Filipino Families and Households in Three Selected Philippine Areas

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THE FILIPINO FAMILY is in a period of transition. The size of the family is slowly being altered by declines in fertility which are somehow being offset by improvements in maternal and child survival. Women's participation in the labor force is on the rise and has gained support from the increasing emphasis on women's rights. This is expected to impinge on household decision-making processes and the relationships between spouses and between parents and children. Likewise, the heightened migration of labor will affect family headship patterns and give rise to the number of solo parents taking charge of childrearing and of household management. These movements will also affect the relationships among family members, i.e., between spouses, between parent(s) and children, and among children.

This report examines the size, composition, and headship of sample families and households in randomly selected barangays of Ilocos Sur, Cebu, and Metro Manila. It seeks to find out any new or emerging structure/arrangement among today's families and households. The analysis compares families and households not only across types of locale, i.e., rural versus urban, but also according to socioeconomic status (poor, middle, rich) based on income and perception of key informants.

The *family* here is taken to comprise two or more persons related by virtue of marriage, blood or adoption and who are living together under one dwelling unit. Marriage covers the legal unions solemnized by a priest or by a judge or other persons authorized by law, and consensual unions like those of live-in couples or of couples living together without the benefit of any ceremony. Thus, the family, when considered as a basic unit, comprises any of the following core combination—both parents with or without unmarried children, or either spouse with unmarried children. This basic unit is referred to as the nuclear family. The core or nuclear family may have other relatives such as a brother or sister of the spouses, an uncle, an aunt, grandfather or other kinsmen. The presence of such kinfolk within the family extends the core and transforms the nuclear family into what is called the extended family.

A *household* on the other hand, is a person or group of persons living together within one dwelling unit and sharing common arrangements for food. Thus the members of a household may or may not be related with one another.

However, fifteen out of sixteen households in the Philippines (94 percent) are family households or households with a family core (de Guzman, 1990).

The family household may either be nuclear or extended. The extended family household has a nuclear core which is extended either vertically or horizontally. Vertical extensions comprise of relatives attached to a core and belonging to a generation other than the household head or his/her spouse. Horizontal extensions consist of relatives attached to a core and belonging to the same generation as the household head or his/her spouse. Vertically and horizontally extended family households have both vertical and horizontal extensions.

Presentation and Analysis of Findings

Size of Families and Households. This study reveals, as expected, a preponderance of large-sized households (six or more members) in Metro Manila compared to urban Cebu and rural Ilocos Sur. Table 1 demonstrates that almost seven out of 10 households in Metro Manila have six or more members, while the corresponding figures for the urban and rural areas are 47 percent and 43 percent, respectively. The average household size increases as one moves from the rural area to the Metro Manila area.

The above supports previous findings and existing evidence pointing to a slightly larger household size, on the average, in the urban areas than in the rural areas (Morada and Gregorio, 1983; de Guzman, 1985; 1990). This may be due to the fact that while fertility continues to decline, albeit more rapidly in the urban areas, household size in the rural areas continues to be further diminished by out-migration to the city. This offsets whatever reductions there are in the mean number of children in the urban family and increases the members of the urban household because of in-migrant relatives.

When the sample households are classified by socioeconomic status (SES), the rich family households register the largest membership (Table 2). However, differences by SES category appear muted when the setting is taken into account. The largest number of members can be found among the rich households in Metro Manila with 10 members on the average, followed by the Cebu urban rich households with a mean of eight members, and the urban Cebu and Metro Manila middle income households averaging

Table 1. Percentage distribution of households by size and locale.

Household Size	Residence		
	Rural Ilocos Sur	Urban Cebu	Metro Manila
2	5.3	2.7	2.6
3	12.0	14.7	2.7
4	20.0	16.0	14.7
5	20.0	20.0	10.7
6	17.3	17.3	16.0
7+	25.4	29.3	53.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	5.3	5.7	7.9

six members. Rural rich households manifest the least number of members with less than five persons on the average. This is consistent with the observation that the more affluent urban families provide accommodations to rural relatives who migrate to the city. Even the rural rich households are depleted by the outmigration of members.

When only the immediate members of the family are considered (i.e., the members of the nuclear family), the Metro Manila poor have the biggest number with a little over five members on the average. The smallest nuclear family is found among the Cebu urban rich with less than four family members.

Table 3 presents the variations in the number of immediate members of the family by socioeconomic status. It is noted that the size of the nuclear family varies negatively with socioeconomic status. Almost 43 percent of the better-off have only two to three immediate family members, compared to the 24 to 25 percent among the middle income and poor households.

Using the proportion of families with six or more members as the indicator, it

Table 2. Percentage distribution of households by size and socioeconomic status of household.

Household Size	Socioeconomic Status		
	Poor	Middle	Rich
2	4.0	2.6	4.00
3	9.3	6.7	13.3
4	14.7	14.7	21.3
5	17.3	24.0	9.3
6	17.3	21.3	12.0
7 +	34.4	20.7	40.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	6.3	5.9	6.7

Table 3. Percentage distribution of households by number of immediate family members and socioeconomic status of household.

No. of Immediate Family Members	Socioeconomic Status of Household		
	Poor	Middle	Rich
2	10.7	8.0	32.0
3	14.7	16.0	10.7
4	6.0	22.7	22.7
5	22.7	24.0	8.7
6	18.7	16.0	6.7
7+	17.2	13.3	9.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	4.9	4.7	4.0

is noted in Table 4 that the largest proportion of large-sized families is found among the poor (37 percent), and the smallest proportion is found among the rich families (28 percent). On the other hand, moderate-sized families predominate among the middle-class (over 44 percent). As expected, relatively more small-sized families are found among the rich (36 percent).

In terms of mean family size, the figures also vary across SES groups. Poor families have 4.9 members on the average. The corresponding figures for middle-class and rich families are 4.7 and 4.5 members, respectively.

The location of the household does not seem to matter in terms of the number of immediate members of the family (Table 5). Irrespective of locale, whether rural, urban or Metro Manila, the mean number of persons comprising the nuclear family remains the same, i.e., between four and five persons. Thus SES, more than locale, is an important determinant of family size.

Composition of families and households. The sample families are predominantly nuclear (seven out of 10 families). However, considering SES, more than three-fourths or 77 percent of the middle class families are nuclear as against 73 percent among the poor and 63 percent among the rich (see Table 6).

It is interesting to note that while rich families have fewer members than

Table 4. Percentage distribution of families by socioeconomic status and by family size.

SES	Family Size			
	2 - 3	4 - 5	6 +	Total
Poor	29.1	34.4	36.5	100.0
Middle	26.7	44.2	29.1	100.0
Rich	36.0	36.0	28.0	100.0
Total	30.6	38.1	31.3	100.0

Table 5. Percentage distribution of households by number of immediate family members and locale.

No. of Immediate Family Members	Locale		
	Rural	Urban	Metro Manila
2	14.7	14.7	21.3
3	17.3	16.0	8.0
4	21.3	17.3	22.7
5	17.3	25.3	22.7
6	17.3	12.0	12.0
7 +	12.0	14.7	13.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	4.5	4.6	4.5

Table 6. Percentage distribution of families by socioeconomic status and by family type.

SES	Family Type		
	Nuclear	Extended	Total
Poor	72.9	27.1	100.0
Middle	76.7	23.3	100.0
Rich	62.8	37.3´	100.0
Total	70.9	29.1	100.0

the other SES families, the highest incidence of extended families (37 percent) is found among them. This is reflective of the capacity of the rich to provide support to other relatives.

Looking at the household, the same pattern is observed. Seven out of 10 of the poor and middle income households are nuclear compared to only 59 percent of the rich households. In other words, there are less extended family members in the poor and middle class households compared to the rich. Again, this shows the pattern of support to kinsmen offered by the rich household.

Considering the locale, three quarters of the Cebu urban poor and middle class family households are nuclear. On the other hand, large numbers of vertically extended family households are found among the rural poor, rural rich, and the Metro Manila rich. It is towards the latter where the attraction for in-migration is the greatest. One explanation for the tendency of the rural folks to study or work in the city to swell their urban kinsmen's household is the relative difficulty and high cost of putting up or maintaining a separate house in the city compared to the low-cost barrio dwelling (Medina, 1991).

Aside from kinsmen, Metro Manila households are large due to the presence of boarders and domestic helpers. Boarders are most likely accepted to offset the high cost of housing, food, and other amenities in the city (Morada and Gregorio, 1983), while domestic helpers are employed by the rich who can very well afford their maintenance and services.

Metro Manila rich households exhibit the most number of extensions of attached relatives and non-relatives (around six persons). Metro Manila poor households come next with about three persons, followed by the Metro Manila middle class, and urban Cebu's rich households with about two persons.

It is reasonable to expect that the number of attached relatives generally exceeds the number of attached non-relatives. This expectation holds true across all SES categories controlled for area or locale, except among Cebu's urban rich and Metro Manila rich households where the attached non-relatives serving as domestic helpers or performing other functions outnumber the attached relatives. In the case of Metro Manila rich households, non-relatives outnumber relatives three times. Among the rural households, non-relatives are virtually non-existent.

In general, the nuclear family is the most prevalent type irrespective of

SES. The vertically extended family is the next most common family household arrangement, although this seems to be somewhat more prevalent among the rich. By and large therefore, the vertical extensions such as parents, grandparents, grandchildren, and nieces/nephews seem to be more common compared to other types of relatives. These relatives are the usual beneficiaries of care and assistance from the well-to-do households but are the sources of help for the poor households.

As to gender, females demonstrate a slight superiority in terms of number in the household vis-a-vis the males. This difference increases with a shift from the rural setting to the more urbanized sector. This could be partly explained by the presence of domestic helpers in the urban and Metro Manila areas. The perceived opportunities for better employment have encouraged the influx of females to these areas.

If the socioeconomic status of the household is considered, the poor and middle class households tend to have an equality of the sexes. Among the rich, the number of females clearly exceed the number of males for obvious reasons.

The Family Head

In this study, the family head is the one identified as such by the family members, particularly by the respondent. Since the female spouse was often available for interview at the time the family was visited, she was the respondent in most cases.

The head of the Filipino family, as reported, is essentially a male (see Table 7). Despite the so-called egalitarianism of the Filipino family in decision-making (Porio, et.al., 1978; Mendez and Jocano, 1974) and the trend toward dual-earner households with the increased labor force participation and breadwinning function of wives (Castillo, 1973; Miralao, 1992), the husband is still officially considered as the head of the household. Only 8.2 percent of the sample families claim to be headed by women, with a large proportion of them found among the rich.

The distribution of male and female heads by socioeconomic status and geographic location of families is shown in Table 8. Although the male heads are more or less equally distributed across SES and locale, in contrast, half of the female heads are at the helm of rich families and only less than a third (32 percent) are in charge of poor families. In terms of locale, the female heads tend to concentrate in Metro Manila and the other urban areas (43 percent and 36 percent, respectively). These findings are consistent with those of the 1988 Family

Table 7. Percentage distribution of families by SES and by sex of head.

| SES | Sex of head | | Total |
	Male	Female	
Poor	92.7	7.3	100.0
Middle	95.3	4.7	100.0
Rich	87.2	12.8	100.0
Total	70.9	29.1	100.0

Income and Expenditures Survey (cited in Miralao, 1992) where female-headed households had a generally higher annual average income compared to male-headed households; and that almost half or 48 percent of female-headed households were in urban areas.

Differentials in headship by family size tend to favor the females. Only 14 percent of female heads have large-sized families (six members and over) while among male heads, the corresponding proportion is 33 percent. These findings tend to disprove the belief that female heads are more disadvantaged than male heads.

Table 9 gives an indication of intact families by SES, meaning families with both spouses present. The greatest number of intact families (married and living-in) in relative terms is found among the middle class families (91 percent) and the least among the poor families (82 percent). Solo parents as heads (widowed and separated) are mostly found among the poor (17 percent). The proportion of solo parent-heads for rich and middle class families are 13 percent and seven percent, respectively.

Summary and Conclusions

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. Household size increases as one moves from the rural area to the Metro Manila area.

2. The biggest household size is found among the rich households in

Table 8. Percentage distribution of families by SES, locale & by sex of head.

SES	Sex of head		
	Male	Female	Total
A. SES			
Poor	36.2	31.8	35.8
Middle	33.3	18.2	32.1
Rich	30.5	50.0	32.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
B. Locale			
Rural	34.2	18.1	33.2
Urban	32.1	36.4	32.1
Metro Manila	33.3	45.5	34.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 9. Percentage distribution of families by marital status of head and by SES.

Marital Status	SES			
	Poor	Middle	Rich	Total
Married	70.8	88.4	83.7	80.6
Living-in	11.5	2.3	3.5	6.0
Widowed	10.4	5.8	9.3	8.6
Separated	6.3	1.2	3.5	3.7
Single	1.0	2.3	-	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Metro Manila and urban Cebu. However, the rich households in the rural areas are the smallest in size.

3. Size of the nuclear family varies negatively with socioeconomic status. The better-off have less children than the poor.

4. Although the sample families and households are predominantly nuclear, the highest incidence of extended families are found among the rich, more particularly, the Metro Manila rich. These are mostly vertical extensions such as grandparents, grandchildren, nephews and nieces.

5. The Metro Manila rich and Cebu's urban rich have the highest number of attached non-relatives, even outnumbering the relatives. In the case of Metro Manila rich households, the non-relatives outnumber the relatives three times.

6. The number of females in the household is slightly more than the number of males, becoming more so as locale shifts from rural to urban, especially among the rich.

7. Majority of the families and households are reported to be headed by males. The largest proportion of female heads are found among the Metro Manila rich.

As may be gleaned from the data, there has not been much change in the structure and composition of the Filipino family and household. Consistent with previous findings, the size of the household increases with the level of urbanization, due mainly to the in-migration of relatives from the rural areas.

The rich Metro Manila family, particularly, has the least number of children but the greatest number of relatives in the household, mostly vertically extended kin such as parents, grandparents, grandchildren, nephews and nieces. Thus traditional close kin ties remain strong even in the city.

The rich Metro Manila and urban Cebu household is further swelled by non-relatives, mostly female domestics. This is reflected in the data where the number of females exceed that of the males as locale shifts from rural to urban, especially among the rich.

The male is still the acknowledged head of the family and household. Only 8.2 percent of the sample families are headed by females, a large proportion of whom are found among the Metro Manila rich.

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