Bouncing Back:
Building Resilience in Migrant Wives Facing Family Violence in Singapore

A study based on migrant wives in a crisis shelter to understand how they overcome adversities

Presented By:
Jean Lim
Kanika Kant
Theresa Wee
Anglican Family Centre

Singapore Anglican Community Services

Overview

1. Introduction: Anglican Family Centre (AFC)

2. AFC Statistics (2018)

3. Literature Review

4. Definitions

5. Interview Process

6. Analysis

7. Key Learnings

8. Limitations and Future Recommendations

1. Introduction: Anglican Family Centre

I. Vision and Mission

II. Background

III. Core Services

IV. Service Model

I. Vision and Mission

- SACS Vision – To be a light in society, relieving suffering and enriching lives with the love of Christ.

- SACS Mission – To provide support, care and rehabilitation to the underserved and disadvantaged by ministering to their physical, mental, social needs based on Christian values.

- AFC Mission – To provide temporary refuge, care and protection to women and children experiencing family violence and to help empower them to build their lives to gain independence and resilience.
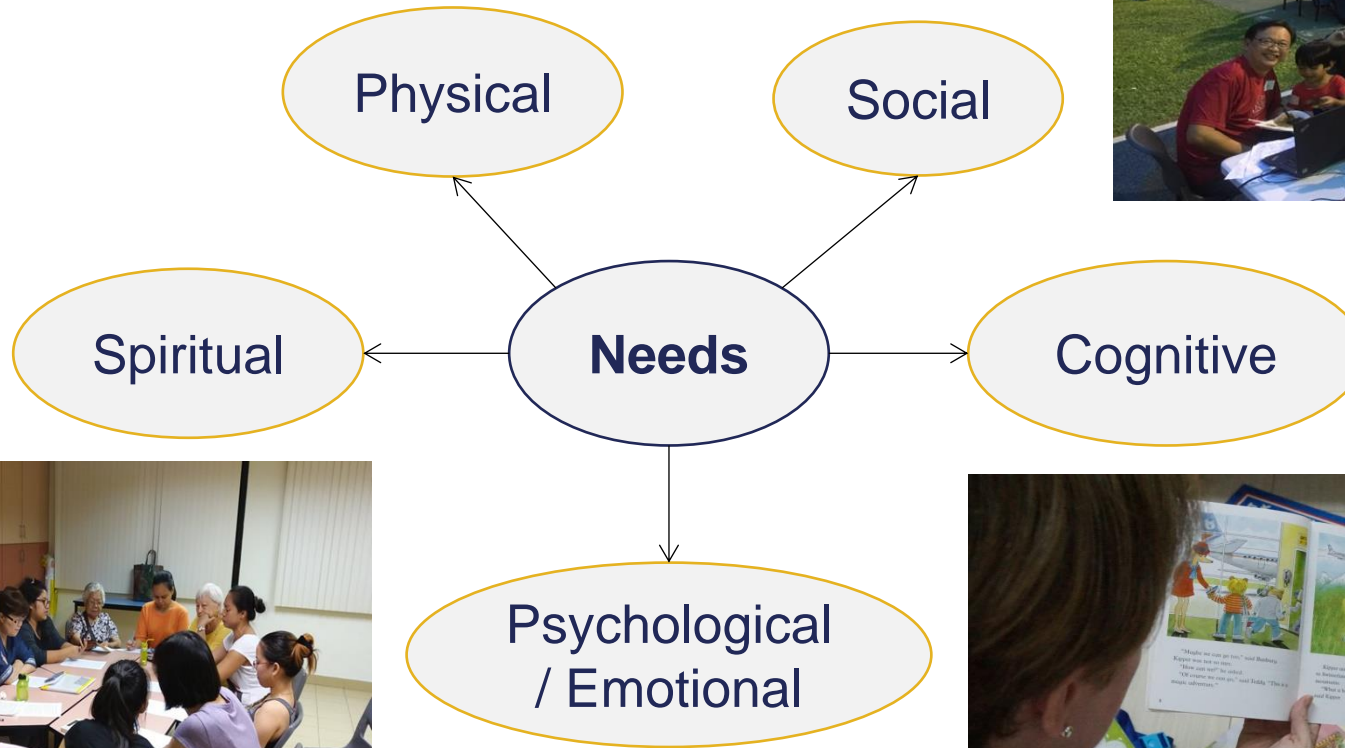
II. Background

- Started in 1986: provides refuge and support to troubled families who need respite care

- Serves primarily women and children who are experiencing family violence

- Also admits homeless women requiring urgent accommodation

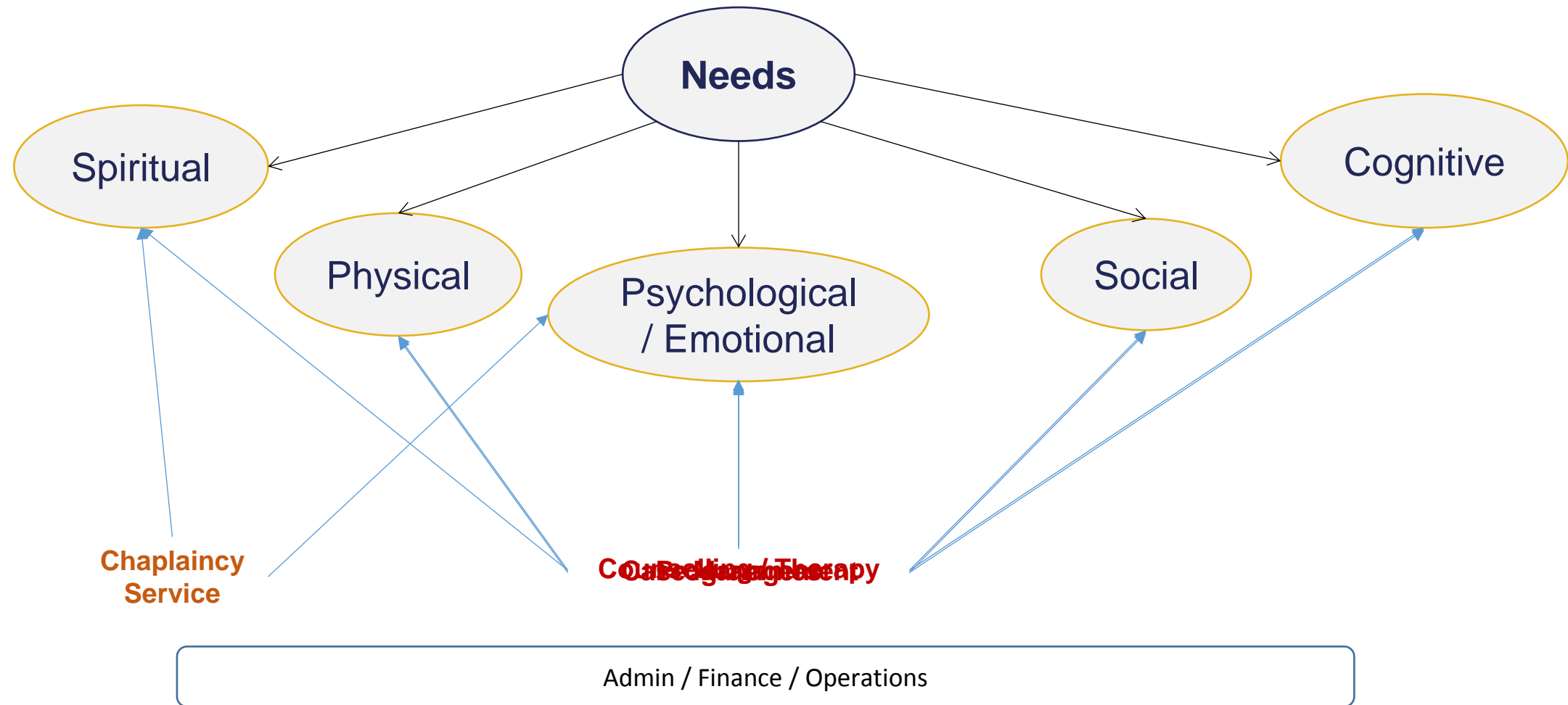- Since 2009, AFC has served more than 1500 residents

III. AFC Core Services

- Accommodation – 27 family rooms and 3 dormitories with max capacity of 100 residents
- Case Management
- Programmes for adults and children/youth
- Therapy / Counselling: Theraplay, Art Therapy, Play Therapy
- Chaplaincy Services

IV. Service Model

Physical

Social

Spiritual

Needs

Cognitive

Psychological / Emotional

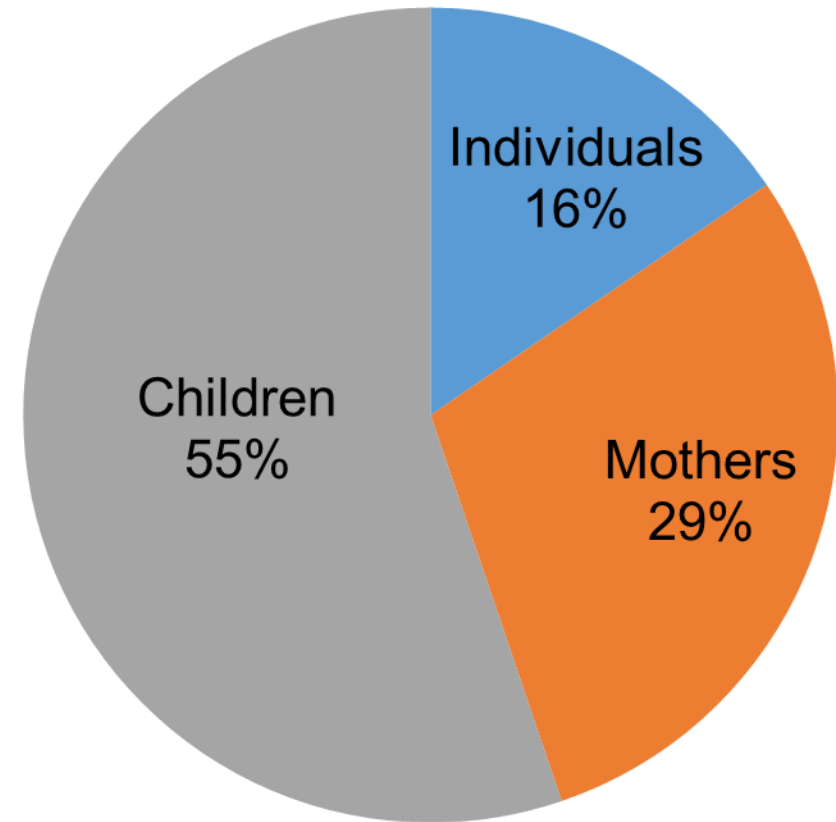Singapore Anglican Community Services

IV. Service Model

2. AFC Statistics (2018)

I.   Case Type
II. Profile of Residents
III. Citizenship of Adult Residents
IV. Ethnicity of Adult Residents

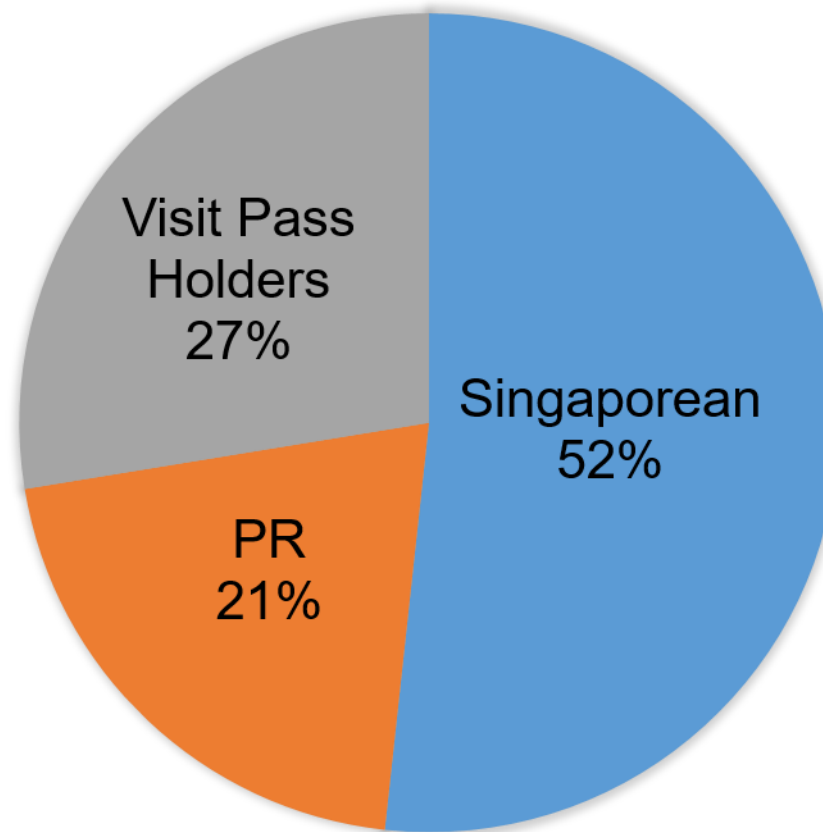# Case Type

Profile of Residents

Homeless
20, 8%

Family
Violence,
239, 92%

Individuals
16%

Mothers
29%

Children
55%
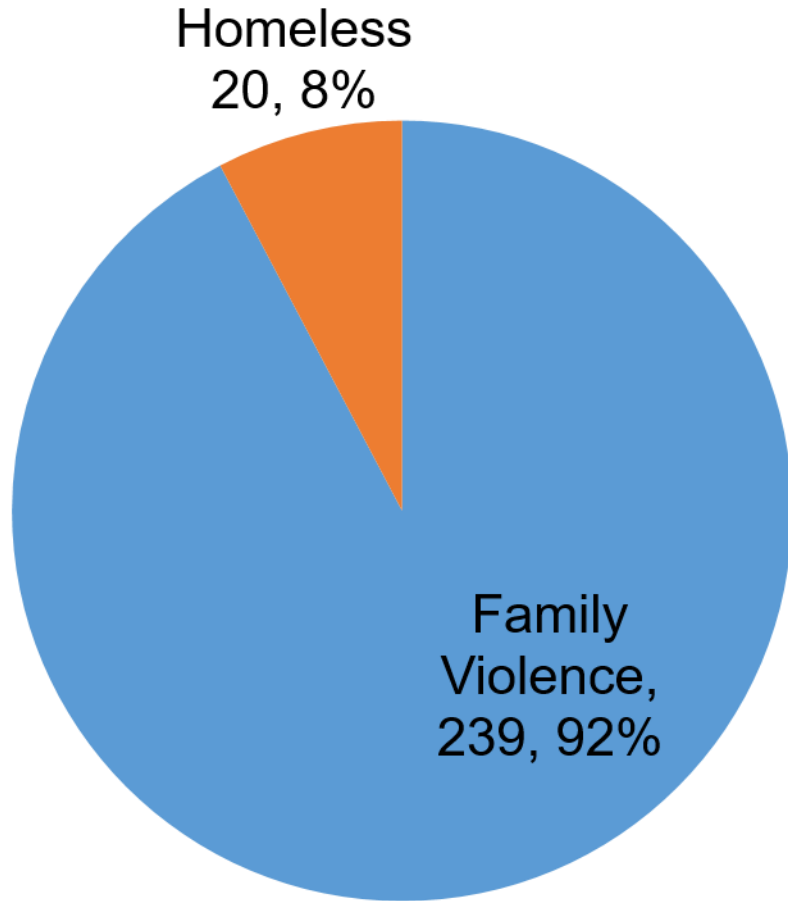
sacs
Singapore Anglican
Community Services
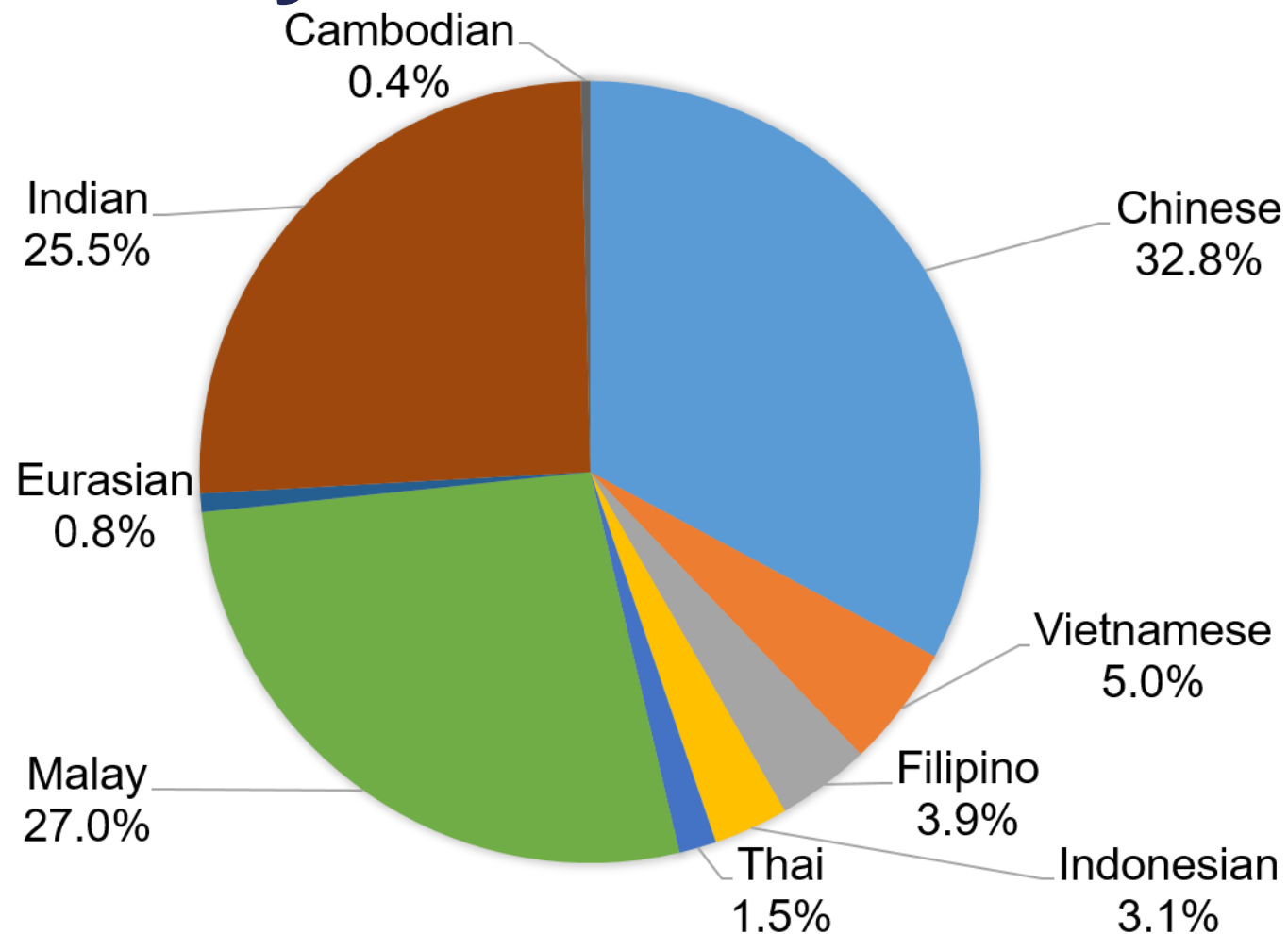
Citizenship of Adult Residents

Ethnicity of Adult Residents

3.   Literature Review

- Process (resilience) vs outcome (resilient)
- Resilience processes that mediate adversity and outcomes.
- Individual factors
  - Hope for the future, personal competence, self-acceptance, spirituality
- Systems:
  - Person In Environment (interactions with the systems)

3. Literature Review

➢Resilience and Family Violence

- Transitions:
  - Being controlled to being in control
  - Survival mode to starting a new life
- Important factors:
  - Friends, family, supportive employers
  - Access to formal support
  - Hope for future

4. Definitions

I. Resilience

II. Migrant Wives

I. Resilience

For this study, resilience is defined as maintenance of healthy/successful functioning or adaptation within the context of a significant adversity or threat

II. Migrant wives

A migrant wife is defined as any married woman residing in Singapore, who was born outside of Singapore, regardless of her present citizenship status

5.   Interview Process

I.   Purpose of the Study

II. Methodology

III. Profile of Interviewees

IV. Background of Interviewees

V. Interview Questions

I.   Purpose of the Study

- To understand experiences of migrant wives in their home country and Singapore

- To identify the factors that help migrant wives persevere despite adversities (resilience)

- To identify and enhance the support provided to migrant wives (system intervention)

I. Purpose of the Study

➢Focusing on Migrant Wives

- Transnational marriages in Singapore in 2018: 35% of the 27 007 marriages were foreign brides

- About half of AFC clients (48%) are migrant wives

II. Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 migrant wives
- 13 interviews were considered for this study
- Interviews were conducted by two shelter case workers
- Interviews were audio recorded
- Interviewer notes/ observations and audio recordings were used for analysis

III. Profile of Interviewees

Nationality	4 Filipino, 3 Indonesian, 3 Vietnamese, 1 Indian, 1 Chinese, 1 Cambodian
Number of Years in SG	4 – 19 years
Age	28 – 51 years old
Length of Stay in Shelter	2 – 31 months
Age difference with husband (Range, Average)	1-28 years, 11 years
Average Number of Singapore Children	2

IV. Background of Interviewees

➢Reasons for coming to Singapore

• Better-life (brighter future, better education for children)

• Marriage

• Work

• Encouraged by friends who migrated to Singapore

IV. Background of Interviewees

➢Difficulties Faced in Singapore

• Domestic Violence

• Chased out of house by husband

• Confined at home by husband

• Treated unfairly by husband and in-laws

V. Interview Questions

➢ Interview questions are broadly categorised into 4 parts

• Life in country of origin

• Life in Singapore

• Experiences in the shelter

• Strengths, motivation and aspirations

6.   Analysis

I.   Key Findings

II. Differences in home country and Singapore

III. Resilience Factors

I.   Key Findings

- Adaptability

- Maintaining relationships and forming new friendships

- Factors that appear to determine client's resilience can be broadly classified into individual factors and environmental factors

II. Differences in Home Country and Singapore

a. Experience in home country and Singapore

b. Relationship with family of origin

c. Relationship with friends

a. Experience in Home Country and Singapore

Home Country	Singapore
Happy – "family by my side" **Laid-back** – "more relaxed'', "not stressful", "simple life" **Comfortable** – "life was not difficult" **Freedom** – "can do what we want to do", "only think of myself and my family" **Poverty** – "family was poor''	**Positive first impressions** – "people very nice", "very pretty and clean", "friends say Singapore is good country" **Difficult** – "due to language, no friends and family"' **Lack of freedom** – "husband did not allow to work and make friends", "cannot talk, cannot work, stay in the room" **Cultural difference** – "people different", "food totally different" **Stressful after marriage** – "before marriage was good, after marriage conflicts with husband frequently"

b. Relationship with Family Of Origin

Home Country	Singapore
Good relationship with family/ extended family – "close to my parents", "chat about everything" **Support** – "all concerned for one another" **Quality Time** – "eat together, travel together", "a lot of family gatherings" **Daily Interactions** – "see them everyday even though have to work"	**Maintained Contact** – "talk to them everyday, night time", "almost everyday I facetime with my mum" **Reduced Contact** – "First used to talk everyday", "siblings got married and only cared about their families", "in-laws restrict", "busy with work" **Not sharing about troubles** – "worried that my parents will be affected, so did not share with them about what happen", "own choice to get married to Singapore, so will manage on my own", "family see that I am strong enough to handle things"

c. Relationship with friends

Home Country	Singapore
Friendships – "A lot of friends. They hang out weekly", "go out after work almost everyday" **Social Activities** – "Everyday I go out with my friends…drink, chat, go KTV", "after work, go for an outing to the beach"	**Friendships** – "I don't have any friends because my husband was too insecure", "easier to make friends after leaving house" **Social Media Friendships** – "I have two online friends", "facebook group (friends from the same ethnicity)" **Shelter Friendships** – "No friends here (in Singapore), except for some in the shelter", "Only at the shelter, easy to make friends" **Social Activities** – "Because my life is stressful, I didn't go out much", "No money to go out"

III. Resilience Factors

a. Individual factors

b. Environmental factors

a. Individual factors

i. Personal competence
ii. Perceived growth
iii. Hopes and dreams

i. Personal Competence

- Pray
- Keep to oneself
- Talk to friends and family members
- Meditation / deep breathing
- Recreational activity: listening to music, exercise, watching videos, eat with family
- Talk to professionals about problems
- Cry
- Sleep

ii.   Perceived growth

- "Increase in confidence"
- "Become tougher, not afraid"
- "Become more focused, have priorities and have to have my own goals"
- "Become brave and courageous"
- "No need to rely on him (husband) for $20 a week"
- "Now can speak up, can say no"
- "Trust myself all the time, (no matter) how hard it is, it will have a solution"

iii. Hopes and dreams

- Self
  - "To have a husband who loves me"
  - "To continue to stay in Singapore"
  - "To get a proper job"
- Family
  - "To have own place to stay"
  - "To earn money to support my children"
  - "For my children to be happy"
  - "To have a happy family"
  - "For my children to study in Singapore and find a good job"

b. Environmental factors

i. Formal support

ii. Informal support

iii. Employment

iv. Engagement by shelter

i.   Formal support

- Emotional Support
  - "Counselling gave me confidence and helped me with my anxiety and worries"

- Practical Support
  - Professionals ensured that she was referred to the right agency and guided her through the process

i. Formal support

➢ Perceptions of help

- Helpful
  - "Very good. My Social Worker help me a lot"
  - "Easy to approach. Government people help a lot"
- Reliable
  - "Can trust"
  - "Ask relevant questions"
- Negative Experiences
  - "Some helpful, some not helpful"
  - Rigid

ii. Informal support

- Emotional Support
  - "Advice one another because all in the same boat"
  - "Encourage me to be strong"
- Practical Support
  - "Gave a place to stay for two nights (when there was violence at home)"
  - Assist with child care occasionally
  - Brought to social workers at Social Service Agencies
- Spiritual Support
  - "They pray for me"

iii. Employment

- Resourceful
  - Recommendations for jobs from Friends/ Facebook
- Flexibility
  - "very easy (to find work) as long as not fussy"
  - "…as long as can earn money"
- Empowerment
  - "Work makes me powerful"

iii. Employment

- Challenges
    - Educational Level
   - Citizenship
    - Language Barriers

iv. Engagement by shelter

- Physical Needs
    - "Good, can protect me"
    - "I feel safe"
- Emotional/Psychological Needs
    - "Not stressed, (social worker) ask me not to give up, encourage me"
    - "Second family"
    - "Staff very helpful"

iv. Engagement by shelter

- Social Needs
    - "Easy to make friends, available to talk and chit-chat"
    - "Small community, can rely"
    - "Programmes keep me and daughter occupied"

iv. Engagement by shelter
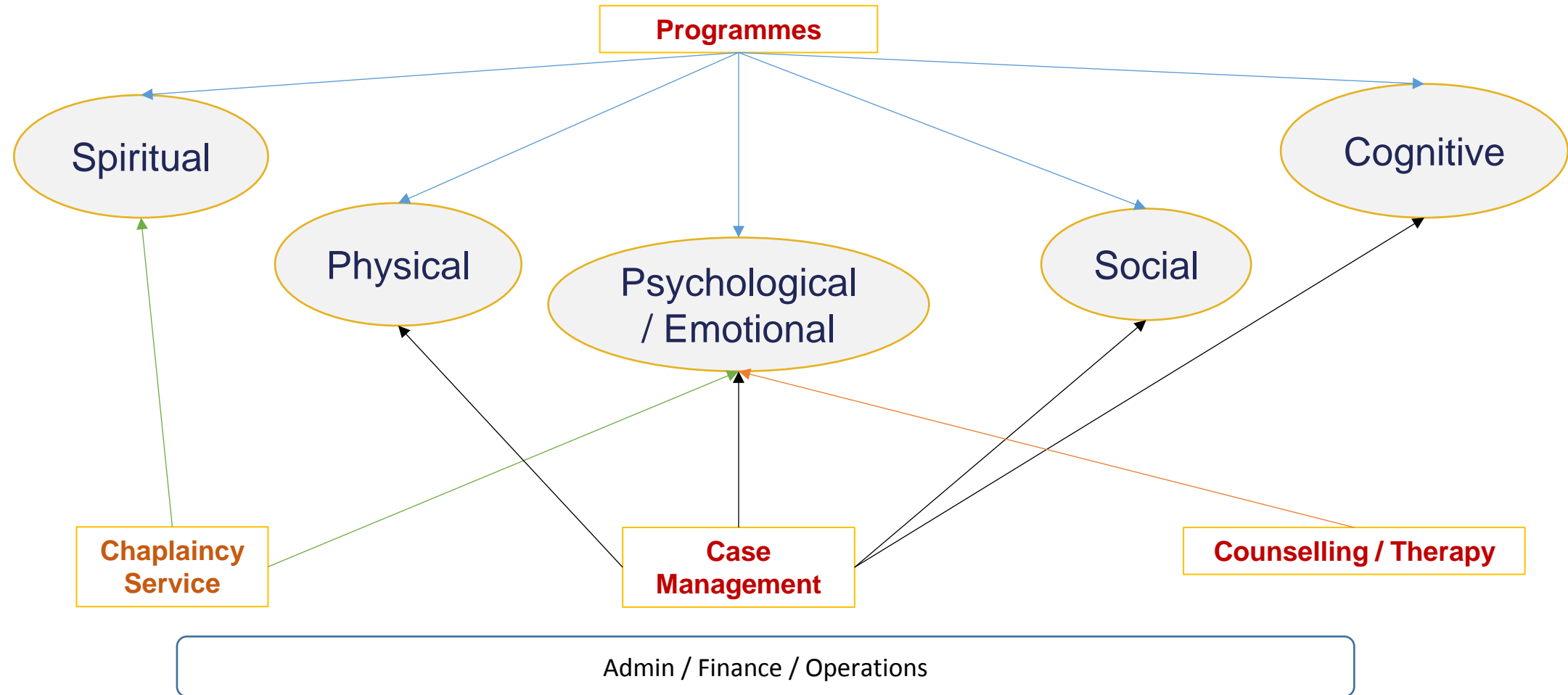
7. Key learnings

- Limited informal support and reliance on formal support from professionals
    - For professionals to support these migrant wives and connect them to informal support
    - To ensure that they are guided through the different systems to receive the right support
- To be strengths-based in our approach and build on sense of self
- Balanced approach between future-oriented interventions and trauma interventions
- They are able to optimize environmental factors (eg. Employment, formal/informal support) and use them to build on their individual factors

8. Limitations and Future Recommendations

Limitations	Future Recommendations
Language barriers	To recruit translators
Small sample size	To have more interviewees
Response bias	To have external and neutral interviewers
Subjectivity of responses	To make use of quantitative scales
Extraneous Variables (severity of trauma, ethnicity, length of stay in shelter, age gap with partner etc).	To include Singaporean wives (as a control group).
Self report	To include interviews with community partners

References

❖ Anderson, K. M., Renner, L. M., & Danis, F. S. (2012). Recovery: Resilience and growth in the aftermath of domestic violence. *Violence against women*, *18*(11), 1279-1299.

❖ Kaplan, H. B. (2005). Understanding the concept of resilience. In *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp. 39-47). Springer, Boston, MA.

❖ Total Marriages By Residential Status Of Grooms And Brides, Annual. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/publicfacing/createDataTable.action?refId=15690.

❖ Tsirigotis, K., & Łuczak, J. (2018). Resilience in women who experience domestic violence. *Psychiatric quarterly*, *89*(1), 201-211.

❖ Van Breda, A. D. (2018). A critical review of resilience theory and its relevance for social work. *Social Work*, *54*(1), 1-18.

Q&A

THANK YOU!