

MSc Thesis, International development Studies



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Migration As a Tool For Empowerment?

The Effects of Migration And Return on The
Empowerment Levels of Filipina International
Migrant Workers



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**The Effects of Migration and Return on the Empowerment Levels
of Filipina International Migrant Workers**

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Abstract

The feminization of migration is a worldwide phenomenon. More often women decide to work abroad in order to provide for their families and themselves. However, within the current literature the difference in experiences between female and male migrants workers tend to be overlooked. A gendered lens is not incorporated within the international labour migrant literature. Furthermore, the effects of return migration on the migrant worker is also often overlooked within the academic literature. This thesis aimed to bridge these gaps within the international labour migration literature. Hence, this thesis has incorporated the concept of empowerment to analyze the effect of international migration on female migrant workers. Furthermore the effects of return migration are also analyzed. The empowerment concept is divided in economic empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment. In addition empowerment is analyzed on the individual level, in close relationship with others and on the collective level. For the research the Philippines has been the area of choice, due to their high levels of international labour migrants and especially female migrant workers. The data for this thesis was collected by semi-structured interviews with returned female migrant workers, government officials, NGO officials and informal observations at a non-governmental organization. The conclusion of this thesis will be that there is a difference in country of migration to what extend women are empowered during their time abroad. Women who worked in the Middle East showed less levels of empowerment in relation to their counterparts who worked in a country in Asia. Furthermore the gained empowerment is difficult to sustain when they return to their home country.

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Abbreviations

DH: Domestic Helper

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

OFW: Overseas Filipino Workers

OWWA: Overseas Workers Welfare Administration

POEA: Philippines Overseas Employment Administration

TESDA: Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

1. Introduction

The amount of international labour migrants has increased tremendously over the previous decades (Willis 2014). Due to globalization the world has become more intertwined and movement of people and products proves to be easier than ever (Ghosh 2009). Hence, the intensity of migration has increased affecting every country, receiving or sending. One of the most recent phenomenon's within the international labour movement is an increase in female migration. Multiple authors have named this the "feminization of migration" (Ghosh 2009; Piper 2005; Tharan 2009). Although migration is a complex and multilayered process, many authors have tried to comprehend it. Over the years these authors have developed theories which explain the international labour movements and the relation between migration and development (de Haas 2010; Cassarino 2004).

Although these theories succeeded in unraveling the complex concept of migration, gaps are still present within the literature on international labour migration. The first gap is linked to the feminization of migration. Even though scholars have been able to make frameworks to comprehend the international labour migration process, gender is mostly excluded within these frameworks (Ghosh 2009). Hence, a gendered framework to analyze the effects of migration on female migrants is scarce within the academic literature. Men and women experience migration differently and are confronted with different processes when abroad. Therefore the importance of a gendered lens within the international labour movement academia should not be underestimated (Bélange and Rahman 2013; Piper 2005).

The second gap within the current literature involves the effects of return migration on migrant workers. Although, for most international labour migrants return is a stage of their migration cycle, return has been under researched by academics. Most of the current literature focuses on the effects of migration during the migration trajectory therefore overlooking the effect of return migration on the migrant, their families and the country (Bastia 2013).

This thesis tries to make a scientific contribution to both of the current gaps within the international labour migration literature. On the one hand a framework is presented that incorporates a gender perspective and on the other hand the effects of return migration are analyzed. The framework that is established analyses levels of empowerment reached during migration by female migrant workers and the ability to sustain empowerment upon return to their home country. By adding empowerment to a framework, it is better to comprehend female migration.

According to many writers the “feminization of migration” has mostly taken place within Asian countries, including the Philippines (Belanger and Rahman 2013; Yamanaka and Piper 2005; Ghosh 2009). The Philippines is one of the leading countries when it comes to the supply of international labour migrants (Yamanaka and Piper 2005). Because of the long history of migration within the country, the Filipino government have established several institutions to control the outflow of migrant workers. The migration trajectory of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) is almost fully institutionalized. Daily, approximately 5500 people leave the country in search of better job opportunities abroad. The country therefore relies on the amount of remittances send to their families (Guevarra 2006). Of these 5500 more than a half are women, mostly working as caretakers, nurses or domestic helpers within the receiving country (Migrante 2015). Although, the country claims to have equal opportunities for men and women the Filipino culture still prevails to be masculine (Tharan 2009; Asis et al 2004; Enrile and Agbayani 2007). Because of the culture of migration that is present within the Philippines this thesis will not solely contribute to the scientific field, but will also have a social contribution . Due to the gap between international labour migration and return migration, and the lack of literature on female migration trajectories this thesis studies the effects of international labour migration and return migration on the empowerment levels of Filipina international labour migrants.

The thesis consists out of the following chapters. First a literature overview will be given on the different theories within the field of international labour migration and the literature on empowerment. Following this, the research design of the thesis is presented, including the research questions, the conceptual framework and unit of analysis. Third, the country profile of the Philippines is presented including the migration policies of the Philippines, and the position of women within the Philippines. Fourth, the methodology for the thesis is outlined. The succeeding chapters present the participants, their experiences pre-migration and finally their experiences during their time abroad. Then, the three types of empowerment are analyzed. The thesis will end with the conclusion and discussion and a policy recommendation.

2. Theoretical framework

Within this section of the thesis the current literature on international labour migration and return migration are presented. It is argued that these current theories are not applicable for the female migration trajectory. Therefore the empowerment concept is introduced, different

definitions are presented and the concept is explained. Furthermore, the empowerment concept is linked to migration and the debate on levels of empowerment and migration are presented.

2.1 Migration and Return migration

The process of migration is complex and has been studied by many over the last couple of decades (de Haas 2010; Gmelch 1980; Cassarino 2004; Bastia 2011). Scholars have tried to unravel the complexity of migration and to come to a generalization on why people migrate, who the people are that migrate and the effects migration has on receiving and sending countries. However, the current literature on international labour migration fails to include a gendered lens within the academic debate (Bastia 2011). Within this section of the thesis the different views of scholars and reasons why people migrate, the effect it has on development of the sending country and reasons for return migration are presented. Afterwards, it is discussed why these theories do not suffice in explaining the effects of international labour migration on female international migrant workers.

Between the 1950's and the 1960's the developmentalist view dominated the international labour migration theories. According to this vision migration was the opportunity to increase welfare. However, this vision was closely linked to return migration. It was claimed that migrants who returned could share their knowledge with their surrounding community (Bastia 2011). In addition to the knowledge sharing, remittances were important to increase the economic development of the developing countries (de Haas 2010). Migration was seen as one of the factors that would lead to development of an underdeveloped country (de Haas 2010).

Upon the 1970's the international labour migration debate shifted towards the Neo-classical theory (Kweun Yu 2007). The concepts of the theory were based on an optimistic view of migration. Migration was needed to create a balance within the international labour market and to increase welfare within both the receiving and the sending country (de Haas 2010). Migrants were value maximizing actors, and the reason for migration was focused on maximization their income. Therefore remittances were not taken into account within this theory. The migrant was not recognized as part of a larger community or acting within social structures (de Haas 2010). Hence, migration was needed for the migrant to increase his or her own income. In the end the main goal of the migrants was permanent settlement (Cassarino 2004). Failure to increase income was the most important reasons for migrants to return according to this theory (Cassarino 2004). Thus, according to the Neo-classical theorists

return migration was a failure within the migration trajectory, because the end goal of permanent settlement was not achieved (Cassarino 2004).

The positive vision concerning migration shifted after the 1970's. Migration became associated with brain drain and increased underdevelopment within countries with high levels of out-migration (de Haas 2004). Instead of portraying migration as a solution to the problem, migration was seen as the problem. Brain drain became a central concept within this vision on the international labour migration trajectory (Bastia 2011). Migration was seen as a tool to de-skill the lower income countries, by the migration of skilled migrants to more developed countries. In addition remittances were not, as stated by the developmentalists, seen as tools for development (Bastia 2011). On the contrary remittances would lead to inflation and overconsumption, rarely used for investments and development of the country (de Haas 2010). Furthermore, migration and particularly remittances were thought to increase the inequality between the community, while some families would receive remittances while other would not (de Haas 2010).

Although the previous mentioned theories have different visions on the effects of migration, the three theories have a similar problem in their explanation for migration and return migration. The theories are unable to explain structural differences between migration trajectories and experiences. The theories cannot explain return and migration on the basis of non-economic reasons (Tharan 2009). They are unable to explain the influence of the family, the state and other institutions on the decision to migrate and on decisions to return from migration (Tharan 2009). Furthermore the theories are unable to incorporate the importance of a gender lens (Kweun Yu 2007).

The structuralist approach has put the structural situation of the migrants in the center of the theory. Influenced by anthropologists and sociologists the structuration theory gave new insights into the international labour migration (Cassarino 2004). The theory claims that the migration process is not only based on the experience of the migrant but based on the social and institutional situation in the country (de Haas 2010). In their vision return migration is not only a personal issue but part of a bigger social and structural setting . According to the structuralist approach people have limited influence on the power structure when they return due to the lack of investments of migrants and the deeply settled power structures within the society (Kweun Yu 2007). The theory states that time and space are two important elements for an migrant to be able to settle back into society and possibly be an actor of change. Being away for too long reduces the possibility to change the society, however staying away for as little as one year will affect the amount of knowledge the

migrant can use to influence the society (Cassarino 2004). Although the approach gives a clear overview of the limitations of change and the influence of social and institutional structures. The structuralist approach lacks a gendered vision. In addition to the lack of the gender vision, the theory states that migrants are unable to be an actor of change due to the different power structures surrounding them. Therefore, the framework is unsuitable for this thesis, while the main point of the thesis is to see how women can be an actor of change within the current power structures.

A theory that has put the structural situation of the migrant into account is the New Economics of Labour Migration theory (NELM). The core of this theory implies that migration is part of a bigger structural vision of the family. Making the household the unit of analysis (de Haas 2010). Meaning that the decision making process to migrate is made within and with the family. Migration is seen as a strategic risk calculation of the entire family (Cassarino 2004). Return within this theory is seen as the end goal of the international labour trajectory. According to this theory return will take place if the migrant has achieved the goals established before embarking on their migration trajectory (Cassarino 2004). Therefore seeing migration not as permanent, but a temporary trajectory where migrants are able to achieve goals and increase the welfare of themselves and their family (Cassarino 2004). As summed up by Cassarino *“The duration of stay abroad is calculated with reference to the needs of the household, in terms of insurance, purchasing power and savings. Once such needs are fulfilled, return migration occurs.”* (2004, 256). Although this theory does include the structures that influence return of a migrant, limitations are still present. According to de Haas the theory focused excessively on the household level, while the individual reasoning is put to the side (2010). Furthermore, the theory does not explain social and political reasons for return. Moreover return of a migrant without completing their pre-established goals is according to this theory not possible. In addition the effect of return migration on the migrant, it's family and society is not taken into account (Tharan 2009).

Transnationalism tries to bridge the differences between the previous mentioned theories. This approach tries to move away from the distinction between sending and receiving country and tries to see a fluid relation between the two (Cassarino 2004). Meaning, that the connections between the two countries plays an important role within this theory. Within the field of international migration it became clear that connection between family and the migrated remained strong. Therefore, the theory tries to find a reason for the strong economic and social contacts between the different countries (Cassarino 2004). The transnational theories has placed migration in a broader social cultural field (Tharan 2009).

Although Transnationalism place the importance of ties between the sending and receiving country central, problems do arise with this theory. According to Tharan there are three issues involved with the theory of transnationalism (2009). First emphasis on circulation and the lack of settlement. Second the emphasis is in a great extent on the nature of transnationalism, therefore the power of the nation state is ignored (Tharan 2009). In addition the feelings and the impact on the migrant tend to be overlooked. Lastly the theory ignores the importance of gender (Tharan 2009, 30). Due to these reasons the theory of transnationalism is unable to explain the movement temporary international female labour migrants. While for most of these women return is part of their migration trajectory. Thus their international labour migration trajectory cannot be seen as circular and settlement is part of their migration trajectory (Tharan 2009). In addition the lack of the gender within transnationalism is another problem, the theory will be incomplete to explain the effect of return migration on the lives of the Filipina international labour migrants.

To summarise: although the literature on the international labour migration and return migration tries to incorporate different processes, the current theories still tend to overlook the importance of a gendered approach to migration. These theories are unable to explain why women migrate, why they return and the effects migration has on the lives of female international labour migrants (Tharan 2009). Different authors have tried to establish a more comprehensive framework by including gender aspects within the migration theories (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003; Pessar and Mahler 2003). Although these frameworks are comprehensive and a sincere effort to put the aspect of women and their position within the international labour migration trajectory in the centre, they both forget the importance of return migration on the levels of gained empowerment. Therefore in the next section there will be a focus on the empowerment and migration debate.

2.2 Empowerment and migration.

The concept of gender has become more important within the development school during the 70's. However the introduction of gender and empowerment within the school of migration theories is more recent (Parrado and Flippen 2005). Unlike sex, gender is constructed by society. Examples of this are the expectations by society because you are a boy or a girl and the specific behaviour you need to show because of your sex (Pessar and Mahler 2003). The difference between gender equality and empowerment is as followed: gender equality is about the relation between men and women, empowerment is about a women's agency, her ability to make choices (Desai 2010). Empowerment would in the end lead to gender equality.

Increasingly the concept of gender is acknowledged to be important to be incorporated within the theory of migration. In addition scholars agree more on the aspect that gender and female migration needs a separate field within the migration discipline (Tharan 2009; Ghosh 2009; Piper 2005; Bastia 2011). Within a gendered framework the effects of migration on female migrant workers can be closer examined. The concept of empowerment is important within this framework, because an increase in levels of empowerment are a step in the direction of gender equality.

The concept of empowerment is extremely broad, as stated by Kabeer “*Empowerment is seen to occur at a number of different levels, to cover a range of different dimensions and to materialize through a variety of different processes.*” (1999,2) Although, the concept of empowerment is used within different field of the development discipline, there is not an clear agreement on the definition of the empowerment (Desai 2010). However, one thing that scholars do agree upon is that power the central concept is within the empowerment definition. Empowerment implies that women go from a situation of being powerless or disempowered to a situation of having power or being empowered (Kabeer 1999).

According to Rowlands (1997) the concept of power can be defined into four different categories: *the power over, the power within, the power with* and the *power to*. Empowerment means overcoming the *power over* to achieve the *power within* to finally achieve the *power with* and *the power to*. Therefore empowerment should not be seen as only the possession of power but also the expression of this power these women have achieved within (Kweun Yu 2007). Rowlands states that empowerment must undo the harmful social situation women are in, making women conscious on their situation and able to change their situation (Rowlands 1997). To Kabeer, on the other hand, power is the ability to make decisions a person that was first denied access to decision making re-claims this power (1999). According to Kabeer empowerment and disempowerment are related to one another. A person is unable to become empowered if she has not been in a disempowering situation (1999). Agency, the ability to make a decision on your own life, is central to the definition of Kabeer (1999). Both Rowlands and Kabeer agree on the perception that empowerment takes place on different levels: the individual level, in close relationship with others and on the collective level (1997; 1999).

Although the concept of empowerment has become a buzzword within the academic literature and within policy making, some agreement on the concept can be found. First, empowerment is a process and therefore different steps needs to be taken to increase women’s empowerment, in the end the outcome will be an improvement in certain aspects of a

women's life (Desai 2010). Second, women are empowered when they are able to make their own decisions. Lastly, the control over resources and ideologies is central to many definitions on empowerment (Desai 2010).

Most authors agree that empowerment is a process, therefore different frameworks were established trying to comprehend the different stages of empowerment. One of these authors is Longwe (1991) according to her empowerment starts with the concept of welfare, meaning that there is an improvement in the women's material welfare. This can be connected to income, food and land. The second step is access, meaning that women get equal access to public services such as education and health. The third step is conscientisation, according to Longwe this means that women become aware of the difference between men and women (1991). The aim of this conscientisation step is to transform the difference between men and women. The fourth step is participation, women start to exercise their agency and take part in decision making (Longwe 1991). The last step is the finalization of empowerment, the control step means that women have the same access and control over resources than men. Having the same benefits without dominance of the men (Longwe 1991). According to Longwe the different steps are linear and full empowerment will be achieved through these different steps (Luttrell et al 2009).

McWhirter (1991) makes a distinction between the *empowering* situation in which a person does not complete all of the components and *empowered*, where the latter did happen (McWhirter 1991). The four steps that need to be followed according to her are firstly, becoming aware of the power dynamics, meaning that women become aware of their situation and how this affects their situation. Secondly develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives. Third, exercise this control without infringing upon their rights and lastly to give support to empowerment of the whole community (McWhirter 1991).

The World bank has stated that empowerment has three different levels. First, the existence of choice, whether women has the opportunity to make a choice. Second, use of choice, when a women actually has the ability to make such a choice and lastly, achievement of choice outcomes (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005).

Lastly Charmes and Wieringa explain empowerment as a process as well (2003). Different steps needs to be achieved before a person can be fully empowered. According to them the first step is becoming aware of their situation. The second movement is the existence of viable alternatives . Third, is the ability to make a choices over these alternatives (Charmes and Wieringa 2003). The fourth step is the ability to have a voice to express their grievances when they enter a political area. The fifth step is the ability to express their agency

individually. And lastly full equality in all aspects of their lives (Charmes and Wieringa 2003).

These different frameworks made clear that empowerment is a process. The next section will describe the levels of empowerment women can achieve through migration and the predicted effects of return migration on the empowerment of women. What are the current visions on empowerment and migration and how can migration and return migration lead to empowerment and disempowerment effects?

2.3 Level of empowerment

Within the literature on empowerment and migration not only the concept of empowerment is contested, the amount of empowerment achieved during the migration process is a point of contention as well. On the one hand authors claim that migration will lead to empowerment while on the other hand others claim the contrary.

In their study on the effects of migration on female Mexican migrant workers in America, Parrado and Flippen researched the levels of empowerment on different aspects of their lives (2005). They in the end made the claim that the disempowering effects of Mexican women in America increase the inequality within their relationship with their spouse (Parrado and Flippen 2005) Within their research they found little to no empowerment effects on the lives of the women they interviewed in their research (Parrado and Flippen 2005).

Hugo in his study on Indonesian female international labour migrants and the effect on the Indonesian family, came to the conclusion that if women move from one patriarchal society towards another little to no increase in empowerment would be seen (1995). According to him the role of the Indonesian women did not change due to migration because of the worsening situation they move towards (Hugo 1995).

Multiple authors agree with the fact that during the migration trajectory women are constrained by gender relations, discrimination and the foreign status they have (Parrado and Flippen 2005; Ghosh 2009). According to these authors women are constrained within their migration process by the different processes of the receiving country and even their family back home. Another factor that plays a role in the empowerment process of these women is the legal protection they lack when living abroad. This is mostly the case for unskilled labour migrants who work as a domestic worker or care taker. These professions are in most countries excluded from labour rights (Ghosh 2009). Because they lack these rights the women are subjected to lower salaries, high working hours and sometimes even violence

(Ghosh 2009). These women are unable to benefit from being a member of a workers union, and mostly are unknown on the rights they have (Piper 2005).

Although most authors agree that empowerment during migration is difficult, it is mostly acknowledged that empowerment is present during a migration process (Tharan 2009; Handapangoda 2012; Kweun yu 2007). These empowerment processes can take place on different levels. On the one hand it is stated that women become more economically independent due to the migration experience. In her study on female migration within the Philippines, Tharan found evidence of the increase of female empowerment during the migration period due to the economic independence they felt (2009). According to Tharan these women were able to make financial decisions for the first time. Although, full economic independence was unable to achieve due to the obligation they felt to send back remittances, the freedom experienced by these women was greater than the restrictions (Tharan 2009).

In addition to the economic independence, Handapangoda found evidence of non-economic empowerment of Sri Lankan women (2012). These empowerment effects were found in the freedom women experienced in a life outside of the patriarchal society. The women became aware of their sense of freedom, while being abroad and aware of the restricting patterns while living in Sri Lanka (Handapangoda 2012). Within this study a dynamics between empowerment effects and disempowerment effects were seen. On the one hand women experienced some levels of empowerment and contested gender relations by being the main provider of the family and an increase in physical mobility, on the other hand they experienced disempowering situation when they worked abroad (Handapangoda 2012). Therefore it can be stated that empowerment and disempowerment should not be seen as two separate processes but a dynamic process these women have to face (Kweun Yu 2007). On the one hand they will experience empowerment effects when being abroad, but on the other hand disempowerment effects will be present as well. It is seen that in different studies female migrant workers do feel an increase in empowerment because they are able to escape the patriarchal society (Kweun yu 2007). Hugo underlines this statement by stating that women who migrate from rural area to the urban area, get more aware of their situation and become autonomous from their family (2002).

Most of the current literature on empowerment and migration focus on the process of women when being abroad. Little attention is paid to the process of return and the effects this will have on the empowerment process of women. It is stated that within the literature of female empowerment and migration they experienced the level of empowerment because they were able to leave the patriarchal society and the traditional gender roles that were expected

of them. However what will be the situation of these women when coming back to these fixed gender roles and patriarchal society?

According to Handapangoda these women face difficulties (2014). From being the breadwinner of the household, they are placed back in the traditional role of housewife and mother (Handapangoda 2014). Therefore the decision-making power they had obtained while being abroad was removed from them. In addition they had to cope with a fragmented society and a community that was unsupportive of her previous decision of migration (Handapangoda 2014). On the other hand when looking at migration of Albanian women E. Caro et al state that the traditional roles of mothers and head of the household was broken down when women returned from their international labour migration experience (2011). Although the process was hard and these women had to fight for their rights, in the end the traditional roles were broken down and the male became more involved in household and the women were able to make economic decisions (E. Caro et al. 2011). Hence, the women reached a higher level of empowerment.

Zhang underlines the statement made by Handapangoda. Although women were able to make autonomous decision and felt and increase in personal freedom due to the international labour migration process, when returning the patriarchal society placed a restriction on the expression of their gained empowerment (2013). Not only does the family places a burden on the women on their moment of return, during their reintegration in the society they restrict the new gained independence (Zhang 2013). According to Zhang some women decide to migrate again because of these restrictions. However this decision is restricted to the marital situation of these women, if married or if she has children this decision was harder to make (Zhang 2013).

Female international labour migrants are faced with several challenges. On the one hand, during their migration process they are confronted with empowerment and disempowerment processes. On the other hand, when these women are faced with these disempowerment effects, they become more aware of their oppressive situation back home and increase their freedom (Zhang 2013). When returning home these women are experiencing troubles how to settle back into their old lives. In addition they also have to face the community they lived in and their perception on their migration experience (Bélanger and Rahman 2013). Hence, different processes have an influence on the sustainability of empowerment of the returnee. These processes are the level of acceptance by the husband or the level of traditional roles within the family, the acceptance of the community, the status of

the women when starting their international labour process and lastly the determination of the women themselves (Bélanger and Rahman 2013).

3. Research design

3.1 Research question

On the one hand this thesis aims to analyze the levels of empowerment during the women's time abroad. On the other hand, this thesis has a focus on the levels and sustainability of empowerment when returning home.

Therefore the following research question is central to this thesis:

“What is the influence of migration and return migration on the social , political and economic empowerment of female Filipina international labour migrants”

The following sub-questions were used to come to an answer to the main research question:

- i. What are the characteristics of Filipina international labour migrants and their migration trajectory?
- ii. To what extent are Filipina international labour migrants socially, politically and economically empowered before migration?
- iii. To what extent are Filipina international labour migrants socially, politically and economically empowered during their migration?
- iv. What are the challenges Filipina women face during their time abroad and upon return with regards to economic, political and social empowerment?
- v. Do Filipina international labour migrants see empowerment as a positive aspect of their lives?
- vi. How does the Filipino government and different NGOs (non-governmental organisations) help Filipina migrant workers to sustain the achieved empowerment and readjustment to the home society?

3.2 Conceptual framework and concepts

For this thesis a conceptual framework established by including the studies of Kabeer (1999), Rowlands (1997), Longwe (1991), Alsop and Heinsohn (2005), Charmes and Wieringa (2003) and McWhirter (1991). As seen in the discussion on the current academic debate on female empowerment and migration empowerment is a complex concept. Not only is it difficult to define the concept, it can mean different things within different settings and

cultures (Gaye and Jha 2011). Empowerment within this study is in line with the definition of Kabeer. Empowerment is seen as the ability of a woman to make her own choices and act upon the goals she has established in the economic, social and political field on the individual level, in relationship with others and on the collective level. Empowerment is “ *The ability to define one’s goals and act upon them.*” (Kabeer 1999). Therefore within this study the aim is to look at the political, social and economic levels of empowerment.

Economic empowerment is analyzed by using the following indicators: financial decision making power, their participation in paid work and control over savings and money (Luttrell et al 2009). Social empowerment will be analyzed by using the following indicators: women are able to make decisions on their own physical mobility and social interaction with others, increase in educational level and skills and their contribution within unpaid work such as household (Luttrell et al 2009). Lastly the political empowerment is analyzed by looking at the women’s interest in their political system, participation in a political party and/or grassroots organization and involvement in activities of community or village.

These different concepts of social, political and economic empowerment are analyzed on different levels. These levels expressed in the literature by Kabeer (1999) and Rowlands (1997) are the individual level, in close relationship with others and the collective level. These different levels are linked to the process of empowerment.

As stated before empowerment is a process, and authors agree on the fact that a women needs to go through different steps to be completely empowered in the social, political and economic field. Several authors have explained these stages, however none of these processes are completely applicable to the situation of migration and return migration. Therefore the different stages of the models are combined to get an insight in the situation of these women during their migration process. Longwe (1991) has five different stages: welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control. The steps according to McWhirter (1991) are awareness, skill development to gain control, exercise of control and support of community empowerment. In addition the World Bank made a distinction between existence of choice, use of choice and the achievement of choice (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005). Lastly Charmes and Wieringa divided the empowerment process in awareness, existence of viable alternatives, ability to make choices, ability to have a voice to express their grievances when they enter a political area, ability to express their agency and lastly full equality in all aspects of their lives (2003). The conceptual model of this thesis uses these authors to develop the process to empowerment, fitting in the situation of migration and return.

The first step that is needed for women within the processes of empowerment is the fact that women are aware of their position and that there is a way out. There needs to be a realization of their disempowerment before they can become empowered. If a woman is not aware of her situation disempowering situation, empowerment is not likely to happen (Kabeer 1999). Therefore the first step within the conceptual model will be the awareness.

The second step is the ability to make a choice in their lives, meaning they exercise a part of their agency to make a choice in favour of their position. If women are aware of their disempowering situation but do not use their choice they will still not see change in their situation (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005).

Following the use of the choice the third step will be the achievement of choice or exercise of their agency. This entails that these women are able to get their voices heard and achieve goals they have set for themselves. This will also mean that these women will contest different gender roles with their new gained agency. The fourth step is equal participation of women in the field of decision making and participation. The end goal of empowerment is full control over the economic, political and social empowerment processes. The latter means that there is equality between men and women in all levels of society.

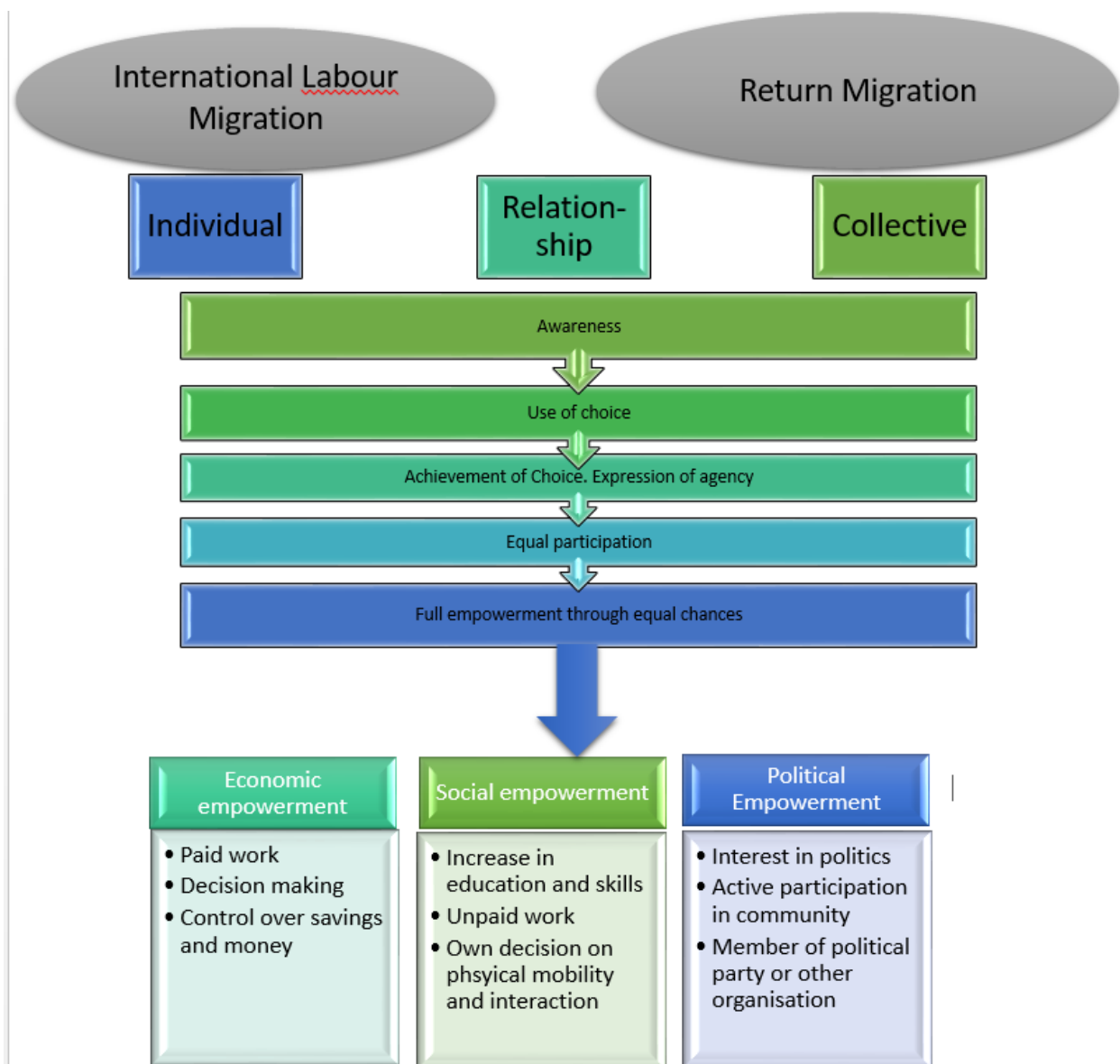
Although Longwe also explained the stage of welfare and access, according to this thesis these stages are unnecessary to include within this thesis. The welfare stage is more applicable when women are unable to have control over any type of welfare levels. However the decision of these women to migrate indicate that these women do have some access and say over resources and already have an increase in welfare. In addition the access level is not suited for the migration process, while it is uncertain if they are able to get more access to public services while being in another country.

In the literature overview it is made clear that the international labour migration trajectory can have an empowerment and disempowerment effects on women. By moving out of their disempowering situation these women are able to increase their self-esteem and become more economic independent. Empowerment can have influence on different levels of society, the individual level, in a close relation with another person and on the collective level. During the migration process women can go through different stages to increase their economic, political and social empowerment. When returning home, certain processes can downplay or reinforce the empowerment of these women. Therefore this study will look if women sustain their empowerment when returning home. Processes such as the traditional roles, the status of women within the society, the level of support by the government and NGOs, the acceptance of the community and determinate of these women on their

empowerment can have a negative and positive effects on the economic and social empowerment.

In addition to the importance of the empowerment concept. Two other concepts that are used within the conceptual model need to be clarified. First the concepts of international labour migration. This is migration with the purpose of working within the country the person is moving towards. This migration process, in contrast to the normal concept of migration, crosses country borders. This employment can be divided into skilled and unskilled. Within this process of international labour migration, migrants can decide to return home. Secondly, return migration. According to this thesis return migration means the movement of a migrant to the country of origin. This return can be voluntarily but can also be enforced by the ties back home or by events during her stay abroad. Return migration does not mean that the migrant need to stay in the country of origin for the rest of its live. However it does mean that the migrant is coming back home with the idea of staying for a significant period of time, or at least to settle back into society.

Figure 1: Conceptual model: Stages of empowerment



Conceptual model 1.0

3.3 Unit of Analysis

For this thesis the unit of analysis were adult female Filipino women, who in the previous ten years have returned from an international migration trajectory. The decision for the limitation of ten years is based on the memory of these women. The further away the event of migration the less likely they are able to memorize specific events and feelings. Furthermore, the international migration process needs to be done alone, without family members, friends or husband. Moreover the women that are participating in this study have to have performed unskilled work in the country of migration. Hereby one must think of work as a domestic helper, entertainer or for example a care taker. It is argued that if women perform unskilled work in the country of migration, they are more likely to return to their home country than

women who perform skilled work abroad (Tharan 2009). Because this study relies on the likelihood of return, women who performed unskilled work are chosen as the unit of analysis. However this does not mean that these women are qualified as unskilled within their home country. Furthermore, specific areas of migration are the last selection criteria of the women that are chosen for this study. The women should have worked in the Middle East or Asia. When a women has worked as a domestic helper in Europe or United States she is not suited for this study.

4. Country Profile: The Philippines

Within this section of the thesis the information previously given on migration and empowerment will be placed into the context of the Philippines. First, general information is given on the Philippines. Secondly, the policies with regards to migration in the Philippines are presented. How is migration in the Philippines institutionalized and who are the actors that are involved within the process? Moreover migration numbers will be given and the influence of female migration within the Philippines is explained. Lastly, the position of Filipino women in the economic, social and political field are analysed.

4.1 General information

The Philippines is a middle income country. On the outset it looks like the country is growing and their economy is booming. With a 7,2% growth rate in the last year it seems like the Philippines is on its way to become a new Asian Tiger. Unfortunately this cannot be more further from the truth (Wozniak 2015). The total population of the Philippines is 94 million. From this between approximately 30% lives below the poverty line (CMreport 2013; Asian Development Bank 2013). Although the government tries to increase the welfare within the country, the different policy changes and projects in cooperation with the world bank have not lead to expected progress. Their policies seem to only benefit the already rich higher class but is not tickling down to the middle and lower class. High unemployment rates and corruption on a daily basis make the country fragile (Parrenas 2005)). Filipino families are faced by several risks on a daily basis: a lack of employment, high mortality rates, lack of education and risk of natural disasters are just a few of them. These risk are not exclusive to the poorest of the county. For these, that can afford it, migration is a way of escaping their hopelessness situation (Aldaba and Ang 2012). Due to these daily struggles and the history of the country, migration has become part of the Filipino culture and economic strategy. With a staggering

amount of 5500 men and women leaving the country daily (Tharan 2009). Sending back a tremendous amount of 26 billion dollars per year one can imagine how this country is economically surviving (Migrante 2015).

4.2 Culture of Migration

The Philippines has a long tradition of international labour migration starting from the early 1900s. Within the country's history one can identify three different waves of migration (Barber 2000). The first wave was from the 1900 till the 1950, the second wave from the 1950 till the 1970 and the third and last wave from the 1970 onwards.



Figure 2: Map of the Philippines

The first wave involved Filipino migrant workers selected by the United States to work at the sugar plantation and fruit plantations in Hawaii. The group of international migrant workers that arrived in Hawaii stayed there for a few years. However instead of returning home, most of the Filipino men migrated to the west and other regions of the United States to find work within other sectors (CMreport 2013). The first group of International Labour migrants from the Philippines were mostly young, single men. The majority had little to no education and could be defined as unskilled. Within the United States they faced hard working and living conditions. During that time the Philippines was a colony of the United States and these men had an uncertain status within the United States of America (Tharan 2009).

After their independence in 1946 a new wave of migration erupted. This wave differed from the first one in the level of skills of the migrants and their gender. The second wave was

namely dominated by the movement of nurses to the US. During the colonization the United States trained medical personal according to US standards, making the migration towards the country easier (Tharan 2009). Furthermore there was a shortage of medical personal, especially nurses in the United States. Hence, a change was seen in the profile of the migrant from solely unskilled single men to female skilled migrants. According to many this wave of migration was a typical case of brain drain, while most of these Filipinas never returned home. Although the amount of nurses going to the USA is not as extreme as it was during the 60's there is still a movement of Filipina nurses to the United States (Tharan 2009). Filipino doctors even re-educate themselves to nurses to work in the United States. In the second migration wave in the Filipino history women became more mobile. Not only where they towards the United States, but furthermore they also moved within the Philippines because of the job opportunities within Manila (Tharan 2009).

The third wave saw an increase in the levels of international labour migration and also a shift in the gender division of the process. During the mid-70's a shift was seen in the movement from mostly to the United States towards the Middle East and neighbouring Asian countries (Briones 2006). Gulf states reached out to their neighbouring countries when they experienced a shortage in their labour forces. Although in the 80's the labour shortages for male construction workers ended, the need for domestic workers rose in the Gulf States. This development led to women filling this gap within the region. However, the Middle East was not the only destinations of the new international labour wave. Neighbouring Asian countries and regions such as Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan Province of China and Singapore experienced a shortage in their work forces as well. A gap the Filipino population was happily to fill (CMreport 2013). During the 1990 the migration of skilled and highly skilled workers increased however, the movement of unskilled labour migrants still dominated the total amount of the international labour migration (CMreport 2013).

The flow of international labour workers was 23,500 in 1975, and increased to about 267,000 by 2007, or an average annual growth rate of about eight percent (Orbeta and Abrigo 2009). A striking number of approximately 5500 Filipino's leave the country on a daily basis. One in three of these people leaving the country is qualified as an unskilled worker. In total 10,4 million Filipino's are living abroad (Wozniak 2015).

As showed with the summary of the migration history of the Philippines, international labour migration it is not a new phenomenon within the Philippines. However, the level of impact and the high numbers of people leaving the country on a daily basis has been increasing within the last decade. According to several authors the Philippines is a migration

exporting country, even when the government is denying this (Tyner 2004; Wozniak 2015; Spitzer and Piper 2014; Guevarra 2006). Problems can arise with these high levels of out-migration. Families are torn apart, the economy of the Philippines is unable to survive without the high level of remittances and the whole educational system is built upon the culture of migration educating youngster to move out of the country (Tharan 2009).

4.3 Female migration

The “feminization of migration” is a process initiated in the 1960’s and currently seen as a widespread phenomenon mostly within the Asian regions. Foremost migration was a male dominated process during the first decades of the 20th century. However women became more involved within the migration flow and the total of women migrating worldwide rose from 75 million to 175 million in 2000 (Kweun Yu 2007). This means that since the 1960’s women have reached the same migration numbers as their male counterparts (Piper 2005).

In 2000, 51% of all international labour migrant were female, out of these 51%, 46% were from the developed countries (Piper 2005). Several reasons can be presented for this shift and increase in female participation. First globalization, this phenomenon increased mobility for mankind. Secondly an increase in demand for overseas domestic workers and “female dominated” jobs made the feminization of migration spur from the 1960’s onwards (Ghosh 2009).

As has been stated in the previous paragraph the labour participation of women increased during the 1980’s. During this time the total amount of Filipinas engaging in labour migration rose drastically due to the demand from the Middle East and Asia. In these areas more women started to participate within the workforce due to shortages. Therefore a gap was created within the family structures of the countries. Filipinas filled this gap by working as a domestic helper or nanny for these families. Statistics of the Filipino government showed that in total in 1975 12% of the total amount of international migrants were women. In 1987 this was 47% and this rose to 58% in 1995 (Anonuevo and Anonuevo 2003). Only in 1997 male migrants exceeded the total of female migrants in the Philippines (Orbeta and Abrigo 2009). From the 1992 onwards the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) started to collect numbers on the division of international labour migrants. In figure three one can see that women from 1993 exceeded the total amount of men when it comes to international labour migration.

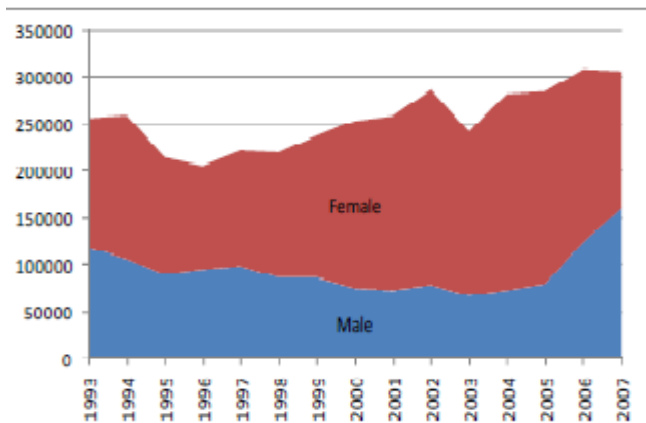


Figure 3: division male/female migration Philippines
(Orbeta and Abrigo 2009)

Currently more than half of all Filipino international labour migrants are women. Although the Filipino women make up more than half of the international migration force, the migration process is still highly gendered. Women are mostly hired for jobs that are seen as suitable for a women such as nursing, care taking or domestic work. Even though women and men can make the same migration trajectory, women do experience their trajectory differently than their male counterparts. Not only when they are abroad, but also when they are making the decision to migrate. When men decide to migrate this is normal and considered as their job as the breadwinner of the house. However, when women leave their family and husbands to work abroad they are frowned upon (CMreport 2003; Parrenas 2005; Asis et al 2004). They leave their duties as the “light of the home”, therefore attacking the masculinity of her husband and burdening their extended family with the care of their children (CMreport 2013; Guevarra 2006). Although women do have the decision to migrate, the position of these women seem to be still set in a patriarchal setting (Asis et al 2004).

4.4 Migration policies

“from a government that treats its people as an export commodity and a means to earn foreign exchange, disregarding the social cost to Filipino families to a government that creates jobs at home, so that working abroad will be a choice rather than a necessity, and when its citizens do choose to become OFWs, their welfare and protection will still be the government priority.”(Aquino, 2012 in Spitzer and Piper 2014)

The government of the Philippines is closely involved within the migration processes and the protection of their citizens abroad. The Philippines has one of the most institutionalized migration trajectory in the world. However, if the involvement of the government is a positive aspect of the trajectory is debated by many (Ireland 2014; Tyner 2004; Wozaniek 2015).

The first laws regarding Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) were established around the 1970s. Due to high levels of unemployment in the Philippines and the demand from the Gulf States the Marcos administration set up the labour export program. This program meant that measures were adopted to promote labour export from the Philippines to other countries. The program was established as a temporary solution for the unemployment rates in the country. The labour export policies were, according to the government, not established as a permanent solution for the high unemployment levels in the country (Guevarra 2006). In contradiction the intended temporary nature of the labour export program, the program became more institutionalized over the years (Tharan 2009). One of these institutionalizations of the labour export program was the creation of the Welfare Fund for Overseas Workers and the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA).

The Welfare Fund later became the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). The purpose of the POEA was to promote the development and rights of overseas employment. Nowadays the POEA is involved in overseeing and controlling the large amount of recruitment agencies in the Philippines and abroad. The POEA is in charge of handing out license to the agencies. Only when an agency has a license from the POEA they are allowed to recruit employers to work overseas. Furthermore the POEA also hosts pre-employment seminars for migrant workers and hands out documents needed by a migrant worker to leave the country (Interview POEA 24112015)

In addition to the POEA, OWWA is the second largest organisation which is involved in the migration trajectory of migrant workers. This organisation is not a governmental organisation and serves as an independent body. Furthermore OWWA is officially not responsible for the workers before deployment or during recruitment, however over the years this separation between the OWWA and the POEA has blurred (Interview OWWA 07102015). OWWA provides different services to the migrants such as social services, employment services, scholarships, loans and judicial services after they have returned or during their time abroad (Fresnoza-Flot 2012). Furthermore in case of unsafe situations in country of migration, OWWA is responsible for the repatriation of all OFWs in the country. This happened in the case of Iraq and currently when the civil war erupted in Syria (Interview OWWA 07102015). When a Filipino citizen wants to leave the country to work abroad, it

needs to pay a 25 dollar fee to OWWA. When this fee is paid the OFW then is able to make a claim upon the different services provided by OWWA. In addition the OWWA provides the pre-departure seminar, in which the workers are prepared for the specifics of the country and the work abroad (Fresnoza-Flot 2012). Without the OWWA membership and proof of participation of the pre-departure seminar the migrant is not eligible to leave the country, and will not receive it's exit papers from the POEA.

In 1995 an OFW was executed in Singapore after being accused of murdering the child of her boss and another domestic helper. After this event the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos act was enacted (Fresnoza-Flot 2012). The act served as a protection for the OFW, this protection is not limited to the movement towards the country but covers the whole migration cycle. This legislation was seen as the “Magna Carta”, and aimed on the promotion and protection of migrant workers and their family. The act expanded the mandate of the POEA by including promotion of working abroad and return and reintegration for OFWs (Guevarra 2006). International labour migration was by the government not promoted as a temporary tool for economic development, however these bodies and the expansion of the current laws are seen as an encouragement by the government for the Filipino citizens to continue to work abroad (Ireland 2014).

In 2010 the last amendment was made to the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos act. In this amendment it is forbidden for workers to go to countries that are not certified as safe destinations by the POEA (ILO 2013). 230 different countries were found safe by the Filipino government because they met one of the following three requirements: presence of a multilateral convention protection the rights of OFWs, presence of a bilateral agreement to protect OFWs or the establishment of actions to protect OFWs (Spitzer and Piper 2014). Although the government of the Philippines seems to show to care for their migrant workers and care to protect them during their trajectory. Scholars do agree that the government is better in managing than in protecting and helping their migrants (Ireland 2014; Wozaniek 2015; Guevarra 2006; Tyner 2004).

According to several scholars and NGOs the government sees the OFW as a tool to keep the economics of the Philippines stable and growing (Wozaniek 2015; Ireland 2014; Migrante 2015). Most of the economic development plan of the Philippines is based on the expected remittances by the migrant workers. In the last couple of years a shift is seen in the protection of the migrants to using them for the economic development of the country. As stated by Wozaniek there is no mutual benefit in the relation between the government and the OFW, there is a “*mutual enabling relation*” (2015;1).

Although the laws are present, implementation of these laws are weak and migrants often find themselves in difficult positions (Spitzer and Piper 2014). In addition to the weak implementation of the laws within the Philippines, migrants are subjected to the laws and cultural beliefs within the country of their trajectory. For women working in the Middle East this can be of great danger to their safety and security (Sabban 2002). The dual burden of the government is difficult. On the one hand are migrant workers helpful for the economy of the country on the other hand protection of their citizens is a task of the government as well. Unfortunately it is seen that the economic pressure wins from the protection burden (ILO 2013). Although the protection factor is extremely important for the women working in areas that are not protected by worker unions or other legal protection, they are mostly affected by the lack of implication and enforcement of these rules (ILO 2013). Therefore NGOs plea for an international cooperation between receiving and exporting countries on the protection of international labour migrants (Piper 2005).

4.5 Position of women in the Philippines

4.5.1 Education and economic activity

Within the Filipino society there is mostly no difference between the access to education between girls and boys (Parrenas 2005; Yap and Melchor 2015).. In some families school for girls is even favoured over boys (Yamauchi and Tiongco 2013). As long as the family is able to pay for the education of their child, they will send both sexes to school. However some scholars do argue that girls are encouraged to take up courses that are in line with their reproductive responsibilities and care for their family (Yamauchi and Tiongco 2013). It is expected that when the daughter is send to school, she will later re-pay her parents by supporting them financially and even take them in when they are older (Barber 2000). Although, the access to education is high for women in the Philippines, they lose their advantages when looking at their activity within the formal economy. According to Yamauchi and Tiongco (2013) women still face gender inequalities in the labour market. These inequalities are shown in the access of labour and their salary in comparison to men (Yamauchi and Tiongco 2013; Yap and Melchor 2015). According to the findings of Yap and Melchor (2015) women working in the service sector earn on average 206 PHP per day, for men this is 314 PHP per day. This inequality is underwritten by the Asian Development Bank (2013) who in their study on the gender equality in the formal economy came to the same conclusions as Melchor and Yap (2015).

Furthermore a women's economic activity is mostly in line with the caring and nurturing vision of a Filipina. Most of the jobs that are available for women are within the caring sector; nursing, teaching, domestic work or work as a nanny (Melchor and Yap 2015). So even though women are active within the economic sector, the unemployment rates remain significantly higher for women than for men and they make less money in relation to their male counterparts (Asian Development Bank 2013). Moreover even though women are working outside the home environment, they are still fully responsible of taking care of their children and the household chores. One of the consequences of this double burden is that women are more active within the informal sector than men. Because of the poor economic situation of the Philippines it is for most families a necessity that both parents work to keep a positive financial situation (Parrenas 2005)

4.5.2 Social position of women

When looking to the Filipino society one might argue that women are equal to men and have the same opportunities. They both have good access to school, women are able to work and can move relatively freely. Although it can be stated that the patriarchal society in the Philippines is not as severe as in Bangladesh or Sri-Lanka, one cannot state that women are equal to men (Anonuevo and Anonuevo 2003). The gender inequality is mostly seen within the social or domestic sphere of the Filipino lives and the vision within the family on womanhood.

The difference in the position of the women in comparison to the man can be traced back to the history of the Philippines. Before the Spanish controlled the Philippines women had a strong position within the country. It is even said that within the society at that point the women had a stronger position than their male counterparts. However this changed when the Spanish rulers arrived with their Catholic values (Enrile and Agbayani 2007). Nowadays the Philippines is an Catholic country. After the domination by the Spanish the catholic religion prevailed over other religions within the country. Hence the catholic values are strong within the country. Meaning that men are supposed to have a machismo attitude and a good wife an or daughter is supposed to be submissive (Enrile and Agbayani 2007). The women in the Philippine society is seen as the light of the house and the men the pillars of the home (Parrenas 2005; Asis 2002). The women are mostly placed within the caring task of the household, while the men is the breadwinner and the most important entity within the household (Tharan 2009). Within a family the oldest girl is expected to take care of her siblings and help her mother within the household (Enrile and Agbayani 2007.) The gender

stereotypes are strengthened within the school system, churches and within the media were the traditional gender roles are enforced (CEDAW 2006; Parrenas 2005).

Marriage is another entity where inequality between men and women is still present. Under Filipino law a woman is punishable when she cheats on her husband however vice versa this is not the case. Violence against women is another issue which is still present within the country. Mostly women in the rural areas with low education are subjected to violence from their male counterparts, however domestic violence is not limited to country side (CEDAW 2006). Although violence against women is illegal under Filipino law it is mostly seen as something that should stay within the private sphere, and not much is done to inform women on their rights in case of domestic violence (CEDAW 2006).

4.5.3 Political participation .

The Philippines has a vivid history when it comes to NGO's and women's movements. The country is noted for their grassroots organisations and the will of the people to protest for their rights. These different NGOs and grassroots organisations have fought in the last decades to increase gender equality (Yamanaka and Piper 2005). In 1933 Filipinas received the right to vote. With two female presidents and multiple women taking seat in congress and senate, one can state that women are politically involved and empowered within the Philippines. However, it is stated that most of the women that are active within politics are mostly from high positioned families and their political career is merely supported by their former important father, uncle or brother (CEDAW 2006). Both elected presidents were elected because of their relation with a previous powerful man (Enrile and Agbayani 2007). In addition the total percentage of women representatives within the local and national government stays below 20% (CEDAW 2006).

5. Methodology

5.1 Host organization

Migrante International was my host organization during three three months of field research in Manila, the Philippines. Migrante is a militant left wing organization, established in 1996, their main office is located in Manila (Migrante 2015). Since 1996 they have been a strong defender of the rights for OFWs. Worldwide Migrante has over 200 member organizations to help stranded OFWs and overseas workers who are in distress or in need of assistance abroad, making Migrante international the biggest organization for OFW. In the Philippines

they work on raising awareness on the rights of OFWs, and to support the families of OFWs. In addition they assist returned overseas workers with their claims and paperwork upon return (Migrante 2015).

5.2 Methods

Because in the book by Scheyvens (2014) it is concluded that using mixed methods is the best way to get reliable information, this research aimed to do so. The first part of the thesis was done in the Netherlands by gathering background information on empowerment, return migration and information on the Philippines. The work in the Netherlands was mainly focused on secondary data gathering. The second part of the thesis was conducted in the Philippines. During the time in the Philippines different methods were used to gather the needed primary data.

5.2.1 Semi structured interviews

According to Bernard semi structured interviews are an excellent tool to gather data when time is limited, and you do not have the chance to see your interviewee again (2011). Because both of these conditions were present during this study, a semi-structured interview was chosen as the main data gathering tool. Furthermore, the decision for a semi-structured interview was also based on the specifics of an interview of such kind. On the one hand the interviewer is able to steer the interview with specific question, on the other hand the interviewee has room for input (Bernard 2011). Therefore, the researcher can step away from the preset questions and go deeper into information that seems valuable. The concept of empowerment is complex. As stated by Gaye and Jha empowerment in a certain country can be a normal process in the other (2011). Therefore asking women to elaborate on different topics in the interview is highly valuable. With these interviews it is possible to come to specific insights on the empowerment process and their migration trajectory.

The first 12 women I interviewed were selected by my host organization, after a short briefing with the head of the organization. After the first 12, I reached out to the head organization again and we discussed more in detail what type of OFWs I was looking for. Unfortunately the Filipino government does not keep a database of returned OFWs. Therefore I had to rely on the contacts of the organization and the contacts the interviewed OFWs had. After the first 12 there searcher tried to stay in control over the sampling, by being detailed on the unit of analysis. In the last phase of the research we were able to contact people by snow-

ball sampling. In total a group of 37 women were interviewed via a pre-established semi-structured interview list.

5.2.2 Elite interviewing

To get more in-depth information on the migration process from another perspective. I was able to conduct two interviews with high government officials and key informants from two different NGOs. These interviews were valuable to give more insight in the different government processes and the visions of NGOs on the situation of female OFWs. Due to the limited time these officials mostly have the questions were semi-structured as well. Elites are mostly custom to use their time effectively, therefore a semi-structured interview was the best option. The interviewer could stay in control over the interview, without giving the interviewee the idea I wanted to be in full control over the interview.

5.2.3 Informal observations and conversations.

During the first month in Manila I tried to spend most of my time with the organization. I went with my host organization to different events and meetings where I was in contact with soon to be migrants, family of migrant workers and return migrants. To a lesser extent this continued during the following months. When I had the opportunity I went to specific events and meetings with the organization. During these events I tried to talk with as many people as possible, but also observe the different events. These informal conversations and observations were important to my research because they gave me insights into the Filipino culture, and on the scope of migration within the country. Furthermore, the settings of these events were different than the official interviews. People were less hesitant to share information with me about their experiences abroad. Some of the information that was given during these events, did give new insights for the formal interviews. In some occasions these meetings let to a formal interview.

5.3 Limitations

Although I thought it was unnecessary to have a translator, due to English being the second language in the Philippines, I decided to hire one after the first contact with returned migrant workers at my host organization. Fortunately the translator was familiar with the topic of female migration and empowerment. However she had been instructed by the researcher on the specifics of the research and how to translate during the interviews. In return she was able to inform me on different traditions in the Philippines and gave me valuable insights on the

lives of Filipinas. Despite the fact that the translator got a clear briefing on the topic and translation, it is possible that some information got lost in translation especially during longer life stories. In addition in some instances the translator was familiar with the interviewees, this might have influenced the answers of the interviewees.

Unfortunately, due to the limited time frame and lack of reliable data, it was not possible to have a random selection of the former OFWs. Therefore I was dependent on the informants selected by the office, increasing the likelihood of a selection bias. Although, during my time at the office I made clear to the head of the organization what the different characteristics were I wanted in the interviewees, in the end she reached out to the participants she thought were suited for the research. Fortunately during the end of my research I was able to interview women who were not connected to the organization through snow-balling, therefore decreasing this selection bias.

In the beginning the women were somewhat hesitant to tell their stories. Some did not understand why I wanted to know their stories, or were ashamed of what happened to them. It therefore took me some time to make them feel comfortable during the interview. It is possible that because of their initial hesitation they were not as open to me as they would have when they had known me for a longer time.

Most women I interviewed came back home within a time span of 3 years. However some of them were already abroad for more than 6 years. Therefore there is a possibility that they could not remember specific feelings and thoughts when asking them about these. Informant accuracy can therefore be an issue within my research (Bernard 2011). Even though during multiple question I tried to comprehend the stories, some women did not have specific recollections of events. Memory lost is therefore a limitation within my study.

6. Introduction Participants

In this chapter the different characteristics of the women who were interviewed for this thesis are presented. Following the characteristics two cases are described more in-depth to give a more specific insight in the difference of these women and their migration trajectory (box 1.1 and box 1.2).

A total of 37 women agreed to participate within this study. In this group of 37, 22 women migrated to the Middle east, mostly to Saudi Arabia. Out of the remaining 15, 11 women migrated to a country in the Asian region. Within this area Hong Kong and Japan were the most popular destinations. Four out of the 37 worked in both the Middle East and

Asia. All of them stayed the longest in the Asian region. For example, Beatrice a 61 year old college graduate went to Saudia Arabia after finishing college. She stayed there for six years. Upon return in the Philippines she could not find a job and applied again. This time she was able to go to Hong Kong and stayed there for 18 years (Interview 33).

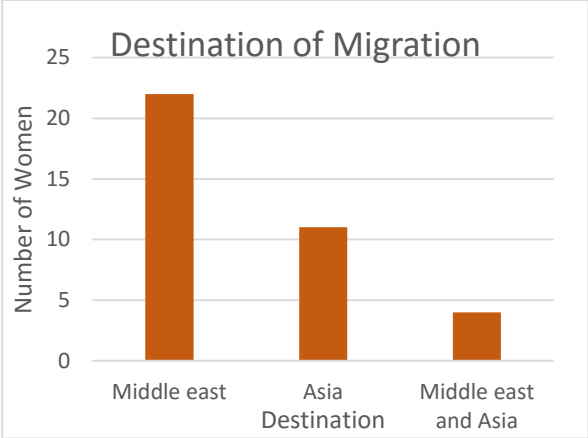


Figure 4: Destination

The destinations of the interviewees is in line with the general trend of migration destinations in the Philippines. Where Saudia Arabia and Kuwait are in the top of migration destinations. Followed by Hong Kong and Singapore who are respectively number three and four on the list (POEA 2014).

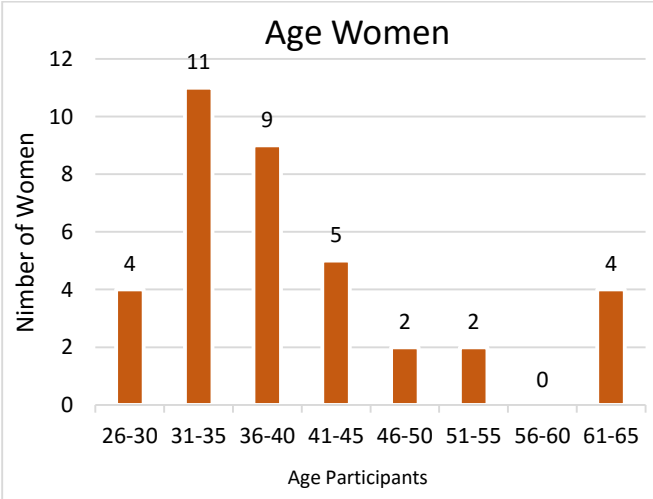


Figure 5: Age

The age of the interviewed women ranged from 27, being the youngest, till 65 being the oldest. In general most women were in the age group between 31 and 35. All of the who were above 50 returned from an migration experience in Asia or Asia and the Middle east. Making the average age of return from a country in the Middle East lower than that of an migrant from Asia.

Box 1.1 Eva

33 year old Eva worked in the Middle East for over three years. She finished high school, is married and the mother of three children. Her first migration trajectory was to Saudi Arabia to work in a beauty salon. She stayed there for two years and was able to finish her contract. Eva wanted to improve the financial situation of her family, and therefore decided to work abroad. She has two children who need to go to school, who needed food and a roof above their heads. The salary of her husband was not enough to cover all of these expenses. In Saudi she worked and lived in the salon, seven days a week together with ten other Filipinas. They had to start at six in the morning and they were finished working around eleven o'clock in the evening. On their payday they were allowed to leave the salon to get groceries and necessary items. Even though she was tired during her time in Saudi, she was able to finish the contract. However, when she came back from Saudi, the financial situation of her family did not improve drastically. Most of the money she send back from Saudi was used on the daily expenses and she had no savings. After her return the family still barely made ends meet. Therefore she decided to work abroad again. In 2013 she went to Bahrein to work as a beautician. There she was unable to finish her contract. In Bahrein all the work was outside the salon, moving from one customer to another. She continuously had to work and there was no time for a bathroom break or to have lunch. Her working days were sometimes from seven in the morning till two A.M. Moreover she needed to carry all of her equipment, making her carry up to ten bags to her clients. The salary she was paid was not in line with the salary on her contract and overtime was not paid by her employer. Although she had a day off every two weeks, this was mostly spend on cleaning her equipment. Even though Eva spend a few years abroad, and worked sometimes over 20 hours a day, she was unable to save money. One of the factors she was unable to save money was because her boss in Bahrein took three months of her salary for her to go back home. Fortunately she is able to use some of the skills she learned in Saudi and Bahrein in the Philippines working as a beautician, but this work is part-time and is not enough to improve the living situation of her children. She is thinking about working abroad again, because her eldest is almost going to high school and she does not know how to pay for the tuition.

A good educational background is in the Philippines unfortunately no guarantee for a good job. The educational graph (figure 6) gives an overview of the highest form of education finished by the interviewees. 35% of the participants finished high school and even 32% has a college degree. Three out of the 37 only finished elementary school, and had no opportunity to go to high school.

There is no difference in educational background between the women who went to work in Asia or the ones who decided to work in the Middle East.

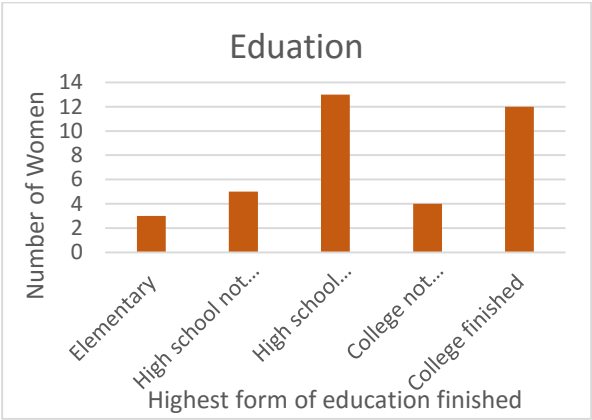


Figure 6: Level of education

The largest group of the interviewees are married. Out of a total of 37 the largest group is married or has a partner, 20 out of 37. Because divorce is not legal in the Philippines, it is noted as separated when the married couple is no longer together. When looking at the destination of most of the women it should be noted that out of the group of single women 67% migrated to Asia. Furthermore six other women who went to Asia were not married when they went abroad but got married when they returned to the Philippines.

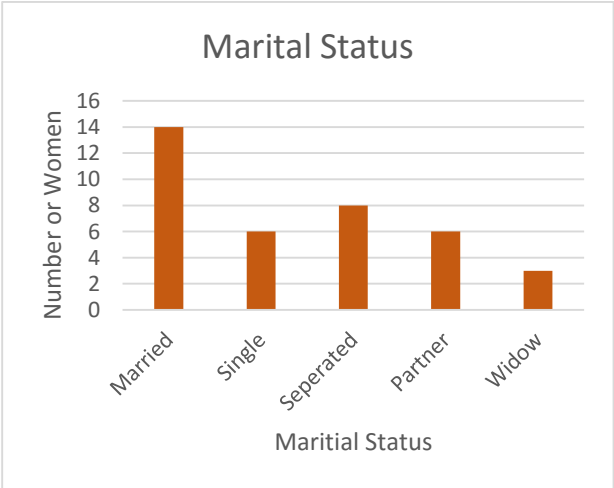


Figure 7: Marital status

Seven out of the 37 interviewees indicated not to have any children. Out of these seven, five are single and two have a partner. On average the interviewed women have 2,6 children.

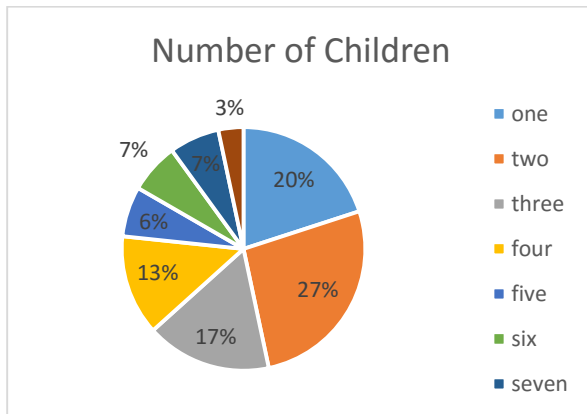


Figure 8: Number of children

Summarizing, within this chapter a quick overview of the characteristics of the interviewees is given. A total of 37 women have been interviewed for this research. Most of the women were between the age of 30 till 35. Out of the 37, 22 migrated to the middle east, eleven to a country in Asia and the other four went to both the Middle Eastern region as the Asian region. Most of the women did finish high school, and twelve were even able to obtain a college degree. Most of the women who participated in the study were married. On average they had 2,6 children. In the following chapter the reasons for migration are explained and the idea's women had about migration.

Box 1.2 Rory

Rory is 37 years old. She is a college graduate and lived in the province for most of her live. Rory is single and has no children. Because of her family and the financial conditions of her family she decided to move to Taiwan. During her studies she worked and went to school and she did not want her siblings to have the same situation. Moreover as a single women she wanted to secure her own future. In Taiwan she worked as a caregiver for an elder lady who needed fulltime care. In the end she stayed there for nine years. She got up at six in the morning and went to bed around 10 in the evening, during the day she made sure the elder lady was comfortable and she did specific exercises with her. According to Rory she was lucky because she did not need to clean the house, and only needed to take care of the patient. She was in the nine years able to build a good social live, mostly with fellow Filipinos who worked in Taiwan. Friends were allowed to come over at the house of her employers, during those evenings they cooked Filipino food and talked about their lived in the Philippines. In the beginning the relationship between her and her employers was difficult due to the language barrier, but this improved and she became a part of the family. Her salary was even for Taiwanese standards high, and overtime was paid by her employer. Therefore she was not only able to send her sisters to school, but later also her nieces and nephews. Furthermore she saved money and bought a house in the province for her future. Rory left Taiwan after nine years because according to the Taiwanese law you are only

allowed to stay in Taiwan with a working visa for that amount of years. However, the family of the employer is still supporting her financially and they even paid for her nursing degree. They currently are processing papers to send her as a care taker to other family members in Canada. At this moment she is working for a social media platform to educate and inform OFWs about their rights. According to Rory working in Taiwan changed her for the best, and her life would have been completely different without this experience.

7.Pre-Migration

In this chapter the institutionalized character of the Filipino migration trajectory is analyzed first. Secondly, the chapter explains the reasons for these women to move abroad.

Furthermore the expectation of these women before migration, their decision making process and in what way they left their country of migration are analyzed.

7.1 Institutionalized migration trajectory

The migration process in the Philippines is highly institutionalized. Before you are able to work abroad you have to follow specific steps. First you have to apply at an agency. This agency has to be licenced by the POEA. Only when an agency is licenced by the POEA they are allowed to recruit Filipinos to work abroad. When an agency is found not to oblige by the set rules of the POEA it is blacklisted (Interview POEA 24112015). From that moment onwards the agency is no longer allowed to recruit workers. It is not allowed as a Filipino citizen to have a personal contract with an employer abroad, all employment contracts need to go through an agency and the POEA (Interview POEA 24112015). When applying for the agency specific papers need to be processed. The intended OFW has to secure a certificate from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) that they are skilled to perform the specific job.

In addition to this certificate the new OFWs need to attend specific courses prior to their department. First the pre-employment seminars and secondly the pre-departure seminar (Orbeta and Abrigo 2011). The pre-employment seminar informs the employers on the specific working conditions abroad. Within the seminar they are briefed “*on labour migration realities in order for them to make an intelligent and informed decision before embarking on overseas employment.*” (Interview POEA 24112015). If, after the pre-employment seminar and the medical check-up, the person is found suited for the job more paper work needs to be processed. An OWWA membership of 25 dollars needs to be purchased, which works as a type of insurance. The OWWA membership enables workers to make claims to a range of benefits and services of the OWWA, such as mandatory life and personal accident insurance

for the workers, pre-departure loans, skills training/upgrading and a scholarship programs for children. Furthermore a medical insurance is mandatory. When the OWWA membership is acquired and after paying the required fees an exit clearance, the overseas employment certificate, can be requested at the office of the POEA. This certificate works as an exit clearance for the place of departure and clears the OFW for paying airport taxes (Orbeta and Abrigo 2011). The working visa is provided by the host country and is issued by the POEA. A few days before departure the worker has to attend the last seminar: the pre-departure seminar. In this seminar the specifics of the work is explained more detailed and in addition your specific rights as an OFW are analysed during the seminar (Interview OWWA 07102015). Although all of the workers need to attend the seminar, when questioning the women about the seminar only a few could remember the content of it. One of the mentioned reason for this was that the seminar was one or two days before departure . Kim explains: *“I went to the seminar but I don't really know about what they told me there because it was a day before I left so I was already thinking about other things. But I do know that they gave us number of the embassy.”* (Interview 34).

Even before the women are able to work overseas, they need to process a lot of paperwork. Not only is this process time consuming, but it costs these women a significant amount of money as well. When they are living in the province they have to go to Manila, where most of the recruitment agencies are. Furthermore the specific documentations, insurances and health checks add up to the total of costs as well. In some cases such as the case of 40 year old Robin, money needed to be borrowed from family members to apply for a job overseas (Interview 23).

7.2 Reasons to work abroad

Barber (2000) states in his research on the Filipina diaspora communities that Filipinas mostly migrate because of the feeling of duty towards their families. On the other hand Constable (2003) argues that women can also migrate to improve their own situation, and that one reason should not exclude the other. In my research more evidence was found for the latter than the former. Most of the women expressed that they had the feeling they needed to move abroad to work to improve the lives of their family and to send their children and siblings to school, however personal reasons should not be excluded in their decision making.

Financial reasons are the most important reasons for women to make the decision to work abroad. Out of the 37 women 20 indicated that their reason for migration is for financial reasons. This includes mostly being unable to pay the bills, schooling for your children and

being able to feed yourself and your children three times a day. Eva is a 33 years old and the mother of three she explains:

“Before I migrate my baby is only one and a half years he doesn't have milk we have to first buy milk then we can eat but I have two other children one eight years old and one 14 when you are a mother it is painful to see that your children are not eating very well. If they have project at school they tell me mama I need this mama I need this but I always tell my children that if I have money I would buy it but sorry you need to wait to find money.” (Interview 3)

Wage standards in the Philippines are low and most women explained that they were unable to pay for regular meals and utilities. In most cases only their husband worked and his salary was not enough to pay for all of the general expenses. 39-year-old Inge is single and has a college degree, before she graduated she worked in a mall as a sales lady. However in the mall she was not earning enough to pay for all of her expenses. She decided to go abroad because she was unable to pay for her house

“we will be deported If I can't pay the exceeding 6 months. Because of my house I decided to go abroad and the salary in the mall is not enough for everyday live. Even when they [employer] increases our salary every two years it is just not enough for living her in the Philippines. It is not that high salary it is maybe 400 a 500¹ so that is just not enough.”(Interview 4)

Although the economic reasons are mentioned more often than personal reasons, one should not exclude one because of the other. During most conversations it became clear that although the economic reason is prioritized above personal reasons, the latter were not excluded from their migration trajectory. Therefore it is unable to conclude that these women solely move abroad solely for economic reasons or solely for personal reasons. Both family reasons as personal reasons are intertwined within their decisions (Asis 2002). This statement by Asis (2002) is supported by Sara. She worked in Hong Kong for 10 years, she explained why in addition to helping her family she wanted to go abroad.

“ I am excited you know I want to gain more experience outside of the Philippines to get to know other cultures get to know other values, there customs, there culture you know so that is why I wanted to go as well..”(Interview 35)

¹ 400 to 500 peso's a day is equal to eight to ten euro's.

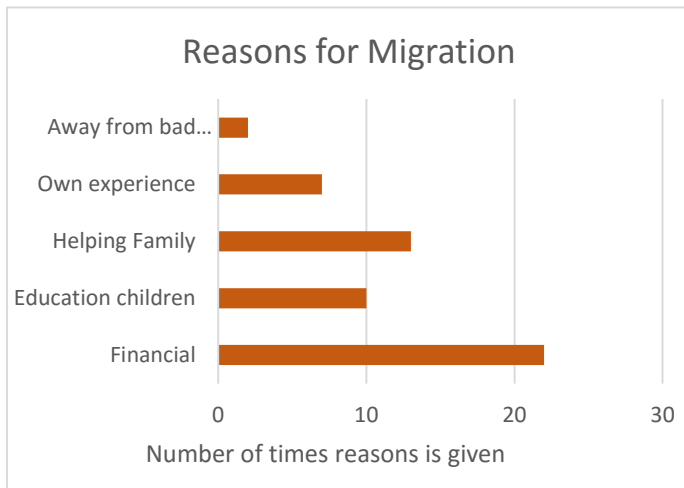


Figure 9: Reasons for migration²

Three of the total of 37 women stated that they moved abroad because of they were unsatisfied with their current marriage or relationship. 41-year-old Isa for example left the country because of her bad marriage. She had to marry a high school friend at a young age because she met up with him without parental supervision. However, the marriage was not successful, he gambled a lot, was an alcoholic and cheated on her multiple times. According to her there was no other way out of the relationship then moving abroad. *“I wanted to go abroad because of my situation here in the Philippines [bad marriage]. Every day I cry, every day I have a problem with him. Then I said to my family I’m going abroad maybe I can find work there, maybe my life would be better there.”* (Interview 7)

In most cases women expressed that they left because they wanted to increase their economic situation. This meant, helping their children with their tuition, being able to feed their family, helping their siblings to school or helping their family financially. However as stated above, one should not exclude personal reasons in their decision to leave.

7.3 “I did not know about the Saudi.” Preparing for migration

The women I spoke to expressed that it was their dream to improve the situation of themselves and their families. However, when asking them about their ideas about migration and the country, many expressed that they had little to no knowledge about the country. Some such as Eva only got some information from relatives abroad.

“For the first time I don’t have an idea [about how migration would be] I don’t have, I only have information from my cousin who is living in the USA, so I think living

² Respondents could give more than one reason.

abroad is good. My cousin tells me that living abroad is good, as long as you have work it is good.” (Interview 3)

Amanda’s story sums up what most of the other women stated when asking if they had any ideas about working abroad and the country.

“Ideas? what I thought then was that... that I would be able to help my family that is living here in the Philippines when I go abroad. I thought that I will have a big salary when I go abroad.” (Interview 13)

In general the women had the idea that working abroad would make their dreams come true. Even when women did hear, stories about the bad conditions of domestic workers or entertainers in the country of migration they told themselves that they might be lucky. Kristin for example went to Kuwait, when she came home from Kuwait after three years she tried her luck again and moved to Saudi. Even though she knew that the situation in Saudi would be difficult and dangerous she went anyways.

“.....because I knew that in Saudi the rules are different from the [rules in] Kuwait. It is Saudi but despite of what I heard I tried to go there. I said to myself maybe not all employer are the same as what I heard on the televisions and then I just go.”
(Interview 10)

It can be observed that even though women leave the country on a daily basis, knowledge about the country of migration is limited. Within my group of participants almost 90% did not have an idea about how the situation in the country of migration. They did not know the culture of the country, or how the working conditions there would be. Even though all of them participated in the pre-departure seminar where these conditions and cultural differences are explained.

7.4 Decision making

In her thesis on female migration in Bolivia, Bastia explained that although making the decision to migrate can express a form of autonomy and therefore a challenge to the patriarchal structures, some cases indicate a higher level of autonomy than others (2012). Furthermore she states that most women justify their movement because of their family and children, to improve the lives of the ones they leave behind therefore not challenging the current structures (Bastia 2012).

Although most women did comment that in the end it was their decision to go, looking at the gathered data some stories express a greater form of autonomy than others. In some instances women did not tell their husband or family that they applied or were leaving to work

abroad. The reasons for not telling their family ranged from not wanting to scare them to not wanting to make their husband angry.

The 40-year-old Rosa for example went to Saudi Arabia to work as a domestic workers. She did not tell her husband about her plans until she already had her ticket and flight schedule.

“He did not know that I applied.....He did not like it but he told me that he can't do anything about it. Because at that time I already told him when my flight is leaving.”

Me: why didn't you tell him earlier?

“Because that time I my baby is only three months old. And when I go nobody will take care of the children so that is why he did not want me going.” (Interview 12).

In Rosa's case a great deal of autonomy is expressed, even when her husband did not want her to go she went anyways. In other situations women just told their family or their husband they were going, without asking them for consent. The 61-year-old Kim for example, she worked in Hong Kong for 8 years as a domestic helper. Her main reason for working abroad was to send her children to school and increase the financial stability of her family,

“I explained my husband why I wanted to go abroad and he understand. He said if you like than you can go. I just wanted to have a good life for my children, and he agreed.” (Interview 34).

In eight cases women expressed that family and or friends were involved in their decision making. This involvement ranged from family members pushing the women to apply at an agency, to friends who got them acquainted with the agency. Despite the fact that within most of these situations the women stated that in the end it was still their decision to go, their level of autonomy is lower than that in the case of Rosa. Whilst in Rosa's case she made the decision on her own, even against the will of her husband, without interference and without any support from family members or friends.

In two cases it was clear that family was pressuring for migration. Charlotte came from a poor background. Frequently they were unable to eat three times a day. She even expressed that there were days when they did not eat at all. She was able to finish elementary school, but there was not enough money to send her to high school. Her mother already worked abroad however her she had a negative experience in Saudi. When asking her about the decision to go abroad she explained:

“The truth is that I really did not want to go. But I was worried about my parents, I felt icky. All my sibilngs are married I am single so I was the only hope for my family. So my mom really wanted me to go abroad and then of course I agreed.”

Me: “Did you feel a pressure from your family to go abroad?”

“Yes, because I did not want to go but you listen to your parents. And I was afraid of the work because I was really conservative and I did not know what the work would be as an entertainer.” (Interview 32).

In the end Charlotte went to Japan and worked there as an entertainer for one year.

Lastly there is the case of the 32 year old Ange. She explained to me that she felt that because of the pressure she felt by her family, in the end it was not her decision to go.

“Not really..but...yes..because of my family. I really want to help them that is why I was pushed to go abroad. My mother told me, you are doing this for your family, for your children. So what kind of choice do you have?” (Interview 8).

These different experiences make clear that decision making is a difficult concept and that different women have different experiences when making the decision to go abroad. However within this thesis 29 out of the 37 stated that they made the decision by themselves without the involvement of friends and or family. Even when women expressed that it was their own decision to leave, it can be argued that the duty they felt towards their family involved their decision making, as expressed by Ange. Some cases do express a greater level of autonomy in decision making than others.

8. Working Abroad

Within this chapter the working conditions of the women are outlined. How did they adjusted to the new situation of working abroad, and how was their experience working abroad. In addition we also look at the reasons for them to return home.

8.1 Adjusting to a new country and working conditions

Almost 80% of the women I interviewed worked as a domestic helper overseas. The remaining 20% worked as an entertainer or caregiver. One out of the 37 worked in a beauty salon.

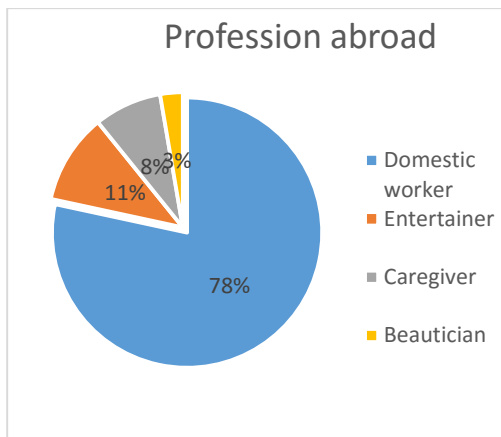


Figure 10: Type of profession abroad

Being a domestic worker meant that their daily tasks included cleaning the house, cooking for their employer, doing laundry and taking care of possible children. There was a difference between the daily routines of the women who worked as a domestic helper in Asian countries in comparison to that of the women who worker in the Middle East.

“I get up a 7 o'clock, from that moment my day started, I went to the market, took care of the daughter, picked up the children, cooked their food, washed their clothes. I went to bed early mostly around 10 o'clock. But then I was already in my room, not working anymore”

(Interview 34).

This is the daily routine of Kim, a domestic worker in Hong Kong for eight years. She did not consider her work to be difficult and she never felt overworked. This is in sharp contrast to the women who worked in the Middle East who easily worked 20+ hours per day, and almost all indicated that they felt overworked during their time abroad.

“Actually I started working at six O'clock but I had to wake up at 430 because I needed to take a bath and take care of myself. Then after that [I made breakfast] for the people in the house, then ironing, washing, cleaning taking care of everything. I slept at three in the morning because they are going to have tea outside the house and you need to prepare whatever they need. If they want food there is no specific time for it. And if you are sick that is no excuse you need to get up and do your job, if not they will kick you out or cold water on your body.” (Interview 21)

Unfortunately most of the women working in the Middle East did not have a proper contract, or their bosses did not obey by the contract. It happened frequently that they did not get paid what was stated in the contract or they had to work as a domestic helper (DH) when they applied for another position. Roxan finished her college degree in Hotel Management

and Hospitality and thought she was going to work in a hotel in Saudi. However, when she arrived in Saudi none of the promises that were made to her in Manila came true.

“The salary that was stated in the contract was not the salary that was given by our employers. Although all the maids had a contract were it said overtime would be paid, and the salary but this did not happened. And then I have the feeling we are recruited illegally because our contract said that we would be working in a hotel but we are not, we are working as a DH.They told us that there is not really a contract that this is just a formality between the agency in the Philippines and the one in Saudi. So what we signed was nothing.” (Interview 24).

Adjusting to the new situation and the environment was more difficult than most of the women had expected. Not only did they have to get used to the new language and climate, the food was something most of them needed to get accustomed to. Homesickness was something all of the women faced. Unable to see their children, or to speak with their family on a daily basis was hard for them. Another cultural difference were most of the women who worked in the Middle East had troubles with was Ramadan. During this Islamic vesting month, people are not allowed to eat and drink between dawn and sunset. The women had troubles on the one hand to adjust to these practices, and on the other hand to meet the heavy demands of their employers during this month. Having no sleep was more the rule than the exception. However over time, most of the women were able to overcome the cultural problems and the homesickness they had. They tried to make the best of their situation. *“because we need to..to cope that because you cannot survive if you are not going to accept the culture and if you don’t follow the rules of the country.”* (Interview 10).

Some such as the 31-year-old Hanna pretended if she was working in the Philippines. *“I pretended that I was in the Philippines. Even I know this was not true, most of the times it helped me. Also God helped me, I knew that He was watching over me.”* (Interview 9).

Praying to God and thinking about their families were two of the tools they used to get over their homesickness. During her time in Saudi, Abby thought of her family, and how she helped them by working abroad. For her this was the way to overcome the homesickness she had. *“It is really hard but you know if I think of my family in the Philippines, it is better. I cannot give my family something if I am not here. So I thought about them and how I was helping them with the money I earned abroad.”* (Interview 17).

8.2 Physical and mental abuse

The biggest difference between the working conditions in the Middle East in comparison to Asia lies in the treatment by their employers. Although domestic workers and entertainers face discrimination and exploitation in the Asian countries as well, according to my data it is much higher in the Middle East. A staggering 86% of all the women who worked in the Middle East encountered any form of mental or physical abuse. In comparison to only one case of the women who went to Asia. The mental abuse entailed scolding, not letting the women rest, not giving them enough to eat or confiscating their belongings. Amanda had the feeling that she was treated as a robot instead of a person. She felt that whatever she did, it was never good enough in the eyes of her employer.

“My experience was that my employer does not treat me as a person but as a robot. We are not allowed to be tired. All the time they would give you a task, to get them a pitcher of water, or to make them coffee and then after the coffee they wanted tea. Because of their big house you can't follow them all the time. So that is why if you are not able to do the tasks they will scold at you and ask you why you are not doing the correct tasks.” (Interview 13).

The physical abuse took on many forms, ranging from getting slapped by their madams till sexual abuse by their male employers or male family members of their employers. Because of the mental and physical abuse a few of the women got sick and were in need of medical assistance. However, none of them got medical help. Mostly because their employers were unwilling to pay for their medical bills. The 41-year-old Isa even lost function in the entire left side of her body due to the terrible working conditions. Unfortunately, this was not the most traumatic experience she had. When she got sick, she asked her employer to get her to the hospital but she was not brought to the hospital instead her boss got her medicine for her problems.

“Then my madam said when I bring you to the hospital that is a lot of money to spend, then she said here in Dubai especially for the people that work in my house we only buy medicine at the pharmacy. Then my madam buy me medicine and when she got home she called me to drink that medicine and then I watch the medicine I know it is not good. I thought that it is not a medicine because it has bubbles. Then I go down and put it in a small piece of bread and give it to the cat after five minutes the cat was shaking and it died. Then I told my madam go down and look at the cat, then my madam got angry at me and she said the medicine was for you not for the cat!” (Interview 7).

It should be noted that although most of the women who worked in the Middle East were subjected to some sort of abuse, they were not silent recipients of this abuse. Almost all of my informants explained to me that they tried to move out of the situation one way or another. One common way to try to move out of the situation was asking their bosses to get them back to the agency. In some occasions this worked and they were able to go home, or were transferred to another house. However, in some cases the agency did not cooperate. Kristin for example filed a complaint at her agency. They told her that she needed to wait for three months before they could help her. But after five months she was still living in an abusive environment, with no response from her agency. Therefore, she secretly called her husband with a cry for help. In the end she was able to leave the country with the help of her husband after ten months (Interview 10).

In the worst case scenario women got locked up at the agency when they reached out for help. Waiting for plane ticket at the agency, some of them needed to sign waivers. These stated that the agency was not responsible for any physical or mental harm. This scenario happened to Linda, Emma and Abby. *“The agency left me alone in an office for one and a half months and they locked the office and then one staff of the agency she checked up on me and checks if I already passed away or committed suicide. Luckily another Filipina in the agency And helped me and gave me her cell phone and said that I should call my family and tell them what happened to me.”* (Interview 5).

Another way was reaching out to family members of the employers. 29 year old Mayra asked the brother of her employer for help. She explained to him that she could not work there any longer and she needed to leave the house. With success, because he was able to get her home to the Philippines (Interview 6).

Out of the 37 interviewees, 15 indicated that their lives did not improve because of moving abroad, 100% of these 15 came from the Middle East. Some even stated that because of the costs they made for their health check, OWWA membership, health insurance, processing fees and placement fees they are currently in more debt than before migration. The 31-year-old Emma even referred to her experience abroad as *“all sadness and broken dreams.”* (Interview 18). Out of the remaining 22, three indicated that their lives might not have improved but that of their children and family members did. Hereby, they mentioned that their children and or siblings were able to graduate and have a good job. 19 did say that their lives became better even when this was slightly.

8.3 Social contact and isolation

It is noted in the literature that social contact during the migration process can have a positive effect on the migration experience of the migrated women (Ghosh 2009). The social networks can help them to feel at home in the new country, but also to talk about their work situation (Tharan 2009). In addition being in a group can lead to collective action, coming together with a common goal can increase the likelihood for these women to achieve something and to increase their feeling of independence. Especially the women who worked in the Asian countries were able to make contact with other migrants and united themselves within different organizations. These women all had a day off, only two of them did not make use of their day off. During their day off multiple activities were undertaken by these women. One of the most popular activity was going to church. Not only was this a way for these women to keep their faith close to them, it was also a place where they could meet other Filipinas. They were able to talk about their lives in the Philippines but also about their work. It was a way for them to relax, release some work stress and talk about different things they encountered during their jobs.

Three of my informants became active within different migrant organizations and fought for migrant rights in Hong Kong and Taiwan. When asking the 61-year-old Amber what the biggest difference was between working in the Middle East in comparison to Asia she explained that she was never alone in Hong Kong.

“In Saudi you are alone. In Hong Kong I did not have this because I never had the feeling I was alone because of the meetings with other migrants. In 1990 I joined the organisation in the beginning we mostly organised to be together talk about the Philippines and share stories. Make sure people did not get homesick but also make sure that we knew that we were there for each other. Then the organisation became bigger and bigger and we started to fight for our rights as well. In Saudi this would have never been possible because you are alone you know. In Hong Kong you are never alone you know, never.” (Interview 27).

The women who worked in the Middle East mostly did not have a day off. The two exceptions were the 29-year-old Mayra and the 31-year-old Emma. Mayra worked in Saudi Arabia and she had two days off per month. However, because of the strict rules within the country she was afraid to go outside therefore she stayed inside. Emma worked in Oman and had one day off per week. She did go outside the house and spent this day with other Filipinas in the shopping mall.

The only occasions when the other women working in the Middle East did leave the house was to accompany their employers to the mall, relatives, or to escort the children of their employers to school. These occasions were extremely important to these women because this was the only moment they were able to talk to their fellow Filipinas. Most of them did not have access to a cell phone because this was confiscated by their employers. Therefore limiting their social contacts to their employers, fellow maids and family members or friends of their employer who visited. On a few occasions they were allowed to call their family via the landline of the employer. Martha is 42-year-old and worked in Saudi Arabia for over a year. During the first few months in Saudi she was allowed to have a cell phone. However this changed when the daughter of her employer came to visit. *“during Ramadan when the daughter of my employer came home she told her mother please take the cell phone of your housemaid. It is not good if a housemaid has a cell phone. That is why my madam took my cell phone from me. I was really hurt because now I could not have contact with my family anymore.”* (Interview 14).

Contact via Facebook or other social media channels was also near to impossible while they had little to no access to a computer. Because the women were unable to leave the house and contact with others was difficult different tools were used to get in contact with family or other Filipinas. A common trick the women used was to hide a phone from their employers. Iris worked in Saudi for a short period of time. When she arrived at the house of her employer they immediately asked for her cell phone. However instead of given it to them she handed in an old cell phone. *“When my bosses asked for my cell phone I gave them a broken cell phone, and then I had another cell phone and I hid that under my bra. That is what I used to contact people here in the Philippines.”* (Interview 19).

A few of the women who I interviewed converted to the Islam. However their intentions for doing this were interesting. *“My third employer convinced me, I told him why would I become a Muslim when they treat me as inhumane despite of me being Christen give me an example why do you encourage me to become Muslim. They told me you should go to an office and there you can decide, the office is a school and then you can decide if you want to become a Muslim. That time I was encouraged because that was the time I was able to meet other Filipinas and socialize with them after three years and 8 months and no day off no rest day. So I became a Muslim not because I wanted to but because that was my opportunity to meet other Filipinas and talk with other people.”* (Interview 13). Because of their social isolation, the Islam school was a good way to be in contact with other people. The women expressed that for them it was an easy decision to make, on the one hand they were getting

more respect from their employer on the other hand they were able to communicate with other Filipinas.

8.4 Reasons for return

Broadly in the literature people tend to express return in the dichotomy voluntarily and non-voluntarily, however return is more complex than that (Gmelch 1980). When talking to Daisy about her reasons to leave Taiwan it became clear that return can be more complex than anticipated. *“The reason is you know the condition of Taiwan regarding migrant workers they have uuhm an agreement on the number of years you are able to stay in Taiwan. But I was lucky because before it was only 2 year contract, every contract is only 2 years and then you have only 1 year extension. I finish these 3 years and then the 6 years was approved just before my three years was finished. Again I finish so no more, so my employer what should I do. The changing of names of workers is very normal in Taiwan it was common. My employer talked to her friends and asked them what can I do. I changed my name go back again another three years with my new name. Before my 12 years end during that time I was involved with migrants rights in Taiwan. So the economic and cultural office in Taiwan of the Philippines was focussing on me. They want us, they are looking in our lives to find a grey area. One of our member was already reported to the government. And my contract was ending so I needed to make a decision. Then another thing I was operated with gallstones and then another thing is that my daughter was already nine years old and I was thinking she needs me she needs my guidance. Because maybe she was going in different directions. She was very confused of her identity, people are bullying her. She was bullied. So that was all the little things that added up to me deciding to go back to the Philippines.”* (Interview 25).

The situation of Daisy explains that there can be a mix of voluntary and non-voluntary reasons to leave a country and therefore makes this dichotomy difficult to use when looking at return of female migrants. Mostly the women who came back from the Middle East did not finish their contract. The reasons for them not finishing their contract was the inability to endure the hardships any further. Although on average most women did not finish their contracts in the Middle East, some were able to.

9. Empowerment during migration and after return

In this chapter the different levels of empowerment are presented. However first the inner strength and confidence levels of the interviewees are analyzed. Secondly, economic

empowerment is presented. During their time abroad did these women had an increase in economic empowerment, and upon return where they able to sustain this? Here we will look at increase in paid work, increase in financial decision making and increase in savings and control over savings. Furthermore the social empowerment concept is analyzed. Here the following indicators are used for the analyzation: women are able to make decisions on their own physical mobility and social interaction with others, increase in educational level and skills and their contribution within unpaid work such as household . Lastly political empowerment is analyzed. The following indicators are used for this analyzation: interests in politics, involvement in politics on several levels, member of political party and/or organization. During the analyzation the concepts are reviewed during their time abroad and upon return in the Philippines.

9.1 Self-esteem and inner strength

According to Charmes and Wieringa, inner strength and self-esteem are a pre-condition for the first stage of empowerment. According to them a women is unable to express her agency and gain awareness of her situation without this inner strength and self-confidence to express her grievance (2003). During the fieldwork it was noticed that women indicated they felt they changed after their migration process. Women that have worked in the Middle East indicated that they felt after sustaining the hardship abroad, they could endure anything. 37-year-old Anna worked in Saudi for two years, during that time she run away from her employer and was able to secure herself a job as barista. After two years she decided to go back home because of a new relationship she established when she was working in Saudi Arabia.

According to her the hardship in Saudi only made her a stronger person. *“I fought for my life when I was in Saudi, so now back here in the Philippines I know I can overcome everything I want to. Nothing can get me down anymore.”* (Interview 1). Most of the interviewees did indicated that they were currently more confident and more independent than before they migrated. However according to Rory this gained independence and confidence does not help her in her current life, especially when it comes to finding a suited partner. *“Because let's face it Filipino's are not very straightforward especially women so it is hard for me to have a relationship with Filipino men. Because I will not let them boss me around, they don't like it that I'm not submissive so that is always a problem.”* (Interview 16).

Currently Rory is working on her papers to move to Cananda, a country were according to her it would be easier to find a partner than in the Philippines. Although most of the interviewed women indicated a growth in inner strength and confidence, expressing of these new qualities

is difficult. Most of the women were unable to present examples of expressing these new qualities or when they did this was mostly in the form of communicative skills. Clara for example states that she became less shy and currently she is able to talk to strangers, something she would not have been able to do before she went abroad (Interview 11).

9.2 Economic empowerment

Before migration the largest group of the women were stay at home moms, 19 out of 37. The other 18 women did have a job, but eight of those had a part-time job or were on call. Other jobs they had were ranging from working in a factory till being a teacher. Out of the 18 women who did work, only 6 can be considered as a working mother, the rest did not have children before migration. Although a handful of women were working before migration, they were not the main provider of the family. In most cases this was the father of the migrant, or the husband.

As stated previously the majority of my interviewees explained that they were moving abroad for financial reasons, helping their family or their children. During their time abroad they became the main provider of their families. Only one of the informants expressed that even when she was working abroad her husband was still the main provider of the family, while his salary exceeded hers. Thus, when these women were working abroad they became the breadwinner of their families. Therefore changing the traditional vision that is central within the Philippines of the man being the main provider for the family, and the women being the care taker. Being the breadwinner of their family made most of them content. They expressed that even when it was extremely hard, they were happy to be able to provide for their family and their children. Most of the women who came back from the Middle East expressed that they were happy, but that the work was a personal sacrifice. For Kristin and Clara working in the Middle East was more of a hardship than a way to increase their financial independence.

“It is a burden, because all of my money I need to send it to them for their needs. When he goes to school we need to pay for that, everything I need to pay for. Transportation, books everything so I send it all. I cannot save anything for three years. When I left the Philippines he was only first year college student so I need help him to finish college.”(Interview 10).

However, some of the women who worked in the Middle East did express working and making money increased their independence. Ariane worked in different countries in the Middle East. She was able to finish her contracts in Bahrein and Kuwait. However in 2010 she moved to Syria to work there. During that time the civil war already erupted but she was

not informed about the situation by her agency. When asking her about her feelings of being the breadwinner she stated: *“I feel that wherever I go I can stay alive. And I tell my husband that I can stand my grounds without you. I don't need him. I think I become strong minded a stronger women more confident.”* (Interview 15).

The women who worked in the Asian countries did experience working abroad, and thereby being the breadwinner of their families differently. They expressed in greater deal that the experience was good for them, making them more independent and gave them the feeling that they were able to work and provide for their families. In their answers they did not express the hardship as extensively as the women in the Middle East did. Rory worked as a caregiver in Taiwan, she expressed in Taiwan she became more independent from her family and that the money she was earning was really hers.

“Because I saw that in Taiwan they don't care, your money is your own and you decide if you want to share the money yes or no. But I have this unspoken responsibility that I need to provide for my family. In the Philippines the money you earn is not for yourself you always have to share that with your family members and that was different in Taiwan. So I decided that I wanted that, I wanted to keep my own money.” (Interview 16)

During their time abroad the women changed the traditional role by being the breadwinner. When asking the informants who should earn the most in the family, 22 expressed that they thought that both the man and the women should earn the most. 13 of them said that the man should be the main provider of the family. Two expressed that they though the women should be the main provider of the family, because they did not trust there husband anymore.

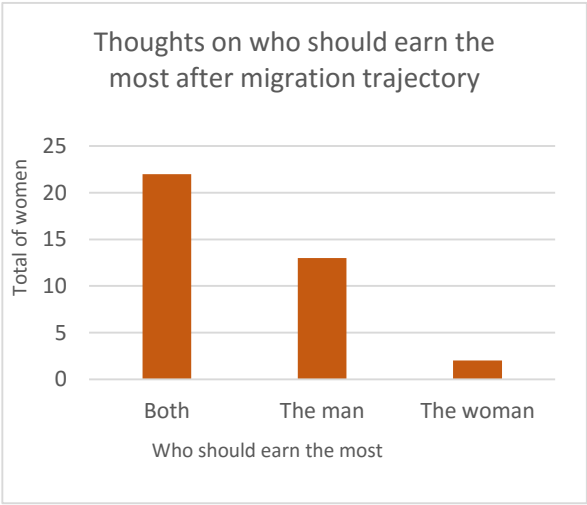
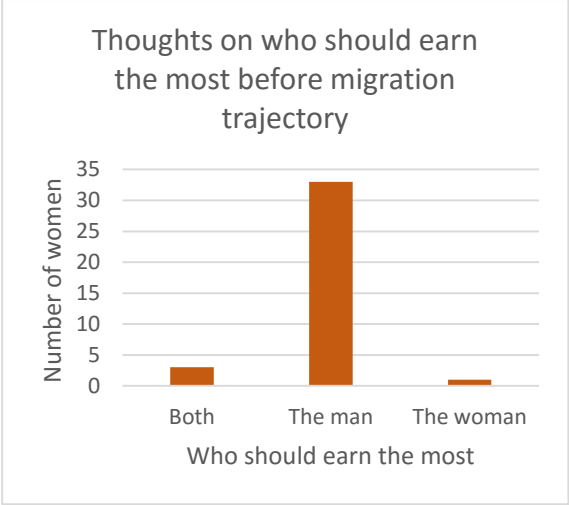


Figure 11: Who should earn the most before migration Figure 12: Who should earn the most after migration

Asking the women on their thoughts about who should earn the most one can see a difference in responses. There is a difference in how they thought about earnings before migration and afterwards. Multiple reasons can be given for this. First women experienced being cheated on by their husband. Therefore they did not trust their husband anymore and wanted to be the sole breadwinner of the family. On the other hand women expressed that working abroad, making money and thereby providing for their family changed their perspective. Bianca for example worked abroad for over 10 years as a domestic helper. When asking her if she thought that working abroad changed her vision about who should earn the most she stated: *“Yes I think so because before I did not work I did not take care of myself. But now I do so yes I think so.”*(Interview 33).

Although, on first sight it seemed that the vision of who should be the main provider of the family changed due to migration, a significant difference is seen in answers from the women who worked in the Middle East in comparison to the women who came from an Asian country. When excluding the women who moved to Asia, another pattern shows. In this case most women think the man should be the main provider of the family after migration.

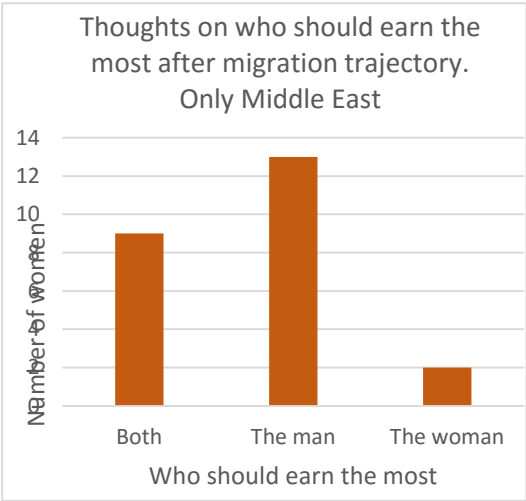


Figure 13: Who should earn the most excluding Asia

Decision making authority mostly increases when women work abroad (Gosh 2009). Because they became the head of the household, an increase is mostly seen in their financial decision making authority. In the Philippines being in charge of the household income is a traditional role for the wife. This was highlighted by Amanda during her interview.

“.....it is also well included in the wedding ceremony you have this symbol and they give this to the wife and you are in charge of the income of the family. All your husband’s earnings should go to the female.” (Interview 13). Therefore being in charge of the household income after migration cannot be seen as a tool for empowerment of these women, while the

traditional view obliges women to be in charge of this. The women highlighted that the man is not a good fit to make decisions over the household income because he is unable to make the right decision for the family. However, this also means that when there are financial problems the women is blamed for this even when her husband is not giving her enough to support the family with. Thereby increasing her burden. *“I think I would say then that the women should be in charge because that is the Filipino tradition but this also means that if there is a problem with the income or the husband does not give enough the women has a problem so I think when you live together you should decide on everything together.”* (Interview 16). This was underlined by the head of the Centre for Women’s Resources. *“When a family is unable to make ends meet somebody will not look at the man why he is not making extra money, but they will look at the wife why she is unable to feed her children.”* (Interview CWR 03112015). It can therefore be stated that being in charge of the household income for these women cannot be seen as an empowering factor.

When it comes to monetary knowledge 32 women expressed that they gained monetary knowledge due to working abroad. The most common answer was that it became more clear to the women that they needed to save money, and be careful in spending their income. All of them worked extremely hard for their money, under sometimes questionable circumstances. It became evident to them that it is demanding to make enough money to sustain their families. Therefore, upon arrival they were more aware of their financial situation, and make sure to prioritise certain expenses.

The group of women who worked in Asia, had more ability to save than the women who worked in the Middle East. In the end all of the women who worked in Asia mentioned that they saved a specific amount of money during their time abroad. During the interviews some did express that they had spent these savings in the years they were back in the Philippines. These spending’s ranged from everyday needs to buying a house for their family. Out of the group of women who worked in the Middle East only four mentioned that they had money saved upon arrival in the Philippines. Out of these four, two had full control over these savings and two needed permission from their spouse or family member to access the account. Nikki for example sent the money directly to the bank account of her husband. Only with his permission she is able to have access to the money she earned while working abroad (Interview 2).

Robin, 40, worked in Saudi for almost two years. During her time in Saudi she saved as much money as she was able to. When arriving home after the time in Saudi she used her

savings to apply for work in Canada. But she did stated that for her it was easier to save because she did not have a family she needed to take care for (Interview 23).

There are multiple clarifications for the difference in the saving behavior of the women from Asia and the Middle East. First, the women worked in Asia for a longer period of time, therefore giving them more time to save money. Secondly, the women who worked in Asia got their salary on time and made on average more than the ones who worked in the Middle East. Furthermore, the women in Asia were able to leave the house at least once a week, making them physically able to make money deposits to a savings account. The women in the Middle East on the other had were unable to leave the house, therefore they had to rely on family members who were in charge of their bank account or people they could trust in the country were they worked. Lastly, most of the women who worked in Asia did not have a family of their own during that time. Therefore, after they helped their brothers or sisters through school or their parents with a new house, they were able to save money for themselves.

Most of the money that was sent back home was used for the everyday needs of the family such as paying school tuition, rent, the electricity, water and gas bills. Although these women were being the breadwinner, most of them expressed that they had little knowledge on where the remittances were spent on. One of the exceptions is Lydia, she stayed in control over her earned money even when she was working in another country. She only sent money back when this was needed and transferred that specific amount to the account of her husband.

In the cases of Ariane, Rosa, Rosy and Hope they came home after working in the Middle East finding out that their partners had spent all of their money. When Hope came back after working in the UAE for a year as a domestic helper she did not expect to find out that her husband did not only had another women but also spent all of her money. *“I don't know where it is because I sent everything back, I did not ask him where do you put the money or how did you spent the money. Because I am happy to send it because it is my goal. That is the reason why I go there to give them what they need in life.....Before my husband had some problems with gambling, playing cards. Sometimes betting games in basketball.”* (Interview 21).

Rosy came back in a similar situation *“Well I sent most of it to my husband but I found out that he did not spend it on my children. Sometimes they were not fed for 4 days. He did not send them to school because one of them should already be in third grade but it is just starting this year. I told him that he should show me the bank statements where it is told that*

he sent money to the bank. But he did not show me anything. I think he spent it on the new women. If I had known this I would have send the money directly to my mother.” (Interview 22)

Even when during their time abroad the women were the breadwinners of the family, upon return it was hard for them to find a new job and to sustain this role. Arguments that were mentioned for being unable to find a job were, being too old according to Filipino standards, not having the right educational background or that they needed to stay at home because of the children. When returning Beatrice, Amber and Haley were ready for retirement and therefore did not try to find work. However out of the remaining 34 women, only 5 were able to secure a job after they came back. Two of the ladies, Charlotte and Rebecca were able to start up a small business. However only Charlotte’s business sustained, she is still managing the shop and it is a fruitful business. Finding work in the Philippines is extremely difficult and it is not uncommon to be needing a college degree for a simple restaurant job. Out of all the college graduates every year there is only room for 50% of them in the formal sector (Anonuevo and Anonuevo 2003) . Therefore some of these women did express, even after the hardships in the Middle East, that they wanted to go abroad again.

Although during their time abroad these women were the breadwinner for once therefore challenging the “normal” structures of the Filipino society it is noted that some women upon return have the idea that the man still should be the main provider of the family. Especially the women who worked in the Middle East had this vision. Furthermore, it was hard to find a job after return to the Philippines. Therefore, it is questionable if these women, especially the ones from the Middle East, were able to sustain any level of their gained economic empowerment after return.

9.3 Social empowerment

In this section social empowerment during and after migration is evaluated. Therefore the following indicators are used for the measurement of social empowerment. Share in unpaid work, increase in education and or skills and decision on social contact and physical mobility. In her study on the social cost of migration for the Filipino family, Parrenas (2005) explains the great costs of transnational families on children. In her book, Parrenas explains multiple differences between the children of OFWs and children of Filipino families with both mother and father being in the Philippines (2005). One of the differences she mentioned is the change in relationship between mother and child after return. The latter is something a few of my respondents experienced first handed.

Rosy worked both in Qatar as in Dubai. In Dubai she experienced been put into jail, because she was accused by her employers of a crime she did not commit. When she arrived back home after these difficult year, she found out that the relationship between her and her children changed. *“Yes it has changed. They have gone wild and they do not what to listen to me. They are smoking now and drinking. And my eldest he has a partner but I don’t know her and I don’t know what they do.”* (Interview 22).

When Bianca returned home after working in Malaysia for 10 years she needed to re-establish the relationship with her daughter. During her time abroad, her daughter got pregnant and started her own family. Bianca explained that she and her daughter are still not fully comfortable with each other but that they are working on their relationship. Bianca is now taking care of her grandchildren so her daughter can go to work, because she want her to grow up as an independent woman (Interview 37).

For some women the relation with their children changed, however most of them came home to a family that was happy their mother, sister, spouse and/or daughter returned. The family of most of the women was supportive of them returning home. Especially the ones who came back distressed received a lot of attention and help from their family members.

Women in the Philippines are the light of the house and therefore expected to do all the chores in the house and be responsible for the upbringing of the children. When asking the different women who was responsible for the household before migration, 27 out of 37 expressed they were responsible for the household chores and taking care of possible children. In most of the ten cases where they were not in charge this meant that they were still living with their parents at that time.

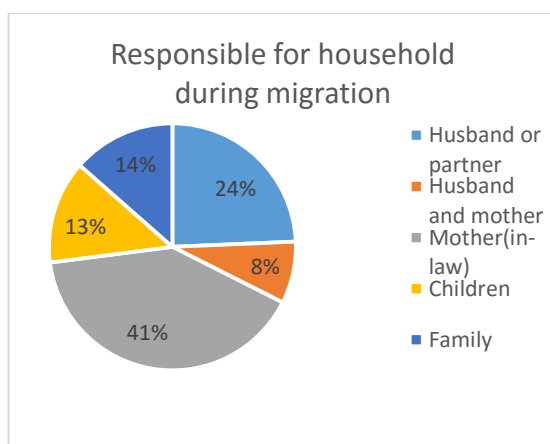


Figure 14: Responsible household during migration

According to Tharan in her work on the effects of migration on the lives of Filipino families, husbands take up the role of responsible father when their wives decide to leave and

work abroad (2009). Thus changing the traditional social roles of husband being the breadwinner and wife being the one who is staying at home to take care of the household. However, this change in social relations within the household and within the responsibility of unpaid work is not found within my data. Mostly, when the women has children, she decides to bring in a female family member to help her husband with the chores and the care of the children. Therefore it can be contest if when a women leaves her house to become the fulltime breadwinner, roles are actually changed when the husband or partner does not take up the role of the mother figure.

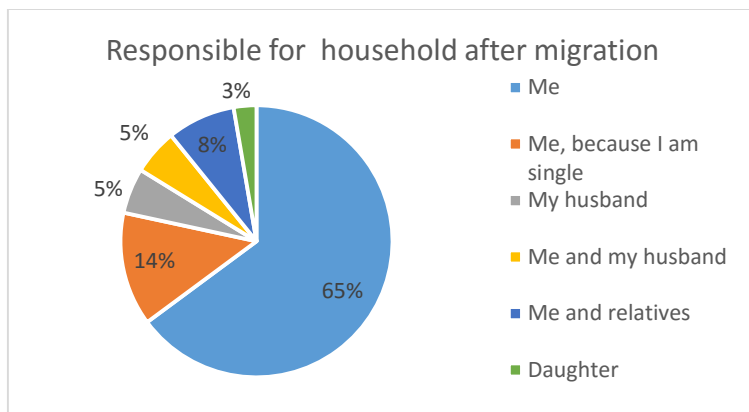


Figure 15: Responsible household after migration

In cases where the husband did took over the role of caretaker some women were not pleased when they returned home. Their houses were filthy, and they came to realization that nobody had been taking care of their children. In the case of Hope, she came home in a dirty house with an eight-year-old daughter knowing how to do all the household chores. She told me that she thought her daughter needed to take care of herself in the time she was working abroad.

“...when I came back here I cannot say it is a house because there are a lot of spider webs and the CR [comfort room] is dirty, the whole house is dirty. Stains on everything. My daughter she suddenly knows how to wash the clothes, how to wash the plates. When I tell her to cook she will know how to do that. But I don't let her because she is only eight years old. But still she can as I said. She can iron her uniform.” (Interview 21).

When the women came back from their experience abroad, the majority took up their role as light of the house and nurture. Thereby not changing the traditional roles and gender perspectives within the family and community. However, it must be noted that 20 out of the 37 interviewees think that the woman should be the one who is responsible for the household

and taking care of the children. According to this majority, the man is not fit to take care for the children. The husband should only be in charge of the household in occasions when the women is no able to do so. In 17 cases it is stated that both can do the job. Yet, only a few of these women actually share the responsibilities of childcare and household chores with their husband or partner. Therefore on the individual level they do think both should be responsible for these chores however they are unable or unwilling to express their vision.

Charlotte is one of the only ladies I met where it was clear that her husband was taking care of the children when she was working in her store. When asking her who should be the one that is responsible for taking care of the children and the household she responded

“No, for me the man should really be the one that is going to work and the women should be the one that is staying at home and take care of the children. But because of the reasons that can't happen to us.” (Interview 32).

Increase in education is recognized as a tool for empowerment for the last decades (Desai 2010). Increase in education cannot only increase the likelihood of a job thereby increasing income. In addition education can increase the awareness on the current disempowering situation of the women. Because a large group of the women already had a college degree, this study also looked at the increase of skills during their time abroad and the use of these skills upon return. All of the women that were interviewed said that they learned new skills when they worked abroad. However, most of these skills were related to the domestic sphere of their work. One must think about a specific way of cleaning, cooking of new dishes or being a better caretaker. Unfortunately most made clear that upon arrival in the Philippines they were unable to use these new learned skills. During her time in Saudi Arabia Nikki learned to speak Arabic however, when she came back she did not know how to use this skill in the Philippines. *“nobody speaks Arabic in the Philippines. So how can I use this...”* (Interview 3).

In Taiwan Daisy and Rory were able to enroll in different courses which were offered by different OFW organizations in Taiwan. Daisy took English classes and she took a cooking class. According to her especially the English class was very helpful for her. Taylor was the only woman who was able to make use of one of the skills she learned while in Japan. During her time abroad she became fluent in Japanese. When she returned from working in Japan and Saipan she got an office job and translated letters from Japanese to English (Interview 29).

When returning home, only a handful of interviewees went back to school. Only Daisy took the opportunity of the OWWA scholarship and enrolled in the subsidized classes.

Unfortunately these classes did not help her with her home based bakery. “*When I was in the class I realized this is not fit for me because it was a class for seaman. The language they were using was for seaman, so I did not understand it. And besides it will not help me because the kitchen there is completely different. I got angry because the OWWA person told me this will help you but how can you compare selling bake products at home to a kitchen in a ship.*” (Interview 25). Hanna worked in Saudi for one year. When working there she was taking care of a special needs child. Although she had no schooling in this area, she is now in school to become a special needs care taker. According to her working in Saudi, even when this was difficult, made her realize that she would like to continue to work as a care taker (Interview 9).

In addition to education, are physical mobility and decision making on social contacts other indicators to analyze social empowerment. To analyze their physical mobility the question was asked if they needed permission to leave the house. 17 out of 37 stated that they did not need permission to leave the house. According to them they could leave whenever they wanted. Out of these 17, six are married, three are separated and the rest is single.

This underlines that when a women is single, she has a certain amount of freedom in her physical mobility, However, when married the wife should ask the husband for permission thus posting an restrain on your physical mobility. The 20 who did need permission to leave the house, indicated that in the Philippines that is custom. Especially when you have a husband, he needs to know where you are. Furthermore the women explained that their husbands did not ask permission when they left the house. This makes the difference between the freedom in physical mobility between man and woman clear.

During their time abroad, the women who worked in the Middle East confessed that they were unable to meet people when they wanted. Countries such as Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have an extreme authoritarian rule. Sharia law is in place in most of these countries and therefore freedom especially for women is restricted. Especially when it comes to personal freedom, the domestic workers are (mostly) subjected to the will of their employers. They are not protected by any labour laws (Sabban 2002). Especially in Saudi having a domestic helper is seen as a status symbol and women, when entering the house become part of the *haram* (Sabban 2002).

Due to their inability to leave the house 99% of the women who worked in the Middle East felt more free when they lived in the Philippines. Only the 37 year old Anna stated that when she was working in the Middle East she was able to meet friends whenever she wanted,

and that she felt more free when she was living there in comparison to her life in the Philippines. However it should be noted that when she was working in the Middle East she run away from her employer and started to work in a coffeehouse. According to her she felt more free abroad because she could do whatever she wanted without asking permission from family or her husband at that time (Interview 1).

But it were not only the domestic workers who were not allowed to leave the house. Their female bosses were bound to the house as well. Both Kate and Rosy explained that they thought their female bosses were toys for their employers. Kate explained that her male boss only came home to give her madam money and then left again. They did not go out, and when they did leave, they were always in company of a male. As stated by Rosy: *“They have no freedom. Big difference with the Philippines.”* (Interview 22)



Figure 16: Able to meet people when she wants to.

The women who worked in Asia did have more freedom in comparison to their fellow Filipinas in the Middle East, however they as well explained that although they did not feel unfree in their working environment you still have to listen to your boss, and as stated by Juliette *“In the Philippines the time is yours, you can do whatever you wanted that is not when you are working, only on your day off.”* (Interview 28). Therefore it can be contested if their time abroad, especially for the women who worked in the Middle East was on the level of physical mobility empowering. Even though when they are living in the Philippines, most of them need to ask permission from their spouse or family members to leave the house, they still felt that they had more freedom in mobility at home than abroad. The fact that they needed to listen to their bosses and they are been watched in their every move was for these women not an increase in their freedom.

Lastly increase in non-financial decision-making abilities can also increase the social empowerment of women. In clear patriarchal societies man are in charge of making the most

important decisions in comparison to the women. Out of the 37 women before migration 26 expressed that this should be the man, 8 stated that this can be both and 2 out of the 37 said that this should be the women. Isa explains why she thinks the husband should be the one that is making important decisions. *“The husband, the man as the foundation of the house of that family. I respect his decision So he should decide for the family.”* (Interview 7).

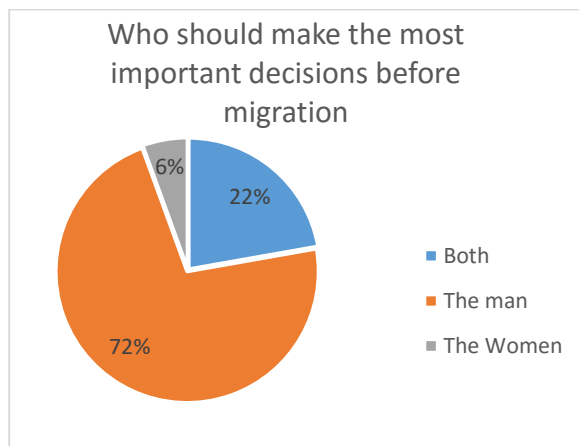


Figure 17: Who should make important decisions before migration

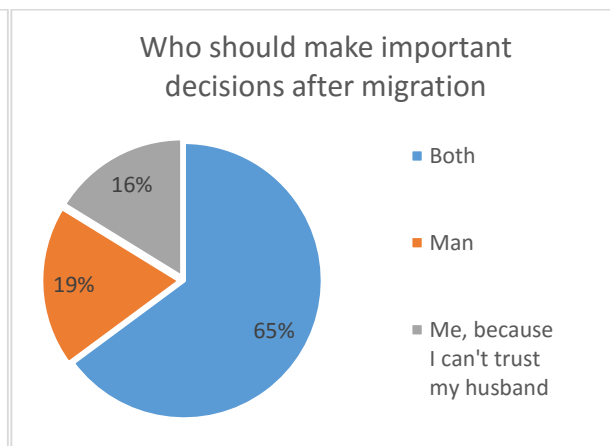


Figure 18: Who should make important decisions after migration

During their time abroad others came to the conclusion that the husband should not be the sole decision making entity in the house. After their migration trajectory more women indicated that they thought that both the man and the women are responsible for making important decisions. Multiple reasons can be given for this change of mind. First, there was a group of women that have been cheated on by their husbands. They lost all their faith in men and now think that the women should be in charge of everything. Secondly, some of the women expressed that during their time abroad they had to endure a lot. When they arrived home they stated that they know they can do more, than they did before migration and they don't want their husbands to decide everything. Lastly there is a group who, especially in the Asia countries, saw more equality within the household of their employees and wanted that back home as well.

9.4 Political empowerment

The Philippines has always had strong grassroots organizations and is the country where *people's power* has been established (Yamanaka and Piper 2004). NGO's have a strong voice within the country and are widely established. Therefore, it was expected that before

migration some of the women would already have acquired some level of political empowerment. This pre-established hypothesis turned out to be true. Some women stated that they were active within their community and even were council members of their Barangay³. One of them is the 40 year old Robin. Before she left to work in the Middle East as a domestic helper she was an active union member for over 10 years. Eight out of those 10 years she even was the president of the union. During her time as a Union Member she was active in improving the working conditions of her members and she tried to increase the wages within her factory (Interview 23).

When asking the women if they were interested in politics, their answers ranged from yes to no -because the politicians are corrupt. Most of the women did express that they watched the news, and that they voted during elections. They were mostly interested in the affairs around OFWs. An increase was seen in interest for politics comparing before migration with after migration.

Especially, the women who faced a lot of hardship during their time abroad lost their faith in the current political powers. They did not have the feeling that during their time the government was able to support them, or help them in any way. Nikki's husband tried to get help from the government however without any luck. *"My husband tried for three months. They made him pay for what they spend when I left home. Because my contract was not finished. Then I had to buy my own plane ticket home even when I did not get my salary."* (Interview 2)

Eva went to the embassy herself to make her complaint, but they did not take her serious and were not willing to send her back home. *"The government support me?? No When I was in Bahrein first month I am there I know my work and my contract this is not fair. I called the agency I want to come home I don't like this job. Then my agency tell me you need to finish this one. So I went to the embassy they told me I was an idiot too much Filipino want to go abroad and you have a job so you need to stay here and finish the contract. You do not need to be stupid. You can work you are not dying. We cannot send you back home."* (Interview 3)

Some even state that without the help of Migrante they would still be working in the Middle East under horrible circumstances. When having a closer look at the data, those women who faced these hardships in the end became more politically involved, especially to fight for their rights as OFWs and mostly against the current political system. They

³ A barangay is the smallest governmental unit in the Philippines. It can be compared to a village or a small city. Every barangay has their own elected board with president and other council members.

participated in protest, are members of organizations and are actively trying to improve the rights of OFWs in the Philippines and abroad. They felt that it was their moral obligation to warn other Filipinas but in addition learn them about the rights they have as an OFW.

Although some of the interviewees already stated that they were politically active before they went abroad, 29 out of the 37 stated that they were not. Some indicated that during that time they were not interested in politics or that they simply did not have the time to be politically active. However, upon return 23 women stated that currently they are active within their community or within a political organization. This ranged from participating in rallies for the rights of OFW till organizing different political events in their Barangay.

Three of my interviewees became politically active during their time abroad. All three worked in an Asian country. During their time they became important union leaders in their respective countries. One of these women is the 61 year old Amber. She worked in Hong Kong for over 26 years. During the first years of her stay there she joined a Filipino cultural organization. However the purpose of the organization changed over time. First the organization was established as a meeting point for Filipinas in Hong Kong. Then the organisation grew and the members of the organisations started to fight for OFW's rights as well. During her time in Hong Kong and with the organization she was able to achieve a lot for the rights of domestic workers in Hong Kong. Back in the Philippines she stayed affiliated with the rights of OFWs and she is still active (Interview 33).

10. Conclusion and discussion

Within this thesis the following research question is central: *What is the influence of migration and return migration on the social, political and economic empowerment of female Filipino international labour migrants*". To answer the research question, sub-questions were established and a conceptual model was constructed on the basis of studies by (Kabeer 1999; Rowlands 1997; Longwe 1991; Alsop and Heinsohn 2005; Mc Whirter 1991; Charmes and Wieringa 2003). In this model empowerment is a process in which a woman should take different steps to become fully empowered. These steps are: awareness, use of choice, achievement of choice/expression of agency, equal participation and full empowerment through equal chances.

The data for this thesis was gathered during three months of fieldwork in Manila, the Philippines. In the end 37 semi-structured interviews were conducted with returned female returned OFWs. These women all worked in either the Middle East or a country in Asia. Their

professions ranged from domestic helper to beautician, but all of their professions were noted as unskilled. Furthermore, two interviews were conducted with government officials, and two more with leaders of NGOs in the Philippines.

It can be observed that women because of their experiences abroad, good or bad, gained a significant level of confidence and an increased their inner strength. The majority of my informants, especially the ones who worked in the Middle East, expressed that their confidence increased and they became stronger because of the hardship they faced. As stated by Asis (2002), the female migrants became more confident and self-aware not because of the absent of trials but because they had to face them head-on. According to Charmes and Wieringa these psychological changes are a pre-condition for the first stage of the empowerment process: awareness (2003). Awareness entails that women become aware of their current disempowering situation.

The main reason for the women to work abroad was to increase the financial situation of themselves or their family members. They wanted to escape the economic hardships they faced on a daily basis. Therefore, they were aware of their economic disempowering situation. By working abroad they made the choice to move out of their situation. Thereby increasing their levels of economic empowerment. Awareness was in lesser extend found, before migration, in the case of social empowerment. With the exception of three, the women did not indicate that they moved because of their disempowering social situation. The three women that did, left because they were escaping a destructive relationship. Not only were they aware of their disempowering situation in addition they used their choice to leave this relationship by working abroad. The majority was not aware of their social disempowering situation, while before migration they thought the women should be the one who should be in charge of the household, and the man should be in charge of making important decisions. Furthermore, most of the interviewees needed to ask permission to leave the house and did not see this as a restrain on their lives.

Most of the informants made the decision to leave without interference of family or friends. One can however argue that the decision they made was not fully autonomous. According to Bastia (2012) female migrants move abroad because of the duty they feel towards their family. Improving the economic situation of the lives of their family members and children was one of the main goals of their migration trajectory. This feeling of duty towards their family members and children could have had an effect on the decision making of the female migrants, therefore putting into question the full autonomy of the decision. In

some cases where the women did make the decision without permission of their husbands, full autonomy was seen.

Although the Philippines has a rich history of *people's power* most of the informants were not politically involved or interested in politics before they migrated. Most of them did vote, though. Therefore, we can state that before migration the interviewees already used their voice on the collective level, by voting during elections. Only a couple of the Filipinas indicated that they were politically involved before leaving the country. This involvement ranged from being a union leader till having a seat within the Barangay council.

10.1 During Migration

The current literature presents different outlooks on if women are empowered during their migration trajectory and to what extent. According to the research of Parrado and Flippen (2005). Mexican women who moved to the United States experienced little to no increase in their levels of empowerment. They were constrained by the different gendered settings and were severely discriminated during their migration trajectory. Furthermore they were unable to increase their economic situation and were restrained in their physical mobility. Furthermore in his study on women in Indonesia, Hugo claimed that no increase in empowerment was seen because these women move from one patriarchal society towards another (1995). Some similarities are found between the research of Parrado and Flippen (2005) and Hugo (1995) and the findings of this thesis, especially for the women who worked in the Middle East.

During their time abroad, the women who worked in the Middle East, faced severe levels of discrimination and they were constrained by the gendered settings of their work environment. Physical and mental abuse was more a norm than an exception. During their time abroad they did become the main provider of their family, thereby increasing their economic independence and voice within the decision making of the family. However, they were mostly unable to have control over these earnings. The majority of the women working in the Middle East sent all of their salary back home, because they were unable to open a savings account or were afraid that their bosses would deprive them from their money. When they returned home these women did not know where their earnings were spent on. A small group of women were able to have control over their earnings though, by only sending back money that was needed by the family. When the informants did have control over their earnings, she reached the use of choice within the economic empowerment process in close relationship to others.

The women who worked in the Middle East felt less free when living abroad than when they lived in the Philippines, indicating the submissive situation they were working in. This is in line with the findings of Hugo (1995), where he states that working as a domestic helper in Saudi Arabia is not a liberating experience, and does not increase a sense of freedom among the female migrants. Because of this submissive situation it can be stated that the women did not reflect on their situation in the Philippines. They were more aware of their disempowering situation in the Middle East in comparison to the, less disempowering situation in the Philippines. Their only concern was how they could endure the hardships during their work. Furthermore, the women were not in charge of their own physical mobility and were unable to build social networks. They were subjected to the rule of their employers and unable to leave the house when wanted.

In contradiction of the findings by Parrado and Flippen (2005) one cannot say that during their time abroad the women in the Middle East were silent recipients of the hardships. Multiple ways were used to move out of the situation they were in: asking their employers to take them back to the agency, reaching out to family members of their employers or inform their families back home secretly. Although during their time abroad they did not become aware of their disempowering situation in the Philippines, they did express some levels of empowerment by contesting the working environment in the Middle East. They became aware of the disempowering situation in the Middle East and used their agency to move out of this situation. Hence, empowerment and disempowerment should not be seen as mutual exclusive (Kweun Yu 2007).

On the political level, the women became during their stay aware of the disempowering situation they were in working in the Middle East. Therefore increasing their awareness of politics and the rights of OFWs. Although in the Middle East they were unable to join an organization, their interest increased during their time abroad.

The women who worked in Asia experienced their time abroad differently. Their stories are more in line with the findings of Handapangoda (2012), and Tharan (2009). According to Handapangoda women who move out of a masculine society will increase their levels of empowerment (2012). During her study on female migrants she found evidence of these women becoming more aware of their restricting situation back home, their freedom in the country of migration and their increase in economic independence (Handapangoda 2012). Tharan found during her study the same type of outcomes (2009). The women who worked in Asia did get their salaries and most were treated well by their employers. In contradiction to

the women who worked in the Middle East, the women who worked in Asia experience being the breadwinner as more liberating. Because they were not only able to help their families but all of them were able to save money as well thereby increasing their economic independence. Not only were they able to save their money, they also were in charge of the use of this money. Thereby taking an additional step in the economic empowerment process towards the achievement of choice expression of agency.

On the social level these women, though they were able to leave the house and have a day off every week, felt more free when they lived in the Philippines. The most common reason was that in the Philippines they were not subjected to the rules of their employer. Most of them during their time abroad did come to the conclusion that they were able to share responsibilities back home. The women who worked in Asia, mostly saw equal households during their time abroad. Therefore they stated that responsibilities could be shared and the women should not be the sole responsibility barer of the household. Furthermore they thought the decision making abilities should be more divided between the man and the women.

Because of their day off the women who worked in Asia were able to join different organizations, including political ones. Three of the interviewees became leaders of political organizations while working abroad. They continued with these activities upon arrival in the Philippines. Therefore these three women increased their political empowerment towards collective political empowerment, on the level of equal participation.

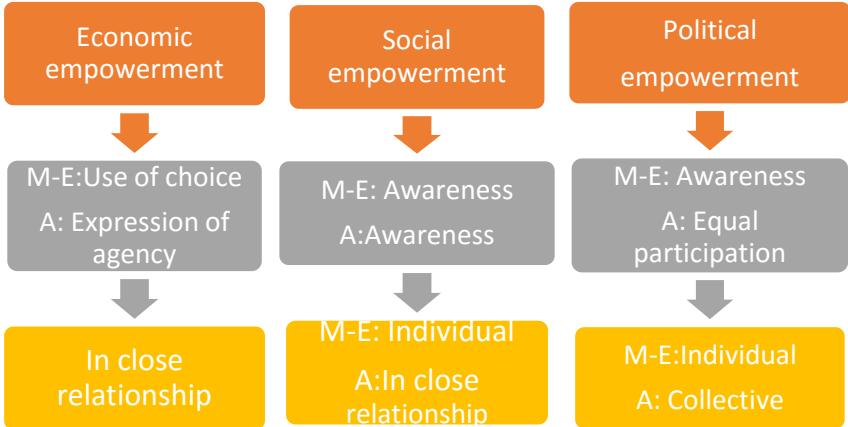


Figure 19: Levels of empowerment during migration

10.2 Return from migration

In a second study on Sri Lankan international labour migrants Handapangoda found evidence women who gained empowerment during their time abroad were unable to sustain these levels upon arrival (2014). On the other hand E. Caro et al found that women who worked

abroad and returned home changed traditional gender roles and therefore increased equality in the family and community (2011). Within this data of this thesis more proof was found for the former than the latter.

After the women returned home, they sometimes had problems with reintegration. Some had problems reconnecting with their children, others came to the conclusion that during their time away their marriage had been damaged. However the majority of the interviewed women came home to loving family who were happy that they were back.

In general women indicated that during their time abroad they were happy to be the breadwinner. Although the women in the Middle East found it more of a personal sacrifice than the women who worked in Asia. Unfortunately, upon arrival the women found it hard to sustain this role as breadwinner, due to difficulties in finding a job. Only one informant was able to use the money she earned in Asia to start up a viable business. Furthermore, the experience of the women in the Middle East did not change their perspective on who should be the main provider of the family. The women who worked in Asia did observe that a man and women could be the main providers of a family. Hence, they reached a different stage of economic empowerment in comparison to the women from the Middle East. However because the majority did not express their vision towards their counterparts, or were able to secure a job they only reached the level of awareness on the level of economic empowerment upon return.

During their time abroad, the household chores were taken over by family members or in some occasions by the husband. All of my interviewees who previously were the main caretakers of the house took up this role upon arrival. It should be noted that most of the women who worked in the Middle East indicated that they thought this should be the role of the wife, to be the caretaker of the family. Being overseas and working there for their family did not change anything to this perspective. Although the caretaker roles did not change significantly, when it comes to non-financial decision-making most women did indicate that they thought that after their migration trajectory they should be making decisions together with her husband. Therefore they did create awareness on their social situation in some established indicators.

The difference in empowerment levels between the women coming from the Middle East in relation to the ones coming from a country in Asia are visible. The women who worked in the Middle East are less aware of their economic and social situation, in relation to the women who worked in Asia. The main reason that can be mentioned for this is the patriarchal society they worked in the Middle East. As mentioned by Hugo (1995) when

women move from one patriarchal society towards another, less elevation of empowerment is shown. Some of the women did reach a certain level of economic and social empowerment, however upon return these levels of empowerment had to be placed within the gendered setting of the Filipino culture and the traditional roles of Filipinas.

Looking at the political empowerment levels of the interviewees, the outcome of this thesis does not reflect other studies. In the studies by Bastia (2012), Tharan (2009) and Handapagonda (2012) most of the women had no to little increase in political involvement. Only in the study of Tharan, who’s study also was conducted in the Philippines, some increase in the political empowerment levels of the respondents was seen (2009). In this study a high level of political empowerment was found. A large group of my respondents are involved in a political party or organization. The three women who were involved in migrant rights during their time abroad continued their fight upon arrival. Especially the women who had a bad experience abroad stated that they became more politically involved than before they left for their migration trajectory. They became more involved in the rights of migrant workers, and are fighting their own case against the government. Although the Philippines has a strong civil society and it was expected to find a certain level of political empowerment, on the levels of political empowerment a bias can exist in this thesis. Most of my informants were referred by a left wing militant organization. Therefore these women already had a strong political background, and had specific ideas about the political system in the Philippines. A higher political empowerment level is therefore found in my thesis in comparison to the previously mentioned other studies.

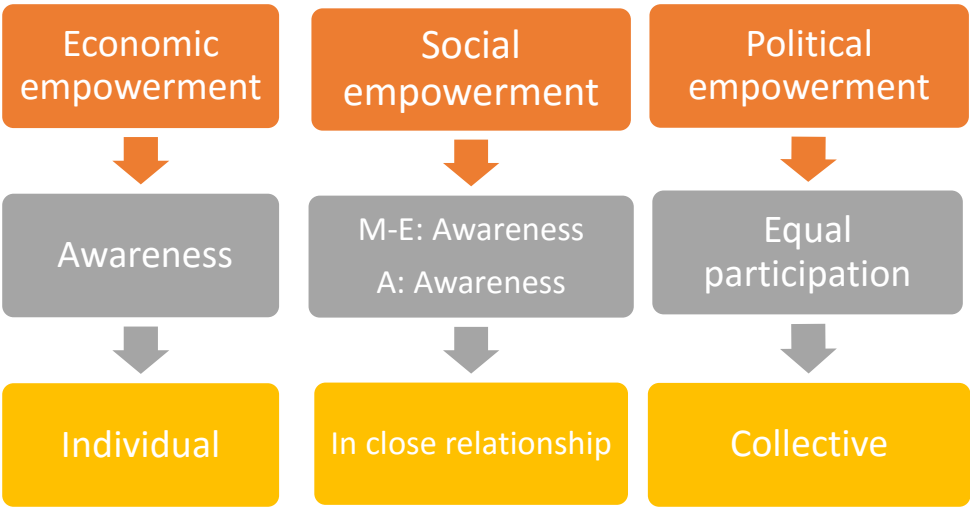


Figure 20: Levels of empowerment after migration

When analyzing the data, and trying to comprehend the situations of these women within the model, some general statements can be made. On the one hand during their time abroad, traditional roles were changed. Thereby increasing the empowerment of these women. On the other hand upon return they are set back in their old roles, thereby finding it hard to sustain the gained empowerment. However with the model problems do arise. Some women, before migration, have already reached a specific level of empowerment while others have not. Furthermore during their stay, the difference between the migration trajectories and experiences turned out to be complex. Especially the experiences of the women who worked in the Middle East are difficult to comprehend using a standardized conceptual model. The model assumes the empowerment process is linear. However, when looking at the different experiences of the women empowerment and disempowerment are intertwined during their migration trajectory. When these women use their agency to leave the Middle East is this increase in levels of empowerment? When they do become aware of the disempowering situation in the Middle East but not of their situation in the Philippines, can one state that they have reached the level of awareness? Furthermore, in some cases an increase was one indicator of economic empowerment however not in another indicator. Therefore, making it difficult to place the realities of these individual women within a standardized linear model. This thesis has to conclude by stating that although it was thought that the model would be a way to understand the different processes of these women, this is not the situation. However it does not mean that we have to write off the whole model, it does mean that the model is unable to grasp the differences between the experiences of the migrant workers and therefore it is difficult to make more in-depth statement about the empowerment levels of the Filipina migrant workers. Empowerment during and after migration is complex and the different scenarios these women faced on a daily basis makes their situation unique. Hence, to understand the levels of empowerment one should analyze all of the individual cases and see what stage of empowerment they have reached.

11. Policy recommendations

Within this section three policy recommendations are presented for the Philippines and the OFWs. The first recommendation is for the government and how to increase the protection of their workers abroad. The second recommendation is for the OWWA and their provided services towards the former OFWs. Lastly, a recommendation is presented for the migrant workers and the NGOs.

As mentioned before the Philippines has a strongly institutionalized migration system. According to the government this institutionalization is necessary as a protection for the migrants during and before their trajectory. Although the government claims to protect their OFWs and to have a well-established judicial system, the respondents of this thesis showed otherwise. Protection of OFWs abroad is difficult. Especially when it comes to domestic workers and other job that are problematic to monitor since they work within the household setting of the employer. However, the Filipino government is responsible for their citizens even when they are working abroad. Therefore the government should put more pressure on countries to have bilateral agreements. Within these agreements the wages, working hours and working conditions of the employee should be central. Because it is difficult to review these agreements, the government should establish relationships with regional organizations or NGOs who could execute this work for them. When it is noticed that a country is violating the agreement, the government should stop the recruitment of workers for that specific country. Only then a signal is given towards the Filipino citizens that their government is concerned with their safety, and towards the violating country that agreements should be complied with.

The women have stated that when family reached out for help at the government, they were covered in paperwork before repatriation could start. Furthermore secondary services such as the scholarships, toolkits and loans are not provided or given in such a way that they are not beneficial for the returned OFW. The current problem within the Filipino system is that there is not a mutual beneficial relation between the government and the migrant workers. On the one hand the government is making money out of the movement of workers and the remittances they sent back home. On the other hand, when in distress or facing problems abroad, the migrants have the feeling they are unable to rely on the government and the systems that are in place to protect the overseas workers.

According to the OWWA informant the organization has a great financial buffer, according to him when necessary the OWWA is able to repatriate all of the OFWs in the Middle East when necessary (Interview OWWA 07102015). Therefore it is likely to claim that the organization is currently making money out of the obliged memberships. Although a financial buffer is of course necessary for the organization to be prepared for a crisis, currently they are not providing the other services in order to retain this financial buffer. Furthermore to collect the specific services of the OWWA all cases are reviewed on a case-by case basis therefore making the former OFW dependent on the grace of the OWWA employer. Because OWWA wants to retain their buffer, they are unable to give the former

OFWs the other services OWWA claims to provide. Therefore it would be better for the organization to either provide a handful of services and make all former OFWs able to claim these services, or to increase the membership fee of OWWA in order to execute the many current service properly and been able to sustain a certain financial buffer.

Lastly, the migrants should also take responsibility for some of the problems they face abroad. During the different interviews it was noticed that many of the returned overseas workers had no idea what their rights were, or to what country they were moving. They had little to no expectation of the country of migration and the specific cultural differences. Even when entered the different pre-departure seminars, the women were still not well informed. Mostly these women entered these seminars because they were compelled to enter them. Without participation in these seminars, they were unable to leave the country. Migrants should therefore take their preparation more serious, they should be aware of the dangers they could face during their time abroad and be able to act when they encounter unfair treatment.

Although the preparation of the migrant workers is according to the POEA, the task of the government. This could actually be a gap where the different NGOs can step in, they should help the government with national information campaigns for migrant workers and their families. Within these campaigns the workers can be educated about the specific countries, the rights they have within the country and outside and furthermore what to do when arriving back home. Former OFWs can teach the new migrant workers and tell them about the problems they faced during their time abroad.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Semi Structured Interview Questions

Personal Questions

- 1) What is your name
- 2) What is your age
- 3) What is the highest form of education you attended?
- 4) Before you migrated what was your profession?
- 5) In what area of the Philippines did you grow up?
- 6) In what city/province/village did you live before you migrated?

Household

- 7) Are you a home owner?/ Do you rent a house?
Where you a home owner before you migrated?
- 8) What is your marital status?
 - i) Where you married before you migrated? How was your marriage?
 - ii) Do you still live together?
- 9) Do you have children? How many?
- 10) Are there other family members/friends living within your household?
- 11) Of how many people did your household consist before you migrated?

Migration Trajectory

- 12) To which country did you migrate?
- 13) For how long did you stay there?
- 14) Was this your first time to migrate?
- 15) What were the reasons for your migration trajectory?
- 16) Who were involved in the decision making for this migration trajectory?
- 17) Before you left, what were your ideas/ thoughts/ feelings about migration?
- 18) What did you hope to achieve when staying abroad?
- 19) What were the reasons for you to return from your migration trajectory?
- 20) Could you tell me about your work in the country you migrated to? What were your daily tasks?
- 21) Where did you live?
- 22) How was your relation with your boss(es)?
- 23) How many days per week did you have to work and how many hours per day? How did you feel about this?
- 24) How were your working conditions? Can you give me examples of these?
- 25) Was it difficult to adjust to a new culture and environment?

Social empowerment

- 26) Were you in contact with other migrants during your stay abroad?
 - i) How did you meet them? Did you meet up frequently?
 - ii) Was this type of contact important for you? How so?
- 27) Do you Agree, Disagree or have a neutral opinion about this statement:
When I was abroad I could meet up with people whenever I wanted

Agree	Not to agree not to disagree	Disagree

28) When I lived in the Philippines I could meet up with friends alone outside the home environment when ever I wanted

Agree	Not to agree not to disagree	Disagree
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29) I think a women should be allowed to meet friends without consulting family or their husband

Agree	Not to agree not to disagree	Disagree
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Did this opinion changed during your time abroad?

30) I had less freedom when I lived in the Philippines than when I worked abroad

Agree	Not to agree not to disagree	Disagree
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Why? How did you feel about the situation?

31) Could you tell me something about different skills you developed in the time you lived abroad?(new Languages/work related skills?)

i) Are you able to use these skills in your life when you returned? How?

ii) When you returned, did you learn any new skills? Started to go to school? Additional education? Why did you learn new skills?

32) Before you started your migration trajectory who was responsible for the household chores, grocery shopping, taking care of the children and cleaning?

i) During your stay abroad who took care of these tasks? And when you came back?

ii) Why did this changed/or not?

33) Who do you think should be in charge of the household (and the upbringing of your children). Did you have the same opinion before you migrated? (What changed)

34) Has your relationship with your children changed because of your migration trajectory? How? Why do you think that happened?

35) Where you happy in your relationship before you migrated? Did you have a good marriage?

i) And how is this relationship right now? Did your marriage changed because of your migration trajectory, how?

ii) Did you feel supported by your husband during and after your migration trajectory. How?

36) How is your relation with your family?

i) How was that relation before you migrated? What role did they have in your migration trajectory? Did your relationship changed after you returned home? How?

ii) Did you feel supported by your family and community after you returned home? How?

Economic empowerment

37) Are you currently working?

i) How many hours do you work?/ Why not?

ii) Do you make more money at the moment than before you migrated?

iii) Does your husband work? (only if she is married) Other members of the household work?

38) Who had saying over the income of your household before migration?

39) Who has saying over your household income after your migration trajectory? If applicable why did this changed? Do you think this should change?

40) Do you agree with this statement: Within the household the man should be in charge of making important decisions? Do you think this vision changed during your migration trajectory?

41) What happened to the money you earned during your migration trajectory?

- i) Where you expected to send money back to your family? Could you decide for yourself what to send back? How did you feel about this?
- ii) How many people were depended on your remittances?
- 42) Where you able to save some money during your migration trajectory? Why not? Access to savings?
 - i) Did you have savings before you migrated? Did you have access to these savings?
- 43) Do you agree with this statement: Because I migrated I have gained knowledge about monetary decisions?
 - i) Are you able to use this knowledge in your current life?
- 44) According to you who should earn the most in the household? Did this vision changed after your migration process?
- 45) How did you feel about being the breadwinner of the family?

Political empowerment/lobby/advocacy(might want to include this as well)

- 46) Are you interested in politics? Why? Are you more or less interested in politics after you ended your migration trajectory?
- 47) Are you affiliated with a political party/organization? For how long? Are you active?
- 48) How active were you within your community, village or city before you migrated? Did you for example were a member of a community council? Participated in rallies?
- 49) How active are you now within your community, village or city? Is there a specific reason for this (change)?
- 50) Have you participated in a form of protest (before, during and after migration)?
- 51) Are you aware of the current political stand of the government on migration and migrant rights? (Before and after migration)
- 52) Do you feel supported in your trajectory and return by the government? Why (not)?
- 53) Can you tell me if after you migrated you think you changed as a person? How? Why do you have this feeling? Examples?
- 54) According to you where you able to make changes within your household after your migration trajectory? In what way?
- 55) Looking back at your experience abroad what do you remember most and what do you value most?

Appendix II List of Interviewees

Name	Age	Education	Marital Status	Country of Migration	Duration
Anna	37	High school	Married but not living together	Saudi Arabia	2 Years
Nikki	27	3rd year High school	Married	Saudi Arabia	6 months
Eva	33	Vocational school	Married	Saudi Arabia and Bahrein	2 years, one year and 2 months
Inge	39	College graduate	Single	Saudi Arabia	10 months
Linda	39	3rd year high school	Partner	Kuwait	3 months

Mayra	29	Elementary school	Partner	Qatar and Saudi Arabia	1 year, 2 years
Isa	41	Vocational school	Married	Saudi Arabia and Dubai	6 years, 2 years
Ange	32	Third Year High school	Married but not living together	Saudi Arabia	5 months
Hanna	31	High school	Partner	Saudi Arabia	1 year
Kristin	29	College graduate	Married	Kuwait and Saudi	3 years and 6 months, 10 months
Clara	50	College second semester	Married	Saudi Arabia	2 years
Rosa	40	High school	Married but not living together	Saudi Arabia	1 year and 3 months
Amanda	46	Third year high school	Married but not living together	Saudi Arabia	3 years and 8 months
Martha	42	College graduate	Married	Saudi Arabia	1 year and 3 months.
Ariane	41	High school	Married	Kuwait, Bahrein and Syria	2 years, 2 years, 7 months
Rory	37	College graduate	Single	Taiwan	9 years
Abby	36	undergrad	Married	Hong Kong, Dubai and Saudi	1 year, 2 years, few months.
Emma	31	High school	Married	Saudi Arabia and Oman	2,5 years, 3 months
Iris	31	High school	Partner	Saudi Arabia	One month
Kate	45	High school	Married	Qatar	2 years
Hope	28	College graduate	Married	UAE	1 year
Robin	40	College graduate	Single	Qatar and Saudi Arabia	Couple of months, one year and 9 months
Roxan	32	College graduate	Married	Saudi Arabia	6 months
Daisy	52	High school graduate	single	Taiwan	12 years
Lydia	37	High school	Married	Singapore and Saudi	3 weeks(tourist visa), 4,5 months
Juliette	37	College graduate	Married	Hong Kong	3,5 years

Taylor	34	1st year College	Married	Saipan and Japan	3 years, 1 year
Rebecca	31	Vocational school	Married	Japan	1 year
Laura	34	High School	Partner	Japan	3 years and 3 months
Charlotte	33	Elementary	Married	Japan	1 year
Kim	62	College graduate	Married	Hong Kong	8 Years
Sara	51	College graduate	Widow	Hong Kong	10 Years
Haley	65	High school	Widow	Singapore	24 Years
Beatrice	61	College Graduate	Single	Hong Kong and Dubai	18 years, 10 years
Amber	61	College graduate	Single	Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia	26,5 years, 6 years
Rosy	35	6th grade elementary	Married but not living together	Qatar and Dubai	9 months, 2 year and 5 months
Bianca	44	3rd year High school	Widow	Malaysia and Singapore	10 Years, 3 Months