

Ensuring Decent Jobs for Returning Migrants in the Time of COVID-19 through Skills Matching

Center for Migrant Advocacy Philippines

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I. Introduction

Background of the study

The whole world is now on a stand still because of the pandemic brought by the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020. According to the European Centre for Disease prevention, there are more than 62 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 1.4 confirmed deaths. (since 31 December 2019 to 29 November 2020). It is reported that over 380,000 individuals have been infected in the Middle East and North Africa where most Filipinos work as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW¹).

Most countries have issued several bans to reduce the risk of international infection, including the Philippines. On 13 May 2020, the Inter Agency Task Force for Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) of the Philippines announced that moderate-risk local government units (LGUs) "shall be placed under General Community Quarantine (GCQ)" and low-risk LGUs "shall no longer be under community quarantine." The entire Metro Manila, Laguna, and Cebu City were declared under GCQ.

As the world adjusts to a "new normal," new structures within families, among communities, and social institutions emerge. At the center of these developments is the Department of Health (DOH) mandated to handle the COVID-19 crisis while still grappling with the implementation of Republic Act 11223 otherwise known as The Universal Health Care (UHC) Act enacted in 2019. With or without the health pandemic situation, DOH should be able to ensure that all health systems' building blocks are kept with rational balance.

The OFWs are among the first groups and sectors bearing the brunt of this pandemic. According to recent statistics from the Department of Foreign Affairs

¹ Al Jazeera. (3 Sept 2020). Middle East coronavirus death toll goes over 50,000: Live updates. Accessed from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/3/middle-east-coronavirus-death-toll-goes-over-50000-live-updates>

(DFA) (2019), there are around 10 million Filipinos living and working in over 200 countries and territories all over the world, with dense populations of OFWs found in the Middle East and Asia and the Pacific. In terms of deployment numbers, the Philippine Statistic Authority's latest Survey on Overseas Filipinos disclosed that, in 2019 alone, there were an estimated 2.2 million documented OFWs working abroad from April to September of that year. The biggest share of these OFWs came from areas and provinces in Luzon (66.1 percent or 1.46 million OFWs), followed by OFWs who hailed from Mindanao (17.9 percent or 39,416 OFWs), and finally OFWs from the Visayan Islands (16.1 percent or 35,452 OFWs).

It is also worth noting that vulnerable job sectors or elementary occupations remained the most prevalent major occupation group in 2019, with two in every five OFWs (39.6 percent) working in jobs such as domestic work and the like, followed by service and sales workers who made up the second largest major occupation group (around 18 percent). Likewise, it is also important to note that female OFWs comprised the majority at 56.0 percent, many of whom fell under relatively younger age groups (from 25 to 34 years old) and an estimated 62.5 percent were in elementary occupations or largely vulnerable job sectors such as domestic work and the like. Despite this, in 2019, remittances from OFWs still reached a record high of \$33.9 billion, equivalent to about 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product, highlighting the enormous contributions OFWs have made and continue to make to the country's development as they courageously embark on grueling work overseas to provide a better life for their families back at home.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), prior to the pandemic, an average of about 13,838 migrants are repatriated because of cases of abuse, and about 4,830 are distressed, while 402 were victims of human trafficking. Most of these cases are women who work in private households. This is to say that even before the pandemic, women migrants are disproportionately vulnerable because of their working and living conditions.

However, since the declaration of the pandemic, lockdown measures have crippled many industries. More and more OFWs are being repatriated because of forced retrenchments and abrupt termination of work contracts. Moreover, the pandemic has also exacerbated violations of human and workers' rights especially in aforementioned vulnerable job sectors such as domestic work (e.g. no guaranteed

days off, severe overwork, restriction on mobility, and increased exposure to exploitation and abuse due to confined living conditions, fears of the virus, and economic stress).

As of 31 May 2020, the DFA reported that a total of 10,893 land-based and 20,635 sea-based OFWs have returned to the Philippines. They face a bleak and uncertain future as they join the hundreds of thousands of local workers displaced by the pandemic. With repatriation, they are reunited with their respective families but unsure of what jobs can be available for them.

Furthermore, the pandemic contribute to the precarity of the migrants' economic and mental situation as there are jobs that require close physical contact with customers, patients, or clients. On the other hand, there are also economic activities deemed non-essential such as occupations in sales and services that caters tourism such as cruise ships, hotels, restaurants, and operational jobs such as construction and assembly.

This action research hopes to offer help to concerned agencies of government and other sectors find a match between the repatriated OFWs and how they can fit in the present health system that is forced to work efficiently and effectively amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inputs from the new COVID-19 referral centers and interim reports from DOH will be sought in terms of jobs and new jobs that they require in each of the components in the health system, and they will be analyzed and matched with what the repatriated OFWs bring home with them. Appropriate recommendations will also be presented to make the producers of labor resources (the repatriated OFWs) meet the requirements of the consumers of service (the health system). The project aims to address the eighth sustainable development goal (SDG) of "decent work and economic growth".

The World Health Organization recommends designation of referral hospitals as part of the surge plans for health facilities. By designating hospitals that will prioritize the management of COVID-19 severe and critical cases, care and resources can be focused to COVID-19 patients through better infection prevention and control measures, more efficient monitoring of cases and inventory of supplies,

more strategic approach for human resources for health, and a maximized facility capacity (i.e. COVID-19 positive wards).²

In line with this, President Rodrigo Duterte signed Republic Act 11469 “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act” to indicate the temporary engagement of human resources for health (HRH) such as medical and allied medical staff to complement and supplement the current health workforce or to serve in the temporary medical facilities that are to be established. Information about these jobs is further discussed in Part III on Findings and Discussion of this report.

Objectives of the Study

Overall objective: Determine the prospects for decent jobs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic for returning Filipino migrants.

Specific objectives:

1. To identify the most urgently needed occupations and their descriptions specifically in the health sector
2. Describe the profile of repatriated OFWs in terms of their demographic, professional, and occupational backgrounds and capabilities
3. Compare the health sector’s urgently needed occupations with the profile of repatriated OFWs in terms of goodness of fit and competency gap

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The population of this action research involve OFWs whose circumstances of return are directly or indirectly affected by the economic implications brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, which include those who were forced to repatriate by their employers and labor agencies, those who cannot renew their contracts, those who temporarily visited the Philippines in the last quarter of 2019 but were not allowed to leave the country because of the country’s travel restriction (e.g. lockdown) that

² <https://www.doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/health-update/dm2020-0142.pdf>

triggered ban on international travel, which likewise include aspiring migrants who are about to leave but were forbidden because of travel restrictions.

Hence, the OFWs covered in these reports are those who returned to the Philippines from the mass repatriation called by the Department of Foreign Affairs on March 2019 to August 2020. The workers who are home on vacation from their jobs abroad on October 2019 who were not allowed to come back are also included in the totality of the study.

This study has met several challenges during its course:

1. The limited timeframe implies a limited number of survey participants and the failure to obtain the Philippine Research Ethics Board (PHREB) certificate that is a requirement by some hospitals, despite the action research not involving clinical inquiries.
2. Most of the hospitals involved in the survey were non-responsive due to number of reasons: lack of manpower to accommodate administrative inquiries from external institutions like the Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) and the lack of proper information on requiring the PHREB certification.
3. There is a misunderstanding within each institutions' (i.e., as hospitals and local governments) understanding of Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

³ The law states that "It is the policy of the State to protect the fundamental human right of privacy, of communication while ensuring free flow of information to promote innovation and growth". However, in Section 4, d, the law states that the law does not apply to "Personal

³ For more information, please access this website from National Privacy Commission.
<https://www.privacy.gov.ph/data-privacy-act/>

information processed for journalistic, artistic, literary or research purposes”

This misunderstanding on the interpretation of the law contributes to the further delay of gathering information from the said offices.

4. During the data gathering phase, most of the respondents are overwhelmed with their current situation and used the survey as a platform to complain and assert their demands to the government. Nevertheless, these suggestions were submitted to the case officers of CMA.
5. The Repatriated OFWs were undergoing ‘survey fatigue’ and were more focused on finding jobs and being financially stable again versus participating in the research.

Definition of Terms

These terms are commonly used in this report with the following operational definitions:

Health Sector – a blanket term to refer to the Department of Health, that is, the government institution and the hospitals under its supervision

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) or Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs) – a term to refer to Filipino migrant workers, those who possess Filipino citizenship who are employed in other countries

Return Migrant – a term used interchangeably with ‘repatriated’ migrants; those OFWs who return to the Philippines after their employment in other countries.

Repatriated migrants – OFWs whose work contracts have expired or those whose work contracts were pre-terminated for various reasons.

Land-based workers – According to the Republic Act 10022 or *An Act Amending Republic Act No. 8042, Otherwise Known As The Migrant Workers And Overseas*

Filipinos Act Of 1995, are OFWs who are deployed in a particular destination in land.

Sea-based workers – According to RA 10022, these are overseas contract workers who worked or are working in any kind of international fishing/passenger/cargo vessels navigating in the foreign seas other than a government ship used for military or non-commercial purposes or an installation located offshore or on the high seas. Included also are OCWs who worked or are working for a shipping company abroad.

OASIS – *OFW Assistance Information System* – It refers to an online platform developed by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) intended to facilitate better service delivery to Overseas Filipino Workers; It serves as a tracking system for OFWs intending to return to the Philippines during the Covid-19 pandemic. The OFWs are requested to provide the necessary information to enable the various agencies of government, particularly those under the DOLE to respond to OFW concerns and provide appropriate services in view of the Covid-19 pandemic such as repatriation, testing, quarantine as well as reintegration and/or re-employment programs.

LGUs - Local Government Units

The following definitions are adapted from the International Labor Organization's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08).

Job- "a set of tasks and duties performed, or meant to be performed, by one person, including for an employer or in self-employment"

Occupation- refers to the kind of work performed in a job. The concept of occupation is defined as "a set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterized by a high degree of similarity". According to ISCO-09, a person may be associated with an occupation through the main job currently held, a second job, a future job or a job previously held

Skills- is defined as the ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job. Following the ISCO-08, the study will use two dimensions of skill to arrange occupations into groups

Skill Level - is defined as a function of the complexity and range of tasks and duties to be performed in an occupation. It is measured operationally by considering one or more of the following:

- the nature of work performed in an occupation,
- the level of formal education in terms of the International Standard Classification of Education required for competent performance of tasks involved, and
- the amount of informal on-the-job training and/or previous experience in a related occupation required for competent performance of tasks involved

Skill Specialization- is considered in terms of four concepts:

The field of knowledge required: The tools and machinery used, the materials work on or with and the kinds of goods and services produced

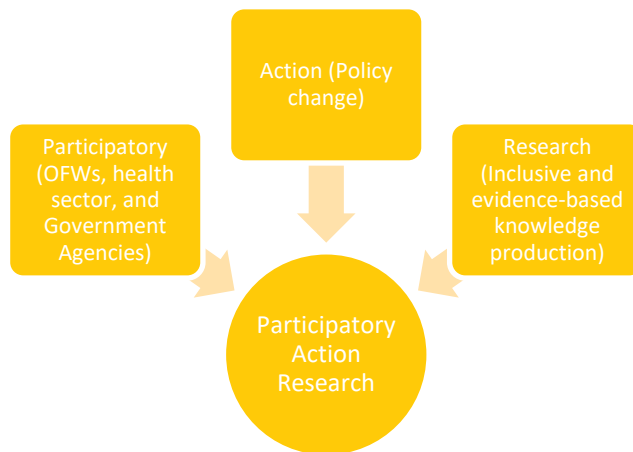
II. Research Methodology and Framework

Research Framework

This study utilizes participatory action research (PAR), a qualitative method of research to understand and interpret the characteristics, attributes and meanings.⁴ According to Streubert & Carpenter (1995), the purpose of qualitative methodology is to describe and understand a phenomenon rather than to predict and control (Somekh and Lewin 2005; MacDonald 2012). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) added that qualitative methodologies with participatory modes of inquiry explore the lived experiences of individuals.

According to Elliot, the process of action research involves not only the collection and interpretation of data, but also personal reflection and self-evaluation, which is the basis for action that integrate practical goals and (moral goals) (Somekh 2006).

This project is in line with Reason and Bradbury's definition that people in the community or organization work together to address questions and issues that are significant, with the aim of creating positive change in the society (Reason et al. 2008). In this case, the study aims to understand how the primary stakeholders can help the OFWs



Methodology

This study utilized mixed method research: the quantitative method included an online and phone survey of 261 return OFWs and the qualitative method included key informant interviews and focus group discussions to gather thick descriptions and dismantle the nuances of the lived experiences of the return OFW.

Due to the limited timeframe, the study utilized a nonprobability sampling method such as purposive sampling because the case to be studied belong to the same group and the same characteristic, that is, return migrants affected by COVID-19, and this method enables an in-depth and detailed investigation of the particular social phenomenon, that is, finding decent jobs based on their skill set.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants were recruited in the form of snowball sampling. The researcher utilized CMA's networks to recruit potential respondents who are willing to discuss their lived experiences aside from specifying their

possessed skills as their aspirations and plans are some of the major considerations for policymaking.

Coordination with networks and government offices

• July - August 2020

Online survey

• August - September 2020

Focus Group Discussions and phone interviews

• September 2020

Data Analysis

• October 2020

Policy Recommendation

• October 2020

III. Findings and Discussion

Profiles of Respondents

As mentioned above, the respondents must be return or aspiring OFWs. The reason for their repatriation or delay for migration to their destination country must be related to the COVID 19 pandemic. Most of the repatriated migrants began their repatriation on the first quarter of 2020. We have also included those who are in the Philippines for temporary vacation but could not return to their countries of employment due to COVID thus some of the respondents have been in the Philippines from October 2019.

This is a nationwide study, however, the snowball sampling provided those respondents whose contact information were provided by cooperative government agencies that CMA has coordinated with such as the Overseas Welfare Workers Administration (OWWA) Regional Offices of Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) and Region XII; Public Employment Service Offices (PESO) and local government

units such as Quezon City in Metro Manila, Tabaco City in the Bicol Region, Mabitac in Laguna, Kabasalan in Zamboanga, Angono in Rizal, and San Juan in Siquijor.

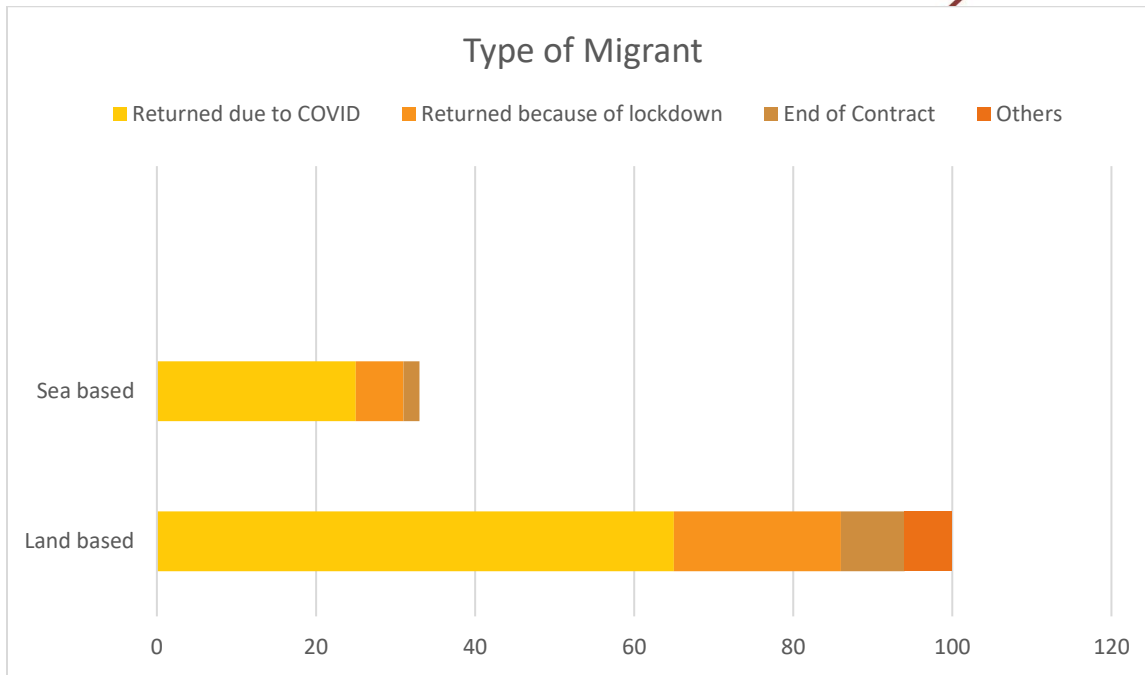
Among the 261 respondents, 51.9% identified as male and 47.7% identified as female with only 1 respondent who identified as LGBT.

There are 46.5% land-based return migrants and 20.8% sea-based migrants who were sent to the Philippines because of COVID-19 related reasons while 14.2% land-based and 3.1% sea-based migrants were not allowed to come back to their previous employments abroad because of the government mandated travel ban. 3.8% are aspiring migrants who were not permitted to leave the country.

Some respondents' reasons for return to the Philippines include finished contracts (9 respondents), being pregnant (2 respondents).

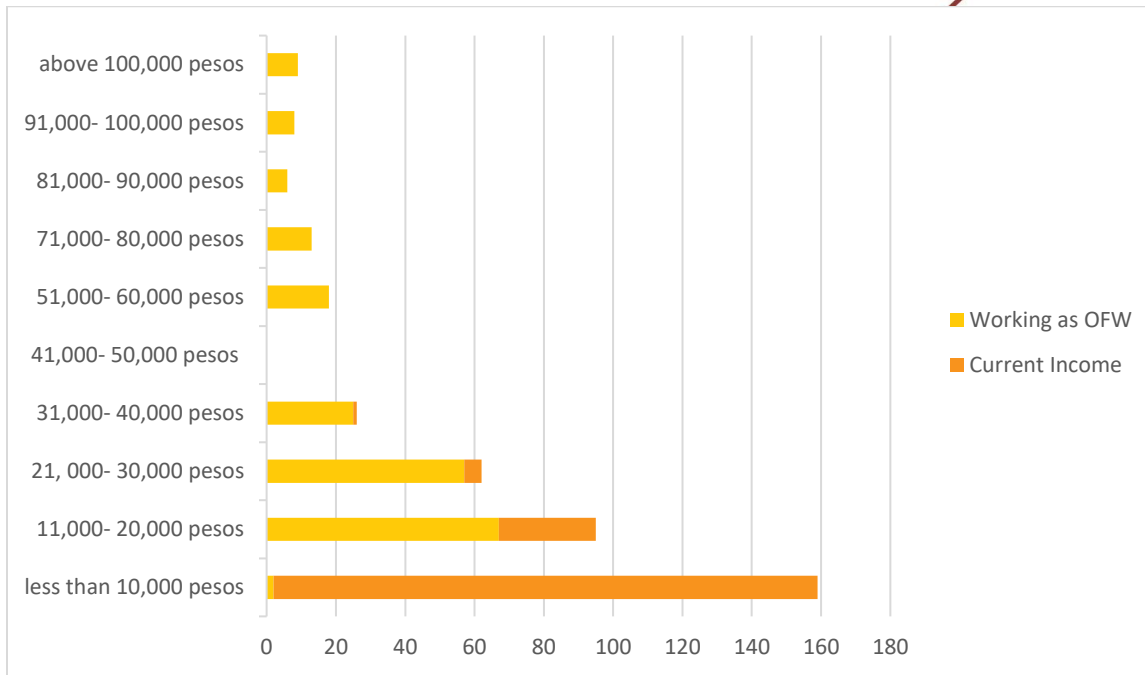
Two respondents specified that they repatriated because of maltreatment, employer's contract violation by not giving their salary and abuse.

In one of the focus groups, one participant flew to New Zealand with his family on March 2020 but were not allowed to pass the country's border control, so they were forced to fly back to the Philippines.



Economic Situation Then and Now

85.2% of the respondents are the primary breadwinners of their family with monthly salaries ranging from 21,000 pesos to 80,000 pesos. 17 respondents were earning more than 90,000 pesos monthly. Currently, there are only 9.2% who are earning when they come back to the Philippines with 68.1% who are earning less than 10,000 pesos, 12.2% are earning less than 20,000 pesos from temporary or “sideline” work which include driving tricycles, fishing, assisting in farming, and selling items like ambulant snacks (*ihaw*), home-made desserts and cosmetics.



Skills and Specialization of the Respondents

In the Philippines, the Philippine Qualifications Register is the national database of quality assured qualifications authorized under the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF). The PQF has eight (8) levels of qualifications differentiated by descriptors of expected learning outcomes along the three domains: knowledge, skills and values; application; and degree of independence. The PQF 8-level framework with Senior High School as the foundation of the 8 levels. It has sub-frameworks in separate subsystems of the education and training system (Vea, n.d.).

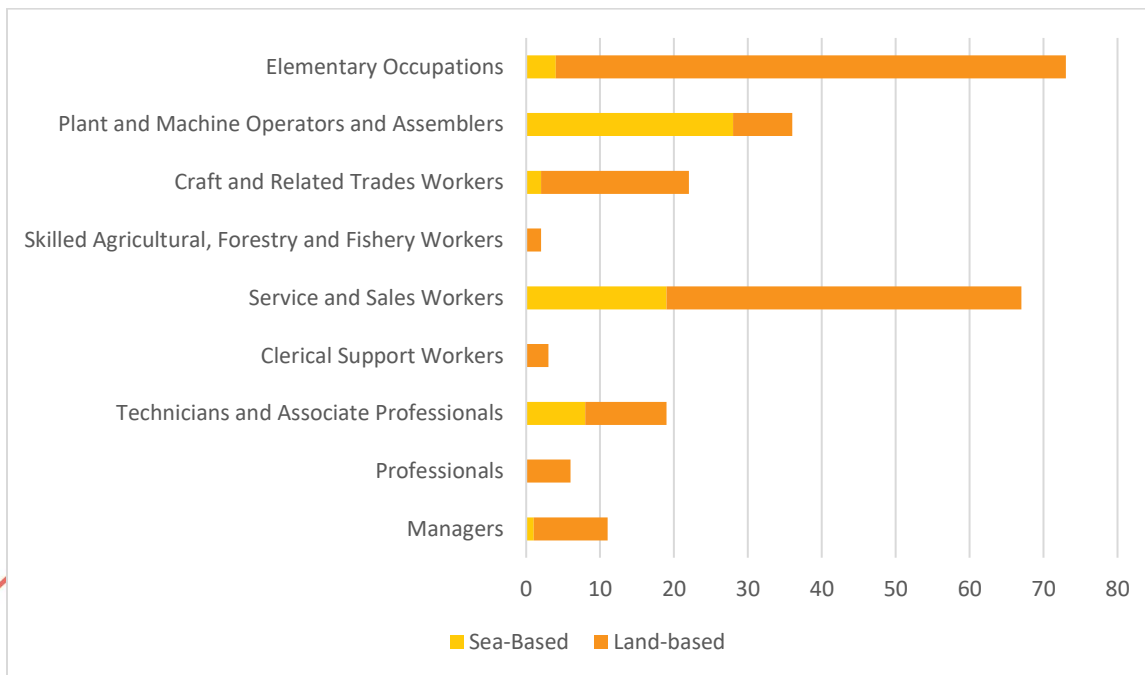
For example, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) subsystem covers National Certificates (NC) I through IV corresponding to the first four levels while the Commission on Higher Education Subsystem covers Baccalaureate, Postgraduate Diploma, Masters, and Doctorate that correspond to Levels 6 to 8. The two Sub-systems interfaces in the provision of diploma programs at level 5.



In relation to this, this report consulted the International Labor Organization's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) categorization of skills and skills level, as well as the categorization of major and submajor groups to further classify the occupation and skill levels of the participants (International Labour Organization 2012).

Based on the ISCO-08, the nature of occupation of the respondents are classified into major groups: Managers, Professionals, Technicians and Associate Professionals, Clerical Support Workers, Services and Sales Workers, Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers, Craft and Related Trades Workers, Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers, and Elementary Occupations.

The respondents' jobs and occupations are based on the recently held position before repatriation.



Most of the respondents held Elementary Occupations and were Service Sales Workers. Those who had Elementary Occupations were Cleaners and Helpers such as housekeeping while the Service and Sales Workers held personal services workers such as travel attendants, restaurant attendants, and bartenders in cruise ships, and waiters and waitresses in restaurants, and home-based personal care workers in land-based jobs. The major groups are further subclassified with sub-major groups and minor groups, which can be found in the table below.

Major Group	Sub-Major Group	Land Based	Sea Based	Total
Managers	Production and Specialized Services Managers	3		3
	Hospitality, Retail and Other Services Managers	6	2	8
			Total	11
Professionals	Health Professionals	5		5
	Business and Administration professionals	1		1
			Total	6
Technicians and Associate Professionals	Science and Engineering Associate Professionals	3		3
	Ship and Aircraft Controllers and Technicians		4	4
	Legal, Social and Cultural Professionals	2	4	6
	Administrative and Specialized Secretaries	5		5
	Information and Communication Technician	1		1
			Total	19

Clerical Support Workers	General Office Clerk	1		1
	Customer Service Clerks	2		2
			Total	3
Service and Sales Workers	Client Information Workers	1		1
	Personal Services Workers	27	23	50
	Sales Services Workers	12		12
	Building and Housekeeping Supervisors	2		2
	Other Sales Workers		1	1
			Total	66
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	Market-oriented skilled agricultural workers	2		2
			Total	2
Craft and Related Trades Workers	Electrical and Electronic Trades Workers	2	1	3
	Building and Finishers and Related Trades Workers	9		9
	Metal, Machinery and Related Trades Workers	9	1	10
			Total	22
Plant and Machine Operators	Drivers and Mobile Plant Operators	5	28	33

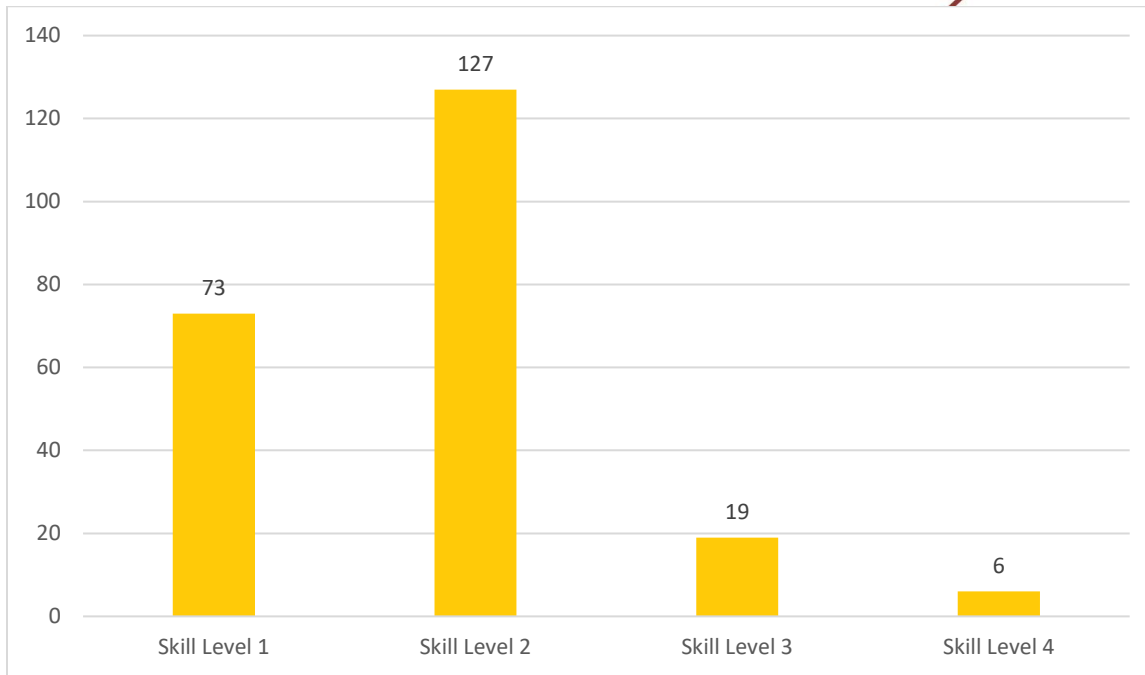
and Assemblers				
	Stationary Plant and Machine Operators	3		3
			Total	36
Elementary Occupations	Food Preparation Assistants		1	1
	Cleansers and Helpers	66	4	70
	Refuse Workers and Other Elementary Workers	1		1
	Labourers in Mining, Construction, Manufacturing and Transport	1		1
			Total	73

43.5% of the respondents are college graduates, 17.7% have taken some years in college, 17.3% are high school graduates and 11.2% have taken vocational courses.

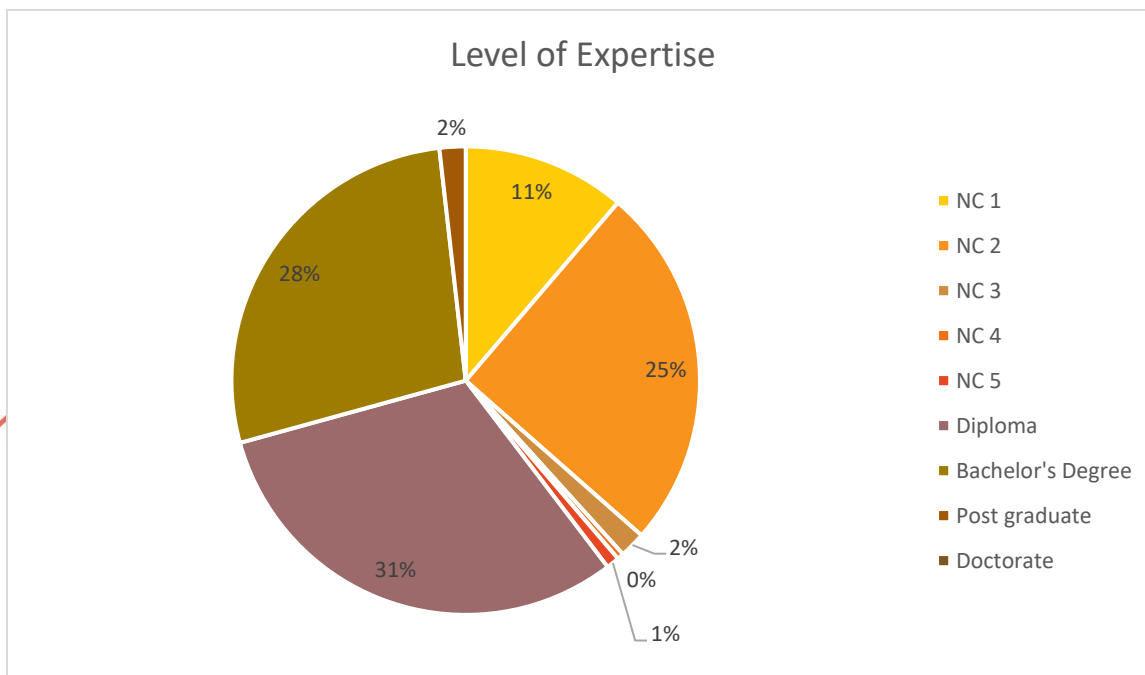
According to ISCO-08, Skill Level 1 typically involve the performance of simple and routine physical or manual tasks, Skill level 2 typically involve performance of tasks such as operating machinery and electronic equipment; driving vehicles; maintenance and repair of electrical and mechanical equipment; and manipulation, ordering and storage of information.

Occupations in Skill Level 3 typically involve the performance of complex technical and practical tasks that require an extensive body of factual, technical, and procedural knowledge in a specialized field. And occupations in Skill Level 4 typically involve the performance of tasks that require complex problem-solving, decision-making and creativity based on an extensive body of theoretical and factual knowledge in a specialized field.

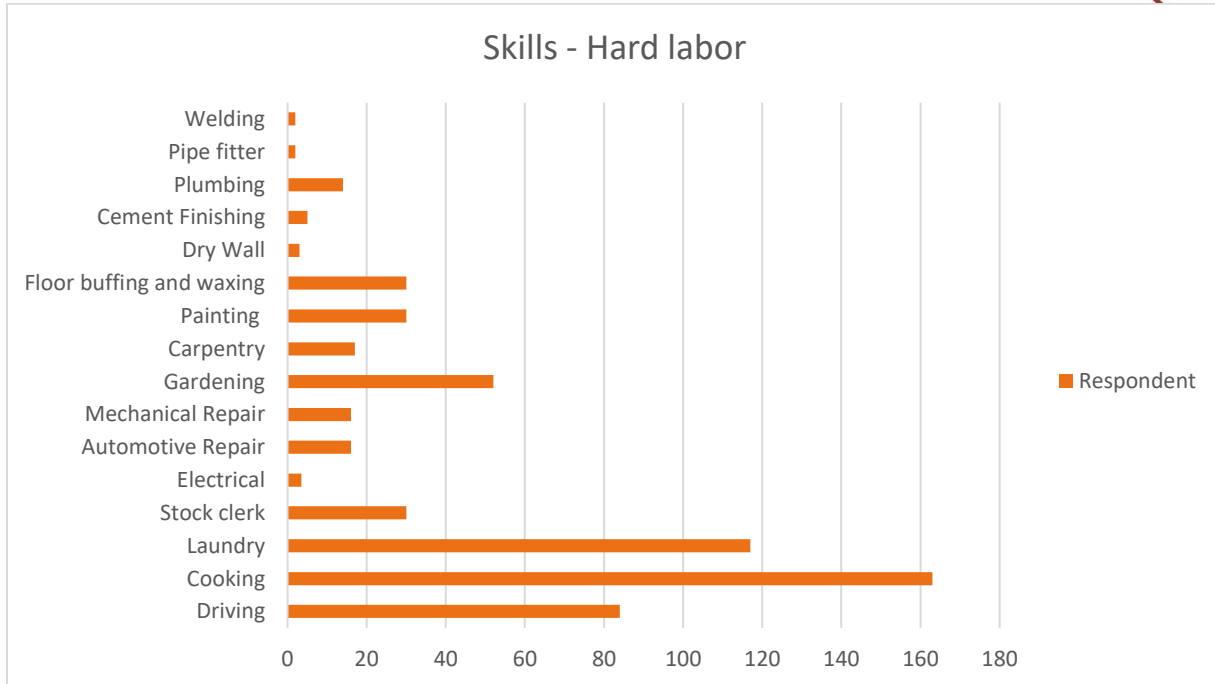
Given these definitions, most respondents are under Skills Level 2, as most of them held elementary occupations, were services and sales workers, and plant and machine operators & assemblers.



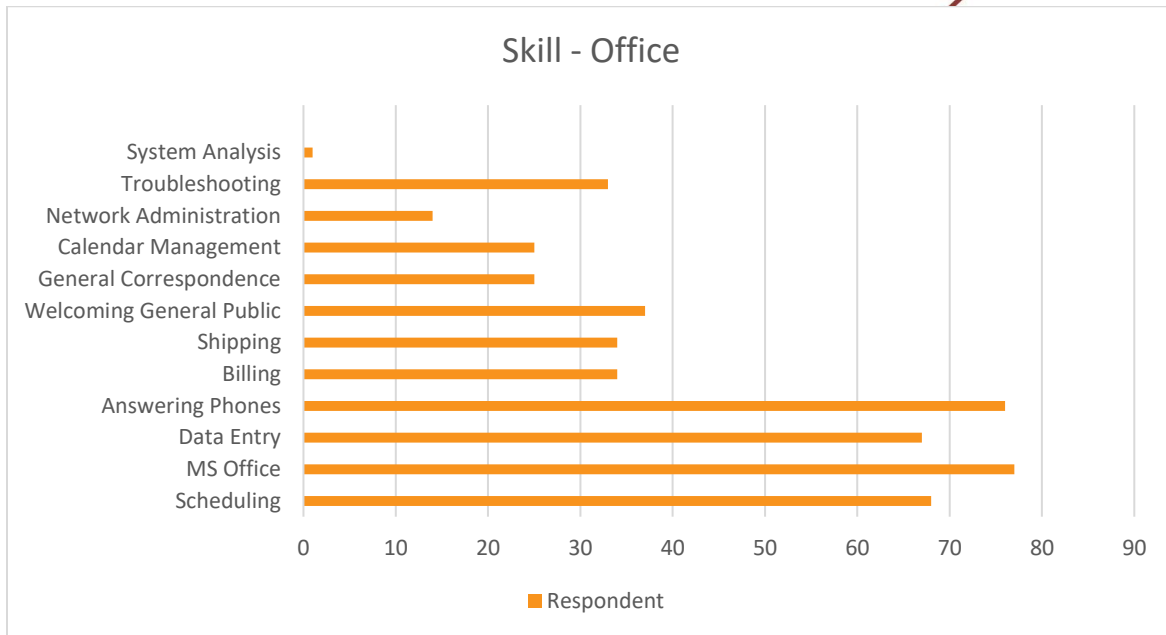
In relation to this, the respondents answered that they possess the following expertise, based on the TESDA Qualifications framework:



This table shows the skills they possessed in terms of hard labor. Most of the respondents are capable of doing laundry and cooking. Half of them are capable of driving. It is notable that 1/3 of the respondents are capable of jobs needed in janitorial and maintenance jobs.



Next, this table shows the skills they possessed in terms of office and administrative work. Half of the respondents answered that they are capable of office skills such as answering phones, scheduling, and data entry, and using productivity management tools like Microsoft Office.



Urgently needed jobs in Hospitals

On 31 March 2020, DOH released an interim guideline⁵ for the emergency hiring of health personnel in selected hospitals and other COVID referral health facilities. These personnel include the hiring of the following positions and the required qualifications based on Civil Service Commission guidelines:

Position	Qualification
Medical Specialist II	Education: Doctor of Medicine with a certificate as Fellow and/or Diplomate of the relevant accredited society
Medical Officer III	Education: Doctor of Medicine
Nurse II	Education: Bachelor's Degree in Nursing
Medical Technologist II	Education: Bachelor's Degree in Medical Technology

⁵ Department of Health. DM2020-0153. https://dtiwebfiles.s3-ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/Advisories/070220_DM_PriceFreezeEmergencyMeds



Respiratory Therapist II	Education: Bachelor's Degree relevant to the job
Radiologic Technologist II	Education: Bachelor's Degree in Radiologic Technology
Medical Equipment Technician III	Education: Completion of relevant two years studies in college or completion of relevant medical technician course
Nurse Attendant II	Education: Elementary School Graduate
Administrative Aide IV (Ambulance Driver)	Education: Elementary School Graduate Eligibility: Professional Driver' License
Administrative Assistant II (Public Relations Officer)	Education: Completion of relevant two years studies in college
Administrative Assistant II	Education: Completion of relevant two years studies in college or High school Graduate with relevant vocational/trade course

Based on these calls for applications and skills level of the respondents, a majority of them can be considered for the following occupations: Medical Equipment Technician, Nurse Attendant, Administrative Aide IV, Administrative Assistant II, and Administrative Assistant II. However, appropriate national certificates are required for them to be able to be considered for these jobs.

In one of our consultations with hospital managers, a key informant disclosed that most hospitals would prioritize the hiring existing temporary job order or contractual officers before considering external applicants, as this is the common practice in most institutions.

On the other hand, several occupations are not indicated in these emergency hiring but are essential based on the WHO Health Systems Framework to contribute to the improvement of hospital operations such as support staff who do not deliver

services directly but are essential to the performance of health systems, such as cooks, cleaners, and laundry personnel (World Health Organization(WHO) 2020).

By following the first three building block of the Health Systems Framework, we categorized the following jobs in these respective blocks:

A. Health Delivery Service

- Administrative Aide (Ambulance Driver)
- Laundry Personnel
- Cook
- Maintenance personnel and Janitor

B. Health Care

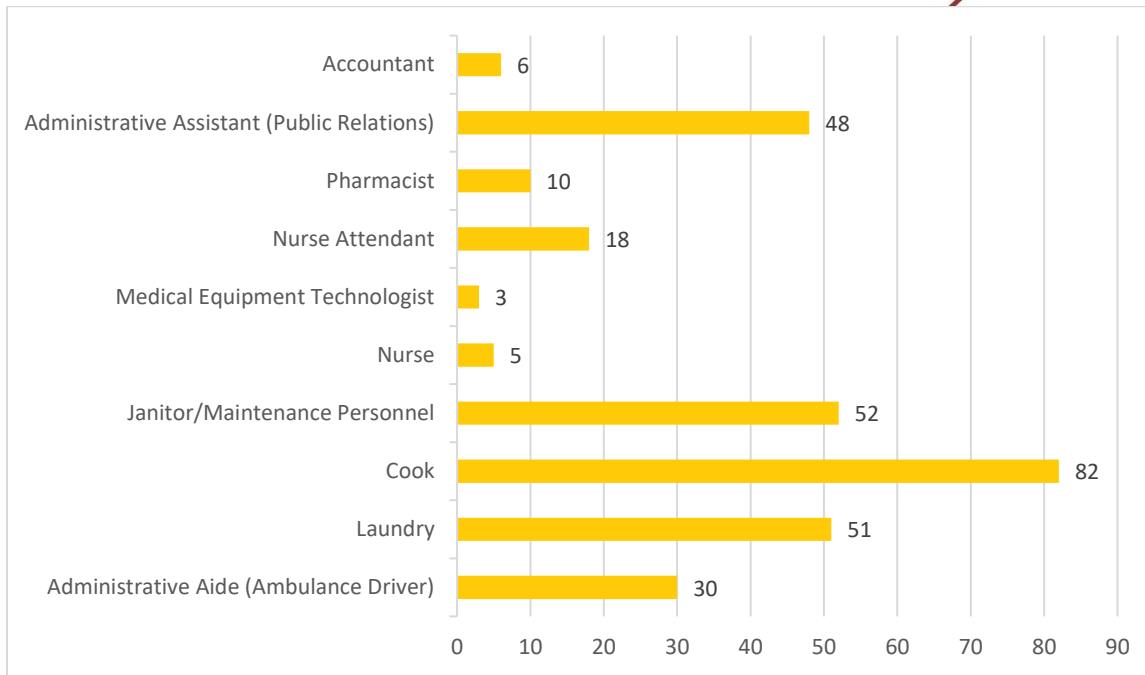
- Medical Specialist
- Medical Officer
- Nurse
- Medical Technologist
- Radiologic Technologist
- Respiratory Therapist
- Medical Equipment Technician
- Nurse Attendant
- Pharmacist
- Pharmaceutical Technician

C. Administrative Services

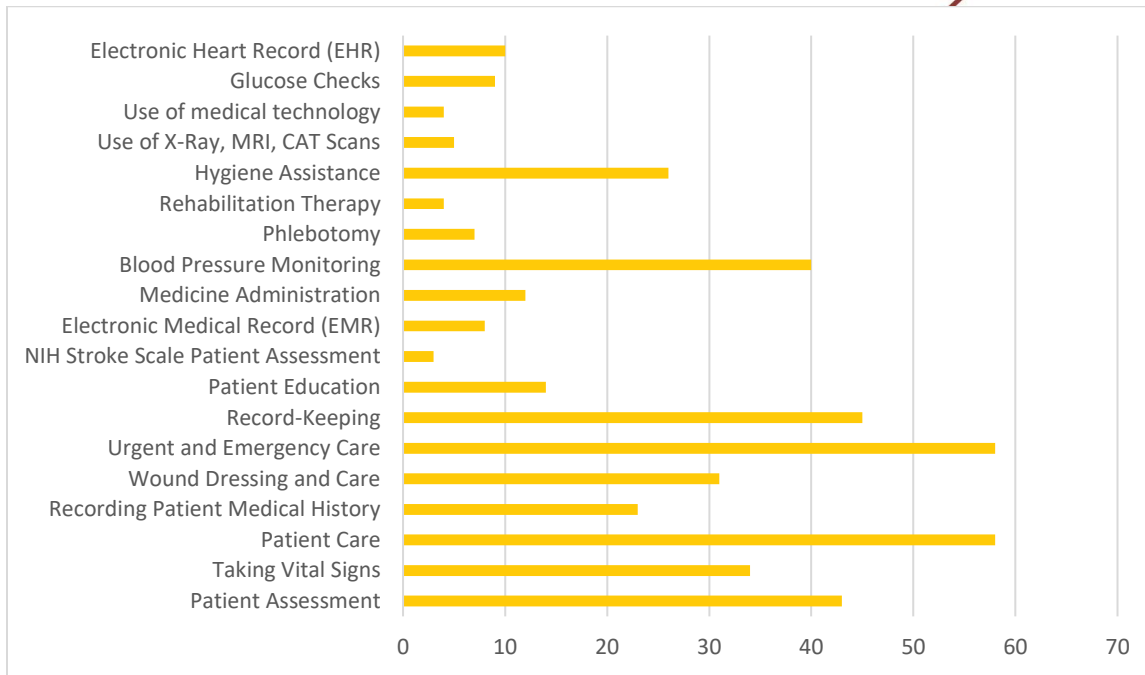
- Administrative Assistant (Public Relations Assistant)
- Accountant

In line with this, 55% of the respondents are willing to work in hospitals and the following are their preferred jobs; with the majority that are willing to work with Skill Level 2 jobs such as being a Cook (Sales and Service Worker), Administrative Assistant (Clerical Workers), and Skill Level 1 jobs such as being a Janitor/Maintenance Personnel and Laundry attendant (Elementary Occupations).

24



Furthermore, several respondents possess medical related skills such as patient care, patient assessment, and blood pressure monitoring, among a few, despite only 18 respondents prefer being a Nursing Attendant.



The respondents who worked in Elementary Occupations such as domestic workers and Personal Care Workers such as home-based personal workers possess skills in patient care as most of their tasks include caring for the elderly member of the family. Two respondents who were former domestic workers mentioned that aside from household chores, they performed medical tasks such as blood pressure monitoring, glucose checks, and medicine administration on a daily basis despite not having a formal training on these skills.

Migrants' Aspirations

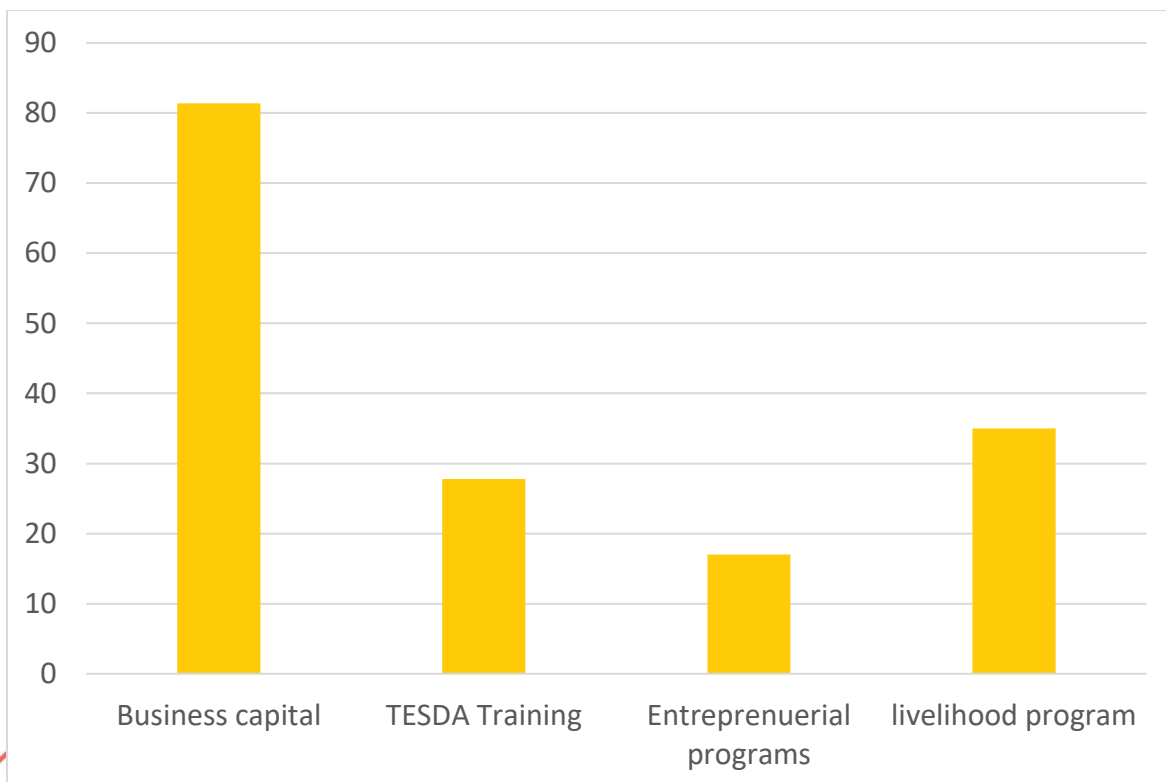
To understand the mindset for job-seeking in the Philippines, we inquired the intentions, aspirations, and possible future plans of the respondents. 85.4% are looking for jobs, 10.4% already have jobs while 4.2% are not looking for jobs (*ayoko magtrabaho*)

Half of the respondents said that they plan to look for jobs in the Philippines, 43% said that they want to start a business and 49% will wait for future employment

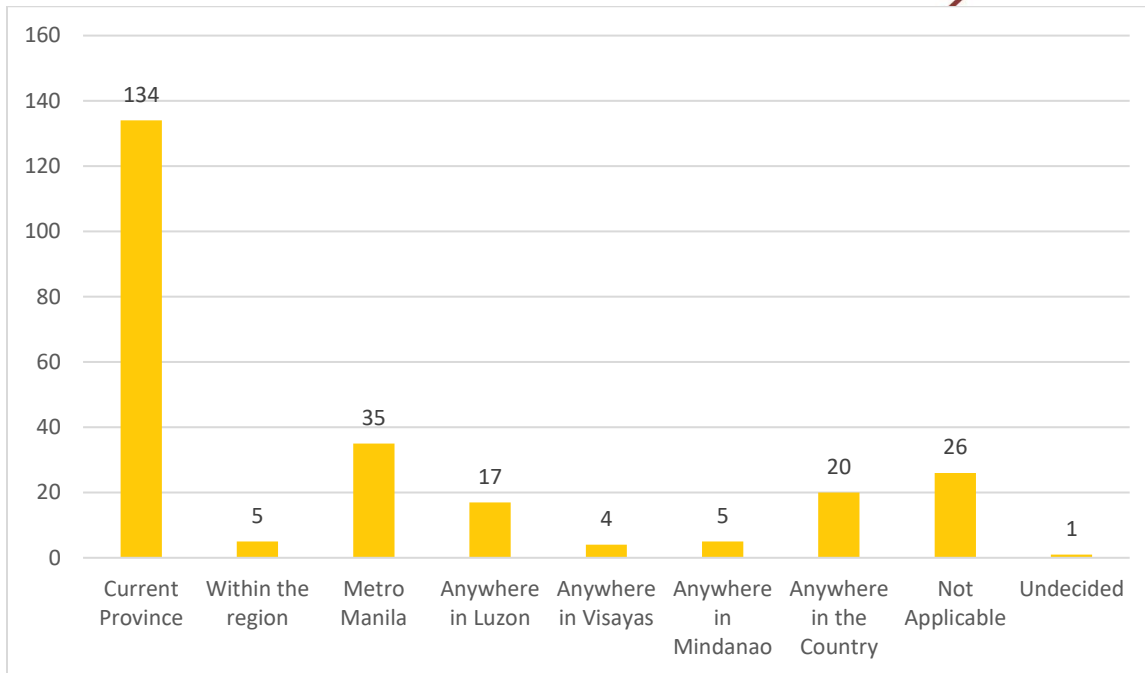


abroad. Some respondents would like to obtain national certificates from TESDA such as cooking, welding, professional driving, manipulation of heavy equipment, cosmetology, and computer literacy.

Those who would like to receive business capitals have a broad idea of what they want to build and develop, such as small in-house stores (sari-sari stores), restaurants, grocery stores, rice mill, reselling retail items, online selling, food carts, food dealership. However, there is clearly a lack of education when it comes to their aspiration for businesses as they do not possess business plans (based on focus group discussions and interviews)



For those who are looking for jobs in the Philippines, 51% are seeking employment within their province, which can break the assumption that OFWs would only prefer working abroad.



In this regard, the hospitals and COVID referral hospitals are urgently hiring clinical health service workers, and only 5 respondents (who are licensed nurses) could fit in their call for applications for health professionals. However, the respondents possess skills such as patient care, patient assessment, and urgent and emergency care that are necessary skills for working as nursing attendants.

Most respondents also possessed skills needed in health service operations such as driving, cooking, cleaning, and maintenance, and skills needed in hospital administration such as being an administrative assistant. We can take into consideration the fact that most of the respondents worked in Elementary Occupations such as being helpers and cleaners, and Sales and Service Delivery jobs such as personal care attendants. Thus, those respondents matched the skills needed in health service delivery in hospitals and COVID referral centers.

Hospitals and COVID referral centers do hire needed employees, however, different factors such as existing hiring protocols, such as the priority hiring of local job order

contractuals, should be taken into consideration on why OFWs may not be immediately hired by these hospitals.

IV. Policy Recommendations

Reflection on initial findings

Concerned government offices and stakeholders must reflect on the findings that we must consider personal experiences to understand the statistical information that we gather from return and repatriated migrants; the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)-OWWA's data collection through OASIS and those from the LGUS on repatriated OFWs are initiatives that can contribute to informed and evidence-based policy and program development for sustainable livelihood programs for repatriated OFWs.

Knowledge Economy

The respondents have a plethora of skills that they have acquired from their years of working abroad, the concerned agencies should look into skills accreditation programs, the institutionalization of lifelong learning programs as well as programs to upgrade and expand these acquired skills of migrants

Collaboration and Coordination of Government agencies

Different organizations should coordinate and cooperate on data collaboration or data coordination to match the skills of repatriated migrants and the ones needed for available occupations. Coordination and cooperation should be both horizontal and vertical –national and sub-nationals and amongst various agencies.

Capacity building on livelihood skills, business management, entrepreneurial skills along sustainable, green livelihood programs

Return migrants aspire to establish their own businesses. Government should provide them support and access to skills and knowledge on social entrepreneurship, cooperatives and agriculture-based support programs

Reintegration programs

Government agencies like OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Administration) and the NRCO (National Reintegration Center for OFWs) should conduct more evidence-based studies to understand what reintegration programs work best with the return migrants, to integrate what fit their aspirations, lifestyle, and capabilities. It is recommended that recent and current programs on reintegration be assessed and evaluated in order to draw lessons from as government tries to respond to reintegration needs of returned migrants en masse.

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