



Predictors of Employment Outcomes among Filipino Workers in Malta

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Abstract. The work-related experiences of migrants vary significantly across groups and are affected by the interaction of the migrants' characteristics with those of the host country. This study investigates the influence of a number of personal factors on the work-related outcomes of Filipino migrants in Malta. Data about seven personal characteristics and nine work-related outcomes were gathered from a sample of 317 Filipino workers and analyzed through inferential statistics. Male and female respondents experience similar work outcomes, apart from access to training which is higher among males. Older workers have better work outcomes than younger ones. They are treated more fairly, face less discrimination, take less sick leave and are less likely to exhibit presenteeism. Knowledge of local employment laws is related to higher levels of job satisfaction, fair treatment, and ability to influence decisions at work. Counter intuitively, level of education is positively related to perceived discrimination. Besides, having a high skilled job and working in the public sector are related to greater health and safety risks and more sick leave. These unexpected results may be explained through the migrants' higher expectations and greater awareness and sensitivity towards working conditions. This study confirms the utility of a nuanced approach when examining the working conditions of Filipino migrants and highlights the predictive ability of age, skills level of job, sector of employment and knowledge of local employment laws.

Keywords: Filipino workers, migrants, predictors, employment outcomes, Malta

Acknowledgements. The authors would like to thank: the Consulate of the Republic of the Philippines and the Filipino Community in Malta for providing access to the participants; the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Condi-

tions for granting permission to use the raw data of the 6th EWCS; Jobsplus (Malta) for supplying data about Filipino workers in Malta.

1 Introduction

It is widely recognized that the active labour market participation of migrants is an important contributor towards their social integration (Cheung et al., 2014). Research indicates that migrants often experience worse employment outcomes than nationals (Ambrosini et al., 2007; OECD/EU, 2018). The labour market situation of migrants in many countries appears to have worsened in both absolute and relative terms since the 2007–8 global financial crisis (OECD, 2013) and has remained particularly bad in Southern Europe due to the general economic difficulties of the region (OECD/EU, 2018).

Migrants are a heterogeneous category that might have very little in common apart from living in a foreign country. By only focusing on the most common work experiences or challenges of migrants, it is easy to miss significant variations from such average experiences. Indeed, the work-related experiences of migrants vary significantly across groups (OECD, 2013). Such outcomes are inevitably affected by the interaction of different aspects of the host country with the migrant's personal factors. Aspects of the host country, such as the economy, culture, legal framework, and political climate, may play an important role in the work experiences of migrants. On the other hand, research also indicates the important role that intersectionality (i.e. how different aspects of a person's identity such as race, class, gender etc. combine and lead to discrimination) plays in increasing the vulnerability experienced by migrant workers (e.g. Alberti et al., 2013; Ressia et al., 2017). For example, a highly qualified female worker from a lower caste in India would experience different career barriers in liberal Sweden than in India, and would also

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experience different career barriers from a low-skilled Norwegian man living in Sweden.

While third country nationals living within the EU experience worse social outcomes than European migrants (OECD/EU, 2018), their working conditions are not particularly high on the national agendas of EU countries, a situation reflecting the negative sentiment towards foreigners which has spread across the world in recent years. This is not to say that governments are not doing anything to help the immigrants. Indeed, many countries are working “to improve the process of recognition of qualifications, promote language courses, and ensure that immigrants are included in active labour market policies, while alleviating the constraints that may limit the employment opportunities for [different] migrant groups” (OECD/EU, 2018, p. 69). Since the employment outcomes of migrants have significant consequences on their social integration and on a country’s larger social cohesion, the predictors of positive work outcomes merit particular attention and have significant policy implications.

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of a number of personal factors on the work-related outcomes of Filipino migrants living in the European country of Malta. This study explores whether foreign research findings are replicable within the specific scenario of Malta. In particular, it is hypothesized that seven personal factors of Filipino workers, namely gender, age, years spent in Malta, level of education, skill level of job, employment sector, and knowledge of employment law are related to nine important employment outcomes, namely skills adequacy, access to training, occupational health and safety, perceived discrimination, sick leave, presenteeism, job satisfaction, fairness of treatment and ability to influence decisions at work.

Malta is the smallest member state of the European Union (EU) by both geographical area (316 sq km) and population (c. 475,000 inhabitants); it is also by far the densest (with over 1,500 inhabitants per sq km). In recent years, and until the arrival of Covid-19, the country had experienced an unprecedented trend of economic expansion, registering the highest real GDP growth (at 6.7%) in the EU in 2018 (European Commission, 2019). Strong performance in particular sectors such as finance, iGaming, tourism, retail, and construction has contributed to this trend. The need for human resources was increasing in line with the expansion of the economy. Unemployment was very low and employers were experiencing staff shortages, a situation that was stifling business growth (Costa, 2018). According to the European Commission (2018), over 30% of the companies in Malta were struggling to fill job vacancies, which were often being taken up by foreign workers. The presence of EU internal migrants and ‘third country nationals’ (that is,

migrants coming from outside the EU) was rapidly increasing, aided by government policy meant to assist employers in resolving their human resource needs. The ratio of foreign workers thus boomed from about 1% in 2000 (Central Bank of Malta, 2016) to about 20% in 2018.

The focus on Filipino workers in this study derives from the fact that they are the largest group of third country nationals in Malta, consisting of a total of 2,882 workers in April 2018 (Jobsplus, 2018). About one out of every five third country national migrant workers in Malta is Filipino (Jobsplus, 2018). Contextualizing the Maltese situation within the EU scenario, “around 800,000 Filipinos live in Europe, making it a less popular destination for their diaspora (estimated at 10.5 million) than the Americas or Asia (4.3 million each). Nevertheless, the Philippines is consistently among the fifteen countries of origin of non-EU migrants to the EU. The largest Filipino communities [in Europe] are in the United Kingdom (220,000) and Italy (184,000)” (European Parliament, 2018, p. 6).

After outlining the rationale, scope and context of this study, the next section reviews research about significant predictors of work-related outcomes among migrants.

2 Review of Literature

This section presents research findings divided across four interdependent dimensions, namely: skills adequacy and training opportunities; occupational health and safety and sick leave; worker participation and job satisfaction; and fair treatment and indiscriminate conditions of work. These four dimensions were chosen due to the significant role they play in the quality of working lives. Besides, as will be discussed below, international literature indicates that migrants and nationals vary in their experience of such dimensions.

2.1 Skills adequacy and training opportunities

Working above or below one’s skill levels is conducive to negative work and personal outcomes. 45% of a sample of Latin American migrants in Germany researched by Espinoza-Castro et al. (2018) reported symptoms of distress as a consequence of working below their skill level, resulting in poor psychosocial wellbeing. On the other hand, a good match between one’s skills and one’s job may improve work performance and contribute to overall wellbeing at work. For example, research highlighted the importance of skill utilization for job satisfaction among high skilled migrants (e.g. Tian et al., 2018).

A survey across EU countries showed that the prevalence of educational mismatch is highest among third country nationals (CEDEFOP, 2018). While over the past decade, the over qualification gap between third- and host-country nationals has decreased, 42% of highly

educated non-EU nationals are still currently over-qualified for the job they do, against 22% of highly-educated EU nationals (OECD/EU, 2018). The average rate of over-qualification among third country workers is higher in particular EU countries such as Italy and Greece (OECD/EU, 2015). In Italy “the general pattern for foreign workers appears to be a fragmented career, either restricted to seasonal or temporary jobs or alternating between legal and illegal employment” (Venturini et al., 2008, p. 517). This reality probably also reflects the situation of migrants in other countries.

Accreditation problems, a language disadvantage, lack of labour market information, and identity-based discrimination may all lead to migrants taking jobs below their skill levels (Sert, 2016). Professional regulatory bodies often underestimate the worth of foreign qualifications. Besides, foreign work experience tends to be devalued by employers for reasons that “range from discrimination and racism based on country of origin, to ignorance about the value migrants’ experience could offer an organization” (Suto, 2009, p. 419).

Research evidence indicates that skills mismatch varies among different social groups. More migrant women than men appear to be overqualified. “EU-wide, the immigrant female over-qualification rate is 14 percentage points higher than that of their native peers, while the male rate is 11 percentage points higher” (OECD/EU, 2018, p. 149). It has been noted that irrespective of their country of origin, young workers in Europe are at risk of “being trapped in jobs that do not reflect their skills and qualifications” (Simola, 2018, pp. 460–461). The outcomes of young people with a migrant background in Europe are less favourable than those of their peers with native-born parents (OECD/EU, 2018). One assumes that, in general and over time, people move closer to jobs matching their skills. Thus, older Maltese persons are more likely to be in jobs that match their skills level (Eurofund, 2017) when compared to younger workers.

Training opportunities are a means of increasing the person-job fit. Research indicates that access to training varies according to different factors. For example, access is higher in the public sector than the private sector (Božič, 2019). The reasons for this might include the fact that private companies face more challenges (including financial and HR constraints) to invest in training and their fear of losing trained employees. Workers’ level of education is also correlated to greater access to training (Božič, 2019). This finding has been replicated among Maltese workers (Eurofund, 2017). The unequal distribution of training opportunities might be due to the organisations’ larger economic returns in training highly-educated workers. At the same time, poorly-educated workers might be less willing to participate

in training, due to economic preferences and personality traits (Fouarge et al., 2013). Access to training also tends to be positively correlated to age (Božič, 2019). However, older persons in Malta have less access to training than younger ones (Eurofund, 2017). While data for Maltese workers indicate that workers in high skilled jobs are more likely to receive training than those in low skilled jobs, they are also more likely to feel that they need further training to cope well with their duties than persons in low skilled jobs (Eurofund, 2017).

The decreased likelihood of migrants to access training has been well documented (e.g. Grainger, 2006). The need for training is accentuated by the fact that, among non-EU nationals aged 15 to 64 years, 19% (or 2.6 million individuals) only achieved primary school education. While that share has declined by 2.5% percentage points over the last decade, it remains four times as high as among nationals (OECD/EU, 2018). It is unsurprising that the higher accident rates among migrants have been related to these workers’ relative inexperience and lack of safety training (Koukoulaki, 2010). On their own, training and qualifications may be unable to improve the employment outcomes of migrants. Indeed, gaps in unemployment between host- and third-country nationals are wider among the highly rather than the poorly educated (OECD/EU, 2018).

Trade unions in Europe have been vocal advocates for basic training and re-skilling programmes for migrant workers. In 2007, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in the UK acknowledged that a large number of migrant workers have considerable difficulty with speaking and understanding English, and this could be one of the most significant barriers to ensuring that they are suitably trained and informed (Trade Union Congress UK, 2007). To this effect, unions both in Malta and elsewhere have taken the lead to offer access to language training for migrants and to educate their shop stewards on how to function within multicultural workplaces (General Workers Union, 2020; International Labor Organisation, 2005).

2.2 Occupational health and safety and sick leave

Migrants are more likely to experience occupational health and safety risks than nationals. Higher occupational injury rates are consistently documented among migrants when compared to native workers (Koukoulaki, 2010; Sterud et al., 2018), and these rates appear to be related to their different working conditions (You et al., 2015). It is well known that migrants concentrate in specific sectors and occupations (Ellis et al., 2007). They often work in hotels and catering, construction and care work, sectors which, as García-Pérez et al. (2019) affirm, have a higher incidence of precarious employment. Indeed, in their systematic attempt to summarize in-

ternational literature that examines working conditions among immigrants in Europe and Canada, Sterud et al. (2018) confirm that poor occupational factors may partly contribute to the higher risk of sick leave or disability pension among immigrants. Maltese persons with lower levels of education are more likely to experience health or safety risks than those with higher education (Eurofund, 2017).

The above-mentioned sectors are often non-unionized. As expected, Niu (2010) reports that non-unionised workers are subject to higher health and safety risks. The reasons for this could include differences in training in safer work practices and in working experiences, as well as different job assignments in connection to age, sex and physical size and strength. The absence of unionization among migrant workers who form part of this “traditionally unorganized and invisible” workforce (Garofalo Geymonat et al., 2017) renders their working environment fertile ground for abuse, exploitation and denial of labour and human rights, which results in health and safety problems.

While difficult to quantify, it is well known that many migrants have irregular and undocumented legal status. This status may direct migrants to less regulated or protected employment sectors. Thus, as expected, Benach et al. (2011) conclude that migrant status is a key cross-cutting factor linking employment and working conditions to health inequalities. Migrants, especially irregular ones, may also experience language barriers in the receiving country: such barriers are known to also impede safe and healthy work environments (Viveros-Guzmán et al., 2015).

Among the multitude of factors that may contribute to greater occupational health and safety risks among migrants, one finds the interesting though insufficiently studied aspect of cultural practices. For example, in a study among Filipino workers in Alaska, Garcia et al. (2017) mention two cultural values of Filipinos, namely ‘pakikisama’ (or getting along with others) and ‘hiya’ (or shame), that may end up increasing health and safety risks at work. In order to continue getting along with others, when Filipinos “are treated unfairly or with disrespect from supervisors or when they feel they may have made a mistake, they are less likely to report disrespect or mistakes or they will minimize the situation” (Garcia et al., 2017, p. 223). On the other hand, the fear (or shame) of being unable to reach their goals may drive Filipino supervisors to put too much pressure on their workers.

Indeed, the potential effects of culture in relation to health and safety are important and wide ranging. For example, culture may affect the likelihood of reporting minor injuries and health issues. Third-country nationals across the EU report being in better health than na-

tionals, particularly in Southern Europe; however, evidence shows that non-EU foreigners are less likely to report poor health than domestic nationals (OECD/EU, 2015). Culture may also affect the amount of leave taken by employees. In their study on the legitimacy of absenteeism from work, Addae et al. (2013) found that there are normative differences based on ethnic diversity about what constitutes a reasonable level of absence from work. Thus Japanese workers view absenteeism from work as least legitimate, followed by Americans and then Canadians, reflecting the differences in absence rates across these countries (Addae et al., 2013).

Differences in occupational health and safety risks are also related to demographics. Young workers, especially males aged between 15 and 24 years, are more likely than older workers to report non-fatal injuries at work (Woods et al., 2010). The reasons that have been put forward for this include the young workers’ greater propensity to take risks, illusion of invulnerability, rebelliousness, greater propensity for substance abuse, lack of control in their workplace, and lower levels of unionization (Woods et al., 2010). International research also links higher risks of precariousness and health and safety to female workers (e.g. Niu, 2010; Ronda-Pérez et al., 2012). Having said that, according to Eurofund (2017) data, Maltese men are more likely to believe that their health or safety is at risk because of their work than Maltese women.

Research carried out in Australia also indicates that “recent immigrants, compared to native-born workers, are more likely to work in jobs that expose them to hazards and increase their risk of injury” (Kosny et al., 2016, p. 99). This is in line with a study showing that short stay and undocumented migrants in Sweden presented lower health related quality of life than those staying for a longer period of time (Andersson et al., 2018). In another study about Latin-American migrants in Germany, Espinoza-Castro et al. (2018) found that, while the link between time of residence in the host country and psychological and physiological distress was not statistically significant, there appeared a trend of decreasing distress with longer time of residency.

2.3 Worker participation and job satisfaction

Gonzales (2010) recognizes the positive consequences of workers’ direct participation at the place of work in terms of stronger work relations, job enrichment and higher degree of influence. Worker participation also helps workers to feel more in control of their lives, which may lead to a better ability to deal with stress (Woods et al., 2010). Pillinger (2016) observes that when vulnerable workers, such as migrants, are denied their legitimate voice within their organization and are not given any opportunity to participate in collective bargaining and access to justice, they are more likely to experi-

ence psychosocial risks and violence at the workplace. However, Gonzales (2010) also argues that direct participation may lead to some negative outcomes such as greater time pressures and stress as a result of work intensification.

Gonzales (2010) concludes that direct participation is weaker in those industries where there is greater dependence on low-skilled work, where organisations rely heavily on insecure forms of work and where unions are not well established. In addition, García-Pérez et al. (2019) maintain that part-time employment is associated with poorer working conditions, including fewer opportunities for participation. As discussed earlier in this study, migrant workers tend to find themselves in such jobs. Thus, it is likely that they do not have much voice in their work. In a qualitative study about immigrants' perceptions on their working conditions in Spain, Ahoen et al. (2009) found that informants' deficient language skills, non-transferability of their education and training and, most of all, their immigrant status left them with little choice but to work under poor conditions and without any voice in their working environment.

Low workplace participation may decrease job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a very important attitude as it reflects a person's psychological well-being and, though the link is not straightforward, it may lead to motivation and higher work performance (Arnold et al., 2016). Job satisfaction has also been linked to other work outcomes such as absenteeism (Arnold et al., 2016).

Some research evidence indicates that migrants (including internal ones) experience lower levels of job satisfaction when compared to locals (Chowhan et al., 2012; Siow et al., 2013; Tian et al., 2018). In their investigations of occupational realities of migrant workers in the health sector, de Vries et al. (2016) conclude that migration seems to 'pay-off' in terms of work and labour conditions but, with the exception of doctors, migrants reported a lower quality of life due to rock bottom levels of job satisfaction. In their study about correlates of career satisfaction in Canada among high paid managers and professionals, Yap et al. (2014) similarly conclude that immigrants experience lower career satisfaction than native-borns. In particular, research connects skilled migrants with low levels of satisfaction (Tian et al., 2018). Since skilled migrants would have invested considerable time, money and effort to achieve their skills level, their skills and job may play a particularly important role in their self-definition. Thus, it has been hypothesized that "when skilled migrants sense a low level of skill utilization, the sense of a less-than-ideal person-job fit limits the opportunity for skilled migrants to form [a] positive self-concept through the context of work-based situations and activities, which is a critical

source of meaning and self-definition for migrants" (Tian et al., 2018, pp. 264–265). On the other hand, some studies link migrants in unskilled work to higher levels of job satisfaction. For example Olesen et al. (2012) report that "lower job expectations among the immigrant cleaners may result in higher satisfaction and, therefore, a more positive view on the psychosocial work environment" (p. 94).

Most barriers experienced by migrants tend to diminish over time in the receiving country (Rendall et al., 2010). In line with this, research indicates that the gap in job dissatisfaction between migrants and native-borns diminished among long-term migrants (Kifle et al., 2016). In relation to this finding, there is also considerable evidence showing that job satisfaction increases with age among workers in general (Arnold et al., 2016). This might be partly explained by the fact that, over time, workers manage to move to jobs that they fit better in. Besides, older persons have more realistic and healthy expectations. However, it is unclear whether this finding holds among migrants.

2.4 Fair treatment and indiscriminate conditions of work

The experiences of many migrants are characterized by discrimination and marginalization (Secretary-General, U.N., 2016). Eurostat and the Labour Force Survey showed that there is discrimination against migrant workers at all stages of the employment cycle, including during hiring and recruitment, as well as layoffs (European Parliament, 2014). Buckley et al. (2016) maintain that the risk of discrimination among migrant workers varies according to a number of factors, namely employment sector, gender and ethnicity, employment skills, nature of employment contract, 'visibility' of ethnicity and socio-economic status. Almost 40% of non-EU nationals in Greece and more than one-third in Belgium consider that they belong to a group that has been subject to discrimination (OECD/EU, 2018). Perceived discrimination or bullying were also found to be consistently higher among immigrant workers than among natives in the review of literature carried out by Sterud et al. (2018).

Female migrants are sometimes at risk of double or triple discrimination on the basis of age, gender and/or ethnicity (European Parliament, 2014). The Trade Union Congress UK (2007) maintains that there is a strong link between the high levels of sexual harassment experienced by younger women and the fact that the latter are more likely to be in low-paid, casual, and insecure work. Similarly, Poulston (2008) states that casual, part-time, young, and female workers are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment. Apart from gender, age might also increase people's susceptibility to discrimination. It has been documented that in Europe,

young people are “far more likely than other groups to be employed in precarious jobs” (Simola, 2018, p. 460), which places them at higher risk of discrimination.

Discrimination may be a major reason why migrants end up in particular jobs according to their ethnic background. The ‘visibility’ of a migrant’s ethnicity—which varies according to the skin, hair and eye colour of the native population—exposes them to more risks, including unmet mental health needs (Office of the Surgeon General (US), Center for Mental Health Services (US) & National Institute of Mental Health, 2001). A study carried out in Italy found that “African immigrants have the fewest career prospects while Eastern European and Asian workers are less far behind” (Venturini et al., 2008, p. 517). Ruhs et al. (2010, p. 27) maintain that “employers draw on socially meaningful stereotypes or their own experiences generalized” to explain the suitability of particular nationalities for specific jobs. Duncan et al. (2004) argue that sometimes, workers’ appropriateness is determined categorically, based on the gender, age, race and/or nationality of the job candidates, rather than individual merit. Thus, for instance, specific traits are generally attributed to Filipinos, such as the ability to get along with others in order to avoid conflict (Andres, 1996).

Over the years, EU countries have construed unique ways to restrict EU migrants’ access to rights in their countries, and consequentially increase the migrants’ precariousness (Simola, 2018). Researching on the extent of labour integration of migrants in Cyprus, Trimikliniotis et al. (2011) ponder on the ineffective labour market regulations and the reproduction of racist ideologies by ‘scapegoating’ migrants which is the guise behind the brewing of extreme right and racist ideas. The European Commission’s country report on Malta in 2018 states that, while measures are in place to facilitate migrants’ recruitment, there are indications that certain third country migrants may not fully benefit from standard rights and conditions and may also encounter discrimination (European Commission, 2018).

39% of immigrants/ethnic minorities in the EU are unaware of legislation forbidding discrimination in employment and so may not report incidents (European Parliament, 2014). This lack of legislative awareness, according to the European Parliament, renders migrant workers even more vulnerable to lower remuneration, anti-social working hours and discriminatory practices by colleagues and customers. In relation to this finding, according to the OECD/EU (2015), the lower a person’s level of education, the keener their sense of discrimination. Indeed, 23% of less-educated non-EU nationals believe they belong to a singled-out group, while the rate among the highly educated is 16%. In relation to this point, in a study revolving around the hospitality

industry, Ram (2018) concludes that low status employees may face structure-related violence both from their bosses and from clients. Having said that, employment discrimination against skilled migrants has also been amply documented (Dietz et al., 2015), with either their skills being devalued or being viewed as a threat to locals. This finding might not be replicated among nationals. For example, Maltese persons in high skilled jobs are more likely to be treated fairly at work than employees in low skilled jobs (Eurofund, 2017).

Chiswick’s (1978) “labour-market assimilation hypothesis” suggests that institutional and individual discrimination against foreign-born workers decreases with additional years in the receiving country, “as the migrant obtains authorization to work legally in a greater range of occupations and employment sectors, and as the migrant’s increasing language and cultural skills potentially reduce individual employer discrimination that is related little to their job-performance abilities” (Rendall et al., 2010, p. 384). According to Hamori (2009), data from the Northern and the Western EU member states are consistent with Chiswick’s (1978) hypothesis. However, “the employment gap between natives and similar EU-born was smaller in magnitude than that between natives and otherwise-comparable individuals born outside the EU. Furthermore, as opposed to those born outside the EU, convergence was almost complete for the EU-born after 10 years of residence in the receiving country” Hamori (2009, p. 19). On the other hand, data about Southern and Eastern Europe are not in line with Chiswick (1978). For instance, the employment rate of women born outside the EU living in Southern Europe exceeds those of native-born. Rendall et al. (2010) also confirm that the labour-market assimilation hypothesis does not clearly explain the labour market trajectories of women.

3 Method

This section outlines the participants, research instrument, and procedure adopted in this study.

3.1 Population and participants

This study was carried out among the population of Filipino workers in Malta. As can be seen in Table 1, most of these workers are female and under the age of 40 (67% each). The large majority of these migrants work in elementary occupations or services and sales (43% and 39% respectively). Besides, the most common employment sector among Filipino workers is Administrative and Support Service Activities, followed by Human Health and Social Work Activities (employing 40% and 23% of Filipinos respectively) (Jobsplus, 2018).

317 individuals participated in this survey, representing 11% of all the Filipino workers in Malta in 2018. While participation in the survey was based on oppor-

	Gender		Age		Total
	Female	Male	< 40	40+	
Elementary Occupations	712	537	882	367	1,249
Services & sales workers	955	177	652	480	1,132
Professionals	114	73	173	14	187
Plant & machine operator & assemblers	65	59	81	43	124
Technicians & Associate Professionals	45	49	72	22	94
Craft & related trades workers	12	35	32	15	47
Clerks & support workers	22	4	22	4	26
Managers	15	8	18	5	23
<i>Grand Total</i>	1,940	942	1,932	950	2,882

Table 1: Occupational Categories by Gender and Age (April 2018), Source: Jobsplus 2018

tunity sampling, the respondents approximated the population in terms of gender, age, and occupational categories. The sample consisted of 241 females and 76 males (forming 76% and 24% of the total respondents respectively). 61% of the respondents were younger than 40 years, while 72% worked in elementary or services and sales occupations. Most of the respondents had lived in Malta between one and five years (59.7%). The large majority of the individuals included in the sample (82.6%) were in possession of a post-secondary or tertiary level of education, whereas the remaining had a secondary level of education (17.4%).

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument consisted of a brief questionnaire of 24 mainly close-ended items focusing on demographics details, basic employment information, working conditions and job-related attitudes and perceptions. Most of the items derived from the 6th European Working Conditions Survey (Eurofund, 2019). The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering note explaining the purpose of the study, guaranteeing anonymity and providing the researchers' contact details.

3.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was modified and finalized after conducting a pilot study. Data were gathered in two different ways. The researchers were given the opportunity to distribute a hard copy of the questionnaire during a Christmas party organized by Filipino community groups in Malta. The method returned a rather low number of 91 properly filled questionnaires. In order to boost the number of replies, an online version of the questionnaire was developed and the link was distributed among the Filipino community in Malta in January 2019. This method yielded a further 226 replies, bring-

ing the total of filled questionnaires to 317. The results were inputted onto a spreadsheet and examined through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Chi-Square tests were carried out to analyse potential relations between the independent and dependent variables of interest in this study.

4 Results

The results section is divided into seven subsections, namely according to: gender; age; years spent in Malta; level of education; level of skill required by job; employment sector and knowledge of employment laws.

4.1 Gender

Chi square tests reveal that the gender of the respondents is not significantly related to almost any of the dependent variables of interest in this study. Table 2 indicates that being male or female is not strongly linked to one's skills adequacy, job satisfaction, the level of work absenteeism or presenteeism, one's perception of health and safety risk at work, fair treatment or discrimination, or influence on important work decisions. However, male respondents are significantly more likely to have undergone some type of training over the past year (which could have been paid for by the employer, by the respondents themselves, or on-the-job-training) when compared to their female peers: $\chi^2(1, N = 317) = 6.8, p < 0.01$.

4.2 Age

As can be seen in Table 3, when compared to the younger respondents, older respondents aged 40+ years spent significantly fewer days absent from work due to health issues: $\chi^2(1, N = 298) = 11.8, p < 0.01$, and worked less while sick over past year: $\chi^2(1, N = 283) = 7.0, p < 0.01$. Older respondents are also significantly

	Male (%) ¹	Female (%) ¹	N	P
Adequately skilled	45.2	55.1	300	2.2
Access to training over past year	90.8	77.2	317	6.8**
Occupational health/ safety at risk	57.7	44.3	283	3.8
Discriminated at work over past year	32.4	25.6	301	1.3
Took health-related leave over past year	73.0	69.0	300	0.4
Worked while sick over past year	50.7	50.0	285	0.0
Overall satisfied with working conditions	62.5	65.9	304	0.3
Treated fairly at the workplace	63.4	68.6	281	0.6
Able to influence important work decisions	62.9	69.6	277	1.1

¹ Yes answers only, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2: Work outcomes by gender

less likely to have experienced discrimination at work over the previous year $\chi^2(1, N = 299) = 8.1, p < 0.01$. Besides, they are more likely to perceive to be treated fairly at work: $\chi^2(1, N = 280) = 11.1, p < 0.01$. However, no significant age differences were found in relation to skills adequacy, access to training, occupational health and safety at work, overall satisfaction with working conditions and ability to influence important work decisions.

4.3 Years Spent in Malta

Chi Square tests reveal that Filipino workers who have been in Malta for less than a year took less health-related leave over the course of the year prior to the survey $\chi^2(2, N = 296) = 15.0, p < 0.01$ (see Table 4). On the other hand, the respondents who lived in Malta between 1 and 5 years are most likely to have suffered from discrimination at work during the past year $\chi^2(2, N = 297) = 13.4, p < 0.01$. The number of years that Filipino workers spend in Malta was not found to be related to skills adequacy, access to training, occupational health and safety risks, presenteeism, overall satisfaction with working conditions, fair treatment or ability to influence important work decisions.

4.4 Level of Education

When compared to the respondents with a secondary level of education, those with a post-secondary or tertiary level of education report: higher levels of discrimination at work over the previous year: $\chi^2(1, N = 300) = 6.3, p < 0.05$; and greater likelihood of having worked while sick over the previous year: $\chi^2(1, N = 284) = 5.3, p < 0.05$. However, as can be seen from Table 5, level of education is not strongly related to skills adequacy, access to education, occupational health and safety risk, health-related leave, overall satisfaction with working conditions, fair treatment at the workplace or

ability to influence important work decisions.

4.5 Level of skill required by job

Chi squared tests indicate that respondents working in high skilled jobs are more likely to feel that their health or safety is at risk because of their work when compared to their peers working in low skilled jobs: $\chi^2(1, N = 283) = 4.7, p < 0.05$, and also took more health-related leave over the previous year $\chi^2(1, N = 300) = 4.1, p < 0.05$. Besides, respondents working in high skilled jobs were also more likely to access training when compared to those working in low skilled jobs: $\chi^2(1, N = 317) = 4.7, p < 0.05$. On the other hand, the level of skills required by their job was not significantly related to levels of skills adequacy, discrimination, presenteeism, work satisfaction, fair treatment or ability to influence important work decisions (See Table 6).

4.6 Employment sector

Respondents who work in the public sector are significantly more likely to have undergone some form of training than those in the private sector $\chi^2(1, N = 312) = 4.0, p < 0.05$ (see Table 7). They are also more likely to state that their health or safety is at risk because of their work: $\chi^2(1, N = 279) = 13.2, p < 0.001$. Besides, respondents working in the public sector took significantly more health-related leave over the past year when compared to their peers working in the private sector: $\chi^2(1, N = 296) = 6.6, p < 0.05$. However, the sector of employment is not linked to skills adequacy, discrimination, unfair treatment, job satisfaction, ability to influence important work decisions, or presenteeism.

4.7 Knowledge of Employment Laws

As can be seen in Table 8, Chi Square tests reveal that knowledge of Malta's employment laws is correlated to: greater levels of job satisfaction: $\chi^2(1, N = 278) = 7.5,$

	< 40 (%) ¹	40+ (%) ¹	N	P
Adequately skilled	53.0	53.0	298	0.0
Access to training over past year	82.8	76.4	315	1.9
Occupational health/ safety at risk	52.3	41.3	281	3.3
Discriminated at work over past year	32.8	17.7	299	8.1**
Took health-related leave over past year	76.9	58.0	298	11.8**
Worked while sick over past year	56.0	39.6	283	7.0**
Overall satisfied with working conditions	61.3	70.2	302	2.5
Treated fairly at the workplace	60.0	79.1	280	11.1**
Able to influence important work decisions	64.3	72.9	275	2.2

¹ Yes answers only, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3: Work outcomes by age

	< 1 (%) ¹	1-5 (%) ¹	> 5 (%) ¹	N	P
Adequately skilled	53.8	50.3	59.0	298	1.7
Access to training over past year	81.0	81.8	77.4	313	0.7
Occupational health/ safety at risk	55.9	46.7	43.4	279	1.5
Discriminated at work over past year	12.5	34.7	17.3	297	13.4**
Took health-related leave over past year	43.2	75.0	72.3	296	15.0**
Worked while sick over past year	39.4	53.5	44.9	281	3.1
Overall satisfied with working conditions	54.1	64.2	72.6	300	4.1
Treated fairly at the workplace	69.4	63.1	76.0	279	4.0
Able to influence important work decisions	63.9	65.6	76.8	273	3.2

¹ Yes answers only, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4: Work outcomes by years spent in Malta

	Secondary (%) ¹	Post-sec/Tertiary (%) ¹	N	P
Adequately skilled	57.1	52.0	299	0.4
Access to training over past year	76.4	81.6	316	0.8
Occupational health/ safety at risk	37.5	50.0	282	2.5
Discriminated at work over past year	12.5	30.2	300	6.3*
Took health-related leave over past year	65.3	70.8	299	0.6
Worked while sick over past year	34.8	53.4	284	5.3*
Overall satisfied with working conditions	64.8	65.1	303	0.0
Treated fairly at the workplace	75.0	65.7	280	1.5
Able to influence important work decisions	70.7	67.4	277	0.2

¹ Yes answers only, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5: Work outcomes by level of education

	High (%) ¹	Low (%) ¹	N	P
Adequately skilled	53.7	52.5	300	0.0
Access to training over past year	92.9	78.5	317	4.7*
Occupational health/ safety at risk	63.4	45.0	283	4.7*
Discriminated at work over past year	37.5	25.7	301	2.4
Took health-related leave over past year	83.3	67.8	300	4.1*
Worked while sick over past year	63.4	48.0	285	3.4
Overall satisfied with working conditions	61.9	65.6	304	0.2
Treated fairly at the workplace	56.4	69.0	281	2.4
Able to influence important work decisions	68.3	67.8	277	0.0

¹ Yes answers only, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 6: Work outcomes by level of skill required by job

	Public (%) ¹	Private (%) ¹	N	P
Adequately skilled	60.0	51.2	295	1.2
Access to training over past year	91.1	78.3	312	4.0*
Occupational health/ safety at risk	73.8	43.5	279	13.2***
Discriminated at work over past year	37.8	25.5	296	2.9
Took health-related leave over past year	86.4	67.1	296	6.6*
Worked while sick over past year	51.2	49.4	280	0.0
Overall satisfied with working conditions	75.0	62.9	300	2.4
Treated fairly at the workplace	58.1	68.5	278	1.8
Able to influence important work decisions	65.9	68.2	274	0.1

¹ Yes answers only, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7: Work outcomes by employment sector

$p < 0.01$; fair treatment at the workplace: $\chi^2(1, N = 268) = 4.4$, $p < 0.05$; and ability to influence important work decisions: $\chi^2(1, N = 272) = 3.9$, $p < 0.05$. However, knowledge of Malta's employment laws is not strongly linked to skills adequacy, access to training, occupational health and safety, work discrimination, sick leave or presenteeism.

5 Discussion

Many of the findings emerging from this study reflect the trends and patterns between the selected personal factors and employment outcomes established in international studies. However, certain findings reveal atypical relations that do not support the conclusions of foreign research. In view of this, major results are discussed in the idiosyncratic context of Filipinos working in the small island state of Malta.

This study reveals that certain personal characteristics may be more or less helpful in influencing the work outcomes of the examined sample of workers. For example, gender was not found to be an important factor predicting the examined work realities of Filipinos in Malta, with the exception that males tend to receive more training than females. This finding challenges international research which indicates that female migrant workers generally tend to face more negative employment outcomes than their male counterparts, such as greater levels of discrimination (e.g. European Parliament, 2014; Trade Union Congress UK, 2007), over-qualification for their jobs (OECD/EU, 2018) and higher occupational risks and precariousness (García-Pérez et al., 2019; Niu, 2010). The similarity in the examined work-related outcomes emerged despite the gender differences in the work that Filipinos normally do in Malta. This finding signals that females (in general) do not feel that they are treated any worse than their male counterparts at work. One could argue that this finding derives from under-reporting, wherein Filipinas might feel more uneasy or insecure than males to report ill-treatment, consequently creating the illusion that gender is not a significant personal determinant of work outcomes. However, this explanation is debatable, as when compared to their male counterparts, Filipinas tend to have more positive (though not statistically significant) scores on nearly all of the studied work outcomes.

The gender difference in access to training reflects the situation across the Maltese population and in Europe in general. If one excludes potential discriminatory practices from employers which this study did not find evidence for, one may search for the reasons of such a condition by focusing on the type of work done by both genders, their responsibilities outside work, and their work orientation. Filipina migrants in Malta are more

likely to work as live-in care workers than their male counterparts. Such a job often requires very long working hours (more than 48 hours per week) which reduces the possibility of taking part in any training outside working hours. Besides, being employed in a family environment also precludes these women from structured on-the-job training opportunities which one might have in a larger and more formal organisation. Filipina workers might also have more family responsibilities outside their work, thus limiting their free time. Besides, due to their greater family commitments (both in Malta and in the Philippines) they might have less long-term, career goals. This might reduce their interest in furthering their education and training.

Age is an important predictor of the studied work-related outcomes. When compared to their older peers, younger Filipino workers take more sick leave and are more likely to work while sick (presenteeism). This situation might be influenced by factors such as limited job experience, illusion of invulnerability, greater propensity towards taking risks and substance abuse (Woods et al., 2010). However, lower levels of health may also derive from discrimination and unfair treatment, which younger Filipino workers are also more likely to experience. Indeed, discrimination is based on prejudice which in turn often derives from lack of interaction. Older workers might have reduced the level of prejudice against them through the longer time they had to build relations with employers and co-workers.

Rendall et al. (2010) argue that most barriers experienced by migrants tend to diminish over time in the receiving country. This perspective received some support from the present study which shows that Filipinos who spent between 1 and 5 years in Malta are the most likely to report having been discriminated over the previous year. Respondents who have lived longer in Malta are probably better equipped to prevent being discriminated and to deal with any emerging situations that may lead to discrimination. With the passage of time, they might have acquired additional experience, nurtured their bridging social capital, integrated more within the local society and established useful contacts from whom they could obtain advice and guidance. In this vein, Kahanec et al. (2009) conclude that social networks—that tend to be strengthened with time—may play an important role in smoothing frictions encountered by migrants in the labour market. On the other hand, those who have lived in Malta for less than a year and who might still be on work probation, might not have had enough time to experience discrimination, or might have tried to ignore it in their pursuit of their new life in the country. Filipino migrants who spent less than a year in Malta reported that they took least sick leave, probably for similar reasons. Furthermore, a lack

	Yes (%) ¹	Unsure/No (%) ¹	N	P
Adequately skilled	51.4	52.7	270	0.0
Access to training over past year	78.9	85.0	282	1.7
Occupational health/ safety at risk	46.5	48.7	257	0.1
Discriminated at work over past year	21.9	31.7	272	3.1
Took health-related leave over past year	64.1	74.4	271	3.3
Worked while sick over past year	45.9	56.9	258	2.9
Overall satisfied with working conditions	72.5	56.2	278	7.5**
Treated fairly at the workplace	74.8	62.4	268	4.4*
Able to influence important work decisions	75.2	63.7	272	3.9*

¹ Yes answers only, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 8: Work outcomes by knowledge of local employment laws

of pre-departure orientation and training in the country of origin might contribute towards higher levels of vulnerability among newly arrived migrants who opt to cede their rights because of fear and insecurity. Lamenting about such lack of orientation, a Filipina migrant in Malta interviewed by Vassallo et al. (2020) stated that: “When I decided to leave the Philippines, I was invited for a one-off meeting, together with hundreds of others, to orientate us about what it will imply to live in a foreign country (p. 203).”

The resulting relationship between the level of education attained by Filipinos and certain work outcomes yielded unexpected results. Higher qualified Filipino workers are more likely to feel discriminated at work than their lower qualified peers. This finding contrasts sharply with international surveys showing a significant statistical relationship between non-qualified migrant workers and higher incidence of discriminatory conditions on the place of work (OECD/EU, 2015; Ram, 2018; Trade Union Congress UK, 2007). There might be different reasons to explain this unanticipated result. One of these could be that graduate migrant Filipinos might have higher expectations and more sensitivity towards discrimination than the lower qualified respondents; thus the former are more likely to detect injustice and report abusive treatment than the latter. This tentative explanation may be viewed alongside another significant finding showing that, when Filipino respondents declare that they are knowledgeable about Malta’s employment laws, they also declare that they experience higher levels of job satisfaction, fair treatment and ability to influence important work decisions. Hence, migrant workers with a higher level of education and greater knowledgeable of domestic employment legislation may be more empowered to uphold their rights and may be more resourceful to challenge the situation if

they think that they are treated unjustly. This state of play is encapsulated in the following narrative by a graduate Filipina worker who is underemployed as a live-in carer in Malta:

“We work more hours than we are paid for. In the third year of my employment, I wrote a letter of appeal to adjust my salary because I was underpaid. If you will not ask for it, they would not give it to you. However, you need to know what the law says. Unfortunately, many of my fellows don’t report anything because they are poorly educated and do not know the law”

(unpublished quote from Vassallo et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, highly educated migrant workers might still be willing to compromise on their rights, perhaps due to their commitment towards their employer or work duties. Indeed, the more highly qualified Filipino workers in Malta are more likely to work while sick. Garcia et al. (2017) presented arguments that may help explain this phenomenon of presenteeism. Filipinos, when compared to other nationals, might be less likely to report sick for the previously mentioned cultural values of getting along with others and shame. Thus, going to work while sick might reflect their effort not to let down their employer and co-workers. The more highly educated Filipinos might feel more pressed by these values than their lower educated peers. Alternatively, or in addition to the previous argument, the more highly educated Filipinos might exhibit more presenteeism in order to reduce the possibility of discrimination by their employer, which as discussed above, they perceive to a greater extent than their lower qualified peers.

Besides the level of education, level of skill required by job is another factor that may help determine benefi-

cial or adverse work-related realities. The current study suggests three significant conclusions. First, Filipinos who work in high skilled jobs are more likely to have access to training; second, they are more likely to feel that their health or safety is at risk, and; third, they took more sick leave during the previous year. The first positive relationship between highly skilled workers and their greater propensity to undergo training is in line with international research (e.g. Božič, 2019). It has been well-documented that low skilled workers can find themselves in a ‘low-skill trap’ (OECD, 2019). Many migrant workers have low-level positions with limited opportunities for development and can often expect limited returns to training, such as higher wages or access to better jobs (Burdett et al., 2002; OECD, 2017). The positive relation between high skilled migrants, health and safety risks, and tendency to take sick leave appears to contradict international research which clearly shows that poorly educated migrants are more prone to higher incidence of precarious employment (García-Pérez et al., 2019; Sterud et al., 2018; You et al., 2015). A possible explanation for the current finding might be the higher expectations and greater sensitivity regarding potentially unhealthy work circumstances that the more highly qualified Filipino migrants in Malta have, when compared to their less qualified peers.

The sector of employment is another personal factor that was scrutinized to assess its impact on the examined work outcomes. As expected, Filipinos working in the public sector have more access to training when compared to their counterparts in the private sector. This finding is in line with international and national literature which highlights the better working conditions of public sector employees (e.g. Božič, 2019; Eurofund, 2017). Governments in many countries promote the lifelong development of their employees through scholarships, flexible working hours and other arrangements. The large scale of the organisations and the fact that these operate outside the competitive private sector facilitate such actions.

On the other hand and unexpectedly, Filipinos who work in the public sector are more likely to feel that their health or safety is at risk and take more sick leave than their peers working in the private sector. This finding reflects the same pattern established by another survey (Eurofund, 2017) showing that Maltese people working in the public sector also report experiencing more occupational health or safety risks than those in the private sector. In this case, the locals and migrant workers are exhibiting similar trends which may be an indication that, as public officers, they both feel more secure to report health and safety hazards and to take sick leave when compared to their peers working in the private sector. This finding could also be affected by

the fact that migrant workers are probably more likely to be unionised when they work in the public than the private sector. Unionization serves as a guarantor of employment rights and a shield against abuse (Garofalo Geymonat et al., 2017; Niu, 2010). Unions make an effort to promote health and safety among their members. Thus, membership in unions may increase one’s health and safety awareness and expectations. At the same time, being a member of a trade union may also decrease the fear of negative employment outcomes potentially associated with the taking of sick leave. Thus Filipino workers in the public sector might feel more comfortable taking sick leave when they need to, when compared to those who work in the private sector.

6 Conclusion: A Narrower Focus

“The labour market behaviour of ethnic communities in advanced societies and the social determinants of their labour market outcomes are important empirical issues with significant policy consequences” (Kahanec et al., 2009, p. 167). Past research amply shows the varying employment trajectories and outcomes among migrants with different ethnic backgrounds (OECD, 2013). This exploratory analysis adds to the literature by highlighting that important differences also exist within specific ethnic migrant groups. Our main contribution is to emphasise the need for a nuanced approach when considering the working situation of migrants. The lumping together of all foreign born or foreign nationality persons as sometimes done in large studies (Rendall et al., 2010) fails to bring about a sufficient understanding of the phenomenon of migrant work to inform effective policies and strategies that may improve the situation of specific groups of migrants. Past literature shows that third country migrants in Europe face greater challenges than EU-born ones (Rendall et al., 2010), and that the employment outcomes of third country migrants varies by nationality (Venturini et al., 2008). The current study supports the need to study migrants with an even narrower focus and a finer lens, by delving into the varying outcomes of migrants hailing from the same country according to their socio-demographic characteristics.

This study also supports the idea of intersectionality which may add up to increase the work difficulties experienced by migrants. Age, the skill level of their job, their sector of employment and their knowledge of local employment laws appear to be particularly useful predictors of employment outcomes, unlike gender which does not seem to be as significant. This study suggests that knowledge and experience may lead to better work outcomes. Social networks may also play an important role in solving information problems and other frictions encountered by migrants in the labour market (Kahanec et al., 2009). However, seemingly better-placed migrants

who have higher levels of education and are in highly-skilled and public sector jobs, appear to experience some worse employment outcomes. These results have been tentatively explained through the potentially higher expectations and levels of awareness and sensitivity of the seemingly more privileged groups of migrants.

The cross-sectional nature of this study limits its ability to understand the nature and causes of the particular relations emerging between the examined dependent and independent variables. Qualitative research investigating the current findings could help provide deeper answers in this regard. Besides, it would be useful to research other ethnic groups of migrants in the Maltese society to establish which of the relations highlighted in the current study hold true and which do not in this regard. This would further delineate the nature of the nuanced relationship between specific ethnic groups and the Maltese society.

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