

**Research Report on Filipina Ex Migrant Domestic Workers who
Worked in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan**



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Research Report on Filipina Ex Migrant Domestic Workers who Worked in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

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INTRODUCTION

With over one million migrant workers sent abroad in recent years (2006 and 2007), the Philippines has the largest annual number of workers deployed overseas among all Asian countries (Martin 2009, 34). In 2008, more than nine million Filipinos were working overseas as temporary workers¹, and, among them, half were women and 1.3 million were working as domestic workers². The vast majority of migrant domestic workers are women (Chammartin 2004) who leave their families to work overseas in pursuit of improving the living conditions of themselves and their families. Many Filipino domestic workers are able to improve their living conditions by purchasing properties, sending their children to good schools, and starting their own small businesses in the Philippines. These overseas domestic workers also send remittances home, which have been known to contribute a large percentage of revenues to the Philippines. The country is the fourth largest receiving countries of remittances with 21.3 billion US dollars in 2010 (World Bank, 2012). In addition, domestic workers contribute to the economy of receiving countries by performing basic household services, like cooking and cleaning, and taking care of family members, including the aged, children, and infants, which enables their employers to work.

However, research has also documented that not all Filipinas who work overseas are successful and return home after achieving their desired goals. While there are domestic workers who are successful in terms of monetary gains, they are also failures in terms of their relationship with their families back home. It is the norm, however, for migrant women and their families to maintain transnational families with long distance relationships (Boehm 2011: 97) and to perform “transnational parenting” (Parreñas 2001a) or “transnational motherhood” (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). This often makes relationships difficult for both working mothers and their children.

¹<http://www.unladkabayan.org/overseas-filipino-workers.html>

²ibid

In addition, some migrant workers suffer greatly at the hands of employers or employment agencies. Some suffer in silence, while others take the initiative to report the abuse to police, embassies, foreign manpower ministries, and NGOs. One Singaporean NGO who partnered in the present research, the Humanitarian Organization of Migration Economics (H.O.M.E.), has been assisting migrant workers, the majority of them from the Philippines. Cases of verbal, physical, or sexual abuse, illegal deployment, non-payment of salaries, and late payment of salaries are common cases brought to H.O.M.E. NGOs in other receiving countries included in this study also deal with similar situations. Domestic workers are often confined to the employer's house, suffer long working hours, and may even not have a day off³. Since domestic work is performed in private households, it can be said that it is still the most isolated job in history (Arat-Koc, Sedef 1989: 37). It is the paradox of labour migration as having the potential to lift families out of poverty while putting migrants at high risk of abuse that this research explores.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and the Gulf States are known as the leading destination countries for foreign domestic workers in Asia. In Singapore alone there are 220,000 female foreign domestic workers in private households⁴, and Filipinas constitute nearly half of them. It is reported that there were 273,609 foreign domestic workers amounts at the end of March 2010 in Hong Kong⁵ and 170,000 foreign domestic workers in Taiwan in 2009⁶.

The main aim of this research is to capture the experiences of Filipina ex-domestic workers who have worked in Singapore, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. We investigate the factors that led Filipina domestic

³Questionnaire Survey on Migrant Domestic Workers in Singapore - H.O.M.E Shelter Residents <http://web.ias.tokushima-u.ac.jp/socio-ueno/pdf/Summary.pdf> <http://web.ias.tokushima-u.ac.jp/socio-ueno/pdf/HOME.pdf>

⁴"His maid levy went from \$170 to \$340" Friday, January 20 2012, *The New Paper*.

⁵<http://www.immd.gov.hk> "Immigration Department Annual Report 2009-2010."

⁶ "CLA considers proposal to include foreign caregivers under labor rules" Taipei Times, January 16, 2010 (<http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2010/01/16/2003463618>).

workers to work abroad and explore their experiences with agencies and employers in these countries. We also ask returnees whether migration affected their family relationships (with spouse, parents, children, etc.) and how it impacted their lives. Hence, the research will aim to look at any changes before and after migration along several dimensions. In addition, our research will analyze how the particular destination countries impact foreign domestic workers' labour migration experiences and self-evaluated outcomes.

In migration studies, there has been discussion regarding the type of migration, called circular migration (Agunias and Newland 2007, Hugo 2003) or shuttle migration (Morokvasic 2003), where workers change their destination country in order to increase profits and better suit the needs of their families. It goes without saying that migration may not be one time occurrence; some women keep moving. For women working as foreign domestic workers, it has been pointed out that there exists a hierarchy of destinations among receiving countries in Asia (Liebelt 2010:13). Thus, this study also looks at the migration patterns and experiences according to destination countries.

DATA COLLECTION

A survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of 426~~90~~ Filipina ex-domestic workers below 60 years of age who used to work either in Singapore, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. The survey was conducted between September 15, 2011 and December 2, 2011. While our survey respondents were scattered across different regions of the Philippines, half were living in Region II (Cagayan Valley) and in Region III (Central Luzon). Ten interviewers attended several training sessions. Interviewers read each question carefully in English and then translated it in Filipino for clarification if necessary. Interviews lasted for 30 to 90 minutes depending on the number of migrations each respondent had gone through. Before commencing the interviews, there were casual conversations to ensure that the respondents were relaxed and better able to answer questions as honestly as possible without hesitation. Respondents were also reminded that they did not have to answer any questions which they found uncomfortable. Out of 426 collected questionnaires

there were 400 valid questionnaires; 26 questionnaires were deleted because respondents were either above sixty years old or some parts of the data were inconsistent. We used a snowball approach to identify respondents who were former domestic workers abroad. Our sample is not representative of all ex-foreign domestic workers living in The Philippines but our respondents' various places of residence and destinations (as migrant workers) allow us to capture patterns of experiences among returnees.

BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

Demographic Information of Respondents

Our sample includes 31 percent respondents from Region III (Central Luzon), particularly Nueva Ecija, 18 percent from Region II (Cagayan Valley area), mostly from Nueva Viscaya, and 16.5 percent from Region IV, specifically Batangas province. The vast majority of our respondents are from rural areas.

Age of the respondents was recorded in 5 year age groups (see Figure 1). The most common age group is 30-34 years (18.8%), followed by 35-39 years (17.5%), then 40-44 years (14.3%), and finally the youngest age group of 20-24 year olds (2%). Figure 2 shows that most respondents are legally married (74.5%), while 19.5 percent are never married, and 5.3 percent are widowed. It can be assumed that some of "married" respondents are no longer living with their husbands because in the Philippines there are no divorce laws and obtaining an annulment in court is extremely rare due to the exorbitant legal fees. Past research indicates de facto separation is a motivation for labour migration among Filipina women.

Figure 1. Age of Respondents

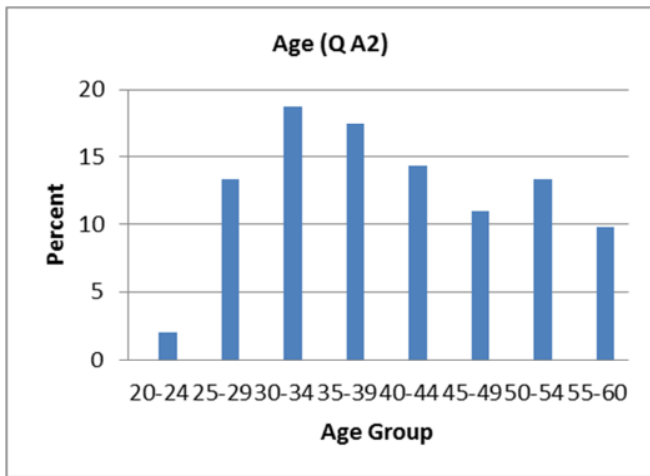
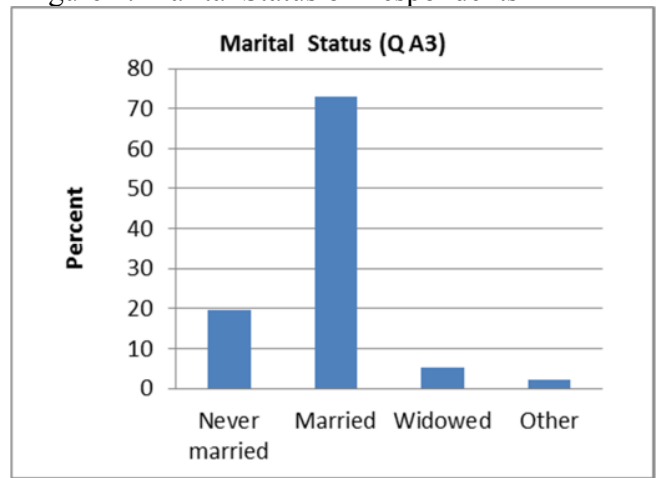


Figure 2. Marital Status of Respondents



The Philippines is predominantly a Catholic country. The majority of our respondents, 74 percent, are Catholic, 23.3 percent are Protestant, while 2.8 percent practice other religions (see Figure 3). Figure 4 shows the level of education the respondents achieved. Eighty percent of the migrants have completed high school and 50 percent pursued higher education at vocational/trade schools or college. As indicated by many studies, our sample shows the relatively high level of education of women from The Philippines who work abroad as domestic workers.

Figure 3. Religion of Respondents

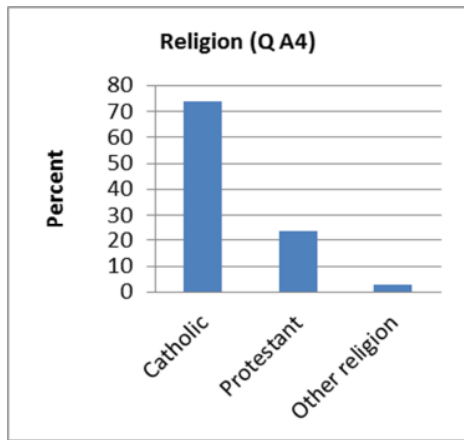
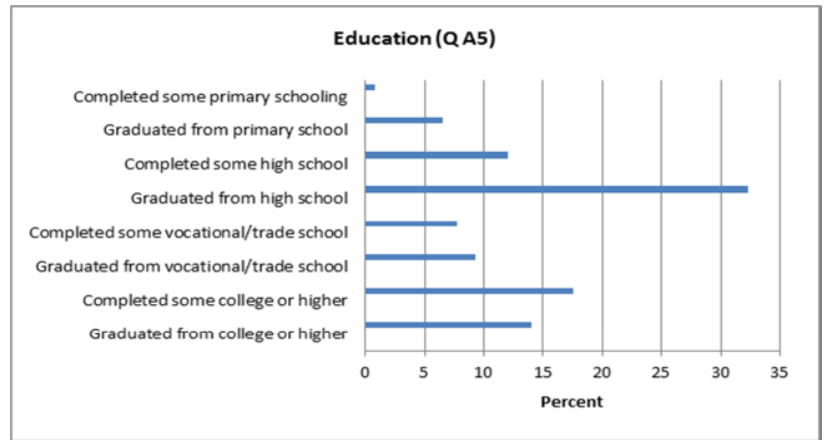


Figure 4. Education of Respondents



Employment Status Before and After First Labour Migration

Prior to obtaining work as domestic workers abroad, 50.3 percent of respondents were employed full-time, 13.8 percent were employed in part-time jobs, 8.3 percent were self-employed, and 23 percent had not been employed. A majority of respondents found employment upon returning to the Philippines: 38 percent worked full-time, 14.3 percent worked part-time, and 18 percent were self-employed. Of the remainder, some worked in unpaid work full-time (2%) or part-time (2.3%) in family businesses including farming or fishery, while 25.5 percent did not work at all.

Employment status before and after the last labour migration shown in Figures 5 & 6 reveals there is a slight increase in the number of respondents engaging in their own businesses, but the number of full time workers decreased from 50 percent before first migration to 38 percent after the last labour migration. Also, a slight increase in the number of respondents who didn't work after labour migration is observed. The lower proportion of women working after migration could be attributed to women's desire to devote their time to their families after many years abroad. It could also be related to difficulties in reintegrating the labour market after return.

Figure 5. Employment Status Before First Labour Migration

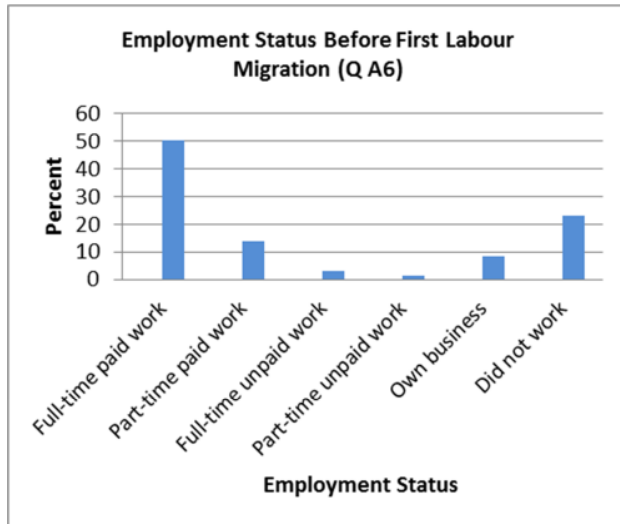
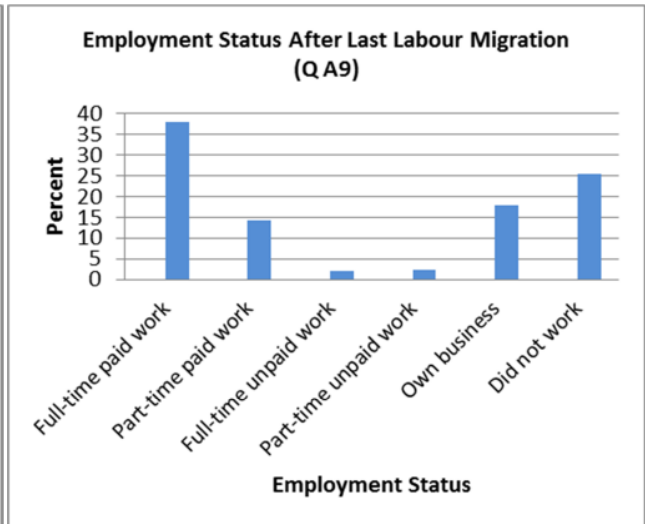


Figure 6. Employment Status After Last Labour Migration



Average Monthly Income Before and After First Labour Migration

We asked about the individual respondent's (not household) average monthly income before the first labour migration (see Figure 7) and after the last migration (see Figure 8). We found that there is not much income difference between before and after labour migration. *Before migration*, 36.5 percent earned 2000-3999 pesos (US\$47-US\$94 ⁷) every month after tax while 35.2 percent earned below 2000 pesos (US\$47) followed by 12.5 percent with monthly income of 4000-5999 pesos (US\$94-US\$140); 11.5 percent for 6000-7999 pesos (US\$140-US\$187), 1.6 percent for 8000-9999 pesos (US\$187-US\$234), 2.3 percent for 10000-19999 pesos (US\$235-US\$447). Few (0.3%) earned 20000 pesos (US\$468) or higher.

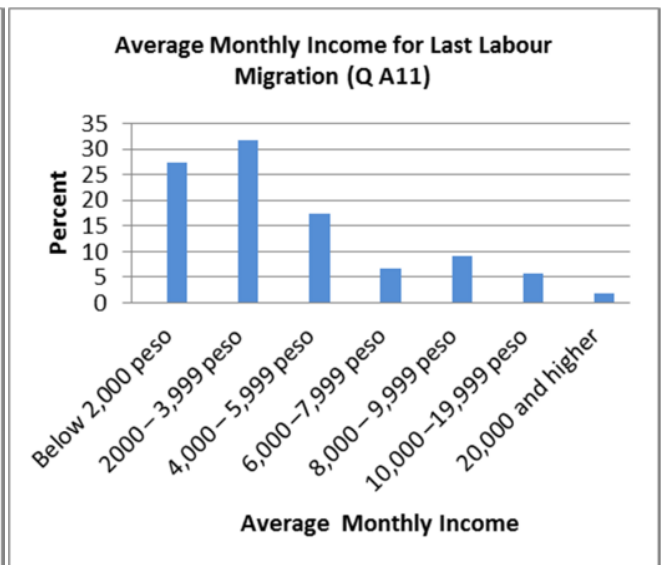
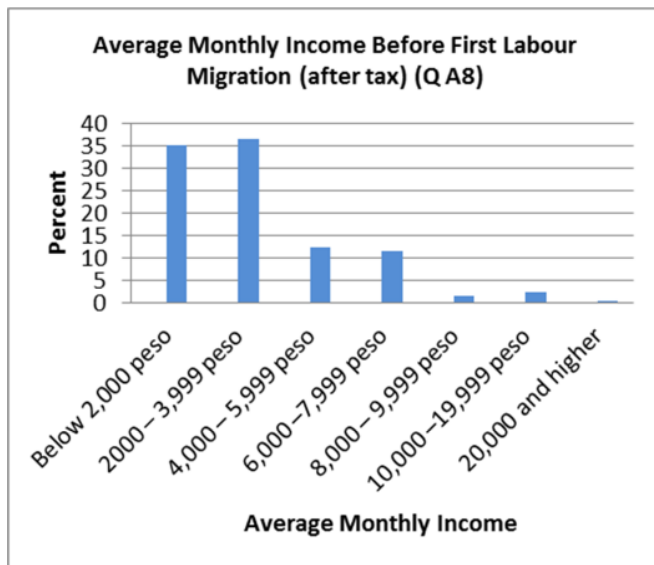
With regard to an average individual monthly income *after the last labour migration*, 31.7 percent of the respondents earned 2000-3999 pesos (US\$47-US\$94) while 27.3 percent earned below 2000 pesos. 17.4 percent earned 4000-5999 pesos (US\$94-US\$140), 6.8 percent earned 6000-7999 pesos (US\$140-US\$187), 9.2 percent earned 8000-9999 pesos (US\$187-US\$234), 5.8 percent earned 10000-19999 pesos (US\$235-

⁷Based on peso-USD exchange rate of 42.58.

US\$447) and only 1.7 percent earned 20000 pesos (US\$468) or higher earned every month after tax. These figures suggest a very similar income distribution before and after migration. This finding questions the theoretical benefits of labour migration among returnees, who are supposed to have new skills marketable on the labour market. Deskillling, which is often experienced during time spent abroad, may prevent migrants from reaping the benefits of their experience abroad on the Filipino labour market. A teacher or a professional who goes abroad to work as a domestic worker cannot, once back at home, use her experience abroad to move upward in her field of expertise. In sum, among women who took part in our survey, there is no evidence of a pattern whereby experience abroad offered significant returns in terms of post-migration income.

Figure 7. Average Monthly Income Before First Labour Migration

Figure 8. Average Monthly Income after Last Labour Migration



Type of Work Before and After Last Labour Migration

Before working as domestic workers overseas for the first time, 28 percent of respondents worked in sales, 18.7 percent worked as domestic workers locally, 17 percent worked in factories, 13.4 percent worked in farming or fishing industries, 11.5 percent did clerical job, and only 1.6 percent worked as nurses or care

workers. Upon returning from their last labour migration, 42.7 percent worked in sales, 21.7 percent in farming or fishing, and 15.9 percent as domestic workers. The remaining percentage comprised clerical works (6.4%), factory work (4.4%), teaching (2.7%) and nursing and care workers (0.7%). Before and after migration, the percentage of respondents working in sales and farming/fishing work increased, while those working in clerical and factory work decreased. The decline of the proportion of women working as domestic workers in The Philippines before and after migration might indicate that some women managed to obtain other employment after migration.

Figure 9. Work Type Before First Labour Migration

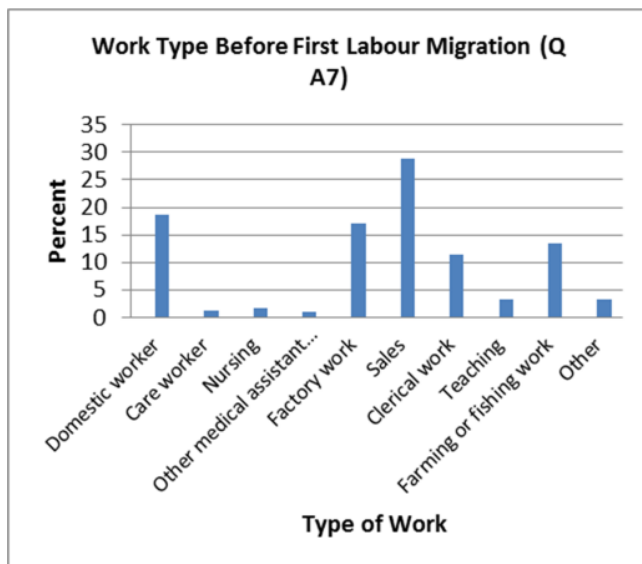
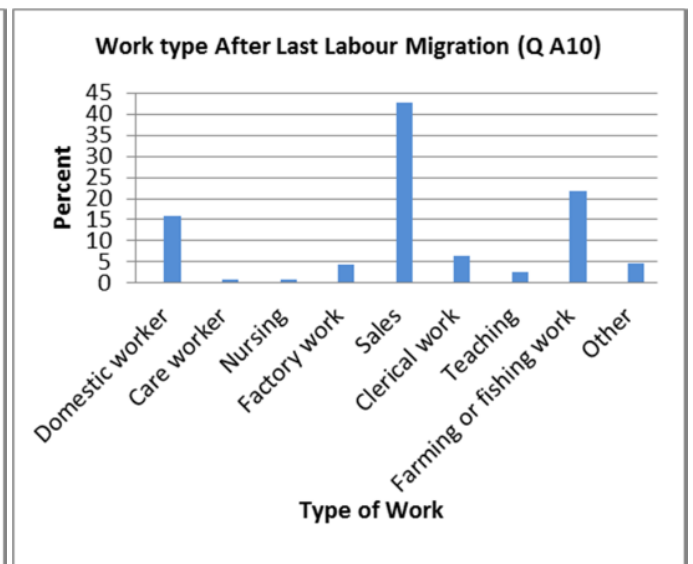


Figure 10. Work Type After Last Labour Migration



Children and Care Giving Responsibilities

Among our respondents, 82 percent of women had children with 50 percent having 2 or more children. It is interesting to note that nearly a quarter of our respondents had four or more children. This result explains why the need to earn income to cover education costs was an important reason for working abroad.

Respondents were asked to identify their children's primary caregiver while they were working abroad (see Figure 11). The majority (49.6%) reported their husbands as the principle caregiver and 32.4 percent their natal

mother. Figure 12 shows that the most common secondary caregivers were the respondents' mother (24.8%), mother-in-law (18.8%), husband (13.9%) or sister (12%). Surprisingly, there were very few respondents who left their children under the care of friends or domestic workers. The fact that mostly close relatives took care of the migrants' children indicates that the care chain involves relatives and not non related care givers. It is interesting to note that biological mothers were more often care givers than mothers-in-law. Other studies have indicated how international migration of women serves to strengthen the bonds of solidarity and exchange between women and their natal family. In addition, this result sheds light on the specificities of the 'care chain' that characterizes migration flows between The Philippines and East Asian countries.

Figure 11. Main Caregiver of Children

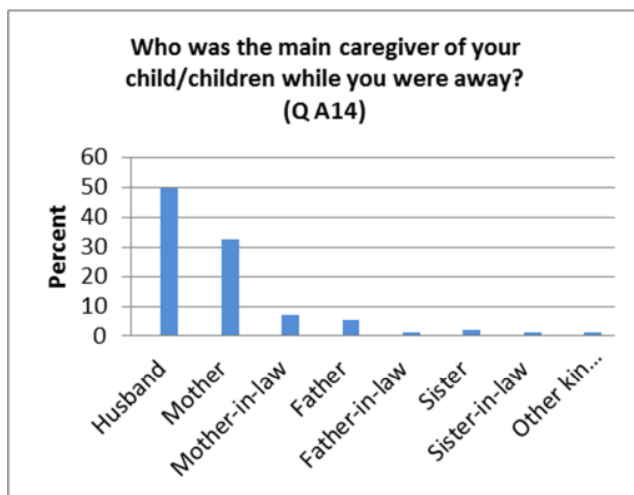
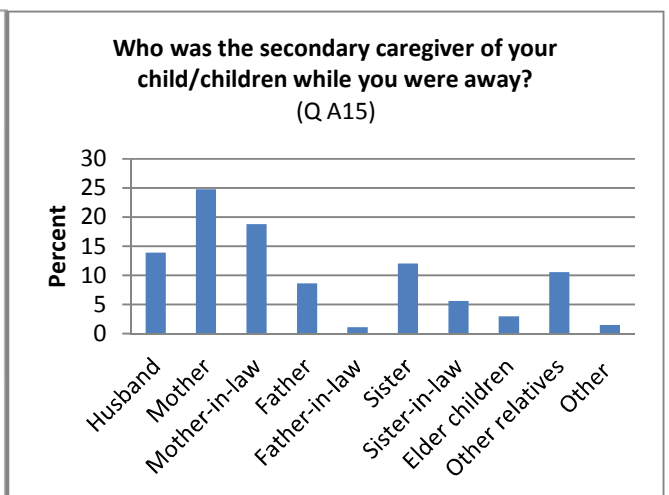


Figure 12. Secondary Caregiver of Children

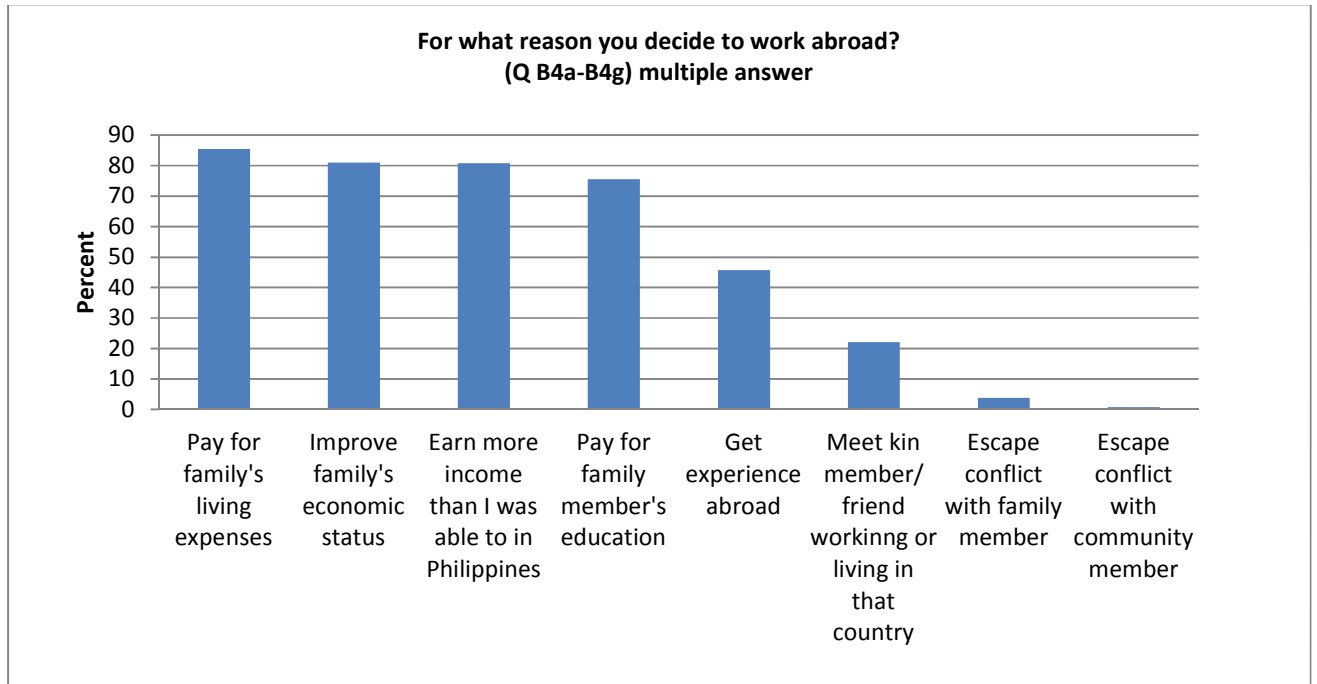


Reasons for Working Abroad

The following data pertain to the longest period working as a domestic worker in one of the three destination countries: Singapore, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. The top reasons for deciding to work abroad were to pay for the family's living expenses (85.5%), to improve the family's economic status (i.e. buying land, houses, and investing in business)(81%), to increase income (80.8%), and to pay for a family member's education(75.5%). Some respondents wanted to get experience abroad (45.8%), to meet with kin/friend

working or living in the destination country (22%), or to escape conflict with family members (3.8%) or community members (0.8%) (See Figure 13).

Figure 13. Reasons for Working Abroad



Respondents were asked what the main reason was for choosing to work in a particular country as a domestic worker (see Figure 14). The most popular reasons chosen were: relatively high salary (47.5%), shorter waiting periods (19.5%) introduced to an agency by a recruiter (11.8%), desire to increase work experience (5.8%), relatively low agency fee (5.3%), informal introduction to specific employer (4%) and no upfront agency fee (3.3).

Figure 14. Main Reason for Choosing a Particular Country for Domestic Work

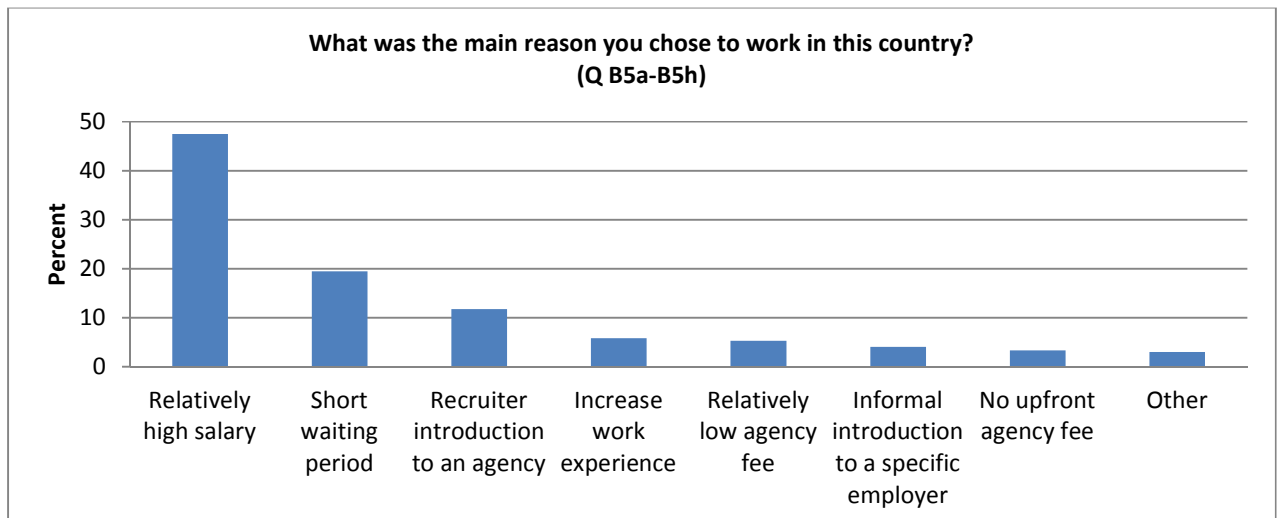
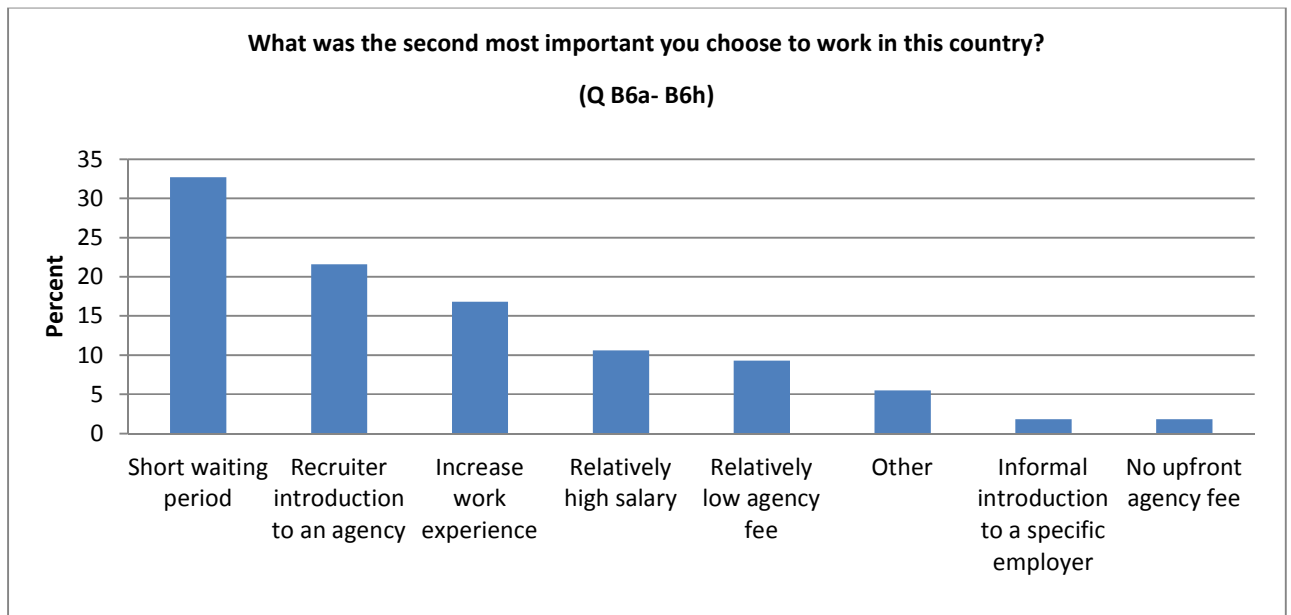


Figure 15 reveals that the secondmost important reason for choosing to work in a particular country was short waiting periods (32.7%) followed by desire to increase work experience (16.8%) and introduced to an agency by a recruiter (21.6%), relatively high salaries (10.6%), relatively low agency fee (9.3%), informal introduction to a specific employer (1.8%), and for other reasons (5.5%).

In sum, the expected salary and the ability to go relatively soon after having initiated the process of becoming a migrant worker were leading factors in choosing a destination country over another one. Access to a recruiter seeking workers for a particular country is also a key factor accounted for. In fact, qualitative research on female migrant workers from Asia indicates that in many cases, women do not really choose a destination but go where ever possible. The option offered to them is mainly dependent on their network and the intermediary they happen to meet. The notion of a rational and informed choice of destination needs to be questioned in the case of these migrants.

Figure 15. Second Most Important Reason for Choosing a Particular Country for Domestic Work



Single and Multiple Migrations

Out of 400 respondents, 59.8 percent migrated only once, 24.5 percent twice, and 8.3 percent three times. A few respondents migrated four (4.5%), five (1.5%), six (0.3%), seven (0.5%), and eight (0.8%) times. The trajectories of migration did not only include Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, but also destination countries (for instance countries of the Gulf region).

During their first labour migration (n=400), 54.8 percent migrated to Singapore, 30 percent to Hong Kong, 9.8 percent to Taiwan, 1 percent to Malaysia or UAE respectively, 0.8 percent to Saudi Arabia, 0.3 percent to Iraq or Kuwait, and 2.3 percent to other destination countries. During their first labour migration, 99 percent of the respondents worked as domestic workers, while 0.8 percent and 0.3 percent did factory and clerical work respectively. Women who went to Singapore tended to stay for a shorter period of time than those who went to Hong Kong or Taiwan (p=0 <0.001) (see Table 1). For the 160 respondents who had a second labour migration, Hong Kong was the most popular destination (33.8%), followed by Singapore

(25%), Taiwan (14.4%), Saudi Arabia (7.5%), Lebanon and UAE (5%), Kuwait (3.1%), Malaysia (0.6%), and other destination countries (5.6%). During their second labour migration, 94.9 percent worked as domestic workers, while the rest worked in sales, schools, or factories (each 1.3%). Some also worked as care workers or did other types of jobs (0.6%). For the third labour migration, out of 62 respondents, 38.1 percent worked in Hong Kong, while 25.4 percent worked in Singapore, 15.9 percent in Taiwan, and the rest in other countries, including UAE (6.3%), Saudi Arabia (3.2%), Malaysia (1.6%), Lebanon (1.6%), and other destination countries. With regard to the type of work for the third labour migration, 95.2 percent worked as domestic workers, while the rest worked in factories (3.2%) or sales (1.6%).

Table 1. Average Length of Migration (in Months) by Country

Destination Countries	1st Migration	N	2nd Migration	N	3rd Migration	N	4th Migration	N	5th Migration	N	6th Migration	N	7th Migration	N	8th Migration	N
Singapore	23.1	219	27.3	40	19.2	16	24.4	7	32	1	32	1				
Hong Kong	34.1	120	34.4	54	30.9	24	23.7	13	27.1	7	27.1	7			18.5	2
Taiwan	36.9	39	27.8	23	29.1	11	43	3					31	4		
Malaysia	30.8	4	23	2	3	1					25	2				
Saudi Arabia	38.7	3	18.8	12	11	1	2	1	13	1	13	1				
Kuwait	25	1	21	5												
UAE	9.5	4	19.3	8	23	4	24.5	4	25	2			24.5	2	24	1
Other	36.8	9	74.3	9	13.3	4	25	2								
Iraq	23	1														
Lebanon			23.8	8	24	1										
Average # of months	28.7		30.0		19.2		23.8		24.3		24.3		27.8		21.3	
Total N		400		161		62		30		11		11		6		3

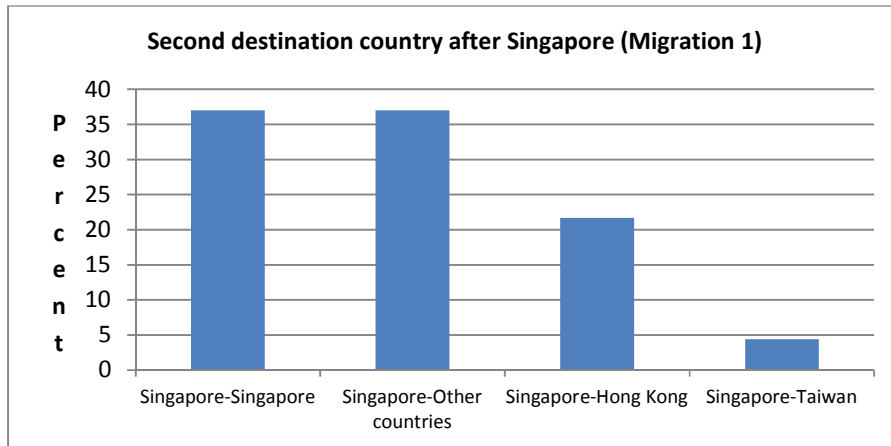
*Total numbers refer to all women who have migrated at least once, at least twice, at least three times, etc.

Of the 30 respondents who migrated for a fourth time, 43.3 percent worked in Hong Kong, 23.3 percent in Singapore, 13.3 percent in UAE, 10 percent in Taiwan, 3.3 percent in Saudi Arabia, and 6.7

percent in other destination countries. They worked as domestic workers (93.1%), in sales (3.4%), or in farming/ fishing (3.4%). For their fifth labour migration women went to Hong Kong (7), UAE (2), Singapore (1), and Saudi Arabia (1) and to work as domestic workers (10) or in sales (1). As for the sixth labour migration, out of 6 respondents, four worked in Taiwan and two worked in UAE. Five worked as domestic workers and one worked in sales. Of the six women who migrated for a seventh time, all worked as domestic workers in Hong Kong (4) and UAE (2). During their eighth labour migration, two women worked in Hong Kong and one in UAE as domestic workers. For the three top destination countries, on their first three migrations women going to Hong Kong and Taiwan tend to stay longer than those in Singapore.

These results indicate that 4 women out of 10 have migrated abroad more than once (more than one contract). Among women who worked abroad more than once, an increasing proportion migrated to Hong Kong as they gained more experience (migrations 2 and above). This pattern is logical because Hong Kong is known among migrants as the place where domestic workers have the best conditions (but abuse still occurs there). It is also the best stepping stone for a subsequent migration to a Western country like Canada where domestic workers can obtain permanent residency after a few years of work as live-in care givers.

Figure 16. Second destination Country after Singapore (Migration 1)



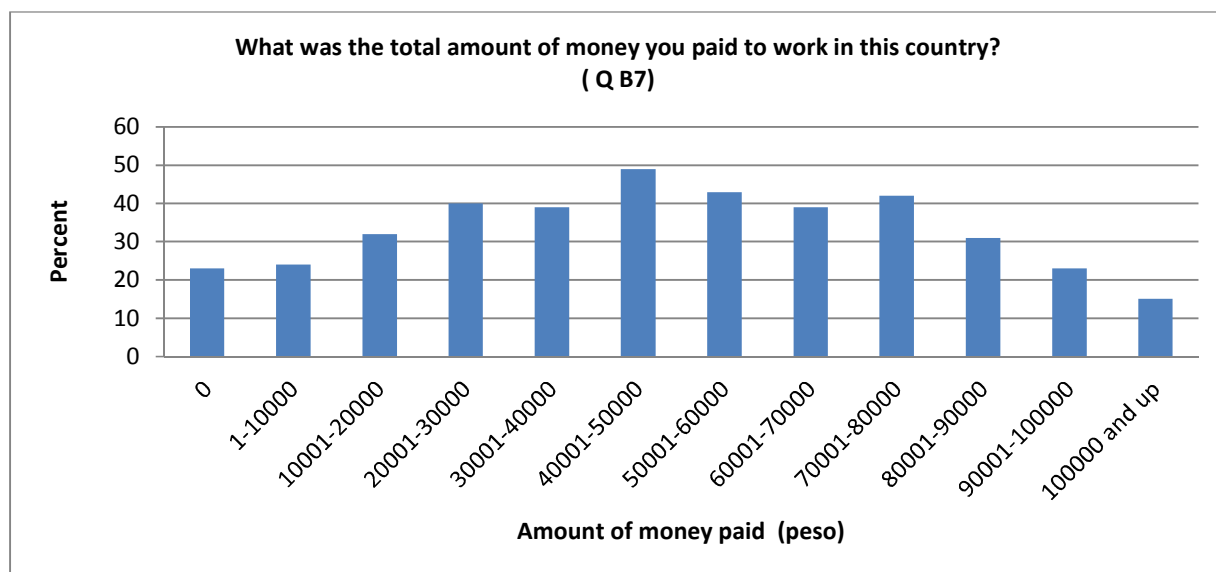
This pattern is confirmed by Figure 16. We note that among all migrants who migrated at least twice and went to Singapore first, only about 37% of them returned to Singapore. All the others, over 60%, went to another destination for their second contract abroad.

EXPERIENCES OF FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS

Migration Costs and Income

In order to migrate for work, most respondents had to pay fees. The amount paid varies considerably from no payment at all to more than US\$2,300. A few (5.8%) made no payment but many (48.5%) paid more than one average year of salary in the Philippines (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Fees Paid to Work in Destination Country



Once abroad, migrants also have to pay salary deductions to cover additional costs for migration (broker’s fees, taxes, etc.). The total average salary per month before deductions varies considerably due to the fluctuating lengths of employment in destination countries (see Figure 18 and Figure 19). In the first year of migration, most migrants pay very high fees which are deducted from their income. In the subsequent years, fees are paid and deductions are much lower, which means that net income increases. Among our respondents, salaries ranged from a low of 50 pesos (US\$29) per month for 5.3 percent of the workers to a high of 30000 pesos (US\$705) per month for 0.5 percent of the respondents. More than half (54%) received less than 2500 peso (US\$58) during the salary deduction period. Please refer to Appendix 1 for information on the distribution by country of women who paid both fees and salary deductions and women who paid fees but no salary deductions.

Figure 18. Total Average Monthly Salary Before Deductions

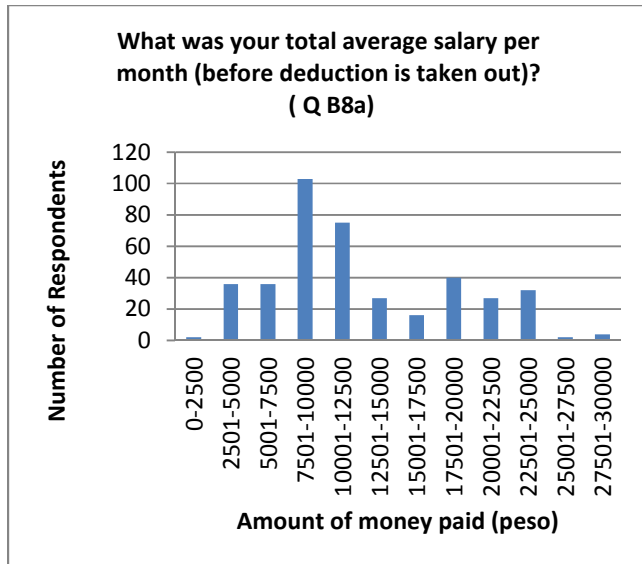
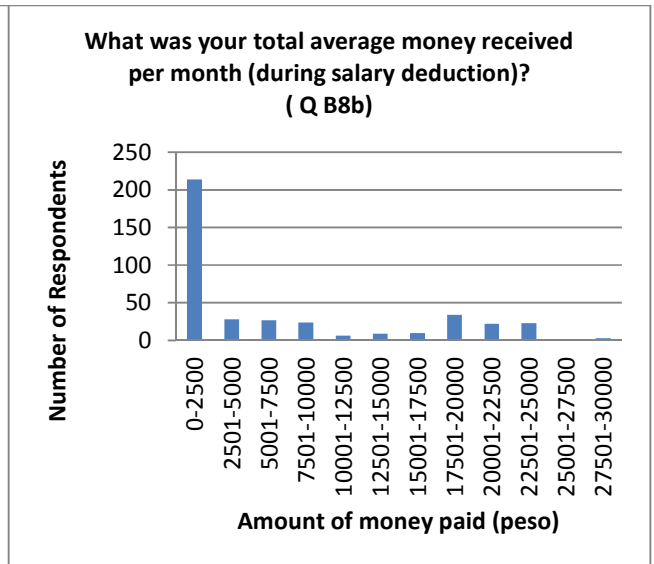


Figure 19. Total Average Monthly Salary During Salary Deduction Period



Early Returns and Change of Employers

Not all foreign domestic workers complete their contracts. In our study, 40.9 percent did not complete their contract with the first employer. Among the three top destination countries, those who went to Singapore are less likely to complete their contract (53.9%), whereas those who went to Taiwan are most likely to do so (84.3%) ($p=0<0.001$). When asked about the main reason for not completing contracts, respondents reported non-salary related problems with working conditions (33.9%), forced return (12.1%), and emergency at home (11.5%). Other reasons cited were homesickness, failure to receive full/partial salary termination of contract, health problems (both voluntary and forced return), escape from employers, and insufficient salary/income. Women from Singapore tend to have more problems with non-salary related working conditions (39.2%) ($p=0.031<0.05$). Out of 400 respondents, 14 percent changed employers while in the destination country either once (65.4%), twice (25%), three times (7.7) or four times (1.9).

Network and Skill Development

Finding a social network of friends in the destination country can make working as a foreign domestic worker more manageable. While employed abroad, 85.2 percent of the 400 respondents made new friends, while 14.8 percent did not make any friends at all. Respondents who went to Hong Kong and Taiwan were more likely to make new friends than those going to Singapore ($p=0.001 < 0.005$).

Skill development training programs are offered to foreign workers during their employment abroad, but in our study only 9.8 percent of the respondents attended any programs. The top three reasons given for not attending included the following: “I wanted to save money” (29.2%), “I was not interested” (25.9%), and “my employer did not give me the time off” (25.9%). The reasons for not attending varied significantly by country. Women from Hong Kong are least likely to be interested in programs (35.4%) ($p=0.011 < 0.05$); women from Singapore are most likely not to be given time off by their employers (48.5%) ($p=0 < 0.001$); and those who went to Hong Kong wanted to save money (38.9%) ($p=0.006 < 0.01$).

The training programs that domestic workers took while working abroad were English language (10.3%), Mandarin language (10.3%), aesthetics (hair and nail care) (10%), aromatherapy/massage therapy/reflexology (9.8%), computer classes (9%), sewing (8.3%), care giving/support worker (8.3%), cooking/ baking (5.8%), and other skill training programs (8.5%). Out of respondents who attended the skill development training programs, 92.5 percent made new friends. Of those who took skill development training programs, 90.2 percent found them useful upon returning to the Philippines.

Self-assessment of Employment Abroad

When asked to rate how satisfied they were with their salaries, out of this sample of 400 respondents, 3 percent said their salaries were very bad/failure, while 10.8 percent claimed they were bad (results not shown). Salaries were acceptable to 33.3 percent of respondents, good for 41.3 percent, and very good/successful for 11.8 percent. Figure 20 indicates that women who worked in Singapore rated their

experience with salary more negatively than women who worked in Hong Kong and Taiwan. One of the reasons for working abroad is to build up savings. Unfortunately, 7.3 percent reported their ability to save money was very bad/failure, while 24.5 percent cited it was bad. It was acceptable for 34.8 percent, good for 30.3 percent, and very good/successful for 3.3 percent of the respondents (results not shown). Destination did not affect savings as much as other aspects of the experience, although more women assessed savings negatively than women who went to other countries (figure 21).

Figure 20. Assessment of Salary Earned by Country

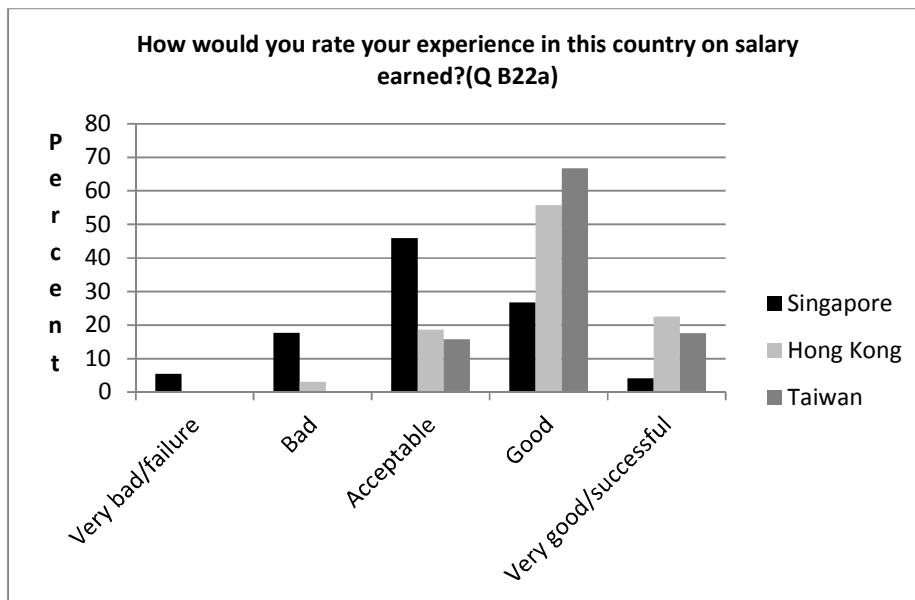
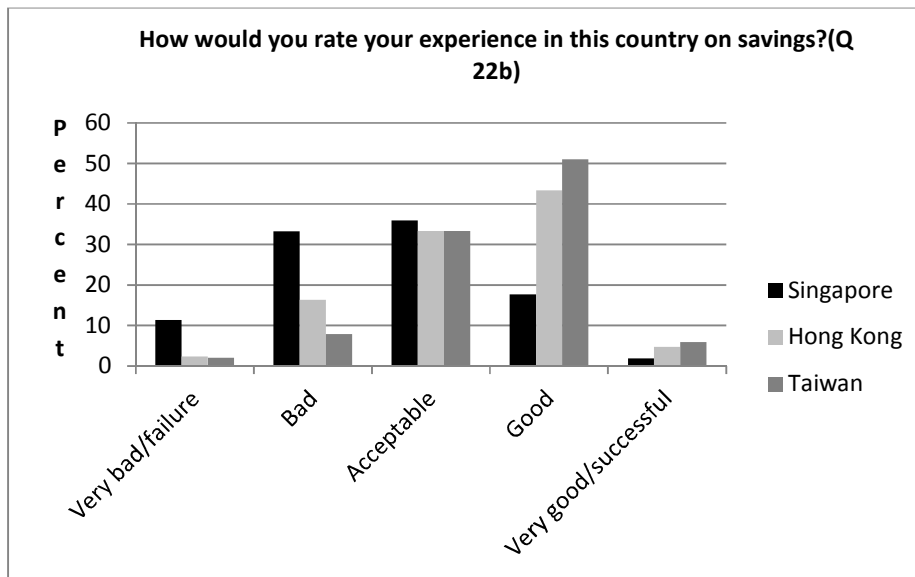


Figure 21. Assessment of Savings Achieved by Country



When rating their experiences with employers, 4 percent of respondents rated them as very bad/failure, 19 percent as bad, 28.3 percent as acceptable, 39.3 percent as good, and 9.3 percent as very good/successful (results not shown). By country of destination (figure 22), we note that among women who went to Singapore, a third had a bad or a very bad experience with their employer; it was the case for only around 10% for Taiwan and Hong Kong. When it comes to ratings of experience with immigration in the working country, only 1 percent answered it was very bad/failure and bad for 6.3 percent. For 40 percent, it was acceptable, good for 48.8 percent and very good/successful for 4 percent of the respondents (results not shown). A very sharp difference emerges with the rating with immigration with the majority of women who went to Hong Kong or Taiwan reporting a positive experience and the opposite for women who went to Singapore (figure 23).

Figure 22. Assessment of Employer by Country

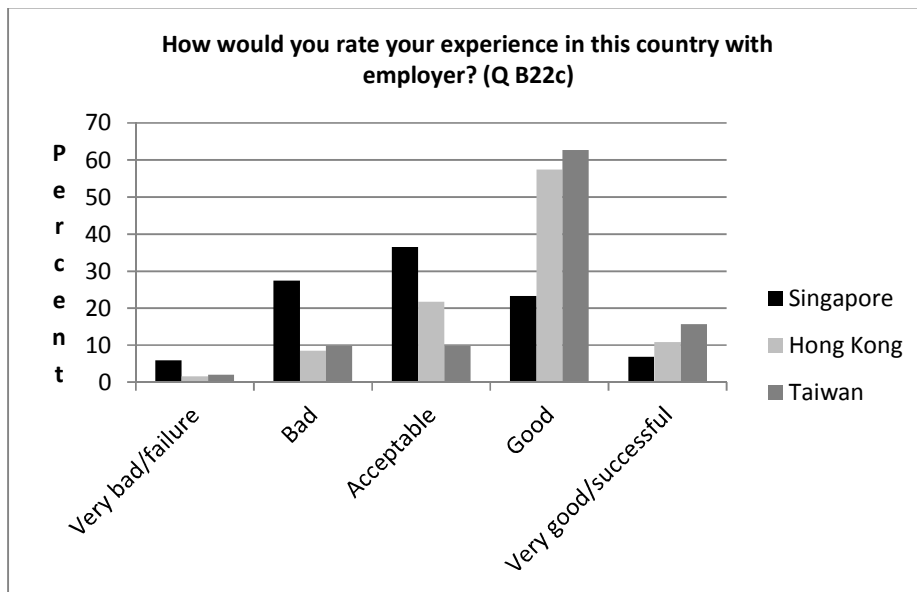
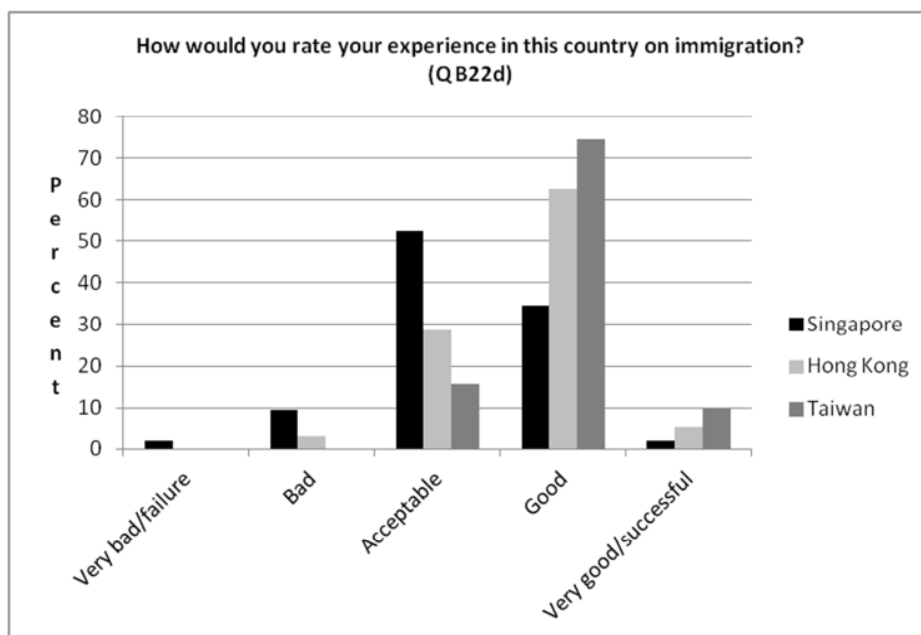


Figure 23. Assessment of Experience with Immigration by Country



When asked about their experiences with the government ministry who is in charge of migrant domestic workers in the destination country, ratings are as follows: very bad/failure (0.8%), bad (4.5%),

acceptable (38.8%), good (52%), and very good/successful (4%). Experiences with government services in charge of domestic services were more positive in Hong Kong and in Taiwan than in Singapore (figure 24). Respondents' experiences with middlemen (recruiters/agencies) were rated as very bad/failure (2.3%), bad (17%), acceptable (38.3%), good (39.1%), and very good/successful (3.3%) (results not shown). Figure 25 reveals that women who worked in Singapore tend to regard their experiences with middlemen as negative, compared with those who worked in the other two countries. Those who worked in Taiwan tend to evaluate their experience with middleman most positively ($p=0<0.001$).

Figure 24. Assessment of Experience with Ministry Who is Charge of Migrant Domestic Workers by Country

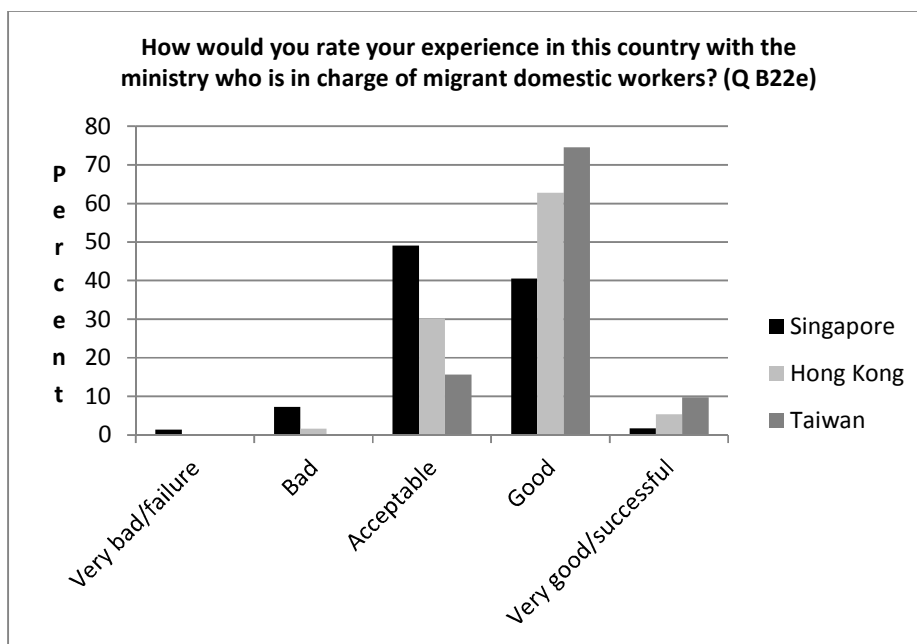
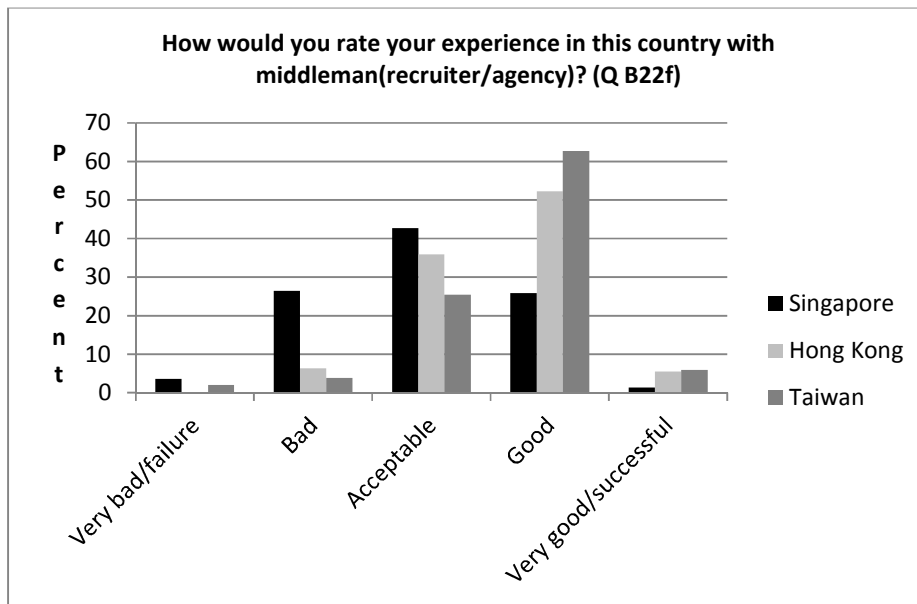


Figure 25. Assessment of Experience with Middleman by Country



Most of the respondents reported having positive experiences with the local people (results not shown). Ratings included very good/successful (4.3%), good (47.8%), and acceptable (35.8%). A smaller proportion rated their experiences as bad (11.5%) or very bad/failure (0.8%). Women who worked in Taiwan tend to view their experience most positively ($p=0<0.001$), while those working in Singapore have more negative evaluations of their experience with local people (figure 26).

When asked about their overall experience in the destination country, most respondents gave positive ratings: 4.3 percent stated their experience was very good/successful, 44.3 percent described it as good, and 35.3 percent ranked their overall experience as acceptable (results not shown). Of those having a negative experience, 14 percent claimed it was bad and 2.3 percent rated it as very bad/failure. Among the three destination countries, domestic workers from Taiwan tended to have positive evaluations on their overall experience, those women from Singapore tended to have more negative evaluations ($p=0<0.001$) (figure 27).

Figure 26. Assessment of Experience with Local People by Country

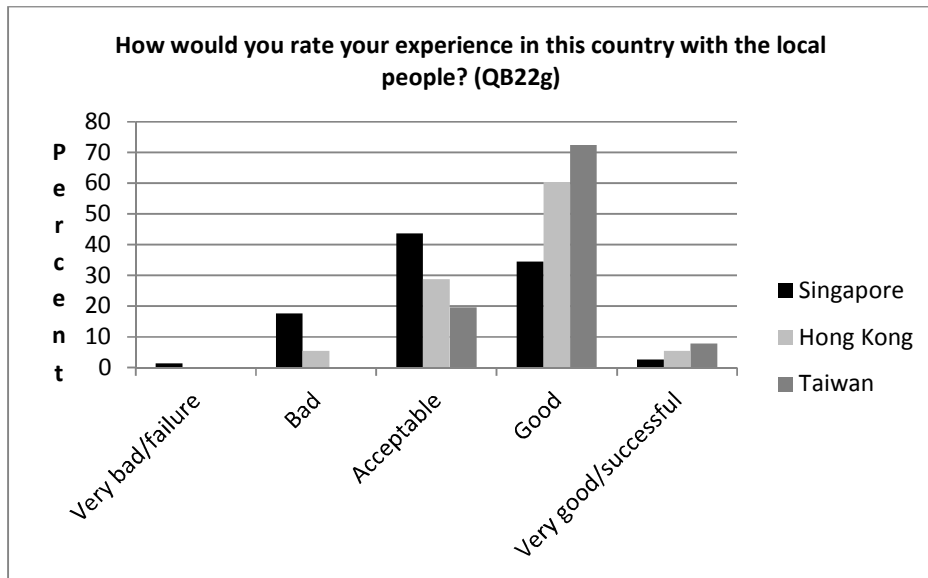
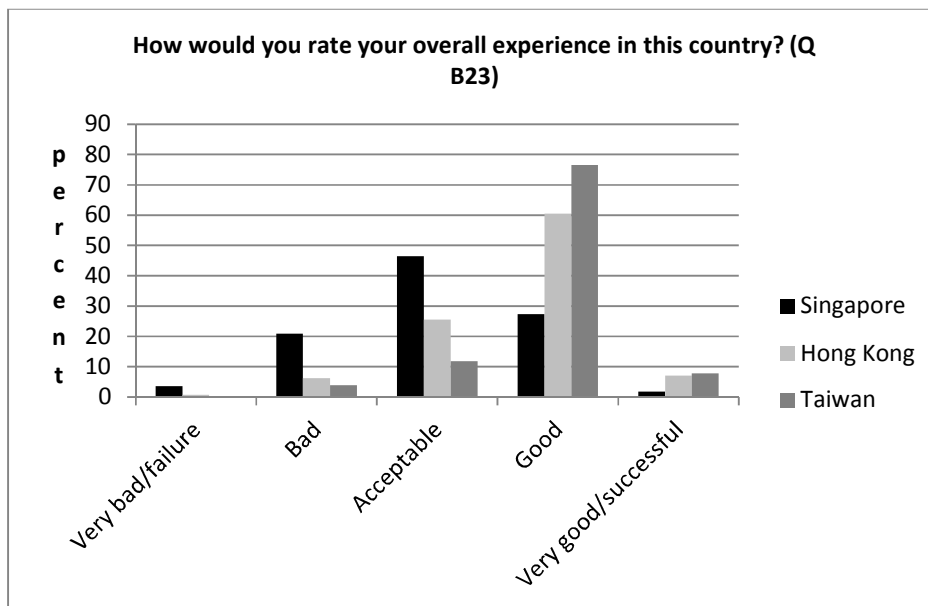


Figure 27. Assessment of Overall Experience by Country



Impact of Migration on Family Relations

While abroad, 13.3 percent of women experienced a negative change in the attitudes of their spouse or boyfriend. Some respondents reported deaths in the family (9.5%), critical illness in family members (9.3%), negative attitude changes in children (8.2%), and serious accidents among family members (4.8%). Other

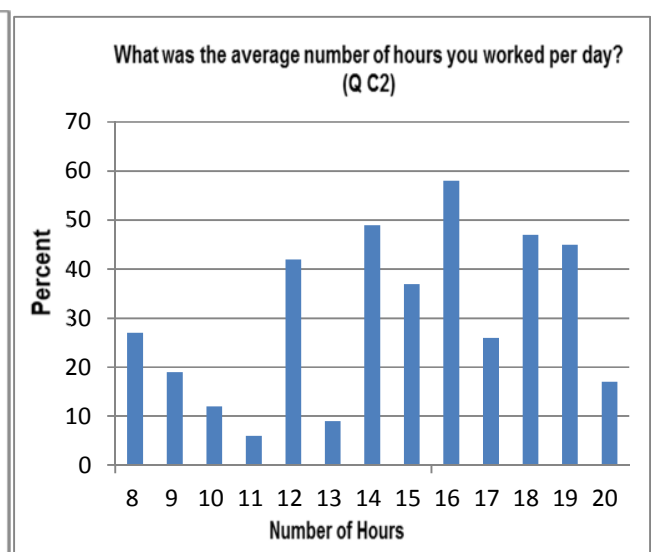
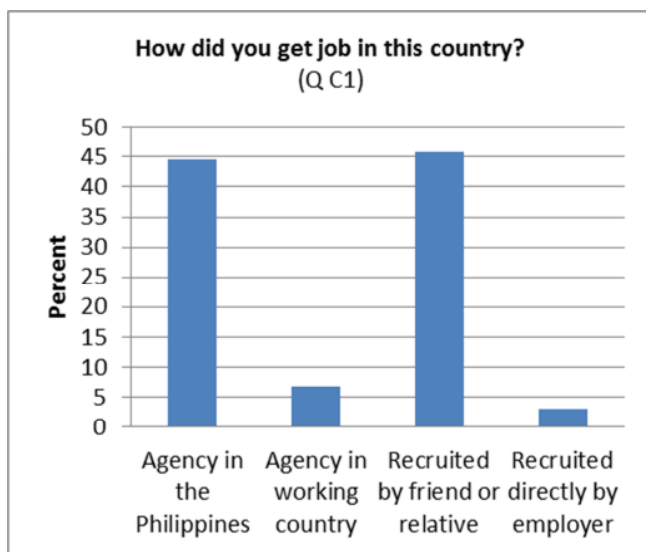
difficulties faced by women while working abroad include having a husband who drinks and gambles, having a daughter get married without permission, and having a husband start another family.

Network for Securing Employment

Among women who obtained employment in one of the three top destination countries, 45.8 percent were introduced by a friend or relative either to an agency or an employer in working country, 44.5 percent got the job through an agency in the Philippines, 6.8 percent contacted the agency in the working country directly, and the remaining 3 percent were chosen directly by employer. If we look at the pattern by destination country, Taiwan has the highest percentage of workers who found employment through an agency in the Philippines and Singapore the lowest. Singapore, on the other hand, has the highest percentage of recruitment by friend or relative and Taiwan the lowest ($p=0<0.001$).

Figure 28. Assessment of Salary Earned

Figure 29. Assessment of Savings Achieved

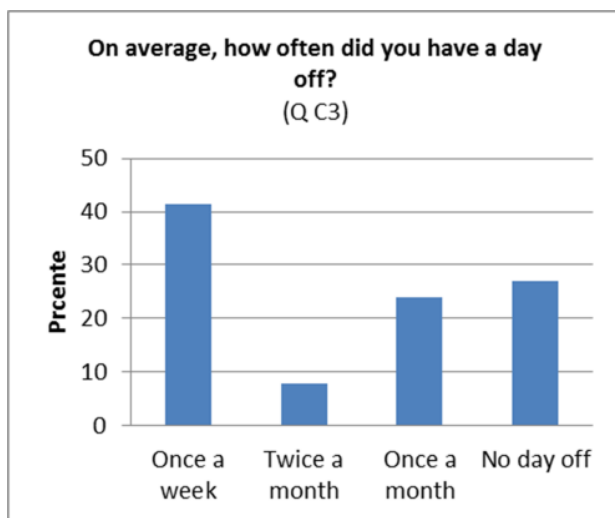


Working Conditions

Although the average number of hours worked per day varies, the average workday is 15 hours long. In general, those who went to Singapore tend to work longer hours when compared to other two countries ($p=0<0.001$). There is great variation among the destination countries regarding the foreign domestic

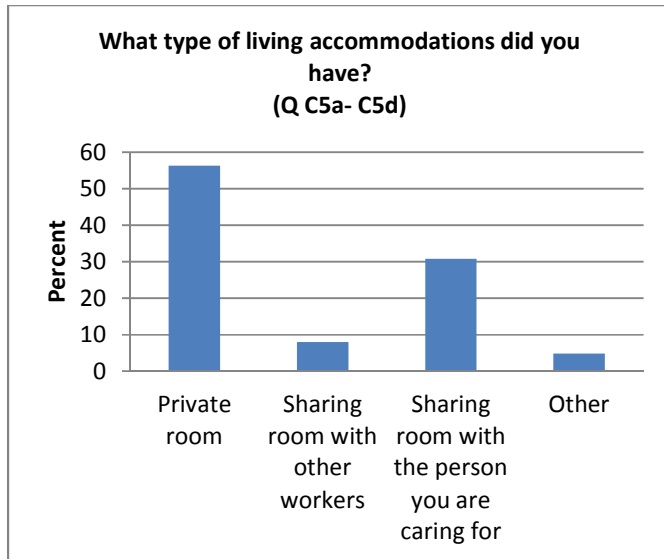
workers' time off from work. Notably 27 percent of respondents had no time off work. Of the remaining workers, 41.3 percent had a day off once a week, 7.8 percent were given a day off twice a month, and 24 percent had a day off once a month. Almost 88 percent of workers in Hong Kong had a day off each week, while this was true for only 41.3 percent of workers in Taiwan and 10.2 percent in Singapore. The proportion of workers having no days off was 44.9 percent in Singapore, 13.7 percent in Taiwan, and 3 percent in Hong Kong ($p=0 < 0.001$). Another issue is that workers may not begin to get days off until their salary reduction period is over, depending on the practice of the employment agency ($p=0 < 0.001$). The majority of workers in Singapore (59.8%) experienced a delay in getting time away from work.

Figure 30. Frequency of Days Off



While working in the foreign countries, slightly more than half (56.3%) of the respondents slept in their own private rooms, while 30.8 percent shared rooms with the person in their care, 8 percent shared rooms with other worker(s), and 4.8 percent slept in other places, like computer rooms, kitchens, living rooms, or stock rooms.

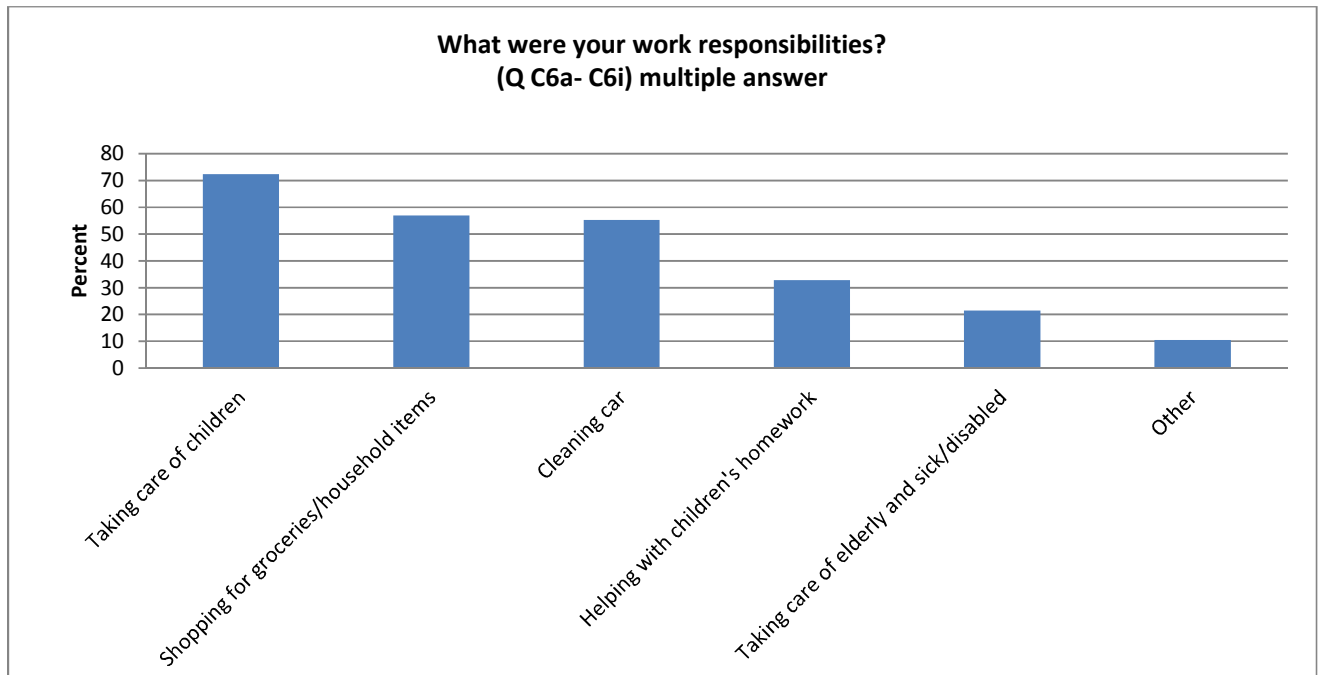
Figure 31. Type of Living Accommodations



The work responsibilities of the domestic workers in their employer’s homes included the following: cleaning the house (96.3%), doing laundry (92.8%), cooking (89.3%), providing childcare(72.3%), taking care of elderly and sick/disabled (21.5%), shopping for groceries/household items (57.0%), and cleaning the car (55.3%).Other work responsibilities included cleaning offices, gardeningfor their employer’s parents/in-laws, helping on the farm, assisting in the office,and taking care of pets.

We see statistically significant differences by destination country. Women working in Singapore are most likely to take care of children ($p=0<0.001$) and those in Taiwan tend to take care of elderly and sick/disabled ($p=0<0.001$). Compared to the other countries, women working in Singapore are more likely to do laundry (95.8%) ($p=0.034 <0.05$) and to clean a car(69.9%) ($p=0<0.01$). Interestingly, those in Taiwan are least likely to help with children’s homework ($p=0.001 <0.01$) or to shop for groceries and household items ($p=0.045<0.05$).

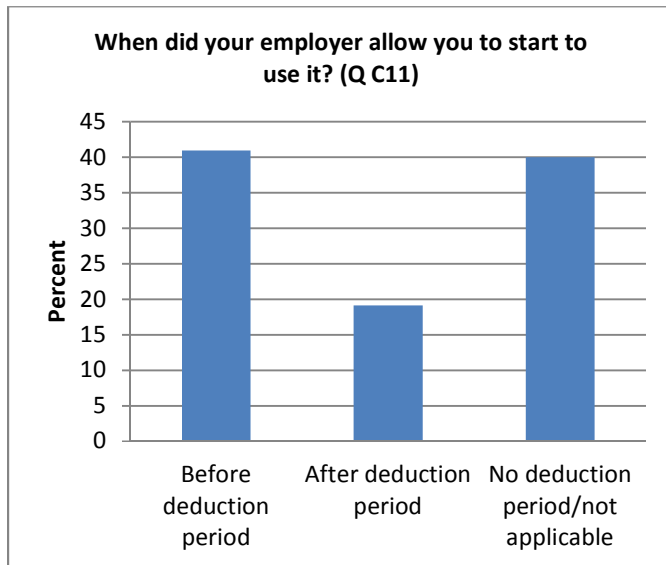
Figure 32. Work Responsibilities



Despite the fact that it is illegal to work outside the employer’s house, 22.8 percent of the respondents did so: 79.3 percent of them did domestic work job outside the employer’s house and 18.5 percent helped at the employer’s business. Notably, approximately half (56.5%) of those who worked outside the employer’s home said that they felt they had no choice. Most likely to work outside the employer’s homes are women in Singapore (29.2%) ($p=0<0.001$), and the majority take on domestic work ($p=0.041<0.05$).

With the introduction of mobile phones, overall, 57 percent of the 400 respondents were allowed by employers to buy and keep their own mobile phones. Rates were highest in Taiwan (82.4%) and lowest in Singapore (43.1%) ($p=0<0.001$). Some workers (19.1%) were only allowed to start using their mobile phones after the salary deduction period was over; whereas, 40.9 percent were allowed to use them earlier. Employers from Singapore were most likely to make their domestic workers wait until after the salary reduction period ($p=0 <0.001$).

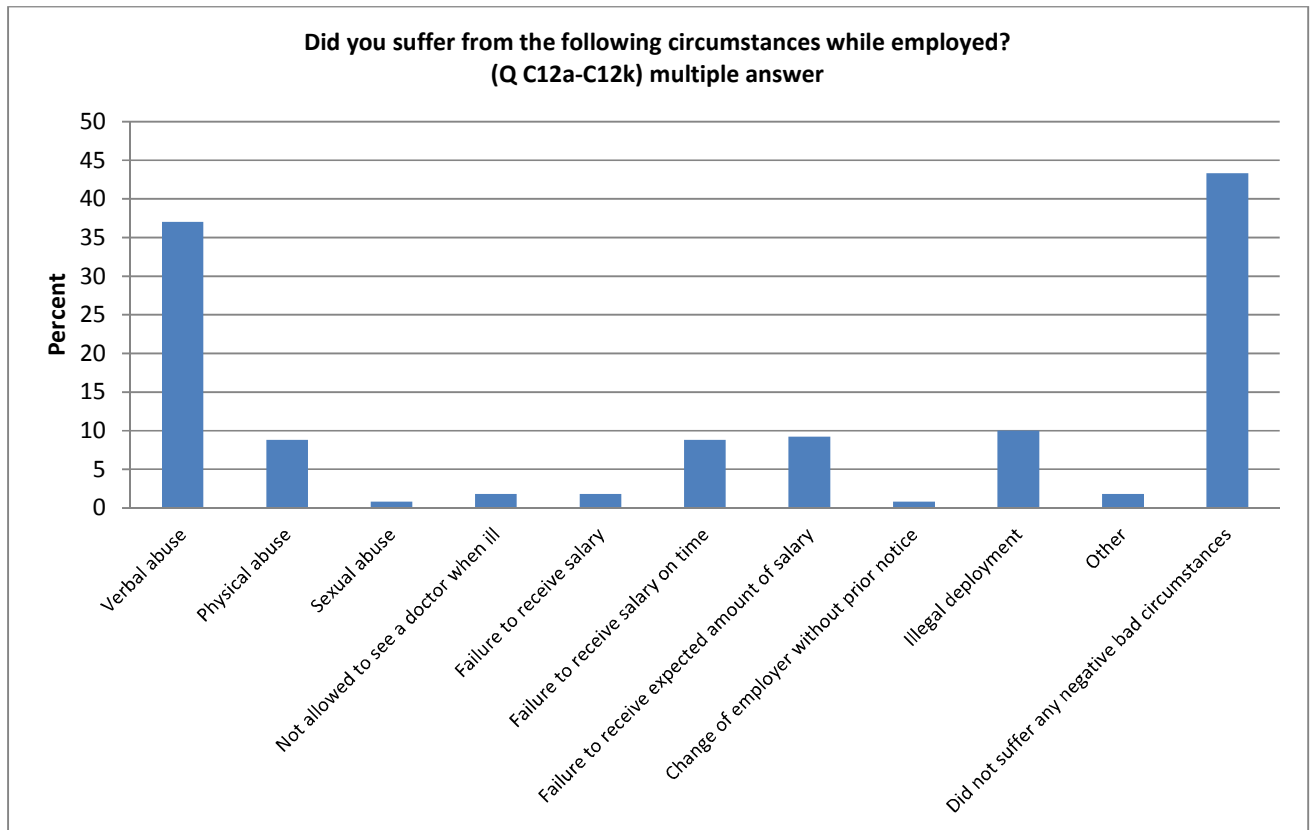
Figure 33. Access to a Mobile Phone



Experiences of Abuse

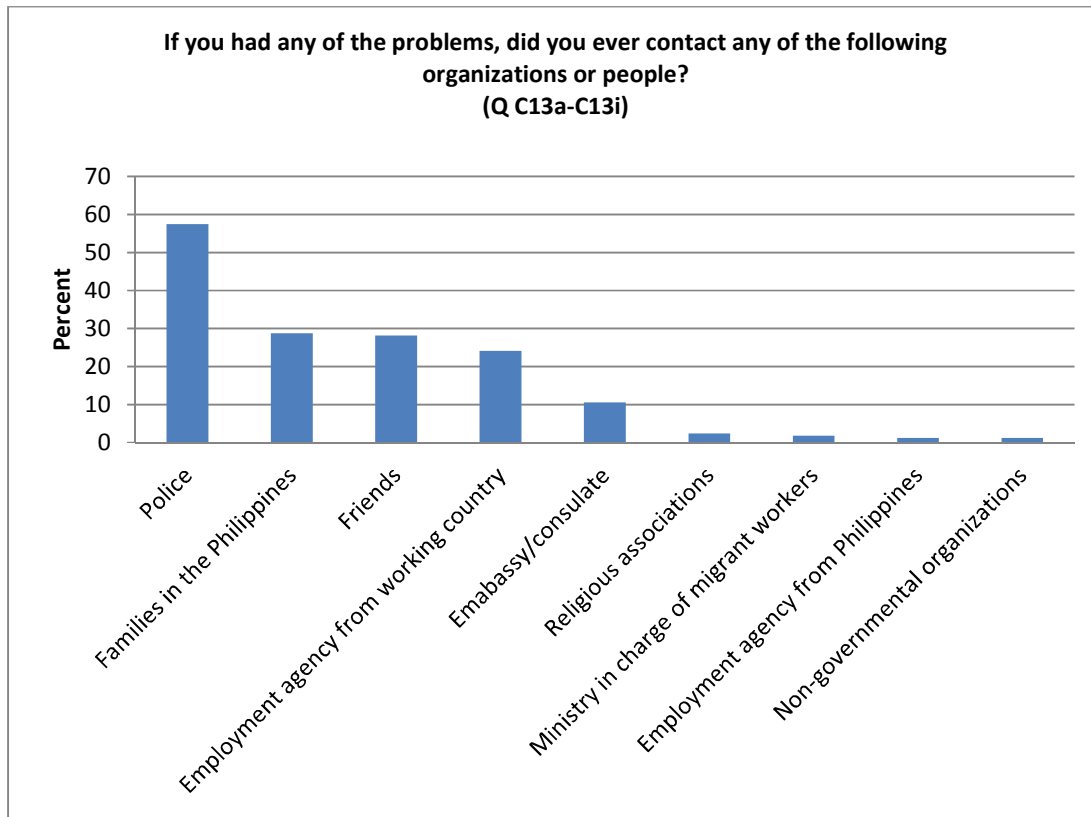
Overall, 43.3 percent of respondents did not suffer any negative circumstances. This finding may be due to respondents being asked about the employers for whom they had worked the longest. Women from Singapore were most likely to suffer negative circumstances (57.9%) ($p=0 < 0.001$). The negative circumstances experienced by domestic workers often include abuse or mistreatment suffered at the hands of employers in the destination countries. Of the 400 respondents, 37 percent were verbally abused, 8.8 percent suffered physical abuse, 0.8 percent were sexually abused. The highest proportion of verbal abuse (50.5%) ($p=0 < 0.001$) and physical abuse (12%) ($p=0.029 < 0.05$) was experienced by workers in Singapore. In some cases, salaries become an issue between domestic workers and employers, again, particularly in Singapore. A small proportion of respondents (1.8%) failed to receive any salary at all (for Singapore, $p=0.029 < 0.05$), received their salary late (8.8%) (for Singapore, $p=0.029 < 0.05$), or received less than the expected amount of money (2.5%) (for Singapore, $p=0.013 < 0.05$). In addition, 0.8 percent of foreign domestic workers were dismissed from work by employers without prior notice and 10 percent were illegally deployed. Rates were higher in Singapore ($p=0 < 0.001$).

Figure 34. Reported Unfair Treatment by Employer and Negative Experiences in the Workplace



When confronted with difficulties, 41.9 percent did not contact anyone for assistance. For those with did seek help, 57.5 percent of respondents contacted the police, 28.8 percent informed their families in the Philippines, 28.2 percent talked to their friends, 24.1 percent consulted with the employment agency in destination country, 1.2 percent consulted the employment agency in the Philippines, 10.6 percent contacted their respective embassies or consulates, 2.4 percent contacted religious associations, 1.8 percent sought assistance from the ministry in charge of migrant domestic workers in the destination country, and only 1.2 percent sought help from non-government organizations. When looking at differences by country of destination, we found statistical differences in seeking help from religious associations and employment agencies in the working country: Hong Kong is highest in the former (8.6%) ($p=0.024 < 0.05$) and Singapore being highest in the latter (28.3%) ($p=0.039 < 0.05$).

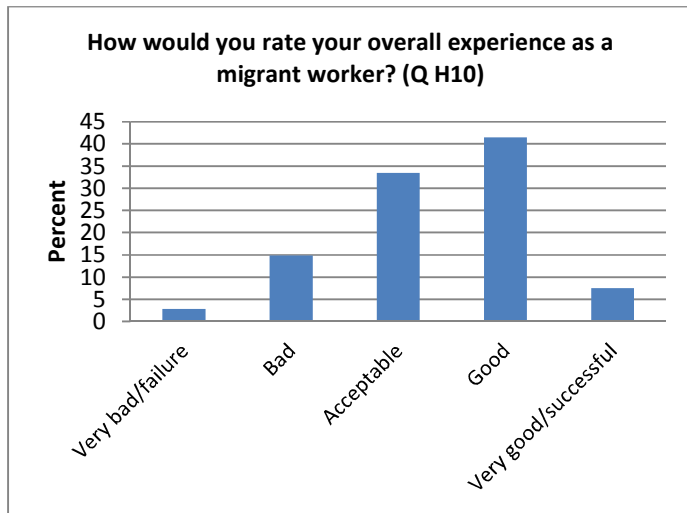
Figure 35. Organizations Contacted if Difficulties Encountered in Workplace



OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF WORK ABROAD

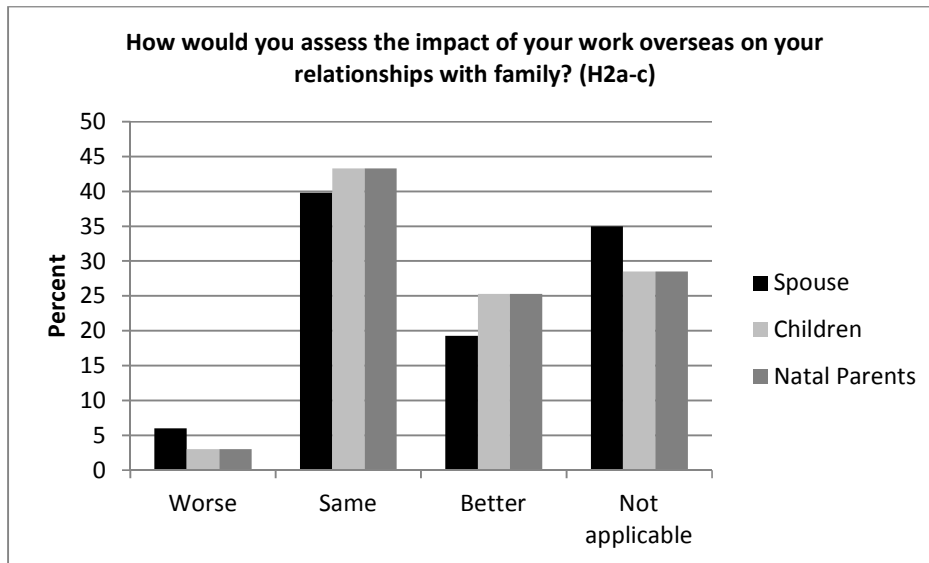
When assessing their overall experience as migrant domestic workers, most respondents were positive; ratings were acceptable (33.5%), good (41.5%), and very good/successful (7.5%). The remainder rated their overall experience as very bad/failure (2.8%) or bad (14.8%)

Figure 36 . Overall Experience as a Migrant Worker



Most of the 400 respondents (70.5%) interviewed felt that working abroad had improved the economic situation of their family. Regarding the impact of working overseas on family relationships, assessments vary. Respondents reported that relationships with spouses were worse (had more conflict) than before (6.0%), the same (39.8%), or better than before (19.3%). Upon returning to the Philippines, respondents reported that relationships with their children were worse (3.0%), the same (43.3%), or better (25.3%). Following their period of working abroad, respondent's relationships with their parents were the same (64.3%) or better (29.5%); relationships with parents-in-law were worse (2.8%) or improved (16.8%); and relationships with siblings were the same (64.9%) or better (26.6%).

Figure 37. Impact of Employment on Relationships with Family



Approximately half of respondents (45.6%) thought that working abroad improved their chances of finding employment in the Philippines upon their return home, while a similar number of respondents (56.1%) reported that they would go to work abroad again if given the opportunity to do so. For the majority of respondents, economic reasons, such as children's future, children's education, and increased family income, motivated them to migrate abroad for work.

For respondents, Singapore is the preferred destination country for (28.7%), followed by Hong Kong (26%), and Canada (15.2%). For second order of preference of destination countries, Canada topped with 26.8 percent followed by Hong Kong with 16.9 percent and with Singapore with 12.7 percent. For the third order of preference of destination countries, Canada came first with 26.1 percent followed by USA with 17.4 percent and with Hong Kong and London with 13 percent respectively.

Not all women were successful in their attempt to migrate abroad again for domestic work. Overall, 7.5 percent of respondents failed in their attempts. The rates of failure, by country of destination, were Hong Kong (16.7%), Saudi Arabia (13.6%), Singapore (10%), and Korea, Italy and Dubai with 6.7

percent each. The primary reasons cited for unsuccessful migration to these countries were illegal recruitment, lack of financial support, and pregnancy.

The two cases below illustrate the stories of how domestic workers improved their lives despite numerous obstacles and difficulties.

Agnes is single and returned from Hong Kong after working for four years. She was able to buy a relatively big house and a small piece of land in Guimba Nueva Ecija. The properties did not generate income, but she had to pay an expensive electricity fee for the house. She could neither apply for a factory job nor a sales job at shopping mall because she was over 30 years of age. She is planning to get a factory job in Taiwan before she uses all her savings, since she needs to pay an upfront agency fee of 80000 peso (US\$1880).

Jennylyn is married with one son, but living apart from her husband. She went to Singapore with the intention of financially supporting her son and other family members. After two years, she returned home, but could not save enough money. She had to pay expensive tuition for her son along with the living expenses of family members. Jennylyn and her son live in Pasig City, Manila with her mother and aunt. Her migration greatly helped her send her son to private elementary school. Now she is earning 12000 peso (US\$282) as a clerk, which barely covers all the daily expenses for four family members. Her son will proceed to a private high school where tuition fees are higher. She is planning to work again as a domestic worker to save for her son's high school tuition fees.

CONCLUSION

Domestic workers play a significant economic and social role in their countries of work. Unlike source countries of domestic workers in Asia, including the Philippines where wealthy employers tend to hire more than one domestic worker and assign them to different type of jobs, domestic workers in our study worked mostly for middle or upper middle class families and performed a variety of household tasks. For instance, aside from their household routines inside the employer's house, more than half washed cars and one third assisted children with their homework.

It is important to emphasize that 71.5 percent of those women who went abroad as domestic workers left their child(ren) in the Philippines. Unlike Filipinas who work in western countries and hire women from rural areas to take care of their children, as typically depicted in care chain argument (Hochschild 2000a, 2000b), our study showed that women working in Asian countries did not recruit women from outside their kin group to care for their children. Given the lower salaries for domestic workers in Asia, it may be too expensive to hire someone outside the family unit. Childcare is usually provided by husbands or maternal grandmothers. Since some of the married women were actually single mothers living without their husbands, the percentage of husbands being chief caregiver is, in reality, higher. At the same time, it might imply that, in some cases, husbands did not work full time and were relying on the income from their wives working abroad.

It is shown in our study that in seven out of ten felt that working abroad improved the economic situation of their families. A majority felt that working abroad as domestic workers was acceptable or more than acceptable in terms of income. However, domestic work in those countries did not bring a continuous positive impact on their lives, which can be seen in the small income differences prior to the first labour migration and after the last. In case of employment status, there is a slight difference between before and after, as typically shown in the decrease of a full-time job. This is strongly evidenced by the negative

responses to the question on whether working abroad improved the chances of finding employment in the Philippines.

As shown in our data, fewer respondents became factory workers after migration. In the Philippines, workers must be 30 years old or less to obtain employment in factories or sales in big shopping malls. These jobs would lead to a livable wage for their families, but only if they do not send their children to private schools. The age limitation for jobs in factories and shopping malls and the emphasis on educating children tend to push women to work abroad again. In fact, 75.5 percent of our respondents decided to work abroad in order to provide educations for their family members. Once a woman's savings are depleted after returning home, they are likely to feel the need to work abroad again. In our study, over half of the respondents would become foreign workers again if given the opportunity, possibly because domestic jobs in Asia and Middle East are perceived as being a realistic option for women to earn money.

Despite the fact that both salaries and working conditions are better in Hong Kong and Taiwan than in Singapore, as shown in our research, among women who took part in our study, many chose to work in Singapore the first time they migrated for work. It can be assumed that women chose to go to Singapore because it is one of few countries women without a long waiting period. In contrast, women heading to Hong Kong and Taiwan usually have to wait longer and pay all or partial agency fees before departure. In our research, four out of ten women migrated for a second time, usually as domestic workers. For some women, Singapore was regarded as a stepping stone for migration to Hong Kong and other countries, but for others Singapore was the destination country for second migration. In our study, compared to Hong Kong and Taiwan, domestic workers in Singapore had relatively unpleasant experiences, including a restriction on days off and mobile phone use, problems with working conditions (not salary related), failure to receive salaries on time, illegal deployment, and both verbal abuse and physical abuse. Women working in Singapore were less likely to be satisfied with their experiences overall, salaries, local people, and

middleman (employment agency/recruiter). They suffered more negative circumstances, and their stays as domestic workers were shorter.

Many domestic workers experience difficulties when working overseas. As our study shows, for example, when domestic workers are confined to their employer's home it makes them more susceptible to poor working and living conditions. They generally work longer hours and do not have days off. In our research, more than half the domestic workers who were working outside the employer's household thought that they could not refuse the illegal work. Many of the problems and difficulties faced by the respondents tend to be caused by the attitudes of some employers that are reinforced by a lack of legal regulation on the employment agencies and inadequate protection for domestic workers.

In order to address such issues, a set of international standards aimed at improving the working conditions of millions of domestic workers worldwide was adopted with the Convention on Domestic Workers (2011) during the 100th annual Conference of the International Labour Organization on June 16, 2011. The new ILO standards show that domestic workers around the world must have the same basic labour rights available to other workers, such as reasonable hours of work, a weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours, and clear information on terms and conditions of employment, including freedom of association and right to collective bargaining⁸. Singapore did not vote for the convention and no member state has ratified this convention yet. In March 2012 in Singapore, there was, however, a significant step taken to improve the lives of domestic workers when they were ensured a weekly day off as their basic labour right. Singapore will apply this new regulation to migrant domestic workers whose work permits are issued or renewed after January 2013. According to HP from Ministry of Manpower in Singapore, "this

⁸http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/media-centre/press-releases/WCMS_157891/lang-en/index.htm

regulation is also expected to enhance Singapore's attractiveness as a destination for quality and experienced foreign domestic workers."⁹

Lastly, this summary closes with the suggestion that NGOs can play a role in improving the lives of foreign domestic workers. In our research, it is revealed that few domestic workers sought direct help from NGOs when they experienced difficulties. This might be partly because we included women who went to those countries before NGOs have become very active in supporting the rights of foreign workers. NGOs can help them by providing more assistance through their grass-roots activities. For example, currently, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in the Philippines provides competency-based seminar workshops for domestic workers along with modules for developing work values. In our research, skill development classes helped respondents make new friends and they found them useful after returning to the Philippines. At the same time, it is notable that the majority of workers did not attend the classes because they wanted to save money or were not interested in the program. Skill development classes can also become a hub of information and networking among domestic workers. NGOs continue to develop more attractive programs in order to suit a variety of needs, including occupational needs. TESDA should also play a role in getting the skills program accredited to make use domestic workers time effectively for their future back home.

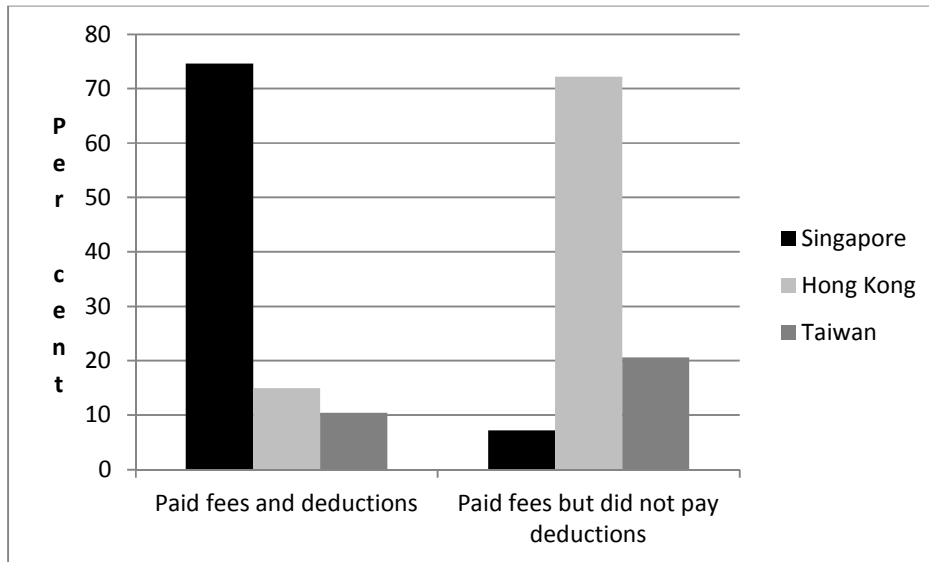
⁹<http://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/Pages/PressReleasesDetail.aspx?listid=411>

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Distribution of migrant workers by payment structure (fees and salary deductions) for two groups of migrants, by country of destination



This figure indicates that the payment structure of pre-departure fees versus salary deductions differs for women from the Philippines by country of destination. Among group 1 (Paid fees *and* salary deductions), most women went to Singapore. Among group 2 (Paid fees *but no* salary deductions), most women went to Hong Kong. Our data does not allow us to calculate with precision if women in group 2 paid less in total than women in group 1 but, there is a strong indication that they did.