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A Probe into the Filipino Migration Culture: What Is There to Learn for Policy Intervention?

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Abstract

For many migrant workers, labor migration is not just a one-time, temporary means of livelihood, it has become the way of life. This is illustrated by the fact that among the 1.4 million land-based migrants in 2015, two-thirds comprise of re-hires. The number of new-hires has been increasing as well. In fact, the trend of migrant deployment shows a continuous upward trend except during periods of crises and tight government control. It is quite unlikely that the deployment will peak soon, at least in the medium term. From a public policy standpoint, this requires constant vigilance and informed decision-making with regards to designing policies and programs that look after the welfare of migrant workers. Some argue that while the government administers the deployment and implement strategies to promote the welfare of migrant workers, it also needs to design more clearly as to what really the long-term thrust should be when it comes to labor migration. The non-negligible number of cases of abuse, maltreatment, and even crimes committed against Filipino migrant workers calls for the development of a more defined policy that is less dependent on labor migration and more towards developing local job opportunities. Designing such would require a deeper understanding on why people migrate in the first place. Unfortunately, empirical studies that look at Filipino's motivations and intentions are rare. This paper seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining migration intentions of individuals from a high-emigration rural village in the Philippines. The results provide evidence of a culture of migration among the villagers as shown by the high proportion (at 44% of a sample of 572) of those having plans to leave for overseas work. The motivations for wanting to migrate are largely economic in nature. Earning high income is also the most common basis for choosing the destination. Nevertheless, the study shows that given more local job opportunities, a non-negligible proportion would opt to stay and be with their loved-ones. Interestingly, the desired amount of compensation abroad which roughly represents people's willingness to stay, is not much. The analysis also reveals that migration intentions do not exhibit a simple leave-or-stay dichotomy. Understanding the nuances is essential if policymakers want to shape people's migration-related behavior in its policy interventions.

Keywords: labor migration, migration intentions, networks in migration, Philippines, migration-related survey data

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Aubrey D. Tabuga[2]

1. Introduction

The Philippines is one of the top labor-sending countries in the world. Each year, around 2 million Filipinos venture abroad in search for greener pastures. Indeed, international migration has seemingly become the panacea for many Filipinos. For many migrant workers, labor migration is not just a one-time, temporary means of livelihood, it has become the way of life. This is illustrated by the fact that among the 1.4 million land-based migrants in 2015, two-thirds consist of re-hires. And the number of new-hires has been increasing as well. In fact, the trend of migrant deployment shows a continuous upward trend except during periods of crises and tight government control. It is quite unlikely that the deployment will peak soon, at least in the medium term. From a public policy viewpoint, this requires constant vigilance and informed decision-making with regards to policies and programs that look after the welfare of migrant workers deployed each year. Some argue that while the government administers the deployment and implement strategies to promote the welfare of migrant workers, it also needs to design more clearly as to what really the long-term thrust should be when it comes to labor migration. The non-negligible number of cases of abuse, maltreatment, and even crimes committed against Filipino migrant workers calls for the development of a more defined policy that is less dependent on labor migration and more towards developing local job opportunities. Designing such would require a deeper understanding on why people migrate in the first place. As Massey (2012, 15) notes, "If one seeks to shape the behavior of migrants through policy interventions, it is critical to understand the reasons why people migrate". Unfortunately, empirical studies that look at Filipino's motivations and intentions are rare. This paper seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining migration intentions from data collected through a survey conducted in a high-migration rural village in the Philippines.

This paper is structured as follows. Section II discusses the study area and profile of its household population. The profile of migrant workers originating from the village of study is shown in Section III. Section IV describes respondents' migration intentions, choice of destination, the support they seek for their migration plans, and perceptions on the migration process, among others. Section V looks at the correlates of migration intentions. Lastly, Section VI provides the concluding remarks and insights for policy intervention.

[1] This paper was lifted from Chapter 3 of the author's PhD Dissertation titled "The Role of Origin-Based Social Networks in International Migration: Focusing on Network Structure, Pioneer Migrants and Tie Strength." It descriptively discusses results of the survey on migration intentions conducted in one migrant-sending village in the Philippines. An econometric analysis of migration intentions using the data collected from this survey will be released soon as a separate PIDS Discussion Paper. The usual disclaimer applies.

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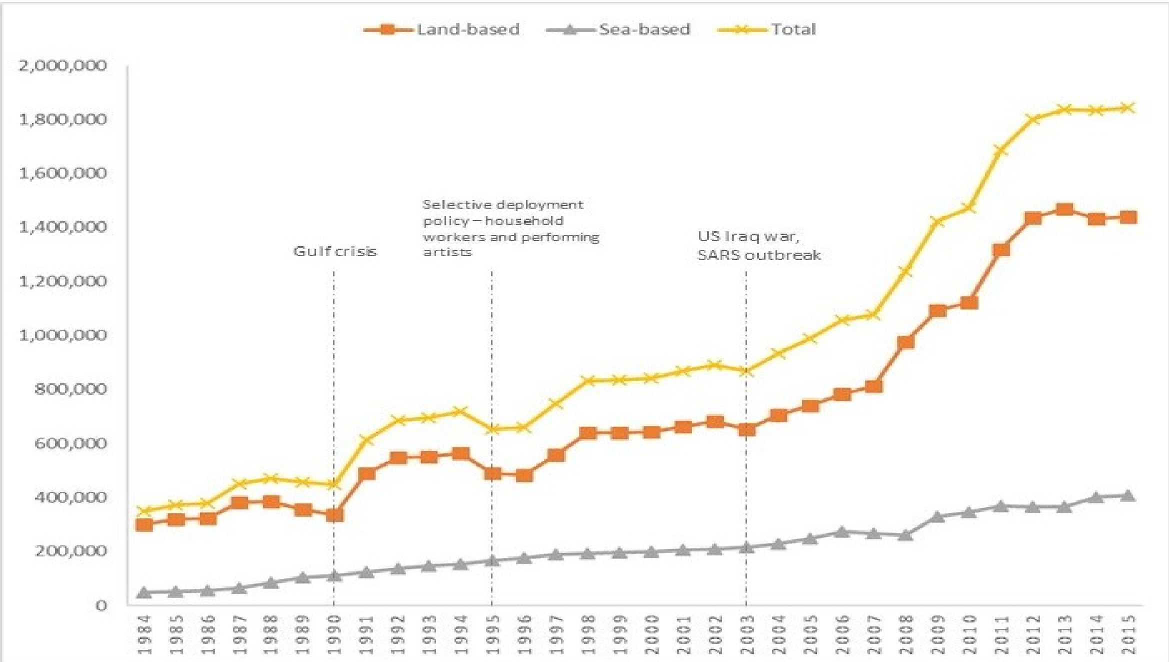
2. Trends in Philippine labor migration

The Philippines is one of the top labor-sending countries in the world. Each year, around 2 million Filipinos venture abroad in search for greener pastures. Seventy-eight percent of the migrant workers deployed in 2015 consist of land-based workers, the remaining (406,000) are sea-based workers. The trend of migrant deployment shows a continuous upward trend except during periods of crises and tight government control. In 1990, for instance, the decline in the deployment was mainly caused by the decrease in the number of deployed workers to the Middle East during the Gulf Crisis. In 1995, a notable decrease in the deployment was caused by the Philippine government's selective deployment where it brought down the number of household workers and performing artists which are said to be most vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Other causes of deceleration or decline were external in nature such as the US-Iraq war, and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003.

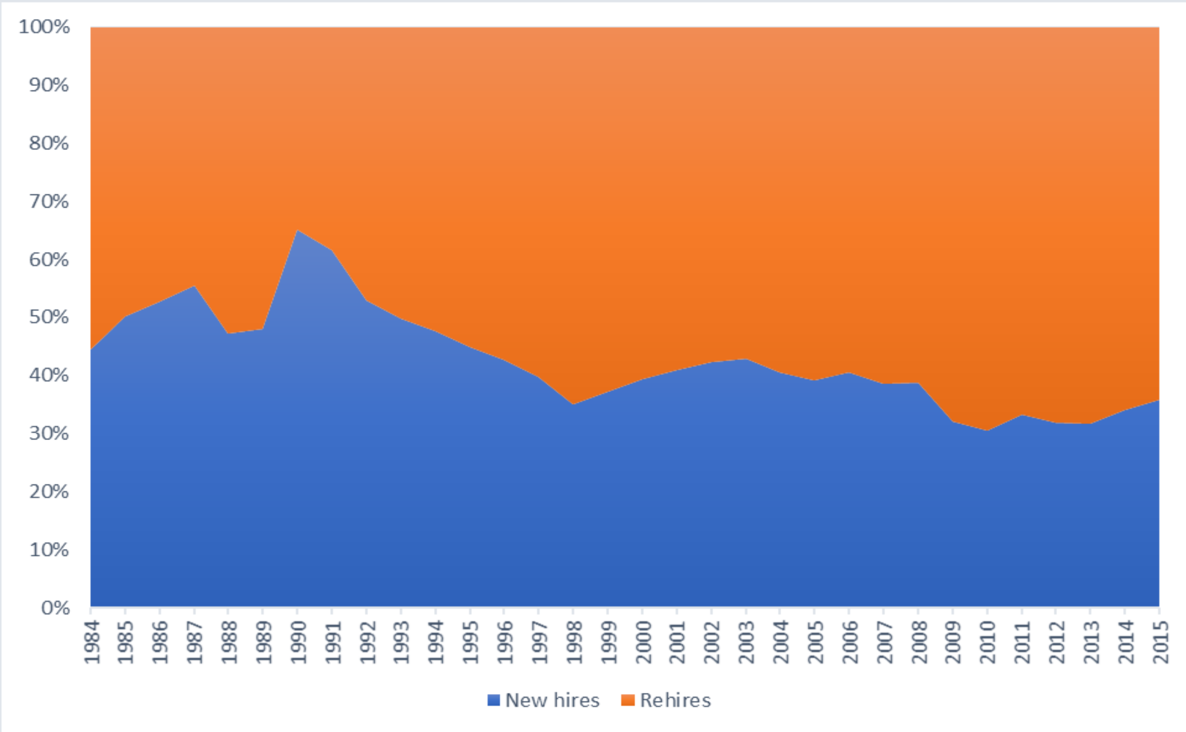
Figure 1. Deployed migrant workers by type, Philippines



Source: POEA

Among the 1.4 million land-based migrants in 2015, around one-third are new-hires; while the remaining two-thirds consist of re-hires (see Figure 2.2). Hence, much of the international migration of Filipinos are cyclical, contract-based labor migration. The bulk of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) deployed in 2015 went to the Middle East (63 percent) and various Asian countries (28 percent). The rest (9 percent) went to Europe, the Americas, Africa, and others. The top three country destinations of Filipino workers are Saudi Arabia (406,089), United Arab Emirates (227,076), and Singapore (141,453). Of the 515, 217 new-hires in 2015, majority (53%) occupy elementary occupations, 11 percent are services and sales workers, and 11 percent are craft and related trades workers. Only around 13 percent of the deployed workers are migrant professionals and associate professionals. The deployment of workers is made through three channels – 1) government placement facility, 2) name-hires, and 3) private recruitment agencies, with the last being the most prominent of the three facilities.

Figure 2.2. Land-based migrant workers by type, Philippines



Source: POEA

The overseas employment of Filipinos dates as far back as the turn of the twentieth century after the Philippines became a colony of the United States. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1885 and the US-Japan Gentlemen's Agreement led to a severe shortage of workers in the plantations in Hawaii and Filipinos filled this demand for workforce (Endriga, 1999). Likewise, Filipino workers were deployed for overseas work during the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts after the World War II, as well as the Korean and Vietnam wars. But the large-scale labor migration of Filipinos began in the early 1970s due to the high demand for labor by the oil-rich Middle Eastern countries which were experiencing economic boom at the time. Since then, Middle East countries have been the top destination of Filipino migrant workers.

Through the years, the Philippine government has enacted laws that are aimed at managing labor migration in the country. The Philippines is said to have the most comprehensive migration infrastructure in the world. Its regulatory agency - the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)[3] processes around two million migrant workers each year to over 190 destinations and conducts thousands of pre-employment orientation seminars. But

[3] Aside from the POEA, the PH government's unit tasked for the promotion and protection of welfare of migrant workers and their dependents is the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). This agency provides welfare services and benefits. It also collects welfare funds from overseas workers and is mandated to ensure capital build-up and fund viability. Source: www.owwa.gov.ph

the sheer number of OFWs being deployed each year poses substantial challenges in terms of regulation and monitoring particularly for an agency that has an annual budget of around P300 million and a regular staff of 320 members.[4] There are more than a thousand[5] recruitment agencies with valid license, and cases of illegal recruitment are rampant despite the different mechanisms put in place against illegal recruitment. In its 2014 Annual Report, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the concerned regulatory agency for labor migration, reported that it assisted around 8,000 complainants involving illegal recruitment during that year. On-site, problems of abuse and exploitations abound and Philippine government representatives at the destination are often overwhelmed as they are grossly understaffed.

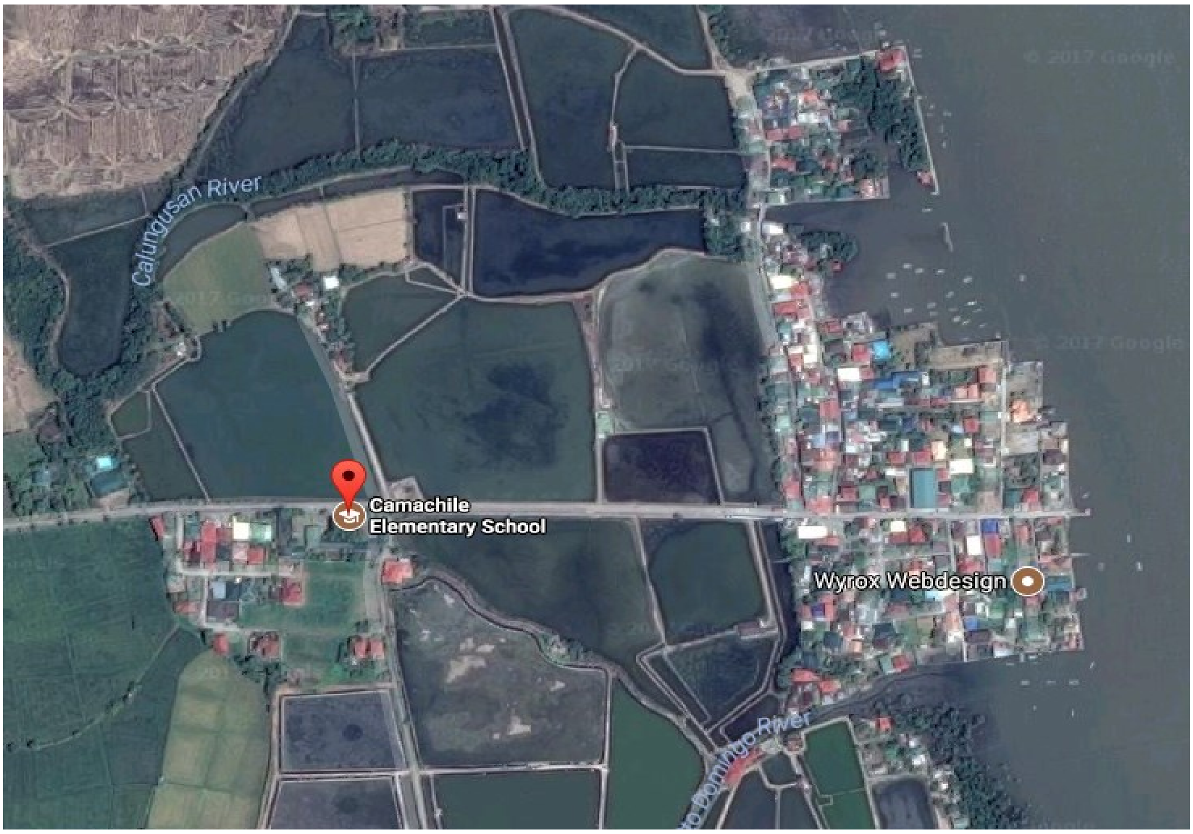
3. Profile of household population

To carry out the research objectives of this study, primary data about migration intentions, actual migration behavior and history, demographic and economic characteristics and social networks were gathered using an interview questionnaire designed for such purposes. The data collection was carried out through face-to-face interviews of all the 365 households in Brgy. Camachile, Orion, in the province of Bataan, a migrant-sending village in the Philippines. The main criteria for selecting the area of study, shown in Figure 1, are being rural, having high migration prevalence based on data from the Community-based Monitoring System database of the municipality, and accessibility from the capital for feasibility of field research.

Camachile is a rural, fishing village with a high migration incidence of 30 percent based on its 2012 Community-based Monitoring System data. Figure 1 shows an aerial view of the study area. It illustrates that the dwelling units are arranged in clusters, with dwellings situated in blocks. Also, although it is a rural area, Camachile is conveniently connected to the provincial road network providing easy access to schools and other facilities.

[4] In 2014, the approved budget of POEA was P334.5 million.
[5] There are 837 land-based recruitment agencies and 406 manning agencies with valid license as of November 2017 based on the POEA website. Date retrieved Nov. 29, 2017 are available at http://www.poea.gov.ph/cgi-bin/agList.asp?mode=actLB

Figure 1. Aerial view of Camachile, Municipality of Orion, Bataan Province



Source: Google Maps

The personal interviews conducted on all 365 households in the study area yield a dataset of 1,555 individuals including minors. The average household size is 4.2 and there are about two (1.7) dependents, or members who are either minors or senior citizens, in each household, on the average. A quarter of the population consists of young minors (i.e. individuals aged below 15). About one-third (31 percent) of them are 15 to 34 years old, while over a quarter (27 percent) belongs to the 35 to 54 age group. The rest, 17 percent, is composed of elderly (aged 55 and above) of which 16 percent are considered senior citizens (aged 60 and above).

Two-thirds of the households have at least one school-aged member (i.e. member aged 6 to 21) while 35 percent of the total have two or more such members. This is basically similar in terms of actual school-goers; 66 percent of the total households do have at least one member going to school, while one-third (35 percent) have at least 2 members attending school. In terms of employment, whether formal or informal, majority (55 percent) of all households reported that they have at least 2 members who have a job/work from which they draw their daily sustenance.

For individuals aged 15 and above, totaling to 1,176, the mean age for this sample is 40.5 years (standard deviation of 17). There are roughly the same percentage of men (49.2% of total) and women (50.8%) in the population of interest. Majority (51.6%) are married, while one-third (33.9%) are single. The remaining 5 percent live in consensual unions, another 5 percent are widowed, and roughly 4 percent are separated from their spouses.

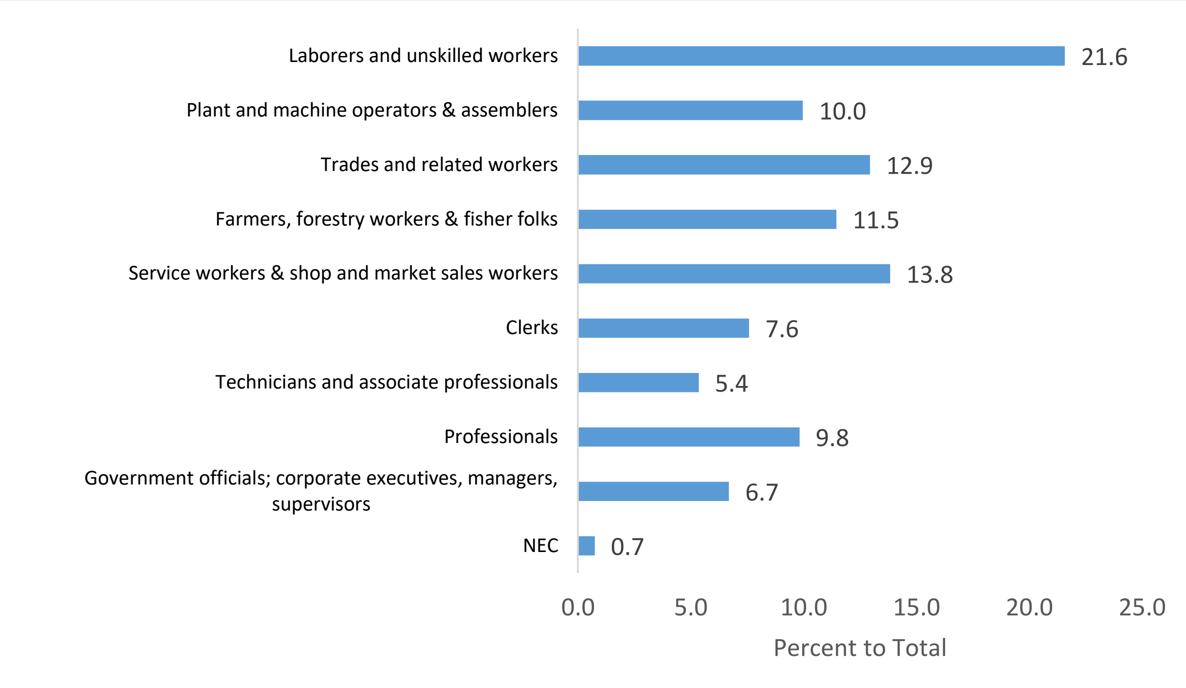
In terms of education, an average member has 10.13 years (with a standard deviation is 3 years) of education. Over a quarter (26 percent) of the population aged 15 and above have finished their college education while the bulk have attained at most a high school diploma (40 percent). Some 12 percent managed to reach but did not finish college, while 17 percent only have some elementary education. The rest (5 percent of the total) are equipped with post-secondary or technical/vocational training.

Of the 1,176 individuals, 57 percent are engaged in some kind of economic activity, whether formal or informal, fully employed or underemployed. Their livelihood consists of street vending and selling cellphone loads, fishing or fishnet making or tending a variety store. Meanwhile, 29 percent do not have paid job or work – such as housewives/housekeepers. The rest, representing 13 percent of the total, are students, retirees and pensioners. The distribution in terms of age is shown below.

Among those who have an occupation, laborers and unskilled workers compose the largest group at about 22 percent of the total (see Figure 2). Others (13.8 percent) are service and market sales workers (e.g. variety store operators and members of service crew in canteens and restaurants). Also, since Camachile is a fishing village, some households are engaged in fishing. About 12 in every 100 individuals are fisher folks including operators and lessees of fish ponds and fishing boats. Others who are engaged in the fishery sector are fish vendors who are among the laborers and unskilled workers.

People in the study area also rely on the employment opportunities at the Bataan Export Processing Zone and the Petron Bataan Refinery which are both accessible from the municipality of Orion. It is no surprise that almost a quarter (23 percent) of the workers consists of trades workers and plant and machine operators/assemblers. Meanwhile, roughly 15 out of every 100 are either professionals or technicians and associate professionals while some 8 percent work as clerks and another 7 percent are executives and managers.

Figure 2. Distribution of household members aged 15 and above with gainful occupation, by occupational group



Due to the difficulty and high cost of collecting socioeconomic data, we obtained information on the living standards of the villagers from the income and assets data of Brgy. Camachile in the 2012 Community-based Monitoring System maintained by the municipality of Orion. The CBMS database contains various socio-economic information such as income, materials of the dwelling unit, land tenure status, water source, type of toilet facilities, and durable assets, among others. The typical household's per capita income is PhP59,990 or US$1,421. The standard deviation is PhP87,625 or US$2,075. Except for 1, all the households have access to electricity.

Only about 57 percent of the households have improved water sources based on WHO and UNICEF definitions.[6] These are those who obtain water from piped sources installed inside the dwelling unit, plot or yard. The rest rely on unimproved water sources such as tube well or borehole, protected dug well, deep well, vendors and surface water. Meanwhile, only 4 out of every 10 households have improved toilet facilities, i.e. flush toilet to sewerage system or septic tank for own use of household. There are some 40 percent who also use the same type but who share it with at least one other household but sharing of sanitation facilities by two or more households is considered 'unimproved.' The rest (19 percent) do not have any toilet facility.

In terms of tenure status of the house and lot being occupied by the household, 77 percent reported that they live in their own their dwelling unit but only 66 percent of these own the lot they occupy, the others (11 percent) occupy the lot either rent-free or by paying rent. The rest

[6] Source: http://water.worldbank.org/sites/water.worldbank.org/files/publication/water-Background-Report-Urban-Access-WSS-in-SSA-FINAL.pdf

are renting both house and lot (4 percent) while others are living in rent-free house and lot with consent of the owner (14 percent). Some (4 percent) live in public spaces with or without rent. Looking at the materials of the house is another way to assess the economic condition of a household. The data show that 83 percent of the households live in houses made of strong materials for both the wall and roof. The rest live in dwelling units made of either light or salvaged materials in either wall or roof or both.

Durable assets reflect the long-term living standards of a household. Since Camachile is a fishing village, we looked at the ownership of boats and found that 12 percent of the households own either a motorized (10 percent) or non-motorized fish boat (2 percent). Meanwhile, car ownership is at 17 percent. Sixty-five percent of households possess at least one radio, while 96 percent have a television set. Majority (57 percent) have a refrigerator in their kitchen. Cellular phone ownership of at least one unit is at a high 90 percent and computer ownership (of at least one unit) is at 40. Likewise, 21 percent of all households (based on 331 households with data) are connected to the World Wide Web.

In summary, the sample comprise of households that are diverse in terms of economic factors and demographics. They vary in terms of household size and number of dependents. The per capita income also varies considerably as shown by a standard deviation that is higher than the mean per capita income. Notably, income is skewed to the right with very few families having very high income. Almost all have potential access to information from sources like mainstream media and other platforms due to the high proportion of television and cellular phone ownership.

4. Profile of migrant workers

The community has a strong exposure to the culture of migration. About a third (31 percent) of the 1,103 individuals aged 18 and above are either current or former migrant workers; 71 percent of the 1,176 individuals aged 15 and above are exposed by either being the migrant workers themselves or by living with at least one person who is a current or former migrant worker in the same household. Aside from this, 90 percent of this population are related by some degree to at least one migrant worker living outside their own households and community.

Migrant workers, defined as those with migration experience, are mostly men, married, and are breadwinners of their family. Seven in ten migrants are male, 62 percent are either household heads or spouses of the head, and 63 percent are married.

They are relatively older than non-migrants. Migrant workers are slightly more educated than the non-migrant population. The average number of years of education of one with migration experience is 10.7, slightly above the 10 years for non-migrants. The composition of migrants by educational attainment indicates that labor emigration in the village is a mixture of skilled and non-skilled migration. While 37 percent of the OFWs are at least college graduates and another 10 percent have reached college level, the other 47 percent have only, at most, high school diploma, while some 6 percent had post-secondary or technical/vocational training. Migrant workers have an average per capita income in 2012 that is 29 percent higher than non-migrants' per capita income (see Table 1).

The average cumulative length of overseas employment for the OFWs in Camachile is 8.7 years, with a standard deviation of 8 years. If the average length of each work contract is two years, a typical migrant worker may have served a total of 4 contracts as of interview period. Migrant workers have served in overseas contracts that span for a period of a few months to around four decades.

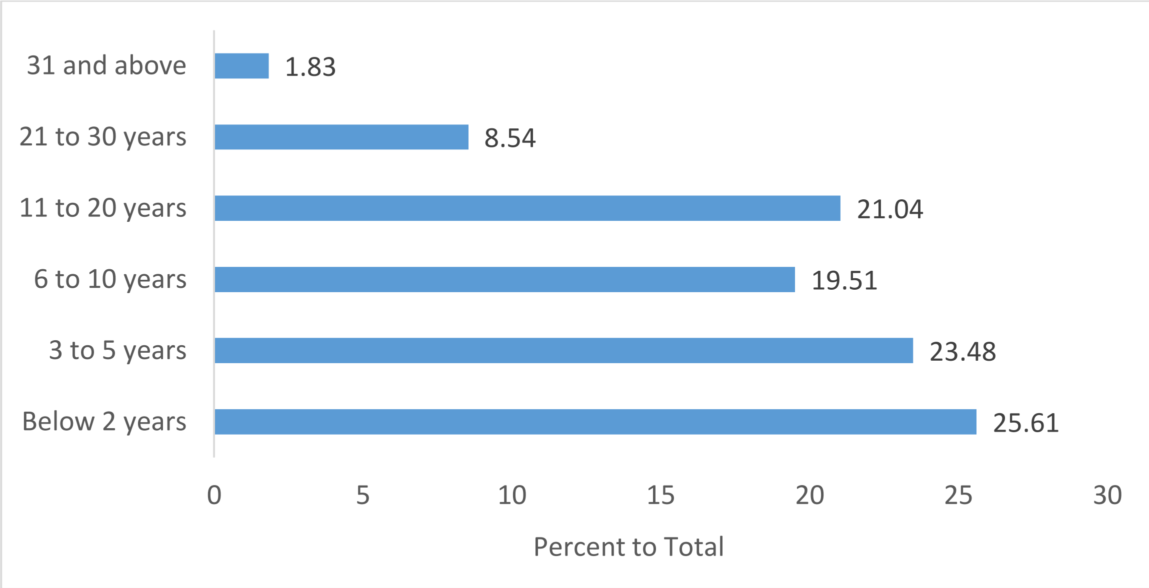
Table 1. Comparison of migrants and non-migrant population (aged 18 and above, n=1,103)

Characteristic	Migrants (n=341)	Non-migrants (762)
Age (average, in years)	45.9	40.5
Proportion of male (In percent)	70.1	39.0
Education (Average, in years)	10.7	10.0
Educational attainment (% to total)		
No grade completed	0.0	0.5
Elementary (Grades 1 to 6)	12.0	20.8
Secondary (Years 1 to 4)	34.6	37.6
Postsecondary education/Technical-Vocational	6.2	5.0
College level	10.3	12.2
At least college graduate	37.0	23.9
Marital status (% to total)		
Single	20.5	33.6
Married	62.8	51.6
Widowed	3.8	6.0
Separated	7.0	2.6
Consensual Union	5.0	5.9
Relationship to household head (% to total)		
Head	51.8	24.5
Spouse	10.9	30.8
Son/Daughter	28.7	31.9
Others	8.6	13
Per capita income (PhP), 2012	316,419	245,797
Per capita income (PhP), 2009	249,862	202,726

Note: Migrant workers consist of 170 current migrant workers and 171 former migrant workers/returnees

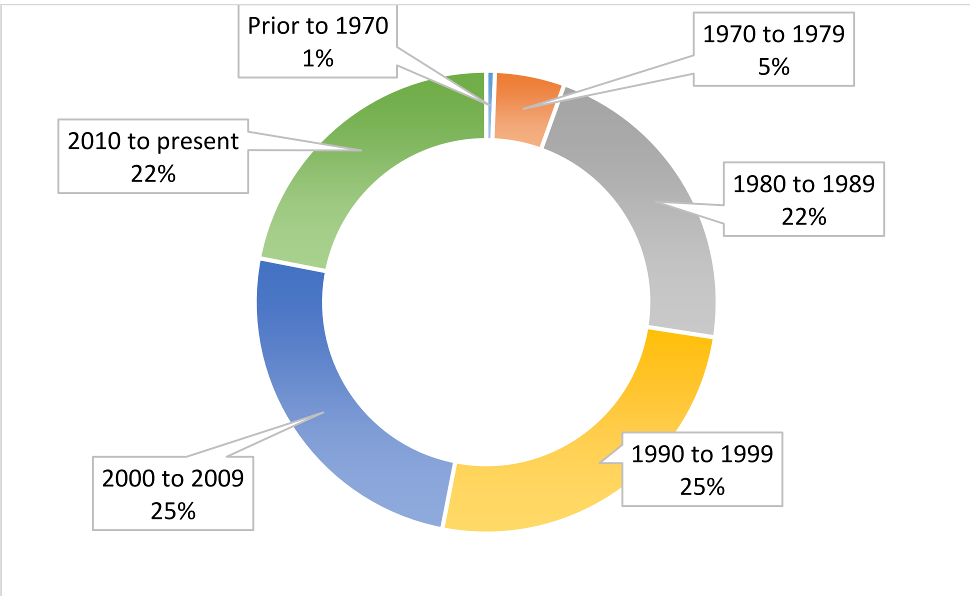
There is a heterogeneous mix of MW based on their cumulative length of migration experience. This heterogeneity makes the examination of the diffusion of migration activities possible. It is notable from Figure 3 that around 10 percent or 34 individuals have over two decades of migration experience. Forty percent have spent 6 to 20 years in overseas work while around half have at most five years of experience.

Figure 3. Distribution of migrant workers by cumulative length of overseas employment



The distribution of migrant workers by their initial year of emigration shows a clear momentum that has developed through time. Figure 4 shows that 27 percent of the total MWs in the village have begun their migration activities prior to 1990. Much of this (23 percent out of 27 percent) were first deployed no later than 1985. This presents the first wave of Filipino migrants to the Middle East following the boom of the oil industry. Overseas employment proved to be a reliable source of remittance income and as more countries opened their labor market for overseas workers in the decades that followed, Filipino labor emigration continued. A quarter of the MWs left during the 1990s, and another quarter did in 2000 to 2009. The remaining 22 percent began their migration journey only within the last 6 years. The continuous outflow of people from the village attests to the fact that labor migration has become a way of life for many.

Figure 4. Distribution of migrant workers by period of first overseas deployment



Through the years, migration has become more selective; the recent cohorts of migrants are more educated on the average than the previous ones. Prior to 1980, the average year of formal training of MWs is at most 8.5. This went up to over 9.3 years in the 1980s and inched up further to over 10 years in the 1990s. The most recent labor emigrants have around 12 years of mean years of schooling (see Table 2).

Table 2. Average years of education by year of first overseas migration activity

Year	Freq.	Percent to total	Mean years of education	Standard deviation
Prior to 1970	2	0.6	8	4.24
1970 to 1979	16	4.9	8.5	3.69
1980 to 1989	72	22	9.31	2.94
1990 to 1999	84	25.6	10.45	2.5
2000 to 2009	82	25	11.7	2.55
2010 to present	72	22	11.91	2.15
All	328	100	10.72	2.84

Meanwhile, having multiple destinations further demonstrates the fact that labor migration has become a way of life for many. About 4 in every 10 MWs have been to multiple country destinations.

Middle East countries are the most popular destinations. Nearly half of the migrants (45 percent) are currently in or have been to Saudi Arabia. Around a third (32 percent) have worked in United Arab Emirates, mostly in the open city of Dubai while about a quarter (23 percent) chose its neighbors Kuwait, Iraq, and Qatar (see Table 3). Outside of the Middle East, the popular destinations are Asian countries Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, China (Hong Kong), Korea, Thailand and Brunei. In the 1980s, the African country Libya was also an attractive destination as some 12 percent of migrants from the study area went there for short-term work contracts. A small proportion of migrants are now working/living in or have been to the US and Canada (4.7 percent), European countries Italy and Spain (4.7 percent), as well as Australia and New Zealand (1.5).

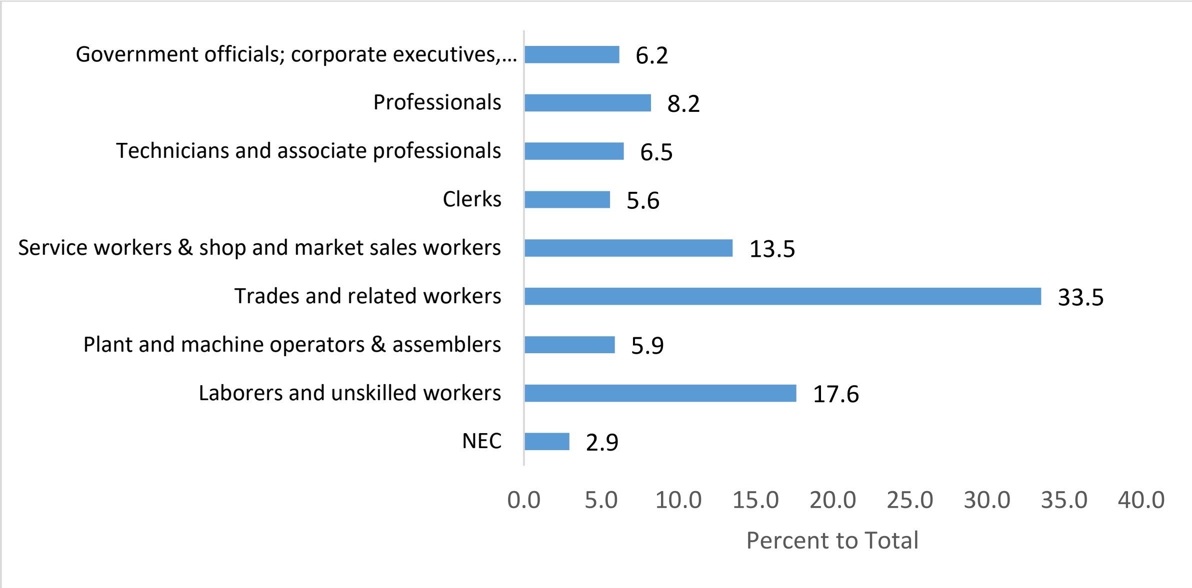
Table 3. Proportion of migrant workers by country of destination, multiple responses (N=341)

Country	Number	Percent
Saudi Arabia	153	44.9
United Arab Emirates	109	32.0
Middle East – Others	79	23.2
East Asia (e.g. Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, China)	44	12.9
Africa (e.g. Libya)	40	11.7
South East Asia (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand)	33	9.7
Others	20	5.9
North America (USA, Canada)	16	4.7
Europe (e.g. Italy, Spain)	16	4.7
Australia or New Zealand	5	1.5

The distribution of MWs by destination clearly illustrates that labor migration in the study area is largely temporary. Nine in ten migrants are currently in or have been to countries that implement temporary labor contract programs or more commonly known as guest worker programs primarily to work in these countries' production and services sector.

The bulk (70%) of migrants are/were employed as production and service workers. Figure 5 shows that a third (33.5 percent) of them are/were trades and related workers – such as pipe fitters, instrument fitters, mechanics, electricians, carpenters, riggers, masons, welders, and painters, among others. There are also some who worked along similar trades but at a managerial/supervisorial capacity (i.e. project foreman and supervisors) and hence were included in the group of executives, managers, and supervisors which comprises only 6 percent. The second largest occupation group is that for laborers and unskilled workers (18 percent) or the group of domestic helpers, construction workers, and helpers/cleaners. This is followed by service workers and market sales workers (14 percent) or the care workers, housekeeping and restaurant services workers, service crew, and shop salespersons, to name a few. Meanwhile, some of the MWs are professionals (8 percent); these are the nurses, engineers, teachers, and surveyors. The rest of the MWs is a combination of technicians (6 percent), plant and machine operators (6 percent), and clerks (6 percent).

Figure 5. Distribution of migrant workers by occupational group (N=341)



Migrants workers earned[7] as monthly income an average of PhP44,600 or US$ 990 based on 2016 prices (with a standard deviation of around PhP47,000 or US$1,040). This is equivalent to an annual income of around US$12,200. The minimum income is PhP 6,278 while the maximum is PhP437,500. To obtain these data, we inflated past earnings to current prices (i.e. 2016) using the GDP deflator to ensure comparability of the earnings obtained from different periods since the MWs considerably vary in their migration timelines. The average monthly income is highly skewed to the right (see Figure 6 below) with some twenty (20) outliers having significantly high earnings of above P100,000.

Higher earnings are correlated with migration experience and schooling. Those who have over two decades of migration experience have received the highest average pay, around PhP140,000 compared to the newcomers who only get around PhP37,000 on the average (see Table 4). Also, the more educated ones tend to receive higher pay than the those who have had fewer years in school.

[7] Earnings refer to average of the minimum and maximum monthly income of migrant workers in all their work contracts, where data are available.

Figure 6. Average monthly earnings of a typical migrant worker (current or former) from Camachile

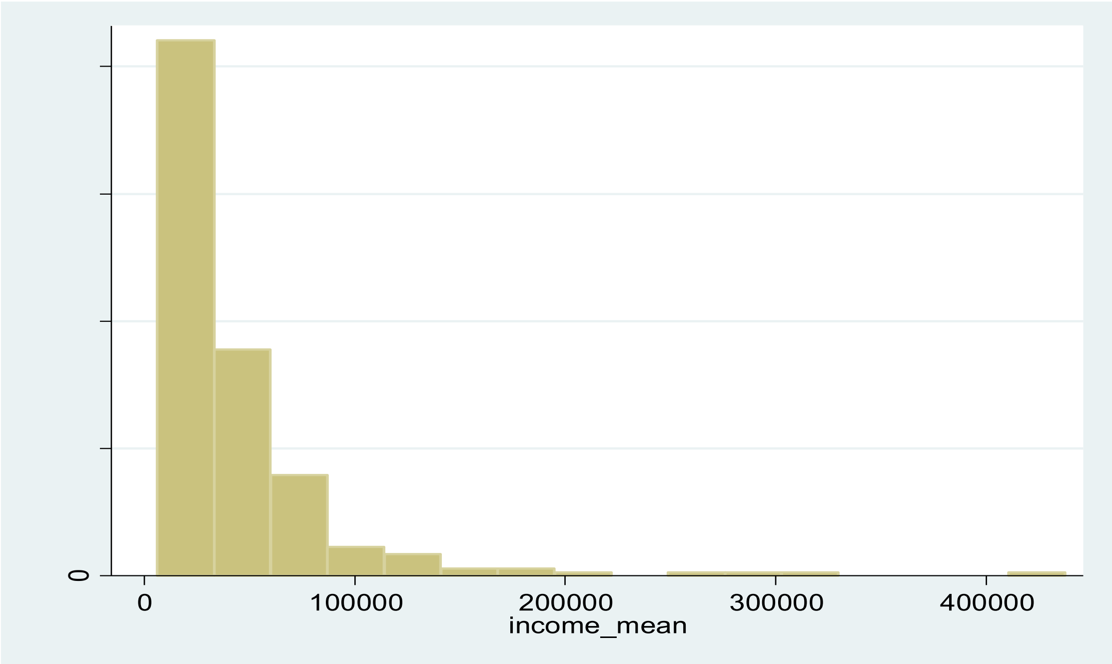


Table 4. Average monthly earnings from overseas work

Monthly earnings from migration	Average amount (PhP)
All (N=263)	44,651
Age group	
15 to 24	33,169
25 to 34	39,502
35 to 44	36,028
45 to 54	47,968
55 to 64	52,576
65 and above	53,436
Years of migration experience	
1 year and below	36,757
2 to 5	36,665
6 to 10	43,362
11 to 15	45,987
16 to 20	74,228
21 and above	137,246
Educational group	
Elementary (Grades 1 to 6)	41,629
Secondary (Years 1 to 4)	37,300
Postsecondary education/Technical-Vocational	31,546
College level	59,980
At least college graduate	52,642

Migrants receive various types of support from their kin in their migration activities. Majority of them (58 percent of total or 199 individuals) have received some types of support from their kin anytime during their migration journey. The proportion of women migrants who received support from personal contacts is 51 percent, slightly lower than men's 59 percent. The assistance received include job information, job referrals, credit and/or financial support (for paying recruitment fees, costs of application and relevant documents like passport and visa) and provisional accommodation while the would-be-migrant is processing his or her overseas job application. The remaining 42 percent reported that they relied only on their own capacity and resources.

For those who have received some type of assistance from their social networks, the most common type given is financial support (78 percent) followed by credit (43 percent) and job referrals (41 percent). Around 4 in every 10 recipients also reported that they got help in terms of job and other migration-related information. Likewise, several MWs mentioned about getting help in terms of accommodation at the destination (13 percent) and in securing the necessary documents like visa or work permits (13 percent) (see Table 5).

Table 5. Type of support provided to migrant workers by their kin

Type of support	Freq.	Percent
Job and other migration-related information	76	38.2
Job referral/recommendation/help in job search at destination	81	40.7
Credit	86	43.2
Financial support	156	78.4
Provisional accommodation/help in settlement at destination	26	13.1
Help with documents (visa, work permits, invitation)	26	13.1
Others	8	4.0

Often, close relatives (i.e. first to third degree of consanguinity or affinity) were/are the sources of much-needed assistance for migration, regardless of the type of assistance. In the instances where migrant workers received any type of help, help came from close kin 70 percent of the time (see Table 6). MWs were also able to get help elsewhere – from their friends to former employers and colleagues and acquaintances 30 percent of the time.

The aspect where more distant relatives, friends, former employers and neighbors have a greater role are in providing job information (31 percent of instances) and recommendations/referrals (33 percent), credit (37 percent), and provisional housing (28 percent). They have relatively minor role in providing financial (non-credit) assistance (8 percent) and in the processing of documentary requirements (20 percent).

The composition of support system for women migrants vary from that of man. Women rely heavily on their close kin; in the total instances where they received assistance, 80 percent came from first- to third-degree relations. For men, the equivalent proportion is 65 percent. Moreover, women are more likely to seek the support of first-degree social ties than men. Men are more likely to receive or obtain support in their migration from weaker ties than women.

Among the close kin, the more distant relations (second- and third-degree) are the more frequently-cited sources of migration support compared to the most immediate kin (i.e. first-degree). This is understandable since first-degree relations (e.g. parents, children, and spouse) are usually part of the migrant's household. The pooling of resources within the household for migration purposes is usually a part of the household's internal strategy for income maximization and risk minimization.

The support system surrounding migrants consist of a diverse set of kin and friendship ties that when combined have a more facilitative effect on migration. While friends and acquaintances do provide job-related information sought by the MWs, they are less likely than a close relation to extend financial support. Hence, the provision of monetary contribution from some close kin coupled with the extension of much-needed job information by other contacts were both instrumental to the decision-making process.

The role of government and even private entities in providing migration-related information is so negligible, it is close to zero. Only five percent of the migrants noted that the information they sought came from private and government. As mentioned earlier, the primary sources of migration information are the close kin particularly the second- and third-degree relations.

Table 6. Nature of relations between MWs and people who provided migration-related support, by type

Nature of kinship	Job information	Job referral/recom-mendation	Credit	Financial support (non-credit)	Provisional accommodation	Documents (e.g. Visa, Passport)	Any	Women	Men
First degree (e.g. parent, son/daughter, spouse)	9.2	7.4	8.2	23.3	16.0	20.0	14.2	17.8	12.8
Second degree (e.g. siblings, grandparent, parent-in-law, son/daughter-in-law)	28.9	25.9	22.4	41.7	24.0	28.0	29.0	27.8	29.3
Third degree (e.g. aunt, uncle, niece, nephew)	23.7	28.4	31.8	26.4	32.0	24.0	26.3	34.4	23.1
Fourth degree (e.g. cousins)	5.3	6.2	8.2	5.5	16.0	8.0	7.3	4.4	8.3
Other relatives, NEC	2.6	4.9	3.5	0.6	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.0	3.3
Friends/neighbours	14.5	14.8	12.9	0.0	8.0	4.0	9.1	11.1	8.3
Kabayan/Fellow villagers	1.3	1.2	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	2.1
Current or former boss/colleagues/classmates	3.9	3.7	2.4	1.8	4.0	4.0	3.3	3.3	3.3
Other non-relatives	3.9	2.5	7.1	0.0	0.0	4.0	3.6	0.0	5.0
Private agency/organization/company	2.6	4.9	1.2	0.0	0.0	4.0	2.1	0.0	2.5
Government organization/officials	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.1	1.7
Others	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	4.0	0.3	0.0	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The provision of migration-related financial support is one aspect that is nearly single-handedly provided by close relations. The interviews in Camachile show that in 91 percent of the time, migrants reportedly drew or sought help from their inner social circles (i.e. first- to third-degree relations). It is rare for friends and non-relatives to provide monetary assistance to cover for migration costs. With regards to accommodation either in the destination or in the city where the MW has gone for application processing, family relations up to the fourth degree also provided such assistance 88 percent of the time. This is similar to assistance given for obtaining visa, passport and other relevant documents where 80 percent of the time migrants relied on family relations. Interestingly, in the majority (57%) of the 296 instances where MWs received some form of support from their kin, the ones providing the help were themselves migrant workers. In 43 percent of the time, non-MWs also provide support to the migration of their kin.

The interviews likewise reveal that 12 percent of the population (N=1176) have extended some form of migration-related support to their kin and even individuals outside their immediate social circles. On the average, current and former migrants had extended some help to two individuals (1.9) while non-migrants have had close to none (0.14). The average for MWs is pulled up by one outlier who is considered an important pioneer migrant in the area who was instrumental in the deployment of around 300 individuals coming from the village and neighboring villages in the past. There is a reason to believe that responses to this interview item was quite conservative given the hesitation of many to reveal or divulge such information. They reported that they felt awkward to claim the assistance/support that they have provided to their kin and other people.

Meanwhile, migrant networks directly affect migration flow from the origin when they facilitate migration themselves. Such is the case of pioneer migrants which we refer to in this study as those who engaged in international migration during the early 1970s. Some of these pioneer migrants have played the role of recruiters or head hunters for their foreign employers. In some cases, they also served as trainers to the recruits where they assumed responsibility for the quality of workers they brought in. When they were asked to recommend people, these pioneer migrants handpicked close relatives and friends first, then neighbors and village-mates and even people from neighboring villages. The case of one such pioneer migrant, who claimed to have recruited hundreds of workers is discussed in more details in Box 1 below.

Box 1. The role of a pioneer migrant in the spread of migration in his village and neighboring communities

Honesto is a pioneer migrant in Camachile. He belongs to the first batch of Filipino migrants who went to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1978 where he worked as an instrument foreman for an American company until 1990. He later joined a Korean company in 1991 where he was assigned in various countries. Despite his lack of formal training, he became a senior instrument engineer. Having gained the trust and confidence of his superiors, Honesto became the enlister of foreign workers from his community in the early 1990s. Every time that his employers or subcontractors needed people to work on new contracts, they relied on him to look for people. He first helped those of his kin and later his neighbors and other able men from his village including fisher folks and farmers. It was relatively easy to get workforce as the placement fee was only at P3,500 to 5,000 back in 1991.

Honesto noted that, in preparation for the overseas job of his recruits, he himself at times conducted and supervised the screening and training of workers in the Philippines. Based on his own account, he has helped more than 300 skilled workers from his own village and at least seven neighboring localities in the province of Bataan. He recalls that workers who he has helped also requested him to bring in their kin. He retired in 2013 after spending 35 years working in one country after another – from Libya to Dubai, Oman, Turkmenistan, Congo, and Malaysia. Even in retirement, his overseas contacts continued to occasionally seek his help when they need people to fill job vacancies.

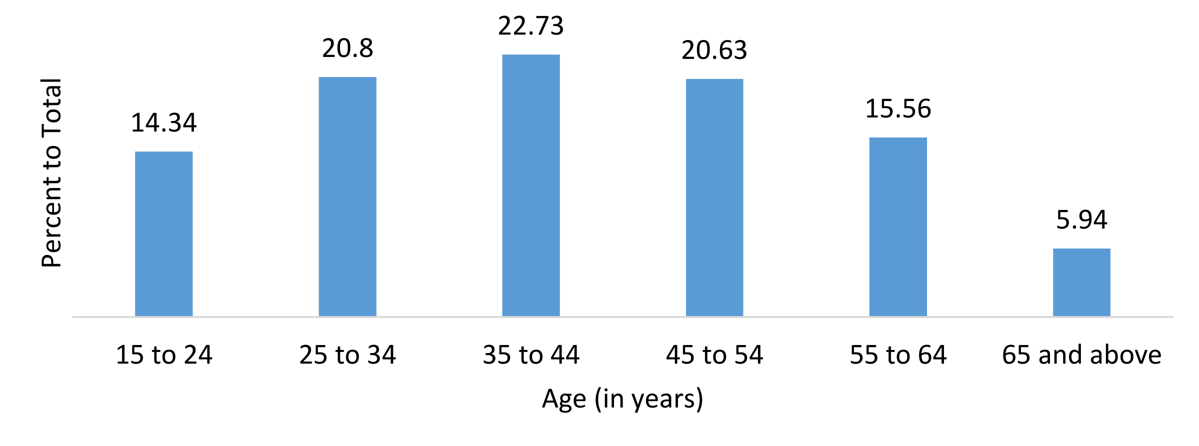
4. Migration intentions

To gather information about migration intentions, a total of 572 adult individuals were interviewed. All 365 households in the village are represented by at least one member in this survey. Of the 572 respondents, 54 percent are women and 46 percent are men. The average age is 41.5 years. Over one-third (35 percent) of them are 15 to 34 years old, while 43 percent belongs to the 35 to 54 age category (see Figure 7). The rest, 22 percent, is composed of elderly (aged 55 and above).[8]

Sixty-nine (69) percent of the respondents are either heads or spouses of the heads while 24 percent are sons/daughters of the head. Two-thirds are either married or in consensual union and a quarter are single individuals. The rest are widowed (4 percent) and separated from their spouses (5 percent). In terms of educational attainment, while 6 out of 10 respondents have completed only high school at most, one-third of them had some college education. Some 6 percent have post-secondary or technical/vocational training.

[8] The sample resembles the age distribution of the relevant population of Camachile except for those aged 15 to 24 because the purpose is to obtain the migration intention of individuals hence, the focus is less on teenagers and more on the economically active ages. In the sample, only 9 respondents are aged below 18.

Figure 7. Distribution of respondents by age group (N=572)



In terms of migration experience or exposure to the culture of migration, 22 percent of the respondents have had at least a year of migration experience. Also, sixty-three percent of the respondents noted that there is at least one member in their household (including themselves) who have had some migration experience, either as current or former migrant worker. Moreover, 90 percent reported that they are related by some degree to at least one migrant worker outside of their own households.

With a considerable exposure to the migration activities of their kin, it is not surprising that four out of ten respondents (44 percent or 252 individuals) expressed desire to participate in international migration sometime in the future. These are individuals who have answered 'Absolutely yes' or 'Probably' to the survey question – "Do you 'wish' to migrate abroad either to work or settle anytime in the future?" Interestingly, there is a much lower proportion of respondents (30 percent) who expressed desire to move to another local destination within the country. Among those who aspire to migrate, 19 percent have had some experience working overseas in the past.

4.1. Extent of decisiveness to migrate

Although many respondents signified intention to migrate, either permanently or temporarily, in the future, the survey found that they are at varying stages in the decision-making process. Their decisiveness ranges from having mere wishes – to carrying out concrete actions needed for migration. For this, several questions were further asked with regards to any concrete action or preparation, their likely timeline for leaving, and whether they already have a target destination in mind as well as if they possess the relevant documents necessary for their application.

Among those who are planning to go overseas, 49 percent reported that they have made at least one of the following concrete actions and related activities- seek job information or recommendations from their kin who are migrant workers, save up or borrow money from relatives and friends to meet the costs associated with overseas job application, apply for work or visit visa, conduct overseas job search through the Internet or other sources, and seek the services of prospective brokers or recruitment agencies.

Assuming that aspirants have the resources to apply for overseas work, around 7 in every 10 expressed their preference to leave within the next 2 years. In fact, 15 percent of the total would want to leave as soon as possible. On the other hand, around 24 percent reported that although they desire to leave, they are not quite certain yet about the timeline. The rest (5 percent) of aspiring migrants prefer to leave for overseas work within the next 5 years.

Meanwhile, having a passport among rural dwellers for purposes other than for overseas migration is not customary. Hence, the presence of a valid passport is one indication that the person is actively seeking employment overseas. Among those with migration plans, 45 percent reported that they currently have a valid passport. Among the 55 percent who do not have such document, 71 percent noted that they are planning to apply for one within the next 2 years.
Around 9 out of 10 aspirants (88 percent) responded that they are certain about pushing through with their migration plans within the next 5 years if given much-needed support by their kin. The support may include covering for the monetary costs, assisting them with job application, and securing the needed work permits or visa. In particular, 73 percent expressed they are certain about their decision while 16 percent responded that there is a high probability that they would. Only 12 percent expressed hesitation, citing other issues they have with their family such as the need to care for old parents and postpose plans until such time that their kids are big enough to be left behind.

4.2. Choice of destination

In terms of target destination,[9] 9 out of 10 prospective migrants already have an idea on where they intend to apply for overseas job, and for a few of them, where to go to settle permanently if and when given the chance and resources. The most popular destination for prospective migrants is still the Middle East, with UAE being the choice of 29 percent. Saudi Arabia is the target destination of 12 percent while other Middle East countries like Kuwait and Qatar are the choices of some 9 percent. A significant proportion (27 percent) is targeting either USA or Canada. Our Asian neighbors especially Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Japan are also popular target destinations with a quarter of the aspiring respondents choosing them over other places. Some 12 percent are planning to move to Australia or New Zealand, while the rest (8 percent) prefer European countries Italy and Spain. Only very few chose a country within Africa and other countries. In summary, intentions to leave involved largely temporary labor migration as seventy-five (75) percent of the respondents expressed their desire to work in countries that receive mostly temporary contract labor.

The primary reason for choosing a destination varies but the most prominent is still the prospect of earning high income based on the responses of majority (50.6 percent) of the prospective migrants (see Table 7). Likewise, a common motive is reunification with family or friends (28 percent cited such). To verify this, we looked at the choices of destination and compared it with

[9] Some made multiple responses for this survey item that is why the percentages do not add up to 100 percent.

the destinations of their kin who are migrant workers, we found that 40 percent of the aspiring migrants picked the same destinations as those of their relatives or friends. This implies that migrant networks exert only partial influence on the direction of migration flow; economic motivations are still the stronger determinant.

Owing to the difficulty and complexity, and therefore costs, of the migration process, many choose destinations where they can easily get in (18.3 percent of total migration aspirants). Notably, the presence of a kin at the destination seems to correlate with prospective migrant's perception on which destination is an easy target. This is true for at least 45 percent of the respondents with migration aspirations. Such perception attests to the facilitative power of migrant networks in migration. Networks can provide financial assistance to pay for recruitment fees, procedural support which makes the application process less burdensome, and on-site companionship, which makes separation from home less difficult.

Others (15 percent) noted that they prefer to go in places where they can be safe and treated with dignity and respect, with good government, and where the climate is not too harsh. Some (6 percent) choose popular destinations of Filipinos and countries with proximity to home so that they can come home easily. Interestingly, only very few (3.2 percent) noted the importance of having job opportunities related to their trade or profession as the top reason for choosing the destination; the same goes with the need to settle permanently (only 3.2 percent). The choice of the rest (4 percent) is based on the presence of good retirement and welfare benefits and familiarity with the place where they have been to in the past.

Table 7. Primary reasons for choosing destination among aspiring migrants

Primary reason	Percent
High income/earnings	50.6
Where I can be with relative/s or friend/s	27.5
Where application for overseas work is relatively easy	18.3
Good and fair working environment, safe/no violence, open country, good government, good climate, not too cold/hot	15.2
Where there are also many Filipinos around, near Philippines, can come home easily	6.0
Where I can settle permanently, become a citizen, take my family with me	3.2
Where there is opportunity/job related to my professions/trade	3.2
Good retirement and welfare programs	2.0
Other	2.0

The importance of the set of rights to MWs that destination governments bestow to them has not been given much attention in past migration works. In the individual interviews, we asked if such is high in the agenda of aspiring migrants in their choice of destination, and the response is overwhelmingly positive (96.3 percent). This is to some extent reflected in the responses of those who reported that they would choose countries where they can be treated fairly. It should be noted that the manner of asking the question for the reasons for choosing a destination was conducted in an open-ended way. Although the questionnaire has some categories of potential answers, these answers are meant to be ticked off when they are chosen but otherwise, the enumerator was tasked to write down the exact narration of the respondent.

4.3. Support sought by prospective migrants

Majority of the aspiring migrants (i.e. 158 individuals) have already sought the support of their kin with regards to their migration plans. Of these, 22 percent reported that they sought support from their second-degree relations (e.g. siblings, parent-in-law); while 19 percent sought the assistance of their aunts/uncles or siblings-in-law (i.e. third-degree relations). Some 17 percent asked help from their cousins (fourth-degree relations) and 11 percent reported that they have requested help from their parents. This only proves that although some sought help from their friends (10 percent) and other non-relatives (8 percent), it is clear that when people need help, they would most likely go to their families and close relatives.

Financial support is the most common type sought by aspiring migrants which suggests that migration costs are indeed significant. Aside from this, they (20 percent) need help in getting into jobs through recommendations from their kin. Others (15 percent) only sought for job information and other migration-related pieces of advice. Not one had mentioned about borrowing money while a few of them (10 percent) asked help in obtaining work permits, visa or invitations. Only very few (2.5 percent) sought out the support of their kin with respect to accommodation at the destination.

4.4. Awareness on financials

The survey also inquired about financial literacy of prospective migrants by asking the question - If you intend to finance your migration through borrowing/credit, what is the annual interest rate that you find acceptable? Of the 252 individuals who have migration plans, only 40 percent were able to provide an estimate of their desired interest rate. The average annual rate is 14.2 percent with a standard deviation of 17.7. The desired rate is as low as none to 120 percent per year. Twenty-one percent noted that they do not want to take in loans while 28 percent do not have an idea of what the acceptable rate is. Some 10 percent refused to answer the question.

4.5. Perceptions on the migration process

To gauge the respondents' opinion about legal and illegal migration, we asked if they believe that migration is easy if done through legal channels. Eight out of ten aspiring migrants responded in a positive way; the rest did not think it is easy to migrate at all even through legal means. As for doing it illegally, 88 percent of them did not agree that it is easy to do labor migration in such manner while some 12 percent believed it is easy to do so. Although 12 percent may seem negligible, it reflects to some extent that some people may be willing to circumvent the law for more efficient ways of doing things. The fact that some 20 percent do not believe that migrating is easy through legal channels implies that the tedious process of application and deployment can potentially encourage people, especially the desperate ones, to seek the alternative.

We likewise asked aspiring migrants where they thought migrating legally is relatively easy. The responses show that the United Arab Emirates is on top at least per 43 percent of the migrant-wannabes. Some respondents (16 percent) named Southeast Asian countries like Singapore and Malaysia easy targets while others (14 percent) believed it is easy to legally migrate to USA and Canada. Meanwhile, 22 percent picked either Saudi Arabia or other Middle East countries. One in 10 thought it is easy to get an overseas job through legal means in Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Less than 10 percent believed they can easily go to Australia or European country through legal means.

4.6. Reasons that can prevent prospective migrants from leaving

We asked prospective migrants to identify the reasons that would strongly make them reconsider their plans. The most commonly-cited reason involves family matters where 49 percent expressed considerable reservation in leaving their family behind (see Table 8). Women, especially those who are mothers, hesitate to leave their children behind. Others fear having their families broken due to long separation.

Meanwhile, 27 percent reported that they would change their mind if only there were decent jobs around available for them. They said that if they or other members of their family are paid decent enough wages, they would not opt to leave and seek livelihood elsewhere. However, some of the more decisive respondents (8 percent) said that the only thing that can prevent them is when they get ill or if they are no longer eligible because of their relatively older age. Interestingly, 11 percent of the prospective migrants noted that there is nothing that can prevent them from wanting to leave as they are already determined to go.

Table 8. Reasons that can strongly prevent an aspiring migrant to leave

Response	Freq.	Percent
Family-related reasons	124	49.2
Health and age-related reasons	20	7.9
Job- and wage-related reasons	67	26.6
Other reasons	31	12.3
Nothing can prevent my decision	27	10.7

4.7. Reasons why people do not have migration intentions

Not all people want to leave home for opportunities elsewhere. As mentioned earlier majority of the respondents (56 percent) in the survey expressed their preference to stay. We already know that this group consists of older and slightly less educated individuals who may be less motivated and less equipped to take risks. We asked through an open-ended question the reasons for not wanting to go abroad and the responses are as follows. Many (40 percent) of the non-aspirants are unwilling to leave their family either because they cannot leave their children or because their spouses do not approve such plans (see Table 9). Some of them reported that they are happy and content living simply with their family. Another common reason, reported by 36 percent of the respondents, is old age or having some type of illness that would render them ineligible for an overseas job contract.

Others (25 percent) are simply not interested while some (12 percent) already have good enough jobs and therefore find no need to seek opportunities elsewhere. There are also those who are just too afraid to go out of their comfort zone (12 percent) while others (7 percent) reported that they do not have the resources for migration. The rest (8 percent) are either too tired of working overseas or that there are other members in their families who are already migrant workers at present and felt no need to migrate as well.

Table 9. Reasons for not wanting to go abroad

Reason	Freq.	Percent
Not interested	81	25.4
Cannot leave family behind	127	39.8
Illness/Old age	116	36.4
Too afraid to go abroad	38	11.9
Job- and wage-related reasons	40	12.5
No money for migration	21	6.6
Other reasons	25	7.8

To determine the decisiveness of non-aspirants to stay, we asked if they would likely change their minds if they were given adequate migration-related support by their kin. The results show that 21 percent would probably reconsider but this proportion increases to 31 percent if we exclude those aged 46 and above. This roughly indicates that for a non-negligible fraction, their decision heavily relies on their capacity to meet the costs of international migration. Meanwhile, when we asked those without migration intention aged 46 and above about what could possibly change their minds –72 percent (117 out of 163) responded that nothing can change their minds. For such group, most are largely constrained by ineligibility arising from illness or old age.

5. Correlates of migration intentions

5.1. Demographic characteristics

Migration intention appears to be correlated with being of younger age and being male. The average age of those who expressed desire for migration is 34 years while those who do not have any intention is 47. Eight in ten respondents who expressed their desire to seek greener pastures abroad are 44 years of age and below. On the contrary, majority (60 percent) of those without any inclination for migration are 45 years old and above. Around 7 in 10 persons who wish to migrate are men while only 30 percent are women.

The aspirants are also slightly more educated than their counterpart having, on the average, 10.7 years of education as opposed to the latter group's 9.5 years. Only few (7 percent) aspiring migrants have at most elementary education compared to 26 percent for the non-aspirants. Likewise, 41 percent of the aspiring ones have some college education but only over a quarter (27 percent) of the non-aspirants possess similar educational attainment.

Having migration plans is also associated with being single and not being the head of the household. Those with migration plans live in slightly bigger households with more dependents. The two groups do not appear to be different in terms of the average number of school-aged members as well as number of members with migration experience (see Table 10).

Table 10. Characteristics of respondents by migration intention category

Attribute	Wish to migrate (n=253)	Do not wish to migrate (n=318)
Age in years (mean)	34.2	47.4
Proportion of men	69.9	40.6
Proportion of women	30.1	59.4
Years of education (mean)	10.7	9.5
Household size (mean)	4.7	4.4
No. of dependents (mean)	1.9	1.6
No. of school-aged members (mean)	1.3	1.2
No. of household members with migration experience (mean)	0.9	0.9
Per capita income in PhP, 2012 (mean)	56,555	54,787
Age group		
15 to 24	26.5	4.7
25 to 34	28.9	14.4
35 to 44	25.7	20.4
45 to 54	13.0	26.6
55 to 64	4.7	24.1
65 and above	1.2	9.7
Educational attainment		
Elementary (Grades 1 to 6)	7.1	26.1
Secondary (Years 1 to 4)	46.2	41.2
Postsecondary education/Technical-Vocational	5.5	5.7
College level	13.8	7.2
At least college graduate	27.3	19.8
Marital status		
Single	35.2	16.6
Married	50.2	65.8
Widowed	0.8	7.2
Separated	5.5	4.4
Consensual Union	8.3	5.6
Relationship to household head		
Head	28.9	47.3
Spouse	23.3	34.8
Son/daughter	36.8	13.2
Son-/daughter-in-law	4.7	1.3
Grandchild	2.4	0.6
Parent	0.4	0.0
Other relative	3.2	2.8
Others	0.4	0.0

5.2. Economic factors

There appears to be no association between intent and economic well-being as measured by the average per capita income. There is not much difference between the mean per capita income of individuals who desire to migrate and those who opt to stay, with PhP56,555 and PhP54,787, respectively. Similarly, both groups are drawn in comparable proportions from the different income deciles (see Figure 8). Not one group comes from a distinct economic class. In other words, they are nearly uniformly distributed across all income classes.

Nevertheless, the key motivation for wanting to migrate is economic in nature. Seven out of the ten aspirants cited their need to improve their living condition as the main reason for wanting to emigrate. Some (11 percent of total) expressed the need to improve their career. Others, around 10 percent, merely intend to do it to finance the education of their children while some (8 percent) wish to join/reunite with their kin who are working/living abroad. The rest would want to earn more and save for the future and for retirement (7 percent), to build or repair their own house (5 percent) and to see the world, experience life in another country.

When asked about the minimum amount of monthly pay or wage that they seek in overseas work, the responses are within the range of 3,000 to around 280,000 Philippine pesos or US$67 to US$6,000. Seven out of ten respondents which have provided the minimum amount of pay they desire (n=255) noted that they would agree to P30,000 or below as monthly salary. Excluding the 7 outliers which have provided expected salary of P100,000 or more, the average minimum expected or desired pay is P30,000. Forty percent of the respondents of interest would even agree to a P20,000 monthly pay (see Figure 8 for the histogram of the desired minimum pay).

Figure 8. Histogram of minimum amount of monthly wage desired by prospective migrants (excluding outliers)

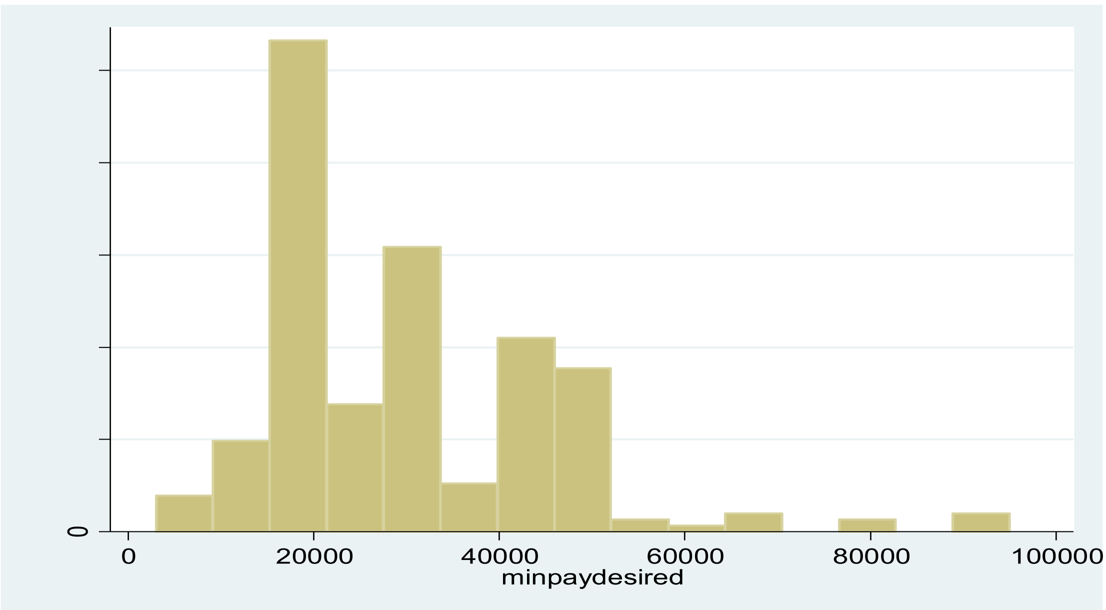
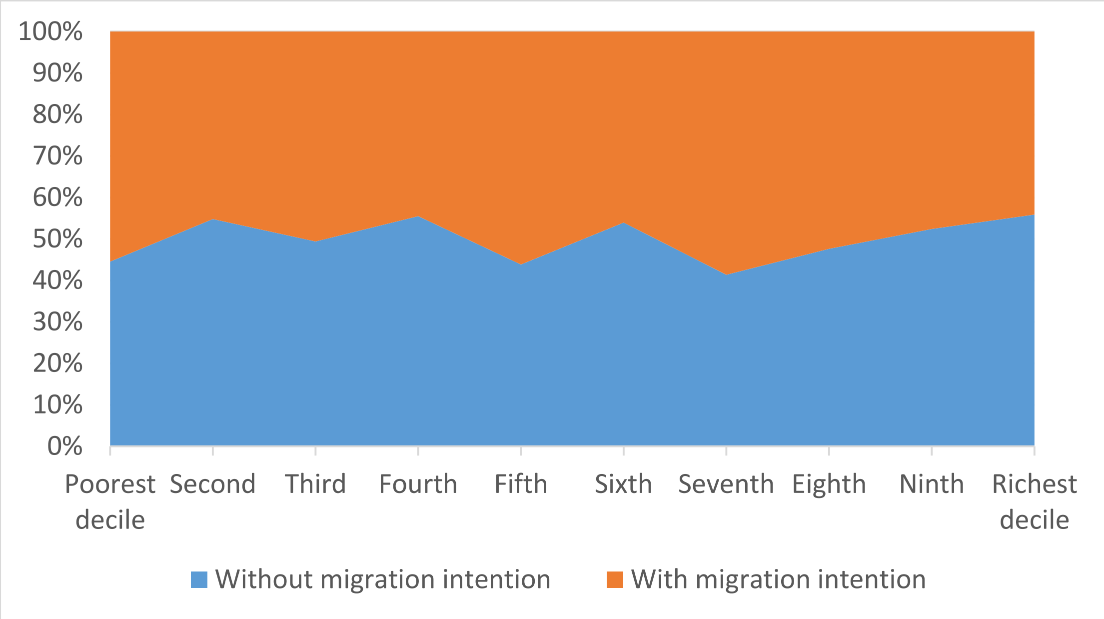


Figure 9. Distribution of respondents by category and per capita income decile



5.3. The role of perceptions

People's desire to seek work elsewhere is associated with the lack of satisfaction with their current livelihood and general living condition. Majority (50.2 percent) of those who expressed future migration plans also signified their discontent with their current earnings level. The proportion of those feeling the same among the non-aspirants is much lower at 34.8 percent. The latter group is shown to be rather content with the status quo. Discontentment or dissatisfaction is discerned from the responses to the question – "How satisfied are you with your current household earnings?" We note one being unhappy if the response is either of the following: 1) Not at all satisfied; 2) Not quite satisfied; and 3) Difficult to say. To ascertain or confirm their sentiments, we reformulated the question into the following – "How satisfied are you with your current living condition?" Again, we noted those who have provided either of the abovementioned negative responses and the pattern is similar. A relatively higher proportion of migration aspirants (43 percent) do not feel satisfied with their current living condition. Only around 30 percent of the non-aspirants expressed the same dissatisfaction.

At the individual capacity level, we also sought responses of those currently employed to the question – "How satisfied are you with your current personal earnings?" Again, majority (55 percent) of the prospective migrants expressed dissatisfaction at varying levels; only over a third (36 percent) of those who opt to stay expressed the same sentiment. Meanwhile, when asked about whether their household's livelihood have improved in the past 5 years, the proportion of those who expressed dissatisfaction in both groups is comparable but slightly higher for those wanting to migrate abroad than those who do not have any plans (i.e. 34.4 percent versus 30.1 percent, respectively).

Aside from gathering people's satisfaction with regards to their own living conditions, we also sought out their perception on the overall condition of their community (i.e. Brgy. Camachile). We asked the following question– "Do you believe that your community's (i.e. Camachile) living condition has improved in the last 5 years?" to understand how their opinion on such aspect might influence their willingness to move or stay. The results however do not corroborate this since there are as many aspirants as there are non-aspirants (38 and 39 percent, respectively) who believed that the living condition of people in Camachile did not progress within the last 5 years. The perceptions of prospective migrants in this aspect do not differ from those of their counterpart.

The time when we were conducting the field survey coincides with local and national political campaigns –elections were scheduled a couple of months following the survey period. To take advantage of this exogenous event, we asked - "Do you believe that your locality's economic situation will improve after the local election in May?" The respondents are divided in their opinions. Still, there is no significant difference in the responses of the two groups.

We likewise elevated the scope to the national level. People were asked whether they believed that the country's economic situation will improve after the presidential election. Again, the respondents were divided and there is not much difference in the perceptions of those with intent to migrate and those without intent. Fifty-three percent of those who wish to migrate were not that optimistic that things will improve soon and so with 55 percent of those who do not have migration plans.

While the abovementioned aspects do not seem to correlate with people's willingness to move or stay, an examination of their perception on the national government's ability to provide or create jobs for the people shows a different story. The results to the question - "How satisfied are you with what the national government is doing to provide jobs?" show that a greater proportion of prospective migrants (i.e. 58 percent versus 48 percent for their counterparts) are not satisfied with the government's job creation efforts, hence the need to seek greener pastures elsewhere.

5.4. Social networks

The interviews reveal that social networks affect migration intentions indirectly via people's awareness and appreciation of the positive outcomes of migration. We asked how the presence of relatives or friends and even neighbors affect respondents' decision on seeking opportunities outside of the country. Of the 248 prospective migrants who responded to the survey question, 32 percent acknowledged that working abroad has improved people's living conditions and they wish this for themselves as well (see Table 11). Many (21 percent) specifically mentioned that they are aware of the high earnings that migrants obtained from overseas work and they understand that labor migration can be lucrative. Meanwhile, others (12 percent) noted that they get motivated and sometimes could not help but feel envious. There are also some (6 percent) who reported that they are encouraged directly by MWs and that they realize they can obtain help from them in their preparation for their own migration. On the contrary, 8 percent responded that whatever their plans are, these had nothing to do with the MWs they know – their decisions are said to be independent. Not knowing how to respond to the question, others simply noted that their decisions are for their family. Only a very small percentage (2.4 percent) noted that the migration activities of others do not affect them in any way.

Table 11. How the migration of kin/acquaintances affects respondents' decision on migration?

Response	Freq.	Percent
1. I am aware of their better life condition because of migration and I also wish that for myself & my family	79	31.85
2. I can see that they have better-paying jobs/higher earnings; I wish that too	52	20.97
3. They advise/encourage me; I am aware that they can help me in my migration plans	15	6.05
4. I get motivated/inspired (indirectly)/I am envious	30	12.10
5. They don't affect me	6	2.42
6. My desire to migrate is independent	20	8.06
7. I do it for family/parents/children	9	3.63
8. Others	5	2.02

6. Concluding remarks and policy recommendations

Notwithstanding the limitations, this study found evidence of a culture of migration among villagers in Camachile as shown by the high proportion of those desiring or planning to leave for overseas work, which is at 44 percent based on a sample of 572 adults. The interviews also reveal that migration intentions do not exhibit a simple leave-or-stay dichotomy. People differ in their degree of decisiveness. In not taking this into consideration, we may fail to fully understand the factors that have significant influence on intentions. More importantly, this paper illustrates that migration intentions are largely driven by economic reasons. Earning high income is also the most common basis for choosing the destination – family/friends reunification is only secondary to economic motivation. Nevertheless, given more secure local job opportunities, a non-negligible proportion would opt to stay. More than a quarter, 27 percent, of those with migration plans reported that they would change their mind if only there were decent jobs around available for them. If people do have a choice, they would rather stay and be with their families and loved-ones. Family-related reason is most commonly-cited factor that could make would-be-migrants reconsider their migration decisions. It is also the main reason of non-aspirants for not wanting to leave. Therefore, enhancing employment opportunities at home is an obvious way to lure individuals to remain in the country. Based on more in-depth responses of the interviewees, what many people seek is job security. This paper shows that the average desired amount of compensation abroad which roughly represents people's willingness to stay, is around P30,000. Forty percent are even willing to receive as low as P20,000 or less. Rural development efforts that will widen job opportunities at the rural areas have the potential of attracting people to stay.

Although this evidence is not sufficient to claim that there is loss of skilled labor or brain drain, the fact remains that the more educated portion of the labor force are leaving this country in recent years. It has earlier been argued by some that it is not unemployed who get absorbed into the international labor market but rather the more educated pool of the labor force. This is something that requires more in-depth analysis with respect to how it could lead to skills shortage.

Many Filipino migrant workers spend so many years of their life working abroad. This finding reflects the possibility that households are not able to sustain their standard of living once they return from overseas job, they are then encouraged to back overseas to sustain their lifestyle. They eventually retire in the place of origin but it is not clear whether they have spent enough for retirement or if that is even something that they have considered. Policies that effectively care for the welfare of retirees or that prepares migrant workers for retirement are imperative.

One of the glaring findings of this study is that prospective migrants do not rely on government agencies/entities when it comes to obtaining much-needed migration-related information. Based on the information reported by former migrant workers or returnees, those who obtained migration-related information from government entities comprise of only 3 percent. This is an indication that either migration-related information is free to obtain from elsewhere and more expensive to obtain it from government sources or that there is lack, if not absence, of visible government information dissemination campaign related to labor migration in the country despite the significant number of migrant workers deployed each year. The assistance that migrant networks provide go beyond mere financial; they also include processing of the application and finding employment overseas. The assistance of migrant networks at the destination also prove invaluable particularly in the processing of documents and other requirements of the prospective migrant. Because the migrant kin already do these important steps, the prospective migrant improves his/her chance of not falling into the hands of notorious intermediaries thereby preventing illegal recruitment and exorbitant fees.

The dependence on personal social networks also reflects the hesitance of many to take great risks by relying mainly on recruitment agents' information due to the rampant cases of illegal recruitment. This analysis also suggests that a non-negligible proportion of prospective migrants do not have any idea about the acceptable rate of interest should they decide to take in loans for the financing of their migration applications. There is therefore a great need for a more aggressive migration education campaign and financial literacy program not only to current applicants or those that are ready to be deployed but to the general population as well. Such efforts are crucial in achieving a more informed migration decision-making process.

Bibliography

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