



Fostering Global Citizenship: Insights from the Children of OFWs

The project Intercultural Competencies of Children of OFWs: Implications for Contextualizing Global Citizenship Education in the Philippines explores how the unique experiences of children left behind by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) can enrich Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in the Philippines. Managed by the Social Development Research Center (SDRC) at De La Salle University and in partnership with Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO INNOTECH), the study sheds light on how local experiences can shape global perspectives within education.

OFW Families as a Lens for Global Citizenship

Global Citizenship Education promotes values like respect for cultural diversity, curiosity about the world, and understanding global issues. In the Philippines, however, the school curriculum has traditionally focused on fostering patriotism and national pride. The study explored how the experiences of children from OFW families might provide a way to connect these national values with broader global realities.



With millions of Filipinos working abroad, children of OFWs may gain insights into life and culture in other countries through stories shared by their parents. However, it remains unclear whether parents actively discuss these experiences with their children, and if they do, the extent to which shared experiences shape their children’s understanding of other cultures. Combined with influences from media and school, these narratives have the potential to help children develop an awareness of global issues, cultural diversity, and migration. The study highlights that leveraging the OFW phenomenon as a teaching tool can enable educators to connect global and local perspectives, fostering a more holistic understanding among students.

What the Research Revealed

Led by Dr. Allan B. I. Bernardo, with Dr. Melissa R. Garabiles and Kimberly Kaye C. Mata as collaborators, the study used surveys and interviews with senior high school students in CALABARZON and Central Luzon—areas with the highest numbers of OFW families.

The findings revealed that children of OFWs tend to show strong patriotism and some awareness of cultural diversity. However, their deeper understanding of global issues depends on how these are processed in their home and school environments. For example, while students expressed curiosity about other cultures, their perspectives were shaped by media, family stories, and personal aspirations, such as working abroad themselves.

Making Education Relevant and Inclusive

The study highlights the need for schools to integrate themes like migration, global labor markets, and cultural diversity into the curriculum. By doing so, teachers can help students appreciate both their national identity and their place in a globalized world. However, the researchers also emphasize the importance of handling these discussions with care, acknowledging the diverse and sometimes challenging experiences of OFW families.

As there is not yet a formal Global Citizenship Education curriculum in the Philippines, this research offers a meaningful way to strengthen Global Citizenship Education in the Philippines. By weaving the stories and experiences of OFW families into lessons, educators can inspire students to become globally aware while staying rooted in their Filipino identity—a powerful combination for building a more inclusive and connected future.



Feasibility Study of A Stop Smoking in Schools Trial (ASSIST): Adapting Peer-Led Interventions for Filipino Youth

The Feasibility Study of A Stop Smoking in Schools Trial (ASSIST) in Culturally Different Middle-Income Countries is an innovative initiative designed to prevent smoking behaviors among adolescents. Originally developed in the UK, ASSIST is a peer-led, school-based intervention that trains 13–14-year-old students as peer supporters to engage their classmates in discussions about the risks of smoking and the benefits of living a smoke-free life.

Led by Principal Investigator Professor Sharon Simpson, with Dr. Maria Guadalupe C. Salanga as Country Lead Investigator for the Philippines and Dr. Niño Jose C. Mateo as Co-Investigator, this study is funded by the UK Medical Research Council, in partnership with the University of Glasgow and the Chief Scientist Office. The study aims to adapt the ASSIST program and assess its feasibility in different cultural contexts, with the goal of promoting adolescent health globally. In the Philippines, the project explores how ASSIST can be successfully implemented within the local context, focusing on its potential to prevent smoking uptake among Filipino youth. The study also evaluates the impact of national factors such as cultural, political, social, and educational systems on the intervention's effectiveness, with the intention of fostering stronger partnerships between the University of Glasgow, SDRC at De La Salle University, and various universities involved in the ASSIST project.

Key Milestones and Achievements

The Philippine implementation of ASSIST began in 2023 with a "train the trainers" session, followed by the pilot peer supporter training. In early 2024, baseline data were collected from Grade 8 students in 10 public high schools in Manila, focusing on students' smoking behaviors, attitudes, and social networks. By May 2024, around 180 students were trained as peer supporters, empowering them to engage their peers in smoking prevention discussions.

SDRC Project in Focus



Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with students, school staff, and parents of peer supporters from May to November 2024. Follow-up data collection comparing current data to baseline findings took place from September to November 2024. Interviews with policymakers are planned for the next phase of the project to explore the potential for broader implementation across the country. More than 40 fieldworkers were trained to administer surveys and measure exhaled carbon monoxide (eCO) levels among Grade 9 students. These fieldworkers have already visited several ASSIST schools, ensuring rigorous data collection.

Anticipated Impact and Benefits

The ASSIST project promises numerous benefits for its stakeholders. For students, the program helps reduce smoking rates by empowering peer supporters to influence their classmates and create a supportive environment for promoting healthier behaviors. Peer supporters also gain leadership, communication, and mentoring skills, boosting their self-esteem and contributing positively to their school communities.

Teachers and school administrators benefit from an evidence-based intervention that supports their health education goals. The project also strengthens the relationship between schools and families, encouraging parents to take a more active role in smoking prevention efforts. Policymakers will gain valuable data that can inform future health promotion strategies and help shape policies addressing youth smoking.

The success of ASSIST in the Philippines could lead to further research on youth smoking prevention, particularly exploring health outcomes within peer-led interventions. It could also open opportunities for cross-country collaborations and comparative studies on smoking behaviors and prevention strategies. By leveraging peer influence, the ASSIST project has the potential to create lasting change, fostering healthier, smoke-free futures for students across the Philippines and beyond.

Research Associate Spotlight



Maria Margareth “Marga” Geluz is the Center’s Research Associate, where she plays a vital role in research proposal development and coordination. Graduating summa cum laude from De La Salle University with a degree in AB Psychology and a minor in Social Science Research Methods, Marga is currently pursuing a Master’s in Health Social Sciences.

Marga began her research journey in junior high, working on science investigatory projects at Quezon Science High School. Her passion for social development deepened during her senior high years at Southern Luzon State University, where she focused on how students cope with academic stress.

At SDRC, Marga assists in searching for funding opportunities, guiding the research team in proposal development, and ensuring ethical clearance applications are completed. She coordinates research activities, maintains a database of proposals, and serves as a liaison between the research team and funding agencies. Her efforts are key to SDRC's successful project proposals, such as the UNDP-NEDA initiatives.

Marga is driven by a desire to create social impact through research, empowering students and communities with the knowledge to improve lives.

