RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT’S OVERSEAS WORK ON THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN’S QUALITY OF LIFE AND CAREER CHOICE INTENTION

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Abstract

Using data from a sample of 109 college students from a private college/university in the Philippines, this study examined the relationship between parent/s’ overseas work and left-behind children’s career choice intention in terms of overseas employment, domestic employment and entrepreneurship and the quality of life of their left-behind children. Contrary to the assumptions, results showed that generally, parent’s work abroad is not related with the career plans and quality of life of their children. College course/degree where respondents are enrolled at had the significant relationship with their career choice intention specifically in domestic employment. Further, it had significant relationship with their perception of the quality of life in social acceptance aspect.

INTRODUCTION

Working overseas has positive and negative impacts on the individual themselves and the family members they left behind. Notwithstanding the negative stories we hear regarding the plight of Filipino contract workers, overseas work may have positive contribution on the life of the overseas workers and their family members. Some empirical evidences (e.g. Scalabrini 2003, Semyonov and Gorodzeisky 2004, Parrenas 2005, and Booth and Tamura 2009) would attest that Filipinos working overseas are able to provide better living for their families. The study of Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2004) for example revealed that among the 2,346 sample households, a large number was unemployed prior to migration but consequently has improved their purchasing power after getting work abroad. The study of Scalabrini (2003) and Booth and Tamura (2009) likewise found that migration has positive effects especially on the economic and educational aspects of their families left behind. Parrenas (2005) found that although the children of migrant workers are not considered as the poorest of the poor in the Philippines, once their parents work abroad, better health and education, and a well-built house were brought for the families left behind. All these pieces of evidence highlight the positive results of parent’s overseas work.

Overseas work too has negative impact on the family especially on children. Studies in the Philippines show that a mother’s absence in the family has a larger negative effect on the educational outcomes of children (Cortes 2011). Save the Children’s study in Sri Lanka (2006) found that mother’s absence resulted to loneliness and sadness in left-behind children as caregiver’s love cannot replace that of a mother. McKenzie and Rapoport, (2006, p.19) found that in Mexico, there is a significant negative effect on school attendance among boys but insignificant for girls, although both have lower chance of finishing high school. Aside from the risk of Leaving school due to lack
of motivation, children from migrant households in Moldova and Ecuador were judged as “arrogant, aggressive, and rude”.

A UNICEF’s study in 2008 on the children of Moldovan migrants found that most of the children left behind diminished in their school performance. In their study among migrant communities in Mexico, Claudia et al. (2009) found that among the households which have a spouse who migrated to US for work are likely to have at least one problematic child. The study of Wen & Lin (2012) showed how children left behind disfavour the migration of their mothers. This scenario of rural-urban migration in Hunan Province of China brought negative impact on children in their behaviour and school engagement.

Seemingly, studies on the effects of migration and overseas work on the children and families left behind do not present single generalization. Results differ due to variables ranging from age group and their “cognitive development”, gender, relationship, labor sending and host countries and their policies on migration, flow of remittances and whether the children are raised in single-parent homes.


There are various studies which tried to examine the real social risks of migration. In the Philippines, Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiatives, a nongovernment organization (NGO) that extends assistance to overseas Filipinos and their families cope with separation and provides educational sessions on savings and entrepreneurship, admitted that there is still a need to provide empirical evidence rather than just anecdotal findings about the “real” social cost of migration. It is in this context that this study was framed.

This study will investigate the relationship between parental overseas work and the quality of life of their children left behind and their career choice intention. Specifically it will look into the relationship between the college course of the children left behind and their perceived economic status with their quality of life specifically in terms of physical, psychological, parental relation, social support and social acceptance; their career choice intention in terms of overseas and domestic employment and their intention to engage in local business. Such research enterprise seems to be under investigated, hence this paper.

**METHODOLOGY**

*Quality of Life and its Related Measures*

There are different studies which dealt on the measures of the quality of life (e.g. Campbell and Jenney 1997, Meuleners et. al 2002, Serber & Rosen 2009,). Gill and Feinstein (in Campbell & Jenney 1997) define quality of life as “a uniquely personal perception, denoting the way individual patients feel about their health status and/or non-medical aspects of their lives” (p. 347). In fact there is an agreement that the measure of the quality of life is multidimensional. Serber and Rosen (2009) admitted that quality of life (QoL) measures depends on how the researcher perceived it. Utilizing the 10-health related quality of life (HRQoL) dimensions of Kidscreen-52 in Ireland’s children and adolescents, Keenaghan and Kilroe (2005) found out that both boys’ and girls’ scores are significantly high on social acceptance/bullying and parent relations. It implies then that from children’s view, quality of life is associated with relationship among friends, peers and parents.
Career Choice Intention

Anonuevo & Anonuevo (2002) confirmed the reality that migration somehow influences the career choice of the children left behind. Their studies opined that even choices of children in college degrees are those marketable abroad like courses in medicine/nursing, teaching, and engineering/architecture. It affirms that even with college diploma, children would still choose overseas work to get a higher pay.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Career Choice Intention

The respondents were asked who influenced them in their choice of course and more than half of them said that they chose their college degrees for themselves (54.1%), free from the influence of parents, friends, and other people. A good number of respondents claimed they were still influenced by their parents (34.9%). The respondents were asked questions regarding their intention to find work abroad and the composite mean of the answers resulted only to neutral. On the questions regarding the respondents’ intention to find domestic employment, result showed that they agreed to stay and find local job in the Philippines. This is also the result on the question whether they are willing to engage into local entrepreneurship. This finding contradicts the study of Moctezuma (in Cortez 2007) and of UNICEF (Moldova) which saw that the adolescent children of migrant parents tend to leave their place and become migrant workers too.

Further, results also showed that there is no significant relationship between the demographic profiles of the respondents with the Career Choice Intention in terms of Overseas Employment and Local Entrepreneurship except with the course/college degree which has a significant relationship with Domestic Employment. The percentage frequency of those enrolled in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship, and Accountancy and the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management are higher compared to the College of Nursing. In fact, these courses are not related to the nature of work of the respondents’ parents. Parent’s work abroad has no significant relation on career choice intention of the respondents neither in looking for work locally or in abroad. This contradicts the findings of Anonuevo & Anonuevo (2002) which opined that the left behind children’s choice of college degree are those marketable overseas like medicine/nursing, teaching and engineering/architecture.

Perceived Quality of Life

The respondents were asked about their perception on quality of life focusing on the following aspects: physical, psychological, parental relation, social support, and social acceptance. Results show that among the demographic profile of the respondents, the college degree/course they are taking is the only variable that has significant relation with the respondents’ perceived quality of life specifically on social acceptance dimension. This agrees with the study of Keenaghan and Kilroe (2005) which found that quality of life for adolescents is connected with their relationship with friends and peers.

This study revealed that respondents did not classify their family as poor or very poor. This supports the findings of Parrenas (2005) who found that the children of the OFWs are not considered poor. The fact that they are enrolled in a private school, majority of the respondents belong to well-to-do families. This also agrees with the study of Scalabrin 2003, Semyonov and Gorodzeisky 2004, and Booth and Tamura 2009 which revealed that overseas work provide better living for the left-behind families. However, even this perception of the economic
stratus of the respondents did not post any significant relation with the career choice and quality of life of the respondents.

CONCLUSION

In summary, it appears that for the left behind adolescent children, their parent’s overseas work and the wealth and honor associated with it do not automatically bring them the quality of life they perceived to have. More than half of the respondents chose their college degrees free from the influence of their parents as opposed to the findings of Ferry (2006) which found that children really consider their parents in planning their college degrees and career plans. In addition, these courses are neither related to their parents’ work abroad nor with their intention of looking for work overseas. Thus, left-behind children are becoming disinterested in leaving the country and finding job abroad. This is a surprising result in the country where “culture of migration” is the way of life. Perhaps, economically speaking they are already satisfied, so migration is not anymore an option. They would rather stay in the country where quality of life is easily accessed with the presence of friends and family.
References

Journal


**Book and Reports**

