

Factors Affecting Career Decision of Overseas Filipino Workers in Singapore Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Social Cognitive Theory Approach

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Abstract. The main driver for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) to migrate for work is better opportunities. However, factors regarding career decisions in their respective host country is an interesting angle to look at specially during this time of pandemic. This paper presented the different factors and how these factors affect the chosen respondents in Singapore by designing a survey through the aid of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and analyzing the data using Pearson Correlation. The result of the study will help future researchers whose research's focus is migration and migrant workers.

Keywords: social cognitive career theory, pearson correlation, OFW

1. Introduction

Filipinos have participated in migration for hundreds of years in search of better opportunities. While several factors motivate Filipinos to work abroad, financial security and economic reason are still the top drivers for most Overseas Filipino Workers [1]. According to the survey conducted in 2019 by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), there was an estimated 2.2 million OFW with 21.7% of this coming from the 30-34 age group and 81.1% are in Asia [2]. In Singapore, the Philippine Embassy estimates that there are 200,000 Filipinos working in the country and 60% of this number are professionals and skilled workers. However, like everything else, COVID-19 has magnified the uncertainties in the life of OFW particularly due to economic and government policies that were introduced by host countries in response to the pandemic [3].

A study by J.A. Borja in 2021 presented the lives of three (3) OFW in their host countries during the pandemic and he argued that during this time, OFWs work in what he labelled as “emotional labour of persistence” or the endurance of uncertainties while performing their overseas duties [3]. Another article analyses in an ontological security framework the different reasons why Filipino nurses in UK decided to move in UK over other host country [4]. This paper, on the other hand, will focus on the different factors that affect the decisions of Filipino workers in Singapore with regards to their career move or the absence of it during this time of COVID-19.

This study aims to present the different factors that Filipino workers in Singapore consider when they are deciding on their career during the pandemic. It will explore other factors such as marital status, family responsibility, number of kids and the likes. The findings of this study will then help understand other motivation or drivers of OFW in Singapore with their career which most of the past studies fail to present as the only focus of those studies were financial security.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data Gathering

Survey form will be distributed to 45 respondents through Google forms. These respondents are randomly sampled overseas Filipino workers who have been working in Singapore for more than two years. To ensure that proper analysis will be made in the study, the researcher will limit the sample to working professionals who are holding work permits such as S Pass and E Pass. The questionnaire is designed based on the theory that will be used for this study.

2.2. Participants

As the survey was limited to OFW in Singapore who are holding S Pass and E Pass work permit, 100% (45) of the respondents are bachelor's degree holder. Moreover, most of the respondents are female at 87% (39) while male accounts to 13% of the respondents (6). Majority of them are in the age group of 30-34 at 49% (22), followed by those who are 25-29 years old at 42% (19), and only 9% (4) of the respondents are 35 years old and above.

The other variables used in the survey such as marital status, number of children, whether the respondent is a breadwinner or not, and number of years in Singapore as an OFW were decided by the researcher as factors that the respondents may or may not consider in deciding on their career. Since these variables are treated differently, it will be presented in figures.

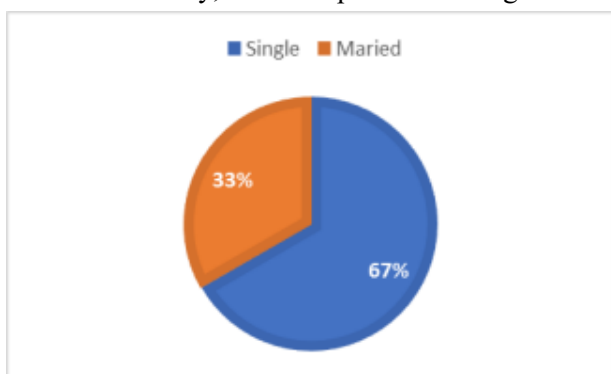


Fig. 1. Martial status.

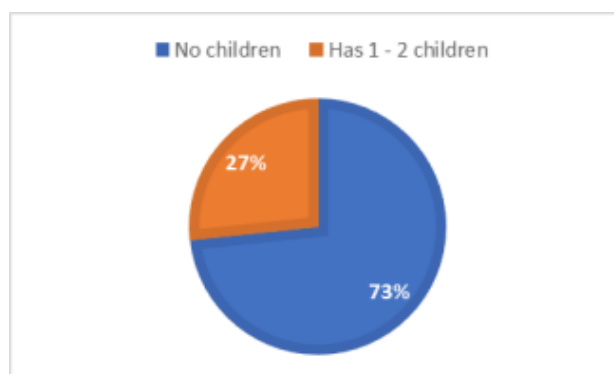


Fig. 2. Number of children.

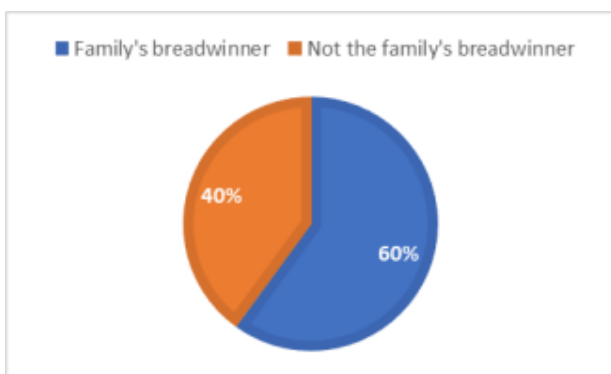


Fig. 3. Responsibility with the family.

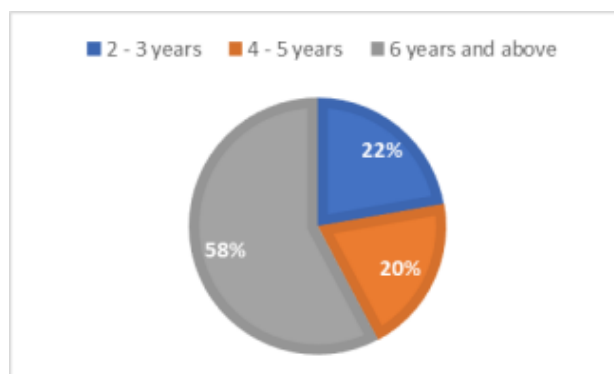


Fig. 4. Number of years as an OFW in Singapore.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) which was developed by Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown and Gail Hackett in 1994 will be applied in this study. According to this theory, career decisions of a person are not merely a product of their behaviour. Factors such as financial security, career advancements, educational background, influences of the environment as well as personal goals are taken into consideration before deciding on one's career [5]. In addition, SCCT was used in analysing how particular characteristics of individuals as well as their socioeconomic locations has influenced the way persons decide their career development [6]. Although the theory was later developed to include two (2) additional modes such as "model of satisfaction and well-being in educational and vocational contexts" [6] and "model of career self-management" [6], this study will use the original theory which has three assertions that contribute to the

career choices that individuals make: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals. Moreover, several previous studies have also decided to use the original theory without the additional models.

In the study of Ericksen in 2002, “Women Pursuing Non-Traditional Careers: A Social Cognitive Career Theory Perspective”, the author used the framework of SCCT in studying the development and progress of career of the sampled population based on the three basic premises of SCCT which are learning experiences, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations [7]. Another study which attempted to explain the paucity of teaching staff in nursing education in Thailand employed SCCT to understand the factors that Thai nurses consider in deciding whether they would pursue a career in teaching or not [8]. Furthermore, these past studies conducted survey using questionnaire based on the premises of SCCT.

For this study, the questionnaire that will be used to collect the data from the sample population was designed using the framework in Figure 5.

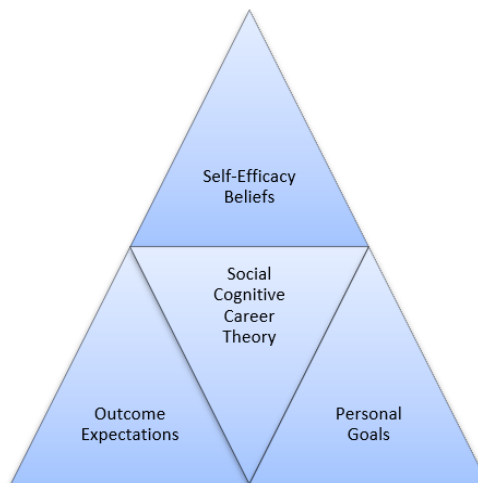


Fig. 5. Social cognitive theory framework.

To understand how the factors affect the decision making of OFW in Singapore, the following statements will be scored by the respondents using the 5-point Likert scale:

Self-Efficacy (SE)

1. I am confident that I am performing well in the job assigned to me at work.
2. My accomplishments matter to the company I’m working with.
3. I am always eager to take on challenging tasks compared to my colleagues.
4. Despite the challenges like the pandemic, I am still able to perform well in my duties at work.
5. I can overcome any challenges in my career through my qualifications and accomplishments.

Outcome Expectations (OE)

1. I perform well because of the reward (promotion, cash incentives, etc.)
2. I am performing well because I believe my performance will still be rewarded despite the pandemic.
3. My performance depends on the reward / outcome that will be given to me.
4. The higher the reward is, the more motivated I am to perform well no matter what.
5. I expect the company to reward my performance even during this time.

Personal Goals (PG)

1. My job performance directly affects my career goals that’s why I’m performing well.
2. My career goals are still important despite the pandemic that’s why I’m performing well.
3. My job performance determines whether I will attain my career goals or not.
4. The pandemic will not hinder me from achieving my goals that’s why I’m performing well.
5. My career goals are still attainable despite the pandemic that’s why I’m performing well.

Career Development Plans (CD)

1. My job performance gives me confidence that I can easily find a more rewarding job despite the pandemic.
2. The pandemic will not hinder me from exploring other career development options.
3. A more rewarding career can still be achieved during this time.
4. I believe my career development plans should be pursued no matter what.
5. Nothing can stop me from pursuing the plans I have with my career, even the pandemic.

2.4. Data Analysis using Pearson Correlation

All collected data from the survey will be analyzed using Pearson Correlation where the value will be determined to help the researcher draw the conclusion on whether there is a significant relation on the factors that might affect the decision of the respondents with regards to their career.

The terms negligible correlation (0.00-0.10), weak correlation (0.10-0.39), moderate correlation (0.40-0.69), strong correlation (0.70-0.89), and very strong correlation (0.90-1.00) will be used to describe the result of the Pearson Correlation test [9].

3. Results and Discussion

The statements from the survey were grouped as Self-Efficacy (SE), Outcome Expectations (OE), Personal Goals (PG), or Career Development Plans (CD).

For the first group of statements which is the Self-Efficacy, 47% (21) of the respondents, which is the highest percentage, agree with the statement that they are confident that they are performing well in the job assigned to them at work. It can be said that based on the results, the respondents agree on the statements that measure how they perceive their ability to perform in their job, except for statement 4 which is about their ability to perform well during the pandemic. Majority of the respondents, 40% (18) feels neutral about this statement. However, this is closely followed by those who agree at 36% (16).

The second group of statements or the Outcome Expectations, majority of the respondents agree with statements 1, 2 and 3 at 47% (21), 53% (24), and 44% (20) respectively. This shows that most of the OFW who answered the survey are motivated by the reward or the outcome for them to perform well in their work. On the other hand, most of the respondents, 40% (18), have a neutral take on the statement that it is expected for the company to still reward the employee's performance even during pandemic.

With the third group of the statements, or Personal Goals, 60% (27) or most of the respondents agree that their performance directly affect their career goals and a remarkable 64% (29) are positive that their career goals are still attainable despite the pandemic. Although there are a few respondents who disagree with the statements under PG, their numbers are irrelevant compare with those who agree with the statements.

The last group of statements, or Career Development, a significant number of respondents, 60% (27) agree with the statement that their career development plans are still attainable despite this difficult time of pandemic. In addition, 44% (20) thinks that the pandemic will not hinder them from exploring better career alternatives and 44% (21) believes that career development plans should be pursued no matter what.

The mean of the responses per group of statements for every respondent where computed. This is necessary for the computation of Pearson-r value which will help determine the factors that OFW in Singapore consider when making career decisions.

Table 1: Pearson R value for each Factor Against each Group of Statements

	SE	OE	PG	CD
Factor 1	0.07652	-0.14780	0.09784	-0.01326
Factor 2	0.15500	-0.13655	0.17384	-0.15978
Factor 3	-0.01105	0.12325	0.07846	0.23358
Factor 4	-0.0022	-0.23487	0.12801	-0.12622

Although the results don't show any significant correlation between the factors and the mean per group of statements, the factor with highest value may be taken as the factor that most of the respondents are taking

into consideration. For instance, in SE, Factor 2 or the number of children has the highest value; in OE, Factor 3 or responsibility with the family has the highest value; in PG, Factor 2 or the number of children has the highest value; and for CD, Factor 3 has the highest value.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

In this paper, the researcher explored the factors that may affect the OFW in Singapore in deciding their career move in the times of pandemic. As Filipinos are believed to have strong family values, the factors that influence them to think positively about themselves, to remain hopeful in the times of uncertainty with regards to their career, and to aspire for better career opportunities will always be something that's connected to family. While it is already given that most stories of migrant workers have something to do with financial reasons, especially in the case of OFW, learning other motivations regarding their career decisions and perceptions is beneficial in understanding our migrant workers better.

Furthermore, the study focused solely on Singapore, which the researcher acknowledged as this paper's limitation. Future studies may explore other host countries where there are significant number of OFWs such as Middle East and North America where the researcher may use other framework, theory and method of data gathering. In doing so, an even in-depth study on the subject will be a great contribution to studying and understanding migration.

Moreover, the researcher would like to recommend the use of other decision-making tools in future research such as Analytical Hierarchy Process which may explore the priority of OFW when making decisions regarding their career. Also, a comparative study on career decision of OFW during and after the pandemic is another further study that the researcher would like to recommend [10]-[13].

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