

Comparative Study on The Experiences of Selected Filipino Early Childhood Teachers in Thailand and Singapore: Basis for Pre-Departure Training Program

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated and compared the lived experiences of selected Filipino early childhood teachers working in Thailand and Singapore, with the aim of identifying key challenges, including cultural and personal opportunities, and adaptive strategies to inform the development of a pre-departure training program. Using a quantitative comparative research design, data were collected via Likert-scale questionnaires. The findings revealed that the two countries share similarities and differences in cultural adaptation, workplace expectations, communication barriers, professional growth, and support systems. Teachers in Thailand highlighted challenges related to language differences and classroom management, while those in Singapore emphasized high professional standards and structured educational systems. Despite these gaps, participants from both groups demonstrated strong commitment to their profession. Future teachers, recruitment agencies, schools, and educational stakeholders must create training programs for Filipino educators who wish to work abroad to prepare them and make them aware of expectations regarding their work, compensation packages, the culture of their host country, and social norms. This research contributed to the limited body of literature on Filipino teachers overseas and provides practical insights for policymakers, training institutions, and prospective migrant educators.

Keywords: - Early childhood, Filipino teachers, cultural challenges, and opportunities

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a vital role in children's development. During the formative years of childhood, they easily absorb fundamental skills and behaviors that influence their lifelong learning and development. With this in mind, early childhood educators are expected to have strong professional competencies, cultural sensitivity, and adaptability to support and nurture young learners.

Thailand and Singapore have been havens for qualified Filipino educators due to the growing demand for teachers to adapt to globalization. Filipino educators are known for their resilience, professionalism, and passion for teaching. These characteristics have contributed to the growing number of Filipino teachers seeking employment in Thailand and Singapore.

Filipino teachers who moved overseas to teach have been influenced by different push and pull factors. In the Philippines, teachers experienced limited career opportunities, lower wages, and limited professional development. Meanwhile, neighboring countries like Thailand and Singapore offer higher compensation, opportunities for professional growth, and improved working conditions. Although

Filipino teachers have opportunities, they are not shielded from challenges such as language barriers, cultural adjustment, personal and emotional well-being, and differences in educational systems.

Thailand and Singapore have different educational frameworks and systems that have shaped Filipino educators' experiences differently. Singapore has a highly structured early childhood system supported by the Ministry of Education, with strict educational standards. On the other hand, Thailand's educational system is more decentralized, with differences depending on whether institutions are private or government, resulting in varied teaching and living experiences for Filipino teachers.

Several studies explored the experiences of Filipino teachers abroad, focusing on cultural adaptation, professional development, and migration. There is a limited number of comparative studies that have specifically investigated the experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore.

This research aimed to address this gap by comparing the opportunities and challenges faced by Filipino early childhood teachers in these two countries. Furthermore, this may serve as a basis for proposed interventions in developing a pre-departure training program for Filipino educators bound for Thailand and Singapore.

Statement of the Problem

This study compared and explored the experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers working in Thailand and Singapore. It also investigated the opportunities and challenges teachers faced in their teaching, including cultural, linguistic, pedagogical, professional, and personal difficulties. This study provided insights into how Filipino teachers adapt to the diverse working conditions overseas and what motivates them to continue working as an early childhood education teacher abroad, specifically in Thailand and Singapore.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions to create a training program for Filipino teachers:

1. What is the demographic profile of the Filipino early childhood teachers?

A. Personal profile

- a. Age;
- b. Gender;
- c. Religion;
- d. Marital status;

B. Professional profile

- a. Place of work;

- b. Monthly salary;
 - c. Bachelor's degree;
 - d. Years of teaching experience;
 - e. Highest Educational Attainment; and
 - f. Number of seminars attended related to early childhood
2. What is extent of opportunities for Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore in terms of?
- a. Professional development,
 - b. Career advancement,
 - c. Compensation and benefits,
 - d. Cultural integration, and
 - e. Linguistic adaptation
3. What is the level of severity of the challenges encountered by early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore in terms of?
- a. cultural adaptation
 - b. language barriers,
 - c. work-related stress,
 - d. professional recognition and support, and
 - e. personal and emotional well-being
4. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of opportunities for Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore and their profile variables?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of severity of the challenges
What are the encounters of Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore, and what are their profile variables?
6. Is there a significant difference in the extent of opportunities as perceived by Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore?
7. Is there a significant difference in the level of severity of challenges encountered by

Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore?

8. What initial pre-departure training program may be proposed based on the results of the study for Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore?

Scope and Delimitations

This study explored and compared the experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore and based on its findings, proposed a pre-departure training program for future educators, policymakers, educational institutions, and recruitment agencies. This also focused on the extent of opportunities across professional development, career advancement, compensation and benefits, cultural integration, and linguistic adaptation, and the severity of challenges encountered by Filipino teachers across cultural adaptation, language barriers, work related stress, professional recognition and support, and personal and emotional well-being.

The respondents of this research were limited to fifty selected Filipino early childhood teachers with a bachelor's degree in education who had at least a year of teaching experience and were currently teaching at the early childhood level. The respondents were 25 Filipino teachers in Thailand and 25 in Singapore.

Review of Related Literatures

The Lee migration theory highlighted the interplay between push factors, pull factors, and intervening obstacles in shaping migration patterns. It suggests that migration is a complex process influenced by a combination of factors at the individual, household, and societal levels (Gaonkar, U. 2018).

Based on the study of De Oca & Malaga (2025), there was a diaspora of Filipino teachers leaving their home country to work abroad, such as in the United States. The study revealed that the main motivators of teacher migration were improved living conditions and higher income. Respondents in the study recognized dilemmas such as cultural adjustments, personal well-being, and emotional challenges.

One study explored the migration and motivation factors of Filipino teachers in Taiwan. The findings showed that personal growth aspirations, higher salaries, and better career opportunities served as strong pull factors for Filipino teachers to migrate and work abroad. However, teachers also faced challenges, such as discrimination and recognition as qualified educators in their host country (Yeh, A., 2025).

Human capital theory, as explained by Gary Becker (1964), emphasizes the importance of investing in employees' knowledge, skills, and health to enhance their capabilities and achieve a competitive advantage within an organization. Teachers who migrate abroad often maximize their professional and career growth potential and financial stability. This theory supports the idea that Filipino

teachers view working abroad as a means of improving their professional competencies while achieving a better personal life.

Fameronag (2026) studied the journey of Filipino international teachers and their experiences before, during, and after migration. The findings of the study revealed that Filipino teachers are greatly motivated by higher compensation packages and benefits, career promotion pathways, professional development, and global exposure. It is further highlighted that migration leads to professional growth and emotional challenges, as teachers must juggle between work-life balance.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on Acculturation Theory by John Berry, the Migration Theory by Everett Lee, the World Systems Theory by Immanuel Wallerstein, and the Human Capital Theory by Gary Becker.

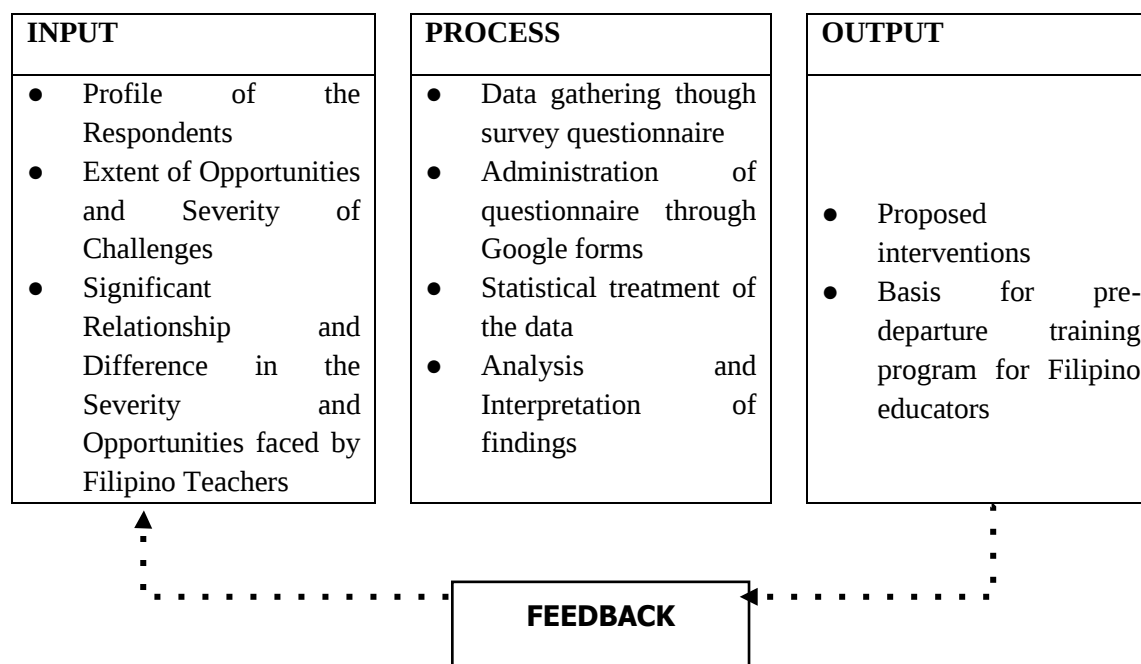
The push and pull theory explained the motivating factors why Filipino teachers work abroad like limited professional opportunities in the Philippines and pull factors like higher salary. In support of this theory, Human Capital Theory posits that migration is an investment in one's skills and career advancement.

World System Theory offered a broader perspective by explaining that labor moved from developing countries to more advanced ones. While Acculturation Theory focuses on how an individual adapts to a new culture, language, and environment.

Overall, these theories explained the reasons for migration and the varied opportunities and challenges faced by individuals who moved abroad to work.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilized Input-Process-Output (IPO) model to examine the on the challenges and opportunities experienced by Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore. The Input phase involved collecting data on the respondents' demographic profile, opportunities, and challenges related to professional, cultural, linguistic, and personal and emotional well-being. The Process phase employed a quantitative approach using a structured survey questionnaire as the sole data instrument. The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive and comparative statistical analysis. The analysis highlighted the relevant theoretical frameworks, including Acculturation, Migration Theory, World Systems and Human Capital Theory. The Output phase presented the study's findings. The extent of opportunities and severity of challenges faced by Filipino teachers and the significant relationship between variables and their profile. With these data, a pre-departure training program is recommended.



Methodology

This comparative research study examined the significant relationships and differences in the severity of challenges and the extent of opportunities experienced by Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore.

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive and Comparative research design using a quantitative approach. The descriptive component is suitable for this study because it will systematically describe the demographic profile and teaching experiences of Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore, without affecting the variables, rather than accounting for respondents' experiences.

Research Steps

The study started with the identification of the research problem and a review of related studies and literature to establish theoretical foundations. After the research title, objectives, and framework were finalized, the researcher prepared a survey questionnaire as the sole data gathering instrument. The instrument was then reviewed, validated, and approved by Dr. Minerva Joy B. Pedranes, Ms. Jessie S. Ibragas, and Ms. Regina Santos. After the approval, the survey questionnaire was distributed to Filipino teachers working in Thailand and Singapore through Google Forms, and completed forms were collected,

organized, and tabulated for analysis. The data were treated by a PSU-OUS statistician using appropriate statistical treatments. Finally, the reporting phase involved analyzing the findings, which were interpreted and discussed.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

This study involved 25 respondents selected from Thailand and 25 from Singapore, for a total of 50 respondents across both countries. 50 respondents may be a small sample size for quantitative research, but this study focuses on initial findings to avoid generalizing to Filipino early childhood educators in Thailand and Singapore. There are specific criteria for selecting research respondents for this comparative study. The teachers reside in Thailand or Singapore, have a legal Philippine passport (not including those naturalized), have a bachelor's degree, have at least two years of experience, are currently teaching in early childhood, and are willing to share their experiences through the survey of this research.

Data Analysis Methods

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using both comparative and descriptive statistics. Frequency counts, percentages, and weighted mean were utilized to describe the demographic profile of the respondents and the extent of opportunities and severity of challenges faced by Filipino teachers. To determine the relationship between the extent of opportunities and the severity of challenges, Pearson correlation, Spearman rank correlation, point biserial correlation, Chi-square test, and Cramer's V were employed. To investigate the significant differences of the extent of opportunities and severity of challenges, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used. These statistical tools helped analyze the data to compare the different experiences of Filipino teachers in Thailand and Singapore.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study was limited to Filipino early childhood teachers who worked as educators in Thailand and Singapore. It did not include Filipino workers who do not have a relevant teaching job. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study by obtaining consent from respondents, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and promoting voluntary participation and transparency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. What is the personal and professional profile of the Filipino early childhood teachers?

The results showed that most Filipino early childhood educators abroad are in their early to mid-thirties; this indicated that a large percentage of Filipino early childhood educators working in Thailand and Singapore are in the early to mid-stages of their professional careers. Singapore has slightly more younger respondents, in the early to mid-thirties; in contrast, the data from Thailand show a wider age

distribution. Overall, the demographic profile of the Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore is primarily female, single, Catholic, and in their early to mid-thirties.

As for the professional profiles of respondents from Thailand and Singapore, in terms of monthly salary, most Filipino educators in Thailand earn Php20,000-Php30,000 (40.0%), while only 8.0% earn Php60,001 and above. In contrast to Singapore, the majority of teachers' salaries fall within Php60,001 and above, accounting for 72.0%. In Thailand, Filipino educators who hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education account for only 12.0%, while most teachers hold a degree in Secondary Education at 52.0%. In Singapore, 92.0% of respondents hold a degree in Early Childhood Education, indicating a strong alignment with their specialization and teaching roles. Thailand is more diverse in terms of the number of years of teaching experience for Filipino teachers: 40.0% have more than 10 years of experience. In comparison to Singapore, which has a majority of 7-10 years' experience, which comprises 60.0% of the respondents.

For seminars or training related to early childhood this year, 44.0% of Filipino teachers in Thailand did not attend seminars, and 20.0% attended more than 6 seminars this year. In Singapore, 24.0% have attended more than 6 seminars and 32.0% have attended 3-4 seminars this year.

SOP 2. *What is the extent of opportunities for Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore in terms of professional development, career advancement, compensation and benefits, cultural integration, and linguistic adaptation?*

Table 1

Extent of Opportunities

Opportunities Experienced	Weighted Mean	Description
Professional Development	4.32	High
Career Advancement	4.18	High
Compensation and Benefits	4.25	High
Cultural Integration	4.10	Moderate
Linguistic Adaptation	3.95	Moderate
Grand mean	4.16	High

The findings revealed that Filipino early childhood teachers experienced a generally great extent of opportunities while teaching abroad. Among the identified areas, professional development obtained the highest mean, indicating that respondents benefited from seminars and learning opportunities. Teachers in Singapore reported stronger institutional support, clearer career pathways, and better access to professional growth opportunities.

In terms of compensation and benefits, respondents in Singapore earned higher salaries, received more generous health benefits, and received more employment incentives than teachers in Thailand.

Meanwhile, teachers in Thailand appreciated the relatively lower cost of living and more flexible work environment despite lower compensation packages. Cultural integration and linguistic adaptation have lower mean, indicating that although teachers adapted to foreign cultures and communication demands, adjustment difficulties persisted. Teachers in Thailand faced greater language barriers due to learners' limited English proficiency, whereas teachers in Singapore encountered fewer communication difficulties because English is widely used in educational institutions.

These findings suggested that Filipino teachers abroad gained substantial professional and personal opportunities while also developing adaptability and adapting to their host country's culture.

SOP 3. *What are the challenges encountered by Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore in terms of cultural adaptation, language barriers, work-related stress, professional recognition and support, and personal and emotional well-being?*

Table 2

Severity of Challenges

Challenges Experienced	Weighted Mean	Description
Cultural Adaptation	3.88	Moderate
Language Barriers	4.12	High
Work-Related Stress	4.05	High
Professional Recognition and Support	3.75	Moderate
Personal and Emotional Well-Being	4.01	High
Grand mean	3.96	Moderate to High

The findings presented that Filipino educators experienced moderate to high levels of challenges. Language barriers emerged as a significant struggle, particularly in Thailand. Work-related stress also has a high mean, with educators reporting feeling pressured by workload and professional expectations. Teachers in Singapore reportedly experienced these challenges more than those in Thailand. In terms of personal and emotional well-being, respondents from both countries experienced homesickness and emotional stress.

The findings further showed that professional recognition and support vary by country and school. The results indicated that teaching overseas is beneficial for Filipino teachers, but educators still face some challenges along the way.

SOP 4. *Is there a significant relationship between the profile variables of Filipino early childhood teachers and the extent of opportunities available to them?*

The findings presented that there is no significant relationship between age, number of teaching experiences, gender, marital status, and religion. This suggested that personal factors do not affect the opportunities experienced by Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore.

SOP 5. *Is there a significant relationship between the profile variables of Filipino early childhood teachers and the severity of challenges?*

According to the results of the study, cross-examination between most of the profile variables of Filipino teachers and the severity of challenges experienced did not show a significant relationship, except for place of work. It showed a significant negative relationship with the severity of challenges, with a point biserial correlation coefficient of $r = -0.393$ and a significance value of 0.005, which was significant at the 0.01 level. This suggested that the severity of challenges faced by Filipino educators depended on the location of their work. This explained that teachers in Singapore experienced lower challenges than those in Thailand.

Moreover, a bachelor's degree was also significantly associated with the severity of challenges, with a chi-square value of 24.708 and a significance level of 0.016. This indicated that teachers whose degrees align with their duties as early childhood educators faced fewer difficulties adjusting than those who became teachers with unrelated degrees.

SOP 6. *Is there a significant difference in the extent of opportunities as perceived by Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore?*

The results of the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) revealed a significant difference in the overall extent of opportunities experienced by Filipino teachers across workplaces, with a Pillai's Trace of 0.482. The significant differences were found in professional development, career advancement, compensation and benefits, and cultural integration. However, linguistic adaptation did not show any significant difference.

This indicated that Filipino teachers in Singapore experienced more professional opportunities, better compensation, and stronger support compared to those in Thailand. The results strongly indicated that workplace and educational frameworks significantly influenced the experiences of Filipino educators.

SOP 7. *Is there a significant difference in the level of severity of challenges encountered by Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore?*

The findings showed a significant difference in the severity of challenges faced by Filipino educators across cultural adaptation, language barriers, and professional recognition. Meanwhile, personal and emotional well-being did not show any significance.

Overall, the results indicated that Filipino teachers in Thailand faced greater challenges with the language barrier, cultural adjustment, and professional support than those in Singapore.

SOP 8. *What initial pre-departure training program may be proposed based on the results of the study for Filipino early childhood teachers in Thailand and Singapore?*

Based on the study's findings, a proposed pre-departure training program was developed. The program aimed to prepare Filipino educators bound for Thailand and Singapore by strengthening their cultural awareness, communication skills, emotional readiness, and professional competencies.

The proposed program focused on cultural adaptation, language learning, workplace expectations, classroom management strategies, and emotional well-being to equip future Filipino teachers to adjust effectively and transition smoothly in their new environment in Thailand and Singapore.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that Filipino early childhood educators in Thailand and Singapore have varied personal and professional profiles. Filipino teachers experienced varying degrees of opportunities and levels of challenge severity based on the location of their workplace. Filipino teachers in Singapore had more opportunities for professional and career advancement, compensation, and support from educational institutions. While teachers in Thailand faced more struggles in cultural adaptation and language barriers.

The results of the study emphasized the importance of a pre-departure training program to help Filipino teachers navigate the demands of working in Thailand and Singapore. This will help Filipino educators become effective teachers and provide them with the necessary physical, mental, and financial preparation.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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