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Fulfilling Acts 16:31 Among Families in the Philippines of Church Leaders and Workers in KSA

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Abstract: This study took a closer look at how Filipino church leaders and workers in Saudi Arabia live out Acts 16:31 with their families back in the Philippines, even though they are separated by distance, face religious diversity, and deal with restrictions on Christian evangelization in KSA. Using a qualitative research design through the Social Grounded Theory approach, this study delved into the real-life experiences, challenges, and strategies of six Filipino church leaders and workers living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The data were obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted online and were then analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and thematic analysis. The findings showed that participants faced hurdles in providing spiritual guidance and evangelization to family members with different religious beliefs or who belong to various Christian denominations. Despite these obstacles, they continued to nurture their families' faith through prayer, patience, digital communication, biblical teachings, and support from church systems. The study also underscores the importance of respect, understanding, and family harmony when evangelizing in interfaith family settings. Moreover, digital platforms such as Zoom, Messenger, and social media have become crucial tools for maintaining spiritual connections and building faith remotely. The findings suggest that churches and religious organizations should bolster digital ministry programs, discipleship initiatives, and support systems for Filipino migrant workers. Overall, the study highlighted that faith, love, communication, and spiritual resilience are key to sustaining family centered evangelization, even in the face of migration and physical distance.

Keywords: Acts 16:31; Filipino migrant workers; Evangelization; Interfaith families; Digital faith communication

INTRODUCTION

The Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:18–20, is the cornerstone of Christian evangelization. It calls on believers to spread the gospel and make disciples of all nations (Malolos et al., 2021). At the heart of this mission is the family, often seen as the "first ministry," where faith is nurtured, practised, and passed down through generations. In recent years, the increasing number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) has changed how Filipino families practice and share their faith with each other. While migration offers opportunities for spiritual growth, it also presents challenges such as geographical separation, cultural adjustment, and religious diversity within families (Liem et al., 2022).

In Saudi Arabia, where public Christian worship and evangelization face restrictions due to its Muslim-majority status, Filipino Christians often find themselves practicing their faith privately and carefully navigating cultural and legal boundaries (Ahmed, 2024). Despite these challenges, Filipino church leaders and workers keep their ministries alive through private gatherings and underground congregations in homes. Digital tools like Zoom, Messenger, and social media have become vital for staying spiritually connected and sharing their faith with family back in the Philippines, even when separated by distance (Liem et al. 2022).

Within the community, over 380,000 Filipinos live and work in Saudi Arabia, many of whom are actively involved in Christian ministries and church groups. These Filipino church leaders and workers

offer spiritual guidance, emotional support, and encouragement to fellow migrants, while also nurturing the faith of their families back home. However, evangelization can be complex, as many of these families belong to different religious beliefs or Christian denominations. Family dynamics, cultural values, and respect for diverse beliefs play significant roles in how faith-sharing unfolds within Filipino migrant families (Malolos et al., 2021).

In Riyadh, Filipino church leaders and workers face significant hurdles in trying to evangelize their families in the Philippines. Geographical distance, limited personal interaction, and religious differences make this task challenging. They often find themselves balancing their desire to share their faith with the need to respect their family members' beliefs and practices. To tackle these challenges, they rely on prayer, patience, digital communication, and church support systems to maintain strong family and spiritual connections (Stanford et al., 2025; White 2023).

This study examines the lived experiences of members of the Abounding Hope Group, LORIMI-KSA, to gain a comprehensive understanding of how Filipino church workers fulfill Acts 16:31 amidst the challenges of migration, distance, and interfaith family dynamics in the Philippines. Despite the increasing number of studies on evangelization, migrant spirituality, and online ministry, there is limited research on how Filipino church leaders in Saudi Arabia fulfill Acts 16:31 among families with diverse religious beliefs in Saudi Arabia. Existing literature often addresses family dynamics, evangelization, or digital ministry in isolation, with few studies exploring the interaction of these factors within Filipino migrant families facing geographical separation and religious diversity (Corpuz 2025; Stanford et al. 2025). Additionally, there is a paucity of research on the role of digital communication, church leadership, and remote faith-building among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Saudi Arabia. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the strategies, challenges, and lived experiences of Filipino church leaders and workers in disseminating faith across distances and diversity.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What communication strategies do Filipino church leaders and workers in Saudi Arabia use to evangelize their families in the Philippines?
2. What challenges do Filipino church leaders and workers face in measuring the outcomes and effects of evangelization beyond direct interaction?
3. How do Filipino church leaders and workers balance their desire to share their faith with their families' existing religious beliefs and practices?
4. How do Filipino church leaders and workers maintain strong family bonds while influencing their family members' faith journeys in the Philippines?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Family Dynamics and Biblical Foundation

The family serves as the primary context for faith formation, acting as the foundational environment in which spiritual growth is initiated. Parents, as the principal educators of faith, convey Christian beliefs through deliberate instruction and demonstration of faith behaviors, thereby influencing their children's spiritual development. Research highlights that faith development predominantly transpires within the family setting, with parental involvement strongly associated with the sustained religious engagement of adolescents (Robinson, 2025). This supports the biblical principle that God entrusts parents with the responsibility to disciple their children, positioning the family as the unique medium through which divine revelation and faith education manifest. Biblically, evangelization is rooted in Jesus' directives in Matthew 28:18–20, where the Great Commission instructs believers to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them. This underscores the necessity of transmitting faith not only within the church but also beginning with the family. Acts 16:31 encapsulates the evangelistic message of salvation through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing faith as the central focus of spiritual formation and outreach. Consequently, the family's role aligns with the biblical call to evangelize by fostering faith that extends beyond the home into the broader world (Stevanus et al.,

2023). Moreover, healthy family relationships promote secure attachment, which correlates with spiritual growth. Children's perceptions of their parents influence their understanding of God, often serving as the foundation for their image of divine love and security. When family bonds are strong, faith development tends to be more mature and resilient, whereas dysfunctional family dynamics can impede it. Therefore, parents' commitment to nurturing faith within family relationships is essential for both personal spiritual growth and the broader evangelical mission (Robinson, 2025; Smoljo-Dobrovoljski, 2025).

Church Dynamics and Evangelization in Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, Christian worship and evangelization encounter considerable restrictions due to the country's stringent Islamic laws, which prohibit public Christian worship and all forms of proselytizing. As a result, Christians, including significant populations of Filipino expatriates, often conduct their religious practices in private or discreet settings within their homes or other locations to avoid legal repercussions in Saudi Arabia. These underground gatherings are crucial for sustaining faith and communal identity in an environment where public expressions of Christianity are severely limited. Within such restrictive contexts, church leaders play an essential role in maintaining the spiritual resilience and cohesion of dispersed faith communities abroad. Leadership often involves facilitating discreet fellowship opportunities, providing pastoral care, and encouraging digital or socially distanced worship, where possible. The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated these dynamics but also catalyzed the global adoption of digital worship platforms, enabling continued connection and spiritual nourishment despite physical restrictions (Hove, 2022; Malolos et al., 2021; Pakpahan et al., 2024). Although these studies primarily focus on contexts in the Philippines, Indonesia, and other countries, their findings on digital worship and pastoral presence offer insights into strategies relevant to Saudi Arabia's constrained Christian communities. Christian worship and evangelization in Saudi Arabia occur largely in private fellowship settings, with church leaders playing a critical role in sustaining faith and community, often by leveraging discreet gatherings and digital worship technologies to navigate legal restrictions and foster resilience.

Digital Communication and Online Evangelization

In today's world, digital communication and online evangelization are essential for sharing faith and building spiritual communities. Social media and online platforms are great for spreading religious messages and keeping spiritual families connected, no matter how far apart they are. These platforms offer a variety of functions, such as sharing information, networking, and enabling participation, which help believers connect and collaborate beyond physical boundaries (Lin, 2022). Through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, faith communities can share teachings, prayer requests, and testimonies, reaching wider audiences and engaging with them in real time. These platforms also allow for interactive and personalized communication rather than just one-way broadcasts, which deepens the relational aspect of spiritual exchanges (Lin, 2022). Digital evangelization strategically overcomes distance barriers, helping dispersed families and faith groups to maintain their bonds and collective religious identities. Moreover, research shows that family and technological support play a role in effective knowledge sharing through social media, highlighting the importance of digital communication in both academic and spiritual growth (Haque et al., 2023). Integrating social media into church contexts allows continuous faith formation and community participation, even when physical gatherings are not possible. However, challenges such as privacy concerns, information credibility, and digital abuse require careful handling to ensure safe and constructive digital faith interactions (Burns et al., 2024; Lin, 2022). Social media and digital platforms are crucial for sharing faith, nurturing spiritual family connections, and effectively reaching out across distances to the faithful. Their interactive and networked nature has transformed traditional evangelization, making it more accessible and participatory for believers worldwide.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL MAPPING

This study thoughtfully presents a theoretical and conceptual framework, illustrating how various

factors influence Filipino church leaders and workers in fulfilling Acts 16:31 among their families in the Philippines. The framework highlights independent variables such as geographical separation, religious diversity within the family, cultural and legal restrictions in Saudi Arabia, family values, and the religious commitment of church leaders and workers. These factors gently affect how participants share their faith and maintain their spiritual relationships with their families despite the distance. The framework also outlines the mediating processes, including communication, faith-sharing, spiritual guidance, and prayer, which contribute to strengthening family faith connections. Supporting factors, such as church support, digital communication, personal faith, patience, love, and biblical conviction, further assist participants in continuing their evangelization efforts. Consequently, the study identifies outcomes such as stronger family relationships, growth in faith and discipleship, respect for religious diversity, and effective remote evangelization methods. Overall, the framework explains how communication, faith practices, and support systems collaboratively aid Filipino church leaders and workers in nurturing family faith despite migration and geographical separation.

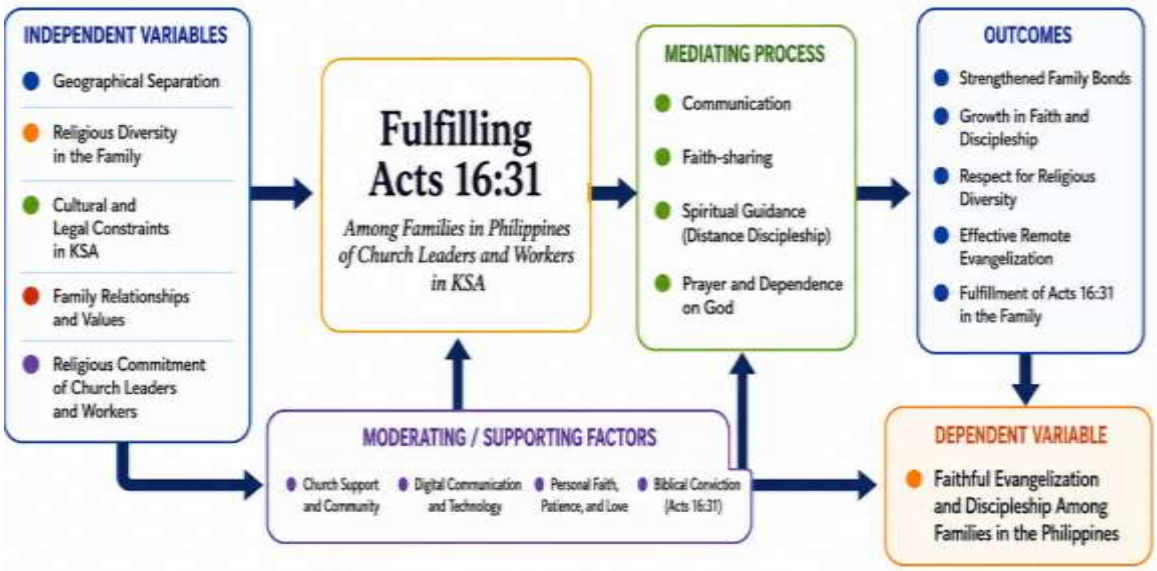


Figure 1: Concept Mappong of Fulfilling Acts 16:31 Among Families in the Philippines of Church Leaders and Workers in KSA

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design based on the Social Grounded Theory (SGT) approach. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to explore the experiences of Filipino church leaders and workers in Saudi Arabia in fulfilling Acts 16:31 among their families in the Philippines. Grounded theory allowed the researcher to generate themes and concepts directly from participants' lived experiences. The qualitative approach also provided a deeper understanding of family faith dynamics, evangelization practices, and the challenges encountered by the participants.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), specifically among members of the Abounding Hope Group of LORIMI-KSA. Riyadh was selected because many Filipino church workers and leaders reside and serve there. The locale was relevant to the study because participants experienced geographical separation from their families and challenges related to faith practices in a predominantly Islamic country.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were Filipino church leaders and workers currently residing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They included pastors, elders, deacons, and ministry workers with families in the Philippines with different religious beliefs or denominations. The respondents were selected because they had direct experience related to the study. Six participants were involved in the study.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

This study employed purposive sampling to select the participants. This sampling technique was used because the researcher intentionally selected individuals who could provide rich and relevant information on the topic. The participants were chosen based on their ministry involvement, experience in the KSA, and family religious background. Data gathering continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide prepared by the researcher. The interview guide contained open-ended questions related to communication strategies, challenges to faith, family dynamics, and evangelization practices. The instrument allowed the participants to freely express their experiences and insights. Follow-up questions were asked to clarify and deepen the participants' responses.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first secured permission from church authorities and the participants before conducting the study. After obtaining informed consent, interviews were conducted through online platforms such as Zoom and Messenger. The researcher used the interview guide during the interview sessions and audio-recorded the responses with the participants' permission. The recorded interviews were transcribed and organized for further analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using grounded theory techniques, such as open and axial coding. Significant statements and responses were identified and grouped into categories and themes for analysis. The researcher used thematic analysis to determine recurring patterns and relationships among the participants' responses. Continuous comparison of data was also conducted until major themes and concepts emerged from the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Theme 1: Faith Across Borders – Navigating Family Dynamics

Themes	Sub-Themes	Descriptions
Theme 1: Faith Across Borders – Navigating Family Dynamics	1.1 Interfaith Journeys	Experiences of Filipino church leaders and workers in dealing with differing religious beliefs within their families.
	1.2 Bridging the Gap	Challenges and strategies for maintaining faith and family relationships across distance and religious diversity.
	1.3 Anchored in Acts 16:31	The influence of biblical teachings on family evangelization and spiritual well-being.

Table 1 dives into the theme "Faith Across Borders: Navigating Family Dynamics," which sheds light on how Filipino church leaders and workers in Saudi Arabia share their faith with family members who hold different religious beliefs from theirs. The sub-theme Interfaith Journeys reveals that having a mix of religions within a family can shape spiritual relationships and faith practices. This aligns with Robinson's study (2025), which pointed out that families are the main source of faith formation and spiritual growth in children.

Moving on, the sub-theme Bridging the Gap underscores the importance of patience, communication, and understanding in keeping family ties strong, even when there are religious differences and physical distance. This finding resonates with Stanford et al. (2025), who noted that

interfaith families thrive on mutual respect and good communication to remain harmonious. White (2023) also highlighted that, when it comes to evangelizing in interfaith settings, the focus should be on love, respect, and building relationships.

Finally, the sub-theme Anchored in Acts 16:31 highlights how biblical teachings play a crucial role in guiding family evangelization and spiritual well-being. Participants viewed Acts 16:31 as a source of encouragement and motivation to share their faith with their families. This supports the insights of Stevanus et al. (2023), who explained that biblical teachings continue to guide Christian missions and discipleship within families and communities.

Table 2 Theme 2: Remote Shepherding – Strategies for Nurturing Faith

Themes	Sub-Themes	Descriptions
Theme 2: Remote Shepherding – Strategies for Nurturing Faith	2.1 Faith from Afar	Methods used by church workers to nurture and strengthen family faith remotely.
	2.2 Spiritual Support Circles	The role of church communities in supporting faith-building and family relationships is important.
	2.3 Tools of Faith	The use of digital communication and other resources to maintain spiritual connections and evangelization is also discussed.

Table 2 graciously presents the theme "Remote Shepherding: Strategies for Nurturing Faith," which describes how Filipino church leaders and workers endeavor to maintain and strengthen the faith of their families despite geographical separation. The sub-theme Faith from Afar gently illustrates that church workers continue to guide and encourage their families spiritually through prayer, personal testimonies, and consistent communication. This finding aligns with Malolos et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of sustaining spiritual connections and worship practices despite physical distance and restrictions during the pandemic.

The sub-theme of Spiritual Support Circles highlights the significant role of church communities in providing emotional and spiritual support to Filipino migrant workers. Church fellowships and ministry groups help strengthen faith and encourage participants' evangelization efforts. This supports Hove (2022), who explained that pastoral care and spiritual support remain important for maintaining faith and resilience among believers, especially in challenging situations.

Lastly, the sub-theme Tools of Faith thoughtfully emphasizes the use of digital communication platforms such as Zoom, Messenger, and social media in maintaining family relationships and evangelization. Participants viewed technology as an effective tool for sharing their faith and staying connected with their families. This finding agrees with Lin (2022), who stated that social media and digital platforms play an important role in communication, collaboration, and relationship building, including spiritual and religious interactions. Similarly, Pakpahan et al. (2024) highlighted that digital worship and online fellowship became effective means of sustaining faith communities despite physical separation during the pandemic.

Table 3 Theme 3: Crossroads of Faith – Personal Stories of Family and Belief

Themes	Sub-Themes	Descriptions
Theme 3: Crossroads of Faith – Personal Stories of Family and Belief	3.1 Facing the Divide	Experiences of families managing religious differences while maintaining harmony and respect.
	3.2 Faith-Driven	Successful strategies used by church workers to connect with family members spiritually despite

	Connections	distance and differing beliefs.

Table 3 dives into the theme "Crossroads of Faith: Personal Stories of Family and Belief," which sheds light on how Filipino church workers navigate religious differences within their families while maintaining harmony and respect. The sub-theme Facing the Divide reveals that participants chose not to impose their beliefs on family members. Instead, they focus on patience, understanding, and respect when sharing their faith with others. This aligns with White (2023), who pointed out that evangelization in interfaith settings should emphasize dialogue, respect and peaceful relationships. Similarly, Stanford et al. (2025) highlighted that successful interfaith family relationships thrive on mutual understanding and sensitivity to religious differences.

The subtheme Faith-Driven Connections underscores the role of church partnerships and community support in bolstering family faith relationships. Participants mentioned that local churches and Bible study groups provide spiritual guidance for their families in the Philippines, even from a distance. This finding supports Malolos et al. (2021), who observed that church communities are crucial in offering spiritual and emotional support to believers, especially during challenging times and separation.

Table 4Theme 4: Guiding the Way – Reflections and Recommendations

Themes	Sub-Themes	Descriptions
Theme 4: Guiding the Way – Reflections and Recommendations	4.1 Key Insights for Future Explorers	Insights and observations of interfaith family dynamics among Filipino church workers in KSA.
	4.2 Charting New Paths	Recommendations and suggested strategies for future evangelization and family faith-building efforts are provided.

Table 4 dives into the theme "Guiding the Way: Reflections and Recommendations," where we get a glimpse into what participants think about family evangelization among Filipino church workers in Saudi Arabia. One subtheme, Key Insights for Future Explorers, highlights the increasing presence of interfaith families among Filipino migrants and the importance of better understanding these dynamics. This insight supports Corpuz (2025), who emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue and faith-based understanding in fostering stronger family and community ties.

Another sub-theme, Charting New Paths, focuses on the participants' suggestions for developing structured programs, training, and strategies to help church workers effectively evangelize their families. They highlighted the need for a step-by-step approach to building faith rooted in patience, love, and spiritual support. This resonates with Hove (2022), who underscored the significance of pastoral guidance and support systems in bolstering faith communities and aiding believers in navigating complex spiritual challenges. Overall, Table 4 underscores the vital role of ongoing support, training, and collaboration in helping Filipino church workers live Acts 16:31 within their families.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study found that Filipino church leaders and workers in Saudi Arabia face several challenges when it comes to fulfilling Acts 16:31 with their families back in the Philippines. The main hurdles are geographical distance, religious diversity, and restrictions on Christian evangelization in Saudi Arabia. Despite these obstacles, the participants were committed to nurturing their families' faith through prayer, patience, digital communication, and support from their church communities. The study also pointed out that maintaining family harmony and respecting different religious beliefs are crucial when it comes to evangelization efforts. It highlights the important role of biblical teachings, church leadership, and online communication platforms in maintaining spiritual connections and strengthening family faith relationships across distances.

The findings suggest that churches and religious organizations should develop stronger support systems, faith-based programs, and digital ministry strategies to help Filipino migrant workers with family centered evangelization. Church leaders should consider offering seminars, discipleship training, and counseling programs that encourage respectful and effective faith-sharing within interfaith families. Additionally, this study adds to the growing body of literature on migrant spirituality, online evangelization, and interfaith family dynamics by emphasizing the importance of communication, spiritual resilience, and family relationships in fulfilling the Christian mission despite migration and physical separation from the family. Ultimately, this study suggests that faith, love, and understanding are key to strengthening family spirituality and sustaining meaningful evangelization among Filipino migrant families.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to six Filipino church leaders and workers residing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, specifically members of the Abounding Hope Group of LORIMI-KSA. The findings were based on their personal experiences and responses gathered through online semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the results may not represent all Filipino church leaders and workers in Saudi Arabia or other countries.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies may involve a larger number of Filipino church leaders and workers from different locations in Saudi Arabia and other countries. Researchers may also explore the perspectives of family members in the Philippines to gain a deeper understanding of family faith development, digital communication, and evangelization across geographical distances.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The researcher secured permission from church authorities and obtained informed consent from all participants before conducting the interviews. Participation was voluntary, and the participants' responses were audio-recorded with their permission and used for research purposes.

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AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No AI Disclosure