

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**Precarious yet Optimistic:  
The Lived Experiences of Filipina 457 Visa  
Holders in the Australian Labour Market**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master in International Development  
at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

**Ava Fuertes Danlog**

2016

## **ABSTRACT**

This study looks into the experiences of Filipina migrants on 457 visas in the Australian labour market, and how these women interpret and make sense of their experiences. In particular it addresses the invisibility of migrant women, in the context of the current rise in temporary skilled migration and the feminisation of migration. Whereas most prior research on this topic focused on measurable working conditions, this study focuses on the lived experiences.

This study adopts a qualitative approach, and draws mainly upon interviews and a small qualitative web survey involving Filipina migrants. The results reveal the convergence of various factors within the subclass 457 visa programme which shaped the labour experiences of women. The Filipinas who migrated as primary 457 visa holders have better labour market outcomes in comparison to Filipinas who migrated as dependent partners of primary 457 visa holders, whose skills and potential were largely underutilised. Yet in spite of this labour market outcome disparity, the lived experiences of both primary holders and dependents were the same – that of varying degrees and forms of precariousness and optimism.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To my two brothers, Kuya Yuri and Kuya Allen, and to my best friend Meldee, whose beautiful weddings I missed while I pursued my degree, thank you for understanding.

To family, friends, and comrades, your love and support have constantly filled my heart and lifted my spirit these past two years. To the amazing people who made New Zealand feel like home, I will never forget your friendship and generosity.

I am also thankful to my supervisors, Dr. Maria Borovnik and Dr. Sharon McLennan, for their mentorship and motivation. To Maria, I appreciate the patience and for that extra push, believing that my drafts could always be better.

To the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Massey University International Student Support Office team, I will be forever grateful for this opportunity.

And finally, I am forever indebted to fellow countrymen in Australia who participated in the study.

To end, at the crossroad of every major life decision, one question steers me to the direction I hope I would always take – “for whom?” This study is for Filipina migrant workers who were forced to leave their friends, families, and country in order to have a shot at a decent life.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
LIST OF FIGURES	VII
LIST OF TABLES	VIII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	IX
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 AUSTRALIA'S TEMPORARY SKILLED MIGRATION PROGRAM: THE 457 VISA	3
1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	4
1.4 METHODOLOGY	5
1.5 THESIS STRUCTURE	6
<b>CHAPTER 2: WOMEN AND WORK WITHIN TEMPORARY SKILLED MIGRATION</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION	7
2.2 THE RISE IN TEMPORARY SKILLED MIGRATION AND THE FEMINISATION OF MIGRATION	7
2.2.1 <i>The Rise in Temporary Skilled Migration</i>	8
2.2.2 <i>The Feminisation of Migration</i>	10
2.3 THE LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES OF WOMEN WITHIN TEMPORARY SKILLED MIGRATION	12
2.3.1 <i>Defining Precarious Work</i>	13
2.3.2 <i>Migrant Women's Double Disadvantage</i>	16
2.3.3 <i>Factors Shaping Labour Market Outcomes</i>	17
2.3.4 <i>Section Summary: Migrant Women's Labour Market Outcomes</i>	25
2.4. EMPOWERMENT AND AGENCY IN THE LABOUR MARKET	29
2.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY	31
<b>CHAPTER 3: FILIPINA MIGRATION AND AUSTRALIA'S 457 VISA SCHEME</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION	35
3.2 THE FILIPINO MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA	35
3.2.1 <i>The Labour Migration of Filipinas</i>	36
3.2.2 <i>Filipino Migration to Australia</i>	39
3.3 AUSTRALIA'S CHANGING IMMIGRATION POLICY: PRIORITISING SKILLED AND TEMPORARY MIGRANTS	41
3.4 THE 457 VISA AND LABOUR MARKET VULNERABILITY	43
3.4.1 <i>The 457 Visa</i>	44
3.4.2 <i>Labour Market Situation of 457 Visa Holders</i>	46
3.4.3 <i>Sources of Vulnerability</i>	50
3.4.5 <i>Recommendations from Previous Studies</i>	54

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY	56
<b>CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION	59
4.2 METHODOLOGY	60
4.3 THE FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE	62
4.3.1 <i>Recruitment and Access to Participants</i>	62
4.3.2 <i>Data Collection</i>	63
4.4 REFLEXIVE BRACKETING	72
4.5 INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS	73
4.6 ETHICS	74
4.7 RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS	76
4.8 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	77
4.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY	78
<b>CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS (PART 1):</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FILIPINA 457 PRIMARY VISA HOLDERS IN THE AUSTRALIAN LABOUR MARKET</b>	<b>79</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION	79
5.2 EXPERIENCES IN MIGRATING TO AUSTRALIA	80
5.2.1 <i>Motivations for Migrating</i>	80
5.2.2 <i>Securing the Primary 457 Visa</i>	82
5.3 EXPERIENCES IN THE LABOUR MARKET	85
5.3.1 <i>Labour Market Outcomes</i>	86
5.3.2 <i>Women's Perceptions of their Labour Market Integration</i>	89
5.3.3 <i>Coping Strategies</i>	96
5.3.4 <i>Mitigating Vulnerability</i>	97
5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY	98
<b>CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS (PART 2):</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FILIPINA 457 DEPENDENT VISA HOLDERS IN THE AUSTRALIAN LABOUR MARKET</b>	<b>101</b>
6.1 INTRODUCTION	101
6.2 EXPERIENCES IN MIGRATING TO AUSTRALIA	102
6.2.1 <i>Motivations for Migrating</i>	102
6.2.2 <i>Securing the 457 Dependent Visa</i>	104
6.3 LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES	105
6.3.1 <i>Motivations for Labour Market Participation</i>	105
6.3.2 <i>Employment Outcomes</i>	106
6.3.3 <i>Quality of Employment</i>	111

6.4 FACTORS SHAPING THE LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES	116
6.4.1 <i>Labour Market Barriers</i>	117
6.4.2 <i>Impact of Familial Responsibilities</i>	120
6.4.3 <i>Dependents' Livelihood Strategy</i>	122
6.5 COPING STRATEGIES, EXERCISING AGENCY, AND THE TRANSITION TO BETTER LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES	123
6.5.1 <i>Coping Strategies</i>	123
6.5.2 <i>Transitioning to Better Labour Market Outcomes</i>	125
6.6. DEPENDENTS' PERCEPTION ON LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION ON A 457 VISA	130
6.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY	132
<b>CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: INSECURITY, VULNERABILITY, AND OPTIMISM IN THE LABOUR MARKET</b>	<b>135</b>
7.1 INTRODUCTION	135
7.2 WHAT ARE THE LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES OF FILIPINA 457 VISA HOLDERS?	136
7.3 WHAT FACTORS SHAPE THE LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES OF FILIPINA 457 VISA HOLDERS?	139
7.4 HOW DO FILIPINA 457 VISA HOLDERS EXERCISE AGENCY IN THE LABOUR MARKET?	144
7.5 HOW DO FILIPINA 457 VISA HOLDERS PERCEIVE THEIR OVER-ALL LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCE?	146
7.6 CONCLUSION: PRECARIOUS YET OPTIMISTIC: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FILIPINA 457 VISA HOLDERS	150
REFERENCES	153
APPENDIX A	171
APPENDIX B	181
APPENDIX C	185

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1</b>	<i>Top 10 Destinations of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWS)</i>	37
<b>Figure 2</b>	<i>Filipino 457 Visa Holders in Australia</i>	46
<b>Figure 3</b>	<i>Pathways to Securing a 457 Visa</i>	85
<b>Figure 4</b>	<i>Jobs of Filipina 457 Primary Holders</i>	86
<b>Figure 5</b>	<i>Jobs of Filipina 457 Dependent Visa Holders</i>	107
<b>Figure 6</b>	<i>Labour Market Outcomes of Filipina 457 Dependent Visa Holders</i>	110

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1</b>	<i>Conceptualisation of Precarious Work</i>	14
<b>Table 2</b>	<i>Migrant Women's Labour Market Vulnerability and Outcomes</i>	27
<b>Table 3</b>	<i>List of Web Survey Respondents</i>	66
<b>Table 4</b>	<i>List of Interview Participants</i>	68
<b>Table 5</b>	<i>Group Interview Participants</i>	70
<b>Table 6</b>	<i>List of Key Informants</i>	71
<b>Table 7</b>	<i>Employment Status of Filipina 457 Dependents Pre and Post-arrival</i>	108

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIBP	Department of International Border Protection
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MBIE	New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
MRT	Migration Review Tribunal
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFW	Overseas Filipino Worker
UN	United Nations
US	United States