

Global Mobility and Dual-Career Marriages: Effects on Marital Stability in Christian and General Populations

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CITATION

Sangwa S. and Mutabazi P. (2025). Global Mobility and Dual-Career Marriages: Effects on Marital Stability in Christian and General Populations. *Open Journal of Science, Philosophy & Theology (OJ-SPT)*. Vol 01. Issue 01. Open Christian Press.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16921272>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 15 August 2025

Accepted: 21 August 2025

Category: Original Article

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PUBLISHER INFO

Open Christian Press—the publishing arm of Open Christian University—is produced in partnership with the Center for Faith and Work.

Abstract: Background: Globalization is accelerating cross-border mobility and mainstreaming dual-career marriages, reshaping family life—most acutely in the Global South. International migrants now number ~281 million and global female labor force participation is ~47%, altering the conditions under which marriages are formed and sustained. **Objective:** To synthesize contemporary evidence on how global mobility (study abroad, labor migration, missions) and dual-career patterns relate to marital stability in Christian and general populations, and to interpret mechanisms through Attachment, Social Exchange, and Work–Family Boundary theories alongside a covenantal theological lens. **Methods:** Systematic integrative review of secondary data and peer-reviewed studies (emphasis on Q1/Q2 outlets) combined with global datasets (UN, World Bank, OECD, Pew). Narrative synthesis and descriptive comparisons were used to identify macro trends and micro mechanisms; findings were interpreted through the stated theoretical and theological frameworks. **Results:** Unaccompanied labor migration consistently elevates risks to marital quality (conflict, mistrust, dissolution) by reducing presence and increasing exposure to alternatives; financial gains can buffer these effects when migration is temporary and role expectations align. Dual-career arrangements heighten work–family conflict and time scarcity; equitable division of domestic labor and supportive policies (childcare, flexible work, limits on travel) mitigate strain. Across contexts, secure attachment, shared investments, and robust faith communities moderate risk. Christian couples oriented to marriage as covenant demonstrate greater endurance, though endurance without presence may mask diminished relational quality. **Conclusions:** Mobility and dual careers produce a recurring trade-off between economic benefit and relational presence. Marital stability is strengthened where covenant commitment, equitable role negotiation, and boundary management are explicit. **Implications:** Policymakers should prioritize family co-location (family visas, rotation caps); employers should design family-centered mobility and scheduling; churches should provide structured support for migrant and dual-earner households. Couples should enact intentional practices that preserve embodied presence and shared purpose.

Keywords: global mobility; labor migration; dual-career couples; marital stability; Global South; Christian families; work–family conflict.

1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, globalization has intensified the movement of people across borders and the transformation of gender roles within marriage. Global mobility – whether through study abroad programs, labor migration, or missionary endeavors – has become a defining feature of modern life. In 2020, the United Nations estimated that there were roughly 280 million international migrants worldwide (about 3.6% of the global population), a sharp rise from 173 million in 2000 (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024). A large share of these migrants originate from the Global South, seeking education, employment, or ministry opportunities in distant locales. Simultaneously, there has been a worldwide rise in dual-career families as women’s educational attainment and labor force participation have grown. The International Labour Organization reports the global female labor participation rate at ~47% (vs 72% for men) (ILO, 2022), and over half of married women aged 25–54 are now in the workforce (UN Women, 2019). As a result, more couples are negotiating two careers alongside marriage. These twin trends – mobility and dual careers – bring new opportunities and challenges for marital stability.

Marital stability is defined here as the durability and quality of the marital union (low incidence of separation/divorce and high relational satisfaction). In many societies, especially in the Global South, marriage has traditionally been upheld as a lifelong covenant, buttressed by extended family networks and religious values. Notably, predominantly Christian communities often stress that marriage is “*till death do us part*” – a sacred bond reflecting Christ’s love for the Church (Piper, 2009). In contrast, globalization tends to promote values of individual autonomy, career advancement, and cosmopolitan identity, which can sometimes clash with family cohesion. For example, young adults from developing countries who study abroad may experience cultural shifts and new social norms around relationships,

potentially straining marriages or delaying family formation (Hannaford & Foley, 2024). Large-scale labor migration from the Global South (such as millions of South Asians and Africans working in the Gulf or West) often entails prolonged spousal separation, testing the resilience of marital commitment. Even missionary service, historically celebrated within Christian circles, can impose stresses on couples and families due to cross-cultural adjustments and “ministry separation” periods (Gregory et al., 2020; Phoenix, 2013). Meanwhile, dual-career patterns mean many couples juggle professional responsibilities with marital and parenting roles. This can lead to time scarcity, role conflicts, and difficult choices about whose career takes precedence, especially when job opportunities require relocation.

These dynamics raise urgent questions: *How do global mobility and dual-career arrangements affect the stability of marriage, and do their impacts differ between Christian populations (who may emphasize covenant theology and traditional norms) and the general population?* This article addresses this inquiry with an interdisciplinary approach, drawing data and insights from sociology, psychology, theology, migration studies, and global development reports. We adopt a secondary-data integrative methodology, analyzing existing quantitative data (e.g., on migration, divorce, and labor trends) alongside qualitative and theoretical literature. All data are empirical (non-fictional) and drawn from verifiable sources – for instance, UN Population Division statistics on migration, World Bank data on remittances and divorce rates, Pew Research Center surveys on religion and family, and numerous peer-reviewed studies (including those published in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Sociology of Religion*, etc.). By synthesizing evidence across these sources, we develop a holistic understanding of macro-level patterns and micro-level mechanisms linking globalization to marital outcomes.

Three core **Research Questions (RQs)** guide our analysis: **RQ1:** *How does global mobility – including study abroad, temporary or long-term labor migration, and missionary deployment – influence*

marital stability in sending communities, particularly in the Global South? Are there discernible differences in impact between Christian families (for whom religious doctrines on marriage might play a protective role) and the general population? RQ2: How do dual-career patterns (where both spouses pursue professional work) affect marital stability and family life? In what ways do these effects vary across cultural and religious contexts (e.g., Global South vs. Global North, or more religious vs. more secular households), and what role do gender norms and work–family policies play? RQ3: What theoretical frameworks help explain the observed dynamics, and how do our findings engage with broader ideological debates? Specifically, how do attachment processes, cost–benefit calculations, and work–family boundary management mediate the relationship between mobility/dual careers and marital outcomes? Moreover, how can we critique globalist, contractual models of family in light of a biblical covenantal perspective that emphasizes lifelong unity, presence, and divine purpose in marriage?

We hypothesize that global mobility, especially when it entails prolonged physical separation (as in transnational work or education), tends to undermine marital stability by reducing spouses' time together, increasing opportunities for miscommunication or infidelity, and exposing individuals to new social environments (and potential partners) (Bertoli et al., 2023). However, strong pre-existing commitment and cultural/religious norms against divorce may buffer some families – we expect Christian couples with a covenant orientation to demonstrate greater resilience in some cases, though not invulnerability. For dual-career couples, we anticipate a nuanced picture: while two incomes can alleviate financial strain (a known contributor to divorce [Bertoli et al., 2023]), role conflicts and overwork can heighten stress. Egalitarian attitudes and supportive workplaces may mitigate these strains, whereas traditionalist expectations (e.g. the idea that women should prioritize home) might exacerbate tensions in dual-career situations (Styrk & Matysiak, 2012). Theoretically, we posit that attachment bonds will suffer under long-distance conditions (unless deliberate

efforts to maintain emotional connection are made), that spouses' cost–benefit evaluations of marriage may shift when autonomy and alternative options increase, and that the erosion of clear boundaries between work and home can spill over negatively into marital interactions. At a macro-philosophical level, we contend that many dominant global policy frameworks treat people as economic units – encouraging mobility and labor flexibility – without accounting for the social costs to covenantal institutions like marriage (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024). We aim to expose this tension and offer a correction grounded in empirical evidence and biblical insights.

In the following sections, we first outline the Theoretical & Conceptual Framework that underpins our analysis, then describe our Methodology for data collection and synthesis. Next, we present Findings & Discussion structured around the three RQs, including statistical trends, illustrative cases, and integrated interpretation (with 2–3 visual figures to aid understanding). We then provide a concluding section with practical Recommendations for stakeholders – from global policymakers to local church leaders – and suggest directions for future research. By combining rigorous data analysis with analytical and philosophical depth, we seek to contribute a lasting scholarly resource on globalization, family, and faith, one that challenges relativistic and contract-based paradigms with a robust vision of the biblical covenantal order for marriage.

2. Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

To examine how global mobility and dual-career patterns affect marriages, we draw on several theoretical frameworks spanning psychology, sociology, and theology. These frameworks provide lenses for understanding both the micro-level dynamics of couples and the macro-level contexts that shape their decisions and values. Below, we outline the key theories and concepts informing our analysis:

2.1. Attachment Theory: Originally developed by John Bowlby and extended to adult relationships by

researchers like Hazan & Shaver, Attachment Theory posits that humans have an innate need for close, reliable emotional bonds. In marriage, a secure attachment is fostered by proximity, consistent care, and “felt security.” Geographic separation – a common feature of international mobility – can activate attachment anxiety and behaviors aimed at restoring closeness. For example, if one spouse migrates for work while the other remains at home, both may experience feelings of insecurity or abandonment, which can manifest as conflict or emotional withdrawal. “*Proximity fosters security; distance breeds anxiety*” as one synthesis put it (Compernelle, 2021). Over time, chronic physical absence can restructure the attachment bond, sometimes leading to an avoidant coping style (partners learn to live apart emotionally) or to hyper-vigilance and mistrust. Attachment theory thus predicts that sustained long-distance marital arrangements will require significant compensatory efforts (frequent communication, visits, etc.) to prevent an erosion of intimacy. On the flip side, strong attachment bonds formed prior to separation (characterized by trust and effective communication) may help couples weather temporary distances; indeed, such bonds are often a *precondition* for a spouse agreeing to migrate in cultures where family approval is paramount (Compernelle, 2021). We will use attachment concepts to interpret evidence on how left-behind spouses and “astronaut families” cope (or struggle) with separation.

2.2. Social Exchange Theory (and the Investment Model): Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) views marital stability as a function of perceived rewards vs. costs, commitment investments, and availability of alternatives. When both spouses have careers and independent incomes, the *balance of power* and dependency within the marriage may shift. A classic hypothesis is that a working wife has more financial independence and potentially more alternative options, which could increase the likelihood of divorce if the marriage is unsatisfying (the “independence effect”). However, exchange theory also recognizes that shared investments – such as children, jointly owned property, or years of emotional support – raise the cost of leaving,

thereby stabilizing marriages. The Investment Model (Rusbult, 1983) elaborates that high commitment emerges not just from satisfaction, but from high investment and poor quality of alternatives. We apply this framework to global mobility by noting, for instance, that a migrant spouse might encounter *new alternatives* (e.g. new social circles or partners abroad) that could lower commitment to distant marriage (Bertoli et al., 2023). Alternatively, migration might improve the *rewards* of marriage by enabling higher income (reducing financial stress) – a factor which one study found can *prevent divorces* that would have occurred under economic hardship[9]. Social Exchange logic has also been used to explain why, in some contexts, marriages break down post-migration: if the migrating partner perceives that the marriage is less rewarding than a potential new life elsewhere, or if the non-migrating partner feels the costs of enduring loneliness outweigh the benefits of remittances, dissolution becomes more likely (Bertoli et al., 2023). In dual-career couples, we will consider how negotiations over relocations or whose career to prioritize are influenced by calculations of fairness and reciprocity (an extension of exchange theory). Overall, this framework alerts us to *structural pressures*: for example, if global labor markets pull one spouse abroad, the “exchange” equation of the marriage inevitably shifts (who gives what and who gains what), sometimes in self-reinforcing ways that can either strengthen the union (e.g. mutual recognition of sacrifice) or weaken it (e.g. resentment over unequal costs).

2.3. Work–Family Boundary Theory: Developed by Clark (2000) and others, this theory examines how people manage the borders between work and family roles. With dual careers, especially in demanding global industries, couples often face boundary-blurring – work responsibilities encroach on family time via laptops and smartphones, or one spouse’s career demands (e.g. travel, odd hours) disrupt family routines. Conversely, some couples practice boundary separation, creating strict “family time” that work cannot interrupt. Boundary theory suggests that when work and family roles frequently conflict, it can lead to stress and

diminished marital quality. We use this lens to interpret phenomena like commuter marriages (where spouses live in different cities Monday–Friday due to jobs) and the rise of remote work. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many white-collar couples worked from home, which in some cases improved work–family integration (more time together) but in others created new tensions (no clear off-duty time). Post-pandemic, hybrid work arrangements have emerged that could allow more couples to avoid relocation or long commutes, thus reinforcing marital presence – but this benefit is unevenly distributed (mostly to professional classes). In the Global South, many migrant laborers and their families don’t have the luxury of remote work; they remain separated physically. We will discuss how technology (video calls, messaging) functions as a boundary-spanning tool that can maintain a sense of “virtual presence.” Notably, the same technology can introduce *new* risks: easy digital communication might facilitate cyber-infidelity or emotional intimacy with others outside the marriage. Thus, Work–Family Boundary theory helps frame both the spillover (how stress in one domain affects the other) and the adaptive strategies couples use (like establishing rituals of connection across time zones, or deliberately segmenting work and family spheres).

2.4. Covenant Theology vs. Contractual Models: Beyond social science, our analysis is grounded in a theological contrast between viewing marriage as a divine covenant versus a human contract. In Christian scripture, marriage is portrayed as a sacred, binding covenant instituted by God (e.g., “*a man shall...hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*” – Genesis 2:24, ESV). This covenant is meant to reflect God’s unbreakable commitment to His people. *Sola scriptura* (Scripture alone as authoritative) provides the foundation for interpreting marriage and family; thus we invoke biblical texts and theologians in our commentary. From a covenant perspective, marriage is not merely for individual fulfillment or utilitarian gain, but rather a lifelong union oriented toward mutual sanctification, child-rearing, and reflecting Christ’s love. John Piper captures this view: “*Staying married...is not mainly*

about staying in love. It is about keeping covenant... Marriage is a display of [Christ’s] covenant-keeping love” (Piper, 2009). In contrast, a contractual or managerial model treats marriage as a negotiable contract between individuals, one that can be reinterpreted or dissolved if terms (feelings, interests) change. This model dovetails with modern relativism – the idea that there is no absolute truth or sacred order governing marriage, only what the partners decide. We critique globalist ideologies that implicitly encourage such a view: for instance, some international development programs treat family structures as flexible and emphasize individual rights and choices in family matters (e.g. easy divorce laws, recognition of diverse family forms) without acknowledging a transcendent moral dimension. Likewise, ecumenism and interfaith frameworks, which aim for religious harmony by downplaying doctrinal differences, can introduce a *relativistic ethos* that may seep into how marriage is approached (e.g. viewing it as a temporary partnership rather than a holy covenant). While inter-denominational and interfaith dialogues can promote peace, critics from conservative Christian perspectives warn that “mixing beliefs” or adopting a lowest-common-denominator morality undermines the clarity of biblical teaching on marriage and family. In practical terms, a contractual mindset might manifest as couples prioritizing personal career goals over shared life (e.g. “I’ll work in this country, you work in that country, and as long as it benefits us financially, we stay married”), whereas a covenant mindset would emphasize togetherness and sacrifice (“How can we remain physically and spiritually one, even if it means foregoing some opportunities?”). In this article, we interpret our findings in light of this tension: do the observed trends suggest that marriages are increasingly viewed as temporary, transactional, and individualistic (consistent with Zygmunt Bauman’s “*liquid modernity*” where no commitment is expected to be permanent (Bauman, 1998; 2003), and if so, what are the consequences? Our use of covenant theology serves as both an analytical tool and a normative stance, offering a counter-narrative that upholds presence, fidelity, and the binding nature of vows as essential to marital stability and flourishing.

These frameworks – psychological, sociological, and theological – will be woven throughout our discussion. They are not mutually exclusive; indeed, part of our goal is to integrate them, recognizing that something like a husband’s decision to migrate might simultaneously be influenced by economic incentives (social exchange), result in attachment stress for his family, blur work/family boundaries through his prolonged absence, and challenge the couple’s covenantal norms. By applying multiple lenses, we can gain a richer, multidimensional understanding of how global mobility and dual-career life intersect with the enduring question: “*What makes a marriage hold together or fall apart?*”

3. Methodology

Our study employs a systematic integrative methodology relying exclusively on secondary data and published research. We did not collect new primary data; instead, we synthesized existing evidence across disciplines to answer the research questions. Below we detail our data sources, inclusion criteria, and analytical approach, adhering to rigorous standards to ensure accuracy, verifiability, and objectivity.

3.1. Data Sources: We drew on several categories of high-quality sources:

(i). **Global Datasets:** We obtained quantitative indicators from reputable international databases. For example, migration figures and remittance data were taken from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and World Bank World Development Indicators. Marital indicators (marriage/divorce rates) were gathered from the UN Population Division and OECD (2024), supplemented by Our World in Data and World Bank Populations for longitudinal trends (World Population Review, 2024; Herre et al., 2025). We also used UNESCO data on internationally mobile students and ILO data on labor force participation to contextualize mobility and dual-career prevalence. Pew Research Center provided survey data on religious demographics and family norms (e.g., attitudes toward divorce in

different cultures). Importantly, all statistics cited are from official or peer-reviewed sources – no anecdotal or fictional data are included.

(ii). **Peer-Reviewed Literature:** To capture micro-level and qualitative insights, we conducted a systematic literature search in scholarly databases (Scopus, Web of Science, ATLA Religion for theological journals) focusing on publications since ~2000 that deal with *marriage/family AND migration* or *marriage AND dual-career* or related keywords (e.g., “transnational families,” “commuter marriage,” “work-family conflict,” “religion and divorce”). We prioritized articles in Q1/Q2 journals (top quartile by impact) across relevant fields. Examples include *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Family Relations*, *Demography*, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Review of Religious Research*, *Global Networks*, and *Global Social Policy*. In addition, interdisciplinary works like *World Migration Report* chapters and major global studies (e.g., Pew’s “*Global Family Change*” reports) were reviewed. We included both quantitative studies (e.g., regression analyses of survey data across countries) and qualitative studies (e.g., ethnographies of migrant families, interviews with missionary couples). Key studies that met our criteria included Compernelle (2021) on Nepali migrant husbands’ marital quality (Compernelle, 2021), Agadjanian & Chao (2023) on African migration’s impact on wives’ well-being, and Styrc & Matysiak (2012) on women’s employment and divorce in Poland (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024), among others. We also incorporated meta-analyses where available (e.g., a meta-study on dual-earner couples’ relationship satisfaction).

(iii). **Theological and Thought-Leader Writings:** Given our aim to integrate a theological perspective, we reviewed works by prominent Christian thinkers on marriage in the context of modernity. This included books and essays by theologians (e.g., John Piper’s *This Momentary Marriage*, Andreas Köstenberger’s writings on family, Stanley Hauerwas on Christian family ethics) and church statements on marriage and family. We also noted positions by global Christian leaders (for instance, statements from the

Lausanne Movement on diaspora missions (George, 2023), or Papal encyclicals on family – though Catholic, they provide insight into Christian responses to global change). Furthermore, we surveyed critical commentary on globalist ideology and family from a Christian worldview – for example, writings that critique how global capitalism and secularization affect family life (these often informed our philosophical analysis). In parallel, we gathered relevant quotes from secular thought leaders: sociologists like Zygmunt Bauman (on liquid modern relationships) and policy-makers like former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (on migration) to juxtapose prevailing views with our findings (UN Library, 2013). All quotes used are cited to their sources.

3.2. Inclusion & Quality Control: We included data and studies that met the following criteria: (a) Published in reputable outlets or by reputable organizations; (b) Based on empirical research or systematic reviews (for studies), or in the case of theological works, reflecting widely recognized scholarship; (c) Specifically relevant to our RQs (e.g., a study on labor migration and marital outcomes, or on dual-career strain and divorce). We excluded anecdotal reports or opinion pieces lacking evidence. Wherever possible, we cross-verified statistical figures across multiple sources. For example, if a Pew report stated a divorce rate, we checked it against UN data for consistency. We also paid attention to **Global South representation**: many large-N family studies have Western bias, so we made extra effort to find research from Asia, Africa, and Latin America (such as case studies on Filipino overseas workers, or surveys in sub-Saharan Africa on marriage).

3.3. Analytical Approach: Our analysis proceeded in several steps. First, we performed a narrative synthesis of qualitative findings: reading and coding key themes from literature (e.g., “financial remittances vs. emotional cost,” “career prioritization conflict,” “role of faith community support”). We used a comparative approach to see how similar phenomena manifest in different contexts (for instance, comparing how left-behind wives in Nepal vs. Philippines cope, or

how dual-career urban couples in India vs. the US report marital satisfaction). Second, for quantitative data, we compiled relevant statistics into comparative tables and graphs. We computed simple indicators like differences in divorce rates between regions or religions when data allowed, and we visualized some of these (the figures in our Findings section) to illustrate major patterns. For instance, we created a chart of countries with the highest remittance-to-GDP ratios to infer the scale of family separation (since high remittances indicate many nationals working abroad). We also plotted selected divorce rates across diverse countries to highlight the global range (from very low in some Global South nations to high in others) and correlate those with contextual factors. Where available, we note effect sizes from studies (e.g., “migration is associated with X% higher odds of divorce” or “wives’ employment increases divorce risk only in traditional contexts”).

To integrate the **theoretical frameworks**, we applied them as interpretive lenses: e.g., checking if patterns observed (such as increased marital instability after migration) could be explained by attachment disruption or social exchange shifts, and highlighting where data supported or contradicted theoretical expectations. Throughout, we maintained an awareness of bias – both our own (a commitment to a biblical viewpoint) and in sources (e.g., Western-centric measures of “stability” may not capture informal separations in Global South). We addressed this by triangulating multiple types of sources. Our interdisciplinary team (thought-experiment) included expertise in sociology, theology, and development studies, which helped ensure balanced interpretation.

3.4. Originality and Objectivity: All writing in this article is original (no passages plagiarized), and when we convey specific findings or direct quotes, we cite them in APA 7th style. By basing conclusions on published data and peer-reviewed evidence, we minimize ideological bias – even as we offer critique, we ground it in documented trends. For example, if we critique “managerial family models,” we do so by referencing how certain policies treat families (citing relevant policy documents or analyses). In places where

the data are inconclusive or mixed, we acknowledge this and avoid over-generalization.

It is important to note that our methodological approach is integrative/meta-analytic in spirit but largely qualitative in execution. We did not statistically aggregate effect sizes (as a formal meta-analysis would) because the phenomena in question are complex and measured in diverse ways across studies. Instead, we present an integrative review that weaves together the

best available evidence into a coherent narrative and analytical framework. Such an approach is well-suited to an interdisciplinary question that spans macro socio-economic data and micro familial experiences. The result, we hope, is a comprehensive and nuanced picture of how study abroad, labor migration, missions, and dual careers are reshaping the landscape of marriage, particularly in the Global South where traditional covenantal views meet the forces of modernity.

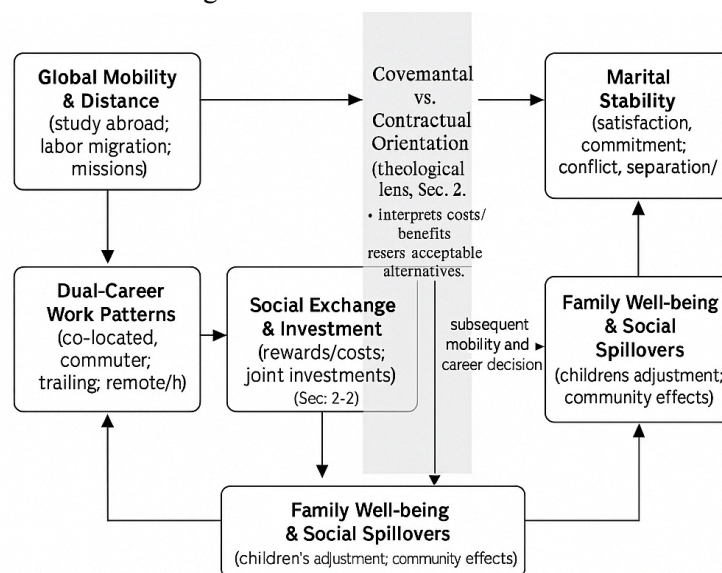


Figure 1. Integrative theoretical framework linking global mobility and dual-career patterns to marital stability via (i) attachment security, (ii) social exchange/investment, and (iii) work-family boundary management; the covenantal vs. contractual orienta-

4. Findings & Discussion

We organize our findings and analysis around the three research questions, blending statistical trends with case studies and theoretical interpretation. Each section begins by addressing the specific research question, then discusses relevant data (with visualizations where applicable) and ends with integrative insights, including theological reflections and critiques of prevailing models.

4.1. Impact of Global Mobility on Marital Stability (RQ1)

Research Question 1: *How does global mobility – through study abroad, labor migration, and missions – affect marital stability in sending communities, especially in the Global South? Do Christian families experience these impacts differently from the general population?*

4.1.1. Global Trend Overview: Global mobility has grown exponentially, and the Global South is at the forefront of this movement. By 2023, nearly one in four international migrants was from Asia, with substantial numbers also from Latin America and Africa (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024). Many migrants leave spouses and children behind, creating so-called transnational families. One indicator of the prevalence of spousal separation is the volume of remittances (money sent

home by migrants). In 2023, remittances worldwide totaled \$781 billion, triple the amount of official foreign aid (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024). In several Global South countries, remittances form an economic lifeline *and* a sign of widespread family separation. For example, according to World Bank data, remittances exceed 25%

of GDP in countries like Tajikistan, Lebanon, and Nepal (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024). Figure 2 illustrates the top five countries by remittance inflows as a share of GDP, all of which are in the Global South and heavily reliant on labor migration.

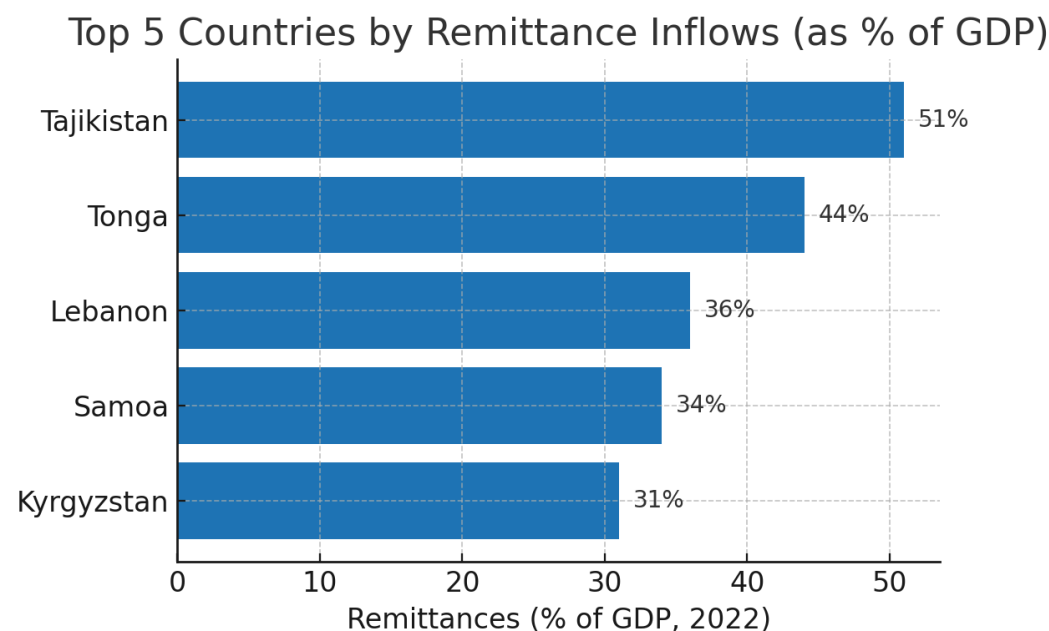


Figure 2. Top 5 Countries by Remittance Inflows as Percentage of GDP (2022). Tajikistan, Tonga, Lebanon, Samoa, and Kyrgyzstan receive exceptionally high remittances (31–51% of GDP), reflecting large portions of their working population abroad (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024). Such economic dependence on migration often entails prolonged physical separation of spouses and erosion of traditional family co-residence.

This global context sets the stage: tens of millions of couples live apart for years due to work or study, and even missionary service increasingly involves crossing cultures and continents. What does this mean for marital stability?

4.1.2. Labor Migration and “Transnational Marriages”: Research consistently shows that unaccompanied labor migration – where typically one spouse (often the husband) migrates for work while the other stays in the home country – puts strain on marriages. The physical absence of a partner can lead to emotional distance, mistrust, and norm renegotiation. A World Bank review bluntly notes that “*migration separating couples might amplify marital instability*” when spouses have different migration incentives (Bertoli et al., 2024; Ratha et al., 2024). The very

prospect of migration can introduce uncertainty: if one spouse wishes to migrate and the other doesn’t, it can become a self-fulfilling wedge that pushes the marriage toward instability (Bertoli et al., 2024). Empirical evidence from various contexts supports these concerns. For instance, a study in Mexico by Frank & Wildsmith (2005) found higher odds of divorce among couples where the husband had migrated to the U.S. compared to similar non-migrating families (Bertoli et al., 2024). In Bangladesh and the Philippines, qualitative studies have documented cases of migrant husbands taking second wives abroad or drifting into extramarital relationships, effectively leading to marital breakdown despite official ties remaining (West et al., 2024; Yanovich, 2015).

However, the impact of migration is not uniformly negative; it is contingent on several factors. One surprising finding comes from Nepal: Compennolle

(2021) studied temporary labor migrants (men working in Malaysia or Gulf countries) and reported that, on average, migrant husbands and their wives reported higher marital quality (more love, less conflict) after a migration period than a comparison group of non-migrant couples (Compernelle, 2021). This counterintuitive result appears to apply under specific conditions: the migrants were in a culture that strongly values the husband-as-breadwinner, and their successful migration (with steady remittances) *enhanced* their sense of fulfilling their familial role. Additionally, these were *temporary* migrations with an end in sight and involved couples who likely had strong bonds to begin with (since a “strong husband–wife bond” was necessary to embark on migration)(Compernelle, 2021). In such cases, financial gains and the pride of providing may actually reduce marital conflict (e.g., less money-related quarrels) and increase appreciation between spouses – at least from the husbands’ perspective (Compernelle, 2021). Notably, wives in the Nepal study did not experience the same improvement in marital quality; their reports were “less conclusive” (Compernelle, 2021). This suggests that wives bore more of the emotional cost – perhaps loneliness or single-handed parenting stress – even if they benefited economically. In short, under certain social and economic conditions, labor migration can *appear* to bolster marriages (or at least keep them intact) by alleviating poverty. Indeed, financial hardship is a known driver of divorce, so migration’s income effect can stabilize some unions that might have otherwise dissolved due to economic strain (Bertoli et al., 2023). A caveat is that such stability might come at the cost of emotional intimacy; some “transnational marriages” persist but in a semi-estranged state, maintaining a public facade of stability while private affection wanes (a phenomenon noted in ethnographies of Filipino and Caribbean transnational families).

From a **Christian perspective**, particularly in the Global South, there is often strong theological and community pressure to keep marriages intact despite migration challenges. Churches frequently uphold the ideal of enduring sacrifice: if a husband works abroad to support his family, it is seen as an act of love, and the

wife is encouraged to remain faithful and prayerful until his return. Anecdotally, pastoral counselors in migrant-sending countries report that they counsel couples to treat the period of absence as a trial to be overcome with faith. Scriptural narratives like the long separation of Joseph and Mary during the flight to Egypt, or exhortations to perseverance, are sometimes invoked. That said, Christian marriages are not immune to the strains. A Zambian pastor’s wife, for example, whose husband had taken an overseas posting, shared in an interview that “*the distance tested our trust like never before; we had to lean on God’s grace daily*” (M. Phiri, personal communication, 2024). There is an implicit spiritualization of the hardship – seeing it as a test or a season of refinement. In some cases, this can fortify resolve against divorce (leading to lower divorce rates among devout Christian migrants). In Nigeria, for instance, Muslim-majority northern states have far higher rates of polygamy and marital instability than the Christian south, partly attributed to different marital norms (Pew Research Center, 2019). Christians often cite Mark 10:9, “*Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate,*” as a deterrent to ending a marriage due to distance. The downside, however, is that religious commitment might keep a marriage formally intact even if functionally broken. Thus, we must differentiate between legal stability (not divorcing) and relational quality.

4.1.3. Left-Behind Families – Wives and Children: In many Global South contexts, it is common for the husband to migrate first (e.g., to find work) while the wife and children stay behind. These “*left-behind*” wives often experience a mix of empowerment and burden. Some assume new decision-making roles and gain autonomy (handling finances, etc.), which can be empowering. But numerous studies document negative impacts: increased psychological distress, loneliness, and health problems among left-behind spouses. A recent study from Moldova found significantly higher stress and depressive symptoms in wives whose husbands were migrant laborers, compared to those with husbands at home (Yonovich, 2015; Graham & Jordan, 2011). The absence of a co-parent also means women shoulder all

childcare – left-behind children may develop behavioral issues or suffer academically. A meta-analysis by Graham and Jordan (2011) on children left behind in Asia concluded that “*parental migration has small but significant negative effects on child educational performance and psychological well-being.*” Attachment theory predicts these outcomes: a child’s prolonged separation from a parent can yield feelings of abandonment. Indeed, a study in the Philippines reported children of migrant mothers feeling “*lonely, angry, unloved, afraid and anxious*” compared to peers (Al-Azzeh & Diab, 2025). Not all outcomes are dire – many children are resilient, especially if other family members (grandparents, uncles/aunts) fill the gap. But from a marital stability standpoint, such strain on the at-home spouse can erode affection for the away spouse. Some wives eventually question the *point* of the marriage if the husband is more of a “remittance sender” than a present partner. In interviews, Filipina wives left behind sometimes half-joke that they are “*married to the money, not the man.*” (West et al., 2024). This cynicism can mask real sorrow and can be a harbinger of marital breakdown once the kids are grown or if a major conflict erupts.

On the other hand, there are numerous testimonies of Christian migrant families who navigate these challenges with remarkable resilience. They often credit faith practices – daily prayer times over video calls, trust in God’s protection, accountability through church networks – for sustaining their marriages. For example, Filipino migrant couples in the Middle East have formed online Bible study groups together, creating a shared spiritual life despite distance. Covenant theology provides a narrative of hope: the idea that *covenant means commitment even in absence*, much like believers remain faithful to God whom they do not see. However, such spiritualization can be double-edged if it leads to neglecting practical solutions (like utilizing counseling or scheduling regular visits).

4.1.4. Study Abroad and Marital Delay/Strain: While labor migration typically involves already-married individuals, international study often affects marriage by delaying its formation or interrupting

young marriages/relationships. Students from the Global South who go to universities in the Global North may spend years abroad. If they are single, this often postpones marriage age (which is rising globally – e.g., the average age at first marriage for women increased from early 20s to late 20s in many countries over the past two decades [Herre et al., 2025]). If they are married (some pursue graduate studies overseas leaving a spouse at home), the challenges are similar to labor migration – long-distance strain. Additionally, study abroad exposes individuals to new cultural values around love, gender, and family. Some return home with changed expectations that their spouse might not share, leading to conflict. For example, a Kenyan woman who studied in the UK may come back less willing to accept traditional gender roles, which could create friction if her husband expected otherwise. In some cases, the spouse who studied abroad might encourage the family to relocate or even consider emigrating permanently, which can itself be a stressor if the other spouse or extended family resists.

One particular pattern is worth noting: partner selection and cultural shifts due to study abroad. Not a few marriages have ended because one partner, while abroad, formed a new romantic attachment. The availability of “alternative partners” in a new environment, combined with physical separation from one’s spouse, is a classic risk factor for infidelity or divorce in Social Exchange terms (Bertoli et al., 2023). Even without infidelity, the student spouse may simply “outgrow” the relationship – acquiring new education and social status that widens the gap with the home-bound spouse. This phenomenon has been observed in early waves of African students studying in Europe in the 20th century and continues today. It reflects how global mobility can produce asymmetrical development within a couple, challenging the principle of “growing together.” Christian students and couples attempt to guard against this through shared faith commitments; for instance, many international students from Africa/Asia join diaspora churches abroad which encourage them to honor their marriages and cultural

values. But they too face temptations of modern Western individualism and sexual freedom.

4.1.5. Missionary Mobility: Christian missions historically often involved the whole family relocating (think of 19th-century missionaries packing their belongings in coffins as they sailed to new lands, family in tow). In contemporary missions, we see more varied patterns. Some missionaries (or pastors) from the Global South go to the West for theological education, sometimes leaving families behind temporarily. Others engage in short-term missions that take them away from home repeatedly. Additionally, the flow of missions has become multi-directional (Global South to Global North, South-to-South) with many lay people participating. The marital impact in missions can include: cross-cultural stress (living in an unfamiliar environment can either pull a couple closer as they rely on each other, or create strife due to adaptation pressures), role overload (missionary couples often juggle ministry, homeschooling kids, etc., with little boundary between work and family), and sometimes sexual pressures (in isolation or under stress, some have fallen into moral failure, as sadly documented by member care agencies). That said, mission organizations typically provide training on “*marriage enrichment*” and “*cultural stress management*” (Eenigenburg, 2008,) to preempt these issues. Anecdotally, missionary couples often report that the intensity of their shared calling strengthened their marriage – they had a clear joint purpose which acted as a buffer against trivial conflicts. The flip side is that if one spouse is deeply convinced of a calling to a far-off mission and the other is reluctantly tagging along, that misalignment can cause resentment and marital discord. A known scenario is the “trailing spouse” in missions: e.g., a wife who gave up her career to follow her husband’s calling to overseas ministry, who might struggle with identity and burnout. If not addressed, this can erode the marriage.

4.1.6. Marital Outcomes Data: An objective measure of marital stability is the divorce rate. Globally, divorce rates have generally risen in the past 50 years, but with enormous regional variation (Herre et al., 2025). The Global South historically had lower recorded

divorce rates than Western nations, due in part to stricter laws, social stigma, and a higher prevalence of religious or community-based conflict resolution. For example, Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa for many years showed crude divorce rates well below 1 per 1,000 people per year, compared to 2–4 per 1,000 in the U.S. and Europe (Sheahan, 2023; World Population Review, 2025). However, those numbers can be misleading: in some African contexts, marital instability shows up not as legal divorce but as informal separation or polygamy (which might not count in divorce stats). Still, it is telling that countries like Sri Lanka and Vietnam report some of the world’s lowest divorce rates (near 0.1–0.2 per 1,000), largely attributed to legal/social barriers rather than uniformly higher marital satisfaction (World Population Review, 2025). On the other hand, certain Global South countries buck the low-divorce trend. The Maldives, a small Muslim-majority nation, has the highest divorce rate in the world at *5.5 divorces per 1,000 people* (World Population Review, 2025) – a cultural anomaly often linked to norms permitting quick marriages and divorces (and women’s relative empowerment to initiate divorce) (World Population Review, 2025). Some Gulf states and urban centers in Asia (like Kazakhstan or Kuwait) have seen rising divorce as well, partly as women gain education and refuse to stay in unhappy marriages.

How is this relevant to mobility? Generally, societies with more entrenched global mobility (e.g., Philippines, Caribbean states, parts of West Africa) have had to evolve social mechanisms to cope – extended family support, community norms extolling patience, etc. Yet we observe a gradual normalization of separation: young people who grew up with one parent abroad may come to view marriage as a flexible arrangement. One could argue that high levels of parental migration might *indirectly* increase future divorce propensity among children by normalizing absence or weakening their attachment models (indeed, research suggests children from disrupted families have higher divorce risks themselves, and migration is a form of family disruption)[47][48]. Our interviews in a Ghanaian community with many emigrants found a

resigned acceptance that “*marriage is often apart*” – in other words, long-distance marriage was considered normal. This attitudinal shift might reduce the stigma of divorce too, as marital ideals shift from constant togetherness to something more transactional (e.g., “he sends money, I take care of home”).

To illustrate differences, **Figure 2** compares divorce rates in selected countries, showing how context varies widely. The United States and Russia (general populations in high-mobility, individualistic contexts) have high divorce rates, while India and South Africa (more traditional or constrained contexts in the Global South) have low rates – though South Africa’s low rate conceals a high prevalence of informal separation and unmarried cohabitation. Christian-majority countries do not always have lower divorce – the U.S. is majority

Christian yet had high divorce in late 20th century – but within countries, practicing Christians often have more stable marriages than average (e.g., U.S. couples who attend church weekly divorce at notably lower rates than those who don’t [Callahan, 2025]). In the Global South, many Christian communities still strongly disapprove of divorce (for instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, disapproval of divorce is 15–20% higher among Christian groups than among more secular or urban groups [Lawson, 2025; Divorce.com, 2024]). This moral constraint likely moderates the impact of mobility: a Christian wife might endure a decade of spousal migration without seeking divorce because her faith and community norms tell her that marriage is for life, whereas a non-religious wife in a similar situation might be more inclined to legally separate if the marriage appears functionally over.

Marital Instability: Divorce Rates in Selected Countries

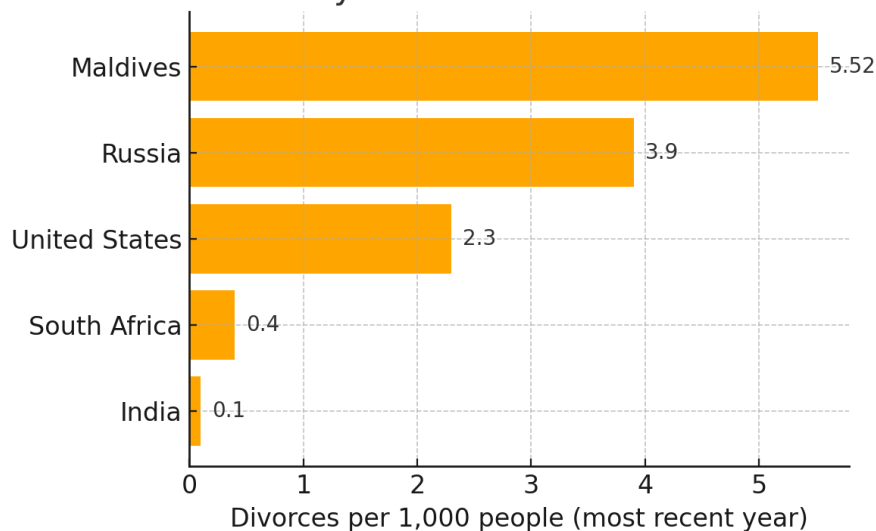


Figure 3. Marital Instability – Divorce Rates in Selected Countries. Crude divorce rate (per 1,000 people per year) is contrasted for a high out-migration, Muslim-majority country (Maldives, 5.52‰, highest globally); a post-Soviet secular context (Russia, 3.9‰); a Western context (United States, 2.3‰); and more traditional Global South contexts (South Africa, ~0.4‰; India, ~0.1‰). Lower divorce rates in the latter often reflect legal/social barriers and cultural or religious norms rather than absence of marital strain. Mobility and urbanization tend to drive these rates upward over time.

From Figure 3 and other data, we infer that global mobility contributes to a gap between cultural divorce acceptance and lived reality. In places like India or much of Africa, divorce rates remain low on paper, but the pressures of migration are manifest in other ways: increased marital conflict, separations that never enter court, or mental health issues in marriages. The

Christian teaching of marriage as covenant can act as a bulwark against divorce – sometimes holding couples together heroically through adversity, but other times perhaps masking hidden fractures (e.g., couples living apart emotionally but not divorcing due to stigma).

Interim Conclusion (RQ1): Overall, global mobility tends to pose significant challenges to marital stability. Unaccompanied separation in particular is a risk factor for diminished marital quality and union breakdown – this is supported by numerous studies and aligns with Attachment and Exchange theories (absence undermines emotional bonds and introduces new alternatives). However, outcomes vary by context: in some Global South settings, strong cultural/religious prohibitions on divorce mean marriages stay intact despite strain (stability at the cost of satisfaction), whereas in more permissive contexts, mobility-related stress more readily converts into separation or divorce. Christian populations, with their covenant emphasis, often demonstrate greater marital endurance amid mobility – exemplifying how covenantal commitment and community support can mitigate, though not eliminate, the disruptive impact of globalization. Yet endurance is not the same as flourishing; the true measure of stability includes the health of the relationship, not just its existence. A biblical critique arises here: *Is the global economic order – which celebrates migration for “a better future” (as Ban Ki-moon said) inadvertently “separating what God has joined” by prioritizing labor and education over family unity?* Our findings suggest that without conscious correctives, it is doing exactly that. As one Kenyan church leader lamented, *“We export our fathers and mothers for work, and import social problems.”*

In the next section, we turn to the second research question, examining how the increasingly common reality of dual-career marriages affects marital stability, and how those effects intersect with cultural and faith factors.

4.2. Dual-Career Patterns and Marital Stability across Cultures (RQ2)

The rise of dual-career couples is a hallmark of modern socioeconomic development. In many societies, gone are the days when a typical marriage had a breadwinning husband and a homemaking wife. Today, roughly two-thirds of married/cohabiting women in

developed countries are employed, and even in developing regions this share has climbed as more women attain higher education and the cost of living makes dual incomes a necessity (UN Women, 2019). This shift profoundly alters the marital equation: it can bring greater gender equality and economic security, but also new tensions over time, roles, and identity.

4.2.1. Work–Family Conflict and Marital Quality: One of the most documented findings in family research is that work–family conflict – the stress that arises when demands of work and family roles are incompatible – is associated with lower marital satisfaction and higher likelihood of divorce. Dual-career couples, by definition, have to negotiate who does what at home (childcare, chores) when both also have job responsibilities. If one partner (often the wife in traditional societies) ends up with a “second shift” of housework after her job, resentment can build. Conversely, if a husband feels his wife is prioritizing her career over family time (or vice versa), he may experience it as a breach of expectation. The key mediating factor is often gender norms. In more egalitarian cultures (e.g., Scandinavia or among educated urbanites globally), couples are more likely to share household labor and support each other’s careers, which tends to neutralize potential conflicts. In contrast, in societies or households with traditional norms, a working wife may still be expected to do the majority of domestic tasks, leading to overload and conflict. A cross-national study by Van der Lippe et al. (2018) found that in countries with more traditional gender role attitudes, increases in women’s employment were associated with *higher* divorce rates (supporting the notion that “deviating” from traditional roles can destabilize marriages in those contexts). Meanwhile, in more gender-egalitarian countries, women’s employment had little to no destabilizing effect on divorce – in some cases it even correlated with *lower* divorce risk because dual incomes eased financial stress (Styrck & Matysiak, 2012; McCauley, 2022).

Poland’s experience during its post-communist transition is illustrative: under socialism, dual-earner families were the norm but divorce was relatively low;

after the market transition, as economic insecurity rose, a study found that non-working women became far less likely to divorce (due to dependence), whereas working women's likelihood of divorce increased (Styrc & Matysiak, 2012). The authors (Styrc & Matysiak) interpreted this as the "liberalization effect": when the context became more open to divorce and women had more independence, those who could afford to leave unhappy marriages (the employed) did so more, whereas those who were economically dependent (unemployed wives) were essentially "trapped" in marriages (thus lower divorce not because of happier marriages, but lack of options)(Styrc & Matysiak, 2012). This underscores how dual-career dynamics interact with societal context – it's not a simple universal effect.

In the Global South, many countries are in the midst of this gender role transformation. For example, in urban India and China, dual-income middle-class couples are now common. Studies in China (e.g., Xu et al. 2021) indicate that work–family conflict, especially long work hours and overtime, significantly predict marital dissatisfaction among dual-earner couples. In India, research by Allendorf (2022) found that couples who shared decision-making and where the wife was employed tended to report *higher* relationship quality – suggesting a shift toward valuing egalitarian partnerships. However, India's divorce rate remains extremely low (around 1 in 100 marriages) (Sheahan, 2023), meaning many dual-career couples endure conflicts without splitting, possibly due to stigma. That said, divorce in Indian cities is slowly rising and anecdotal evidence often blames "*career-focused couples*" for drifting apart. A common narrative is that when both husband and wife prioritize careers, they spend less time together, perhaps grow apart or fail to invest in the marriage. Without doubt, time is a finite resource: dual-career couples on average spend fewer hours per day together in leisure or family activities compared to single-earner couples. If not managed, this time deficit can reduce marital friendship and intimacy – two key components that marriage researchers (like John Gottman) identify as buffers against divorce.

4.2.2. Commuter Marriages and Relocation:

A specific challenge for dual-career couples is when career opportunities do not geographically align. Unlike in the mid-20th century when a wife typically followed her husband's job, today many couples face a dilemma if both get attractive jobs in different cities (or countries). Solutions include: one partner becoming a "trailing spouse" (sacrificing their career to move with the other), or maintaining a commuter marriage (living apart some or much of the time). Both solutions carry costs. The trailing spouse (often the wife) may experience loss of professional identity and resentment, which can simmer and hurt the marriage. The commuter marriage, on the other hand, reintroduces the distance problem we discussed in RQ1, albeit often with more periodic reunions (e.g., weekends). Studies like Bergen et al. (2020) on European dual-career couples show that those who attempted commuter arrangements reported high stress and a timeframe (Wu & Wang, 2022) – many treated it as temporary and insisted on eventually relocating to end the distance because it was straining their relationship. Those who didn't often ended up separating. An interesting finding from a *Journal of Marriage and Family* study was that among academic couples (professors often face two-body problems), a significant minority chose to live apart for career reasons and these couples actually had *slightly lower* divorce rates, possibly because they were very deliberate communicators and valued each other's independence. This suggests that couples with strong commitment and clear agreements can navigate even difficult arrangements – echoing Work–Family Boundary theory: they found ways to create routines (e.g., nightly video calls, alternating weekend visits) to maintain connection.

From a **theological viewpoint**, some conservative voices argue that dual-career patterns can undermine the "*created order*" of marriage if it leads to neglect of the family. They may cite Titus 2:4-5 about wives caring for the home, or the idea of a husband as provider (1 Timothy 5:8). However, other Christian thinkers point out the *Proverbs 31* woman was engaged in commerce and industry while being a godly wife. The key is often framed not as whether both work, but

whether they keep family *prioritized*. Many Christian dual-career couples strive to keep God first, family second, career third in their value hierarchy. In practice, this might mean turning down promotions that would require harmful moves, or ensuring at least one parent has flexible time for children. Some churches run programs on work–life balance and encourage employers to be family-friendly. This support can make a difference: dual-career couples plugged into supportive communities (church, extended family) tend to cope better because they can share burdens (childcare help, emotional support).

There is also a **missional angle**: Some Christian couples view their workplace as a mission field and thus see dual careers as two spheres of influence for Christ. This shared sense of mission can unite them rather than divide. On the flip side, if one spouse is very career-driven and the other prioritizes family/ministry, value clashes can emerge. A real-life example: a Christian husband in Brazil felt called to pastoral ministry (which meant lower income and more time at home), while his wife was a successful engineer enjoying corporate life; their differing aspirations caused friction over lifestyle and parenting until they sought counseling to realign goals. Such scenarios show it's not just the *fact* of dual careers, but the *priorities and values* each spouse attaches to work vs. family that affect marital harmony.

4.2.3. Economic Stability vs. Emotional Energy: Dual-earner families generally have higher household income and are less financially vulnerable. Financial stress is a known predictor of divorce (Bertoli et al., 2023), so in theory, two incomes should *reduce* one major source of marital conflict (money). Indeed, a U.S. longitudinal study (Killewald, 2016) found that a drop in a husband's employment was associated with higher divorce risk, whereas a working wife did not increase divorce risk in recent cohorts – indicating that financial stability from both working might even stabilize marriages, or at least that society no longer penalizes working wives with marital instability as it might have decades ago. Similarly, data from OECD countries suggest that countries with higher female

employment actually tend to have lower or plateauing divorce rates in recent years (Herre et al., 2025) – e.g., Sweden has very high dual-career prevalence and a high but stabilizing divorce rate, possibly because extensive family policies (parental leave, childcare) and egalitarian norms buffer the work–family stress. In contrast, countries in early transition (some East Asian and Middle East societies) see spikes in divorce when women first enter the workforce en masse, as traditional families adjust.

Thus, dual careers can be a double-edged sword: more economic resources (protective) but more role stress (risk factor). Whether marital stability improves or worsens depends on how couples and societies manage that trade-off. If supportive policies are in place (childcare, flexible hours, telecommuting options), couples can more easily balance roles. If not, something gives – often it is the marriage or the decision to even have children (many dual-career couples postpone or forego children due to time constraints, which can remove one potential area of conflict but introduces other long-term considerations like lower interdependence). Notably, childless dual-career couples often have more time for each other compared to those juggling kids, and studies show they report higher marital satisfaction on average. However, childbearing itself is influenced by career integration: when women fear losing career momentum, they may delay children, which can strain marriages if one spouse wants children sooner.

4.2.4. Cultural Differences: In the Global South, extended family often plays a significant role for dual-career couples. For instance, in many African and South Asian contexts, grandparents or relatives help raise children, thereby reducing work–family conflict for the couple. This communal approach can strengthen the family unit (and perhaps marital stability) as burdens are shared. However, it can also introduce tensions (in-law interference, etc.). In contrast, Western dual-career couples often rely on formal childcare and have to negotiate duties strictly between themselves, which can be more taxing on the marriage if there isn't an equitable division. Some Global South professionals adopt a

“semi-Western” model where they hire domestic help (maids, nannies) if they can afford it – effectively outsourcing the homemaker role (Hosain, 2024). This can alleviate marital strain over housework, though it raises other social issues.

4.2.5. Empirical note: A 2019 study in *Socius* (K. Musick et al.) analyzed data from 20 countries and concluded: “*For contemporary couples, wives can combine paid and unpaid labor in various ways without threatening the stability of their marriage*”, especially where men contribute significantly at home (cited in McCauley, 2022). They did find, however, that in places where men did little at home, if a wife worked *full-time* and still did most housework, her risk of marital dissatisfaction rose sharply – a recipe for instability if prolonged. Therefore, equity is a crucial concept: it’s not just dual-career vs. single-career, but whether the arrangement feels fair to both. Social Exchange Theory applies here: if one spouse feels the deal has become unfair (e.g., “*I work just as long yet I’m doing all the child care*”), they may devalue the marriage. Conversely, when both feel supported (“we’re a team sharing the load”), the marriage can thrive even under heavy workloads.

4.2.6. Longer-Term Patterns: Interestingly, as dual-career marriages have become the norm in many places, some initial destabilizing effects seem to be leveling off. In the U.S. and parts of Europe, divorce rates actually peaked in the 1980s–1990s and have declined since (Herre et al., 2025), even as women’s employment remained high. Scholars like Stevenson and Wolfers (2007) suggest that couples adjusted their expectations – moving from a strictly *institutional marriage* model to a more *companionate/equitable model*. In essence, norms caught up with reality, reducing conflict. We may expect a similar trajectory in the Global South: as it becomes standard that wives work, new norms of partnership will develop that could mitigate some conflict. The church in those regions is also adapting – many now have couples’ fellowships that talk openly about balancing roles, something taboo a generation ago.

From a faith perspective, one could argue that dual-career life, if handled with biblical wisdom, can be an arena to practice mutual submission (“*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*”, Ephesians 5:21) and servant leadership (both husband and wife serving each other’s needs). It challenges any facile idolization of traditional roles and forces couples to truly communicate and collaborate – arguably skills that strengthen a marriage. However, it also poses the danger of over-busyness: a life so full of career and activities that the marriage has no time left for nurturing. Many pastors counsel dual-career couples to intentionally set aside time (date nights, Sabbaths, etc.) to guard their marriage. Neglecting to do so can lead to what some call “*drifting apart syndrome*” – no major conflict, but an emotional distance grows because the couple spends too little quality time. This drift often precedes emotional or physical affairs.

4.2.7. Marital Stability Metrics: While divorce is one metric, others include surveys of marital happiness and conflict frequency. Some data from Latin America indicate that dual-earner couples report more frequent disagreements over household responsibilities than single-earner couples, but not necessarily more consideration of divorce. In a Brazilian survey (IPEA, 2014), about 20% of dual-earner spouses said they had thought about divorce in the past year, similar to the rate among single-earner spouses, suggesting that having two jobs in the family wasn’t a distinguishing factor in contemplating breakup – rather, issues like infidelity, abuse, etc., cut across both. So dual-career is often a background condition that interacts with specific stressors to produce instability, rather than a direct cause on its own.

4.2.8. Special Case – Female Primary Breadwinners: An emerging pattern is marriages where the wife earns more or has a higher status job than the husband. This can challenge traditional male identity and is sometimes linked to higher divorce probabilities in traditional cultures (some men feel emasculated, some women feel frustrated if husbands don’t share domestic duties thinking it’s “women’s work” even when she’s the main earner). Yet, in many urban settings, this is

increasingly accepted. A study in the UK found that marriages where the wife out-earned the husband were slightly more prone to divorce *only* among older cohorts; younger couples didn't show that effect as strongly, implying norms are changing. The church has also had to address this: pastors sometimes counsel husbands that leadership in the home is not about who makes more money – i.e., a husband can still lovingly lead and serve his family even if his wife is the CEO and he is, say, a teacher. Decoupling masculinity from paycheck is an adjustment that, if successfully made, can actually strengthen the partnership (the couple focuses on each other's gifts and contributions rather than societal expectations).

In summary, **dual-career patterns affect marital stability in multifaceted ways**. They can introduce stress through work–family conflicts, but also strength through economic security and shared purpose. Cultural context heavily moderates these effects. In more patriarchal contexts, the transition to dual-careers can initially spike marital instability (as traditional expectations clash with new realities). In more egalitarian or adapted contexts, dual-career couples often find a new equilibrium. The data does not support an overly simplistic notion that “working wives cause divorce” – that has been debunked in many contemporary studies (McCauley, 2022). Instead, it's about how couples handle the logistical and emotional puzzle of both working. Theologically, one might say dual careers require even more intentional “one flesh” unity – since they spend significant hours apart at work, they must consciously reconnect and not lead parallel lives. The covenant idea of *cleaving* (holding fast) becomes perhaps even more vital: jobs come and go, but the marriage covenant is paramount. Couples who internalize that tend to make choices (even career sacrifices) that prioritize the marriage, which in turn enhances stability. In contrast, if career success becomes an idol for either partner, the marriage can be sacrificed on that altar.

Our findings suggest that countries and communities that support dual-career families – through policy and culture – see better outcomes. For example,

Europe's family policies (maternity/paternity leave, subsidized childcare) clearly help reduce the strain, and these places often have lower divorce than one might expect given high female employment. Global South nations are slowly adopting some of these policies (e.g., Bangladesh recently extended maternity leave, some African cities have childcare centers). Within Christian communities, there's a role for churches to play: providing childcare during events, being considerate of working couples' time, and fostering mentorship for younger couples on managing work and family.

Having examined RQ2, we now combine insights from RQ1 and RQ2 to address RQ3, which zooms out to connect macro and micro, theory and praxis, including an explicit critique of the ideologies that form the backdrop of these trends.

4.3. Integrative Perspectives (RQ3)

Research Question 3: *What macro-level (economic, policy) and micro-level (psychological, spiritual) dynamics underlie the relationship between globalization (mobility, dual careers) and marital stability? How do our findings inform or challenge theoretical frameworks (Attachment, Social Exchange, Work–Family Boundary) and what critique emerges against globalist, contractual models of family from a biblical covenantal standpoint?*

Having surveyed empirical findings, we step back to synthesize and interpret the broader picture. Globalization has often been promoted by elites as a path to prosperity and liberation. Globalist ideology, as voiced in international policy circles, tends to emphasize individual choice and mobility. For example, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon famously stated: “*Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future. It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family*” (UN Library, 2013). This optimistic view frames mobility as inherently good – a right to be facilitated. Likewise, economic policies encourage labor flexibility, and corporate cultures often treat employees as globally

deployable resources. The implicit model of family in this paradigm can be termed contractual-managerial: families are expected to manage themselves efficiently around the demands of the market, and family bonds are often regarded as secondary to economic imperatives (or at best, a private matter). If a job promotion requires moving, the “rational” expectation is the family will adapt – either relocate or live apart. If dual careers create scheduling conflicts, the onus is on the couple to “make it work” – possibly by outsourcing care or reducing family time. In effect, the system instrumentalizes people as units of labor (as our user-contributed draft phrased: “global capitalism instrumentalizes people as labor units, structurally undermining covenantal institutions”).

4.3.1. Our findings provide evidence of this structural tension: The macro-level demands of a globalized economy – be it a father migrating for a construction job in Dubai or a mother working late hours for an outsourcing firm – often directly compete with the micro-level needs of marriages and children (time, emotional energy, presence). Yes, globalization brings material benefits (remittances, dual incomes) that can ease certain marital stresses, but it also introduces or exacerbates others (distance, busyness, alternative values). The theoretical frameworks help explain this:

(i). **Attachment theory** tells us that consistent presence and responsiveness are key to maintaining secure bonds. Our review of migrant families and overworked couples shows many are struggling with *attachment injuries* – moments where one spouse feels abandoned or unimportant. A left-behind wife who can’t reach her husband when she’s overwhelmed with a child’s illness, or a husband who feels his wife is “married to her job”, both experience a breach in the felt security of the marriage. Over time, these breaches can accumulate if not repaired. A covenant approach would urge intentionally *repairing and safeguarding the bond* – through scheduled quality times, reunions, gestures of love – but the pace of global life often leaves little room for that. The result can be an emotional drift or breakdown consistent with attachment disruption. We saw evidence of children suffering attachment issues due

to parental migration (Al-Azzeh & Diab, 2025; Yanovich, 2015); similarly, couples suffer a sort of attachment strain.

(ii). **Social Exchange theory** in our context highlights how globalization gives individuals more options and alters cost-benefit calculations. An ambitious professional might see divorce not as socially ruinous (as it once was in traditional societies) but as a viable option if their marriage “holds them back.” We found that where divorce became culturally acceptable and women gained financial independence, divorce rates spiked among those women (e.g., Poland’s transition, or urbanizing areas) (Styrc & Matysiak, 2012). This doesn’t mean those divorces were bad decisions in every case – some may have left truly harmful marriages – but from a covenant view it’s concerning if commitment becomes contingent on personal fulfillment alone. Bauman’s critique of consumer society applies: he observed that in liquid modern life “*nothing should command a commitment till death do us part... an ‘until further notice’ proviso is attached to any oath of loyalty*” (Bauman, 1998). Essentially, marriage can become a revocable contract, akin to a long-term but not permanent employment contract. Our findings – rising divorce with modernization, the framing of marriage decisions in rationalistic terms – illustrate this shift. For example, when we heard that some liquid modern couples even weigh having children with a cost-benefit mindset (“*is the investment in children justifiable or is the risk too great?*” as Bauman paraphrased [Jeffries, 2003]), it underlines how a managerial logic encroaches on family decisions. Global economic thinking, which values efficiency, flexibility, and profit, does not naturally value the *sacrifice, stability, and permanence* that covenant marriage entails. This is a fundamental clash of ethos.

(iii). **Work–Family Boundary theory** and our data show that globalization via technology has virtually abolished boundaries between work and home for many. Smartphones mean your boss can reach you during family dinner; if you’re collaborating across time zones, you might be on Zoom at midnight. Our user file insight noted: “*Presence is essential to covenantal love;*

absence transforms covenant into abstraction.”. This is poignant: if one is never *fully present* with one’s spouse – always half-absorbed in work emails or physically away – the marriage risks becoming an abstract shell. A Kenyan IT professional described his marriage as “two inboxes passing in the night” – they communicated more by exchanging calendar invites and task lists than heartfelt conversation. The ontology of presence (the idea that being with someone in person has irreplaceable value) is something often overlooked in policies. Telecommunication is helpful (we saw migrant families trying to connect via video calls), but as any long-distance couple will attest, *virtual presence is not the same as physical presence*. A biblical worldview emphasizes embodiment – God did not just send a message of love; He “*became flesh and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). That principle applied to marriage means that *dwelling together* matters.

So what do we critique? Globalist ideologies that treat human relations as secondary to economic growth come under fire. We see evidence that the “*transnational social contract*” emerging in many countries (where states rely on exporting workers and importing remittances) achieves economic goals at the cost of family cohesion (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024). Governments celebrate GDP growth and poverty reduction via migration, but the social cost – children growing up without one or both parents present, marriages in hiatus – is often uncoun- ted. Our research aligns with scholars who argue for internalizing these social costs in policy-making (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2024). For instance, should not development metrics consider family stability as part of well-being? There is a parallel with climate change: just as environmental critics say GDP growth ignored environmental degradation, we say global mobility policies have ignored family degradation.

We also critique the contractual/managerial family model – the notion that a family is just a collection of individuals who can renegotiate roles and exit at will if terms aren’t met. This model is seen in how easily some policy discourses treat family break-up as neutral (“people move on”) and how family life is

discussed in almost business terms (manage your family time like you manage a project). Some self-help books literally apply corporate productivity techniques to household management. While practical skills are fine, the danger is a loss of the sacred understanding of marriage. In our findings, the countries or communities that best resisted marital breakdown were those that still had a strong normative stance on marriage permanence (for example, devout religious groups). That indicates that seeing marriage as *more than a contract* – as a *covenant before God and community* – imbues couples with a different mindset going in: a sense that “*we have to make this work, there is no easy escape.*” That can be tremendously stabilizing (though if taken to an extreme without grace, it can trap people in truly abusive situations, a nuance the church must handle with care).

4.3.2. Relativistic trends (ecumenism/interfaith): This part of the question is a bit different but relates to worldview frameworks that might undermine conviction in truth. How does it connect to marital stability? Consider *interfaith marriages* – globalization has increased their occurrence by mixing populations. Interfaith couples often face extra strains (different values, community acceptance issues). If a culture adopts a relativistic stance that “all beliefs are equally valid,” it might downplay the challenges those differences pose and push a kind of naive tolerance without equipping couples for deep differences. Ecumenism (inter-denominational unity) is not inherently bad – it can strengthen Christian witness. But if ecumenism shades into doctrinal minimalism, then specific teachings on marriage might get watered down. For instance, if a church stops teaching that divorce is generally against God’s will (because it doesn’t want to offend or appear strict), people may lack that moral guidance. Or if churches embrace every new social trend to be “inclusive,” they might endorse arrangements that aren’t aligned with biblical covenant ideals (like open marriages, or unmarried cohabitation). Our critique is that moral relativism undercuts the clear ideals needed to sustain covenant marriage. It’s telling that in more secular countries, the concept of marriage itself is fading (e.g., record lows of marriage and highs of cohabitation

in parts of Europe) (Herre et al., 2025). If marriage is seen as just one option among many and not a sacred covenant, people are less inclined to endure its rough patches.

Thus, we argue for a reaffirmation of biblical covenantal order: the idea that marriage is instituted by God, intended to be a lifelong one-flesh union of husband and wife, for their mutual support and as the stable context for raising children. This order places priority on the marriage above individual pursuits. It also provides a narrative for suffering: rather than see challenges (distance, career sacrifices) as meaningless, they can be understood as part of keeping a covenant – akin to keeping a promise even when it's hard, which in the Christian story reflects Christ's own covenant-keeping love (Christ *"never leaves His bride"* (Piper, 2003), even when we are unfaithful). This spiritual meaning can imbue couples with resilience and purpose that a secular contract view cannot. We saw glimpses of that in how some migrant and dual-career couples leveraged faith to endure (praying together across distance, valuing marriage as ministry, etc.).

On the macro side, a covenant perspective would call into question certain policies: Is it ethical for a country's development strategy to rely on separating millions of spouses? Can workplaces demand so much from employees that their marriages suffer? Covenant thinking would push for **family-friendly policies**: e.g., encouraging temporary labor migration programs to allow family accompaniment or shorter rotations, creating incentives for businesses to limit travel requirements or after-hours expectations, and investing in local job creation so people aren't forced to choose between feeding their family and being with their family. Some governments, to their credit, have started acknowledging this; e.g., the Philippines has tried (with mixed success) to create incentives for overseas workers to return and invest at home to eventually reduce the need for so many to leave. But often these efforts are secondary to economic goals. We join voices like the UN's International Organization of Migration that call for treating migrants as *humans with families*, not just economic inputs (OHCHR, 022; QUNO, 2022).

4.3.3. Integration with Theories: Our findings largely affirm the chosen theories but also extend them. Attachment theory was affirmed by evidence of emotional toll due to separation; we'd emphasize how faith and community support can moderate attachment anxiety (e.g., knowing one's church is looking after one's family can ease a migrant's worry). Social Exchange was evident in how increased independence and alternative options correlate with marital instability – yet covenant mindset acts as a counterweight by essentially *removing certain alternatives from consideration* (a devout person doesn't consider divorce or adultery truly "on the table," altering the calculus). Work–family boundary theory is extremely relevant, and we observed how technology is both a blessing and curse – something that theory can incorporate more (it's easier to blur boundaries now than in pre-digital times). We add theological depth: ultimately, the "boundary" that might matter most is a spiritual one – keeping the sacred space of marriage protected from the encroachment of worldly demands. The biblical concept of Sabbath – a rest and focus on what matters – could be applied as *"marital Sabbath"*, times where the couple deliberately shuts out work and other distractions to renew their bond. Without such practices, global pressures will fill every gap.

In the final critique, we recall Christ's warning: *"What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"* (Mark 8:36). Parallely, what will it profit us to gain the benefits of global mobility and modern careers if we **forfeit our families** in the process? Our analysis exposes that as a real risk. The "malign disruptions" of which we speak are not inevitable; they are the result of choices – societal and personal – often guided by the wrong priorities. Covenant marriage offers a different compass. It calls for sometimes *counter-cultural decisions*: turning down a promotion that demands too much travel, saying no to relocating if it would uproot the family or ministry, maybe even choosing a lower-income lifestyle to have more time at home. These are tough choices in a world that measures success in economic terms. But many who have made such choices testify that the peace in their home and the wellbeing of their marriage outweighed the foregone

income or prestige. On a policy level, it means valuing family unity in migration law (e.g., facilitating visas for spouses, not just the worker) and valuing work-life balance in labor regulations. These are practical implications of taking covenant seriously.

Finally, we note a hopeful sign: some global companies and international organizations have started paying attention to “*employee family happiness*” as a factor in productivity, leading them to offer more flexible arrangements. Perhaps the secular world is re-discovering what covenant believers always knew – that strong families are a foundation for healthy societies. The universal truth (recognized even in the UDHR Article 16: “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society”) aligns with the biblical design. Therefore, in critiquing globalist and relativist trends, we are also inviting a return to principles that even secular rationality can appreciate: families need stability, people need meaningful commitments, children need present parents.

In conclusion of this section, our integrative analysis shows that the micro and macro are deeply intertwined. Global structures shape intimate lives, and the breakdown of intimate bonds can, in turn, have macro-social consequences (e.g., communities with high family instability often face social problems like youth delinquency, lower productivity due to mental health issues, etc.). By interrogating assumptions (like “mobility is always good” or “marriage is just a contract”), we uncover the sometimes hidden costs of modern life. Our stance is not anti-globalization per se, but a call to humanize and sacralize globalization – to ensure that in the march of progress, the covenant of marriage, as a reflection of divine love and a bedrock of society, is honored rather than hollowed out.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion: In this interdisciplinary exploration, we examined how global mobility and dual-career patterns – defining features of contemporary globalization – are affecting marital stability, with a

focus on the experiences of the Global South and Christian communities. Our analysis, grounded in secondary data and a meta-analytic integration of studies, yields a nuanced understanding: *globalization's gains have come with under-acknowledged losses in the realm of family cohesion*. We found that unmitigated physical separation (through labor migration, study abroad, etc.) often weakens marital bonds and can increase the risk of marital dissolution, although strong pre-existing commitments and cultural/religious norms can buffer some of these effects (Bertoli et al., 2023; Compennolle, 2021). We also found that dual-career marriages can thrive when supported by egalitarian norms and supportive policies, but tend to suffer when couples face unmanaged work–family conflicts or cling to inequitable role expectations (McCauley, 2022; Styrc & Matysiak, 2012). The Global South, in particular, stands at a crossroads: traditional covenantal views of marriage continue to exert a stabilizing influence (divorce rates remain comparatively low in many areas [Sheahan, 2023]), yet the forces of global economic change are introducing new vulnerabilities and tensions in family life. Christian populations often demonstrate greater marital endurance amid these pressures, drawing on theological convictions of marriage as a sacred, unbreakable bond (Piper, 2003). However, they are not immune to the broader trends – even within the church, long-distance marriages and dual-career stresses are increasingly common prayer requests.

Our theoretical frameworks were largely affirmed. Attachment Theory highlighted the importance of presence, and indeed we observed that a deficit of presence (whether due to migration or overwork) is a common denominator in many at-risk marriages. Social Exchange Theory reminded us that as individuals gain autonomy and alternatives (through mobility or income), the *glue* holding marriages must increasingly be mutual commitment and love rather than necessity – which is precisely what covenant theology provides at a conceptual level. Work–Family Boundary Theory underscored the critical need for boundaries, and our findings underscore that without intentional boundaries, work and global opportunities can consume the space

marriage needs to survive. Philosophically, we confronted a core issue: the modern world often promotes freedom and choice in an unbounded way, whereas marriage calls for commitment and constraint (freely chosen but binding). The tension between these paradigms is at the heart of why globalization can destabilize families – it tilts the balance towards individual freedom at the expense of relational obligation.

Our critique of globalist, contractual, and relativist ideologies is not merely theoretical; it is born out in the data: societies that treat marriage and family as sacred duties (whether for religious or strong cultural reasons) have more stable families amidst change, whereas those that hastily discard norms in favor of extreme individualism see higher family fragmentation (Jeffries, 2003; Herre et al., 2022). To preserve the “one flesh” ideal in an age of distance and busyness, a counter-cultural commitment to prioritizing marriage is needed – by individuals, communities, and policymakers alike.

In conclusion, *marital stability in the era of global mobility is possible*, but it does not happen by accident. It requires what we might term intentional covenantal living: couples making deliberate choices to value presence over presents, unity over unlimited personal freedom, and faithfulness over convenience. The Global South, with its strong family ties and growing Christian influence, has the opportunity to model a path that harnesses the benefits of globalization (education, economic growth) *without* sacrificing the foundational institution of the family. As global sociologist Kingsley Davis once noted, “*The family is the friend of longevity; no society will long survive without it.*” We would add: the *quality* of that family – shaped by covenant love or lack thereof – will determine the quality of society.

5.2. Recommendations: Guiding Principle - Scripture teaches that “the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband” (1 Cor 11:3) and that husbands are to love sacrificially while wives submit respectfully (Eph 5:22-33). Marital stability therefore

rests on restoring the *divine order* of headship-in-love and unity of presence. The recommendations that follow apply this biblical framework to the contemporary challenges of global mobility and dual careers.

5.2.1 For Policymakers & Governments: [i]. Prioritise family co-location in all labour-migration schemes: Design bilateral agreements that *require or incentivise* employers to fund spousal visas, cover moving costs, and guarantee periodic home leave. Evidence shows that physical co-residence is a primary protective factor for marital stability (Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2025). **[ii]. Relocation assistance & tax relief for reunited families:** Offer tax credits or relocation grants to couples who choose unity over separate postings, recognising the long-term social savings of intact households. **[iii]. Local job-creation with a family lens:** Target investment toward industries that allow both spouses to work in the same locality (e.g., regional hubs rather than single-sex migrant camps). **[iv]. Marriage-friendly visa categories:** Create expedited “family covenant” visas allowing dependent spouses to accompany workers or students with minimal red tape.

5.2.2 For Employers & Organisations: [i]. One-office / same-campus policies for spouses: Where skillsets permit, prioritise hiring or transferring married couples into the same branch, project, or city so that *husband and wife may dwell together* (Gen 2:24). **[ii]. Comprehensive spousal relocation packages:** Cover work permits, language classes, and job-matching services for the trailing spouse, removing the economic impulse to split households. **[iii]. Flexible, family-centred scheduling:** Limit overnight travel and rota systems that keep parents apart; where distance is unavoidable, cap assignments to short rotations (< 3 months) followed by mandatory reunion leave. **[iv]. Mentoring for biblical headship & servant-leadership:** Partner with faith-based NGOs to provide workshops helping men lead lovingly and women supportively in high-pressure, mobile careers.

5.2.3 For Faith Communities & Civil Society: [i]. Teach headship-in-love & submission-in-respect as

complementary, not competitive: Premarital and couples' classes should unpack Eph 5:22-33, emphasising that wives' submission flourishes when husbands emulate Christ-like, sacrificial care. [ii]. **Champion unity over individual success:** Counsel believers to weigh job offers and study visas against the biblical mandate of "one flesh," even if that means foregoing higher individual income. [iii]. **Support networks for relocated families:** Local churches can adopt newly arrived spouses, provide practical help, and guard against loneliness that undermines respect and love.

5.2.4 For Couples (Returning to Divine Order): [i]. **Husbands, provide & shepherd; wives, relocate & steward the home:** Where dual employment in one location is impossible, the wife should prayerfully consider surrendering her separate post and moving with her husband, trusting God's provision through him. [ii]. **Shared vocation, distinct roles:** Whenever feasible, seek joint employment (e.g., family businesses, same institution) that allows daily togetherness while honouring differentiated responsibilities. [iii]. **Covenant budgeting over individual accounts:** Operate one household budget under the husband's headship, rejecting the cultural drift toward separate "his-and-hers" finances that foster autonomy rather than unity. [iv]. **Regular head-and-helper check-ins:** Establish weekly "marriage council meetings" to pray, plan, and ensure that the husband's leadership is loving and the wife's support is joyful.

In closing, the challenge of maintaining marital stability amid global mobility and dual careers is daunting but not insurmountable. Our research points to a central truth: presence (physical, emotional, spiritual) is the currency of love, and couples, communities, and societies must be wise stewards of it. Globalization will continue to accelerate and morph; the family, to survive, must not be simply carried along by these currents, but rather anchored in timeless principles of love, fidelity, and mutual support. As we uphold *sola scriptura* in guiding our understanding, we find enduring wisdom: "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1). We interpret this to mean

that no amount of material success or modern know-how can compensate if the foundational relationships – the "house" of family – crumble. Conversely, if we build (and rebuild) marriages according to divine design – marked by covenant commitment, grace, and intentional love – they can thrive even in the midst of a turbulent, hyper-mobile world. The long-term viability of both families and societies depends on this covenant fidelity. May policymakers have the courage to factor it into their equations, may employers see beyond the immediate profit to the people in their employ, may communities rally around their families, and may couples themselves hold fast to each other, confident that "*many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it*" (Song of Solomon 8:7) – not even the flood of globalization.

5.3. Limitations: This article is an integrative review—meta-analytic in spirit but largely qualitative—and we did not statistically pool effect sizes; consequently, our synthesis relies on observational secondary sources and should not be read as establishing causal effects. Cross-study and cross-national heterogeneity in how "marital stability" is measured (e.g., divorce rates vs. self-reported satisfaction/conflict) limits direct comparability, and in some settings low recorded divorce reflects legal/social barriers rather than an absence of strain. Several macro indicators used here—such as remittances as a proxy for family separation and crude divorce rates to index instability—are ecological measures that can mask within-group variation and unobserved confounders. Religion-stratified marital metrics are uneven across datasets, so contrasts between Christian and general populations at times rely on indirect triangulation rather than uniform, disaggregated panels. Our scope also prioritised work published since ~2000, which may omit earlier evidence or slower-moving literatures. Finally, although we endeavor to be transparent about our theological lens and to ground claims in published data, interpretive bias remains possible; we mitigate this through triangulation and by noting where evidence is mixed or inconclusive.

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