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THE IMPACT OF LABOR MIGRATION ON FAMILIES IN SAMOA

“For a Better Future”: The Impact of Labor Migration on Families in Samoa

Rebekah Underwood

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S.I.T. Samoa, Fall 2022

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Abstract

This research sought to investigate the motivations, benefits, and consequences of international labor migration on Samoan families. Seasonal worker schemes in New Zealand and Australia were generally found to be beneficial to families given the tangible and material benefits it provided to them. The benefits of remittances were found to have been multiplied through investment in the village of Poutasi to increase industry and job opportunities. A lack of economic opportunity in Samoa was implicated in the motivation and beneficiality of participation in labor schemes and may have increased due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Family was at the forefront of Samoans' desires to improve economic conditions. Despite this, negative impacts of parental/spousal absence were found on children and wives in Samoa. Loneliness, infidelity, impaired relationships, difficulty child rearing, and behavioral challenges with children were referenced in the wake of migration. Cultural gender roles were also found to shift due to a labor vacuum from absent young men in family and village settings. Mitigating factors that were found to reduce the harm of migration were the use of technology, reliance on extended families, and duration of stay. Samoan families remained resilient in the wake of challenges caused by labor migration likely due to strong social networks and cultural understandings of migration.

Keywords: Labor migration, Samoa, family, economic opportunity, negative impacts

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank first and foremost the brave and wonderful participants who were willing to share their life experiences with me. The Samoan villages of Amaille and Poutasi welcomed me to discuss these topics with them and gave me crucial insight into labor migration in Samoa and treated me with the utmost kindness and generosity. I hope that I have done their stories justice and given them a voice to be heard. I would also like to thank my advisor, Dr. Masami, for her instrumental help with crafting, framing, and completing my project. My academic director, Dr. Taomi, also provided consistent support, care, and help in all processes of completing this research. It truly would not have been possible without her help. My program's academic assistant, Sinu'u Tuimavave, was also extremely helpful in helping me recruit participants and even driving me to her wonderful village to conduct *Talanoas*. My fellow SIT students also provided much needed emotional encouragement and editing help which was essential to the completion of this project. Generally, I would like to thank the amazing people of Samoa for welcoming me into their country and giving me this incredible opportunity to conduct research and gain a window into their world.

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Introduction

Faced with limited economic and employment opportunities, many Samoans migrate to larger host countries temporarily for employment opportunities to send money, or remittances, back home to families in Samoa. This international labor migration is an essential factor in Samoa's economy, politics, and livelihood. The Samoan economy functions largely off of these remittances sent back home from overseas labor and many families are heavily dependent on them. Although many Samoans choose to migrate overseas for work to improve their family's economic circumstances, the detrimental impacts of this practice on families left in Samoa in other ways is less understood. This research therefore aimed to examine the motivations, benefits, and consequences of international labor migration on the wellbeing of families in Samoa.

Two driving forces of labor migration in Samoa are New Zealand's Recognized Seasonal Employer scheme (RSE) and the Australian government's Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). New Zealand's RSE program recruits laborers to work primarily in horticulture and viticulture for seven to nine months, although the time frames vary by program and contracts. The Australian government recruits labor for hospitality, agriculture, fishing, aquaculture, and forestry for generally around three years (Yomoh, 2022). Both programs make up the majority of seasonal labor schemes in Samoa and were the two programs this research focused on.

While the benefits of remittance economic strategies have been thoroughly debated by economists, the sociological, psychological, and human dimensions of international labor migration have not been as thoroughly explored. The term "intimate economies" highlights how economic issues transcend the global and political realm to breach the lived experience of

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individuals and families; something that is often not part of the debate surrounding economic initiatives (Hendrickson et al., 2019). Western conceptions of capitalism, materialism, and individualism have often defined the path forward for developing nations which often centers around capitalistic notions of wellbeing. These ideas posit that increasing a family's access to material goods and financial abundance will foster greater wellbeing. However, the absence of parents may lead to the disintegration of families which is crucial to the *fa'a Samoa*, or the Samoan way. Therefore, the effect of labor migration policies need to be further explored within this context to determine the ultimate benefits and detriments of international labor migration in Samoa.

Centering *aiga*, or family, as a unit of study for this research encompasses Samoan cultural foundations as it is inextricably tied to individual, family, village, and national wellbeing. Samoans view the *aiga* as the foundation in which an individual springs from and the basis for their health and wellbeing (Vakalahi, 2012). This creates the motivation for family members to migrate to meet familial goals and contribute to family's general needs (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009; Vakalahi, 2012). However, other needs of Samoan families outside of financial ones are not as heavily considered in general literature and understanding of labor schemes. Conceptualizing the holistic impacts on the Samoan *aiga* is therefore crucial to determine whether labor migration is a viable economic strategy for Samoa.

Research on other developing countries has shown negative outcomes from parental labor migration on families such as greater stress, loneliness, loss of family intimacy, and greater difficulty in raising children (Cooray, 2017; Hendrickson, 2019; Iosim et al., 2022). These findings highlight that while a family's economic situation may be improved through labor migration, their overall wellbeing as a family may worsen. The extent to which this happens in

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Samoa is unclear and will be examined in this research. Samoan's extended families may create conditions in which the absence of family members do not necessarily create the same negative impacts on families as they do in other societies. The Samoan *aiga* in which children are raised by many different family members may mitigate the effect of an absent parent on their development and lessen the stress incurred on the spouse. This research sought to determine whether Samoan families also have negative impacts of absent parents/spouses from international labor migration given the more collectivist model for raising children.

Additionally, Samoans' cultural conceptions of "migration" are vastly different than Western notions that delineate a clear distinction between home country and global country and imply a rupture due to migration (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). The Samoan word *Malaga* is a verb used for migration, but more accurately means to travel back and forth, whether locally in Samoa or on a global scale. Migration is therefore within this context of always coming and returning, and the movement of individuals is always temporary and related to kinship. Samoans do not often view distance as causing a separation of the *aiga*, but instead as creating a larger web of interconnectivity across spaces (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). This could provide a cultural context that allows for migration with minimal disruption to families and cultures.

In order to investigate these concepts in a Samoan context, interviews were conducted mainly with wives/mothers whose husbands have gone abroad in addition to a general survey. This population was targeted to be most effective at examining the impact on families due to Samoan's traditional gender roles in which women are primary caretakers for children and the home (Scroope, 2017). This research is intended to center the family as much as possible. To do this, according to traditional gender roles, wives and mothers may offer unique and important insight into the effects of labor migration. In order to see the general implications of international

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labor migration, a survey was conducted for all family members who had a relative abroad to supplement the understandings gathered by interviews.

The impact of this research helps clarify the advantages and disadvantages to Samoan families and individuals of labor migration. While the economic benefits of seasonal labor schemes and remittance economies have been considered on a macro-scale, the human dimensions of this migration have not been fully considered in the context of Samoa with indigenous voices centered. Additionally, most research that has been completed focused on the workers themselves, not the families left behind. This research intends to explore the impacts on not only the individual, but the family unit. While seasonal labor may improve the financial and living quality of Samoan families, it may create conditions that deteriorate families' emotional wellbeing, child rearing, and relationship quality. Understanding the potential negative impacts of labor migration may help reorient Samoa's economic initiatives by considering the impact on arguably the most important Samoan cultural phenomenon: the family.

Literature Review

Samoa and other Pacific Island countries' economies have been plagued with developmental struggles, the entrapments of foreign aid, and the loss of labor from emigration. Economists Bertram and Walters coined the acronym MIRAB to represent this economic positionality; (M) Migration (R) Remittance (A) Foreign Aid and (B) Public Bureaucracy (Lee, 2009). This model emphasizes the nature of economies like Samoa that integrate with larger and former colonial countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and the USA (Lee, 2009). It characterizes an economy that is heavily dependent on migration based remittances and foreign aid. Lacking strong economic opportunities and spaces for development in Samoa, many Samoan

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family members migrate overseas for labor to send money back home to families. The primary motivations generally for labor migration are economic ones (Lee, 2009; Gibson, McKenzie, & Rohura, 2008; Iosim et al., 2022; Cooray, 2017; Hendrickson et al., 2019; Fatupaito et al., 2021).

Samoa has and continues to be among the top remittance earning countries worldwide (Lee, 2009). In 2019/2020, almost 80,000,000 USD had been earned by around 3400 Samoan seasonal workers (Fatupaito et al., 2021). Most migrants participate in programs like New Zealand's RSE program and Australia's PSL program to work in primarily agricultural and horticultural industries (Yemoh, 2022). Samoans' participation in these programs and others like them creates circular migration whereby the individual migrates for labor, but intends, or is required to return to their home country after a period of labor (Bedford, Bedford, & Ho, 2009). This practice impacts Samoa's economy in a myriad of ways with many argued advantages and disadvantages.

The argued detriments of this migration on the Samoan economy include dependence on foreign nations, stunting of development and domestic economic productivity, inflation, and "brain drains", whereby skilled and educated individuals are drained from the domestic labor force (Lee, 2009; Ahlburg, 2017; Brown 1994). Skilled and employed workers in Samoa participate in labor migration schemes, undermining private businesses and development (Yemoh, 2022). International labor migration may stunt economic development not only by draining skilled labor forces, but also by discouraging labor participation through the use of remittances (Bedford, Bedford, & Ho, 2009). Reliance on labor migration may also be relatively unsustainable/unreliable as it relies on the continuing participation of host countries (Lee, 2009; Ahlburg, 2017). While the UN formally claimed that remittance economies generally failed to foster development and instead created many negative effects on developing economies, some

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argue that sustainable development in many of the Pacific Islands is not possible and that remittances and foreign aid are viable economic strategies in which labor is exported rather than goods (Ahlburg 2017).

Therefore, the proposed benefits of labor migration on Samoa's economy are increased development, higher standard of living for citizens, and proposed greater wealth equality and social mobility for those denied access to labor markets (Ahlburg, 2017). The extent to which social mobility is fostered by labor migration depends on the populations selected, as it could also be a source of social and economic inequality if programs favor educated already skilled workers (Bedford, Bedford, & Ho, 2009; Perkiss et al., 2021). Wages earned in seasonal work are much higher than those paid in Samoa, allowing for economic benefits to the families of seasonal labour scheme participants (Fatupaito et al., 2021). It is also argued that labor migration increases migrants' social and human capital as "agents of development" that can benefit home countries when migrants return (Bedford, Bedford, & Ho, 2009). It has been found that in Pacific Island countries generally, labor mobility programs have been economically beneficial for families and communities sending workers (Gibson & Bailey, 2021). Collectively, these arguments demonstrate that there are many proposed benefits to labor migration economic strategies. The extent to which remittance economies are truly beneficial on a macroeconomic scale is therefore heavily debated.

However, ideas about development are typically based in Western cultural ideas. Scholars valuing indigenous perspectives have highlighted that the framework of development used to address labor migration particularly in Samoa is largely inaccurate to how Samoans' actually view the purposes of movement, or *malaga* (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). Instead of focusing on increasing GDP or other capitalistic markers of progress, development for Samoans is used to

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maintain the *fa'a Samoa*, or Samoan way of life, not circumvent or “improve” it. Samoans seek material improvements for their lives, but generally desire to sustain their culture and kinship and view migration as a practice to do so in a modern context. Development must serve Samoan culture, not undermine it. Money earned from circular mobility is therefore primarily used to prioritize the everyday needs of families and maintain cultural traditions in Samoa (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009).

This is highlighted in the research that shows that remittances from overseas family members are mostly used by Samoans for daily needs and cultural and religious obligations (LeDe et al., 2015; Ahlburg, 2017). At least half of the funding for *fa'alavelaves*, or contributions to cultural events, comes from remittances (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009). Daily living expenses often include food, housing, school related fees, bills, agricultural equipment, clothing, transportation costs, etc. Remittances are also used to contribute to community purposes such as assisting schools, churches, water supply systems, social organizations, and infrastructure in village settings and can be a force of economic development in communities (LeDal et al., 2015; Bedford, Bedford, & Ho, 2009). Remittances are also used for cultural practices such as weddings, funerals, and bestowing of chiefly titles (LeDe et al., 2015). Therefore, remittances cover the costs of many necessary functions within Samoan society and lead to the continuation of the *fa'a Samoa*. Without them, the ability to cover functions of a household would be far more difficult. Current literature therefore shows that Samoan families heavily rely on these remittances to fulfill necessary functions of their society and culture.

Remittances are also inversely linked to government and nongovernmental aid, which highlights the use of remittances as a “private insurance system” outside of aid (LeDe et al., 2015). When governments and NGOs are unable to provide assistance to Samoan families, they

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rely on remittances to fill in the gaps. This concept is especially highlighted in Samoans' use of remittances in the face of natural disasters like the tsunami of 2009 to recover from housing damages, food security issues, and health care needs. Unlike governmental and NGO aid, remittances were made quickly available for families and were specific to their needs (LeDe et al., 2015). This exhibits the benefits of having overseas labor in which families in Samoa can better adapt to everyday needs as well as provide relief for any type of hardship.

Research on New Zealand's RSE program highlights some motivations and concerns of Pacific Islanders participating in seasonal labor schemes. When questioned, Tongans were motivated by the potential to earn a better income, provide for their families, eventually live overseas, and improve their English (Gibson, McKenzie, & Rohura, 2008). However, workers also anticipated the detrimental aspects of the program to involve primarily the separation of the family (Gibson, McKenzie, & Rohura, 2008). Samoans echoed similar tangible desires of participation in the RSE program such as building a new house/renovations, buying a car, giving church donations, purchasing agricultural/fishing equipment, financing a shop, etc. (Fatupaito et al., 2021). Broadly, Samoans were motivated by the desire to improve their family's circumstances (Fatupaito et al., 2021; Perkiss et al., 2021). These motivations and reservations by Tongans and Samoans highlight that a driving motivation for participating in the RSE program is to improve the economic wellbeing of their families.

Families are at the center of Samoan culture and their health is integral for individual, village, and national wellbeing (Enoka, 1997; Scroope, 2017; Vakalahi, 2012). Samoans seek to create the best outcomes for their families as Samoans' duty is to contribute to the success and honor of their families (Scroope, 2017; Vakalahi, 2012). Migration is almost always centered in the context of kinship and familial needs (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). However, the wellbeing of

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family units and thus individuals within them require not only economic and material needs, but emotional and social ones as well (Iosim et al., 2022). Family members leaving may disrupt this cultivation of social and emotional growth between parents and children. Conversely, the Samoan conception of family operates outside of a Western nuclear family model in which children are part of an extended family (Scroope, 2017). Additionally, migration is viewed as less disruptive force for Samoans and instead as a way to continue the functions of Samoan culture (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009). Therefore Samoans may be uniquely situated to weather the challenges of migration due to cultural conceptions of transmobility and larger reliance on extended families.

Participation in international labour schemes may negatively impact families left behind in a number of ways, often dependent on gender (Bedford, Bedford, & Ho, 2009). Wives left behind while husbands are overseas may experience loneliness, anxiety, and stress about extra responsibilities and being the sole caretaker of the home. When wives participate in labour schemes, husbands also struggle with masculine identities while undergoing household duties and may lack an adequate conception of child-rearing which has negative impacts on children. Shorter duration of labor migration, a high ability to communicate with a partner, and increased support by extended families can be moderating factors that alleviate these negative impacts of labor migration on families (Bedford, Bedford & Ho, 2009).

While there is no research known to this author of the implications of labor migration on Samoan families specifically, research on other developing nations illustrates some of the advantages and disadvantages of labor migration. In a study of Sri Lankan children who were left behind by maternal labor migration, migration was found to improve the economic status of families, but did not necessarily lead to an overall positive experience (Cooray, 2017). The vast

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majority of participants experienced negative consequences of maternal migration including greater stress, loneliness, and loss of family intimacy despite children's understanding of the necessity of their mother's migration (Cooray, 2017). Similarly, a study of women with an absent spouse due to labor migration in Nepal revealed increased stress and difficulty in child rearing (Hendrickson, 2019). However, labor migration was viewed as a necessity for their children's quality of life, education, and future due to the financial benefits it provided (Hendrickson, 2019). A study of Moldova and Romania concluded similar results wherein all respondents agreed that the largest benefit of parental migration was financial improvement, however 5/8ths of respondents reported that their family situation worsened after their parent went overseas (Iosim et al., 2022). These studies highlight that in other developing nation contexts, the financial and economic gain provided by parental migration does not compensate for the emotional toll it takes on families. In societies such as Samoa where a large number of individuals migrate internationally for labor, this has far-reaching sociological implications in terms of family, child, spousal, and collectivist wellbeing.

Overall, this research highlights the concept of "the family opportunity cost" in which families must weigh the costs of spousal migration for economic opportunity with the potential downfalls (Cooray, 2017). In general, motivations for labor migration revolve around economic and financial ones, not always considering emotional needs of families (Lee, 2009; Gibson, McKenzie, & Rohura, 2008; Iosim et al., 2022; Cooray, 2017; Hendrickson et al., 2019). With little known about the detrimental impacts on Samoan families in the wake of seasonal labor schemes, it is hard for individual families to make decisions about migration. Additionally, national economic strategies towards labor migration may be woefully under informed as to the negative implications of this employment strategy given the negative sociological and

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psychological findings of other developing countries with similar labor migration experiences (Cooray, 2017; Hendrickson, 2019; Iosim et al., 2022).

Methodology

Interviews

In order to understand the motivations, benefits, and consequences of labor migration on families and married couples in Samoa, Indigenous methodology of interview processes were utilized that respect and foster personal relationships with interview participants. This process in Pacific Islander tradition is known as the *Talanoa* which includes a sharing of stories, respect, and relationship building between peoples. Generally, it's a way of simply having a conversation. This informal interview procedure was used to allow the research participants to feel more comfortable and at ease while sharing their perspectives. It also attempted to eliminate a distinct power dynamic between the researcher and *Talanoa* participants by asking strict interview questions. Questions were generally framed under the main potential impacts of labor migration on emotional wellbeing, financial circumstances, child rearing, and relationship quality of spouses.

The intended population of study for the *Talanoas* was the wives of seasonal workers since they most intimately experience the consequences and benefits of these labor schemes to families due to their gendered responsibility of family and child rearing responsibilities in Samoa (Scroope, 2017). This research did not examine individuals who participated in the labor migration, but instead the family members, or most often wives, left behind. Wives/mothers in Samoa are more likely to be experiencing the direct impact on family's finances, physical and mental health, and child rearing due to prevailing gender roles. Twelve individuals were

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interviewed overall and eight of them were wives/mothers whose husbands were overseas, or had recently been overseas. Two mothers who had sons overseas were also interviewed and one man whose wife was overseas was interviewed to establish a different perspective. A recruiter for labor schemes was also interviewed to provide a broader perspective on the topic.

Convenience and snowball sampling methods were utilized in this research. Interviews were conducted in the Apia urban area, the village of Poutasi, and the village of Amaille. Data collection took place in the village of Poutasi on November 11 while prospective seasonal workers were filling forms out to go to Australia. Interviews were conducted in the village of Amaille on November 20th. These areas were targeted due to convenience as Apia was easily accessible using snowball sampling, the village of Poutasi was accessible using a contact whose family resided and ran labor schemes in the village, and the village of Amaille was used through another connection who had family in that village. The interview population was mostly those residing in rural villages with two contacts in the urban area of Apia.

Interview questions were generally framed under the impact on the family's finances, relationship with their spouse, child rearing/children's wellbeing, the individual's emotional wellbeing, and general motivations for pursuing labor schemes. General interview questions were attached in the appendix, but due to the nature of the *Talanoa*, a strict questioning was not followed. The interviews acquired were ranging in length, with some being relatively short. Generally, the interviews ranged from approximately ten minutes to forty, with most being around twenty minutes in length.

Survey

An anonymous online survey was also created to supplement the results of these interviews. The platform Google Forms was used for this data collection. The population of

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study for the survey was anyone who had a family member that migrated overseas for labor. This was used to add more clarity to the issue on a wider scale by reaching a larger sample. Survey questions were framed as multiple choice questions when one answer was necessary, check-box questions when multiple answers could occur, and open-ended questions to expand upon previous questions. Multiple choice questions were used to reduce the time required to complete the survey and encourage participation. Therefore, to avoid being leading, questions were given an option of “other,” answers were based off of past literature on the topics questioned, there were options to click no effect, and there were spaces beneath questions for participants to expand upon the question if they wished to do so.

For the survey, a convenience and snowball sampling was used by again using contacts to send out the survey to as many people as possible and encouraging those individuals to recruit more participants interested in taking the survey. Although some surveys were sent to the village of Amaille, most survey participants were likely recruited through contacts at the National University of Samoa. Nineteen individuals completed the survey and results were gathered between November 8th and November 25th.

Ethical Considerations

My positionality as a *palagi*, or foreigner, creates potential conflicts, bias, and harm in conducting this research. I attempted to ensure that all *Talanoa* participants were truly desiring to participate in the research due to the potential power dynamic incurred by my position. If participants seemed hesitant to participate or answer specific questions, I ensured that they did not need to participate or answer. Additionally, when constructing my questions in both the survey and interview process, I ran questions by native Samoans who could give me a perspective on how the questions might be interpreted and the best ones to ask. I recognize that

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Western biases may infiltrate this research, but I attempted to mitigate the effects of these as much as possible by reading literature on the topic, asking contacts in Samoa for their perspective on research decisions, and truly listening to the voices that were telling stories to me instead of inserting my own narrative.

Informed consent was achieved in interviews through verbal consent after outlining the general descriptions and purpose of the project, my position as a researcher, their general commitment, topics discussed, the risk of stress in participating, and their ability to end the interview at any time. I ensured their confidentiality and anonymity by not recording or reporting any identifying information and keeping their *Talanoa* recordings password protected. These recordings were kept password protected on my phone. The script used to obtain informed consent is attached in the appendix of the research and each interviewee was recorded agreeing to the terms. Interviews were also conducted in a private setting and the interviewees were asked if the setting was comfortable for them before each interview. A translator was also used when it seemed that interviewees did not understand what was said in order to achieve informed consent.

The survey was constructed using Google Forms which recorded all answers anonymously so that the researcher had no access to identifying information. A synopsis was written at the beginning of the survey outlining the purposes of the research, the population of study, and the benefits to the academic community by participating. The survey was also structured such that no question needed to be answered to complete it online, so respondents did not feel pressured to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. This was also outlined in the description of the survey. Therefore, there was no risk in completing the survey, the survey was explained to the respondents in the beginning, and answers were recorded completely anonymously.

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Generally, I tried as best as possible to refrain from using my position of power and biases in this research and to lay a framework for respect and connection with my participants, particularly those in the *Talanoas*. I recognize that these stories are theirs to share and it is a privilege that I have been granted access to their experiences. I did my best to ensure that their voices were properly heard and outlined in the following research and to give a voice to their perspectives.

Results

Demographics

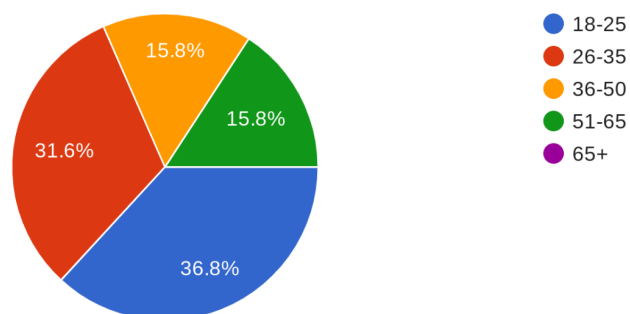
Twelve *Talanoas* were conducted with eight women who had husbands overseas for labor, two mothers with sons overseas, one man with a wife overseas, and one recruiter. Eight of the interview participants' spouses were in Australia for work and three were in New Zealand. Seven out of eleven interview participants had spouses who will be gone for longer than two years. Three interview participants had spouses who would be gone for less than a year. Most participants were young to middle aged adults.

Nineteen participants completed the survey with the majority of them being ages 18-25. The majority of participants (26.3%, or five respondents) had a brother overseas. 15.8% had a sister, and 10.5% had a husband overseas. Two respondents, or 10.5% indicated that they had cousins abroad, two respondents who had a niece/nephew overseas, two who had an aunt/uncle gone, and two that had an in-law overseas. Another interview participant just wrote in "relative". The majority of participants (68.4%) had relatives in Australia, and most were gone for over three years (47.4%). The demographic characteristics of the survey are outlined in the charts below.

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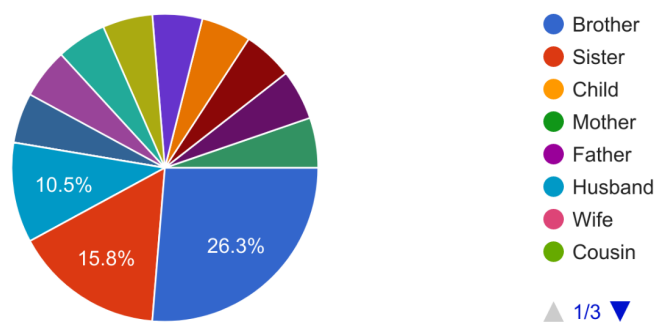
What is your age?

19 responses



Which member in your family has gone overseas for work?

19 responses

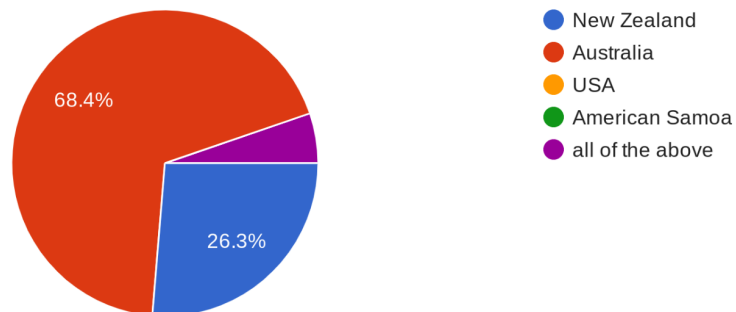


Note for relationship with seasonal worker chart: Many participants wrote in answers that led to this chart being difficult to read. The general outline of relative demographics is written above.

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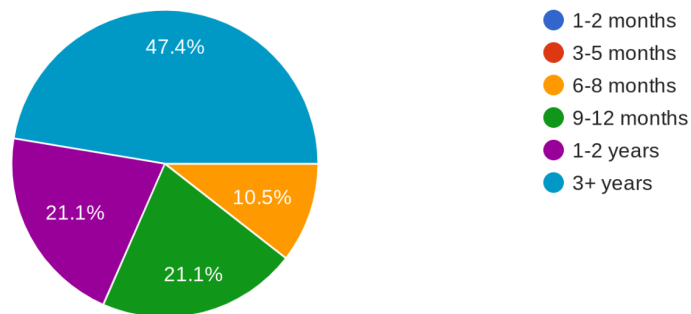
What country overseas do they work in?

19 responses



How many months out of the year is your family member gone for work?

19 responses



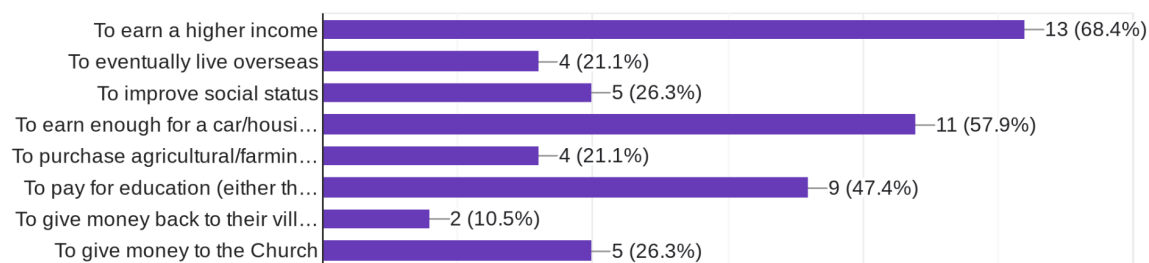
Motivations for Participation

Survey results for motivations for labor migration:

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What were the primary reasons for your family member working overseas? Check all that apply.

19 responses



The survey results indicated that the desire to earn a higher income (68.4%) was the largest driving factor of labor migration and that buying a car/housing improvements was secondary (57.9%). The ability to pay for education was also listed as a motivating factor for just under half of the respondents (47.4%) and the desire to give money to the church (26.3%), improve social status (26.3%), live overseas (21.1%), purchase agricultural/farming equipment (21.1%), and give back money to their villages (10.5%) were all relevant motivations. Three individuals also chose to write in answers regarding economic benefits and improving the standard of living of their families.

The primary motivations that emerged for families to participate in labor migration schemes from the *Talanoas* and survey were financial ones and the desire to provide for one's family due to limited economic opportunity in Samoa. Family was at the forefront of motivations for relatives participating in overseas work. The phrase "for a better future" was used frequently throughout the *Talanoas* and was a perspective that encompassed the desire for an increased income, status building, to eventually live overseas for children's education, and for money to buy things to improve the material condition of families living in Samoa. Therefore, financial success tied to family and children's overall wellbeing was central to the desire to work overseas.

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The lack of economic opportunity in Samoa was frequently cited in interviews as being a driving force for labor migration. Low earning potential led many Samoans to feel that the opportunity abroad far exceeded their potential to improve their family's well being in Samoa. Five interview participants referenced the wage differences in Australia/New Zealand compared to Samoa. The recruiter for labor schemes in Poutasi village outlined this difference stating, "Minimum wage is four tala, and that's about 2 dollars Australian, so they're gonna go to Australia and get 27 dollars per hour. That's like 52 tala per hour." This wage differential highlights the intense discrepancy between wages in Samoa versus host countries. This is likely why the desire to earn a higher income was cited as the largest driving motivation for labor participation found in the survey with 68.4% of respondents saying it was a motivating factor.

A survey respondent highlighted the ability for those with limited job opportunities in Samoa to earn higher incomes. She stated, "My nephew and niece had no formal qualifications and could only do labor work, so this was a great opportunity to help raise the standard of living for the family and maybe a car and new home." This is purported as one of the largest benefits of labor schemes in Samoa by the Samoan government: the desire to provide social mobility to unskilled individuals (Perkiss et al., 2021). However, the acute difference in wages seem to not only compel unskilled labor in Samoa, but others as well. One interview participant outlined the struggle to earn an income in Samoa even when highly educated and successful below.

"Even if you work as a doctor, a teacher, you can hardly find...that kind of salary they find there compared to us here in Samoa. It's hard...I have a brother who's been working in the teaching industry for ten years...there's a big difference. Even though he's a teacher, my husband's salary in Australia is way more higher than his salary as a teacher right now."

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Economic opportunity was also stunted by the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Three interview participants explained the push to send a relative overseas was driven by the lack of jobs in Samoa in the wake of the pandemic. One interview participant explained that his wife went abroad because she lost her job, stating “she was [working in] reception...because of the covid, they closed the borders, no tourists from overseas, that’s why the company closed the apartment, and that’s why [she went abroad].” A mother interviewed also outlined how her son lost his job due to the pandemic which led to her encouraging him to work overseas to earn enough to support their family through the difficult time below.

“Because he worked at...Samoan airways...he has no more work because of the Covid and the work sent him a message to stay home saying there's no works because of the disease. He stay home for a long time, then I ask him to go and find some work because of the kids and the wife who's attending school, but no work now. So my son don't work and his wife had no more work, so that's the reason why [he went abroad], to try to find some money for his children and his wife and also our financial problems.”

Material, tangible benefits of the wages earned overseas were driving factors for labor migration. Besides earning a higher income, the second and third largest motivations were the desire to purchase a car/housing improvements (57.9%) and pay for educational fees (47.4%) according to the survey. 21.1% of survey respondents also reported the desire to get more agricultural or farming equipment. A survey respondent outlined the desire for these material benefits, stating that the main reason for their relative going abroad was “to improve our family’s standard of living.” Another survey respondent stated that their relative went abroad “initially to earn money to send back to Samoa to assist family to improve social status, to build a bigger and

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better house for everyone, to buy a car for the family and to assist with Samoan faalavelaves and church and village obligations.” These findings highlight the material desires that many Samoan families wish to procure through labor migration.

Status and honor in contributing to families was also discussed as motivating factors. 26.3% of survey respondents stated that the motivation for going abroad was also related to improving their status. Contributing to the success and wellbeing of one’s family are essential to the honor and perception of Samoan individuals (Vakalahi, 2012). Therefore, labor migration was intended to provide Samoan individuals with a sense of honor and pride by helping out their families. This sentiment was reflected in a survey respondent’s pride in her brother for participating in the labor scheme when she stated “lucky we have a life saver in Australia...he never fails to stand up and help.” Participation in these schemes esteems not only the individual in Samoan culture, but the family as well through the individual’s dedication to family success, their contributions to the church and village, and improved material conditions.

A desire to live overseas was also emphasized in many *Talanoas* as well as survey results. 21.1% of respondents in the survey indicated the desire to live overseas was a factor in their decision to participate in the overseas labor and three interview participants expressed the desire to eventually live overseas unprompted. Interviewees expressed this desire mainly for the future of their children specifically related to the educational opportunities in New Zealand and Australia compared to Samoa. The desire to live abroad was typically in relation to limited economic or educational opportunities in Samoa. An interview participant expressed the differences in education below.

“He’s working there so that we will have citizen after three years, then we move if it’s okay with him and my family too...for my kid’s future and for my family’s future...it’s better than here

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because I've seen teachers here, they are not taking care of kids. They will talk and then say go play go play, so I see in Australia it's better for the future of the kids."

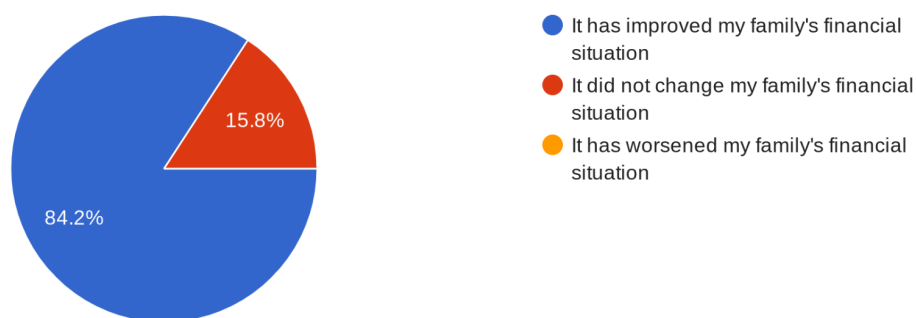
Therefore, Samoans' motivations for participating in labor migration generally related to economic opportunity which in turn was intended to provide them with access to home improvements, material goods, status building, and additional educational opportunities overseas. Family's well being and children's futures were centered in their participation. Many individuals highlighted the lack of economic opportunity and earning potential in Samoa as driving forces to migrate for labor. The Covid-19 Pandemic was also implicated in limited job opportunities. Collectively, this defines a largely economic driving force of labor migration in Samoa with the general purpose of improving families' futures.

Financial Impacts

Survey Results for Financial Impacts of Labor Migration

How has having this family member abroad affected your family's financial situation?

19 responses

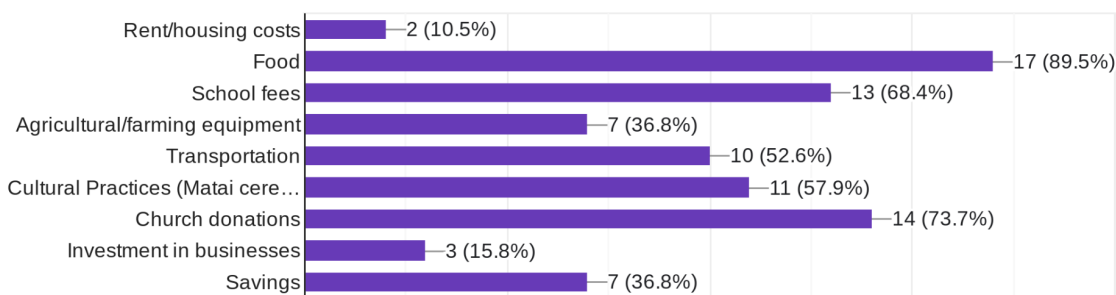


Survey Results for Use of Remittances:

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What does your family use the money sent home for? Check all that apply.

19 responses



The impacts of labor migration on finances were almost entirely beneficial, with no survey or interview respondents saying that their financial situation worsened after their relative worked for labor schemes. However, 15.8% of survey respondents said that their family's financial situation was unchanged and one *Talanoa* participant said that her husband being abroad didn't improve their financial situation. The higher percentage of the survey respondents compared with interview participants that said their financial situation was unchanged may have been because their relative who worked overseas was a niece or nephew who wouldn't have as much of an impact on their family's finances. However, some of the survey respondents and the interview respondent indicated the inability of the person abroad to save which led to their financial situation being unchanged. A survey respondent explained this inability to save below.

"it did not change my family's situation for the better...because of the lack of knowledge of seasonal workers to save money and lack of planning and forward thinking. Some of the issues were when seasonal worker returns they thought only of themselves instead of the whole family that is greedy of their money and spending on other unnecessary things."

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Although a small percentage of individuals sampled reported that their financial situation was unchanged, the majority of people indicated that it had improved. Many individuals in the survey indicated that their families had many material benefits from the labor participation such as money to spend on daily expenses as well as investing in their businesses. Many individuals surveyed and interviewed explained that remittances were used to cover the daily expenses of their homes as well as to provide for their extended family units. A survey respondent stated “now we can pay bills and afford to buy car and built roof over our head because those are hard to do since we worked here in the island.” All individuals interviewed but one expressed that their spouse working overseas improved their financial situation. Most participants expressed extreme gratitude for the financial and material improvements labor programs provided to their families.

Generally, survey respondents and *talanoa* participants expressed how remittances helped cover the daily needs of living in Samoa. Although larger projects such as renovating homes, investing in businesses, and buying a car did occur from remittances, the most frequent use of it was for daily expenses. Generally, earnings were able to be used for larger projects only when workers saved money while overseas and didn’t send it home frequently. Survey respondents and interview participants also emphasized the high cost of living in Samoa.

A survey respondent stated that the remittances were used “to help out with the family financially because life here is expensive and we can’t afford it due to [in]crease in cost of food, groceries, clothing etc.” They emphasized that the stable nature of the remittances was especially helpful. One survey respondent stated “there’s an improvement since they have some source of income to rely on aside from their plantation.” Therefore, as highlighted in the survey results above, most respondents and interview participants used the remittances sent home to cover

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regular costs of living in Samoan culture. These included the cost of food (89.5%), church donations (73.7%), school related fees (68.4%), cultural practices (57.9%) and transportation costs (52.6%).

Although almost all participants used remittances to cover daily expenses, some were able to save, invest, or purchase a large item. 36.8% of survey respondents were able to purchase agricultural/farming equipment, 36.8% were able to save, and 15.8% were able to invest in a business. These functions are arguably more important as in order for seasonal work to be largely beneficial for Samoa, it should allow families to cover more than just their daily expenses. However, echoed in many interview participants was the inability to save the money sent home due to high costs of living. One respondent stated that it was “hard to save from when he send money...hard to save in Samoa, so many *falavelaves*.” This sentiment was echoed by another interview participant below.

“If you sending 200 NZ australia, you got 300-400 in Samoa, you still having money in your account in NZ and Australia, but here if you get 300/400, once a time, you spend it on church, falavelave, shopping, plus the high cost of living here...too much money, so much money.”

The ability to invest and save is therefore crucial for benefiting Samoan communities at large. Although it was not possible for every family, some interview participants were able to invest, especially in the village of Poutasi where the program required individuals participating in the labor schemes to save money and invest it to benefit the community. One interview participant explained that she was able to use her son’s remittances to invest in her shop through “buy[ing] some foods for my shop and repair[ing] my refrigerator because it was damaged.” One

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interviewee's son started a business with the money he earned. The RSE recruiter outlined this benefit below.

“He started his business from going to the RSE and he's developed lots and lots of other businesses now...he's helped a lot of boys develop as well, he gives people jobs. He has the biggest taro plantation in the district and he employs a lot of boys”.

This highlights the positive financial benefits that can be multiplied when invested back in the Samoan economy, although many are seemingly unable to do this potentially due to lack of education and preparation. Although remittances improve family's financial situations specifically, the benefits can be multiplied in communities by increasing capital that individuals can use to invest in businesses that will generate more wealth back in Samoa. This is made increasingly possible in programs that properly train and educate workers about how to save and invest upon return from overseas. The village of Poutasi was able to foster this kind of economic investment. All of the larger economic benefits such as savings, investment, or larger purchases and projects were found with interview participants who were from the village of Poutasi. This is likely due to the way their program is structured and the requirements and financial literacy education they give to prospective seasonal workers.

Village vs. Government Models

The RSE recruiter outlined how the village of Poutasi could serve as a better model for how to maximize the economic benefits brought about by labor migration. Their organization provides financial literacy education and training on proper saving strategies and investment capabilities. Not only do they train workers, they also have strict requirements about their savings and contributions to multiplied economic gains. The recruiter interviewed explained that

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this is the benefit of community recruiting and organizing for overseas work instead of the government- run programs that recruit randomly and don't do enough to properly prepare the workers. She outlines the differences below.

“There's different streams of recruitment. This recruitment is a community based recruitment, and then there's a government based recruitment. The government based one is just a list of people and picked from a list and then sent. That recruitment caused problems in terms of they're not a team and they're drinking, carding, absconding... they're not structured, they're not taught how to do banking, how to save, how to set goals...Most of them don't come back with any savings, so the sacrifices the families made isn't really worthwhile for a lot of the cases...So to stay in the program... there are some community projects that they have to do. They each have to plant twelve trees each to give back the carbon that they use on the plane...they also need to plant a patch of taro so that when they come back, there's income for them and stuff for them to do...start doing projects that will generate money when they come back the next time.”

She outlines the transformative positive benefits labor migration schemes have had on the village of Poutasi below including rebuilding in the wake of natural disasters, purchasing cars, and investing in businesses.

“So this village has done so well with the program...So 2009 they had a tsunami that wiped out that house that we just came from that got flattened. So I think 12 people lost their lives here, and most people went inland, so the RSE program really helped rebuild the district. So if you look around there's a lot of cars, a lot of things they buy overseas is cars, or a business plantation to start building plantations. So there are benefits not only to the district but the other village

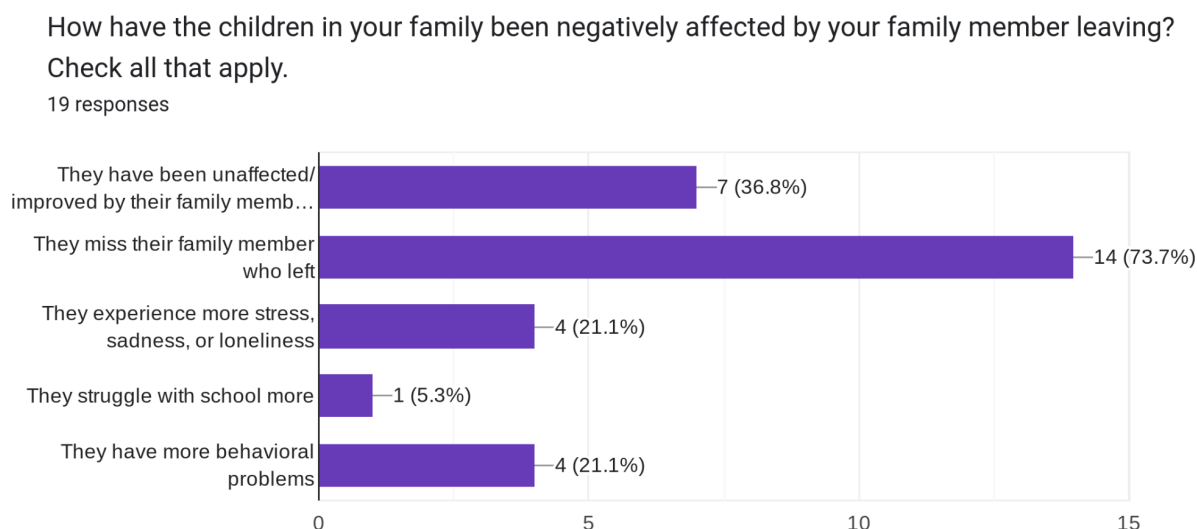
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people who come. It's been huge. So they have a celebration once a year and this whole field is full of the cars that they bought and it's packed."

Poutasi Village provides evidence that the economic benefits provided by seasonal labor schemes can have compounding benefits on economies in Samoa. In order for the financial benefits from seasonal labor to be magnified on a larger scale, there needs to be more training and education in the process of recruitment and preparation for time abroad as is done in Poutasi. The recruiter identified that the government of Samoa is looking into community-based programs like the one in Poutasi village in order to ensure the most beneficial outcomes of the seasonal labor not only short-term, but as a long term investment in family's and villages' economic success.

Effects on Children

Survey Results for the Negative Impacts on Children:



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Generally, many interview and survey participants outlined negative impacts on children with an absent relative due to labor migration. Almost three quarters of survey respondents (73.7%) indicated at least one negative impact on the children in their family. The main effects gathered in interviews and preliminary discussions were the effect on their relationship with their relative, their emotional wellbeing, their school work, and their behavioral problems. The largest effect highlighted in the survey as well as in the interviews was the children missing their relative. 73.7% of survey respondents said that the children in their family missed the member of their family that left to work overseas and almost all of the interview participants expressed similar sentiments.

The negative impact of an absent father was specifically expressed in many interview and survey responses. A survey respondent stated, “since my brother in law left, his kids have missed him and would not eat or act strange if their father didn’t call in to check on them.” One interview participant even almost forced her husband to stay home and not participate in another labor scheme because of how hard it was on her kids. She indicated a lasting impact on her children from the absence of their father and described them as “sick” without him below.

“When he left, the kids hardly get along with what they used to be when he was here with us...he come back and I was trying to let him stay cuz we have kids, and they are sick.”

This was echoed by a different survey respondent who also described her children as “sick” without their father below. The use of the word “sick” by both individuals highlights the severe toll that this took on their children. These experiences highlight the negative impacts of labor migration on children, particularly when their parent leaves.

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“My son misses his father 24/7 and would talk about him all the time. He became sick sometimes. Only when we video call and try to make him happy that heals him. It affects him mentally and physically as well as his health.”

Parents also occasionally struggled with increased behavioral issues since their family member/spouse left. 21.1% of survey respondents cited that the children in their family had more behavioral problems and one survey respondent said that they struggled with school more after their relative left. A survey respondent explained that “children miss their fathers, being away for more than a year now. Also behavioral problems arises as there is no father figure for them.”

Therefore, the absence of a father figure is cited as a reason for increased behavioral issues. The mechanisms for this is explained by one interview participant below who indicated that she struggles raising her kids without her husband and that discipline is often initiated by fathers, and mothers struggle to replicate the same effect on their children.

“[Raising children is] so difficult because...they only listen to their father. Their mother just screams and says ‘do this, do that’ but their father, he spansks them.”

Another important negative impact on children from labor migration found in the interviews was their stunted relationship with their father. The beginning of a child’s life is especially important in forming bonds with parents which is disrupted by the parent leaving. One interview participant highlighted this issue when she explained that her youngest child will likely not have a good relationship with her father, or even know him, when her husband returns from overseas work as she was too young to even bond with him. This struggle is outlined below.

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“They missed him a lot, especially my eldest and the second, but my third child, he left when she was 6 months, so she hardly knows him. [When he returns] for the two kids it will be back to normal, but not really with my youngest because he left when she was only 6/7 months.”

Although many interview and survey participants did indicate negative impacts, some respondents explained neutral or positive benefits for children. 35.8% of survey respondents indicated that the children in their family were unaffected or improved by their relative's absence. One survey respondent explained that they “are okay with my brother leaving because we know he needs to leave to earn money for himself and to help us.” This idea was echoed in some interviews where children often understand the sacrifice of family member going abroad. Additionally, some indicated that their children benefited overall from the labor migration because of the opportunities and benefits it provided for them. One interview participant stated that his children did not miss him while he was abroad and that “they were happy...and having all their wants [in Australia].” Therefore, occasionally children seem to understand why their relative is abroad, benefit from the remittances sent home, and remain unaffected.

Although some survey respondents and interview participants indicated that there were no negative impacts on their children from the labor migration, the majority of them indicated important negative impacts on children. Largely children miss their family members, particularly their parents, and behavioral and relational problems arise from their absence. Wives often struggle to raise their children without the support of their spouse. Therefore, there are potential lasting impacts on children from labor migration such as relationship issues with the family member that left, behavioral problems, and psychological harm.

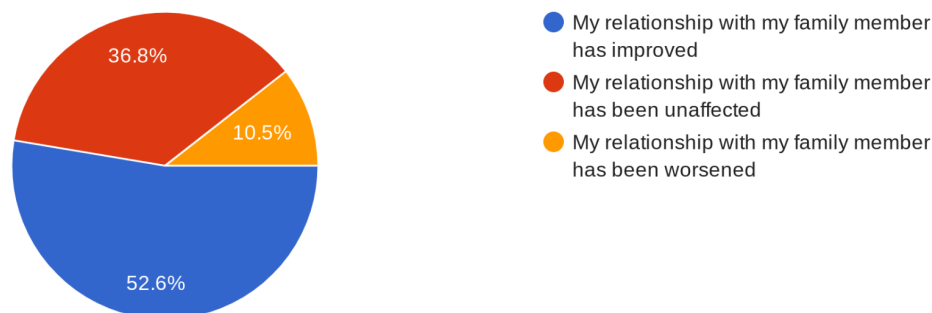
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Effects on Family Members' Relationships

Survey Results on the Impact on Relationships:

How has your relationship with your family member been affected by them leaving?

19 responses



Survey respondents indicated that the majority (52.6%) had an improved relationship with their relative since they went abroad. 36.8% reported that their relationship was unchanged, and 10.5% of survey respondents indicated that their relationship with their family member worsened. Many survey respondents indicated an improvement or no change on their relationship likely due to them not being a member of their immediate household. One survey respondent stated, “since I have been funding my own life nothing has changed since the RSE family member went and came back.” Most indicated that it improved because of the financial support they provided to their family. One survey respondent stated, “it’s improved...because the support comes from the member who left for work overseas.” Most individuals who reported that their relationship had improved indicated that it was due to their contributions to their family and the respect they had for them.

Two participants indicated that their relationship with their family member had worsened, and they were the only participants in the survey who had husbands overseas. One wife

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explained that her relationship worsened with her husband stating, “With covid emergency shutdown and all the hassle it has a toll on our marriage. Not being able to see him and hug him makes it worse. Hopefully these borders never shutdown so he can come back whenever work is done.” This highlights how the physical distance has negatively affected their marriage. The majority of survey participants indicated no difference or an improvement, perhaps due to the demographic surveyed. In fact, the only two survey respondents who indicated that their relationship with their family member worsened had husbands working overseas. This indicates that the negative impacts on relationships may be mostly for spouses, not other family members.

The *Talanoas* painted a more complex picture about the impact of the absent partner on their relationship. Most participants reported missing their spouse, but often refused to talk about that for long and would spin it in a positive way. For example, one interview participant explained “I’m okay, just missing him, but I am okay”. This framework was consistently used by participants; they would acknowledge a hardship but reference the good it’s doing for their family. One interview participant explained this struggle with missing her spouse clearly, describing that she often pushed down those feelings because she knows why it’s necessary for their family. She outlines this feeling below.

“I don’t want him to go because it’s three years, so it’s been long, but it’s good for him to go to help our family...I was feeling missing him. He is the number one supporter for me actually, especially for his family, so I try to ignore that feeling so to let him to achieve his goals to develop our family, so that’s why I’m strong.”

Many interview participants indicated that their relationship with their husband was “harder with him gone” and that they often felt less close as they were before. One interview

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participant originally said that she didn't feel lonely without her husband, but later in the interview conceded that she did struggle without him there. This reflects many interview participants' responses in which they were hesitant to express the negative sides to their partner being gone. It seemed as though many participants spun things in a positive way not only to be agreeable, but also because it was their method of coping with the loss of their spouse. This interview participant spoke about her loss of emotional connection with her husband's absence below that was unable to be filled with other interpersonal relationships.

"I sometimes feel lonely. Like he always be a partner, you know, he always gives me the courage to go on... someone to share your problems with, you know? But since he's away, and there's no one around here, you can hardly open up yourself."

Multiple interview participants also explained finding comfort in their children when missing their spouse. One participant stated that her kids helped with the loneliness "because I have kids and I see them, they remind me of him... so it's okay". Another interview participant echoed this sentiment, stating "since I have the kids, I don't have to be lonely." Therefore, although many wives felt lonely with the absence of their spouse, having kids and extended family often helped those feelings.

One major issue that many individuals referenced with the labor schemes broadly was infidelity, albeit not in their own experiences. Few interview participants and survey respondents mentioned experience with infidelity throughout the study. Only one survey participant referenced infidelity by his brother in law, stating that he "left his family (wife and kids) for someone else." Although it was not specifically asked about in the survey questions, questions about cheating were posed to wives during *Talanoas*. However, most wives indicated that they

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were not worried about their spouse cheating while abroad. Although they indicated this, they often seemed sad or uncomfortable about the question and may have not been open to discussing it. One interview participant said that she was not worried, but explained that she had prepared and discussed this with her husband. This preparation and discussion implied that she was somewhat worried about the possibility. She outlined the discussion she had with her husband below.

“My advice for him when he will go is to put God first to guide him everywhere he will go and he go there because of our goal to achieve and develop for our family. So that’s why I let him go, so I trust him to go.”

The recruiter in the village of Poutasi outlined infidelity as one of the most concerning effects on families from the labor schemes. She even referenced one of the women in the village who was a leader in their program that just found out that her husband cheated on her the day before and how he was kicked out of their house. Despite this, only one wife indicated that she was concerned about cheating, stating that she did worry about it “because you know there are boys who cheat.” Participants reported that cheating did happen with seasonal labor schemes, but that the majority of them were not worried about it. This could be again seen as a way of coping in which wives did not want to admit the possibility of it happening, or they could truly be trusting of their partners. Regardless of whether the survey or *Talanoa* participants actively had experience with cheating or concerns about it in their relationships, it was clear that it was a larger scale problem. The recruiter outlines this issue below.

“Well a lot of the problem we see at the moment is extramarital affairs, so that short or long term is a problem...that’s the biggest impact I think I see on the families.”

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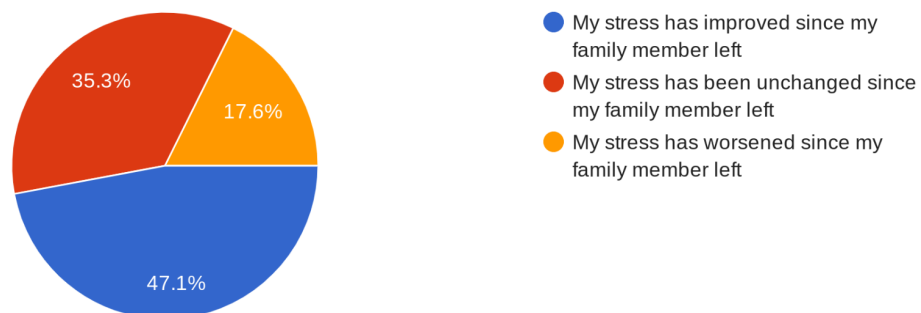
Overall, survey and interview results indicated that the absence of a family member often induced loneliness and emotional stress, particularly for spouses missing a partner rather than extended relatives. Although this was often mitigated by extended family support as will be described further, the absence of a spouse often led to an increase in loneliness. Infidelity also was cited as a broader issue that was well-known, but was not mentioned by the majority of participants. This could be because of the need to cope with worries in assuring themselves that it would not happen to them specifically, or it could indicate a reluctance to share on that intimate topic. Regardless, infidelity was indicated generally by the RSE recruiter as a major problem with labor schemes. Additionally, the absence of a spouse seemed to lead to negative outcomes for family members, although they remained strong while understanding the necessity of their spouses' labor participation.

Effects on Family Members' Stress

Survey Results for the Impact on Family Member's Stress:

How has your stress been affected by your family member leaving?

17 responses



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Survey respondents generally said that their stress levels improved since their family member left, largely due to financial reasons. This reflects that many family members' stress was alleviated through their improved financial situation. Additionally, many survey respondents indicated that their relationship with their relative improved because they respected their contribution to the family and the sacrifice that they were making. This was often framed as individuals no longer being a drain on financial resources, but instead actively contributing to families. One survey respondent said that their relationship improved because "they no longer borrow from us." Another respondent explained his relationship with his brother overseas as one of respect and encouragement below.

"Our bond is really close...he always messages me to check up on me and how works going. Sometimes he send me lunch money and encourage me to work hard and told me not to worry that he's helping me and the family."

Some survey respondents again indicated that it was unchanged due to the minimal involvement of their family member in their regular life. One survey respondent stated that "family members leaving does not affect my everyday life, I have a comfortable job and...hardly rely on my cousins or aunts for anything." This highlights that the demographic of some survey respondents may influence this question. In fact, all survey respondents who said it worsened were wives whose husbands were abroad, and no wives whose husbands were abroad indicated that their stress was unchanged or improved. Therefore, once again, the effect on spouses was the greatest. One wife explained the increased stress she faced below.

"Work plus school, family duties overload work sometimes makes it hard for me causes a lot of stress too and no one to help makes is worse."

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Talanoa participants also indicated an alleviation of stress from financial concerns, but an increase of stress due to increased roles in the household and in child rearing. One interview participant explained the increased roles she had in her household with her husband gone, stating “because now you know I have to do the jobs of both parents, father and mother, but you know I have to do both...I do more.” This highlights that the increase in responsibilities often takes a toll on spouses whose partner has left overseas. Another interview participant outlined this increase in responsibilities due to lack of people around below.

“I kind of missing him a lot since he helped me a lot with the chores around the house looking after the kids while I be going around, but I deal with it...there are lack of people in the village, especially with us, my family. Now there’s only us, me and her [her sister] and my parents. Both husbands have been left and my brothers are overseas as well, so there’s none of the family.”

Labor migration therefore mostly increased spousal stress. Additionally, stress was alleviated in financial ways, but increased in responsibilities of child rearing and running the household with the absence of a spouse. Not only were spouses more lonely without their partners, but they also had greater responsibilities and felt overwhelmed with the tasks they had to pick up. However, many interview participants indicated that the assistance of parents, inlaws, and siblings helped mitigate this stress which will be addressed further.

Mitigating Factors

Although interviews and survey results suggested some negative effects on children, relationships, and stress in families, the mitigating factors that alleviated some of these problems were the help of extended families, the use of technology, and the duration of the time overseas

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just as was found in other studies (Bedford, Bedford & Ho, 2009). One of the biggest mitigating factors on the negative impacts on families was reliance on extended families outside of the married dyad. Almost all *Talanoa* participants asserted this in their interviews. As one participant explained, in “Samoan life, you can depend on your relatives, your siblings.” In three *Talanoas*, the in-laws of the wife were responsible for at least half of the child rearing responsibilities. Another interview participant expressed that raising children without her husband was “not actually hard because I can do it on my own and I have my parent’s support, especially my mom, to look after our kids when I go to work.” One interview participant relied on her mother, and another participant relied on her father and sister to raise the children while they went to work. Therefore, almost every interview participant expressed that other family members assisted with their children and household duties. The recruiter interviewed expressed this view below.

“I mean obviously there’ll be that family unit that’s disrupted, but within Samoa as well, they normally live with the inlaws. So the parents, or grandparents, normally step in. So a grandfather will normally replace that [father figure], or an uncle.”

Another mitigating factor on the impacts of families is the use of technology. Again, almost all *Talanoa* participants discussed using video call with their spouse who was abroad and how this helped them and their children cope with their absence. One interview participant stated, “my kids didn’t miss him because he called every day.” Another participant stated that “they missed their dad, but...using messenger, they talk...very important face to face video call.” It was almost universally cited that technology helped fill in those gaps created between parent and child and husband and wife. One interview participant expressed deep gratitude for the use of technology below.

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“Nowadays technology is improving and that’s what we use. You know, video calls, Whatsapp, every night. We hardly get in touch in daytime because of work, but at night time we usually call, and that helps. It helps, and he’s working and they know [that].”

Another mitigating factor that was not mentioned in the *Talanoas* with the wives but by the recruiter was the duration of stay for the worker. She said that “short term is better” on families and that their program doesn’t participate in the longer labor schemes. She explained that longer programs often have higher rates of infidelity and larger negative impacts on families. However, the 6-9 month programs often are able to reduce the negative impacts some families see from the labor migration. Most interview participants’ spouses (7/11) were gone for longer than two years, perhaps explaining some of the negative impacts found on children and spouses.

Impacts on Gender Roles

One finding from the *Talanoas* was that gender roles were impacted by labor migration. In families, mothers reported noticing the absence of their husbands in household tasks and disciplining children. A mother reported that she struggled with her spouse’s absence due to her inability to discipline the children in the same way that he could. Survey respondents echoed that the loss of a father figure caused behavioral issues with many children. This highlights the gendered role that fathers play in raising children and how their absence affects families. One participant highlighted this issue and said that she was stressed because “I have to do the jobs of both...father and mother.” This demonstrates the issues wives face in the absence of their spouse in caretaking responsibilities and the “father” roles they must take on in their place.

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The recruiter identified that women are responsible for the majority of home tasks which is why it is harder on children and families when women leave instead of men. She stated that they “send women, but mostly men. I’d say 85%...[it’s] harder when the woman goes away.” This contributes to the gendered dynamic of labor migration in which men are most often the ones participating while women remain in Samoa to take care of the home and children. Even when individuals reported members of their extended family assisting in tasks, it was most often their mother in law or their mother that helped them, although one participant named her father as assisting with her children. This demonstrates anecdotally that women function largely as the head of home responsibilities and may indicate that it would be harsher on families if the mother left instead of the father. Only one man was interviewed whose wife was away, but she took the children with her to Australia, so that perspective was unclear.

Although the absence of fathers may be less difficult in the context of daily household chores compared to the absence of mothers, their absence is felt in village tasks. One *Talanoa* participant explained that due to the lack of men from seasonal labor in the village of Amaille, women were often forced to take up roles that men used to occupy. The young men in the village are the *taulelea* and they have distinct chores from the women in the village. She specifically identified the practices of *vavao*, *galuega*, and the making of *umu* as being impacted by the loss of the *taulelea*. *Vavao* is the evening curfew where the men guard the village while they have evening prayers. *Galuega* is the practice of mowing the grass and cleaning the surroundings of the village, or landscaping generally. Preparing the *umu* is the task of preparing meals, often specifically on Sundays. She outlines how all of these gendered village tasks were impacted by the absence of the *taulelea* below.

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“With our village...there’s so many guys or boys, members of the taulelea, that left already. It’s hard for them to do their duties...in the village. Like the vavao every evening before church ceremony..., they hardly have taulelea during the galuega. The chores throughout the village [have been affected] and...in... many families...There are girls who have been making umus, making food for the families, but those are the boys' chores. But since they left, there is no choice for us.”

This highlights that the traditional gendered dynamics of village and family tasks in Samoa have been altered by the absence of largely young untitled men, or *taulelea*. Women are forced to occupy spaces that were traditionally reserved for men in both family and village settings. Women are now participating more in disciplining children, preparing traditional food, and landscaping, all tasks that used to be reserved primarily for men in Samoan culture. As was mentioned in the effect this had on spouses, it often caused increased stress for wives as they now are forced to participate in spaces that were usually not expected of them. This creates a labor vacuum in villages and families which alters gender roles by requiring women to perform tasks traditionally reserved for men.

Impact on Workers

Although this project didn’t specifically focus on the impact of labor migration on the workers themselves, some key impacts came out unprompted during the survey and interviews. One interview participant was a seasonal worker before his wife went to Australia and participated in the work herself. He outlined the long, hard hours of work and explained that “it’s hard work for us”. Not only is the labor grueling, but they often experience culture shock and difficulty transitioning without their families. The recruiter described this process stating that

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“they come there lost. First time on a plane, first time in Australia, first time using emails, transferring money.” This can be a factor that leads to their inability to save and some issues individuals experience in the program. The recruiter even identified that the programs are “paused for Australia...because of the problems that they’ve been having. There’s been like 200 people who’ve been sent back.” This shows that individuals often struggle to get accustomed to the new environment. A survey respondent also pointed out the impact labor migration has not only on the families, but on the workers themselves below.

“Season works helps financially for those families needed income. However it has disadvantages mainly not on the families who are left behind but the people who become seasonal workers themselves. For instance there is too m[uch] pressure on them, from parents and families here to get money almost every week. So those poor people have to double shifts or take over time to get more. It's like the more families here have access to more money...the[y] want for more, neglecting the fact that their family members who are working under these seasonal workers scheme need to be healthy, both physically and mentally. They are humans, not working robots.”

Although this was not a specific intention of the research: to determine the effects on the workers themselves, it was important to acknowledge the perspective that came up of the challenges not only the family faces, but the workers themselves as they participate in labor schemes abroad. Interview participants seemed to place a lot of pressure on the spouses abroad to further the success of their families. The cost of this not only comes to the families who miss their family member, but also to the individual themselves as they participate in hard labor and are away from the life that they know and their families.

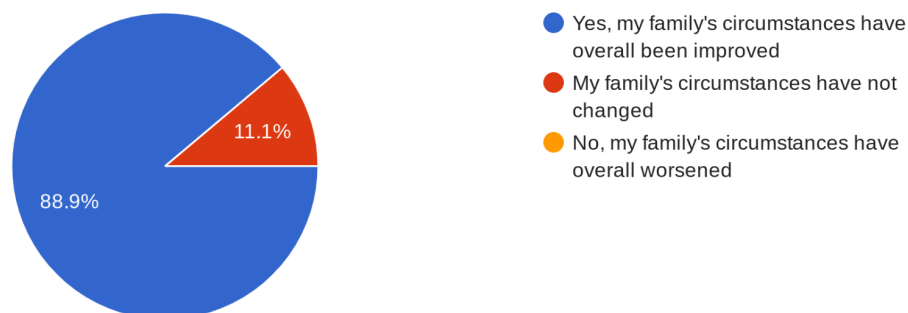
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Beneficiality of Participation

Survey Results for Beneficiality of Participation:

Overall, do you think that your family member migrating overseas has been beneficial for your family?

18 responses



Overwhelmingly families indicated that participation in labor migration was a beneficial thing for their families and that it improved their family's circumstances. 88.9% of survey respondents indicated that it improved their family's circumstances and that it was beneficial, with only 11.1% reporting that it was unchanged, and no respondents indicating that it had worsened. All *Talanoa* participants reported that it had been a good thing for their families, largely because of the financial and tangible benefits it provided to them. Many individuals expressed gratitude towards labor programs and the benefits it has provided for their families. One interview participant expressed this below.

"Yeah, lucky me, lucky me for the chance to join the RSE program, some families starve... whatever we want, we can do what we want because of the money from the program."

This quotation highlights that faced with little economic opportunity in Samoa, programs like the RSE scheme allowed his family to thrive while others looking for jobs in Samoa faced

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adversity. Similarly, an interview participant expressed gratitude about the benefits this program had given her family as she had multiple relatives in the programs. She highlighted the benefits of these programs in the face of limited employment options, specifically in the wake of the pandemic as her son lost his job. She explains this gratitude below.

“I am grateful for the program. It has been many help to my family and other relatives of my family...I have six boys at a program in New Zealand and Australia...they have no work and they have no hope for the future because they were staying home and they had no work at all.”

Both interview participants emphasize the benefits of participation in these programs as largely tangible financial ones in the wake of limited opportunity in Samoa. Interview and survey participants did not express the beneficiality of these programs outside of opportunity that did not exist in Samoa. Even when it was framed under the desire to live overseas, education and a better future for their children was cited as a driving force. Therefore, the gratitude and benefits for families of seasonal work was often predicated on the lack of opportunity in Samoa. When asked if they could earn the same amount of money in Samoa as they do working in these schemes, the conclusions were more nuanced.

Survey Results for if Finances Weren't a Factor in their Decision:

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If finances were not a factor, would you choose to have your family member remain home or work overseas?

18 responses



Although this question was hard to articulate to survey respondents and *Talanoa* participants, the majority of both groups indicated that if they could earn the same amount of money somehow in Samoa, they would have their relative/spouse stay home. 44.4% of survey respondents indicated that they would prefer to have their family member stay home and 11.1% of individuals reported that they weren't sure. Although the question was often not understood by interview participants when asked (only three participants were able to give an answer), all who answered indicated that they would "rather have him living here" if they could somehow earn the same wage in Samoa. One interview participant explained that when her sons "stay home...they have no money" but that she would rather have them "here in Samoa if they could do some work and earn some money." This highlights that most people are not actually desiring to leave Samoa, but that they feel compelled due to lack of economic opportunity.

33.3% of survey respondents indicated that they would prefer that their relative stayed overseas if finances were not a factor. This may be somewhat related to family members' indication that their relationship with their relative improved once they were gone, although survey respondents did not specifically outline this in relation to the question. Additionally, one

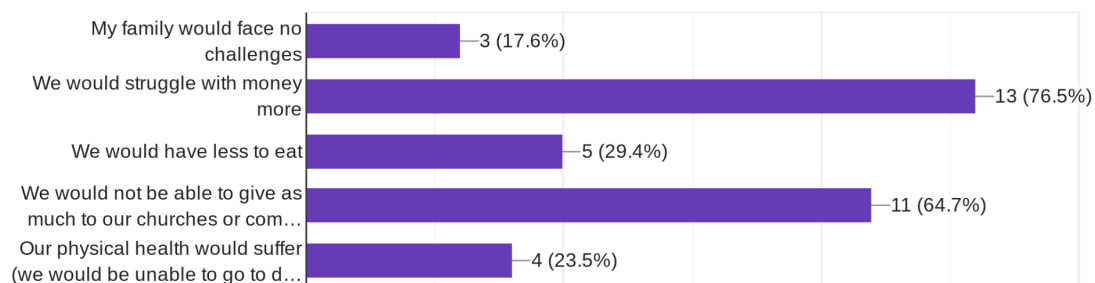
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individual referenced not just the economic opportunity of living abroad, but the chance to experience another country. They stated that “in a way I am happy that they get to travel and experience another country from Samoa which they would not have been fortunate to do so without the RSE scheme.” However, most survey respondents and interview participants indicated financial factors being a driving force to leave Samoa. In fact, survey respondents indicated that they would struggle without their family member working abroad.

Survey Results for Challenges Without Participation:

What challenges, if any, would your family face if your family member did not work overseas and send money back home? Check all that apply.

17 responses



76.6% of survey respondents reported that they would struggle with money more without their family member working overseas. 64.7% indicated that they would not be able to give as much to their churches or communities, 29.4% that they would have less to eat, and 23.5% that their physical health would suffer. Only 17.6% of respondents said that their family would face no challenges if their relative did not work overseas. A survey respondent stated that they “would not be able to support [them]selves financially given the shift of the economy in Samoa.” Another stated that “it's so hard to live on a budget and that is why we send our family member overseas.” Another participant described life in Samoa as “slowly getting by,” indicating that

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although some families would not live destitute, it would be a struggle to keep up given the wages in Samoa. Another respondent outlined this sentiment below.

“When I was the only breadwinner of the family, I struggle a lot for paying everything that cost money in the family. Sometimes we don't have church donations, sometimes our car run out of petrol cause the money already gone for some important things that we prioritize.”

This economic struggle motivated many families to send partners or family members overseas for job opportunities that could bring their family a better future. Sadly, many individuals did not see this as possible while living in Samoa given the difference in wages and lack of viable jobs. This demonstrates the driving factors behind labor migration in Samoa and the lack of economic opportunity and financial stability many Samoan families have. Although most respondents believed the labor migration to be beneficial for their families, one respondent argued that the economic benefits did not negate the consequences, and that subsistence living in Samoa may have been better than participation in labor schemes. They explain this below.

“He would've done well working on his own plantation and growing his own vegetables that he can sell and feed his family with. [Then] at least he is still with his spouse and kids. He can sell his crops and still enjoy his time with his children.”

These results indicate that if economic opportunities were comparable in Samoa to New Zealand and Australia, or even just closer, many individuals would choose not to migrate overseas for employment. The impact it has on relationships, children, and the difficulty of the labor seem to be deterring factors for participation. Prior research even indicates that family disruption is a concern for individuals applying for programs like the RSE program (Gibson,

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McKenzie, & Rohura, 2008). Therefore, in order to retain workers and individuals who desire to live in Samoa and remain with families, the Samoan economy would need to be able to provide the same economic opportunities as the host countries. Many cite this as an impossible goal, and highlight that the wage differences are so stark that a doctor in Samoa cannot even earn the same amount as an apple picker in Australia. The recruiter in Poutasi village stated that “there will never be [the same wages available] only because of the currency, the industries that we have here. It’s just not feasible.”

Discussion

This study found primarily economic motivations for international labor migration centered around a lack of economic opportunity in Samoa. This was unsurprising given the healthy literature that explains the economic driving factors behind labor migration (Lee, 2009; Gibson, McKenzie, & Rohura, 2008; Iosim et al., 2022; Cooray, 2017; Hendrickson et al., 2019; Fatupaito et al., 2021). Generally, limited economic opportunity in Samoa was implicated in the pursuit of labor schemes, and many individuals in both the survey and *Talanoas* reported that they would face challenges if their relative was not abroad. Some interview participants highlighted the Covid 19 Pandemic as increasing these economic hardships and potentially fueling labor migration.

Aiga, or family, was the primary reason to seek economic opportunity and families hoped to create better futures for their children and relatives by improving their opportunity and material condition. Therefore, families echoed similar motivations found by workers themselves in past research (Fatupaito et al., 2021; Perkiss et al., 2021). This also reflects past research identifying that migration of individuals is almost always centered around kinship, and those

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who migrate are seen as extending social networks and providing necessities for cultural functioning (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009). Migration is therefore seen as a solution to limited economic opportunity in Samoa in the age of modernity and globalization to provide for one's family (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009).

Samoans were found to use remittances generally for daily needs and cultural and religious purposes in agreement with the literature (LeDe et al., 2015; Ahlburg, 2017; Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009). Many interview and survey participants described the difficulties of saving and investing in Samoa given the expectations of family members, commitment to churches and cultural functions, and high cost of living. Therefore, many were unable to invest or save the money they made overseas, which again is in alignment with past research (LeDe et al., 2015). However, some, particularly in the village of Poutasi where the program strictly required savings and investments, were able to invest earnings in important ways that generated growth in Samoa besides the original money brought in. A small percentage of the survey respondents indicated that their relative was able to save and invest from the money earned overseas. Almost all *Talanoa* and survey respondents reported that seasonal work participation improved their family's financial situation.

Although the impacts of labor migration were almost entirely beneficial for Samoans' finances, the impacts on children and spouses were not besides material benefits. A large number of survey and *Talanoa* respondents indicated negative impacts on children from a relative migrating overseas, the effects of which seem to be most pronounced when a parent leaves. The main negative impacts found were children missing their relatives, harming of a parental bond, and increased behavioral issues. The harm done to children with an absent father was expressed as very severe by some mothers and some even described their children as "sick" in the wake of

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their father leaving. The spouses themselves additionally struggled with the absence of their partner due to loneliness, lack of emotional connection with others, and increased stress in household responsibilities which was found in other studies as well (Bedford, Bedford, & Ho, 2009; Hendrickson, 2019). This was not found to be as much of an issue with other relatives such as cousins, siblings, or parents with family members abroad. Infidelity was also cited as a broader concern although most interview and survey participants did not indicate that they were concerned about it, and only one survey participant referenced an extramarital affair as causing detrimental impacts to their family.

Although spouses and children did struggle with the absence of their family member, the resilience of Samoan women and families stood out in *Talanoas* and survey respondents. Almost all mothers reported relying on extended family members such as their parents, mother in laws, or siblings to assist in taking care of their kids and meeting emotional needs from their absent spouse. Although participants did highlight some problems with themselves and their children, almost all would say “but I’m okay,” and “I’m strong.” The resilience this extended social support and social reliance provides Samoan families is crucial. Additionally, whether as a way to cope or not, Samoan women consistently emphasized their strength and capability to weather the challenges brought about by labor migration.

Mitigating factors found for the negative effects experienced by participants were extended family support, use of technology, and the duration of the time abroad which has been found in other studies as well (Bedford, Bedford & Ho, 2009). Almost all *Talanoa* participants highlighted the assistance of family support and technology to access their spouse as helping with the issues that arose from labor migration. The RSE recruiter also identified that longer

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schemes were harshest on families and that shorter durations caused less issues with families in Samoa. These factors all helped ease the harm caused by the absence of a relative or spouse.

Varying types of recruitment processes were anecdotally discussed to mitigate some of the harm to families and maximize the benefits of participation. The RSE recruiter in Poutasi outlined the village model of recruitment as a much more effective model of seasonal labor schemes. The village model requires participants to go as communities and hold one another accountable, have social ties while abroad, save and invest, and have strict guidelines to follow in order to participate. This is in contrast to the government recruitment wherein individuals are chosen at random and sent without proper connections, training, and preparation for how to maximize the good of the program. The social accountability and responsibility fostered by village models seems to maximize the benefits to communities and families by encouraging investments and savings, social responsibility to mitigate extramarital affairs, and committees that look after families while their spouses are abroad. This model should be investigated further to see how it may mitigate harm done to Samoan families and maximize economic benefits to families and communities.

Gender roles were also found to be impacted by labor migration in the family and village setting. Mothers reported having to occupy culturally masculine roles in parenting such as disciplining the children and preparing food. This induced stress from many wives as they had increased responsibilities in the home and there was a labor vacuum in their families. This effect was compounded on a village level in which the *taulelea*, or young untitled men, were notably absent due to high participation in labor schemes and were unable to perform their designated duties in village spaces. This led to women having to occupy traditionally masculine roles in

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both the family and village settings. This could have far reaching implications on gender roles in Samoa.

Despite the challenges to families discovered, almost all survey and *Talanoa* participants reported that labor migration was an overall beneficial endeavor for their families. This is in contrast to many other developing countries in which families reported that the financial benefits did not outweigh the emotional toll it took on families (Cooray, 2017; Hendrickson, 2019; Iosim et al., 2022). Participants emphasized the necessity of the financial benefits gained from overseas labor and consistently described the challenges as necessary for their family's success and future given the lack of economic opportunity in Samoa. Samoans' assessment of migration may differ heavily from other countries due to their conceptions of movement, or *malaga* and the idea that migration may increase social interconnectedness and provide important uses for families instead of viewing it as a disruptive force (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009). This may have led to the discrepancy between Samoan families' assessment of migration and families in other developing nation contexts.

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However, when participants were asked if finances were not a factor if they would still participate in labor schemes, most respondents indicated that they wouldn't. This highlights that if the Samoan economy could provide similar economic opportunities for Samoan individuals, many families would prefer for individuals to stay in the country and not leave their families. This calls into question the overall beneficiality of these programs as it highlights a supposed lack of choice wherein Samoan families felt that the only avenue to a better future was through overseas labor, not participation in the Samoan economy. However, most individuals interviewed argued that development in Samoa would never produce the same earning potential and economic opportunity as is possible abroad.

International labor migration was therefore assessed as overall beneficial to Samoan families, likely due to differing conceptions of migration, the necessity of providing opportunities for one's *aiga*, and the collective and extended social support networks Samoans are a part of. Despite this, there were apparent ruptures to families particularly for spouses and children. Therefore, participants' expressed nuanced understandings of the consequences and benefits of international labor migration for their families. They emphasized the tangible economic benefits provided by participation in seasonal work schemes in the wake of limited opportunity in Samoa as essential to their families' wellbeing and participation in Samoan life.

Limitations

The main limitations of this research were language barriers, my positionality as a foreigner, discomfort discussing sensitive topics, and the tendency for participants to be agreeable and positive. The most important and difficult limitation of this research was the language barrier. My inability to speak participants' language led to comprehension barriers from participants and an inability for them to express themselves in their native tongue. Three

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interviews had translators available, but most often translators were not used during *Talanoas*. Particularly in the survey, answers from respondents were occasionally contradictory, highlighting that they may not have understood the question properly. My inability to speak their language led to a disruption in connection during *Talanoa* processes and survey questioning.

My position as a *palagi*, or foreigner, also led to a disruption of traditional *Talanoa* research methodology as it made interview participants seem uncomfortable talking about certain things and made the process more formal than was intended. Casual, easy conversations were often difficult to establish with interview participants. Due to the nature of having to recruit participants, set up meeting times, and the little time we had to get to know one another in most cases, it was difficult to establish genuine connection and ease of conversation before asking participants questions. Spontaneous connections were not the basis of most interviews; instead they were cultivated meetings which de-valued the genuine connection of the *Talanoa*. Generally, participants seemed uninterested in casual conversation and it was clear that my identity as a *palagi* and researcher limited the ease of conversation.

One challenge of the research, particularly in the *Talanoas*, was interviewees' discomfort with discussing negative things. Discomfort was clear to the researcher as interviewees were asked questions about infidelity or spousal relationships particularly. Often when these questions were asked, participants' demeanor would change and their answers would sometimes be shorter and more abrupt. Many individuals seemed to withdraw during the process. My position as a *Palagi* may have led to their discomfort and unwillingness to discuss negative things about their families, lives, and culture. Additionally, discussing things like infidelity and intimate details of partnerships is difficult for most people, particularly to a researcher they just met. Therefore, the

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nature of the subjects discussed led to a discomfort in addressing these issues which may have impacted the information that was received.

Even respondents that highlighted something negative about their experience tended to frame it in a positive light, perhaps reflecting a desire to be agreeable and discuss mostly positive experiences with labor schemes. Interview participants would often state a negative outcome, but spin it in a positive light. For example, one interview participant originally said that she did not feel lonely or miss her husband, but eventually conceded that “I kind of missing him a lot... but I deal with it, everything’s good.” Participants may have been uncomfortable addressing the negative sides to labor migration, and when they did, they often spun it in a positive way such that the reality may not have been accurately reflected in the data. However, this could also reflect the resilience of Samoan women or the ways in which they cope.

The setting/recruitment of these participants could also have led to this, particularly in the village of Poutasi where interview participants were recruited through the agency that their spouse was traveling for. The RSE recruiter additionally helped translate for two interviews, which may have limited what participants were willing to say. In the village of Amaille, my relationship to a former member of their village, my program’s academic assistant, was known. This may have led individuals to be uncomfortable talking about hardships if they did not understand the nature of the anonymity/confidentiality of the research.

The demographic of the survey led to some discrepancies between *Talanoas* and survey results as it occasionally had extended family members who went overseas for labor such as nieces, nephews, and cousins which generally would not have a huge impact on those relatives. This was highlighted in the fact that only two respondents had spouses abroad, and both were more likely to indicate negative outcomes than others. This did establish that those with spouses

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abroad were more impacted than other relatives, but may have underestimated the problems shown in the survey due to the demographic surveyed.

My positionality as a foreigner, or *palagi*, likely led to not only some discomfort from participants to discuss certain topics, but also a biased lens. I worked hard to overcome this bias in my questioning and attempted to leave questions as open as possible when individuals could understand them, but this likely affected the questions I chose to ask, how I asked them, and how I interpreted the results. I attempted to eliminate this bias whenever possible by doing things such as reading past literature to define questions and answers for the survey and *Talanoas* as well as learning about and understanding Samoan culture. Regardless, acknowledging this bias is important to addressing limitations of this research.

Conclusion

This research found that Samoan families perceive labor migration as generally beneficial to their lives and communities due to the tangible benefits it provides that improve their material condition. This is particularly due to the lack of economic opportunity in Samoa that may have been worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. The benefits of remittances could also be multiplied through proper cultivation of financial literacy training and investment by workers such as in the village of Poutasi. However, negative implications of labor migration on specifically children and spouses were found. The absence of a relative had relational, emotional, and child-rearing costs for families although they were mitigated by the use of technology and support of extended families. Labor migration programs must take these factors into account when planning and recruiting for programs and ideally implement strategies to mitigate any harm caused during the process. Village model recruitment and participation may offer insight into harm reduction to

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families and maximization of benefits from participation. Policymakers in Samoa should also consider the negative impacts on children and spouses by potentially attempting to create economic opportunities in Samoa similar to the opportunities found abroad if possible.

Future Research

This research helped clarify some of the detrimental impacts on families in Samoa and should be replicated on a larger scale. Economic development in Samoa should be investigated further to see if there is potential to develop similarly to host countries so that families do not feel the need to migrate overseas to earn enough to support their families. Additional research should be done on the differences between village models of recruitment and labor participation versus government models. General research on how to reduce the harm done to families by labor migration should be conducted. Future research should also investigate further the preliminary findings of the impact of labor migration on labor vacuums in village and family settings that alter gender roles in Samoa. The lasting implications of this are unknown and may have long-term effects on Samoan culture and conceptions of gender roles.

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Glossary

Aiga: Family

Fa'a Samoa: The Samoan way of life

Fa'alavelaves: Contributions to family/communities for large cultural events such as weddings and funerals

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Galuega: The practice of mowing the grass and cleaning the surroundings of the village;
landscaping

Malaga: Migration, or more accurately, movement between places

Palagi: A foreigner

Talanoa: Pacific Island research paradigm that characterizes a sharing of stories, or informal
interview practices

Taulelea: The young untitled men in the village

Umu: The task of preparing meals with outside ovens, often on Sundays

Vavao: The evening curfew where the men guard the village while they have evening prayer

Appendices

Informed Consent Script

I am a student at the School of International Training and I am conducting research about the impact that labor migration has on families in Samoa. Your participation will involve one talanoa that will last for around an hour, or however long we need to answer questions. There will be sensitive information asked during this interview, such as your relationships with your children and husband, that may cause you stress. Please know that you can choose not to answer a question if it makes you uncomfortable and you can end the interview at any time. This research will benefit the academic community because it will define the advantages and disadvantages of labor migration on families. Ideally, this knowledge could help inform individual families and Samoan policy as to the impact labor migration has on families. I will do everything I can to protect your privacy by going to a setting that you feel comfortable in for this interview, removing any identifying information of you or your family in the report I write, and keeping this interview recording password protected if you decide to continue. I will keep this recording for five years and after that it will be deleted. This interview may be used for future research in undergraduate or graduate research I conduct, but the confidentiality of it will be maintained throughout the entire process. Does this sound okay to you and would you like to continue with the interview?

Interview Questions

General:

1. How old are you?

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2. How long have you and your husband been together?
3. What country did your husband go to for work?
4. For how many years has your husband migrated overseas for work?
5. How many months out of the year is your spouse not in Samoa?

Reasons for working overseas:

1. What made your husband decide to go overseas?
 - a. More money, a better life for the kids, desire to leave Samoa, status building?

Use of remittances:

1. What do you primarily use the money sent to you for?
2. Do you use this money only on your family, or on things in your community?

Financial stability:

1. How has your financial situation been affected by your husband being abroad?
2. Do you worry about money more or less since your husband went overseas?
3. Are you able to save more, less, or the same amount of money now compared to before your husband went abroad?

Child rearing:

1. Do you do most of the caretaking for your children? Aunties, grandmas, etc?
2. How has taking care of your children changed since your spouse migrated?
3. What changes (if any) do you notice in your children since your husband left?
 - a. Do they have more behavioral issues?
 - b. Do they struggle more with schoolwork?
4. Do you think not having a father figure around negatively impacts your children?
5. How is your children's relationship with their father?
6. Do your children miss their father while he's gone? How does this affect them?
 - a. How do you think their relationship will be with their father when he returns?

Emotional wellbeing

1. How has your stress been impacted by your husband going abroad? Is it worse, better, the same?
2. Do you live with your in-laws? If so, has that been difficult with your husband gone?
3. Do you feel more lonely/sad while your husband is gone?

Spousal relationship quality:

1. How has your relationship with your husband been since he went abroad?
2. Do you feel as close with him as you did before he left for work?
3. Do you ever worry that your husband will cheat on you while abroad?

Concluding Questions

1. Are you happy that your husband chose to take a job overseas? If you could change it, would you?
2. If finances were not a factor, would you prefer that your husband remained home?
3. Overall, do you think that overseas work is beneficial for your family?
4. Is there anything else you would like to say?

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Survey Questions

Survey introduction: This survey is meant to further an understanding of the impact that labor migration has on families in Samoa. If you are part of an *aiga* that has a family member travel overseas for work, your participation in this survey would be greatly appreciated. This might include having a member of your family participating in New Zealand's RSE program, Australia's PLS program, or other labor programs requiring traveling overseas for employment. All answers will be recorded completely anonymously and your privacy will be protected. You may choose not to answer any questions if you wish not to. Fa'afetai lava!

What is your age?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51-65
- 65+

Which member in your family has gone overseas for work?

- Brother
- Sister
- Child
- Mother
- Father
- Husband
- Wife
- Other

What country overseas do they work in?

- New Zealand
- Australia
- USA
- American Samoa
- Other

How many months out of the year is your family member gone for work?

- 1-2 months
- 3-5 months
- 6-8 months
- 9-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 3+ years

What were the primary reasons for your family member working overseas? Check all that apply.

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- To earn a higher income
- To eventually live overseas
- To improve social status
- To earn enough for a car/housing improvements
- To purchase agricultural/farming equipment
- To pay for education (either their own, or their children's)
- To give money back to their village
- To give money to the church
- Other

Please expand upon the question above if you wish to do so. What was your family member's main reason to go abroad for work?

How has having this family member abroad affected your family's financial situation?

- It has improved my family's financial situation
- It did not change my family's financial situation
- It has worsened my family's financial situation

Please expand on the question above if you wish to do so. If your family's financial situation has improved or worsened, in what ways? Why has it been improved or worsened?

What does your family use the money sent home for? Check all that apply

- Rent/housing costs
- Food
- School fees
- Agricultural/farming equipment
- Transportation
- Cultural practices (matai ceremonies, weddings, funerals, etc.)
- Church donations
- Investment in businesses
- Savings
- Other

How have the children in your family been negatively affected by your family member leaving?

Check all that apply.

- They have been unaffected/improved by their family member leaving
- They miss their family member who left
- They experience more stress, sadness, or loneliness
- They struggle with school more
- They have more behavioral problems
- Other

Please expand upon the previous question if you wish to do so. What other ways, if any, have they been negatively impacted by your family member leaving? What changes have you noticed in the children growing up in your family?

How has your relationship with your family member been affected by them leaving?

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- My relationship with my family member has improved
- My relationship with my family member has been unaffected
- My relationship with my family member has been worsened

Please expand upon the previous question if you wish to do so. If your relationship has improved or worsened, in what ways?

How has your stress been affected by your family member leaving?

- My stress has improved since my family member left
- My stress has been unchanged since my family member left
- My stress has worsened since my family member left

Please expand upon your answer to the previous question if you wish to do so. If your stress levels have improved or worsened, why? How have your family members been affected?

Overall, do you think that your family member migrating overseas has been beneficial for your family?

- Yes, my family's circumstances have overall been improved
- My family's circumstances have not changed
- No, my family's circumstances have overall worsened

If finances were not a factor, would you choose to have your family member remain home or work overseas?

- I would choose to have my family member remain home
- I would choose to have my family member continue to work overseas
- I'm not sure
- Other

What challenges, if any, would your family face if your family member did not work overseas and send money back home? Check all that apply.

- My family would face no challenges
- We would struggle with money more
- We would have less to eat
- We would not be able to give as much to our churches or communities
- Our physical health would suffer (we would be unable to go to the doctor or get medicine)
- Other

Please expand upon the previous question if you wish to do so. What other challenges, if any, would your family face by not having a family member working overseas?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?