



# The Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Preference to Pursue a Career as an Overseas Filipino Worker

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to ascertain whether a relationship exists between perceived self-efficacy and preference to pursue an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) career. The New General Self-Efficacy Scale was used to measure perceived self-efficacy. The level of preference to pursue an OFW career was measured using the OFW Career Preference Questionnaire - a researcher-made instrument. 153 college students from the Province of Rizal, Philippines volunteered to take part in this study. An online Google Forms version of both questionnaires was administered on the respondents. Pearson r computation of the scores from both research instruments yielded a low negative relationship between self-efficacy and respondents' preference to pursue an OFW career.

## INTRODUCTION

The term "migrant for employment" or migrant worker means an individual who migrates from one country to another in order to be employed otherwise than on his or her own account.<sup>1</sup> Filipinos who become migrant workers are referred to as Overseas Filipino Workers or OFWs. For the most part, OFWs leave their homes to work abroad and provide for their families back home.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1970s, OFWs were referred to as Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs), most of whom were men who went to the Middle East, mainly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to work in construction and on oil rigs. At present, the Philippines is a major provider of migrant workers across the world. Various Philippine administrations have adopted varying policies in promoting work abroad and protecting the welfare of OFWs.<sup>3</sup>

One reason why many Filipinos opt to become migrant workers is the limited employment opportunities for higher skilled workers. There appears to be an overabundance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workers and not enough local demand for them, which results in their underemployment.<sup>4</sup>

The Philippine economy has come to rely on the remittances of OFWs. These remittances allow for a surplus of earned dollars more than what it has spent during a particular period. OFW remittances also strengthen the Philippine currency, which allows the government to minimize debt since most of the latter are in US dollars. These remittances are the second largest contribution to the Gross International Reserves, which help stabilize the foreign exchange rate of the Philippine currency. OFW remittances are also a major source of the fixed monthly income of many Filipino families. Economists assert that there is a direct positive correlation between remittances and enhanced education, health care and entrepreneurial pursuits. OFW remittances are also considered as the drivers of domestic demand for consumer goods and services.<sup>5</sup>

However, pursuing a career as an OFW has its many risks. Its challenges include high costs of recruitment, the dangers of illegal recruitment, contract and visa shams, contract violation by the foreign employer, maltreatment or mistreatment by the foreign employer, immigration and document related concerns, contract replacement, medical problems, personal issues and sexual abuse.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, OFWs are considered as the modern-day Philippine heroes due to their personal sacrifices and the risks that they face in order to support their families back home and the contribution that they make to the economy.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, OFWs numbered at 2.18 million. In 2020, 59.6% of OFWs were women. With respect to age, 22.4% of OFWs were within the range of 30-34, 20.5% between 35-39 and 19.1% were 45 years and beyond. 46.7% of OFWs were engaged in elementary occupations, followed by service and sales at 14.4% and plant and machine operators and assemblers at 11.5%. CALABARZON is the region in the Philippines with the largest contribution to OFWs at 18.5% of the national total. Around 26.6% of OFWs worked in Saudi Arabia, 14.6% in the United Arab Emirates, 6.4% in Kuwait, 6.3% in Hongkong, 5.4% in Qatar and 5.3% in Singapore.<sup>8</sup>

In order to understand how a Filipino is able to contemplate working in a foreign land, there must be some character traits and values that encourage him to do so. Three major characteristics serve as the foundation of Filipino values: (1) personalism, (2) familialism and (3) particularism. Personalism is the importance Filipinos attribute to interpersonal relations or face-to-face encounters. On the other hand, familialism is the promotion of the welfare of the family above the community. For the Filipino, it is the family and not the individual that decides on significant issues. It is the family honor that is risked when an individual invites embarrassment because of his or her actions. Particularism is about gaining the esteem of

others, which leads Filipinos to exert much effort to entertain friends and relatives. This forms a basis for proper codes of Filipino conduct. The Philippine value orientation centers around three chief obligations: (1) relational or *pakikipagkapwa*, (2) emotional or *damdamin* and (3) moral or *karangalan*.<sup>9</sup>

Some articles written by veteran OFWs have compiled a list of attitudes that a Filipino should possess in order to have a successful OFW career. One such article states that a Filipino should be (1) open, curious and imaginative, (2) exercise self-discipline, (3) ability to live within one's means, (4) kindness, humility and helpfulness toward fellow OFWs and have (5) a positive outlook.<sup>10</sup>

Another author highlights the following five qualities in order to become an OFW: (1) possess great ambition, (2) interpersonal skills, (3) being able to do other jobs in addition to your main job, (4) patience in suffering and (5) courage, fearlessness and prayerfulness.<sup>11</sup>

Being an OFW offers some life lessons such as (1) being independent, (2) valuing yourself more because you can't take care of others even you don't care for yourself first, (3) understanding that there are different types of people both beneficial and injurious, (4) adaptability to different social situations and personalities, (5) the need to continue learning new skills and to retool oneself and (6) thinking long term.<sup>12</sup>

Based on the foregoing desirable attributes of an OFW, self-discipline, ability to live within one's means, interpersonal skills and being able to do other jobs in addition to one's main job may all be considered to comprise self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in his or her ability to perform behaviors necessary to produce specific performance accomplishments. Self-efficacy mirrors confidence in the capacity to exert control over one's own drive, behavior, and social milieu. These cognitive self-evaluations impact all forms of human experience, including the objectives for which people strive, the amount of effort exerted toward goal attainment, and likelihood of achieving specific levels of performance.<sup>13</sup>

As ambition<sup>11</sup> has been identified as one of the qualities necessary to become an OFW, it has been found that a positive relationship exists between ambition and self-efficacy.<sup>14</sup> In addition, being open, curious and imaginative<sup>10</sup> have also been noted as preferred attitudes to achieve success as an OFW. A study has found that openness to new experience is related to self-efficacy, such that individuals who are willing to experience new things tend to be more engaged if they believe they can overcome the challenges faced.<sup>15</sup>

Based on the foregoing, this study was conducted to ascertain whether a relationship exists between perceived self-efficacy and level of preference to pursue an OFW career. The New General Self-Efficacy Scale<sup>16</sup> was used to measure perceived self-efficacy. The level of preference to pursue an OFW career was measured using the OFW Career Preference Questionnaire - a researcher-made instrument, the items of which were based on “The Common Pros and Cons of being an OFW.”<sup>17</sup> This research was undertaken on selected college students in the Province of Rizal, Philippines.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the levels of self-efficacy of the respondents?
2. What are the respondents’ levels of preference to pursue an OFW career?
3. Is there a significant relationship between levels of self-efficacy of the respondents and their levels of preference to pursue an OFW career?

## METHODOLOGY

153 college students from the Province of Rizal, Philippines volunteered to take part in this study. 38 were males and 115 were females. The mean age of the respondents was 21.77. Their informed consent was obtained and their identities remained anonymous. The New General Self-Efficacy Scale<sup>16</sup> was utilized, which is composed of 8 items using a 5-point Likert scale. The researcher-made, OFW Career Preference Questionnaire was also used, which consists of 10 items and also uses a 5-point Likert scale. Half of the items are reverse-scored. An online Google Forms version of both questionnaires was administered on the respondents.

## RESULTS

The following tables present the scale used, the data obtained and the statistical treatments needed to address the research questions.

**Table 1: Scale of Interpretation**

Weighted Mean Range	Verbal Interpretation
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly disagree
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree
2.61 – 3.40	Neither agree nor disagree
3.41 – 4.20	Agree
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly agree

**Table 2: The New General Self-Efficacy Scale Item Weighted Means**

Statement	Weighted Mean (N=153)	Verbal Interpretation
1. I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself.	4.143791	Agree
2. When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.	3.96732	Agree
3. In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.	4.084967	Agree
4. I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.	3.986928	Agree
5. I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.	4.111111	Agree
6. I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.	3.705882	Agree
7. Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.	3.222222	Neither agree nor disagree
8. Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.	3.771242	Agree

**Table 3: OFW Career Preference Questionnaire Item Weighted Means**

Statement	Weighted Mean (N=153)	Verbal Interpretation
1. I would like to be an OFW because of higher income and better employment benefits.	3.836601	Agree
2. I would rather NOT be an OFW because I will experience homesickness and loneliness. ( <i>reverse item</i> )	3.27451	Neither agree nor disagree
3. I would like to be an OFW because it will grant me a global career and profession marketability.	3.816993	Agree

4. I would rather NOT be an OFW because I will experience culture shock. <i>(reverse item)</i>	3.48366	Agree
5. I would like to be an OFW because it will grant me independence and a better life style.	3.797386	Agree
6. I would rather NOT be an OFW because I will experience discrimination. <i>(reverse item)</i>	3.346405	Neither agree nor disagree
7. I would like to be an OFW because it will grant me prestige and recognition.	3.27451	Neither agree nor disagree
8. I would rather NOT be an OFW because my employment contract can be cut short anytime with or without notice. <i>(reverse item)</i>	3.130719	Neither agree nor disagree
9. I would like to be an OFW because it will allow me to travel and gain experience abroad.	4.039216	Agree
10. I would rather NOT be an OFW because I might be tempted to spend my hard-earned money recklessly. <i>(reverse item)</i>	3.660131	Agree

**Table 4: Relationship between the New General Self-Efficacy Scale Scores and OFW Career Preference Questionnaire Scores**

Pearson r computation	
X Values $\Sigma = 592.75$ Mean = 3.874 $\Sigma(X - Mx)^2 = SSx = 44.047$	X and Y Combined N = 153 $\Sigma(X - Mx)(Y - My) = -5.804$
Y Values $\Sigma = 545.6$ Mean = 3.566 $\Sigma(Y - My)^2 = SSy = 60.863$	R Calculation $r = \frac{\Sigma((X - Mx)(Y - My))}{\sqrt{(SSx)(SSy)}}$ $r = -5.804 / \sqrt{(44.047)(60.863)} = -0.1121$
<b>r = -0.1121 which indicates a low negative relationship</b>	

## DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the items in The New General Self-Efficacy Scale and the weighted mean scores for each. 7 out of the eight items produced weighted means that have a verbal interpretation of *agree*, while item 7 yielded a weighted mean with a verbal interpretation of *neither agree nor disagree*. The item with the highest weighted mean is item 1: "I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself."

Table 3 presents the OFW Career Preference Questionnaire item weighted means. For the normally scored items (1, 3, 5, 7, 9), 4 items yielded weighted means with a verbal interpretation of *agree*, while item 7 yielded a weighted mean that has a verbal interpretation of *neither agree nor disagree*. For the reverse-scored items (2, 4, 6, 8, 10), 3 items yielded weighted means that have a verbal interpretation of *neither agree nor disagree*, while items 2 and 10 yielded weighted means with a verbal interpretation of *agree*.

Table 4 presents the Pearson r computation between The New General Self-Efficacy Scale Scores and OFW Career Preference Questionnaire Scores. An r value of -0.1121 was obtained which indicates that there is a low negative relationship between self-efficacy and respondents' preference to pursue an OFW career.

## CONCLUSIONS

In Table 3, item 10 "I would rather NOT be an OFW because I might be tempted to spend my hard-earned money recklessly" obtained the highest weighted mean for the reverse-scored items. This could be seen as consistent with the *particularism*, which is the desire of gaining the esteem of others, leading them to exert much effort and even expense to entertain friends and relatives.<sup>9</sup>

Also among the reverse-scored statements, item 4 "I would rather NOT be an OFW because I will experience culture shock", yielded a weighted mean that has a verbal interpretation of *agree*. This could be explained by the Filipino value orientation that is based on the relational obligation or *pakikipagkapwa*.<sup>9</sup> Imagining oneself thrust into a foreign social situation where everyone are strangers could present a mental obstacle to the would-be OFW. The respondents' apparent aversion to culture shock is perhaps why adaptability to different social situations and personalities<sup>12</sup> is recommended for those who wish to become an OFW.

The computed Pearson r value in Table 4 appears to be counterintuitive. Based on the negative r value obtained, it would mean that there is a weak inverse correlation between self-efficacy and preference to pursue an OFW career. It could be inferred that as the respondents' self-efficacy increase, their preference to pursue an OFW career would slightly decrease.

This result could be explained in part by the data in Table 2. In Item 7, “Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well”, yielded the lowest weighted mean. It would therefore appear that the respondents may see themselves not as competent as Filipinos who pursue an OFW career.

Another possible explanation for this finding is that the respondents do not see limited employment opportunities locally as one article claims<sup>4</sup>, and they further consider their self-efficacy as a means to obtain employment in the Philippines.

Further research is recommended to confirm these findings with other respondents and on a larger scale. If this study’s findings are replicated, then reasons for this inverse correlation between self-efficacy and preference to pursue an OFW career should be investigated.

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