

**Migrant Remittance as a Transnational Activity within the Context of Exit and  
Reception:  
A Comparative Study of Overseas Filipinos in the US, Japan and Saudi Arabia**

*Seok Hyeon Choi  
DPhil candidate  
Department of Social Policy and Social Work  
University of Oxford*

**Abstract**

**OBJECTIVES:** The aim of this paper is to examine how the context of exit and reception affects migrant remittance patterns, comparing those of Filipino migrants residing in the US, Japan and Saudi Arabia. The US, Japan and Saudi Arabia are countries in which many Filipino migrants, one of the most representative migration groups in the world, are residing. However, all three have different contexts of reception, such as immigration rules that impede immigrants' long-term/permanent settlement. Following 'transnationalism', this paper regards Filipino migrants' remittances as a constant transnational activity across 'here' and 'there', and one which aims to maximise migrants' economic interests beyond national boundaries. Thus the paper addresses whether there is a difference of migrant remittance between one ethnic migrant group residing in an environment favourable for immigrants' long-term economic activity and those who do not. In a same sense, it is questionable whether regional diversity of migrants' home communities leads to differences in remittance pattern, and, if so, what may have caused this and whether this pattern tends to be discovered in the home country.

**METHODS:** This paper has selected Filipinos residing in the US, Japan, and Saudi Arabia for comparison. Regarding the context of reception, the US provides a relatively favourable environment for migrants for settlement than do the other two countries. The Philippines has particular cultural and language attachments to the US, because it was a US colony in the past, and the US has historically had a Filipino ethnic community. By contrast, Japan and Saudi Arabia have less favourable environments for migrants to decide to settle. Therefore, it is possible to forecast that these systems or policy differences can make Filipino workers' economic activity adjust and diversify, which will in turn affect their remittance pattern. The indicators that this research has chosen are age, occupational status, legal status, and ethnic community. These indicators will be examined in

conjunction with amount of remittance by country, which will in the end reveal a relationship between the context of reception and migrant remittance pattern. Regarding the context of exit, this research has employed home community circumstances as an important variable that determines future domestic economic activity. The Philippines can be divided into an urban area, including Manila, a rural area, and a conflict area. Major economic activities are occurring in urban area, but the other two areas are less desirable places, with little economic activity. These regional differences cause differences in remittance patterns. Also, relationship with family members in the home country is an important variable that determines potential economic activity back home. When controlling for other variables, the context of exit has a continuous effect on migrants' remittance pattern. Therefore, this research is to examine the contexts of origin and reception affecting the remittance patterns of Filipino migrants residing in the US, Japan, and Saudi Arabia in comparative view. The paper employ quantitative methods, which comprise Ordinary Least Square model and Robust model, to better characterise the associations between amount of remittance and contextual factors, using the survey data on Overseas Filipinos that the Philippines government has provided.

**RESULTS:** The findings of multivariate analyses reveal important variations in the explanatory power of independent variables among the three countries. First of all, regarding the context of reception, this research finds that the age, legal status, occupation and ethnic community of Filipinos in the US had significance, while Filipino workers in Saudi Arabia showed little significance in terms of remittance amount and these variables. Japan showed a mixture of the results from the other two countries. Regarding context of exit, all three countries had significance in the amount of remittance by home community. That is, when the home community is in economic trouble or uncertainty, the remittance amount decreases, and the urban area showed a relatively higher amount of remittance than did rural areas. Also, when the remitting person is a head of household, or the child of a head of household, these persons were discovered to have sent lesser amounts than had other family members. Contrastingly, a migrant who is a spouse of a head of household is likely to send more money than other family members.

**CONCLUSIONS:** the findings of this research suggest that migrant remittance must be reconsidered as an economic choice in the context of origin and reception. Once migrants leave their home country, they simultaneously consider the context of the economic and social environments of the host country and home country. On the one hand, they keep their moral obligatory contact with their family and relatives back in the

home country. On the other hand, they have a continuous interest in the host country, where they are conducting economic activities. They consider emigration policy, economic outlook, local community and ethnic community as variables that affect migration when they are making economic choices.

This research has found that migrants consider both their home country and the host country when making decisions. Furthermore, their remittance behaviour, as previous literature argues, cannot be seen as altruistic actions that only consider family and relatives back home, ignoring one's own economic benefits. Therefore, migrants can be seen as actors who continuously seek to maximise their economic resources beyond national boundaries. This research has helped to confirm empirically the transnationalism argument by analysing Filipino migrants' remittances.