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Underpayment Experiences of Filipino Migrant Teachers in Thailand During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Underpayment of wages is a persistent problem among migrant workers globally, and this type of compensation issue is believed to have been stimulated and/or exacerbated with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study examines the situation of underpayment among Filipino Migrant Teachers in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic and what recommendations are possible to enhance current policies and redress mechanisms towards the issue. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 participants and one Philippine government representative to generate the necessary data for the study. This research found that there are four main problems. The first issue is the absence of a bilateral agreement that could standardize labor practices and redress mechanisms. The second concern is that protection measures for complainants are not yet available with the current laws. Third is the lack of labor and cultural orientation programs, and last is the unavailability of multi-lingual systems to communicate effectively with Thai authorities. As such, on a policy-making level, the study recommends continuing the negotiations for a bilateral labor agreement to standardize employment and consider specific modifications in the law to shield migrant teachers from reprisal and the burden of proof. On an institutional level, embedding labor/cultural orientation programs and multi-lingual channels to relevant government offices and places of work would reduce skepticism towards the law, racial bias, and the language barrier between migrant teachers, employers, and authorities.

Keywords: *Underpayment of Wages; Wage Theft; Filipino Migrant Teachers; Migrant Workers in Thailand; COVID-19*

1. Introduction

Wage theft is an umbrella term applied in labor and migration studies which deals with the non- or underpayment of remunerations and benefits for a work rendered complete by an employee to a company or an employer. A broader definition would also include discriminatory wage set-ups, false accounting, unjust termination, forced repatriation without severance pay, and deceptive employment (International Organization for Migration, 2023; Harkins, 2020; Chok, & Ng, 2017). Underpayment of wages, more specifically, refers to the situation wherein a worker is receiving less than the expected or what was the contractually agreed amount of pay for a task completed. This situation may occur simultaneously along with other forms of wage theft at any given point during an employment period. The current literature on underpayment of wages is most commonly found in research and publications dealing with wage theft. As such, for the purpose of this research, when discussing the concept of wage theft, the research presumes the idea that underpayment of wages is part of the context. As Chok, and Ng (2017) stated, the most common forms of wage theft are non- and underpayment of wages.

An example of wage theft is the Kafala System of the Middle East. Under the Kafala system, a migrant household worker could experience non- or under-payment of wages because of the structural power imbalance favorable towards the employer. During wage disputes and/or severance of ties, employers have the outright capacity to revoke a worker's visa or file bogus charges such as theft and absconding to refuse payment and punish them in jail (Migrant Forum Asia, 2012). Another example of underpayment can be found in Australia, examples of this can be seen at 7-Eleven, Pizza Hut, and Dominos. 7-Eleven systematically underpays their workers, pretending to deposit full wages but would require employees to pay back a portion of their wages in cash. Pizza Hut and Dominos were found sham contracting and not complying with the standards enabled by the franchising nature of their business (Australian Council of Trade Unions, 2018).

In Singapore, employers who hire migrant workers purposely declare fraudulent compensation packages in In-Principle Approval (IPA) letters and pay less than the stated amount. Cases lodged in the Ministry of Manpower of Singapore recorded a total of 560 false salary declaration from 2015-2019 with 1,400 migrant workers affected in the same period (Yufeng, 2021). Other cases were also documented in parts of the United States (Watts, 2022; Ferriss, & Yerardi, 2021), Europe (Verité, 2021), Asia (Human Rights Working Group, 2020; Rajan, & Pattath, 2022; Subramaniam, 2020; Harkins, & Åhlberg, 2017), and Africa (Khambay, & Narayanasamy, 2021).

Zooming into the context of Thailand and the Philippines, Thailand stands as a labor-receiving destination while the Philippines serves as its source of labor force, particularly in the teaching sector. The Philippines is the only ASEAN member state that formed part of the top 10 nations of skilled migrant workers in Thailand (Harkins, 2019). In 2019, there were at least 23,000 Filipino Migrant Teachers employed at different levels of Thai educational institutions (Dumlao, & Tepsuriwong, 2019). This influx of Filipino migrant teachers is partly due to the country's decision to hire foreign teachers to better the English competency skills of Thais (Novio, 2018), achieve its goal of becoming a hub for international education (Sarasad, & Archavanitkul, 2014), and escape unemployment of teachers in the Philippines. The limited migration corridors of English teachers to Asia and Middle East are also another contributing factor.

Despite the steady labor migration movement between the Philippines and Thailand, many Filipino Migrant Teachers still faced job insecurity. The industry practice of "no work, no pay" was felt harder during the COVID-19 pandemic and forced many teachers to depend on donations and food packs to survive (Mala, 2020). Underpayment also perpetuated during the crisis, forcing teachers to agree on earning only half of their salary during the pandemic (Deguma, Cacho, & Deguma, 2022; Thai PBS World, 2021). Parents insisted as well that they should pay less for academic fees since the responsibility has now shifted from teacher to parent. This demand for refunds and lower tuition fees further restricted the cashflow of private academic institutions (Thailand International School Monitor, 2021). Citing the circumstances above, this piqued the interest of the researcher in examining the situation and experience of underpayment of Filipino Migrant Teachers in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research is divided into seven sections. The first section provides the relevant literature about the underpayment of wages and labor policies in general. The second section introduces the objectives of the study. The third section describes the methods applied in selecting participants, profile of the participants, and limitations to the study. The fourth and fifth section exhibits the findings and discussions on the experience of underpayment among Filipino Migrant Teachers in Thailand. And lastly, the research identifies the conclusions and recommendations under the sixth and seventh sections.

1.1 Underpayment and the COVID-19 pandemic

Underpayment of wages refers to the situation wherein contract-based salaries are not complied with, and workers are paid less than the agreed-upon amount. Scholars consider the underpayment of wages to be part of the larger concept of wage theft. Wage theft itself has a global characteristic because it is embedded to the system of migration. Factors such as systemic and legal structures of the destination country, economic instability in the home country, power imbalance in labor relationships, ethnocentrism, corporate greed, and many others all play a role to its existence. Employers, both local and foreign, take advantage of non- and underpayment of wages among migrant workers through a number of factors: lack of knowledge in labor and wage laws, sheer desperation to earn a living, power dynamics, fear of reprisal, lack of legal representation, deceptive contracts, and racial discrimination (Al Jazeera Plus, 2022; Hallett, 2022; Berg, & Farbenblum, 2017; Harkins, & Åhlberg, 2017). According to the International Organization on Migration (2023), migrant workers are more prone to receiving less favorable employment terms and conditions compared to local workers and can be excluded from social protections.

Foreign workers are already among the most vulnerable groups economically and socially, and they are also more likely to be pre-disposed for job losses during an economic fallout (Dustmann, et. al., 2010, as cited in Fassani, & Mazza, 2020). An estimated 17.3 % decrease in global working hours, equivalent to 495 million full-time jobs, was lost from April to June 2020 according to the International Labour Organization (Piper, & Foley, 2021). As businesses experienced the negative impacts of COVID-19, many migrant workers were being relieved, forced to accept poor terms including reduced compensation, or face termination and deportation. Sectors of

agriculture, construction, textile, retail, manufacturing, janitorial, domestic work, fishery, and meat industry, including hospitality and entertainment sectors were found to be the most common industries involved with wage issues across research on different parts of the world (Khambay, & Narayanasamy, 2021; Khemanitthaithai, 2021; Australian Council on Trade Union, 2018).

The Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, which monitors over 9000 companies in over 180 countries, observed that during April and August 2020, wage-related issues were the most commonly reported labor abuse with 81% in total of the reported cases during the pandemic (Piper, & Foley, 2021). The Human Rights Working Group (2020), in their region-wide study of migrant worker experiences in East and Southeast Asia, discovered that unpaid wages and other forms of remunerations, forced salary deductions, delayed payments, leaves without pay and termination were utilized during COVID-19 to mitigate costs in the employment and retention of migrant workers in countries of Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand.

Other companies, such as major Western fashion brands, imposed major cutbacks with their demands, refused to pay completed orders, and pressured Asian suppliers to implement discounts despite generating billions of dollars in profit within the second half of 2020 (Khambay, & Narayanasamy, 2021). Such major cutbacks and substantial discounts are pushed further down the line harming the wages of garment factory workers. Other firms resorted to implementing various arbitrary criteria to reduce their compensation responsibilities such as non-remuneration of benefits accrued over time, asking employees to resign, or resort to nonpayment of salaries (Rajan, & Pattath, 2022).

A) Thailand

In the case of Thailand, the Ministry of Labour reported that there are at least 2.1 million migrant workers already inside the country (International Labour Organization, 2022a). A year before the pandemic, these migrant workers make up 10% of Thailand's total labor force (Human Rights Working Group, 2020). When COVID-19 hit, entertainment, retail, fishing, manufacturing, and construction industries, which employ mostly migrant workers, were ordered to shut down to contain the virus. Migrant fishermen in Samut Sakhon were not allowed to work without a negative COVID-19 test result (Wongsamuth, 2021). Migrant garment workers lost their social security benefit and other compensations due factory and border closures (Migrant Forum Asia, 2021). The tourism industry was the hardest-hit sector with cancellations mounting since the end of January 2020, and tourism operators implementing wage deductions and leave without pay to keep companies afloat. In response to the crisis, the Thai government rolled out 5,000 THB handout to support the country's 3 million informal workers (Post Reporters, 2020).

B) The Philippines

The Philippines, on the other hand, has over 1.96 million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) as of December 2021 (Mapa, 2022). The International Organization for Migration conducted a survey of 8,332 OFW returnees during COVID-19 and revealed that 17% of the sample did not receive their final wage while close to 60% did not receive their separation pay (International Organization for Migration, 2021a). In the local setting, BPO employees were placed on "floating status" for 90 days without pay (Macaraeg, 2020). Another survey of 600 men and women employees from large private firms revealed that 17% have less pay and 13% were forced to take unpaid leave. This affected household income and well-being due to rising financial concerns and uncertainty about the situation (Investing in Women, 2020). The Philippine government responded to the crisis by providing 5,000 – 8,000 PHP cash aid for the vulnerable groups and informal workers of the country (Nakpil, 2020).

1.2 Labor policies of Thailand

Currently, Thailand has both judicial and non-judicial access to remedy for wage disputes. On a judicial aspect, Thailand has its Act for the Establishment of and Procedure for Labour Court of 1979 (Adulyadej, 1979) and Labour Protection Act (LPA) of 1998 (The Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, 1998). Section 8 of the 1979 Act indicates the jurisdiction powers of the Labour Court which includes disputes concerning the rights or duties under an employment agreement or under the terms concerning the state of employment, and cases arising from the ground of wrongful acts between the employers and employees in connection with a labor dispute

or in connection with the performance of work under an employment agreement (International Labour Organization, 2023). Furthermore, the Act separates cases and issues surrounding employment from regular civil cases through the application of the Labour Protection Act of 1998 (The Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, 1998) and the Civil and Commercial Code employment acts and statutes (Thailand Court, 2023).

The Labour Protection Act (LPA) of 1998 (The Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, 1998) meanwhile enshrines the rights and welfare of workers. The 1998 Act includes migrant workers and any human and labor rights violations reported to the Labour Court or Labour Inspector. Section 23 of LPA states that the normal working hours in a day are eight while Section 9 states that should an employer fail to pay back wages, overtime pay, holiday pay, and holiday overtime pay within a month, or severance pay or special severance pay, the employer shall pay interests to an employee at the rate of 15% per annum during the current year. The LPA also limits an employer's ability to make deductions from wages except for payment of income tax, labor union contributions, debts to a savings cooperative or cooperatives of similar nature, debts entered for the employee's welfare and benefit such as salary loan, payment of security deposit for workers who have responsibility with company cash or property, and provident fund contributions with an accompanying fund agreement (Supasitthumrong, Tilleke, & Gibbins, 2018).

Although the Labour Protection Act was migrant-worker inclusive from the onset and has been constantly reshaping to accommodate changes over the years, the enforcement of the law was limited and outside laborers have increased under the limited rights and liberty in labor unions (Yotwilai, & Ratchatawan, 2019). In defense of the Thai government, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) and Department of Employment (DOE) established 10 Migrant Workers Assistance Centers (MWACs) to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers including the assurance of access to various grievance mechanisms available under the Thai labor and migration law. An assessment was conducted from October 2017 to February 2018 and revealed that the MWACs have improved migrant workers' ability to access information and receive advice regarding their employment, working conditions and rights. Further findings revealed that the centers were able to deliver services to 124, 515 migrant workers from August 2016 to April 2019 (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Thailand also has State-based non-judicial channels or more commonly known as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to handle employment issues without resorting to court. The first one is The Arbitration Act of 2002 wherein parties are to submit disputes to a third party, known as the arbitrator, who will then set out the terms of the decision. Similar to a court ruling, the decision is final and binding (International Organization for Migration, 2021b). The benefits to parties to a dispute, particularly to a foreign litigant, can be significant (Siam Legal, 2023). The second non-judicial policy is the Dispute Mediation Act of 2019 wherein parties enter into a negotiation with the help of a mediator to reach a settlement that is acceptable to all. Unlike arbitration, it is the parties who set out the terms of the agreement and not the mediator (International Organization for Migration, 2021b). The 2019 Act is found to be popular among workers and employers and helps retain the relationship between the two parties.

1.3 Labor policies of The Philippines

As for the Philippines, the rise of OFWs prompted the country's legislators to tailor policies specific for the protection of migrant workers. The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (2023) provides legal assistance and funding for OFWs to acquire foreign lawyers, payment of bail bonds, court fees, and other litigation expenses. Section 24 refers to the establishment of a Legal Assistant for Migrant Workers Affairs under the Department of Foreign Affairs' (DFA) embassies and consulates abroad. The Legal Assistant shall be primarily responsible for the provision and overall coordination of all legal assistance services to Overseas Filipino Workers as well as Overseas Filipinos (OFs) in distress. The Legal Assistant also has the authority to hire foreign private lawyers to assist the officer in the effective discharge of the above functions. Section 25 on the other hand, establishes the amount of Legal Assistance Fund (LAF) while Section 26 determines where the fund should be spent on. This includes professional fees to foreign lawyers, bail bonds to secure temporary release of workers under detention, court fees, and other litigation expenses among other things.

The Department of Migrant Workers Act (Tahanan, 2021) is a newly designed ministry tasked to oversee the management, monitoring, and welfare and rights of OFWs. Section 15 specifically establishes the Migrant Workers Office (MWO), absorbing the former Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLO) and Assistance-to-Nationals (ATN) Unit of Philippine embassies and consulates abroad, to serve as the operating arm of DMW. The

MWO is mandated to protect OFWs and assist them in employer-employee disputes such as violation of work contract, nonpayment of wages and other benefits, illegal dismissal, and other violations of the terms and conditions of their employment

Lastly, the Wage Theft Prevention Act otherwise known as Senate Bill 208, introduced by Senator Raffy Teshiba Tulfo (2022) seeks to penalize the act of wage theft both locally and abroad. Section 2 and 3 of the bill states that it is the policy of the State to not only ensure workers' rights are met and protected, but that the act of penalizing wage theft should apply both locally and abroad. Section 6 further explains that those found guilty of wage theft are criminally liable in accordance with Article 309 of the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines. However, there is no specific process how to penalize overseas employers. The bill is still pending in the committee as of August 2022.

An interesting observation by Javadikouchaksaraei (2018) points out that the labor laws of Southeast Asian countries vary greatly according to the kind of migration movement taking place. Countries like the Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia are regarded as countries with emigrant movement. This means nationals move out of their home country to settle permanently abroad. While Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and Thailand on the other hand, are countries with immigrant movement. In other words, foreigners are coming in to live permanently in their country instead. Having such circumstances placed, countries like the Philippines have less policies for the immigrant community within the country. While in Thailand, where the rate of immigration is distinctly higher than the Philippines, there are well-placed laws for foreign laborers with airtight regulations.

1.4. Other promising labor policies around the world

It is important to note that there is no jurisdiction in the world yet were unpaid and underpaid migrant workers can expect to recover the full wages owed to them. For the most part, national systems place all the burden, expenses, and risks of remedying wage-related issues on the hands of the migrant workers (Farbenblum, & Berg, 2021). However, a few countries have acted to improve the access to justice and remedy.

Australia's Fair Work Act (FWA) of 2009 places the burden of proof to the employer instead of the employee. Employers are to keep records of remuneration, taxation and other deductions, incentives, overtime hours, allowances, leaves taken and balances, and notices of termination. Failure to comply will require the employer to disprove the allegations (Kelleher, 2017). Section 425.1 of the Criminal Code of Canada meanwhile prohibits employers or any person of authority to take disciplinary or retaliatory action intended to demote, terminate, or antagonize an employee (Justice Laws Website, 1985; International Labour Organization, 2022b). The mere act of threatening an employee is also punishable under the said law. In the United States, the states of Arizona, California, Florida, New York, Oregon, and the District of Columbia instituted retaliation protection laws that will allow workers to 1) claim monetary damages in addition to lost pay; 2) recover cost of attorney fees; 3) take court action against retaliatory acts; and allow the government to impose fines on employers who are found guilty of labor injustices (Huizar, 2019). The United Arab Emirates also has its e-Trials which allows migrant workers to attend court hearings remotely during widespread crises such as COVID-19 and in the event of untimely return to their country of origin (Faal, 2021). The UAE government has also introduced mobile labor courts that come to workers to respond on salary disputes and ensure they are paid on the spot (Farbenblum, & Berg, 2021). Lastly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia deployed a Labor Attaché to the Philippines to accommodate repatriated Filipinos who wish to file cases on wage-related issues against their former employers (Farbenblum, & Berg, 2021; Aben, 2020).

2. Objectives

1. To examine the underpayment situation of Filipino Migrant Teachers in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To propose recommendations for the Thai and Philippine government to create or improve its policies and redress mechanisms for underpayment of wages.

3. Materials and Methods

A qualitative approach was utilized in this research in order to gain a rich and detailed understanding of the phenomenon. The Purposive sampling technique was employed to meet matching needs and ensure that the

individuals selected are proficient and well-informed of the field of interest (Campbell et al., 2020; Cresswell, & Clark, 2011, as cited in Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The study used both primary and secondary sources of information in analyzing the findings of the study. Primary information was obtained through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide greater breadth and depth of information with a particular emphasis in understanding the social movement of actors (Klandermans, & Staggenborg, 2002). The secondary information meanwhile was acquired from existing bodies of research, current literature, news reports, government legislations and publications, and other forms of public information relevant to the study.

3.1 Participants

A total of 9 participants and one government representative were asked to share their experiences and knowledge on the underpayment of wages. Selection of the nine participants were based in two criteria: 1) they must be documented Filipino Migrant Teachers in Thailand; and 2) are employed during the peak of the pandemic period, specifically before January 2020 until after January 2022. The sampling did not restrict itself in terms of gender, grade, or year level of teaching, public or private employment, and whether hired under a manpower agency or directly through an academic institution. For the government side, one representative from the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok was asked to share their knowledge. Table 1 and Table 3.2 provides further illustration of the participants' information.

Table 1 Participant's Information

No.	Participant	Gender	Year Employed	Work Experience	Location
1	A	Male	2018-2022	3.5 years	Nakhon Pathom
2	B	Male	2019-2023	4 years	Chiang Mai
3	C	Female	2018-present	4 years on going	Nakhon Pathom
4	D	Female	2018-present	4 years on going	Nakhon Pathom
5	E	Female	2018-2022	4 years	Nakhon Pathom
6	F	Female	2018-present	5 years on going	Rayong
7	G	Male	2016-present	7 years on going	Bangkok
8	H	Female	2019-present	4 years on going	Bangkok
9	I	Female	2013-present	10 years on going	Bangkok

Table 2 Government Representative's Information

No.	Participant	Gender	Work Experience	Office
1	J	Male	15 years on going	Philippine Embassy in Bangkok

3.2 Scope Limitation

The study intended to interview the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, and employers to gather more information and insight about reports of underpayment in Thailand. However, due to time constraints and organizational protocols to observe in the Thai government ministries, the researcher was unable to determine how many cases have been lodged and resolved by the Thai government and what other relevant information and initiatives are in the works now to address similar situations. In addition, due to personal privacy and business confidentiality reasons, the researcher was also unable to interview the employers both from schools and manpower agencies. Thus, this research could not provide additional context on the operational constraints encountered by the employers during the period of underpayment of their hired teachers. Nevertheless, the study attempted to fill all these gaps with secondary data from existing literature and legislation.

4. Results

This section will exhibit the findings of the research. The first part demonstrates a summary of the types of underpayment experienced by the participants of the study. This is then followed by the three themes generated

from the interviews: a) attitude towards the situation of underpayment; b) redressing strategies; and c) perception towards accessing justice.

4.1 Underpayment situation during the COVID-19 pandemic

From the interviews conducted, there were two forms of underpayment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first form underpayment of their basic salary and the second form is underpayment of other forms of remuneration such as overtime, rest day duty, holiday work, extra classes, etc. A summary of the experiences is provided in Table 3.

Table 3 Underpayment Situation Experienced by Filipino Migrant Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Participant	Type of Underpayment	Situation	Duration
A	Basic Salary	Received only 17% of his total compensation	3 months (Mar, May, Jun 2020)
B	Did not experience any form of underpayment	-	-
C	Basic Salary	Received only 32% of her total compensation	3 months (Mar, May, Jun 2020)
	Other Forms of Remuneration	Did not receive payment of 1,200 THB per extra class	2 weeks (March 2020)
D	Other Forms of Remuneration	Did not receive payment of 1,200 THB per extra class	2 weeks (March 2020)
E	Basic Salary	Received only 50% of her salary increment	1 year (2021)
F	Did not experience any form of underpayment	-	-
G	Basic Salary	Received only 60-70% of her total compensation	2 months (May, Jun 2020)
	Other Forms of Remuneration	Did not receive payment of extra classes (approx. below 20,000 THB in total)	11 months (May 2019-Mar 2020)
H	Basic Salary	Received only 60-70% of his total compensation in one school	2 months (May, Jun 2020)
	Other Forms of Remuneration	Did not receive payment of extra classes (approx. above 20,000 THB in total)	11 months (May 2019-Mar 2020)
	Basic Salary	Received only 93% and 75% of his total compensation in different periods in another school	1 month – 93% (Sep 2021) 5 months – 75% (Nov 2021-Mar 2022)
I	Basic Salary	Received only 75% of her total compensation	3 months (May, Jun, Jul 2020)

Participant B did not experience any form of underpayment during COVID-19 because he was employed under a public school in Chiang Mai. He explained that their compensation was funded from government coffers. As for Participant F, she also did not experience any type of underpayment during the crisis since she was hired under a prestigious international school in Rayong with sufficient funding.

A) Attitude Towards the Situation of Underpayment

There were three major themes that emerged in the study. The first theme is attitude towards the situation of underpayment. The attitudes demonstrated were settling for less, optimism, and racial prejudice.

Settling for Less

Except for Participant B and J, all participants expressed that they settled for less or that it was what they observed with fellow Filipinos when facing the issue of underpayment. This resigning attitude stems from various reasons such as fear of losing their jobs, the precarity of their status as migrant workers, and the on-going COVID-

19 crisis itself. Moreover, the responsibility of sending remittances back home outweighs any personal urge to raise the issue of underpayment.

We have certain limits in terms of visa, usually lasting within 3 months or at least 3 exits. This presents a difficulty especially if you are not an Education degree holder. It will be very hard to apply and find a job. So, Filipinos settle for less just to get the job (Participant C, Personal Communication, May 05, 2023).

Us, Filipinos, we just say, "That is okay, rather than losing the job, right?", because we value our family. We focus on future implications compared to other nationalities who may have a different reaction. (Participant I, Personal Communication, May 20, 2023)

Optimism

Participant A, E, and I displayed an optimistic attitude during the situation of underpayment. Optimism was their preferred course of action in order to: 1) mentally and emotionally function in society, 2) find gratitude amidst the crisis, and 3) demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness.

The important thing is that we are getting paid, the pay was getting back to normal. And just being grateful! Because at that time, we were already hearing stories of Filipinos getting repatriated there. Filipinos repatriating themselves! And when they end up in the Philippines? No jobs! Right? Dude, we were lucky because the school kept us (Participant A, Personal Communication, May 01, 2023).

In my department, I had a Caucasian colleague teaching Visual Arts, and he is part of that anti movement in the school. Then I explained to him, "Actually, you do not have to worry about us, Filipinos, because we are very resourceful. It is innate in us," And then I added, "If you are worried that we will not have anything to eat, we can survive with just tinned sardines and porridge," (Participant I, Personal Communication, May 20, 2023)

Racial Prejudice

A common understanding between Participants A, C, D, G, and H was that local authorities will side with their fellow Thai nationals, and that their identity as foreign workers would make them second-class citizens.

It crossed our minds actually, us foreign teachers, "You know what? We can actually raise this concern to MOE and all," But since it is Thailand, why would they give care and concern to foreigners? Try to go to a police station, try to report an incident. What happens is that they are going to push through the process. But at the end of that transaction, when you get out of that door, you will never know what is going to happen next... It is a totally different thing when it comes to locals and us working there (Participant A, Personal Communication, May 01, 2023)

No one among us had the courage to report to the labor authorities because we felt that if we ever did, the labor authorities would side with their fellow Thai nationals (Participant C, Personal Communication, May 05, 2023).

B) Redressing Strategies

The second theme presents how the Filipino Migrant Teachers remedied the situation of underpayment. There were three strategies employed by the participants which are assertiveness, restraint, and borrowing.

Assertiveness

Participant C, D, E, H, and I opted for a direct engagement with their employers to resolve the issue. Participant I (Personal Communication, May 20, 2023) gained favorable results as described below:

The school chairman emailed us informing everyone that by May, only 50% of our compensation will be paid. And then we were given an option, to either accept the 50% or they will give a 100% of our summer break salary but our contracts will no longer be renewed... I sent an email to the chairman suggesting if we can receive 75% instead, since we rendered online classes throughout May. And as soon as they are able to rebound from the crisis, that is the time they can pay us back with the balance. I did not expect that after emailing, we would receive an email that the school will give us 75% of our salary. I thanked the chairman, and it was 3 months with 75% salary.

Participant H, on the other hand, failed to claim back his initial compensation amount. He alleged that the political influence of the head of the school may have played a role in the outcome. Participant H (Personal Communication, May 11, 2023) shared more details to this situation by stating:

We went to [Ministry of] Labour, Ministry of Education. But nothing came out of it, because the owner of the school happened to be the governor? Or the mayor? At the same time. We could not do anything about it. We did not stand a chance.

Restraint

The use of restraint was more evident with government entities such as the Labour and Education Ministry of Thailand and the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok. Only Participant A and G held themselves back from expressing grievance with their employers.

To be honest, I did not anymore... followed up or exerted useless effort to... uh... to do that. What happened was that I was just being virtuous at that time. I will just shut up and work; work to paying my debts, working back to get my normal pay (Participant A, Personal Communication, May 01, 2023)

Participant E meanwhile, explained that finding evidence to present to the authorities was found to be an impediment towards redressing the issue of underpayment. "We did not anymore, because I think that time, we needed to gather data and evidence to prove that. And some of us have families already." (Participant E, Personal Communication, May 06, 2023) on the other hand stated).

Borrowing

Although this strategy was employed only by Participant A and C, it is noteworthy to include in the study because it was an essential technique to provide temporary solution to the situation of underpayment. Since schools were cutting their compensation for teachers, some agencies provided cash loans to augment the decrease in income.

I had a good relationship with my agency because they always provide and help [us]. You can also apply for cash advances as much as you like. But it will be deducted immediately once the salary comes. Depending on the terms negotiated, they can also deduct like thrice in a month or in whole (Participant C, Personal Communication, May 05, 2023).

C) Perception Towards Accessing Justice

The last theme in this chapter describes the perception of the participants towards accessing justice from underpayment. Processing perceptual information is often anchored on a subjective experience and may be substantially different from reality. Skepticism, fear of reprisal, and cultural and linguistic differences shaped most of the perception of the participants.

Skepticism

Participant A, C, D, E, G, and H believed that anyone is free to lodge a complaint or file a formal case against their employers, but the doubt lies after the documentation stage.

You would get past the gate, you would be able to sign some papers, right? But on the resolution part, I think 6-7 times out of 10, you are going to lose. You are going to end up being negotiated to... “Well, the matter of fact is...” You know? those kinds of stuff... (Participant A, Personal Communication, May 01, 2023)

I could see scenarios. First would be an internal settlement to end the issue quickly. The second one would be, I am already back home in the Philippines, but the case is still pending... (Participant E, Personal Communication, May 06, 2023)

Fear of Reprisal

Participant C, D, E, and H shared that what they feared most was getting terminated from their jobs, or that their employer might single them out and subject them to antagonistic treatment.

We do not want trouble. Because if we raise that to Labour authorities, it will mean that we are going against the management and that we have higher chances of getting terminated. That really leaves us with nothing, especially that it was a particularly difficult time to find new jobs (Participant E, Personal Communication, May 06, 2023)

We could not do anything in the end, it is them who had the final say. So, we just accepted things since it would be difficult for us to keep fighting. We do not have income anymore... The issue did not die, the school decided not to renew us. They only let us finish the contract that time (Participant H, Personal Communication, May 11, 2023)

Cultural and Linguistic Differences

Participant A, B, F, G, and H cited cultural nuances as a reason why accessing justice towards underpayment was difficult for them.

Because when you get accustomed to Thai culture, Thai attitude and all that, although they are somehow significantly a little bit more pleasing than Filipino attitude, but most of the time it will end up like, “Just arrange it internally,” “Just talk to it privately with the concerned body or entity,” That is how you normally get end up with (Participant A, Personal Communication, May 01, 2023).

Thais have their culture of just following whatever the Heads are telling them even if they are on overload. For us, foreign teachers, we say no when it is too much. But they try to treat us like Thais. So, when we complain, they take it against us, “What a complainer!”, “What a whiner!” Also, in Thai culture, they always emphasize obedience (Participant B, Personal Communication, May 03, 2023).

Language was also an obvious obstruction in expressing grievances related to underpayment and in understanding labor policies.

Before when I started on my first school, I read some [labor policies] when I went to the Labour Ministry. I think I read something about the rules of being a teacher in Thailand. But that was a long time ago... There were also a few things about our rights but not in full detail because mostly they were written in Thai (Participant C, Personal Communication, May 05, 2023).

I also did not read about local labor policies, except when I come to the Labour Ministry. The things I read are only about the policies in obtaining a work permit. Apart from that, you have to use Google Translate because there are no English translated... [bulletin boards] (Participant D, Personal Communication, May 05, 2023).

D) Information from the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok

The study also interviewed the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok to acquire information relevant to the situation of underpayment and nonpayment of wages of Filipino Migrant Teachers in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Participant J, the Embassy did receive calls and emails of similar nature but the bulk of request the office has been getting that time were repatriation flights and relief packages.

The Embassy does not have a specific program because it is a pandemic, it is a crisis. So again, at that time, the major assistance that we provided was repatriation flights... because of the uncertainty at that time. In fact, it took a long time before the economy has reopened. So, in the absence of that certainty of being able to return to their work, the most rational thing to do is for them to return to the Philippines. And so, that's what we facilitated (Participant J, Personal Communication, July 20, 2023).

Data from the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok showed that from 2020 to 2022, a total of 3,998 Filipinos were flown out of Thailand through these repatriation flights. However, for Filipinos who opted to stay in Thailand, the Thai Bureau of Immigration offered an extension through their "COVID Visa" program. Applicants must be endorsed by their respective embassies in which the Philippine Embassy issued a total of 21,789 request letters. In terms of handling complaints related to salary or enforcement of contracts, Participant J (Personal Communication, July 20, 2023) responded the following:

The basic principle is that when such a complaint is lodged with the Philippine Embassy, what we will do is, of course, to exhaust all the procedures. Because you cannot just jump on filing a complaint without exhausting first the internal procedures that they have laid down in their company. We have to go through that process. So, that is the first thing that we would advise them. Because like in many countries, if you go directly to filing a legal complaint, it is like being done in bad faith because you have not taken advantage first of the mechanisms available in your workplace.

Should the internal mechanisms have been exhausted with no satisfaction on the part of the Filipino Migrant Teacher, he or she may resort to legal action using his or her own resources or through the assistance of non-governmental organizations. If the Filipino Migrant Teacher requests for legal assistance to the Embassy itself, the request will undergo a vetting procedure in the Home Office to examine if it is reasonable to provide a lawyer. At the moment, the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok is advocating for a bilateral labor agreement to provide better working conditions and opportunities for Filipino Migrant Teachers and other professions in Thailand. However, the agreement is still yet to be materialized between the two countries. Participant J (Personal Communication, July 20, 2023) pointed more of this in detail:

It could be better if only there can be a bilateral labor agreement. But as I said, we may want it, but it depends on the receptiveness of the host government in Thailand. At this time, we feel that Thailand is not ready for it. Because they feel that they are already giving adequate work or suitable work conditions for Filipinos here. But as I said, it could be better. Comparing, for example, the situation of overseas Filipinos who are teaching, for example, [with] the other nationals here [who] are getting paid better. And that is the prerogative of the employer because of the absence of a bilateral agreement. So, the only legal obligation of the host government here is not to violate their local labor laws. So long as they are able to meet their minimum wages, for example, they are not in any situation of violating their own laws.

With respect to the issue of underpayment or nonpayment of wages, the Philippine Embassy agrees that such cases should be informed to their office as well. However, it is important that the Filipino Migrant Teachers also carefully read their contracts.

I agree with you that we need to know about these things so that we can advocate their cases. But going back to the situation you just described, if the non-payment, or under-payment of compensation took place during the pandemic, it will be hard to enforce that because it is in their contracts. The basic principle here, and I think it is an industry practice, if there is no work, there is no pay. And also, I think, even if you elevate that case to their labor mechanisms here in Thailand, I am pretty sure that their labor authorities will decide in favor of the employers. Because how can the employer pay if they are not receiving income? So, it is an extraordinary situation. Unless it is happening during normal times, that is a different matter... That is why it is very important to read the contracts. Here at the embassy, we see these contracts every day. And almost always, that is the condition. If there is no work, for whatever reason, then payment would not be made (Participant J, Personal Communication, July 20, 2023).

5. Discussion

This section involves two parts. The first focuses on analyzing the findings with the relevant literature and identifying what problems resonate most in the study. The second part deals with the recommendations from the participants in resolving the situation of underpayment.

5.1. Underpayment situation of Filipino migrant teachers in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic

There are four problems identified in the present research. The first problem is the lack of a Bilateral Labor Agreement (BLA). According to Participant J, without a BLA, employers have the prerogative of settling the amount of compensation and enforce a “no work, no pay” rule. As such, establishing a BLA can even the playing field for migrant workers. Such is resonated in the work of Sáez (2013) wherein he determined that Pacific Island countries’ BLAs with Australia and New Zealand included a criterion for determining eligibility to recruit foreign labor, minimum and maximum employment contract and visa duration, standard wages, cost-sharing for the placement and accommodation of migrant workers, and stern sanctions for non-compliance with policy rules. Spain’s BLA with the Philippines also allowed Filipino migrant workers to enroll in the Spanish social security system and enjoy their pension benefits outside the country.

Researchers argue that a BLA should not only work to provide a safe and regulated work opportunity for migrant workers, but should also enshrine decent work conditions, labor rights, and appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms (Bhattarai, Baniya, Tumsa, & Rai, 2022; Foley, & Piper, 2021). BLAs also have the capacity to call for origin countries to pre-screen migrant workers before they depart, for destination countries to provide certain protections during their employment, and for both countries to keep records, share information, and resolve disputes related to labor migration (Chilton, & Woda, 2022). Thu et al. (2021) further suggested that labor and migration relevant legislations and infrastructures should be regularly assessed to ensure that they remain relevant to the changing contexts and lived experiences of workers.

The second problem is related to existing laws and policymaking. Thailand has both judicial and non-judicial access to remedy which are all migrant worker-inclusive (International Organization for Migration, 2021b). However, these current laws don’t have protection measures yet for complainants. As such, policies that can lift the burden of proof and fear from employees can further improve the chances of getting these issues of underpayment reported and resolved. Participant C, D, and E shared that they did not resort to legal action because of fear of reprisal. Foley, and Piper (2021) also revealed that migrant workers experience fear of reprisal because their visas might get revoked, leave them jobless, and put them in a worse financial situation than when they started. Harkins, and Åhlberg (2017) also revealed that among low-skilled migrant workers in Thailand, majority of the grievance cases were dropped because of fear of retaliation from employers. The same is true in Europe, wherein many Filipino domestic workers during COVID-19 endured the same abusive and exploitative work conditions out of fear of losing their regular status, being dismissed, or not being paid at all (Verité, 2021). A simple way to encourage migrant workers to speak up against labor irregularities is to have policies that safeguard them from retaliation like those of Criminal Code of Canada (Justice Laws Website, 1985), Retaliation Protection Laws in the United States (Huizar, 2019), and Fair Work Act of Australia (Fair Work Commission of Australia, 2023).

Transferring the burden of proof to the employer is also another policy improvement to protect migrant workers. Participant E expressed that another reason she restrained from taking appropriate action is because of

the absence of proof she needed to make claims. In the study of Farbenblum, and Berg (2021), most cases of underpayment and other forms of wage theft go unresolved or unreported because the burden generally rests on workers to prove that they are not getting paid. In fact, in Thailand, the third most prominent reason why complaints related to compensation are being dropped is because of insufficient evidence or inability to meet legal or procedural requirements (Harkins, & Åhlberg, 2017). Foley, and Piper (2021) also included documentation and proof of violation as some of the institutional flaws that hinder migrant workers' ability to pursue justice.

To prevent this from happening, the Thai government can reverse the onus of presenting evidence similar to the Fair Work Act of Australia (International Labour Organization, 2022b; Kelleher, 2017). Another way is to digitize employment records like those of Saudi Arabia's Labor Reform Initiative (LRI). The LRI requires employers to provide electronic documentation of worker contracts to serve as key evidence in identifying terms of recruitment, housing, labor, wages, and employer compliance (International Labour Organization, 2022b). Improving laws that will lift the burden of proof from workers and protect them from reprisals would enable migrant workers to have the confidence and voice to stand up against issues like underpayment of wages that were otherwise unreported or unresolved through conventional and internal dispute mechanisms.

The third problem refers to the need for a comprehensive orientation of host-country labor policies and related culture and customs. Participant A to I reported that they did not receive a proper labor orientation by their employers. Participant E in particular, believes part of the reason why the issue of underpayment is happening is because of a knowledge gap in host-country policies. Such knowledge gap in local labor policies could have been supplied by a proper state-managed overseas employment program. Through a BLA, the Philippines could enforce a Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) to prospect workers bound for Thailand. A PDOS is a mandatory orientation-seminar that aims to equip migrant workers with essential information about work standards, general country profile, stages of a migrant worker's life, health and safety, and Philippine government programs and services (Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, 2023).

This is supported by study of the Asian Development Bank (2020) among Tajik migrant workers. The majority of the said workers leave the country with inadequate knowledge in the culture, rights, laws, and documentation processes of the destination countries. In response, the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment (MOLME) established a pre-departure orientation to help Tajik migrant workers in terms of decision-making and acquiring necessary life skills for survival. Watanabe (2014) also revealed that the pre-departure orientation programs of the Philippines provide sufficient essential information but emphasized that the "well-informedness" of Filipino domestic workers also rely on their will to understand host country society and their own lived experiences.

Countries of destination can also conduct a post-arrival orientation program. The Employment Permit System (EPS) of South Korea requires foreign workers to attend a two-day briefing program to educate them of their rights under the Korean labor laws and how they can find support and solutions with labor issues (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Asian Development Bank Institute, & International Labour Organization, 2016). The program was found to be moderately useful to very useful in helping workers adjust in the country (International Labour Organization, 2015). Singapore's Settling-in Programme (SIP) also works in a similar vein (Ministry of Manpower of Singapore, 2023) wherein a pilot test of 1,900 workers revealed that they were able to understand how the Ministry of Manpower could help them during employment disputes and a post-course evaluation indicating workers displaying a more positive attitude towards work (Seow, 2017).

Pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programs can also solve another underlying issue which is culture. Participant A, B, E, F, G, and H have noted that Thai culture take serious regard for authority and avoidance of open conflict. This aligns with the study of Deguma et al. (2022) wherein they indicated that Thai classrooms place high respect for teacher authority. Also, in the work of Anurit, Selvarajah, and Meyer (2011), business managers in Thailand found non-confrontation and respect to authority as ideal in leadership roles and that confrontation and open disagreement can lead to loss of 'face' and poor work relationship. Keen awareness of socio-cultural differences through cultural orientation programs could reduce uncertainty amongst Filipino Migrant Teachers, avoid racial bias and cultural offense, and instill confidence towards their employers.

Finally, the fourth problem relates to linguistic differences between the Filipino Migrant Teachers and Thai employers and authorities. This finding is also resonated by a number of studies such as with Foley, and Piper (2021) reporting that migrant workers in the Middle East are up against a combination of institutional systems which includes language barrier. In Southeast Asia, language barriers are also seen to be one of the most

frequent impediments that migrant workers face when seeking redress with the issue of wages. This results to a very small number of documented cases in comparison with the usual labor rights abuses (Harkins, & Åhlberg, 2017). Farbenblum, and Berg (2021) also point out that the majority of migrant workers require legal assistance in lodging claims, gathering evidence, and transacting with government and court offices since these are not in their primary language.

In response, some countries work with technology to remove the problem. The Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform of the Middle Eastern operates with a multilingual facility to help migrant workers express grievances (Faal, 2021). In Abu Dhabi alone, the Labour Court has received 24,687 online requests which were settled amicably during the first quarter of 2022 while its Judicial Department offers translation services in Arabic, English, Urdu, Pashto, and Bengali, to reach out target groups and provide legal advice and information on their rights. The effort contributed to a 40 percent drop in labor cases (Emirates News Agency-WAM, 2023). Australia's Fair Work Ombudsman Agency also has an online platform for anonymous complaints available in 16 different languages. Taiwan has a migrant worker hotline providing 24-hour consultation that includes information on rights and legal advice in the migrant worker's language (Farbenblum, & Berg, 2021). Thailand, together the International Organization for Migration (2020) and other international organizations, civil society groups, public and private partners launched 'MitrThai'. This virtual migrant worker information hub collects and disseminates information, legal advice, and other relevant services that are available in Thai, Burmese, Laotian, and Khmer languages (MITRThai, 2023).

5.2. Recommendations for the Thai and Philippine government to improve its policies and redress mechanisms for underpayment

From the interviews conducted, there are three recommendations mentioned by the participants. The first recommendation is the creation of a BLA. As reported by Participant J, Philippine Embassy in Bangkok has already proposed such legal instrument to the Thai government and is waiting for further developments. With a BLA, contracts, compensation, and benefits, as well as dispute settlements can be standardized and enforced with legal basis (International Labour Organization, 2022b). Farbenblum, and Berg (2021) also underscored the value of BLA by infusing it with guidelines that pursue labor cases such as compensation and exploitation through a joint bilateral committee. Rajan, and Pattath (2022) also argue that including wage-related issues of migrant returnees could help inform bilateral operations between sending and receiving countries. Finally, at times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, BLAs can help governments in emergency preparedness and have a uniformed approach towards managing migrant workers (International Labour Organization, 2021).

The second recommendation from the participants of the study is to have a local labor orientation program prior to the start of employment. All the participants of the study have expressed a positive need for a labor orientation program to become familiar with the norms and labor laws of Thailand. Many studies recommend the need for a pre-departure orientation program to be administered, become a requirement, or to be further strengthened for migrant workers in order to raise awareness of their rights and get them familiarized with the process of grievance handling (Bhattarai, et. al., 2022; Verité, 2021; Asian Development Bank, 2020). The International Labour Organization (2015) also recommended that destination countries should make post-arrival orientation training mandatory for all migrant workers and that its provisions may be stipulated in the labor migration policy.

The third recommendation from Participants C, D, E, G, and H is to have more English-translated policies, whether in print or in digital format, when accessing information. The International Labour Organization (2022b) recommends governments to improve information on rights and access to justice for migrant workers through free professional translation and interpretation services when using judicial and non-judicial remedy mechanisms. Technology is also a highly recommended tool, through mobile applications and web-based platforms to provide translation of information, guidance on grievance handling, and useful redress mechanisms (Faal, 2021; International Organization for Migration, 2023).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has sought to examine the underpayment experiences of Filipino Migrant Teachers during the pandemic and what improvements in policy can be considered by both governments to mitigate the problem

and prevent such from happening in the future. The following summarizes the challenges found in the research and what recommendations apply to these problems.

6.1 Conclusion

A) Underpayment situation of Filipino migrant teachers in Thailand

By examining the situation of underpayment among Filipino Migrant Teachers in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic, the study identified four problems. The first is the lack of a BLA between Thailand and the Philippines. Without a BLA, compensations are not standardized, contracts remain unregulated, and identification of responsible actors and offices remain a blur. The second is to consider specific policy enhancements to protect workers from retaliation and the pressure of presenting evidence. Without these provisions, the issue might remain repressed, and pursuing legal action will be costly, both money and career-wise. The third problem is the unavailability of labor policy orientations and cultural training. If such information were made available, Filipino Migrant Teachers would know about their rights, norms to observe, and what redressing channels they can utilize to resolve underpayment and other labor issues. The last problem is language barrier.

B) Recommendations from participants for governments to improve their policies and redress mechanisms for underpayment

There are three recommendations from the participants to mitigate the issue of underpayment. The first recommendation is to materialize a BLA to help standardize compensation, regulate contracts, and specify redress mechanisms at the state-to-state level. The second recommendation is to provide labor orientation programs at the pre-employment stage and through the post-arrival phase. Staying informed can keep fear, racial bias, and skepticism of the law at bay. The last recommendation from the participants is the desire to see more English-translated copies of policies, announcements, and local and national orders in conspicuous places, spaces of public transaction, and virtual platforms. The visibility of these instruments can help draw attention to Filipino Migrant Teachers in reading and knowing more about the policies and rules related to them.

6.2 Recommendations

A) Recommendations for the Thai government

The following are recommendations for the Thai government:

1. To consider applying certain policy enhancements in Thai labor laws. These enhancements may either be to put the burden of proof to the employer and/or to place lawful restrictions that will prohibit them from acts of reprisal during and after the investigation of the case.
2. To utilize technology in enhancing redress mechanisms such as having digital courts and digital employment records.
3. To establish a post-arrival orientation program that would introduce appropriate labor laws and available redress mechanisms in Thailand.

B) Recommendations for the Philippine government

The following are recommendations to the Philippine government:

1. To provide a pre-departure orientation program once the BLA has been materialized.
2. To ensure that the pre-departure orientation is well-linked to Thailand's post-arrival orientation and reinforce common salient points.
3. To conduct a culture and language training or workshop to help Filipinos migrant workers become acquainted of the socio-cultural norms of Thailand.

C) Recommendations for both governments

This research further recommends to both Philippine and Thai government the following proposals:

1. To continue the negotiation on a BLA for Filipino migrant teachers, and other professions, and are encouraged to include the following:
 - A) Establishment of government-to-government recruitment channels to curb unfair labor practices and create a sound employment process for the exportation and importation of labor.

- B) Adoption of a well-linked pre-departure and post-arrival orientation program to ensure that Filipino Migrant Teachers are guided throughout the migration cycle.
 - C) Standardization of salary and increments based on academic and professional qualifications, as well as years of service.
 - D) Standardization of contracts particularly on social and corporate benefits, mandatory deductions, and emergency situations such as accident or death.
 - E) Embedding of transnational dispute resolution mechanisms that can define what constitutes underpayment and wage theft as a whole, point out responsible actors, specify the process of lodging complaints, reduce the time frame, and identify proper offices to file these cases.
 - F) At times of natural calamities, pandemics, and public unrest, crisis management strategies for the protection, repatriation, and wage resolution of migrant workers are also underscored.
2. To consider appointing a Labor Attaché in the two governments' respective embassies to help resolve issues of underpayment. The Philippines' submission of request for an MWO to the Thai government is already an indication of this effort.

D) Recommendations for Filipino migrant teachers

The research recommends the following to Filipino Migrant Teachers:

1. To thoroughly check their employment contracts in order to avoid misunderstandings in compensation and benefits and address any possible disproportionate conditions to make it more equitable and safer for the entire duration of employment.

E) Recommendations for employers

The following are recommendations to the school and manpower agencies:

1. To incorporate a comprehensive orientation program about Thai labor laws and workplace conduct should a post-arrival orientation program not be available from the government.
2. To introduce company-prescribed and state-sponsored redress mechanisms and ensure that internal dispute resolution channels are maximized first to avoid escalation.
3. To provide English versions of company rules and applicable local and national labor laws in the workplace to reinforce the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers alike.

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