

Miles Apart: A Case Study on Criminology Students with Overseas Filipino Worker Parents

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ABSTRACT

Criminology students coming from Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parents experience emotional, psychological, and academic problems due to the long absence of parental support. This study sought to investigate the lives of criminology students coming from OFW parents specifically targeting their emotional well-being, responsibilities, coping methods, and support systems. A qualitative case study approach was used in the study. It was carried out among criminology students with OFW parents in an educational context. Data gathering using semi-structured interviews was implemented. On the other hand, Moustakas' Thematic Analysis Method was used to interpret the findings. The study uncovered six themes: emotional struggles and feelings of loneliness, pressure and added responsibility, dependence on support systems/networks, development of independence, self-discipline, and coping mechanisms, emotional support from family and peer networks primarily, and support from institutions/community which heighten emotional well-being and motivation. This study concludes that although there are emotional challenges that students experience because of parental migration, such students have developed protective mechanisms and have received support from family and institutional networks to be resilient. In this regard, it is recommended that the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and the Local Government Units improve psychosocial and family-based interventions to address students with parents who are Overseas Filipino Workers, considering that students have to deal with their own emotional and psychological aspects.

Keywords: Coping Strategies; Criminology Students; Emotional Well-Being; OFW Parents; Parental Migration; Support Systems.

1. Introduction

The overseas migration of Filipino parents as OFWs profoundly transforms the educational and socioeconomic lives of students, especially those enrolled in criminology (Catembung, 2024). Through the absence of parents, numerous students experience emotional difficulties and pining, which may interfere with their classroom motivation and engagement (Hermansyah & Aqil, 2024). As much as remittances bring money stability and exposures to quality education resources, they can also breed dependency that constrains students' autonomy and decision-making (Sharma et al., 2025). Parent migration also influences students' career aspirations, family life, and individual development, making it essential to address the multifaceted issues with support mechanisms (Ziaian et al., 2023). Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), there were approximately 2.16 million OFWs during April to September 2023, an increase of 9.8 percent from 1.96 million between the same periods of 2022 (Balba, 2024).

Parental loss through OFW migration significantly impacts the academic and emotional lives of criminology students, as evidenced by their experience of loneliness, depression, and emotional displacement, which are further aggravated by the absence of direct parental guidance and support (Peñalba & Lobos, 2021). These students have often suffered from a lack of ability to stay concentrated and motivated in their studies, given that they struggle with yearnings and insecurity arising from being away from their parents (Rabanal, 2020). The psychological cost of such separation can cause disturbances in their psychological growth, with their attitude towards learning and their mental well-being being affected (Sarmadi & Khodabakhshi-Koolae, 2023). Even with the economic well-being brought about by remittances, these students might require extra emotional and

social support to manage the absence of their parents, highlighting the fine line between economic gain and emotional loss (Ullah, 2022). Identification of these effects is important in the context of creating focused interventions that assist their academic achievement and emotional strength, so the drawbacks of parental loss do not stand in the way of their ambitions and personal development in the criminology sector.

The absence of OFW parents often causes feelings of loneliness, emotional distress, and a lack of parental guidance among criminology students (Peñalba & Lobos, 2021). Students usually manage these challenges by seeking comfort from friends and relatives who provide them with emotional stability (Gao & Liu, 2025). Most students also react by valuing the sacrifices of their parents and converting their deep longing into a drive for excellence (Howell-Shields, 2023). The separation also promotes independence and responsibility, as they accept household chores and childcare roles in the family (Saleh et al., 2022). In spite of the difficulties, these reactions promote resilience and flexibility, influencing their behavioral development and attitude toward learning and potential opportunities in the future (Yang & Wang, 2022).

The motivational issues and decision-making patterns of criminology students who have working abroad parents are significantly shaped by the desire for parental attention and guidance (Cheng et al, 2023). Even when their parents are physically absent, these students tend to depend on relatives, friends, and individual strength of character for making decisions that affect their educational and personal lives (Olmos-Gómez et al., 2021). Their interest in succeeding in school is often driven by a sense of obligation to their parents' sacrifices and the family's expectations, aware that their success in school can be the key to securing future stability and success (Somaiah et al., 2020). The power of their goal is also supported by the fact that employment overseas will offer greater earning potential, which encourages them to study higher and strive for good career opportunities (Zahari & Puteh, 2023). In general, their choices are influenced by a mix of emotional yearning, cultural values, and practical concerns that motivate them to put education first as an individual development tool but also as a means of contributing to their families and rewarding their parents' effort abroad.

School support mechanisms have a significant role in counterbalancing the adversity experienced by students with OFW parents (Taola et al., 2024). Schools are important settings where students can access emotional, academic, and social support through counseling services, peer assistance groups, and caring teachers who are well aware of their special situation (Marsh & Mathur, 2020). These support structures assist in alleviating the sense of missing, isolation, and ambiguity emanating from their parental loss, thus enhancing resilience and positive behavioral growth (Leitch, 2022).

By offering a nurturing environment that supports open discussion and counseling, schools are able to strengthen students' coping mechanisms, improve their motivation to perform well academically, and foster a sense of belonging despite disrupted family life. Finally, good support systems at school are crucial in helping such students break their emotional and social barriers so that their learning process remains positive and focused despite their parents' absence (Enderle, 2025).

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of criminology students with Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parents, focusing on the emotional, psychological, and behavioral challenges they encounter as a result of parental absence. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What emotional and psychological challenges do criminology students experience as a result of having OFW parents?
2. How do criminology students cope with the absence of their OFW parents in terms of their academic, personal, and social lives?
3. What support systems (e.g., family, peers, school services, community networks) do criminology students rely on to manage the effects of parental absence, and how do these systems influence their overall well-being, motivation, and resilience?

2. Methods

2.1. Design

This research used a case study research design to examine the lived experiences of Criminology students whose parents were Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). Case study research was a qualitative method that focused on the comprehension of people's personal lives and the meanings that they ascribed to them (Moustakas, 1994). This design was well-suited for the study as it enabled an in-depth examination of the emotional, psychological, and social challenges these students faced due to prolonged parental absence. Using the case study method, the study captured the subtleties of realities on how these students dealt with, adjusted to, and kept their academic and personal welfare intact, giving a realistic understanding of the effect of parental migration on their everyday life, relations, and future plans.

2.2. Setting

This study was conducted at one of the universities in Misamis Occidental, Philippines, and focused on the well-being of criminology students with OFW parents as they navigated the emotional, psychological, and academic challenges arising from parental absence. The province's dynamic urban landscape provided a relevant context for understanding the unique experiences of these students within both their academic pursuits and personal lives.

2.3. Participants

The study involved ten (5) Criminology students from Misamis University who had Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parents. Participants were selected through sampling to ensure that they possessed characteristics directly relevant to the study's objectives. The selection criteria were as follows: (1) currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program; (2) had both parents working abroad from their elementary years up to their time in college; and (3) were willing to participate and openly share their lived experiences regarding the emotional, psychological, and social effects of prolonged parental absence.

2.4. Instrument

An interview guide was used to collect information from criminology student participants whose parents worked abroad. The researchers developed a set of interview questions, which were reviewed and approved by the panel members. The interviews focused on the participants' emotional, psychological, and academic experiences related to parental absence, as well as their coping strategies for these challenges. To create a comfortable atmosphere, the interview began with a casual conversation, helping participants feel at ease and encouraging open, honest responses. Participants were invited to provide detailed and descriptive answers, elaborating on their personal experiences and coping mechanisms.

2.5. Data-Gathering Procedure

To ensure the feasibility of the study, the researchers first sought formal approval from the Dean of the College of Criminology at Misamis University. Once approval was granted, the researchers invited identified criminology students with Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parents to participate in the study. The primary aim was to explore the emotional, psychological, and academic challenges these students faced due to prolonged parental absence. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, which were conducted at a mutually agreed time and place to ensure participant comfort and privacy. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and then transcribed for analysis. The researchers emphasized that active participation and honest sharing were vital to achieving the study's objectives. Collected data were treated with strict confidentiality and stored securely in password-protected files. They were disposed of either by permanent deletion of electronic files or secure shredding of any printed materials upon completion of the study and publication of the findings.

2.6. Ethical Consideration

In conducting this qualitative research, the researchers adhered to the ethical protocols set by Misamis University. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and interviews were only conducted with students who provided their informed consent. Each participant was required to sign an informed consent form before the interview began, ensuring they fully understood their rights and the purpose of the study. Participants had the right to withdraw at any time without facing penalties or loss of benefits. The signed consent form did not waive any legal rights or claims related to the study.

To protect participants' identities, strict measures were implemented to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. During the interviews, participants were addressed using neutral terms, such as "Ma'am" or "Sir," instead of their names. No identifying details, including names or other personal information, were included in the final research report or manuscript. The researchers prioritized the privacy and confidentiality of all participants throughout the study.

Additionally, the study complied with Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, to ensure the protection of all collected data. The informed consent form was written clearly, free from misleading terms, ensuring transparency in participants' involvement. All audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. After the completion of the study,

all data were retained for five years for academic purposes before being permanently deleted. By upholding these ethical standards, the researchers created a safe and respectful environment for participants to share their experiences.

2.7. Data Analysis

This study employed the phenomenological reduction technique developed by Moustakas (1994) to analyze the lived experiences of criminology students with OFW parents. Interview transcripts from all participants were examined using Moustakas' structured approach. The following steps guided the data analysis: (1) Bracketing, (2) Horizontalization, (3) Clustering into Themes, (4) Textural Description, (5) Structural Description, and (6) Textural-Structural Synthesis.

3. Results and Discussions

The research consists of criminology students with overseas worker parents, both male and female, although predominantly female. All have been separated from their parents for over eight years, experiencing long-term emotional and social adjustments to the absence of a parent. Their similar experiences in terms of coping with distance, managing academic responsibilities, and taking on increased household roles constitute a sound basis for describing how prolonged parental migration shapes their emotional wellbeing, resilience, and daily functioning. This common background also gives a clear description of the effect of extended separation on their ways of dealing with troubles, motivation, and overall personal development.

The study tried to obtain an understanding of daily emotional, psychological, and behavioral experiences of criminology students whose parents are OFWs and the strategies they employ in coping with prolonged separation from their parents. In this way, the investigation was able to provide a comprehensive view of the challenges they experience along with the ways in which motivation, stability, and resilience are sustained despite separation. Results are grouped into five major themes, which are emotional distress and loneliness, pressure and increased responsibility, reliance on support networks and social connections, development of independence and coping strategies, and the role of institutional and community support to improve well-being. Each theme exposes that students are burdened with the emotional weight of missing their parents, managing school and household responsibilities as well as maintaining academic drive with greater responsibilities at home. Participants narrated how sadness, role strain, and absence of guidance mark their daily lives, but how support coming from peers, relatives, teachers, and institutions, coupled with resiliency and self-discipline, enable them to adapt and move forward. These testimonies have painted a human face of parental migration and show that these students are not just passive recipients of remittances but individuals who are confronted with emotional, psychological, and social challenges in their quest for stability, growth, and academic success.

3.1. Emotional Distress and Loneliness

Such children and adolescents often face a lot of emotional challenges with feelings of loneliness owing to the extended separation from their caregivers, which also impacts their ability to concentrate, their academic performance, and overall psychological well-being. Supportive networks can, therefore, be crucial in coping.

They reported that the absence of a parent resulted in feelings of loneliness and anxiety, which disturbed their concentration and affected their academic performance (Fatima et al., 2021). Some became depressed and stressed, especially in an adjustment period. Others mentioned that due to emotional instability, their studies were disrupted initially. Overall, the responses reflected that parental absence created emotional challenges that influenced personal well-being and a focus on academics (Hashmi & Fayyaz, 2022). These are evident in the responses of the Criminology Students during the conduct of the interview (Trebilcock & Griffiths, 2022).

“My parents being away caused me to feel lonely and anxious, impacting my concentration and grades.” (CS 1)

“I had emotional problems like depression and stress as a result of being away from my parents, and these affected my studies at first.” (CS 2)

“My parents' absence caused emotional distress and a sense of instability, affecting my initial academic efforts.” (CS 4)

The guardian particularly pointed out that at first, there were feelings of loneliness, which coincide with students expressing emotional turmoil due to the absence of a parent. However, as much as that is concerned, with time the student regained motivation and confidence in his studies, showing resilience and adaptability. This observation supports the students' experiences of gradually developing coping mechanisms, relying on support systems, and finding ways to maintain focus and determination despite challenges imposed by having parents working overseas. It is a pointer that guidance and encouragement from family and mentors go a long way in ensuring both emotional stability and academic growth.

At first, the student seemed lonely, but now shows motivation and confidence in their studies. (G 1)

Among the major issues that students with an overseas-working parent experience are emotional disturbances and loneliness (De Jesus & Adducul, 2024). In an overseas working setup, the separation period is protracted and frequently arouses feelings of sadness, anxiety, and emotional instability that can automatically affect concentration and academic performance. Initial responses may include depression, stress, and insecure feelings, further making it hard to put up with daily responsibilities and demands (Solberg et al., 2023). Coping mechanisms include maintaining links with family and peers through communication, support provided by social and institutional networks, and activities that bring emotional outlet (Khan & Sultan, 2023). With time, these strategies aid in mitigating feelings of isolation, build resilience, and enable the development of a stable sense through which learners can navigate emotional complexities associated with the absence of parents.

As identified in related studies on emotional distress and loneliness among children of parents working abroad, the prolonged physical absence of a parent at home significantly impacts the children psychologically and socially (Lim et al., 2022). Research indicates that these children often feel sad, anxious, and emotionally unstable, influencing their academic performance, social interactions, and general outlook on life (Gau & Liu, 2025). The lack of parental presence, as expressed in various studies, results in feelings of isolation and inability to face day-to-day challenges, causing children to be at greater risk for stress and symptoms of depression (Rhodes et al., 2023). On a positive note, some of the same studies discuss how emotional support from other family members

and the community cannot replace but can alleviate the negative effects, building resilience and belonging. Overall, the literature emphasizes emotional disturbances and loneliness are much-encountered problems among children with OFW parents; nevertheless, support mechanisms can help children surmount such problems more proficiently.

The findings on emotional distress and loneliness suggest that the prolonged absence of parents has a great effect on children's psyches and minds, which in turn can have a bearing on their academic achievements, socialization, and quality of life (Fatima et al., 2021). That, of course, underlines the necessity to offer professional support through psychological consultation, peer support, and mentor ship programs (Danzi et al., 2020). Educational institutions and families should give emotional monitoring and create opportunities for frequent communication and connection, ensuring that students feel taken care of in spite of parental absence (Miller, 2022). Meeting these emotional challenges in their earliest stages will definitely increase the resilience and motivation of students to be better able to cope with the balance between personal and academic life.

The results on emotional distress and loneliness indicate that the long absence of parents affects the psyche and educational performance, socialization, and overall lives of children (Fatima et al., 2021). This study is grounded on Attachment Theory that considers parental attachment to be essential for building healthy relationships and a sense of attachment for a child (Ali et al., 2021). This result is imperative and emphasizes that initiatives for professional psychological assistance via consultation services and peer assistance initiatives for students to achieve stability and normalcy in their lives despite parental absence are a crucial requirement (Harrington-Diorio, 2024). The implications for this result indicate that initiatives for timely intervention and a systematic process for building a resilient and motivated learning and coping ability for students with parental circumstances such as those from OFW parents to face both educational and overall lives successfully are essential.

3.2. Pressure and Increased Responsibility

The absence of OFW parents means students have to take more responsibilities in the house, caring for themselves, managing household chores, and taking care of their siblings (Catembung, 2024). This added burden can be straining, while at the same time promoting independence, discipline, and a strong sense of accountability in their academic and personal lives. The students shared that they had to adapt to managing their emotions and financial responsibilities on their own (Cao et al., 2022). They also became involved in care giving tasks for their siblings and took on household duties. They learned to juggle school, work, and family tasks on their own without parental guidance, including becoming independent, disciplining themselves, and managing their time better (Saputri et al., 2022). These are evident in the responses of the Criminology Students during the conduct of the interview.

“The greatest adjustment was how to manage emotional issues and financial constraints independently.” (CS 2)

“The most challenging adjustment was to step up to the responsibility for my siblings.” (CS 3)

“One major adjustment was learning to balance school, work, and family duties without my parents' direct support.” (CS 4)

The guardian's observation of the student becoming more driven and responsible, showing independence in the management of duties, supports the students' accounts of taking on added responsibilities both at home and in studies because of their parents' absences. This reflects how the experience of having OFW parents instills self-reliance, discipline, and a strong work ethic as the students learn to juggle academic, personal, and family responsibilities. This guardian's insight into the role of supportive guidance leading students to channel such challenges into motivational and personal growth highlights maturity and responsibility as key outcomes of negotiating parental absence.

“The student has become more driven and responsible, showing independence in handling duties.” (G I)

Such absence often puts tremendous pressure on and increases responsibility for students to perform roles and tasks that their parents traditionally undertake, such as household chores, sibling support, or juggling multiple responsibilities associated with schoolwork, part-time jobs, or extracurricular activities. The sudden need to cope independently with emotional, financial, and practical challenges can be overwhelming at first, serving as a source of distress and necessitating rapid adjustment (Oliinyk et al., 2025). With time, however, students become much better organized, self-disciplined, and able to forge effective time management strategies to deal with such demands (Martin, 2022). Increased responsibility builds maturity, independence, and a sense of accountability that shapes the students' personal growth and further solidifies their resolve to succeed academically and socially despite all the challenges brought about by parental absence.

In this regard, related studies on pressure and increased responsibility among children of parents working abroad indicate that often, parental absence necessitates the child's assuming adult-like roles within the family, such as taking care of household chores, looking after siblings, and being part of decision-making in family affairs. This shift of responsibilities could mean immense stress and a heightened sense of responsibility affecting both personal and academic life (Nayak & Kachhi, 2025). However, studies have shown that while they initially may feel overwhelmed by their juggling multiple duties, such situations often foster independence, discipline, and problem-solving skills over time (Van Nooijen et al., 2024). The literature also established the fact that well-structured support from the family, mentors, and community programs can give relief to these responsibilities and eventually manage stress to enhance resilience and a strong work ethic (Kamanzi et al., 2025). Overall, the literature highlights that the pressure for increased responsibility is both a challenge and a developmental opportunity for children of OFW parents.

Findings on pressure and increased responsibility indicate that students who experience parental absence are usually expected to take on adult-like roles at home, blending the running of household errands with finances and school work. This can be an opportunity for them to develop positive traits such as independence, self-discipline, and problem-solving, but it may increase stress if not addressed appropriately (Bear & Soltys, 2020). The results tend to show that targeted interventions-mentoring, counseling, and skills workshops in particular-can prepare the student with ways of balancing multiple responsibilities (Fraire, 2025). If the educational institutions and families intervene on such pressures, students can maintain academic performance, emotional stability, and personal growth despite challenges. Results supported the concepts of pressure and additional responsibility, where

children from OFW families tend to shoulder mature responsibilities for home, finances, and studies (Catembung, 2024). This fuels independence, self-control, and problems-solving skills (Ozturk Eyimaya et al., 2022). Role Strain Theory provides the foundation for this discussion since it focuses on various roles causing strains, though stressful, and leading to personal development (Skoczylis & Andrews, 2022). Results are valuable since they show the importance and need for programs and initiatives at educational institutions and family levels for children to cope with all the mentioned pressure while staying emotionally sound and performing well.

3.3. Reliance on Support Networks and Social Connections

Family support networks and social connections become especially critical in enabling students to cope emotionally with the circumstances brought about by having an OFW parent (Taola et al., 2024). Such relationships whether with family, friends, or community groups provide reassurance, motivation, and a sense of belonging that strengthens their emotional resilience. The responses indicate that each of these individuals utilizes various forms of connection to help them bear up under emotional burdens (Pihkala, 2024). One describes maintaining frequent contact with loved ones and relying on peer groups for emotional stability. Another expresses the comfort derived from continuous communication through online platforms and virtual support communities (Fayez & Aboelnagah, 2023). Yet another testimony points to meaningful support in church groups and friendships that bring about a sense of belonging and encouragement. Overall, these glimpses show how continued social bonding is essential in sustaining emotional well-being. These are evident in the responses of the Criminology Students during the conduct of the interview.

“I deal with isolation by keeping in touch with my family and friends. Support networks such as peer groups have been a great help in staying emotionally stable.” (CS 1)

“Support systems like video calls with family and support groups online make me feel connected and supported.” (CS 2)

“Support systems like church groups and close friends provide a sense of belonging and encouragement.” (CS 4)

The guardian's perspective reinforces the shared experiences of the criminology students through the emphasis on structured emotional and social support within schools and communities. This consideration parallels the reliance of students on communication, peer groups, and social networks as critical coping mechanisms during times of challenge brought about by parental absence. In advocating for counseling, guidance programs, and peer-based activities, the guardian can easily demonstrate how formal support systems enhance the informal networks that students are already relying upon. These support programs not only help address emotional distress and loneliness but also facilitate students' continued motivation, contentedness, and resilience in juggling academic pressures and personal responsibilities.

“Schools and communities should provide counseling, guidance programs, and peer activities to support students emotionally and socially.” (G 1)

Reliance on support networks and social connections is paramount, in that it helps the individual cope with the emotional and practical challenges associated with parental absence (Khan & Sultan, 2023). Regular

communication with family members through calls, messages, or online platforms maintains a sense of closeness and reassurance despite physical distance (Brown & Greenfield, 2021). Peer groups, friendships, and social communities offer additional layers of emotional stability, creating safe spaces where struggles can be expressed, advice sought, and understanding found (Clonan-Roy et al., 2021). Further reinforcing this feeling of security are supportive environments such as school organizations, church groups, and online forums. Such support makes individuals better equipped to deal with loneliness and stress. By building resilience, they learn better ways of coping and feel more anchored at school and in their personal lives, with social support providing the bedrock for emotional well-being and continued.

Similar studies consistently emphasized the importance of solid support systems and social connections in cushioning students from the emotional stresses linked to parental absence in overseas worker families (Gyasi-Gyamerah et al., 2024). Research has documented that in families where communication with family members, whether through digital platforms or periodic visits, is regular, feelings of loneliness are significantly reduced and emotional stability is fostered (Brown & Greenfield, 2021). The literature also underlines the salience of peer relationships. Specifically, friends and classmates are found to be important sources of comfort, understanding, and companionship, thus enabling children to better cope with academic and personal problems. Community groups, such as church organizations, or school-based support programs have similarly provided a sense of belonging and contentedness that bolsters resilience and psychological well-being (Fu & Zhang, 2024). Taken together, the literature points to social support systems as mitigating factors that allow students to remain motivated, manage stressors better, and develop healthier coping mechanisms in the absence of their parents.

The findings from the theme *Reliance on Support Networks and Social Connections* reveal how meaningful relationships and consistent social support are in maintaining the emotional stability and academic functioning of the students with OFW parents. These findings signal that when the students keep open communication with the family, receive encouragement from peers, and engage in supportive community groups, they can more effectively handle loneliness, stress, and pressures for independence (Chaudhry et al., 2024). These support systems enhance their coping capabilities and a sense of belonging, important for sustaining motivation and resilience (Khan & Sultan, 2023). This implies that schools, the community, and families should continue to nurture these networks and provide structured programs which reinforce emotional and social support, since these connections make an important difference in students' overall life and success.

The results from the theme of *Reliance on Support Networks and Social Connections* indicate that positive relationships and the presence of a support network are essential within the overall emotional stability and academic functionality of OFW students (Fuentebella et al., 2025). Social Support Theory underlies the importance of family, peers, and community organizations as a protective environment for the child (Bauer et al., 2021). These results are significant because they confirm that the presence of regular communication with the support network increases the resilience factors of the child. It suggests the need for further development of programs that increase the importance of the support network for OFW children within the academic institution.

3.4 Development of Independence, Self-Discipline, and Coping Strategies

The absence of a parent who is working abroad often facilitates in students becoming independent and responsible by encouraging them to carry out household and personal duties on their own (Jovero, 2021). This experience fosters self-discipline and effective coping strategies to manage academic responsibilities, emotional challenges, and daily tasks with increased resiliency and focus (Spohrer, 2024). Students said that due to a parent's absence, they had to assume family responsibilities, which tested their independence and accountability (Purwono et al., 2023). They also said that building resiliency, maintaining a positive attitude, and establishing personal routines helped them handle stress and maintain focus on their studies, reinforcing their ability to handle academic and personal demands effectively. These are evident in the responses of the Criminology Students during the conduct of the interview.

“The most challenging adjustment was to step up to the responsibility for my siblings.” (CS 3)

“Having a sense of independence and resilience, along with practicing positive self-talk, are significant contributors to my well-being.” (CS 4)

“The experience of having a parent working abroad has instilled in me a strong sense of independence and responsibility.” (CS 5)

This observation by the guardian shows how parental absence can be a facilitator in developing maturity and independence among students. Assuming responsibilities while staying home motivates students to handle time management, prioritize activities, and make independent decisions. The guidance, therefore, helps them in developing self-discipline and coping mechanisms, thereby strengthening their ability to manage academic responsibilities along with personal and family duties. Mentorship and encouragement from supportive figures enable students to deal adequately while fostering resilience and personal development.

“The parents’ absence inspired the student to be more mature, responsible, and independent.” (G 3)

Except for cases of prolonged parental absence or other challenging circumstances, the development of independence, self-discipline, and coping strategies becomes crucial (Sanchez, 2024). With added responsibility, the individual develops a sense of maturity through managing a task, making decisions, and prioritizing in the absence of direct supervision (Burkhonov et al., 2021). Self-discipline develops through structured routines, setting goals, and putting continuous effort into maintaining focus to realize personal and academic goals. Coping mechanisms, such as mindfulness, positive self-talk, and management of time, lower the level of stress and emotional distress to attain emotional stability and resilience (Grzybowski & Brinthaupt, 2022). All these skills collectively promote personal growth, ensure active problem-solving, and develop in them the confidence to handle daily responsibilities and long-term goals.

Related studies point out that extended absence of parental figures, or conditions of challenging life, hastens young adults' sense of independence and, accordingly, self-discipline (Alice, 2024). Scholars have established that individuals with more responsibilities either at home or in their personal lives possess better time management, decision-making, and organizational skills (Boguslavskaya et al., 2025). Studies indicate how coping mechanisms such as goal-oriented behavior, mindfulness, and stress management facilitate resilience, promoting

emotional stability and academic performance (Nwadi et al., 2025). Indeed, the literature suggests that becoming resilient through such practices not only has favorable consequences in terms of personal growth but allows individuals to proceed with confidence against any challenges that might arise in the future with a greater ability to be adaptable. These findings accord with the understanding that independence, self-discipline, and coping mechanisms are interrelated skills which support overall well-being and success.

Findings regarding the development of independence, self-discipline, and coping mechanisms indeed suggest that a student who experiences challenging situations, such as parental absence, will work on developing important life skills that can help him or her to improve both personally and academically. In taking on more responsibilities and being able to manage time and emotions, students engage in developing resilience and a sense of responsibility that will benefit them in successfully pursuing their studies and future careers (Alarilla, 2024). These findings underscore the need for educational institutions to offer structured guidance and skill-building programs that strengthen students' self-discipline and coping abilities (Oju et al., 2025).

The students learn to be independent, self-disciplined, and develop coping mechanisms as a result of the absence of parental support, dividing time and attention between school and home commitments alike (Mbaluka et al., 2021). This study, founded on the theory of Resilience, exemplifies how these problems may develop adaptive approaches and generate positive outcomes for students (Fullerton et al., 2021). The relevance offers enhanced support not only to improve performance but also to strengthen emotional and psychological foundations related to mental health and overall well-being, as it must mean that coping and independence should also be enhanced and fostered within an educational environment.

3.5. Family and Peer Support as Primary Emotional Anchors

Family and peer support are highly important in shared responsibility and coping strategies. Having individuals a person can trust provides help in dealing with stress, builds resiliency, and strengthens a sense of belonging and motivation (Subedi, 2025). The students echoed that keeping in contact with both family and friends was one of the key things, along with involvement in peer and community groups, which helped them manage feelings of isolation (Gill, 2025). This provided emotional stability, belonging, and encouragement; they corroborated that these aspects kept them motivated and resilient despite challenges brought on by their parent's migration abroad (Gallegos, 2025).

“I deal with isolation by keeping in touch with my family and friends. Support networks such as peer groups have been a great help in staying emotionally stable.” (CS 1) “Support systems like video calls with family and support groups online make me feel connected and supported.” (CS 2)

“Support systems like church groups and close friends provide a sense of belonging and encouragement.” (CS 4)

The guardian, as a source of encouragement and understanding, cements emotional support as the key to helping students deal with parental absence. Through guidance, reassurance, and being a listening presence, the guardian helps the student manage lonely feelings, sadness, and tension. This support fosters resilience and emotional

stability, enabling the student to remain focused on their studies while maintaining contact and well-being. The involvement of family members underlines that close relational support provides an important anchor, supplementing peer networks and institutional resources in supporting psychological and academic adjustment overall.

"My role is to be a source of encouragement and understanding, helping them manage their emotions during their parents' absence." (G 2)

Family and peer support provide emotional anchors of stability and reassurance in times of separation or stress (Ani, 2024). Maintaining regular communication with loved ones and investing in supportive peer relationships foster resilience to cope with loneliness, anxiety, and isolation (Kumar et al., 2025). In fact, such networks promote a sense of belonging, encourage the expression of emotions, and offer practical advice on how to manage daily responsibilities. Reliance upon trustworthy family and peer contacts acts to enhance an individual's resilience and confidence in coping with setbacks (Haddow et al., 2021). The presence of strong emotional support systems enhances psychological well-being but also motivation, focus, and overall personal growth by reinforcing the importance of connected relationships in maintaining mental and emotional balance.

Related studies identify that the sense of familial and peer support plays a major role in stabilizing the individual's emotions and ensuring psychological well-being when experiencing parental absence or another life threat (Afita & Nuranasmita, 2023). It has been noted that regular communication with family and peers, along with active involvement in peer groups, reduces feelings of loneliness, stress, and anxiety while positively affecting resilience and coping (Labrague et al., 2021). Research findings indicated that supportive social relationships create an individual sense of belonging and self-efficacy in effectively dealing with responsibilities and academic or work pressures (Larsen & James, 2022). Further, participation in organized forms of support, such as in counseling programs, mentorship initiatives, and peer groups, has shown improvement in emotional regulation, motivation, and overall mental health. These findings together suggest that family and peer support are essential emotional anchors that enhance individuals' ability to adapt to, and overcome, adversities.

The findings regarding family and peer support as major emotional anchors indicate that strong social networks are vital in maintaining emotional stability and promoting general well-being (Khan & Sultan, 2023). Individuals who have supportive family relationships and peer networking cope more easily with stress, loneliness, and challenges related to parental absence (Heshmati et al., 2021). These findings suggest that educational institutions and communities must create programs and activities that build social support, such as peer mentoring, group counseling, and family engagement initiatives (Bryan et al., 2020). This will enhance resilience, motivation, and emotional health, allowing students to effectively tackle personal and academic responsibilities while fostering a sense of belonging and safety.

The findings indicate that consistent family and peer support provides students with reassurance, motivation, and a sense of belonging during parental absence (Allen et al., 2022). Anchored in Attachment and Social Support Theories, the study highlights that these relational networks are foundational for emotional stability and

resilience. The significance is that students with strong support systems are better able to manage stress, maintain focus, and pursue academic goals despite challenges (Travis et al., 2020). This implies that schools, families, and community organizations should continue implementing programs that reinforce peer mentoring, family engagement, and social support networks.

3.6. Institutional and Community Support Enhancing Well-Being and Motivation

Institutional and community support are very important in helping students confront the problems caused by parental absence (McCulloh, 2022). Ensuring the accessibility of counseling services, mentorship programs, and organized support networks provides students with guidance, encouragement, and practical assistance that together raise students' motivational levels in pursuing academic and personal success (Afzal et al., 2024). Students acknowledged that to be able to meet the challenges brought about by having a parent who is an OFW, support must come from their school and social circles (Distor & Campos, 2021). Guidance from teachers, encouragement by classmates, and a sense of community shared in the university showed acceptance and understanding. By being able to receive such support, they were able to better cope with academic requirements and put on a stable emotional outlook that would keep them motivated, thus showing how institutional and community resources become invaluable in promoting well-being and persistence.

"I thank friends, teachers, and the university for the understanding and support that enable me to cope with the difficulties of being an OFW parent's child studying criminology and pursuing hobbies and having realistic goals, building close relationships, and having self-care for my mental health." (CS 1)

"I acknowledge the assistance of my classmates, instructors, and the University for providing the criminology student a sense of community and belonging with an OFW parent." (CS 3)

"The support from my friends, teachers, and the university is essential in helping me balance my responsibilities as a criminology student with an OFW parent." (CS 4)

The recommendation for mentorship and counseling initiatives underlines the very important role that institutional support plays in maintaining the well-being of the students and their motivation. With systematic guidance and professional counseling, the students would be accorded unbroken emotional support to realize their coping mechanisms and keep focused on the academic and personal goals. Such initiatives complement the encouragement and understanding from teachers, classmates, and peers, creating a holistic support system that strengthens resilience and fosters a sense of belonging. In this way, students who have certain special challenges-for instance, having OFW parents-are equipped with the ability not just to cope with their responsibilities but to be successful in their emotions and academics as well.

"They should create mentorship and counseling initiatives to help students with OFW parents cope and stay motivated." (G 2)

Support from an institution or community is very important for wellbeing and motivation in general but can be of particular help for those who have to face special challenges (Stumbitz et al., 2022). Mentorship programs, access to counseling services, and peer support networks provide a structured system of guidance to deal with emotional

stress, build resilience, and keep focused on one's goals (Fortuna et al., 2022). The sense of belonging and reassurance that comes with engaging in supportive communities will foster proactive coping strategies and continued personal growth (Slavich et al., 2022). These resources also provide realistic means of juggling responsibilities and life skills development, ensuring that academic, social, and personal demands can be appropriately managed. Emotional, social, and practical support combined make institutional and community resources highly valuable in motivating individuals, ensuring good mental health, and long-term success.

Related studies have shown how support from an institution and community contributes to individuals' well-being and motivation (Boyd & Nowell, 2023). According to research, mentorship, counseling programs, and structured peer networks allow students to cope with emotional problems and stress while developing academic engagement (Le et al., 2021). In their turn, supportive communities nurture feelings of belonging, enhance self-efficacy, and encourage overcoming personal and social complications. Besides, organized support activities, such as guidance programs and community initiatives, have been found to promote better time management, resilience, and goal-setting skills (Lunov & Rozhkova, 2024). These findings collectively stress the role of institutional and community support as crucial for sustaining motivation, mental health, and overall personal development.

These results signal that strong institutional and community support is critical in enhancing emotional well-being and motivation among students (Shen et al., 2024). Guidance programs, mentorship, and supportive networks allow students to manage their stress levels, overcome challenges, and make sure they remain focused on their goals academically and personally (Omoosebi et al., 2024). The findings suggest that schools and societies must be actively engaged in implementing various initiatives that can offer continuous emotional, social, and academic support by providing a caring environment for their students. In this way, it is easier to enhance resilience, self-efficacy, and belonging by reinforcing these support systems at an institutional level, thereby contributing toward the general development and success of the students (Guo et al., 2025).

These findings imply that this psychosocial set is due to the strong institutional and community support which enhances the emotional well-being and motivational stride of the students with OFW parents, thereby upholding the Social Support Theory, emphasizing that stress can be reduced and resilience enhanced with structured and meaningful support systems. Findings give evidence that supportive educational and community interventions facilitate students' coping with their stressful experience while sustaining motivation and commitment to academic and personal pursuits (Abuzar et al., 2024). The findings also offer insight into schools and communities as ecological settings that provide supportive environments which help mitigate the emotional problems attendant on parental absence (Ren et al., 2025). More specifically, these institutions provide a haven that boosts belongingness, self-efficacy, and emotional stability among students whose parents are OFWs.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study detail emotional and psychological struggles faced by criminology students with OFW parents, which include feelings of loneliness, pressure, and added responsibilities at home. Similarly, despite these difficulties, they have strong resilience, independence, and coping mechanisms that help them respond to academic demands and personal concerns. Support networks-family, peers, and institutional frameworks-are

central in mitigating stress and motivating them to achieve their goals. In this case, results revealed that the absence of a parent does not mean only hardship but also a way to maturity, disciplinedness, and networked social relationships. Overall, the study underlines complex, transformative experiences of students facing both academic and parental migration realities.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that future research focus on the role that technology and online communication tools, such as online mentorship, online peer support group sessions, and online counseling initiatives, could play in lessening the emotional pain and feelings of loneliness being experienced by students from OFW backgrounds. These initiatives could be introduced in partnership with OWWA, LGUs, CHED, and DMW to possibly improve the resilience levels and educational outcomes of these students.

Declarations

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

All the authors took part in literature review, analysis, and manuscript writing equally.

Informed Consent

All participants in this study voluntarily gave their informed consent prior to their involvement in the research.

Availability of data and material

All supplementary documentation can be provided for the purpose of academic inquiry or verification.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable for this study.

Ethical Approval

The researchers adhered to the ethical protocols set by Misamis University.

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