



**“He Loved Me First so I Need to Love My Neighbors”:
Filipino Migrants’ Experiences of Resilience
against Racism and Discrimination in Finland**

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland is an under-investigated topic. The social exclusion of migrants and the need for a theological reflection opens up a different way of observing, interpreting, and understanding people’s experiences and their responses. In this theological inquiry, the researcher recruited five Filipino migrants who (1) currently live in Finland, (2) have lived in Finland for at least a year, and (3) have experienced racism and/or discrimination. Using systematic theological approach and hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews that explored the participants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in depth. The research findings produced rich descriptions about the participants’ experiences of resilience against their perceived racism and discrimination. Focusing on the research question, “<i>How do religious, spiritual, or theological factors support Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland?</i>”, five identified categories or thematic clusters came out of the data. The study reveals that religion or more carefully specific Christian spiritual formation practices like reliance on prayer, use of Scriptures, seeing the self in others, the practice of forgiveness, and the imitation of Christ support the Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland.</p>	
Keywords: <i>discrimination, Filipino migrants, Finland, hermeneutic phenomenology, racism, resilience, social exclusion, systematic theology</i>	
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“Oot valoni, oot voimani, oot ruokani ja juomani...

Niin etten enää elä minä, vaan Sinä minussa.”

(Vain Sä voit, Petri Kosonen & Undivided Hearts)

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

[T]here is not only one migrant, but many. Just as there are different types of societies, so there are different types of migrants, different degrees of mobility, and different forces of expulsion. But in the end, every society produces its migrants.

—Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant*

Just about anywhere in the world you go, you are bound to meet a Filipino migrant. He or she might be a fellow student in your university, a cook in your favorite restaurant, a musician in your recent hotel accommodation, a maid of your neighbor, an IT expert in your company, or a pastor in your church congregation. Whether in Africa, Eurasia, or as far as the Americas, you will surely bump into a Filipino—working hard for a living, trying to achieve a better life not just for himself or herself alone but also for the family he or she left back home.

Today, the Philippines has one of the largest diasporas in the world with an estimated 10 to 12 million Filipinos¹—about 10 percent of the population—scattered in over 200 countries and territories (Aspinwall 2020; International Organization for Migration [IOM] 2021). Of this number, 2.2 million are migrant workers domestically known as “Overseas Filipino Workers” or OFWs (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA] 2020). Prior to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, more than a million Filipinos left the country every year or nearly 3,000 daily to work abroad (International Labour Organization [ILO] n.d.; San Juan 2009). On a positive note, remittances contribute significantly to the lifting of the socioeconomic conditions of many households as well as the wider community. In 2019, personal and cash remittances hit a record high at US\$33.5 billion and US\$30.1 billion, respectively (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

¹ Determining an accurate number of Filipinos abroad is complicated because there are those who live and work in other countries without proper legal documentation, i.e., undocumented migrants or illegal immigrants. Overseas Filipinos (OF) is a more comprehensive term that captures migrant workers as well as those who have permanently migrated and gained citizenship in other countries (PSA 2020).

[BSP] 2020).² Given their role and sacrifice, OFWs are lauded as modern-day heroes (Encinas-Franco 2015).

In spite of the economic benefits that Filipino migrants bring to the country, many of them endure hardship and face various struggles in their host country. Just like any other foreign worker, the life of an OFW is not always a bed of roses. Among the persistent problems faced by migrants are inclusion and acceptance in their neighborhood, school, and workplace. As a migrant myself, having worked and lived in at least three countries in a span of thirteen years now, I have witnessed the plight of migrant workers and diaspora peoples. More so, I have experienced what it is like to be a member of a minority and to exist as an Other. In my encounters with Filipino migrants, I am inspired by their stories of determination, love, and perseverance amidst their challenges.

Filipinos are deeply religious people. The Philippines takes pride in being Asia's only Christian nation. Out of its 101 million population³, approximately 80 percent are Roman Catholics, while 5 percent belong to various Christian evangelical groups and other local sects (PSA 2017).⁴ Unlike many other nations where the Christian faith has diminished, the majority of Filipinos continue to practice their devotion with zeal. Among them are the OFWs who carry their faith with them and practice it wherever they go. Likewise, Filipinos are resilient people too. Countless natural calamities and disasters have hit the nation, ranging from storms and floods to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, yet Filipinos manage to pull themselves up despite the enormity of the challenges. A case in point is the resiliency shown by many Filipinos when the infamous Typhoon Haiyan⁵ struck the Philippines in 2013, killing over 6,000 individuals and affecting 16 million people (Hechanova 2018; Wilkinson 2015). Given this backdrop, I am

² Prior to the onset of COVID-19, OFW remittances contributed 9.3 percent of the Philippines' gross domestic product (GDP) and 7.8 percent of the gross national income (GNI), boosting household income and consumption in 2019 (Rivas 2020).

³ As May 1, 2020, the latest Philippine population is 109,035,343; however, no data on religious affiliation is available (PSA 2021).

⁴ The country also has a Muslim minority population, which accounts to 6 percent of the population. The Filipino Muslims are primarily located in southern Philippines, that is, parts of Mindanao, Palawan, and the Sulu archipelago—an area known as Bangsamoro or the Moro region. The other 9 percent of the population belongs to other religious affiliations (PSA 2021).

⁵ Known locally as Super Typhoon Yolanda, a category five tropical cyclone and one of the world's strongest ever recorded.

interested in knowing what role does Christian faith and practices of spirituality play in the resilience of Filipino migrants in Finland, specifically those related to social exclusion.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

The phenomenon of “human tidal wave” (Tira 2013) has caught the attention not only of academicians, researchers, policy-makers, and politicians but also of evangelical Christian leaders and theologians because of its challenges and opportunities. This trend of accelerated and expanding movement of peoples across the globe has profound implications not just in nation-building and social cohesion but also in thinking about God and human life. On the other hand, social exclusion, along with its other forms and manifestations, continues to impact people living on the fringes of society. Social exclusion in the form of racism and discrimination has never been more relevant, given the rise of hate crimes and attacks against racialized minorities in many Western countries (i.e., police brutality towards non-citizens and people of color as well as prejudice and violence directed at Asians and people of Asian descent). These realities have become more apparent, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Addo 2020; Human Rights Watch [HRW] 2020).

This research seeks to contribute to the understanding of the social exclusion of migrants, specifically in the field of theological ethics and philosophy of religion. As marginalized and disadvantaged groups—such as migrant workers—are persistently exposed to social exclusion and its concomitant issues and tensions, the need for a theological reflection opens up a different way of observing, interpreting, and understanding people’s experiences and their responses. The main thrust of this study is to explore the significance and applicability of Christian religious, spiritual, or theological beliefs and practices in dealing with the intersecting dynamics of migration, religion, and social exclusion.

This study intends to make three central contributions to the literature on social exclusion and theology. First, the study will fill a gap in the research literature. Despite the fact that several research articles have been published about Filipino migrants, there is no study about their experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in general and specifically in Finland. In this research, I hope to provide some insight into this underexposed issue by focusing on the Filipino migrants’ or OFWs’ experiences of racism and discrimination and their ability to cope with it. More so, I hope this study can initiate discussions and prompt

a need for research about the racial exclusion experiences of migrant minorities living in Finland.

Second, the study will explore the Christian theological view of migrants about their resilience against racism and discrimination. Though research suggests that religion and spirituality are significant factors in fostering resilience, there has been very scarce theological thought on the subject. By articulating the lived experience of Filipino migrants, this research gives voice to the hidden dimensions and insights from the Christian tradition. Having a deeper understanding of the resiliency of Filipino migrants in Finland can open up further discussion on the powerful role of religious belief and faith or practice of spirituality in overcoming social exclusion, especially those related to racial trauma. As Finland is traditionally characterized as a Christian nation⁶, I hope that the local Finnish population who will be able to read this study can find something valuable and make it a compelling reason to exhibit tolerance and, ultimately, practice compassion and understanding towards foreigners.

Finally, the study and its results might be a good source of inspiration for policy change benefitting migrant peoples in general and empowering them through fortifying the factors that help overcome their perceived racism and discrimination.⁷ Although this study will reflect explicitly on the case of Filipino migrants only, I believe that many of the findings of this research will also apply to other migrants in Finland. By heightening awareness and creating dialogue, I hope that this study can lead to a better understanding of migrant peoples' way of life and work towards respect for their practice of religion or spirituality. Lastly, I desire that many will gain a better understanding of the social exclusion of migrants, empathize with their problems and struggles, and understand the critical role of religion, spirituality, and theology in the lives of foreigners and migrant people.

⁶ About 3.9 million Finns out of 5.5 million belong to Christian congregations or groups. Approximately 69% of Finns are members of the Finnish majority church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko 2021).

⁷ The United Nations (UN) recognizes the importance of freedom of religion or belief in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 18, which states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his [her] religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his [her] religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." Of course, there are necessary restrictions in exercising this right as determined by each country (e.g., public safety, rights and freedoms of other people). However, there are cases where OFWs are not able to practice their religion or belief because of the poor treatment and abuse by employers. For example, some OFWs are forced to work on their day-offs and as such they are not able to attend church services and other religious gatherings.

1.2 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first aim is to understand the experiences of social exclusion, specifically racism and discrimination, of Filipino migrants in Finland. This will be done in a two-fold manner. First, with the help of literature review I will show how social exclusion is understood and what we know about racism and discrimination against Filipino migrants both in general and specifically in Finland. Secondly, through in-depth interviews with Filipino migrants in Finland I will present case studies for how the lived experiences of social exclusion may look like. The second aim is then to find out if Christian faith or practice of spirituality influence the Filipino migrants' resilience from social exclusion experiences in Finland. This will be done by asking the interviewees about how they respond to and deal with the experiences of social exclusion and if their faith plays any part in these responses. Through this academic endeavor, I hope to encourage the church community, civil society, and advocacy groups in Finland and elsewhere to have more conversations, engagements, and support in addressing the problem of racism and discrimination of migrants.

This study will seek to answer the overarching research question: *"How do religious, spiritual, or theological factors support Filipino migrants' experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland?"* This will be answered by the following two sub-questions: (1) *What kinds of experiences of racism and discrimination have Filipino migrants in Finland had?* and (2) *What role does Christian faith and practices of spirituality play in the resilience of Filipino migrants in Finland?* How Filipino migrants view and practice resilience, I believe, provides an encouraging and insightful investigation of how they look at issues of racism and discrimination along with its perpetrators. Simultaneously, it also opens up about migrant people's religious convictions and theological imaginations, as they relate their experiences of afflictions to their life aspirations.

In this research, the process of collecting information involved face-to-face, in-depth interviews with Filipino migrants currently living in Finland who have experienced racism and discrimination. The study's essence comprises the primary data collected through a semi-structured interview of five Filipino respondents. To obtain participants for the study, I did a passive recruitment strategy through the use of social media. Specifically, I made an online post of this study in several Facebook groups that are created, organized, and maintained by Filipino migrants in Finland. The five participants for the study were selected from all the interested individuals who signed up for the interview via the method of criterion sampling. After the

interviews were conducted, I employed thematic analysis to analyze the data gathered (i.e., interview transcripts). Thematic analysis is an independent qualitative descriptive approach and is mainly described as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79). From the identified themes, together with the significant statements of the participants, I embarked on a theological reflection using resources from social sciences, psychology, religion, and theology to understand and describe the Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination.

1.3 Previous Research and Terminology

Previous research and relevant literature on both the theories of social exclusion and resilience are dealt with in two different chapters, Chapters 2 and 3. There I further situate and explain the Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination. For a better understanding of this study, the following terms are defined in the context of this research. The upcoming chapters will provide a more detailed discussion of each term.

Discrimination. This refers to the act of making unjustified distinctions between people on the basis of group belonging, classification, or any other categories or characteristics. In this study, discrimination is defined as any unfair or unjust treatment of an individual, directly or indirectly.

Filipino migrant. This refers to people from the Philippines who currently work or live overseas regardless of legal status. In this study, the term Filipino migrant is operationally defined to include both permanent immigrants (i.e., Filipinos who are already Finnish citizens and permanent residents) and temporary migrant workers (i.e., OFWs).

Racism. This refers to the belief that some people are inferior to others on the basis of their race, nationality, or ethnicity. Such a way of thinking results in a contemptuous or hostile attitude, which may be subtle or overt. In this study, racism is operationally defined as any form of prejudice or hatred directed at an individual.

Resilience. This refers to the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, crisis, or trauma. In this study, resilience is defined as the ability of an individual to withstand, bounce back, or recover from difficult situations, that is, experiences of perceived racism and discrimination.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

First is the issue of common experience. Creswell and Poth (2018) note that in a phenomenological study, participants must be carefully picked to be individuals who have all encountered the phenomena under investigation in order to build a shared or common understanding. Given the broad scope of social exclusion it may be challenging to find persons who have the same experiences of perceived racism and discrimination. Likewise, as there are differences in the emotional pain and suffering of individuals, their response to their experiences also varies.

Second is the issue of limited number of participants. As a qualitative study, the focus of the research is on idiographic knowledge provided by selected individuals. Given the small sample size (i.e., five participants), the results cannot offer a generalizable answer or response so that all Filipino migrants in Finland are likely to behave in the same way when faced with issues of racism and discrimination. It is important to highlight that in phenomenology, the goal is not to provide generalizable results but to understand the meaning of a phenomenon. Nonetheless, the findings of this study might resonate with the experiences of other Filipino migrants who have similar circumstances or encounters.

Third is the issue of health and safety protocols. As of the beginning of 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic is still an ongoing global problem. Many people are currently infected through contact regardless of age and even vaccination status. In as much as face-to-face, in-depth interviews held in-person are the best way to convey sincerity, rapport, and confidentiality, this remains a challenge at the moment. As a preventative measure, data collection and actual interviews has been done entirely online through Åbo Akademi University's secure electronic platforms (i.e., Zoom for video conferencing and E-lomake for sharing personal demographic information) unless requested otherwise by the participant.

1.5 Organization of the Research Paper

The research paper is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which discusses the rationale, purpose, research question, definition of terms, scope and limitations, and the outline of the study.

The second chapter sets the background of the study. I will specifically discuss the following: the global process of migration; the interconnected concepts of social exclusion, racism, and discrimination; the racial exclusion of migrants; the historical development of Filipino migration; and the status of Filipino migrants in Finland.

The third chapter is the literature review that gives an overview of the concept of resilience and its related theories. This chapter also includes the description, definitions, and current studies and debates about the topic, with particular emphasis on religion and spirituality as a resilience factor.

The fourth chapter offers the research design framework and methods employed in the study. This chapter focuses on the research approach, data gathering strategy, and ethical considerations in the conduct of the study.

The fifth chapter presents the results of the interviews conducted. I will discuss the Filipino migrants' perceived racism and discrimination and its effect on their life in Finland. More importantly, I will highlight several themes that surfaced from the discussion of Filipino migrants' experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination.

Lastly, the sixth chapter closes with the discussion and analysis of findings. I will provide theological reflections on each of the identified themes. Afterward, I will close the study with a summary of the findings and a personal reflection.

CHAPTER 2

Background of the Study

This chapter presents the context of the study. In this section, I will present the intersecting complexities of migration and social exclusion and their impact on migrant peoples. I will also provide an overview of the Filipino labor migration and a discussion of the current status of Filipino migrants in Finland.

2.1 Migration as a Global Trend

We are witnessing one of the defining megatrends of our time—migration.⁸ Today's hyper-globalized world is characterized by large-scale human mobility where people are living outside of their place of origin due to various complex factors and issues. According to the *World Migration Report 2022*, there are currently 281 million international migrants and 740 million internal migrants in the world (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou 2021).⁹ These global figures combined sum up more than a billion scattered people—i.e., every seventh person in the world is a migrant—and this staggering number has been growing steadily every single day until COVID-19 disrupted it due to mobility lockdowns and travel restrictions worldwide. This massive scale of contemporary migration is the highest level of displacement on record, and no wonder many migration analysts and observers proclaim this era as “the age of migration” (de Haas, Castles, and Miller 2020).

⁸ The word migration, used in the context of spatial mobility of living creatures, is derived from the Latin word “*migrare*,” meaning “to move from one place to another” (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “migration,” accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/migration>). The dictionary definition of migrate is “to move from one country, place, or locality to another” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “migrate,” accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/migrate>).

⁹ An international migrant refers to “[a]ny person who is outside a State of which he or she is a citizen or national, or, in the case of a stateless person, his or her State of birth or habitual residence. The term includes migrants who intend to move permanently or temporarily, and those who move in a regular or documented manner as well as migrants in irregular situations” (Sironi, Bauloz, and Emmanuel 2019, 112). On the other hand, an internal migrant refers to “[a]ny person who is moving or has moved within a State for the purpose of establishing a new temporary or permanent residence or because of displacement” (Sironi, Bauloz, and Emmanuel 2019, 108).

In his ‘push-pull’ model of migration, Lee (1966) theorizes that people move because of a combination of “push” (e.g., unemployment, poverty, political instability, climate change) and “pull” (job or education opportunities, high wages, food security) factors. Others divide the migration dynamics into “economic” (e.g., labor supply and demand) and “non-economic” (e.g., flight from war zones, persecution, family reunification, and even adventure) forces (Martin, Abella, and Kuptsch 2006). Ultimately, migration results from the complex combination of macro-, meso- and micro- factors, the former operating at the larger group level and the latter operating at the individual level (Castelli 2018; see fig. 1).

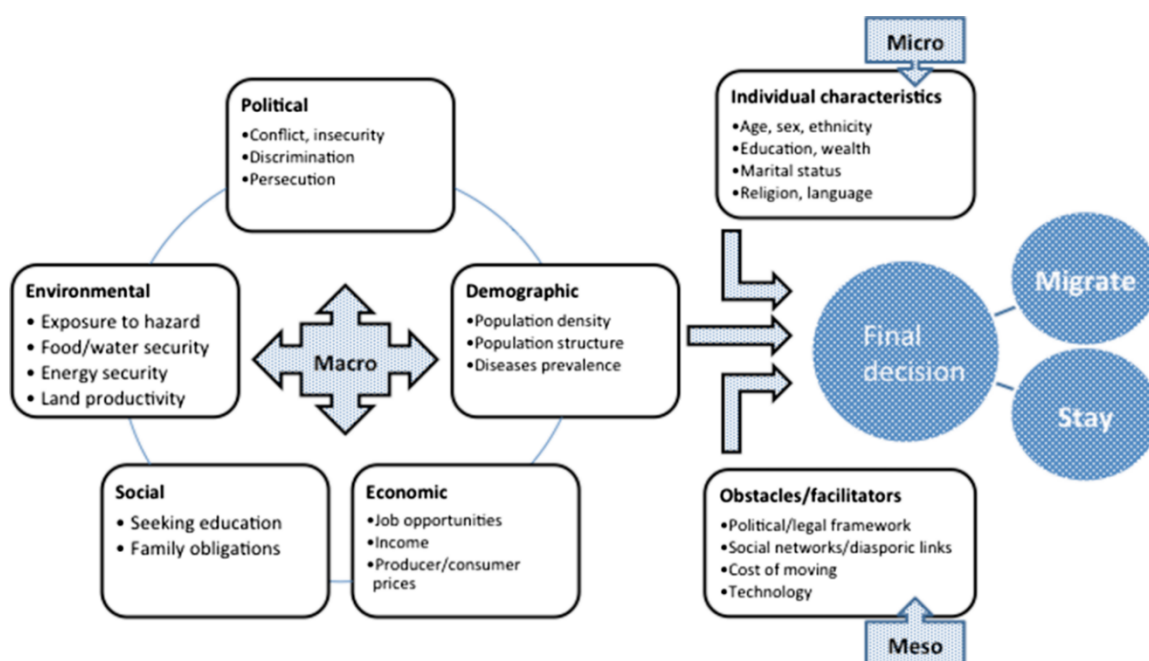


FIGURE 1. The complex drivers of migration.¹⁰

It is imperative to highlight that of those who crossed borders internationally in 2019, migrant workers account for nearly two-thirds, that is, about 169 million (ILO 2021; McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou 2021). This extraordinary flow of people is conventionally motivated by economic mobility and the need to support families at home, among other reasons (Castelli 2018; Démurger 2015). Nonetheless, the process of globalization and the growth of transnational economic migration engendered both opportunities and heartaches. There is no

¹⁰ Source: Castelli (2018, 3).

question that the massive worldwide movement of people has been transforming cultural, economic, political, social, and religious landscapes of many countries and nations. Further to this, minorities, especially those with a migrant background, experience social exclusion in a variety of ways, such as discrimination, injustice, marginalization, prejudice, and racism, to name a few.

2.2 Social Exclusion, Racism, and Discrimination

Social exclusion is a term that was established in the western social sciences in the early 1990s to broaden the focus beyond poverty by highlighting the individual-society relationship (Fangen 2010; Verma 2011).¹¹ Over the last few decades, the concept of social exclusion has become more prominent in discussions across many disciplines. Today, social exclusion is used to describe a broad variety of social, political, and economic issues. Despite its overlapping categories and dimensions in many contexts and disciplines, scholars agree that social exclusion is a multidimensional, dynamic, and relational concept (Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud 2002; Levitas et al. 2007; Mathieson et al. 2008; Piachaud et al. 2009; Room 1995; Room et al. 1992).

Due to its broad nature and varying meanings, social exclusion is described as a complex and multidimensional process. This perspective is observed by Levitas and her colleagues:

[Social exclusion] involves the lack of or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole. (Levitas et al. 2007, 9)

Social exclusion can best be understood as a process through which people's lives are influenced by various disadvantages and inequalities both at the vertical and horizontal social levels. As such, social exclusion provides a comprehensive framework for examining the numerous dimensions of inequality affecting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of the society.

¹¹ The term social exclusion originated in the 1970s when René Lenoir, a French politician, points to '*les exclus*' or "the excluded" population (Sen 2000; Silver 1994). This group of citizens refers to those who were not provided for by the state social insurance, namely "the mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, drug addicts, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and other 'social misfits' (Silver 1994, 532).

Given the extensive nature of social exclusion, a holistic understanding of the concept requires an analysis of the interrelationships between the social, economic, political, and even the religious dimensions of exclusion. In this study, I focus on the relational perspective of social exclusion, which is the rupture of relationships between a group of people and the wider society.¹² Silver captures this view in the following definition:

Social exclusion is ... a dynamic process of progressive multidimensional rupturing of the 'social bond' at the individual and collective levels. By social bond, I mean the social relations, institutions, and imagined identities of belonging constituting social cohesion, integration, or solidarity. (Silver 2007, 1)

This rupturing of the social bond is best exemplified when people cross borders, especially in a rapid and unprecedented number.

Consequently, scholars recognize that the idea of social exclusion has conceptual connections with the notion of race and its oppressive effects—racism and discrimination (Alemanji 2016; Bobo and Fox 2003; Wade 2015). Broadly speaking, race is an ethnoracial distinction of people. According to Alemanji (2016, 7), “Race is a socially constructed concept born from the activities of othering based on skin color, in particular, as well as other social factors like religion, gender and sexuality.” Corollary to the concept of race is racism, “a set of institutional conditions of group inequality and an ideology of racial domination, in which the latter is characterized by a set of beliefs holding that the subordinate group is biologically or culturally inferior to the dominant racial group” (Bobo and Fox 2003, 319). For Alemanji (2016, 16), racism is “discrimination or prejudice based on difference, starting from skin color and reaching out to other variables like gender, sexuality, religion etc., and exercised through the use of power.” Thus, racism is a broad construct reflecting the processes, norms, ideologies, and behaviors that perpetuate racial inequality. The hierarchical and exclusionary perspectives as they apply to the context of race highlight the ideas of relational deprivation, stigmatization, and inequality. No wonder racism is regarded as a “prominent form of social exclusion” (Hyman 2009, 4). Clearly, the concept of social exclusion calls attention to the social psychological process by which groups of people are perceived as alien, stranger, or Other.

On the other hand, discrimination is a component of racism that centers on behaviors (Gee et al. 2009). According to Smith, Mackie, and Claypool (2015, 141), discrimination is “the

¹² Due to the limited time and scope of this research, I do not discuss in further detail the other discourses on social exclusion.

positive or negative behavior directed toward a social group and its members.” Regarding attitudes, positive discrimination is giving higher regard or preferential treatment to a group of people over another because they possess certain characteristics. Its opposite, negative discrimination, is giving lower regard or poor treatment. Simply put, discrimination is treating a person less favorably based on their personal characteristic or background. Using the perspective of social exclusion, discrimination is the unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on one or many different social attributes or elements of social identity (Landman 2006, 19). Such treatment pertains to several dimensions, such as age, race, ethnicity, gender, or religion. In this study, I will focus on the issue of racial discrimination, which is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups on the basis of their race or ethnicity. As a negative feeling held by someone against a racialized person or group, racial discrimination expresses itself in various ways such as favoritism, stereotyping, or even hostility. Using the lens of racism, Kendi (2019) stresses that any discrimination that creates inequity is racist.

2.3 Racial Exclusion of Migrants

Human beings moving in search of a better life is not a new phenomenon. Nonetheless, the year 2015 shocked the world when multitudes of people overseas—escaping war and poverty—migrated towards Europe. The mass exodus of refugees triggered a crisis as the European Union (EU) and its member states struggled to handle the situation. Since then, the concepts of migration and social exclusion and their interconnections have become ever more central to policy and academic discourse not just in Europe but in many parts of the world.

In today’s globalized world coupled with migration, cross-border interactions not only open up opportunities for growth and inclusion but, on the other hand, also generate the social exclusion of migrants. Social exclusion is an important lens in comprehending the various disadvantages and disparities that many groups, especially migrants and ethnic minorities, confront in modern society. As the trend of accelerated and expanding movement of peoples across the globe continues, there will be more serious implications of social exclusion, especially in the areas of citizenship, identity, and well-being. Sadly, the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity creates discrimination that often hits hard on those who are already experiencing marginalization—the minority populations.

There is a general consensus, both theoretical and empirical, among migration scholars and racial and minority study theorists that supports migrants' disadvantage in the form of social exclusion (Marinucci et al. 2022; Marinucci et al. 2021; Marinucci and Riva 2021a, 2021b; Riva and Eck 2016; Riva et al. 2016). For most migrants, crossing the border is going into a field of struggle "that take shape around the ever more unstable line between the 'inside' and 'outside,' between inclusion and exclusion" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 13). One of the apparent consequences of migration is the rise in negative forms of contact between foreigners and locals because of religious, ethnic, and cultural differences. According to Khan, Combaz, and Fraser (2015, 25), "'Host'-immigrant tensions can be increased by perceptions of religious, ethnic or cultural 'otherness' that can sharpen social divisions and potentially contribute to conflict." In a paper published on the Global Migration Policy Associates website, it describes the grim condition experienced by migrants:

Scapegoating of migrants and xenophobic violence against foreigners are manifestly on the rise across the [European] region—and throughout the world. This has been expressed in murders and lynchings of migrants in some countries, in generalized expressions of anti-foreigner sentiment, in hostile political discourse, and in calls for exclusion of migrants from access to labour markets and social protection benefits. Nonetheless, the evident increase in xenophobic violence has been understated or ignored in some official assessments. (Taran 2012, 4)

Even in egalitarian societies such as in the Nordics, foreigners suffer racial discrimination and prejudice. Finland, ranked as the world's happiest country for five consecutive years [2018–2022] (Helliwell et al. 2022), is not an exemption (Moore 2021). As a relatively new immigration country, there are negative attitudes toward migrants in general in Finnish society (Salonen and Villa 2006). Even though Gorodzeisky and Semyonov (2016) found that racial prejudice against immigrants is lower in Finland and other Nordic countries compared with many other European countries, many forms of racism and discrimination in Finland exist (Mannila, Castaneda, and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2012; Väänänen et al. 2009). This is most especially true for people of color or migrants who have African descent. In fact, the second large-scale EU-wide survey on migrants and minorities (EU-MIDIS II) confirms this in its findings. The survey highlights the following experiences by Black people: "[r]acist harassment and violence are common occurrences," "[p]olice stops are often experienced as racial profiling," "[r]acial discrimination is a reality in all areas of life," "[l]abour market participation [is] not a level playing field," and "[s]kin colour affects access to adequate housing" (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA] 2018, 9–12).

In that same study, Finland is reported as the most racist country based on perceived racial discrimination and harassment speech and gestures (FRA 2018; Kataja 2020; Yle News 2018). A more recent report by the Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu [Non-Discrimination Ombudsman] (2020) reinforces the message of previous studies: “[R]acist discrimination and harassment occur especially in public urban spaces, at work or when applying for work, and in education. It also takes place in public services, such as social and health care services.” Indeed, racism, prejudice, and discrimination are pervasive realities in Finland, and many minority people experience them, especially migrants.

2.4 Filipino Labor Migration

At the beginning of this millennium, the Filipino migrant workers have become one of the biggest diasporic communities in the whole world (San Juan 2001). Most Filipinos in diaspora are either migrant workers while others have chosen to live permanently in foreign countries. According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO 2017), the Philippine government’s agency that registers permanent migrants, there are more than 10 million registered Filipinos outside the country—or about 10 percent of the population—either working and/or living abroad in 2013.¹³ Many of the Filipino migrants started as temporary migrant workers popularly called OFWs or “Overseas Filipino Workers.” OFWs are Filipino workers that often remain citizens of their home country but are working for a series of years within another nation and often sending money back to the Philippines to support their family or others. They are expected to return permanently either upon the expiration of a work contract abroad or upon retirement. Most OFWs find employment as service or production workers as well as other elementary occupations (see Appendix 1).¹⁴

The Filipino labor migration is primarily driven by poverty and the need to find better opportunities for livelihood and is further promoted by the government’s export-oriented policies (van der Ham et al. 2014). The institutionalization of the OFWs began in the 1970s when the oil industry boom in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, due to its severe

¹³ The latest stock estimate published by the CFO was as of December 2013. According to the CFO website, CFO stopped releasing updates on the “Stock Estimate of Filipinos Overseas” until the proposed framework for counting overseas Filipinos is approved by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Board (<https://cfo.gov.ph/yearly-stock-estimation-of-overseas-filipinos/>).

¹⁴ An infographic about the OFWs’ number, professions, destinations, and remittances.

labor shortages, promoted the need for foreign workers (Seemann and Fischer 2015). Consequently, the Philippine government saw it as a way to combat unemployment and thus stimulated the “warm body export” of Filipinos (San Juan 2011, 5). While this policy was aimed to be of temporary nature, labor migration has been increasing steadily since then. High unemployment and poor living standards combined with a government policy of emigration encouraged thousands of Filipinos to seek employment overseas. By the 1980s, the OFWs were in demand beyond the Middle East and were deployed to most continents. Philippine migration further flourished with the exodus of Filipino women to work as maids or household helpers in countries such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan (Bautista 2002). San Juan (2011, 5) describes the internal challenges that plagued the Philippines in recent decades: “accelerated impoverishment... severe chronic unemployment, rising cost of living, inflation, and huge cutbacks in social services.”

The number of OFWs leaving the Philippines each year has reached astonishing proportions over the last two decades at least. In 2000, nearly 850,000 Filipinos left the country to work abroad. In 2015, that number has more than doubled to almost 1.8 million in annual deployments all over the world (Pacete 2016). Tira and Wan (2014, 130) contend that the Filipino migration in massive numbers was “pushed out by financial crisis and increasing political instability in the Philippines and pulled by promising jobs in other countries.” According to the 2013 stock estimate of overseas Filipinos, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are the top three countries of destination of Filipino migrants. Other countries in the top 10 are Malaysia (4th), Canada (5th), Australia (6th), Italy (7th), the United Kingdom (8th), Qatar (9th), and Singapore (10th) (CFO n.d.). According to the Philippine government estimates in 2015, the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and Sweden are the top five destinations for OFWs (CFO 2017). However, the number of OFWs declined tremendously from 2.2 million in 2019 to 1.8 million in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic (PSA 2020; Yraola 2022).

On the other hand, Filipinos migrate not just in search of a job but eventually, they find their life partners. A substantial share of Filipinos overseas is accounted by “marriage migrants,” that is, Filipinos who have married foreign nationals in order to acquire permanent residency status in their adopted countries. The CFO reported around 400,000 Filipinos are under this category or approximately 22 percent of the 1.9 million. Between 2005 to 2015, Filipinos are most likely to marry American, Japanese, and Australian citizens. Other Asian countries with

significant number of Filipinos married to foreign spouses are South Korea and Taiwan. Among the Western world, there are significant marriage migrants in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, and Sweden respectively (CFO 2017). Interestingly, nine out of ten Filipino marriage migrants are women, making it a highly feminized phenomenon.

A major issue faced by contemporary OFWs is the unequal treatment they receive from employers of host countries. The OFWs often face issues of citizenship and human rights abuses due to their precarious nature in their host countries. OFWs have been characterized in some regions as “modern-day slaves” due to the harsh conditions, taking of passports, limiting movement, etc. as conducted in some regions by some employers in order to keep control of the OFW population. Regardless of these challenges, there are many positive impacts of the Filipino diaspora and they are well documented in many reports and studies. But among these positive impacts, perhaps the most important is the remittances that the OFWs send back to their families. In 2019, OFW remittances hit a record high of US\$33.5 billion (Rivas 2020). These remittances have kept the Philippine economy afloat even during the economic crises of 1997 and 2007-2008. In view of this, the OFWs have become the country’s lifeline. At the micro level, these remittances provided financial security to families and improved their economic status. This economic significance of overseas employment is one reason the Philippine government continues to support its human power export policy and even branded the OFWs with the moniker “*Bagong Bayani*” or “New Heroes” (Encinas-Franco 2015). To honor the Filipinos working overseas, every year on June 7, the Philippines marks “Filipino Migrants Day” as a way of celebrating the signing into law of Republic Act 8042 or the Migrant Workers Act of 1995.

Besides financial remittances, the Filipino diaspora has become an important catalyst for “social remittances.” These are knowledge and ideas gained from overseas that contribute to the betterment of the socio-economic conditions of Filipinos in the homeland and well-being of communities involved. Many Filipinos through their organizations and affiliations and even personally served their home communities through various projects such as medical and dental missions, especially to remote towns and villages. Overseas Filipinos have also been a great source of resource, either monetary or in-kind donations, during times of calamities like typhoons, floods, and earthquakes.

The scattering of millions of Filipinos globally has its pros as well as its cons. Migration has affected the country's economic, social, intellectual, and moral structures. While the economic benefits of the Filipino diaspora are undeniably true, its social costs are also looming behind. According to missiologist Michael Pocock:

Migration solves the problems of many who immigrate to find safer conditions and meaningful employment, and it serves the needs of the countries to which they move. But the increased *rate* of migration also overwhelms and frightens many who have to deal with the consequences. (Pocock 2015, "Introduction 1", para. 7)

Many critics identified the negative effects of migration and top on the list is the "brain drain" phenomenon. According to a government report, almost half of Filipino migrants between 2005 to 2015 are college/university graduates. Prior to migration, 39 percent of Filipino migrants were professionals or technical workers (CFO 2017). The Philippines is indeed at the suffering as many educated and highly-skilled Filipinos migrate to look for better opportunities especially in developed countries. Their technical expertise which was supposed to be applied domestically is now being enjoyed by many host countries.

The second obvious impact of the Filipino diaspora concerns the families left behind in the Philippines. The CFO (2017) reports that between 2005 to 2015, 43 percent of the Filipino migrants are married prior to departure. Another interesting point to highlight is that the majority of migrant Filipino workers are women (i.e., 75% female and 25% male) (CFO 2017). In Asia, the Philippines is the leading female migrant-sending countries along with Indonesia. Many of these women work as domestic helpers, nurses, caregivers, and entertainers. With these data, migration undeniably has affected the husband-wife and parent-child relationships. "Family is, by far, the most important, the most cherished, and the most durable institution in Philippine society" (Asis 1994, 16). Filipino families are traditionally highly nuclear very closely knitted. With the migration of family members, especially of husbands and/or wives, socio-psychological conditions have changed and have greatly affected family dynamics and relationships. As one or both parents migrate for work, they leave their children vulnerable emotionally and psychologically. There are studies that relate youth delinquency, school dropout, drug use, teen pregnancy, among others, to families with parents who are OFWs because of displacement, disruptions, and changes in caregiving arrangements (Reyes 2008). With the unceasing trend of migration, many Filipino families are significantly affected and threatened as relationships are strained and become dysfunctional.

The phenomenal growth of the Philippine labor migration has flourished through the years and its numbers show no sign of stopping. In the case of the millions of OFWs, when they move, they do so over varying distances, for different periods of time, and for different reasons. Indeed, migration is a very “complex transformative global process” (Bautista 2002) that has its positive impact and negative impact, advantages and disadvantages. It is undeniable that the exodus of Filipinos out of the country has become a source of strength both for the economy and the society however it has also resulted in losses that can have long-term developmental implications. As the OFW phenomenon continues to expand, social and economic issues related to migrant workers and their families at home and abroad will surely get bigger and broader.

2.5 The Status of Filipino Migrants in Finland

Many think that Finland is largely a culturally homogeneous nation and mono-ethnic society, but this is erroneous given the historic presence of several cultural and ethnic minorities within its boundaries (Keskinen 2019; Keskinen, Skaptadóttir, and Toivanen 2019). In terms of migration, Finland was relatively isolated from international migrants. However, around the end of the 1980s, the number of foreigners began to rise (Raento and Husso 2001). Through the years, its population is becoming more and more diverse as a result of people migrating to the Nordic region. As of the latest official data, Finland’s population stands at 5,548,241 at the end of December 2021. Out of this number, 469,633 or about 8.5 percent of the population are persons with foreign background (Statistics Finland 2021a).

Among the migrant population that live and work in Finland today came from the Philippines. Historically, European countries have not been the main destinations for Filipino migrant workers in general (Battistella and Asis 2014). However, Finland is becoming one of the popular options for Filipino migrants due to better welfare and living conditions. In recent years, Filipino migration to Finland has grown tremendously—almost ten times since 1990 (Statistics Finland 2021b; see fig. 2). According to the Finnish population agency, there are 6,201 Filipino migrants currently living in Finland at the beginning of 2021. In terms of gender, there are 2,026 men and 4,175 women, making it a female-dominated migrant group (Statistics Finland 2021c; see fig. 3). The great majority of Filipino migrants (about 57 percent) are located

in the main cities of Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa. Some are located in other larger cities such as Turku, Tampere, and Oulu, while the remaining are scattered in many other rural areas.

The first Filipinos came to Finland in the early 1970s, primarily by marriage (Zurbano-Ruutu 2007). Since then, the Filipino migrant population has grown over the last 50 years as a result of labor migration. According to Filippiinit-seura ry [Finnish-Philippine Society] (2021), “When Finnish policy changed more in favor of work-related immigration after the amendments to the Aliens Act in 2004, more Filipinos have started to come here with a work permit, and at the same time more men have started to come here [more] than before.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, very few Filipinos have found work in the so-called “white-collar” sector. The inability to obtain employment that matches one’s education and training is hampered by a lack of mastery of the Finnish language (Zurbano-Ruutu 2007). Since 2007, both Finnish and Filipino recruitment companies have worked together to supply job positions in high-demand sectors such as health care and hospitality. Aside from these, direct hiring of domestic helpers and cleaners has been prevalent, especially among Filipino business owners and Finnish families who resided before in the Philippines (Saksela-Bergholm 2019).

Between 2015-2018, the Philippines is one of the six largest nationalities that received positive decisions for resident permits on the grounds of employment. The majority of applicants who received such approval from Maahanmuuttovirasto [Finnish Immigration Service] are employed as manual laborers in agriculture, catering, construction, cleaning, and transport (Ministry of the Interior 2019). However, Filipino migrants outperform several other migrant groups in terms of employment due to several advantages, such as better educational qualification, good English proficiency, and strong networks because of Finnish relatives and friends who assist them with employment searches (Filippiinit-seura ry 2021). In fact, hundreds of Filipino nurses have migrated to this Nordic country in recent years as the need for health care workers arise. Most of them work as nursing assistants or practical nurses in Finnish health care institutions like hospitals, clinics, and elderly care facilities (Vartiainen 2019).

¹⁵ Translated from the original: “Kun Suomen politiikka muuttui v. 2004 ulkomaalaislain muutosten jälkeen enemmän työperäistä maahanmuuttoa suosivaksi, tänne on alkanut tulla runsaammin filippiiniläisiä myös työluvalla, ja samalla on myös alkanut tulla enemmän miehiä kuin ennen.”

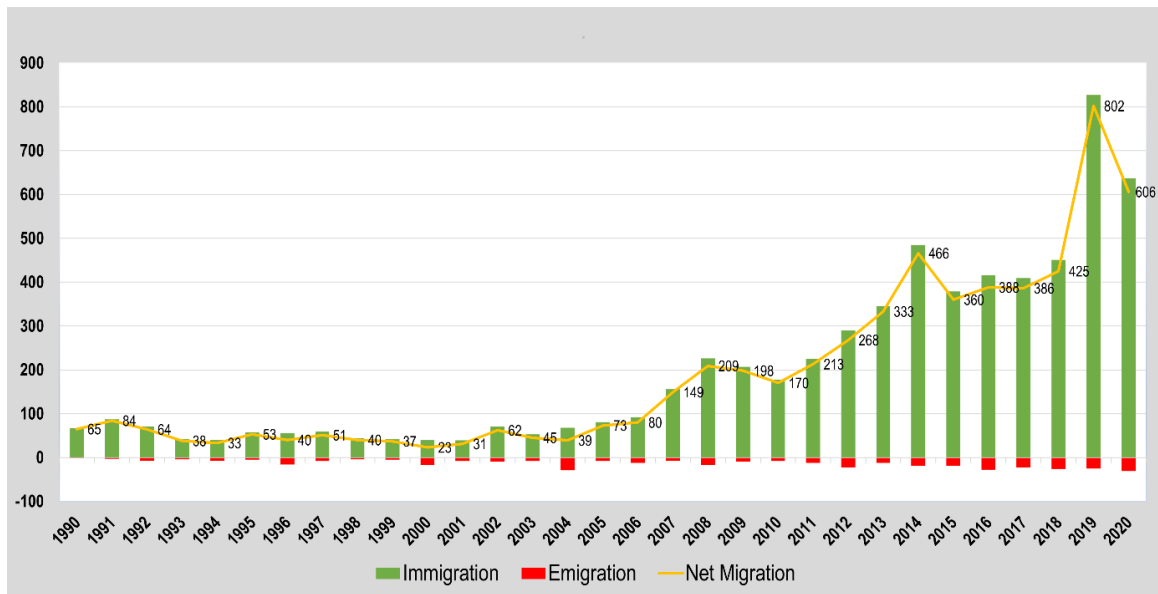


FIGURE 2. Filipino migration in Finland, 1990-2020.¹⁶

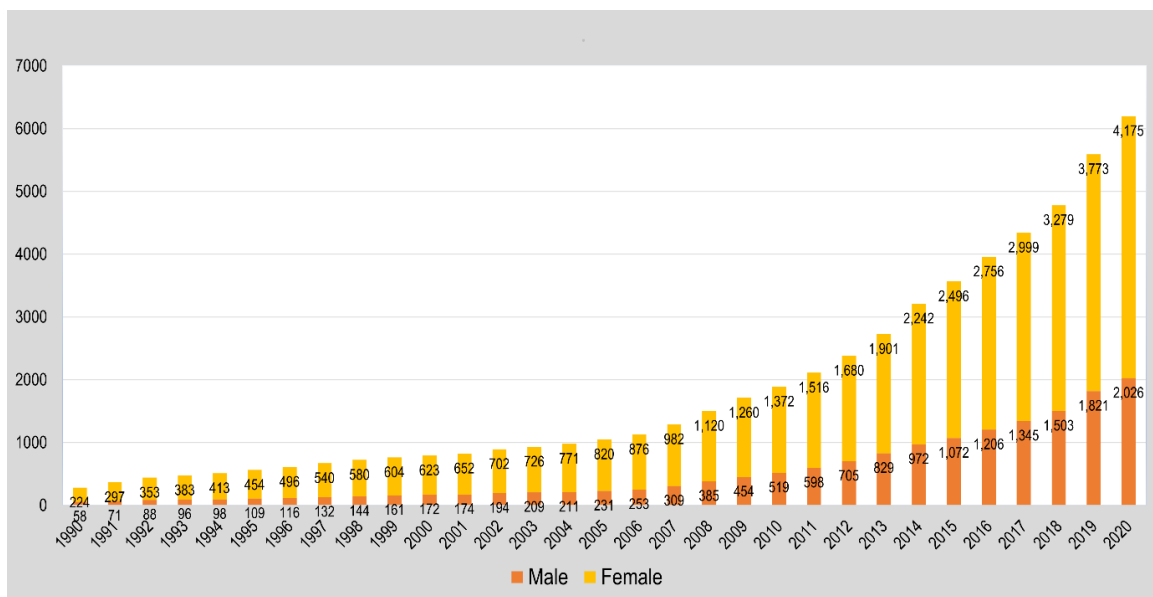


FIGURE 3. Filipinos in Finland, 1990-2020.¹⁷

Many labor migrants become victims of abuse, prejudice, distrust, and misunderstanding simply because they are marked as culturally different or an outsider. This is also the case for many Filipino migrants. A major issue faced by OFWs is the unequal treatment they receive from employers of host countries. The OFWs often face issues of exclusion and

¹⁶ Source: Statistics Finland (2021b).

¹⁷ This data refers to Filipinos who were born in the Philippines. Source: Statistics Finland (2021c).

injustice due to their precarious nature in their host countries. However, even as professionals, many OFWs struggle with the lack of recognition of their education and skills. San Juan argues this sad plight of the OFWs:

Most OFWs today ... are service workers: household or domestic helpers, maids or cleaners in commercial establishments, cooks, waiters, bartenders, caregivers and caretakers. Although most are professionals with college degrees, teachers, midwives, social workers, etc., they are generally underpaid by the standards of their host countries. ... OFWs work in the most adverse conditions, with no or limited labour protection and social services otherwise accorded to nationals. Whether legal or undocumented, OFWs experience racism, discrimination, xenophobic exclusion, and criminalisation; many are brutalised in isolated households and in the “entertainment” industry. They are deprived of food and humane lodging, harassed, beaten, raped, and killed. (San Juan 2011, 12)

In her paper “Filipinos in Finland,” Philippine Honorary Consul in Helsinki Teresita Zurbano-Ruutu narrates her first-hand experience of helping Filipino migrant women:

[In 1995, after the mail-order bride issue was exposed in Finland] many Filipino women complained of being harassed at work and in public places: some were asked [for] how much they were bought; a child was asked by a schoolmate the same question about her mother; and while crossing the street, a Finnish woman called behind a Filipino woman’s back, “Whore! Go back to your country! You are using up our tax money!”

I accidentally became involved when over a period of time, a dozen Filipino women, then married and living with Finnish men, sought me for advice and moral support. It took some time before I recognised a pattern in their situations: indifferent husbands who were quick-tempered and violent, especially when drunk. One man lay on his bed, not caring how his equally drunk friends tried to rape and beat his wife. The wives were discouraged from socialising with other Filipinos or with anyone outside their circle of friends. The men were strict with money. One Filipina was instructed to jump off the tram when she spots the ticket inspector coming. Such benefits as the maternity, homecare, and child allowances were kept by their husbands. They were misled into signing documents and were often threatened to be sent back to the Philippines when they started to be too inquisitive. The men kept their wives’ passports and deliberately neglected them until their visas expired. When an arranged marriage ends up in divorce, the mediator usually comes in again to arrange a new match for the same fee. Rather than go home in shame and more broke than ever, a woman can be a bride to several men until she finds the most satisfied man who will keep her. (Zurbano-Ruutu 2007, 337)

In terms of employment, OFWs also suffer from prejudice and discrimination. Filipinos are known to be highly-skilled workers. However, many Filipino migrants settle to work in low-skilled occupations in order to stay in Finland and be able to support families back home. For many Filipino families, dependence on remittances has become their primary source of income because of un- or underemployment (Saksela-Bergholm 2019). A case in point is the situation of Filipino health care workers. Sadly, many Filipino nurses are given low salaries and less benefits despite having completed four-year university education in nursing or holding more advanced qualifications in the Philippines. In a report by Yle News (2019), Vartiainen shares her research findings that Filipino nurses’ qualifications are downgraded when they arrive in

Finland. According to her, “The pay for care assistants is low and will not meet salary requirements that would allow them to bring their spouse or children to Finland.” Moreover, healthcare trade unions Tehy and Super have raised concerns that Filipino nurses in Finland are employed at service homes for the elderly below their expertise level for years. They are occasionally underpaid in comparison to their Finnish colleagues.

2.6 Chapter Summary

Migration has been an increasingly global phenomenon in the past decade. As more and more people move internationally in search of a better life, their places of destination are impacted in many ways. The overwhelming influx of migrants and its complex dimensions create stress that puts pressure on resources and many other aspects of living. As levels of migration arise, antipathy towards migrants has also increased. One of the problems faced by migrant people is social exclusion, expressed in the form of racism and discrimination. Among the many people who experience social exclusion are Filipino migrants. In many parts of the world, millions of Filipinos are scattered as OFWs or overseas Filipino workers. Unfortunately, many Filipino migrants experience racial exclusion. In recent years, Filipinos have started migrating to Finland due to better welfare and living conditions. However, their migration experience is hampered by problems of racism and discrimination. Understanding this background information on the complexities of migration and social exclusion will play an important role in investigating the Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in the following chapters of this study.

CHAPTER 3

Understanding Resilience

This chapter provides a brief literature review of resilience. This review builds on the writings of George Bonanno, Norman Garmezy, Ann Masten, and Michael Rutter among others who have developed the concept of resilience within the psychological and psychiatric sciences. With the help of authors Clément Métais and his colleagues from the field of psychology and their study on how human resilience is theorized within the human sciences, I will present the meaning of resilience and how it is generally conceptualized. Here I also introduce a list of definitions from a variety of different disciplinary approaches.

In the next section I will introduce three views on resilience based on the studies done in the fields of psychology and religion. I will give a historic development of resilience studies and the different schools within the field. After this, I shift to the focus of this study which is the experience of migrant people and how the concept of resilience might pertain to their lives. I will specifically bring forth the literature based on empirical studies made by Garmezy and Rutter who studied stress and coping within the context of child development as well as Kenneth Pargament who posited on religious coping theory in the field of psychology, health, and religion to highlight the different factors that have been found to influence the resilience of migrant people. Among these is found the question of faith and spirituality. I thus end this chapter by presenting the studies that discuss how religion and spirituality affect resilience.

3.1 Defining Resilience

‘Resilience,’ together with its derivatives, comes from the Latin words *resilire* or *resilio*, which means “to leap back” or “bounce” (Alexander 2013; Mohaupt 2009; Windle 2011).¹⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers two literal applications in its definition of the word resilience. The first refers to it as “[t]he action or an act of rebounding or springing back.” The second describes it

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion on the history of resilience, see: Alexander (2013).

as “the power of resuming an original shape or position after compression, bending, etc.”¹⁹ Within the resilience literature, scholars highlight its roots in the fields of physics, mathematics, and engineering and is understood as the ability of a system or structure to return to equilibrium or undergo stress without being broken by way of stability, endurance, elasticity, or resistance (Bodin and Wiman 2004; Norris et al. 2008; Reid and Botterill 2013). In this case, resilience pertains to a material’s quality to go back to its original form or withstand deformation, such as in metals (e.g., iron) or infrastructures (e.g., roads and bridges). When applied in the context of human beings, the term is used to describe generally the capacity of people or individuals to adapt, cope, recover, or thrive in the face of challenges, setbacks, stress, or any difficult circumstances (Bonanno 2004; Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker 2000; Mukherjee and Kumar 2017). In this study, the latter perspective on resilience—human resilience—is the focus.

Historically, the term resilience was first adopted in the field of ecology in the 1970s and since then has “infiltrated” and “colonized” other disciplines and fields of study (Alexander 2013; Walker and Cooper 2011). However, the majority of the resilience literature claims that the concept originated in the field of psychology and psychiatry way back in the 1940s (Bartley 2006; Howard, Dryden, and Johnson 1999; Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker 2000; Manyena 2006). Still, there are other scholars who argue for a multidisciplinary genealogy of resilience and claim that there are many branches that helped to develop the concept of resilience through the years (Bourbeau 2018a; 2018b). Regardless of its origins, studies on resilience have grown tremendously and have extended into many fields of academic inquiry. Table 1 presents samples of definitions of resilience from different disciplines. Given the plethora of literatures, usages, and interpretations on resilience, understanding the concept has led to confusion (Alexander 2013). On the other hand, some believe that the presence of different definitions of the term reveals an evolving understanding of a complex phenomenon (Southwick et al. 2014).

¹⁹ Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online, s.v. “resilience,” Oxford University Press, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.vasa.abo.fi/view/Entry/163619?redirectedFrom=resilience&>.

TABLE 1. Varying definitions of resilience across disciplines

Discipline	Definition of Resilience
Anthropology	“[T]he process of harnessing biological, psychosocial, structural and cultural resources to sustain wellbeing.” (Panter-Brick and Leckman 2013, 335)
Child Development	“[T]he capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development.” (Masten 2014a, 6; 2014b, 10)
Ecology	“[T]he ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change.” (Adger 2000, 347)
Politics	“[T]he process of patterned adjustments adopted in the face of endogenous or exogenous shocks, to maintain, to marginally modify, or to transform a referent object.” (Bourbeau 2018b, 3; 13–14)
Psychiatry	“[A]n interactive phenomenon that is inferred from findings indicating that some individuals have a relatively good outcome despite having experienced serious stresses or adversities – their outcome being better than that of other individuals who suffered the same experiences.” (Rutter 2013, 474)
Psychology	“The ability of adults in otherwise normal circumstances who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disruptive event such as the death of a close relation or a violent or life-threatening situation to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning, as well as the capacity for generative experiences and positive emotions.” (Bonanno 2004, 20–21)
Social Work	“The multilevel processes that systems engage in to obtain better-than-expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity.” (van Breda 2018, 4)
Theology & Spirituality	“[A] motivational force present within all human beings that prompts one to seek wisdom, fulfillment, and selflessness and be in harmony with inner spiritual power.” (Renaud 2021)

Although there are many varied and contested definitions of resilience today across and within academic disciplines and fields of research (i.e., physical, psychological, social, and technical), scholars and researchers share an instinctive understanding that it is a dynamic

process of human adaptation in the face of adversity (Fletcher and Sarkar 2013; Vella and Pai 2019). Within resilience research, it is said that resilience as a concept is only critically possible with the presence of three core elements (Windle 2011). First, an exposure to an adverse situation or difficult experience as the antecedent (e.g., disasters, illness, poverty, violence, war, and other similar traumatic or negative life events). Second, the utilization of resources to cope amidst adversity (e.g., personal, social, or community resources). Third, a positive adaptation or good outcome as the consequence (e.g., ability to absorb perturbation, recovery from a disturbance, resistance from stressors, return to normal functioning, and other ways of coping). With regard to this, Windle (2011, 158; citing Roisman 2005) clarifies that “it is misleading to use the term resilience if a stressor, under normal circumstances with a majority of people, would not ordinarily pressure adaptation and lead to negative outcomes.” Thus, to be considered resilient, a person must be able to respond positively against some type of significant adversity, trauma, tragedy, or stress.

Given the divergent definitions of resilience, some scholars made efforts to clarify its meaning and suggest an operational definition of the concept. For instance, Windle, after an extensive review of publications on human resilience from 1989 to 2010, offers the following definition from a multidisciplinary perspective:

Resilience is the process of effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing significant sources of stress or trauma. Assets and resources within the individual, their life and environment facilitate this capacity for adaptation and ‘bouncing back’ in the face of adversity. Across the life course, the experience of resilience will vary. (Windle 2011, 163)

In a more recent study on human resilience from 2013 to 2019, Métais et al. (2022, 106) highlight that definitions of the concept are either one of the two broad categories—“adapting and bouncing back to previous levels of health and development” or about “thriving and rising above the adversity towards increased levels of health.” For them, resilience is a complex construct, and therefore any realistic understanding should be applicable across different contexts and situations. Based on their research, they synthesized what resilience means and defined it as:

[A] person-situation-defined process, referring to the ability of an individual to evidence and draw support from available resources (internal and external) when confronted to adversity. This interaction itself will trigger adaptative mechanisms, therefore enabling the person to face and adjust to that very disturbing or rather challenging adversity. The trajectory of this whole process could either lead back to similar levels of health or drive to improved levels of health. But as we are evolving living creatures, the outcome would anyhow be about a neo-development. (Métais et al. 2022, 111)

Despite the many studies and attempts to define resilience, there remains a lack of consensus because of multiple meanings among researchers from diverse disciplines and contexts (Reid and Botterill 2013; Vella and Pai 2019). As some resilience experts affirm:

[R]esilience is a complex construct that may have specific meaning for a particular individual, family, organization, society and culture... [I]n order to establish a single broader, but nevertheless useful, definition of resilience, it will be essential to collaborate with experts who study engineering, ecological, biological, individual, family, organizational and cultural resilience. (Southwick et al. 2014, 11)

3.2 Three Views of Resilience

Adaptive functioning among individuals who have experienced adversity or other traumatic events yet have had positive developmental outcomes has long been a source of fascination for researchers. The ability to withstand and even thrive despite the challenges has led to many theoretical and empirical studies. Contemporary research trends on resilience have shifted from a psychopathology perspective toward positive psychology, emphasizing human strengths and resources (Vella and Pai 2019). Examining the resilience literature reveals the three ways researchers conceptualize human resilience—as a trait, as an outcome, and as a process (Fletcher and Sarkar 2013; Southwick et al. 2014). Understanding these three interpretations or theories of resilience is vital in explaining how individuals maintain or develop their well-being despite their adversities.²⁰

Early studies on the concept of human resilience focus on looking into it as a personal characteristic or trait that a person possesses. This view stems from the first wave of resilience research in the field of developmental psychology that aims to identify protective factors that contribute to the resilience of young children who exhibit adaptability when the opposite is expected because of their vulnerabilities and other factors (Block and Block 1980; Garmezy 1971; Kadner 1989; Rutter 1987; Wagnild and Young 1990; Werner 1996).²¹ Simply put,

²⁰ The literature on the study of human resilience identifies four major waves of resilience science: The first wave is descriptive which focuses on the identification of predictors of resilience; the second wave is understanding the processes that lead to resilience; the third wave focuses on promoting resilience through interventions; and the fourth wave focuses on enhancing resilience through multidisciplinary analysis and integration with the advances in research methodologies and technological innovations (Masten 2014b; Vella and Pai 2019).

²¹ According to Earvolino-Ramirez (2007, 73), the concept of resilience in human beings has its roots in early psychiatric literature that studied children who appeared to be “invulnerable to adverse life situations.” The term “resilience” eventually took the place of the term “invulnerable” and “invincible”, and a new field of research emerged thereafter.

protective factors are specific characteristics or circumstances that must exist for resilience to take place. Examples of protective factors are self-esteem, resourcefulness, positivity, and flexibility, among others. As such, proponents of this view assert that resilience is “a personal trait that helps individuals cope with adversity and achieve good adjustment and development” (Hu, Zhang, and Wang 2015, 18). As an intrinsic quality, resilience is seen as being “stress-resistant,” an ability that minimizes the negative effects of stress and promotes adaptation (Ahern, Ark, and Byers 2008; Fontes and Neri 2015). However, critics of this individual-centric view emphasize that the conceptualization of resilience as an inherent personal characteristic or quality is narrow because there are other external factors that contribute to resiliency, such as cultural and environmental factors that influence individual factors (Ungar 2008; Vella and Pai 2019). Therefore, to claim that resilience is something some would have and others do not have is questionable. Nonetheless, recent evidences of trait resilience are found in research on the mental health of older people (Färber and Rosendahl 2020; Fontes and Neri 2015; Hu, Zhang, and Wang 2015).

The search for understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of human resilience further prospered as interests in the way individuals cope and are able to overcome adverse life events or situations. From asking ‘what’ makes an individual resilient, researchers focused on asking ‘how’ a person was able to adapt positively to traumatic experiences or any suffering that is associated with difficulty. Rather than looking into traits or characteristics that are deficient, the second view of resilience focuses on the immediate outcomes of trauma (Vella and Pai 2019). This view highlights resilience as “a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (Masten 2001, 228). From here on, the conceptualization of resilience from a person-focused approach has progressed into a variable-oriented approach (Masten 2001; 2014b). Moreover, resilience as an outcome seeks to explain positive outcomes following negative life experiences by looking into positive explanatory factors or influences which were sidelined in earlier models of resilience research. An important discovery from this new impetus of research is the idea that resilience is not extraordinary, but rather it appears to be a common phenomenon that arises from human adaptation. In her years of empirical studies on resilience, Masten came to a breakthrough conclusion:

Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities. (Masten 2001, 235)

As more systematic studies of resilience came about, the limitations and inconsistencies of extant literature led to a shift in the theorizing of human resilience. Consequently, a broader research paradigm that seeks to understand resilience from a number of sources and not just from a fixed, inherent quality of an individual and as an outcome brought forth the view of resilience as a process. Those who claim for a process-based conceptualization of resilience define it as a dynamic process of positive adaptation or functioning within the context of significant adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker 2000; Schoon 2006). This conceptualization highlights resilience as both being dynamic or constantly changing and being contextually based (Vella and Pai 2019). This view holds the belief that resilience is not static but interactive, meaning there is an interaction that happens between the individual, the adversity, the environment, and the outcome (Rutter 2006). This perspective is significant because resilience as a process refutes the idea that resilience is something that a person demonstrates in solitude. Moreover, this view argues that resilience happens across different levels or systems (Southwick et al. 2014). As such, instead of looking at resilience as being just present or absent, proponents of this view believe that resilience exists on a continuum (Pietrzak and Southwick 2011). In other words, depending on a given situation, various people will exhibit varying levels or degrees of resilience. This means that an individual's positive adaptation to adversity at a particular point in life does not guarantee a similar response to challenges at future times.

These three views of resilience have been the bedrock and driving forces of research approaches and theorizing in various fields of study. In comparing resilience as a trait, as an outcome, and as a process, it is important to highlight that these conceptualizations are not mutually exclusive but they complement each other in one way or another. The continued growth and evolution of resilience as a concept include a host of biological, cultural, psychological, and social factors that interact with one another. The synergy between these three classical interpretations of resilience will continue to provide critical perspectives in understanding the multifaceted and nuanced nature of human resilience in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or any significant sources of stress.

3.3 Resilience and Migrant People²²

In Chapter 2, I discussed the connection between migration and social exclusion. Without a doubt, migration has its benefits, but it also has its challenges. Unfortunately, today's era of increasing global mobility has contributed to the production of people who are susceptible to various kinds of abuse, exploitation, and even racialization. Though migrants' conditions, struggles, and experiences vary in different parts of the world, many experts describe them as people whose lives center on precarity and vulnerability (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodgkinson, and Waite 2014; Molenaar and Van Praag 2022; Ramírez, Falcón, Poblete, McKay, and Schaeffer 2021; Schierup and Jørgensen 2016). In the case of migrant workers, their commonly identified problems include marital issues, parental anxiety, loneliness, workplace abuse, and poor employment conditions (van der Ham, Ujano-Batangan, Ignacio, and Wolffers 2014). Yet, in spite of the enormous adversities, risks, and stressors that migrants face, many were able to deal with their situations and have proven themselves to be resilient in their receiving countries. Understanding how migrant peoples cope with the many adversities they encounter is made possible by the insights provided by theories on resilience. As Saleebey (2000, 135) points out, the strengths perspective and the resilience literature "obligate us to understand that however downtrodden, beaten up, sick, or disheartened and demoralized, individuals have survived, and in some cases even flourished."

As discussed earlier, human resilience is understood in a broad sense as the ability to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity, stress, or trauma. As a dynamic and multidimensional construct, resilience highlights not just an individual's attributes and self-protection skills but also a number of supportive mechanisms and resources during difficult situations. Known as "protective factors" (Garmezy 1971, 1974, 1985; Garmezy and Rutter 1983; Rutter 1987, 2006, 2013) in resilience research, these factors help to mitigate the effects of adversity and promote successful adaptation. Protective factors can be grouped into two general categories: 1) personal or internal resources, which are the characteristics that an individual possesses, and 2) social or external resources, which are the relationships, networks, institutions, and other environmental attributes that enhance resilience (Lopez, Pedrotti, and Snyder 2019). For migrant people, their potential to overcome life challenges in the host country comes in many forms. In a review of

²² In this study, I use "migrant people" or "migrants" to refer to a broad spectrum of individuals who reside outside their country of origin with citizen status, permanent residency status, temporary status, refugee status, asylum-seeker status, or no status at all.

migration and resilience literature published between 2000 to 2016, Akbar and Preston mention that:

[i]n general, various personal traits (self-esteem, motivation, optimism, intellect, coping skills, and competence) and collective resources (community pride, ethnic networks, cultural practices, spiritual and faith-based networks) are recognized as protective factors that strengthen migrants' capacity to overcome challenges. (Akbar and Preston 2019, 11)

Research on the resilience of migrant peoples in the past decades has expanded with a particular emphasis on knowing how they were able to cope or bounce back from their adversity. Today, the factors that build up the resilience of migrants against various stressors are widespread, and it is only possible to provide a short and limited overview of this topic. Based on the literature review, there are at least three main factors that influence the resilience of migrants: 1) personal qualities, 2) family and networks, and 3) belief systems and cultural practices. I shall, therefore, briefly consider these in turn.

Regarding personal qualities, several studies identified it as a major contribution to migrants' resilience. In a study of the lives of immigrant and refugee women in Canada, Toth (2003) cites personal qualities such as optimism, adaptability, and perseverance as factors that helped them to survive their resettlement experiences. Similarly, Khawaja et al. (2008) share that Sudanese refugees in Australia were able to navigate the various stages of migration by drawing on their inner resources and focusing on future wishes and aspirations. Moreover, personal qualities also serve as a component that strengthens migrants' resilience against difficult and life-threatening experiences. According to Iheduru-Anderson and Wahi (2018), maintaining a positive attitude, looking on the bright side, as well as being assertive and not giving up helped Nigerian nurses in the United States overcome racism and other cultural challenges. In another study involving kidnapped Iraqi refugees, Wright et al. (2017) report that those who demonstrate resilience in their character, such as belief in oneself, had better mental health outcomes. On the other hand, Kuo et al.'s (2019) study also indicates that personal competence played a significant role in the resilience of migrant women who experienced divorce in Taiwan.

In addition to personal qualities, external forms of support in the form of family and networks are also prominent in the resilience of migrants. In a study on migrant families in South Africa, Greeff and Holtzkamp (2007) found out that family members, relatives, and friends serve as the primary coping resource. They highlight that the presence of emotional and practical support act as a cushion against the stressful impact of relocation. Likewise, Sossou et al. (2008) also cite the importance of family as a key resilience factor in their research of Bosnian

refugee women. According to them, family members gave a sense of responsibility, purpose, and belonging in the face of difficulties. This research finding is further supported by Thomas et al. (2011) in their study of Pakistani and Somali refugees' resilience in Nepal. Through the support of primary relationships, the migrants were able to build trust in themselves and strengthen their self-confidence. Interestingly, a support system is not limited within the bounds of migrants' destination. A study by Torres et al. (2016) reveal that cross-border ties maintained by Latino migrants in the United States serve as a significant source of resilience against migration-related stressors and psychological distress. Apart from receiving support from family and friends, migrant peoples also turn to their own ethnic community to help them cope and adjust to their new way of life. In the case of female Eritrean refugees living in Norway, Abraham, Lien, and Hanssen (2018) note that the support and friendship of other Eritrean migrants were crucial in their resilience because they served as a proxy family and a source of strong ethnic identity. An extensive study by Novara et al. (2022) confirms the connection between resilience and a sense of community as significant protective factors in terms of life satisfaction and the general health of migrants.

Lastly, belief systems and cultural practices also play a significant role in promoting resilience among migrant peoples. Coming from a different country, migrants bring with them their diverse and unique cultural background (i.e., values, traditions, norms, and customs). In terms of resilience, Thomas et al. (2011) report that, like the supportive network of family and friends, religion played a comparable part in people's life and served as a crucial coping strategy. Religion "provided meaning to life circumstances, helped develop self-confidence, and played a key role in how participants coped with adversity" (Thomas et al. 2011, 8). For many migrants, their resilience is directly intersected by spiritual beliefs and practices in culturally unique ways. These factors help migrants to make sense of their experiences and approach life challenges. For example, Lewis (2013), in her study of Tibetan exiles in India, highlights how they consider resilience as an active and learned process of making the mind more "spacious" and "flexible" against their traumatic experiences. According to her, the refugees employ their Buddhist philosophy to dispel or transform the harmful effects of political violence and forced resettlement. In the case of Sudanese refugees, Schweitzer, Greenslade, and Kagee (2007) note how their Christian belief in God helped them respond constructively to trauma. Through God and the church community, the refugees received emotional and physical support that contributed to their positive adaptation. Likewise, Pertek (2022) highlights how the Christian

and Islamic faith of African forced migrant women in Tunisia enabled them to develop pathways to resilience against gender-based violence and trafficking.

3.4 Religion, Spirituality, and Resilience

Continuing from the previous discussion on the factors that influence the resilience of migrants, it is clear that there is an intersection between people's religious or spiritual beliefs and the way they confront their most stressful situations or unfortunate circumstances in life. Across the board, multiple studies have shown an association between positive religious coping and various indices of health and well-being. In fact, many researchers identified religion and spirituality as a factor that promotes resilience in dealing with major life stressors (Cook and White 2018; Foy, Drescher, and Watson 2011; Koenig, King, and Carson 2012; Pargament 1997; Pargament et al. 1998; Rosmarin and Koenig 2020). As such, it is vital to ask this question: What is it about religion and spirituality that affect or influence peoples' resilience against adversity? Before considering this further, it is imperative to describe what these related concepts mean.

Defining and confining what religion and spirituality mean is difficult because of their complexities and varied nuances as used in different contexts (Cook and White 2018). Nevertheless, numerous scholars offered a diverse range of definitions. On the other hand, some researchers use spirituality, religion, and faith interchangeably (Paul Victor and Treschuk 2020). In this study, I find Gallagher and Tierney's explanation insightful:

[I]t is generally accepted that spirituality concerns the exploration for the sacred, celestial, or transcendent side of life, while religion can be defined as a perception, influence, and behavior which emerges from a consciousness of, or alleged contact with, metaphysical entities which are deemed to perform an essential role in human life. (Gallagher and Tierney 2020, 1871)

Based on this definition, spirituality is a broad term that refers to any aspect of life that is thought to have a divine dimension, but religion is a specific term that refers to such aspects of life that are shared with others within an institutional or cultural group. Though there are meaningful distinctions between religion and spirituality, the two concepts overlap considerably. This means that when people talk about spirituality (e.g., ideas on God, higher powers, divinity, transcendent reality, etc.), oftentimes their description contains themes of religion. As Hodge and McGrew (2005, 2) put it plainly, "a person may be spiritual but not necessarily religious."

My search for an answer to the connection between religion, spirituality, and resilience led me to the theory of religious/spiritual coping (Cook and White 2018; Gall and Guirguis-Younger 2013; Pargament 1997). At the outset, general coping theory points to the assumption that human phenomena are complex and can only be understood as the result of ongoing interactions between people and their environment in a broader social context (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). According to the literature on this topic, coping is described as a process of dealing with specific difficulties or stresses such as harm, threat, and challenge (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, Compas et al. 2001, Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck 2007). Experts place a strong emphasis on coping as a controlled and effortful process, meaning an individual's responses require "conscious, purposeful, and intentional thoughts and behaviors" (Compas, Vreeland, and Henry 2020, 587). From here on, religious/spiritual coping was theorized as it applies to people's life stressors.

In his study of the relationship between religion, psychological well-being, and stress, Pargament (1997, 32) defined religion particularly as "a process, a search for significance in ways related to the sacred."²³ Based on this conceptualization, he introduced religious coping and defined it as a "search for significance... in stressful times... in ways related to the sacred" (Pargament 1997, 32; Pargament et al. 1998, 711). Drawing from this understanding, religious coping methods are identified as "ways of understanding and dealing with negative life events that are related to the sacred" (Pargament and Abu Raiya 2007, 743). In other words, religious coping is "the use of religious beliefs or behaviors to facilitate problem-solving to prevent or alleviate the negative emotional consequences of stressful life circumstances" (Koenig, Pargament, and Nielsen 1998, 513). On the other hand, spiritual coping is characterized similarly; however, it turns not to religion but to the spiritual realm.

In his research and clinical practice through the years, Pargament (1997; 2007; 2011) recognized the role of religion and spirituality in every part of a person's coping process. When economic or social resources are inaccessible, religion and spirituality could give the necessary support needed when dealing with significant stresses in life. As a pioneer in this research area, Pargament (1997) believes that religious/spiritual coping methods mediate the relationships between an individual's religious and spiritual orientations and the outcomes of major life

²³ Later on, recognizing the growth of spirituality as a popular construct and the evolving meaning of religiousness to include diverse spiritual expressions, Pargament included spirituality in his research and defined it similarly as "a search for the sacred" (Pargament 2007, 32).

events.²⁴ According to him, religious coping assists people in the search for a variety of significant ends during stressful times, such as a sense of meaning and purpose, emotional comfort, personal control, intimacy with others, physical health, or spirituality (Pargament et al. 1998). He summarizes this point well:

Coping is the process that people engage in to attain significance in stressful circumstances. ... People actively approach, avoid, anticipate, and appraise situations in life according to their implications for significance. In the face of negative events, people are not helpless. They bring an orienting system, a general frame of reference for viewing and dealing with the world that helps ground and direct them through difficult times. A key task of coping is to translate this general orienting system into methods of coping specifically suited to the distinctive demands and challenges of the particular situation. (Pargament 1997, 90)

As its name suggests, religious coping is a specific mode of coping that is derived fundamentally from religious thoughts, practices, relationships, and experiences. This theory underlines that when people encounter adversities that strain “the limits of personal powers” (Pargament 1997, 310), religion and spirituality, which serve as readily available and powerful orienting systems, translate into coping responses. Among the many purposes of religious coping include achieving meaning in life, having personal closeness to God, developing a feeling of hope about the future, gaining self-awareness and control of one’s life, and having a sense of peace and comfort (Pargament 1997).

In treating religion as a form of coping, Pargament (1997) claims that it is not unidirectional and that there are two ways of religious coping—positive and negative. Positive religious coping relates to notions of a supportive relationship or connectedness with God or the divine, while negative religious coping points to spiritual doubt, uncertainty, and a sense of abandonment or punishment by God (Pargament et al. 2013; Pargament, Feuille, and Burdzy 2011). In this respect, people who have positive religious coping mechanisms think that there is a purpose to God’s actions and a deeper significance to the suffering they have experienced. On the contrary, those who use negative religious coping mechanisms tend to have an undesirable and destructive attitude or behavior as they struggle to find meaning in their adversity. Religious coping literature indicates that positive religious coping is typically associated with positive health outcomes, such as lower mortality, fewer complications after surgery, and reduced levels of mental health distress (Ano and Vasconcelles 2005; Cummings and Pargament 2010; Gall

²⁴ In *Spiritually integrated psychotherapy: Understanding and addressing the sacred*, Pargament (2007) uses the term “spiritual coping.” In the past years, a number of scholars use the term “religious/spiritual coping” (RSC) in their research to refer to the way people use religious and spiritual beliefs and practices to deal with stressful situations (Jaramillo, Monteiro, and da Silva Borges 2019; Martins et al. 2012; Pilger et al. 2021).

and Guirguis-Younger 2013; Koenig 2012; Pargament and Abu Raiya 2007). However, in my own perspective, there is a problem with the fact that resilience studies do not seem to understand lived religion and that there are no theologically sound theories that could speak about resilience found with religious people. As such, the task of this study is to show that one way to interpret the experience of Filipino migrants is to speak about resilience and coping and that this does not cover it all. More is needed to understand deeper how they cope against perceived racism and discrimination.

3.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I outlined the existing understanding and theories about resilience. The concept of resilience has been operationalized in a variety of ways depending on the discipline, perspective, and problem. Over the years, resilience has evolved from what was once a straightforward concept used in mechanics to a now more complex and multifaceted process of bouncing back or positive adaptation in the face of adversity. In the case of migrant people's experiences, their resilience is primarily influenced by personal qualities, family and networks, as well as belief systems and cultural practices. Focusing on the latter as a protective factor, the theory of religious/spiritual coping presents a compelling connection between religion, spirituality, and resilience.

CHAPTER 4

Research Design

This chapter presents the research approach, methods, and procedures undertaken in this study. In this section of the study, I will provide an overview of the research design framework that guided my inquiry, that is, (1) systematic theology, (2) qualitative research, (3) hermeneutic phenomenology, and (4) semi-structured interviews. I will outline and justify the commitment in the choice of these methodological approaches in exploring Filipino migrants' experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination. Thereafter, I will discuss the data gathering strategy used in this study. Lastly, I will also share some ethical considerations in the conduct of the research and highlight the steps I made to maintain the validity, credibility, and trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Systematic Theology and Qualitative Research

As a study situated in theological ethics and philosophy of religion, I intend to explore the subject of my inquiry using the lens of systematic theology. Traditionally, systematic theology has been focusing mainly on written material and concerned with dogmatic or moral/ethical issues. However, today there is a growing interest among scholars of systematic theology in how faith and beliefs are expressed in the ordinary lives of people; and in the question how personal faith and practices on the one hand, and institutional teaching on the other, are influencing each other mutually. Thus, systematic theology, according to the Finnish theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, is:

an integrative discipline that continuously searches for a coherent, balanced understanding of Christian truth and faith in light of Christian tradition (biblical and historical) and in the context of historical and contemporary thought, cultures, and living faiths. It aims at a coherent, inclusive, dialogical, and hospitable vision. (Kärkkäinen 2014, 2)

Practically, this means that in my journey of meaning-making and knowledge generation, I will employ interpretation and hermeneutics to understand the human experience of resilience against social exclusion, particularly that of racism and discrimination. Through the systematic theological quest of interpretation, I will look at meanings Filipino migrants attach to their

experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination and interpret it in light of Christian theological and biblical understanding. In this study, I will employ systematic theology through my analysis of textual transcriptions of interviews. As researcher, my main task is to listen to what my participants say about the topic and use theology to interpret the patterns of thought behind their experiences of resilience.

In research, methodology refers to the principles and processes by which the investigator approaches a problem and seeks answers. Considering the subject and the purpose of this study, I assert that qualitative research methodology seemed to be an appropriate methodology to employ for two main reasons. First, this study focuses on the investigation of a phenomenon in the natural context of individuals or a group. As with systematic theological inquiry, qualitative research is essentially interested in situations and practices of people (Swinton and Mowat 2016). Qualitative research tries to gain a deeper understanding of people's behavior, experiences, processes, and views and the meanings they attach to them. Second, this study intends to provide a rich and profound description of a complex and dynamic issue through the detailed narratives that explain the situations and the background contexts of participants' experiences. The capacity of systematic theological inquiry and qualitative research to produce detailed textual descriptions of how individuals perceive a specific study subject is one of its strengths. Qualitative research, at its core, ask open-ended questions whose answers are not easily categorized or put into numbers.

In the world, there are many stories as there are many varied contexts and experiences of individuals. There are many various interpretations of phenomena, none of which is necessarily more correct or truthful than the others. Given this framework, systematic theology together with qualitative research are heuristic approaches helpful in this study because it is about the discovery and interpretation of meanings in human experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). In this systematic theological inquiry, I will be describing and interpreting stories of Filipino migrants' experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination.

4.2 Systematic Theological Approach and Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Considering the nature of the research problem, the kind of research question, and the type of empirical knowledge that I seek, I decided to employ systematic theological approach and hermeneutic phenomenology in this study. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a tradition and

method widely used inside systematic theology. To understand the Filipino migrants' lived experience of resilience against racism and discrimination, systematic theological approach and hermeneutic phenomenological research tradition offer an inquiry that focuses on deep insight into the essence of the experience.

Phenomenology, as a distinct form of inquiry, is the study of an individual's lived experience of the world. Phenomenology is "the science or study of the phenomena" (Zahavi 2019, 9). As a type of qualitative research, phenomenology focuses on describing and explaining a phenomenon—an object of human experience—from the perspective of those who have experienced it. Thus, in the words of Engelland (2020, 2), phenomenology is "the experience of *experience*." The purpose of a phenomenological study is to capture the essential aspects of the lived experience of all individuals and then develop a composite description of their experiences (Creswell and Poth 2018). This description, known as the "essence," consists of "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it (Moustakas 1994).

There are two main types of phenomenology—transcendental (descriptive) and hermeneutic (interpretive). Broadly speaking, the difference between the two approaches is in how the data are generated and in how the findings are used to add or expand knowledge about the phenomenon. Developed by Edmund Husserl (1913), transcendental phenomenology aims to explore, analyze, and provide a pure description of a lived experience. In order to do so, it is critical for the researcher to engage in *epoché* or bracketing, a procedure in which all prior information, knowledge, or preconceptions of the phenomenon are set aside (Creswell and Poth 2018). The objective of the researcher is to achieve transcendental subjectivity, meaning "everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas 1994, 34). As a result, transcendental phenomenology provides the researcher with a 'pure' description or meaning of a phenomenon that is free of assumptions and biases.

On the other hand, hermeneutic phenomenology was a reaction challenging some of the assumptions of the Husserlian view of phenomenological inquiry. Grounded in the work of Martin Heidegger (1927), hermeneutic phenomenology holds that consciousness is inextricably linked from human existence and that interpretation happens concurrently with the experience rather than through later reflection. Thus, hermeneutic phenomenology claims that all descriptions are an interpretation (van Manen 2014). As such, phenomenology is both a description and an interpretative process in which the researcher attempts to make sense of the

meaning of lived experience and interpret the “texts” of life (Creswell and Poth 2018). An important aspect of hermeneutic phenomenology is the idea of co-constitutionality (Heidegger 1927). This concept means that the meanings reached by the researcher are a mixed combination or co-construction of the meanings articulated by both the participant and researcher. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960) is relevant to this, whose version of hermeneutic phenomenology centers on the significance of preunderstandings, ‘hermeneutic circle,’ and ‘fusion of horizons.’ For Gadamer, interpretation is influenced by prejudices, which are “not only unavoidable, they are necessary, as long as they are self-reflectively aware” (van Manen 2014, 354). Hence, in hermeneutic phenomenology, rather than setting aside preconceptions or preunderstandings, researchers bring it to the fore to be recognized as influences and biases. Consequently, a deeper, richer, and more meaningful understanding of the lived experience is produced as preunderstandings of the phenomenon are not bracketed but rather integrated and become part of the research findings.

After comparing the two approaches, I believe that hermeneutic phenomenology as a research approach is uniquely positioned to support the intentions of this systematic theological inquiry. First, the focus of the research is not only to describe what it is like to undergo a particular experience. As stated earlier in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is two-fold: to understand the experiences of social exclusion, specifically racism and discrimination, of Filipino migrants in Finland; and to find out if Christian faith or practice of spirituality influence the Filipino migrants’ resilience from social exclusion experiences in Finland. Second, the researcher is deeply grounded in the problem being investigated. Due to my previous research and academic endeavors, I am fully invested in this study. Moreover, I am aware of the realities and struggles faced by Filipino migrants as a result of being a migrant worker for more than a decade. Lastly, the research outcome calls for meaningful theorizing of a painful and challenging topic. Understanding the phenomenon of resilience in the context of racism and discrimination is incomplete if it only reflects the first-hand experiences of research participants. I surmise that when the researcher’s horizon intersects with the meanings attributed by the research participants, it will result in a richer understanding of the phenomenon that could lead to greater sensitivity for the marginalized and the excluded. In turn, this could lead to new ways of theorizing and theologizing in bringing about a transformation of the human condition and society.

4.3 Data Gathering Strategy

Corollary to the research approach and methodology is the appropriateness of the choice of method. The research method describes the specific techniques used for data collection and analysis. Swinton and Mowat (2016, 53) suggest that “[t]he choice of method and the mode of analysis are deeply tied in with the epistemological positions that are assumed within the general outlook of the researcher and reflected in the research question.”

Interview. Given that the starting point of knowledge that this research aims at is the lived experience descriptions, specifically the lived experience of resilience of Filipino migrants, I chose to employ the social science practice of empirical data gathering through interviewing individuals. As a two-way dialogue, the researcher asks questions to elicit relevant information from the research participant. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, 3), qualitative research interview “attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, [and] to uncover their lived world.” Participant interviews are in line with systematic theological approach because it allows the researcher to gather rich descriptions of the phenomenon of interest via first-person narratives. On the other hand, the use of in-depth interviews in phenomenology aims to search the essence of lived experience or phenomenon (Moustakas 1994). As a research technique, interviews focus on two elements—“what” the individuals have experienced and “how” they experience what they have experienced (Patton 2015). The examination of these rich descriptions from participants forms the research data, which will then be the subject of the analysis.

In this study, I seek first-hand perceptions and descriptions of Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination. Therefore, I designed the data collection process to be a face-to-face, in-depth interview held either in-person or remote (i.e., through Zoom²⁵, a virtual meeting platform). The use of in-depth interviews as a method prompts participants to reflect freely on their experience and discuss the meaning of the phenomenon openly. Moreover, face-to-face interview builds rapport between the researcher and the participants. In addition to this, face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to observe the participants’ attitudes, emotions, and body language, which are also important sources of qualitative data.

²⁵ More information about Zoom can be read through their website, <https://zoom.us/>.

Sampling. Generally speaking, sampling strategy describes how the sample is selected systematically to meet the research objectives. However, the idea of an explicit sampling strategy is not used intrinsically in the phenomenological tradition (Gentles et al. 2015). Phenomenological research do not strive for empirical generalization but an understanding of a phenomenon's meaning from the view point of those who experience it. As van Manen explains:

Within phenomenological methodology, the term sample should not refer to an empirical sample as a subset of a population. This use of the notion of sampling presupposes that one aims at empirical generalization, and that is impossible within a phenomenological methodology. (van Manen 2014, 352)

Nevertheless, the rationale in the selection of research participants is key to any study to be successful and ethical in its conduct.

In this study, I will use purposeful sampling to select the research participants According to Patton (2015, 401), purposeful sampling is “[s]electing information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated.” Purposeful sampling gives the researcher the discretion to choose variables based on the aims and objectives of the study. Since it is essential that participants in this study ought to have experience of the phenomenon being investigated, I specifically employed the method of criterion sampling in selecting participants in this study. As the word implies, criterion sampling looks for participants who fulfill a set of criteria (Creswell and Poth 2018). This is imperative in order to yield rich information that is also consistent with the methodological approach used.

In terms of sample size, phenomenological studies do not prescribe a fixed number of research participants (van Manen 2014). Phenomenological research have had participants ranging in size from only one to over a few hundred (Creswell and Poth 2018). In their exploration of research done in the phenomenological tradition, Gentles et al. (2015) point out that having less than ten participants in hermeneutic phenomenology is an appropriate sample size estimate. For Giorgi (2009), at least three participants are needed to come up with an understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon's essence. Considering the purpose, resources, and timeframe, I designed this study to have five research participants only. I believe that a small but heterogeneous sample size is good enough to interpret the phenomenon's essence. Again, it is important to emphasize that while the sample size of five participants is acceptable for phenomenological research, the goal is not to produce generalizable results but

instead provide rich meaning and analyses of the lived experience descriptions. Thus, the selection of research participants in a phenomenological study is achieved effectively when researchers “gather enough experientially rich accounts that make possible the figuration of powerful experiential examples or anecdotes” (van Manen 2014, 353).

Procedures. In examining the research question, “*How do religious, spiritual, or theological factors support Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland?*” I developed a semi-structured interview questionnaire that attempts the following: 1) know the participant’s story as a Filipino migrant in Finland, 2) uncover the participant’s experiences of racism and discrimination and its impact on his or her life, and 3) identify the participant’s understanding of resilience and the factors or elements that influence their resilience. The interview guide (see Appendix 2) represents the basic set of open-ended questions that I planned to ask each research participant. The design of this questionnaire was assisted and validated by the researcher’s advisers. As the discussions were semi-structured, additional questions not reflected on the list were asked depending on the conversation.

The recruitment of research participants was done through the use of social media. On February 5, 2022, I sent letters of requests to administrators of identified Facebook groups created, organized, and maintained by Filipino migrants in Finland, asking for permission to recruit participants for the study. Specifically, the recruitment was conducted in four Facebook private groups, namely 1) *PINOYS in FINLAND* [over 4,700 members], 2) *Filipinos Community in Finland Ry (FILCOM)* [over 3,500 members], 3) *Finnish-Philippine Association (FPA)* [over 2,400 members], and 4) *Filipinos and friends In Finland* [976 members]. After receiving approval, I publicized the study as a “Call for Interviewees” on the topic of Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland (see Appendix 3).

A total of 15 Filipinos volunteered to participate in the study from the recruitment period of two weeks, that is, February 5–24, 2022. All the interested individuals were screened through the following three pre-determined criteria of importance for inclusion in the study: 1) currently living in Finland, 2) have lived in Finland for at least one year, and 3) have experienced racism and/or discrimination in Finland. In the end, five participants were selected based on the researcher’s judgment as to who can best provide meaningful responses to the topic of experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination. The selection was carried out through a simple survey of those who volunteered. Filipinos who responded with more details

of their experience, instead of just answering “Yes” or “No,” were considered to be the ‘best fit’ participants of the study. It was necessary to conduct the survey not just to limit the participants but in order to determine who are the individuals who has experienced the phenomenon. I want to highlight that the three questions set as the pre-determined criteria for selection did not ask the individuals to elaborate their experience. This was done purposely to not influence the volunteer’s understanding of the concepts of resilience, racism, and discrimination. Those volunteers who opened up more about their experiences are deemed to be of more interest than others and can therefore speak and provide more information about the phenomenon.

From February 20 to March 2, 2022, I conducted individual, semi-structured interviews with the selected participants, lasting approximately 60 minutes as the shortest to about 90 minutes as the longest. Prior to the interview schedule, each participant received a letter of information detailing an explanation of the research and its procedures (see Appendix 4). As consenting participants, each interviewee was asked to return a signed copy of the consent form (see Appendix 5). They were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire to ensure they met the criterion. Due to time constraints and health safety concerns because of COVID-19, all the participants agreed to conduct face-to-face interviews online via Zoom. On the day of the interview, a brief introduction of the study was explained, understanding and willingness to participate was confirmed, and questions about the conduct of the study were clarified to each participant. After the interview, I stressed that all information, recorded or written, is confidential and kept private. The interviews were conducted according to the participants’ language preference—in Filipino (*Tagalog*), in English, or a combination of both (*Taglish*). Data from all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Audios from vernacular language were transcribed and translated into English, while maintaining consistency with their original meaning.

Participants. The participants in the study were four women and one man who are located in four major cities in Finland. As much as I would want to have an equal balance in the gender representation of the sample, only one Filipino man signed up as an interviewee. Table 2 shows the demographics of the five selected research participants. Below is a brief introduction to each of the research participants. The names of the participants were changed to maintain anonymity (i.e., all names are fictive).

- **Sonia** (30–34 years old, female) has been working as a nurse in Finland for several years. She is married to a Finn and is now a Finnish citizen.
- **Michelle** (40+ years old, female) has been working in the health care industry for a few years. She is married to her Finnish husband but currently lives separately from him.
- **Maribel** (35–39 years old, female) works in a private company in Finland. She is currently the breadwinner of the family.
- **Christine** (35–39 years old, female) has been working and living in Finland for a long time. Currently, she works in a private company but also does part-time work. She is married, has children, and is a permanent resident of Finland.
- **Antonio** (35–39 years old, male) has been an OFW for many years. He currently works in a health care facility in Finland. Prior to moving to Finland, he has worked in the Middle East for a couple of years.

TABLE 2. Demographic characteristics of five participants in this study

Characteristic	Value
Sex, no.	
Female	4
Male	1
Age in years, range	
30–34 years	1
35–39 years	3
40+ years	1
Current city in Finland, no.	
Espoo	1
Helsinki	1
Turku	2
Vantaa	1
Years living in Finland, no.	
1–5 years	1
6–10 years	3
11+ years	1

Data analysis plan. The in-depth interviews provided rich narratives and stories of the phenomenon under study. To analyze these data, I borrowed the phenomenological data analysis method developed by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) because the strategy was well structured

and easy to follow. Figure 4 illustrates the data analysis stages along with a brief summary of the steps I adapted in this study.

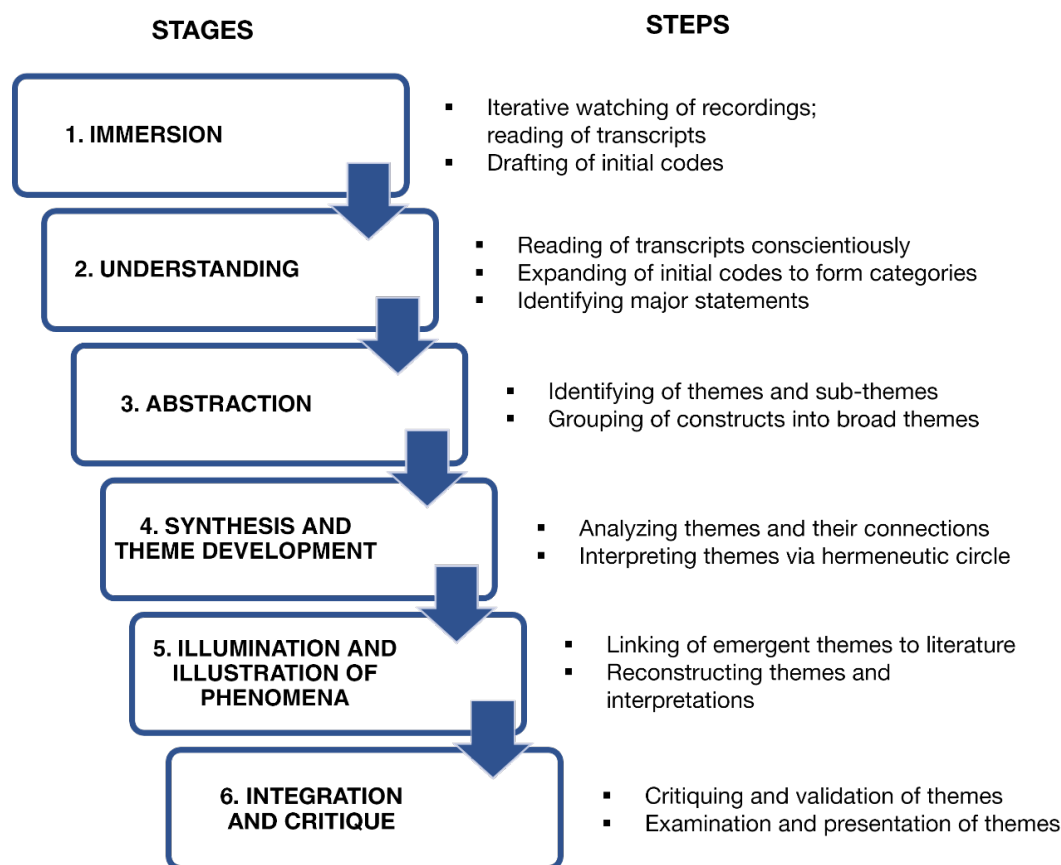


FIGURE 4. Data analysis method used in this study; based on Ajjawi and Higgs (2007).

Stage 1: Immersion. After all the interviews were transcribed, the researcher's goal is familiarization with the data. Ajjawi and Higgs (2007, 623) refer to this step as "[o]rganizing the texts." To have a broad understanding of the phenomenon, I repeatedly watched the video recordings of the interviews. Besides this, I also repeatedly read the verbatim transcriptions many times while taking notes of significant points or remarks shared by each research participant. As I highlighted these points, I made some initial codes along with my personal comments. As part of my immersion, I practiced reflexivity by reflecting and writing down my own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. At this stage, both my horizon and the participants' horizons were linked to form initial interpretations of the phenomenon.

Stage 2: Understanding. In order to gain more and deeper insights into the phenomenon under study, I engaged the transcripts more thoroughly by going through every sentence slowly and conscientiously. Ajjawi and Higgs (2007, 624) define this step as “[i]dentifying first order constructs.” First order constructs are the thoughts and opinions of the participants in their own words. I expanded them further from the earlier initial codes to include related concepts and ideas to form categories or sub-themes. Later on, I focused on re-occurring elements and left other sharing moments to the side. At this stage, I identified the major and subordinate statements of each research participant.

Stage 3: Abstraction. From the identified statements of each participant, I created my own statements based on my own personal understanding and knowledge. Ajjawi and Higgs (2007, 624) define this step as “identifying second order constructs and grouping to create themes and sub-themes.” These second order constructs are the researcher’s abstractions of the first order constructs. In this process, I used thematic analysis, “a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves searching for recurring ideas (referred to as *themes*) in a data set” (Jason and Glenwick 2016, 33). In phenomenology, thematic analysis is helpful in “recovering structures of meanings” (van Manen 2014, 319). At this stage, all similar constructs were grouped together into broad themes.

Stage 4: Synthesis and theme development. The broad themes were further analyzed by looking into their relationship to the whole data and reflecting on their connections and meanings. Ajjawi and Higgs (2007, 625) describe this step as “continuously moving backwards and forwards between the literature, the research texts and the earlier analysis.” This movement is what phenomenologists refer to as the ‘hermeneutic circle,’ a process of interpretation in which researchers continually move between smaller and larger units of meaning in order to determine the meaning of both. In this iterative process, the themes were challenged, and their meanings expanded as the researcher relates the sub-themes to the themes and the themes to the whole text.

Stage 5: Illumination and illustration of phenomena. At this point, the identified themes and sub-themes were linked to pertinent literature in order to highlight the phenomenon under study. Afterward, the themes and sub-themes that were identified from the entire data were reconstructed through the participants’ own words. Through this, a richer context for understanding the phenomenon is achieved.

Stage 6: Integration and critique. Ajjawi and Higgs (2007, 625) call this step “testing and refining the themes.” In this final stage of analysis, I critiqued the identified themes and shared the final interpretation to my research advisors for their comments and feedback. As this study is a systematic theological inquiry, the themes were also examined in light of the biblical text, teachings and practices of the Christian tradition along with other resources in relevant fields of study.

4.4 Role of the Researcher & Ethical Conduct of Research

Researchers influence the research process. All research is susceptible to being swayed by the researcher’s history, values, and beliefs. In every qualitative research, there stands the “biographically situated researcher”—a person “who speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective” (Denzin and Lincoln 2018, 52). While it is an advantage that researchers can explore a topic that they are passionate about, it also poses the issue of dealing with researcher bias and its potential to permeate the process and impact the research findings. This means that researchers play a significant role in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. In light of this insight, I recognize that it is important to be transparent about my influences, experiences, and biases so as to practice “empathic neutrality” (Patton 2015), a non-judgmental stance toward whatever content that may emerge during the research process.

I want to share a little background history about myself. In 2009, at the age of 23, I left the Philippines to be a migrant worker because of personal reasons and the need to help my family financially. My first destination was Singapore, a First World country. Then in 2015, I moved to Malaysia together with my family to lead a small church. In 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we temporarily moved back to the Philippines while preparing for our transition to Finland. During my years of working overseas, I saw the beauty in the diversity of people and cultures. However, the differences in race, ethnicity, and nationality have revealed to me the sad reality of racial prejudice, alienation, and inequality. The problem of social exclusion happens overtly or covertly in many aspects of a foreigner’s life. Whether at the workplace, the neighborhood, in government services, or in school—racism and discrimination happen anywhere. Living as a migrant is an eye-opening experience for me. Nonetheless, my

Christian faith and church communities have helped me tremendously to be strong and resilient in my journey.

From 2011 to 2020, my wife and I served in the full-time ministry in our fellowship of churches. As a Filipino in a foreign country, the thought of working in the church was a surprise. Eventually, I came to a realization and conviction that foreigners like me have a special role to play in the Christian mission. During those years, I also became a student of the Word and pursued master's degrees in Bible and theology, intercultural studies, and Christian ministry. As a pastor and counselor, I became very involved in people's lives and their struggles. Reading and understanding Jesus' examples in the gospels enabled me to comprehend and empathize with the difficulties of the people of his time. He was extremely sensitive to their needs and yet responded wholeheartedly without any condition. Although Jesus had lived in heaven, he emptied himself, became like us, and became poor for our sakes (2 Corinthians 8:9, New International Version). When he saw the crowd, Jesus "had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Not only did Jesus feel compassion for the people, but he also took a personal interest in their needs. The example of Christ convicts me and motivates me to do likewise.

In 2021, my family migrated to Finland to further our studies and look for better opportunities. Before our move, I read news and stories about racism and discrimination in Finland, but I took it lightly. However, my awareness of these issues has grown, especially after experiencing what I perceive are examples of racism and discrimination on several occasions. The most troubling case so far happened to my wife and two children. One day my family was playing in a nearby outdoor playground when an old Finnish man approached them and told them to leave the premises. The man said that the playground is private property and that they are not allowed to use it. When I heard the story from my wife, I was shocked because we had been spending time in that area a number of times. After that experience, we did not go back to that playground anymore. To this day, my daughter still remembers that experience. Despite this experience, I do not hold a grudge against that man or have negative thoughts about Finns which I believe is due to my Christian faith and convictions.

As a result of my work experiences, academic interests, group affiliation, and personal accounts of perceived racism and discrimination, I have preconceptions that I must be conscious of as a researcher of this study. Some of these beliefs are the following:

- Positive bias and empathy towards foreigners and migrants, especially Filipinos (i.e., OFWs).
- Positive bias towards the Christian faith and its teachings and practices.
- Positive bias towards and empathy for victims of racism and discrimination.
- Positive bias towards the use of religion or spirituality as ways to cope with adversities in life.

Given these biases, I have a prejudice that because I share common experiences with some Filipino migrants, I, as a researcher, and the research participants, may also share similar thoughts, values, and beliefs in our understanding of the phenomenon of resilience against racism and discrimination.

As a theology student and researcher, I recognize that it is difficult for me to remove myself from the process of meaning-making and essence-identification because I am also a participant and an actor in the entire research process. While my goal is to remain neutral or be detached from the experiences shared to me by the research participants, I find it impossible to totally bracket off the way I identify the essence of the phenomenon under study. As Swinton and Mowat share:

In hermeneutics, understanding is always from a particular position or perspective. It is therefore always a matter of *interpretation*. The researcher can never be free from the pre-understandings and ‘prejudices’ that inevitably arise from being a member of a culture and a user of particular modes of language. Indeed ... the act of interpretation is dependent on such prejudices. (Swinton and Mowat 2016, 103)

Being mindful of my personal history and presuppositions on the topic brought to the fore my perspective as a researcher and my self-awareness and sensitivity, especially in the collection of data, that is, through the interviews. Awareness of my biases is essential to bracket my assumptions that might stand in the way of understanding the meaning of the phenomenon under investigation. In addition to this, the practice of critical self-reflection or reflexivity allowed me to monitor and respond to my contribution and interpretation—in data analysis and report writing—during the research process.

As the sole investigator of this study, I attest that this research adheres to the ethical principles of privacy, confidentiality, and choice. In the recruitment and conduct of the interviews, nothing was imposed on the research participants, and their participation was voluntary and at their discretion. Consent was demonstrated either through a written consent form or verbally by the participant to be part of the interview. Names of participants were

anonymized in the preparation, analysis, and drafting of the study findings and discussions. Moreover, the identities of the participants were made to be unrecognizable in this study. This means that no personal information or any detailed descriptions in the form of direct quotations, statements, or summary interview content from the participants can be deduced that could lead to their identification.

The interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data. The recorded information is confidential, and no one else except the researcher has access to the recordings. I also transcribed the interviews personally in a private setting. I stored all the interview materials carefully on a password-protected Cloud device so that no outsiders except the researcher had access to them. To validate the collected data, each participant received a copy of their interview transcript via email for their review and feedback.

All information gathered from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications that may result thereof. Nothing will be shared with any other parties without the approval of the participants. The recordings were destroyed after the transcriptions had been made. Hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be deleted upon the completion of the study unless the study is published, in which case de-identified electronic data will be kept indefinitely.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an explanation of the research design framework of this study. The description, rationale, and merits for the use of systematic theological approach, qualitative research, and hermeneutic phenomenology were discussed. More so, the data gathering strategy as well as the data analysis plan were explained. In this chapter, I also discussed some ethical considerations such as my influences and biases in the research and a clarification in the conduct of the interviews. The next chapter will introduce the research findings.

CHAPTER 5

Interview Results

This chapter presents the research data findings and the key emergent themes. In addressing the overarching research question of the study, “*How do religious, spiritual, or theological factors support Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland?*”, I divided the chapter into two sections. In the first section, I will share the Filipino migrants’ stories of racism and discrimination. This will answer the first sub-question: *What kinds of experiences of racism and discrimination have Filipino migrants in Finland had?* In this section, I describe the various perceived racism and discrimination experiences as recounted by the interview participants to offer a deep contextual understanding of their lives. By highlighting several excerpts from each interviewed Filipino migrant, the reader will have a clearer picture of their experiences and the impact of racism and discrimination in the lives of migrant people.

In the second section, I will share the Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience. This will answer the second sub-question: *What role does Christian faith and practices of spirituality play in the resilience of Filipino migrants in Finland?* In this section, I turn to the presentation of five categories or thematic clusters I identified after conducting a thematic analysis of all the participant’s transcribed interviews. To support these categories or themes, I will provide important excerpts from the participants that pertain to their resilience against perceived racism and discrimination.

5.1 Filipino Migrants’ Stories of Racism and Discrimination

The first step in the interview process was to gather background information about the participants’ perception of social exclusion and, more importantly, identify the particular situations in which they encountered racism and discrimination. I began each interview by asking the participants about their motivations for migrating to Finland. After this, I zoomed in on their social interactions in Finland and whether they felt included or excluded. From here, I asked them to share their experiences of racism and discrimination, how these had affected

their personal life, and what this impact had been on them. I summarized my findings into two descriptive categories, namely (a) racism and discrimination experiences and (b) effects and impact on self and others.

Racism and discrimination experiences. Based on the individual interviews, there were at least three prevailing reasons why the participants migrated to Finland: marriage to a Finn, the necessity to support family members back home, and the desire for a better way of life and work opportunities. Unfortunately, their hope for a good life was not smooth sailing as their migration experiences were marred by racism and discrimination in the host country. All participants shared that they experienced different modes and forms of racism and discrimination in Finland. From indirect and subtle verbal expressions of prejudice to direct and personal encounters such as the threat of violence and physical aggression, each participant opened up their life and narrated vividly their own distressing stories of social exclusion as a Filipino migrant. Below are their stories in greater detail.

Racism and discrimination incidents can happen just about anywhere. In public spaces where meeting people is inevitable, one participant had her first taste of unwelcoming behavior. For example, Sonia shared:

The first time I experienced it [racism and discrimination] was ... on a bus. Because there was—there was a [Finnish] man there talking [and] I was talking to my friend by phone... I wasn't speaking in a loud voice because I learned that when on public transportation, you must keep your voice low... So, I was talking on the bus on my way to my aunt's house. Oh no! When I'm about to go down, the man pushed me and yelled at me. He pushed me! That time I'm trembling. He really pushed me hard. When I asked, "What's your problem?" He said to me, "You are very noisy!" He was really furious at me. ... I hit myself to the bus... because of his size; he's big. I was trembling—it took me about an hour or two before I was able to move on.

On the other hand, racist and discriminatory acts do not choose their victims. Surprisingly, even young children are witnesses to implicit racial prejudice. Such is the case of Maribel and her children:

My daughter [was] using phone on the bus and it's not that loud, then there is this drunk Finnish man [who just suddenly] go touch my daughter's phone like this. [He asked,] "Why are you using phone?" ... In front of my children, he do like that and telling [us] that we are foreigner... [He said to us] "We don't need you here! Go back to your country!" Like that. In front of the children, can you imagine that? In the public... in the bus.

And then also we're doing bicycle, I'm teaching my daughter bicycling [then an] old [Finnish] woman came to me and telling me all the bad words in Finnish which is I don't understand that time. And then my daughter [who understands Finnish, responds] is telling to her: "My mom is not perkele! My mom is not vittu! You—Sinä vittu, perkele, saatana..." [I asked my child] What are you talking about? I go Google [to translate], I say, "Shh! Don't say those words!" And my child is only 2 years and 4 months. Can you imagine that?

In a more extreme example, one participant shared how her family has experienced racism and discrimination repeatedly and for a long period of time. From unfriendly stares to playing loud music and banging the walls, the racist behavior erupted into several hostile encounters. According to Christine, she, her husband, and her children have endured relentless harassment and intimidation from their racist neighbor since they moved into their house. She narrated one of their confrontations:

There was an old lady [who stays] next to us. We were smiling, we were greeting, like the kids were always greeting [her] like how Filipino kids are and so and everything was okay at first... [Then we started to hear loud shouts and screams] ... Then every time the children were there [at the yard], they heard strange noises [from our neighbor's area]. ... [Then it was summer] we made something like a gazebo. She intervened, she actually climbed the fence, then said to us, "What are you doing? Why are you putting it there? Put it there at the very end corner." I said to her, "Wait, just wait." I said, "This is ours; it's our yard. You don't care where I put it," I said to her like that. "This is ours, wherever I put it, [it's okay because] it's mine." [Then she replied,] "Huh, whatever, all of you get out of here! You all don't belong here! What are you doing here? You don't even have jobs." [Perhaps] She feels that we are just depending on government support. Like that. "What do you all do here? Do you have a permit to stay here? Blah blah blah." ... Then we started shouting at each other, sir. My children were there, sir. So, my children were confused because why was she yelling at me? She even points[her fingers] to all of us. We were screaming at one another. At that point, I'm already angry.

Some participants shared that they had people communicate their racist and discriminatory thoughts in a more subtle or subconscious way. For instance, Antonio shared how he felt belittled in a religious group setting:

One time when we are in this gathering, we are having this discussion about like Jesus and everything. And then one [Finnish] guy just questioned me like, "Do you really know Jesus?" something like that, just questioning you. Like you can still feel you know. You can really feel that [you are being treated] lesser kind ... in some way. ... When you try to say your own opinion, and they still question what you know, there's a question mark. [It's like] White supremacy. Something like that, you can still feel that in some way.

In the field of racism studies, there is a term coined by African American professor Chester Pierce (1974) which is called microaggression. It is defined by Sue (2010, 5) as the "brief and common place daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional" that are hostile or derogatory toward a racial minority or group.²⁶ These so-called racial microaggressions range from negative or disrespectful words to derogatory insults or hostile attitudes. The experience of Antonio is an example of this.

²⁶ A macroaggression, on the other hand, include severe racist acts that results to tangible harm, such as an assault, beatings, and lynchings. Both microaggression and macroaggression are emotionally damaging offensive mechanisms (Pierce 1970; 1974).

Still, racial and discriminatory offenses show themselves in the form of racist humor that dehumanizes people. Christine recalled a racist joke she once received:

There was no problem at that time; everyone I knew at that time was very helpful. There are just strange ones, you know, looks before but like, you know, because I was married to a Finn in my first marriage. So, there are those who are drunk. For example, there is this first encounter that he actually said—that he said to my ex-husband, “Where did you buy this?” He said that, referring to me. “Where did you buy this so we can buy too?” Like that. My husband got angry [and reprimanded him], “Why are you talking like that? She is not a thing; she’s a human being, so you should know how to respect her.” ... They have [perhaps this thought that] Asian can be bought by them.

Humor is a very common way of microaggression. According to Weaver (2010, 537), racist humor is “humour [that] draws on dichotomous stereotypes of race and/or seeks to inferiorise an ethnic or racial minority.” From what Christine shared, we further see that the joke also was explicitly dehumanizing by assuming women from Asia can be bought as objects.

Most of the participants shared that their racism and discrimination experiences happened at their workplaces. Participants acknowledged being ridiculed due to various factors such as language proficiency, physical appearance, and even skills and intellect. Negative and inappropriate comments come out because of dislike for foreign workers. Michelle expressed:

At my work. We had a patient who I heard say, “Why... Why are the workers outsiders [foreigners], why not locals [Finns]? Where are our locals? He said he hates—he hates foreigners who always take care of him. ... In my experience, our patients say that why do we take care of them, why I’m the one taking care of them, which is there are many local [Finnish] people like him who do the same job as me, why do they say I take care of them? I said, “This old man is very racist; I have taken care of him well, he is not yet comfortable with me taking care of him.”

Antonio shared:

We came here directly, 10 of us [it] was like an experiment, [we came here] without learning the language, to work in a nursing home. The problem is we were degraded to our profession; it’s like, we don’t know what is the policy in Finland yet that time, so we were degraded to [being a] ... nursing assistant. But you know, when you don’t know the language, they degrade you much more. Some of us do some cleaning, and [in my case] me... I did both. Like after three months of observation, I was [then] able to take patients alone and ... at the same time helping in the cleaning. Which is, you know, the work in hoivakoti [nursing home] is so simple, not so complicated, because I have experience in [the Middle East] ... so actually the work is so simple, but our problem is the language. So the discrimination I [had was about] the language. ... Outside, when you’re walking, you don’t actually experience that so much racism, but at worksite, you know, when you mingle with them, you have to know them in work area, you can feel. Like they try to question your, how did you get your diploma in nursing, [they] question everything... Some of us were degraded, in a way that you have to swallow it, you know, because you want to earn the money; you cannot just go back right away, you know, the situation of our country; we cannot just go back right away in our own country.

While some experienced less obvious racist and discriminatory remarks, others endured verbal attacks such as belittling. For example, Sonia, when working in a healthcare facility, noted several occasions when she was treated rudely:

At work... I don't know if he is like that or just a narcissist. He was so angry with me ... to the point where I cried at work. But everyone says that he's a mean person. My co-worker, who is African, said that he is angry because we are a different race and then [we are] on the same level, treated as equals [with Finnish people]. ... It got to the point where he yelled at me, that I started crying... They feel you should be lower than them even though you have the same status [role at our workplace]. Like that, they will try their best to show that they are still above you.

The consequences of being treated unfairly in the workplace lead to psychological stress. In the end the constant negative behavior by colleagues leads to an experience of both being portrayed as “lower” individuals and an inability to deal with the assaults in any other way than bursting into tears.

Another area where racism and discrimination occurred was in marital relationships. One participant mentioned how her marriage turned sour because of irreconcilable differences, which later spilled into racial prejudice and discriminatory undertones. Michelle, who has been married for four years and is now in the process of divorce, narrated how her husband treated her:

The way he treated me was terrible, even though we were [already] separated. In one of his messages, he asked me to pay him 20,000 Euros for what he spent on me. When he said that, it's like [I felt] I'm just a business to him. Because in his message [he asked me], “What about those I invested in you? I want you to pay it back.” Right? That, the word investment, so it means he didn't marry me to be his wife that he loves. Well, he only married me so that someone would take care of him when he is old... [Actually] the way he treated me was slavery; he made me a slave.

While most divorces turn sour, Michelle's case clearly had an added layer to it, where she sees the sourness as also displaying racism. Her experiences of oppression and abuse made her feel that she is in a bondage. For her, marriage felt like slavery in which she was treated as a commodity.

Michelle also shared her experiences of racism and discrimination based on culture or some aspects of her identity (e.g., food and language):

In our first year [of marriage], there was culture shock—because [both of our] culture is different. So, my husband and I always fight because of culture. He can't accept that Filipinos eat rice [most of the time]. ... He discriminates against Filipino food [thinking] that it's unhealthy, that is why [he believes] most Filipinos are not tall. That's what he had in mind because he said we always eat poison rice. ... It has gotten to the point where my children themselves don't want to talk to my husband anymore; they always lock themselves in the room because my husband is always controlling. He controls us with money, with food, with everything we do. But my youngest, it's not possible that we don't cook rice. Because my youngest [child] is from the Philippines, she's a picky eater, so we really have to cook rice. So, what we do when we cook rice, we hide it in the children's room. What my husband is doing is really bad, really bad. When we buy something like frozen fish at the Asian store... He gets angry; he says we're just wasting money because he says it's unhealthy, frozen a lot of times. He gets angry... He no longer gives us a chance to be happy, at least because of food.

During our first year, we couldn't get along because of cultural differences, so it got to the point where I almost went home because I couldn't stand my husband's terrible attitude. ... One of it is being racist. I called him a racist because he really hates English—he doesn't like it. I said to him, "Why are you so angry with the Americans when the Americans don't do anything to you? Why are you so angry with the English language?" Which is our bridge why we became a couple, right? If he doesn't know English, how can we communicate?

Racism and discrimination can also manifest in terms of racial or ethnic pride. Central to this idea is ethnocentrism. According to LeVine (2015, 166), ethnocentrism refers to “culturally biased judgment, i.e., applying the frame of reference provided by one's culture to an object, action, person, or group of a different culture.” The concept stresses ingroup preference and superiority while having negative attitudes toward the outgroup. Michelle's experience with her husband was an example of an ethnocentric attitude and bias when her husband regarded his own culture as the benchmark to judge while looking down and criticizing her food and language preferences.

In another case involving a legal battle for child custody, one participant shared her struggles in her former marriage and how she was treated unfairly by the court, the police, and the social services department in Finland. Maribel, who was married for three years and is a divorcee, recounted her experience of discrimination and institutional racism:

He [my ex-husband] take my child with his mother. ... Of course, they will protect their own blood, as you can tell, blood is thicker than water, you know. I fully understand that. But the—the only thing I cannot admit is the system that they [police, social services] listen to them just because they are Finnish and I don't get [any] support like suppose that I should get in my situation included like example, finding a lawyer. Just because they know each other here, in Finland it's too small. ... In my experience, how many times I call many people, when they read my case and they ask, "Who is the father? Who is the mother?" [When they knew who my ex-husband and his family were] immediately, they didn't want to accept my case.

He [my ex-husband] said he doesn't love me anymore. Okay, I fully understand. You don't love me, then we can talk about the child custody. But with the child custody, he doesn't want. He wants full custody. ... He just took my child away from me... [Then] he put me in the court. And make [the story] upside down [that I'm crazy and I abuse my child]. ... Court is a dirty place to fight. There's no good person there. So, the only thing I cannot believe, he said in the court [that] I'm the one who beat him, which is, how possible is that? I have medical report, I have people who see that, but in the court they twisted with my lawyer. With my lawyer, my lawyer don't say anything about the assault, which is one again [an example] of racism. [My lawyer] She hides the truth even though I gave her all the evidence; she doesn't use that in court; she hides it. ... When I removed her as my lawyer, after a couple of hours, someone hacked my email and removed all our conversations. But I cannot accuse if it's her or who [it might be], but who can delete all the emails? All the government emails disappear. So, who will do that?

Maribel's experience highlight how racism and discrimination pervades even the institutions and systems of the government. This is an example of what Macpherson (1999, para. 6.34) calls as institutional racism, which he defined as “[t]he collective failure of an organisation to provide

an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin.” This form of racism is seen in “processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.”

Clearly, these vivid stories reflect the intense experiences of racism and discrimination of the interviewed Filipino migrants. Next, I will review its impact on their personal lives.

Effects and impact on self and others. The Filipino migrants I interviewed for this study had similar responses to their experiences of perceived racism and discrimination, except for one. For Antonio, who felt that his experience did not cause him that much harm, his reaction can be described as that of a pragmatic optimist. Nevertheless, he expressed: “*It’s a bit annoying... Little by little, it fills you up... It’s not that much, but it fills you up little by little.*”

While one participant seemed to have shrugged it off, the other four reported that their experiences were traumatic. The four participants, Sonia, Michelle, Maribel, and Christine, shared that their racism and discrimination experiences have affected their mental health and well-being. The effects included feelings of anxiety, depression, stress, and racial trauma. For instance, Sonia shared how she had difficulty forgetting the incident that happened on the bus:

[It took me] a long time, maybe even weeks [to move on]. I’m shaking whenever I tell my story because it’s really terrible! I thought to myself, what else can he do to me? He hit me with his bag! He pushed me and the big plastic bag that he was carrying, he used it to hit me.

While the feeling of shock is characteristically present in most of the participants’ reactions, some describe more alarming effects of perceived racism and discrimination. Three participants admitted that their negative experiences created health problems and emotional disturbance, which they associated with depression. As an example, Michelle relayed how she has been feeling inside:

It’s good for me to be able to share [my racism and discrimination experiences] because it’s hard for someone like me who suffers from depression to have no one to talk to about my problem. My chest hurts; it feels like I can’t breathe... It’s really hard to deal with these days. I need a friend to talk to, friends <cries... long pause>. ... [My experience] was traumatic. It’s really traumatizing because [after many months] it’s still very painful.

For some, their perceived racism and discrimination experiences are so depressing that it distorts their perceptions and reduces their ability to make good decisions. Such is the case of Maribel, who lamented having thoughts of self-harm or suicide as well as social withdrawal:

All of this gave me anxiety. And not only me, I don’t care myself; my children’s mental health is affected so much. But I don’t do it; I just don’t want to fight anymore. I don’t have energy. I even

wanted to abandon my own daughter. That's how they destroy my mental health. ... I want to kill myself... Because I was shocked when all these were happening. In 2017, I wanted to jump in <name of place>. Of course, when you are super down and don't have family [in Finland]. ... [It's] super traumatic that I cannot sleep anymore. ... I [also] don't want to go out of my house. I only stayed in my house for two years... because I got traumatized. When people outside are smiling at me, I don't know, like I'm thinking, "Why are they smiling?" You know... that's something how traumatized they give to me.

It is also reported that perceived racism and discrimination greatly impacted the well-being of family members, especially children and young adults. Three participants vented that the overwhelming feelings of the trauma have caused anxiety and other mental and emotional distress. The racial harassment that Christine experienced over a long period created a profound impact not just on her but also on her children's psychological health. She shared:

I had anxiety every time we were there [outside in our yard]. I would tell the kids, "Hey, don't make a lot of noise" like this. I didn't realize at that time that what I was doing was wrong. They are supposed to play [and] I'm always like that. I panic; I don't have peace of mind anymore... "Don't be noisy." It seems that whatever my children do, I make them stop. Just because I don't want her [my racist neighbor] to be upset, you know. ... I don't want trouble. ... Until it started to sink in [to me that] I didn't let the kids go out anymore. I also couldn't sleep well; that was the effect it had on me.

On the other hand, according to Michelle, her two Filipino teenagers who witnessed her ordeal told her one day that they wanted to leave the house and move somewhere else just to avoid her racist husband. She expressed tearfully:

I saw that the children did not want to face my husband anymore; they were always locking themselves in their room. That made me worry. I said, "The way we live is no longer healthy." We live under the same roof, but it's not peaceful. The children see that we fight every day. He yells at me all the time, I cry. The children see how I cry; they are hurt by what my husband does to me.

Lastly, Maribel shared how her children developed a mistrust of people and that their experiences affected their academic performance at school. She stated:

Because I get racism from the government official people, that's the impact towards me, that even my daughter doesn't trust social workers. You know, so that's the impact it gives to my children, especially my daughter who we are fighting child custody. She doesn't want to be here. She wants to live in the Philippines.

It's very hard for all of us. My eldest daughter's grades fell down, and she wants to go back to the Philippines. She wants to go back to the Philippines. She doesn't want to be here. So that's the effect of what happened in our family. It's because it's not only me; my entire family is affected by it. But of course, when you are a mother, even if you are in pain, we are not showing. I don't know if that's Filipino culture. I'm not showing it; my daughter doesn't see me crying. They think I'm okay, but deep inside, I'm super broken. ... I feel sorry for my children.

In summary, the Filipino migrants' experiences of racism and discrimination had damaging effects on them and their immediate family members, such as children. The stress from the negative encounters negatively affected their emotional and mental well-being. Moreover, racism and discrimination affected their psychosocial performance in Finland.

5.2 Filipino Migrants' Experiences of Resilience

Resilience is not a new concept for the interviewed Filipino migrants. After sharing their experiences of perceived racism and discrimination, each participant was asked to describe what resilience means to them. The definition of resilience provided by the participants were similar. Resilience was generally described as being strong amidst the challenges of life. Many of the participants also viewed resilience as the ability to bounce back and recover from a difficult situation. Among the words and phrases the participants used to associate what resilience means to them are the following: 'adapting', 'being positive', 'being strong', 'being in control', 'confidence', 'coping', 'endurance', 'fighting spirit', 'resisting', 'trying again', 'not giving up', and 'sacrifice'. One of the participants, Sonia, gave a well-thought summary of what resilience means for her as a Filipino migrant:

Resilience is being strong in everything that comes your way especially when it's negative, right? It's like that, it's how you fight in life. That's resilience and we are known for that I think as an OFW because whatever happens, no matter what storm comes to you as long as you have this kind of resilience, then you can really fight... you can move on... I think we should really have resilience, that's important especially when you're in another country otherwise you'll be defeated by all the negativities.

My analysis revealed five categories or thematic clusters of how religious, spiritual, or theological factors support Filipino migrants' experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination. I identified these categories as follows: (a) *Prayer as Comfort for Agony*, (b) *Scriptural Mantras as Life Guides*, (c) *Treating the Other as Self*, (d) *Forgiveness as a Virtue*, and (e) *Living as Christ Lived*. These categories represent the overall structure of the experience extrapolated and subsumed 17 themes. This scheme is presented in Table 3. The order in which the themes are presented is not a reflection of the sequence or importance in which the themes emerge.

TABLE 3. Identified categories and themes

Category	Themes
Prayer as Comfort for Agony	Entrusting God the adversity Expressing emotions; relieving stress, anxiety Making sense of pain and suffering
Scriptural Mantras as Life Guides	Remembering who God is, who they are Shifting focus to God's promises Having a spiritual mindset; defense mechanism against negative thoughts
Treating the Offender as Self	Viewing offenders as fellow humans; common humanity Seeing the good in people Practicing reciprocity and loving others
Forgiveness as a Virtue	Healing power of forgiving people Treating others the way God does Releasing control of negative experiences Embracing forgiveness leads to well-being
Living as Christ Lived	Practicing the Greatest Commandments; love God, love others Remembering the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ Living out the Christian identity Imitating Christ's love; Christ as an example to follow)

Prayer as comfort for agony. This category is reflective of the participants' most common religious coping strategy when confronted by any hardship, difficulty, or adversity in life. Participants talked about various ways prayer helped them support their resilience against perceived racism and discrimination. They spoke of prayer as an avenue to express their emotions as well as a means of asking for strength and hope to overcome adversity. Maribel expressed: *"I pray a lot by myself. I cry, I pray when it's very hard... I pray when I cannot handle it anymore, [when] I cannot sleep. I just pray and hope that things are getting better."*

Additionally, prayer is also used as a way to free the mind and heart of evil thoughts, bad attitudes, and ill feelings. One way this is done is by interceding for the offender in prayer. For example, Sonia said: “*I pray for them, for the Lord to forgive them because they don’t know what they’re doing.*” Likewise, Christine said: “*I pray for her; I pray for her peace. I pray that her family will visit her as well.*” With a similar perspective, Maribel stated:

I pray, I pray by myself. I don’t know if it’s part of our [Filipino] culture; when you have a hard time, you go to God. You notice only God when you are in tough moments. I don’t know; it also happens to me. I pray to remove all the pain and anger in my heart to forgive my ex [husband] and to forgive the people who are [supposed to help] working with us who ignore me... I try to understand them, try to understand the situation. Then it helps me to cope with this.

Participants also highlight a sense of dependence or reliance on prayer in order to help them make sense of the deeply and painfully felt experience of racism and discrimination. Through praying to God, participants could find meaning in their adversity and respond better to what they were going through. Acknowledging her deep faith in God, Michelle reasoned the following:

I just endured; I just endured as much as I could. I just prayed to the Lord that I would be able to handle what my husband was doing. I said to myself, “Lord, maybe you gave me trials like this because I know that You know I can handle it. Yes, because I am a believer, I am a God’s believer.

I said to the Lord, “Lord, I know that you love me so much that you gave me this kind of problem.” I don’t blame Him in the first place, really, never. I didn’t really blame God for why this [adversity] happened to me.

In this example, prayer is not just asking God to change things, but prayer is a dialogue between the person and God. It is a conversation that potentially changes the situation or the viewpoint of the person entering into this conversation.

In other instances, prayer as a coping method helped the participants relieve stress and gain better mental health. Most participants relayed that instead of being filled with anxiety, worry, and fear, they chose to let go and let God deal with their problems. For example, Antonio shared:

Praying gives release to your tensions, like you know, talking to God about it. Then talking to families. Then you know sharing. And that’s I think—That’s the most important thing for as a Christian, you can have someone to hold your hands in that kind of [situation] and then try to express everything and then just pray for other people also. It releases the tension.

And Michelle stated:

For my mind, spiritually. It seems to have helped me because it entered my heart. [I am reminded that] There’s someone who loves me, people who pray for me. ... I [also] pray to the Lord, which I know the Lord listens to my prayers because He answers my plea.

Three of the participants also spoke of how prayers by other people, such as family and friends, provided a huge emotional and spiritual support to them. Michelle said: “*It’s a big help for me, really praying, especially [knowing that] my friends pray for me.*” On the other hand, having a church community also served as a great support when faced with racism and discrimination. For instance, Christine shared she was encouraged when her pastors and churchmates prayed with her and also for her racist neighbor. According to her, if she were not strong in her faith, she would have easily given up and succumbed to the effects of racial harassment she experienced. Christine explained:

Prayer gives me peace of mind and assurance that everything will fall into place. My faith in the Lord is, if I’m facing a certain problem, all I have to do is like pray and talk to Him. Like He is a father to me, He is my best friend, and I can tell Him anything and everything. So, when I pray, I release all my anger, then after that I feel better... Prayer is really a big help when you face a certain problem or when you encounter racism, for example.

Through prayer, Filipino migrants connect with God just like a child to his or her parent. The practice of prayer provides some respite from tension and anxiety. In Christine’s example, the outpouring of emotion to God served as a cushion from the pain of perceived racism and discrimination.

The themes identified in this category mainly speak of the desire to entrust to God an unbearable problem or stressful situation beyond their control. All of the participants mentioned their use of prayer as a way to cope with their perceived racism and discrimination experiences. This is no surprise since all of the interviewed Filipino migrants claimed to profess the Christian faith (i.e., three are Roman Catholics, and two are evangelical Christians). They believed prayer played a crucial role in their lives, especially as a Filipino migrant in Finland.

Scriptural mantras as life guides. This category reflects the participants’ strong belief in the Bible being the inerrant Word of God. Three participants explicitly shared and repeatedly quoted passages from the Bible that have helped them cope with their perceived racism and discrimination experiences. Sonia shared:

One [Scripture] goes to my mind—Jeremiah 29:11... “For I know the plans I have for you.” I remember it always when feeling down, when I didn’t get what I wanted right away... “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.”

For Sonia, Jeremiah 29:11 reminded her that God has a plan for everyone, including her. In the face of adversity, the passage brought comfort in knowing that she is under God’s protection. With a similar Scripture, Christine expressed:

My favorite verse, Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you.” So that’s really the only hope; when you know Christ, your faith is strong, and you hold on to that promise, the Lord’s promise is always present. Even if it doesn’t come now, it will come, it will come, you know, so that’s what will really help.

The same passage reminded Christine of God’s promise of deliverance from her perceived racism and discrimination experience. Trusting in the Lord gives her hope to continue despite her challenges. Lastly, Antonio stated:

The verse that I have memorized, “I can do all things through Christ [who strengthens me],” the Philippians 4:13 and “Love one another,” something like that, [and] “Love your enemies.”

For Antonio, the Scriptures gave him the motivation to persevere and love the unlovable. These scriptural mantras came either through individual efforts, such as the regular practice of reading and studying the Bible, or through communal endeavors, notably participation in church gatherings and worship services.

While some participants noted that they learned more of the Christian teachings later in life, the majority claimed that their knowledge of the Scriptures started when they were young. One participant, Antonio, shared that being raised by Christian missionaries as a young boy for many years had greatly influenced his worldview and thus affected how he viewed racism and discrimination. According to him:

I was raised by missionaries... my real parents, they prioritized the Bible and church. Me being young, I didn’t realize it, but I still go. I know it’s for spiritual—or to go to church to worship God. At [ages] 8 to 16, I was in a missionary house; that’s where I was taught the real foundation of life. We learn about the Bible every day of our life, and still, we do studies, and until 16, we do devotional, morning and everything, like it’s a daily process, every day... When I was younger, I didn’t understand it; it’s just by force... sometimes when you are a teenager, you don’t feel you know you’re very adventurous, you don’t listen sometimes to what they say, but unconsciously it’s being put into our minds, so when we are already adult, I was out of the missionary life... the things that they have taught us, it is still coming forward every time... the things I learned from the Bible brings me back to the right path. You know, it’s the most important thing that keeps me going in this kind of situation.

Antonio’s exposure to the Christian faith at a young age brought forth a habitual formation praxis. When we meditate on Scripture, we seek to plan the text deep in our hearts, so it grows and shapes our character. Doing this repeatedly and on a regular basis leads to spiritual discipline.

Participants spoke explicitly about how the Scriptures helped them deal with their adversity. Instead of focusing on the negative and traumatic experiences, the participants used biblical passages to shift their focus on God’s promises and what God expects them as His followers to be. One participant relates the Bible and resilience as having an armor that protects

us from the effects of racism and discrimination. According to Sonia, “*Resilience means you have a shield.*” The simple truths, such as “God loves me,” “God is with me,” and “God is in control,” among others, comforted the participants’ hearts and spirits. More importantly, the scriptural mantras influenced them to have godly responses against perceived racism and discrimination, no matter how distressing and painful it had been. For example, Sonia shared:

When I’m feeling depressed, I notice that [it happens when] I’m not reading [the Bible], my perspective on life is different. I’m really down; I’m thinking of many things. But when I read, God is speaking to me again through what I read. ... What I experienced at work, I was affected when I realized that I forget that there is Someone [God] who tells us that we are beautifully and wonderfully made. There are times I forget this. When I was down, I cried at work; I lost my mind, I was down. There’s this one co-worker she talked to me; she said, “Don’t worry because we’re equal here... We must know how to fight.” “Read the Bible,” my friend told me “at least you won’t feel down...” So, when I read the Bible, then I’m strong enough to face any challenges.

And Christine expressed:

Hope and trust in the Lord. That it will come to pass, one day that too will disappear. For now, the test of our faith and character is really there. When you face that kind of situation, the racist is attacking you; just close your eyes, take a deep breath, and think properly about your next move. When we don’t think or make a plan when we are in the hype of the situation, and you are very angry, it might end up a wrong decision move, or wrong plan. You really need to think, rest first then think. Because the same thing happened to us if I did not calm down, pray, and think.

“Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” That’s what always imprinted in my mind, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. It’s easy to say, but when you are in that situation, your faith and character are tested. So that’s the Lord’s verse that is always in my mind. [I also remember] That what is being done to you is worse than what was done to Christ before. So that’s what helped me.

From these examples, the Scriptures function as a shield against adversity. When embedded in people’s lives, the Word of God becomes an anchor of truth. The Scriptures give wisdom and understanding that lights the path and leads us toward righteousness, not sin.

The themes identified in this category point to the Scriptures, a central component of the Christian faith, as life guides, especially in the hardest of moments. The Scriptures served as a powerful reminder of who they are and who God is. The scriptural mantras reminded the interviewed Filipino migrants of what they know to be true amidst their adversity. If prayer is the way the participants expressed their struggles, it is through the words of God written in the Bible that they found solace and guided their actions against racism and discrimination.

Treating the offender as self. This category reflects how the Filipino migrants see the racist beyond their offense. As Christian believers, the participants dealt with their anger and frustration in more constructive ways. Instead of dwelling on negative thoughts and hurt, they chose to see the good in people. In treating the offender as self, two participants acknowledged

the principles of reciprocity and loving others as oneself as the important biblical teachings that helped them in their resilience against racism and discrimination. Christine expressed:

Because I'm a Christian... [I am reminded to] "Love thy neighbors as you love yourself." So, that's what I always think about... I see her as someone who needs help. I look at her—she's alone, she needs help, she needs support as well. ... If I wasn't a Christian, I would fight, but because I have Christ in me, I think of her differently. I actually think of her more with mercy. She needs help. I don't see her as an enemy.

I said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" because I am not perfect; I [also] fail sometimes, I get angry sometimes. I want to understand her like myself. If she is there and more people will press her and do not understand her, and so what will happen to her? So, that's what's always in my mind, I thought, to love your neighbor as yourself. But that word [love] is really difficult.

And Antonio stated:

Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you—Golden rule... It's the humbleness. It also says in the Bible to treat others more than you. Treat others higher than you—than yourself. Give respect also to them even what they do [is wrong], even if they are cruel. I heard a story about a Filipino woman [in my workplace], that there is one workmate that always trying to make problem [to her], you know trying [to] put her down. Then after a year [of] showing the work she's been doing, this workmate of hers said sorry to her. So, I think that's one way of like being a human because if we don't, we always fight back [even] with little things.

In retelling their experiences of perceived racism and discrimination, all the participants showed grace and understanding despite their pain and trauma. When asked about their feelings towards their offenders, the participants described it as not having hatred but more of understanding. For instance, Maribel said: *"I don't resent them, but I tried to understand them. Because even if they do that, I don't think of them in a bad way or something."* Additionally, Antonio stated that meditating on God's words helped him to love racist people and not think of them as enemies. According to him:

The way we live out life, as a human being [is] to do good to others. Even in Finland, you are not allowed to discriminate. It's also in the Bible—love one another. It's all based here. We [need to] only reset our mind and go back [to what is] biblically based. ... When I am doing my devotion, I don't see them as enemies... Our real enemies are not these people. ... So, I just widened my understanding.

While racism and discrimination are a visible problem in Finland, two of the participants asserted that their perceived racism and discrimination experiences are isolated and believed that what happened to them does not reflect the attitude of Finnish people to migrants in general. Michelle shared:

Nothing, nothing has changed because I'm the kind of person who won't judge other people who I have not met. It's hard to judge, it's hard to judge that's why I didn't involve my husband's race [i.e., other Finnish people].

Likewise, Sonia expressed:

No, it didn't affect me [anymore]. People are different at some point, right? I guess that's him, but there are still more kind people here, more kind Finnish people. ... There are still more good people here. When you are with such [racist] people, it makes you feel bad. Everyone is different, but there are actually more kind people, that's what I think.

As noted earlier in the participants' stories of racism and discrimination, the abuse, cruelty, and oppression brought by the offenders are hurtful and damaging. The biblical passages mentioned in the above statements may seem to make the Filipino migrants compliant with the offenders. They may make people passive and just accepting of misery, just like what Marxism states that religion does. However, those kinds of remarks miss the point. I believe there is a hidden strength and deeper active resistance in the participants' statements than what superficial judgments may conclude.

In this category, the Filipino migrants viewed their racist offenders as fellow human beings who, just like them, are imperfect and commit mistakes. When asked about their view of those who committed racism and discrimination, all the participants responded that they are people who need help, love, and God in their life. While the participants recognized the wrong that was done to them, their Christian faith helped them not to seek revenge or harbor prejudiced attitudes. By seeing the offender as an imperfect person, they could process and manage their perceived racism and discrimination experiences in a positive light.

Forgiveness as a virtue. Related to the previous discussion of treating others as self is the concept of forgiveness. Forgiveness as a virtue is about replacing the negative emotions toward the offender with positive ones such as sympathy and compassion. In this category, the interviewed Filipino migrants talked passionately about their willingness to grant forgiveness to people who committed racism and discrimination against them. The participants spoke of forgiveness not as merely overlooking the wrong but as choosing not to be bounded by their negative thoughts and to no longer carry the resentment for what they have experienced. For them, forgiveness was the way to move forward; without it, it would be difficult to be resilient.

For most of the participants, pardoning the offender was not as easy as it might sound, but they recognized it as a necessary path toward their healing. Their decision to forgive is a personal response motivated by God's example. Ultimately, it is about choosing to treat others the way God treated them. This response is modeled by Christine, who, despite the many harassment incidents her family went through, decided to forgive her racist neighbor. She shared:

Yes, I did forgive her already. Despite the anxiety and depression she caused me, whatever I experienced with her in the past two years, I forgive her. I don't have any grudges. As I mentioned earlier, I don't see her as my enemy; I see her as someone who needs help. ... [I chose to forgive because of the] love of Christ; because he loved me first, so I need to love my neighbors. It's, like what I said, it's not an easy thing to do. It's really hard to love your neighbor, especially her, when she is the one who did something for me, but what can I do? It's there already; I cannot change it; I need to forgive her; I need to understand.

In Sonia's case, forgiveness was about saving herself. It kept her from the pain and helped her overcome the trauma, become a better person, and appreciate what she had. By pardoning the offender and letting go of the negative hold of her perceived racism and discrimination experiences, she released the control of the person who hurt her in her life. According to her:

I have already forgotten him. Now I remember my experience but okay, let it go. I can laugh with that experience because I've been through it, I've learned, and I'm here strong and standing. It's up to them [racists]; they are the ones with the problem. I just pray that they will change. If they have a problem emotionally, spiritually, I hope it can be solved so they won't be like that forever. Because it's also unfortunate, it's unfortunate if it's always like that, because for sure they're not just like that to me, they're also like that to other people. Imagine a person having so much anger in their heart, right? They are the poor ones. So, it's better to humble yourself [and] forgive.

On the other hand, while recognizing the example of Christ as paramount, three participants also mentioned that forgiveness is also for their own benefit. For them, embracing forgiveness led to peace and better mental and emotional well-being. For example, Michelle shared:

As for me, [I] don't hold a grudge even if my husband treated me that way. I forgave him even though he didn't apologize because I don't want any hate in my heart... That's why I didn't report him to the police; I didn't report him to social [services] because I didn't want him to have a problem. Because he's already old, I don't want to give him trouble; I just want us to be separated. [I remember] in the [Catholic] mass... the saying that "If someone throws a stone at you, you should throw back a bread." If the person is bad to you, do good to him, love him more. It helps my well-being.

Sonia also stated:

It's better to just forgive them because sometimes they don't—they mostly don't know what they are doing. Sometimes maybe, [I think] it's not also their choice to be like that. We have to forgive because we have been forgiven a lot by Jesus. ... When you get hurt, cry, but you have to forgive because it's for you too. If I keep it to myself, they are like this, like that, my heart will be black, it will make me bitter... Because not all people are like that, very few are like them.

And Maribel expressed:

Filipino culture is like easily forgive, right? So for me, of course, I'm a human being. In my mind, I'll kill my ex-husband many times in my mind. But what is the point? When you get angry, you get anxiety, you don't sleep, but if you forgive him or the people who hurt you and think in the positive way because in our culture, we value the debt of gratitude. That's what I feel about him. ... People do stupid things... Maybe he needs love, or people need love... You cannot have revenge... People have different mindset, but I choose to forgive and to [think of a] positive way for the future. ... I'm hoping for a better future, for a positive, progressive way.

These statements highlighted the participants' understanding of God's gracious forgiveness to all human beings. For them, forgiving their offenders means understanding that all people make mistakes. More so, hanging on to those negative feelings can do great harm to their health. Ultimately, rather than dwelling on their negative experiences, they choose what is good and beneficial for themselves.

In this category, the interviewed Filipino migrants talked passionately about their willingness to grant forgiveness to people who committed racism and discrimination against them. The participants spoke of forgiveness not as merely overlooking the wrong but as choosing not to be bounded by their negative thoughts and to no longer carry the resentment for what they have experienced. For them, forgiveness was the way to move forward; without it, it would be difficult to be resilient.

Living as Christ lived. The example of Christ served as a great encouragement when facing remarkable adversity. Participants spoke of Christ's sacrifice as a powerful reminder that their hardships and challenges are nothing compared to their Lord. For example, Christine opined how the image of Christ called her higher and gave her motivation to be resilient. According to her:

But because he suffered, Jesus Christ. He is so humble, but then he suffered as well. He was also mocked, he went through a lot of hardships. Who am I to like think that I am different? He is the Savior; he is the Jesus Christ who the people know; he even made miracles, he doesn't do anything bad, but still, people are mocking him, accusing him of anything. So, that's what I always think, that he is the best example for me that no matter what I say, he experienced it first before me. So that's where he comes into the picture on my faith.

The sufferings of Christ especially his death on the cross is a powerful demonstration of God's love for the world. He bore the punishment that we deserve. For Christine, understanding what Christ went through helped her in her endurance as well as to see God through her pain and suffering. This perspective did not mean minimizing her perceived racism and discrimination experiences, but it gave her a bigger spiritual picture that her suffering is part of life and that she can overcome it.

On the other hand, some participants talked about how their Christian identity was a powerful influence in their response against racism and discrimination. Their spiritual affiliation to Jesus enabled them to transform their attitudes and behaviors, which is perhaps less likely if they had not encountered God and imitated Christ's example. For instance, Christine shared:

Maybe if I'm not a Christian, I will really fight her. My old self [tells me], "She is close to me; I can slap her!" "You are the one who came here in my territory, so I can do whatever I want here. I didn't invite you, then [you] accuse me of everything and anything." That's my old self, that's what my old self says, but because I am a Christian, I'm not like that anymore. ... Without Christ, without my faith, really... really my old self is telling me to do different things like, you know, we are only humans. Once our ego, our pride is triggered, we will respond in a different way. But because I was changed already, so I respond differently as well. ... Being a Christian doesn't mean you can't get angry. It's normal, but not to the point that you will commit sin.

This same narrative of 'new self' versus 'old self' helped Antonio in his resilience against racism and discrimination. According to him:

As a Christian, [I am called to] love your enemies... love one another even when they hurt you, not actually physically hurt you, this kind of racism, but verbally... I focus on my work, family, and how I was raised as a human being. That's very important because I was raised by missionaries, so we stick with the Bible things every day... If they didn't raise me [with these teachings], I'm not here; maybe I've hurt somebody already or something. ... It helped me a lot really because as a human being, if I want to follow my feelings—maybe I had a fight... even the simple things like when they talk back at you, you can say bad words and everything, but still unconsciously you stop those things because as they said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," so rather than fighting... why not make peace? But sometimes I feel like I have been taken advantage of because I don't really fight back even if they said something [to me]... like "This guy is stupid" something like that, because I don't really say anything but actually just keeping myself calm and be positive at work, just like that.

In the Christian tradition, believers are called to cast off their old selves and put on their new ones (Ephesians 4:22-24). When an individual becomes a Christian, he is to be renewed on the inside. This spiritual transformation has serious consequences for our behavior and relationships. In the above statements, the participants understand this view. Though they struggled to respond to their perceived racism and discrimination, their Christian identity helped them overcome their challenges. Moreover, they also know that these adversities help them to transform constantly in and throughout their lives.

In regard to imitating Christ and how his character motivated a change in response against racism and discrimination, participants talked of God's love as a compelling factor to do what is right and to resist any form of retaliation. Their comments reflected a strong belief that God is in control and that by entrusting their situation to Him just like what Jesus did, they do not need to take things into their own hand but let God work for their deliverance. Coming to these realizations helped to develop sympathy and kindness toward racists. For example, Sonia expressed:

God loves me. No matter what happens, I won't be abandoned, even if I just let them [do racist and discriminatory acts] because I am doing right in the eyes of God. No matter what they do to me, someone loves me—I have a Father in heaven. ... I choose to forgive because they are like that; I don't have a problem with them. I'll just pray. ... For me, this is one of my resilience. Because

knowing the fact that you have a Lord who is just there for you no matter what happens, that He will not abandon you... that's the only thing that makes me strong in my faith.

Moreover, Jesus' example of non-violence taught the participants to let go and let God deal with their racism and discrimination experiences. They expressed some struggle with their racial trauma but overall, their confidence in God gave them the strength to endure. As Michelle stated:

I don't hate him at all. I'm just angry but without hate. I'm just angry at what he did [to me]. That's why sometimes I still cry; my depression comes back because despite of my kindness to him... the service I do for him, he did not reciprocate my love, my goodness... But what I hope from the Lord [is] He will take care of it and that I can have peace in my heart, that I will not think about the pain, that I will be able to let it all out. ... I have no hatred... I leave it to my God. I just said to the Lord, "Lord, it's up to you to do something with them so that they can see what their mistake is." Because I always cling to Him, I always express my pain to Him. So, that's why [I'm] stronger despite my experiences. My faith in Him is strong.

Surprisingly, this strong faith in God and the decision to imitate Christ's example even prompted participants to go beyond their comfort zone and still love the unlovable. In Michelle's case, she shared that she is willing to care for her ex-husband despite how he treated her. She expressed:

I made a promise to him that when he gets old, I will take care of him. I will still fulfill that despite of what he did to me. I will find out where he is—for example, if he is in a home for the elderly, I will still visit him because that is what I promised him. Even if we are already divorced. Because I am a person who has the word of honor. When I make a promise, I want to keep my promise... So, no matter what happened to us, no matter what my experience with my husband is, I will still keep my promise to him. I may not take care of him every day, [but] I will at least visit him wherever he lives... That, that's the only promise I made to him; I'll really fulfill that.

Michelle's noble attitude to care for her offender exemplifies the example of Christ. Loving the unlovable is not about tolerating the wrong but about imitating the way of the cross. With God's help and inspiration, we can love others the way Christ wants us, even though it is difficult.

This category reflects the participants' strong reverence and faith in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God and Savior of the world. As the central figure in Christianity, the life of Christ and his teachings inspire believers to follow a different way of life which is anchored in the two greatest commandments—love God and love other people. The example of Christ played a significant role in the interviewed Filipino migrants' resilience against racism and discrimination. All the participants expressed that being a Christian and choosing to obey Jesus' teachings helped them to manage their negative emotions and have a godly response towards their offenders.

5.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented stories of racism and discrimination based on my interviews with Filipino migrants living in Finland. I also reported on five key categories or thematic clusters that highlight how religious, spiritual, and theological factors supported them in their experience of resilience. These findings will then be analyzed in the following final chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 6

Theological Reflections & Conclusion

This chapter examines the Filipino migrants' interview results. I will organize my theological reflections based on my analysis and discussion of the research findings around the identified key categories or thematic clusters. Afterward, I will end the study by giving a summary of the research findings and a personal reflection on the problem of racism and discrimination.

6.1 Unpacking the Filipino Migrants' Experiences of Resilience

The findings from this study suggest that Filipino migrants' experience of resilience against racism and discrimination is greatly influenced by religious, spiritual, and theological factors: reliance on prayer, use of Scriptures, seeing the self in others, practice of forgiveness, and the imitation of Christ. I address each theme in turn, in what follows.

Prayer: Trusting God and the search for meaning.

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

—Psalm 145:18-19²⁷

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 4:6-7

The results of the interview point to prayer as a factor that supported Filipino migrants' experience of resilience against racism and discrimination. Through their reliance and dependence on prayer, they demonstrate that their faith in God is a personal relationship. As Christian believers, the participants used prayer as a natural response to cope with difficult life

²⁷ All Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV).

situations. For them, prayer is a spiritual conversation that brings forth the awareness and acknowledgment of God's presence. It is an opportunity through which they can let God know what they are going through. In prayer, the participants open up their minds and hearts while God listens. More importantly, the participants used prayer not just as an outlet to help them ease their pain but also as a way to make sense of their experience. As they turned to God for strength, prayer gave them meaning and, ultimately, hope in their adversity. In faith, they believe that God hears them and will answer their cries, petitions, and requests.

Prayer is the most commonly practiced form of religious expression (Finney and Malony 1985; Levin 2016). It emphasizes that a Christian's relationship with God is personal in nature. As a dialogical act between humanity and divinity, prayer connects the believer to the sacred. Through its practice, the individual attempts to experience and communicate with the divine directly. The theologian and historian Friedrich Heiler (1932, 362) defines the essence of prayer more profoundly: Prayer is a "living communion of man with God, bringing man into direct touch with God into a personal relation with Him." This idea that human beings have a relationship with God and that people can let Him know their struggles makes prayer a powerful element for resilience against any adversity. For Christians, prayer goes beyond merely asking for something; it is also a means of communicating their experiences with God, be it their joy, sorrow, anger, gratitude, or fear. During difficult times, religious persons turn to God for support, typically through prayer (Ellison and Taylor 1996; Krause 2004; Sharp 2010).

In prayer, God is seen as a partner who can help to resolve problems. Using the lens of religious coping theory, prayer could be viewed as a "collaborative coping style" because it involves the active partnership between the individual and God (Pargament 1997, Pargament et al. 1988). As a form of coping against stressors, the person and God work together as contributors in the problem-solving process. Through prayer, the Filipino migrants tap on God as their definitive spiritual resource against their perceived racism and discrimination. Their statements point to their strong belief that prayer mediates divine presence and divine support during difficult moments. As thoughts and feelings are directed to God, prayer provides comfort by experiencing the steadfast presence of God. Indeed, God is big enough to handle their anger, fears, hurts, and doubts.

In my analysis of the Filipino migrants' use of prayer as a way to cope with racism and discrimination, it is apparent that trust in God has a very significant function in the human-

divine relationship. Praying points to the primacy of God and the acknowledgment of trust in Him. As a factor that promotes resilience, prayer is seen as trusting God vis-à-vis just relying on oneself. Foster (2008, 42) notes that prayer “brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit.” Prayer reminds believers that they are not alone in their spiritual journey in this world. By practicing prayer, believers choose to depend not on themselves but on a Higher Being who is sovereign, powerful, loving, and knows everything they need. It also recognizes the notion that human beings are weak, mortal, and in need of help and salvation. To pray means “to establish a relation between the limits of the human condition and divine power” (Giordan 2011, 78). In prayer, believers surrender to God in His will. The legitimization of prayer as a support for the Filipino migrants’ resilience stems from the belief that God being a transcendent power “empowers” the believer so that they feel “empowered” by His divine power. In the practice of prayer, God becomes the frame of reference for individuals to help them understand their adversity. For example, the image of God being a Father who listens to His children’s afflictions and troubles is a great source of consolation.

Perhaps the appropriateness of prayer lies in its ability to help individuals understand the meaning of their adversity. Although racism and discrimination are outrightly wrong, it is surprising to find that the Filipino migrants’ prayers were filled with compassion and not hatred towards their offenders. This is consistent with the research of Pargament, Koenig, and Perez (2000), who identified meaning-making as one of the main functions of religion.²⁸ For them, religion plays a key role in searching for meaning and a sense of life. In their analysis of religious coping methods, they present the idea that stressful situations can be an opportunity for spiritual growth. Referred to as “benevolent religious reappraisal,” this religious coping highlights the redefinition of the stressors through religion as benevolent and potentially beneficial (Pargament, Koenig, and Perez 2000; Pargament 2011). Through prayer, the problem of racism and discrimination are not ultimately incomprehensible. In the words of Geertz (1966, 23–24), “The effort is not to deny the undeniable—that there are unexplained events, that life hurts, or that rain falls upon the just—but to deny that there are inexplicable events, that life is unendurable, and that justice is a mirage.” In essence, the Christian faith, through the practice of prayer, offers meaning to many perplexing issues of life, such as pain, injustice, and suffering.

²⁸ Besides the search for meaning, the other four functions of religion include the following: 1) the search for mastery and control; 2) the search for comfort and closeness to God; 3) the search for interpersonal intimacy and closeness to God; and 4) the search for a life transformation (Pargament, Koenig, and Perez 2000).

Moreover, meaning-making in prayer acts as a protective approach that supports resilience against racism and discrimination. Meanings influence how individuals think, behave, feel, and respond when confronted with life stressors (Park 2005; 2013). As such, prayer as a form of positive religious coping strategy offers frameworks for understanding and interpretation. Based on the interviews, the meanings Filipino migrants ascribed to their experiences of perceived racism and discrimination are influenced mainly by their level of spirituality and faith in God. Their perceptions of God, self, and life shape their reactions and understanding of their racial adversity and trauma. Through prayer, the Filipino migrants could assimilate their negative experiences into a larger, spiritual perspective in life. This manner in which they made sense of their experiences may have influenced the way the Filipino migrants coped. Also, participation in church services and praying together with other believers enhance the meaning-making process. Having a spiritual community also plays an important role. It appears that the participants who have close relationships in the church were able to overcome their adversity better. The prayers of others provide comfort, knowing that they are not alone and have the support of Christian friends.

Finally, praying to God helps in the healing of racial trauma. According to the literature on trauma recovery, an individual's knowledge and interpretation of a traumatic event are critical to their healing (Ehlers and Clark 2000; Herman 1997; 1998). This signifies that the meaning-making of a racism and discrimination experience is an important step towards recovery. Moreover, several studies point to the connection between prayer and positive well-being as well as coping with illness and adversity (Levine and Targ 2002; Levin 2001; Luhrmann 2013). According to Luhrmann (2013, 721), "the ability to imagine vividly and prayer practice make God experienced as more person-like; and reporting that one feels God's love directly is associated with lower stress, lower psychiatric vulnerability, and less loneliness." Practically speaking, the Filipino migrants' faith in God as expressed in their use of prayer helped them to contextualize their perceived racism and discrimination experiences. Because of the religious and spiritual meanings that they ascribed to various aspects of their negative experiences, the Filipino migrants were able to produce a powerful and cohesive narrative that allowed them to reframe and integrate their racism and discrimination experiences into their spiritual lives.

Scriptures: Meditating on God's voice and the transformation of the mind.

The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall for the LORD upholds him with his hand.

—Psalm 37:23-24

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

—Romans 8:28

The importance of God's words is also emphasized as a factor that supported Filipino migrants' experience of resilience against racism and discrimination. The Scriptures that have been ingrained in their minds and hearts through repeated reading, meditation, memorization, and studies have become an integral part of their identity and outlook in life. When faced with perceived racism and discrimination, the scriptural mantras served as a defense mechanism against negative thoughts. Moreover, the scriptural mantras enabled the participants to have a spiritual mindset which is especially helpful when life feels uncertain and out of control. It helped them to transform their minds, which enabled them to respond with restraint and kindness.

For most Christians, the Bible is a message to them from God. It mediates the message and truth of God in written form and, thus, is the ultimate set of guiding principles that govern all areas of life. As the sacred text in the Christian tradition, it is the primary source of faith for many believers. The Scriptures being God's words is believed to evoke the voice of God. As such, the theologian and priest Henri Nouwen exhorts that "[t]he Bible is primarily a book not of information but of formation, not merely a book to be analyzed, scrutinized, and discussed but a sacred book to nurture us, to unify our hearts and minds, and to serve as a constant source of contemplation" (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2010, xxiii). In reading and meditating on the Scriptures, believers gain knowledge about God and His character. Equally important, it inspires them to live godly lives despite their challenges.

In hard times, Christians look to the Scriptures for help. Pargament (1997) highlights that those religious coping methods involving prayer and Bible reading, that often are helpful to people in times of stress. For believers, images of a loving and supportive God provides spiritual encouragement, comfort, and strength. Relating to the experience of Filipino migrants, their use of scriptural mantras such as words, phrases, verses, and sentences from the Bible

allowed them to cope with their perceived racism and discrimination experiences. As most participants shared that they are religious and claimed to read and meditate on the Bible, it is apparent that the teachings became a part of who they are as a person. Through the practice of Bible reading, the words of God were embedded deep in their psyche. Their comments suggest a positive pattern of religious coping, such as using the Scriptures to renew their minds, turn hurts and pains into positive thoughts, and find hope in God's promises.

For devout Christians, reading and meditating on the Scriptures as a regular practice helps them to have a spiritual mindset and not be influenced by societal pressures and worldly responses. The passage in Romans 12:2 affirms this view when it calls believers to be a living sacrifice: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." It is likely that through the reading and application of God's words to their daily living the Filipino migrants were able to respond positively amidst their racism and discrimination experience. One of Christianity's fundamental teachings is replacing an old way of thinking and adopting an entirely new perspective that is in line with God's point of view. This points to the idea that "religious rituals and conceptions, once formed, become more a way of *knowing* the world than *thinking about* the world" (Pargament 1997, 40). In other words, when a believer is wholly convinced of a religious or spiritual belief, it becomes a personal conviction in which the person structures his or her experiences. Thus, Christian convictions have a limiting effect on a believer's attitude and behavior simply because they go against human nature. God's words serve as a safeguard from destructive human impulses and actions.

The use of scriptural mantras in resilience against racism and discrimination illustrates Pargament's (1997) view of coping as the search for meaning in times of stress. Seen in this way, religion has a central importance in people's meaning-making system. The Bible, which can be regarded as a metanarrative of the divine-human story, provides a powerful explanation for understanding adversities and stressors in life. As such, narrative appears to be an important part of the process of coping with racial trauma. Many people believe that the Scriptures metaphorically depict modern problems of humanity (Anderson 2005). If one's personal circumstance or situation can be identified in the passages and stories in the Bible, this might offer a way to begin to confront the issues raised by a traumatic event, such as racism and discrimination experiences. Anderson (2005, 203) states that "people discover new purpose and freedom when they begin to see their story in a larger narrative." From a resilience perspective,

Brooks (2020, 223) explains it further: “When the metanarrative is shaped, then the individual worldview of the person is changed. When the worldview is changed, the person will be equipped to address challenges and trauma in life that require resilience.” Therefore, the Scriptures is a compelling resource for resilience when used to connect a personal narrative with God’s metanarrative.

Self in others: Seeing humanity as ‘kapwa’/Imago Dei and the call to love.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”

—Matthew 5:43-45a

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.

—1 Corinthians 16:13-14

One of the surprising findings I had in this study is the grace and understanding given to those who committed racism and discrimination. All the interviewed Filipino migrants showed how they value and respect people, even those who have hurt and transgressed them. While they saw themselves as victims of racism and discrimination, their Christian convictions weighed more, giving them a broader perspective to treat others with love rather than hate. Moreover, the attitude of seeing the offenders as human beings just like themselves pointed to the idea that they are still peers to them, fellow human beings, who deserve equal consideration despite their wrongdoing.

The compassionate and humane treatment extended to the offenders is a reflection of the participants’ understanding that we are all flawed individuals. By seeing people as mere human beings who are imperfect and sinful, the Filipino migrants were able to cope and be resilient to their perceived racism and discrimination experiences. Seeing the self in others is the practice of empathy, which is a positive religious coping strategy. According to Pargament, Feuille, and Burdzy (2011, 51), positive religious coping express “a secure relationship with a transcendent force, a sense of spiritual connectedness with others, and a benevolent worldview.” As Filipinos with deeply held Christian beliefs, it was easier perhaps for them to respond with understanding and forgiveness. The idea that we all share a common humanity—that we are mortal, vulnerable, and imperfect—places unpleasant feelings and negative events as part of the

human experience (Neff 2011). The problem of pain and suffering is universal though it doesn't mean that nothing should be done to address it.

In his religious coping theory, Pargament (1997) highlights that coping is embedded in culture. He believes that “[c]oping plays itself out against the backdrop of larger cultural forces” (Pargament 1997, 117). In view of this, I argue that Filipino culture is insightful in understanding how the Filipino migrants respond to their racist offenders. Exploring the Filipino virtue ethics points to the *kapwa* theory or philosophy of seeing the self in others. In Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the “self” and “others”. *Kapwa* is the recognition of a shared identity, an inner self shared with others, which is at the core of Filipino social psychology, and also at the heart of the structure of Filipino values (Enriquez 1986; 1994; Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 2000). The concept of *kapwa* as a shared inner self turns out to be very important, psychologically as well as philosophically. According to Reyes (2015), the word *kapwa* is literally translated as “other” or “other person” but it is untranslatable into English, though many local scholars translate it as “shared self”, “shared identity”, “self-in-the-other”, and “together with the person”. In essence, *kapwa* is about treating the other person as a fellow human being. On the other hand, the term *pakikipagkapwa* indicates an idea, value, or conviction that Filipinos consider most important. Enriquez (1994, 45) points to *pakikipagkapwa* as “humanness at its highest level.” A person starts having *kapwa* not so much because of recognition of status given to him by others but more because of his awareness of shared identity. For de Guia (2005, 28), *kapwa* is “the notion of a ‘shared self’ [that] extends the I to include the Other. It bridges the deepest individual recesses of a person with anyone outside him or herself, even total strangers.” I believe that this worldview, though not explicitly mentioned during the interviews, shaped the Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination.

Theologically speaking, the doctrine that humanity has been created in the image of God or *Imago Dei* provides valuable insight for constructive conversations on resilience against racism and discrimination experiences. At the heart of *Imago Dei* is the affirmation of the value of every person. All human beings have inherent dignity as people made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). This central truth places a high interpretation and understanding of the humanity of all people regardless of race. For ethicist Lisa Sowle Cahill (1980, 279), the image of God is “the primary Christian category or symbol of interpretation of personal value.” The *Imago Dei* highlights four indicators of humanity’s commonality: 1) all humans bear the image of God, 2) all humans are relational creatures, 3) all humans are

dependent upon each other, and 4) all humans are travelers hosted by God (Martin 2014). Thus, the conviction that every human being is marked with the *Imago Dei* is a significant and powerful motivation to respond with love, even to those who have committed racism, discrimination, or any other form of exclusion.

Additionally, the *Imago Dei* helps us understand the great commandment—to love God and to love others as ourselves—because all of us bear the same image. Its moral implications are apparent in the fact that if humans are to love God, then humans must love other humans despite their differences, as each is an expression of God. In the New Testament, this emphasis on affirming the value of every human being becomes most comprehensive in Jesus’ teaching to love even our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). Seeing racists through the lens of *Imago Dei* does not minimize or dismiss the wrong they committed, but it is a personal decision rooted in a deep conviction that ‘two wrongs do not make a right.’ As professor Christine Pohl (2006, 86) argues, “[b]earing God’s image establishes a fundamental dignity and value that cannot be undermined by neediness or wrongdoing.” Ultimately, we must recognize that our love for God and others springs from God’s abundant love—“We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Forgiveness: Letting go of pain and the desire for healing.

[A]s far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

—Psalm 103:12

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

—Ephesians 4:32

The findings of this study showed that forgiveness was a crucial element to the interviewed Filipino migrants’ resilience against racism and discrimination experiences. For the participants, their Christian beliefs played a significant help in their resolve to forgive the offender. They understood that there is no genuine healing from their trauma if there is no forgiveness for the racist person. Moreover, their decision to forgive was not dependent on whether the offender apologizes for the wrong done but on desiring to overcome evil with good. In the end, forgiveness was about freeing themselves from the bondage of hatred, misery, and pain caused by racism and discrimination.

Forgiveness is a conscious decision to let go of anger, resentment, or any other negative feelings or thoughts toward a person who hurt us. According to Dr. Robert Enright (2001), an expert on the topic, forgiveness involves an understanding that the pain caused is valid, the offense was unfair, there is a moral right to be angry, and giving up that, to which we have a right, such as anger or resentment. In the Christian faith, forgiveness is a central theme. Human beings are all sinners and have fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). God provides forgiveness and reconciliation of relationships through Jesus Christ, and his followers are urged to forgive because God Himself also forgives (Matthew 6:14). In my interview of the Filipino migrants, it is apparent in their attitudes, behaviors, and responses that forgiveness helped them to cope with their racial traumas. Interestingly, all the participants spoke that they already forgave their racist offenders and that they did not hold any grudge or hatred towards them. Their responses reveal that their Christian faith had a significant influence on their understanding of forgiveness, which in turn shaped their experience of resilience.

Using the lens of religious coping theory, the participants' religious and spiritual beliefs serve as a moderator on how they process forgiveness amidst their negative experiences. One way of looking at their forgiveness is a product of the interplay of many other positive religious coping mechanisms such as prayer, Bible reading, and meditation (Pargament, Koenig, and Perez 2000). Perhaps their understanding of God's forgiveness and mercy enabled them to offer the same to their offenders. In their research on Christian forgiveness and stress-and-coping theory, Worthington et al. (2019, 3) note that "receiving a divine gift of forgiveness is intended to activate gratitude to God, which translates into motivation to extend mercy, grace, and forgiveness to other humans." They surmise that Christians' forgiveness is affected by their religious beliefs because they are admonished to trust God and to seek godly coping responses.

Though most mention that their faith inspires their forgiveness, some participants did it for their own well-being. In general, unforgiveness is a negatively perceived emotion that triggers the stress response and leads to several physical and psychological diseases (Koenig 2012; Toussaint, Worthington, and Williams 2015). In a study on the religious coping of Filipinos, Captari et al. (2018) observed that those who use negative religious coping strategies report higher degrees of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Indeed, forgiveness is inextricably linked to better health outcomes. It appears that this understanding prompts Filipino migrants to choose to forgive not just because it is theologically necessary but because they desire healing for themselves. Forgiving others is less about being the perpetrator and more

about being the one who has been wronged—the victim of injustice (Worthington et al. 2019).

The words by Nouwen are inspiring:

Making one's own wounds a source of healing, therefore, does not call for a sharing of superficial personal pains but for a constant willingness to see one's own pain and suffering as a rising from the depth of the human condition which all men share. (Nouwen 1972, 94–95)

The Filipino migrants' pain and suffering in their perceived racism and discrimination experiences help them to strengthen their empathy with others. As Christian believers, they see beyond the suffering brought about by their racist offenders. Their awareness that God is on their side and that He is working for their deliverance provides them a reason to let go of their hurt and forgive.

Christ's example: Living a cruciform life and the inspiration for resilience.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

—1 Peter 2:21

So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.

—Hebrews 13:6-9a

Possibly the most persuasive factor that supported the interviewed Filipino migrants in their resilience against racism and discrimination is the example of Jesus Christ. The participants' narratives on how they cope with their adversity highlight how they put into practice their religious and spiritual beliefs in God, especially through the imitation of Christ. As Christian believers, they turned to Christ as their spiritual model to cope with their perceived racism and discrimination experiences. While feelings of hurt and anger are unavoidable, the participants learned that the example of Christ points to how humans ought to emulate God's unconditional love despite injustice and suffering brought by the problem of racism and discrimination.

Christ is the example of how we ought to live—a life of *agape* or unconditional love. From the menial task of washing his disciples' feet to his own willingness to submit to the Father's will, even to the point of death, Jesus showed love lived out to its fullest. Even in the face of adversity, we can look to God's example. Jesus humbled himself in all things, even to

death on the cross (Philippians 2:5-8). He did this so we can all be saved. As the popular adage says, Christ has shown us “grace”—God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense. Through the crucifixion of Christ, Christianity presents a model of coping against pain and suffering in the world. It does not mean we should also suffer on the cross, but we must imitate his attitude and life. Having a cruciform life means allowing the life of Christ to take shape in us.

In many instances, the Filipino migrants referred to Christ—his words and his examples—as their inspiration in life. It is through Christ’s teachings that they changed the way they live and see the world. From their old, sinful, worldly identity, the participants share that they have a new, spiritual, and godly identity through their Christian faith. Pargament, Koenig, and Perez (2000) refer to this as the “life transformation” function of religion. It is about throwing up old objects of value in favor of new sources of significance (Pargament 1997). From this perspective, imitating and living out the example of Christ becomes a significant reason for religious coping. The idea of “religious reframing” (Pargament 1997, 221–232) explains how individuals can transform their adversity and suffering into an explainable and acceptable experience with salient or potential positive value and significance, which is a key to resilience. Having Christ as an inspiring role model in treating people even though they have hurt them, the Filipino migrants were able to forgive, which helped them move into a better place emotionally and spiritually.

6.2 Summary and Concluding Remarks

This systematic theological study has two aims. The first aim is to understand the experiences of social exclusion, specifically racism and discrimination, of Filipino migrants in Finland. The second aim is to find out if the Christian faith or practice of spirituality influence the Filipino migrants’ resilience from social exclusion experiences in Finland. Given these aims, I articulated an overarching research question: *“How do religious, spiritual, or theological factors support Filipino migrants’ experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland?”* Through the research design framework of systematic theology, qualitative research, hermeneutic phenomenology, and the use of semi-structured interviews, I tried to uncover the research question through the following two sub-questions: (1) *What kinds of experiences of racism and discrimination have Filipino migrants in Finland had?* and (2) *What role does Christian faith and practices of spirituality play in the resilience of Filipino migrants in Finland?*

The first question was answered in Chapter 4, where I described the different kinds and modes of racism and discrimination that Filipino migrants experienced in Finland. The study reveals that Filipino migrants are victims of indirect and subtle verbal expressions of prejudice to direct and personal encounters of racism and discrimination, such as the threat of violence, harassment, and physical aggression. These actions resulted in racial trauma that negatively affected their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. I find that the Filipino migrants' stories of racism and discrimination in Finland point to the sad reality that racial prejudice and exclusion still happen in society. The second question was answered in Chapters 4 and 5, where I highlighted the categories of Christian faith and practices of spirituality that supported Filipino migrants' ability to withstand or bounce back. Specifically, this study reveals that religion or, more carefully, specific Christian spiritual formation practices like reliance on prayer, use of Scriptures, seeing the self in others, the practice of forgiveness, and the imitation of Christ support the Filipino migrants' experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland.

Overall, this study suggests that Filipino migrants in Finland drew their strength from religious, spiritual, and theological factors to support their resilience against racism and discrimination. This is consistent with prior research that claims religion, as a coping resource, helps an individual to understand and deal with life stressors (Pargament 1997; Pargament et al. 2011). Based on the analysis and discussion of the Filipino migrants' experiences of resilience, it can be argued that it was through the Christian faith and practices and personal relationship with God that provided them with the ability to withstand or bounce back against racism and discrimination. The strength of this study lies in providing an in-depth empirical study of the lived experiences of Filipino migrants who encountered perceived racism and discrimination, particularly in Finland. Also, this study is a first step towards enhancing our understanding of how Filipinos, a minority migrant population in Finnish society, use the Christian faith and practices of spirituality in their resilience against racism and discrimination. Taken together, the study findings highlight the significant role of religion and spirituality in combating the problem of social exclusion and its effects. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that this study was only conducted on a small group of Filipino migrants in Finland over a short period of time. Thus, I suggest that further research be done, both qualitative and quantitative, to add value to the findings of this study on Filipino migrants' experience of resilience against racism and discrimination.

As a personal reflection, this study opened my eyes to the reality that social exclusion in the form of racism and discrimination exists in various forms in Finland. Despite the fact that this country has a predominantly Christian population, the problem of racial exclusion happens, and it often targets foreigners and minorities. Filipino migrants came to Finland in search of a better life, but it broke my heart to learn that their expectations were not met. Some of them choose to stay in order to provide for their families back home, even though they are subjected to painful social exclusion experiences.

As a Filipino migrant myself, I am saddened that this problem of racism and discrimination is still happening in Finland, known to be “The Happiest Place on Earth.” Nonetheless, I am relieved to learn that Filipino migrants’ Christian faith has been an important and strong anchor in their life. I am in awe of how they overcame their perceived racism and discrimination and emerged stronger than before because of their resilience, which is derived from their faith in God. They overcame their racial traumas through their dependence on prayer, reading Bible verses, and relying on God and His promises. These elements of their faith that they already possess serve as their armor that protects them from the attacks of the devil, our real enemy. Ultimately, racism and discrimination are sins that everyone must fight.

Finally, God did not promise a fair and perfect world, but He did promise a Son who came to earth to be a role model for all of us. He was beaten, mocked, and mistreated, yet He chose to love and forgive. He is a protector as well as someone to whom we can relate. This study inspired me to pray more, read the Scriptures more frequently, and strengthen my relationship with God because we never know when racism or discrimination will occur, and when it does, I want to be prepared and equipped. I hope that many Filipino migrants can read this study and be inspired by how the faith of their fellow migrants can help them and learn that they are not alone if they are going through the same ordeal. Indeed, resilience is a gift from God above!

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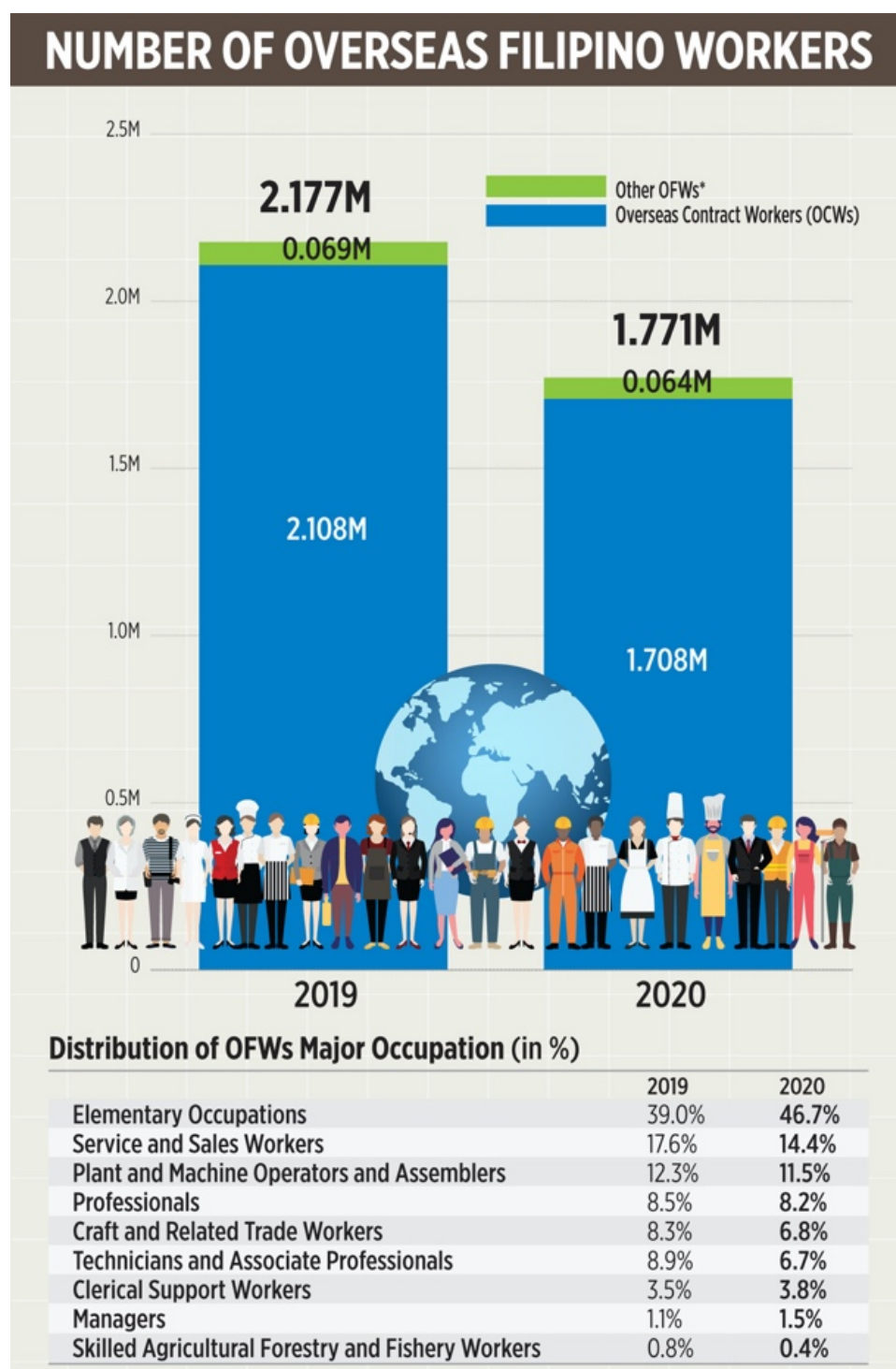
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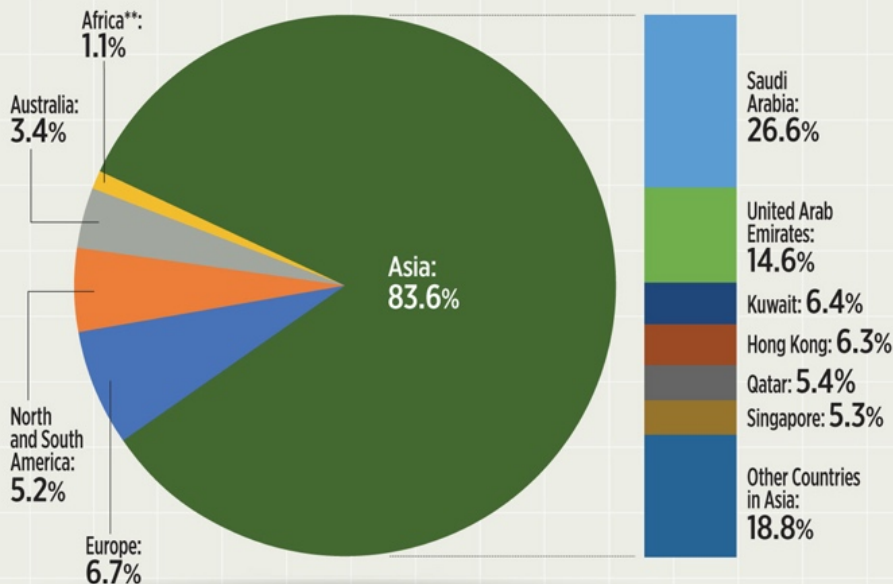
Appendices

Appendix 1. Number of Overseas Filipino Workers, 2020²⁹



²⁹ Source: Yraola (2022).

Distribution of OFWs by Place of Work (2020)



Remittance of OFWs

	2019	2020	Year-on-Year Growth Rates
Total Remittance (in P million)	₱210,403.30	₱134,765.13	↓ 35.9%
Cash Sent Home	₱157,041.16	₱113,074.85	↓ 28.0%
Cash Brought Home	₱46,195.99	₱18,982.33	↓ 58.9%
In Kind	₱7,166.15	₱2,707.95	↓ 62.2%
Average Remittance Per OFW (in pesos)	₱106,618.00	₱86,810.00	↓ 18.6%
Cash Sent Home	₱82,096.00	₱77,778.00	↓ 5.3%
Cash Brought Home	₱111,860.00	₱111,108.00	↓ 0.7%
In Kind	₱23,076.00	₱24,433.00	↑ 5.9%

NOTES:

- Details may not add up due to rounding.

* Other OFWs are those who worked abroad without working visa or work permits such as tourist, visitor, student, medical, and other types of non-immigrant visas but were presently employed and working full time in other countries

** Caution in utilizing the estimate for these industries must be observed due to its very small sample size

SOURCE: PHILIPPINE STATISTICS AUTHORITY'S 2020 SURVEY ON OVERSEAS FILIPINOS
 BUSINESSWORLD RESEARCH: ABIGAIL MARIE P. YRAOLA BUSINESSWORLD GRAPHICS: BONG R. FORTIN



Appendix 2. Interview Guide

I. Pre-interview

Demographic Questionnaire – Either the respondents fill in the questionnaire prior to the interview, or the researcher asks the questions and fills in the questionnaire on their behalf. The link of the questionnaire: <https://survey.abo.fi/lomakkeet/14313/lomake.html>.³⁰

1. Name
2. Gender
3. Age (in years)
4. Marital status
5. Education (highest level reached)
6. Religion
7. Occupation
8. Status of residence (citizen/permanent resident/residence permit holder)
9. Duration of time living in Finland (in years)
10. City / Municipality you currently live
11. Contact number
12. Email address

II. Interview Proper

A. Warm-up questions: Migratory background and experiences of racism and discrimination – Try to clarify the migratory path of the respondents and their motivations for migrating to Finland. Try to attain information about the respondents' experiences of racism and discrimination in Finland (i.e., kind of racism and discrimination faced as a migrant).

(Possible) questions:

1. When did you come to Finland and what brought you here? What did you know about the country before? What were your intentions, hopes, and plans?
2. In your social interactions in Finland, do you feel included or excluded? What kinds of exclusion have you faced in society?
3. Have you experienced racism and discrimination in Finland, particularly any unjust treatment because you are a Filipino? Can you share some examples that you have encountered here? [Describe some concrete situations.]

³⁰ This link has already been deactivated after the completion of all the interviews.

4. How did you feel when you experienced what you just shared about? Can you share how you felt during and/or after that experience? Do you feel different from the locals? Do they see you as different?
5. Do you consider your racial exclusion experience(s) as traumatic? Why or why not?
6. How is your image/impression of Finland changed because of your racial exclusion experiences? Do you think people in Finland are racist? Why or why not?

B. Main questions: Views and experiences of resilience – Try to attain more focused information about the respondents' understanding and experiences of resilience against racism and discrimination. Try to find out the impact of religion, spirituality, and theology (i.e., changes in values, worldviews, attitudes, and practice).

(Possible) questions:

1. How did you cope with your experience(s) of racism and discrimination?
2. Is the word resilience known to you? What does it mean to you? Would that description fit your own experience?
3. What are the top three things that are most important in your experience of resilience against racism and discrimination? Are any of these things that you accounted for, from your point of view, linked to spirituality or faith? How?
4. Do you practice any religion in Finland? How?
5. Are there any religious, spiritual, or theological factors that supported you or helped you to overcome your perceived racism and discrimination experience(s)? What activities linked to faith, religion, or spirituality helped your resilience?
6. What resources helped the most for your resilience? (e.g., people, organizations, literatures, podcasts, or something else) How?
7. Does religious belief, tradition, or practice play a role in your daily life? How does that look? What is the significance of these practices or ideas?
8. What is the most important religious, theological, or spiritual teaching or value for you? Did any of these help you deal with the experiences you have had? How?
9. What is your view of those who committed racism and discrimination? Do you think your view of them and your religious, spiritual, and theological understandings are linked in some way? How?
10. What do you value most in your religious, spiritual, or theological beliefs and practices? How has this(these) religious, spiritual, or theological factor(s) impacted your life as a Filipino migrant in Finland thus far?
11. Based on your experience and practice of resilience, how do you think Filipinos can positively contribute towards racial inclusion in Finland?

Appendix 3. Recruitment Letter

Hello mga kabayan!³¹

My name is Louie, a Master of Theology in Social Exclusion student at Åbo Akademi University in Turku. I used to be a pastor/ministry leader and counselor and have served in churches in the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia. Currently, I am writing my master's thesis on the topic of Filipino migrants' experience of resilience against racism and discrimination in Finland. I am looking for people to interview for my thesis.

In the interview, we will discuss your own experiences and thoughts about racism, discrimination, and resilience. In the interview, your identity will be protected in the conduct of the research. All information will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of my study. We can do the interview via Zoom, or if you prefer to meet in person, we can set a place and date that is the most convenient for you. The interview will be done in English, Filipino, or both.

If you want to participate or know more information, please feel free to send me a personal message on Facebook. You can also contact me via WhatsApp at 045 341 5808 or email at jan.uy@abo.fi. Alternatively, if you know someone who experienced racism and discrimination in Finland, please feel free to forward this interview invitation to them.

Maraming salamat po! God bless!

Louie

 **CALL FOR INTERVIEWEES**

KABAYAN, I NEED YOUR HELP TO FINISH MY THESIS...

RESEARCHER:
JAN LOUIE UY, MA

TOPIC:
FILIPINO MIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES OF RESILIENCE AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN FINLAND

 
Åbo Akademi University
Arts, Psychology and Theology

TO SIGN UP / FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT ME:
045 341 5808
JAN.UY@ABO.FI

*THE INTERVIEW WILL LAST FOR ABOUT AN HOUR AND IT IS CONFIDENTIAL

³¹ Refers to fellow Filipinos; it is a Filipino (Tagalog) word for “countrymen.”

Appendix 4. Informed Consent Letter



LETTER OF INFORMATION

[Date]

[Respondent]

[Contact information]

Research Topic:

***A Theological Study on Filipino Migrants' Experiences
of Resilience Against Racism and Discrimination in Finland***

Dear [Respondent],

I am Jan Louie Segundo Uy, a Master's Degree in Social Exclusion student specializing in Theological Ethics and Philosophy of Religion at Åbo Akademi University (ÅAU) in Turku, Finland. As part of my course requirements, I am undertaking a small-scale study under the supervision of Professors Heidi Jokinen, *ThD* and Laura Hellsten, *ThD*. I am the principal investigator of this study that focuses on the social exclusion of Filipino migrants in Finland. This is an invitation to you to take part in this study. Please find below more information about the study and the interview setting:

Purpose of the research

Today, the Philippines has one of the largest diasporas in the world with an estimated 10 to 12 million Filipinos. The "Overseas Filipino Workers" or OFWs are lauded as modern-day heroes because of their significant socioeconomic contributions and sacrifices. In spite of the economic benefits that Filipino migrants bring to the country, many of them endure hardship and face various struggles in their host country. Among the persistent problems faced by migrants is inclusion and acceptance in their neighborhood, school, and workplace.

The purpose of this research is to gain insight into the lived experiences of Filipino migrants who faced racism and discrimination in Finland. In particular, I am interested in knowing whether the Filipino migrants' faith or practice of spirituality has a strong influence on their ability to withstand and bounce back from perceived racism and discrimination. This study will seek to answer the following research question: *"How do religious, spiritual, or theological factors support Filipino migrants' experiences of resilience against racism and*

discrimination in Finland?” This study is an opportunity to give a voice to Filipino migrants to express their personal reactions to, feelings about, and perceptions of racism and discrimination in an attempt to further the understanding of the phenomenon of resilience.

Participant selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you signed up to be one of the interview respondents. Among all the volunteers, you are selected as one of the five participants in this study because you meet the pre-determined criteria of importance. I regard your experience to be of high value to contribute to finding answers and meaning to the question this study wants to investigate. I want to emphasize that your participation is completely voluntary, and you can also withdraw during the interview if you wish so.

Procedures

In this research, the process of collecting information involves in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Filipino migrants currently living in Finland who have experienced racism and discrimination. The interview will last for about an hour, and it is confidential: your name and personal details will never be revealed.

During the interview, I will sit down with you in a comfortable place or over Zoom, a virtual meeting platform. You may read more about Zoom on their website: <https://zoom.us/trust>. If it is better for you, the interview can take place in your home or a friend's home. The interview will be carried out according to your language preference—in Filipino (*Tagalog*), in English, or a combination of both (*Taglish*). If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so, and the conversation will move on to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there.

The interviews will either be audio-recorded when conducted via face-to-face meeting or video-recorded when conducted via Zoom to ensure accuracy. The recorded information is confidential, and no one else except the investigator will have access to the recordings. The interview material will be carefully stored on a password-protected Cloud device so that no outsiders except the investigator have access to it. I will be transcribing the recordings alone in a private setting. You will have the chance to validate your interview transcript after the recordings have been transcribed. A copy of the transcript will be emailed to you to review and correct any factual errors. Access to information documented (i.e., notes and transcriptions) will be restricted to the investigator, the supervisors, and the participants who will review the information for the purpose of evaluating the investigator's conclusions.

Risks

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics that come up during our time together. However, my intent is not to put you into uncomfortable situations on purpose. You do not have to answer any question if you feel the question(s) and/or topics are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable. You may, at any time, tell me that something we discussed or something that happened may not be part of the research materials I gather.

There is also a risk that during the interview, unpleasant memories could possibly come up that can trouble you later on, and in which case, please do not hesitate to contact someone whom you think can provide the necessary help for you (e.g., your church pastor, priest, ministry leader, or counselor).

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you by participating in this study. However, your shared stories may be of great benefit for the research community interested in the experiences of resilience and exclusion in the Finnish Filipino communities.

Confidentiality

No personal data of participants will be published in the conduct of the research. I will make every effort to protect your identity and keep the information confidential, including the following:

- Participants will be assigned fictive names with the corresponding gender to be used on all notes and documents pertaining to the study. Any direct quotations, statements, or summary interview content from the participants will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified in the study.
- The recordings will only be available to the investigator and will in no way be used other than for the analysis of the study. All information gathered from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications that may result thereof. Nothing will be shared with any other parties without the approval of the participants.
- Audio and video recordings, transcribed notes, and any other identifying participant information will be kept on a password-protected Cloud device. The recordings will be destroyed after the transcription has been made. Hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be deleted upon the completion of the study unless the study is published, in which case de-identified electronic data will be kept indefinitely.

Sharing of the results

During this study, nothing that you tell me will be shared with anybody outside the investigator's supervisors, and nothing you have done or said will be attributed to you by name. The knowledge (i.e., the results and analysis of all information from all participants) that I get from this research will be shared with you before it is made widely available to the public. Each participant will receive a summary of the results. There will also be small-group meetings in the Faculty of Arts, Psychology, and Theology of ÅAU when results are ready to be discussed, and these will be announced well beforehand. Following the meetings, the resulting thesis will be published as Open Access on the ÅAU website (www.abo.fi) so that interested people and organizations may learn from the research.

Right to refuse or withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will not affect you in any way. You may rescind your consent for participation in

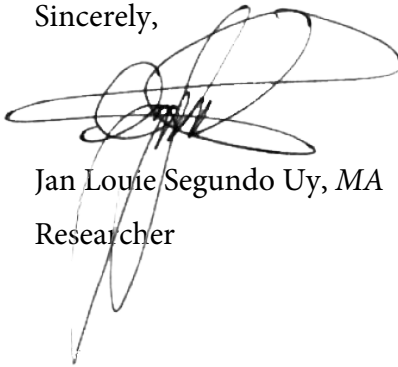
the study at any time. If you rescind consent, all information gathered during your participation will be immediately destroyed.

I hope you are available for an interview. I have enclosed a consent form for your review. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me directly at 045 341 5808 or jan.uy@abo.fi, or the Head of Systematic Theology at ÅAU, Professor Björn Vikström, *ThD* at bjorn.vikstrom@abo.fi.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated. I look forward to your reply.

Maraming salamat po!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jan Louie Segundo Uy, MA
Researcher

Appendix 5. Informed Consent Form



CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT

Research Topic:

*A Theological Study on Filipino Migrants' Experiences
of Resilience Against Racism and Discrimination in Finland*

I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to decline or withdraw my consent at any time without offering any reason. I also understand that information will be treated in confidence.

Place and date

_____ / _____

**I hereby consent to participate
in the research:**

Signature of interviewee

Name in block capitals

Place and date

_____ / _____

Recipient of the consent:

Signature of researcher

JAN LOUIE SEGUNDO UY

Name in block capitals