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**CHERYL GRACE E. SALAZAR**

**THE USE OF NEW MEDIA FOR OVERCOMING CHALLENGES  
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS  
IN SINGAPORE**

Thesis Adviser:

**BENJAMINA PAULA G. FLOR, PhD**  
**Faculty of Information and Communication Studies**

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**Acceptance Page:**

This paper prepared by **CHERYL GRACE ELUMBARING-SALAZAR** with the title: **“THE USE OF NEW MEDIA FOR OVERCOMING CHALLENGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS IN SINGAPORE”** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Program.

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**BENJAMINA PAULA G. FLOR, PhD**  
Chair, Thesis Committee

---

(Date)

---

**ALEXANDER G. FLOR, PhD**  
Member, Thesis Committee

---

(Date)

---

**JOANE V. SERRANO, PhD**  
Member, Thesis Committee

---

(Date)

**DIEGO S. MARANAN, PhD**  
Dean  
Faculty of Information and Communication Studies

(Date)

## **Biographical Sketch**

Cheryl Grace “Gigi” Elumbaring-Salazar, born in Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte, moved between Mabalacat, Pampanga, and Dipolog during childhood. Initially interested in communication, her focus shifted to Chemistry due to intensive exposure to the sciences during her secondary years at the Philippine Science High School - Mindanao Campus. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Agricultural Chemistry from the University of the Philippines at Los Banos, where she met her future husband. Both became registered Chemists after passing the Licensure Examination.

Gigi began her career as Technical Manager at Atlas Fertilizer Corporation. She was assigned to the Visayas and Western Mindanao regions and later led a nationwide project. She then moved to Singapore to work in the R&D and manufacturing sectors, as a researcher and Chemist. She is currently a Project Manager of the strategic innovation unit and business incubator of Evonik, a leading German specialty chemical company.

She lives in Singapore with her husband and two daughters. Outside work, she enjoys dancing, swimming, baking, building Lego bricks, and travelling with her family.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, she took up various online courses, which motivated her to pursue Master of Development Communication to fulfill her childhood dream. Being an OFW herself, she was inspired by her positive perception of online learning platforms to study the experiences of other OFWs with new media during the pandemic.

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*Ad majorem Dei gloriam.*

This work is dedicated to all Overseas Filipino Workers and their families.  
Your hard work, sacrifices, and perseverance are a testament to your strength and resilience. May all your efforts bring you the success and fulfillment you truly deserve.

*“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you, will be faithful to carry it unto completion until the day of Jesus Christ.” – Philippians 1:6*

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored how Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore engaged with new media during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet their diverse needs. By employing the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study examined their media consumption patterns and the interaction between social factors, needs, and media use. The descriptive research found that OFWs primarily accessed new media for communication. Other motivations were information, opportunities, and seeking escape.

The most utilized new media types were websites, social media, shopping platforms, conferencing tools, and messaging applications. Statistically significant increases were observed in access to online news, learning platforms, and streaming services, with notable surges in telemedicine, video conferencing, and online shopping during the pandemic. Elevated stress among OFWs was linked to job uncertainty, homesickness, worry about family, boredom, and work overload, with the situation of their families in the Philippines being the most pressing concern.

A higher frequency of new media access was positively associated with the overall effects of new media. It provided OFWs with significant gratifications such as information, education, opportunities, relationships, and relaxation, contributing to high satisfaction with new media and better coping during the pandemic.

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

Every year, thousands of Filipinos leave the country to seek greener pastures overseas. Singapore, being less than four hours away by plane from the Philippines, is a common destination for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) after the Middle East. The city-state hosts approximately 5% of the almost two million OFWs that leave the Philippines every year (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022). Filipinos who come to Singapore work as domestic workers, healthcare, IT, engineering, academics, and science professionals (Lara, 2018).

OFWs face many challenges in an unfamiliar environment away from their families. They experience homesickness, financial difficulties, work, and cultural adjustments. Migration, work, and social support-related issues are identified as stressors for domestic workers in Singapore (Zainal and Barlas, 2022).

The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus brought unprecedented challenges in all aspects of society as the disease spread worldwide. The effects of quarantine, lockdown, and border closure intensified the situation of OFWs. The circuit breaker, the local term for the lockdown in Singapore, and the strict quarantine measures compounded the homesickness due to isolation and heightened anxiety due to health and economic uncertainties.

The key factors associated with mental stress during quarantine were income, duration of isolation, impacts of the worsening pandemic situation, and health considerations (Nguyen *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, the study by de Borja (2021)

concluded that business shutdowns that resulted in job termination across the world during the pandemic highlighted the emotional labor confronted by OFWs.

It is noteworthy how OFWs in Singapore have overcome these challenges. Like any other crisis, people's information needs dramatically increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The media becomes the primary source of information when society becomes unstable because of disasters or public health crises. In this context, media consumption and exposure are enhanced. Media attracts audiences by offering content that can fulfill the needs for understanding social situations, information, and entertainment.

The proliferation of information communication technology has altered the media landscape and ushered in new media. It is through this pervasive media technology that the way information is consumed has changed. New media is any media communication that is in the format that is delivered digitally, with the use of the internet (Cote, 2022). According to Vinney (2019), studies have revealed that the internet fulfills the social and communal needs of users through information, experience, monetary compensation, diversion, personal status, relationship maintenance, and virtual community. The internet enhanced mediated communication for interpersonal and mass personal communications that were associated with the user's psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic (Choi and Choung, 2021).

Access to information has never been available anytime, anywhere, enabling individuals to adjust to their present environment, particularly during a pandemic. For example, it was revealed that the use of digital media technology helped in coping with the difficulties of the pandemic among OFWs in Dubai, U.A.E. (Deputado *et al.*, 2021).

Additionally, there is a positive correlation between the high use of digital media technology and maintaining relationships despite isolation as discussed by Wright and Wachs (2021) and supported by the study of Gabbiadini *et al.* (2020) on the mitigating role of digital communication technologies during COVID-19 outbreak.

Singapore is a digital nation with 92% internet connectivity (Internet Usage in Singapore from Statista, 2023). Staying connected is not an issue with ubiquitous digital devices and platforms. A study from the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore found that the use of online messaging and social media applications spiked due to feelings of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic (Henderson, 2022). Social connection facilitates positive well-being, especially during a pandemic (Humphrey *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, the high usage of digital media technologies was also observed in healthcare, education, work, and daily personal and professional activities (Vargo *et al.*, 2020).

As media expands to the digital sphere, it is interesting to explore the degree of media consumption using new media among OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic and its role in managing the associated stress and overcoming the challenges that COVID-19 introduced.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social distancing measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19 led to the absence of physical interaction, which impeded social activities and affected the well-being of individuals. The role of the new media has never been emphasized during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the rise of the internet, new media systems have

developed. They have been ubiquitous in everyday life and more predominantly used during the pandemic.

Applying the theory of Uses and Gratifications, the question posed in this research study was: “How did the use of new media facilitate in overcoming the challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic?”.

This study investigated new media usage among OFWs in Singapore in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and attempted to answer the following questions.

1. What specific needs did OFWs in Singapore seek to fulfill through their use of new media during the pandemic?
2. Which new media platforms were most preferred by OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How did the frequency of access to various new media platforms change before and during the pandemic?
4. How did the gratifications obtained from using new media relate to the overall perception of its effects among OFWs in Singapore?
5. How were the different pandemic-related challenges associated with the stress level of OFWs in Singapore during the pandemic?

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study endeavored to determine new media use among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) in Singapore for overcoming the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, it aimed to achieve the following.

1. Categorized the motivations for accessing new media by OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Determined the most preferred new media platforms among OFWs.
3. Compared the frequency of access to various new media platforms by OFWs in Singapore before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Examined the correlation between the gratifications obtained from utilizing new media and the overall perception of its effect among OFWs in Singapore.
5. Investigated the association between different pandemic-related challenges that were addressed by new media and the stress levels of OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Significance of the Study**

Overseas Filipino Workers experience distinctive challenges. Communication, finances, life, and work environments are just some of these. When the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, societal difficulties arose that affected everyone. OFWs faced augmented hardships and became more susceptible to negative situations.

New media use has been the lifeline during the pandemic as it provided information about the evolving situation, education for continuous learning, entertainment as an escape from boredom, and connectedness during physical isolation.

This study will contribute to communication research by gaining an understanding of new media usage among OFWs, particularly during crises by employing the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health emergency that affects every aspect of society, heightened vulnerabilities, and aggravated the situations of many communities and different social groups. Thus, investigating the role of communication, specifically the use of new media, in mitigating the effects of the pandemic on Overseas Filipino Workers in Singapore will be relevant.

The findings that will be derived from this study will provide knowledge on new media usage and its effect on Overseas Filipino Workers in Singapore, particularly during a crisis. Moreover, it will encourage crafting informed policies that leverage digital media technologies as a basis for initiating measures and organizing activities to promote OFWs' overall welfare in Singapore.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study delved into the usage of new media, particularly digital media platforms among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employing a quantitative research approach, this study investigated how OFWs utilized new media during the pandemic, categorized its purposes, determined the types of new media used, and analyzed their effects. It also identified the challenges that new media helped to address. In addition, information was collected to describe how new media facilitated mitigating the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conducted in Singapore, the study targeted OFWs who had been residing and working in the country for a minimum of four years or since the onset of the pandemic. Individuals who were not present in Singapore at any point during the pandemic and those who had been recently hired were excluded.

Data gathering was performed through a Google Form survey with voluntary participants. The survey questionnaire was distributed using a non-probability sampling method, specifically convenience sampling.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations. The insights gained from this study are confined to participating OFWs in Singapore. Moreover,

due to the non-disclosure of information regarding the actual number of foreign workers in Singapore, as noted by the Department of Migrant Workers in Singapore (2023), only approximate figures for OFWs and limited categorization of groups are available. Given these constraints and the utilization of a non-probability sampling method for data collection, the information gathered, and subsequent analysis may not be readily generalizable to the broader population of Overseas Filipino Workers in Singapore, as it may lack accurate representation.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

New media have been instrumental for individuals and communities alike in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter begins with a description of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore as the subject of this investigation and the COVID-19 pandemic as the trigger for new media usage. It includes a review of research on new media, uses and gratifications, and a synthesis of findings from related studies is generated.

#### **Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)**

The Philippine Statistics Authority recorded approximately 1.83M Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in 2021. From the estimate of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, the last data they collected in 2013 reflected 10.2 million Filipinos around the world as permanent, temporary, or irregular/undocumented migrants. Thus, at present, there are approximately 11 million Filipinos living outside the Philippines, and most of these have left the country for the purpose of migrant labor (Bautista and Tamayo, 2020). According to San Juan (2009), this is “the second biggest global diaspora after Mexico”. These individuals go abroad for work, which presents a better prospect for supporting their families financially in the Philippines. Going abroad improves the circumstances of the OFWs’ family as it offers a greener pasture than staying in the country and getting employed locally with a meager salary.

Aside from uplifting their families’ lives, OFWs’ remittances have a significant impact on the economy of the Philippines as they contribute to the Gross Domestic

Product or GDP, which helps pay off foreign debts and increases consumerism that boosts local spending in the country. There was PhP 151B in remittances from OFWs in 2021 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022). With more disposable income to spare, OFW families can afford beyond what is necessary. For this economic contribution, OFWs have been hailed as modern-day heroes in the country. Therefore, labor exports have long been included in the policy of the Philippine government (Arguillas and Williams, 2010).

An estimated 200,000 Filipinos live and work in Singapore as professionals, skilled workers, or household workers (Embassy of the Philippines – Singapore, 2022). Filipinos who go to Singapore accept jobs in various sectors such as sales and retail, entertainment, health, and medical, manufacturing, service, academe, and research and development.

The attractiveness of Singapore as a work destination for OFWs may be attributed to its highly industrialized, affluent, educated, and global society. The city-state also boasts of effective governance, advanced and well-maintained infrastructures, and public facilities, a notable low crime incidence, and a high level of cleanliness. Thus, Singapore is dubbed the safest and cleanest country in Asia.

Having proximity to the Philippines is another aspect that one can consider when choosing this country to work in. The high connectivity in Singapore in both transportation and telecommunications is insurmountable. These can address homesickness, which is one of the top challenges that OFWs face according to the study by Bautista and Tamayo (2020). The latter being the driver that maintained connections and played a huge role, particularly during the lockdowns, when COVID-19 swept across the world.

## COVID-19 Pandemic

The emergence and subsequent contagion of COVID-19 sparked a global health crisis. The local infection that started in the Wuhan province of China triggered an unprecedented global health emergency (Lee *et al.*, 2021).

COVID-19 is caused by the virus SARS-Cov-2, an abbreviated name for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2, which is a virus similar to those that cause colds (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S.A., 2021). Such a disease easily spreads through droplets that are expelled through the mouth and nose.

Disease outbreaks are not new, as this generation has been introduced to previous variations of coronaviruses such as SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in 2003 and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) in 2012. However, because little was known about COVID-19 in the early stage of the pandemic, its rapid transmission, and the absence of specific medical treatment as well as vaccines made governments across the globe act swiftly by implementing measures that sought to contain the infection.

In a span of three months from the detection of this novel coronavirus in November 2019, authorities scrambled to organize a multi-ministry or inter-agency task force to respond to the emergency, as the disease reached the shores outside China and the first community transmissions were recorded in various countries.

Although closely similar to the SARS disease from 20 years ago, the COVID-19 outbreak was compounded due to the infection from asymptomatic and presymptomatic individuals (Keshta *et al.*, 2021). To contain community transmission, non-pharmacological or non-medical approaches were also implemented, such as frequent observation of good hygiene practices, wearing of masks, and social distancing. In addition, the quick detection and isolation of positive COVID-19 cases

and the identification of close contacts for quarantine were implemented. The movement of people was controlled by travel restrictions and strict quarantine protocols.

COVID-19 brought the frantic world to a standstill as governments announced lockdowns and implemented regulations that were strictly enforced to combat the pandemic and prevent transmission. Activities plummeted as classes were suspended and operations in most industries, work sectors, and establishments considered non-essential services ceased temporarily.

### **COVID-19 Situation in Singapore**

The first imported case of COVID-19 in Singapore arrived on January 23, 2023 (Ministry of Health-Singapore, 2020) from a tourist from Wuhan. By February 4, a local infection had been confirmed with a Singaporean who worked in a Chinese herbal product shop that is famous among Chinese tourists. Three days later, the health authority raised the health outbreak level alert or DORSCON (Disease Outbreak Response System Condition) from yellow to orange. DORSCON is a four-level prevention and response plan for Singapore when infectious disease spreads worldwide (Ministry of Health-Singapore, 2020). Green indicates the lowest level while red indicates the highest alert. The increased alert level prompted panic buying, with people emptying grocery shelves of food and hygiene product stocks.

The following month saw the first deaths from COVID-19. The government announced the closure of enclosed public spaces that were considered high risk for transmission, such as cinemas and entertainment venues. Tourists were banned from entering Singapore.

The increasing number of local infections necessitated the implementation of a circuit breaker, the Singapore government's term for lockdown. Mask-wearing and social distancing were made compulsory outside homes. Schools shifted to home-based learning, and work-from-home was introduced. Borders were closed and both public and private social gatherings were prohibited.

Only workers in the healthcare sector and those related to the manufacturing and distribution of food and pharmaceuticals remained in operation, and its support industries, which are considered essential.

To comply with the social distancing requirement, essential service companies carried out staggered work for their employees. They were split into teams that reported to work on alternate schedules, such that half of the employees were working on-site, and half were working from home. Those working on site were obliged to observe company rules in alignment with government emergency laws during the pandemic, such as compulsory wearing of masks, social distancing, no gathering, no intermingling of different teams, and no exceeding the number of people allowed on site.

Whether at work or home, contact tracing was rigorously performed when there was a confirmed positive case, and quarantine orders were strictly followed. Inspections and surveillance were conducted to ensure that everyone complied with the new rules implemented. Anyone who flouted the law faced a serious penalty, in accordance with the law. Separate news on punishments imposed on those who breached the COVID-19 rules in Singapore were published. Locals were fined for illegal gatherings (Lam, 2020), whereas foreigners living and working in Singapore, those who were found guilty were deported as their visas and work passes were canceled as in the cases reported on The Straits Times by Lim (2020) and on Today

Online by Tang (2020). Furthermore, some foreign workers were permanently banned from working in or returning to Singapore for violating the circuit breaker measure (Zhuo, 2020).

The circuit breaker lasted until June 2020, when Singapore embarked on a gradual reopening and a return to “new normal” activities. The measures were calibrated to manage the evolving pandemic and cope with its effects on both the economy and society at large.

### **Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

A study by Bautista and Tamayo (2020) revealed that the top life challenges faced by OFWs are homesickness, salary and savings, language barrier, relationship with employers and co-workers, and workload. In addition, the never-ending challenge of financial management also preoccupies OFWs (Jalagat and Dalluay, 2016).

Anxiety and mental health stressors arise from multidimensional sources such as migration, work, and human-rights challenges (Zainal and Barlas, 2022). Domestic workers who were interviewed in Singapore experience stress from financial burdens and separation from their families. Work-related stressors come from workload and intercultural interactions where language barriers and differences are encountered.

Finally, migrant workers are exposed to exploitation violence, and limited support. The challenges that COVID-19 brought exacerbated the struggles that OFWs experienced prior to the pandemic. The case study conducted by Cleofas *et al.* (2021) found three major issues that OFWs encountered and themes that emerged at the height of the pandemic, namely: anxiety or worry over their family’s situation; homesickness due to separation as the lockdowns caused disruptions in family plans

and relationships; and awareness of their family's needs be it in monetary or non-monetary terms such as care and guidance. A prior study by Graham *et al.* (2015) on parental labor migration in Southeast Asia showed that lack of communication is one of the major factors that negatively affects families. The uncertainty in reuniting families with migrant members during the pandemic aggravated this condition. It is not just the OFWs but also their families back home who suffer equally in an emergency.

The crisis brought distress not just to health but also to the economy, with border closures and resources directed toward health and social aid. Many industries were affected due to the restriction of movement that caused loss of transactions which eventually led to the closure of businesses. This economic crunch disrupted the lives of OFWs with the termination of jobs, and for those who were able to keep their jobs, concerns over the stability of their employment intensified emotional and mental stress (de Borja, 2021).

A study among Singapore residents showed that disruptions in social interactions, activities, and finances were reported as the major social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 mitigation measures in the country (Daly *et al.*, 2021).

Tan *et al.* (2023) highlighted that migrants were among the vulnerable population during the pandemic. The plight of migrant workers at the height of the COVID-19 wave of infection in Singapore was highly emphasized, citing disparities in many social aspects and the lack of an inclusive protection system (Goh *et al.*, 2020 Yi *et al.*, 2021).

Fear of being jobless and the feeling that migrant workers are neglected compounded the anxiety of Filipinos working in Singapore amidst reports on transmission hotspots in migrant dormitories, pay cuts, and lay-offs particularly in badly hit industries, which gripped the city-state (Esmaguél, 2020).

Among domestic workers, it was reported by the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (2020) that this group of migrant workers faced issues such as overwork, mobility and communication restrictions, salary, and instability of employment. Wong (2020) reported on the Straits Times that the number of runaway cases, such as foreign domestic workers leaving their employers to seek refuge at shelters run by the Philippine Embassy and welfare groups, doubled during the pandemic. Furthermore, according to the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (FAST), tensions between employers and domestic workers have escalated, especially during the lockdown. With most people working and staying home, there was more workload for foreign domestic workers but limited opportunities for rest and recreation.

It is equally interesting to investigate how migrant workers in Singapore, particularly Overseas Filipino Workers, navigate this precarious situation.

## **New Media**

The internet enabled the transformation of the media landscape and paved the way for new media. New media is the evolution of the old form of mass media into a more dynamic model that is internet-based, produced, and consumed by online users (Usera, *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, the New Media Institute of the University of Georgia defines new media as all media that is related to the internet and involves an interplay with technology. Examples include email, websites, social media networks, streaming services, and virtual and augmented reality (Cote, 2022).

As of January 2023, there are 5.16 billion people who actively use the internet, of which 4.76 billion are social media users (Petrosyan, 2023). With the dramatic shift

from old to new media fueled by technology, most social activities are mediated by forms of computing technology. Increasing use of digital devices such as smartphones and computers in daily communication.

### **Uses and Gratifications of New Media**

The basic understanding of the Theory of Uses and Gratifications is to understand how the audience uses the media. It advances the assumption that audiences seek media and establish preferences to satisfy their needs (Idid *et al.*, 2012; Choi and Choung, 2021). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) proposed that social factors are involved in the generation of media-related needs. These factors are as follows: 1) social tensions and conflicts; 2) social situations that demand attention and information; 3) social problems that provide opportunities to satisfy needs; 4) facilitation of affirmation and reinforcement by media during social situations; and 5) provision of familiarity with certain types of media.

Furthermore, research on uses and gratification has focused on both the functional and psychological perspectives of the audience. The functional approach considers how people use the media and its contents, as discussed by Idid *et al.* (2012), whereas the psychological approach considers the sources of motivation and effects of media use (Perse, 2014).

Several studies have revealed various uses and gratifications sought by the audience in several types of new media. Whitting and Williams (2019) found ten uses and gratifications of new media such as social media. These include social interaction, information seeking, pastime, entertainment, relaxation, expression of opinions, communicatory utility, convenience, information sharing, and surveillance. Stafford and Gillenson (2004), identified that the uses and gratifications of the use of mobile

devices are centered on the speed and connectivity with which data and information services are available. Roy (2009) identified six gratification needs that the internet satisfies: self-development, wide exposure, user-friendly, relaxation, career opportunities, and global exchange. Omar (2014) examined the gratification concept of online news consumption as compared with print news. He found that there is no significant effect in the immediacy gratification from online news, but significance was found in the surveillance and orientation in the information space through web navigation.

Additionally, Michailina *et al.* (2015) surveyed 156 university students, and their results showed that the uses and gratifications obtained from online news and social media are information, discussion, entertainment, and surveillance. The preference for the type of new media, such as online news websites or social media, which is intensively used is dependent on how well-informed the users would like to be, the demographics, and the trust level in the media.

### **Use of New Media During COVID-19 Pandemic**

The crucial role of media communication has been central to the pandemic. The dissemination of information regarding the Coronavirus and the evolving situation in local and global settings is paramount to the decisions made on measures to contain the infection and to respond and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on all aspects of society.

The high media utilization during the pandemic enabled individuals to perform functions or activities in terms of information, education, economics, entertainment, and emotional and intellectual responses to the crisis. There is extensive use of media

as it satisfies the needs of its audience and enables them in their decision-making to achieve stability and to respond during a social change, conflict, or crisis.

As physical interactions were prohibited because of the high transmission of the Coronavirus, the use of new media through computer-mediated communication maintained social connectedness, learning, and keeping abreast with information.

Technology-mediated communication supports the timely circulation of news and reports to inform, educate, and protect every person in every corner of the world (Das, 2022). Virtual spaces aided by advanced media technology have burgeoned to maintain operations as adjustments were made by various organizations and enterprises in their respective processes, such as shifting to remote working, home-based learning, and online activities where possible.

Leung (2009) established that ICTs and internet connectivity can be strongly linked to quality of life through information literacy provided by the media. Digital communication paved the way for coping with the difficulties of the new normal (Deputado *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, it was shown that the high utilization of digital technologies by OFWs during the pandemic was for information and literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, health and safety measures, and decision-making.

Figueroa (2020) mentioned that apart from remote communication through digital devices in the absence of physical interaction, access to mental health applications may help address anxiety and stress, aside from allowing people to track COVID-19 symptoms.

Furthermore, employing social media to circumvent physical restrictions has been helpful in the education and research field by creating global networks of information and providing emotional support that lessens the distress felt from social

isolation (Ong *et al.*, 2020). Key findings by Prasetya and Wardani (2023) on the systematic review of social media addiction among healthcare workers during the pandemic include the extensive use of social media in healthcare settings and to obtain information regarding COVID-19. Additionally, from Wong *et al.* (2021), social media and online communication have been common channels among healthcare professionals, patients, and the public for social interaction, ongoing education, collaboration, and information sharing, to improve health outcomes in times of pandemic. While mobile applications and social media platforms facilitate the distribution of reliable information, caution is advised so as not to fall victim to misinformation. Hauer and Sood (2020) discussed and reviewed best practices in social media communication strategies that promote sustainable preventive measures and curtail misinformation surrounding COVID-19.

In terms of interpersonal communication, amidst the lockdowns, new media through digital technology has become more important than ever in staying connected with family, friends, and co-workers (Figueroa, 2020). The use of internet-mediated communication has compensated for the reduced physical interaction to maintain social connectedness among individuals (Scott *et al.*, 2022; Lee *et al.*, 2021).

Even before the pandemic, many Filipinos depend on new media for communication with family members who work abroad. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have a positive impact on the connectedness of Filipino migrant workers and their families (Alampay and Alampay, 2012). The emergence of social networking sites made familial exchanges easier as these sites such as Facebook, have been platforms for sustaining relationships (Ariate *et al.*, 2015). It is confirmed by an investigative study (Chib *et al.*, 2013) that the use of mobile

phones and other types of media technologies contributed to alleviating stress among migrant workers in Singapore.

Smartphone penetration in Singapore has reached 92% in 2022 (Statista, 2023). The country ranks first overall in the Inclusive Internet Index, being the country with the highest availability and quality of internet infrastructure, and second in affordability after the UK, with respect to the cost of internet relative to income (Economist Impact, 2022). Access to digital technology is prevalent in the city-state as the government works towards the goal of making Singapore a Smart Nation, which aims to enable nation-building and people empowerment through seamless technology (Government of Singapore: Smart Nation, 2018). Hence, the use of the internet is pervasive in Singapore.

A higher adoption of media technology was observed in Singapore during the onslaught of COVID-19. The top internet activities in Singapore are communication, information, and leisure (Infocom Media Development Authority: Key Internet Activities in Singapore 2017-2022). Increased online activity in interaction with government and public organizations, online banking, content creation, and education was noticed from 2020. The government coordinated COVID-19 responses through daily updates using the WhatsApp platform and other tools in managing quarantine and contact tracing (Basu, 2020). Moreover, it was observed that access to instant messaging apps through social media and surfing the internet for information were the top online activities among older digital technology users in Singapore (Visaria *et al*, 2023).

Drawing from the premise of Uses and Gratifications Theory, the isolation, lack of physical interaction, and the threat posed by the pandemic to society were factors that prompted the use of new media. A study on media as a predictor of pro-environment behaviors in Singapore suggested that when interpersonal

communication through physical interaction is low, the reliance on media increases as people will likely surround themselves with media messages that instruct behaviors and provide an understanding of a situation (Ho *et al.*, 2014). This highlights the importance of the variety of needs that the media satisfies to its intended audience.

In the case of the pandemic, various media information enabled individuals to respond to the COVID-19 situation and alleviate their circumstances. The use of new media by different audiences was driven by specific purposes and gratifications sought, according to the needs that the audience wants to be satisfied. A study by Corpuz and Vargas (2021) on the uses and gratifications of new media revealed that social media use during COVID-19 satisfied knowledge acquisition, socialization, and relaxation needs. The findings by dela Cueva (2022) her thesis revealed that youths' primary motivations for new media usage were self-expression and social interaction.

Incidental exposure to political information led to political awareness and community engagement. Choi and Choung (2021) focused on social interaction, entertainment, and information-seeking needs as the most pertinent to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their results showed people preferred the use of new media for mediated communication such as interpersonal media such as chat applications for social connection, while mass personal media like social media networks were preferred for entertainment and information. The use of these media was associated with the well-being of the users.

The emergence of new media has changed the way people acquire and communicate information. Several literatures covered the role of the new media in satisfying the needs of its users during the pandemic. However, none was found to explore the use of new media by OFWs in Singapore. Hence, it is worth investigating

the utilization of new media and its effects on OFWs, in terms of managing the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study investigated how Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore utilized new media during the COVID-19 pandemic. It employed the Uses and Gratifications Theory that was developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in 1973. This theory proposes the relationship between audience needs and media use. Such needs stem from the social factors that affect the audience and exert influence on the use and preference of media. The theory emphasizes that audiences actively engage with media based on their specific needs. The gratification obtained from the utilization of media is related to how well it satisfies the needs of the audience.

Figure 1 illustrates the key components of the theory.

**Social factors:** These are external influences that shape an audience's needs.

**Audience needs:** The specific needs that individuals seek to fulfill through new media consumption.

Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) have classified the audience needs into five groups.

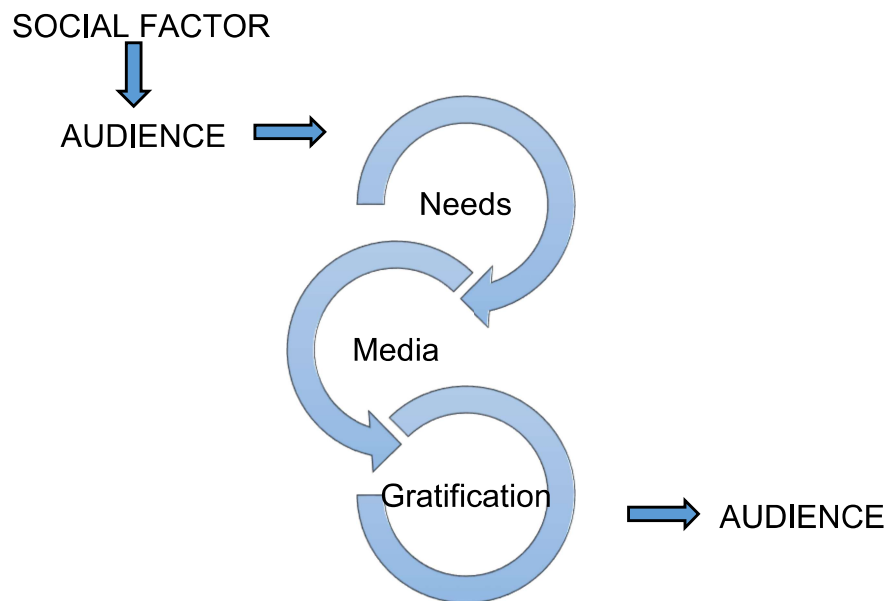
- 1) Cognitive- the need for information, knowledge, and understanding.
- 2) Affective- the need for pleasurable and emotional experiences
- 3) Integrative– the need for opportunities, confidence, and stability
- 4) Social connection– the need for belongingness with family, friends, and society and
- 5) Escape– the need for relaxation

**Media choice:** Audiences actively select types of media platforms based on their needs.

**Gratification:** The satisfaction obtained from using specific media.

The main research question addressed by this study was: “How did the use of new media facilitate in overcoming the challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic?”. By applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study explored how Overseas Filipino Workers' (OFWs) media choices aligned with their specific needs during the pandemic.

**Figure 1.** Theoretical framework adopted from the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973).



## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework integrated the Uses and Gratifications Theory, emphasizing how Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore actively engaged with new media to fulfill their specific needs during the pandemic.

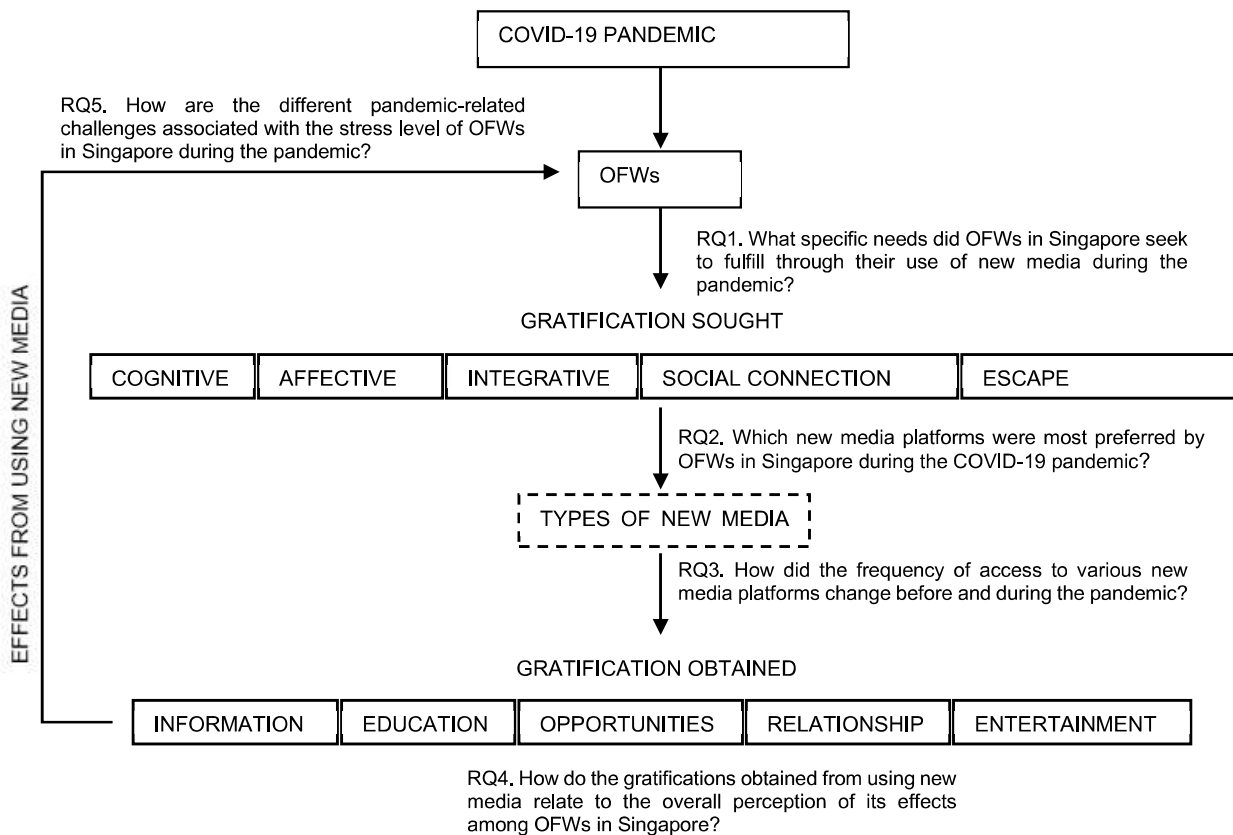
This study explored the use of new media among OFWs amidst the social instability that COVID-19 caused. The pandemic prompted OFWs to seek gratifications from various types of new media as a coping mechanism against the negative effects of the crisis.

Figure 2 represents the conceptual framework grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The central research question revolves around understanding how new media impacted OFWs during this challenging time. Adhering to the framework outlined by this theory, the concept addressed specific questions as illustrated in the diagram below.

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore encountered challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The threat that was posed by the coronavirus and the unfavorable events that followed, consequential to physical restrictions, prompted OFWs to use new media. Drawing from the Uses and Gratifications Theory, it categorized the specific purposes for the use of new media namely: cognitive; affective; integrative; social connection; and escape. These needs motivated the utilization of specific platforms or channels. Each type of new media catered to fulfilling one or more gratifications sought by the OFWs.

Subsequently, several outcomes ensued from using specific new media. These are information, education, opportunities, relationships, and entertainment. Obtaining gratifications that allowed OFWs to overcome the challenges of the pandemic caused satisfaction in new media.

**Figure 2.** *The conceptual framework for using new media to overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.*



This study evaluated variables through indicators identified or measured through a survey among OFWs in Singapore. These included:

1. Socio-demographic profile: Age, gender, field of work, length of stay in Singapore.
2. Purpose for using new media: Likert Scale rating on needs addressed using new media.
3. Types of new media platforms used: selection from given applications or enumeration of other applications.
4. Consumption pattern of new media: Likert scale rating on frequency of access before and during the pandemic.

5. Effects of new media usage: Likert Scale rating on gratifications obtained from new media.
6. Challenges addressed by using new media: Likert Scale rating on challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

**Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs):** Citizens of the Philippines who have been employed and residing in Singapore for at least four years, since the onset of the pandemic. They participated in the quantitative survey and their socio-demographic profiles were described from the information that they gave about their gender, age, field of work, and length of stay in Singapore. By employing the Uses and Gratification Theory, their use of new media in overcoming the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic was determined through the survey.

**COVID-19 pandemic:** The global health crisis occurring from the spread of SARS-CoV-2, was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020. The effects of this event were measured through the challenges that were encountered by the OFWs in Singapore as identified through a survey.

**New media:** Digital platforms and applications accessed via the internet, including social media, online news websites, streaming services, and mobile/web applications used for communication and consumption of information and various contents. The types of new media used by OFWs in Singapore were identified using a survey questionnaire.

**Use of new media:** The consumption of specific types of new media, measured by the frequency of engagement and the type of content accessed (e.g., news, social interaction, entertainment).

**Motivation for the use of new media:** The specific reasons or purposes for utilizing new media, categorized into various needs related to cognitive, affective, integrative, social connection, and escape aspects, as reported by the participants of the survey.

**Media effects:** The impacts or outcomes resulting from the use of new media, such as the acquisition of information, achieving education, seizing opportunities, maintaining relationships, and experiencing relaxation measured through self-reported perception of OFWs on new media.

**Uses and gratifications:** The satisfaction or benefits derived from the utilization of new media when the needs and intended purposes of usage are fulfilled, as reported by OFWs in the survey on the purposes and frequency of access to specific types, and the perceived effects of using new media.

**The needs satisfied by the consumption of new media in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:**

**Cognitive:** The need for seeking information, knowledge, and understanding about the COVID-19 pandemic situation was measured by the access to news, health, and informational new media content (e.g., news websites, government web pages, health blogs) by OFWs.

**Affective:** The need for emotional fulfillment was measured by the access to new media (e.g., social media, telemedicine, shopping platforms) for seeking pleasurable feelings or emotional relief.

**Integrative:** The need for self-accomplishment and stability amidst uncertainties, measured by the engagement of OFWs in online learning, and seizing opportunities or maintaining income through new media (e.g., social media, online learning platforms, video conferencing platforms, online remittance).

**Social connection:** The desire for interaction and the need to feel connected with family and to belong to a community, measured by the OFWs' access to new media (e.g., social media, video conferencing platforms, web applications) for communication and social interaction.

**Escape:** The need for relief from pandemic-related stress, allowing individuals to relax and unwind, measured by the consumption of entertaining content on new media (e.g., social media, mobile gaming, streaming services).

**Gratifications obtained from the utilization of new media:**

**Information:** Satisfaction from fulfilling cognitive needs by staying informed about pandemic updates, measured by the reported perception of OFWs on the usefulness of the types of new media in providing informational content.

**Education:** Fulfillment from meeting integrative needs by acquiring new skills and knowledge, measured by the reported perception from the outcome of participation in online learning.

**Opportunities:** Addressing integrative needs related to job prospects and business continuity, measured by the perceived outcome of engaging in work or income-related online activities.

**Relationship:** Satisfaction of social connection needs through online communication, measured by self-reported perception of the benefits of using new media in maintaining relationships and family bonding.

**Entertainment:** Enjoyment and relief from pandemic-related stress from consuming entertainment content, measured by the frequency of access and participation in online leisure activities.

## **Chapter III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the research design, the locale and period of the study, respondents of the study, sampling and data gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

A descriptive research design was employed to obtain information on the use of new media among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey questionnaire was used as a data-gathering tool to collect information from volunteers about their media usage and the subsequent media effects.

This study used a quantitative research method through an online survey questionnaire. Quantitative research aided in characterizing the sample population in this study and in identifying trends or patterns in their responses, specifically about the use of new media during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Locale and Period of the Study**

The study was conducted in Singapore, a city-state that is home to approximately 200,000 Filipino workers (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2013). According to the information by the Migrant Workers Office of the Embassy of the Philippines in Singapore (October 29, 2023), out of the assessed number of OFWs

based on deployment figures, the population is estimated to consist of 55% professional and 45% domestic workers.

The survey was conducted between March 1 to March 31, 2024.

### **Respondents of the Study**

A total of 150 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) based in Singapore willingly took part in the survey. An inclusion criterion was explained on the questionnaire to specifically target OFWs who had been residing and employed in Singapore for a minimum of four years, encompassing the duration of the study. This measure aimed to maintain consistency and ensure comparability of experiences among OFWs. Newly hired individuals during the study period and those who departed Singapore amid the pandemic were excluded from participation.

### **Sampling Procedure**

Convenience sampling, a non-probability technique, was conducted to reach out to a considerable target population, taking into account the period of study and the accessibility to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) communities in Singapore.

### **Research Instrument**

Information on the use of new media was gathered by using survey research with a standardized set of questions that were answered by volunteer Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. In this study, participants were surveyed using a Likert scale, which is commonly used to assess attitudes and behaviors. The scale consisted of statements followed by a series of five-answer options. For this specific

research, the OFWs were asked to indicate their agreement level with statements related to the purposes for access to new media, the types of new media applications used, the effects of new media, and the challenges they faced during the pandemic that were addressed using new media.

This approach allowed us to capture responses and understand the new media usage among the participants during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey was administered through a Google survey form, which was accessed through a direct link or QR code. In instances when volunteers were not familiar with such a tool, an interview was conducted following the same set of questions, entering responses on the Google form.

**Table 1.** *Variables and indicators according to the objectives of the study.*

<b>VARIABLES</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>
<b>I. Socio-demographic profile of the respondents</b>	
Age	25-36 y/o; 36-45 y/o; 46-55 y/o; over 55 years old
Gender	Either male or female
Field of work	Work sector or industry in Singapore
No. of years working in Singapore	4-10; 11-15; more than 15 years
<b>II. Purpose for using new media during the pandemic</b>	
Seek information	Rate of agreement using the Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
Seek medical advice	
Education and skills training	
Source of income	
Remittance	
Communication	
Community engagement	
Pass time	
Seek escape	
Shopping	

<b>III. Consumption pattern of new media</b>	
News websites Telemedicine Learning platforms Conferencing platforms for work Conferencing platforms for personal Online remittance Social media Online community activities Mobile games Video and music streaming Online shopping	Rate of agreement using the Likert Scale 1 = never 2 = seldom 3 = sometimes 4 = always 5 = all the time  Two separate ratings were provided to indicate the frequency of access before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.
<b>IV. Type of new media applications used</b>	
Information seeking Health-related Personal and career development Maintain family/relationship Family support Community engagement Work/income generation Relaxation Pass time Online shopping	Selection from websites, social media network, video conferencing, video/music streaming platforms, personal messaging applications, gaming applications, shopping platform or enumeration of other applications used
<b>V. Effects of new media usage during the pandemic</b>	
Frequency in access to new media Information Education Income opportunities Social connection Entertainment	Rate of agreement using the Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
<b>VI. Challenges addressed by new media</b>	
Fear of Covid-19 Job uncertainty Financial difficulty Homesickness Worry for family back home Boredom Work overload High level of stress	Rate of agreement using the Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
<b>VII. Overall effect of new media</b>	

## **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the collected data, summarizing key trends. The median score served as a measure of central tendency to describe the typical responses among survey participants regarding challenges encountered, motivations for new media usage, the frequency of access before and during the pandemic, and its effects on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore.

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was employed to assess the associations between various variables in this study, such as challenges encountered by OFWs in Singapore and the elevated stress that they felt during the pandemic, as well as the relationship between gratifications obtained from new media use and the overall perception of its positive effects in coping with challenges during the pandemic. This coefficient is suitable for analyzing non-parametric ordinal data such as ratings from a Likert scale.

Furthermore, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to determine the significance of the differences between the frequency of access to different types of new media before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This robust non-parametric test is similarly well-suited for analyzing data obtained from Likert scale ratings.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The survey was conducted voluntarily, aligning with the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) of Singapore and the Data Privacy Act or RA 10173 of the Philippines to safeguard the confidentiality of the respondents' information. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study with an emphasis on the collection of only pertinent information. Personal data directly linking or identifying participants was excluded from data collection.

The advisory committee was consulted for review of the survey questionnaire and approval of the conduct of the study to ensure compliance with ethical standards throughout the research study.

## **Chapter IV**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the findings derived from a survey conducted to explore the utilization, purposes, and effects of new media, among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore during the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Framed within the theoretical lens of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study examined how OFWs engaged with various forms of new media, the motivations driving their usage, and the resultant impacts on their experiences with new media amidst the pandemic. This section is divided into five parts that describe (I) the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, (II) the purpose of the use of new media, (III) the types of new media that OFWs accessed, (IV) the effects of accessing new media, and (V) the challenges that Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore faced during the pandemic that were addressed by new media.

#### **Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents**

The utilization of new media among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic was determined by conducting a survey. 150 OFWs agreed to participate by answering a survey questionnaire. The first part of the survey was on the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The participants were asked about their gender, age, field of work, and length of years working in Singapore. The distribution of socio-demographic characteristics among the sample population is shown in Table 2. As certain segments of the population were more susceptible to the stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic (Quadros, et. al, 2021), the

socio-demographic profile influenced the coping mechanism of individuals during the COVID-19 crisis (Lin, et.al., 2022) as well as their patterns of engagement with the new media (Mujala, 2023).

**Table 2.** *Distribution of sample population according to socio-demographic categories.*

PROFILE	SAMPLE POPULATION	PORTION OF RESPONDENTS
<b>Age</b>		
25 to 35 years old	31	21%
36 to 45 years old	89	59%
46 to 55 years old	26	17%
above 55 years old	4	3%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	60	40%
Female	90	60%
<b>Field of work</b>		
Business and Finance	9	6%
Building and Construction	12	8%
Domestic Work	34	23%
Education	9	6%
Healthcare	11	7%
Information Technology	24	16%
Manufacturing and Logistics	27	18%
Science and Technology	18	12%
Services	6	4%
<b>Length of Stay in Singapore</b>		
4 to 10 years	61	41%
11 to 15 years	56	37%
More than 15 years	33	22%

*n* = 150

### **Gender**

Ninety respondents or 60% of the total participants were female Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. Sixty respondents were male. They comprised 40% of the whole participants.

## **Age**

Most respondents were Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) aged between 36 and 45 years old who accounted for 89 (59%) responses. Individuals aged between 25 to 35 years old accounted for 31 (21%) responses, while those aged between 46 to 55 years old contributed 26 (17%) responses. Only 4 (3%) OFWs above 55 years old participated in the survey.

## **Field of work**

The participants came from various industries in Singapore, namely building and construction, manufacturing and logistics, education, science and technology, information technology, healthcare, business, finance, and retail services, and those engaged in domestic work. Most of the respondents were involved in domestic work (23%), manufacturing and logistics (18%), information technology (16%) and science and technology (12%).

## **Length of stay in Singapore**

Sixty-one respondents (41%) have been working in Singapore for 4 to 10 years, 56 (37%) individuals have been working for 11 to 15 years whereas 33 (22%) respondents have been working in Singapore for more than 15 years.

In summary, 150 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) participated in the survey, the majority of whom were female. The age of the respondents ranged from 25 years old and above, with most of them being between 36 to 45 years old. They were employed in various industries in Singapore such as manufacturing, construction, information technology, education, retail, and domestic work. A significant portion of the respondents had been working in Singapore for anywhere from 4 to 15 years.

## **Purpose of Using New Media During the Pandemic**

It has been noted in several articles that there was a spike in the utilization of communication and media technologies throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In Singapore, the already prevalent use of the internet further intensified during the crisis. New media served a role in satisfying the needs of individuals amidst the pandemic.

In this section, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding the purpose of accessing new media during the pandemic, using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Figure 3 represents the quantified results in terms of the count of the responses from survey participants. It lists the various purposes for which respondents accessed new media during the pandemic. This included seeking information, maintaining health, training, and development, generating or maintaining income, remittance, communication, community engagement, passing time, escaping stress, and commerce.

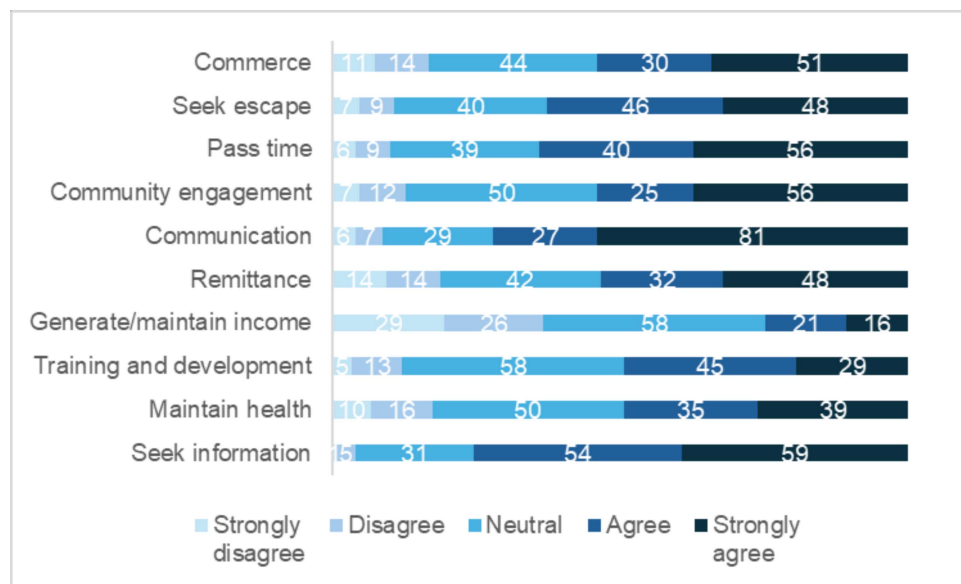
The results showed that the primary purpose for accessing new media was communication among the OFW participants in Singapore, with a median score = 5. The majority of the OFWs (72%) agreed that they utilized new media to communicate with family and friends during the pandemic. This usage was linked to addressing two main challenges encountered by the participants: concerns about their families back in the Philippines and homesickness. Constant communication kept the OFWs updated about their family members and allowed them to connect with their loved ones and friends, easing the feeling of loneliness, despite the distance and physical restrictions while in Singapore.

Other motivations that drew most OFWs to use new media during the pandemic, with a median score = 4, including seeking information, community engagement, leisure, relaxation, and commerce. Most respondents, 109 OFWs (75%)

accessed new media to seek information (median score = 4). This aligned with their need for updates during the pandemic.

Accessing new media to maintain health has a median score of 3. Although many OFWs (49%) responded that they sought health advice through the utilization of new media, others may not have actively engaged in health-related content and applications. Similarly, for purposes like training and development, as well as generating/maintaining income, there were varied responses (median score of 3) among participants. About half of the respondents (80) accessed new media to remit money, fulfilling their obligations to support their families in the Philippines.

**Figure 3.** Purpose for accessing new media by OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic (n=150).



As defined by Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973), audience needs for media can be grouped into five distinct categories: cognitive needs which center around seeking information for understanding and knowledge; affective needs relate to the desire for pleasurable and emotionally engaging experiences; integrative needs encompass opportunities, confidence, and stability; social connection emphasizes the need for belongingness; and escape needs involve seeking relaxation and mental relief.

Following the Uses and Gratifications approach to investigate the utilization of new media among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic, Table 3 tabulates the various purposes mentioned above, classified under the five categories of gratifications that the audience seeks when using new media.

**Table 3.** *Classification of the purpose for accessing new media among OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

<b>GRATIFICATIONS SOUGHT</b>	<b>PURPOSE/NEED TO BE FULFILLED</b>
Cognitive	Seek information Maintain health
Affective	Maintain health Commerce Pass time
Integrative	Training and development Generate/maintain income Remittance
Social connection	Communication Community engagement
Escape	Pass time Seek escape

### **Cognitive**

Accessing new media to stay informed about pandemic updates, travel restrictions, and health guidelines helped OFWs make well-informed decisions and prioritize safety. Similarly, seeking information on COVID-19, preventive measures, and medical advice contributed to the OFWs' health management.

### **Affective**

Utilizing new media for health-related information fulfills affective needs by providing emotional comfort and reassurance about wellness. Moreover, the survey participants engaged in entertainment on new media during leisure hours to pass time

and seek enjoyment, while online commerce activities such as shopping elicited positive emotions among OFWs.

### **Integrative**

Some OFWs utilized new media for training and skill development through online courses, webinars, or career and income-oriented contents, reflecting a desire for professional and personal growth. Additionally, seeking income-enhancing opportunities or continuing employment activities via new media aligned with integrative needs for financial stability and career advancement.

### **Social connection**

As shown in the survey results, communication was essential for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) as new media platforms played a crucial role in maintaining connections with family and friends, while remittance activities facilitated financial support and familial bonding among OFW families. Furthermore, engaging in online activities to connect with communities allowed OFWs to foster a sense of belonging as they participate in professional, religious, civic, or social activities despite the physical restrictions.

### **Escape**

OFW respondents turned to new media as a form of escapism, seeking mental relief and relaxation amidst the challenges of the pandemic. Leisure activities while passing time provided a temporary distraction from pandemic-related stressors.

The motivations for accessing new media that were identified in the pre-pandemic times, such as seeking information, passing time, leisure, social interaction, social development, and exploring opportunities (Stafford and Gillenson, 2004; Roy, 2009; Michailina, et al., 2015), also drove Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore to engage with new media during the COVID-19 period. Also, Graham et

al. (2015) noted in their research the importance of communication for the parent-child relationship within transnational families. Similarly, this finding coincided with the results of this study revealing the high agreement on communication as the primary purpose for accessing new media.

However, it was notable that the pandemic introduced a different trigger, leading to varied patterns of usage and subsequent levels of gratification among OFWs. In this context, the primary instigator for OFWs during the pandemic was COVID-19 itself, along with its associated challenges such as health and employment concerns. More so, the anxiety stemming from lockdown measures and separation from families exacerbated the situation of the OFWs.

The results of this study aligned with the findings of Meri et al. (2022), who observed that individuals surveyed exhibited heightened cognitive, affective, and escape needs that motivated their use of new media. They sought to stay updated on the Covid situation, alleviate anxiety, and overcome boredom and loneliness during the lockdowns. In the same way, OFWs in Dubai utilized digital technologies for information seeking, communication, decision-making, seizing opportunities, and most importantly, ensuring safety amid the COVID-19 outbreak (Deputado et al., 2021).

To summarize, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore faced various stressors that likely prompted them to seek out new media to cope with their emotional and informational needs. The pandemic exacerbated existing challenges faced by OFWs, supporting the focus of the Uses and Gratifications Theory on the influence of social factors on individual motivations and gratifications for the utilization of new media.

## **Types of New Media Used**

The choice of new media applications depends on the intended purpose of usage. According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals select specific media types based on the gratification they seek or the needs they aim to fulfill. These decisions are influenced by personal motivations and the surrounding social environment.

In the case of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore, the survey revealed their preference for new media platforms. Participants chose the most suitable type of new media application based on their specific needs.

Table 4 illustrates the most preferred type of new media applications used for a certain purpose. For information seeking, 66% of the total respondents (99 individuals) accessed websites such as government webpages and online news outlets to stay updated on the Covid situation highlighting the importance of reliable information during the pandemic. In Singapore, a high interaction with government websites was reported during the pandemic as these are the official sources of information in the country regarding pandemic updates, social distancing measures, regulations, and restrictions, as well as COVID-19 reporting and contact tracing.

Health-related contents and websites were highly sought, with 70 individuals (47%), indicating a strong need for guidance and health-related information. Given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and the associated health risks, OFWs likely felt a heightened sense of health concern for themselves, as well as for their families. The search for health-related content reflected a proactive approach to managing their health and highlights the importance of access to accurate and timely information for OFWs to make informed decisions in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and minimizing the risk and effects.

Social media networks were utilized the most by 68 respondents (45%) who turned to acquire new skills, as these platforms served as valuable educational resources for self-improvement. The utilization of social media underscored the adaptability of OFWs in seeking alternative avenues for personal growth despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Personal messaging applications were heavily utilized by 98 respondents (65%) to maintain communication and to stay connected with family and friends. This indicated that personal messaging applications played a crucial role in facilitating social connections and providing emotional support to Overseas Filipino Workers in Singapore.

Interestingly, 90 OFWs (60%), preferred personal messaging in rendering support to family than solely relying on sending remittances. This implied that for a significant portion of OFWs, personal communication held greater value than finances alone. It suggested that OFWs prioritized emotional connections and family relationships through communication platforms.

Moreover, social media network was the preferred choice of 65 respondents (45%) for community engagement, facilitating interaction with professional or social groups. This highlighted the importance of social media not just for personal communication but also for engaging with various virtual communities. Despite physical distancing measures, OFWs found ways to participate in virtual activities.

Conferencing platforms were predominantly used for income-generating activities as agreed upon by 71 respondents (47%). Leveraging video conferencing platforms enabled opportunities to generate income or maintain employment through remote work and business continuity.

For leisure and relaxation, social media networks emerged as the primary new media type for 72 OFWs (48%). Social media as a versatile new media application, was widely utilized as a means for enjoyment by consuming content and engaging recreational activities online.

Lastly, shopping platforms were utilized by 114 individuals (76%) for retail therapy or to fulfill household duties by replenishing groceries. This underscored the significance of e-commerce during the pandemic in meeting daily consumer needs and offering convenience while adhering to social distancing measures and movement restrictions in Singapore.

**Table 4 .** *Types of new media accessed by OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

PURPOSE	MOST PREFERRED NEW MEDIA APPLICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Information	Websites	99	66%
Healthcare	Websites	70	47%
Training and development	Social media network	68	45%
Communication	Personal messaging	98	65%
Family support	Personal messaging	90	60%
Community engagement	Social media network	65	43%
Income opportunities	Conferencing platforms	71	47%
Pass time	Social media network	73	49%
Seek escape	Social media network	72	48%
Shopping	Shopping platforms	114	76%

*n=150*

These results were consistent with the findings that highlighted the preference for and trust in news websites for information-seeking purposes, as well as high interaction with government webpages in Singapore for Covid updates (Visaria et al., 2023; Newman, 2021; Basu, 2020; Singapore Infocom Media Authority, 2020). Access to mental health applications in the absence of physical interaction increased as it

addressed anxiety and stress (Figueroa, 2020). The crucial role of social media as a multifunctional agent for information dissemination, interpersonal and mass communication, and educational resources during the pandemic were highlighted in many studies (Hauer and Sood, 2020; Prasetya and Wardani, 2023; Ong et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2021;). Similar to the OFWs surveyed, the results obtained by Corpuz and Vargas (2021), indicated a high level of satisfaction with new media in fulfilling socialization, entertainment, and relaxation needs.

Meanwhile, the outcome of this study with regards to the preference for personal messaging applications for communication and family support showed agreement with what Choi and Choung (2021) discussed regarding the inclination towards interpersonal media for social connection as this method afforded a more personal communication when face-to-face interactions were limited. Indeed, the use of new media became important in maintaining social connectedness as internet-mediated communication technology compensated the reduced physical interactions during the pandemic (Figueroa, 2020; Leet et al., 2021; Scott et al., 2022).

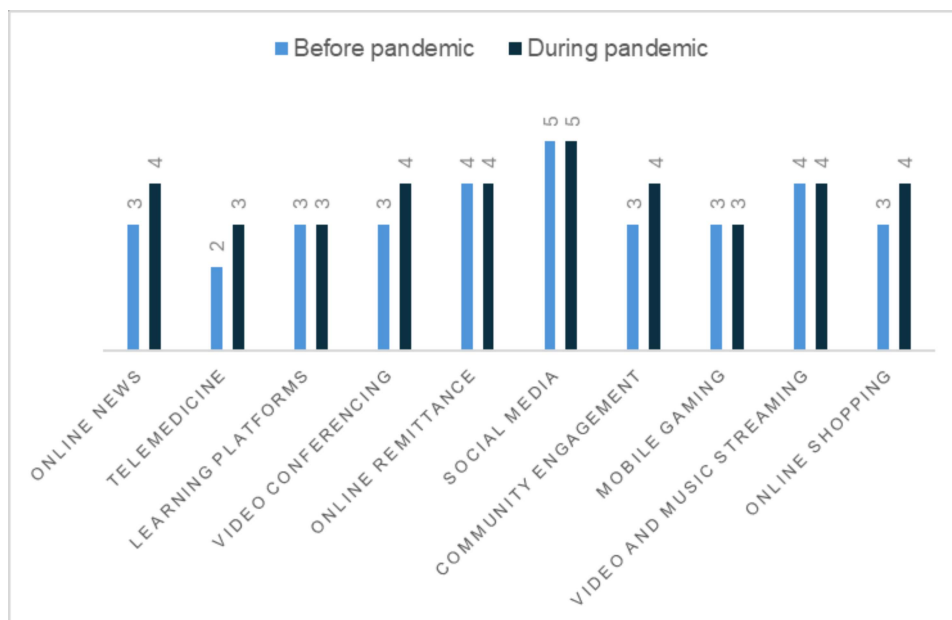
Overseas Filipino Workers in Singapore exhibited strategic utilization of new media platforms to fulfill specific needs, ranging from reliable information to emotional support. These choices aligned with the principles of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, emphasizing the active role of the audience in selecting media by their gratification. Moreover, the OFWs' choices reflected an adaptation of media preferences to suit their circumstances, notably amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Consumption Pattern for New Media

The survey participants, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore, were asked if the frequency of access to new media applications increased during the pandemic. The median scores of each statement regarding the frequency of use of a specific type of new media application were compared.

Figure 4 shows the median scores of the frequency of access to various new media applications before and during the pandemic.

**Figure 4.** *New media consumption pattern among OFWs before and during the pandemic.*



Based on the graph, the median scores on the frequency of use for all listed new media platforms during the pandemic (represented in dark blue bars) were equal to or higher than before the pandemic (represented in light blue bars). This suggests that OFWs in Singapore found these platforms more valuable, thus increasing their utilization of these platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The need for information about COVID-19 likely drove increased access to news websites while the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) sought updates on the pandemic's impact. The perceived safety of staying home made individuals seek professional health advice through teleconsultation platforms. With movement restrictions and remote work, learning applications became essential for personal and career development. OFWs relied more on video conferencing for both work-related meetings and personal or social interactions. Online activities such as electronic remittance facilitated financial support to the OFWs' family members and helped in continued community engagement as these platforms also provided social and spiritual support to OFWs during challenging times. Social media facilitated OFWs in staying connected with families and their larger social network, seeking entertainment while coping with isolation. At the same time, as leisure options decreased, OFWs turned to streaming services or mobile gaming for relaxation when physical stores became less accessible, which led to higher reliance on online shopping platforms.

**Table 5.** Comparison of the frequency of access to new media before and during the pandemic.

NEW MEDIA APPLICATION	Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test	
	z value	p value
Online news	-2.70	0.007**
Telemedicine	-5.69	<0.001**
Learning platforms	-3.41	0.001**
Video conferencing	-6.35	<0.001**
Online remittance	-0.29	0.769
Social media	-0.28	0.78
Community engagement	-6.68	<0.001**
Mobile gaming	-1.78	0.075
Video and music streaming	-2.41	0.016*
Online shopping	-6.08	<0.001**

\*significant at 0.05; \*\*significant at 0.01

A Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that there was no significant difference between the frequency of access in online remittance ( $z = -0.29$ ;  $p = 0.769$ ), social media ( $z = -0.28$ ;  $p = 0.78$ ), and mobile games ( $z = -1.78$ ;  $p = 0.075$ ) before and during the pandemic. This observation may also indicate that the OFWs who participated in the survey were already highly utilizing online remittance (median score = 4) and social media (median score = 5) even before the pandemic. Some of the OFWs mentioned that their salaries were wired by their employers directly to their families in the Philippines through online banking transfers even before the pandemic so that they didn't need to wait for their day-offs before they could send remittances. As for social media, it was reported by Alampay and Alampay (2012) and Ariate et al., (2015) that the messaging functions of social media have established connectedness and sustained relationships between OFWs and their families pre-pandemic. Likewise, prior research by Chib et al., (2013) revealed that the use of media technologies contributed to alleviating stress among migrant workers in Singapore.

On the other hand, the frequency of access to online news ( $z = -2.70$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ), telemedicine ( $z = -5.69$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), learning platforms ( $z = -3.41$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), video conferencing ( $z = -6.35$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), community engagement ( $z = -6.68$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and online shopping ( $z = -6.08$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) before and during the pandemic, showed highly significant differences. Access to online news increased due to the need for timely information. The use of telemedicine surged for remote healthcare consultations. Upskilling shifted to online learning as face-to-face classes and training were disrupted. Staying home also prompted OFWs to acquire new skills or take on new hobbies such as baking, planting, or arts, through lessons offered online. Video conferencing became essential for work and social interactions. Virtual communities replaced physical gatherings and e-commerce boomed during lockdowns. Moreover,

data from the Infocom Media Development Authority of Singapore showed increased internet activities that were related to communication, information, leisure, online banking, and education. Despite the disruptions caused by health measures and physical restrictions, the use of internet-mediated technologies has helped mitigate the effects of the global health crisis.

These results reflected how Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore adjusted their new media consumption pattern during the pandemic, emphasizing the importance of technology in navigating the pandemic through digital means. Within the premise of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this echoed the emphasis on the significant influence of social factors on the audience in actively adapting their media preferences and consumption behaviors in response to evolving circumstances.

### **Effects of the Utilization of New Media During the Pandemic**

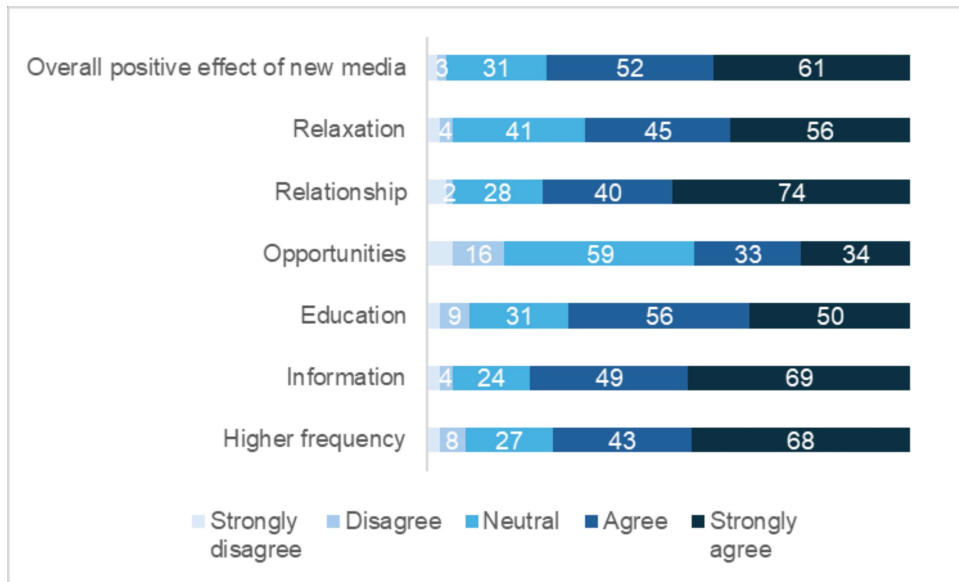
The final section of the survey focused on examining the impacts experienced by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore when engaging with new media during the pandemic. Participants were asked to evaluate statements using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 which means strongly disagree, up to 5 which means strongly agree, regarding specific effects from the increased frequency of access.

In relation to the Uses and Gratification Theory, this section delved into the gratifications derived by OFWs through their utilization of new media amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

As depicted in Figure 5, a notable overall increase was observed in the frequency of new media usage compared to pre-pandemic levels. Sixty-eight OFWs (45%) strongly agreed that their new media usage became more frequent during the

COVID-19 pandemic, while 43 OFWs (29%) reported an increase in access to some degree.

**Figure 5.** Gratifications were obtained from the higher frequency of access to new media during the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Information

New media provided valuable information for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore about the ongoing situation of the COVID-19 pandemic as reported by 118 survey participants (79%). The median score for information as a gratification obtained by OFWs in their access to new media was 4.

### Education

The increased frequency of access to new media during the pandemic brought opportunities for self-development among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. Fifty-six participants agreed and 50 individuals strongly agreed that the new media enabled them to gain new knowledge and acquire new skills. This group constituted 71% of the total surveyed population. The median score for education as a gratification was also 4.

## **Opportunities**

With the economic crisis from the disruptions caused by COVID-19, many individuals faced income challenges due to unemployment or salary reduction. Job uncertainty loomed for most people throughout the pandemic. Thus, many turned to the use of new media for business continuity or generation of income through online selling, blogging, tutorials, etc. Interestingly, 59 individuals felt neutral about new media affecting their income. 33 to 34 individuals (23%) agreed that the use of new media facilitated income opportunities. This statement regarding new media's impact on generating or sustaining income had a median score of 3.

## **Relationship**

Despite social distancing measures, new media allowed seamless communication between OFWs and their families and friends. Real-time updates about their families were possible during the pandemic. 74 OFWs (49%) strongly agreed, while 40 (27%) agreed, that the use of new media helped maintain relationships throughout the pandemic (median score of 4).

## **Entertainment**

67% found entertainment through increased access to new media during the pandemic. Whether streaming music or videos or engaging in other leisure activities online, new media provided relaxation amidst the challenging times (median score of 4).

From the above results, it is evident that Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who participated in the survey derived significant gratification from engaging with new media platforms during the pandemic. These gratifications encompassed a wide spectrum of benefits from obtaining vital information, achieving education, seizing opportunities, sustaining relationships, and engaging with entertaining content from

new media. This aligned with the existing research of Vargo et al. (2020), which explored the impact of digital technology during the pandemic. Their review included studies that discussed various effects of technology ranging from enhancing education, facilitating economic opportunities, and mitigating the impact of the disease outbreak. This substantial body of literature underscores the pivotal role of new media in alleviating the adverse effects of such a crisis.

The findings of the survey corroborated the conclusions drawn from various studies that employed the Uses and Gratification approach in understanding the effects of new media based on the purposes that it served. Specifically, the survey results confirmed that the utilization of new media during the COVID-19 pandemic satisfied the needs for social connection, information, entertainment, and relaxation.

For instance, Choi and Choung (2021), emphasized the role of new media in fostering connectedness and maintaining relationships, while Lee et al. (2021) highlighted its importance in information seeking. Additionally, the survey revealed the utilization of virtual reality (VR) technology and social media for entertainment and social interaction purposes (Ball et al., 2021; Falgoust et al., 2022). Moreover, the survey findings also underscored the opportunities presented by new media for business continuity through remote work, and business creation through e-commerce (Belsie, 2023).

In the context of Singapore, the key activities observed include communication, information consumption, and leisure activities. The observations from the survey also aligned with the broader trend in Singapore, where a surge in access to social media and various websites was noted. At the same time, online financial transactions, content creation, and educational activities were found to increase during the pandemic (Basu, 2020; Singapore Infocom Media Authority, 2022; Visaria et al.,

2023). All these trends mirrored the gratifications obtained by OFWs, as revealed by the survey results.

In summary, the survey findings underscored the indispensable role played by new media in meeting the diverse needs of OFWs during the COVID-19 pandemic. By facilitating access to essential information, and educational resources, sustaining relationships, providing entertainment, and enabling economic opportunities, new media emerged as a crucial lifeline for OFWs in traversing the challenges posed by the pandemic.

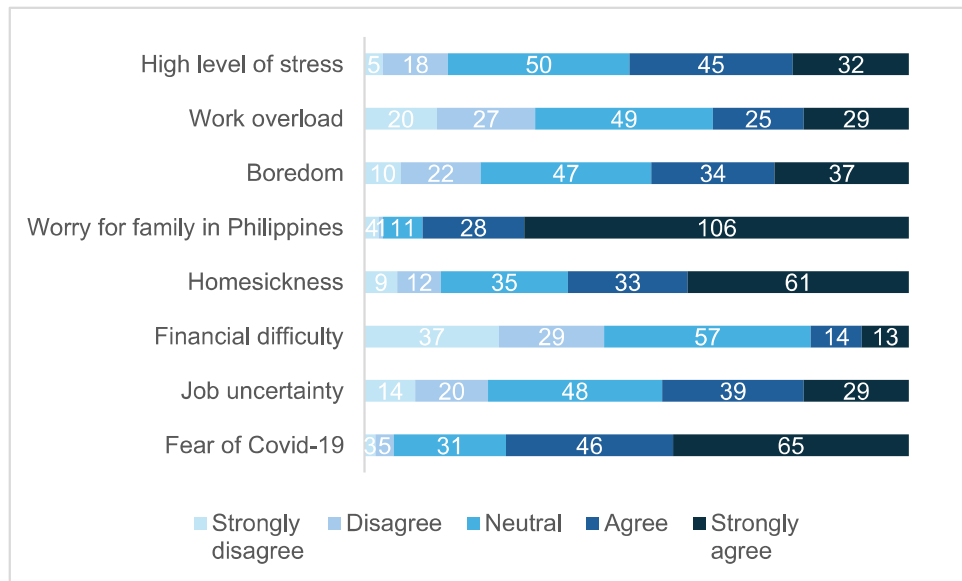
### **Challenges Addressed by New Media**

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore were asked about the difficulties that they encountered during the pandemic. Using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), they expressed their level of agreement with statements related to their situation, including concerns about contracting COVID-19, job uncertainty, financial difficulty, homesickness, worry for their families in the Philippines, boredom due to physical restriction and work overload. Additionally, respondents were asked about the overall stress that they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 6 presents the survey results from 150 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore, focusing on the challenges they encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. The subjective experiences of OFWs during the recent global crisis were quantified, shedding light on the common concerns and emotional responses of the survey participants related to the pandemic. The graph presents the actual count of

respondents who expressed a particular level of agreement, ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”, for a specific challenge.

**Figure 6.** Challenges faced by OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic (n =150).



The COVID-19 pandemic brought forth unprecedented challenges across various facets of society. Among the vulnerable groups that were most affected are the migrant workers including Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), as they faced unique challenges and uncertainties due to lack of social protection while being susceptible to job or income loss, health and safety concerns, and lack of support network being far away from their families (UN, 2020).

### Fear of COVID-19

Among 150 participants in the survey, about 74% (n=111) of the respondents felt fearful of getting infected by COVID-19, with 65 of them having strongly felt fearful of contracting the disease. Thirty-one had neutral feelings about COVID-19, and a total of eight OFWs were not fearful of COVID-19.

The high percentage of respondents who expressed agreement with this challenge suggested that fear of the virus significantly impacted OFWs. This was

further supported by the median score of 4, indicating a tendency toward agreement on the scale, and implying that most of the OFW respondents experienced this challenge. It was reported by Quadros et. al (2021) that the fear of getting infected by the coronavirus in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic was a concern because of the associated effects such as worries about families getting infected, economic loss, and health conditions amidst information on death rates related to Covid infection.

### **Job uncertainty**

The largest proportion of survey participants, 48 individuals (32%), reported feeling neutral regarding job uncertainty. Thirty-nine (26%) participants agreed that they experienced uncertainty regarding their employment status whereas 29 (19%) expressed deep concern about job security. In contrast, 34 OFWs (22%) indicated that they didn't worry about their employment in Singapore.

With several sectors of the economy brought to a standstill by the lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people were affected by businesses and companies shutting operations. Several news mentioned employees facing layoffs, reduced working hours, and job instability due to the economic downturn. In Singapore, employment dropped by 196,400 by the third quarter of 2021 (Tan, 2021). The substantial number of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with job uncertainty highlighted a common concern among the OFWs. However, the median score of 3 indicates a varied response pattern among OFWs about this challenge.

### **Financial difficulties**

The economic ramifications of the pandemic led to widespread unemployment globally, impacting individuals' incomes from job loss or salary reduction. This in turn, placed additional pressure on the part of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to provide financial support by sending remittances to their family members affected by the

economic crisis in the Philippines (Magdaraog, 2024). Reduced income, remittance challenges, and increased expenses would likely contribute to this concern.

Conversely, the results from the data gathered presented in Figure 6 reveal that only a small portion (9%, n=13) of OFWs who participated in the survey reported experiencing severe financial hardship. Another 14 individuals (9%) indicated that they suffered from financial difficulty, although to a lesser extent. A relatively large proportion (38%) felt neutral about experiencing financial difficulty during the pandemic. The remaining survey participants did not encounter income-related problems. The median score of 3 highlights a varying perception of the OFWs' experience of financial difficulty. This information implied that while some OFWs faced financial difficulties, more OFWs have managed well throughout the pandemic. Some respondents may have had financial safety nets, while others struggled due to specific situations surrounding their circumstances, such as remittance challenges, personal savings, and employment conditions.

### **Homesickness**

More than half of the survey participants (63%) indicated that they felt homesick during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, sixty-one OFWs (41%) reported that they experienced extreme levels of homesickness. Thirty-five individuals (23%) expressed neutral sentiments about being homesick while a total of twenty-one (14%) stated that did not yearn for home.

With a median score of 4, the emotional toll of being away from family and home was evident among most of the OFW respondents. Homesickness was one of the significant stressors among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). The lockdowns implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, referred to locally in Singapore as a “circuit breaker” exacerbated feelings of longing for home due to prolonged separation

periods from families in the Philippines. For some respondents who were unaffected by homesickness, it is plausible that these OFWs stay with their families in Singapore, as the government allows dependents of foreign workers to legally reside in the country as long as they fulfill the eligibility criteria.

### **Worry for family in the Philippines**

Being away from loved ones is a setback for Overseas Filipino Workers. The pandemic intensified the uncertainties surrounding health, the economy, and the overall negative outlook for the future due to the negative impacts of COVID-19.

It is understandable that most of the survey participants, 134 OFWs (90%) experienced concern for their families in the Philippines. The median score of 5 indicates heightened anxiety about their family members' safety, health, and well-being back home.

### **Boredom**

From the survey, nearly half of the respondents, seventy-one (48%), conveyed experiencing boredom throughout the pandemic, 47 individuals (31%) reported feeling neutral while 32 individuals (22%) were not bothered by the situation.

The implementation of social distancing measures intended to curb COVID-19 infection led to physical restrictions and reduced mobility throughout the pandemic. This situation resulted in feelings of boredom among individuals confined to their homes or workplaces, with limited opportunities for social interaction or physical recreation. For Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), these also meant the inability to interact with friends and social networks which are vital sources of support particularly when separated from their families.

With a median score of 3, there was a varying response in this specific challenge, meaning that though some experienced being bored, the result also suggests that some OFWs found ways to cope with isolation.

### **Work overload**

Those who retained their employment during the pandemic were associated with the essential industries. The shortage of manpower caused by travel restrictions and COVID-19 infections, and the transition to remote work by employers in the domestic setting, resulted in numerous employees having to extend their work hours and responsibilities. Thus, work overload emerged as a work condition challenge that was highlighted during the pandemic (Magdaraog et. al, 2024).

Interestingly, the median score for this specific challenge is 3, reflecting a varied perception of the issues of work overload. 29 OFWs (19%) reported a high degree of work overload whereas an additional 25 individuals (17%) expressed that they faced work overload issues in their employment to some degree. Forty-nine (49) respondents, representing 33% of participants felt neutral about working overload. Forty-seven (31%) indicated that they did not encounter work overload during the pandemic.

### **Overall stress during the pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique set of challenges, particularly for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). The OFW respondents in Singapore were asked about whether they experienced an elevated of stress during the pandemic. From the information gathered during the survey, 32 OFWs (21%) expressed their strong agreement about suffering from significant stress during the pandemic while 40 individuals (30%) reported experiencing stress although not to an intense degree. Fifty

(33%) OFWs maintained a neutral stance regarding the stress brought about by the pandemic. Additionally, a total of 23 respondents (15%) indicated that they did not experience significant stress due to the pandemic.

The median score of 4 implied that a high proportion of respondents experienced a high level of stress, which underscored the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of OFWs in Singapore. Isolation, uncertainty, and health concerns likely contributed to the elevated stress levels of most OFWs.

### **The most significant challenges faced by OFWs in Singapore**

Based on the median values of the various stressors mentioned above, it appeared that worry for the OFW's family in the Philippines, with a median score of 5, stands out as the most significant challenge encountered by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. Following closely in importance, were fear of COVID-19 and homesickness, both with median scores of 4. Interestingly, most of the OFWs in Singapore who answered the questionnaire had varied perceptions regarding job uncertainty, financial difficulties, boredom, and work overload. Furthermore, the results highlighted that most OFWs who responded to the survey experienced high stress (median score = 4) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The relationship between the different challenges with the stress level that the respondent OFWs in Singapore reported can be examined by determining the Spearman correlation coefficient and p-values.

The correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.14 indicated a positive association between fear of COVID-19 and the high stress level. However, the p-value (0.090) suggested that this correlation was not statistically significant at 0.05 level. In contrast to the

agreement score given by the OFWs during the survey, fear of COVID-19 may not strongly impact their stress level.

The strong positive correlation between homesickness ( $\rho = 0.44$ ), worry for family ( $\rho = 0.38$ ), boredom ( $\rho = 0.34$ ), and work overload ( $\rho = 0.47$ ) with the stress level implies that when the OFWs felt strongly about these challenges, their level of stress increased. The very low p-value ( $p < 0.001$ ) indicated a high statistical significance in the relationship between these stressors and the stress level of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore during the pandemic.

**Table 6.** Correlation of various challenges with the stress level felt by OFWs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHALLENGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	Median score	Spearman Coeff ( $\rho$ )	p-value
Fear of Covid-19	4	0.14	0.09
Job uncertainty	3	0.25	0.002**
Financial difficulty	3	0.10	0.21
Homesickness	4	0.44	<0.001**
Worry for family in the Philippines	5	0.38	<0.001**
Boredom	3	0.34	<0.001**
Work overload	3	0.47	<0.001**
High level of stress	4	n.a.	n.a.

\*\*significant at 0.01

The findings on the challenges encountered by OFWs in Singapore were related to the outcome of the study by Cleofas *et al.* (2021) in the case of OFW families in times of COVID-19 pandemic, where it was revealed that heightened anxiety throughout the pandemic was felt due to the prolonged separation among family members and the associated health and work-related uncertainties. According to de Borja (2021), the global economic crisis triggered by the widespread COVID-19 infection underscored the persistent issues of labor migration, wherein OFWs were

abruptly confronted with employment uncertainties, adding on to their emotional burden within their already precarious circumstances.

Moreover, this study supported prior research concerning the primary life challenges that OFWs face regarding separation from family, finances, and work-environment problems (Bautista and Tamayo, 2020; Jalagat and Dalluay, 2016). Furthermore, the unique challenges that were already experienced by migrant workers in Singapore, including OFWs, particularly migration-related issues such as homesickness even after years of residing in Singapore (Zainal and Barlas, 2022), were aggravated by the effects of the pandemic as evidenced by this study's findings.

Like many regions around the globe, the COVID-19 mitigation measures in Singapore caused social and economic impacts such as disruptions to social activities, as well as finances (Daly, et al., 2021). As a vulnerable population during the pandemic, migrant workers in Singapore, including Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) intensely felt the impacts of these effects due to the absence of a robust social and inclusive protection system, (Esmaguél, 2020; Goh et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2023; Yi et al., 2021).

Overall, despite the challenges not being directly linked to media, the positive correlations observed between these challenges and heightened stress experienced by OFWs during the pandemic likely encouraged individuals to turn to new media as a means of alleviating the difficulties posed by these stressors.

### **Overall effect of new media**

Finally, the OFW respondents were asked about the overall effect of the utilization of new media during the pandemic. 75% or a total of 113 Overseas Filipino

Workers (OFWs) agreed that access to new media facilitated coping with pandemic challenges. Only a small percentage disagreed, highlighting the positive effect of new media.

Table 7 describes the association between the increased frequency of access to new media, the corresponding gratifications derived from it, and the overall impact of new media access among OFWs in Singapore. This was achieved by determining Spearman's coefficient ( $\rho$ ) and its associated p-value. The increased adoption of media technology during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated a highly statistically significant association with the positive impact of new media access among OFWs in Singapore ( $\rho = 0.69$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 7.** *Correlation between the frequency of access and gratifications obtained with the overall positive effect of new media.*

GRATIFICATIONS OBTAINED	Median score	Spearman Coeff ( $\rho$ )	p-value
Higher frequency of access	4	0.69	<0.001**
Information	4	0.72	<0.001**
Education	4	0.69	<0.001**
Opportunities	3	0.45	<0.001**
Relationship	4	0.72	<0.001**
Relaxation	4	0.73	<0.001**
Overall positive effect of new media	4	n.a.	n.a.

*\*\*significant at 0.01*

Across all categories of gratifications from new media, there were positive correlations indicated by a substantial Spearman's coefficient ranging from 0.43 to 0.72. It was noteworthy that all correlations were statistically significant, with  $p < 0.001$  for all categories. This suggested that there was an association between the increased frequency of new media usage with gratifications including information, education,

relationships, and relaxation. The Uses and Gratifications Theory acknowledges that individuals choose media based on their specific needs and motivations. The statistical significance validated this relationship.

While the impact varied across the different categories as individuals sought different types of media for distinct purposes, overall, the use of new media provided valuable benefits to OFWs in coping with the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Examining the utilization of new media among Overseas Filipino Workers in Singapore during the pandemic through the lens of the Uses and Gratifications Theory helped explain their media preferences and highlight the adaptive nature of media consumption in challenging times.

## **Chapter V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

In this study, the Uses and Gratifications Theory shed light on how OFWs actively engaged with new media to satisfy their diverse needs during the pandemic, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between social factors, audience needs, and media consumption. Through an investigation of audience needs and media consumption behaviors, this study elucidated the role of new media in meeting the diverse needs of OFWs, spanning from information-seeking to emotional support, and social connection.

Specifically, it answered the following research questions:

1. What specific needs did OFWs in Singapore seek to fulfill through their use of new media during the pandemic?
2. Which new media platforms were most preferred by OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How did the frequency of access to various new media platforms change before and during the pandemic?
4. How did the gratifications obtained from using new media relate to the overall perception of its effects among OFWs in Singapore?
5. How were the different pandemic-related challenges associated with the stress level of OFWs in Singapore during the pandemic?

The study accomplished the following objectives.

1. Categorized the motivations for accessing new media by OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Determined the most preferred new media platforms among OFWs.
3. Compared the frequency of access to various new media platforms by OFWs in Singapore before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Examined the correlation between the gratifications obtained from utilizing new media and the overall perception of its effect among OFWs in Singapore.
5. Investigated the association between different pandemic-related challenges that were addressed by new media and the stress levels of OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study employed descriptive research by administering a survey questionnaire conducted through convenience sampling around Singapore from March 1 to March 31, 2024. There were 150 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who participated in the survey. The questionnaire was divided into different sections describing the profile of the respondents, the challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic, the purposes for using new media, the utilization pattern on new media and the effects following the utilization of new media during the pandemic.

### **Profile of the respondents**

There were 150 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who participated in the survey, with the age range from 25 years old and above. Most of them were within the age bracket of 36 to 45 years old. There were more females (90) that participated in the survey. They came from various industries in Singapore and many of them are from domestic service, manufacturing and logistics, information, and technology, as

well as science and engineering sectors. Many of the respondents have been working in Singapore for 4 to 15 years.

### **Purposes for the utilization of new media**

Communication was the most typical motivation for OFWs in accessing new media. The various purposes were categorized according to the gratifications for the use of new media: cognitive (seeking information and maintaining health); affective (maintaining health, commerce, and passing time), integrative (training and development, income generating, remittance), social connection (communication and community engagement) and escape (passing time and seeking escape/relaxation). It was found that the need for social connection was the most important gratification sought by OFWs in their utilization of new media.

### **Types of new media used during COVID-19 pandemic**

The most preferred new media applications accessed by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore were websites for information and health-related content; social media networks for self-development, community engagement, passing time and escape; shopping platforms for e-commerce; conferencing platforms for income opportunities and personal messaging applications for communication and family support.

### **Utilization pattern for new media**

Results of the survey revealed that there was a surge in the frequency of use of different new media applications throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test showed a statistically significant difference between the frequency

of access to various new media platforms before and during the pandemic, except for social media, online remittance, and mobile gaming. There may be a relatively higher use of social media and online remittance among OFWs in Singapore even before the pandemic. There was a significant increase in the utilization of online news, learning platforms, and video and music streaming. The most significant increase in access to new media among OFWs in Singapore was found to be in telemedicine, video conferencing, community engagement, and online shopping.

### **Effects of the use of new media during the COVID-19 pandemic**

There was a higher frequency of access to new media among OFWs in Singapore which resulted in fulfillments in terms of obtaining information, achieving education, seizing opportunities, sustaining relationships, and experiencing relaxation during the COVID-19 pandemic. These gratifications obtained from the use of new media significantly resulted in high satisfaction with new media in addressing the challenges of the pandemic. This was validated by the determined Spearman's correlation coefficients that are statistically significant at 0.01 level.

### **Challenges addressed by the new media**

The challenges faced by OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic included fear of COVID-19, job uncertainty, homesickness, boredom, work overload, and most significantly, worry for their families in the Philippines. All these contributed to the high level of stress among OFWs. Moreover, the established Spearman's correlation coefficients revealed the statistical significance of the contribution of job uncertainty, homesickness, worry about family, boredom, and work overload to the stress level of OFWs during the pandemic.

The increased frequency of access to different types of new media applications such as websites, personal messaging applications, social media, conferencing, and shopping platforms enabled them to address these challenges. The association of this higher frequency of access to new media during the pandemic has statistical significance according to Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho = 0.69$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

The utilization of new media provided crucial information, facilitated communication to maintain relationships and social connections, and served as avenues for learning, seizing income opportunities, and relaxation.

### **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. In navigating these difficulties, OFWs turned to new media platforms.

Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study investigated the media consumption patterns of OFWs and provided insights into how new media helped them navigate the unique challenges posed by the pandemic.

Specifically, the various purposes of media usage were categorized into cognitive (information-seeking), affective (maintaining health and relaxation), integrative (seizing opportunities), social connection (communication), and escape (relief from stress). Moreover, websites were primarily used for information-seeking, personal messaging applications for maintaining relationships, social media for entertainment, conferencing platforms for integrative purposes, and shopping platforms for practical needs. The pandemic led to increased access across different new media applications including online news, learning platforms, video and music

streaming, telemedicine, video conferencing, community engagement, and online shopping. The increased frequency of access to new media led Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore to obtain information, education, opportunities, relationships, and relaxation during the pandemic. These media gratifications significantly contributed to the positive perception of new media's effects in overcoming pandemic-related challenges.

This study identified numerous challenges that OFWs in Singapore encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included fear of COVID-19, homesickness, boredom, job uncertainty, and work overload, but worry for their families in the Philippines was the main challenge for them. These difficulties necessitated adaptive strategies among OFWs where they used new media for communication, information-seeking, and emotional well-being. Consequently, the utilization of new media proved effective in addressing the pandemic-related challenges they encountered.

Furthermore, the study found that the intentional use of new media had a substantial impact on the welfare of OFWs. By actively selecting media that met their specific needs, OFWs were able to manage stress during uncertain times. This highlighted their resilience and adaptability in leveraging new media as a coping mechanism.

In summary, the study demonstrated how the principles of the Uses and Gratifications Theory were reflected in the new media consumption patterns among OFWs in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic. By strategically using new media to fulfill their needs and seek gratification, OFWs effectively managed to overcome the pandemic's challenges. Their purposeful media preferences underscored the vital role of new media in enhancing their well-being during these unprecedented times.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

Like many migrants worldwide, OFWs in Singapore faced a unique stressor during the COVID-19 pandemic, which stemmed from the separation from family and uncertainty about their future. This study underscores the importance of communication for OFWs and highlights the crucial role of communication technologies in mediating social connection among OFWs, to stay connected with their families and communities.

The types of new media applications utilized by OFWs mirror global trends in digital communication among the migrant population, illustrating the universality of digital communication tools in addressing the needs for information, maintaining social connections, and seeking social support. The increase in the utilization of telemedicine, online learning, and e-commerce platforms among OFWs reflects a broader trend of online activities. This suggests that access to many other digital services can be particularly beneficial for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. Lastly, the positive effects of new media that were reported from this study emphasize the role of new media in mitigating the challenges faced by OFWs and the broader migrant population, providing avenues for support, empowerment, and well-being.

Development Communication research can further shed light on the role of communication technologies in addressing the challenges faced by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). By recognizing the communication needs and preferences of OFWs in designing effective communication, strategies for harnessing media technologies can be developed to facilitate social support and enhance the welfare of OFWs.

Finally, understanding the mechanisms through which new media influence well-being will enable innovative approaches for leveraging digital communication

tools to address the unique needs and challenges of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) around the globe.

### **Recommendations for further studies**

A qualitative research approach is recommended to supplement the quantitative data from this study. Interviews or focus groups could provide deeper insights into OFWs' experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding new media usage, as well as uncover contextual information not captured through surveys, such as the effects of new media on misinformation, polarization, privacy issues, and mental health concerns.

Comparative studies involving specific OFW groups in Singapore or other countries would enrich the understanding of their coping strategies and resilience, particularly in using new media and other digital communication tools. A follow-up study on post-pandemic new media usage could reveal emerging trends and patterns, offering valuable perspectives on communication beyond crisis coping strategies.

Further research using the Uses and Gratifications framework to explore new media effects, focusing on convenience and utility, would enhance the understanding of OFWs' consumption patterns and enrich knowledge in this area.

Finally, it will also be valuable to explore the policy implications for the utilization and access of new media among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. Such analysis could inform the creation of policies and initiatives, as well as the development of strategies aimed at addressing digital inclusion barriers to ensure equitable access to technology. This would help promote access to essential digital services and enhance digital literacy among OFWs and empower them to navigate online platforms effectively in their host or destination countries.

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## **Appendices**

## APPENDIX A

### Survey Questionnaire on Google Form

Section 1 of 8

# The Use of New Media by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore During the Covid-19 Pandemic

**B** *I* U ↺ ↻

This survey aims to **determine the purpose and effects of the use of new media** among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) in Singapore in coping with the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**New media** refers to forms of communication that involves digital technology. It is characterized by the use of the internet to access digital platforms such as websites, mobile applications, social media networks, e-commerce, blogs, podcasts, online forum, and audio/video streaming platforms.

#### NOTE:

- 1) This survey is intended for **OFWs or Filipino citizens who are legally working** in Singapore, i.e. those holding a valid work pass/permit, including Permanent Residents.
- 2) Respondents must have been working or residing in Singapore at least **for the last four years or during the pandemic.**
- 3) Kindly **answer all items** in this questionnaire.
- 4) All information that will be gathered from this survey will be used for **academic research.**
- 5) **Anonymity** shall be strictly maintained. **Personal data will not be collected.**

**Thank you for your support.**

## Profile of the Respondent



This section provides the demographic information of the respondents.

What is your age? \*

- 25 to 35 years old
- 36 to 45 years old
- 46 to 55 years old
- Above 55 years old

What is your gender? \*

- Male
- Female

What type of visa do you possess in order to work in Singapore? \*

- E or S Pass, Entrepass, PEP, ONEP
- Letter of Consent
- Work Permit
- I'm a Permanent Resident

What is your field of work? \*

- Business and Finance
- Domestic Worker
- Education
- Health and medical service
- Information Technology
- Legal practitioner
- Manufacturing and Logistics
- Science and Technology
- Services (Admin, HR, Hospitality - Entertainment, F&B, Tourism)
- Other...

How long have you been working in Singapore? \*

- 4 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- More than 15 years

### OFWs in Singapore During the Covid-19 Pandemic



This section describes the challenges that OFWs encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate your agreement with the statement regarding the associated challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rate:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neutral

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

I felt fearful about contracting Covid-19. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I had anxiety over job uncertainty. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I had financial difficulties due to the loss/lack of job during the pandemic. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I was homesick because I couldn't go back to Philippines. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I worried about my family in the Philippines. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I was bored due to physical restriction and lack of mobility. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I had work overload during the pandemic. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I experienced significant stress amid the Covid-19 pandemic. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

### Purpose of Using New Media During the Covid-19 Pandemic



This section describes the purpose of using new media among OFWs in Singapore during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate your agreement with the statement regarding the purpose for accessing new media during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rate:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = neutral
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic to seek information regarding Covid-19 and the evolving pandemic situation. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic to seek medical help. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 for education and skills training to develop competencies in pursuing opportunities. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic for work or as a source of income. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic to remit money to my family in the Philippines. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic to communicate with family and friends. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic to participate in religious/civic/professional activities. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic to pass time due to boredom. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic to seek escape from stress. \*

1      2      3      4      5

Strongly disagree                        Strongly agree

I accessed new media during the Covid-19 pandemic for shopping. \*

1      2      3      4      5

Strongly disagree                        Strongly agree

Section 5 of 8

### The Use of New Media Before the Pandemic



Before the pandemic, which type of new media did you access? How often did you access it?

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the frequency with which you accessed the specific new media before the pandemic.

Rate:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Seldom
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Always
- 5 = All the time

How often did you access news websites before the pandemic? \*

1      2      3      4      5

Never                        All the time

How often did you access news websites before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you access telemedicine (ex. WhiteCoat, DoctorsAnywhere, etc.) before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you access learning platforms (ex. Coursera, Moodle, LinkedIn Learning etc.) before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you access conferencing platforms for work/professional activities (ex. Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.) before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you access conferencing platforms for personal communication or community engagement (ex. Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.) before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you access e-remittance/digital banking before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you access social media and personal messaging platforms before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you access websites/platforms to participate in community activities (ex. church, civic group, professional, hobbies etc.) before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you play mobile games before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you stream video/movies/music before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

How often did you shop online before the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

Section 6 of 8

The Use of New Media During the Pandemic



During the pandemic, which type of new media did you access more frequently?

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the frequency with which you accessed the specific new media during the pandemic.

Rate:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Seldom
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Always
- 5 = All the time

Did you access news websites more frequently during the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

Did you access telemedicine (ex. WhiteCoat, DoctorsAnywhere, etc.) more frequently during the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

Did you access learning platforms (ex. Coursera, Moodle, LinkedIn Learning etc.) more frequently during the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

Did you access conferencing platforms for work/professional activities (ex. Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.) more frequently during the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

Did you access conferencing platforms for personal communication or community engagement (ex. Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.) more frequently during the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

Did you access e-remit/digital banking more frequently during the pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

Did you access social media and personal messaging platforms more frequently during the Covid-19 pandemic? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All the time

Did you access websites/platforms to participate in community activities (ex. church, civic group, professional, hobbies etc.) more frequently during the pandemic? \*

Never      1      2      3      4      5      All the time

Did you play mobile games more frequently during the pandemic? \*

Never      1      2      3      4      5      All the time

Did you stream video/movies/music more frequently during the pandemic? \*

Never      1      2      3      4      5      All the time

Did you shop online more frequently during the pandemic? \*

Never      1      2      3      4      5      All the time

### Type of New Media Used During the Pandemic



This section describes the main type of new media that was accessed in order to fulfill a specific need.

Please select the type of new media that you accessed for the following purposes.

#### Seek information about Covid-19 situation \*

- Websites (ex. government, news)
- Social media network
- Personal messaging app
- Other...

#### Maintain health \*

- Websites (ex. medical, blogs)
- Social media network
- Telemedicine platform
- Other...

#### Personal and career development \*

- Websites (ex. e-books, blogs)
- Social media network (ex. YouTube, Facebook)
- Learning platforms (ex. Coursera, Moodle, etc.)
- Other...

Communication to maintain family/relationship \*

- Social media network (ex. Facebook, X, Instagram)
- Personal messaging app (ex. Whatsapp, Messenger, Viber)
- Conferencing platform (ex. Zoom, Google Meet)
- Other...

Support for family \*

- Social media network (ex. Facebook, X, Instagram)
- Personal messaging app (ex. Whatsapp, Messenger, Viber)
- Websites (ex. e-remit)
- Other...



Community engagement/participation \*

- Social media network (ex. Facebook, X)
- Personal messaging app (ex. Whatsapp, Messenger, Viber)
- Websites (ex. online mass/church services, forum)
- Other...

Work/generate income \*

- Social media network (ex. Facebook)
- Conferencing platform (ex. Zoom, Teams, Google Meet)
- Websites (ex. work-related, blog)
- Other...

Entertainment/recreation \*

- Social media network
- Video/music streaming platforms
- Gaming applications
- Other...

Pass time/escape from boredom \*

- Social media network
- Video/music streaming platforms
- Gaming applications
- Other...

Shopping \*

- Social media network (ex. Facebook)
- Websites (ex. merchandise/online store)
- Shopping platform (ex. Lazada, Shopee, Zalora)
- Other...

### Effects of New Media Usage



This section describes the effects of the use of new media among OFWs in Singapore during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate your agreement with the statement regarding the effects of accessing new media during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rate:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neutral

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

In general, accessing new media during the pandemic occurred more frequently compared to pre-pandemic times. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Did the increased use of new media during the Covid-19 pandemic provide information that kept you updated on the situation? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Did the increased use of new media during the Covid-19 pandemic provide learning for developing new knowledge and skills? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Did the increased use of new media during the Covid-19 pandemic provide opportunities to sustain or generate income? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Did the increased use of new media during the Covid-19 pandemic help maintain connection and relationship with family and friends? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Did the increased use of new media during the Covid-19 pandemic provide entertainment for relaxation? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Accessing new media during the pandemic had positive effects such that it helped in coping with the challenges and difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree