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菲籍專業人士在台灣就業市場的挑戰與際遇：  
對台灣雇主的優勢與好處

Challenges and Opportunities of Filipino Professionals in  
Taiwan: Highlighting the Benefits to Taiwanese  
Employers

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臺灣專業人才短缺與菲律賓勞動力輸出：從文化角度分析

Taiwan's Talent Shortage and the Philippines' Labor Force: A Cultural Analysis

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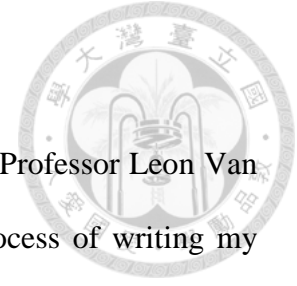
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## Abstract

Taiwan is currently facing major talent shortages in different industries. Despite aggressive efforts from the government and companies to recruit and entice the participation of professional workers, the issue remains to be a growing problem. Taiwan is now looking to the "global talent" pool to address this growing concern (Tseng, 2020).

Despite several advantages such as high educational attainment, excellent proficiency in English, the availability of workers, and cultural compatibility with the Taiwanese, the market for Filipino professionals remains untapped and has resulted in a large disparity of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) being hired for white-collar positions in Taiwan as compared to those being hired for blue-collar positions.

The study aims to explore the opportunities that Filipino professionals can provide in addressing the skills gap and talent shortage issues Taiwanese employers are facing. It also seeks to determine how practicing greater diversity, equity, and inclusion with the hiring of more white-collar OFWs can benefit these employers. Lastly, it looks to examine the cultural fit compatibility between the two countries and how these may impact their integration within Taiwan's labor force.

It finds that although Filipinos match the required job qualifications and are culturally compatible with Taiwanese culture, various factors such as stringent labor policies, costly and rigorous recruitment processes, lack of awareness for job opportunities, and several cultural differences hinder the positive impact it may provide to employers. The findings of this research aim to provide a view of the experiences of OFWs in Taiwan, increase awareness for the abilities and contributions that OFWs can provide to Taiwanese employers, spark improvements to the overall practice from both sides, and in turn help alleviate Taiwan's ongoing talent shortage concerns.

*Keywords:* Talent Shortage, Filipino professionals, Diversity, Inclusion, Culture Fit

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## List of Abbreviations



OFW - Overseas Filipino Workers

POEA - Philippine Overseas Employment Agency

DOLE - Department of Labor and Employment

SHPT - Special Hiring Program for Taiwan

TFETP - Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program

RBA - Responsible Business Alliance

OEC - Overseas Employment Certificate

OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

MECO - Manila Economic and Cultural Office in Taiwan

DEI – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

PDI - Power Distance Index

IDV- Individualism versus Collectivism

MAS - Masculinity versus Femininity

UAI - Uncertainty Avoidance Index

LTO - Long versus Short Term Orientation

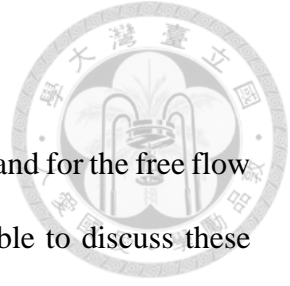
IVR - Indulgence versus Restraint

PH- Philippines

TWN- Taiwan

PR – Permanent Residency

SOP – Standard Operating Procedures



## 1. Introduction

Over the years, globalization has continuously fueled the demand for the free flow of goods and services. According to Hong-zen Wang, it is impossible to discuss these without considering the correlation between the movement and the need for skilled human capital (Wang, 2008). Coupled with the pace of technological advancements, digitization, and innovation, companies and nations have been more eager to attract and retain skilled labor within their institutions to steer economic progress and development (Model, 2016). Unfortunately, high demands coupled with the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in global talent shortages with more than 50% of companies worldwide facing problems in finding or retaining employees equipped with the sufficient skills needed for their business operations (Manpower Group, 2020).

Taiwan is no exception to this growing issue. Since 1996, after experiencing years of strong economic performance, Taiwan has been transitioning to a “labor shortage economy” which is evident to this day (Lee & Wang 1996). Most recently, the country’s business leaders have called the attention of its government to conduct the necessary actions to address talent shortage concerns, most especially for technical and white-collar positions (Huang, 2021). According to a survey conducted by Taiwan’s National Development Council in August 2021, “it found that there was an overall shortage of 248,000 workers in Taiwan, including 47,000 at the executive level” (Chang, 2022). The institution pointed out that issues in terms of talent retention, recruitment, and employee cultivation pose as the major contributors to the growing problem (National Development Council, 2019). The government and business stakeholders have come to realize that solely relying on the country’s local talent pool would not be sustainable and insufficient to support the need of Taiwan’s labor force.



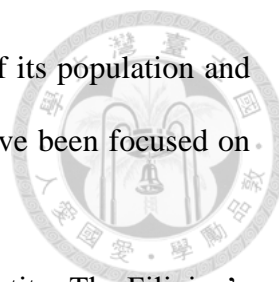
As a result, the Taiwanese government has set its sights on tapping the foreign talent pool to help alleviate the negative impact on companies and the nation's economy. Most recently, Taiwan has set the goal "to attract 100,000 foreign professionals to the country by 2030" (Chang, 2022). To support this bid, initiatives such as "relaxing work, visa, and residency regulations", providing more inclusions to package benefits, improving recruitment platforms, implementing cultural integration practices, and amending laws to support the participation of foreign talent within Taiwan's labor force have been put into action by government officials and have garnered the support of local and foreign companies within the country (National Development Council, 2019).

### **1.1 Research Problems**

However, there has been minimal discussion as to where Taiwanese employers look for their candidates and the vital considerations in their hiring of foreign professionals. Also, although statistics show the increasing number of foreign employees joining the country's labor force, a few have touched on the demographics and the specific experiences of these individuals during the job-seeking process and working in Taiwan.

According to Hsin-I Cheng, there is also a gap in terms of research being conducted on migrant workers as most studies focus on the movement of immigrants from the south to the "north and west societies such as Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States" and that "there is scarce research on representations of the south-south international migration practices and experiences" (Cheng, 2015).

On top of this, the research on migration studies often focuses its attention on the experiences of those in the blue-collar sector. This is particularly true for the case of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), a well-known contributor to this segment of the global migrant workforce. Despite Filipino workers abroad receiving "the most academic



attention” due to the, normalization of the practice, the sheer size of its population and the large amounts of remittance produced from the OFWs, these have been focused on those working in “low-status overseas jobs” (Paul, 2019).

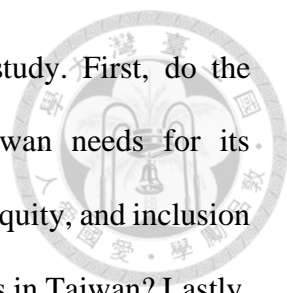
In a 2016 article entitled “Resuming the “Skilled Worker Identity: The Filipina’s Strategies in labor Market Participation in Melbourne, Australia”, the author describes the lack of studies being conducted on skilled or professional migrant workers from the Philippines, both in local and international publications (Limpangog, 2016). She pointed out that the main reason could simply be due to the fact that the majority of Filipinos working abroad are within the “low-waged laborers” working as caregivers or in labor-intensive industries as compared to the small percentage of those considered as professional workers (Limpangog, 2016).

This is the same case for the Philippines’ labor force in Taiwan. According to the updated statistics by Taiwan’s Ministry of Labor, the Philippines is ranked the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest migrant-sending country, following Indonesia and Vietnam, which make up more than 50% of those working in the “productive industries and social welfare” (Ministry of Labor, 2022). An important observation can be made that the high demand for the employment of OFWs in Taiwan is limited only to the blue-collar sector, as the number of white-collar Filipino workers constitutes only 1% of the total population of registered OFWs in Taiwan (Ministry of Labor, 2022).

**Table 1 Top Producers of Foreign Workers in Taiwan in the Productive Industries and Social Welfare (As of May 2022)**

Country Industry	Indonesia		Vietnam		Philippines		Thailand	
	PI	SW	PI	SW	PI	SW	PI	SW
<b>Total</b>	70,776	165,837	206,089	27,362	118,021	25,709	61,718	386
<b>Grand total</b>	236,613		233,451		143,730		68,104	

*Note.* Adapted from <https://statdb.mol.gov.tw/html/mon/i0120020620e.htm>. Copyright 2022 by Ministry of Labor, Taiwan.



Therefore, several questions aim to be addressed in this study. First, do the Filipino professionals possess the skills and attributes that Taiwan needs for its professional labor force? Also, how can practicing greater diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), by hiring more Filipino professionals, impact the organizations in Taiwan? Lastly, are Taiwan and the Philippine culturally compatible and how does culture fit affect the candidate screening and hiring practices of Taiwanese employers?

This thesis aims to address the above-mentioned research gaps and questions using in-depth qualitative interviews with a Philippine labor official and white-collar Filipino workers employed in Taiwan. The information gathered from these interviews will be cross-referenced with pre-existing literature on related topics to formulate an analysis and provide recommendations to address the barriers from increasing the employment of OFWs for white-collar positions in Taiwan's labor force. It also hopes to improve the overall labor shortage in Taiwan and create a mutually beneficial situation for both economies.

## 2. Review of Related Literature



### 2.1 Talent Shortage

As the old saying goes, “A company is only as good as its people.” More and more businesses have seen the importance of investing in high-quality candidates needed to fill specific positions within their organizations to gain competitive advantages over their competitors, and most importantly “to avoid the risk of talent shortages” (Robert Walters). More so due to the increased global connectivity, industrialization, and process automation, the possession of high-quality human capital is an in-demand asset for any company or economy that wishes to achieve sustainable growth and development (Leng, 2002).

Since the early 2000s, human resource experts have noted the emergence of the “talent crunch” issue and have foreseen its continued effects on other industries due to various economic and social changes (Manpower). With these ongoing “demographic shifts (aging population, declining birthrates, economic migration” and changes in “entrepreneurial practices”, the talent shortage problem does not simply boil down to the unavailability of sufficient manpower, but the lack of “specific skills and competencies required in industrialized and developing economies” (Manpower). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the demand for certain skillsets and experience, resulting in the “biggest workforce shift and reallocation of skills since World War II began” (Manpower Group, 2020).

According to a survey conducted by Robert Walters, nearly 60% of employers are facing the difficulty of recruiting professionals, “regardless of company size” or location, which signals a widespread cause for concern” (Robert Walters). The whitepaper also pointed out that traditional tactics of solely providing attractive salary packages and benefits are no longer effective methods in enticing preferred candidates to join or

continue its services within a company (Robert Walters). These recruitment challenges have resulted in further issues related to rising costs, lowered productivity, and talent loss for these businesses that have failed to address these concerns (Robert Walters).

In an attempt to overcome the talent shortages, companies have taken different courses of action such as providing more training and development opportunities for their current staff, adjusting the qualifications for roles, offering flexible working arrangements, or outsourcing labor elsewhere (Manpower Group, 2018). Companies, recruiters, and governments now aim to widen the scope of where they attempt to source the candidates by tapping the global talent pool.

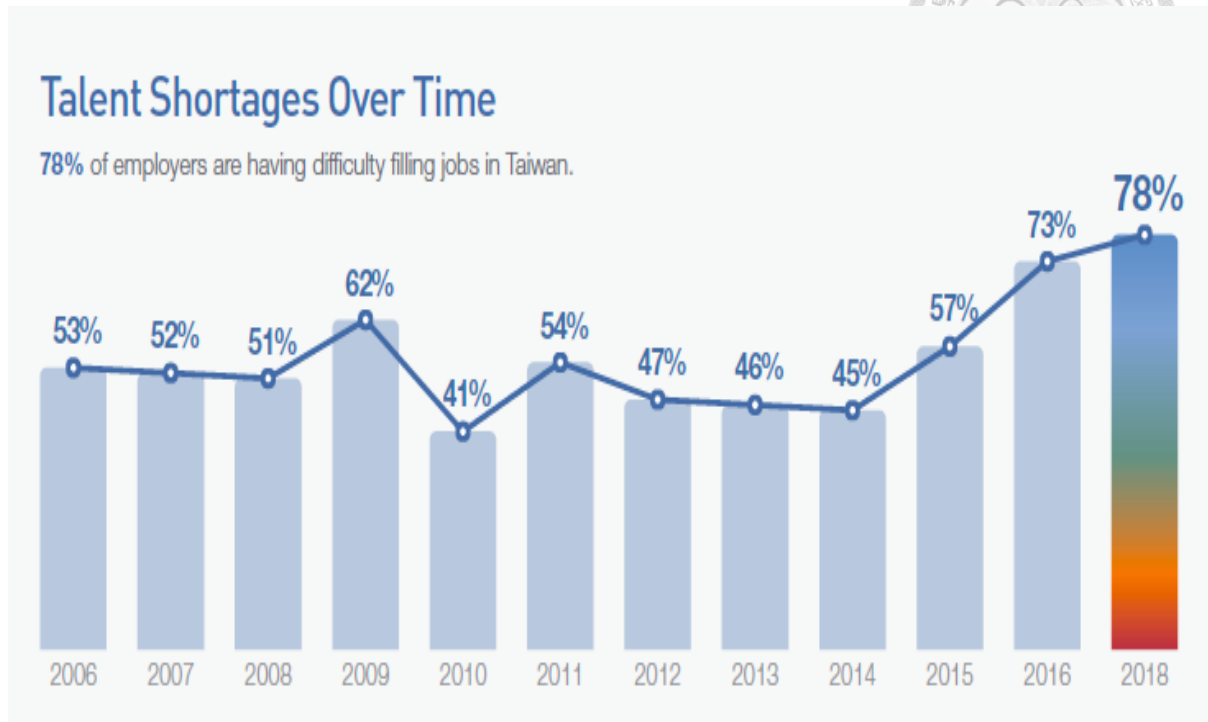
Following this observation, minimal research has been conducted as to where these companies or countries seek foreign professionals to address their respective talent crunch concerns. Also, although the above-mentioned studies do not take into account the unique factors and requirements that vary per nationality when hiring foreigners for their operations, the research aims to explore the potential factors behind a country's talent shortage issues, as well as their considerations in addressing the problem at hand, particularly for Taiwan.

### **2.1.1 Taiwan's Talent Shortage Issues**

With regards to the concerns of talent shortage, Taiwan is seen to be one of the most heavily impacted by this issue. According to a recent survey conducted by the Manpower Group in 2018, nearly 80% of employers in the country are facing the challenge of filling positions within their organizations. (Manpower Group, 2018).



**Figure 1 Taiwan’s Talent Shortage Issue Over Time**



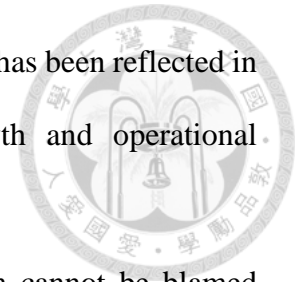
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The island nation has been ranked as one of the countries experiencing the greatest difficulty in acquiring the skills needed to support their companies' operations, joining the ranks of much-developed economies such as the United States, India, and Japan who are also facing the similar concerns (Manpower Group, 2018). Organizations in Taiwan feel the effects of the talent scarcity, with the survey indicating that at least 86% of all micro, small, medium, and large-scale companies face the difficulty of filling roles due to “shifting demographics” such as an aging local population, policy restrictions, uncompetitive wages, brain drain to other countries, and the lack of required hard and soft skills within its domestic talent pool (Manpower Group, 2022).

These concerns are especially evident in the fields of Information Technology, Manufacturing, Banking & Finance, Construction, Education, and Semiconductor industries where there remains a large number of vacant positions for IT experts, engineers, and technical staff; vital roles for businesses involved in these sectors



(Manpower Group, 2022). The continuing problem of unfilled roles has been reflected in the country's slowing economy and has threatened the "growth and operational efficiency" of its businesses (Manpower Group, 2018).

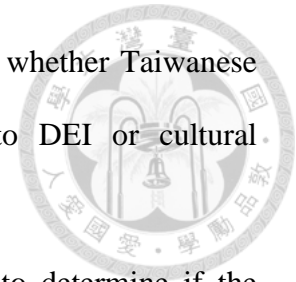


Yen-Fen Tseng states that Taiwan's talent crunch problem cannot be blamed solely on this global issue, but is also a result of its own internal shortcomings with its misguided and selective policies (Tseng, 2020). In her article entitled "Becoming a global talent? Taiwanese white-collar migrants in Japan", one of her interviewees shared her sentiments as to how "Taiwanese employers treat employees as instruments" and "invest very little in cultivating employees' abilities" (Tseng, 2020). The country has also been seen to be heavily reliant on its local education system to produce the workers needed in its workforce (Ashton et al, 2002).

Even then, despite having a local population of well-educated individuals, "the gap between effective and nominal skills is large because only a few workers who possess degrees in the 'right' majors are considered by employers to be skilled workers" and consider the rest as "unqualified" for their openings (Tseng, 2020). Many job-seekers in Taiwan have been left with the feeling of frustration and exclusion as their skills are being undervalued by employers through the over-demanding qualifications for job openings or preferences for select candidates, specifically those with business, IT, or engineering backgrounds (Tseng, 2020).

Tseng's study focuses on the frustrations of Taiwanese professionals to the lack of flexibility that local companies practice in their search for candidates to fill the roles they need. This has resulted in a large influx of local talent seeking jobs elsewhere, which further exacerbates the country's talent shortage problems. On the other hand, Tseng's research does not discuss how the company's stringent criteria have affected foreigners who have difficulties entering Taiwan's labor market, despite matching the requirements

for the country's desired talent and skills. It also does not address whether Taiwanese employers have different considerations, such as importance to DEI or cultural compatibility when making hiring decisions for foreign applicants.



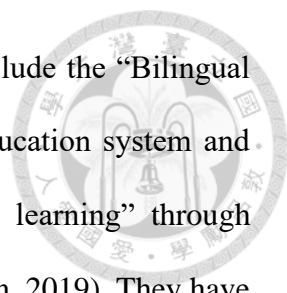
Particularly for Filipino professionals, the research seeks to determine if the Philippines can help provide the skills and abilities needed within Taiwan's short-handed labor force. It also aims to determine if the hiring of more Filipino professionals contributes to the diversity, equity, and inclusion within organizations in Taiwan. The study will also look into the cultural compatibility between the two nationalities and how these affect the Taiwanese's employers hiring decisions, as well as the job-seeking and working experience of the Filipino professionals.

## **2.2 Taiwan's Foreign Labor Recruitment**

To address this pressing issue of talent shortages and to compete with the fierce demand for outstanding workers, the Taiwan government has set its sights on acquiring the services of foreign professionals and has put various mechanisms in place to "attract and retain more foreign white-collar workers" within its productive workforce (Everington, 2021).

According to Taiwan's National Development Council, given its "key role in the global supply chain" and as "more and more multinational corporations have invested in Taiwan in recent years, the demand for talent with bilingual proficiency has greatly increased" (National Development Council). As these skills remains scarce among Taiwan's local talent pool, Taiwanese employers are looking to hire professionals "who possess a wide range of expertise and skills, including English proficiency and international mobility" (National Development Council).

The Taiwan government has devised several programs to push for a more globalized work-force and greater bilingualism in country, with the support of foreign

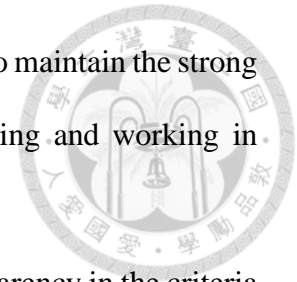


professionals (Financial Supervisory Commission, 2019). These include the “Bilingual Nation 2030 Policy” which aims to “bolster Taiwan’s bilingual education system and improve the public’s English proficiency through demand-driven learning” through greater exposure to the language. (Financial Supervisory Commission, 2019). They have also developed the Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program (TFETP) to support the need for foreign English instructors to be assigned in the country’s public and elementary schools in a bid to develop the Taiwanese’s English proficiency at a young age (Chen, Yen, 2022). These projects have resulted in the increased effort by the national government to seek the support of experienced foreigners that possess the ability to teach English well.

Aside from the TFETP project, it recently made amendments to Taiwan’s “Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professional Talent” wherein they further loosened the regulations for foreigners in terms of work and residence visas, application eligibility, increased tax incentives, and relaxed the "rules for obtaining permanent residence and the conditions for health insurance" (Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professionals, 2018). The act also introduced the Taiwan Employment Gold Card initiative in 2018, which functions as a “4-in-1” card that grants foreign talent a work permit, resident visa, alien resident, certificate, and re-entry permit. The gold card’s added benefit includes large tax deductions, eased applications for permanent residency, and swifter inclusion in the National Health Insurance scheme for themselves and their dependents (Taiwan Employment Gold Card, 2020).

The Taiwanese government is “aiming to provide 100,000 gold cards to foreign professionals by 2030 and establish a ministerial committee to assist in the facilitation of living arrangements for expatriates" (Everington, 2021). According to Taiwan's National Development Council (NDC), they have set the goal of providing 10,000 gold cards to

foreign white-collar workers by the end of 2022 alone, in an attempt to maintain the strong momentum of having a 40% increase of foreign professionals living and working in Taiwan since 2017 (Everington, 2021).

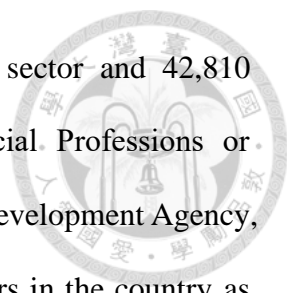


Although, these policies and initiatives are said to lack transparency in the criteria used for granting employment for foreigners and the approval of gold card applications. Many are quick to criticize these measures do not directly address the existing major problems for foreign professionals in Taiwan who continue to face difficulties in securing employment and have called for higher wages and benefits in the past (Startup Taiwan, 2020). Some have also voiced concerns about Taiwan as to having biases for certain professionals and nationalities. These speculations stem from various reasons such as the varied costs of Gold Card applications based on nationality, the number of accepted applicants being mostly from western countries, and the limited fields being granted these privileges.

This study looks to gain and understand the sentiments of white-collar OFWs as to the current initiatives in place to attract and retain foreign talent in Taiwan. It also hopes to gather information about their working experience in the country and how Filipino professionals have impacted their respective organizations in Taiwan. Lastly, it also hopes to garner recommendations from those currently employed in Taiwan's white-collar sector on how to further improve these initiatives from the government and corporate level to better address the needs of both foreign employees and local employers.

### **2.2.1 Taiwan's Foreign Labor Force**

Since 1989, Taiwan has abandoned its own versions of its 'zero immigration policies' and opened its doors to migrant workers ranging from different industries (de Haas, Natter, and Vezzoli, 2016). According to the latest statistics from Taiwan's Ministry of Labor, as of May 2022, there are a total of 675,903 recorded migrant workers

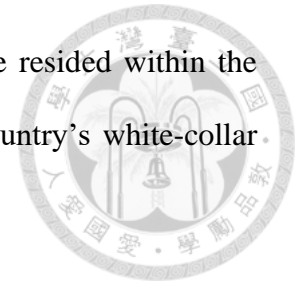


in “Productive Industries and Social Welfare” or its blue-collar sector and 42,810 migrants with effective employment permits working for “Special Professions or Technical Assignments in Taiwan”/white-collar sector (Workforce Development Agency, 2022). These numbers exclude foreigners working as school teachers in the country as these statistics are recorded by the Ministry of Education and are not available to the public. Even with the high demands for these foreign workers to function as a “supplementary labor force”, the current number of migrant workers in Taiwan has seen a decline from 718,058 in 2019 due to strict border controls being implemented by the government as the COVID-19 pandemic continues (Chen, Yen, 2022).

Although the experiences and conditions of migrant workers vary depending on social status, job classifications, and employment categories, many foreign workers face similar issues as those from Taiwan’s local talent pool (Human Rights Working Group, 2022). The policy brief entitled “The Underutilization of immigrant Skills: Trends and Policy Issues”, encapsulates their biggest concern for skilled foreign workers searching for white-collar employment in Taiwan, wherein “a large number of college-educated migrants continue to experience poor outcomes when searching for employment opportunities”, despite matching the qualifications posted on the employers’ job descriptions (Reitz, Curtis, & Elrick, 2013). Isabelle Cheng reiterated this as she described Taiwan as being a “migration state with an open economy but a closed national community”, connoting Taiwan’s openness to foreign labor for the sole purpose of their economic benefits (Cheng, 2020). Foreign residents and students have often complained about the lack of welfare policies, opportunities, and mechanisms in place to support their stay and job-seeking efforts in the country.

Hence, this research aims to shed more light on the personal experiences of foreign workers, specifically through the lens of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). It

also hopes to gauge the cultural compatibility of OFWs who have resided within the Taiwanese community and continue to be employed within the country's white-collar sector.

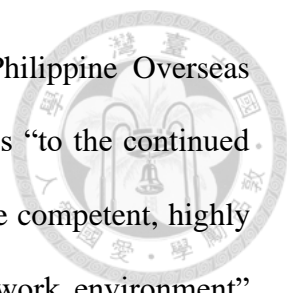


### **2.3 The OFWs and their Employability**

The Philippines is known to be one of the world's largest exporters of human capital, second only to Mexico (Bata, 2021). According to a survey by the Philippine Statistics Office, as of June 2020, there are about 2.2 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in various countries (Philippine Statistics Office, 2022). These OFWs are considered modern-day heroes among family members and fellow countrymen, given their large contributions to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) through remittances. If not for the hindrances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the projected number of OFWs and the percentage of their contributions to the country's GDP were expected to greatly exceed the figures recorded during the pre-COVID era.

The current phenomenon can be traced back to the early 1990s and was further institutionalized in the early 1970s by former President Ferdinand Marcos to address unemployment and economic issues surrounding the country at the time (Ludden, 2006). “The 1974 Labor Code formalized the Philippine skills migration program and had as its major goal the promotion of overseas contract work for the administration to reap economic benefits of lessened unemployment and workers’ remittances” (Bata, 2021). As the government continues its efforts in “supporting the mass marketing and export” of its countrymen to other nations, more and more OFWs seek employment elsewhere with the promise of greater economic prosperity as compared to seeking employment in their homeland (Paul, 2020).

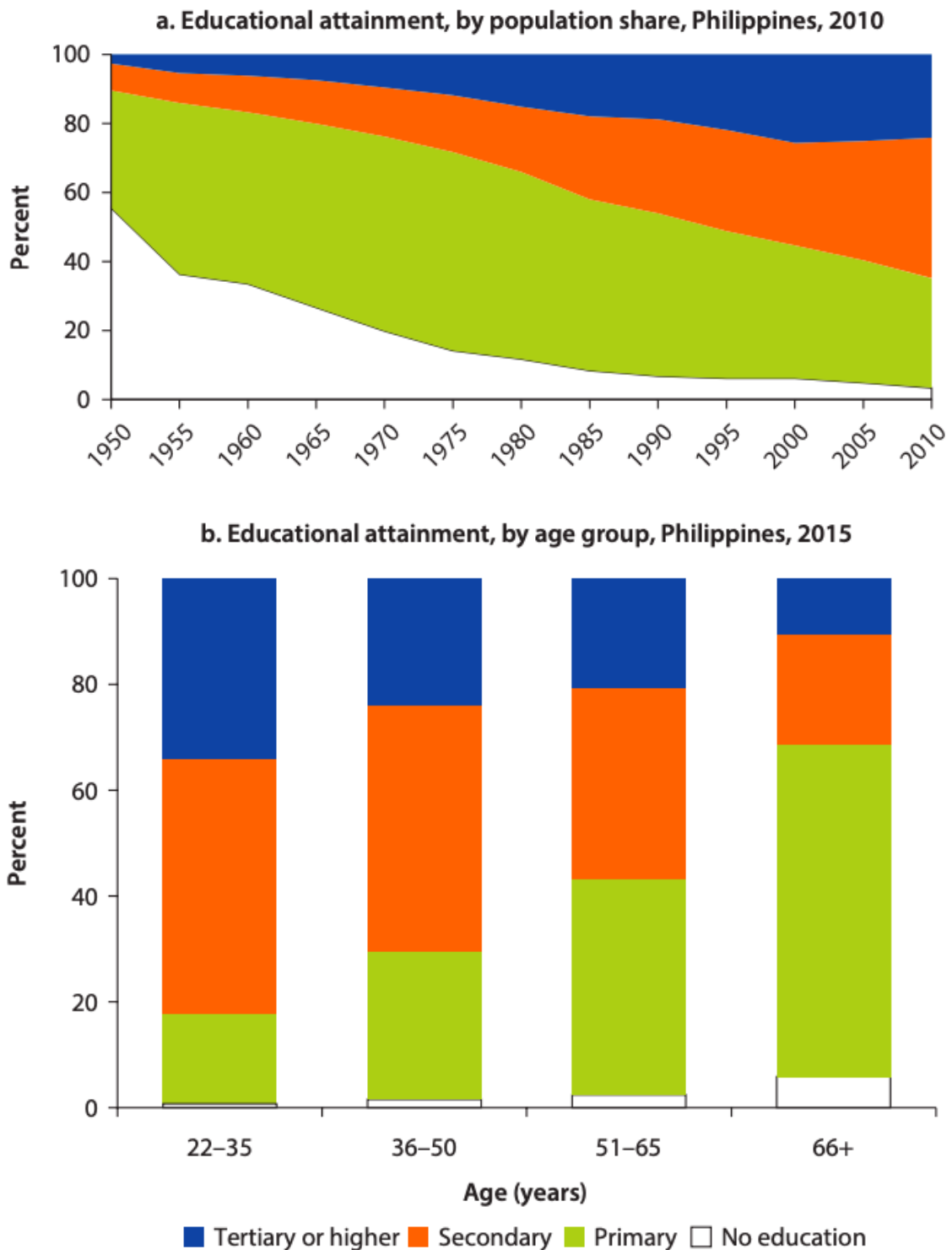
In comparison to their other migrant workers, Filipinos are known to receive higher salaries and hold positions of higher stature abroad mostly due to “their cultivated



reputation” and other attributes (Paul, 2020). According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency, it attributed the OFWs global competitiveness “to the continued confidence of foreign principals to employ Filipino workers who are competent, highly trained, *English* proficient, with caring attitude and adaptable to work environment” (POEA, 2006). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also described the Philippines as a country that possesses a young and dynamic population that is seen as a “key source of future growth and competitiveness” (OECD, 2017). Absuelo and Hancock’s further describes the Filipinos as some of the most sought-after migrant workers, based on the determinants of employability and earning potential, given that a large percentage of its population are highly educated and possess excellent English proficiency among others. (Absuelo, Hancock, 2015).

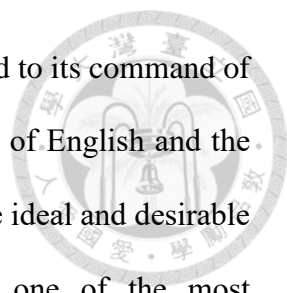
According to the OECD, the Philippines is “regionally successful” in terms of education given its enrollment rate in tertiary education is “higher than in most ASEAN countries” (OECD, 2017) The Philippines has also experienced a dramatic increase in the “average education level of its labor force” since the 1950’s when only “more than half of the adult population had no formal education, and less than 5 percent had reached the tertiary level” (Acosta, et al, 2017). As of 2010, 35 percent of the population had completed primary education, 40 percent had completed secondary education, and about 20 percent receiving tertiary education”, while the literacy rate was recorded at about “98 percent” (Acosta, et al, 2017) The Philippine Statistics Office have also noted that majority of the students graduate from courses related to the fields of “Business, Education, Engineering, Health, and Computing/Information Technology” (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2010).

Figure 2 Philippines Educational Attainment By Population Share and Age Group



Note. Reprinted from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28381/9781464811913.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>. Copyright 2017 by the World Bank.





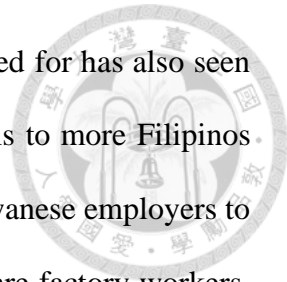
The Filipinos high employability rating can be most attributed to its command of the English language. According to the Beatriz Lorente’s “The grip of English and the Philippine language policy”, she describes the Filipinos as “being the ideal and desirable labour for foreign employers” with English proficiency being one of the most “distinguishing quality of Filipinos” (Lorente, 2013). It was recently ranked 27<sup>th</sup> worldwide and second in Asia in the Education First’s 2020 English Proficiency Index, highlighting the global recognition for their mastery of the English language. (Philippine Star, 2020). The Filipinos functional literacy rate, which is defined as “a significantly higher level of literacy which includes not only reading and writing skills but also numeracy skills” was estimated to be at 91.6% in 2019 (Philippine Statistics Office, 2020)

In reference to the previous sections, the study hopes to prove that Filipino professionals possess the skills and attributes that could support some of the current needs of Taiwan’s labor force, specifically in the provision of well-educated and English-equipped professionals, as well as in-demand positions in Taiwan such as engineers, technicians, IT professionals, and English teachers. It hopes to determine the cultural compatibility between the two countries.

### **2.3.1 Filipino Labor Force in Taiwan**

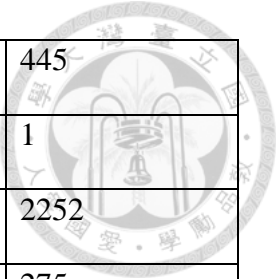
According to the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO), the Philippines’ de facto embassy in Taiwan, the number of Filipinos residing in Taiwan has been increasing significantly over the past years. The majority of the Filipino migrants are still OFWs, followed by language and degree-seeking students, then spouses of several Taiwanese citizens. Women comprise a larger portion of the population given the large demand for caregivers and factory workers, and the growing number of housewives as a result of more inter-marriages the Taiwanese locals.

The variety of jobs and functions which OFWs are being hired for has also seen an uptick in recent years. A Filipino labor official has attributed this to more Filipinos pursuing their studies in the country and the growing interest of Taiwanese employers to hire skilled Filipino employees. The largest composition of OFWs are factory workers, caregivers, engineers, and teachers (MECO, 2022).



**Table 2 Filipinos in Taiwan (as of March 2022)**

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>56,951</b>	<b>86,112</b>	<b>143,063</b>
Business/Entrepreneurs	75	46	121
Engineers	556	95	651
Accountant	1	0	1
Reporters	2	0	2
Teachers	67	137	204
Doctors	2	2	4
Missionaries	24	5	29
Construction Workers	86	17	103
Factory Workers	52,390	57,757	110,147
Domestic Helpers	1	239	240
Caretakers	469	23,229	23,698
Translator	59	133	192
Cook	45	1	46
Dairy Farm Workers	10	1	11
Agricultural Worker	1	0	1
Fishermen	1099	0	1099

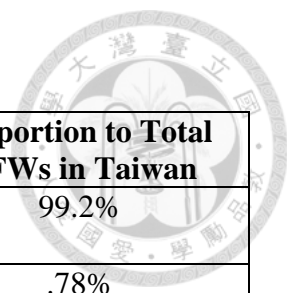


Others Skilled Workers	283	162	445
Seamen	1	0	1
Other Professions	813	1439	2252
Unemployed	61	214	275
Housewives	0	1629	1629
Students	527	631	1158
Non-Professional	21	18	39
Children (Below 15 years old)	297	279	576

*Note.* Number of Filipinos in Taiwan as of March 2022. Data provided by the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO).

Despite being migration-ready, the high employability ratings of OFWs, and their matching of certain labor needs in the country, there remains a large disparity between those being hired in Taiwan’s blue-collar sector as opposed to white-collar positions in the country. According to the latest statistics by Taiwan’s Ministry of Labor, as of May 2022, there are 143,730 Filipinos working in the Productive Industries and Social Welfare (Ministry of Labor, 2022). On the other hand, the number of OFWs with effective employment permits working in the country as “Foreign Workers for Special Professions or Technical Assignments” is 1130, excluding those working as school teachers which amounts to only .02% of the OFW population in Taiwan. (Ministry of Labor, 2022).

Out of the 1400 Gold Cards issued by Taiwan to select foreign professionals since 2018, only 20 Filipinos have been granted such a privilege by the Taiwan Employment and Gold Card Office (TEGC, 2022).



**Table 3 Number of OFWs in Taiwan by Sector (As of May 2022)**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion to Total OFWs in Taiwan</b>
<b>Productive Industries and Social Welfare (Blue-collar Sector)</b>	143,730	99.2%
<b>Special Professions or Technical Assignments (White-collar Sector)</b>	1130	.78%
<b>Total number of OFWs in Taiwan (excluding school teachers)</b>	144,860	99.98%

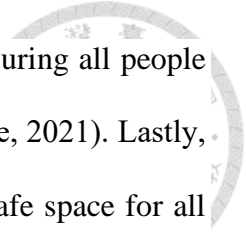
*Note.* Adapted from <https://statdb.mol.gov.tw/html/mon/i0120020620e.htm>. Copyright 2022 by Ministry of Labor, Taiwan.

The disparity of the above-mentioned figures may echo Hsin-I Cheng’s sentiments about Taiwan viewing Southeast Asian migrant workers as being recruited mostly for jobs related to construction, production, domestic help, caregivers, and foreign crews, or the “so-called 3-D industries (dirty, dangerous, difficult)” (Cheng, 2016). Similar studies have been conducted on other Southeast Asian nationalities, including Filipinos. Although, these studies often focus on the blue-collar OFWs working as caregivers or domestic help and located in various parts of the world.

This thesis will highlight the experiences of those OFWs working in the white-collar sector, specifically those living and working in Taiwan, the Philippines’ closest neighboring country. It also aims to identify how the hiring of Filipino professionals contribute to the DEI initiatives of the Taiwanese employers. The culture fit/compatibility between the two countries will also be identified and determine how this has impacted the disparity between the blue and white-collar OFWs in Taiwan.

#### **2.4 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Within Organizations**

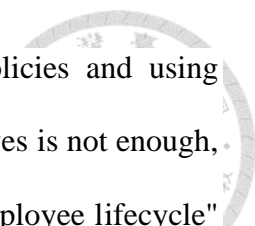
According to Deloitte, leading organizations worldwide have recognized the need to incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) “as a comprehensive component of business strategy, woven into all aspects of talent lifecycle in order to achieve success” and that the integration of these practices is of “critical importance” (Deloitte, 2021). Diversity is defined as “the variety of people and ideas within an organization”, while



Equity “is about eliminating systematic barriers and privileges, and ensuring all people have fair access to opportunity, resources, and power to thrive” (Deloitte, 2021). Lastly, it describes companies that practice Inclusion as those that possess a safe space for all employees to “feel valued and connected” with each other and the organization (Deloitte, 2021).

Research has shown that greater incorporation of DEI is positively correlated to an organization's business and financial performances, as well as its non-monetary attributes such as levels of innovation, productivity, creativity, perspective, and the company's turnover rate (Deloitte & Adediran, 2021). “Organizations with inclusive cultures are 2x as likely to meet or exceed financial targets, 3x as likely to be high performing, 6x as likely to be innovative and agile, and 8x more likely to achieve better business outcomes” (Deloitte, 2021).

The combination of people from “different background, nationalities, and culture” also brings in fresh ideas, perspectives, and viewpoints to tackle organizational projects and challenges, and can increase a company's “decision-making abilities” by 60% (Adediran, 2021). The increased diversity in the workplace may also attract a larger talent pool who seek diverse and “progressive” places to work (Adediran, 2021). It has also discovered a trend where a growing number of professionals and customers are less inclined to work with companies that do not possess a diverse workforce and are notorious for discriminatory practices (Adediran, 2021). With regards to innovation, inclusive companies are “found to be 1.7 times more likely to lead innovation, 70 percent more likely to capture new markers, and also have the benefit of 2.3 times the profitability of other enterprises” (Adediran, 2021). Although it may be difficult for business leaders and decision makers to prioritize DEI, research has proved its enormous benefits for the company.




Experts have also argued that simply incorporating DEI policies and using "business returns" as the sole indicators for the success of such initiatives is not enough, and they should take into account the impact "on all aspects of the employee lifecycle" including the recruitment and interview process, and their overall working experience (Adedirna, 2021). The study aims to determine if the Filipino professionals contribute to the DEI of their Taiwanese employers and highlight the advantages/opportunities these present.

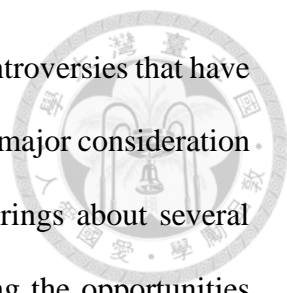
## **2.5 Cultural Compatibility: Culture Fit and National Culture**

When it comes to employment/hiring trends, many organizations continue to hire for "cultural fit" and give high value in making the right match between the employee and the organization's culture (Gupta, 2011). According to Mobasseri, Goldberg, and Srivastava, "Culture fit can only be understood in reference to culture" (Mobasseri, Goldberg & Srivastava, 2017). Geert Hofstede defines culture as the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede, 2011). Culture fit on the other hand is the "alignment between an individual's beliefs, attitudes and background and the organizational culture – it's values, work environment and customs" and has become an vital factor for organizations when screening and hiring candidates. (Gupta, 2021).

Studies have shown that employees who are culturally compatible or fit in with their companies, employers, and colleagues present greater overall job satisfaction which reflects in their longer tenure and "superior job performance" (Bouton, 2015). On the other hand, "poor culture fit" can result in organizational issues such as high employee turnover and lower productivity which can "cost an organization between 50-60%" of an employee's yearly salary for each departing member (Bouton, 2015).



Most recent studies related to the incorporation of culture fit in the recruitment and hiring decision-making of employers perceive the practice as “anti-diversity” and “anti-innovation” in practice (Dali, 2018). In her study entitled “*Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms*”, Lauren A. Rivera highlights culture fit “as a vehicle of labor market sorting” and its negative effects on “occupational attainment” within organizations (Rivera, 2012). Labor and employability studies also often focus on the specific relationship of qualifications, skills, and background in attaining employment, but rarely discusses the impact of having “cultural similarities” shared between employers and potential candidates during the screening or hiring process. (Rivera, 2012). She emphasized that the process of hiring employees is no longer based purely on “skills sorting”, credentials, and a candidate’s potential impact on an organization's productivity and performance, but also on the process of “*cultural matching* between candidates, evaluators, and firms” (Rivera, 2012). More recently, the term has become transitioned to “the new jargon used for hiring decisions that are based on personality traits” and cultural background.” (Hennigan, Evans, 2018). Research has also shown that culture fit may actually lead to “biased rationale” in the hiring decisions, “discrimination against candidates, and lack of diversity” in the workplace (Bouton, 2015; Hennigan, Evans, 2018). These issues stem from misguided and subjective notions of managers that make hiring decisions based on certain types of personality traits and preferences (Bouton, 2015; Hennigan, Evans, 2018). Mel Hennigan points out that an increasing number of HR professionals resort to this “hiring rationale” to support their “invalid” and “subjective assessment” of candidates which have only resulted in detrimental organization-wide issues for the employers. (Hennigan, Evans, 2018).



Despite the above-mentioned studies shedding light on the controversies that have arisen with regards to culture fit, it cannot be denied that it remains a major consideration for companies in their candidate search and hiring decisions and brings about several benefits for the organization overall dynamic. Aside from examining the opportunities and benefits for Taiwanese employers in practicing greater DEI by hiring OFWs, this research will also look into the cultural compatibility of the Filipino professional to the Taiwanese culture and how this impacted the overall landscape of the professional OFWs in the country.

### **2.5.1 National Culture as the Determinant for Culture Fit**

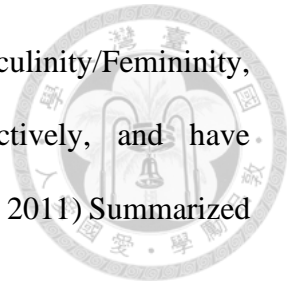
Over the years, scholars have attempted to further classify “distinct dimensions of culture” to describe specific characteristics among societies (Hofstede, 2001). Preceding Hofstede, Alex Inkeles and Daniel Levinson attempted to analyze culture at a national level as they considered this the “most common personality type” among individuals (Hofstede, 2011). The analysis led to the coining of the term “*national character*” which used several “standard analytic issues” such as “Relation to authority, Conception of self, and Primary dilemmas” to describe the different dimensions of the concept (Inkeles, Levinson, 1969). Succeeding studies, including those by Geert Hofstede, continue to refer to “national character” to support their own advancements on the subject. (Hofstede, 2011).

### **2.5.2 Hofstede’s 6 Cultural Dimensions**

With reference to a survey conducted among employees of a multinational company that focused on the varied values and points of view of individuals residing in different parts of the world, Hofstede eventually developed a “country-level correlation analysis” where he identified 6 distinct cultural dimensions to be compared relative to other national cultures and personalities (Hofstede, 2011). These are Power Distance,



Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Long/Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence/Restraint respectively, and have eventually become “the paradigm for comparing cultures” (Hofstede, 2011) Summarized below are Hofstede’s 6 Cultural Dimensions;



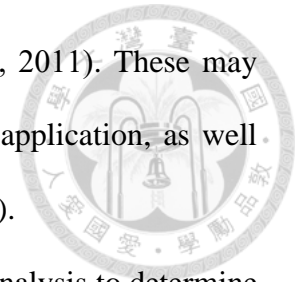
**Table 4 Geert Hofstede's 6 Cultural Dimensions**

<b>Power Distance</b>	“Defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality.
<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	“Deals with a society’s tolerance for ambiguity...or the extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future”
<b>Individualism versus Collectivism</b>	Refers to the “degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups.” Individualists are more loose and looks after him/herself and their immediate families. Collectivists “Are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families”
<b>Masculinity versus Femininity</b>	“Refers to the distribution of values between the genders” Studies show that “women’s values differ less among societies than men’s values”
<b>Long Term versus Short Term Orientation</b>	“Related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past.”
<b>Indulgence versus Restraint</b>	“Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that controls gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.”

*Note.* Reprinted from <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/orpc/vol2/iss1/8>. Copyright 2011 by Geert Hofstede.

Despite being known as a “collective phenomenon”, the Hofstede stated that the National Culture framework and the above-mentioned dimensions have also been used by many to analyze varied individual characteristics and personalities and how these may affect interactions within organizations and groups (Hofstede, 2011). Although, he also pointed out that “one of the weaknesses of much cross-cultural research is not recognizing the difference between analysis at the societal level and at the individual level” and that

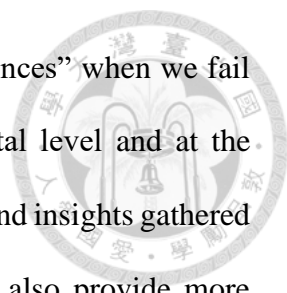
“patterns of correlation...could be strikingly different” (Hofstede, 2011). These may eventually lead to numerous errors in terms of interpretation and application, as well as stereotyping on both a national and individual level (Hofstede, 2011).



This study believes aims to use Hofstede’s national culture analysis to determine the cultural compatibility between Taiwan and the Philippines and how this may potentially affect the decision-making of Taiwanese employers when considering Filipino candidates for their openings.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

Given the significant impact of talent shortage on a nation’s economy, the efforts of Taiwan to seek the assistance from foreign professionals is perceived to be a step in the right direction. It also coincides with the proven benefits of practicing greater DEI for organizations and its overall operations. In choosing the best candidates to fill the needs of the Taiwanese employers, they must also consider if the candidates they look to hire may fill the skills gap and if there will be limited to no culture fit-related issues once they are onboard. As Hofstede pointed out, the national culture dimensions can also be used and “applied other than the national level...in particular at the organizational and occupational levels” (Hofstede, 2011). Most cultural research related to the migration of foreign workers also focus on the analysis between those from the east and west societies, and lack research on the cultural differences of countries found within the same region (Cheng, 2015) Therefore, the approach of using Hofstede's National Cultural dimensions to identify the cultural compatibility between Taiwan and the Philippines, on top investigating the DEI impact of the white-collar OFWs in the country may be instrumental in better understanding the general hiring and management decisions of Taiwanese with regards hiring those specifically the Philippines.



As Hofstede often pointed out that there are “striking differences” when we fail to take into account “the difference between analysis at the societal level and at the individual level”, incorporating the specific knowledge, experience, and insights gathered from in-depth interviews with white-collar OFWs in Taiwan may also provide more significant results to the research (Hofstede, 2011) Therefore, the following research questions are stated as follows;

**RQ1:** Do Filipino workers possess the skillsets and attributes needed in Taiwan’s labor market?

**RQ2:** How can Taiwanese employers benefit from practicing greater DEI in the hiring of more white-collar OFWs?

**RQ3:** Are Taiwan and the Philippines culturally compatible?

Despite the importance of understanding DEI, culture fit and their impact on the movement and interactions with foreign workers in a society, Djafar and Hassan’s research show that many non-cultural factors also “determine the supply of international migrant workers” in a “labor receiving country” such as income, unemployment rates, and availability of work opportunities (Djafar, Hassan, 2012). Along with the findings for the above-mentioned research questions, the research hopes to identify potential non-cultural factors that affect the large disparity of white and blue-collar OFWs in Taiwan to strengthen the findings and provide a wider range of recommendations as reference to related stakeholders (governments, employers, OFWs). Several potential barriers to retaining or encouraging greater participation from the Philippines’ labor force may also be discovered.

### 3. Methodology

This section enumerates the methods used throughout the course of the research to acquire valid information and references in determining the impact of OFWs in addressing the skills/talent shortage in Taiwan's labor market, the opportunities OFWs provide in terms of DEI for Taiwanese employers, and the cultural compatibility between Taiwan and the Philippines.

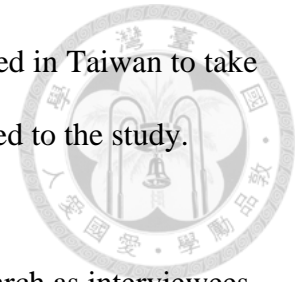
A total of 9 qualitative interviews were conducted to gain in-depth knowledge and personal accounts from various respondents. The study also used Hofstede Insights' online Country Comparison to conduct a national culture analysis between Taiwan and the Philippines and determine the cultural compatibility of the two countries. The information acquired through these interviews and culture fit analysis were cross-referenced with existing statistical data and pre-existing studies related to the research, which functioned as secondary sources for the thesis.

#### 3.1 Participant Interviews

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with a total of nine respondents for this study. The respondents were composed of one Philippine labor officer assigned in Taiwan and eight white-collar OFWs currently working in the country. The participants were invited through personal and social connections with the Filipino community in Taiwan.

Two sets of interview questions were designed to accommodate the different classifications of the respondents. The first questionnaire was used in interviewing eight white-collar OFWs in Taiwan. The second questionnaire was used solely for the interview with a current labor official assigned in the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO), the Philippines's de-facto embassy in Taiwan. MECO was also instrumental in

acquiring the participation of a seasoned labor representative assigned in Taiwan to take part as an interviewee and to acquire updated statistical figures related to the study.



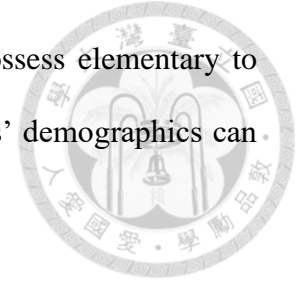
### **3.1.1 Population Demographics**

A total of 35 individuals were invited to take part in the research as interviewees. Among those invited, nine showed their willingness to participate. The remaining invites declined for various reasons such as time schedule constraints, fear of potential employment-related issues arising from their participation, and the belief that their experiences will not effectively contribute to the purpose of the study.

The 9 interviewees comprised one labor official from the Manila Economic and Cultural Office in Taiwan and eight white-collar OFWs currently working and residing in the country. The eight workers are white-collar professionals ranging from the financial, information technology, education, and semiconductor industries. Each performed different functions within their respective organizations such as product marketing, public relations, ESL teaching, operations management, quality assurance, PCB layout engineering, and internal audit. The highly-varied selection criteria of the participants were made as such to prevent an unbalanced and biased analysis favoring a specific field or assignment, and to create greater diversity within the pool of participants.

The ages of the participants ranged from their late 20s to their early 50s, while the number of years working in Taiwan ranged from 2 to 6 years. Considering the educational background of the participants, 75% have attained a master's degree, and the remaining hold at least a bachelor's degree. Their field of studies varied from business, political science, international relations, engineering, literature, arts, education, and accounting. 30% of the respondents have either attained degrees or pursued Mandarin language studies in Taiwan. 7 of the 9 interviewees resided in Taipei, 1 in Hsinchu Country, and another in Taichung city. In terms of mandarin proficiency, only one of the interviewees

possessed a professional level of speaking or writing. The rest possess elementary to intermediate Mandarin proficiency. A summary of the interviewees' demographics can be found in the table below;



**Table 5 Interviewee Demographics**

	Gender	Age	Industry & Function	Educational Attainment	Years Working in Taiwan	Mandarin Proficiency
1	M	N/A	Government, Labor Official	N/A	5	N/A
2	M	50's	IT, Engineer-	Bachelors	1.5	Elementary
3	F	Late 20's	IT, Territory Manager	Masters	6	Professional
4	F	Late 20's	Semiconductor, Engineer	Bachelors	1.2	Elementary
5	M	Late 20's	Fintech, Marketing	Masters	1.5	Intermediate
6	M	Mid 30's	Education, ESL Instructor	Ph.D.	4	Elementary
7	F	Late 20's	Fintech, Operations	Masters	3	Intermediate
8	F	Early 30's	Semiconductor, Auditor	Masters	2	Intermediate
9	F	Late 20's	IT, PR & Marketing	Masters	3	Elementary

### 3.2 Research Instruments

#### 3.2.1 Hofstede Insight's Country Comparison

The Hofstede Insight's online Country Comparison (<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/>) was used as a tool to conduct a national culture analysis between Taiwan and the Philippines. The company's website offered a free "Compare Countries" feature to provide an overview of the cultural similarities and differences between two select countries using "the six dimensions of national culture...", based on extensive research done by Professor Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov and their research teams." (Hofstede Insights, 2022)

The National Culture model is comprised of six dimensions namely; Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Long Term Orientation (LTO)

versus Short Term Normative Orientation, and Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR) (Hofstede, 2022).

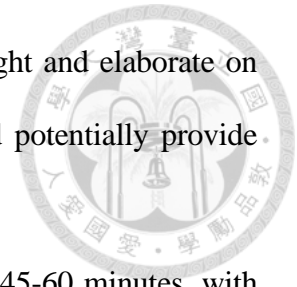
The scores generated are based on a scale from zero to one hundred, with 50 as the middle mark. Generally, if a score is under the 50 mark, the country score is considered low for that specific dimension, while a score of 51 and above indicates that a country's dimension score is high (Hofstede Insights, 2022). With regards to the dimension of Individualism vs Collectivism, the score under 50 is considered "Collectivist" while the a score above 50 is considered "Individualist" (Hofstede Insights, 2022) According to the website, the definition of the dimensions and country scores are based on a process that "have been generated over time, starting with Hofstede's initial studies between 1967 and 1973" and were found "inductively" with reference to Hofstede's works such as *"Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind"* and *"Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations"* and will therefore rely on the platforms calibrated scoring system. (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

The main reason for the decision to use this tool was due to the convenience it provided. Users may simply visit the website, input the two countries being compared, and receive a highly-specific and analyzed comparison of the subjects based on each the National Culture Model's dimensions.

### **3.2.2. Qualitative Interviews**

In-depth qualitative interviews were then conducted to gather data, personal accounts, and opinions from the population previously described. Despite the lack of time and participation, the chosen method would allow the researcher to gather unique individual accounts, experiences and sentiments from the interviewees. The use of a semi-structured questionnaire also allowed the interviewer to adjust the questioning based on the participant's sharing and the flow of the conversation during each interview. Lastly,

choosing to administer interviews allowed the participants to highlight and elaborate on their personal insights and feelings on the related topics that could potentially provide significant explanations for the research problems at hand.



The duration of each interview varied from a time frame of 45-60 minutes, with 90% of these being conducted online due to health and safety concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were conducted either in Taglish (Tagalog and English) or purely Tagalog, due to the comfortability of all the participants to express themselves in their native tongue. Each interview was transcribed in full English and made available in the appendix.

Copies of the interview questionnaires were provided to the participants ahead of time as references for the subjects. (see Figure 2) The first few minutes of the interview were used for the interviewer and participants to get acquainted and comfortable with each other. Following a short introduction of the purpose and significance of the study, the interviewer would ask permission to record the audio for transcription purposes.

The interview questions focused on their individual experiences and their knowledge on the experiences of other OFWs with regards to (1) Migrating to and Living in Taiwan, (2) the Job-seeking Experience in Taiwan, (3) Work Environment and Culture, (4) Attractiveness and Barriers to Working in Taiwan, and the (5) Filipino Culture in Taiwan. These areas of focus were chosen to gauge their perceptions of their and other OFWs impact on Taiwan's work environment and society. It also aims to gain a better understanding of how the national culture of Taiwan and the Philippines affected their experiences and engagements with other cultures throughout their career experiences in the country. As the interviews progressed, the interviewer also included questioning about their observations regarding Taiwan's openness to Filipinos and other nationalities. Specifically in the portions of the "Work Environment and Culture" and "Filipino Culture in Taiwan"



questions, the interviewer was able to pinpoint several experience related to their employers' adherence to DEI and how the Taiwanese society perceives the Filipino culture as a whole.



## 4. Results

The study aims to show how Filipino professionals possess the labor needs of Taiwan and how they contribute to the improvement of their organizations' DEI outcomes. It also looks to discover the cultural compatibility between Taiwan and the Philippines based on Gert Hofstede's six National Culture Dimensions and how these affect the job-seeking and working experience in the country. In the process, it also hopes to determine non-cultural elements that influence the issue at hand.

First, key information and findings related to the contributions and opportunities that Filipino professionals may provide to Taiwan's talent shortage problems and DEI outcomes will be enumerated. Next, this section will show the results from Hofstede Insight's online Country Comparison to highlight the 2 countries' cultural compatibility based on Hofstede's six dimensions. The information will then be analyzed, with reference to the following research questions.

***RQ1:** Do Filipino workers possess the skillsets and attributes needed in Taiwan's labor market?*

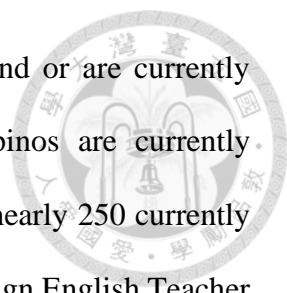
***RQ2:** How can Taiwanese employers benefit from practicing greater DEI in the hiring of more white-collar OFWs?*

***RQ3:** Are Taiwan and the Philippines culturally compatible?*

### 4.1. Addressing the Needs of Taiwan's Labor Force

Qualitative interviews with the Philippine labor official and white-collar OFWs in Taiwan were conducted to find relevant information in answering the question "Do Filipino workers possess the skillsets and attributes needed in Taiwan's labor market?" to contribute to the current talent shortage in the country .

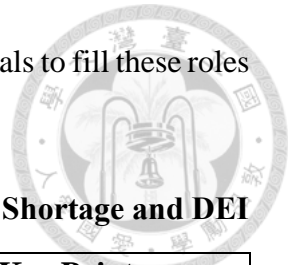
According to the interviewed labor official, Filipinos can provide qualified manpower, specifically for positions such as English teachers, engineers, and highly



skilled technicians, positions in the country that are in high demand or are currently difficult to fill (Manpower, 2022). He mentioned that the Filipinos are currently “dominating” the recruitment for ESL teachers in the country with nearly 250 currently employed now and with more being recruited under the Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program (TFETP) (Chen, Yen, 2022). Many Taiwanese employers are also hiring Filipino engineers and technicians to join their manufacturing, semiconductor, electronics, and other high-tech industries, areas which are especially affected by the Taiwan’s talent crunch. (Manpower, 2022) Engineers currently make up the largest group of white-collar OFWs in Taiwan with number reaching nearly 700 as of March 2022 (Ministry of Labor, 2022). He also shared those Taiwanese employers often expressed positive feedback in their hiring of Filipino workers for the reasons of them possessing quality education, training, work experience, and good behavior and are able to produce excellent output with minimal supervision. He highlights that the Philippines’s young and abundant workforce, who actively seek opportunities abroad, would be a great supplement to Taiwan’s short-handed and aging labor force.

On the part of the OFW interviewees, they mentioned that Filipino professionals will be good options to help address the need for positions in Taiwan that require a good grasp of the English language. Aside from English language teachers, these positions requiring excellent English proficiency are often for marketing, PR, and communication roles and are mostly offered by local Taiwanese companies with business overseas or multinational companies with subsidiaries/operations in Taiwan. These were said to be advantageous to Filipinos given their proficiency in English and especially those that are not fluent in Mandarin. Another potential position which white-collar OFWs may help fill are those that require familiarity/knowledge in the Philippines’ consumer market, business regulations, and local laws. Companies that have or are looking to establish

partnerships/business in the Philippines often seek Filipino professionals to fill these roles within their organizations.



**Table 6 Summary of Potential Contributions to Taiwan’s Talent Shortage and DEI**

Category	Summary of Key Points
<p><b>A. Talent Shortage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Opportunity for Taiwanese employers to further increase hiring of OFWs for positions such as engineers, ESL teachers, technicians. Specialized positions such as those that require high English proficiency and knowledge of the Philippine market are also growing.</li> <li>-The industries where Filipinos can contribute the most are education, manufacturing, IT, and semiconductors.</li> <li>-More OFWs are already being hired for these roles in Taiwan and receive positive feedback from their Taiwanese employers</li> </ul>
<p><b>B. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased participation in Taiwan’s labor force and intermarriages with Filipinos</li> <li>-Taiwan’s hospitable nature entices Filipinos and other foreigners to migrate to the country</li> <li>-Taiwanese employers encourage active participation and inclusion in the planning and decision-making in the organization. This motivates the OFWs to work hard and contribute to the organization’s progress.</li> <li>-Greater participation from OFWs also increase productivity, innovation, and information-sharing</li> <li>-Growing number of OFWs in the country, attract for Filipinos to follow suit which further increases DEI.</li> </ul>

#### 4.2 Taiwan’s DEI Practices

This section aims to present the observations of Filipinos professionals as to how Taiwan has practiced greater DEI in the workplace and society, in an attempt to determine

“How can Taiwanese employers benefit from practicing greater DEI with the hiring of more white-collar OFWs?”

In terms of diversity, the labor official has seen a growing trend of more Filipinos being hired in the country for both blue and white-collar roles (Ministry of Labor, 2022). In terms of gender, data provided by the Manila Economic and Cultural Office in Taiwan shows that as of March 2022, Taiwanese employers are seen to hire more females than males, amounting to nearly 87,000 and 57,000 respectively. According to the ages of the interviewees, Taiwan is also diversifying the ages of those Filipinos being hired in the country with the ages of these interviewees ranging from early 20s to late 50s. The labor official also pointed out companies in Taiwan that are known to hire many Filipinos as engineers and quality managers such as Micron and Quanta, and that the Philippines is still doing fairly better as to the number of white-collar employees being hired in Taiwan in comparison to other labor-sending countries. Outside of Taiwan’s labor force, he mentioned there are also more than 10,000 inter-marriages between Taiwanese and Filipinos.

With regards to equity, the interviewees believe that Taiwan has exercised greater awareness for various disadvantages of Filipino professionals who seek employment in the country and have implemented several initiatives to address these. According to the Philippine Labor Official, in a bid to and provide more work opportunities for Filipino professionals in Taiwan and to work around the “broker system” (an embedded labor practice when hiring OFWs which he describes as costly and discouraging) the two governments have devised the Special Hiring Program for Taiwan (SHPT) to allow employers to directly hire Filipino a number of workers without the intervention of Philippine and Taiwanese recruitment agencies. He mentioned that a group of conglomerates and multinational companies also formed the Responsible Business

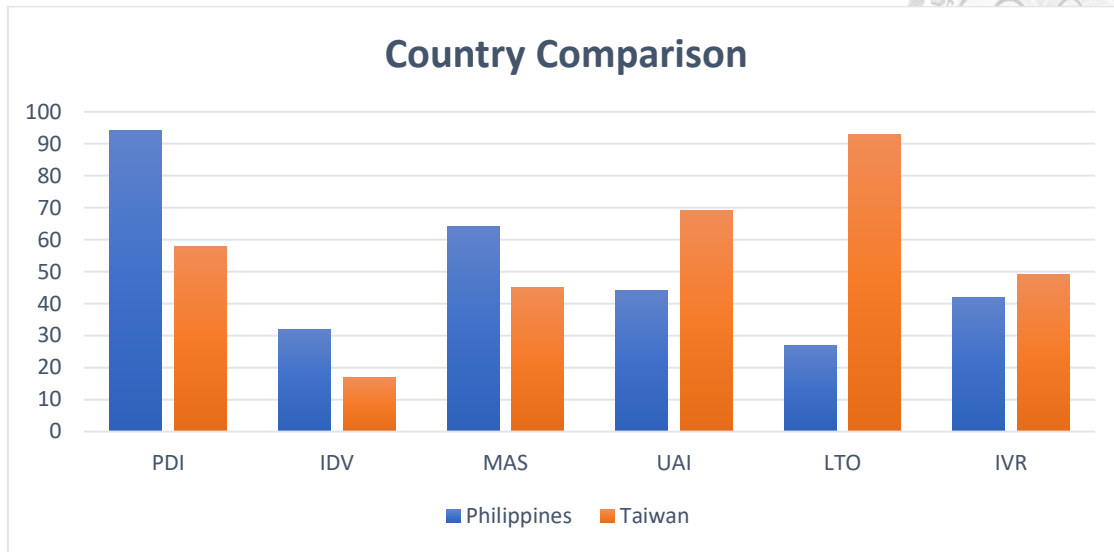
Alliance (RBA) to help shoulder the recruitment expenses of the migrant workers they hire and has supported about 20,000 OFWs who have been employed in the country. The interviewees also shared how they appreciate the government's further efforts such as the devising the Taiwan Gold Card Initiative, providing multi-lingual versions for announcements and signages, including foreigners in the National Health Insurance scheme, and raising the minimum wage salary for foreigners/migrant workers in the country.

The interviewees also share the same sentiments of describing Taiwan and its people as an inclusive and foreigner-friendly environment. In the workplace, interviewees explained that their companies practice inclusion by actively seeking and encouraging their participation in improving their organization's processes, systems, and decision-making. Despite being foreigners and not being proficient in Mandarin, most of their colleagues try to adjust and communicate in English to avoid the Filipinos feeling left out. The local employees also use the opportunity to practice and improve their English capabilities with them.

#### **4.3 National Culture Comparison Between Taiwan and the Philippines**

Another question to be addressed by this study is "Are Taiwan and the Philippines are culturally compatible?". Figure 3 displays the results of the Hofstede Country Comparison between Taiwan and the Philippines. Based on Hofstede's model, the scores indicate that the Taiwan and the Philippines are culturally compatible in three out of the six cultural dimensions. Both countries are given a score of 1 to 100 for each of the six national culture dimensions.

**Figure 3 National Culture Comparison Between the Philippines and Taiwan**



*Note.* Reprinted from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/>. Copyright 2022 by Hofstede Insights.

Based on the diagram, the two countries share similar characteristics in the dimensions of Power Distance and Individualism versus Collectivism. Taiwan and the Philippines both scored above 50 for Power Distance, making them hierarchical societies. The two countries scored below 40 in terms of individualism, making them more collectivistic societies (Hofstede Insights). The Philippines posted a score of 42 for Indulgence, showing a society that exhibits more restraint. Taiwan had a score of 49, with both posting a score of below 50 for this dimension. (Hofstede Insights)

The Philippines and Taiwan contrast significantly in the remaining three dimensions. In terms of the Masculinity dimension, with the Philippines scoring 64 and Taiwan 45 respectively, this makes the former a more masculine society and the latter a slightly more feminine society. For uncertainty avoidance, the two countries also differ with Taiwan (69) having higher uncertainty avoidance as compared to the Philippines (44), which shows the latter generally exhibiting a low preference for avoiding uncertainties. Long versus short-term orientation is where we see the largest disparity between countries' scores. The Philippines (27) is a dominantly short-term-oriented

society, while Taiwan (93) is a significantly long-term. The two countries' scores and related explanations are summarized in Table 7;



**Table 7 Country Comparison Per Dimension**

	<b>Philippines</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>
<b>Power Distance</b>	With a score of 94, The Philippines is considered a hierarchical society. This reflects their acceptance for “hierarchical order” and inequalities (Hofstede Insights, 2022)	With a score of 58, Taiwan is also considered a hierarchical society. This reflects their acceptance for “hierarchical order” and inequalities (Hofstede Insights, 2022)
<b>Individualism versus Collectivism</b>	With a score of 32, the Philippines is considered a collectivistic society. This highlights their commitment and loyalty to the “member ‘group’, be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships”(Hofstede, 2022) Within these groups, everyone is expected to look after fellow members and committing offences often results in “loss of face”(Hofstede Insights 2022).	With a score of 17, Taiwan is considered a collectivistic society. highlights their commitment and loyalty to the “member ‘group’, be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships” (Hofstede, 2022) Within these groups, everyone is expected to look after fellow members and committing offences often results in “loss of face”(Hofstede Insights 2022).
<b>Masculinity versus Femininity</b>	With a score of 64 on this dimension, the Philippines is considered a masculine society (Hofstede Insights, 2022). Those in this category “live in order to work” and are “expected to be decisive and assertive” while the emphasis is on equity, competition and performance. Conflicts are often resolved through physical means (Hofstede Insights, 2022).	With a score of 45 on this dimension, Taiwan is considered a “slightly Feminine society” (Hofstede Insights, 2022) They focus on “working in order to live” and they value “consensus, equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives (Hofstede Insights, 2022. They resolve conflicts through compromise and negotiations, while “incentives such as free time and flexibility are favored” as they focus on well-being over their status (Hofstede Insights, 2022).
<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	With a score 44, the Philippines exhibits a low preference for uncertainty avoidance. They exude a more relaxed nature and prioritize “practice” over “principles” (Hofstede Insights, 2022). These societies do not give high importance to rules and believe they should be disregarded if ineffective. “Schedules are flexible, hard work is undertaken when necessary but not for its own sake, precision and punctuality do not come naturally, innovation is not seen as threatening” (Hofstede Insights, 2022)	With a score of 69, Taiwan exhibits a high preference for avoiding uncertainties. These societies “maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas” (Hofstede Insights, 2022) Rules are sought after, despite their ineffectiveness, and they give importance to time, hard work, punctuality, and security (Hofstede Insights, 2022).
<b>Long Term versus</b>	With a low score of 27, this indicates that the Philippines are “more normative than pragmatic...and have	With a score of 93, Taiwan is considered “long-term orientation culture” and are pragmatic in nature



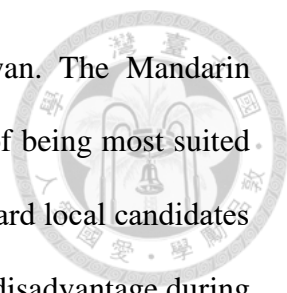
<b>Short Term Orientation</b>	a strong concern with establishing the absolute truth” (Hofstede Insights, 2022) They give great importance to upholding traditions and achieving quick results. They also possess a relatively small propensity to save for the future (Hofstede Insights, 2022).	(Hofstede Insights, 2022). These societies possess “strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, perseverance in achieving results and an overriding concern for respecting the demands of virtue” (Hofstede Insights, 2022)
<b>Indulgence versus Restrain</b>	The Philippines scored a 42, showing that it is a culture of restraint. They do not give too much importance on “leisure time and control gratification of their desires” (Hofstede Insights, 2022) They feel that they are “restrained by social norms” and exhibit feelings of guilt when indulging themselves (Hofstede Insights, 2022).	“Taiwan has a very intermediate score of 49 which does not indicate the dominant preference on this dimension” (Hofstede Insights, 2022)

*Note.* Adapted from <https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture>. Copyright 2022 by Hofstede Insights.

#### 4.3.1 Impact of Culture on the Job-Seeking and Working Experience of OFWs

According to the interviewed labor official, he personally believes that culture and nationality do not have a big impact on the job-seeking and working experiences of white-collar OFWs in Taiwan, except for certain professions such as teaching where employers prefer to hire Filipinos over Westerners because “they can speak good English and are good teachers”, have less “behavior issues”, and are known to be obedient employees. In terms of culture and nationality, the official mentioned that Taiwanese companies generally still prefer local candidates for their job positions. The effect of culture and nationality is also evident in the large number of OFWs being hired in Taiwan as English teachers as Filipinos are known globally for possessing excellent English-speaking abilities.

On the part of the interviewees, they shared that culture and nationality affected their job-seeking or working experience in Taiwan, in either a positive or negative way. The common positive affiliations to Filipino culture that were mentioned by the interviewees include having great English proficiency, their in-depth knowledge of the Filipino market, and the known resiliency of Filipino workers were said to have been



instrumental in their being hired as white-collar OFWs in Taiwan. The Mandarin language barrier, the attached stereotype toward Filipino nationals of being most suited for blue-collar work, and the Taiwanese employers' preferences toward local candidates are some of the common culture-related reasons that put OFWs at a disadvantage during the job-seeking period and employment, according to the subjects. The interviewees are all aware that Filipinos in Taiwan mostly work for blue-collar positions which has contributed to the perception that they are only apt for such roles.

The labor official attributes the large disparity of blue and white-collar OFWs in Taiwan mostly to the ongoing broker/agency system embedded in the bilateral labor laws between the two countries. This practice requires workers to pay “exorbitant placement fees” even before their deployment, which ultimately discourages many from working in Taiwan. Other policy issues related to the case include the imposed limitation on companies to only have 5 Filipino employees as direct hires and Taiwan’s employment limit for skilled and professional migrant workers in their country. Other non-cultural factors that affect the larger disparity between blue and white-collar OFWs in Taiwan are related to individual job preferences, specific skill requirements for certain professions, the low demand for white-collar workers in Taiwan.

Aside from the culture-related aspects, the interviewees attribute the large disparity between blue and white-collar OFWs in Taiwan to several other factors such as the lack of flexibility of Taiwanese employers with regards to hiring qualifications, the tedious procedures and requirements needed for legal employment in Taiwan, and the lack of disseminated information and awareness related to employment opportunities in Taiwan. Below is a table containing the summary of the key findings from each participant, based on the focus of the interview questions.

## 5. Discussion



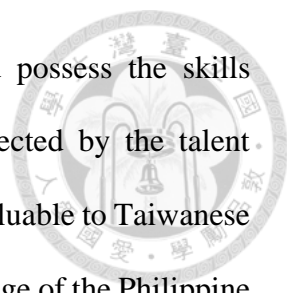
### 5.1 Supporting Taiwan's Labor Needs Beyond the Blue-collar Sector

Despite a large majority of OFWs are being hired mostly for Taiwan's blue-collar and labor-intensive sectors, the study shows that Filipinos are also able to capable of being hired for more technical positions and contribute to the country's white-collar sector to help address the lack of talent in certain positions. More and more Filipinos are being hired in Taiwan as engineers and specialized technicians, particular positions that Taiwan is currently having a shortage off (Manpower, 2022). According to the MECO Labor Official, engineers make up the second highest number of Filipino professionals in Taiwan with nearly 700 as of March 2022. The number is expected to further increase over time given that more and more companies are seeing the potential of the current batch of Filipino engineers in the country. Two engineer interviewees also noticed that their companies are hiring more and more Filipino engineers over the years and have relaxed the requirements by not requiring that they possess Mandarin proficiency to be employed in the companies, which present even greater advantages for more Filipino engineers.

The increase of more Filipino engineers and technicians being hired in Taiwan is also advantageous for the Philippines, which is currently facing an oversupply of IT and engineering graduates (Lofarga, 2021). In 2018 alone, engineering graduates amounted to nearly 50,000 and are facing difficulties to secure jobs related to their field of study. (Habito, 2019). The increase in the hiring of Filipinos in the manufacturing, high tech, and semiconductor industries are positive signs of light for local and multinational companies situated in some of the country's most vital industries that have been seriously impacted by the ongoing talent crunch (Manpower, 2022). These industries are especially

important to Taiwan given the world's dependence on its manufacturing capabilities of technology hardware and semiconductor chips/components. (Bloomberg, 2021)

Other areas where Filipinos are contributing greatly to Taiwan's white-collar sector are positions for English teachers, those that require a high proficiency in English, and for those that have familiarity with the Philippines and other overseas markets. As the labor official mentioned during the interview, the Filipinos are "dominating" the English teaching market, as opposed to the perception that these positions are reserved for those coming from native English-speaking countries. Most recently, nearly 90 Filipinos have been chosen by Taiwan's ministry of Education to join their Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program (TFETP) to boost the youth's English capabilities starting this school year and support Taiwan's "Bilingual Nation 2030 Policy" (Chen, Yen, 2022). Despite only 88 being chosen out of 5,800 Filipino applicants, it is a good sign that Filipinos are garnering greater recognition for their English proficiency and are being chosen for such a program along with the likes of candidates from native English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. This trend is attributed to the growing awareness for the Philippines' exceptional English capabilities, coupled with their employability facets and lower demands from their employers. (Caingcoy, 2021). Also, with Taiwan's business expansions reaching other markets such as the Philippines, having the support of Filipino professionals would be much more valued in the coming years. This was evident in 2 of the interviewees who were hired specifically to support their organizations' operations in the Philippines and their ambitions to further tap the Filipino consumer market. Both of their companies plan to expand hiring for more positions with the focus on expanding their reach to more Filipinos situated in Taiwan and the Philippines.

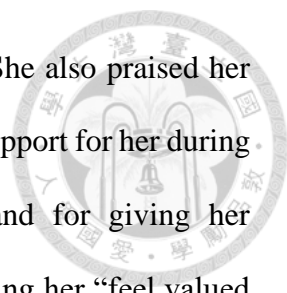


These show how Filipinos professionals are qualified and possess the skills needed for particular positions and industries that are greatly affected by the talent shortage in Taiwan. Filipino professionals are also becoming more valuable to Taiwanese employers, thanks to their grasp of the English language and knowledge of the Philippine market. These may hopefully entice more employers to seek the support of Filipino professionals and open more opportunities for OFWs in other industries and functions where these professionals may thrive and provide support for organizations' needs. This also shows that Filipinos are also competent contributors to Taiwan's white-collar sector as opposed to the perception that they are only fit to be recruited for the "3-D industries" and labor-intensive jobs (Cheng, 2016).

## **5.2 OFW's Contributions to DEI**

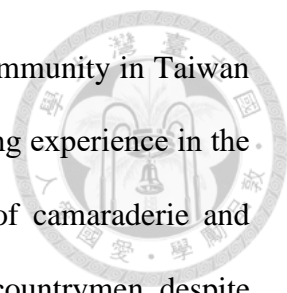
Taiwan's DEI practices have resulted in many positive responses from the side of the OFWs that are also seen to benefit the company. One of the interviewees specifically mentioned that the openness and inclusiveness that he felt from his Taiwanese counterparts during a business trip, was one of his main motivations to seek a transfer to the company's subsidiary in the country, reiterating Adediran's statements that employees are more inclined to seek diverse, inclusive, and "progressive" places to work in (Adediran, 2021). Since transferring from China, he is now working as a senior engineer in a global cloud company's Taiwan subsidiary and has shared his vast knowledge and experience in the tech and semiconductor industries to many of his much younger colleagues, including other fellow Filipino employees in the company.

Several interviewees also mentioned that their companies' efforts to practice greater DEI and provide employees with a supportive working environment motivated them to perform better in their duties. One interviewee mentioned that she was very appreciative of her company as it was the only one that took a chance by offering a



position for her throughout her job-seeking experience in Taiwan. She also praised her Taiwanese superiors and colleagues for showing extra concern and support for her during her early months of adjusting to the new work environment and for giving her opportunities to grow and develop herself within the company, making her “feel valued and connected” to the organization. (Deloitte, 2021). As a result, she was highly motivated to deliver great output and opportunities for her employer, which has allowed them to vastly expand their business operations, including the entry to the Philippine market which she is currently heading. Similar to Deloitte’s white-paper, the organization’s DEI efforts to provide employees fair access to opportunities and “the power to thrive” paid dividends in terms of their employees’ high performances and positive outputs for the company (Deloitte, 2021).

Many of the interviewees also mentioned that the diversity in their office and the hiring of more Filipinos were mutually beneficial to them and their companies. The environment of having a diverse set of employees from different backgrounds and cultures made the Filipino employees more comfortable working in the Taiwanese office setting. As most of them did not possess high proficiency in Mandarin, it helped having others that they could speak English to comfortably and with limited language barrier issues. It also encouraged their local colleagues to communicate in English and adjust to the diverse environment. For them, it made each working day more interesting for them and allowed them and other foreign colleagues to contribute and share their ideas and perspectives to help in the company’s decision-making processes. The active participation from both local and foreign colleagues paid dividends for the companies they worked for in terms of overcoming challenges, making decisions efficiently, and devising innovative solutions for their organization’s practices (Adediran, 2021).

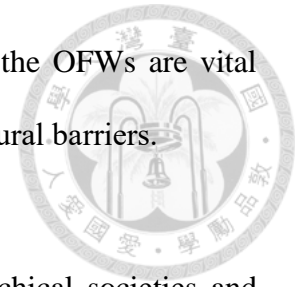


Outside the office, the growing population of the Filipino community in Taiwan was also a positive attribute to the Filipino OFWs' living and working experience in the country. The presence of such a group allowed to find a sense of camaraderie and community and made them less homesick being around their fellow countrymen, despite being miles away from home. The growing representation of Filipinos in the Taiwanese workplace and society can be seen as a manifestation of the Taiwanese employers' satisfaction in the services of the Filipino employees they hire. This also led to the Taiwanese employers and the national government showing greater value and appreciation for their services and have made the effort to “enrich the lives” of migrant workers in the country through the provision of more benefits and programs to support the community of foreign workers in the country, including those from the Philippines. Specific examples come in the form of consistently raising minimum wage, providing more benefits, providing more help desks, and creating cultural programs for them to better integrate in the Taiwanese society (Sang, 2021).

### **5.3 Cultural Compatibility Between Taiwan and the Philippines**

Based on the results from the Hofstede Country Comparison between Taiwan and the Philippines, the two countries share the same classification for the dimensions of Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, and Indulgence versus Restrain, while their classifications contrast in three of the remaining cultural dimensions, specifically with regards to Masculinity versus Femininity, the Uncertainty Avoidance Index, and Long-Term verses Short Term Orientation. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize whether the two countries are culturally compatible based on Hofstede's national culture model. Nonetheless, these cultural similarities and differences are great references in attempting to explain the interactions between the two cultures and how

these affect the OFWs experiences in Taiwan. It also shows that the OFWs are vital contributor's to Taiwan's workforce and society despite several cultural barriers.



### **5.3.1 Leveraging National Culture Similarities**

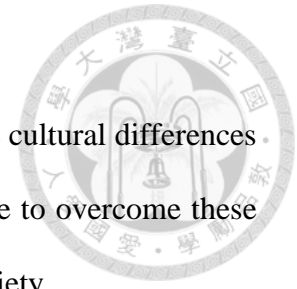
As both the Philippines and Taiwan are considered hierarchical societies and “accept that power is distributed unequally”, Taiwanese employers may notice the influence of this dimension on the Filipinos because of their general “good behavior” and obedience to their superiors (Hofstede Insights, 2022). With greater awareness for the personality type shared among the two, this may entice more Taiwanese employers to hire Filipinos within their organization given the potential of having less employer-employee issues, and in turn further increase diversity and inclusion within the workplace.

With the shared characteristic of being collectivist societies who are known to be possessing a strong commitment to a member group, may it be a family or an organization, the Filipinos are inclined to show loyalty to their employers and maintain good relations with them for as long as they can, with the fear of losing face (Hofstede Insights, 2022). This is also related to the common Filipino trait of showing “utang na loob” or gratitude and reciprocity to those that have provided them with opportunities and acts of kindness. (Rungduin, et al, 2015)

These two societies are also known to control their personal “desires and impulses”, and do not give much importance for leisure time and indulging oneself. (Hofstede Insights, 2022). A manifestation of such personalities in the Filipinos can be seen from their hard-working nature and going above and beyond their required work hours and output, an attribute that has been noticeable to the Taiwanese employers according to the interviewees. The Filipinos dedication to their work will pay dividends for their employers and can help increase productivity and output for their organizations.



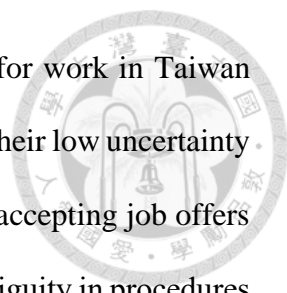
### 5.3.2 Overcoming Cultural Differences and Integration Issues



Despite integration issues that may potentially arise from the cultural differences, the experiences of the Filipino interviewees show how they are able to overcome these cultural barriers and contribute to the Taiwanese work force and society.

As a low-masculine society, the Taiwanese are perceived to have preference for greater “quality of life” over material possessions (Hofstede Insights, 2022). This personality attribute can be associated to a common observation made by multiple interviewees that the Taiwanese have a “preference for fewer working hours” and discouraging overtime work among its employees, which coincide with their high femininity score. (Hofstede, 2001). On the other hand, the Filipinos, as a masculine society, are constantly pursuing “greater material wealth” and often choose to work longer hours for the extra pay. As mentioned by some of the interviewees, the companies benefit from this as Filipinos are often willing to accept the extra hours, and limit the employers’ problems of finding the employees for the job.

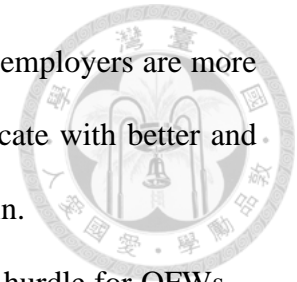
With regards to Uncertainty Avoidance, Taiwan’s high scores are also reflected in the highly structured standard operating procedures (SOPs) within their organizations and preference for long-term employment durations to limit uncertainties, inconsistencies, ambiguity in their operations (Hofstede, 2001). This may help explain their preference of Taiwanese employers to hire locals over foreign candidates for job openings to limit such potential risks. The issue of continuing to implement the controversial broker system when hiring migrant workers, a known hindrance to many OFWs and foreign employees alike when seeking employment in Taiwan, is also perceived as a decision affected by the Taiwanese’s high Uncertainty Avoidance score, as it exemplifies the Taiwanese government adherence to “strict rules and regulations” (Nickerson, 2022).



Despite these hindrances, the number of Filipinos applying for work in Taiwan continue to grow. Their dedication to search for greener pastures and their low uncertainty avoidance, make them more flexible when it comes to applying and accepting job offers in their home country or abroad, given their higher “tolerance for ambiguity in procedures and structures” and “changeable environments” within their respective organizations and assignments abroad (Nickerson, 2022). Potentially, their short-term orientation qualities such as their “emphasis for quick results” and the lack of regard for social status, and “delivering short-term success or gratification” for themselves may also attribute to their decisions to pursue work in the country despite the differences (Nickerson & Hofstede, 2001). Despite the challenges, Filipinos continue to apply and seek work opportunities in Taiwan. The growing population not only help limit the effects of Taiwan’s manpower shortage in many of its industries and businesses, but also contribute to the country’s economy and its attempt to further internationalize.

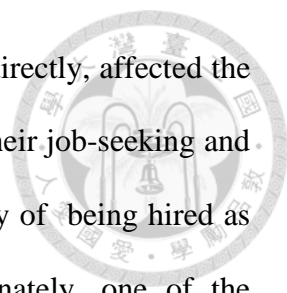
Based on the interviewees, language has been the most vital cultural factor with regards to the job-seeking and working experience of white-collar OFWs in Taiwan. The levels of their proficiency Chinese have impacted their chances in mostly negative ways. The most common issue related to language was the lack of proficiency in Chinese, that has resulted in their automatic exclusion or low chances of being interviewed for certain job openings in Taiwan. These were evident in some of the interviewees mentioning that some employers specifically indicate the responsibilities, qualifications, and package inclusions on the job descriptions in full Chinese characters, discouraging most candidates with low to zero level proficiencies. Other employees specifically indicate the need for “native” Chinese or English speakers, which automatically excludes interested OFWs, despite some possessing high speaking and writing abilities for both languages. Despite Taiwan’s plans of becoming a bilingual country by 2030 and organizations’

portraying a more global outlook, it can be inferred that Taiwanese employers are more inclined to choose candidates whom they will be able to communicate with better and more comfortably, ideally one that possesses proficiency in Mandarin.



The overlying issue of the language barrier continues to be a major hurdle for OFWs to find employment in Taiwan and cause miscommunication, even amongst individuals that share a common language. As Mandarin is also the basic mode of communication in the workplace, foreigners (including the OFWs) are expected to make the necessary adjustments to limit the language-related issues in the workplace and increase their chances of being employed in the country. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they sometimes feel that their respective companies and superiors may be hesitant to communicate with them or give them more tasks to accomplish due to the language barriers. The OFWs may also not be fully aware of the conflicts and office politics surrounding the organization due to these issues. Many of the Filipinos attempted to learn Mandarin to improve their proficiency and develop this skillset to improve their chances of employment and integration in the workplace. One of them was able to develop a professional proficiency and was granted multiple promotions for her hard work and efforts.

On the other hand, despite the lack of ability to speak Mandarin fluently, the Filipinos are able to leverage their proficiency in the English language and has been instrumental in helping them find employment in Taiwan or in the “global labor market” (Lan, 2003). Lan’s statement echoes the importance of the English language to the Filipino worker; “The capacity for speaking “good English,” i.e., correct grammar and proper accent, has become a cultural privilege that can be converted into competitive advantages and monetary values in the global market” (Lan, 2003)



Nationality has also been discovered to have directly and indirectly, affected the working and job-seeking experiences of the white-collar OFWs in their job-seeking and working experience in Taiwan. One of interviewees shared her story of being hired as an English teacher at a local Taiwanese cram school. Unfortunately, one of the stipulations of the employers for them to hire her was that she is not allowed to disclose that she is Filipino to avoid any potential issues with the institutions clients/parents. Her speculation was that the parents would rather have native English speakers (or at least those that appear to be) teaching their children.

According to her and several other accounts from other OFWs Taiwan, this has been happening constantly to other Filipinos who are applying or have been hired as English teachers in Taiwan. Employers in these educational institutions cannot deny the fact that they are well-qualified for the position because of their excellent English proficiency, but advise not to disclose their nationalities or lie when asked. Most would attribute it to the Taiwanese stigma of Southeast Asian migrant workers as only fitting for blue-collar and labor-intensive work (Cheng, 2016). Taiwan's varied classification of native English speakers also makes it difficult for more Filipinos to be accepted for similar roles without facing racial issues.

Fortunately, as mentioned in the previous section, more and more Filipinos are being given opportunities to work in Taiwan as English teachers. At the same time, with a growing number of companies in Taiwan expanding their business to foreign markets (including the Philippines), we can foresee a potential increase in the number of white-collar OFWs being hired; specifically for their knowledge of the Filipino consumer market, their native language, and English speaking/writing abilities. This is currently evident in several of the interviewees who were recruited for these specific functions. It is important to note though that these opportunities so far are often limited to large

multinational companies that have expended or are looking to expand their businesses in the Philippines.



### **5.3.3 Impact of Non-culture Related Factors**

Based on the insights gathered from the interviews, it was discovered that non-cultural factors also made a significant impact on the job-seeking and working experiences of the white-collar OFWs here in Taiwan which is believed to have significant effects on the large disparity between the number of OFWs being hired for Taiwan's white-collar sector as compared to those in the blue-collar category.

According to all the interviewees, the higher salaries stand out as the biggest motivators for OFWs to find and continue working in Taiwan. This is due to the significantly large disparity between the salary packages being offered in Taiwan as compared to working in the Philippines. As the MECO labor official pointed out, these OFWs are even willing to work as blue-collar workers abroad, despite their professional and educational background, simply to earn and be able to send more money back home to their loved ones. One other interviewees mentioned that her fellow PCB layout engineer, abruptly took a factory worker job in Taiwan due to financial needs.

The labor official also shed light on the existing broker system when hiring OFWs to work in Taiwan, and how he sees this particularly as a major hindrance to more Filipinos pursuing both blue and white-collar opportunities in the country given that they are being charged "exorbitant placement and service fees" from both countries, forcing them to shell out large amounts of money even before receiving their salaries. Although the Labor Agency Broker system is more focused on the employment of blue-collar migrant workers from Southeast Asia, he mentioned that the rules also affect the recruitment of foreign white-collar professionals to Taiwan. So as not to hamper the business of these brokers, the government imposed a certain limit to the number of foreign

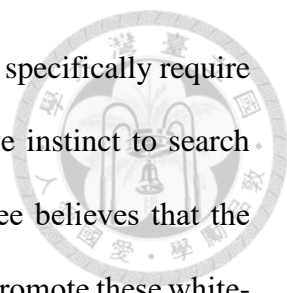
candidates a company may employ directly. In the case of the white-collar OFWs, organizations are limited to 5 direct hires at a time. This limits the opportunities for the capable OFWs who wish to find employment in Taiwan and despite the companies' desire to hire more Filipino professionals.



A considerable number of interviewees complained about the troublesome requirements for white-collar OFWs to be employed and begin working in Taiwan. They mentioned that acquiring the necessary work permit from the Taiwan side takes a considerable amount of time as the employers are unfamiliar with the processes and requirements needed from both the company's and employees side.

At the same time, the Philippine government also requires that all OFWs working abroad must be registered in their respective embassies/consulates located in the host country. The interviewees mentioned that upon checking the respective websites, no information is presented for their classification. Most of the information on websites are attending to the requirements needed from the agency/broker who are handling the paperwork for blue-collar OFWs being deployed in the country. Those that attempted to inquire directly with the representative offices in Taiwan, also noticed the uncertainty of the employees in addressing the incoming white-collar professionals' inquiries and concerns. These experiences may reflect that many human resource personnel and offices in Taiwan are unfamiliar with the necessary processes due to minimal experience conducting the practice. This may be attributed to the low number of applicants or those willing to go through the troublesome and costly processes.

Lastly, many of the interviewees believe that there is lack of information dissemination targeting the white-collar OFWs with regards to the opportunities in Taiwan. Although many companies post their openings on public job sites, not a lot actively seek candidates from the Philippines to encourage them to apply for these



opportunities despite being qualified candidates. Unless the openings specifically require a Filipino candidate, companies and recruitment firms will not have instinct to search within the Philippines' talent pool. At the same time, an interviewee believes that the Philippines' representative office in Taiwan are not doing enough to promote these white-collar to the OFWs. They are most focused on promoting the mass-hiring opportunities for blue-collar employment and the services of the labor broker agencies that OFWs may approach for their services.

An interviewee shared his sentiments regarding the matter that the Philippine government should also change the way they promote the Filipino worker to help change the image to the foreign employers. Although promoting the Filipino's resilience and employability for low wages has helped many of in the middle to lower-class citizens earn better living abroad, this mindset and practice have provided foreign employers with the notion that all Filipinos are the same and are best suited for these labor-intensive duties and cheap labor. These will affect the chances of highly trained and skilled professionals moving forward with regards to their chances of attracting potential white-collar employers and negotiating for higher salaries in their occupations.

The discovery of these similarities and differences reiterates the importance of considering and understanding the role of culture in influencing interactions between nationalities and their decision-making processes, especially with regards to the "cross-cultural management" in the work place. (Hofstede, 2011). Although it is hard to generalize that both societies have a good culture fit, awareness for such similarities and differences and how the Filipinos are able to overcome these can aide the hiring decisions of employers. As echoed in Mohammed Ayub Khan and Laurie Smith Law research, "national culture influences managerial decision-making, leadership styles, and human resource management practices" as well as "the behavior of people within organizations",

and is therefore a fundamental component in understanding the dynamics within a global work environment (Law, Khan 2018).



#### **5.4 Limitations**

The most significant limitation to the study is the lack of available and willing participants for the qualitative interviews as this has restrained the discovery of more potential reasons behind the low number of white-collar OFWs working in Taiwan. With the relatively small sample size of 9 interviews, the scope of the research was also limited to focusing heavily on the cultural aspects, and not take greater consideration to other specific factors that are known to have a major impact on the experiences of the Filipino job-seekers and workers in Taiwan such as labor policies, the industries of the companies, and their respective job functions in the analysis. Also, in terms of the demographics of the interviewees, acquiring more white-collar OFWs spread out across the different parts of Taiwan may have provided a larger variety of experiences and responses as to how their work locations could have attributed to their overall experience.

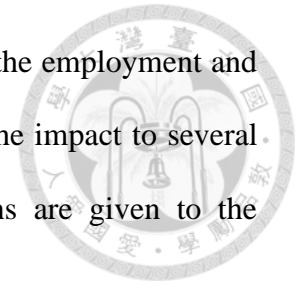
With regards to the chosen interview participants, the study is also only limited to the accounts of white-collar professionals and one labor official from the Philippines. The research did not take into account the inputs and sentiments of the Taiwanese employers and Government labor officials regarding the prevailing issue. Acquiring from them the knowledge as to which specific industries and functions are experiencing a talent crunch, the factors affecting these, and learning about their impressions and perception of white-collar OFWs would have made the research significantly more credible and meaningful.

#### **5.5 Recommendations**

The research and interviews revealed that the Philippines can play a role in alleviating some of the effect of the ongoing talent shortage in Taiwan. The hiring of more Filipinos can also bring about improvements to an organization's DEI initiatives. Also,



both culture fit and non-cultural factors have been shown to affect the employment and job-seeking experience of the white-collar OFWs. It also showed the impact to several major stakeholders on these aspects. Therefore, recommendations are given to the stakeholders listed below.



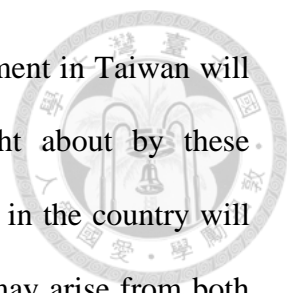
### **5.5.1 Recommendations to Filipino Professionals**

Firstly, the Filipinos that seek white-collar employment abroad should consider Taiwan as one of their options and actively search for career opportunities with companies residing there. Specifically for positions such as engineers, English teachers, and those that focus on Philippine market, searching for such opportunities would provide greater chances of securing employment in Taiwan.

Aside from the close geographic proximity with the Philippines, which makes it convenient for them to fly home or their loved ones to be able to frequently visit, the cost of living in the country is also relatively affordable. As mentioned by majority of the interviewees, Taiwan has an immensely friendly and safe environment and presents good quality of life for locals and foreigners alike.

In terms of the work culture, Taiwan is able to provide much higher salaries as compared to working in the Philippines. Despite being a foreigner, the work environment is also very friendly and open, while majority of the companies push for greater work-life balance by discouraging overtime work and having to fulfill tasks beyond an employee's assigned role. Foreigners are also entitled to many benefits provided to their locals such as the National Health Insurance (NHI), various tax rebates, and access to quality and affordable healthcare.

The results of Hofstede's national culture analysis between Taiwan and the Philippines also shows how the two cultures are share similarities on certain dimensions and aspects. Despite also possessing several major differences, the adoptability of the



Filipino workers to most cultures and their desire to secure employment in Taiwan will be vital characteristics to overcome potential challenges brought about by these differences. Taiwan's growing exposure and openness to foreigners in the country will also play the role in limiting the cultural compatibility issues that may arise from both sides.

As majority of those living in Taiwan still prefer or can only speak Mandarin, OFWs who wish to pursue work here would be in a much better position if they develop an intermediate proficiency in the language. The added skill on their resumes also would make them more attractive candidates to Taiwanese employers and limit the negative impact of the language barrier during their job-seeking, working, and living experiences in Taiwan.

Lastly, with the prevailing image of the Filipino workers as being mostly suited for service-oriented or labor-intensive occupations, it is every Filipinos' responsibility to help in changing this false perception by showcasing their abilities, dedication, and reliability to their foreign employers in Taiwan. It will be mutually beneficial for both the OFWs and the companies once these employers are more aware of the capabilities of the Filipino professionals. The current OFWs in Taiwan may also help to refer other qualified Filipinos as potential candidates when their organizations are looking to hire more foreigners to fill certain positions. In addressing this major cultural stigma attached to the OFWs, there may be a significant increase in the number of Filipinos filling white-collar jobs in Taiwan.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations to Taiwanese Employers**

As the number of companies in Taiwan that are facing talent shortages continue to grow, it is recommended that they expand their search for candidates in nearby areas such as the Philippines. The Filipino workers are known to be highly employable,

especially in the above-mentioned functions and industries. Another benefit would be the short travel from the country will make it easier and less costly to recruit them.

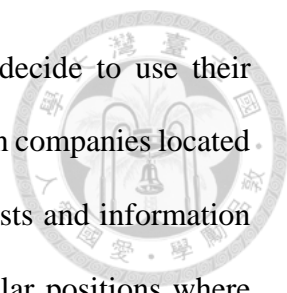
Many employers may learn from the experience of certain companies in the country that are known to hire OFWs for their position and how pleased they are with their overall performance. These companies have shared these sentiments with the labor description and describing them as dependable and needs minimal supervision.

The companies may also use their strong influence and propose to the Taiwanese government to lift the limit on the direct hiring of foreigners. These will be beneficial for them as they can increase the number of Filipinos being hired and avoid the possibility of these candidates being discouraged due to the high costs if coursed through a labor agency broker. The added number of OFWs in their workforce may hopefully increase the diversity, inclusivity, and productivity within the company.

### **5.5.3 Recommendations for Taiwan and Philippine Government/Labor Officials**

Given the important roles of both Taiwan and Philippine governments with regards to the labor exchanges between the two countries, several recommendations are directed for their consideration. As mentioned in the previous section, the Taiwanese government may consider revising the current labor policies involving the broker agencies and the limit imposed on companies to directly hire foreigners to address the pressing need for more talent in the country, as these have also been discovered to hinder and dissuade more Filipinos from seeking employment in the country.

The Taiwanese government may also consider increasing dialogues with the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) in Taiwan in order gain greater awareness regarding the concerns and interest of employment from the Philippines' side. Through the discussions, both parties may also help directly promote the needs of the Taiwanese companies to the interested Filipinos already in Taiwan and those Filipino professionals



looking for opportunities from the Philippines. MECO may also decide to use their various platforms to openly promote more available job posting within companies located in Taiwan to the Filipino communities. They may dedicate more posts and information on white-collar opportunities, instead of solely prioritizing blue-collar positions where majority agencies benefit from. These would make the Filipino professionals more aware of such opportunities abroad and provide the Taiwanese companies with a larger size of candidates to choose from.

Lastly, the Philippine government and MECO may consider changing their marketing strategy when promoting the Filipinos to employers in Taiwan. The past governments have always portrayed the images of the OFWs as “new heroes” making immense sacrifices for leaving their families behind to ear better wages abroad. They “explicitly commodify OFWs...holding a dual role as cheap commodified human labor for export and a source of national pride and economic empowerment for the country” (Encinas, 2013) Despite these descriptions portraying majority of the cases of our OFWs and the undeniable fact that they have provided immense contributions to the national economy through their remittances, it may be more beneficial to focus on promoting their capabilities and achievements moving forward. As a known “globally renowned... labor exporting country”, organizations abroad have potentially had the experience or are currently hiring OFWs and are aware of their highly employable characteristics (Encinas, 2013). A shift in marketing these attributes and using the accounts of the organizations who have had the pleasure of working with Filipino professionals may help uplift the image of the OFWs in Taiwan and increase their chances of being employed for white-collar positions in the country.



#### 5.5.4. Further research

Given the findings presented in this study, further research may be conducted on the topic. Firstly, future studies may attempt to limit their scope to a specific position or industry wherein Taiwan is experiencing a shortage of talent.

Aside from the impact of national culture, future research may consider the impact of other cultural dimensions and may change the lens of their analysis from a collective to an individual perspectives. Researchers may also consider to incorporate methods that could help determine the levels of DEI within an organization based on internationally-recognized standards.

Another potential research to explore would be to focus on how the current labor policies in place have affected the ongoing talent shortage in Taiwan and if these directly affect a certain sub group of nationalities seeking employment in the country. An in-depth study on foreign employees coming from different regions may also be an interesting area of focus. Given that it was determined that certain Taiwan labor policies specifically target a group of migrant workers from Southeast Asia, further studies may be conducted on their employment rate for white-collar positions in Taiwan, in comparison to other known nationalities and factions working in the country to further determine the effect of nationality and culture towards employment.

Lastly, future research may also consider further exploring the talent crunch issue in Taiwan and the specific preferences of Taiwanese employers when hiring candidates. As data provided has shown the growing need for hiring in Taiwan and that work experience is given high priority when choosing among candidates, more research may be conducted on how these preferences have impacted the Taiwan labor market and attractiveness/barriers to working in the country.

## 6. Conclusion

This study aimed to determine whether Filipino professionals possess the skills and talent needed in Taiwan's labor market. It also looked to see how the hiring of white-collar OFWs may impact the DEI of organizations in the country. Lastly, the two countries' cultural compatibility and its effect on the employment of Filipinos within Taiwan's white-collar labor force was also explored.

The research has shown that the Philippines can offer their expertise in the English language and the large number of engineer graduates to support the needs of Taiwan for its manufacturing, IT, and semiconductor industries, as well as their goal to be a bilingual nation by the year 2030.

Using the Hofstede National Comparison tool, it was also discovered that there exists major national culture similarities and differences between Taiwan and the Philippines. Although the comparison was not heavily utilized to determine its direct effect on the number of employed OFWs in Taiwan's white-collar sector, the discovered differences were considered important indicators in determining the cultural compatibility of the two countries and how these potentially affect their OFWs job-seeking and working experience in the country.

According to the data and feedback collected from national culture analysis and the personal accounts from the 9 interviewees, nationality and culture do play a significant role in the job-seeking and working experience of OFWs in Taiwan. It has shown that Taiwanese employers consider the language barrier, the perception of foreigners towards Filipinos, the distinct strengths/attributes of the OFWs, and their knowledge of the local market when being hired for professional positions within their company. Culture fit was not seen as a major contributor to low number of Filipino professionals being hired in Taiwan and the experience of those currently working in the country.

Lastly, it was discovered that on top of the impact of nationality and culture, other non-culture related factors such as stringent labor policies, lack of information dissemination from both sides, and the Philippine government's outdated and flawed portrayal of the Overseas Filipino Worker, have made a significant impact to the low number of Filipino professionals being hired in Taiwan as those assigned to the blue-collar sector.

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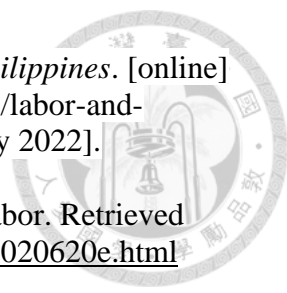
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## Appendix



### Interview Questionnaire: Overseas Filipino Workers

#### A. Migrating to and Living in Taiwan

- Why did you decide to migrate to Taiwan and what about it made it an attractive destination for you?
- Prior to your move, what were your main concerns about moving/living in Taiwan?
- Would you be interested to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan? Why or why not?

#### B. Job-seeking Experience in Taiwan

- What type of job/s were you hoping to acquire during the job-seeking process and was this in line with your field of study and expertise?
- What intermediaries did you utilize throughout the job-seeking process?
- What factors made it easy/difficult to be invited for interviews and secure a job in Taiwan?
- What do you think were the factors that got you hired for the job?
- Do you think your nationality or culture played a major role in your overall job hunting experiences in Taiwan? Why so?
- How would you compare the job-seeking experience in Taiwan to the Philippines?

#### C. Working Environment and Culture in Taiwan

- Do you think you were being treated and compensated fairly in comparison to your other colleagues?
- What problems did you face while working in Taiwan?
- Do you think your skills are fully appreciated in your current workplace and do you have opportunities for professional growth?
- How would you describe the work/workplace culture in Taiwan and how is it different from that in the Philippines?
- Do you think nationality/culture played a major role in your overall working experience in Taiwan? Why so?
- According to your observation, what are the obstacles/difficulties that local/other foreign workers have in interacting with Filipinos in a Taiwanese society/workplace?

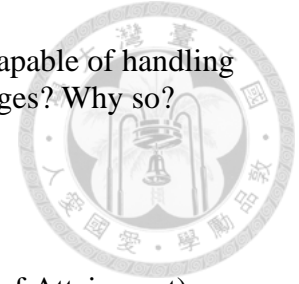
#### D. Attractiveness and Barriers to Working in Taiwan

- In your opinion, what factors make Taiwan attractive/unattractive to Filipino professionals?
- What should the Taiwanese government and companies do so that more highly-skilled Filipinos will be willing and able to work in Taiwan?

#### E. Filipino Culture in Taiwan

- Are you in close contact with the working Filipino community in Taiwan?
- Based on your observation, what type of jobs and industries are they mostly working and how are they classified? (Blue or White-collar workers?)
- How do you think Filipinos are perceived by the locals and other foreigners in Taiwan?
- Currently, there is a huge disparity between the number of OFWs working in the blue-collar sector as opposed to the white-collar sector in Taiwan. Why do you think that is?

- Do you think Filipino professionals working in Taiwan are capable of handling higher positions/more responsibilities and deserve higher wages? Why so?



#### **F .Background Information**

- Gender
- Age/Age Range
- Educational Background (Major, Education Level, Location of Attainment)
- Number of Years Residing in Taiwan
- Number of Years Working in Taiwan
- Current Visa Status (Permanent Resident, Work/Student Visa, Gold Card)
- Current Job Position/Work function
- Industry of Company (Past and Current)
- Languages and Proficiency Level (Mandarin & English)

## **Interview Questionnaire: Labor Official**



### **A. Migrating to and Living in Taiwan**

- Prior to your assignment in Taiwan, did you have experience living/working in other countries?
- How would you describe the living experience here so far?
- What were your main concerns prior to your move to Taiwan?

### **B. Attractiveness and Barriers to Working in Taiwan**

- In your opinion, what factors would attract or dissuade Filipinos from seeking or continuing work in Taiwan?
- During the stages of recruiting, hiring, and employment what problems do both employees and employers usually encounter when hiring white-collar OFWs?
- What should the Taiwanese government and companies do so that more highly-skilled Filipinos will be willing and able to work in Taiwan?
- What programs and mechanisms are in place to protect and help OFWs cope with the demands of the Taiwan labor market?

### **C. Taiwanese-Filipino Interactions**

- In your opinion, how are OFWs perceived by their employers in Taiwan?
- Are companies/employers in Taiwan generally compliant with the Philippines' basic labor laws and regulations?
- What are the frequent complaints/labor dispute reports from our OFWs regarding their companies/employers in Taiwan?

### **D. Filipino Culture in Taiwan**

- What types of jobs and industries are OFWs mostly working for in Taiwan?
- Do you feel that Filipinos working in Taiwan are compensated fairly, given work/positions based on their qualifications, and are treated well by employers?
- Do you think Filipino professionals working in Taiwan are capable of handling higher positions/more responsibilities and deserve higher wages? Why so?
- Are their companies known to prefer or dislike hiring OFWs? Why so?
- Currently, there is a huge disparity between the number of OFWs working in the blue-collar sector as opposed to the white-collar sector in Taiwan. Why do you think that is?

### **E. Taiwan's Labor Force Qualifications**

- With regards to foreign professionals, what are the skills/knowledge/factors most valued/sought-after by employers/companies in Taiwan? (ex: hard skills, soft skills, personality, background, education, previous work experience, social networks)
- Do you think your nationality/culture/social/economic backgrounds play a major role in seeking white-collar opportunities in Taiwan? Why so?

## **Interview Transcriptions**

### **Interview 1: Philippine Labor Official**

**Date of Interview: April 29, 2022**



R: Your decision sir to move to Taiwan is to lead in our embassy. Are there other factors sir that encouraged you to transfer or be employed in this country?

L: Well it's a government decision. Being a career official of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE, we're being assigned anywhere in the world at the behest of the Secretary of Labor. So right now, I am assigned here in Taiwan but previously I was assigned in the Middle East, in Kuwait, in Saudi Arabia, before being assigned here in Taiwan. I am now on my last year, on my fifth year of assignment in Taipei, Taiwan.

R: Thank you sir. And before coming here sir, were there any information that you found useful, or is there any information that you knew of Taiwan that was encouraging you to pursue the assignment here?

L: Yeah, there are. Actually, this is the lightest post where I am assigned, because in the Middle East, it is a shall we say problematic areas for Filipino workers. There are many labor issues and terms and conditions of employment that are not being followed by companies and employers. So far as Taiwan is concerned, the challenge here is to compete with other labor-sending countries. The market is good, compensation is quite reasonable compared to other labor destination countries, and welfare cases and labor disputes are minimal.

R: Thank you. Personally sir, did you have prior concerns about your move or anything about Taiwan that concerned you or that worried you about your transfer here?

L: Actually, my only worry concern about Taiwan is the existence of a broker system or this agent, who in the past charged so much to the workers. Exorbitant placement fees. But now it is being controlled, but it is still high, the placement fees being paid by migrant workers, including Filipinos.

R: So you would say sir that these broker fees and broker systems are one of the hindrances for our OFWs to pursue work here in Taiwan correct?

L: Yeah, that is one thing. Because before they are deployed, they are already pressed on or required to shell out big amounts of money.

R: So this broker system, is this necessary for our OFWs, whether white-collar or blue-collar to go through this system, or are there other options for them to find employment here?

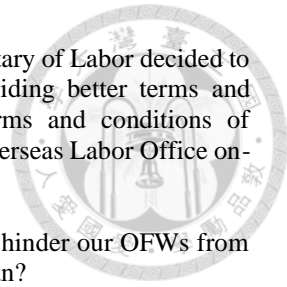
L: Actually, there are now several options. As an offshoot of these complaints about this broker system and exorbitant placement fees. There are now direct hires. We call it SHPT, Special Hiring Program for Taiwan, where employers can hire directly Filipino workers without the intervention of Philippine recruitment agencies and Taiwan recruitment agencies. We have also direct hires for white-collar jobs, but right now it is limited to 5 per company and they cannot hire more than that. They have to hire through agencies, in Taiwan and in the Philippines. There are also groups of employers in Taiwan, they call themselves as the Responsible Business Alliance (RBA). These are conglomerates and multinational companies, usually from Europe and the Americas, who do not charge any amount to migrant workers. Even the passport processing fees, they refund it upon arrival in Taiwan. So they do not pay any placement fees and this is where we are trying to promote and trying to market so that many Filipinos can avail of these RBA employers who are absorbing all the recruitment expenses. Right now there are about 20,000, Taiwan-wide under RBA, out of our population which is at the moment 140,000.

R: So sir you mentioned earlier a quota of 5 per direct-hiring per company. Are you saying they are only allowed to directly hire 5 Filipino employees?

L: Yes, because Philippine labor laws actually ban direct hiring. The purpose of banning direct hiring is because it consequently removes the layer of protection on the part of the worker because just in case there will be problems, there will be no more agent in the Philippines or agent in Taiwan or in destination countries where the worker can run after. If the worker has money claims or any other claims against the



employer. So that is the purpose of banning direct hiring. Over the years, the Secretary of Labor decided to issue an exemption. So one of the exemptions is for employers who are providing better terms and conditions of employment, usually over and above the POEA's standard terms and conditions of employment. If they are over that, and upon direct verification of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office on-site, then they will be allowed to hire a maximum of 5 workers only.



R: On top of this issue related to the brokers, what other possible issues arise that hinder our OFWs from job-seeking and retaining employment within the white-collar sector here in Taiwan?

L: White-collar?

R: Yes sir.

L: At the moment, there are actually only a few demands for white-collar especially. Right now I think, from the Ministry of Education, they only have a budget for 300 teachers for the year. But we are dominating this market. There are already hundreds of Filipino teachers here in Taiwan right now and they are hired directly. One of the problems in Taiwan is that there is an employment limit for skilled workers and professionals. They are only allowed to work for a maximum of 12 years. And for domestic workers and care-takers, it is up to 14 years. Although there is now a proposal to allow them to apply for permanent residency but it is still a proposal at the moment. There is no official issuance yet so that is one of the hindrances. They are coming to us, inquiring if there is an extension, if there is a new law, that would allow them to continue to work. Based on our study, it shows that many of these workers are not ready to go home after working for 12 years. They still want to be gainfully employed and they also fear than when they go back to the Philippines they cannot be employed anymore because they are on the middle age. 45, 50, so they age may hinder them from getting employed after working here for 12 years. That is the maximum limit for skilled work.

R: If you don't mind me asking sir, because you mentioned that the Filipinos are quite attractive for Taiwan in terms of the education sector.

L: Only for English

R: Only for English teachers. Are there other white-collar positions that Filipinos are quite known for or attractive to Taiwanese companies?

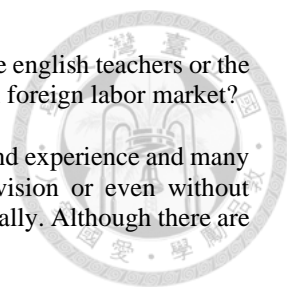
L: Yeah, our engineers, highly skilled technicians. We also have pilots here and of course managers of signature brands. Some of the managers there are Filipinos.

R: Sir you mentioned that the Filipinos that have experienced work here, after 12 or 14 years of working, are afraid to go home mostly because of age. But are there other factors that they are afraid of upon coming back from their employment in Taiwan?

L: Primarily, the reason is that they are not ready. Probably because they do not have enough savings after working for 12 years. The other thing is that they are also worried that their age might not be attractive anymore for new employment. Either in the Philippines, locally, or in another country. These are the two primary and prevailing reasons as of the moment. They are requesting us to work with the Taiwan government so that there will be an exemption on this employment limit. Right now there is this proposal for permanent residency. They were saying that they will release the official guidelines by April, and tomorrow is the last day of April already..

R: So you're saying sir that a lot of them enjoy their stay here in Taiwan and their working experience here. What factors make them want to stay sir? Is it the high salary, the good quality of life? What factors do they point out to you sir?

L: Yes, that is one thing. The salary is attractive and the other thing is that it is very near to the Philippines. You can go home and be back in one day because Taiwan is the closest country to the Philippines, our closest neighbor. The standards of living is also reasonable, it is not so expensive to live in Taiwan. And the people are also generally friendly, the Taiwanese. Plus the crime rate is very low, compared to our country. Relatively safe.



R: From the Taiwan side, what about the Filipinos attract them to hire for maybe the english teachers or the specialized manufacturing engineers? What qualities or capabilities for the Taiwan foreign labor market?

L: I have been talking to many employers and the reasons are education, training, and experience and many also said that they want Filipinos because they can work with minimal supervision or even without supervision and we get good outputs. So very nice feedback from employers, generally. Although there are also a few problematic workers.

R: Aside from the English teaching and manufacturing are there other industries wherein the OFWs are starting to build a better reputation in the white-collar sector?

L: Actually, we dominated the semiconductor, electronics, computer manufacturing. We're number 1 there. We employed around 70,000 Filipino workers there. They want Filipinos because they are good in these sectors. The rest are being given to other labor destination countries, because Filipinos do not like to work in construction. They do not also like to work in fabrication, metal fabrication, those hard work. Filipinos do not like it. They want in the manufacturing of chips and computer parts, and semiconductors. More high-tech.

R: Actually sir, I was surprised to hear that because initially, based on my research, Filipinos were being reserved more for the "3-K industries", dangerous, dirty, and strenuous. When I was comparing it to the statistics, I think we were ranked pretty high in terms of the number of OFWs in those positions. So from your understanding sir, the white-collar workers are not willing to do that, but some of our other Filipino workers are open to this type of work?

L: Yeah, but only a few want to work in dirty industries. Circumstances. You can see the statistics from my office. These are the lasts as of March, you can have it.

R: Thank you sir. I noticed in the productive industries and social welfare, we're ranked third-most in terms of providing these types of workers.

L: Yeah, but if you look at the semiconductor and computer, we're number one there.

R: And then sir for special professions and technical assignments, we have around 1292. So there is obviously a big gap in that comparison. Why do you think that is sir for that big gap?

L: It is the preference of the Filipino workers, they do not want to work in some sectors. As you can see, even in the construction you can see there are only very few. Only 88 Filipinos are there. Metal fabrication is dominated by the Vietnamese. They do not want to work. In marble manufacturing very few Filipinos. If they have the opportunity, they transfer to better companies.

R: So it is actually more from our side sir. Not so much the Taiwan side

L: Sometimes, we call it choosy. We're choosy. Some employers call us choosy.

R: I think it is also because Filipinos now have some many options. We're basically employable everywhere else.

L: Yes exactly. If it's not attractive here, they can just go somewhere else.

R: Sir, I just have one more question. From the Taiwan side, in terms of hiring foreign employment, do they have certain preferences in terms of background, nationality, education, and skills etc. From your personal understanding.

L: It depends on the profession. When hiring teachers, they like Filipinos because they speak English, and because they are also good teachers. They were telling me that some workers/teachers they hire from Western countries or from Europe, they like Filipino more because teachers from there not only demand higher salaries but they are some behavior issues. Filipinos are generally obedient to the orders of their superiors.

R: In terms of salary compensation and growth within the companies and positions, do you think Filipinos receive that here and are able to progress? Or is that also an issue that some of our OFWs face?

L: That is an issue because the preference is given to locals. But if we consider only the migrant workers, the labor-sending countries, we are better off than other countries. We have more workers that are promoted, but there is a double standard actually. Sad to say. If there is a Taiwanese there/local worker and there is a competitor/migrant worker, of course they will choose the local.

R: It's funny sir because they mentioned they have a shortage of skilled workers, and yet they're still not open to foreign workers. I mean, even if the Filipinos are highly-trained, we're basically being trained to work abroad, and yet they would still prefer to choose from a market that's very saturated or doesn't have the availability of skilled workers. But if they maybe look toward the Filipinos, do you think we can succeed or at least thrive in the labor market of Taiwan?

L: Actually, the problem there lies in the broker system, because the agencies in the labor-sending countries and the agency here in Taiwan, sad to say, some of these entities are very corrupt. Labor-sending countries charge so much to the workers. Let's say placement fee of 6 months' salaries. In the Philippines, we only charge one month's salary. Some are charging 2 months but that's already a violation of the Philippine laws. So they charge so much, 6 months to 9 months, then they will buy the broker here so that the job orders will be given to them. Instead of job orders given to the Philippines, they will give them to those who will be paying more. Much more than what they can get from the Philippine market. So that's the problem. That's why they dominate the totality of the deployment. Because on our part, we are controlled by Philippine laws. We cannot charge beyond 1 month's salary, the agencies. If they are found charging so much, they will be liable for excessive placement fees. That's illegal recruitment. But other labor-sending countries, no. Very very exorbitant placement fees and they are buying the brokers here. So that is the problem actually.

R: So for you sir, the broker system is actually the biggest problem.

L: Actually, if the playing field is the same, we should've been number one. These brokers cannot do what they want, only when the employers dictate that they want Filipino workers. Even if these brokers would like to get from other labor-sending countries, but because the employers want Filipino workers, then they cannot do anything. They will be forced to hire Filipino workers with a very minimal profit.

R: Thank you sir

L: Almost all transactions require a broker. If you want to get a house or apartment, there's a broker. If you buy something, there's a broker. If you invest in stocks, there is a broker.

R: and the broker system sir has been implemented from the Taiwan side?

L: Yeah, it's already embedded in their society. It is a major industry so it cannot just be removed overnight. That is why the Taiwan government and the Philippine government were talking every year. We call it a joint labor conference to resolve these issues. Slowly, but surely, we are getting some concessions that would address this problem of brokering.

R: So sir I was initially coming here thinking it was more of a cultural issue, but apparently it is more a political and regulatory.

L: Yes, it boils down to business actually. You know the Chinese are businessmen.

R: In terms of culture sir, would there be issues? Or not much? Would being a Filipino be an issue?

L: Culture, not so much. Taiwanese are generally very friendly and some Taiwanese are also catholic and I think there are more than 10,000 that are married to Filipinos. Inter-marriages. The statistics there are only for workers in the productive industries, the 140,000. It does not include white-collar jobs.

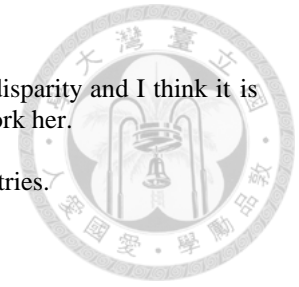
R: So the productive workers will still fall under the blue-collar?

L: Yeah, that's still blue-collar

R: For special or technical work, we're still in the 1200 mark. So there's a wide disparity and I think it is also from the side of the Filipinos that they choose not to pursue these kinds of work her.

L: Yeah, but for white-collar jobs, we are better off than other labor-sending countries.

<END OF INTERVIEW>



**Interview 2: OFW in Taiwan**  
**Date of Interview: May 4, 2022**



R: Sir if you may mention at least your age range and if you are open to mentioning your specific age sir, that would be very helpful.

J: Okay. So actually I am already in the 50s.

R: Okay thank you. And sir would you mind sharing your educational background. Maybe just your major and if you finished your studies in the Philippines or abroad?

J: Yup, so actually I am a graduate of electronics communication engineer in Manila.

R: Okay. Thank you sir. May I ask sir how many years have you been residing in Taiwan?

J: I am running 1 year and 5 months now. So I started like November of 2020.

R: Okay. Since November 2020 sir, have you been working in Taiwan or are there other purposes sir for your decision to migrate to Taiwan?

J: It was solely for work, ugh Renzo. So I applied as a direct hire to one of the cloud companies there in Taipei.

R: Alright. Since you are a direct hire sir, your visa would also be purely work visa or working resident visa correct?

J: Right, yup.

R: And you mentioned sir that you are currently working in a cloud company here in Taiwan. Is it a foreign or local cloud company sir?

J: It is foreign company, Renzo

R: If I may ask sir, have you always been always working in this industry sir or did you transition from a different industry?

J: Yup, so actually, that cloud company I started to work in that company back in the Mainland. There are different products that are supported by that company so the other are the surface books or surface products. We call it in the device service unit. The other is XBOX or gaming console and some other PC hardware products. So I stayed almost 4 years in Mainland, China and then after that I tried another telecom company for 2 years, then went back to this company because I really wanted to relocate to Taiwan and they have opportunities there.

R: Were your job functions similar in your experiences in the Mainland and in the Philippines? Were they all related to your engineering background or not necessarily?

J: Yup, so actually in the mainland, I started with supplier quality in some of the components for surface and XBOX. So those are semiconductor components, some are display parts of the surface, and the hard drives HDD hard disk drives. So I am more on the supplier quality space. So in Taiwan, it's basically more on the factory operation management. So there are some similarities, but I am more on the operation rather than the quality.

R: So sir since you've mentioned you've spent some time in Mainland China and now in Taiwan, may I ask what is the level of your Chinese proficiency?

J: That is a good question. I really envy one of our colleagues there since he can really speak Chinese. But for me, most of the time I speak English with the technical marketing people of the suppliers, so I did not really have the chance to exercise or train my mandarin skills.

R: No worries sir. Of course it's an asset, but at least we know for foreigners it's not a pre-requisite to be able to work in these big companies and in these Chinese-speaking areas. If I may ask sir, what made you decide to move to Taiwan after spending some time in the Mainland? Are there any factors about Taiwan that attracted you to pursue work here or at least choose a position or opening here in Taiwan?

J: Yeah, compared with Mainland, I have the impression that Taiwan really is a foreign-friendly environment. When I was in Mainland, I also had the chance to visit Taiwan in different areas like Tainan, I visited the suppliers. I really observed the differences in terms of culture, in terms of interactions with the foreigners, so in that sense, I somehow think of looking for an opportunity to really work in Taiwan because of that treatment by the locals in Taiwan. They are more friendly to the foreigners and the culture is very encouraging.

R: That's good sir. So it was also based on previous work experience, that you were able to travel to Taiwan, learn about the culture and the people, and your experiences then actually encouraged you to pursue work here. So sir given that you have been staying in Taiwan for quite some time, you mentioned that you are enjoying your stay and the living environment here, are you open to the idea of possibly applying for permanent residency or do you have plans of relocating back home or to another country?

J: Initially, when I looked for the opportunity of employment in Taiwan, my plan really is to stay there and acquire the residency. But right now, the challenge for me is some family situation. I have a special son. I even asked around there whether there is an opportunity of bringing in my special son. But I think at this point, I am still balancing the decision whether I am going to be a resident of Taiwan or eventually decide to just stay in the Philippines.

R: Alright sir, so it's a family-related consideration. Just out of curiosity, when you asked them, did they say it was possible for you to bring your immediate family in while working here?

J: Yeah. Actually it's part of the package that I can bring my family here.

R: Was it a package from the company sir or the government allows you to do that?

J: I think even Taiwan is encouraging to bring in the family so, but that company itself is really giving us the privilege to bringing in our family.

R: So sir, so far, everything I have been hearing about your sentiments towards Taiwan has been positive. Before the move, was there any concerns from your end with regards to Taiwan? Would you have any before moving or maybe right now since you've lived here already for quite some time?

J: Actually, I don't have any concerns. The experience that I had is really motivating instead. I can really see the discipline, I can really see the warm socialization with the local people. So there is much to learn in terms of culture.

R: Happy to hear that sir. Of course, usually, despite the positive feedback about Taiwan, there's always something from certain people. They have their own concerns. This is the first time I heard something completely positive and it's good to hear.

If I may ask about the job-seeking experience in Taiwan? You mentioned you were a direct hire. So seeking the opportunities here, was it difficult? Since you are a direct hire, did you attempt to look for this or did the company actually reach out to you for this role?

J: Some my friends gave me feedback that there was an opening in the company. So the typical process is that I have to go to the company website to upload my resume. It was a typical process, so it's not really difficult. It only took a couple of months, at most 3 months if I remember.

R: So by word of mouth, you were informed that there are some opportunities and by yourself you applied online through their website. Were there other attempts sir to look for other opportunities outside of the one you have now or was this the only option that you had in mind coming in?

J: Actually, Taiwan has a lot of good companies in there. There is google, a lot of big companies. But so far, this company that I am in, they are really offering a competitive overall package. So at this point, I really don't consider to look for opportunities outside this company.

R: It's good to know that it wasn't difficult from your end. Hopefully I can use this experience to encourage more people to try to follow that because based on my interviews, some of the issues would be that they do not know where to look for this information. Even if they tried to go on LinkedIn, they feel like the process is too hard or the companies have too many requirements, or the language barrier. I heard some various reasons and at least there is some good experience from one of my interviewees.

During the hiring process, given that you are a foreigner, and you mentioned that Chinese is not at a level of working proficiency, what were they requiring from their candidates at the time?

J: Basically the advantage, that I have is really my background and experience. I've been to different electronic industries which really fits to the requirements of the position. I used to be in car stereo manufacturing, to semiconductor, and then this EMS company of different products. Like I mentioned, those surface, XBOX, and PC hardware. So all of those experiences, a combination of those, had really fit in to the requirements. So probably that's reason why it wasn't that hard to complete the hiring process.

R: And would you say that it was always in line with your educational background, your working experience in the Philippines and in China, everything was uniform and the same?

J: Yup.

R: So these are some of the biggest factors that we can say maybe. They really look towards your educational background and your previous work experience and if its in line with the opening that you are applying for. Is that more or less a good summary of it sir?

J: Yes, exactly. So I think the big plus of course is if you speak Chinese. It is really a big advantage. But for a global company, like what I mentioned, they really this value of diversity and inclusion so they really welcome a different background and different cultures. So it's also the opportunity for them to engage with people who does not speak their local language. It is an exchange of learning.

R: Definitely. I am curious sir. Did you ever attempt or try to apply for a local company in Taiwan? Or does that interest you in any way?

J: I never had the chance to try the local company yet.

R: Let's say sir, if your current company was not in the picture, would you be open to applying for these local Taiwanese companies or would you still prefer to work in a multinational company?

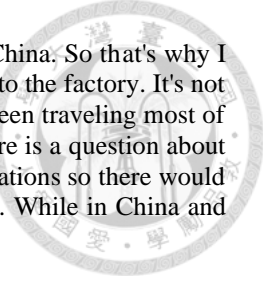
J: I am really open to trying in a local company it just so happens that I am assigned this multinational company. Again, one of my motivations why I consider a local company is because of the observed culture that I just mentioned, they are very open to foreigners.

R: Sir, one last thing about the job-seeking experience. You've done it in 3 different companies, but is there anything unique or different from the Taiwan side as compared to the other 2 countries where you've sought employment in?

J: Because it's the same company, whether in China and Taiwan. And the other company before Taiwan is also another multinational company. I cannot see a big disparity as to the processes.

R: Maybe we can move on to your work experience in Taiwan. You mentioned it was more in line with your educational background and previous work experience. But what about inside the company itself, is there anything particularly unique about working in a multinational company in a Taiwanese setting as compared to your experience in Mainland and back home.

J: Back home, I was really just working within the factory. I mentioned I worked in a car stereo manufacturer, a Japanese company. So I just stayed in the factory. Similarly, for a semiconductor company that I also worked with for almost 12 years, again the setting was just working in the factory. Unlike when



I started working in China and in Taiwan, I have been all over to different parts of China. So that's why I also had the chance to visit Taiwan while I was working in China. So I am not stuck to the factory. It's not an in-house factory, it was more an outsourced manufacturing company. So I have been traveling most of the time. So if you will see, some of the ads for the job opportunity, you will see there is a question about how much are you willing to travel. Is it 50% or 60%, so those are part of the expectations so there would be no surprises. So that's the difference. In Philippines, I'm just stuck in the factory. While in China and Taiwan, I was travelling most of the time.

R: So is this a personal preference sir that you enjoy moving in and out of the country, including your work travels and other activities. Or would you prefer to be in one place most of the time?

J: Definitely it is really a good experience to travel as you can explore more. Different environment, different setting, different interactions, different cultures of different company.

R: You mentioned earlier that you are enjoying your time at your current company. So can we say that they are treating and compensating you fairly and that you are able to grow as a professional in this company? Or are there factors where they lack among those that I mentioned?

J: This company has a lot of opportunities. If I compared it with the semiconductor company that I worked in before, where it's so structured. Every function has a designated system. In this company, you have to think of how you can contribute to it in terms of processes and systems. It's very flexible and it's probably one of the reasons why they promote diversity and inclusion. So some are coming from a very structured company. Some from a not-so-structured company. So it is a different balance, because if you work to outsource from different suppliers, of course, it is a different tier of suppliers. If you have, that kind of diversity then you are able to handle them effectively and efficiently.

R: Going back to diversity, you mentioned your current company has given much importance to this. In terms of specifically Filipinos, aside from you and your other colleague whom you mentioned, would there be other Filipinos in your company?

J: So far, only the two of us at this time. But there are other nationalities such as Malaysian, another from England. So at least there is a mix of nationalities.

R: May we go back to how the Filipinos perceive Taiwan as a work destination. Do you think a lot of Filipinos would actually be interested to move to Taiwan and pursue work here? Or maybe not?

J: As Taiwan is really inviting more big companies, I really think it is really an attraction for Filipino professionals. Aside from the package of the company itself, the environment in Taiwan is really conducive for families, for health-conscious people. There are really a lot of spots to maintain and improve your health. Biking, hiking and all those and they are really into all those things and regiments and they invite you to join them.

R: Of course, a lot of factors would attract our fellow Filipinos to pursue blue or white-collar work here. But do you think there are barriers as well that could discourage them?

J: I don't see barriers really. As far as my experience is concerned, I don't see any barriers. It is really a matter of how you present yourself and be confident in who you are. So I think we can easily get all the opportunities that Taiwan is offering, and we will be able to handle those.

R: You mentioned that the government is very open to accepting foreigners already. It is a matter of our own individual selves and how we present our work experience, skills, and assets to the company here in Taiwan. Are you in touch with the Filipino community here? Aside from your colleague?

J: Yup actually I've been to some Filipino communities in Chongshan/Songshan, which is also in Taipei. There are more friends in Taoyuan and the middle part of Taiwan but we did not get the chance to meet up yet. Unfortunately, when they visited Taipei, I was already here in the Philippines.

R: Would you say that this Filipino community is easily accessible or were they hard to find? How were you able to connect with them sir?



J: It's a matter of scheduling, it's not really that hard. They're in the middle part, so most of them are working in Micron, one of the better companies as well. It is a semi-conductor. So once you start to work there, you will know them and you will have a mixed community of professionals and services from all different industries.

R: You mentioned that this company hires a lot of Filipinos as you highlighted them. So are they known to hire a certain number of Filipinos in their company?

J: If you're talking about the company I am working for now, in China, they really hire a lot of Filipinos. They are product quality managers from what I remember. Almost more than 10 Filipino professionals. In Taiwan, I mentioned we are 2 but this is still a very young business unit. It has been running for about 4-5 years. So I think as the company is growing, there will be more opportunities for Filipinos. Micron is very open to Filipinos. I know a lot of Filipinos there because they were my colleagues in Intel before.

R: Do they have a good mix of white-collar and service professionals right?

J: Yes correct. Another company is Quanta. The managers there told me there is also a lot of Filipino engineers there.

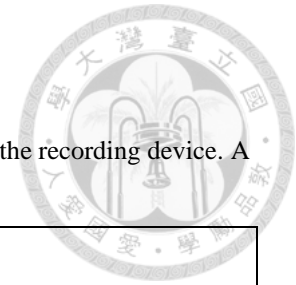
R: I have one last question. Based on your sharing, I can say you are very successful here in Taiwan. Aside from developing your personal skills, how do you think us Filipinos can get better chances of finding white-collar employment here in Taiwan?

J: I believe a good example is you and another colleague. I think that route of career is really recommendable. You can start by taking up a masteral or MBA there. Aside from exposing yourself to the opportunities there, you also adapt to the language. It's my frustration that I haven't developed this myself.

R: Of course you have your own skills. But definitely, learning the language is an advantage, and you recommend before pursuing work, maybe they can go through the route of getting a degree in Taiwan first.

**<END OF INTERVIEW>**

**Interview 3: OFW in Taiwan**  
**Date of Interview: May 4, 2022**



\*The full transcription of the interview is unavailable due to technical errors with the recording device. A summary of the main points is enumerated below;

Background Information	<p>Age: 28</p> <p>Education:            Bachelor's: Arts, Communication, Media Studies (Philippines)            Master's: MBA (Taiwan)            Chinese Language and Culture: Taiwan</p> <p>Years living in and working in Taiwan: 6 years</p> <p>Current Industry &amp; Function: IT, Business Group &amp; Territory Manager</p> <p>Previous Industries: Education, Marketing, Media/Journalism</p> <p>Mandarin Proficiency: Professional working proficiency</p>
Moving & Living in Taiwan	<p>-Moved to Taiwan for studies.</p> <p>-Main concerns included language barrier, unfamiliarity with environment</p> <p>-Interested to apply for permanent residency</p>
Job-seeking Experience	<p>-Looking for positions related to her MBA</p> <p>-Used intermediaries such as job sites and personal connections</p> <p>-Factors that made it difficult were the language barrier, unavailability of information on opportunities, low number of responses from employers</p> <p>-Believes nationality played a factor. Mentioned she was hired as an English teacher in a cram school with the condition that she is not allowed to disclose her being a Filipino when asked</p>
Working Experience	<p>-While studying Mandarin and her MBA, she was hired as a marketing intern and an English teacher for 3 months.</p> <p>-She was eventually hired full-time by an IT solutions company in 2019 and is still currently employed</p> <p>-She enjoys working in her company because of the opportunities given to her by her boss. She is compensated well and has been promoted several times throughout her stay. She is now handling a managerial role related to the company's business in the Philippines.</p> <p>-Overall, she has not faced any problems with her work in Taiwan except during her short stint as an English teacher where she was not allowed to disclose her nationality. She was very offended by this clause and decided to switch jobs after 3 months with the learning institution.</p> <p>-She did not encounter any difficulty engaging with her local colleagues and superiors. Her high Mandarin proficiency was also a factor for this.</p>
Attractiveness and Barriers	<p>-Attractive factors for OFWs would be the higher salaries, clean and friendly environment, close distance to the Philippines</p> <p>-Potential barriers for OFWs would be the language and high living costs.</p> <p>-Another barrier maybe the stigma and stereotypes towards Filipinos in Taiwan. Aside from her experience in the English school, she is well aware how majority of the Filipinos are looked down upon. She feels this affects how many of the OFWs</p>

	<p>here or those who are seeking employment in Taiwan are treated and considered by employers during the hiring process. During her time as a student, many locals were surprised to hear that she was a Filipino student pursuing her MBA in a Taiwanese university. Locals are also quick to assume that she is Filipino based purely from her dark skin tone.</p>
<p>Connection to other OFWs</p>	<p>-She is not in close contact with many of the Filipinos, but are acquainted with some blue and white-collar OFWs in the country.</p> <p>-Majority of those she knows were either students or blue-collar workers that she meets in church.</p> <p>-She feels that despite the Taiwanese being generally nice, there still remains this perception that OFWs are only capable of handling blue-collar work. Although this is slowly changing with the increase of Filipino students coming to Taiwan and securing jobs, there is still much to be done to change this notion. For her, this is the biggest factor for the large disparity of blue and white collar workers in the country.</p> <p>-Generally, the OFWs here enjoy the life in Taiwan mostly because of the higher salaries they receive here. Many have also said that the workload here is generally lighter compared to what they used to do back in the Philippines.</p> <p>-She knows that Filipinos are highly capable of handling more responsibilities and being hired for white-collar positions within companies in Taiwan.</p> <p>-If more employers will give OFWs a chance, as what her current employer did, she believes that more and more companies will be made aware of the OFWs capabilities and positive attributes to the company.</p>



**Interview 4: OFW in Taiwan**

**Date of Interview: May 7, 2020**

\*Interview conducted in Tagalog then translated in English

R: What is your current age range?

G: I am 28 years old.

R: What is your educational background and major?

G: ECE. Electronics Communication Engineering. But currently, it's only called Electronics Engineering only. I received this from the Philippines.

R: In Taiwan, you are currently working. Did you come here initially as a worker or did you have other reasons of coming to Taiwan?

G: I went here directly to work. moved here about 1 year and 2 months ago and I have been working here from the start.

R: For your current work, may I ask what industry you are in now?

G: Currently, I am in an R&D and a product manufacturing company.

R: The products are consumer technology products right?

G: Yes. Basically, its applications are more for communications. These are being used for high-speed trains and military aircraft as some of their applications.

R: Do they also have electronic products for regular consumers or is it a more specialized product line?

G: It is more specialized as it is mostly used for these applications. But we also have products being used for testing.

R: Your function in this company is what exactly ma'am?

G: I am a PCB layout engineer. Printed Circuit Boards.

R: I assume it's a highly specialized function where only those in your field have an in-depth idea about the product. So from what I understand, your current position in the company is very much related to your educational background correct?

G: Yes.

R: Since you've been here for less than 2 years, have you been able to practice your Chinese since you started working here?

G: Not at all. Due to the pandemic restrictions and limited time.

R: So at least your job does not require you to have Chinese proficiency and communication in Chinese.

G: Yes. Since my employer is a US company here in Taiwan.

R: Aside from moving here for your job, were there other reasons that attracted you to move to Taiwan?

G: It was really the high salary. There is a really big difference in the salary offers here and in the Philippines.

R: When you discovered this job, did they reach out to you directly or did you use platforms, or personal connections to find this job?



G: A job hunter contacted me. These job-hunters are being paid by the company to look for possible candidates for the job openings. So they contacted me, but they are not like those agencies. They just contact you and share your information directly with the company.

R: Congratulations ma'am. Before moving to Taiwan, did you have experience living in other countries or not?

G: It is my first time living abroad.

R: When you were offered the job and before deciding to accept the job, were there factors about moving to Taiwan that worried you?

G: Actually, it was just the language barrier. That was the biggest concern. My thoughts initially were that, do people here speak English? But the people that I worked within my previous company, which was based here in Taiwan, mentioned that they speak English here, especially the younger generation.

R: Now that you have been here more than 1 year already, do you have plans of extending your stay beyond your work contract and maybe applying for permanent residency?

G: So far, yes. As it does not state in my contract that I have to leave at some point. As long as my working visa is being renewed, then I just need to renew for as long as I can. I see myself staying here even after 5 years since the situation here is really good for us to live and stay here, even if we're not really from here. It would've been really easy to go back and forth if not for COVID.

R: When the job hunter from the company approached you with the opening, did you find it attractive or did you have a different preference in terms of the job you were looking for.

G: When they approached me at the time, I just really tried. I was not really looking for a job here in Taiwan at the time. But since they got in touch with me, and it was an opportunity, I did not want to waste it so I just tried my best, despite the first-time jitters.

R: Great. But when they told you about the position and the company, was it something you always saw yourself doing and joining? Or was it different? As an electrical engineer, I believe it is an in-demand job so you have a lot of options to choose from right? Or did you have another preference?

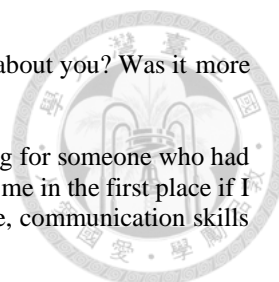
G: Not really. I just really wanted to pursue being a PCB layout engineer since I have been in this industry for quite some time now. So I really saw an opportunity that would provide growth and experience for me in my career. I preferred working in a field and job that I was comfortable in.

R: When they were presenting the job to you, what information were they providing from your end? Was it useful or did you have to do your own research to still to answer questions?

G: At the start, I was actually very scared. I was not aware that they have job-hunters here and I did not apply or send my resume to anyone. I was thinking if this was a scam or not as these are frequent happenings for us right? So I just went with it, gave what they asked for, joined the interviews, etc. Then I was waiting if they were going to charge me a fee or not. I also asked them for the company profile, its name, where is it located, and how big it is. So the job hunter provided all of these company details. Then I had an initial interview with him to see if my profile matches the profile that the company is looking for. When they saw I was okay, they directly asked me about salary. If I had an idea, my own salary, and salary expectations. Maybe the company gave him a certain budget or range. So he asked if I was okay with this amount or am I expecting a certain amount of salary. Since it was my first time, I did not really have any idea. So I did my own research first to make sure. Since I was a direct hire and they directly talked to me.

R: How long was the whole process? From them contacting you, to the interview process, until the deal was signed.

G: It was very fast. From the time the recruiter contacted me, then the company interview, it was about two weeks total until I got the results. I had like 3 interviews total with the job hunter and company, then I passed the panel interview. After that, I waited 3 days, then they offered the job.



R: During the interview process, what did you notice they were looking or asking about you? Was it more related to your educational engineering background or work-related experience?

G: Mostly it was technical matters. Since it was a senior position, they were looking for someone who had a technical working background. But I also assume they wouldn't have considered me in the first place if I was not an electrical engineer graduate. A mix of technical skills, work experience, communication skills english-wise were the top factors that I noticed.

R: Do you think that being a Filipino or nationality was a factor in being chosen for the job?

G: Actually no. But I think the reason they looked at the Philippines is because we are known as hardworking individuals and we can keep up in terms of communicating in English. I think these are very attractive attributes for Filipinos.

R: After working in the company you are in now for quite some time, how do you feel about the working environment there? Is it good or are there some cultural issues as a foreigner working with the locals?

G: Not so far. They are very friendly. I think being required to speak in English within the company is also very helpful. So basically, it's good. I am also not the lone Filipino in the company, which is one of the factors that made them see that the Filipinos people are good employees. Which I also felt was a big factor to make them think that why don't they hire more Filipinos? Based on the stories I heard, the very first Filipino that worked there really made a mark. The employers asked who he was and where he was from? We need more like him. So that's when they started hiring more and now I am the 5<sup>th</sup> Filipino hired by the company.

R: Were all of you from an engineering background or did you have different functions?

G: Yes, engineering. There's computer engineering, ECE, and different educational backgrounds. But our job functions are all the same. We're all in PCB layout since it's a wide function.

R: So engineers from the Philippines are really attractive to foreign employers not just in Taiwan.

G: Yes, indeed.

R: You also mentioned in your company, everyone is being required to speak in English. So does that mean that the locals are adjusting to the company's internationalization?

G: Yes, they really are. I think that's also why I did not have much of a hard time at work since all of us needed to make adjustments given that our contacts are based in the US or India and are English speakers.

R: So would you say that an English-speaking environment is also very helpful for workers like you to not feel out of place and cope with the working environment abroad?

G: Yes, definitely. In terms of treatment, compensation, and benefits are also all good so far.

R: It seems from your stories that you are not experiencing any problems at work right now correct?

G: Yes, as of now. It's probably also because I was doing the same job as what I was doing in the Philippines. It only differs as to the tools we are using.

R: What about the working culture and environment in Taiwan as compared to the Philippines? Are there big differences based on your personal experience?

G: There are big differences actually. In the Philippines, we frequently had to work overtime. In my work now, we only do overtime if it is really needed. Unlike in the Philippines, it's a requirement to do overtime work. They even criticize you if you do not do this.

R: In Taiwan, who tells you that you have to do overtime work?

G: No, actually. It's only from our own decision whether we should work overtime or now. If we know that we have to finish our respective projects since it's a per-project basis type of work and we have deadlines. In the Philippines, it's really different. I guess it also depends on the customer as here our function includes making circuit boards is more for communications and testing. In the Philippines, we have bigger projects such as server motherboards, so the time needed to be given for each project is also different. So it really depends on the type of product and client.

R: So would you say that the demand for the output was much higher for you back in the Philippines?

G: Yes, but mainly depends on the size of the project.

R: Are your supervisors Taiwanese, American, or from a different country?

G: They are French. We're a very diverse company.

R: As an engineer in your company now, do you think you will be able to progress further in terms of position and salary in the long run?

G: For the PCB layout function, there does not seem to be a need to be promoted or be a supervisor. Your title automatically changes based on years of experience and tenure in our field. So your salary automatically goes up as well. You do not need to be a manager to have a salary raise in our field.

R: That culture of having an automatic raise in terms of position and salary based from years of experience from the engineering culture or from the company?

G: I think it is from the engineering culture as they mostly need and depend on years of experience. If they had a choice between someone who has a master's degree and licenses as opposed to someone with 5 years of work experience in that field, they will definitely choose the latter if they both want to work in the same field or position. So in the field of engineering, they really look more towards experience and skills and this will give you a higher chance of be employed. But of course, educational attainment is also a factor here.

R: From your personal experience ma'am, what factors about Taiwan would attract our fellow Filipinos to look for white-collar work here, on top of the high salary and good working environment here?

G: As a white-collar worker, maybe if the company gives higher compensation. But it will depend on the company really. Like the one I work for now, you do not have a dorm and you will have to find your own place when you get here. They do not have housing or relocating allowance. I think we Filipinos will be more inclined to work here if there is housing provided or cheaper alternatives provided. Same as for our blue-collar workers. Although, the salary for white-collar is already very high as compared to those in the blue-collar sector. So maybe their thinking is that we can leave it to them to find their own housing as the salary is already high anyway. But I think free dorms or housing that is offered can help make Taiwan more attractive for us. If they also included more benefits as well.

R: When you were applying for a work permit here, did you have to do it yourself or did the company take care of it for you?

G: When it came to the work permit here in Taiwan, they had to process it for me since I was still at home. Then I took care of all the requirements needed in the Philippines. Everything they could do from the Taiwan side, they did for me.

R: What do you think are the factors that will dissuade or convince OFWs from working, accepting offers, or applying for jobs in Taiwan aside from the language barrier?

G: From my personal experience, as a white-collar worker, you will have to shell out money from your own pocket to cover everything. When you get here, you do not have a house. As you know their policy here, they require 2 months deposit and 1 month advance in rent. Even if you have some budget, these are still really huge expenses. If they can offer or provide assistance with regard to processing these things, then I think Filipinos will be more willing to take on these opportunities. Although, you might think that it's okay to shell out these big amounts given that the salary will be high. But I feel that not having to spend

such big amounts of money just to start. Because it was really big from my end. Like it was around NTD 200,000, on top of the conversion rate. If a subsidy can be provided, then that would be helpful. If no one helps you here upon arrival and you have to do everything by yourself, more so in Chinese then it's very difficult. More so during COVID time.

R: On top of the other Filipinos that you met in your company, did you know other Filipinos in Taiwan before moving, or did you only meet them here?

G: It was only here that I met them. I really needed to be strong-willed during my move here. You really need that, especially if you know that you are doing this alone. It can really be a frightening thought. Plus I was a girl and I did not know anyone.

R: So for the Filipinos that you met here, what were their classifications as workers? Were they mostly blue or white-collar workers?

G: They were mostly in the blue-collar manufacturing sector. Those in the white-collar sector that I knew off, since my previous employer was based in Taiwan, the others there I have worked or was acquainted with already and I know they are white-collar workers. But generally, those that I know and met here, they are mostly from the blue-collar sector.

R: Since you mentioned your previous employer was based in Taiwan, did you already switch jobs since you arrived here or not yet?

G: No. That company is based here and has a branch in the Philippines. So there was a collaboration. There was PCB here in Taiwan and PCB in the Philippines. They are connected.

R: Among the Filipinos here in Taiwan that you are connected with, do you think they are treated and compensated fairly? Why or why not?

G: Based on the stories of my friends in the manufacturing industry, salary-wise it is good. Although, they mentioned that they have to work overtime and they are tired most of the time. They feel like if they do not work overtime, they are disheartened by the possible income that they could have earned from it. It could have been possible income. But there's also a big difference in terms of the treatment of blue and white-collar workers. For example in terms of residency eligibility, at least now they are a possibility for them to apply for permanent residency despite being blue-collar workers. But in terms of salary, the minimum wage salary now for blue-collar workers is around 25K. Then to be a white-collar worker you have to earn almost 40K at least. So it seems kind of useless and unfair for those that have been working here for a long time already that they do not have a chance to get up. Although, those that I know here who were also ECE graduates and were my classmates back home, were rushing to get jobs right after graduation and accepted jobs in manufacturing. So despite having the same educational background, they have different classifications in terms of work. But generally, they are treated and compensated well. It is just that the difference in worker classification makes a big difference for salary and working hours.

R: So based on your stories, the number of Filipinos working in Taiwan is growing. So would you say that we are able to keep up or handle the work being assigned to us here in Taiwan and that we are capable of doing well?

G: Yes, we are. Filipinos are always resilient and able to find ways. We are also known to be very hardworking. I even hear from my friends in the manufacturing sector that they advise each other not to show off too much as they might be asked to do more work but will get paid the same as everyone else. We have to tell them not to do so well. They are overqualified for the work. Being engineering graduates then they end up in the quality assurance or other positions, they are overqualified for that work. I am not saying non-engineering candidates are less capable. I just mean that it feels like they could use this background to transition to being a white-collar employee and apply or start in other fields.

R: Thank you for your insights ma'am. These have been very helpful.

**<END OF INTEVIEW>**



**Interview 5: OFW in Taiwan**

**Date of Interview: May 15, 2020**



R: Would you mind sharing your age for profiling purposes?

J: Sure, no problem. 27

R: In terms of educational background, what would be the highest educational attainment that you currently have?

J: Master's degree.

R: Great. From my understanding, this master's degree you have attained in Taiwan correct?

J: Yes, the highest one would be MBA. Although I had some units when I was in the Philippines, but I did not finish them.

R: For your undergraduate studies, you finished this in the Philippines?

J: Yes

R: Was this also under the field of business administration or a different field?

J: It was not. It was a BA in Sociology. I did have some units in management, but it was not really business-related.

R: All right. So it was more social sciences for your undergrad, and for your masters in Taiwan more business-related. For the number of years residing in Taiwan, you mentioned you arrived in 2018. Before this, were you just living in the Philippines or did you get the chance to live elsewhere?

J: No I did not. I was just living in the Philippines before moving to Taiwan in 2018.

R: So you've been living in Taiwan for more than 4 years. How about the total number of years working here?

J: I would say 1 and a half. I started working full-time for a Taiwanese company only in January 2021.

R: But before your full-time work in January 2021, did you also get to do internships or part-time work here in Taiwan?

J: No. During my MBA, I had the chance to keep my full-time job in the Philippines and was working remotely for my previous employer back home. So I would say that even if I left the Philippines, I did not really stop working. With that, I would say I only started working in Taiwan, in 2021.

R: Alright. But in terms of employment status, you were never really unemployed despite studying abroad?

J: Yes, I just kept working all throughout.

R: Would you mind giving us an idea of your function/role in your current company?

J: It's product marketing for a fintech company.

R: How is your Chinese proficiency at the moment?

J: It's funny. I would say it's worse. When I was studying in the university from 2018-2020, we were given a scholarship for language studies. It was 9-hours per week, full load of mandarin classes. At the time I was really able to use it since I was in school. But right now, I don't really get to go use it at work. For my 2 employers, english was the medium of conversation everywhere in the company. I want to say intermediate since I was able to receive the TOEFL, but I am not that confident.



R: So you have acquired the certification to be branded as having intermediate proficiency at least right?

J: Yes, level 2 of TOEFL.

R: Great. Now we can move on to the questions that are more focused on your living experience here in Taiwan. At the time that you were making the decision to move to Taiwan, what about the country made it an attractive destination for you?

J: It was not really the country at the time, but more on the scholarship offer. At that time I was studying tech management, I was hoping to have those units credited when I go to another country to study. Regardless if it was Taiwan or any other country. I was supposed to enroll in Tsing Hua University since they had an MBA in technology management. Unfortunately, I felt that the benefits of the ICDF scholarship would be more beneficial for me, so that's why I decided to enroll at NCCU. But to answer your question, it's not really the country for me. Although I have been to Taiwan before I applied for the scholarship. I enjoyed the experience, but it was more on the scholarship benefits.

R: Prior to your move, did you have any concerns about Taiwan?

J: Before the move, as it was a full-ride scholarship, I knew all the benefits were good. I was just worried if it was gonna be enough for me. Even though I had the job, I was still worried. It was enough at least and I wasn't that worried since I knew the scholarship provides well and I was comfortable.

R: What about outside the financial concerns, did you have any cultural or safety concerns about Taiwan that worried you? Language barrier maybe?

J: No, it did not cross my mind at the time. I think I was just too excited then.

R: Great. Now that you have stayed for quite some time and you're currently working here, did the possibility of applying for permanent residency ever cross your mind or would you prefer to go back to the Philippines in the next 5 years?

J: I am definitely working towards PR (permanent residency). Right now the requirement is only 5 years. I already had probably a year with my previous employer, and my contract with my current employer ends just in time for me to be able to apply for permanent residency. Right now, I plan on staying.

R: Great. Can we now move on to your experiences in terms of job-seeking? You mentioned while studying here you were still employed by your employer from the Philippines. What made you decide to finally look for employment here in Taiwan after studying?

J: After I graduated, I realized that the compensation provided by my employer in the Philippines wouldn't be at par with what I could earn here in Taiwan. At that time, I decided to finally resign from that post. But I looked for a job first before I officially resigned. Immediately after graduating and after talking to my boss, I realized I really needed to seek employment here in Taiwan.

R: During the period when you were job-seeking, what types of jobs were you hoping to acquire? Did you want one that was more related to your MBA from Taiwan or your degree in Social Sciences from the Philippines? Or did you have a different preference?

J: I would say it was more related to my previous job. Because when I was working for my previous post back in the Philippines, it was also a marketing and project management post. But back then, it was a non-profit organization. So most of my leads when it comes to job-seeking, it's all related to marketing. It was also related to my MBA, since marketing was my concentration in my MBA.

R: So just to clarify, you were successful in acquiring a marketing-related job in a fin-tech company correct?

J: Not immediately. The first job that I had was with an OEM company. It was an educational technology start-up, specifically hardware. But, I was a social media marketer/manager there. Then after 8 months, I transferred to another company.



R: Alright. During your job-search, what platforms and intermediaries did you use to search for opportunities here in Taiwan?

J: I would say LinkedIn, 104, and cake resume maybe.

R: When you were searching, what factors made it difficult for you to secure an interview? Then afterward, to continue with the job applications process?

J: I think during that time it was hard to secure even just an interview. We don't realize it that much, but there are still only a few foreigners in Taiwan in terms of the marketing field. It's very competitive. Somehow, I would say the quality of candidates is very small? I think for me, the main roadblock would be the lack of platforms for foreigners since it's just 104 or LinkedIn. I would say even in LinkedIn it's not that much. Only big companies and international companies are hiring on LinkedIn, and sometimes they don't even. Like for example ASUS, HTC, and other big companies, only hire on 104 or more local platforms. Or their main manpower database/actual website. It's really hard. Like 104 at the time did not have English yet and were purely in Chinese. What I also noticed is that why it's hard for candidates to even secure an interview, is because even though the post is for an English-speaking professional, the ones who are hiring or those in the first line of people responsible for hiring or the recruiters, many of them don't speak English. So the tendency is, why would they call if they cannot communicate in the first place? So even if they're hiring for English-speaking professionals, the first question would be "can you speak Mandarin? For people who are not so confident in their Mandarin, I think that's one of the biggest roadblocks in terms of the platform and the first people you talk to.

R: So you're saying that just from the screening process, there are already several barriers despite the job description not requiring Chinese language proficiency?

J: Definitely. Even though they won't say that, it is the call of the hiring manager as to whom they call or get in touch with.

R: So in your case, you were already able to secure two jobs already here in Taiwan. During the interview process, did you notice any patterns in their questioning, or the requirements/qualifications they were looking for in their candidates? Also, if you compared it to the job-seeking process and interview process in the Philippines, was there a big difference?

J: During interviews, I did not notice any patterns from hiring managers. I think they tried to keep us on equal footing at least. I think the HR manager was already able to sift through the candidates already. Based on my experience, when you reach the hiring manager, you're all equal. I would say it's more on the skills and experience. Also in Taiwan, one thing that's different from my experience in the Philippines, they try to negotiate salaries based on experience. Even though the salary is declared on the job post, they'll try to adjust it depending on the experience that you had.

R: Would you say your nationality and where you attained your education also played a factor? As you were also educated in Taiwan, do you think that also played a big role or not really?

J: I would say, for my line of work, it was not a criterion. Though I would say, that my job current job is specifically marketing toward migrant workers. So most likely, the person that they would be hiring is someone from the Vietnamese, Indonesia, and Philippine communities. Professionals with those backgrounds. But with my job before that, I did not notice that nationality was a factor.

R: Just to clarify. Your current company is a local or foreign company in Taiwan?

J: It is an international company.

R: And for your role, they were looking for someone with experience or expertise in a specific consumer market. In your case, the Philippines correct?

J: True, yes.

R: All right. Let's move on now to your specific work experience here in Taiwan. In terms of compensation, work environment, and personal development within the company, do you think you are treated fairly in terms of all of this?

J: This is just my personal opinion. I think in terms of compensation it was easy to negotiate. In terms of training and development, the 2 companies that I worked for were also supportive. So it's been positive so far. I have to say this though, as this is a common experience for Filipino students after graduating in Taiwan. I don't know if you're familiar with it, but there are 2 ways of getting a work visa. The first is you need to earn the minimum of salary, I think it was 30,000? I mean this is the point system right. You have to reach 70 points. The other way is you need to earn more than 42,000. Luckily, they did not opt for the point system, so in terms of compensation, I got what I asked for. It wasn't a nightmare negotiating my compensation.

R: Did any problems/issues arise for you then during your stay here so far?

J: None really. The only thing I can think of is the hiring procedures. Most employers are familiar with the process of hiring workers directly from the Philippines. It's rare that they hire students and then process them as foreign workers. You know, the OEC (Overseas Employment Certificate) thing. I think that was the only problem. Because every time that I needed to explain to the employer, they find it weird that "why do I need to process you as a foreign worker in the Philippines, while you already have a labor permit here in Taiwan?" So right now, I am going back to the Philippines, I need to secure the contract verification kind of thing, the OEC, I need to explain it to them again since they are not familiar. That's the only challenge I can think of. Probably that processes that they are not familiar with. Otherwise, they are very supportive, no problems securing the work permit from their side. That's all you really need actually.

R: So the OEC is a requirement from the Philippine side only?

J: Yes, that is from our side. Because we need to get back to Taiwan right? So for me, I will be spending 2 months in the Philippines, but I have to first secure an OEC because immigration won't let me out.

R: So the paperwork requirements is actually more tedious from our side than Taiwan's correct?

J: I think so, specifically MECO. The way it's designed on the website, it seems to be designed for people that are currently in the Philippines. What happens, if a student is directly hired in Taiwan and plan to go back home, it's not part of the process. You have that figure that out and ask. It's considered more a minority case, it's not part of the process. So HR has to get in touch with MECO, then MECO has to explain to them why they need to do this. So it seems it's MECO's problem.

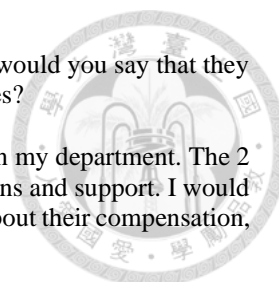
R: So it actually causes problems for our white-collar OFWs here going through that route.

J: I encountered several individuals that opted to finish their contracts first, like 3-year contracts, since they did not want to go through the hassle. It's a waste because we have multiple entry visas that come with our ARC. So we have the luxury of going home, since we're not migrant workers and we can visit home every time we want. But we'd rather not just to avoid the hassle. It's definitely a problem right?

R: Yeah, I understand. What about workplace culture, dealing with local Taiwanese and other Filipinos and foreigners in the workplace, how is the dynamic between all of you?

J: So the first company that I worked with, it's a small team of around 20-25 people. I think during the latter half of my tenure, I was the only foreigner left. But I did not really feel that I was a foreigner since they really encouraged speaking English in the office. In terms of culture, you might have heard some horror stories about working in Taiwanese companies? Fortunately, in my case, I didn't experience that. It was more Western culture. No time out, they encourage you to log out after 6 pm, they don't want people taking home their laptops because they do not want them working at home. I didn't have any problems.

For my current employer, it's the same. I would say there are more foreign professionals here. We have people coming from the UK, Australia, India, and the Philippines, since the company is a global organization and the culture is more Western-oriented.



R: Would you mind sharing how many Filipinos are working in the company and would you say that they are thriving and appreciated for their work? Or are they experiencing specific issues?

J: I would say in the company, there are around 8-10 Filipinos. I am the only one in my department. The 2 others are engineers, so totally different fields. The rest are working under operations and support. I would assume we're "thriving" since we are still with the company. I am not totally sure about their compensation, but it is safe to assume they are compensated well since they are staying.

R: That's great. It's also good to hear that there are more than 5 Filipinos working in your company because I interviewed a Filipino labor officer here in Taiwan and they mentioned that companies have a limit of 5 employees per company. So I think it's a good sign that your company actually hired well above the quota. I hope it shows that they appreciate the services of the Filipinos and feel that they are assets to the company.

J: I think I have to clarify. The 5 are probably within the limit still. I think it's because majority of the Filipinos are hired as spouses. I do not know if their classification fall under foreign professionals, but they were in Taiwan already upon being hired, especially those working in operations. So they're married to Taiwanese and have families here already. It's probably not covered by the quota. As for as I know, 4 of us in the company now are hired from the Philippines.

R: All right, thanks for clarifying. Maybe we can now move on to attractive factors or barriers for those that want to work in Taiwan. So what would white-collar OFWs find attractive here in Taiwan in terms of work, and aside from the hassle of paperwork from the Philippines side, what barriers could possibly dissuade them from pursuing or continuing to work in Taiwan?

J: I think first of all in terms of policy, I think MECO should work hand in hand with whatever department handles direct foreign employment. Foreign professionals would not want to go through an employment agency. They would want to be hired direct. If MECO can probably coordinate job opportunities in Taiwan and communicate it back to professionals in the Philippines. We have lots to offer, especially in IT and engineering. We also have great English communication skills, so it's an asset definitely. I think that's what we lack. Filipinos back home do not know there are actually opportunities in Taiwan.

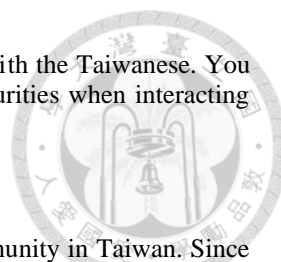
Secondly, I hope the process gets easier since there's really too much paperwork to be handled even if you are a direct hire. The only difference between being directly hired and going through an agency is who is handling the paperwork. It's either you or the brokers. But it's same the sets of requirements, same processes. So if we can probably refine the process to make it easier for Filipinos back home.

I want to add that in terms of compensation, Taiwan is still not competitive as compared to other countries. Even though, it's more competitive to what we were getting in the Philippines, but if you compare it to maybe Singapore and US then it's still low.

Even though you attain a degree here from a Taiwanese university, it does not equate to high salary when working here. You have to realize that your other competitors here got their degrees from the US, in Europe, so even the degree is not competitive. It helps to a certain extent of course, but even a master's degree is really not that competitive.

R: So if it's not so much the Taiwanese degree that will give you a competitive edge and salary here, what do you think will be the biggest factor? Skills, nationality, experience?

J: Well for my line of work, it's really the skills and certifications. But for very specific kinds of work, for example teachers. Although they do not want to admit it, employers do have specific nationalities that they do prefer right? It will depend on the industry and type of work. We're not even considered native English speakers which I find weird. I think the Ministry of Education (MOE) categorizes the Philippines as a native English speaker, but the employers don't, like the bushibans. They would prefer to hire someone that is white. I'm just basing it off experience. I have classmates that do not even come from English speaking countries, but they are hired just because they look white. I think the teachers admit to it. I really also boils down to the parents. I think they would prefer someone who is white. So it's put our English teachers, who are well certified even, at a disadvantage.



R: Yes, I heard similar stories before. Maybe we can move to your interactions with the Taiwanese. You have worked for local Taiwanese, do you think they have their own issues/insecurities when interacting with foreigners or Filipinos specifically?

J: For me, luckily no. None so far

R: Great. May I ask now about your personal connections with the Filipino community in Taiwan. Since you've been here for more than 4 years already, have you built an established network with the Filipinos here or not really?

J: When I was studying, as I was also working full-time, no not really since I did not have time. But right now, since I have the luxury of time. I have met some. I was part of \_\_\_\_\_'s campaign team here in Taiwan, we ran the Facebook page and all, gathered the supporters here in Taiwan. So I was one of the lucky ones who had the opportunity. I also did poll watching during the elections. So my volunteering made me connected to the Filipino community here. When I was studying it was just other expats, but now I know a lot more Filipinos here. Mostly blue-collar workers. Hopefully we can organize some events later on, when the surge is over.

R: So most of the Filipinos your connected to, their demographics are what exactly? Blue-collar workers?

J: It's a mix. Previously it was just students and white-collar workers. Right now, I have a lot of friends that blue-collar workers.

R: For your circle of friends classified under-white collar workers, what are their demographics? Like what background, industry, etc.?

J: Engineers mostly. Engineers, technical writers, researchers. The ones that have been here for quite some time, they work for the big companies here like HTC, Asus, Acer. So if not engineers, they are technical writers most of the time.

R: Did they ever mention about the treatment towards them and if they enjoy the life here in Taiwan? Or maybe they see themselves going back home or elsewhere for work?

J: They love Taiwan. One friend of mine has been saying since 2012, another even moved her whole family here and has acquired residency. Some of their sons and daughters grew up here already.

R: Do you think that they are able to compete and thrive in the Taiwan labor market, regardless of the industry/field? Or would you think it would be more beneficial to pursue work back home?

J: I think it is worth the try to explore the opportunities here in Taiwan. It might be hard since it's highly competitive here, employers would prefer someone else based on face value. But I think it's still worth a try especially if you're young, trying to save up, and want to gain experience. You don't have an immediate family or other responsibilities to attend to back home.

R: There remains to be a big disparity between blue and white-collar OFWs in Taiwan. Why do you think that is?

J: First of all, I think companies don't look to the Philippines at all for their openings. They would much rather hire other nationalities such as the Japanese or overseas Chinese because of the culture. I think we need to convince them to hire more Filipinos for white-collar workers. It's weird, they hire a lot of Filipinos for blue-collars and even look for them, but don't even consider us for white-collar roles. Second, there is a lack of awareness. The reason why not many are given gold cards is that only a few apply. Even us professional working here in Taiwan aren't fully aware of the initiative and its process, what more those working in the Philippines? I think it boils down to government-to-government relationships for direct hiring, and information dissemination.

R: So you can observe there is a lack of awareness from both sides with regards to opportunities in the country and the capabilities of Filipinos for these white-collar roles.

J: Yes, exactly and honestly it's a waste. For our blue-collar workers here, many of them are engineers with degrees from back home. Why would you give them 30K salary if you could give them 90K, basing it on the same skills?

R: So why do you think those with the same qualifications and background are still categorized and paid differently?

J: I do not know, to be honest. It's hard to say. But a factor may be that the employees are also willing to get paid that much and work as factory workers despite their credentials and degrees as they can earn more working as that than maximizing their engineering degrees back home. For example, I don't think it will be the same case for an engineer from the west to be okay with such roles.

R: Yes, it is also from our personal willingness due to pay and other situational factors. It's not totally on Taiwan's side.

J: If I can just add. It's not because they want to. It's just what the situation demands. There's a higher salary in Taiwan, so I'll just go for it.

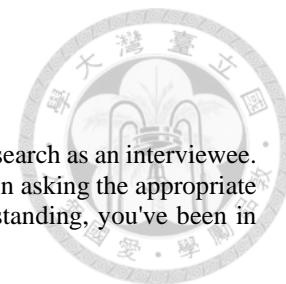
R: Yes, you're right. Thank you for all of your insights and inputs sir. I'm curious how you acquired such an in-depth understanding of the situation for our blue and white-collar workers in the country?

J: It's part of my job since I market towards these sectors. I know specifically where Filipinos are located up a certain zip code. Our company has that much insight since we are marketing to migrant workers. We also have a job to maintain the Filipino community so that product marketing would be easier. It's based on data and talking to many people. I know there are many engineers, accountants, and nurses. It's just too bad.

R: I understand sir. Thank you again for your sharing your knowledge and time with me.

**<END OF INTERVIEW>**

**Interview 6: OFW in Taiwan**  
**Date of Interview: May 18, 2020**



R: All right. So sir, thank you again for accepting my invitation to be part of my research as an interviewee. Thank you as well for sending your CV to me which will serve as a helpful guide in asking the appropriate questions based on your experience. So, sir, based on your CV, from my understanding, you've been in Taiwan since 2019, correct?

J: Correct. Right.

R: Okay. And so initially you came here for, for work or for your current studies?

J: I actually started here when I first presented my paper to NTNU where I am currently taking my PhD. I was on a tourist visa at the time since it was just a short trip for my presentation. But during that time, I was already doing my own research and sent several applications to universities here and sent out my CVs to the same universities for possible job openings. I sent out my CV to hundreds of employers and only received replies from less than 10 of them. Within those 10, I only received 2 positive responses. I am currently working from one of them now after they offered me a contract. Luckily, these two companies were open to hiring me and I joined the company that first offered a position. So I worked for 2 years here first before starting my PhD.

R: So I see that you were invited to many conferences all over the world, why did you choose Taiwan as your work destination? Was there a specific reason?

J: I applied to other countries too like Hong Kong and Japan, but Taiwan seemed to be the most economical option. It just so happens that during my presentation, I sent out my resume and got callbacks. It was also about timing. I think you will notice this in all of your OFW interviewees, working abroad is also about timing.

Initially, I thought I was overqualified to teach basic education. But I came to realize that I wasn't and that working in the Philippines conditioned me to think that a master's degree is sufficient to teach in a university, while the minimum requirement in Taiwan and most parts of the world requires a PhD. Unless you are a well-published researcher or possess certain skills.

R: So would you say Taiwan holds higher standards in the employed in the education and research fields as compared to the Philippines?

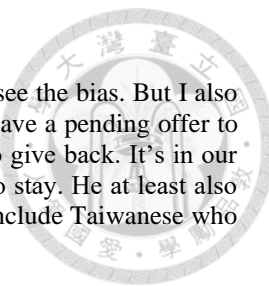
J: Actually, many Filipinos are qualified as they first look at teaching license, which Taiwan recognizes even if it's from the Philippines. Second, you will hear the term native speaker of English especially if your job is an English-speaking teacher. It's a debatable concept because who really are considered to be native speakers right? In the Philippines, those in the upper class and elites have English as their native language. In the middle class, it's translingual and we're comfortable with both English and Tagalog. But you will understand that Taiwan believes in the native speaker fallacy. I would say fallacy or myth because from a linguistics standpoint, they believe that the best teachers of English are those who have it as their native language. It's also debatable actually. South Africa for example, they have Afrikaans as its first language, English might only be its third language. But since they are white, you know. Even when choosing a white or black South African, most will still choose the white person. Not to be racist or anything but that is the observation.

R: Did you ever experience this issue yourself sir as an ESL instructor and as one that comes from the Philippines they did require you to submit other forms of documentation?

J: Not really. Luckily, they considered English as our second native language. 3 years ago, you still needed to present a lot of proof to be able to teach here. Today, the good news is the government and public schools have been more accommodating as they have the bilingual program by 2030. They also have the Southbound Policy. In the south, it's really just Singapore and the Philippines that have people who speak English comfortably. I also told my boss that I will not put up a fake accent just to make me seem like more of a native speaker.

R: What was his reaction when you said that?





J: There was no issue. Although sometimes with my boss, sometimes you can still see the bias. But I also don't want to leave him since he gave me the opportunity to work here. Even if I have a pending offer to teach in a government school with higher pay, I chose to stay out of loyalty and to give back. It's in our culture right, "utang na loob". So even if I feel some biases sometimes, I choose to stay. He at least also makes the effort to make a balance. As an international private school, his clients include Taiwanese who base teaching skills on appearance and nationality but not on your credentials.

R: Yes, I am well aware of this stigma. I have another interviewee that had to fake his/her nationality just to continue working for a cram school. It's a sad reality. I am happy to hear at least in your case, that the hiring decision was based more on your credentials.

So let's move on to your living experience in Taiwan. You've been here almost 3 years already. Do you see yourself applying for permanent residency or maybe migrating somewhere else? Or maybe go home?

J: I am a practical guy. I don't want to waste the opportunity and am looking to apply for permanent residency for me and eventually my mother. The healthcare system here is very good, so maybe in the future I will try to bring her as well at least for checkups. Also, the opportunities here are much better. The salary is around fifty to ninety NTD, and I can study at the same time. It's a practical choice.

In the Philippines, I was teaching in a private and polytechnic university on weekdays and Saturdays. On Sundays, I was editing English textbooks on an e-book platform. I was also on the last year of my Masters. So I had no rest.

Here, what I really like is that when you enter the educational system and working culture/environment in the office in Taiwan, they will not disturb you on the weekends even if the nature of teaching will more or less force you to bring homework. Grading, making preparations, etc., which I really appreciated. Unfortunately, it was a different story back home.

R: If you don't mind me asking, how's your Chinese proficiency and do you use this when you teach English?

J: I have zero proficiency, but I do feel that it would be more advantageous to incorporate it when I teach English to my students. Luckily, my employer never asked if I ever had proficiency in Chinese. My personal standpoint though is that it makes English teaching more effective, especially for the foundational years of a child, as it provides them access to their first language while learning a second one. Most institutions and teachers here impose the "English only policy" which made it advantageous for me, but I am personally not in favor of this method.

R: When you get the offer to work here, what were your concerns before the move? Were there factors that were discouraging you from your move at the time?

J: Not really. I do not get homesick. Anxiety and sadness were not concerns for me at all. I believe I am quick to adjust. The language barrier was also not a factor since I was a language teacher in English and I can survive outside of the school. I just used charades and photos to get by. At work, it's not the same for engineers or accountants that require basic proficiency in Mandarin. The English-only policy at my workplace really made it easier for me. I had the opportunity to learn Chinese through the free language classes being offered to migrants in Taichung, but it was stopped due to the pandemic.

I did face some health issues, irritable bowel movement, which was traced back to the spices or oil that they use for their food here. But the healthcare system is very good here anyway so. If I had this in the Philippines, it would have been very bad.

R: It's good to hear that you did and do not have any issues regarding your stay and living here. You mentioned a while ago sir about your working experience here, that it's good since they did not require you to work overtime and all, but how would you describe your interactions with your colleagues at the workplace? Is there a diverse composition and what are day-to-day dynamics with each other?

J: So it's a private school that has an international and local department. In my first 2 years here I was with the international department where I taught literature. This year, I was given a lot of courses in the local

department for ESL as I am not able to work from Monday to Friday anymore due to my Ph.D. schooling. They allowed me to not be present once a week for this. So despite the biases that I previously mentioned, it feels easy to disregard them because of all the favors they provide for me. I feel the trust that they have in me and for giving me such a great opportunity so I feel grateful to them. Yes, there is racism but it's also objective, right? I believe my studying will also benefit the institution in terms of faculty achievement so it's also a good thing for them to give me this flexibility.

For me, as long as my boss is good and there are no university or office politics, I am okay. I avoid politics even if it is beneficial for me. I prefer to save face and would rather climb the ranks through hard work. I think this is a typical trait for Filipinos. What I like about the place I am working in now is that you just have to do your job, review, and follow the teaching guidelines. I also enjoy the flexibility my boss gives me and he is fair to all employees and other foreigners. I think it also stems from me just being open to all kinds of work and load that he would want me to handle. So it's a give and take. I am also easy to talk to.

R: That's great to hear. Does your company provide opportunities for development in terms of position and salary? Let's say after you attain your Ph.D.?

J: There is a salary increase yearly, but not too big. But what's more important for me is being renewed every year. I have a Filipino friend who was also a substitute teacher here, but her contract was not renewed. Luckily, she was able to land another job at a public school which actually put her in a much better position financially. She is highly qualified, also a doctorate student but online, and her qualifications are much higher than mine. But because for reasons such as politics among others, I am not really sure, she was not renewed. That instance made me feel blessed. What I'm trying to get at is there are different dynamics and reasons to be hired and retained in the teaching industry in Taiwan as a Filipino. This became an issue for her given the rule that if an employment contract will not be renewed, the employer has 30 days to fix their ARC status before it expires. She was not given this treatment by the boss which caused problems for her. By law, these are actually grounds for complaints. But as us Filipinos have this "utang na loob" or indebtedness mindset, she opted not to do it since she also found a new job anyway.

R: This case actually shows how we Filipinos sometimes even put our own selves at a disadvantage just because of this mindset. It's also a great example of how Filipino culture affects our working dynamics abroad.

J: At the same time, if you look at it, Taiwan is a very attractive destination for foreigners that want to pursue English language teaching. So in the international school that I am working in, many try to apply for work there and many have also been laid off or left already. The turnover rate in this field is very high. So as a Filipino, you would see that it is very competitive and that you can be replaced anytime.

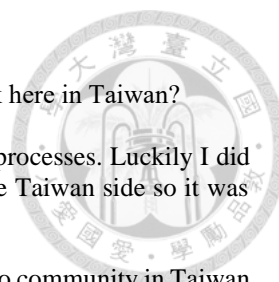
R: That's a great point. Do you see yourself changing jobs, after you finish your Ph.D.?

J: The salary of a university professor teaching 9-12 units and a full-time basic education teacher is basically the same. At the same time, it's more exhausting for university teachers since you have to produce papers. So I am not actively looking to switch careers. I am more focused on switching or upgrading from private to government schools since I know now that it is manageable and attainable. If I were to jump to being a university professor, maybe not in Taiwan. I want to prioritize my studies and being re-hired in my current teaching job.

R: Alright. Going back to what you mentioned earlier. You said that some of the factors about Taiwan that may attract other OFWs would be the higher salary, the good healthcare system, the environment, and the dynamic with the locals are also good. What do you think would be the hindrances and barriers for them?

J: Right now, there are a lot of pending applications from the Philippines that are being considered by schools here. Unfortunately, they are bypassed by others because of the very slow process of authenticating their documents in the Taiwan office/embassy in Makati (Philippines). I feel for our fellow Filipinos because actually I know the burden of this process. At the time that I applied it was pre-pandemic and already troublesome. What more nowadays? Their opportunities for an interview and offers are foregone because they do not reach the deadline by the employers. That is one barrier.

Another I think would be attitude and mindset. Sometimes the pressure to prove oneself and the double standards may get to some of us, but that's how it is right? If you can't take it, then it also restricts you.



R: That's sad to hear. Did you have similar issues attaining the required paperwork here in Taiwan?

J: I had to go back and forth between the Philippines and Taiwan to finish all the processes. Luckily I did some initial research and finished them faster than usual. I had a contract from the Taiwan side so it was easy to get the visa from the Taiwan embassy in the Philippines.

R: Moving on to my last set of questions. Do you have close contact with the Filipino community in Taiwan after having lived there for more than 3 years?

J: My auntie is a caretaker in Taipei. So she was my first contact here. I also have some friends from the manufacturing industry. The majority of those in Taichung are from this industry. But I don't frequently see them anymore since COVID happened. I am also just in touch with one other Filipino teacher here. Most of my friends here are foreigners actually. Most of the time, I also keep to myself since I am very busy.

R: From those that you've met, do you think Filipinos are compensated and treated well here in Taiwan? And do you think there exists a stigma towards Filipinos here in Taiwan?

J: Based on the experience of my aunt here as a caretaker, they have the agent and broker system. As a teacher though, what's nice about Taiwan is that no matter your nationality, as a foreign teacher you get the same salary. It only boils down to how well you negotiate during the yearly contract renewal period and salary. They are much better at this than we are. I think it is also because of our personality, as we are generally more shy. We're also the type to just do our jobs. It's subjective at times too.

R: Last question sir. Do you think Filipinos will thrive here in Taiwan, no matter the sector or industry?

J: Yes, we can. Especially for teachers, workload wise as compared to what we were doing in the Philippines, we can easily cope here. I think we are just too grateful for the opportunities that we find a way to do good in it once given the opportunity. It just so happens for example that many of us end up in manufacturing and there's a bias attached to it. Racism and politics is everywhere. You just have to know how to work around it.

R: Fair point sir. Lastly, may I ask a few questions for profiling purposes?

J: Sure, go ahead.

R: Thank you. May I get your age please?

J: 33

R: Educational background?

J: Currently finishing my Ph.D. in Literature here in Taiwan. I attained my M.A. in English Language and Literature Teaching and my Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education, Major in English in Manila.

R: Number of years staying and working in Taiwan?

J: A little over 3 years now.

R: Current position and company/industry?

J: I currently work as a Literature and ESL teacher at a private international high school in Taichung.

R: Great. Thank you so much for your time and input. I really appreciate it.

**<END OF INTERVIEW>**

**Interview 7: OFW in Taiwan**

**Date of Interview: May 24, 2020**



R: Thank you for joining me today. For profiling purposes, would you mind sharing your age range with us?

C: Late twenties

R: Educational background?

C: MA in Creative Industries and then undergrad would be Asian Studies and Social Science

R: Okay. And the number of total years residing in Taiwan would be?

C: 2019 to 2021, so three years now and I have been working for 3 months now.

R: And then your current job function would be more on operations for a FinTech company, correct?

C: Yes.

R: Okay. And then in terms of Mandarin language proficiency, is it at the intermediate level? conversational?

C: Elementary?

R: So you initially moved to Taiwan, for studies. And at the time, when you were making the decision, what made Taiwan an attractive destination for you to pursue your studies?

C: Um, it's close to the Philippines. The fair it's cheap and my program was in English. So I wanted to find an arts program that is taught in English,

R: Any concerns from your end before your move?

C: Since I've worked in Taiwan's embassy before, I already know a lot about Taiwan and I also know some people here. Also, since I already experienced being a tourist here, it's okay. I felt like I already knew the place and it's not so unfamiliar.

R: All right. And then before your move to Taiwan, did you have prior experience living anywhere else? Aside from the Philippines or No?

C: No.

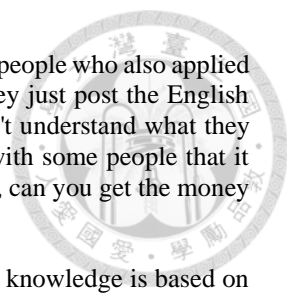
R: And since you've been staying here for since 2019, and it seems you are approaching eligibility for permanent residence. Is this something you're looking to attain? Or do you see yourself moving back home within the next few years?

C: I'm unsure as of now.

R: May I ask why?

C: Because for the APRC, I am not really that okay with the terms that they are setting for migrant or like professional workers. Because as of now, pending the amendment, we still need five years on ARC type. So for me, since I've just graduated and worked only for one year, I'm still waiting for four years to have the APRC. Then I also read that there are some different types of an APRC too, so since I'm on the track for the foreign professional APRC, as of now there is a salary bracket, so if you're below that bracket, I think it will be hard to apply and also the money that you're gonna shell out to pay the APRC also is not that cheap. It's 10,000.

R: 10,000, wow. So it's not really the lack of information for the requirements. It's more of it's still a bit stringent?



C: I guess it's both? Because you can only find information about that through other people who also applied for a PRC and if you search the government website, it's really not that clear. They just post the English version of the ruling, but not really like a process, how to do it. So if I really don't understand what they mean, I need to call and you know, like, go there or ask. And then I heard also with some people that it takes two months to review the application, and I'm not sure like, if you get denied, can you get the money back?

R: Okay, so a lot of unclear information, and from what I understand most of your knowledge is based on the experience of others who have attempted to apply. Otherwise, if you refer purely on the website, it's not that useful as a guide.

C: Yes, exactly.

R: Okay. That's good reference for me. In terms of job seeking, what were your concerns about working in a Taiwanese setting?

C: When I applied, I actually didn't have a hard time to find a job because I initially I wasn't really looking to find work here because I'm already like, planning to go back home. But then someone saw my profile in LinkedIn and asked if I'm interested and since I know the company, I just give it a try. But actually, with what am I doing now, I was not hired because of what I studied. It's because of my Filipino language ability. So it's more of technical skill rather than my master's or undergrad.

R: So if you had the choice, though, were you looking to acquire a job that's more in line with your arts degree? Or maybe your social science degree? Did you have a preference or not really?

C: At first, I did want to come back to the Philippines because prior to that, I'm doing public service. And it's more of what I studied master's because I wanted to contribute more to the public service since I was doing a research on public policies in art. And then, but since COVID happened, I had my doubts then on coming back, since everything was not so good. That time. 2021? Yeah. So I was also advised then by my family that if I can, if I have an opportunity here, might as well take it since that time, it's not a good place to come back to. And then there's still like, quarantine that time. So it's also costly. Also because I tried to compare the job offers between Philippines and Taiwan and the difference is not that much, but then in terms of like work-life balance, the job in Taiwan can provide that rather than working in the Philippines, and then you get a lower amount of salary.

R: Okay. So you mentioned that the job-seeking experience wasn't so difficult. Someone actually reached out to you directly, and invited you for an interview. So in terms of utilizing different intermediaries, you did not really have an experience these because you were directly approached by the company, correct?

C: Yeah and also in terms of working professionals here, I've heard that the Chinese culture, they take more on the connections, so it wouldn't be hard for you if someone recommended the job to you. I guess it would be hard if you don't ask like a Taiwanese or someone you know in that company, and then they would put in a good word for you. But then like, for my experience, maybe our HR is also just, you know, hard-working since during my time when I was hired that we are one batch, so we were like 10 people who were hired by the same headhunter. So I think it's based on 2 tracks. If you have a connection, and also if the HR of your company is hardworking, then it would be easier to find a job here.

R: But you didn't use any of your social networks or circles. It was more of the headhunter, and the company was really looking for someone with your profile. Right?

C: Yeah.

R: Okay. If you don't mind me asking during the interview process, what did you notice? In terms of maybe their questioning or the types of skill sets and background and abilities that they were looking for, what did you notice from there end, like what were they trying to find from their candidates?

C: I think since this is a fin tech company, so they are really looking more on what you can add on to the company and if you really fit the job description. So for like us, we are on the operations and we deal with migrant customers. So they prefer those who can understand Filipino or Vietnamese or Bahasa, since we will be the ones talking to the customer if they have any problems. And then also since during the interview,

I asked them basically on the link that they gave me about the job description, it's very unclear on what we would be doing. It's more of like assisting, taking care of like Filipina customer. So, it kinda looked like it was a customer service job. But then during the interview when I asked, it wasn't really a customer service job. It's just we are part of the customer service team. But we're not doing customer service because someone else is doing that job. So our job is more on the front and back end of the APP. But since the APP is more consumer-related, I think it's a mistranslation of our department. So I was confused at first when they invited for an interview. I said if this is a customer service position, I'm not interested. When they explained that they're not looking for a customer service personnel, but more on KYC, know-your-customer duties. So we are in charge of checking the legitimacy of the app. So it's more on customer checking really. If ever there's a problem with that, we can relay to the customer service team that they should ask this customer to provide a more valid document and stuff like that.

R: Ah yes, so really more back-end operations. Okay. So, in this case, nationality actually played a big role in the decision to hire you for this company.

C: Yes since the company really wants to expand to the migrant profiles in Taiwan.

R: Okay. And it didn't seem that your educational background was a big factor here. Or even some of your previous experience in government service?

C: No.

R: But in terms of maybe the job-seeking process, are there any big differences as to how the employers conducted this, if you compare it to your experience back home?

C: I think you're in, in Taiwan, you really have to start from scratch. Back to zero basically, because they don't count any experience from the Philippines as valid experience. Unless you are hired from the Philippines. Because we have colleagues from the Philippines that were really hired there. Like they had to go through the processes with POEA. If you get hired from there, I think the government of Taiwan would require the company to offer you a higher salary, rather than those who are already here. Those who are here, they can just compare your salary to the usual Taiwan society salary. Those hired here are counted as foreign skilled workers I think? But those who get hired from the Philippines then go to Taiwan, they are classified as specialists and are considered special hires by the company.

R: So they are probably provided an expat salary package, right?

C: Yes, yes. And I think free housing for 2 months until they can find a place here.

R: Oh, okay. At least this is some new insight for me. So in terms of working experience, from my understanding, you also did an internship while studying, and then now you're working full time. Would you mind describing the working environment in a company in Taiwan? And is there any big comparison to your experience in the Philippines?

C: Since my office is not purely Taiwanese, there are a lot of other nationalities too. So in terms of communication, we don't need to speak Chinese every time. So English would be our mode of communication in the office even in emails and memos. I think the difference is no overtime here and whatever is indicated on your job description is really only what you have to do. Not like in the Philippines, when there's no one doing it, you have to shoulder the responsibility.

R: Okay. So you're saying that in the Philippines, they expect you to go beyond your job function. And here, they stay true to what they promised based on the job description.

C: At least for my company, yes. Since we are also dealing with a lot of private information. So we are only limited to what we can know.

R: Alright. If you don't mind this this company that you're working for, it's not a local company as well.

C: Yes. Okay. So being in a diverse setting actually is more advantageous for you? Would you have preferred that? Or would you have preferred to have worked in a local Taiwanese company?

R: Hmm, I actually tried before. On my third month here after moving, there was one job I tried in a tour company and it's a pure Taiwanese company. And for me, it's not really a good company because everyone is busy, and it's a quota-based company. It's a tour company so you need to get a lot of clients for the tours to push through. You also need to talk to the suppliers abroad, so they need us to speak in English, to send emails, and stud. So they were pushing us that if the supplier gave us this rate, we should haggle for a lower price because Taiwanese customers like this and that. So I think the demand for work did not match my salary and I was not a permanent employee, but I had to do it anyway. So I think it also depends on what kind of company or nature the company, and also what skills you offer to that company.

R: Oh, okay. Just a clarification. This company of yours now, you mentioned you're not the only Filipino. How many Filipinos currently hired for your company?

C: We are eight or nine, I think. Since one plans to resign.

R: Are all the Filipinos there white-collar workers? Or they also have blue-collar?

C: All are white-collar. 4 of them already have Taiwan Resident IDs. Two are married to a Taiwanese and then two are with Taiwanese parents.

R: Okay, okay. But do you think Filipinos there in your company are treated and compensated well and are given opportunities to grow?

C: Yeah, I think so. I have an officemate, she came before me and she was part of the customer service department before and now she's doing another she got transferred to another department to network, so more challenging work. Also one colleague who was from customer service and now he's doing programming. If the company opens a position we can also apply to be transferred.

R: That's good. Okay. And do you think in comparison to your other foreign colleagues, is there a difference in terms of treatment or no, it's more or less the same treatment no matter the nationality?

C: I think it's the same treatment. It just differs on the position.

R: In terms of your interactions with the locals in your office, did you notice if they had any difficulties when interacting with foreign colleagues?

C: Based on my experience, it was okay and they were all nice. There are just times, in terms of processes and customer processing in the office, when there's a problem with this customer we need to involve other teams. There is some difficulty to explain the situation. So we need to say it in a way that they could also get it. So I think it becomes a problem sometimes. Also, as my work also involves screening and checking the documents, so we follow certain standards for what passes or fails. So my local colleagues and I sometimes debate over it, what passes and what fails. We keep going around sometimes because they say that in the Taiwanese guidelines, it's a fail for them while in our foreign guidelines it is considered a pass. So this results in our misunderstandings and disagreements.

R: But shouldn't those guidelines be uniform? It's just the change in terms of language use?

C: It is uniform as in most cases we agree. There are just special cases for example when the document is blurred for me, but it's not blurred for them. It's often subjective. My boss advised, that if it's this kind of case, my local counterparts and I have to talk and agree amongst ourselves since it's a case-to-case basis.

R: okay. Yeah, I was about to ask who mediates in these kinds of cases but I guess the boss leaves it to you.

C: Yes. But usually in my company, because we have young supervisors, they rarely mediate. If there are any problems, we have also the SOP that we can go back and refer to. I also like this because we don't go to work from Mondays to Fridays, and not all supervisors are always present. So the SOP which has all the guidelines and documentation procedures is our main point of reference for cases even without our supervisors.

R: Okay. But the credit would go to the company's well-established SOPs, right?



C: Yes.

R: Or is it the Taiwanese leadership? Is your boss Taiwanese or?

C: No. From Hong Kong. But my immediate supervisor is Filipino?

R: Okay. And most of the time you report to her?

C: Yes, but I since right now she's assigned in Europe so she is working remotely. Technically, my supervisor in the office is Taiwanese, but she's from another division. Most of the time we work independently and only go to her for certain problems.

R: Okay. So, I'm not sure if this experience of not being micromanaged is only within this company. But did you also experience this minimal supervision during your previous internships in Taiwan or just this company specifically?

C: I think they generally do not micromanage, maybe for me especially since I don't speak Chinese. But then I think when they say that I have to do something, I really have to do it within the day. So they just expect me to produce the desired output.

R: Okay, they're more results-oriented, basically.

C: Yes.

R: Okay. Okay, thank you. So maybe we can move on to some of the barriers for our fellow OFWs who wish to seek white-collar employment here in Taiwan. What would make Taiwan attractive to an OFW?

C: It's near. It's near Philippines. Also compared to other Asian countries, the cost of living is a bit high, but not at as high as in other countries. Environment-wise, I think it depends on where you live. I think that overall it is okay.

R: Overall, it's good. If not for COVID the convenience would be the biggest factor. In terms of barriers though, what may hinder our OFWs to pursue work here or want to continue working here?

C: I think language. I don't think so much about the cultural aspect.

R: But you were mentioning a while ago that despite you wanting to maybe pursue permanent residency. But because of all the vague guidelines, lack of information, and tedious application processes and requirements, is this also something that may possibly dissuade others from continuing to work here for a longer period?

C: Yes. Oh, but then because actually, you can work here for a longer period, it's just that you can stay on your ARC and not opt to move to a PRC. The only difference would be if you have a PRC, is you don't need to get a work permit and you can go back and forth to Taiwan. But then the bad side of that is that I think you can exit unlimited times and enter unlimited times, but then there is a period of stay that you need to complete here so that the APRC won't get expired. I think if you already got it then you exit for one year, I think they will have to stop it.

R: You mentioned you can either stay on your ARC and may be no need to apply for a PRC but in terms of acquiring the necessary work permits to be to legally work here, would you say that it's tedious? And if so, is it because of several factors from the Philippine or Taiwan side?

C: The work permit should be managed by your company, so you don't need to worry about that. So you just need to tell your HR, you need a work permit and they will do everything for you. But then in terms of you already getting the work permit, you just have to go to the immigration and extend your ARC. That's it.

That's the difference between the Philippine side and Taiwan side when it comes to students then becoming workers. It's not really detailed on the MECO website and also Taiwan side, because they only have



guidelines for those who are blue-collar workers and are hired from the Philippines. But then for us that are students or workers who are hired from here, they don't have guidelines on that.

Actually, it's a policy thing I think? Because the Philippines will treat us as undocumented OFWs when we work here, but then the Taiwan side has no problems as we are complete in the documentation since we have the ARC and work permit so we are legal workers here. But the Philippines has a law that you cannot directly hire from one country to another. That's why we have the POEA and the broker system. But in our case, we don't pass through that route. MECO and Taiwan also have an agreement about direct hiring, and it does not include students here who become workers, or we are included but we just don't know it. I just found out from my colleague that we still have to go through the OWWA because I thought if you are a direct hire, you should have an OEC(Overseas Employment Certificate) before making a trip home and only the Philippine side requires this actually. So we had to keep explaining to our HR here about the processes and why we need this and that. It's very confusing and tedious and they are also not familiar with the process since it is quite unique.

R: Wow. So, if they were supposedly changes to be made, should it be more from the Taiwan and company side or it's really more on the guidelines from the Philippines?

C: It's just on the Philippine side. Because we have to go through the same process for those who get hired from the Philippines, but some of the guidelines don't apply to us anymore like for example, your employer should shoulder the airfare of the employee. But we are already here, so why should they shoulder it? Plus it's legally binding because they have to sign it. So they are also scared to sign it since it can be used against them.

So maybe the Philippines side can do things to make it easier for us being hired here and for our employers. Like if what if we could just bring our contract there and not go through the whole bureaucratic process? And then they can just notarize it or something.

R: So actually, the company signing this agreement actually puts them at legal risk in a way?

C: Yeah I guess. Since there is no separate contract for those who are they're actually hired here and the form that they want us to fill out generates just a general contract. So they can make forms/documents that are more fit for our cases.

R: Okay, thanks. That's a good input for my thesis. Lastly, in terms of maybe your personal connection to the Filipino community in Taiwan. Since you've been here since 2019, are you in close contact with the community here or not?

C: Not really.

R: Okay. Okay. But you are in contact with a few Filipinos, I assume? And would you mind sharing the demographic of these close contacts of yours? Are they more blue-collar workers, white-collar, or unemployed?

C: There are some I met who are students too, and there are some I met who are blue-collar workers and white-collar too. I think I'm more on white-collar and students, the blue-collar collar not much. Only a few.

R: Based on your knowledge, the majority of the Filipinos here dominate the blue market sector, right?

C: Yes,

R: And as you know, there is a huge disparity between the white-collar and blue collar OFWs in Taiwan. Would you have an idea as to the reasons for this large disparity? What factors do you think contribute to this gap?

C: I think because in terms of white-collar jobs here, the salary is not that high. It's high compared to the Philippines, but then it's not really that high as compared to say you work in Europe or you work in the US. I think maybe depending on the company, the package is not really that enticing.

Also, Taiwan doesn't brand itself as a white-collar worker place. It's more of I think the marketing of Taiwan to the Philippines is more for tourists. I've also heard some cases of students saying they want to teach English but then when they come to Taiwan, they find out that English schools only accept those that are native speakers. We Filipinos consider ourselves native speakers since we speak English as our native language too. But here, they consider native speakers as those being white persons. So I think it's more of how Taiwan is branded in the Philippines and it attracts more blue-collar workers since the factory pay is really high. I heard also if they have overtime and stuff they get to earn big.

R: Yeah that's true.. Like I heard stories of engineers from the Philippines who are willing to be working as you know, quality assurance or more blue-collar type of functions, even if they are classified as well educated graduates and can take on white-collar roles just because of the salary disparity is also so big in comparison to our two countries

C: Yes, but I think it's really how Taiwan markets itself in the Philippines. They are more like it's near, so you can travel closer and spend like, say the weekend here and go back to Manila. It doesn't really say that if you go here you can find a job for yourself. And unlike, let's say when you go to Europe. It's far but even as a tourist, you hear stories of people finding work there while I was on tour. But here you don't really hear those stories. People just go here for vacation and to relax. It never crosses their mind to find work here. Unlike Hong Kong, I've heard a lot of stories that they travel overnight just for an interview. Singapore is also a similar case. People visit it for tourism purposes, but also try their luck because they know they can find a job there. So in Taiwan we actually have 14 days for travel, but why does no one try?

R: Yeah, no one even attempts to begin with or not a lot. But I'm also curious, because Taiwan now mentioned that they're facing a talent shortage, they need more highly skilled professionals, and they're opening up to the foreign labor market. But we're there two hours away in terms of proximity. They're aware of us because we provide the third-highest number of blue-collar workers in the country. But in terms of white-collar employees, we don't even reach 1% of the white-collar labor market here. So is there something directly related to the Philippines that maybe Taiwan is not considering? Or because they're very trying to be more open, but I don't think we're in the lens of the Taiwan employers...

C: Because I think though Taiwan employers are not also looking at us like us in that way. Because I think the labor shortage that they are saying is not really a labor shortage, but they're just looking for more expats?

R: Okay, so you feel like there's no shortage? They just want to diversify. But maybe we're not considered for the talent pool that they want?

C: Yeah, because if you look at the job openings here that they say is like a talent pool shortage, you can see that it's not really suited for Southeast Asians or at least Asians. It is really more for a white person, or Latin American person. It's not us. So I think even if you try, they will say it's not a good fit for you. Let's say TSMC, is looking for a corporate PR specialist, I think we can apply for this. But they would want to be more international looking as a PR specialist. So that's what I observed. If you read the job postings, they require 10 years plus of brand knowledge and everything. You have the qualification since they invested in your country, but then you're not looking at us, as professionals given our market segment in Taiwan is more of a blue-collar. So they feel that we can only produce blue-collar workers.

Also, I think they don't want to gamble with say that NTD47,000 salary base for specialists. They think that that kind of money is not you know, not for Southeast Asians or at least if they qualify, they are Southeast Asians who are from abroad like America or Europe who are just trying to find a closer job from their homes

R: Okay, and do you notice this purely based on the job descriptions for their openings or did you have experience applying for these companies?

C: Not really. It's also like how they say it in the news and also how they appeal that they need foreign workers, but then many of us are still not hired or unemployed and they still go for those that are hard to get.

R: So I'm not also sure if it's the lack of information from the Filipino side. Taiwan even has the gold card program that apparently anyone can apply for.

C: I think the gold card requirements are very stringent in terms of their requirements. So they're only certain sectors and professionals.

R: True. I also want to bring up one observation that many of those that attain a degree here in Taiwan, also face difficulties in finding a job after their program. Does that mean that attaining a degree here puts us at a disadvantage?

C: Yeah. I think it's because they treat you as a local hire?

R: So does that mean it gets more competitive for us just because we acquired a degree here?

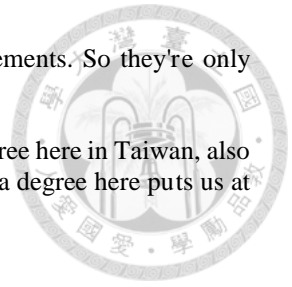
C: Yes, because I feel that most of those that get hired here that also studied here, get hired for their skills and not their education. MBA graduates for example. A lot of locals also have MBAs. So how do you differentiate yourself from them? So speaking English and Tagalog would be one of the few right?

R: So you would say maybe if you can give advice to foreigners looking for white-collar jobs here, it's the education route is not the most ideal? It will boil down to how you differentiate your skills and showcase this to the companies Correct?

C: Yes. I think if they're looking for a job here, I think it's still okay to look for one that na in related to your studies, but then I think it would be easier if you focus on what you already have like say you can speak a certain language or you have a background on some apps or programming. Since these often stand out for them. Many in Taiwan are also educated, so it's really how you differentiate yourself either through your skill sets, attributes, etc.

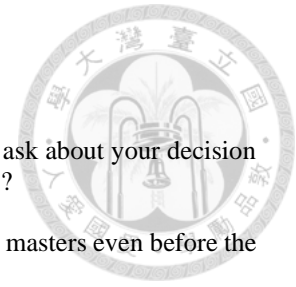
R: Thank you so much. These are really great.

**<END OF INTERVIEW>**



### **Interview 8: OFW in Taiwan**

**Date of Interview: May 26, 2020**



R: Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. To begin, I would like to ask about your decision to move to Taiwan. When and why did you decided to move here in the first place?

M: Sure. I moved here in 2020 for my studies. I was planning to move here for my masters even before the pandemic.

R: Great. What about Taiwan made you want to study here? Did anything concern you before you made the big move?

M: I was comparing the education and living costs with other universities worldwide and Taiwan seemed to stick out because of the convenience of travel and cost-effectiveness. I also saw that some of the schools here are highly ranked globally. I was most concerned about the language barrier and safety of living there since China was always threatening Taiwan.

R: Do you have plans of staying here after your study? Maybe apply for permanent residency?

M: I am definitely looking to apply for PR. I hope they make it easier for foreigners who get degrees here.

R: That's good to hear. Are you currently still studying or working already?

M: I am finishing up my thesis at the moment so I am technically still a student. I have recently been offered a full-time job with an engineering solutions company and will start working for them in August.

R: Congratulations! Happy to hear that you found a job even before you finished your studies. Was this something you had in mind when searching for jobs in Taiwan?

M: Not really. I am being hired as an internal auditor, which was something I used to do back home for a global auditing firm. I also took up accounting during my undergrad. With an MBA abroad, I was hoping to change career paths and transition to roles outside of auditing. I even turned down an offer for a job in Singapore which was similar to my role and company that I used to do back in the Philippines. Looking back now, I realized that was a mistake actually. I had a very difficult time finding and securing a job here in Taiwan as a foreigner. It took me always a whole year just to get interviews. Luckily I was able to find one just recently.

R: I'm sorry to hear that. But I do understand the difficulty of looking for employment here in Taiwan, more so for foreigners. What intermediaries did you use during your search and which of these proved to be useful to you?

M: I tried LinkedIn, Facebook, and even connections through the school and classmates. I also asked for help from a classmate who was interning in a headhunting firm here. It was only recently that I tried the local 104 site. I had considerably more callbacks and invitations once I started using this. So I highly recommend to foreigners looking for a job here to go through this portal. The difficulty is that it is in Chinese, but I feel like most companies here actively look for recruits on the site.

R: That's great. During the interview process, what questions did they frequently ask about you? Was it more related to your education, previous employment, or hard or soft skills?

M: I noticed they were very particular with my work and responsibilities in my previous company. Most of my interviews were related to my auditing background so they would even test me on my accounting knowledge and experience. They weren't so keen on my part-time work in Taiwan as it was not related to accounting at all. I also remember they asked me specifically about how much I used to earn in my previous company, to the point that one even requested proof of my monthly income. Chinese proficiency is also something I noted they were particular about. I can communicate a bit, not professionally. They barely asked me about my education here in Taiwan.

R: You said you had part-time work in Taiwan, would you mind describing this to me?



M: Yeah sure. I worked for the university to earn a bit of money while studying. It was a teaching assistant to a Filipino teacher and to some of my MBA professors.

R: Wow. Did you always want to work in the education sector?

M: Not really. It was really just to help support my education and living expenses here.

R: Were you being compensated fairly for the work you were doing?

M: Yes, definitely. I was only working a few hours a week and was earning way above the minimum hourly rate here in Taiwan. I have other Filipino friends who were working longer hours and more demanding work, but were only getting paid very little.

R: Where were they working?

M: One was working as an intern in the headhunting firm I mentioned and another was working as a part-time English tutor.

R: Did they ever complain if they were being treated or compensated unfairly?

M: The one working as an intern did quite often. He mentioned he was being given so much work by his colleagues, on top of his recruiter duties and was only being paid minimum wage. He also did not get commission for any of her successful placements since she was not on a full-time status.. She was being offered a full-time position with the company eventually, but she turned them down and looked for other opportunities.

R: It's good she found a different job then. Did you ever have difficulties in your interactions with the local or foreign colleague in the university.

M: Not at all. All of them were really nice and we helped each other when we could.

R: That's great. Let's move on now to the next part. In your opinion, what factors attract or dissuade Filipinos from working or seeking work in Taiwan?

M: The good thing about Taiwan is that is so close to the Philippines that traveling back and forth would have been super convenient. I also heard that it is one of the safest countries to live in, despite the pressure it gets from China. People here are also relatively friendly and the quality of life is generally good. The salary ranges here are also much higher than what's being paid to most Filipinos back home doing the same jobs.


Cost of living is a bit expensive in Taipei but, I think you can get by if you are able get by with the wide variety of food and accommodations available. The public transport system here is much better than what we have back home and you don't even need to invest in a private vehicle. That's if you're staying in Taipei at least.

For the barriers, I think it will be language definitely. You should come with some basic knowledge of Chinese already before coming here. I also just realized this, but looking for a job here is really difficult, so I will not go here with the goal of looking for a new job. It will really take up a lot of time and energy. I would advise securing a job here or maybe studying first before searching for opportunities in Taiwan. I think it's the same for all nationalities, not just Filipinos. I noticed the Taiwanese employers are a bit more on the conservative side and would much rather interview locals for the positions they are looking for.

R: I agree. Have you tried applying for work permits here? How was the experience?

M: Yes I have. The process was very easy and convenient. I just coursed it through my school and eventually received an online copy. For my full-time work, it's almost the same. They just asked for a few documents and they will take care of it themselves.

R: Good good. So to address some of the barriers you mentioned earlier, what do you think the Taiwanese government or companies should do so that more OFWs will be willing and able to work in Taiwan?



M: For the language barrier, maybe the OFWs can be provided free or subsidized mandarin lessons to help them gain basic knowledge. I also think that companies should actively promote their jobs in English so that more foreign applicants will be made aware and will try to apply. Most of the job postings on LinkedIn in English, but for example, I see a full posting in Chinese, then I am automatically discouraged from applying. I think it is also a way for companies to present that the opportunity is for locals or Chinese-speaking applicants only. On 104, it's almost completely Chinese. You will find a few openings that are described in English, but a minimum requirement will still be fluency in Chinese.

I hope that these companies would actively seek Filipinos for some of their openings given our improving track record here. I have countless stories of OFWs working in different industries here and are well-liked by their employers and colleagues. If only more companies can provide the opportunity for Filipinos to showcase their capabilities, I think they will be pleasantly surprised and the mindset that OFWs are only for blue-collar work can be slowly changed.

R: Speaking of other Filipinos in Taiwan, are you in close contact with some of them? If so, what types of jobs and industries are they usually working in?

M: I am acquainted with some Filipinos here. Most of them I met through my program and university, but it's not a big group. They are all either full-time students or white-collar workers in Taiwan. But I have also had to chance to meet with some in the blue-collar sector. They are either working as janitors or maintenance personnel in certain establishments or buildings. Others work as caregivers or house help here.

R: It's good to hear that you've met quite a number of Filipinos from both sectors. Did you ever get to ask them about their lives here?

M: For my student and white-collar friends, yes. I get mixed reviews from them. Some want to start a life here and others opt to go back home. They all agree that life in Taiwan is decent, but for various reasons, the majority of them go back home.

R: Did they ever mention specific reasons why they decided to go home?

M: Many of them would much rather be close to their families. It's a big deal for us Filipinos. We are very family-oriented and make it a point to be with them during the big occasions and milestones. Others mentioned that finding work here was too difficult. I remember one of them mentioned it took him a year after he graduated here to find a job.. He almost reached the deadline of his ARC and would be forced to go home if he did not secure one soon. Luckily, he was taken in by Microsoft Taiwan.

R: That's great. It's definitely not easy. It's a good thing he was patient enough to wait a year.

M: I know. Not a lot of people have the luxury. He was okay with interning even after he graduated at least.

R: I think what you previously mentioned are some of the reasons for the large disparity of blue and white-collar OFWs in Taiwan. Aside from these, do you have other possible reasons for this?

M: I think Filipinos also opt to work in other places, rather than Taiwan. If you can't speak Mandarin, you would probably want to choose an English-speaking country to work in. At the same time, other countries also have higher salaries and benefits for their migrant workers. So I guess Taiwan is not a go-to market for white-collar OFWs.

R: Do you think Taiwan also has role to play in this disparity?

M: I guess it also reflects their openness to hiring Filipinos for their white-collar openings. We are definitely their choice for the blue-collar labor, but not a lot of OFWs work in the sector. It can be that we do not meet the high standards of Taiwanese employers or they simply prefer others over us.

R: Fair point. Do you think if given the chance, Filipinos can perform well and thrive in the Taiwan white-collar labor market?

M: Definitely. I think our training and education back home have prepared us well enough to work in any country and industry. It's a matter of being given or grabbing the opportunity to showcase it.



R: Great. Lastly, may I ask a few questions for profiling purposes?

M: Sure.

R: May I get your age or age range please?

M: Sure, I am 30.

R: And educational background?

M: I took up accounting during my undergrad in the Philippines and I am now finishing my MBA here in Taiwan.

R: How long have you been living and working in Taiwan?

M: 2 years so far. I moved here for my MBA in 2020. I started working part-time in 2021 and will be working full-time here by August 2022.

R: Current position and industry?

M: Currently I am working at the university as a teaching assistant. Then I will work as an internal auditor for an American company here.

R: Great. Lastly, what is the level of your Mandarin proficiency?

M: I would say intermediate.

R: Great. That's all for my end. Thank you so much for participating in my research.

**<END OF INTERVIEW>**

**Interview 9: OFW in Taiwan**  
**Date of Interview: May 28, 2020**



R: Hi ma'am. Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research.

K: It's my pleasure.

R: So I will start first by asking a few questions about your move to Taiwan.

K: Sure, go ahead.

R: Based on your CV, it seemed like you moved here to study?

K: Yes, I moved here in 2019 for my Master's studies in Global Politics and Economics.

R: What made you decide to choose Taiwan for your study?

K: Before moving, I was working for a private Taiwanese company in the Philippines. They were closely connected to the embassy in the Philippines and they were promoting a lot of scholarship opportunities in their country. My boss then encouraged me to apply and he even wrote my recommendation letters to the university and the scholarship. When I passed both applications, he really encouraged me to push through even if it meant him losing an employee. So I decided to go through with it. He was a very great boss.

R: That's great. Happy to hear that story. Did you always want to study in Taiwan? If yes, why so?

K: Yes, I always had plans of studying abroad but Taiwan was never my first option. I lived in Kuala Lumpur before so I was considering taking my MA there. Japan was also an option since I studied Nihongo back in college. I was only getting familiar with Taiwan after working with my previous company. I got to visit it for the first time when they had the visa-free program for Filipino launched in 2018 I think. I enjoyed the trip very much and started to grow interest from then on.

R: Before your move, did you have any concerns about Taiwan?

K: Not really. Just the language since I can only speak elementary Chinese.

R: Since you have been here since 2019, do you see yourself applying for permanent residency here?

K: Not at this moment. I am actually looking to go back home by early 2023. I think I have been away from my family for too long so I would like to spend more time with them by next year.

R: So you would prefer to stay and work in the Philippines?

K: Yes. I think 3-4 years of staying in Taiwan have been more than enough for me. I am also considering taking the Foreign Service Examination to hopefully become a career diplomat.

R: Great, that's good to hear. So moving on to your working experience here, you are currently working at a Taiwanese computer hardware company correct?

K: Yes. It's local, but it's a well-known company abroad.

R: What is your main function there?

K: I am currently doing Marketing and PR for them.

R: Was PR and Marketing always something you wanted to do?

K: Not really. My background is more in International Relations and Political Science, but it's hard to find jobs related to my area of study here in Taiwan. I also did not want to be too involved in research either, so I thought a corporate job for now will be okay.





R: How did you find your current job? What intermediaries did you use during your job search here?

K: LinkedIn and FB groups mostly. I usually avoided job openings that were in Chinese to save time and effort. It's quite difficult to look for jobs here.

R: What factors do you think make it difficult?

K: At first, I thought language would be the biggest factor. After a while, I think it's also because companies here prioritize local candidates in a way. I think I am one of the few lucky foreigners in my course who was able to find a full-time job here. I have foreign classmates with better credentials and more work experience than I have who gave up looking for jobs here since it was so hard for them to even be invited for interviews. I'm not too sure why, but it's a common problem for foreign students here actually. My guess is that companies are not too open to hiring foreigners even if they studied in Taiwan. Some of my classmates can also speak better Chinese than me. I got lucky with my company since they needed someone who can write and speak English well. Job hunting here involves a lot of luck, especially for foreigners who are looking while they are already in Taiwan.

R: Yes, I am aware of this problem too. Did you notice any similarities during your interview process here? What were employers looking for mostly in their candidates?

K: I feel they look into your previous work experience mostly. They were asking a lot of questions about what I specifically used to do for the Taiwanese company I worked for back home. I also highlighted my research and writing skills which I developed during my undergraduate studies. I realized that you have to find a way to connect your skills and work experience to the responsibilities mentioned in their job description. If you do not match it, then you will probably not have a good chance of being offered the job.

R: Do you think your nationality of culture plays a role in the job-seeking process?

K: I think it does to a certain degree. As I mentioned, foreigners don't often get callbacks from companies or even interviewed, unless it's for a position that required foreign market experience and a certain foreign language. In my case, they needed a native English speaker so I feel like they excluded the locals in this opening. But you will rarely find such job openings here in Taiwan that are focused on foreigners.

R: That is a good observation. Thank you. Was the job-seeking process very different compared to that in the Philippines?

K: Yes. It's definitely easier to find a job back home, even for foreigners. Everyone speaks English there and all businesses and documents are conducted in English. I think Filipinos perceive foreigners differently too. In a way, we see them as the more capable or smarter people, just because they're foreigners. It's a cultural thing, but that's the common perception for Filipinos. I think we are also a more open culture compared to the Taiwanese. I also noticed we're very particular with educational attainment as compared to the Taiwanese. We give high regard to the university which they came from.

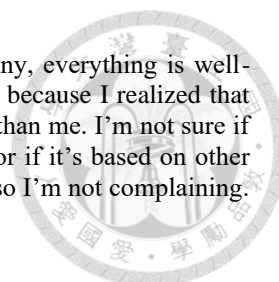
R: I totally agree. Okay, we can move on now to your working experience in Taiwan. Overall, how has it been working for the Taiwanese company you are in now?

K: I think it's been great. Everyone speaks English here which makes it easier for me. My direct supervisor is very young and we get along really well. The pay I am receiving now is triple what I used to earn back in the Philippines and surprisingly, working overtime is not a usual practice in the office.

R: Why is that surprising to you?

K: Because I was constantly working overtime for my previous company back home, which was Taiwanese. My boss and most of my colleagues were Taiwanese too and they were working overtime every day! I felt bad whenever I asked if I could leave already since I have finished my work already. Most of the time, I would just pretend to still be doing something in the office just because most of us were still there.

R: Wow, it's a good thing you do not experience that now. In your current company, what problems have you experienced so far?



K: Nothing too serious. Everyone is very nice and since it's a pretty big company, everything is well-structured. I do sometimes feel a bit underpaid. Not because of the workload, but because I realized that my colleagues who are doing almost the same work are getting paid much higher than me. I'm not sure if it's because I was too shy to negotiate for a higher salary during the offer stage or if it's based on other criteria. The salary is much higher than what I could earn back in the Philippines, so I'm not complaining. I just regret not pushing for a higher starting salary when I had the chance.

R: Why didn't you at the time?

K: Well, I was becoming desperate for a job by then and it was the only offer I ever got during my time here. So I thought that if I lowered my asking price, it would give me a better shot at being offered the job. My goal at the time was to get hired so I stuck with this plan.

R: I understand. Were you able to resolve this problem?

K: No, not yet. I am approaching one year in the company so I hope I receive a considerable raise.

R: But do you think your work and skills are being fully appreciated in the office?

K: Yes, I have a lot of flexibility with my work and I am always given credit when doing well. Salary-wise, I thought I was too, until I heard how much the others were making for the same job.

R: I hope that changes soon. Do you know of other Filipinos in your company now? Are there other foreigners working in your company as well?

K: None that I know off. There seems to be a good number of foreigners working in the company. I work with one in the same department as me too.

R: Do you notice any difficulties in your interactions with the locals in the office?

K: Not really. Everyone there is nice to me. I get lost sometimes when they suddenly switch to Chinese. Otherwise, it's easy to interact with the locals in our company.

R: That's good to hear. Let's move on to the factors that may attract or discourage OFWs from working in Taiwan. Do you mind mentioning some that you have in mind?

K: For Filipinos, higher pay would definitely be an attractive barrier. Living in Taipei is a bit expensive but it's very convenient here. You do not have to spend hours in traffic every day just to go to work. I enjoy the accessibility and the clean environment here. I was also very surprised to realize how important Taiwan is in the tech supply chain. It's impressive how many of the tech brands and components are Taiwanese. I think this country is a good and underrated tech hub in Asia.

For the barriers, I would say the language and the job-hunting process here. It was a very stressful experience for me while I was studying. I do not know if it's only for my case, or for Filipinos, or foreigners in general, but it is certainly difficult to look for a job in Taiwan. I can only attribute it to not being Taiwanese or Chinese. My local friends have been jumping from company to company, but many of us foreigners here struggle to get interviews, let alone secure work.

R: I agree. How can we work around that then?

K: I think it should start with the companies themselves. The government seems to be doing a lot to make it easier for us to work here legally. But it's basically useless if companies in Taiwan are not willing to hire foreigners.

R: Fair point. Lastly, I would like to ask about your connection to other OFWs in Taiwan. Are you in touch with many of them here? If so, what are their classifications?

K: Not so much recently. I was in touch with a few students and those that have found work here already. Majority of them are doing research in either universities or institutions. Many of them are still finishing their Doctorate degrees.

R: All right. Are you aware though that there is a large disparity between blue and white-collar OFWs in Taiwan? Why do you think that is?

K: Yes, of course. I think this is not only in Taiwan. Generally, Filipinos working abroad belong to the blue-collar sector. I think this has been the trend for years now. You can really earn higher wages abroad as compared to the Philippines and many are willing to make be classified or even transition to a blue-collar worker just to earn more money. To begin with, most of those that leave the country are those from low-income families. Not a lot of middle-class and well-off families will seek employment abroad as they are already very comfortable living in the Philippines. Maybe they will just move for studies.

Taiwan particularly is also not a famous destination for white-collar OFWs so this widens the gap when comparing the number between both sides.

R: Good point. The outward migration, the majority for blue-collar employment, has been a long-standing practice in our country. How do you think can we close the gap then?

K: I think Taiwan should first promote its openings to the Filipino and foreign labor market more. Studying the language or taking up a degree in Taiwan might help, but it's not a certainty as I shared earlier.

From the Philippines' side, I think they can first help change the perception of Filipinos globally. They can start by not promoting the OFWs in a way that they are willing to accept any work and treatment wherever they may go. I think this has painted OFWs in a way that they are only fit for blue-collar work, while many of us are certainly capable of handling white-collar roles wherever that may be. I think some of our own countrymen do not want to be branded as an OFW given that they are marketed in that way. The Philippines should highlight the skills, education, and capabilities of our overseas workers, not the resilience and affordable labor that we are currently known for, In the long run, this may put us at a disadvantage in terms of the salary range and our image to employers and other foreigners.

R: Thank you for that. I cannot agree more. I appreciate your time and inputs. These will be very helpful in my research.

**<END OF INTERVIEW>**