

# The psychological issues filipino workers experience essay



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## Research paper The Psychological Difficulties that Overseas Filipinos

Undergo Abroad Overseas Filipino Workers work abroad due to numerous reasons. In the Philippines, it is a well-known fact that there is a great number of Overseas Filipino Workers. The number is so great that each probably has at least one relative who is an OFF. However, not only is the number of Overseas Filipino Workers great, but also constantly increasing.

Statistics show that the number of Overseas Filipino Workers has grown to 1, 470, 826 workers from 1975 to 2010 (Www and Hepburn). One could possibly infer that over the years, Filipinos have begun to become more interested in work outside rather than in their motherland. At first glance, it could possibly be thought of as something harmful to the Philippines, with their own countrymen leaving their home at an increasing rate. However, it is actually the other way around, as it greatly benefits the country economy in its GAP through their annual remittances.

However, what should be more importantly noticed rather than the benefits of Filipinos leaving their country is why they leave the country and look for work abroad. First of the many reasons is that some Filipinos use the excuse to go abroad through their work in order to avoid and escape personal problems that they experience back at home. An example of a personal problem that they escape from is marriage issues. Some Filipinos (mostly female), go abroad in order to escape their marriages, to avoid confronting these problems (Nouveau et al. 9-20). Another reason as to why Filipinos pursue work abroad is that they are encouraged to do so by relatives who already live or work abroad (Nouveau et. AY 19-20). One of the things that hinders people from working abroad is the fact that hey know absolutely no

one, and are uncertain of what to expect in that country. In short, they fear being alone and isolated. By having relatives abroad who are already established, this fear is dispelled, and they are given more reason to work in that foreign country.

Ultimately, however, the most common reason as to why Overseas Filipino Workers go abroad is the economic benefit (Nouveau et. AY 19). When asked what enticed them to work abroad, Maria Christina Ancient (29), and Irvin Dave (27) both exclaimed that the working opportunities abroad were much better in terms of reparability, to the point that they were incomparable to the ones available in the Philippines. With the constant outflow of Filipinos to foreign land in order to work, one would think that the Philippines is losing all of its professional, white collar workers.

However, based on a statistic taken from a Rapper anaphoric by Www and Hepburn, most of the Jobs that Filipinos take abroad are those of unskilled laborers, domestic workers, and the like. For them to choose that kind of work with such a great preference due to the number, it suggests much about the state of work, and the ark opportunities in the Philippines. Them These Overseas Filipino Workers choosing to be employed in such difficult work that is looked down upon implies that work in the Philippines is in such an undesirable state.

Offs experience psychological difficulties abroad. With that said, one cannot really blame them for preferring to work abroad. It is in fact their own lives, and they have the right to lead it as they desire. We as As their countrymen, the Filipinos should wish them well, for them to be able to reap the benefits

of the work they sow. However, as we send them off and await their return, we cannot help but wonder: " How are they faring abroad? " Based on the stories that Offs have been recounting, the answer to this question is evident: not anywhere near fine.

In actuality, Overseas Filipino Workers experience great difficulty abroad. , namely psychological difficulty. Thus, since Overseas Filipino Workers experience numerous psychological issues when they are abroad, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration in partnership with the Philippine consulates, should delegate approximately two officials in order to develop and promote Filipino communities in the cities that Offs reside and work in. One would not even need to make an extra effort in order to find out about the state of Offs there.

Numerous documentaries, interviews, and even movies have covered this topic over and over again due to the sympathy they have for workers under such conditions. This is because of how they continue to work so hard despite the abuses they experience in hopes of the fulfillment of the promise that they will be economically compensated, which will supposedly help solve the rest of the relevant problems they have. What is important to note out of all of this is that Filipinos value this reason and ruse this promise -they expend all efforts to prioritize it above almost everything else.

They are warned of problems, and anything they should worry about or prepare for when they go abroad, and yet they still disregard these and pursue the job as they feel that the opportunities outweigh the problems that may arise. Due to this mentality, Filipinos end up experiencing shock

because of how sudden the problems they experience affect them. Sure they were warned about these, but their downplaying of these issues greatly contribute to the shock of how real and threatening these problems are.

Consequently, their attempts to adapt to the new culture where the problems arise become increasingly because of how underpowered they are. The important question that should then be asked is " What are these specific psychological problems that they experience? " Alienation and Isolation One psychological problem that Overseas Filipino Workers experience abroad is alienation and isolation. Alienation pertains to a person becoming distanced, or being made a stranger either to one's own self or society (Firelight 77) . Offs experience this abroad because there, they are the minority.

They are the strangers because they are unfamiliar with the culture and the people. As a result, Offs experience the first form of alienation which is alienation to society. In an interview with an Overseas Filipino Worker Maria Christina Ancient, (30, USA) about problems that she encountered initially and continued to face, her answers reflected experiences of alienation. Ancient recounted that during her first few years of working abroad, she had to learn the culture and ways of communication in order to adjust to the social situations that the country she resided in possessed.

She felt that it was her obligation as the minority to have to adjust to the culture present in the country she was working in. The thoughts and experiences she recounted are a concrete example of alienation because she was made a stranger by the foreign land she was working in, mostly because she was unfamiliar with culture and the people. It is fortunate though that

the alienation she experienced was nothing too extreme. This is a result overseas domestic workers being continually subjected to abuses abroad.

They also experience several issues which range from problematic meals, sleeping area quality, and working conditions. Though most of these stem from different cultural beliefs that the family being served observes, several are still clearly inexcusable forms of buses (Sat. Maria et. Al 25). The other form of alienation that Overseas Filipino Workers experience is alienation from one's own self. People are alienated, or made strangers to themselves because they cannot live their life true to their own intentions.

Considering the reasons Offs choose to become such, their freedom to choose becomes dictated by their financial or life status. They become constrained by their limited resources, problems, and opportunities (Schmitt 116). In order to illustrate this point clearly, a suitable example for this claim would be the situation of Overseas Filipino Workers. Overseas Filipino Workers commonly give reasons tied to financial status when asked why they chose to become Offs. They chose, and continually choose to remain Offs, despite the difficulties their situations entail such as being away from home, and abuse among other reasons.

They subject themselves to these difficulties because the financial reward is supposedly enough compensation. They would rather undergo these difficulties, rather than working in their homeland because the pay is " more worth it" They basically become alienated from their own lives as they feel as if retain decisions are forced onto them, and no longer think that they are able to choose the kind of life they want to lead. They live their lives not for

themselves, but for other people. This is one of the many reasons Overseas Filipino Workers should be given much more credit than they presumably receive.

They are put into situations and contexts that are extremely unfavorable, and yet are still able to continue what they are doing mostly for the sake of their families back home who they earn money for. In an interview with OFF Irvin Dave (28, Bahrain), he exclaims that one of the robbers that he experienced abroad aside from unfamiliarity was homesickness. Despite the yearning to come home and spend time with loved ones in a country they are familiar with, they still choose to subject themselves to the problems they experience.

They sacrifice their own freedom of choosing a more comfortable life just so they can give their loved ones theirs by relieving them of poverty. Fear and Anxiety Another psychological problem that Overseas Filipino Workers experience is fear and anxiety. In a book that studies happiness as a science by conducting numerous experiments and background studies on several people who suffer psychological cases, Stephen Braun discusses emotions and moods and how these affect all of us: " Our emotions - both pleasant and unpleasant- exist because they have served useful functions in the past.

Fear and Panic for instance shape our response when our physical, mental, or social lives are immediately threatened. Fear is evoked by situations that could hurt us or endanger our social standing, our chances for successful mating, our ability to acquire valuable resources. Anxiety tracks potential threats or danger. It is a future oriented version of fear that helps us predict,

and thus avoid, immediate danger (Braun 89). " Both fear and anxiety are felt by Offs abroad because their lives, in all 3 dimensions, are threatened and compromised by their respective situations abroad.

For instance, Offs in the countries of Singapore, and Malaysia were reported to have a fear of approaching the Philippine embassies abroad (given they were illegal workers) because the officials of these embassies supposedly discriminate and condescend to these abused workers, as well as threaten to take their jobs because of their being illegal workers (Sat. Maria et. Al 24). The Offs that experience this there have their social status bob), and their mental lives (pride) threatened. As a result of this fear, they become increasingly anxious of approaching the embassies - the governing bodies for Filipinos abroad- for help.

They identify the Philippine embassies where you are supposed to be able to get help as a potential threat to them. However, it is not this presence of fear and anxiety that is alarming. What is alarming is where they actually direct their fear and anxiety. Initially, they direct it on the ones who abuse them, which prompts them to turn to the embassies for help. However, their anxiety alarms them that the embassies are actually a threat and cause for fear too because they can lose their jobs cause of them.

As a result, the appalling thing occurs: they choose to go back to their abusers because they think that keeping their job is more important than their very own safety. Depression The last prevalent psychological problem that Overseas Filipino Workers experience is depression. In the same book that studies happiness and moods as a science, Stephen Braun refers to a



study done by psychotherapist Emmy Gut: "... Depressive moods are to our mental life what pain is to our physical life: potentially valuable signals that something is reducing our chances for survival, reproduction, and well-being.

Most often, depressive moods are telling us that something is wrong with our intimate relationships, our life situations, or our efforts to achieve a goal...

Telling us that we are experiencing unconscious crisis, frustration, breakdown, or problem that needs our attention. (Braun 90). " It is not necessarily depression, but rather depressive moods that most Offs likely experience. Like the emotion of fear and anxiety, depressive moods arise to be indicative of anything in our the lives of people that continuously recur and need solving. In the case of Offs, this can be caused by a number of things.

One of them could be by homesickness, of being away from the family as well as home, and being with strangers for far too long. It could also arise from troubles in work, from abuses all the way to discrimination. In the interview with OFF Irvin Dave, he states that as he worked, he experienced discrimination on his skills from his coworkers because of his nationality. Christina Ancient also shares the same sentiments, as she also said that locals weren't very accommodating at first because they were seen as threats to the jobs of the locals. She exclaimed that because of this, it caused alienation between them and the locals.

It is a basic mantra that all people should be accounted for when freedom is being sought. No one should be trampled upon for other peoples' sake.

However, the problem in a lot of cities is that when the governments make

laws, and the people abide and live by it along with their culture, they forget to take into account into their laws the foreigners and their guests (Schmitt 15). They give special favor to their own countrymen, and forego the wellbeing of foreigners because they feel as if they don't really need to care about them because they are not their own. Such a thing needs to be taken into

Some may think that this problem of depressive moods, as well as all account. The other psychological problems could be solved by simply going to a psychologist, therapist, or psychiatrist. That is wrong. What should be solved is not the end result, but the causes or reasons as to why the end-result keeps occurring. The common cause of these psychological issues. Evidently, all of the psychological problems have common causes. It could attributed to the Offs caring too much about their Job that they put it above themselves, or caring too much about their family that they put their income above themselves.

While it is detrimental, as is valiant of them, it is something that cannot be changed and manipulated in people because it is an attitude or value for them. What can be changed, however, that is contributory to the prevalence of psychological problems in Offs, is their isolation, unfamiliarity, and aloneness in general. These psychological problems stem from them being alone and not having anyone to relate their problems with. They are unfamiliar in the country because everyone to them are strangers, and they do not know anyone.

That their loved ones, their fellow countrymen are back home in the Philippines. They forget that they are to singularly the only Overseas Filipino Workers abroad who experience the same thing. Community building among the Overseas Filipino Workers. Hence, a realistic and effective solution to these psychological problems is by delegating officials to promote and supervise community building among Filipinos abroad to relieve Offs of the psychological stress that they experience from the difficulties they undergo.

First off, the government will partner up the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, along with the respective Philippines embassies all over the world so that they can work hand in hand in doing this recess. The Joint agencies then will delegate approximately 2-3 officials who will spearhead the process of community building in each of the respective cities that Offs work in. It is up to them to form a system, or schedule depending on the background that suits the country they work in.

It is here where they will be able to bring the Filipino culture abroad. Filipino culture gives great value to the notion of being shared beings with fellow countrymen. It meaner that Filipinos as much as possible integrate themselves with other Offs abroad, because they see each other as links and remembrances of their homeland. Hence, these Offs do their best to maintain connections with their fellow countrymen abroad, whether it be the sharing of stories, jokes, and the like (Nouveau et. Al 59).

It could even be with through sharing of culture, such as fiestas because it is a way for them to anchor their festive roots onto the countries they reside in (Nouveau et. Al 55-54). This solution is one realistic way in order to bring

together Overseas Filipino Workers abroad in the respective cities they work in for them to not feel alone. They won't be alienated because they'll have people to interact with and not feel like strangers to, because they share the same culture. In the interview with Mrs..

Ancient, she stated that the way she had to cope with the problems she experienced abroad was approaching it with the mentality that she needed to adjust to the environment - culture, and language among others. With the suggested proposal, doing such adjusting would become significantly less difficult because not only would the OFWs not need to adjust to the culture alone, but with the aid of the proposed community building, they would also be given the opportunity to incorporate or draw parallels with their own Filipino culture.

Additionally, They will not feel fear and anxiety because they are familiar with each other's culture, and can help solve each other's problems interdependently. They will not have to be subjected to depressive moods, as being with people they are familiar with, they will not feel the need to be alarmed or threatened in any aspect of their lives. Going back to the situation stated previously about reporting abuses in the 7th page, this proposed solution would allow the problems, and abuses experienced by the Overseas Filipino Workers to actually reach the higher Filipino authorities abroad.

This is because not only do they have fellow Filipinos they could directly talk to, but they also have direct contact to embassy and POPE officials in these Filipino communities. The difference between their contact with embassy

officials in the communities with the officials in the actual embassies is that in these communities, the officials would have most likely gained the trust of the Offs enough for them not to fear any bias or judgments - the factors that hindered Offs from approaching the embassy officials in the first place.

Despite being an ideal and realistic solution, however, this proposal still has potential insides. One of these is the possibility that with all the stories that these Filipinos share with each other, it may turn out to become an event wherein they share gossip instead, and promote attitudes such as backstabbing, and hate. Tied to this potential downside is the possibility that Offs might begin to neglect or rush their work just so that they could attend the community building events and places more quickly.

Both of these issues can be easily addressed with the implementation of a set time frame of when Offs can stay in the venue chosen by the embassy officials for community development. Another downside to this is that it may not be an ideal solution for cities where there is a minimal (around less than 10) number of Overseas Filipino Workers residing in. This is because it defeats the purpose of removing the idea that the Filipinos are a minority, or are isolated in the respective cities they live in.

This however can be easily addressed by organizing either a substantial number of visiting times to OFF hotshot cities for better interaction, or by planning the centers of OFF community development in venues where it can accommodate as many cities or Offs as possible. Overseas Filipino Workers deserve assistance. Therefore in conclusion, Overseas Filipino Workers

should be given aid, help, and most of all appreciation for what they do. This is mainly because Offs experience so much difficulty abroad.

They are subject to abuses of many kinds. What merits so much appreciation from this is that despite these abuses, they still continue to work and push through with these Jobs. Yes, it may be that they are merely forced into doing this only because there are no other available options in the Philippines itself, but it should still be considered that objecting one's own self to these abuses willingly for the sake of earning money for your family deems much credit. It shows how unselfish Offs are, and how they are unsung heroes.

What is more unfortunate to note about their situation is given how much they sacrifice for their families, it is still sometimes these families blaming their respective Overseas Filipino Workers that are part of their family for internal problems that arise in their family. The fault is placed on them for their absence when their families go through rough times and problems especially during the time hen their children grow up and get raised (Nouveau et. Al 20). Their sacrifice becomes unrecognized, and instead get blamed, which in effect can become very demoralizing as it contributes to the notion that their work is not worth it.

Thus, by responding to the need of the Overseas Filipino Workers, the notion that their work is appreciated will be affirmed. By aiming to solve this through the proposed solution, Offs will be made to feel that they are being appreciated and given attention to, because they are being considered as assets to the Philippines just as much as any other high paying Job. In the

interview with Mrs.. Ancient, the final question was asked whether or not working abroad had been worth all the trouble.

She responded that while it was worth it mainly because of the economic compensation, she also stated that she considered it worth going abroad because she was still able to build a home abroad with the presence of other Filipinos. We Filipinos might not be able to fully stop the abuses that Overseas Filipino Workers experience, as that is mostly up to the governments of the respective countries they reside in. However, we must do everything in our power to motivate and help these Overseas Filipino Workers as much as we can starting with their motivation and mentality going in, and through their stint as Overseas Workers of the Philippines.

These OFFS deserve all the help they can get. They work and contribute to both their country and family despite being subjected to numerous difficulties and abuses. This selfless sacrifice is what merits them the privilege of being called heroes in their own right. However, heroes cannot do it all, nor can they do it alone. They need the support and company of their fellow countrymen and family in order to help keep them motivated ND feel as if their sacrifice meaner something to those whom it is done for.

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Appendix Interviews Mrs.. Ma. Christina E. Ancient, 30 years old, United

States of America. 1 . How long have you been an Overseas Filipino Worker?

ANSWER: 8 years 2. During the initial parts, or the first time you went abroad as an OFF, what problems or issues were you expecting?

Which of these actually occurred, and what issues or problems came

unexpectedly? ANSWER: I was expecting to encounter problems relating to

communicating with locals. Going to a foreign country meaner having to deal

with the language of the locals. I understood that not everyone will be adept

to speaking in English so I had to do my part in learning quickly basic

conversational Jargon to get by. Indeed, I had to deal with both social

situations (outside of work) wherein I had to communicate to make friends,

as well as communicating with work colleagues as well as clients. This

language barrier was