

Emigration of Filipino Occupational Therapists

Is the pasture really “greener” on the other side?

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Introduction

- The global shortage on human resources for health necessitated for the gross outsourcing of developed countries (i.e., United States, Canada, and United Kingdom) of health care workers from developing countries including the Philippines in the recent decade.
- The active recruitment among Filipino occupational therapists (OTs) for overseas work represents various motivations including professional growth, advancing credentials, and better economic opportunities or moving to “greener pastures” among others.
- While the Philippines is the biggest exporter of healthcare professionals and the majority of Filipino OTs have a desire to migrate, little has been researched about the emigration experience of Filipino OTs who move to developed countries.

Aims

To describe the lived experiences of Philippine-trained occupational therapists who have emigrated abroad but are not working as an occupational therapist.

Method

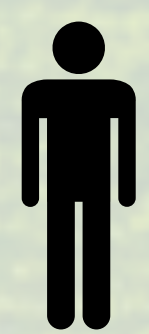
- In-depth interview via purposive sampling
- Utilized web-based applications to interview participants for 1 to 1.5 hours who are Filipinos residing in an English-speaking developed country with a working status characterized by underemployment.

Interview Questions

- Could you describe your previous work in the Philippines and detail your reasons for leaving?
- Could you describe your current work and living conditions in your host country?
- Could you explain the advantages and disadvantages of living abroad (vis-à-vis staying in the Philippines)?
- How is your job prospect (finding an occupational therapy position) in your host country?
- Could you give your thoughts about returning to the Philippines?

Sample

Kris



25/M (single), 1 year in Canada, working as an OT aide while waiting for Canadian OT license

Jen



31/F (engaged), 2 years in the USA then 4 years in Canada; former OT but now working as a marketing research analyst

Anne



29/F, (engaged) 8 years in Canada; currently a quality assessor for a medical insurance company (4 years)

Initial Results

Emergent Themes

- Disillusionment (DI)
- Living Comfortably (LC)
- Devaluation and Deskilling (DD)
- Opportunity (OP)

DI: “Going abroad is a natural thing that Filipino OTs do. Because everyone knows working and living abroad is better... but it is not true.” (Jen)

LC: “Aside from the usual (getting better paid), living in Canada is more comfortable. There’s no traffic jams and no flooding.” (Kris)

DD: “Canadian experience is important. So we are at a disadvantage in job finding compared to those who were really trained here in Canada.” (Anne)

OP: “I am able to pursue my interest in business and I’m already happy with my current work. I have no plans of going back to OT...” (Jen)

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