

# A Narrative Approach to Understanding the Development of Cultural Intelligence Among Migrant Domestic Workers

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## ABSTRACT

Filipino migrants all over the world naturally engage in encounters that necessitate the use of cultural intelligence (CQ) or the ability to interact effectively with people who are culturally different. Studies have shown that CQ improves the well-being of workers and aids in their adjustment in foreign environments. This study examines CQ development among migrant domestic workers who worked in Middle Eastern, East Asian, and Southeast Asian countries. A narrative approach was utilized to make sense of the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews with twelve migrant Filipina domestic workers. Findings show that trainings prior to migration, self-initiated strategies for cultural learning, environmental factors, pagtitiis or perseverance during migration, and adopting cultural values from their former host countries are crucial in the development of their CQ. This study highlights the need for further research on the development of CQ in the informal migrant sector. Our findings contribute to the dearth of qualitative research on CQ and its development, and these may be useful for manpower agencies and governments with migrant workers.

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migration highlights the transnational and global movement of labor, especially the movement of women into domestic work abroad (Williams, 2010). Globalization leads to the mobility of labor across nations and cultural boundaries. Although globalization may have provided new opportunities for individuals, workers face day-to-day challenges abroad. Some people work for less pay with longer hours, and in less conducive conditions than natives from the host country (United Nations, 2017). Apart from these circumstances, migrants face conflicts as a result of being situated in a context different from their heritage culture. Female migrant workers are especially vulnerable to different forms of discrimination, exploitation, and abuse. There is much to uncover about the social changes involved in the migration of women into transnational domestic work in the households of countries wealthier than their own home country (Williams, 2010).

An important aspect to consider in migration is an individual's cultural intelligence (CQ) and its development across cultural experiences. This study explores CQ, which refers to one's capability to deal with cross-cultural interactions and communication (Ang et al., 2007). Current research on CQ mostly focuses on managers and leaders (Fang et al., 2018). Research

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has yet to be done on migrant workers in the informal sector. These are workers who go abroad to do jobs that nationals cannot fill or do not want. More often than not, they are employed in vulnerable forms of employment where they may have less access to protection from the government and are at greater risk during a crisis (International Labour Organization, n.d.). To effectively work in cross-cultural contexts, migrants need to understand different cultural norms, practices, and conventions and to act in a culturally appropriate manner (Chen et al., 2012). As CQ helps people deal with cultural barriers, alleviate stress, and reduce difficulties in interactions, we argue that studying CQ's development will aid migrant domestic workers to better understand and cope with the changes surrounding them.

This study extends current knowledge on migration by exploring the development of CQ among migrant domestic workers. Using narrative psychology enabled the participants to tell stories about their lives in a manner that gives coherence and meaning to their life events. Narrative psychology uses storytelling as a means of communicating the narrator's realities to a larger audience (Riessman, 2008). In the Philippines alone, migrant workers, colloquially known as overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), number to about 2.3 million. Half of these OFWs are female and in elementary occupations, which are jobs involving simple and routine tasks, usually using physical effort and hand-held tools (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018). Thus, this study uses the narrative approach in understanding how female migrant domestic workers develop CQ.

### *1.1. Review of Related Literature*

The review of related literature discusses the experiences of migrant domestic workers and their CQ development. This section is further divided into three subsections. First, migrant domestic workers and the nature of their jobs are discussed. The second subsection focuses on the dimensions of CQ. Lastly, current research on the CQ of migrant domestic workers is presented.

#### *1.1.1. Informal Migrant Workers*

Informal migrant workers are those workers in the informal economy who are “independent, self-employed small-scale producers and distributors of goods and services” (International Labour Organization, n.d.). Workers in the informal sector include domestic workers, construction workers, and home-based workers.

In a year, over a million Filipinos are sent to work abroad and most are women leaving to be domestic helpers (DHs), nurses, and entertainers (Madianou & Miller, 2011). Filipino migrant domestic workers, labelled in the 2017 statistics of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) as Filipino household service workers, reached a total number of 2.2 million, the highest in the last 25 years (Medenilla, 2017). In 2016 alone, POEA reports that it has deployed 275,073 migrant domestic workers - 70% higher than the count of 194,835 in 2015. A majority of these workers serve in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Hong Kong, and Qatar (2017). Given the nature of their jobs, migrant Filipina domestic workers may need to utilize their cultural intelligence to be able to effectively navigate through the cultures of their host countries and to deal with cross-cultural interactions.

#### *1.1.2. Cultural Intelligence*

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is the ability to interact effectively with people who are culturally different (Earley & Ang, 2003). If one has the ability to adapt, then one can shape the context of a cross-cultural interaction. From this, one can determine the appropriate behavior (Thomas, 2006). CQ is a multidimensional construct that is composed of four (4) components, namely:

metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). These dimensions are linked through cultural encounters.

Metacognitive CQ refers to “an individual’s level of conscious cultural awareness during cross-cultural interactions” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 5, as cited in Fang et al., 2018). Ang and Van Dyne (2008) referred to cognitive CQ as the “knowledge of norms, practices and conventions in different cultures that has been acquired from educational and personal experiences.” It includes specific knowledge about different cultures such as their rules and norms, and general knowledge such as information about a complex and specific environment (Fang et al., 2018). Motivational CQ reflects the “capability to direct attention and energy towards learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 6, as cited in Fang et al., 2018). Lastly, in engaging in interaction with different cultures, an individual must have the ability to act appropriately through verbal and non-verbal behaviors. The behavioral dimension of CQ focuses on how these behaviors are necessary in creating a common ground for interaction with individuals perceived as culturally different (Earley & Ang, 2003; Plum et al., 2008; Thomas, 2006, as cited in Gertsen & Söderberg, 2010).

CQ can be developed through individual traits and capabilities. Past studies have examined how personality traits, most frequently the Big Five personality dimensions, predict both overall and the dimensions of CQ (Ang et al., 2006; Harrison, 2012; Adair et al., 2016; Depaula et al., 2016; Li et al., 2016). Openness to experience, as well as agreeableness was found to be positively related to CQ (Ang et al., 2006; Harrison 2012). Conscientiousness was positively related to metacognitive CQ. Neuroticism, however, was the only component found to be negatively linked to CQ (Ang et al., 2006).

Researchers have also examined how CQ can be developed with cross-cultural contact (Crowne, 2008; Li et al., 2013; Moon et al., 2013; Kurpis & Hunter, 2017; Pekerti & Arli, 2017; Schwarzenhal et al., 2017). International experience provides cultural exposure that creates the opportunity to develop CQ (Fang, Schei, & Selart, 2018). CQ is considered to be an ability that can be improved through experiences, such as interpersonal interaction in cross-cultural situations (Ang, 2008; Ng and Earley, 2006, as cited in Moon et al., 2013). Since CQ can be developed by engaging in interactions with other people from different cultures, it is expected that the interactions that migrant domestic workers experience will shape their CQ.

### 1.1.3. Cultural Intelligence of Migrant Domestic Workers

An important dimension to consider in migration is how developed one’s CQ is. Migrants must have the ability to understand norms and practices in different cultures and to act appropriately when interacting with people from the host country (Chen et al., 2012). This is necessary in order to effectively work in multicultural contexts. Although there were research findings that lend support to the claim that CQ can be developed in every person, there is a dearth of research on informal migrant workers (Fang et al., 2018). Most research on CQ involve managers, students, and organizational leaders. Though some studies have attempted to expand the methodology of qualitative research on CQ of migrant workers, such as Gertsen and Söderberg (2010), the focus was still on managers and employees who hold formal positions in companies.

The most common methodological approach to the study of CQ has been quantitative. Hence, there is a call to look at the dynamics and interactions, and the process of how interactions unfold using qualitative lenses or frameworks. As compared to quantitative studies, researchers using qualitative methods relied on a larger range of definitions and structures of CQ (Fang et al., 2018). In using a qualitative approach, it is possible to explore the personal cross-cultural experiences of migrants through their own interpretations of the world and of themselves while

utilizing cognitive processes. Hence, this allows participants to communicate and construct the realities they are in, creating meaning and order in their experiences (Schreuders-van den Bergh & Du Plessis, 2016).

This study aims to contribute and expand on the existing body of knowledge by using a qualitative lens to understand the experiences of migrant domestic workers. These workers, particularly Filipino informal migrant workers, take up a large part of the whole population of migrant workers in the world (Parreñas, 2000). Yet despite this huge population of informal migrant workers, research on their adjustment experiences appear to be scarce.

## *1.2. Theoretical Framework*

### *1.2.1. Narrative Psychology*

Narratives are generally understood as stories and interpretations of events that are ordered as an integrated account of experiences. These stories are unfolded and developed in different contexts full of history and culture in order for the narrator and listener to make sense of experiences. As narrators share their stories, they are provided with opportunities for dialogue and reflection (Wang & Geale, 2015). In turn, this enables them to connect series of events that is of importance for future action and for meanings they want to share to their listeners (Riessman, 2008). Moreover, narratives use various cognitive skills emerging from cultural and moral discourses and resources, which attribute a sense of agency to the narrator (Hiles et al., 2009). Thus, the individual is able to position himself or herself in relation to the recounted events and infer causal links between these events to make their actions meaningful and comprehensible (Rudd, 2009).

Individuals make sense of events through narration or storytelling, especially when something unexpected happens. Narratives are usually formed as people talk about what they expected and how something unexpected occurred instead (Gertsen & Söderberg, 2011). They allow narrators to establish clarity and coherence in past, present, and future experiences. Particularly, in cross-cultural encounters, expectations may be ruptured and a need for meaning-making arises. These encounters may inspire storytelling to help in constructing the realities people are situated in (Hiles & Cermák, 2008). While narrators share remembered stories, their narratives mesh in with the convergence of other histories and life spans (Trahar, 2013). Personal stories are connected with societal stories about life in a particular culture (Bruner, 2002 as cited in Gertsen & Söderberg, 2010). Narratives about cross-cultural experiences provide insight and allow us to delve deeper into the process of understanding and bringing order and meaning to the constant changes in a person's life (Schiff, 2012; Murray, 2015).

Through narrative approaches, previous studies have explored how people construct and make sense of organizational phenomena (Vaara et al., 2016). Gabriel (2000) examined the emotional and symbolic aspects of organizational life in relation to organizational culture and change by analyzing the stories of individuals working in an organization. His research discusses how storytelling in organizations act as a device for sense-making. This means that looking at the stories of an organization provides an understanding of its culture. Other researchers have also studied the differences between how managers and employees narrate about their working lives and how they make sense of change in their organizations (Brown & Humphreys, 2003). In the field of cross-cultural management, some researchers have argued for the use of narrative methodology as a complementary approach in developing our understanding of cultural differences (Soin & Scheytt, 2006). Yet, this approach is rarely used in cross-cultural work (Gertsen & Söderberg, 2011).

This study aims to extend Gertsen & Söderberg's (2010) study on cultural encounters and the learning processes involved in the context of multinational companies by examining the experiences of migrant domestic workers. A narrative approach to cross-cultural experiences and CQ may deepen our understanding of how migrant domestic workers construct the social reality they are situated in. Using narratives, meaning-making is expressed and experiences are contextualized and organized into a story (Murray, 2015). While in the process of narration, we may gain insight on the development of CQ as its dimensions are closely connected to cultural experiences (Gertsen & Söderberg, 2010). With CQ, individuals are able to act using verbal and non-verbal communication to interact with individuals perceived as culturally different (2010). As CQ involves having knowledge about how cultures differ from one another and having the ability to reflect on culture's effects on our own behavior and ways of thinking (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Plum et al., 2008; Thomas, 2006), metacognitive processes may be utilized which may shape one's own understanding of oneself and of the world. The study of the narratives told by migrant domestic workers may bring forth a deeper understanding of their cross-cultural experiences and at the same time, shed light on how they utilize the dimensions of CQ as they make sense of the changes happening around them.

### 1.2.2. Statement of the Problem

Through narrative psychology, this study aims to understand the narratives of migrant domestic workers on their cross-cultural experiences. At the same time, the researchers aim to examine CQ development in the narration. The researchers ask the question: "What can migrant domestic workers' narratives tell us about the development of their CQ before, during, and after their migration?"

## 2. Method

This research employed a qualitative approach informed by narrative theory to explore the cross-cultural experiences of migrant domestic workers. This approach allowed the researchers to examine the development of CQ through the narratives of migrant Filipina domestic workers. The process of narration may be a way to enhance the participant's reflection on their experiences, potentially leading to metacognition and increased CQ (Gertsen & Söderberg, 2010). Participants were selected based on a set criteria related to their experiences as migrant domestic workers. The participants' narratives were gathered through individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. The interviews were analyzed following Polkinghorne's (1988) process of tracking narratives with a focus on changes occurring from beginning to end.

### 2.1. Participants

Twelve (12) participants were interviewed. The participants were migrant Filipina domestic workers who fulfill the following criteria: (1) they are at least 18 years old, (2) they have worked abroad and stayed with employers for at least two years, and (3) they are currently living in the Philippines. Each participant was recruited through snowball sampling, in which a participant recruits future participants from among their acquaintances.

The study focuses on migrant domestic workers in particular as their job gives them the opportunity to be able to interact with the locals especially at home and in transactions in the marketplace, and in doing errands outside the house. This is the case with live-in domestic workers as their temporary home in the host country they are working in is also their place of employment (Yeoh & Huang, 1998). Hence, they need to take into account the norms, standards, and languages of the receiving culture (Holroyd et al., 2001).

## *2.2. Data Collection Instruments*

This study's main data collection method is individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. This was done in order to allow the researchers to build rapport with the participants, to ask questions pertinent to the study and allow for probing on their answers. Questions for the interviews were in Filipino and followed an interview guide. The participants were asked questions such as "Why did you decide to work abroad?" to allow the participants and researchers to explore the life of the participant prior to working abroad and their motivation to work abroad. They were also asked questions such as "How is your relationship between you and your employer?" to delve deeper into the experiences of the participants in the host country. Finally, they were asked about their current state. Through narrative interviews, the participants are encouraged to tell their stories the way they want to and to reflect on them (Gertsen & Söderberg, 2010). After reflecting on a perceived cultural conflict in a more organized manner, the narrator's descriptions of her experiences help in forming a deeper understanding of the situation (2010). With this, narration is used as a sense-making tool that may lead to the enhancement of CQ. The researchers also prepared informed consent forms to make the participants aware of the purpose and duration of the study, its risks and benefits, participant rights, and all the necessary information that enables them to voluntarily decide whether or not to participate.

## *2.3. Data Collection Procedures*

### *2.3.1. Pilot Interview*

A pilot interview was conducted to determine whether the prepared interview questions are comprehensible, answerable without difficulty, relevant to the focus of the research, and not offensive. The pilot interview, which simulated the procedures of the actual interview, included the protocols of the informed consent and was conducted with one (1) informal migrant worker who fits the inclusion criteria. The test took place on a set date, time, and place agreed upon by all involved. After pilot testing, the participants were asked for feedback and if there is a need to edit, add, or remove interview questions, the researchers applied the necessary changes and adjust accordingly.

### *2.3.2. Actual Procedure*

The actual procedure with the twelve (12) participants was done after recruiting the individuals who fulfill the inclusion criteria. All interviews were held on a set time, date, and place agreed upon by all involved. Each interview lasted for at least one hour, and interviews were conducted in the vernacular and audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. Before starting the interviews, the researchers briefed the participants about the study and had them sign a consent form. The researchers began each interview by building a good rapport with the participant through warm-up questions such as "How are you?" to facilitate better responses (Jacob & Ferguson, 2012). A majority of the interview questions asked about their experiences before, during, and after their cross-cultural adjustment in the host country. The interviewers also asked clarifying and probing questions to further encourage storytelling, such as: (1) "Can you give examples [for what you just shared]?" and (2) "What do you think influenced you to act that way?" The probing questions focused on the dimensions of CQ and the interviewers helped facilitate the narrator's attempts at making sense of her experiences. The interviews concluded with questions regarding the current state of the participant.

Prior to conducting a pilot test and the actual procedures, this study obtained its approval and clearance from the University Research Ethics Office of the Ateneo de Manila University. During each interview, the participants were given an informed consent form in Filipino to

document their agreement to participate. The consent forms included all the necessary information they needed to know about the study.

#### *2.4. Data Analysis Procedures*

All twelve (12) interviews were audio-recorded, and verbatim responses to the interview questions were translated and transcribed by the researchers using a standardized transcription protocol (McLellan et al., 2003). In analyzing the data from the interviews, these were be compiled into sections or groups of information, which are also known as themes or codes (Creswell, 2007). With the current paucity of qualitative methods that employ narrative analysis in understanding the development of CQ, Polkinghorne's (1988) suggestion to track narratives with a particular focus on changes that occur from "beginning" to "end" was utilized. The researchers analyzed the experiences of the participants from the beginning of when they decided to work abroad to the end where they shared about how they are currently. In creating themes, the results of Gertsen & Söderberg's (2010) study was looked at in order to aid in identifying focal points and challenging situations that hinder possibilities of cultural learning for the narrator. Literary elements such as tone and setting were examined according to their place in the network of relations in narratives (Polkinghorne, 1988). To ensure the validity of this narrative analysis, the researchers repeatedly looked back and forth at the data and themes being explored. In a similar manner, the transcripts were carefully inspected to guarantee that the themes being generated best captured the essence of each response and considered the entirety of the responses of the participants. The researchers also had an intercoding meeting to properly discuss the themes and the codes under each theme by comparing our analyses with one another. The succeeding results section presents the narrative accounts of the participants. All quotations were translated to English. The verbatim quotes can be made available upon request.

### **3. Results**

This section presents the results of the analysis conducted on the narratives of the twelve (12) migrant Filipina domestic workers. The analysis was made in light of the main research question: What can migrant domestic workers' narratives tell us about the development of their CQ before, during, and after their migration? The stories shared by the participants presented a story of one's own development of CQ throughout the process of migration that highlighted the following themes: (1) Preparation Prior to Migration, (2) Self-Initiated Strategies for Developing CQ, (3) Environmental Factors Shaping CQ Development, (4) *Pagtitiis* or Perseverance as a Vital Characteristic, and (5) Embracing Cultural Learnings as One's Own. These themes along with the different sub themes are shown in Figure 1.

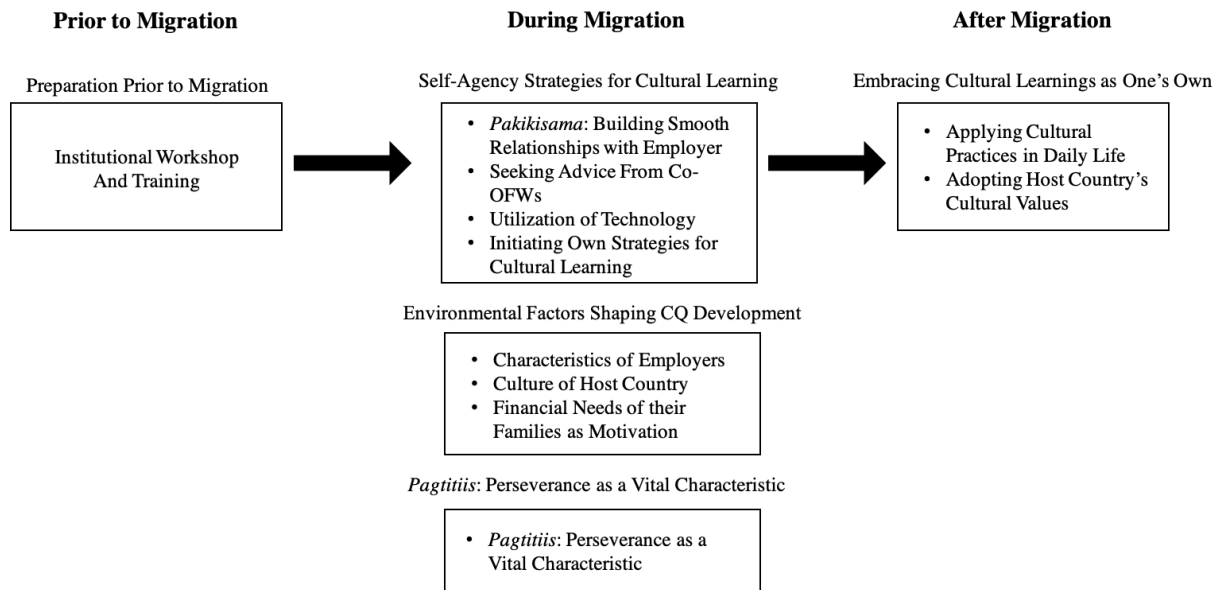


Figure 1. Themes and Subthemes Identified Throughout the OFWs Migration Process

### 3.1. Preparation Prior to Migration

Prior to migration, most of our participants went through institutional training and workshops from the government and their employment agencies. A few of our participants did not undergo any training as they first went abroad in the 1990s. These activities were created for such migrant workers to acquire skills important to their work and gain knowledge that would introduce them to the culture of their host countries. The narratives of those workers who had training depict dependence on these trainings alone, hence showing no agency to initiate learning on their own. These workers no longer needed to buy books about language and cultures as books or materials were already given in the workshops.

#### 3.1.1. Institutional Workshop and Training

Before most of our participants flew to their host countries, they first attended a skills-training hosted by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). Following this was the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS), a workshop hosted by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). This is a requirement enforced by recruitment agencies and the embassies of host countries. For the 1-week to 1-month training given by TESDA, OFWs learned basic household chores such as cleaning with a vacuum cleaner, using the washing machine, cooking foreign dishes, and reading and speaking basic phrases in the language of host countries. Afterwards, certification is given by TESDA as proof of completing training. Participants also underwent a 1-day to 3-day PDOS that gave them crucial information on settlement concerns and issues, and an introduction to the host country's culture and language. OWWA also provides a book on culture and language as supplementary material for the participants. Sara thoroughly discussed how she prepared for migration in her narrative:

“When we had our PDOS, they (the instructors) would tell us, ‘This is what it will be like for you abroad.’ The cooking and the household chores, it’s (taught) in TESDA... The first thing that’s taught in TESDA is cooking their (the employer’s) food. Second, in the table setting...how...the Arabs use tableware. Then in using the vacuum cleaner, wiping glass, and fixing their bed sheets. It’s because their bedsheets shouldn’t merely be fixed, there is a degree to be followed, 45 degrees... Then in washing their clothes and ironing. The first thing taught in ironing was how to iron the collar... Then in cleaning the ceiling, this is what TESDA would



teach... And cleaning the comfort rooms... Because foreigners want their comfort rooms clean. All (of them). If only you could (clean so much) that they (the employers) would see their reflections on the floor... While in PDOS, (they tackle) how one should talk to their future employers. In OWWA, (they teach) the Arabic (words) one has to learn.”

### *3.2. Self-Initiated Strategies for Developing CQ*

Apart from the trainings and workshops they were required to undergo, the participants also learned through self-initiated strategies. During the migration process, the participants developed their own strategies to better understand and learn the culture of the countries they worked in. These strategies aided them in adjusting to their host countries, as well as their work as migrant domestic workers. These strategies include *pakikisama* or building smooth relationships with their employers, asking for advice from OFWs who have prior experience of working abroad, making use of technology, and other strategies for cultural learning.

#### *3.2.1. Pakikisama: Building Smooth Relationships with Employer*

One common element that was present in the narratives of all participants was how they used *pakikisama* in order to have smooth relationships with their employers. They highlighted the necessity of having smooth relationships with their employers, as it allowed for better learning of the host culture. Eva shared how important it is to maintain a smooth relationship with her employers as it aided in better understanding the host culture.

“You’ll see them (the employers), and the way they greet you: they don’t disrespect you, they consider you like their own sibling, like family. They would always say, ‘We don’t see you as our helper, we treat you like our sibling...so in case you have any problems, just share with us.’ From them, I also learned how to...interact in their culture. Even though we’re not alike, they still treated me as if I’m part of their family.”

*Pakikisama* was an important element in forming good relationships with the employers, regardless of how lenient the employers were. Malou even described how the rate at which one adjusts does not depend on how nice the employer is. She highlighted how essential *pakikisama* is by saying that no matter the circumstance, *pakikisama* is an absolute necessity in adjusting smoothly to the culture of the host country.

“When your employers are kind to you, adjusting is faster. *Pakikisama* is really what’s needed there.”

#### *3.2.2. Seeking Advice from Co-OFWs*

At times, the participants turned to more experienced OFWs for guidance to gain more understanding of the culture of the host country and to help them do their jobs well. Some participants sought the advice of domestic workers that have the same employer as them. In the case of Eva, she narrated how seeking the help and advice of her fellow domestic worker was important as it aided in her learning how to cook and do other household work.

“I would ask her how (food) was supposed to be cooked, I would also copy how to cook eggplants, for example, because if you did not ask, you would not know anything.”

Some participants sought the help of domestic workers working for the relatives of their employers. Sara shared how she asked for help from the Filipino helpers of her employer’s relatives because they already had prior experience of working abroad as domestic workers.

Apart from this, she was also able to see them on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays because her employer's family would often have family gatherings on those days. Sara's asking for help from co-OFWs eventually helped her learn more about the host culture.

"When my employer's daughter would go (to our residence), she'd bring her Filipina helper...If I hear (something) from my employer and from her employer, I would ask. That's because...they're already ex-abroad, they're really experienced. I would ask (the Filipina helper), 'What did my employer say?' There, she would tell me. (She would) explain. Until...I would gain more knowledge."

When our participants were given the chance to leave their homes, more often than not, they are able to meet other migrant Filipina domestic workers who they can talk to and ask for advice from. Malou described how relationships with other migrant domestic workers can aid in one's adjustment to the host country and one's job as a domestic worker as a whole.

"Because they would also give you advice about things you don't understand or even in cleaning, cooking, they'd give you advice because sometimes...you'd always be left alone in the house, and of course, I would also cook food."

However, Ellen shared how one still needs to be cautious in making friends with fellow migrant Filipina domestic workers. She expressed how some co-OFWs may trick others and take advantage of them.

"There are co-workers, your fellow Filipinos there that would take advantage of you, (they would) fool you, get you to trust them. Some would also help (you), which is why you should choose who you'd want to befriend because people are not all the same, right? But (rest assured) I choose friends who would be right."

### 3.2.3. Utilization of Technology

Some participants were able to form *barkadas* (peer groups) with the fellow migrant domestic workers they met during their days off. They eventually formed group chats on social media platforms to maintain constant communication with each other even when they cannot meet. Angel shared how their group chat served as a way to help and ask for help from her co-OFWs regarding things she did not understand.

"With my friends in other countries, my fellow helpers in Kuwait, of course I would ask about things I couldn't understand, and then...(hope that) maybe they know...through chat."

There were also instances wherein some of our participants consulted the internet to aid them in learning about the host culture. In Ellen's case, she used the internet to learn new recipes. She described how her employer was too busy to teach her how to cook, but at the same time, wanted variety in her family's food. For this reason, she learned to rely on searching on Google for recipes to follow.

"Actually...I only depended on recipes because my employers were busy, they would always be working so I was really forced to learn. I would search on the internet or read recipes because they liked a new recipe (to be cooked) each day and it's difficult because there are five dishes a day. (You would) really...be forced to cook."

### 3.2.4. Communicative Strategies

Besides seeking help from other people, our participants also developed and made use of their own strategies in order to learn, and to adjust to the host culture. One of the strategies used by

our participants was using sign language in order to transcend language barriers. In the case of Rochelle, she utilized sign language in order to effectively communicate with the mother of her employer, who was also living with the employer's family and did not know how to speak in English. They would use gestures such as pointing to things, to understand each other until Rochelle eventually picked up on some of the Cantonese words and understood what the mother was talking about.

"The grandmother (of my employer) didn't know how to speak in English. So sometimes, we just gesture to each other. Point like that, she'd also point. It's because I don't know how to communicate in Cantonese, so we'd just do whatever using sign language. Imagine she's telling you to do something... she would just use gestures and gestures. So of course sometimes, I wouldn't understand... so sometimes she'd get mad... Just because I didn't understand, I would just say 'okay' and 'okay.' (She'd) probably get irritated but, I got used to it, so I learned a few Cantonese (words). So still, I'd understand her... as time would pass."

In some cases, our participants would use writing to aid in their understanding and learning of their host cultures. In Eva's case, writing served as a way to navigate through the places she needed to go to. She shared how the first time she was asked by her employer to go to the market alone, she asked her employer to write down their phone number and address in Chinese. Eva also asked her employer how to pronounce the address in Chinese, so that she would know how to pronounce it in case she gets lost and would need to ask for directions from the locals.

"(My employer) wrote our address in Chinese. I asked, 'How do I say this?' If I'd say it while riding a taxi; don't just give out the address immediately (to the taxi driver). So I asked, 'How do I tell them my address?' So my employer told me, I wrote it down...how (it was spoken) so that...how I'd read it would be how I tell them. So the number one (thing I remembered) was our phone number, our address, in case I'd get lost. That's what I did when my employer instructed me."

In the case of Jessica, she used writing to be able to remember the names of the spices she needed to use in recipes. Jessica describes how she listened attentively to her employer as her employer told her the names of all the spices in Arabic. She then proceeded to write the Arabic names on the bottles of each of the spices, so that she would not forget since there were many spices that needed to be remembered.

"Back then, my employer would monitor me, and as she would say the ingredients—the leaves, flowers. I would write (the names of the) ingredients on the bottles because there are many types of ingredients in Arabic."

### *3.3. Environmental Factors Shaping CQ Development*

Other than the self-initiated strategies employed by our participants that paved the way for cultural learning, the workers were also exposed to several factors in their environment that influenced how their CQ developed. These environmental factors include various characteristics of their employers, the host country's own culture, and the financial needs of their families back home. These factors helped determine how the migrant domestic worker may be able to learn from cultural experiences and interactions.

#### *3.3.1. Characteristics of Employers Influencing CQ Development*

While in their host countries, our participants were placed in different contexts or backgrounds that affected how they were to learn about the host culture and in turn, to work efficiently. The

amount and type of work they needed to do was dependent on three (3) characteristics, namely family dynamics, socioeconomic status (SES), and the nature or personality of the employer.

In terms of family dynamics, our participants expressed the difficulties an OFW faces when their employer has children. The number of children they need to take care of or attend to is a decisive factor in their everyday schedule and in the nature of their work as a whole that they need to accomplish each day. Looking at Sara's experiences with a family of ten (10), she had stressed the importance of being on time and working efficiently.

"When you are called by your employer, you need to move quickly because each instruction (should be responded to) instantaneously. (Even when) you are not yet done, they would (already) tell you, 'Do this.'...(even) when you're busy, one of the children would call you, (and) you would then have to do what is being asked of you. You're not yet done? You could leave it first, then get back to it because the child is in a hurry. It was like that because my employer had eight children."

It is necessary for an OFW to work hard and work smart. When something is done in such a way that is unacceptable for their employer, the migrant domestic worker must learn right from wrong and to respect the preferences of their employers as shaped by the culture in their country, especially in terms of cultural values and practices in the host country. For Rose, she learned how people have different ways of doing tasks and unique approaches to certain situations.

"I didn't work in the Middle East anymore. Before, during my first time (abroad)... I went to the Middle East. Since my experiences with Ma'am and Sir in Malaysia, (they're) Chinese... so I didn't deviate. I still worked under Chinese and Singaporean employers... and the culture, it does not differ from ours. In how they dress... we, even my Ma'am, when we went to Bali, she just wore shorts. And yes, (she only wore) Havaianas slippers. Yes! I'd tell her, 'Ma'am, can I also wear?' (to which she'd respond) 'Your call, whatever! Whatever, if you are comfortable with this, you wear what you want.' They don't suffocate me in any way... But really, during my first year, that was when they were kind of harsh, of course... you'd have to adjust to them."

### 3.3.2. Culture of Host Country

On the one hand, in the East Asian countries where half of our participants worked, the amount of freedom they had helped them in learning about their host country's culture. The migrants in these countries could freely roam around the cities and interact more with other migrant workers and locals, which exposed them to more instances of cultural learning.

"When I went to Hong Kong, I felt even more relieved because... in Hong Kong, there are days-off... in Hong Kong, I felt free because you can do everything... that's how I felt, I was free."

On the other hand, in Middle Eastern countries where freedom seems to be less felt since it is necessary to follow the certain rules in relation to Islam that affects the locals' lifestyles, the CQ development of these migrant domestic workers was limited.

"The culture that we have in our country is all about freedom. You can do everything, you can wear everything. There, you can't. I was only limited by—there, I wore an *abaya* (a cloak many women in Muslim areas wear)... you also have to hide your... your body... There are many differences... (in the) food, dialect, clothing... Because you should respect how they dress... so that they won't get mad at you. If you also don't respect them, that's when you'd get a taste of

something that they'd have to fight you or they'd do something awful to you if you also disrespect them. I think that what you need to do is to just adjust to them so they can also respect you. If you don't respect them (and) their culture, it means that you also don't... respect them. Respecting your employers is a necessity."

### 3.3.3. Financial Needs of their Families as Motivation

Although coming from distinct backgrounds and having migrated to different countries, our participants shared a common motivational factor that constantly encouraged them to continue working abroad as domestic workers. The financial needs of their families back home serve as their motivation in times of difficulty. When work becomes too challenging, the women recall their reasons why they decided to work abroad. As a single mother, Andrea took it upon herself to be an OFW for the sole purpose of helping her children and to work hard so that they may be able to go to school.

"Because my husband died abroad, so I need to work to support the education of my two children."

Many of our participants chose to migrate and leave their children and loved ones behind for the sake of supporting them. As wives and mothers, the OFWs felt the need to do their part for their families, "it (working abroad) was necessary because the salary I used to get was not enough. I needed a bigger salary to fulfil the needs of my children." Being a daughter of a farmer and a widower, Ellen wanted to go abroad to work in order to give back to her father and help her family have a better life.

"We were just poor because my father was a farmer who worked on other people's farms. We are four siblings. Our mother passed away, so my father raised all four of us. Our livelihood was working on other people's farms, so after graduating high school, I thought of working abroad to help my father, have a good life, and be able to fix our house and our livelihood."

Here, we can see the effect of several personal challenges on the OFW and her motivations to work. These situations motivated the domestic workers to persevere and learn from past cultural experiences and interactions with individuals from the host country.

### 3.4. *Pagtitiis: Perseverance as a Vital Characteristic*

In addition to the different environmental factors that influenced their CQ development, each of the workers experienced several challenges while in their host countries. Our participants encountered personal struggles during their first few months abroad that revealed their strengths and capabilities in the midst of new changes and foreign cultures. These struggles include adjusting to unfamiliar lifestyles, meeting the demands of their employers, and becoming accustomed to being far from family and home.

In the case of Eva, during her very first time abroad as a domestic worker, she was constantly filled with fear and would call her aunt whenever she was afraid and anxious. Her first month in Hong Kong was marked with personal struggles where she felt the weight of being a domestic worker. She was overwhelmed with her many responsibilities, having to juggle doing all the household chores and taking care of children, among other things. She had expressed to her aunt how she wanted to go back home to the Philippines, yet her aunt told her to persevere and keep going until she receives her first salary, which will motivate her. At the same time, Eva thought twice about leaving her job and going back home even with the many challenges she was facing because she had to sacrifice in order to support her family in the Philippines.

“In my first month I already knew how difficult the work was there, so I called my aunt... It hasn't even been a month yet. ‘Auntie, I already want to go home, I feel like I can't do this anymore,’ I told her. I thought that when you know how to do work, you're already good to go, but I was wrong. Surprisingly, being a DH is a big responsibility, especially when you do everything at home...the household chores, the cooking, the shopping, and at the same time having children inside the house and having a pet dog that's so big, it's scary. During my first night, I thought the dog was just outside my room and that I'd get bitten...So I told my auntie, ‘I want to go home. I don't want to be here anymore.’ But my aunt told me, ‘Just persevere. Experience first receiving your first salary...Just endure first and persevere...and when you get your salary, you'd be motivated to work.’ So that's what I did. It's a challenge for me to just persevere, endure, you have to sacrifice for the sake of those you left in the Philippines. That's also one of the reasons why I thought twice about going home, knowing that I have siblings waiting for my help to chase money, at the same time my mom,...I'd be of help to her so I told her, ‘Alright, okay, let's push through. I'll endure. I'll try my best’...With endurance, perseverance. I was able to stay with them (my employers).”

For many of our participants in the face of adversity, they felt it was necessary to endure (*magtiis*) no matter how difficult the situation they are in is. Sara's struggles with juggling a heavy workload only pushed her to persevere, “I endured it because I did not want to change employers. You need to be patient and persevering when you have already started your work.” A common experience is one wherein they consider their employers as strict and very particular with how things should be done. With this, Nina's first time in Kuwait taught her to persist and to put in her own effort to learn so as to avoid being corrected by her employers.

“They will point out all your mistakes and teach you how something should be done. My employer only taught me the basics, and I just learned and learned. It was really voluntary. I had to accept my circumstances; I had to learn everything that needed to be done so that I could finish all of them...so I persevered.”

The stories of these women while in the host country are not entirely alike, yet these show the different challenges one may face as an OFW. For them, *pagtitiis*, enduring and persevering amidst struggles and difficulties, is an essential characteristic that an OFW must have and must embody in order to continue having a source of livelihood and to be able to support their families back home.

### *3.5. Embracing Cultural Learnings as One's Own*

Even after their migration and in returning home, our participants expressed that they gained significant cultural insights from their work, which they integrated in their daily lives back in the Philippines. Many of our participants mentioned several values that they now take into heart in guiding their lives to a more meaningful path. These women also shared the different practices they apply in their households that helped them do their chores efficiently. In these narratives, one can see how the CQ development of these women had brought significant changes in their personal lives.

#### *3.5.1. Applying Cultural Practices in Daily Life*

In their narratives, most of our participants shared the practices they currently implement that make their lives more efficient. With cleaning being in the line of work of these women, the participants conveyed a positive change in how they clean their homes:

“The way I clean my house. Just like how meticulous I was before I went to Qatar... I became two times more meticulous. For example here, ... Usually when wiping this (top of table), because it’s the working area. For me, I would wipe even its underside. Before, I don’t remove those (points to things on the table), I would just wipe it. But there (in Qatar), I learned (that) you have to set aside all of those at one side before you even start cleaning it.”

In as simple as washing the dishes, these OFWs became more meticulous.

“I learned that when you’re washing the dishes, you need to use Clorox. When I arrived here (in the Philippines), it’s like I didn’t want to eat if the plates were not cleaned with Clorox because sometimes, my employer would want Clorox to be used (on the plates) until my hands would get wounded. When I arrived (in the Philippines), it’s like I didn’t want to eat without washing (the plates) with Clorox... Then there (abroad), the vegetables don’t only get washed once, twice... (they’re washed) five to six times.”

Apart from cleaning, our participants now also cook dishes from their host countries for their families. For the migrants who worked in Hong Kong, most of them learned how to use chopsticks.

“You would still cook their (employers’) food... regarding chopsticks, whenever you use them, you would learn how to use them more... Depending on which country you’re from, you’d be able to take home and practice their traditions in your own home!”

### 3.5.2. Adopting Host Country’s Cultural Values

With the different struggles and learnings that our participants encountered in their work abroad, most of them gained values unique to their host country that they now use to live their lives meaningfully. If in the Philippines the workers experienced utmost freedom, in Middle Eastern countries, the interviewees felt that everything was not allowed. This led the workers to strive to be as perfect as possible in their work. In one narrative, texting more than 40 words was not allowed. With this, when asked what values were applied after arriving in the Philippines, the women would mention being perfect, which for them manifested in being strict. Most of them became strict in dealing with small arguments within their families and in caring for their children’s affairs.

“I became stricter... Whenever my husband would scold my children when they would make a mistake, he would immediately notice all the things he would say because I would reprimand him... I would correct him, but not in a disrespectful manner.”

“I set rules for my children which I learned from there (abroad). I am strict because I’m a single mom to two grown-up kids who are graduating from college. Before, when I say my rules, (I’d expect them to) do it now. I’m not so strict anymore now. If they can do it now, then don’t wait until tomorrow to do it.”

A number of our participants felt more independent and more confident in taking risks as the struggles they experienced abroad tested the best of their abilities and strengths.

“I became more mature... because I was 21 when I stayed in Hong Kong and with that number of years... I’d have experiences in Hong Kong where I was dependent... Now... when I opened my own grocery, I really told myself, ‘I’m very capable now.’” The struggles that I faced in Hong Kong and in the Philippines

that somehow weren't so difficult, and those were what motivated me, I matured, I became more independent, that's perhaps what made me successful. That in everything I experienced in Hong Kong, I now apply these in my life. Because it is a lesson for me that I (learned) in Hong Kong... And I still bring them with me to the Philippines, that despite any poverty or difficulty, the number one thing I'd think of is that I have no employer. You are your own boss, and happiness is there and at the same time, what you're doing is your passion—the fulfillment is there."

Some, on the one hand, became more hardworking, persevering, and obtained a positive outlook in life. Essentially, these workers experienced a significant change in their lives that can be summed up by the quote, "I was able to straighten out a lot of things about myself when I went to Qatar."

The narratives of these informal migrant workers showed that their migration to Middle Eastern and East Asian countries posed as significant cultural encounters for them. This is seen in how they brought back home several values from their host countries that they find useful at present. They would not have practiced these values if it were not for their cultural experiences abroad. Additionally, these anecdotes suggest their use of CQ even after migration, as seen in their efforts to bring together their cultural learnings and the values of their home country.

#### **4. Discussion**

The narratives of the migrant domestic workers highlighted the development of their CQ across experiences before, during, and after their migration. It is clear from the stories of these women that their experiences allowed for the development of their understanding of cultural differences, which reflects the development of their CQ. As they were preparing to work abroad, they gained knowledge about the different norms, practices, and conventions of the country they were going to work in. This knowledge, along with self-initiated strategies, the environment they were working in, and their families as motivation, helped them in adjusting to and learning more about the host culture. This led to them eventually embracing some of the values of their host countries, and bringing them home to the Philippines.

##### *4.1. Developing Cultural Intelligence Before Migration*

Prior to going abroad to work as domestic workers, the participants had to undergo a skills-training and a workshop, which aimed to acquaint them with the skills and knowledge needed for them to be effective at their jobs. The training and the workshop introduced them to the culture of the country they were going to work in, and helped in familiarizing and preparing them for the possible circumstances that they may encounter. Through these, the participants were able to gain initial knowledge about the possible differences of the host culture from their heritage culture, which helped in the enhancement of their cognitive CQ, one of the facets that make up Mental CQ (Fang et al., 2018).

Cognitive CQ is referred to as the knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in a different culture that has been obtained through educational and personal experiences (Fang et al., 2018). The women were able to develop their cognitive CQ through the training and workshops, as they were able to gain knowledge about a different culture in preparation to working in their host countries.

Our results support other studies that showed the great importance of lectures on the development of CQ in general, especially that students, and managers use this for their own CQ development.



#### *4.2. Strategies and Contributing Factors to the Development of Cultural Intelligence*

Unlike students and managers who, numerous researches show, only develop their CQ prior to migration, our study shows that development of CQ is possible during migration of migrant domestic workers. Based on the results, the crucial factors in the development of CQ of migrant domestic workers were self-initiated strategies, environmental factors, and perseverance. During their migration process, the participants made use of strategies to help them in adjusting and navigating their way through the culture of their host countries. In initiating strategies, they were able to show and develop their cognitive, metacognitive and behavioral CQ as they found ways to obtain knowledge about the norms, practices, and conventions of the host culture, and use this knowledge to exhibit the appropriate verbal and non-verbal actions in interacting with people from their host countries. Our results then support the positive link between intercultural experience and CQ (Pekerti & Arli, 2017). Intercultural experiences provide more avenues for one to learn. Knowledge of the host culture was obtained by seeking help from other people more knowledgeable than them and even searching for certain information on the internet. They adjusted their behaviors to be more attuned to the norms of their host countries, and the families they are serving. At times, struggles in the form of misunderstandings happen and with that, development becomes more difficult but informative (Gertsen & Söderberg, 2010). The encounter with struggles, then also becomes a cultural learning experience.

The characteristics of their employers, as well as the different policies of their host countries also affected the development of CQ of the migrant domestic workers. Despite the claim that CQ is a culture-general construct or one that's not bound by any culture and it stresses one's capability to handle unfamiliar environments or conditions (Fang et al., 2018), our findings interestingly show that the ease of its development may be culture-specific. The participants who worked in Middle Eastern countries, for example, did not have the opportunity to interact with the locals as much as the other participants who came from Hong Kong and Malaysia. The only times that they were able to leave their home and workplace was when they were accompanied by the driver of their employers. In addition, their employers were not that lenient in giving them days off, which also meant that they were not given a lot of chances to explore their host countries. This is different from the experiences of the participants who worked in Southeast Asian and East Asian countries, as more freedom was given to them by their employers. They were given the opportunity to have a number of days off, so they were also able to meet new people—both locals and fellow migrant workers, particularly migrant Filipina domestic workers. The lack of opportunity to go outside and explore paved the way for the participants who worked in the Middle East to rely on technology. Through social media and various websites on the internet, they were able to learn more about and have a better understanding of the culture, and use that knowledge to help them act in a manner that is appropriate to the culture of their host countries. With this, they were able to display both cognitive and behavioral CQ. We found the use of the internet as a tool to enhance CQ as a unique phenomenon, as previous researches on this construct seem to have not focused on the possible role of technology in the development of CQ.

Additionally, perseverance as a characteristic supports several studies on the connection of personality traits and cultural intelligence, specifically Wang et al.'s study (2018) on how overall CQ is related to personality and life satisfaction. As seen in the narratives of the participants, most of them who chose to persevere amidst difficulties in learning had better relationships with their employers, hence making them satisfied with their job abroad. Interestingly for our study, this essential characteristic found in the participants is rooted in their motivations to work in order to support the financial needs of their families back home. This presents itself as another important layer involved in the motivational CQ of these OFWs. The participants chose to migrate and leave their loved ones behind in order to support them.

When faced with challenges and difficulties in work, the women recall the reasons they decided to work abroad. They chose to endure and persevere, and to learn from past cultural experiences and cross-cultural interactions to overcome difficulties.

#### *4.3. Making Cultural Learnings Their Own*

Wang & Geale (2015) believe that when narrators share their stories, they are given the opportunity for dialogue and reflection. As the participants shared their stories and narrated their experiences, they were able to recognize those past experiences that were of importance to them for their own future and the future of their families. Previous studies have shown how narration allows individuals to construct the realities they were situated in and to bring order and meaning to their experiences and the current changes in their lives (Hiles & Cermák, 2008; Schiff, 2012; Murray, 2015). The participants were able to recount events and see how their past actions were meaningful in shaping their lives at the present.

While their stories unfolded and developed, they too were able to make better sense of their experiences. Looking back and seeing where they are now after returning to their families in the Philippines, they had brought home many of their cultural learnings and realizations while abroad and allowed themselves to take these life lessons to heart and apply them to their own lives. They had wanted to share what they learned and experienced with their loved ones by choosing to adopt the cultural values of the host country that they worked in. In embracing the lives they had abroad, along with the particular culture they were exposed to, they had adopted their cultural learnings and made them their own as they returned home. In making sense of their experiences abroad and seeing as these had positive impacts on their lives, they felt that it was only fitting to apply these cultural values and practices in their everyday lives at home, especially while being both a mother and a homemaker.

#### *4.4. Theoretical Implications*

The results of the study showed the possibility and relevance of a qualitative approach in further exploring the development of CQ, especially as most studies on this construct have used quantitative methods (Fang et al., 2018). In-depth insights were gathered from the perspectives of the migrant domestic workers that broadened the understanding of their CQ development. In addition, this study also demonstrated how CQ is present and can be developed across various natures of work. CQ can and should be studied beyond managers, leaders, and individuals with complex jobs, and delve deeper into the lives of migrant domestic workers as well. As seen in the results of this study, the number of strategies done by the participants, as well as the characteristics they embodied, reflect the different aspects of CQ.

#### *4.5. Limitations and Implications to Research*

The study focused on the development of CQ of migrant Filipina domestic workers. Though the narratives highlighted how their CQ developed across their experiences before, during, and after migration, one limitation observed was that the participants were OFWs in Asia alone. Most of the participants worked in Hong Kong and only a few had experiences in some countries in the Middle East. Aside from this, all the participants interviewed were domestic workers. The study was not able to examine the experiences of other workers in the informal sector, as well as the experiences of OFWs in other continents, which may help further understand the nature of CQ and its development. Hence, the researchers suggest to involve more countries and other workers in the informal sector in this research on the development of CQ so as to generalize the experiences of the participants to the rest of the OFWs.

Another limitation found was that though the study required the participants to have worked at least two years under their employers, it did not control for the number of years of experience that the OFW has had. Their narratives had shown how their process of learning about the host culture and their ability to interact effectively in cross-cultural interactions differs depending on their previous experiences as OFWs, if any. The researchers recognized that being a first-timer or an experienced OFW greatly influences how an individual's CQ develops. On the one hand, first-timers are more inclined to undergo training and workshops prior to migration and they engage in more self-initiated strategies in order to enhance their development of their CQ. On the other hand, OFWs who have had previous work experience rely more on their past experiences and cultural learnings then build up their CQ from there. Future researchers are then suggested to test the effect of this characteristic of participants on the development of CQ.

Since the study further presented the relevance of studying CQ and its development using only a qualitative approach, it is recommended that future research examine this construct through mixed methods. This is in order to have a wider understanding of this relatively new construct. Further looking into the effectivity and importance of the government trainings and workshops, along with the self-initiated strategies of the migrant domestic workers may also add to the dearth of research on CQ. Another potential research area is to examine the personalities and family dynamics of employers. The results of the study included the characteristics of one's employers as a pertinent theme, and it is recommended to explore this aspect more using quantitative methods as it plays a role in the development of an individual's CQ. This is to address how most research on CQ focuses solely on the personality traits of the employee, and not their employers (Fang et al., 2018).

#### *4.6. Practical Implications*

This study explores the different realities faced by our OFWs. These realities must be recognized, especially for manpower agencies and the Philippine government in order to better serve these workers. Apart from domestic violence, isolation, and in some countries, the lack of rest days or days off, these migrant domestic workers also experience challenges involving language barriers. These affect not only the development of their CQ, but also their overall well-being. With this, the government may need to provide new and improved training programs and workshops, particularly in terms of extending the duration of each program to be able to include more relevant content that address the issues faced by our OFWs. In a recent study, it was found that the overall CQ of the participants of a two-hour classroom training, group work, and role playing activity improved (Reichard et al., 2014). This effect went on to last for a month after the training ended. This suggests that if more training programs with longer durations were given, the effect of CQ improvement would be longer lasting especially that the current PDOS in the Philippines only lasts for two hours. The Philippine government, represented by our various embassies abroad, may also implement more projects and systems that more effectively protect and help our OFWs. Since some of the participants in this study relied on the internet, the government can develop a mobile application that contains necessary cultural information about the host countries these workers are in and information about the government in those countries (i.e., location of embassies and Filipino support groups).

#### *4.7. Reflexivity*

At the beginning of our thesis journey, we were very unsure of where this would take us. Two of the researchers grew up with fathers who are OFWs and this motivated us to pursue this research. We believed that doing so would allow us to get a glimpse of the demands of the work of OFWs and to be able to gain greater understanding of their experiences. Studying CQ, which is a fairly new construct, and taking a narrative approach brought about fresh insights

and allowed us to delve deeper into the life and experiences of our country's own migrant workers. Examining narratives on CQ development made us realize the struggles that our parents and other OFWs may have gone through, especially since learning about another country's culture is not as easy as it seems. As a whole, the study granted us more empathy towards their experiences and all they endure. We learned so much from the women we interviewed as they embodied a special kind of strength driven by a real kind of love for their families. We admire the strength and perseverance they showed through their narratives. We only hope to become like them: strong, loving, and persevering working women.

## **5. Conclusion**

Our study examined the development of CQ across the narratives of migrant domestic workers prior, during, and after their migration. Contextualized in the transnational and global movement of labor in the Philippines, we looked at how migrant domestic workers are capable of cross-cultural interactions and communication. In particular, we examined how they demonstrated the different dimensions of CQ throughout the various points of their journey. The narrative approach was used to have a better understanding of the cross-cultural experiences and stories of the participants. Through their narratives, we were able to see the development of the dimensions of CQ throughout their journey. The training and workshops they received prior to their migration helped in the development of their cognitive CQ, as it provided them with knowledge about the host culture. This aspect of CQ, along with behavioral CQ, was also developed through self-initiated strategies, exposure to environmental factors such as the characteristics of their employers, the culture of the host country, and having the financial needs of their family as the main source of motivation to work abroad. With their families in mind, they showed the characteristic of *pagtitiis* or perseverance. This led to the development of their motivational CQ. Our findings contribute to the lack of research on CQ, specifically on migrant domestic workers. In particular, this study further explored the migration and mobility of migrant domestic workers, examining CQ as an important aspect of migration, and how the development of its dimensions can be captured through narratives.

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