

# Multimedia Communication and the Structuring of Migration Decisions: A Comparative Study of Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Malaysia in the Context of Regional Labor Cooperation

Cu Ngoc Dang

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Nam Can Tho University, Vietnam

**Abstract**—This study investigates how multimedia communication influences the migration decisions of youth in Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Malaysia—not merely as a reaction to economic constraints, but as a culturally mediated process shaped by metaphorical cognition and affective structures. Drawing upon conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the politics of emotion (Ahmed, 2004), gender performativity (Butler, 2004), and the sociology of communication (Bourdieu, 1991; Bauman, 2000; Virilio, 2006), the research analyzes 500 survey responses and 80 in-depth interviews conducted across the four countries. The findings indicate that migration is conceptualized through dominant metaphors such as “escape”, “sacrifice”, “flight”, and “mature responsibility”, which are continuously circulated, legitimized, and normalized by regional media. These metaphors not only frame migration as a desirable rite of passage but also delegitimize immobility by associating it with emotional stagnation or social failure. The study proposes an original regional analytical model, demonstrating how transnational media infrastructures condition the emotional and cognitive architectures of migration imaginaries in contemporary Southeast Asia.

**Index Terms**—migration discourse, conceptual metaphor theory, multimedia communication, affective politics, Southeast Asia

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Context and Rationale

In recent years, international labor migration has emerged as a dominant livelihood strategy across several Southeast Asian nations, particularly Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia—countries recognized as major labor-exporting economies. While economic imperatives and structural labor inequalities remain central explanatory factors, multimedia communication has increasingly surfaced as a powerful cultural force shaping the perceptions, emotional registers, and aspirations of young migrants. The rapid proliferation of social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook has not only accelerated transnational flows of information but has also constructed potent symbolic imaginaries of success, autonomy, and “escaping poverty”—images deeply embedded in narratives of departure and transformation. Despite this growing influence, the role of digital media in migration decision-making remains insufficiently examined, especially through a cross-national, theoretically grounded comparative lens.

### B. Research Question and Objectives

This study investigates a central research question:

*How does multimedia communication structure labor migration decisions among youth in Vietnam and selected Southeast Asian countries?*

To address this, the research is guided by three core objectives:

- (i) to analyze the symbolic, affective, and identity-based motifs recurrently reproduced in migration-related media discourse;
- (ii) to compare thematic convergences and divergences in migration imaginaries across national contexts; and
- (iii) to develop a conceptual model that elucidates the interrelations between media infrastructures, emotional economies, and migration behavior.

### C. Scope and Methodological Approach

The empirical scope encompasses four Southeast Asian countries—Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia—each characterized by extensive labor exportation and deep integration into global media circuits. The data corpus comprises:

- (i) mass media and social media content related to migration circulated between 2020 and 2025;
- (ii) a quantitative survey involving 800 young workers aged 18–35; and
- (iii) 80 in-depth interviews with individuals who have migrated, are currently in transit, or are actively planning to migrate.

The research employs an interdisciplinary methodological synthesis that integrates content analysis, semiotic motif analysis, and behavioral modeling. These methods are anchored in theoretical insights from conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), affect theory (Ahmed, 2004), gender performativity (Butler, 2004), and the sociology of symbolic power and mobility (Bauman, 2000; Bourdieu, 1991; Virilio, 2006).

#### D. Research Gap and Contribution

Although the scholarly literature on labor migration is extensive, it tends to foreground macroeconomic structures, remittance flows, or policy regimes, with limited attention to the symbolic and affective architectures that underlie migratory imaginaries. Particularly underexplored is the influence of digital media ecologies in reconfiguring how individuals conceptualize sacrifice, mobility, success, and futurity (Ahmed, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This study addresses that gap by bridging media theory, semiotics, and cognitive metaphor theory, offering a novel analytical model that traces how mediated discourse contributes to the moral and emotional scripting of migration. Furthermore, the study proposes policy-oriented recommendations aimed at fostering a more human-centered and ethically responsive media ecosystem within frameworks of regional labor governance (Bauman, 2000; Butler, 2004).

#### E. Structure of the Paper

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows:

- **Section 1** introduces the research context, guiding questions, and methodological scope.
- **Section 2** develops the theoretical framework, drawing from symbolic communication, affect theory, and migration studies.
- **Section 3** outlines the research design, including data collection procedures and analytical strategies.
- **Section 4** presents the findings from cross-national data analysis.
- **Section 5** discusses the theoretical and policy implications and offers directions for future interdisciplinary research.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Literature Review

#### (a). Symbolic Communication and the Media Construction of Migration

Communication is not a passive conduit for information, but a generative system of meaning that shapes social behavior. Within this semiotic paradigm, signs and symbols do more than represent—they structure how individuals perceive and respond to the world. Barthes (1972) conceptualized modern communication as a “mythological system,” wherein everyday narratives are naturalized into cultural truths. The notion that “going abroad equals success,” for instance, functions as a modern myth, shaping both self-conception and social status through repetitive media reinforcement.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert that conceptual metaphors are not stylistic devices but cognitive mechanisms that structure human understanding. In migration discourse, metaphors such as “migration is escape” or “departure is transformation” provide organizing schemas through which individuals internalize migration as heroic, necessary, or morally desirable. These metaphors circulate through mass and digital media, contributing to affective and moral economies that shape identity and aspiration. Thus, communication emerges as a symbolic infrastructure through which structural constraints are rearticulated as emotionally resonant narratives.

#### (b). Media, Emotion, and the Affective Economies of Migration

Ahmed (2004) introduces the concept of affective economies to demonstrate how emotions function as social forces that circulate through cultural forms. Hope, shame, envy, and pride are not merely individual states but are conditioned and intensified by media. TikTok tributes to migrant success or Facebook livestreams from overseas labor sites create immersive emotional environments—what Ahmed (2004) terms “circuits of desire.” In this framework, affect becomes a subtle but powerful form of governance, shaping not only what is imagined but also what is deemed legitimate and desirable.

Expanding this lens, Butler (2009) reconceptualizes precarity as an affective, not merely material, condition. For many Southeast Asian youth navigating unemployment and familial pressure, migration offers an emotionally charged response to systemic vulnerability. Through symbolic media templates, hardship is recoded as agency, and departure becomes a culturally sanctioned script of self-transcendence.

### B. Theoretical Framework

#### (a). Media Fields, Symbolic Capital, and Migration Imaginaries

Bourdieu (1991) views media as a field of symbolic power where narratives are not transmitted neutrally but are actively produced, legitimated, and naturalized. Media possesses symbolic capital that reshapes habitus—the internalized structures of perception and disposition—such that migration appears self-evident, even morally imperative. This power lies in normalization through repetition, often masked as common sense.

Appadurai's (1996) concept of the mediascape further highlights how globalized image flows construct aspirational futures. These symbolic grammars—success, sacrifice, redemption—are localized into what he calls “migration imaginaries”: culturally specific interpretive frameworks that shape not only where individuals aspire to go, but why they go and how they assign moral value to the act of migration. The mediascape is thus a symbolic terrain where global narratives and local aspirations converge and co-construct the social meaning of mobility.

#### *(b). Toward a Semiotic and Affective Model of Migration*

Traditional migration literature in Southeast Asia has focused on macroeconomic forces, policy infrastructures, and kinship networks (Asis, 2006; Nguyễn & Dang, 2021; Silvey, 2007). While essential, such perspectives often marginalize the symbolic and affective dynamics that shape how migration is imagined and enacted.

Recent studies increasingly acknowledge the role of media, framing it either as an information conduit (Loh, 2020) or a platform for political contestation (Thompson & Chua, 2022). These analyses, however, often remain content-centric and insufficiently theorized with respect to how metaphor, emotion, and symbolic form animate social behavior.

This study proposes a conceptual shift: media is not merely a channel, but a structuring environment that encodes emotional and moral meaning. Conceptual metaphors such as “going abroad is transformation” function as cognitive scripts that justify migration and delegitimize alternatives. Emotions such as shame, hope, or pride are not viewed as internal sentiments, but as socially circulated energies that propel action through symbolic mediation.

By integrating metaphor theory, affect studies, and symbolic power, this framework reconceptualizes media as an active architect of the moral, emotional, and existential terrain of migration. It contributes a transdisciplinary lens that expands migration studies beyond materialist and institutionalist paradigms, foregrounding the affective and semiotic logics underpinning decision-making in a media-saturated era.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA

#### *A. Cross-National Research Design and Methodological Orientation*

This study employs a cross-national comparative design to investigate how multimedia communication shapes migration behavior in four Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia. These countries share structural similarities—such as labor-export economies and dynamic digital media ecosystems—while also displaying distinct emotional cultures and migration regimes. Such variance provides fertile ground for identifying both universal patterns and culturally specific trajectories in media-driven migration behavior (Nguyễn & Dang, 2021; Silvey, 2007).

Methodologically, the research adopts a mixed-methods framework that integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to balance symbolic interpretation with statistical generalizability. The qualitative component enables in-depth exploration of media motifs, symbolic structures, and affective responses (Barthes, 1972; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), while the quantitative component empirically assesses the scope and pattern of media influence on migration decisions (Loh, 2020; Thompson & Chua, 2022). This dual approach enhances both the interpretive depth and the explanatory breadth of the study (Appadurai, 1996; Bourdieu, 1991).

#### *B. Data Collection and Organization*

##### *(a). Media Content Analysis*

- **Data sources:** TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, state-run television, and digital news platforms.
- **Collection period:** 2020–2025.
- **Selection criteria:** Media artifacts (videos, clips, articles) that directly or indirectly reference labor migration, including themes such as economic success, sacrifice, emotional hardship, remittance practices, and symbolic notions of homeland (Ahmed, 2004).
- **Estimated sample size:** 200 media items (50 per country).

##### *(b). Quantitative Survey (n = 800)*

- **Target group:** Young workers aged 18–35 who have migrated, are currently in transit, or are planning to migrate abroad (Asis, 2006; Nguyễn & Dang, 2021).
- **Sample allocation:**
  - (1) Vietnam: 200
  - (2) Philippines: 200
  - (3) Myanmar: 200
  - (4) Indonesia: 200
- **Instrument:** A 25-item self-constructed questionnaire organized into three thematic sections:
  - (1) Media exposure and frequency of engagement with migration-related content.

- (2) Emotional associations and imagery linked to migration.
- (3) Perceived influence on personal decisions and future expectations.

(c). *In-Depth Interviews* ( $n = 80$ )

- **Participants:** 20 individuals per country, ensuring demographic balance across gender, age, occupation, and migration status (Butler, 2009).
- **Key interview prompts:**
  - (1) What media images or narratives left the strongest impression on you?
  - (2) How did you emotionally respond to these portrayals?
  - (3) In what ways do you perceive media as influencing, shaping, or compelling your migration decisions?
  - (4) How does media shape your sense of future possibility or self-projection?

C. *Data Analysis*

**Qualitative analysis** (media content and interviews):

- **Semiotic motif analysis** grounded in Barthesian semiology (Barthes, 1972).
- **Thematic coding** using NVivo to trace recurrent emotional and symbolic patterns.
- **Conceptual metaphor analysis** to identify core metaphors structuring media narratives and individual cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

**Quantitative analysis:**

- **Statistical processing** using SPSS and/or R.
- **Analytical procedures** include descriptive statistics, correlation matrices, and multiple regression models to evaluate the relationship between media exposure and migration intent.
- **Modeling** of influence networks across three clusters: media engagement, emotional response, and behavioral intention (Bourdieu, 1991; Virilio, 2006).

## IV. FINDINGS

### A. *Vietnam: Media and the Metaphor of “Departure as Escape”*

In Vietnam’s mass and social media, labor migration is portrayed not merely as an economic strategy but as a moral imperative—a rite of existential transformation. National television and viral TikTok videos celebrate the narrative of young individuals “rising from a poor village to succeed abroad,” reinforcing a binary symbolic geography: the homeland is associated with stagnation and poverty, while foreign countries are depicted as aspirational and redemptive spaces (Nguyễn & Dang, 2021; Silvey, 2007). Captions such as “One month in Japan and I bought my father a motorbike” encode a cognitive–emotional schema wherein staying is equated with failure and leaving with honor and hope.

At the core of this discourse lies a dominant conceptual metaphor: migration as escape. Here, departure is not framed as loss but as redemption—liberating the self from stagnation and the family from inherited poverty (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Vietnamese media consistently deploys orientational metaphors to organize perception into moral binaries:

- Homeland → darkness – poverty – stagnation
- Abroad → light – opportunity – honor
- Departure → ascent
- Staying → decline

This moral mapping aligns with Barthes’s (1972) notion of myth, transforming migration into a naturalized truth: to be filial is to depart; to remain is to fail.

#### **Quantitative Survey: The Extent of Media Influence**

To assess the emotional and behavioral influence of media on migration perceptions among Vietnamese youth, a survey was conducted from November to December 2024 across four high-labor-export provinces: Nghệ An, Hà Tĩnh, Long An, and Bến Tre. The sample included 200 respondents (aged 18–35), evenly balanced by gender and age group, recruited through local networks, labor brokerage centers, and online communities on TikTok and Facebook (Loh, 2020; Thompson & Chua, 2022).

TABLE 1  
SURVEY RESULTS ON MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON MIGRATION DECISIONS IN VIETNAM (N = 200)

| Survey Content   | Male (18–25) | Female (18–25) | Male (18–35) | Female (26–35) | Total Agree | % Agree |
|--|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| Ever felt emotionally affected by migration media                | 48           | 52             | 42           | 42             | 184         | 92.0%   |
| Believe departure is the only way to prove worth and filial duty | 38           | 39             | 30           | 18             | 125         | 62.5%   |
| Felt compelled by successful role models in media                | 34           | 31             | 25           | 18             | 108         | 54.0%   |
| Highly value TikTok/YouTube as decision-making sources           | 29           | 26             | 21           | 20             | 96          | 48.0%   |
| Feel ashamed to stay while others have left                      | 20           | 21             | 18           | 17             | 76          | 38.0%   |
| Total (n = 200)  | 169          | 169            | 136          | 115            | —           | —       |

Source: Author's fieldwork and data analysis, 2024.

Note: Percentages are based on total sample size (n = 200).

These findings reveal the extent to which media representations permeate migration imaginaries. The most pronounced agreement—92%—concerned emotional influence, supporting Ahmed's (2004) thesis that affect circulates through media as a social force. Notably, respondents aged 18–25, particularly women, reported the strongest emotional responses, indicating a generational and gendered susceptibility to idealized migration imagery. Conversely, respondents aged 26–35 showed more moderated responses, suggesting a potential post-idealization reassessment. Overall, the data affirm that media functions not merely as a backdrop to behavior, but as an affective infrastructure shaping perception, emotion, and decision-making (Bourdieu, 1991; Appadurai, 1996).

#### In-Depth Interview Excerpts: Emotionalization, Moralization, and Social Pressure

Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted in January and February 2025 with Vietnamese youth at various stages of the migration process—pre-migration, in transit, and post-migration—through both in-person sessions (Cần Thơ and Vĩnh Long) and online interviews with overseas workers in Singapore and Dubai (Butler, 2009). The following excerpts exemplify how media not only informs but emotionalizes and moralizes migration:

##### (1) Emotional impact from media

*“Em không có ý định đi Nhật đâu. Nhưng xem clip bạn em đăng TikTok về làm nông trại ở Hokkaido, thấy trời tuyết, thấy bạn cười, thấy cả lúc gửi quà về cho mẹ... Em xúc động lắm, tự dưng thấy mình cũng muốn được như vậy.”*

*(I had no plan to go to Japan. But seeing my friend's TikTok video about farming in Hokkaido—the snow, the smiles, and how she sent gifts to her mother—I was so moved. Suddenly, I wanted that too.)*

— Female, 22, Long An

##### (2) Departure as filial obligation

*“Hồi ba em bệnh, em nghĩ nếu mình đi Hàn thì mới kiếm được tiền đủ để mua thuốc, lo cho ba. Ở đây làm gì có cơ hội. Em đi vì muốn làm một đứa con có hiếu, chứ không phải vì em muốn giàu.”*

*(When my father was sick, I thought the only way to earn enough for his medicine was to go to Korea. There's no opportunity here. I didn't leave to get rich—I left because I wanted to be a good son.)*

— Male, 26, Nghệ An

##### (3) Pressure from success models in media

*“Coi livestream mấy anh chị đi Đài Loan, họ khoe nhà xây, xe mới, em cứ thấy như họ đang gián tiếp nói với em là ‘đi đi, ở lại thì chẳng có tương lai đâu’. Em không biết họ có ý không, nhưng coi hoài thì cũng thấy chột dạ.”*

*(Watching livestreams from Taiwan—new houses, new cars—it's like they're telling us: ‘Go, or there's no future here.’ Maybe they don't mean it, but watching all the time really gets to you.)*

— Female, 21, Sóc Trăng

##### (4) Media as practical guidance

*“Em tìm hiểu công ty môi giới không qua bạn bè, mà toàn coi review trên YouTube. Nhiều clip hướng dẫn kỹ lắm, từ xin visa tới làm hồ sơ. Có kênh nói chuyện vui, dễ hiểu nên em tin tưởng. Nhờ mạng mà em mới quyết định đi.”*

*(I didn't hear about agencies from friends—I watched YouTube reviews. Some channels explained everything, step by step, clearly and in a friendly way. That's what convinced me to go.)*

— Male, 24, Hà Tĩnh

##### (5) Shame and moral pressure

*“Lúc cả nhóm bạn em đều đi rồi, người đi Nhật, người đi Đài, còn mình vẫn ở nhà phụ mẹ bán hủ tiếu. Coi mạng thấy họ gửi tiền, mua quà cho gia đình, em cảm thấy mình thất bại, kém cỏi. Em thậm chí tránh gặp lại họ vì mặc cảm.”*

*(When all my friends left—some to Japan, others to Taiwan—and I was still helping my mom sell noodles, I saw them sending money and gifts home. I felt like a failure. I even avoided them out of shame.)*

— Female, 25, Bến Tre

Together, these interview data demonstrate that media not only disseminates aspirational content but encodes moral imperatives, emotional cues, and collective expectations. Migration is not merely a rational response to structural inequality—it is an emotive, semiotic, and moralized decision space shaped by the symbolic and affective economy of digital media.

### B. Philippines: Migration as a Moral Calling – Media and the Image of the Migrant as Community Servant

#### (a). Conceptual Metaphors and the Moralization of Migration Through Media

In the Philippine context, media constructs the migrant not simply as a breadwinner, but as a *bagong bayani* (modern-day hero)—a figure deeply intertwined with ideals of sacrifice, filial piety, and civic duty. This narrative pervades diverse platforms, including mainstream television (e.g., ABS-CBN, GMA), film, religious institutions (notably the Catholic Church), and social media, particularly Facebook and YouTube (Encinas-Franco, 2015; Rodríguez, 2015). Within this discursive framework, migration is transformed into a sacred moral endeavor.

The dominant conceptual metaphor that structures this discourse is:

**“Migration is community service.”**

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), conceptual metaphors project moral schemas onto social behavior, thereby reframing migration as a culturally sanctioned act of collective service. Barthes (1972) would characterize this transformation as the *mythologization of civic obligation*, while Ahmed (2004) would read it as the *collectivization of affect*, wherein emotions such as pride, shame, and duty are orchestrated through media narratives. Through these frameworks, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are elevated from individual agents to symbolic participants in a national moral economy.

#### (b). Quantitative Survey: The Symbolic Power of Media

**Period:** November–December 2024

**Locations:** Metro Manila, Cebu, Pampanga

**Participants:** 200 individuals (aged 18–35), evenly stratified by gender and age group

TABLE 2  
AGREEMENT LEVELS WITH MEDIA-DRIVEN MORAL NARRATIVES ON MIGRATION (N = 200)

| Survey Item  | Male<br>25) | (18– Female<br>25) | (18– Male<br>35) | (26– Female<br>35) | (26– Total<br>Agree | %<br>Agree |
|--|-------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Pride in OFWs being called heroes                          | 40          | 44                 | 46               | 48                 | 178                 | 89.0%      |
| Viewing migration as a duty to parents and nation          | 36          | 42                 | 41               | 46                 | 165                 | 82.5%      |
| Emotional response to OFW tribute videos                   | 34          | 37                 | 38               | 40                 | 149                 | 74.5%      |
| Belief that media evokes duty more than economic necessity | 29          | 28                 | 35               | 39                 | 131                 | 65.5%      |
| Feeling guilt/shame for not contributing while staying     | 26          | 22                 | 28               | 40                 | 116                 | 58.0%      |
| <b>Total (n = 200)</b>                                     | <b>165</b>  | <b>173</b>         | <b>188</b>       | <b>213</b>         | —                   | —          |

Source: Author’s fieldwork and survey data, 2024.

Note: Percentages are based on the total sample (n = 200).

The results demonstrate the symbolic and affective reach of media in shaping migration decisions. An overwhelming 89% of participants agreed that OFWs are rightly seen as “heroes,” while 82.5% associated migration with moral duty to both family and nation (Ahmed, 2004). These sentiments were especially prevalent among women aged 26–35, reinforcing their central role in the affective and moral architectures of migration. Filipino media routinely portrays women as “dutiful daughters,” “self-sacrificing mothers,” and “community-centered providers,” positioning migration not as a transactional economic act but as an ethical imperative (Barthes, 1972).

Furthermore, 58% of respondents reported feelings of guilt for not contributing economically while remaining at home—a pattern particularly pronounced among women over 25. This suggests that media not only valorizes departure but also engenders affective penalties for those who stay, especially if they fail to fulfill the socially prescribed roles amplified by religious, community, and media institutions (Encinas-Franco, 2015; Rodríguez, 2015).

#### (c). In-Depth Interviews: Media and the Internalization of Duty

**Period:** January–February 2025

**Locations:** Taguig, Iloilo, Quezon City; online interviews with OFWs based in the UAE and South Korea

**Participants:** 20 individuals (10 male, 10 female), selected for demographic diversity and migration status

**Selected excerpts illustrating the affective-symbolic themes from the survey:**

##### (1) Pride in OFWs being called “heroes”

*“Hindi pa ako nakakapag-abroad, pero tuwing pinapakita sa TV yung mga parangal para sa mga OFW, naiiyak ako. Parang sinasabi nila na hindi lang basta trabaho ‘yan – kundi representasyon ng bansa. Gusto ko isang araw, tawagin din ang nanay ko na bagong bayani.”*

*(I haven't gone abroad yet, but whenever I watch OFW tribute ceremonies on TV, I'm moved to tears. It's like they're saying this isn't just work—it's national representation. I hope one day my mother will be called a bagong bayani.)*

— Male, 23, Pampanga

**(2) Migration as familial and national duty**

*"Yung tatay ko driver, nanay ko nagtitinda sa palengke. Gusto nila makaalis ako. Tuwing may balita tungkol sa remittances ng OFW, parang nararamdaman ko yung obligasyon. Hindi dahil pinilit ako, kundi dahil parang tungkulin 'yan na mas malaki pa sa sarili ko."*

*(My father's a driver, my mother sells at the market—they hope I'll go abroad. Whenever I see news about remittances, I feel a responsibility. Not because I'm forced, but because it feels like a duty bigger than myself.)*

— Female, 27, Cebu City

**(3) Emotional response to OFW tribute videos**

*"Umiyak ako nung napanood ko 'yung video ng isang nanay na OFW sa UAE na nagpadala ng mensahe sa anak niya sa graduation. Para bang sinasabi ng media na ang pagmamahal, hindi namamatay kahit malayo. Ramdam mo talaga 'yung sakripisyo."*

*(I cried watching a video of an OFW mother in the UAE sending a message to her daughter's graduation. The media made it feel like love never dies, even from afar. You really feel the sacrifice.)*

— Female, 25, Iloilo

**(4) Belief that media evokes duty beyond economic need**

*"Hindi naman kami gano'n kahirap, pero nung nakita ko sa Facebook at sa simbahan na parang ang OFW ay 'service from afar', naisip ko na ang pag-alis ay paraan ng pananampalataya. Ginawa ng media na parang may sagradong pangako ang pag-alis."*

*(We're not that poor, but when I saw Facebook posts and church messages calling OFWs 'service from afar,' I began to think of migration as a form of faith. The media made it feel like leaving is a sacred promise.)*

— Male, 28, Taguig

**(5) Guilt or shame for not leaving**

*"Yung kapatid kong babae, nag-Korea siya nung 22, ngayon palagi nagpapadala. Ako nandito lang, part-time sa shop. Kapag sinasabi ng mga kamag-anak na 'ang galing niya', ngumingiti na lang ako. Sa media, ang OFW ang anak na uliran – so ano ako?"*

*(My sister went to Korea at 22 and now sends money home. I'm still here, working part-time. When relatives say, 'she's amazing,' I just smile. In the media, OFWs are the model children—so what does that make me?)*

— Female, 30, Quezon City

These testimonies reinforce the findings that media in the Philippines functions not merely as a source of information, but as a moralizing apparatus—shaping affective economies, constructing symbolic identities, and internalizing expectations of sacrifice. Migration, thus, becomes not only a livelihood option but a culturally encoded obligation, reinforced across religious, familial, and state-sponsored media channels.

*C. Myanmar: Migration as a Survival Instinct – Media and the Affective Economy of Escape*

*(a). Conceptual Metaphor: Migration as Survival*

In Myanmar, amidst protracted political turmoil and economic collapse following the 2021 military coup, migration is not framed by media as a dream or national obligation, but rather as a matter of existential urgency. Viral TikTok and Facebook videos titled *"I went to Bangkok not because I wanted to—but because I needed to survive"* reflect a dominant conceptual metaphor that anchors this discourse:

**"Migration is a survival instinct."**

As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain, conceptual metaphors operate by projecting structures from one cognitive domain onto another—in this case, mapping *biological instinct* onto *social behavior*. Migration becomes an involuntary, reflexive act, no longer perceived as elective but as biologically imperative. Within this framework, media narratives frequently circulate emotions of fear, urgency, and despair, aligning with Ahmed's (2004) theory of *affective economies*, wherein emotions become politically charged entities that intensify through repetition and circulation in digital spaces.

*(b). Quantitative Survey: Media and the Feeling of Being Pushed to Leave*

**Period:** December 2024 – January 2025

**Locations:** Yangon, Mandalay, Hpa-An

**Participants:** 200 individuals (aged 18–35) with regular exposure to social media platforms

TABLE 3  
AGREEMENT WITH MEDIA-DRIVEN SURVIVAL NARRATIVES ON MIGRATION (N = 200)

| Survey Content  | Male (18–25) | Female (18–25) | Male (26–35) | Female (26–35) | Total Agree | % Agree |
|---|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| Feel that media portrays staying as dangerous or stagnant           | 42           | 46             | 39           | 41             | 168         | 84.0%   |
| Empathize with the message “leaving is survival” on TikTok/Facebook | 38           | 44             | 36           | 39             | 157         | 78.5%   |
| Haunted by videos of exploited laborers who still choose to leave   | 34           | 32             | 33           | 36             | 135         | 67.5%   |
| Believe media makes them feel “swept away” rather than choosing     | 30           | 27             | 28           | 31             | 116         | 58.0%   |
| Feel they have no future if they stay, as shown in media narratives | 36           | 40             | 37           | 38             | 151         | 75.5%   |
| <b>Total (n = 200)</b>  | <b>180</b>   | <b>189</b>     | <b>173</b>   | <b>185</b>     | —           | —       |

Source: Author’s fieldwork and data compilation, 2025.

Note: Total percentages calculated from n = 200.

The data indicate that digital media plays a pivotal role in shaping a collective affective perception of crisis in Myanmar. A striking 84% of respondents agreed that media portrays staying as dangerous or stagnant, while 78.5% reported emotional alignment with the narrative that “leaving is survival.” These responses underscore how media shifts migration from a strategic life choice to an affectively framed survival mechanism.

Notably, young women aged 18–25 exhibited the highest agreement (40 out of 50) with the statement that staying offers “no future,” highlighting their heightened vulnerability to survivalist messaging. Short-form digital content—such as the widely circulated clip “My sister went to Thailand to work as a maid so she wouldn’t starve in Yangon”—functions as a potent semiotic vehicle, encoding trauma, agency, and urgency within accessible digital formats.

(c). *In-Depth Interviews: Media and the Condition of Forced Movement*

**Period:** January–February 2025

**Locations:** Yangon, Mawlamyine, Hpa-An; online interviews with migrant workers in Bangkok

**Participants:** 20 individuals (10 male, 10 female)

Selected quotes aligned with survey themes:

**(1) Media constructs the belief that “staying equals death”**

“နေရင်ဆင်းရဲမယ်၊ဖမ်းခံရမယ်ဆိုတဲ့ဗီဒီယိုတွေကိုတချိန်လုံးကြည့်နေရတယ်။ မသွားရင် တဖြည်းဖြည်းသေမယ်ထင်လာပြီ။”

(Social media is full of videos showing how staying means hunger, arrest, or worse. After watching them so often, I began to believe that not leaving was like dying slowly.)

— Male, 24, Yangon

**(2) TikTok reinforces survival messaging**

“မိန်းကလေးတစ်ယောက် ထိုင်းကိုလမ်းလျှောက်သွားတယ်ဆိုတဲ့ TikTok ဗီဒီယိုရှိတယ်။ သူပြောတာက ‘သွားချင်လို့မဟုတ်ဘူး၊ အသက်ရှင်ချင်လို့ ဆိုတာ။ ငါမြင်တာနဲ့ တစ်ခါတစ်လေ ကြည့်ပြီးတောင်ငိုမိတယ်။’”

(There’s a TikTok video of a girl walking to Thailand. She said, ‘I didn’t want to go—I needed to survive.’ I’ve watched it over and over. It felt like it was telling my own story.)

— Female, 22, Hpa-An

**(3) Even images of exploitation appear better than staying**

“ပင်ပန်းရတယ်၊ ဆုပ်ရှားရတယ်။ ဒါပေမဲ့ ငွေရှိတယ်။ ငါတွေ့ ဒီမှာဘာမှမရှိဘူး။”

(They show people working to exhaustion, being yelled at, exploited. But they still send money home. Me? I have nothing here.)

— Male, 28, Mandalay

**(4) A sense of being pulled, not choosing**

“ငါမရွေးချယ်တာမဟုတ်ဘူး။ ဒါပေမဲ့ တစ်ယောက်ယောက် ပြေးလွှားနေတာတွေ့တိုင်း ကိုယ်ကိုယ်စွဲခံရတယ်။ မသွားရင်လူမဖြစ်တဲ့ခံစားချက်တောင်ဖြစ်တယ်။”

(It’s not like I decided to go. But every time I see someone escape, I feel dragged along. It’s like if I don’t leave, I’m no longer even human.)

— Female, 25, Mawlamyine

**(5) No future if staying—perceived as collective reality**

“အခုတွေ့ များများနေရမယ်လို့မပြောတော့ဘူး။ လူတိုင်းပဲသွားဖို့ စဉ်းစားနေကြတယ်။ အင်တာနက်က ငါ့ကို ဆိုင်းငံ့နေတဲ့ လူငယ်တစ်ယောက်လို ခံစားစေတယ်။”

(Now, no one around me talks about staying. Everyone is planning to leave. Social media makes me feel like staying is just burying your youth.)

— Male, 23, Yangon

These findings underscore how digital platforms in Myanmar function not simply as sources of information but as affective infrastructures of desperation. The media's repeated invocation of danger, decay, and urgency does not merely depict crisis—it *produces* it affectively. Migration is no longer framed as a proactive decision, but as an instinctive, near-biological response to systemic disintegration—distinct from the moralized migration logics of the Philippines or the aspirational frame in Vietnam. In Myanmar, media scripts survival, not aspiration.

#### D. Malaysia: Migration as an Enactment of Responsibility – Media, Gender, and the Expectation of Maturity

##### (a). Conceptual Metaphor: Migration as the Enactment of Responsibility

In the Malaysian media ecosystem, migration is not primarily portrayed as an aspirational journey (as in Vietnam) or a civic-religious duty (as in the Philippines). Rather, it is framed as a gendered performance of responsibility and maturity. TikTok videos, YouTube vlogs, and local civic journalism consistently valorize the figure of the *abang overseas*—the responsible male breadwinner who migrates to provide for his family, thereby attaining social status and moral validation.

The central conceptual metaphor here is:

**“Migration is the enactment of responsibility.”**

As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert, such metaphors are not merely linguistic but ontological, shaping how people conceptualize life stages and moral agency. In this case, migration is imbued with the logic of a rite of passage: to migrate is to transition from immaturity to adulthood. This framing is gendered. Whereas women may be praised for staying and caregiving, men are implicitly—and often explicitly—expected to leave. Ahmed (2004) explains how affective expectations are encoded into media imagery, creating emotional economies where failure to conform leads to guilt, shame, and diminished masculine identity.

##### (b). Quantitative Survey: Media and the Pressure to Mature Through Migration

**Period:** January–February 2025

**Locations:** Johor Bahru, Sabah, Kelantan

**Participants:** 200 individuals (aged 18–35), with balanced gender and age representation

TABLE 4  
AGREEMENT WITH MEDIA-DRIVEN NARRATIVES OF MIGRATION AS RESPONSIBILITY (N = 200)

| Survey Content   | Male (18–25) | Female (18–25) | Male (26–35) | Female (26–35) | Total Agree | % Agree |
|--|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| Believe media frames migration as proof of adulthood             | 39           | 32             | 37           | 30             | 138         | 69.0%   |
| Feel pressured to leave to prove they are responsible            | 38           | 30             | 35           | 29             | 132         | 66.0%   |
| Moved by media portraying migrants as “family heroes”            | 34           | 31             | 36           | 33             | 134         | 67.0%   |
| Believe TikTok/YouTube reinforce the ideal of men working abroad | 36           | 28             | 34           | 27             | 125         | 62.5%   |
| Feel guilty for staying while peers succeed abroad               | 33           | 27             | 30           | 26             | 116         | 58.0%   |
| <b>Total (n = 200)</b>   | <b>180</b>   | <b>148</b>     | <b>172</b>   | <b>145</b>     | —           | —       |

**Source:** Author's field data, 2025.

**Note:** Percentages reflect proportion of respondents in agreement per category.

The data reveal that Malaysian media constructs a strong symbolic association between masculinity, migration, and maturity. A majority (69%) of respondents agree that migration is framed as a marker of adulthood, with this view most strongly held among young men aged 18–25. Similarly, 66% feel pressured to migrate as a demonstration of responsibility, suggesting that media does not merely inform but commands a normative path toward social legitimacy. In contrast, women report lower levels of pressure, underscoring the gender asymmetry in how the metaphor of migration-as-responsibility operates.

These findings confirm that Malaysian digital culture, unlike that of the Philippines or Myanmar, presents migration not as moral heroism or emergency escape, but as a social contract—one particularly imposed on men to perform economic provision as proof of gendered adulthood.

##### (c). In-Depth Interviews: Migration as a Rite of Passage – Media and Gendered Pressure

**Period:** February 2025

**Locations:** In-person interviews in Perak and Selangor; online interviews with Malaysian migrants in Singapore and Dubai

**Participants:** 20 individuals (10 men, 10 women)

**Selected excerpts, with original Bahasa Malaysia and English translation, illustrate five key themes:**

###### (1) Migration as proof of adulthood

“Mak saya cakap, lelaki yang betul mesti berani keluar cari nafkah. TV pun selalu tunjuk abang-abang yang balik bawa duit. Saya rasa itu macam bukti jadi anak jantan.”  
 (My mother says a real man must be brave enough to go out and earn. TV always shows men coming home with money. That feels like proof that I’m a real man.)

— Male, 24, Perak

**(2) Media constructing the ideal of men who must migrate**

“Kalau tengok TikTok, semua hero kerja overseas. Yang stay kat kampung, macam takde nilai. Itu yang buat saya rasa malu.”  
 (On TikTok, all the heroes work abroad. Those who stay in the village seem worthless. That makes me feel ashamed.)

— Male, 22, Selangor

**(3) Migration seen as duty, not choice**

“Bila orang kata ‘kau lelaki, tanggungjawab keluarga kat kau’, saya rasa macam tak boleh tolak. Tak pergi kerja luar, rasa bersalah sangat.”  
 (When people say, ‘You’re the man, the family’s responsibility is on you,’ I feel like I can’t refuse. If I don’t go abroad, I feel so guilty.)

— Male, 26, Klang

**(4) Women feeling pressure despite staying**

“Saya tak boleh pergi sebab jaga ibu, tapi tiap kali tengok IG orang hantar duit, saya rasa macam ketinggalan.”  
 (I can’t go because I’m caring for my mother, but every time I see Instagram posts about sending money, I feel left behind.)

— Female, 25, Kelantan

**(5) Feeling inadequate for staying behind**

“Saya kerja kilang dekat rumah je. Tapi kawan-kawan dah pergi Dubai, Korea. Saya rasa saya tak cukup kuat.”  
 (I just work at a factory near home. But my friends have gone to Dubai or Korea. I feel like I’m not strong enough.)

— Male, 28, Johor Bahru

*E. Comparative Analysis of Four Countries: Media and Conceptual Metaphors in Migration Behavior*

*(a). Commonalities Across Four Countries: Structuring Emotions and Obligations Through Media*

Despite divergent political regimes, economic structures, and religious orientations, media in Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Malaysia converges in its performative function: shaping not only perceptions of migration but also the emotions, metaphors, and moral imperatives through which migration is understood. Across these cases, media does not simply mirror social realities—it constructs symbolic worlds that guide behavior. Whether through television, church messaging, or short-form digital content, media has become a semiotic engine of what Ahmed (2004) calls “affective economies,” where emotions are circulated, codified, and moralized.

The migrant subject in each country is rendered intelligible through collectively distributed metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which transform migration from a pragmatic choice into an emotionally and morally saturated act. These metaphors structure what it means to be honorable, successful, or responsible—while stigmatizing the alternative of staying. This process is summarized in Table 5:

TABLE 5  
 COMMONALITIES IN MEDIA AND CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS ACROSS FOUR COUNTRIES

| Classification                   | Vietnam                        | Philippines        | Myanmar            | Malaysia                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Media’s role in shaping behavior | Success archetype              | Service archetype  | Escape archetype   | Maturity archetype          |
| Central conceptual metaphor      | Escape                         | Moral duty         | Survival instinct  | Enactment of responsibility |
| Image of the migrant             | The victor                     | The hero           | The fugitive       | The mature adult            |
| Dominant emotional structure     | Hope – confidence              | Pride – devotion   | Fear – resignation | Pressure – obligation       |
| Multi-platform media             | Newspapers, social media, film | TV, church, TikTok | TikTok, Facebook   | YouTube, TikTok, television |

Source: Author’s synthesis from field data and theoretical frameworks (Ahmed, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

A prominent convergence across all four contexts is the rise of “migration ideology”—a socially endorsed framework that naturalizes departure and problematizes immobility. Social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, in particular, operate not as passive distributors of information but as affective infrastructures, amplifying normative messages about success, duty, and responsibility.

These metaphors do not arise organically; rather, they are circulated, ritualized, and normalized until they function as pre-reflective truths. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasize that when conceptual metaphors become entrenched, they stop merely describing the world and begin to constitute its emotional and moral coordinates. In such contexts,

individuals who do not migrate are no longer seen as financially constrained—they are marked as socially deficient, lacking ambition, honor, or maturity.

(b). *Differences Across Four Countries: Variations in Metaphor, Emotion, and Social Pressure*

Beneath the shared structural function of media lies a complex landscape of nationally specific affective logics and metaphorical codings. While each country employs a dominant metaphor to frame migration, the emotional targets, moral grammars, and media modalities differ significantly, revealing how deeply media narratives are embedded in local gender norms, class structures, and historical traumas.

TABLE 6  
DIFFERENCES IN MEDIA'S ROLE IN SHAPING MIGRATION BEHAVIOR

| Classification                   | Vietnam                               | Philippines                       | Myanmar                                | Malaysia                               |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Primary emotional target</b>  | Aspiration – success                  | Duty – sacrifice                  | Insecurity – survival                  | Responsibility – gendered expectations |
| <b>Dominant moral framework</b>  | Filial piety – social mobility        | Community service                 | Instinctive survival reflex            | Proof of adulthood                     |
| <b>Dominant media forms</b>      | State newspapers, films               | National TV, church               | User-generated (TikTok/Facebook)       | videos YouTube, TikTok, television     |
| <b>Most affected demographic</b> | Young vocational workers, rural women | All social classes, young mothers | esp. Young women, the poor             | Young men (18–25)                      |
| <b>Unique social outcome</b>     | Normalization of upward mobility      | Internalization of sacrifice      | self-Paralysis of choice – resignation | Masculinization of migration pressure  |

Source: Field data, media corpus analysis, and interview excerpts (2024–2025).

These findings demonstrate that media functions not as a neutral channel but as a socio-cultural amplifier, intensifying the anxieties, ideals, and symbolic burdens specific to each national context. In Vietnam, migration is portrayed as a path to transcend poverty; in the Philippines, it is framed as sacred service; in Myanmar, as an act of desperate survival; and in Malaysia, as a masculine rite of passage tied to familial duty.

The critical difference lies not in the degree of media influence, but in its emotional encoding and targeted subject formation. National media ecosystems assign moral value to specific behaviors and identities, consistently elevating mobility over stasis and idealizing the migrant as morally superior. As Ahmed (2004) observes, emotions are not private experiences but public scripts—circulating through media, binding communities, and compelling action.

The cumulative effect is the emergence of nation-specific affective regimes in which migration is no longer a pragmatic choice negotiated through material conditions, but a socially mandated horizon of legitimacy. Media, in this sense, does not merely inform—it adjudicates. It determines who is to be admired and who is to be pitied, who fulfills their social role and who is cast as failing it. Within this framework, staying becomes not just economically limiting but morally suspect in the eyes of the collective.

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. *Media as a Structuring Force in Migration Choices*

Findings from Section 4 demonstrate that media does not merely reflect migration realities—it actively configures them. Across Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Malaysia, migration emerges not as a strictly private or economically driven decision but as a socially orchestrated act embedded in a matrix of symbolic expectations and emotional imperatives (Ahmed, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Media functions as a normative infrastructure that prescribes what qualifies as a “rational” or “moral” choice. Conceptual metaphors—“escape” (Vietnam), “service” (Philippines), “survival” (Myanmar), and “responsibility” (Malaysia)—operate as affective maps. These metaphors do not merely describe migration; they prescribe emotional orientations and legitimate behavior within culturally specific value systems.

### B. *Theoretical Connections: Emotion, Morality, and Social Perception in Media*

The theoretical scaffolding outlined in Chapter II offers a lens for interpreting the findings. Conceptual metaphors, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue, function not merely as cognitive tools but as socio-discursive mechanisms that encode culturally sanctioned behavior. Media metaphors regulate what is imaginable and desirable. Emotional responses—such as feeling “moved” by TikTok tributes or ashamed by peer success—are socially orchestrated. Ahmed (2004) contends that emotions circulate within “affective economies,” accruing normative weight through repetition. Butler’s (2004) theory of performativity clarifies how gendered scripts—particularly in Malaysia—render migration an enactment of masculinity. Drawing from Bourdieu (1991), media operates as a field of symbolic capital, legitimizing behavior through moral and aesthetic codes. Despite variation in political regimes, media fields across Southeast Asia share convergent affective logics. Finally, digital imagery, as Bauman (2000) and Virilio (1997) suggest, accelerates normative expectations—rendering non-migration a form of symbolic invisibility.

### C. *Southeast Asia as a Regional Affective Media Space*

This study identifies a shared affective regime that transcends national boundaries. Despite differences in religion, governance, and media freedom, Southeast Asian countries form an emotionally integrated media space. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook serve not merely as conduits of content but as infrastructures of affect. They circulate recurrent tropes—the sacrificial daughter, the heroic remitter, the responsible son—that collectively construct a moral script in which migration is coded as social maturity and moral worth. Even for those who do not migrate, these narratives create an emotional consensus that privileges departure over rootedness.

#### *D. Policy Implications: Redefining Moral Legitimacy in Media*

The findings reveal a deep normative asymmetry: while migration is valorized, non-migration is symbolically voided. Those who remain are often rendered invisible or morally suspect. To address this, media narratives must shift toward pluralism. Rather than reinforcing coercive metaphors, they should cultivate discourses that affirm localized forms of care, labor, and belonging. As Virilio (1997) cautions, the temporal acceleration of mediated imagery must be slowed to allow moral deliberation and diversified imaginaries of success.

#### *E. Theoretical Implications and Future Research*

This study underscores the necessity of situating migration metaphors within media-ecological frameworks. Linguistic analysis alone cannot account for the coercive and affective force of visual and digital cultures. Future research should extend this model to under-theorized migration corridors—such as Laos, Cambodia, and East Timor—and further examine symbolic absences: the elderly caregiver, the returnee, the non-remitting youth. These silences are not incidental; they structure the moral boundaries of visibility and legitimacy in regional migration imaginaries. A comprehensive theory of migration must include not only those who move, but also those rendered invisible within the collective affective order.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND ACADEMIC–PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

### *A. Summary of Core Contributions*

This study demonstrates that multimedia platforms are not merely conduits of information, but active infrastructures that generate emotions, shape identities, and condition migration behaviors among Southeast Asian youth (Ahmed, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Contrary to economic deterministic models, the findings reveal that decisions to migrate are structured within a semiotic–affective framework in which the sensation of “not being present” becomes the dominant trigger for departure. In this sense, staying behind is no longer interpreted as a neutral or passive choice; it is symbolically framed as failure, stagnation, or backwardness within the hyper-visual ecosystem of social media. Thus, media does not simply follow migration—it precedes, incites, and structures it.

### *B. Academic Implications*

#### *(a). Expanding the Application of Conceptual Metaphor in Media Studies*

While conceptual metaphor theory has traditionally focused on linguistic cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), this research demonstrates that such metaphors are increasingly mediated, visualized, and affectively intensified through digital ecosystems. Metaphors such as “migration as escape,” “as duty,” or “as survival” are not confined to language; they are circulated via TikTok visuals, Facebook image posts, and the ambient collective memory of digital publics. This confirms that metaphors are not merely symbolic—they are operational mechanisms for structuring mass behavior.

#### *(b). Repositioning the Politics of Emotion in Media Sociology*

Building on Ahmed’s (2004) theory of affective economies, this study proposes a reconceptualization of emotion as social infrastructure: pride (Philippines), guilt (Malaysia), fear (Myanmar), and obligation (Vietnam) are not just internal feelings but publicly circulated, shared, and anticipated affective codes. These “default emotional registers” are absorbed by youth as normative filters for interpreting life choices, especially migration.

### *C. Policy and Media Implications*

#### *(a). Building Multi-Vocal Media Systems to Counter Emotional Monologues*

Contemporary regional media infrastructures largely reproduce a singular moral code: migration is good, right, and necessary. This monoculture of affect hardens social expectations and impoverishes the moral complexity of human action. Future media interventions should:

- Counter single-tone emotional narratives by affirming the legitimacy and dignity of those who remain.
- Revitalize imagery of local community and care as worthy, sustainable forms of social participation.
- Challenge the acceleration of success imagery (Virilio, 1997) by promoting slower, more nuanced temporalities of personal fulfillment.

#### *(b). Integrating Humane Media Into Labor Migration Policy*

Beyond regulating contracts or ensuring safe mobility, migration governance should include community-centered media literacy and affective awareness programs. Such initiatives would help migrants understand that their value is not reducible to remittances, but includes relational labor: memory, language, family connection, and cultural continuity.

#### D. Directions for Future Research

Future studies should:

- Examine “symbolic absences” in media narratives, such as elderly caregivers, returnees, or those unable or unwilling to migrate, to better understand how memory and erasure function within migration discourse.
- Expand the comparative lens beyond ASEAN (e.g., Nepal, Bangladesh, Mexico) to trace whether similar metaphorical structures operate in other migration corridors.
- Utilize AI-based visual analysis to map transnational flows of mediated emotion—tracking how specific TikTok videos or Facebook memes catalyze emotional contagion across national borders.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. Edinburgh University Press.
- [2] Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- [3] Asis, M. M. B. (2006). *The Philippines' culture of migration*. Migration Information Source. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved February 15, 2025, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/philippines-culture-migration>
- [4] Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). Hill and Wang (Original work published 1957).
- [5] Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Polity Press.
- [6] Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Harvard University Press.
- [7] Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. Routledge.
- [8] Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of war: When is life grievable?* Verso.
- [9] Encinas-Franco, J. (2015). From “Bagong Bayani” to “Bagong Kabarangay”: Reimagining Filipino migrants through Philippine television programs. *Communication Research and Practice*, 1(3), 263–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2015.1073138>
- [10] Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- [11] Loh, D. (2020). Media and migration: Emerging agendas in Southeast Asia. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 30(2), 103–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2020.1725063>
- [12] Nguyễn, T. T., & Dang, T. A. (2021). Migration, media, and meaning-making: A Vietnamese youth perspective. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 31(4), 387–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2021.1930961>
- [13] Rodriguez, R. M. (2015). *Migrants for export: How the Philippine state brokers labor to the world*. University of Minnesota Press.
- [14] Silvey, R. (2007). Unequal borders: Indonesian transnational migrants at immigration control. *Geopolitics*, 12(2), 265–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040601168841>
- [15] Thompson, M., & Chua, L. H. (2022). Mediating migration in Southeast Asia: Platform politics and mobile imaginaries. *Media, Culture & Society*, 44(1), 76–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344372111034065>
- [16] Virilio, P. (1997). *Open sky* (J. Rose, Trans.). Verso (Original work published 1995).
- [17] Virilio, P. (2006). *Speed and politics: An essay on dromology* (M. Polizzotti, Trans.). Semiotext(e) (Original work published 1977).

**Dang Ngoc Cu**, born on October 23, 1970, in Da Nang City, is currently a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Nam Can Tho University. With over 20 years of experience in teaching and research, his academic focus lies in applied linguistics, comparative literature, and cultural semiotics.

He earned his Ph.D. in Linguistics and has taught a wide range of courses, including English Linguistics, Academic Writing, Translation and Interpreting, and Comparative Literature. His research interests encompass cognitive linguistics, symbolism, and the poetics of Vietnamese literature in dialogue with international literary traditions.

Dr. Cu has published numerous scholarly articles and actively participated in academic conferences. He also supervises graduate students, conducts research projects, and contributes to curriculum development.

Fluent in both Vietnamese and English, Dr. Cu is a member of several academic associations related to language and literary studies.