

# The Social Construction of Reality Among Professional Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Thailand

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**Abstract:** *This study discusses the social construction of reality of professional Overseas Filipino Workers in Thailand. It identifies their new realities, accumulated understanding, and shared definitions of socio-cultural realities and patterns of acting. It describes how the professional OFW's engage, build a new identity and internalize their concrete roles in Thailand. Lastly, it examines how they turned a new subjective reality into a new objective reality. In order to determine the social construction of reality of thirteen (13) professional OFWs in Thailand, the study used a qualitative descriptive research design as a technique of inquiry and analysis. Face-to-face, audio and video online interviews, as well as talking via an application, were used to collect data. The findings revealed that the participants encountered and engaged with Buddhism, the monarchy, and the Thai economy the most in Thailand. These institutions became ingrained in their daily knowledge, collected wisdom, and shared definitions of their socio-cultural realities. As a result, while living and working in the state, they establish their knowledge, conduct, connections, and responsibilities. Their new identity incorporates Thai customs of interpersonal relationships and task completion. Justifying, explaining, and defining an action, a system, or an idea as acceptable or normal is how subjective reality is transformed into objective reality. Some of their actions in Thailand were routinized and eventually became commonplace. Finally, the participants' cultural memories are used to understand Thai norms. These findings may be useful in conversations about socializing Filipinos on values, attitudes, and abilities that clarify the Filipino identity.*

**Keywords:** institutions, professional OFWs, social construction of reality, Thailand

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## 1. Introduction

The Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) phenomenon is described as the Philippines having a large proportion of its population working abroad (Lisbe, Jr, n.d.; Medalla & Kingston, 2016). As the ASEAN is aiming for a unified market and production center, it needs breaking down the barriers in the movement of human resources, principally the skilled professionals. Data shows that there was significant growth in the movement of labor within the ASEAN, from 1.5 million migrant workers in 1991 to 6.9 million in 2015. Thailand (35%) Malaysia (35%), and Singapore (21%) are the top three destinations for ASEAN workers, accounting for ninety one percent (91%) of total migrant flows within the region (Olivier, 2018). Meanwhile, the Philippines came in last among the six countries of origin in intra-ASEAN migration from 1990 to 2015, according to a UNDESCA report released in 2016 (Harkins & Lindgren, 2018). One characteristic of intra-ASEAN labor migration involves low-skilled workers in separate studies conducted by the World Bank Group and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Vineles, 2018).

Numerous scholars, including Silvey (2013), conceptualized movement from one country to another as a process, be it material, discursive, or institutional. This thinking looks at migrants as important players in cultural production. The migrant workers are, consequently, agents in generating and circulating the practices, values, norms, and shared understanding of culture. Further, places, institutions, and people in their interactions produce personal interpretations of the circumstances about their paths and spaces that create communities. These people attach meanings to places they have been and to their destinations with reference to their homes. In addition, they produce religious distinctions from institutions they come into contact with.

The culture of a civilization shapes a person's thoughts, actions, and identity. Individuals gain knowledge and skills from their interactions with institutions, which they then pass on to others and society at large. As a result, a person's interactions with other individuals, institutions, and cultures have an impact (Confucius, 1938; Zerilli, 2007; Durkheim, 1982; and Ore, 2006).

This OFW phenomenon and having a number of Filipinos experience working in Thailand involve social processes and interactions. Being in Thailand constructs social reality. Thus, this encourages a study among professional Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). It's fascinating to learn how the participants in their new social reality in Thailand formed reality, as described by Berger and Luckmann (1966). It is hoped that related information and lessons from the professional OFWs in Thailand can have relevant contributions to the discourse on migrant workers today. The social construction of reality of professional OFWs in Thailand so far is lacking in scientific literature, hence this study.

The purpose of this qualitative research was to discover and describe the social construction of reality among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Thailand. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

- 1) What new socio-cultural realities do professional OFWs encounter in Thailand?
- 2) What new accumulated understanding of the new socio-cultural realities are passed on to them from their interactions with persons and institutions in Thailand?
- 3) What new shared definitions of socio-cultural realities and patterns of acting are established resulting from the OFWs' everyday life experience in Thailand?
- 4) How does an individual professional OFW engage with the Thais in the workplace and general environment?
- 5) How does a professional OFW build a new identity and internalize concrete roles acceptable in Thailand?
- 6) How is the new subjective reality transformed into a new objective reality of defined shared situations and established patterns of acting by the professional OFWs in Thailand?

## **2. Literature Review**

A few studies on the social construction of reality appear to have been done by various experts. Several research studies focusing on employing various measures, well-being, and migratory workers were found while searching for related literature on professional OFWs for this study. Furthermore, studies on the integration of asylum seekers and migrants are more common than studies on the social construction of reality by overseas workers.

### **The Socio-Cultural Context of Thailand**

Thailand has been described as a Buddhist country with a monarchy and elite-led government in a number of studies. It has a developing economy better than the Philippines in almost all

metrics. Hence, Thais have a better standard of living than the Filipinos (Ember & Ember, 2001; Lim, 2007; Kerbo, 2005; Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, & Hsieh, 2008; Brown, 2006; Forbes, 2009; Ba, 2006; Chua 2001 in Kang 2004; McGregor, 2008; Thompson, 2015; Larsson, 2018; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2007, 2019; and InterNations, 2019). Therefore, with approximately 85% of the Thais as Buddhists and Buddhism as its major religion, Thai society has religious homogeneity (Ember & Ember, 2001; Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, & Hsieh, 2008). Daniels (1998) added that Buddhism has a significant influence on the development of an economy.

Traditional Thai culture is generally maintained by government efforts and by the Thai people. This is despite the diffusion of Western culture into Thai society (Ware, 2011; Kang, 2004; Winichakul, 1994 in Yeoh 2002; Ember and Ember, 2001). Further, Xing (2016), Magill (1990), Markus and Kitayama, (1991), Daniels (1998), and Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, and Hsieh (2008) said that Buddhism and Confucianism have similarities. Their influence in Thailand and East Asian countries is through observing harmony and peace within and with other people. Also, to live with tolerance, non-violently, and compassionately. Mercado (1977) said that religion and Eastern thought influence the Filipinos.

Thailand's concept of democracy is different from that of the West. Thais believe that the only form of democracy is "Thai-style democracy" (p. 880), which is defined by a monarchy, military, and elite governance (Thompson, 2015). Under Thai ideals of Buddhist kingship, Thai rulers felt obligated to dedicate substantial efforts to the promotion and safeguarding of Buddhism in Thailand as it was being converted into a bureaucracy (Larsson, 2018).

### **The Filipino Culture and Personality**

In clarifying the Filipino culture and personality, Lawless (1967) reviewed studies available during his time. His review and Jocano (2006) asserted that Filipinos prefer the group and authority, and that these factors, along with the need to survive, impact their behavior and thinking. According to Andres (1985), the best method to understand Filipinos is to examine their values.

Jocano (2006) also described the Philippine society and culture's orientation. Themes about organizations, culture, values, and communication are some of the characteristics of the Filipino social environment. The family and kin group are the most prominent organizational structures in Philippine society. Filipino culture emphasizes sensitivity, reciprocity, and collectivity, among other things. Filipinos associate sensitivity with adaptability and versatility. While, reciprocity is the fulfillment of social and moral responsibilities as it creates sensitivity and directs connections between individuals and communities. Collectivity, on the other hand, fosters mutual benefit by teaching members of a community how to help their families connect successfully with one another.

Philippine society is made up of two elements: personalism and familism. The value placed on interpersonal interactions and direct communication is known as personalism. It refers to a desire to be a part of a community in the context of groupism. Personalizing service to consumers and other individuals by giving and demonstrating concern for their well-being is a common example of personalism. While familism refers to a Filipino's focus on his or her family rather than on themselves or their groups. The group's core belief is that everyone must treat others equally.

Because the Philippines were colonized by both Spain and the United States of America, Constantino (1977) identifies Filipino culture as Western. The establishment of institutions by both colonial masters, especially through religion (Spain) and an educational system based on the English language, helped to Westernize the Filipino identity (United States of America). Gonzalez (1989) wrote an essay on the impact of the West on the country's higher education. He claims that historically, this period of independence has been economically and culturally dependent on the United States. This reliance manifests itself in the continued use of English in the life of the Philippines, the continuous importation of consumer products from the United States, the constant influence of American fashion and taste, and, more subtly, in the educational system, which depends almost entirely on the content of American research.

### **Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)**

The Filipinos in other countries maintain their culture but try to get along with the natives. They also meet with fellow Filipinos to continue practicing their religion, culture, for comfort and support for wellbeing (Palmes, 2013; Hall, Garabiles, & Latkin 2019; Navarro and Tatel, 2012; Cruz, 2006; Iwayama, 2019; and Abouguendia & Kimberly, 2001).

According to OFW literature, the Philippines' culture, poverty, and a lack of professional opportunities in the nation are all factors that drive Filipinos to work overseas. Other factors include technological advancements that allow families to stay connected (Mulder, 2016; (Hall, Garabiles, & Latkin, 2019; Castro-Palaganas, et al., 2017; Sevilla, 2014; Palmes, 2013; Castro-Palaganas, et al., 2017; Aguila, 2009; Choe, O'Regan, & Kimbu; 2020)).

According to studies, Filipinos working abroad may impede the country's progress. Labor migration, according to several studies, causes harm to employees and their immediate families (Ullah, 2018; Castro-Palaganas, et al., 2017; and Meniado, 2019). Labor migration, on the other hand, has been shown to benefit both sending and receiving countries in other studies (Samet, 2013; Kampan & Tanielian, 2017; and Castro-Palaganas, et al., 2017). Apart from that, being an OFW has unfortunate consequences on their physical and emotional health, as well as the health of their families. Cultural and language obstacles that come with living in a foreign place are among these stressors. Women from impoverished Asian countries move to better their families. Despite the numerous obstacles, Asian women manage to continue working and eventually prosper in their host nations. Courageous optimism, inventive resistance, and unwavering faith are essential for surviving and growing (Cruz, 2006). Furthermore, the Filipinos had a favorable outlook on life while working in Macao (Choe, O'Regan, and Kimbu, 2020).

Due to language barriers, according to Meniado (2019), many Filipinos working overseas struggle to master their host country's language. Fishman attributes this to their love or respect for their language, country, and culture, which are all linked to loyalty or nationalism (1972, cited in Garcia & Schiffman, 2006). This is like a portion of one's soul that connects the usage of one's native tongue to the magnificent past and authenticity of one's country. As a result, one is regarded loyal if they solely speak the language of their country; cultural customs and identity will be preserved in this way (Garcia & Schiffman, 2006).

According to Tsujimoto (2016), the sense of belonging and identity of the migrants has roots in their place of origin, the emotion of friendship that emerges from various social and cultural contexts, and interpersonal connections rooted in transnational processes. The analysis of Polanco (2017) of previous literature posits that the ideal migrant worker can anticipate and evolve to changing surroundings. On an international scale, the same conditions follow—

Filipino workers (OFWs) are considered more adapted to aligning their personal interpretation of events with the social environment in foreign locations.

### **Theoretical Basis**

This research was also grounded on the epistemology or the study of meaning and foundations of knowledge, which asserted "that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the process in which this occurs" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966 p. 13).

The source of assumption was mentioned in Schutz's, Berger's, and Luckmann's approaches to action and agency. This entails depicting the required or remarkable characteristics of objects and people. Likewise, the depository of beliefs includes the different knowledge of standard forms of activities that actors bring with them and recall in suitable situations (Scott, 2006).

Social construction and symbolic interactionism consider individual subjective experience as a source of consciousness of the research participants. Individuals are products of their own culture through socialization. As a result, social interaction and process are prioritized in this study. They are active players in the construction of meanings for symbols and experiences through their relationships. The meanings attached to objects, symbols, and experiences influence the action of an individual. This research focuses on the process of producing meanings or the activities that are intentional and authentic, as well as the social construction of reality for understanding and behaving in social situations (Blumer, 1969 in Rothman 1991; Esterberg, 2002; and Wasson, 2007).

### **3. Methodology**

Thirteen professional Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) consented to participate in this study. Their education and training took place in the Philippines. They were a diversified group with a wide range of work experience as Filipino professionals in Thailand. They were either still working or had already left Thailand at the conclusion of this study. Friends and the subjects themselves recommended the participants for the study.

The methods by which professional Overseas Filipino Workers in Thailand form their social reality were investigated using a qualitative technique of inquiry. This study was guided by the notions of phenomenology, which were popularized by Alfred Schütz in the field of social science. It was argued that social analysis should begin with an examination of the contents of individual consciousness – the "phenomena" that people are aware of – and regard them as stocks of socially transmitted information (Scott, 2006). Further, phenomenology allowed the researcher to look into the participants' daily experience and helped find out what they do in their daily lives. Primarily, the nature of the experiences of the participants arises from the interview data as they characterize the specific aspects of their experience. Researchers try to figure out the experience's essence or structure by interpreting the thick and word-based data supplied by participants who describe the experience being studied (deMarrais, 2004).

This study is also guided by descriptive qualitative analysis, which according to Lambert and Lambert (2012), the objective of is to provide a thorough inventory of particular events that individuals or groups of individuals have encountered in daily conditions. This systematic data summarization and presentation provide a straightforward and logically ordered summary of the data's factual contents. The end result is a detailed account of the chosen experience that is organized in a way that the outcomes are presented in the most relevant way possible.

Furthermore, Kim, Sefcik, and Bradway (2017) said that data extraction in this study design focuses on the study research aims. The results are presented in a way that is consistent with the study goals. The research followed the suggestion that the narrative to answer the research objectives should focus on the circumstances, incidents, or experiences (Sandelowski 2000 cited in Doyle, McCabe, Keogh, Brady, & McCann, 2020). The study revealed significant details and a narrative that matched the social construction of reality in Thailand by professional OFWs.

This study also searched for the positive aspects of the participants' lives and careers. Their life affirming stories that are filled with meaningful events and actions became the themes of the study. Finding the themes using Appreciative Inquiry entails identifying the achievements and strengths of the practices among professional OFWs in Thailand (Knox, Carter, Sommers, & Michaels, 2015).

The social construction of reality among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Thailand has been illustrated in this study. This social construction centers around and focuses on their work in the country. Relevant knowledge, actions, and extent of changes in identity are geared towards two things: first, accomplishing their tasks related to their work, and secondly, building and maintaining harmonious relations.

#### ***New Socio-Cultural Realities Encountered by Professional OFWs in Thailand***

The nine major realities included 1) encompassing Buddhism, 2) revered monarchy, 3) unimposing society and religious freedom, 4) progressive economy, 5) traditional culture, 6) customary Thai people, 7) varied encounters with the typical Filipinos and the Whites, 8) favorable workplaces, and 9) other institutions. The findings reveal the participants' encounters with their new societal and cultural conditions. Individual awareness, according to Durkheim (1982), is the product of experiences. These face-to-face experiences influenced their awareness and helped them shape perceptions of the Thais, their society, and institutions. The perspectives of the participants are necessary to their knowledge in their current social and cultural contexts as their behavior is undoubtedly affected by their understanding of Thai society and culture. According to Singh (2016), the expectations and awareness of the position of the participants in the country would present them with various sets of facts.

#### ***Accumulated Understanding of Socio-Cultural Realities Passed on to Professional OFWs in Thailand***

The accumulated understanding of the Thai society and culture includes the following: 1) Thai Monarchy is vital, 2) Thailand is a Buddhist country, 3) *Karma* and reincarnation are core beliefs, 4) monks have societal roles, 5) being respectful is essential, 6) Thais are traditional people, 7) Filipino workers are admired and preferred, 8) change is inevitable; 9) there is connection between the little adjustment and the shared culture of Thais and Filipinos.

These exhibit the participants' cultural and political interpretations of Thailand, as well as the knowledge they received and passed on to society, which predominantly includes Buddhism and the monarchy, demonstrating that religion and royalty are important aspects of current Thai society. These are the key institutions in Thailand that the participants encountered. The Thai economy, workplaces, markets, and Christian churches are the other institutions that regulate the behavior of the Thais and the participants. The regulation is manifested through the setting up of predefined patterns of behavior (Singh, 2016).

Overall, the participants comprehended Thai society, culture, roles, and status of members through their experiences. They also learned about the different categories of Thai society as a result of their encounters. These categories have associated definitions and concepts that are learned through its institutions. The categories of race and social status connect with the social roles of the participants (Ore, 2006).

The participants have views and interpretations of Thai society and community. Their interactions with Thai people and institutions are crucial in their understanding of the current Thai social situation. The participants' mutual awareness of Thais and their institutions as well as their new social environment is transformed into an established, familiar, and crystallized reality. In Thailand, the participants' experiences with other people and institutions turn the concept or abstraction into a collective and factual construct (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Singh, 2016).

### ***Shared Definitions of Socio-Cultural Realities and OFW Behavior Patterns Established in the Participants' Everyday Life in Thailand***

Socio-cultural realities are created through social interaction and the product of uniformities among observers. The new shared definitions refer to the actual Thai social condition of the participants influenced by the Thai economy, Buddhism, monarchy, monks, and the Thai people. Similarly, new agreed descriptions of the current status of Thai society include those related to workplace relationships, elders, teachers, Filipinos in Thailand, Thai language, culture, Asians, a preference for being attractive and fit, and Thai food.

The participants regarded their established patterns of behavior in Thailand as normal. These included learning and speaking the Thai language, speaking English, and mixing English and Thai words. On the other hand, the accepted behaviors and actions included speaking softly, being respectful, doing the *wai* and saying *sawadee kah/kup*, giving up seats in public transport, and dining and buying food from stalls. Likewise, the accepted behaviors include not touching the head and taking off shoes when entering the house.

The participants, Thais, and other actors in Thailand created the shared definitions of realities and patterns of acting. These shared realities and patterns of actions are what the Thais and other actors in Thailand expect the participants to know and do (Singh, 2016). Moreover, these common descriptions and explanations of the actual Thai social condition and manner of conduct are assumed to be true by the participants. Thais are defined by their culture, which allows the Filipinos to conduct responsibly in their employment and in Thai society. By doing this, they develop harmonious relationships in their workplaces. As a result, they have productive and satisfying work experiences. They also keep themselves out of humiliating situations.

Through their experiences, interactions, readings, and Internet surfing, they were able to affirm their formed notions of socio-cultural realities. Confirmations of created definitions are knitted together using a variety of acquired skills. Observations, experiences, readings, and encounters provide the information. These exchanges take place with their friends, coworkers, superiors, and clients.

The participants use their relevant knowledge and experience in Thailand. They believe that practicing what they have learned every day helped and equipped them to function as individuals and professionals. This goal dovetails with the motive of fulfilling their duties and

responsibilities as Filipinos and as professionals. Being professionals helps and encourages the participants to engage appropriately with the Thais.

The Filipinos are perceptive mainly with the Thais in their relationship with other individuals. This is related to Jocano's (2006) description of the Filipino as *sensitive* and having a societal framework of *personalism*. Being sensitive means being flexible and having the ability to modify—this despite the participants being in a new social environment and who also need to learn the difficult Thai language and observe Thai practices. Further, being mentally strong and light hearted helps them endure the challenges they face in Thailand. Concerning the principle that embraces the value, uniqueness, and freedom of another person, Filipinos give importance to interactions and direct conversations with others. This implies that service is a personal commitment among the Filipinos in Thailand.

Further, various constructions of behavior patterns among the OFWs in Thailand illustrate the appreciation of the Thais' value for their culture, hierarchy, and respect underscores the acceptance of these patterns—highly similar among all participants such that the perceptions associated with them establish a pattern of acting. Similarly, the participants' experiences in public places are patterns of acting with different social actors. As a colleague or an individual, each participant reproduced these behavior patterns with Thais and successfully generated positive reactions.

The participants also gained awareness and further affirmed these constructed common meanings of societal and cultural conditions through their experiences and reactions, from both Thais and other people. According to Berger and Luckmann, social institutions have ideologies and norms. These elements of the Thai institution are perceived and experienced by both Thais and Filipinos. Social institutions then regulate the behavior of both Thais and Filipinos through existing patterns of conduct. These institutions became a reality in the everyday lives of the participants (Singh, 2016).

In addition, the participants have a general awareness of Thai culture and the behaviors that are considered normal in Thai society. The relevance of having a shared understanding of Thai society and accepted behavior is that it ensures that everyone understands what Thai culture entails (Durkheim, 1982).

### ***How the Professional OFW Engages with Thais in the Workplace and General Environment***

The participants engage with the Thais respectfully, professionally, personally, appropriately, and suitably. They behaved on the basis of who they are as individuals, Filipinos, and professionals through knowledge of social reality in Thailand. Also, relationship patterns arose from their desire to accomplish their tasks as professionals and to live happily in Thailand. The significant acts that helped them to live and work successfully in Thailand are in the form of relevant information by conversing, being told, listening, engaging, witnessing, reflecting, surfing the Internet, and reading.

The professional Filipinos engage with the Thais and institutions with *galang*—being respectful underlies Filipino interpersonal relationships. Its aim is to avoid misery or to bring shame to avoid disputes in disgrace. *Galang* is part of the *dangal* of the Filipino social system, which is personal honor and dignity (p. 68). Both respect and dignity are observed by the Filipinos in dealing with the Thais. Further, the participants are demonstrating reciprocity as when two people or groups of people help and benefit one another. Reciprocity directs the relationships with supervisors, colleagues, clients, and other individuals and groups, which

often means repaying and returning social and moral commitments. In Thailand, engaging with people on a personal level does not necessarily mean a discussion of religion, thinking and behaving in a way that does not hurt someone or put anyone in danger. This result is consistent with the principle of familism among the Filipinos whose fundamental philosophy is treating others equally. The finding also shows *kapwa* that they treat Thais and other people as individuals. *Pakikisama* is obvious among the participants as a structure of value among Filipinos. This idea is, in a moral sense, the need to go along with others, interested, compassionate, and to offer concessions. This is used primarily to describe relationships within institutions (Jocano, 2006).

Filipino workers take action in generating and circulating traditions, beliefs, norms, and shared cultural knowledge (Silvey, 2013). Further, Filipinos are ideal migrant workers because they foresee and adapt to changing conditions. Filipino workers in other countries are thought to be better suited to aligning their personal experience of events with the social environment in foreign locations because a broader means of migration has systemic and discursive practices (Polanco, 2017).

The participants suggest that they maintain their culture at the same time, they want to interact with the Thais in their respective workplaces. This is consistent with studies that Filipinos and Asians did not think of assimilating or becoming immersed in the cultural heritage of host countries. But they strove to blending into their new society and get along with the hosts while learning new habits and maintaining their own cultures (Abouguendia & Kimberly, 2001; Palmes, 2013)

Participants have begun to recognize and define the norms of specific institutions as well as Thailand's greater society. Their first and subsequent contacts with Thai people and institutions solidified their perceptions of Thais. Thais are traditional, nationalistic, reserved, and avoid being disgraced, to name a few qualities. The participants are also using conventions and norms to clarify the meanings of Thai institutions. This categorization of Thai people and institutions has become part of the country's verifiable reality. Consequently, the participants act on these definitions of categories, and Thais and institutions push back at them in return (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Singh, 2016).

### ***How the Professional OFW Builds a New Identity and Internalizes Concrete Roles Towards a More Generalized Role in Thailand***

The participants' new identity will include gained skills, attitudes, and values. The new identity would have vestiges of the old identity via the process of embracing or integrating an idea, viewpoint, belief, or other concept of the Thai culture. Their acquisition of appropriate values, skills, beliefs, and attitude in Thailand, as well as their respective roles in the nation, is an essential aspect of this process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The identity of the participants in Thailand includes speaking the Thai language, doing the *wai* and saying *sawadee kah/kup*, speaking softly, showing respect for the monks, and being mindful of the monarchy. Their identity also includes a heightened sense of nationalism/patriotism, respect for elders, and awareness to be respectful, as well as adopting the attitude of going with the flow, the proverb *When in Rome do as what the Romans do*, and a positive attitude, and in dressing up and putting cosmetics, dressing simply, and being cautious of interacting with fellow Filipinos.

Overall, the process of embracing or incorporating a Thai culture idea, viewpoint, belief, or other notion is mostly concerned with their respective jobs. As a coworker, subordinate, and service provider, this role entails building connections. Every person's identity is shaped by

their function as an Asian, Filipino, or foreigner in Thailand. Finally, their sense of self is defined by their function as a friend and person in Thailand as they go about their daily lives.

Learning about Thailand's beliefs, practices, and attitudes helps individuals understand their own circumstances, which includes their natural motivations and emotional relationships. As a result, they learned the abilities and developed attitudes that enabled them to achieve the intended results. In this study, the motives of the participants were evident such as those related to being successful, being accepted, fear, or avoidance. Conforming to the norms of society can be driven not only by a desire for success, but also by fear of failure. It results in anticipated positive feelings of togetherness and high fear of rejection when having relationships with others (Manstead & Hewstone, 1999).

### ***The Transformation of Subjective Reality into Objective Reality of Shared Situations and Established Patterns of Behavior***

The means for turning a concept or abstraction into a collective idea are by justifying and describing an action, a system, or an idea, actions that are regularly repeated and result in patterns, and the methods for defining something as a standard or normal in the community.

Thai institutions primarily converted personal interpretations of experience into factual situations and circumstances of the participants in Thailand. Thai religion, government, markets, and other institutions direct the conversion of a personal concept or idea into a common object among the participants. In Thailand, the memories of the participants of their culture play a major role in the concretization of Thai norms into their thought.

Individual experience of the Filipinos turned into corroborated truths when they interacted with others. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), interpersonal experiences transform personal perceptions into concrete situations. As a result, when others described their personal experiences to them, they became commonsensical and everyday knowledge. A particular experience becomes a collective verifiable reality through the experiences of other people.

Thai identity and culture stem from their knowledge and interpretation of Buddhism, the monarchy, and Thai culture. These assisted the participants in transforming personal reality into a verifiable phenomenon. The norms of Buddhism, monarchy, and Thai culture have justified Thai behavior, thinking, and actions. Values, practices, and traits of the Thais, according to the participants, are facts that they encounter with every typical Thai. Thus, the participants have acted by the norms set by these institutions.

This is in line with how individuals, organizations, and other factors impact the production and acceptance of truth in society. Individuals can interact with the natural world and other people through communal representations and ideas that have been passed down through the generations. Filipinos use several signs, interpretations, and impressions to explain the situation (Scott, 2006). Their situation, according to the respondents, is linked to the Thai economy. It is more progressive than the Philippines when it comes to creating higher-paying jobs. These are the things that drew them to Thailand and kept them there. As a result, the participants deemed Thailand to be an appropriate place for professional practice. The better lifestyle and workplace are all that they remember to interpret and explain their situation as Filipinos working in Thailand.

Their situation is likewise related to Thai religion and government. These institutions influence Thai people, society, and culture. Consequently, their perception of the Thai economy, religion,

and government coincides with their actions and thinking in Thailand. Generally, their collective description of the Thai economy, religion, and government justifies and explains Thai society and culture (Singh, 2016; Jenkins, 2008).

In Thailand, describing and accepting things as normal are evident in the appropriate behavior arising from classifying and describing *Filipinos* and *Thais*. Filipinos were also aware of Thai institutions' expectations of them as people and workers. The Thais' norms and institutions were also recognized by the participants. While living and working in Thailand, they observed these norms and accepted them as necessary. Thai customs became second nature to them, such as speaking quietly and smiling during conversations, being respectful, and giving up seats on public transportation to monks and elderly people.

Despite subtle variations, the participants realized and acknowledged that learning and speaking the Thai language, and observing their beliefs and practices are vital in thriving in Thailand. This understanding made them engage respectfully, professionally, personally, appropriately, and suitably in their respective institutions. In addition, their significant learning from their interactions made them realize what behavior and ways must be prioritized.

Ultimately, the participants' entire experience made them learn the importance of culture, religion, language, and values. These gathered common representations helped them adjust and cope with the different tensions and challenges of working abroad. All in all, the foreseen opportunities and more comfortable lifestyle that these participants experienced are the fundamental agents why they continue working and advancing their careers in Thailand. This aligns with Macpherson (2015) that professional OFWs discover ways to satisfy this common imagery by adapting the attitudes and skills and adjusting in the country.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Overall, the encounters of the participants with Thai culture constitute their knowledge of their current social world. This knowledge of Thailand would add to the blend of ideas that would later be essential in routinizing, organizing, and making their acts and behavior predictable. Likewise, this stockroom of knowledge of the participants would benefit them in classifying certain people and institutions in Thailand for appropriate actions. The stockpile of concepts of Thai society would assist Filipinos in recognizing and accepting the norms (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Singh, 2016; Scott, 2006). The socio-cultural experiences of the participants in Thailand are consistent with the teachings of Buddhism of harmony and community. Secondly, the participants experienced the monarchy's overarching role and influence in other institutions of Thailand such as the family, government, and workplaces. Thirdly, overall, the participants have shown that their initial and successive encounters in Thailand are important in creating consciousness.

Their interactions with relevant people were instrumental in their understanding of their experience of the actual social condition in Thailand. In gathering relevant knowledge and establishing socio-cultural realities, the varied experiences of the participants, especially their interactions, is crucial. In addition, Thailand and the Philippines share similar ideals and features, resulting in a harmonious relationship. As a result, disagreements are relegated to interpersonal levels. The participants constructed definitions help them effectively and harmoniously live and work as professionals in Thailand. This is after analyzing that the new accumulated understanding of the new socio-cultural realities is passed on to them from their interactions with persons and institutions in Thailand.

The daily knowledge of professional OFWs in Thailand is mostly limited to their work and family. Working as a professional in Thailand thus motivates and incentivizes the participants to engage with Thais appropriately.

Each professional OFW engages with the Thais in the workplace and general environment in the self-reproduction of the human environment through the process of externalization and objectivation for him/her to build a new objective (social) reality. The dialectic—or the two interacting but contrasting forces—mostly took place in the participants' internalization process. The Thai habits were assimilated by the participants. Doing the wai and saying sawadee kah were two of the practices that were internalized and eventually externalized by all participants. Additionally, there is considerable evidence that the Filipino in Thai society, together with institutions and other players, is an agent of constructing new social realities.

The development of a new identity depends on the Filipino as a person and as a professional. This Filipino joins the Thai social environment characterized by its culture, government, and economy with his/her personality, circumstances, motivations, and ambitions. Secondly, it was necessary for him/her to adhere to Thai cultural norms and cultivate acceptable attitudes in order to complete his/her tasks as a professional and function well in Thai society. This acceptance of roles is connected to their occupation and as individuals in the country. Thirdly, participants socialized in Westernized institutions and Eastern thought and practice are well-adapted in the Thai social environment as professionals and individuals.

For the OFWs, justifying and explaining their actions and Thai systems are actually obtained through knowing and understanding shared situations. Actions, reactions, and explanations of the Thais and other people provide means of gathering knowledge and understanding of their shared condition. Experiencing Thai culture with other participants also aids in the concretization of personal impressions of the participants. Their actions and the Thai systems are also justified and explained through their experiences both in the Philippines and in Thailand. They believe in the ideas and values existing in the Philippines, Thailand, and other places. This referencing of the universality of principles and values enables the Filipinos in Thailand to explain their collective circumstances.

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