

Transnational Families: Maintaining Relationships Across Borders

Sefa Bulut¹ 

¹ Department of Counseling Psychology & Head of Student Counseling Center, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Türkiye

Corresponding author email address: sefabulut22@gmail.com

Article Info

Article type:

Letter to Editor

How to cite this article:

Bulut, S. (2024). Transnational Families: Maintaining Relationships Across Borders. *Journal of Psychosociological Research in Family and Culture*, 2(2), 1-3.

<https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.jprfc.2.2.1>



© 2024 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

ABSTRACT

In an era characterized by globalization and mobility, the phenomenon of transnational families has become increasingly prevalent. These families, dispersed across national borders, strive to maintain familial bonds despite geographical separations. This letter explores the dynamics of transnational families, focusing on the methods they employ to preserve relationships and the challenges they encounter, drawing upon recent scholarly contributions to the field. In conclusion, transnational families embody the complexities and dynamism of contemporary family life in a globalized world. Through innovative communication practices, caregiving arrangements, and the maintenance of cultural ties, these families demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability. As globalization continues to shape the patterns of migration and family life, it is essential for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to pay close attention to the needs and experiences of transnational families. Addressing issues of accessibility, supporting caregiving arrangements, and fostering cultural connectivity are crucial steps in ensuring the well-being and cohesion of transnational families. As we move forward, it is vital to continue exploring and understanding the diverse ways in which families maintain their relationships across borders, adapting to the challenges and opportunities of a connected world.

Keywords: *Transnational Families, Relationships, Family Structure.*

In an era characterized by globalization and mobility, the phenomenon of transnational families has become increasingly prevalent. These families, dispersed across national borders, strive to maintain familial bonds despite geographical separations. This letter explores the dynamics of transnational families, focusing on the methods they employ to preserve relationships and the challenges they encounter, drawing upon recent scholarly contributions to the field.

The concept of transnational families refers to family units where members live in different countries but maintain close relationships and fulfill family roles across borders (Bernardi, 2011). These families often face unique challenges, including navigating long-distance communication, managing caregiving from afar, and maintaining cultural ties. Despite these challenges, transnational families exhibit remarkable resilience and adaptability, employing various strategies to nurture their relationships and support one another.

Communication technology plays a crucial role in maintaining the intimacy and connection within transnational families. The advent of digital media has transformed the landscape of transnational communication, allowing families to share everyday experiences and maintain emotional closeness despite physical distance (Kang, 2012; Parsakia & Rostami, 2023; Wilding et al., 2020). Video calls, social media, and messaging apps have become indispensable tools for these families, enabling them to participate in one another's lives in real-time.

However, the reliance on technology also brings to light issues of digital divide and accessibility. Not all family members have equal access to or proficiency with digital communication tools, which can exacerbate feelings of isolation and detachment (Toumi, 2022). Therefore, it's critical for families and policymakers to address these disparities to ensure that all family members can benefit from the connective potential of technology.

The resilience of transnational families is further evidenced in how they navigate the challenges of caregiving across borders. Studies have shown that these families develop complex arrangements for care, often involving extended family members or community networks (Matei & Bobárnat, 2021; Tu, 2022). For example, Filipino transnational families have been found to establish intricate support systems to care for children and elderly family members, demonstrating the adaptability and resourcefulness of these families in the face of logistical and emotional challenges (Garabiles et al., 2017; Parreñas, 2005).

Moreover, transnational families play a significant role in the transmission of cultural values and identities across generations and borders. Despite the physical separation, parents in transnational families actively engage in the cultural education of their children, ensuring the continuation of language, traditions, and cultural practices (Yeoh et al., 2005). This effort underscores the importance of cultural connectivity as a cornerstone of family identity and cohesion in transnational contexts.

The concept of "transnational family habitus" has emerged as a useful framework for understanding how transnational families navigate their complex realities. This concept refers to the shared dispositions and practices that shape the ways in which family members relate to one another and to their broader social worlds across borders (Zontini & Reynolds, 2017). It highlights the strategic and intentional ways in which families maintain their bonds and

support each other, despite the challenges posed by distance and national boundaries.

In conclusion, transnational families embody the complexities and dynamism of contemporary family life in a globalized world. Through innovative communication practices, caregiving arrangements, and the maintenance of cultural ties, these families demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability. As globalization continues to shape the patterns of migration and family life, it is essential for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to pay close attention to the needs and experiences of transnational families. Addressing issues of accessibility, supporting caregiving arrangements, and fostering cultural connectivity are crucial steps in ensuring the well-being and cohesion of transnational families. As we move forward, it is vital to continue exploring and understanding the diverse ways in which families maintain their relationships across borders, adapting to the challenges and opportunities of a connected world.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

None.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethics Considerations

Not applicable.

References

- Bernardi, L. (2011). A Mixed-Methods Social Networks Study Design for Research on Transnational Families. *Journal of marriage and family*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2011.00845.x>
- Garabiles, M. R., Ofreño, M. A. P., & Hall, B. J. (2017). Towards a Model of Resilience for Transnational Families of Filipina Domestic Workers. *PLoS One*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0183703>
- Kang, T. (2012). Gendered Media, Changing Intimacy: Internet-Mediated Transnational Communication in the Family Sphere. *Media Culture & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711430755>
- Matei, A., & Bobârnat, E.-S. (2021). Parental Role Changes in Romanian Transnational Families: Consequences of Migration. *International journal of environmental research and public health*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182412960>
- Parreñas, R. S. (2005). Long Distance Intimacy: Class, Gender and Intergenerational Relations Between Mothers and Children in Filipino Transnational Families. *Global Networks*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2005.00122.x>
- Parsakia, K., & Rostami, M. (2023). Digital Intimacy: How Technology Shapes Friendships and Romantic Relationships. *AI and Tech in Behavioral and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 27-34. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.aitech.1.1.5>
- Toumi, I. (2022). 'A Wedding Through a Piece of Glass': Transnational Tunisian Family Communication as Driver of ICT Adoption. *Media Culture & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221099616>
- Tu, M. (2022). Ageing, Migration Infrastructure and Multi-generational Care Dynamics in Transnational Families. *Global Networks*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12390>
- Wilding, R., Baldassar, L., Gamage, S., Worrell, S., & Mohamud, S. (2020). Digital Media and the Affective Economies of Transnational Families. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877920920278>
- Yeoh, B. S. A., Huang, S., & Lam, T. (2005). Transnationalizing the 'Asian' Family: Imaginaries, Intimacies and Strategic Intentions. *Global Networks*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2005.00121.x>
- Zontini, E., & Reynolds, T. (2017). Mapping the Role of 'Transnational Family Habitus' in the Lives of Young People and Children. *Global Networks*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12185>