



A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE MOTIVATIONS DRIVING FILIPINO LIBRARIANS TO WORK ABROAD

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ABSTRACT - This transcendental phenomenological study explores the motivations driving Filipino librarians to pursue careers abroad. The research addresses a critical gap in existing literature by providing an in-depth examination of the personal and professional factors that influence these individuals' decisions to work internationally. Employing Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach, the study gathered data from Filipino librarians employed in various countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Hungary. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed using NVivo, focusing on key themes such as career stagnation, personal aspirations, professional opportunities, and cultural adaptation. The findings reveal that motivations are deeply rooted in a combination of personal ambitions, professional growth, and the pursuit of financial stability. Moreover, the research underscores the significance of cultural adaptability and continuous learning in achieving success in international librarianship. The study contributes to the understanding of how international experiences enhance librarians' competencies and suggest implications for policy and practice in supporting the professional integration of librarians in global contexts.

Keywords: Cultural Adaptation Filipino librarians; International Librarianship; Professional Motivations; Transcendental Phenomenology

Introduction

The global landscape of librarianship has evolved, with Filipino librarians becoming key contributors in international contexts due to their resilience, versatility, and cultural adaptability (Roberto, 2015). Despite these strengths, the motivations behind their decisions to work abroad had remained underexplored. The shift from localized to global roles in librarianship required more than academic proficiency; it demanded passion, discipline, and cultural insight (Cherinet, 2018).

This study addressed the gap in understanding the motivations and challenges faced by Filipino librarians working internationally. Using Kim's (1988) Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory, it examined how these librarians adapted to new cultural environments. Additionally,



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Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory was employed to analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving their decisions to work abroad.

Given the limited research on the lived experiences of internationally mobile librarians, particularly from developing countries like the Philippines, this study provided a deeper understanding of the factors influencing their professional journeys. Economic disparities and cultural differences, as highlighted by Livholts and Bryant (2017), were among the factors influencing these decisions. The findings could be valuable for institutions aiming to support and integrate international professionals effectively, informing targeted training and mentorship programs that enhance cultural adaptability and professional growth.

Methods and Materials

This study employed transcendental phenomenology, as outlined by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2013), to explore the lived experiences of Filipino librarians working internationally. Conducted within a digital framework, the study used online communication platforms due to the broad geographical distribution of participants, who were employed in educational institutions across various countries, including four (4) individuals from United Arab Emirates, three (3) from Saudi Arabia, one (1) from Bahrain, one (1) from Thailand, one (1) from Andorra, one (1) from Hungary, one (1) from China, highlighted the global extent and scope of this research.

A semi-structured interview format was used, with questions reviewed and validated by three experts in research and language to ensure clarity. Interviews were conducted via Zoom or Google Meet, transcribed, and analyzed using Creswell's (2013) adaptation of Moustakas's Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. To maintain objectivity, bracketing was employed to set aside preconceived notions. NVivo software facilitated the coding and thematic analysis of qualitative data, with manual review ensuring accurate theme representation.

The analysis involved coding significant text segments to identify themes related to professional motivations. The data were further validated through member checking, where participants reviewed and confirmed preliminary findings. Trustworthiness was ensured using pseudonyms to protect privacy, encryption of identifying data, and adherence to ethical guidelines as emphasized by Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2000).

The research also incorporated the Epoch process, as highlighted by Moustakas (1994), involving bracketing, reflective journaling, and peer debriefing to ensure validity. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, data security, and confidentiality, were strictly followed, with all necessary approvals obtained from the relevant ethics committee.

Results And Discussion

This section presents the findings and analysis of a phenomenological study exploring the experiences of Filipino librarians working internationally. Not all responses from the participants were included because only the most significant statements were highlighted to ensure clarity and conciseness in presenting the findings. Redundant responses were excluded, especially when multiple respondents expressed similar thoughts and ideas, allowing for a focused and coherent

representation of the key themes and insights. This approach ensured that the chapter remained concise while effectively capturing the essence of the participants' lived experiences.

The framework diagrams for each research question were carefully formulated to visually represent how different theoretical concepts interact to address specific aspects of the study, illustrating the relationship between the core elements of the research questions and the underlying theoretical foundations.

Primary Motivations and Aspirations

This component investigated the underlying motivations and aspirations that drive Filipino librarians to pursue careers outside their home country, uncovering the personal and professional factors influencing their decision to work abroad.

Table 1. Table of Domains, Themes, and Formulated Meaning on the Primary Motivations and Aspirations of Filipino Librarians Working Abroad

Domains	Themes	Formulated Meaning
Life History: Background and Interest in Librarianship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion for Librarianship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deep-seated interest and enthusiasm that Filipino librarians have for their profession
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Challenges and Rewards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The various challenges and rewards experienced by Filipino librarians throughout their careers and balanced perspective on the realities of a career in librarianship
Life History: Motivations for Working Abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Aspirations and Influences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The personal goals and influential factors that inspire Filipino librarians to work abroad
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stagnation and Dissatisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The professional frustrations and limitations experienced by Filipino librarians in their home country and

- Professional Opportunities and Growth the push factors that drive librarians to look for career prospects in foreign settings
- The pull factors that attract librarians to pursue their careers beyond the Philippines

Domain 1: Life History: Background and Interest in Librarianship

Theme 1.1: Passion for Librarianship

This explores the deep-seated interest and enthusiasm that Filipino librarians have for their profession and the emotional and intellectual connection that these librarians have with their work. The testimonies reflected a deep-rooted passion that often began in childhood and was further shaped by professional challenges and societal recognition in the Philippines.

"But my interest in librarianship started even earlier. When I was around 6 or 7, I'd gather all the books my cousins and I owned and arranged them on a shelf, opening a private library at home for my cousins and neighbors." (P9)

These early experiences emphasized how personal interactions with books and a desire to share them with others laid the foundation for a career in librarianship. The passion for creating access to information and fostering a love for reading was evident from a young age. According to Smith (2020), early exposure to books and literacy activities plays a significant role in developing a passion for librarianship. Childhood experiences of organizing and sharing books often translate into a lifelong commitment to improving access to information and promoting literacy.

Theme 1.2: Career Challenges and Rewards

This theme explores the various challenges and rewards experienced by Filipino librarians throughout their careers and balanced perspective on the realities of a career in librarianship, highlighting both the struggles and the triumphs that define their professional lives.

"It was challenging and a bit fulfilling, and I worked there for almost four years. I believe that is the place where I honed my skills and gained practical knowledge that I apply now." (P1)

This testimony emphasized the importance of challenging work environments in professional growth. Despite the difficulties, such experiences provide valuable opportunities to develop practical skills and knowledge. According to Tynan and Garbett (2020), challenging professional environments can accelerate skill development and foster resilience. Librarians who

navigated these challenges often emerged with enhanced capabilities and a deeper understanding of their roles.

Domain 2: Life History: Motivations for Working Abroad

The motivations for Filipino librarians to work abroad are rooted in a combination of personal aspirations, career dissatisfaction, and the pursuit of professional growth. These factors drive them to seek opportunities beyond their national borders, where they hope to find more fulfilling and rewarding career paths.

Theme 2.1: Personal Aspirations and Influences

This theme pertains to the personal goals and influential factors that inspire Filipino librarians to work abroad, their desires for adventure, financial stability, family considerations, and the impact of mentors or role models who encouraged them to pursue international opportunities. This discussion highlighted the impact of early dreams, familial influence, and the aspiration to work abroad, which have collectively driven these professionals toward international librarianship.

"For your second question about the life history or motivations for working abroad. So ever since I was young, I could say that I had always dreamed of working and living abroad." (P1)

These testimonies revealed a long-standing aspiration to work overseas, often rooted in childhood dreams. The allure of living and working in a foreign country is a significant motivator, irrespective of the specific job role envisioned. According to Adrian-Taylor et al. (2021), early aspirations to work abroad are common among individuals from developing countries, driven by the desire for better opportunities and experiences. These aspirations often shape career decisions and professional trajectories.

Theme 2.2: Career Stagnation and Dissatisfaction

This theme explores the professional frustrations and limitations experienced by Filipino librarians in their home country and the push factors that drive librarians to look for career prospects in foreign settings. The testimonies highlighted feelings of exhaustion, inadequate compensation, and a lack of professional growth as primary motivators for seeking employment outside the Philippines.

"If there's any specific moment that prompted me to work abroad, I would say exhaustion from my previous job in the Philippines." (P1)

These testimonies reflected a common issue among professionals experiencing burnout due to excessive workloads without corresponding compensation. This imbalance often leads to dissatisfaction and the pursuit of better opportunities abroad. Goel and Mishra (2020) found that burnout among librarians is linked to high job demands and low resources, leading to emotional exhaustion and a desire to seek alternative employment. This aligned with the experiences shared by the key informants.

Theme 2.3: Professional Opportunities and Growth

This theme emphasizes the pull factors that attract librarians to pursue their careers beyond the Philippines, highlighting the benefits and opportunities that come with working in a global context. The testimonies reflected a mix of unexpected opportunities, the desire for exposure to different work environments, and the pursuit of personal and professional growth.

"I had no intention of working abroad, but the opportunity appeared, and I tried it. That's my story." (P12)

Many librarians did not initially plan to work abroad, but unexpected opportunities arose, leading them to pursue international careers. These opportunities are often seen as fortuitous and life changing. In a study by Fu and Powell (2021), it was found that unanticipated opportunities often play a significant role in the international careers of librarians. These unexpected changes can lead to substantial professional growth and fulfillment.

Textural Description

Participants expressed a blend of personal ambitions and professional aspirations driving their decisions to work abroad. Many sought financial stability and career growth, driven by a desire to support their families and pursue new opportunities.

Structural Description

The structural analysis revealed that the motivations for working abroad were deeply intertwined with cultural and familial values. The decision-making process often involved extensive discussions with family members and mentors, reflecting the collective nature of Filipino society.

Essence of Lived Experience

The lived experiences of Filipino librarians working internationally disclosed a profound journey driven by diverse motivations and aspirations. The primary motivations encompassed personal ambitions for financial stability and career growth, alongside a desire for new experiences and personal development. The interplay of these intrinsic and extrinsic factors shaped their journey, reflecting a blend of professional aspirations and personal fulfillment. Below is a diagram that illustrates the primary motivations and aspirations that drive Filipino librarians to work abroad. It visualizes both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, showing how personal and professional goals influence their decision to pursue international opportunities.

The diagram below was formulated by systematically analyzing the key themes identified from the semi-structured interviews conducted with Filipino librarians working abroad. The thematic analysis, facilitated by NVivo, involved coding significant text segments related to motivations and aspirations, which were then grouped into broader categories such as personal ambitions, career stagnation, professional opportunities, and cultural adaptation. These categories were further synthesized to visually represent how intrinsic and extrinsic factors interact to influence the decision-making process of Filipino librarians in pursuing international careers. The diagram was designed to provide a clear and concise visualization of the complex motivations that drive these professionals to seek employment outside their home country.



Figure 1. Diagram on Filipino Librarians' Intentions to Work Internationally

Conclusion

This study highlights that Filipino librarians working abroad are driven by a complex interplay of personal and professional motivations, such as the pursuit of career advancement, financial stability, and the influence of early aspirations and mentors. The success of these librarians in international contexts is significantly shaped by their ability to adapt culturally and their commitment to continuous professional development. The findings underscore the necessity for targeted support systems, including comprehensive training and mentorship, to enhance the integration and effectiveness of librarians in global work environments. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that international experiences not only broaden librarians' professional competencies but also contribute to the enhancement of library services in their home country. These insights are crucial for informing policies and practices aimed at fostering the growth and international

mobility of librarians, ultimately leading to a more diversified and dynamic global library workforce.

Additionally, Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory is validated in this context, as the motivations for working abroad are clearly influenced by both intrinsic factors, such as personal fulfillment, and extrinsic factors, such as financial rewards. To support the effective integration of librarians in global work environments, it is recommended that institutions provide targeted training, mentorship programs, and inclusive policies that address the unique challenges of international librarianship. These measures are crucial for enhancing librarians' competencies, fostering their growth, and ultimately contributing to the diversification and dynamism of the global library workforce.

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