

## **Kabataan, Gaano Ka Katatag? Migration and Resilience of the Left behind**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

The Philippine Statistic Authority (2017) reports an estimated number of 2.13 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) working abroad. This has increasingly grown through time with Filipinos facing economic uncertainty. The OFW phenomenon has created solutions as well as problems to every transnational family. Vital transitions brought about by the absence of a parent have affected the children who are left behind. This study explores the personality traits of the migrant children and their level of psychological resilience through the use of NEO PI-R and Resilience Scale. Pearson R reveals that Conscientiousness is significantly related to the General Resilience and all resilience domains except for perseverance. Openness to experience is significantly related to Equanimity and Self Reliance. Extraversion is also significantly related to Self –reliance, Meaningfulness and General Resilience. Neuroticism was negatively correlated with the resilience domain such as Self Reliance, Meaningfulness and to General Resilience itself. Conscientiousness is identified as a major predictor of general resilience using the Step Wise Multiple Regression method.

**Key Words:** Resilience, Adolescence, Filipino Overseas Worker (OFW), Personality Traits

### **Introduction**

In the Filipino society, the family is considered as the basic fabric and primordially the most important social group in the Filipino culture. It is described as very cohesive and closely-knit group and is the core of social relations (Carandang 2001; Tarroja 2010; Jocano 1966,1969,1975; Mendez et al. 1984; Tones 1989 in Torres 1995). However, in recent years a significant and dramatic shift of this traditional family to a new family structure took place as an offshoot of the OFW phenomenon. In search for a greener pasture, Filipinos started working abroad leaving their families and children behind. In the research result of Rosiana and Wijayanti (2021) claimed that migrants migrated for improving their welfare which gained from overseas' wider job opportunity. Among Asian countries, the Philippines is a major supplier of labor migrants (Commission on Filipino Overseas, 2005) with a report from the Philippine Statistic Authority (2017) an estimated number of 2.13 million Overseas Filipino

Workers (OFW) across the globe. This has increasingly grown over the years as the Filipino is faced with economic uncertainty. While these OFWs have become the new breed of economic investors in the country (PIDS, Development Research News, 2008) it also created problems. Among these include the dissolution of several households, the occurrence of working children, adultery in marriages, teenage pregnancies (Go 1993), and the raising of children by a single parent or close family members.

The OFW phenomenon has also spawned non-traditional or alternative families, such as living-in couples, single parenthood, childless marriages, dual professional families, and role-reversal families (Medina 2001). Moreover, women outnumber men in international migration. In the 2017 PSA survey, 53.7% overseas workers were females, many of whom were in the age group 30-34 years while 46.3% were males. Considering the age group of women OFW, one can conclude that these women are or have been married and most probably rearing a child. Accordingly, the migration has created motherless families hence reversed gender roles - fathers performing motherly roles while mothers have become the providers for the family. All these have repercussions to the growth and development of young adolescents. Strongly evidenced in several extant studies states that parenting styles of mothers and fathers greatly influence young adolescent outcomes, particularly in terms of their inward and outward responses to family situations. In other words, any influence of parenting during adolescence continues to influence behaviors into adulthood, other academic studies demonstrate a relationship between parenting and adolescent outcomes (Hoskin, 2014).

This study has some empirical and practical value. The empirical findings will investigate and help us understand relationships of personality traits identified as conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and neuroticism to psychological resilience among adolescents with migrants' parents or OFWs. While several research and models have been developed along this framework, the present study shall explain further the role of the five personality traits and psychological resilience among adolescents especially when there is a separation from an immediate parental support. Additionally, it can be a disadvantaged situation that can bring distress and psychological discomforts. The distress can be attributed to academics, peers, relationships and critical developmental transitions in the life of an adolescent. Both frameworks can also provide an important contribution in understanding the adolescent transitional journey in a structure where there is an absentee parent/s.

The rapid increase and exodus of Filipino workers looking for better job opportunities created new family forms where in many children grow up with only a mother or father at their side or both parents are absent. Indubitably, modernization has twisted the structure and the perspective of the Filipino family further exposing the adolescents to a critical and difficult situation. This is a crucial stage for growing adolescents because vital transitions are also taking place in many aspects of their life like psychological, social and emotional wellbeing. The many circumstances faced by the family have generated series of questions and skepticism as to how Filipino adolescents cope with these pressures and challenges.

One most significant determinants of resilience are the personality traits (Miller & Harrington, 2011). Fayombo (2010) cited in his International Journal of Psychological Studies reported similar findings among adolescent respondents that Neuroticism was negatively associated with resilience but positively associated with conscientiousness and extraversion. Adolescents' personality profile seems to have successfully adapt despite a challenging or threatening circumstance. A more vulnerable personality profile will also negatively correlate with the different dimensions of resilience. On the other hand, a well-adjusted personality

profile will be high in resilience and also its domains. People who are resilient tend to be more psychologically healthy (Friborg, Barluag, Martinussen, Roserosenvinge & Hjemdal, 2005).

The literature confirms that personality traits have a considerable impact on psychological resilience, which is also known as adaptation and coping. This study has not yet been conducted among teenage children of migrant workers, notably Filipino Overseas Workers. However, these findings do confirm that healthy personality qualities are key in determining resilient individuals. The adolescents' coping resources may be too limited to understand the impacts of the situation to their mental health. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend, depending on their psychological make-up, how they naturally handle stress when one or both of their parents are missing. The current investigation was carried out in light of this context.

## **Methodology**

This correlational study aims to present the relationship existing between the participants' general level of resilience when grouped to their level of openness, neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness.

The Individual Record Form (IRF) of the students from the Guidance Center were utilized to identify the samples of the study. There are more than 500 students who have an OFW parent/s but only those with active OFW parent/s were included in the study. Eligible criteria for student participants include Filipino male and female, adolescents ages 16 – 28, and whose parents are currently working as overseas Filipino worker. The identified respondents are studying in a government university whereby a greater number of students belong to below to average middle income earners. The respondents were 334 students from Cagayan State University, Tuguegarao City in Northern Philippines. The participants were chosen from a cross sectional student population through a purposive sampling method.

There were two psychological questionnaires utilized to assess personality traits and resilience of the participants:

The NEO Personality Inventory Revised edition (NEO PI-R) developed by Costa Jr. and McCrae (Costa, 1995) was used to measure Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. This questionnaire has internal consistency coefficients of 0.86 to 0.95. It is utilized for normal adults. It consists of 250 items with sub-scales each for the different five personality trait being measured.

The Resilience Scale (RS) developed by Wagnild & Young (1993) consists of 26 items was used to measure the level of resilience along five domains namely: equanimity, perseverance, self-reliance, meaningfulness and existential aloneness. Its internal consistency ranges from .76-.91, test –retest reliability ranges from .67 to .84, and possesses high concurrent validity. (Wagnild & Young, 1993)

The statistical tools employed in treating the data were Pearson-r and Stepwise Multiple Regression, using SPSS version 23.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study investigated the relationship of personality traits and resilience among college students of Cagayan State University in Tuguegarao City in Northern Philippines. In

particular, it focused on the adolescent children of Filipino overseas workers to determine their personality traits, level of their general resilience and establish relationship between and among these variables.

Results of the five personality traits seen in Table 1 are as follows: Neuroticism trait (M=97.503, SD=12.46); Extraversion Trait (M=108.449, SD=12.41) and Openness trait; (M=104.147, SD=9.97); Agreeableness (M=108.985, SD= 10.62) and Conscientiousness trait (M=113.308, SD=13.42). That being said, the general level of personality traits manifested by the participants significantly showed that they are relatively high on Neuroticism trait. Based on the study of Costa & McCrae (1992) a high score on Neuroticism suggests a higher propensity to feel unpleasant emotions like fear, sadness, humiliation, guilt, anxiety, and disgust. They often struggle to handle stress, are more prone to having irrational thoughts, and are less able to regulate their impulses. When faced with a stressful scenario, they exhibit stronger emotional reactions. Both Agreeableness and Conscientiousness traits obtained the lowest scores, while moderate scores were observed on the domains of Extraversion and Openness traits.

**Table 1.** *Personality traits of respondents*

TRAITS	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	DESCRIPTIVE VALUE
Neuroticism	97.503	12.46	HIGH
Extraversion	108.449	12.41	MODERATE
Openness	104.147	9.97	MODERATE
Agreeableness	108.985	10.62	LOW
Conscientiousness	113.308	13.42	LOW

The participants' scores from the five domains of resilience are as follows: Equanimity (M=26.820, SD=3.65); Perseverance (M=25.368, SD=11.65); Self Reliance (M=24.728, SD=4.03); Meaningfulness (27.072, SD=3.75); Existential Aloneness (M=25.311, SD=3.94); General Resilience (M=128.754, SD=15.48). All of which convey high descriptive value.

Such present research finding is congruent with Rutter's (1979) who opined that adolescents can also be resilient because they have protective factors considered as innate abilities that enable them deal with difficult situations and can help a person respond better to some environmental risks leading to an adaptive outcome.

On the other hand, the finding, defies the stand of Carandang (2011) on adolescents who are considered left behind because of the possible adversity or environmental hazards of belonging to family households where both or either parent are migrant workers.

**Table 2.** *Resilience of respondents*

DOMAINS	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	DESCRIPTIVE VALUE
Equanimity	26.820	3.65	HIGH
Perseverance	24.769	11.65	HIGH
Self-Reliance	24.728	4.03	HIGH
Meaningfulness	27.072	3.75	HIGH
Existential Aloneness	25.311	3.94	HIGH
General Resilience	128.754	15.48	HIGH

Table 2 provides the result of the test of difference between the participants' general resilience when grouped according to their levels of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Those with high and very high levels of extraversion significantly differ in their scores of General Resilience when compared to those very low to average levels, with the former having higher scores of resilience. The same holds true when they are grouped in terms of their level of Conscientiousness, that is, those high to highly conscientious have significantly higher resilience scores than those opposite levels. That being said, personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness cause a significantly inverse variation in the General Resilience of adolescent participants.

**Table 3.** *T-test results of personality traits and general resilience*

Personality Traits &	Very Low; Low; Average (M)	High; Very High (M)	t
Neuroticism	130.978	127.896	1.635
Extraversion	127.794	132.968	-2.391*
Openness	127.033	129.732	-1.535
Agreeableness	128.216	130.786	-1.236
Conscientiousness	125.354	131.919	-3.956**
General Resilience			
** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ $df = 332$			

The relationship between the participants' personality traits and psychological resilience is shown in Table 3. Pearson-r indicates that there exists positive and negative significant relationship between the different domains of the two variables. The results are presented as follows: (1) Neuroticism is negatively correlated with Self Reliance, Meaningfulness and General Resilience; (2) Extraversion is positively correlated with Self Reliance, Meaningfulness and General Resilience; (3) Openness to Experience is positively correlated with Equanimity and Self Reliance; and (4) Conscientiousness is positively correlated with Equanimity, Self-Reliance, Meaningfulness, Existential Aloneness and General resilience. These results generally indicate that having a high level of extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness would make the participants more resilient. Conversely, high level of neuroticism tends to weaken their resilience.

**Table 4.** Pearson correlation results of personality traits and general resilience

PERSONALITY TRAITS	RESILIENCE DOMAINS					
	Equanimity	Perseverance	Self-Reliance	Meaningfulness	Existential Aloneness	General Resilience
Neuroticism	.001	-.024	-.210**	-.110*	-.095	-.135*
Extraversion	.011	.083	.165**	.133*	.134	.148**
Openness	.120*	-.004	.112*	.039	.054	.093
Agreeableness	.028	-.026	-.037	.045	.018	.005
Conscientiousness	.239**	.086	.311**	.205**	.196**	.295**
**p<.01	*p<.05					

Table 5 below presents how much the different domains of personality contributed to the variation of resilience. It is shown that there is a moderate relationship between Conscientiousness and General Resilience ( $r = 0.295$ ) and that that respondents' Conscientiousness accounts for 8.7% of the variation in their General Resilience ( $R^2 = .087$ )

**Table 5.** A model summary showing the strength of relationship between Conscientiousness and GR

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.295 <sup>a</sup>	.087	.084	14.8167
a. Predictors: (Constant), Conscientiousness				

Table 6 shows how well the overall model significantly predicts the dependent variable General Resilience. The F value of 31.624 is significant at  $p < .001$  implies that the overall regression model predicts the General Resilience of the respondents significantly well.

**Table 6.** Overall regression model of GR

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6942.461	1	6942.461	31.624	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	72885.407	332	219.534		
	Total	79827.868	333			
a. Dependent Variable: General Resilience						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Conscientiousness						

**Table 7.** Table showing the contribution of Conscientiousness to GR

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	90.204	6.903		13.067	.000
	Conscientiousness	.340	.061	.295	5.623	.000

a. Dependent Variable: General Resilience

Table 7 reveals the contribution of Conscientiousness to General Resilience. In this case the B value .340 is the predicted change in General Resilience (B = 90.204) for every unit change in Conscientiousness.

The table further reveals the test of whether the coefficient is significantly different from zero. Since the corresponding p value of the coefficient is less than .05, it is concluded that the coefficient is significant, therefore, it reflects a genuine effect and does not occur by chance alone.

Based on the results shown above, the model can be written as:

$$\text{General Resilience} = 90.204 + .340 (\text{Conscientiousness})$$

General Resilience was found to be significantly predicted by conscientiousness.

Result of the study found a significant positive association between the conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness to resilience. Noticeably, neuroticism was negatively associated with resilience. Apparently, the findings may be quite expected because in similar studies (Ercan, 2017), conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness are considered as positive personalities. The factor scale description of these healthy traits both the high or low description may still involve predispositions to positive emotions which can be relevant as it strengthens their resilience. Some of these positive characteristics are as follows (Costa & McCrae, 1992): Being conscientious means being focused and persistent; being Extravert denotes being sociable, assertive and cheerful; Openness to experience means being imaginative and attentive to one's feelings, willing to entertain novel ideas and conventional values; Agreeableness tend to be compassionate and kind to others. These positive traits have statistically significant positive relationship with all domains of resilience.

Neuroticism on the other hand was found to have statistically negative correlation with resilience including its subdomains. This is not also surprising and therefore expected because earlier literatures and findings have shown that Neuroticism is a negative trait (Fayombo, 2010; Bradshaw, 1997). It includes negative emotions and tendency for negative affect such as fears, prone to irrational ideas, weak coping skills, difficulty of controlling one's impulse. Neurotic individuals have a tendency to have negative self-perception, poor skills in dealing with their emotions which can deter in their ability to face experiences. However, having a lower level

of neuroticism, suggests that they also have the capacity to maintain emotional equilibrium (Costa & McCrae, 1992), it is still not surprising that neuroticism is negatively associated with the respondent's general resilience and its sub domains.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

The present study confirms that the more stable the personality traits that people possess the more resilient they become even when under extreme pressure. The context of being left alone or being in a stage where growing up is a developmental challenge proves that even adolescents with OFW parents are resilient and are able to cope as shown in their general resilience. Their capacity for a positive adaptation may have been strengthened by an inner trait which is evident in the findings of the study. It can be said that of the five personality traits, conscientiousness, extraversion and neuroticism were the traits that have significant influence to the participants' general resilience. This new evidence could also strengthen the risk-protective factors of resilience which are no more than the positive personality traits that can mitigate the occurrence of a negative outcome (Zimmermann, Ramirez-Valles, Maton, 1999).

In conclusion, it can be said that analysis of findings indicates generalizability of characteristics pertaining to personality traits and resilience. It confirms that personality traits significantly predict psychological resilience thus findings of the current study can add to the growing research on resilience and personality. However, much should be known further about the differences of the high and low scorers of the personality traits and how this can impact psychological resilience. Other interesting component may include a comparative study of personality traits and resilience in terms of sex. Also, what factor variables can mediate or moderate personality traits and resilience. Further research can also focus on variants of personality not covered by the study or other important elements of positive psychology particularly among adolescent with migrant worker parents.

In a setting where the teenagers' closest significant adults are migrant workers or overseas Filipino workers, this study has suggested that positive personality traits are significant in influencing adolescents' resilience. Insights from this study suggest that being conscientious, open to experience, agreeable, and extravert provide constructive impact on adolescents' wellbeing. The findings therefore of the study is useful for parents, school guidance counselors, faculty, psychologist and other community mental health workers in aiding their understanding of adolescents' behavior. The potential impact of the study will provide mental health care workers a well guided interventions, developing better life skills activities and other well-crafted services provided by stakeholders in the school and community so that these adolescents can gain better coping skills that will empower them to bounce back from stressful and disadvantaged situations.

## **Recommendations**

Further researches may be conducted on the following; a) differences of the high and low scorers of the personality traits and how this can impact psychological resilience, b) a comparative study of personality traits and resilience in terms of sex, c) factor variables that can mediate or moderate personality traits and resilience, and d) other personality traits not covered in the study or other important elements of positive psychology particularly among adolescent with migrant worker parents.



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