a domestic helper (DH). Working as a DH became a common ground for Muslim women who believed that it could be their best remedy to their family’s depressing economic condition. Since they are Muslim, Middle East countries are naturally their chosen state to work in. Similar as how Corpuz (2003) cited Carpizo in his paper, the need for manpower in the Middle East makes Philippine’s exports of manpower a progressing industry. Thus, overseas employment undeniably is what Muslim women considered the tolerated “trend” because it is the easiest and strategic way of helping and alleviating their economic difficulties back in the province.

Overwhelmingly, all of the informants from the FGD, proved this, like most of their relatives and friends. The transcriptions below discuss the commonality of their reasons:

*Vilma: Pumunta ako sa Maynila kasi gusto kong mag abroad kasi mahirap makapag apply ang asawa ko. Para makatulong sa gastusin ng pamilya.*

*Ada: Uso sa amin ang pag aabroad kaya sumama na rin ako sa tita ko.*

*Fatima: Hindi na ako kayang pag aralin ng tatay ko sa kolehiyo kaya kinuha ako ng ate ko na nakapag abroad na din. Tinulungan nya akong makapag apply ng trabaho sa abroad.*

*Charlene: May nameet kasi ako sa amin, Muslim din pero wala namang pinag aralan, pero nung nakapag abroad siya, nabago talaga...parang nabalutan ng alahas ang katawan.*

Apparently, either because of unplanned marriages or unpleasant experiences from their employer, majority of the informants failed to return to their work overseas, which result to settling in Barangay:

*Fatima: …sabi ko mag aabroad na lang ako. Kaso hindi na ako nakabalik, kasi nakapag asawa ako ng biglaan.*

*Vina: Nakapag abroad nga ako pero nagpadeport ako kasi yung amo kong lalaki, mahilig sa babae, hinipuan ako kaya pumunta ako sa Embassy.*

Misfortunes of one informant is not unusual to all, particularly to Filipina DH. Some could not even sue the local agencies since the applicants did not underwent the usual legal process and worst they are minors that makes them undocumented. Visayan Forum supported this case as they have assisted 619 abused domestic workers from April 2010 to March 2011 of which almost 98% are female. Usual abuses do not only concerns their employment but also includes physical, verbal and sexual in nature. It adds that they have also assisted trafficking cases that are related with domestic work, usually of domestic worker bound for Malaysia, Singapore, and Middle East countries.

A recent study published by the Committee on Workers Overseas Welfare reports that 70% of workers employed as caregivers or without a specific work qualification suffers continuous physical and psychological abuses in Saudi Arabia.

Fortunately, not all informants suffered what the victims from the above-cited study reported but could have been prone to as majority of them had used a falsified document. Charlene, Fatima, and Ada, who were then 17, 15 and 16 respectively, were able to work as domestic helpers several times while presenting only a tampered passport. Almost all of them even agreed that unlike non-Muslim applicants, their application and processing of documents particularly in their birth certificates, is much easier then. That’s why Charlene, who had mastered the processing steps, later became a recruiter for other interested Muslim applicants.

The recruitment and application will start, according to her, by financing the transportation expenses of her applicants from their provinces, then agreeing into certain terms like payment should be deducted from their first few months of salary. The payment will cover the full accommodation provided to applicants—from food to transient house—until they leave for abroad.

Yet, Charlene’s fortune is different with other Muslim DH. Vina, for instance, was sexually harassed by her Arabian employer. She went straight to the Philippine Embassy in Saudi Arabia to seek help and volunteered herself to be deported. After this, she never thought of coming back in Saudi Arabia.

Key informants confirmed that Muslim minor applicants can easily apply and work abroad then. This practice, they believed, became possible because recruiters are conniving with some personnel of government agencies particularly on passport processing. They could change the name and the age since Muslim may late register their new-born. But they added, that due to advance technology, such it is no longer being practiced nowadays.

Commissioner Lucman narrates an incidence which her husband, a former Ambassador, personally handled. A Muslim woman who had just arrived in the airport was eventually deported by using falsified passport. This was after the immigration personnel doubted the age of the bearer which did not matched with the presented document.

But aside from economic benefits from working overseas, migrant informants also reasoned the influences they got from their family and relatives as well as the rido of theuir migration. These identified reasons, according to Kadil, H (1986) and Kadil B (1985), are the push-pull factors which greatly and commonly provoked Muslims to migrate, particularly in 1970s.

**Subservience to Tradition: Passive obedience and evolved assertions**

A Muslim woman can be easily recognized because of their customary practices—from material culture like wearing of veil *(hijab),* full body cover dresses anddialect, to their non-material culture such parental arrangement, dowry, subscription to polygamy and divorce. Any Muslim woman is expected to be subservient to these practices, more specifically concerning family relations. Most often than not, obedience to religion or cultural practice is symbolically reflected on their submissiveness to their husbands.

Believing that subservience is also part of the norms of Filipino, it is usually linked with other factors like women being economically dependent, manifestation of religious obedience or even fear. Serquina-Ramiro et al (2004), as quoted by Ngales (2008 ) stated in her study*, ‘women continue to believe that they are inferior to men… and that ‘good wives are expected to be subservient to their husbands.”* This is akin for Muslim women. Being so, this reflects their subservience is not only manifested to their traditions but most importantly to their religion.

As stipulated in the holy Qu’ran (4:34):

*Men are the maintainers of women, with what Allah has made some of them to excel others and with what they spend out of their wealth.* ***So the good women are obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded.*** *And those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the beds and chastise them. So if they obey you, seek not a way against them. (emphasis added)*

Silas interpreted how slam views the woman. According to him, Quran sees woman as inferior to the man and as such, places her in a subservient and subordinate position. This will start the moment she accepts the dowry from the husband in return, the woman is giving her husband the right to her regulation. (http:www.answering-Islam.org)

Among the informants, Vilma, a Maguindanaoan, spoke with such an inspiring intense of obedience. She claims and believes that the kind of culture that she practices are conforming to the teachings of Islam. She was brought up by family who religiously observe what they thought is indeed an Islamic culture. From her childhood until now and from her two marriages to her son’s weddings, she admits and proud to be an obedient Muslim.

In the interpretations that was provided by Engineer (1992) who stated that to the effect that Muslim women remains subservient and perform everything to please his husband is not explicitly stated in the Quran. This practice, he adds, became the norm in later Islamic society. This difference between the Muslim informant’s cultural norm and the interpretations of a Muslim scholars reflect that the concept of subservience may be followed according to society’s cultural orientation and of by formal learnings of the person who interprets. Being so, not all Muslim women may be expected to conform in lieu of subservience.

Consequently, from various stories of the informants, it also reveals that the migrant Muslim women manifests two kinds of subservience; passive obedience and evolved assertions with maintained trust and dependence to Muslim authorities like the *imam* (priest).

**Passive Obedience to Traditional Practices**

As Muslim women are required to wear a veil or hijab, many perceived that this is a visible marker of their inferiority in Islamic society. This inferiority or subordinate status mandates them to remain steadfast on their traditional family practices such as arranged marriages by parents, paying of dowry, divorce and polygamy since these are believed to be in conjunction with Islam.

Engineer (1992) stated that women’s general status in a society can be assessed by the recognized marital rights accorded to them. Women in most societies and religious system, he believes, were not given rights equal to men like absence of freedom when entering into a marital relationship, and this is at par from the Islamic law.

Parental arrangement is one distinct practice that is very common to all Muslim ethnic tribes. Muslim’s pre-marriage customs starts with the parental arrangement either formal or informal conversation as whoever of the parents would propose such, the moment they like the boy or the girl. After this, the groom’s parents pay a visit (*pamanhikan*) to formalize the agreement.

Vilma, a Maguindanaoan, still vividly recalls how her parents religiously followed their traditional practices particularly concerning marriage and family relations. This in turn, guided her on deciding for her sons’ future marriages. Vilma recounts:

*“…magsimula sa maliit, sumusunod kami sa mga magulang namin. Kahit ang mga anak ko ay mga lalaki, ako din ang pumili ng mapapangasawa nila…”*

At the age of six (6), Vilma, as if, is certain of her destiny as well. Because her parents arranged her future wedding to the son of her parent’s friend. And upon reaching the age of ten (10), her future-in–laws, concluded the arrangement by a formal visit or “*pamanhikan.*” From that agreement commenced the blossoming of an intimate relationship of two minors. In their innocent minds, they were required to constantly see each other from kindergarten to elementary. She said:

*“Nasa anim na taon ako nuon, sinabihan ang ama ko na huwag ako pag aasawahin sa iba. Pagtuntong ko ng sampu, namanhikan na sila, at sabi ng nanay ng asawa ko, mag –aaral yung mga bata..magkaklase sila.”*

Vina’s fate is an example of an arranged marriage of Muslims who are just very young. When she reach the age of twelve (12) years old, her parents asked to stop schooling for fear that they might engage in premarital sex which is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. Her husband-to-be, who is five (5) years her senior, continued his study and finished an education course. Her parents’ decision to stop her studies and let her future groom finished his education is assumed as a gender discrimination. Favouring male over women for higher status in the society, however, is being observed generally in Muslim community.

Arranged marriage is also affirmed by Samira Gutoc, a Maranao. It is customary recognized that Muslims perceive arranged marriages by parents or guardians at an early age even without asking the ones who are to be married. In this norm, it is noteworthy to discuss as well, that the early marriage would result to losing the sense of childhood the Muslim children. Vilma remembers:

*“Minsan pag nagkakaaway kami, iniisip ko yung paglalaro. Iiwan ko yung bahay. Kaya minsan inaalalalyan kami ng biyenan ko. Kasi hindi puwede ako matalo, hindi ko matatanggap na matalo ako..”*

Tata, a Maguindanaoan, is also a product of arranged marriage. She shares that it was her parents-in-law and her parents who were close friends, made the agreement for her and their son’s wedding. While her eldest sister had the fixed wedding with her husband’s cousin. And as culturally required, a *wali* (guardian) will be negotiating for the future bride’s marriage conditions. And on her behalf, her brother acted as her *wali.*

Similarly, Fatima, a Tausug, had been arranged by her parents to her cousin. But since she did not approve of parental arrangement, she left Zamboanga del Norte and went to Manila.

Undeniably, parental arrangement can cause debates from those who favour and rejects the norm. Engineer (1992) explains that child marriage is consider a highly controversial issue but it had only come into practice under the influence of early times rather than due to the Quran. And that no need for its justification since times evolved. He adds that the father’s decision over his child is not to be imposed when she grows into adulthood. The Muslim woman will be given then an option to accept or reject the marriage not even interfered by anyone. Fyzee (1974), as cited by Engineer (1992), affirmed this interpretation by saying *“If a Muslim minor has been married during minority by a guardian, the minor has the right on attaining majority to repudiate such marriage.”* This contradictions of interpretation results to confusion not only from the non-Muslims but more on Muslims.

Along with parental arrangement is the payment of *mahr* (dowry) by the groom’s parents. It is believed, as stated in the Quran, an essential part of Islamic marriage. Before solemnizing a marriage, it is important for Muslim to pay *mahr* (dowry) or *saduqatun* (as used in Quran*). Saduqatun* is derived from *sadaqa* which means truthfulness, sincerity, and gift given as an act of virtue and (Engineer; 1992). It can also be called *nahlah* (as what is used in the Quran) which is derived from *nahl* that means “something given without any expectation in return, that is purely out of love and regard (Raghib as cited by Engineer: 1992) Thus, dowry is not to be taken as a bride-price or to show off groom’s social or financial status. As stated in the Quran;

*“And give the women their dowries as a present, but if they are happy to offer you any of it, accept with happiness and with wholesome pleasure.”*

As explicitly cited, *mahr* therefore, is an integral part of marriage. To emphasize, no contract will be valid without it. To some Muslim, it is often consider as a security against divorce (Engineer: 1992) But Badawi (1980) adds that it may regarded as an actual or symbolic price for the woman in certain cultures but not in Islam.

Moreover, payment or fixing the value is an exclusive preserve of the woman or the bride to determine. And once given, it totally belongs to the wife alone. It could be nominal or could be quite substantial, if the woman insists. But if groom does not have a capacity to pay, a ring or teaching may do (Sahir Bukhari; 1980) However, the husband may not take back what has been given if they will decide to divorce. Unless, the wife is the one who initiate to have their marriage divorced.

From the dowry, Vilma claimed that she have lived comfortably on her first marriage at the early period. Also, she admitted, that the younger the child is, the higher the value/amount will be imposed:

*“Sa ganoong kabata (6-10 years old), mahal na mahal… Nakapagbigay ang asawa ko sa nanay ko ng isang ektaryang lupa, isang kalabaw, isang traktora, bahay na tinirahan naming, Php 10,000, yung kama at lahat ng gastos sa kasal.”*

Parental arrangement with *mahr* completes the pre-marriage requirement in Muslim culture and religion. Commissioner Lucman, a Maranao confirms that these customary ways are still evidently followed by Muslims especially by Maranaos. Conflict or marital problems, she believes, are found to be commonly encounter by Muslim couple because they neither sought the consent of their parents nor ignore their role. Parents in Muslim society play a vital role in their children’s marriages because they would verify the family’s background and the character of the potential groom. She claims:

*“Lalo na sa mga Maranao, we’ re very strict with it even the payment of dowry. Flexible naman yun, walang fix for as long as nasusunod ang nasa Koran. And as long as there is consent from both parents.”*

**Subscription to Polygamy and Divorce**

Marriage is said to be prescribed and called for in Islam. Under Muslim Code, marriage is made complete by the expression of mutual consent in the presence of the witnesses. Marital practices for Muslim do not only conform to their culture but more of the holy Quran and legitimated through Islamic laws. Since the very foundation is the holy Quran, other scholars even elevated marriage into a mere obligation particularly on those who has the ability thus, according to Al-Bukhari:

*“Whoever has the ability should marry for it is better in lowering the gaze and guarding one’s chastity. Whoever is not able, let him fast for it is for him a restraint.”*

A man, according to the above verse, is encouraged to marry as far as possible because procreation is necessary for human survival. Others who may not marry free women, should marry the oppressed. With this belief, marriage safeguards the rights of women, both as wife and a mother. Thus, it guarantees social stability and a dignified existence for both man and woman (Engineer; 1992). Thus, acceptance of polygamy has been evident among Muslims.

Polygamy is a common practice by Muslims since holy Quran expressly permits it, as stated (4:3)

*“And if you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans, marry such women as seem good to you two, or three, or four; but if you fear you will not do justice, then (marry) only once or that which your right hand possess.”*

But it does not only emphasize polygamy but its practice should be under certain conditions; that doing so will provide justice to orphans and equal justice to all his spouses. If not, Muslim man should marry only one unless there is justice. This is in conjunction with the Quran verse which says that men are maintainers of their wives (Qu’ran 4:34) which includes food, clothing, and shelter and that the first wife’s permission is given (Engineer; 1992). However, in reality, just and equal treatment of all wives is claimed to be impossible.

Vilma subscribes to this practice because she was oriented by her parents about the possibility. According to her:

*“Sinabi na sa amin na kung kaya ng lalaki, hindi ako hahadlang..hanggang apat kung kaya at hindi makakahadlang kasi iyon ang patakaran. Pero kung hindi kakayanin, hindi puwede.”*

However, some also believed that the law or the practice has been abused by most Muslim by regarding it as a privilege. The cultural customs, that prone to be abused, therefore are sometimes implemented under the cover of Islam. The basis why it becomes a topic of unfortunate discussion because Muslim women are assumed to be prone to oppression or mistreatment.

Meanwhile, divorce is derived from the word *talaq* (as used in Quran) which means untying a knot or being released from a covenant. It essentially is coming out of the marital knot and becoming free (Engineer: 1992)

This explains that similar to marriage, divorce is regarded as a mere contract and acceptable for Muslim. As provided in Chapter 2 of the Quran:

*“Divorce may be (pronounced)* ***twice****; then keep (them) in good fellowship or let (them) go with kindness. And it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them , unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah. ….These are the limits of Allah, so exceed them not, and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah, these are the wrong-doers.”*

Thus, divorce should be done with certain limitation-- that it can be only be given twice and not a number of times in order to prevent the abuse use of divorce. (Engineer:1992) The Muslim Code enumerates certain grounds when dissolution of marriage is to be done.

The following Quranic verse relates to what can Muslim woman do, when put into an unfortunate situation.

*“If you fear a breach between the two, appoint an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people. If they both desire an agreement, Allah will effect harmony between them .” (4:35)*

This, as interpreted by Engineer, (1992) enforce an arbitrary rules of divorce that could undermine the woman’s position which often could be against her interest. This, he adds, is more in the nature of ordinance by a ruler to meet a specific situation and not as a divine provision. The male then could only have the prerogative to file a divorce when he desires, while the wife has nothing to say in the issue.

The perceptions and experiences of Rea and Vina, both Maguindanaoan, proves this condition. As for Rea, she believed that initiating divorce would require her to pay, similar to a fine if she will initiate the divorce as she expects that the authorities might only favor her husband.

*Rea: “Gusto ko ng humiwalay, pero kahit gusto ng babae kung ayaw naman ng lalaki, walang magagawa ang babae. Baka magbayad pa ako ng multa. Kung hindi pipirma ang lalaki sa ginawang kasulatan ng imam at ustadz, hindi puwede maghiwalay ang mag asawa.”*

*Vina : “Maghiwalay na lang kung away din lang ng away…mahirap din kasi kahit gusto ng babae kung ayaw ng lalaki, magmumulta ang babae.*

An obligation to pay fine is a common belief for most of the Maguindanaoan informants. While they are aware that women also possess the right to divorce their husbands or *khu’la* as Qu’ran provides, *“Then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah there is no blame on them from what she gives up to become free thereby.”*  But traditionally, since they will be the one to file the legal proceedings, they believed that a part will the payment of a similar to a fine.

The key informants, Commissioner Lucman and Ms Balindong who are both Maranaos, said that filing a divorce must be in conformity with the teachings of Quran. As Commissioner Lucman points out:

*“Kasi nga sa amin, not until the man says, I divorce you and I return you to your parents, that is the only time that the girl can be separated. Kung ayaw g lalaki, hindi puwede.”*

Moreover, Ms Balindang also assures that separation among Muslim couples in Maranao group has been rarely observed since domestic violence or physical beatings, which are common causes and accepted grounds for divorce, have been avoided. Ms Balindong confirms:

*“Ang isang tunay na Muslim, hindi mo aasahan ng violence o physical beating, walang ganuon na problema, kung meron man madalang. Dahil magkakaroon lang ng hiwalayan kung nasa kautusan ng Islam.”*

Otherwise, Muslim women would just accept the dysfunctional relationship since they have no choice but to accept the condition. Like how Fatima accepts her situation despite of the physical and emotional suffering she endures. She said:

*“Kung kelan siya magsawa na at magsabi hiwalayan na kita, dun na ako makakalaya…”*

In tolerating or enduring the pain and suffering experienced by the informants are commonly based on one’s religious belief. Ferraro and Johnson (1989) as quoted by Ngales (2008), *“ some women endure battering for the sake of some high commitment like that of Christians. Women should serve their husbands as men serve God is invoked as a rationalization to endure a husband’s violence for later rewards in the afterlife”* While for Muslim, accepting the traditional ways, would be highly appreciated by the society and that of Allah.

What Islam allows *khu’la*  should be subject to the following grounds (Engineer; 1992): physical defect in her husband, of ill treatment, of legal cruelty and inability of the husband to fulfil his marital obligations such as providing shelter and maintenance. However, the belief of paying fine, he added, could be related to the orthodox practice of *khu’la*. It was when the wife was able to win *khu’la* provided she has to return her *mahr* (dowry).

In the belief that mahr should be returned to husbands if wife will be initiating the divorce deters majority of the informants to free themselves from abuses. But, Commissioner Lucman assures that if domestic violence exists, they have the Sharia Court to seek help. Commissioner Lucman explains:

*“They have to go to the Sharia Court..Ang dowry once natouched ka nan g lalaki, wala ka ng ibabalik…you really have to inform them.”*

Among the informants, Vilma was the only one who is separated from his husband. The separation has been made even without taking the process of *khu’la.* Her husband, according to her, did not even bother to contradict with her decision since her husband committed mistakes on her. He had misused all her remittances out of the ten (10) years of sacrifices while working abroad. Still emotional, she said:

*“Hindi ko alam kung saan niya ginamit…nagsusumbong na lang ang mga bata na may hawak na makapal na pera papa nila pero sila naghihirap.”*

**Obedience with Evolved Assertions**

Islam covers many lands with many diverse cultures. The diversification itself attributes to the possible confusion of Muslim’s practices to be modified, altered or even replaced. Thus, practices can be distinct and different from one another though they all are identified Muslims.

This is true as well with diverse ethnic groups of Filipino Muslims. Their practice is found to be according with the tribe’s culture. While other Muslim women strictly conforms, others on the other hand, may deviate from the customary ways while still recognizing the significant role of their parents. Muslim parents, on the other hand, may found lenient or lax on observing the traditional ways as well, noticeably among the Tausug tribe.

This is what Charlene, a Tausug, experienced when she was still a teenager. While still in Cotabato, she admits that she experienced was the typical non-Muslim courtship method—exchanging love letters and meeting secretly. She recalls:

*“Wala pang cellphone noon, nagsimula iyon nang magbigay siya ng panyong pinabanguhan..yun ang uso noon, tapos nagpadala na siya ng sulat na nagsabi crush kita, tapos magkita kami sa ilog..puro sulat lang..”*

Her suitor eventually became her boyfriend even without her parent’s knowledge. It was kept to be secret not for the reason that she might be punished but it was their decision. She adds that they were in fact, given by her parents a freedom to choose and to decide for themselves. But the 20- year old relationship ended when she went abroad.

Considerably, changes are evident to Muslim women as they have migrated in Barangay 655. These are anchored from the reasons /factors that either pushed or pulled them to migrate or had been attributed to their new environment. Their stories revealed some differences and deviations of their perceptions, practices, and thoughts concerning family relations.

Unlike Vilma, who observes and follows Islamic and cultural practices, some informants have departed and/or may tend to deviate on following such. This was actually revealed when asked about the courtship and pre-marriage stage.

**Using Clandestine and Simple Ways On Courtship**

Short-cut, discreet yet simple. These are qualities the stages of Muslim courtship known and practiced by some informants before they enter into marriage. By being distant from their parents, living independently and with the influences from the others oftentimes resulted into deviations from their Muslim traditional ways.

*“Walang nakakaalam nang maging boyfriend ko siya..Lihim sa lahat ang naging relasyon namin. Kasi hindi din naman iyon ang priority ko nuon..ang makabalik sa abroad.”*

*-Janice, Maguindanaoan*

*“Binigay lang ng pinsan ko ang number ko sa pinsan nya..ayun, naging magtextmate na kami.”*

*-Vina, Maguindanaoan*

*“Magkababayan kami pero dito na kami nagkakilala. At bago ako bumalik sa abroad, kami na.”*

*-Ada, Maguindanaoan*

*“Tukso-tukso lang nagsimula. Namamasyal na sa Luneta..hanggang sa nagloving-loving na..nagkatuluyan na..”*

*-Fatima, Tausug*

*“Pinakilala siya sa akin ng nanay nya na kasamahan ko sa trabaho, nang bumalik ako ng Qatar, hindi na ako nilubayan..diredretso na.”*

*-Angela, Tausug*

Migrant Muslim women were found to have modified their norms in terms of courtship. Not as conservative as they used to be known, the informants themselves have been freely behaving almost the same as the non-Muslims. This could be attributed to their new, non-Muslim community which have influenced the migrants. Thus, freedom of choice is not to be taken for granted but recognized even on deciding on who and how to entertain people as their suitors.

Commissioner Lucman said this deviations are possible because they have a access now to available communication lines, like cellphones. She claims that these could have influenced the migrant Muslim women not to follow the Muslim’s customary ways. Thus, courtship by some Muslims is being done through simple texting.

**On Waiving Parental Arrangements**

Angela, who was once arranged by her father to her cousin, had decided to escape and leave their province and ignored the arrangement.

*“Kinausap ko yung lalaki, sabi ko sa kanya, hindi puwede na magpakasal tayo kasi kapatid lang ang turing ko sa iyo…gusto daw ng mga magulang naming kaya gusto din kaya..kaya humanap ako ng paraan. Pumunta ako dito sa Maynila.”*

However, as she disobeyed her parents, she had a thought of blaming herself for the kind of miserable condition she is now into---a dysfunctional family. She claims:

*“Ang isip ko ganito yung nangyari sa akin sa probinsya, ngayon dito din sa Maynila din pala..Kaya nga iniwasan ko na mag-asawa na magulang ko lang ang magdesisyon. Mahirap na kami doon, mahirap pa rin ako ngayon”*

Majority of the informants in fact claimed to have renounced the stringent custom on marriage particularly on parental arrangement. Usually, the parents are only informed when they got pregnant or had had their first born for fear of being punished. Like what Angela explained:

*“Nalaman nila na nag-asawa ako nung nabuntis na ako sa panganay ko. Tinago ko kasi natatakot ako magalit sila eh.”*

However, the informants emphasized that once they had engaged into sexual intercourse, they believed that marriage must follow. As they believe, husband can possibly leave them if they wish to, provided marriage was solemnized. The reason for it is to prevent further humiliations from the society against their families.

**Negotiated or Non-payment of Mahr**

Traditionally regarded as an integral part of marriage, some of the migrant Muslims admit that they have deviated from it unintentionally. While some still recognize its importance as part of their culture, the others had considered the financial incapacity of their husband to pay the dowry. That made them to be excused and even pardoned by their family. This is obviously is a violation for Muslims.

Tata, a Maguindanaoan, was able to receive Php 50,000 as the dowry along with the decorated bed which normally amounts to Php 40,000 from her future groom. But Ada, also a Maguindanaoan, was not sure if her husband paid a dowry to her family in the form of property but what she can confirm was the amount of Php 3,000. This, she said, was personally received herself. She explains:

*“Nagbigay ng pera pero hindi ko alam kung magkano, sa akin Php 3,000 lang. Sabi may lupa daw hindi ko alam kung totoo. Hindi naman nagkocomplain ang mga magulang ko.”*

On the other hand, Fatima’s family insisted on the payment of dowry as this may offend her family and that their reputation could be at risk, much worse could lead to a disgrace in the community. The supposed amount of Php 50,000 was then secretly negotiated and reduced later on to Php 20,000 for reason that the husband could not afford to pay the asked amount. According to her:

*“Siguro mga Php 20,000 lang pero ok na yun, ang mahalaga may maipakita sa mga taga doon (probinsya). Na ako ay asawa talaga. Kasi kung hindi parang kabit kabit lang..mababa ang tingin sa iyo pag walang dowry.”*

Meanwhile, Angela, a Tausug, claims that dowry is optional to be practiced in their tribe. She herself, did not receive any form of a dowry from her husband. Considering her husband’s economic status, her family understands.

*“Wala siyang naibigay, naintindihan din naman nila (pamilya) na mahirap lang ang buhay ng napangasawa ko.*”

**Subscription to polygamy with conditions**

From the informant’s narratives, it somehow revealed the other character of a Muslim woman that is alike to a non-Muslim. This character of Migrant Muslims manifest a bit of assertiveness yet still obedient to their religion particularly demonstrated on their perception about polygamy and divorce.

Angela, Janice, Tata and Ada were noticeable of being assertive with their rights. Believing that succeeding marriages may only be done only if the first wife approves, polygamy then is not to be tolerated. With full confidence, they explains:

*“Kung mag aasawa siya, makikipaghiwalay na ako. Ayaw ko ng magulo. Hindi din puwede iyon kasi ang unang asawa ang tatanungin..kung papayag o hindi…pag hindi ako pumayag, wala siyang magagawa..”*

*-Angela, Tausug*

*“Puwede kung papayag yung una, kung hindi pumayag, hindi puwede mag asawa, maliban kung ipipilit.”*

*-Ada, Maguindanaoan*

*“Sa akin ayoko nang ganoon, pareho kaming propesyunal.”*

*-Tata, Maguindanaoan*

*“Kung magkakaroon siya ng iba, sabihin nya lang sa akin, at malaya siya. Hihiwalay kami sa kanya pero hindi dapat pakialaman ang mga naipundar ko.*

*-Janice, Maguindanaoan*

They may not be the only Muslim who have this conviction because even in much conservative society in Middle East countries, polygamy is being questioned. According to United Nation Development Program-- Arab Human Development Report (2005), many Muslims no longer see polygamy as acceptable. Strong public support as survey shows in four Arab countries—Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco— at least half of the men and nearly all of the women surveyed to be disagree with the practice of polygamy. While those who did agree, linked their approval to the agreement of the wives concerned (Chandrakirana: 2001)

Key informants tried to explain this new perception of their fellow Muslims. Commissioner Demuna believed that as Muslim women starts to mingle to various cultures especially to non-Muslim, this eventually affects their attitude to Muslim traditional practices and thereby makes them prone to vulnerability. It is therefore, a challenge to be considered and must have surpassed. He said:

*“Kung sa probinsya, nasusunod pa din ng mga babaeng Muslim ang kanilang tradisyon o kultura maging ang utos ng Islam. Pero dun sa mga lumipat na nang siyudad, meron pa din naming sumusunod, pero hindi na lahat Kasi iba ang kultura at relihiyon nang komunidad na kanilang ginagalawan. Kaya ito ang challenge sa kanila.*

He further adds that migrant Muslim is more vulnerable given the fact that she might be surrounded by various challenges. Conflict can be avoided though if she is truly a practicing Muslim.

**Various Testimonies on Polygamy**

Fatima must be in a very difficult family life. This starts when she trusted and married the Muslim he had just known after migrating in Manila. Apparently, she did not know that her husband was already married to a Maguindanaoan woman back in their province. But when the first spouse knew about her, the first wife immediately filed a divorce against her husband.

Ironically, this is what Fatima now regrets of. She even hoped that her husband filed a divorce to her as well on the ground of various abuses she has been experiencing since then. Her husband bluntly use polygamy just like a mere right or a privilege for a Muslim man. As what Ngales (2008) opined *“males consider it a normal course invoking their male privileges as inevitable and normal*.” Jealousy issues aggravated by physical beatings, Fatima claimed these to be normal in their home. But despite of abuses, Fatima still manages to cling on to her marriage. She does not have any other options particularly on how to provide her children’s basic needs. Fatima is a plain housewife. Thus, by being economically dependent on her husband and the belief that she is no longer attractive, tolerance to her unfortunate condition is only her hope.

Women may tend to deny victimization and act naturally as what Fatima does. Ngales (2008) described that women’s thought may turn inward. They drew attention on what may be wrong with them instead of their husbands. By tolerating her own conditions, yet Fatima may simply says:

*“Kahit nambabae na siya, kahit kinaladkad na ako sa daan, nandito pa din ako, paramg umaasa kasi ako na may trabaho siya at mabubuhay niya kami ng tatlong anak ko.”*

Those abusive experiences hardened her heart and made her feel numb. At the moment, she may even approves divorce only if her husband assures their financial support.

Unlike Fatima, Rea, a Maguindanaoan, literally subscribes into polygamy. Her husband, who is an *imam* (priest) has two (2) *duwaya* (other wives). She did not have any knowledge at all about the second marriage. It was kept confidential from her until gossips came to her. Thus to avoid it, she, herself, approves her husband’s third marriage. Prior to these marriages, she had heard issues about his infidelity which provoked her to confront him but would only results to denial. When asked how she may describe her situation:

*“Masakit pag may duwaya, lalo na pag dumating ang pangatlo, magkakatabi kami sa kama. Kung mabubuksan lang ang puso ko, durug-durog na.”*

Between Fatima and Rea, the Muslim society is believed to give highly regard to what Rea has demonstrated as a wife. Muslim women, according to Commissioner Lucman, who accepted their husband being polygamous is highly appreciated by the Muslim community. He adds:

*“Sinasabi sa Koran na ang mga lalaki, they can get married up to 4 wives at a time, pero hanggang ngayon hindi malinaw eh..but polygamy is an accepted practice among Maranaos. Karamihan 2, 3, hanggang 4. Karamihan din pag ayaw na nila o gusto pa nila mag asawa, they have to divorce one, they have to maintain 4 wives at a time with the condition of course na kaya mo buhayin sila. And of course according to our religious leaders kailangan pantay panaty ang feelings mo which is impossible****. Sa amin naappreciate yung mga babae na binibigya nila ng duway o approval****.” (emphasis added)*

However, she claims that since more Muslim gets educated, polygamy as for norwadays, is no longer widely practiced by Maranaos. Education empowers Muslim women to assert their rights as first wives. She said:

*“In fact ang trend sa amin ngayon, mga educated, ayaw nan g polygamy..wala na masyado ngayon, very few na, unlike before, it had been well tolerated.”*

Consequently, Commissioner Demuna justifies that though polygamy is allowed among Muslims, it should be exercised according to the set limitations by Islam. He said that polygamy prohibits illicit affairs, more so, having illegitimate children. Thus, as polygamy is applied, it should observably under the condition that the husbands should inform the first wives before marrying the second, third or fourth wife. The Muslim husbands are also mandated by Islam to equally support and look after the welfare of his families yet he admits that such equality and consent are quite hard to follow.

**Common Muslim’s Marital Issues**

Generally, there is no perfect family. Even Muslims under the teachings of Islam encounter marital issues and challenges. The Muslim informants specifically mentioned only two possible cause which could provoke separation or divorce of Muslim couples, it could be either because of jealousy or by poverty. Their statements revealed these possibilities:

*Tata:* *“Madalas na paghihiwalayan ay dahil sa ibang babae..”*

*Angela: “Nagkaroon kami ng alitan nuong buntis ako sa pangalawa, alam mo naman selosa, pag buntis.”*

*Janice: “Magsabi lang siya..magiging malaya siya.”*

*Vina: “Ako lang naman ang nag iisang asawa ng asawa ko..ang problema minsan pera..hindi sapat sa amin.”*

*Ada: “Maiisip mo na sila nanduon, tapos ikaw nandito, naglalaba ng damit…sarap sunugin”*

But, as poverty may be tolerated, jealousy issues are not for majority of Muslim informants. Given that polygamy is allowed, it revealed that Muslim informants do not favour this practice similar to how an ordinary non-Muslim does.

**Roles Performed: a Wife, a Mother and a Sister**

A true and practicing Muslim recognizes the fundamental role of the Muslim woman. This is explicitly stated and outlined in Islam. As Abu Huraira narrated, *"The righteous among the women of Quraish are those who are kind to their young ones and who look after their husband's property."*(<http://www.khilafah.com>)

Thus, Muslim woman’s significant role shall be with the upbringing of her children and in being a dutiful wife. Carrying out such must along with devotion and enthusiasm.

All of the informants take this role dutifully as possible. As a wife, the following statements prove that it’s obediently followed:

*Vilma: “Nung wala pa kami anak, asikaso ko siya, paliliguan, handaan ng damit, pulbusan…hindi ako kumakain hanggang hidni siya kumakain.”*

*Fatima : “Wala siyang masasabi laban sa akin, hindi ako nangangaliwa, alaga lang ako ng alaga sa mga anak naming..kahit nambabae pa siya, nandito pa din ako..”*

*Tata: “Mula noong kinasal kami nong 1997, hanggang ngayon, hindi pa kami nag aaway. Nasa pag uusapkasi yan kumbaga understanding, kung ano ang ayaw ng isa wag mo gawin..”*

*Ada: “Lahat ginagawa ko, sinabi noong kasal naming, alagaan mo ang asawa mo at asikasuhin lahat..”*

However, citing that their worst enemy is to know that their husbands has another woman yet they cannot control. This manifests that the Muslim women are aware how to assert their rights as a woman and as a wife.

On the other hand, utmost consideration is more given to their children. Education and marriage are important to be provided. In order to fulfil this, most of them regulates the number of children as possible, usually 2 to 3 children, given the prevalence of poverty.

*Fatima: “Pag anak talaga, paninindigan naming yan. Kahit anong buhay, hiwalayan man kami, ang anak itataguyod naming.”*

**Subservience to Traditional Practices Linked to Ethnical Backgrounds**

Generally, all traditional practices of Muslim are within the context of Islam. However, what had been practiced and demonstrated by most Muslims vary depending on the type of ethnic tribes. This was affirmed by Commissioner Lucman when she herself, notice how the term ‘duwaya’ (other wives) was used and observed the Tausug wedding ceremony which she had attended.

Similar observation is shared by Samira Gutoc. Traditional practices vary according to their cultural group. In fact, wearing a veil by Muslim woman varies and identified according to her community or tribe. Women of the Tausug tribe wear their caps with sequins, while women from Maguindanao prefer colored veils and while Maranao go for the full triangular cover (http://pcij.org)

This was also affirmed by Commissioner Demuna, he reveals:

*“Depende kasi kung anong tribe kabilang. Kung mas matimbang ang pagsunod sa tradisyon ng tribe, malaki man ang halaga ng dowry, yung ang dapat sundin, pero sa Islamic law, walang nasusulat na laki ng halagang dapat ibigay ng lalaki, kahit ang ‘prayers’ ay sapat nang maging dowry.”*

But what must be followed and observed, the Commissioner emphasized, *“Muslim women though had different ways of practices and been change in these modern times, their practices must be conform the holy Quran and teachings of Prophet Muhammad.”*

**Lost interpretations of Muslim’s Traditional Practices**

Most scholars tried to enlighten what are wrongly interpreted and practiced by some Muslim ethnic tribes. Much more if they have different tribal customs which is taught under the cover of holy Quran. Commissioner Lucman advises that Muslim women should know more about the provisions of the holy Quran and educate themselves in order to prevent marital conflicts or abuses. She claims:

*“Kasi alam niyo there are lots of misinterpretation. For Maranoa, meron kaming seminars, how to be a Muslim woman…kasi hindi naman alam ng mga muslim eh..in fact ditto meron kami weekly. Ang mga lecturers namin mga Maranao, kaya ang mga umaattend mga Maranao din. they could hardly seek other tribes, hindi namin mapilit..Muslim women should know, they should have at least attend the dahwa….what are the provisions for women in the Koran.”*

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

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Normally, when an individual is confronted by a new set of cultures from a different community, she/he either submit, adjust or leave. But when one has no option at all because of the forced circumstances, one needs to be flexible in order to live a normal life. It is worth to know how women particularly, whose statuses and roles have become topic of sensitive discussions, have manage to keep their position in the society.

This paper presents the resiliency of Muslim women with their traditional family practices as they have migrated to an urban place with which co-existence with non-Muslim is evident. This discusses the conclusion of the findings which are based on the informant’s narratives as corroborated by the key informants, reconciled with related literatures and studies, and the provisions of Quran with the interpretations of Prophet Mohammad (Hadeeth).

Majority of the informants in this study are Maguindanaoan whose place of origin are either Cotabato or Maguindanao. The migrant Muslim women directly settled in Barangay 655 of Intramuros as pulled by their family members, relatives, friends and work opportunities while others are being pushed by the *rido* and prevailing armed conflict. Since time immemorial, the armed resistance still exists in Mindanao provinces that caused much poverty to the people thus, pressed them to search for an opportunity in urban areas. Linked to poverty as well why the informants has low level of literacy for none of them was able to acquire a degree. While overseas employment had become a status symbol for many, all of the informants were lured to apply and work in Middle East countries despite of being a minor. Processing of documents was so easy through illegal transactions with some cohorts in the government agencies of Muslim recruiters. However, working abroad didn’t even improved the living condition of most of the informants. Majority are economically dependent to their husband as they decide to permanently settle and start a family in Barangay 655.

While residing for quite a long period in a non-Muslim dominated and urban community, migrant Muslim informant’s view, in terms of following their family tradition, were partly transformed. This evolved perspectives are reflected on how majority ended up marrying their husbands who were not arranged by their parents and disregarding the importance of dowry. Clandestine and simple ways like courtship through text made the marriage possible. Even in the most common identifiable way of wearing hijab (veil) among Muslim women as observed by the researchers, is not being practiced by the informants. The parental arrangement and payment of *mahr* (dowry) are very important for Muslim to follow as these are prescribed by their culture and their religious belief.

Among the informants, only one (Maguindanaoan) has demonstrated a high degree of subservience to these practices. This may be attributed to the place where she had actually practiced the tradition. Her first marriage was arranged and the husband abided by the agreed dowry when she was still in Cotabato. But when she started to live in Intramuros, the simple customs like wearing hijab is not anymore dmeosntrated. Thus, the migration affects Muslim women’s perception towards their culture. As affirmed by the key informant, the migrant Muslim women tend to become more vulnerable to such influences as they are co-existing with the non-Muslim. However, there are still migrant Muslim women in Metro Manila who are still subservient to their Muslim traditions.

Noteworthy to discuss as well is the differences among ethnic tribe’s cultural practices in terms of parental arrangement and dowry. For Tausug tribe, the women may have the freedom to decide as long as the parents was informed on who will be their boyfriend; while Maguindanaoans and Maranoas particularly, cannot afford to have such kind of independence. This disparity is also observed on the practice of paying dowry. The Tausug tribe may totally disregard the practice while Maguindanaoan manifests flexibility depending on the financial capability of the husband. For Maranaos, it should be strictly followed as affirmed by the key informant. Non-conforming to these traditions often caused elopement, thus, expect to result into various marital conflicts.

Marital issues and problems for Muslim women are often associated to the laws and Islamic teachings on polygamy and divorce. Majority of the informants, both from Tausug and Maguindanaoan tribes, know how to assert their rights as the first spouse. Except for one (Maguindanaoan) informant who was deeply oriented with these practices while being aware about the prescribed rights of the Muslim wife thus, was can accept a polygamous husband.

But, with the revelation made by few informants about violence and infidelity, they still submit to their husband and to their cultural beliefs for fear of paying fine once they filed a divorce. This was contradicted by the key informant because returning of dowry should not be practice once the husband has ‘touched’ the woman. This practice and belief reflects misconceptions of the Islamic law and Quran injunctions or the differences of their ethnic orientation. Muslim women, in fact, has the right to divorce their husbands on the ground of physical defect of her husband, of ill treatment or legal cruelty and inability to fulfil marital obligations. Thus, migrant Muslim reflects resiliency while confronted by their traditional belief of submissiveness and conformity to their primary roles as a mother and wife which are important to Muslim’s traditional family ties.

While being challenged by the identified issues; an urbanized environment, jealousy and poverty disputes, and disparity of ethnic tribes with the interpretations and cultural practices, the migrant Muslim women are unanimous with acknowledging that their role in the society has always been in relation to her family—as a wife, as a mother, as a sister, as a daughter.

In conclusion, migrant Muslim women generally reflects resiliency amidst complex issues attached to her and regard Islamic and cultural practices related to family relations as an important component of their culture. Evidently, the kind of culture identifies Muslim women, thus much need to conform. Yet, because of low level of literacy, Muslim women failed to assert their rights which are in fact guaranteed by their laws and religion.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the interpretation, the Muslim woman has more of the burden to bear not by being a Muslim, but by being a woman. The lived experiences of the informants support the common observation that the Muslim women occupy the least position in the Muslim society. This situation, as revealed from the findings, rooted from their decision to migrate from rural setting to urban community which make them more vulnerable to be influenced by other cultural beliefs and traditions that would challenge their family ties. Moreover, the disparities of Muslim ethnic tribe’s culture and the misinterpretations of holy Quran and the Hadeeth disclose that Muslim women do not perform or practice exactly how the other Muslim women do. However, Muslim women generally demonstrates resiliency while being aware of their commonalities believing that all of these practices are covered by the Islam. Thus, the need to fully understand and clarify the deviations, as Islam truly promotes equality between men and women, the researchers present the following recommendations:

* Government Offices (National Commis for Muslim Affairs (NCMF), Department of Education/Commission on Higher Education (DepED/CHED), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Barangay Officials (Barangay 655)
  + That the ongoing conduct of Madrasah, an Arabic education and the teachings of Quran, must be widely promoted to non-Maranao tribes as well by the NMCF, CHED and DEpED. Education will contribute to Muslim women’s realization of their actual rights as prescribed by their religion. As there is a compelling need to make clarifications about the distinctions of various cultural practices of each ethnic tribes and what Islam prescribes, Muslim women could properly handle all possible marital issues based on the Islamic law and not from what is enjoyed by some members of their ethnic group.
  + Continuous conduct of conferences, symposia, and fora to be participated by the Muslim authorities like the *imam* (priest) and *ustadz* (scholars) in order to relearn the confusing interpretations of Islamic verses particularly on intriguing issues of polygamy and divorce. They may initiate to unify the disparities among the Muslim ethnic groups.
  + More particular with the Muslim women, a creation of an office or organization which will focus on combating the discrimination and advance continuous education.
  + A policy of integration in the curriculum of Filipino’s indigenous people (IPs) and Muslim that would bridge the gap with the dominant Filipino groups. This will tend to promote peace and harmony in a dynamic society.
  + Enactment of a law that would provide severe sanctions for recruiters, government personnel who are involved in the illegal processing of application for minor Muslim women.
  + Moreover, an appropriation law that will provided for a national consultative method to work for a creation of a representative national body for Muslim women. This will ideally include all Muslim women’s organisations and other Muslim women’s representative groups within the community.
  + Conduct of seminars, fora, conferences and livelihood programs for Muslim women that will empower each participant as they develop their potentials and skills that will opportune them to occupy key positions in the society.
  + A creation of guidance and counseling centers or support system that can be accessed by Muslim women who experience domestic violence. The center should be handled by group of professionals, dedicated social workers or volunteers who can at least comfort them.
  + Initiate a program and project that will enjoin Muslim and non-Muslim residents to promote peace, cooperation and harmony in the community.
* Media

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

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