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EDUCATIONAL FILTERING, LABOR MARKET CHANNELING, AND ONWARD MIGRATION AMONG SECOND-GENERATION FILIPINOS IN ATHENS

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Abstract:
This study examines the educational trajectories, labor-market transitions, and mobility horizons of second-generation Filipinos in Athens. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative design, it draws on semi-structured interviews and small focus-group discussions conducted in community settings. Data were collected between September 2023 and June 2025 through snowball sampling and comprise 80 interviews in Greek and English, with focus-group participants included within this total sample. The analysis shows that mobility constraints are produced through the intersection of institutional filtering across education and citizenship-related access, labor-market channeling, and a family moral economy structured around a "*debt of sacrifice*" that narrows what counts as acceptable risk. The findings indicate that educational pathways and transitions into work are shaped by bureaucratic barriers, documentation-related uncertainty, and enduring stereotypes, despite participants' linguistic fluency and educational investment. Family obligations and community-based norms further shape how participants assess acceptable educational and occupational choices. Onward migration emerges as a salient mobility horizon, associated with protracted citizenship-related procedures, bounded opportunity structures, and uncertainty about long-term settlement in Greece.

Keywords: second-generation Filipinos, Athens, educational filtering, labor-market channeling, onward migration, mobility constraints, Greece

1. Introduction

Migration from the Philippines is widely recognized as a paradigmatic case of contemporary international mobility, often operating as a "*culture of migration*" in which

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overseas work is understood as a family strategy linked to survival, intergenerational mobility, and personal advancement (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Parreñas, 2015; Roces, 2021). Scholarship has examined first-generation labor trajectories and the gendered organization of care work within global care chains in considerable depth (Parreñas, 2001; Hochschild, 2015). Far less attention has been paid to the experiences of second-generation Filipinos in Southern European settings, where research on second-generation incorporation remains comparatively limited and Filipino-focused scholarship is still concentrated in a small number of national cases, including Italy (Portes *et al.*, 2011; Thomassen, 2010; Nagasaka, 2015; Moro & Russo, 2024). In Greece, incorporation is further shaped by protracted naturalization pathways and the institutional mediation of belonging (Gogonas & Tramountanis, 2023). Athens, therefore, offers an instructive site for examining how educational trajectories, transitions into work, and future mobility horizons are shaped within a context marked by bureaucratic uncertainty, unequal opportunity structures, and enduring social boundary-making (Maloutas *et al.*, 2019; Topali, 2024).

Contemporary Filipino migration has also been shaped by the institutionalization of overseas employment as a national strategy and by the long-term normalization of migration-related family obligation, in which household welfare is often organized across borders through remittances, care practices, and moral economies of sacrifice and reciprocity (Rodriguez, 2010; Parreñas, 2001). These conditions are important for understanding the second generation, not only because they form the intergenerational background against which educational and occupational aspirations are articulated, but also because they shape how risk, success, and obligation are interpreted within migrant families. In this context, mobility is not simply a matter of individual choice. It is embedded in institutional arrangements, family expectations, and unequal structures of recognition that shape access to education, work, and long-term settlement (Argyrakou, 2026).

This article addresses a gap in the literature on second-generation incorporation by focusing on second-generation Filipinos in Athens. It contributes empirically by documenting an under-researched Southern European case and analytically by showing how constrained mobility is produced through the intersection of institutional filtering across education and citizenship-related access, labor-market channeling, and a family moral economy structured around a "*debt of sacrifice*" that narrows what counts as acceptable risk. Institutional filtering refers to the ways in which educational pathways and citizenship-related eligibility shape access to credentials, tracks, and rights, thereby delimiting subsequent choices. Labor-market channeling refers to the patterned routing of job seekers into a limited set of occupations and sectors through employer expectations, informal recruitment, and the uneven convertibility of educational capital. A family moral economy structured around a "*debt of sacrifice*" captures how intergenerational narratives of migration sacrifice translate into obligations to avoid perceived failure, to prioritize immediate income and stability, and to treat certain forms of risk as illegitimate. Low collective visibility and weak organizational infrastructure

further reinforce these constraints by limiting the capacity to contest exclusion and leaving barriers to be managed primarily at the individual and household level. The argument advanced here is interpretive rather than deterministic and is grounded in recurrent narrative patterns across participants' accounts.

The article, therefore, examines how educational experiences and transitions into work are shaped by institutional barriers, documentation-related uncertainty, family obligations, community life, and broader processes of social recognition. Constrained mobility is understood as emerging at the intersection of these domains, where educational and occupational choices are negotiated under conditions of uncertainty and obligation, and where onward migration becomes a plausible horizon for securing improved opportunities and longer-term stability. In this way, the article moves beyond a descriptive account of an under-researched population by specifying the mechanisms through which educational and occupational constraints are reproduced in the Greek context.

The study is guided by the following research questions.

1) How do second-generation Filipinos in Athens describe their educational trajectories and transitions into work?
2) How do institutional arrangements and social inequalities in Greece shape educational opportunities, labor-market positioning, and perceived mobility constraints?
3) How do family obligations and community life shape decision-making, acceptable risk, and orientations toward onward migration across education and work?

The article first situates the study within relevant scholarship on second-generation incorporation, education, work, and migration-related family obligation, then outlines the qualitative design and analytic approach before presenting the findings and discussing their implications.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in scholarship on second-generation incorporation, educational inequality, labor-market segmentation, and migration-related family obligations in order to examine how second-generation Filipinos in Athens navigate schooling, work, and future mobility. The framework begins from the premise that educational and occupational trajectories are not formed through individual effort alone. They are shaped within a relational and institutional environment in which family expectations, school systems, labor-market structures, and broader processes of social recognition interact. Rather than treating identity as a standalone object of analysis, the study considers questions of belonging and social positioning insofar as they influence access to education, work, and long-term mobility.

A central premise of the framework is that second-generation experiences are embedded within the wider Philippine migration system and its long-standing institutionalization of overseas employment. Large-scale Filipino migration developed

under conditions of economic pressure, limited domestic opportunity, and state-supported labor export, while colonial and postcolonial formations helped shape an educational system and widespread English proficiency that later facilitated access to global labor markets (Tyner, 2002; Choy, 2003; Baldoz, 2011; Guevarra, 2006; Rodriguez, 2010; Tigno, 2000; Asis, 2020). These structural conditions matter for the present study because they normalize mobility as an intergenerational strategy and provide the broader background against which education, work, aspiration, and sacrifice are interpreted within migrant families.

Within this broader migration system, migration-related family arrangements are treated as a key social infrastructure. Migration from the Philippines has been closely associated with families whose lives are organized across borders through shared obligations, remittances, and long-term projects of collective welfare (Parreñas, 2001; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2020). These financial and moral arrangements often position education as a central site of intergenerational investment and anticipated upward mobility, while also attaching strong expectations to children's future occupational success (Adams & Page, 2005; Goce-Dakila & Dakila, 2009; Rodriguez, 2010). In this sense, family obligation is not simply a cultural background variable. It functions as a practical and moral framework through which acceptable educational choices, career paths, and future risks are evaluated.

The framework also draws on scholarship on second-generation incorporation to examine how schooling and labor-market entry are shaped by institutional arrangements rather than by aspiration alone. The concept of context of reception is especially important here because it directs attention to the institutional and societal conditions that structure opportunities and assign social meaning to minority groups (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In this study, these conditions are encountered through schooling, bureaucratic classification, language requirements, citizenship-related eligibility, labor-market segmentation, public stereotypes, and everyday interactions. In less supportive contexts, such processes may reproduce inequality and generate forms of constrained advancement despite educational effort and linguistic fluency (Ciminelli *et al.*, 2021; Fajth & Lessard-Phillips, 2023). This perspective is particularly relevant to the Greek case, where recent scholarship highlights contested belonging, citizenship-related uncertainty, and uneven incorporation in urban settings (Gogonas & Tramountanis, 2023; Michos & Xenitidou, 2025; Zisakou *et al.*, 2025).

Language is also significant within this framework, though not as an autonomous identity theme. Bilingual or multilingual repertoires can facilitate movement across school, work, and community settings, while also exposing individuals to judgments about competence, legitimacy, and belonging (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zentella, 1997; Li & García, 2022). In the present study, language matters because it mediates educational access, institutional navigation, and occupational positioning. It is therefore treated as part of the broader process through which recognition is unevenly distributed across schooling and work.

Intergenerational dynamics form another key element of the framework. For many migrant families, parental sacrifice becomes a moral language through which migration is justified, and children's futures are evaluated. Parents' difficult labor histories are often narrated as investments in the next generation, producing expectations of achievement, mobility, and reciprocity (Wolf, 1997; Parreñas, 2005). These expectations may function as both support and constraint, offering direction while also narrowing the range of legitimate risks that young people feel able to take (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Titzmann *et al.*, 2014). At the same time, first-generation reliance on community ties and informal infrastructures can shape how the second generation interprets obligation, autonomy, respectability, and adulthood, especially in relation to education and work (Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Levitt, 2009; Menjívar *et al.*, 2016).

Taken together, these theoretical resources function as sensitizing concepts for interpreting how second-generation Filipinos in Athens describe educational filtering, labor-market channeling, family obligation, community-based regulation, and orientations toward onward migration. The framework, therefore, supports an analysis centered on the production of constrained mobility through the interaction of institutional barriers, segmented labor-market incorporation, and intergenerational moral expectations, while treating belonging and recognition as part of the conditions under which these processes unfold rather than as separate thematic endpoints.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological epistemological orientation in order to understand how participants interpret and assign meaning to their lived experiences rather than to pursue statistical generalization (Bevan, 2014; Rathe, 2022). A qualitative research design was selected to examine educational trajectories, transitions into work, and perceived mobility among second-generation Filipinos in Athens. The researcher's positionality as an insider within the diasporic community facilitated access and culturally attuned interpretation, while also requiring sustained reflexivity to avoid taking shared norms for granted and to reduce the risk of naturalizing participants' accounts (Bucerius, 2013).

Data collection took place between September 2023 and June 2025 and consisted of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The study focused on young adults aged 18 to 35 who identified as members of the second generation and were either studying, employed, or both. Participants were either born in Greece or migrated from the Philippines during early childhood. For the purposes of this article, the term second generation is used in a broad operational sense, encompassing participants born in Greece as well as 1.5-generation early-arrival participants who migrated from the Philippines in early childhood and completed their formative schooling years in Greece. This operationalization is analytically appropriate because the study focuses on educational and occupational trajectories shaped primarily through early-life institutional and social experiences in Greece. To retain analytic transparency, birthplace

and early-arrival status were treated as descriptive attributes throughout the analysis. As a sensitivity check, the coded material for each major theme was revisited to examine whether the core patterns identified in the study were reproduced across both subgroups, with any divergences interpreted as differences in thematic salience and temporal framing rather than as distinct pathways.

Recruitment followed snowball sampling, beginning from the researcher's initial community networks and expanding through participant referrals, a strategy commonly used for populations that are socially networked and not easily captured through probability sampling (Naderifar *et al.*, 2017; Parker *et al.*, 2019). Although recruitment was network-based, the researcher actively sought variation relevant to the research questions as the study progressed in order to avoid restricting the sample to a single social cluster and to ensure coverage of diverse educational and work trajectories within the local community.

Participant characteristics were documented in de-identified form to enhance analytic transparency while safeguarding anonymity within a relatively small community. Gender was recorded for the full sample, comprising 52 women and 28 men. Age was available for 65 participants, with a median of 25 years, an interquartile range of 23 to 28, and an observed range of 18 to 35. Birthplace information was documented for all participants, indicating heterogeneity between those born in Greece and those born in the Philippines who migrated in early childhood. Most participants resided in Athens and the wider Attica region during the fieldwork period, while a small number were living abroad, reflecting patterns of onward mobility. Educational pathways and employment backgrounds were diverse, spanning public Greek schooling, Filipino community schooling, vocational training, and tertiary routes, alongside employment concentrated in hospitality and tourism, with additional representation in office-based, creative, and care-related sectors. Citizenship-related positioning also varied, including holders of Greek identification documents, participants with Filipino citizenship, and individuals reporting ongoing or unsuccessful attempts to secure Greek documentation. These status-related data are reported only in aggregate form for ethical reasons.

Interviews were conducted in Greek and English, with an average duration of 60 to 90 minutes. Fifty interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the remainder online via Zoom. In addition, four small focus group discussions were conducted face-to-face, lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes each. Across the four meetings, a total of 10 participants took part, with group sizes ranging from 3 to 5 participants. Focus group participants are included within the total sample of 80 interview participants, and the group discussions were used to support the exploration of how meanings are articulated, negotiated, and contested in a collective setting (Wilkinson, 1998; Caillaud & Flick, 2017). Most interviews and all small focus group discussions were audio recorded with participants' consent. In five interviews, participants declined recording, and detailed notes were taken instead. All participants were anonymized, and identifying information was removed from the transcripts.

Transcription and translation were completed by the researcher. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were checked for accuracy through repeated listening during transcription and subsequent review. Extracts originally produced in Greek were translated into English for reporting purposes, while many excerpts were already in English. Translation decisions prioritized semantic equivalence and the preservation of participants' intended meaning, with particular attention to culturally specific expressions that may not map directly across languages.

Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006), employed here as an interpretive analytic method consistent with the study's hermeneutic phenomenological orientation. The analysis approaches participants' accounts as situated interpretations of lived experience and as meaning-making in context rather than as reports of stable attitudes. Reflexive thematic analysis was selected because it supports the development of patterned meanings across cases while remaining compatible with a hermeneutic stance that recognizes the researcher's active role in interpretation. In this project, phenomenology does not operate as a search for a single universal essence. It operates as an analytic commitment to the lived and situated character of participants' narratives of education, work, and future mobility in Athens, including how they make sense of constraint, recognition, and possible futures within a specific context of reception.

This approach supported the identification of patterned meanings across accounts while remaining attentive to the lived and situated character of experience and to the researcher's interpretive role in theme development. Analysis combined inductive sensitivity to participants' language with theoretically informed attention to domains highlighted in the literature on second-generation incorporation. Four broad analytic axes structured the initial organization of the material: school and language, work and mobility, family obligation and intergenerational negotiation, and community relations and collective visibility. Analytic work proceeded iteratively through familiarization with the dataset, initial coding across interviews and focus group data, development of candidate themes and subthemes, review and refinement of thematic boundaries through constant comparison, and final definition and naming of themes in relation to the research questions. For each subtheme, sets of supporting extracts were compiled and repeatedly reviewed to assess internal coherence and to clarify distinctions between closely related categories. Exemplar quotations were selected as illustrative instances of each subtheme, without treating any single quotation as representative of all participants. After the themes were finalized, coded extracts were reorganized at the case level through iterative mapping and analytic memos to trace recurring narrative sequences across interviews, focusing on how educational filtering, labor-market channeling, family moral economy, and low collective visibility were linked by participants when explaining constrained mobility and future horizons. Boundary and divergent cases were examined as disconfirming evidence, including accounts that did not culminate in an exit-oriented horizon or that described upward mobility despite similar constraints. These cases were used to refine the analysis by specifying the conditions under which particular linkages

weakened, did not apply, or were reworked differently by participants. Interpretive consistency was supported by maintaining written working definitions for each theme, documenting decisions to split, merge, or re-scope categories in analytic memos, and returning to full transcripts to check that the central interpretive claims remained grounded across multiple cases and that counter-patterns were incorporated as explicit qualifications rather than treated as noise.

The adequacy of the dataset for the study's analytic aims was assessed through concurrent data collection and analysis, with attention to the extent to which subsequent interviews and group discussions continued to generate new thematic directions or instead predominantly elaborated, nuanced, or qualified patterns already identified. As the corpus expanded, new material increasingly contributed refinements, boundary cases, and contextual variation within established themes rather than additional overarching themes. This assessment is presented as an interpretive judgement aligned with the study's qualitative aims, and the analysis does not make claims about prevalence or statistical representativeness. Instead, the findings are advanced as interpretive accounts of patterned meanings and processes through which participants narrate educational pathways, work transitions, and mobility horizons in Athens.

To enhance trustworthiness, methodological triangulation across individual interviews and focus group discussions was used to examine both convergences and tensions in how participants described key experiences (Caillaud & Flick, 2017). An audit trail was maintained through analytic memos and documentation of coding decisions and theme development. Reflexive journaling supported ongoing awareness of how the researcher's insider position may have shaped interactions in the field and interpretive choices during analysis. The analysis also maintained systematic attention to divergent accounts, using them to sharpen thematic boundaries and interpretive claims rather than to present themes as uniform.

This study was conducted as part of the author's doctoral research at Harokopio University of Athens. Ethical procedures followed the Harokopio University Code of Ethics and Good Practice and relevant institutional provisions. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, and participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was ensured through pseudonymization and the removal of identifying details. Data were handled in line with the EU General Data Protection Regulation and applicable Greek data protection provisions.

4. Results

The analysis identified five interrelated themes through which participants described educational pathways, work transitions, family and community dynamics, and future mobility. Presented in sequence, these themes show how institutional filtering, labour-market channeling, family obligation, limited collective visibility, and onward migration are experienced as connected dimensions of constrained mobility in Athens.

4.1 Educational gatekeeping and diverted pathways

Educational trajectories among second-generation Filipinos in Athens reveal substantial heterogeneity, but also a patterned experience of institutional gatekeeping that shaped which forms of effort could be converted into recognized educational opportunities. Participants described early schooling as a field in which community continuity, perceived safety, linguistic preparation, and access to Greek institutional routes were continuously negotiated. Their accounts make clear that there was no single route through schooling. Rather, movement between Filipino, Greek, intercultural, British, American, and other private or faith-based schools was common. As one participant recalled, she was first in "*a Filipino school… until fourth grade*", then moved to an intercultural school, and later completed secondary education in a Greek school. Another described a similar sequence more succinctly: "*kindergarten until second grade, I was in a Filipino school… after that, from third grade until high school, I was in a Greek school*". These trajectories show that school choice was often a cumulative family strategy rather than a one-time decision.

Attendance at the Philippine School in Greece, a school in Athens established to serve the educational needs of the Filipino community and operating within the Philippine curriculum framework, was frequently narrated as an everyday bridge to Filipino community life and as a way of preserving cultural continuity. Participants associated it with English-language instruction, Filipino peers, and exposure to Filipino culture, values, and history. One participant explained that being in a Filipino school meant that "*we didn't lose the culture of the Philippines, basically, because I was with many Filipinos*". At the same time, parents' decisions were not driven only by cultural preference. In several accounts, enrollment in English-speaking, Christian, or private schools was described as a protective strategy against anticipated hostility or exclusion in Greek public schooling. One participant recalled that her mother explicitly refused a local school because she "*didn't want to put [her] in that environment*", while her mother's employer offered to pay for a different school placement. In this sense, school choice emerged as a form of anticipatory risk management within a context where recognition and safety were perceived as unevenly distributed.

Within Greek public schooling, participants described experiences of racialization that shaped peer relations and the institutional texture of learning. These were not narrated as isolated incidents, but as recurring forms of social classification that affected how they were seen and positioned. One participant stated plainly, "*They were calling me Chinese… because of my eyes and stuff like that*". Another recalled that in primary school she was "*the new one, the strange one, the colored one*", while another described a teacher entering class and joking, "*I don't want to hear next time that the Filipina took your markers*". Such accounts are analytically important not simply because they document discrimination, but because they show how racialized ascription could heighten the appeal of "*safer*" educational environments and reinforce family decisions to prioritize schools perceived as more protective, more familiar, or more institutionally manageable.

Post-compulsory transitions were narrated as the point at which institutional constraints became more explicit. Participants described being steered toward vocational institutes, private colleges, or alternative routes that felt more feasible than the public university pathway. Greek-language proficiency emerged repeatedly as a practical requirement and deterrent. One participant, despite long-term schooling in Greece, remarked, "*I've been to Greek school from elementary until senior high, but the Greek language is still not my tongue language… so imagine me writing Panhellinies*". Others emphasized that difficulty was anticipated long before any formal failure, especially when academic writing, Ancient Greek, or theoretical subjects became central. Eligibility for the Panhellenic examinations, Greece's national competitive entrance examinations for admission to public universities, also figured as a decisive institutional gate. Participants who had followed the Filipino curriculum described a sense of bureaucratic impasse, especially when their school histories were only partially recognized by Greek authorities. They also referred to B2-level Greek-language certification as one possible route for accessing public higher education. As one participant explained, "*From the Filipino school, we don't have the right to do the Panhellenes… if we apply for B2 Greek, then maybe there's a possibility we can apply for the public universities here*". Under such conditions, vocational and private routes were not framed merely as second-best solutions. They were often narrated as pragmatic recalibrations toward pathways that seemed administratively and linguistically more attainable.

Participants also described educational filtering as deeply entangled with documentation, rights, and citizenship-related uncertainty. Schooling was not experienced as a separate domain from legal recognition, but as one of the arenas in which future papers, eligibility, and institutional belonging were negotiated. One participant captured this ambivalence with unusual clarity when reflecting on her years in the Filipino school: "*Sometimes I regret it… because I couldn't fix my papers now. On the other hand, I don't regret it because somehow this community brought me closer to the Filipino community*". Another participant similarly linked school type directly to naturalization prospects, explaining that if she had remained in a Filipino school, it would have been "*much more difficult*" to secure Greek citizenship. These accounts show that educational decision-making was inseparable from a broader calculus of recognition, in which language, certification, school type, and documentation were experienced as interlocking conditions of opportunity.

Taken together, the accounts suggest that educational heterogeneity was not random, but patterned by language, perceived exam eligibility, documentation-related constraints, and family strategies of protection and risk management. What participants describe is not simply diversity of schooling routes, but a stratified field in which some trajectories were more easily converted into recognized educational futures than others. Educational choices, therefore, operated as a foundational stage in the cumulative production of constraint, shaping how later transitions into work were approached, which sectors appeared realistically accessible, and why mobility aspirations were often narrated as recalibration rather than linear advancement within the Greek context.

4.2 Labor-market channeling and constrained mobility

Occupational trajectories among second-generation Filipinos in Athens were described as diverse in form, yet patterned in the mechanisms through which work became accessible, intelligible, and difficult to leave behind. Participants reported employment across hospitality and tourism, retail, customer service, office-based work, creative industries, and small-scale entrepreneurship. What emerges from these accounts is not a simple story of free occupational choice, but a more uneven process in which certain sectors appear easier to enter, easier to sustain in the short term, and harder to convert into broader upward mobility. In that sense, labor-market channeling operated through the combined effects of sectoral demand, social networks, language capital, and unequal recognition of qualifications and long-term potential. Participants' narratives show that occupational sorting was frequently experienced as a practical adjustment to what could realistically be secured in the Greek labor market rather than as the direct expression of personal preference alone.

A particularly salient pattern involved the conversion of English proficiency into an asset that simultaneously widened access and narrowed occupational horizons. Participants repeatedly suggested that English-speaking Filipinos were especially sought after in customer-facing sectors. One participant stated that employers were "*always looking for English-speaking Filipinos"*, especially younger workers who "*don't have an accent*" and "*speak English very well*". Another participant linked this perception directly to educational and occupational choice, explaining, "*I studied hotel restaurant management… because it's the easiest for Filipinos. In terms of speaking full English*". These accounts suggest that linguistic capital did open doors, but mainly within a recognizable niche. English did not function as a universally transferable advantage. Rather, it was converted into employability most readily in tourism, hospitality, reception, and service work, where Filipinos were already seen as suitable, familiar, or desirable workers. The consequence was that language could facilitate labor-market entry while also stabilizing a narrower range of expected trajectories.

Hospitality and service work appeared in the material not simply as common jobs, but as a labor market segment that many participants could access quickly, often through friends, prior community knowledge, or the broader visibility of the sector in Greece. One participant recalled that after school, she "*just happened*" to begin in catering and then stayed in that field. Another described tourism as something people often entered "*by influence from others who went for the season"*, adding that this made sense because "*tourism here in Greece is strong"*. A further participant, who had worked across restaurants, hostels, and a call-centre job while waiting for other opportunities, illustrated the same pattern of movement between accessible sectors rather than stable progression through a single occupational ladder. These accounts indicate that channeling was sustained not only by formal barriers but also by social normalization. Certain sectors came to appear realistic and sensible because they were already well-trodden, immediately available, and compatible with the skills and networks participants felt they could mobilize.

At the same time, many participants articulated aspirations that clearly exceeded these labor-market niches. Some were drawn to graphic design, tattooing, music, entrepreneurship, or business projects of their own. One participant described choosing graphic design because "*from a young age*" she had always been "*a bit more creative*". Another imagined opening "*a Filipino fine dining*" place that would be "*exclusive*" and built around experience rather than routine service. These accounts are important because they show that the second generation was not simply reproducing first-generation occupational patterns at the level of desire or self-understanding. Yet participants also described how such aspirations were pushed back toward more conventional or immediately viable work. A participant who wanted to build a career in creative work explained that employers either demanded experience she did not yet have or offered salaries so low that creative employment became difficult to pursue as a realistic livelihood. Another participant chose graphic design partly because she had researched that it might allow her to work "*abroad*" or "*from your home*", which already suggests that professional imagination was being shaped in relation to mobility beyond the Greek labor market.

The material also reveals a strong intergenerational dimension to occupational aspiration. Participants frequently positioned themselves against the exhausting or precarious labor of the first generation, while remaining deeply aware of the sacrifices through which that generation had sustained family life. This tension gave work choices a clear moral and emotional charge. One participant said of her parents, who were approaching sixty and still working very hard in kitchens, "*that's what I'm trying to avoid generally in my future*". Another rejected the idea of remaining indefinitely in service work, explaining, "*I don't like to be in my 30s and serve others… it's not my career*". These statements do not simply express dislike for particular jobs. They reveal an effort to avoid a future defined by repetition of parental endurance labor, even while participants remained structurally exposed to sectors built around service, flexibility, and long hours. At the same time, the data also include more ambivalent cases. One participant who had spent many years in food service described herself as competent and valued in that role and eventually became a floor manager. Such cases complicate any rigid opposition between aspiration and service work. What they show, instead, is that mobility constraints do not erase agency, but shape the terms on which agency is exercised. Some participants rejected service work as a trap, while others sought to convert it into a more stable or senior position.

Workplace inequality and institutional friction further intensified insecurity, especially when participants attempted to claim recognition, rights, or longer-term stability. In some cases, linguistic legitimacy itself was challenged. In others, documentation status or nationality became an implicit condition structuring access to better roles. One participant recalled a public servant dismissing her with the phrase, "*You don't know Greek, we must learn Greek first*", despite her presence and participation in Greece. More strikingly, participants also connected citizenship status to constrained professional horizons. One participant observed, "*It's a pity that we can't think to grow our*

horizons of jobs. I feel like most of us are limited in our jobs". Another explained that what prevented her from planning her future was not uncertainty about what she wanted, but the fact that Greek citizenship still remained "*a barrier*" keeping her from deciding "*the next steps*" in her life. In these narratives, the labor market was not experienced as stratified only by skill or ambition. It was also stratified by the uneven portability of rights, by administrative uncertainty, and by the possibility that legal status could slow, suspend, or redirect occupational movement.

A particularly revealing case came from a participant working in software engineering, who described being unable to access certain projects requiring specific security clearance. He linked this directly to citizenship status, noting that because the Philippines is not part of NATO, he could not receive the same clearance and this had pushed him to apply for Greek papers. This example is analytically important because it shows that labor-market channeling is not confined to low-wage or service occupations. Even in professionalized and higher-skill sectors, advancement could become conditional on citizenship-related eligibility rather than competence alone. Here too, what matters is not only exclusion in the abstract, but the way formal recognition shapes access to particular tasks, projects, responsibilities, and futures.

Taken together, these accounts show that labor-market participation among second-generation Filipinos in Athens is organized through patterned processes that make some sectors readily accessible and others persistently conditional. English proficiency, social networks, and service-sector demand facilitate entry, but often into occupational niches that are difficult to transcend. Creative and professional aspirations remain present and sometimes quite strong, yet their realization is filtered by low pay, credential mismatch, administrative insecurity, and the unequal recognition of long-term potential. Under such conditions, constrained mobility is experienced not as a single blocked opportunity, but as the cumulative outcome of how skills, credentials, language, and legal recognition are differentially valued in practice. It is precisely this cumulative quality that helps explain why work is so often narrated by participants in terms of recalibration, strategic compromise, and a persistent search for futures that may need to be secured beyond Greece.

4.3 Moral economy of obligation and reputational governance

Participants described family life as both a material support structure and a normative order through which educational and occupational choices were assessed, justified, and sometimes disciplined. Family was often narrated as a source of emotional encouragement, practical help, and long-term investment. At the same time, that support was rarely framed as unconditional. It was tied to reciprocity, responsibility, and the expectation that one should eventually "*give back*". One participant expressed this pressure very directly, saying, "*you need to support the family, you need to support everybody. You need to help*". Another similarly described the broader expectation that "*you have to give on your own*", adding that if someone focused too much on themselves, "*they consider you selfish*". In this sense, obligation did not appear as an abstract cultural value. It

functioned as an active criterion through which legitimate choices were evaluated inside the household.

This moral economy became especially visible in narratives of educational and occupational steering toward fields perceived as safe, prestigious, and economically secure. Participants repeatedly described parental preferences for careers that promised stability under conditions of narrow opportunity and uncertain recognition. One participant summarized this logic with unusual clarity, recalling that for his mother the "*top choices*" were "*IT or doctor*", and adding, "*she chose it for me*". He then reflected on the emotional cost of compelled reciprocity, explaining that when giving is imposed "*it doesn't feel like it's genuine*". Another participant described a similar tension when she wanted to study graphic design but was redirected toward a more conventional field because her mother asked, in effect, what practical future such a creative path could guarantee. These accounts show that obligation was experienced as a form of governance over aspiration. It narrowed the range of acceptable futures and encouraged trajectories that looked administratively legible, socially respectable, and less risky.

Obligation also shaped the timing of career-building, especially when participants felt pressure to prioritize immediate income over longer-term professional development. One participant put this starkly when she said, "*my career, it can wait*", because what mattered most at that moment was "*to earn bigger money*" and "*help my father*". Another explained that her "*first dream and goal*" was to secure her mother's comfort after everything she had done for the family. These statements are important because they show that labor decisions were often evaluated through their capacity to sustain household stability in the present, even when this meant postponing specialization, certification, or more uncertain professional pathways. At the same time, reciprocity was not always narrated as pure burden. In a more affirmative register, another participant linked future entrepreneurial plans to the hope of building something that could also support the family. This kind of account suggests that obligation could also be narrated as continuity, pride, and purpose. Even then, however, it still governed the threshold of acceptable risk by making failure feel morally consequential rather than merely personal. A closely related pattern in the material concerns reputational governance. Participants often described the Filipino community as protective, familiar, and capable of generating strong ties. Yet they also spoke of it as a space of scrutiny, gossip, and social judgment. One participant said that for a long time she felt her Filipino friendships were "*very toxic*", because when she went out with them "*it's all about hating or shading or judging… it's all gossip*". Another described staying "*a bit away*" from Filipino circles because "*it's this gossip*", adding that community pressure could also take the form of comments about appearance, success, and whether one was making one's parents proud. A further participant made the same point in even sharper terms, saying that once someone has achieved a goal independently, others may respond with jealousy and say "*she is very cocky, she is showing off*". These narratives make clear that reputational governance was not a minor interpersonal irritation. It shaped the emotional climate within which participants made decisions about friendship, visibility, and self-presentation.

Participants also linked this reputational climate to the social organization of opportunity. Some described the community as close-knit in ways that could support coping and mutual recognition. Others emphasized that this closeness could narrow one's circles and make it harder to build relations beyond familiar co-ethnic networks. In practice, this meant that some second-generation participants deliberately distanced themselves from Filipino social spaces in order to protect psychological space and cultivate a less monitored sense of self. One participant explained that she avoided certain Filipino venues because "*every time somebody will say something about me*". Another recalled that she had actively wanted to explore life "*not being with the Filipinos*" because she experienced those spaces as socially restrictive. Such strategies of distancing reveal heterogeneity rather than a uniform communal script. They also point to a broader consequence. When participants cope by withdrawing into individualized or carefully selected networks, opportunities for collective voice and broader bridge-building become weaker. Reputational governance therefore affects more than intimate belonging. It also shapes the social conditions under which information, confidence, and opportunity circulate.

Intergenerational relations provided the connective tissue through which obligation and reputation were translated into everyday decision-making. Participants frequently portrayed the first generation as more cautious, more socially bounded, and more invested in preserving cultural continuity, while the second generation described itself as somewhat more open, reflexive, and oriented toward self-direction. This difference generated friction around adulthood, respectability, and life-course sequencing. In the material, participants referred to reminders such as "*you have to have a child… because it's a culture of Filipinos*" or "*at your age I was already married, I already had a child*". These statements show that obligation extended well beyond money or educational status. It also regulated adulthood itself by attaching moral weight to timing, marriage, parenthood, and socially approved forms of stability. Under conditions where educational pathways and labor-market futures were already experienced as uncertain, these intergenerational expectations raised the stakes of experimentation and made risk-averse choices appear more compelling.

Taken together, these accounts suggest that the moral economy of obligation and reputational governance functioned as stabilizing forces in the wider production of constrained mobility. Familial reciprocity norms elevated the consequences of missteps, encouraged safe and socially legitimate trajectories, and shaped when and how participants felt able to invest in longer-term career development. At the same time, community-based monitoring and judgment could provide familiarity while also constraining bridge-building, experimentation, and broader network formation. The result was not simple submission to family or community expectations. It was a recurrent process of negotiation in which second-generation participants recalibrated aspiration, autonomy, and risk under conditions of material uncertainty and social scrutiny.

4.4 Limited visibility and collective action under fragmented community infrastructures

Participants described the Filipino presence in Athens as socially real and often emotionally meaningful, yet uneven in its public visibility and limited in its organized capacity. Their accounts did not depict the community as absent. On the contrary, they pointed to churches, gatherings, informal networks, and everyday forms of recognition that sustained a sense of familiarity. What was repeatedly described as missing was a stable infrastructure capable of transforming this dispersed presence into enduring, outward-facing representation. One participant expressed this very clearly, noting, "*I haven't personally felt a strong organized presence, no clear community center, no consistent cultural events that bring us together regularly*", and concluding that "*we often live alongside each other without really connecting*". Another similarly remarked that the community was "*not very active*", even while expressing a desire for "*more involvement and connection*". These accounts indicate that fragmentation is experienced not simply as a social inconvenience, but as an organizational limitation that weakens collective voice and reduces the possibility that shared concerns in education, work, and documentation will be publicly articulated and institutionally addressed.

At the same time, participants did not describe community life as empty or socially thin. They often referred to strong affective bonds, recurring gatherings, and religious spaces that provided familiarity and support. In one account, a participant emphasized that after church "*we stay in the church, we eat with each other*", while another described church as "*a good place for me. I feel safe there. I'm comfortable*". Others referred to Filipino events as places that momentarily recreate a sense of home, or to neighborhood life in terms of a "*quiet solidarity*" that remains present even among people who do not know one another personally. These narratives show that community cohesion does exist in relational and emotional terms. Yet they also suggest that such cohesion does not necessarily produce stable representative structures. The support available through churches, festivals, and informal contacts often remains episodic, socially bounded, or oriented toward interpersonal care rather than sustained public advocacy. In that sense, community life can be dense in affective terms while still institutionally thin.

Participants also offered explanations for why collective mobilization remains difficult to consolidate. Several accounts implied that the first generation's settlement histories were shaped by long work hours, insecurity, and a pragmatic emphasis on survival, leaving limited time and energy for building durable public-facing institutions. This helps explain why informal solidarity may be strong while formal organizing remains weak. A related pattern concerns the style of incorporation itself. The material suggests that caution, deference, and the avoidance of confrontation are often valued as practical strategies for getting by. In the manuscript material, this orientation is captured in the phrase "*don't make noise so they don't bother us… be good, be quiet*", which condenses a broader logic of low-profile adaptation. Read together with other accounts about respect, judgment, and the risks of overexposure, this suggests that limited visibility is not only a matter of lacking infrastructure. It is also shaped by a practical sensibility in

which public assertion may appear risky under conditions of bureaucratic uncertainty and workplace precarity.

A further consequence of this fragmentation is that barriers are often managed privately rather than collectively. Participants' accounts imply that problems related to schooling, work, documentation, or recognition are usually dealt with at the level of the household, the friendship circle, or the individual career strategy. Even when participants were clearly aware of shared frustrations, they rarely described strong collective channels through which those frustrations could be translated into claims-making. One participant's comment that existing spaces "*haven't reached me or people my age*" is especially important here, because it points not only to a lack of structures, but also to a generational disconnect within the community itself. The appearance of occasional embassy initiatives or second-generation events was described with curiosity, yet also with uncertainty about who would attend and what such efforts would actually become. These accounts suggest that visibility is recognized as desirable, but coordinated capacity remains fragile and intermittent.

Taken together, the data indicate that fragmented community infrastructures and limited collective visibility amplify the durability of mobility constraints. When organizational spaces are weak, barriers in education, work, and legal recognition are less likely to become shared public issues and more likely to be absorbed into individualized strategies of adjustment, caution, and recalibration. The result is that community presence remains socially palpable but institutionally muted. This helps explain why many participants narrate recognition and opportunity in Greece as difficult to secure through collective leverage, and why future planning is so often organized around private solutions rather than collective transformation.

4.5 Onward migration as a mobility horizon

Onward migration emerged in participants' accounts as a practical horizon through which present constraints in Greece were interpreted and future possibilities were recalibrated. It was not always narrated as an immediate departure plan, but it frequently appeared as a way of thinking about mobility when educational effort, labor-market participation, and long-term settlement remained experienced as conditional. In some accounts, this orientation was expressed in highly explicit terms. As one participant put it, "*I think many of us feel like we have no choice. You do what you can, and for many Filipinos, that means going abroad*". In other narratives, the issue appeared less as a generalized cultural expectation and more as a response to blocked futures within Greece, especially where citizenship-related uncertainty delayed the ability to plan adult life with confidence. One participant stated that her "*main focus is to get the Greek citizenship*" because it remained "*a barrier*" keeping her from deciding "*the next steps*" in her life, while another explained that the fear of losing residence status after staying away from Greece for too long was "the only thing" stopping her from leaving at present.

The destinations imagined by participants were not entirely abstract. Europe often appeared as the most plausible frame of comparison, not only because of perceived

professional opportunities, but also because of clearer or faster routes to documentation and legal security. One participant noted that if she "*lived and worked in Italy for five years, or in Germany, or elsewhere in European Union*", she would obtain papers much more easily than in Greece. Another spoke specifically about Ireland, emphasizing both "*better salary in relation to Greece*" and the appeal of a destination that felt less saturated than the more predictable options of Germany or France. Elsewhere, participants framed mobility more openly, describing willingness to move "*whether in Europe or even farther away*" if a meaningful opportunity emerged. What these accounts share is a comparative mode of evaluation in which Greece is measured against other jurisdictions not only in terms of wages, but also in terms of mobility, recognition, and the possibility of building a future that feels less stalled.

Participants' accounts also suggest that onward migration reorganizes present-day decision-making rather than remaining a distant fantasy. In several cases, legal recognition itself was treated as a precondition for movement, not because Greece was imagined as the final destination, but because Greek citizenship or a stronger legal status would widen future options. One participant explained that obtaining Greek citizenship would allow her to "*start planning in general*" what she wanted to do, while another stressed that "*the first priority*" was to have a passport because "*most of us are limited in our jobs*". In this sense, future mobility reshaped the meaning of present choices. Documentation, work experience, language acquisition, and even endurance in imperfect jobs could be understood as provisional investments that kept open the possibility of later movement. A participant who avoided rigid long-term plans expressed this logic clearly, saying that if "*a better opportunity comes along, whether here in Greece or in another country*", she would take it. Here, onward migration does not simply interrupt local incorporation. It becomes one of the ways participants manage uncertainty by refusing to treat current constraints as the final horizon of their working lives.

At the same time, the material does not support a simplistic opposition between staying and leaving. Some participants described Greece as a place where growth remained possible, even while remaining open to movement elsewhere. One participant stated that she did think she could "*grow here in Greece*", but added that if she found "*better chances somewhere else in Europe, financially or professionally*", she "*wouldn't hesitate to leave*". Another framed the issue less in terms of wages or formal status and more in terms of existential mobility, saying that he was "*more afraid of staying stuck somewhere just because*" he was used to it, and that he hoped one day to find a place that felt like home "*because I can breathe there*". These accounts are important because they show that onward migration is not always driven by outright rejection of Greece. More often, it reflects an attempt to secure a future that feels more open, more breathable, and less constrained than the one participant currently perceive. Under these conditions, onward migration functions as a mobility horizon through which educational and occupational choices in the present are assessed, endured, and strategically reorganized.

5. Discussion

This article shows that mobility constraints among second-generation Filipinos in Athens are not reducible to individual deficits or incomplete incorporation. Rather, they are produced through the interaction of institutional filtering across education and citizenship-related access, labor-market channeling within segmented opportunity structures, and a family moral economy organized around a perceived "debt of sacrifice" that narrows what counts as legitimate risk. These processes are further reinforced by limited collective visibility and weak organizational infrastructures, which restrict the capacity to contest exclusion and translate everyday presence into institutional responsiveness. Conceptually, the study contributes to scholarship on second-generation incorporation by showing that family obligation and public visibility are not merely background cultural conditions. They operate as mobility-regulating processes that interact with institutional design and labor segmentation in the Greek context. This helps explain why participants can describe everyday fluency and participation in Greece while at the same time evaluating their futures through an exit-oriented horizon rather than through a linear expectation of upward mobility.

Given the broad operationalization of the second generation adopted in this study, the analysis also considered whether the central patterns identified here were contingent on birthplace or early-arrival status among participants who completed their formative schooling years in Greece. Across the material, the same core configuration appears in both Greece-born and early-arrival accounts, as institutional filtering, eligibility regimes, labor-market channeling, and household-level risk management converge to produce constrained mobility horizons. Where contrasts emerge, they are better interpreted as differences in narrative entry points and sequencing rather than as distinct pathways. Early-arrival accounts more often foreground the practical work of institutional translation and administrative legibility, whereas Greece-born accounts more commonly anchor constraint in long-running experiences of social boundary-making within Greek schooling and public interactions. These contrasts refine the interpretation of when and how constraints become salient, without undermining the broader claim that they are shaped by early-life institutional and social experiences in Greece.

5.1 Belonging, recognition, and everyday boundary-making

Belonging is best understood here as a negotiated and conditional position shaped by external ascription and routine boundary-making rather than as a stable state achieved through simple socialization. Participants' accounts indicate that "Greekness" can be lived through language, schooling, friendships, and everyday participation, yet remain fragile when phenotypical difference triggers racialized recognition. The repeated misrecognition of Asian-looking students as "Chinese" is analytically important because it shows that belonging is mediated by ordinary classificatory practices that can override linguistic fluency, educational participation, and social familiarity. In this sense, belonging is directly relevant to the educational and occupational focus of the article.

Conditional recognition shapes how participants interpret risk, opportunity, and the probable returns of effort, feeding into decisions about schooling, work, and future mobility.

5.2 Education and occupational mobility under constrained opportunity structures

Education emerges in this study as a primary institutional site where mobility is promised while being restricted through structural filters experienced as neutral rules with uneven consequences. Rather than repeating the descriptive diversity of schooling routes, the central finding is that certification regimes, language requirements, and eligibility rules operate as gatekeeping devices that make higher education unevenly reachable, especially for those whose earlier schooling trajectories do not translate smoothly into the Panhellenic route and Greek credentialing requirements. These filters matter because they render some pathways more administratively legible and less risky than others, aligning educational decisions with family-based calculations of security under conditions of uncertain recognition. In this sense, institutional design functions not as a purely meritocratic ladder but as a stratifying context of reception (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

The same logic extends into employment. Labor-market channeling constrains occupational diversification even when aspirations, educational effort, and forms of capital are present. Participants describe English proficiency and customer-facing competence as legible and marketable mainly in tourism and hospitality within a seasonal economy, while other pathways remain harder to access because of informal gatekeeping, stereotypes, and, in some cases, eligibility constraints tied to documentation status. These patterns resonate with work showing that incorporation may proceed while mobility remains segmented and unequally distributed across institutional and market fields (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The combined effect is that education-to-work transitions become a site where institutional filtering and market segmentation converge, turning pragmatic recalibration into an ordinary response and reproducing constraint through apparently reasonable choices.

5.3 Family moral economies and reputational governance

A further contribution of the study is to show how the "*debt of sacrifice*" operates as a mobility-regulating moral economy rather than simply as a cultural narrative. Participants repeatedly frame parental migration as difficult labor undertaken for children's futures, generating expectations of repayment through educational achievement, occupational success, and financial contribution. Under conditions of uncertain recognition and narrow opportunity structures, this moral economy narrows the range of legitimate risks and makes secure, socially legible pathways appear ethically preferable, even when they do not align with personal aspirations. This is consistent with scholarship on Filipino transnational family obligation, where sacrifice is moralized and reciprocity becomes a normative expectation that can both sustain and constrain intergenerational projects (Parreñas, 2005; Wolf, 1997).

Importantly, the findings do not support a simplistic opposition between constraint and autonomy. Family obligations also function as practical infrastructure in settings where external support is perceived as limited, so protective rationalities are understandable within the conditions participants describe. At the same time, reputational governance, including concern about gossip, judgment, and moral evaluation within close-knit circles, raises the perceived cost of experimentation and visibility. This encourages precaution in educational and occupational choices. The analytical implication is that moral economy translates structural uncertainty into everyday decision-making by lowering the acceptable threshold of risk, thereby tightening constraint even when aspirations remain expansive.

5.4 Community infrastructures, visibility, and collective action

The study also identifies low collective visibility as a self-reinforcing condition that stabilizes mobility constraints. Low visibility here refers to the combination of survival-oriented restraint and limited organizational capacity developed under local conditions rather than to a simple preference for quietness. Participants describe dense informal cohesion through churches and interpersonal networks while simultaneously emphasizing the absence of durable infrastructures able to convene the second generation, sustain regular collective activity, or represent shared concerns in public arenas. Such patterns can be read alongside work that treats migrant institutions and diaspora organization as uneven, historically contingent, and shaped by specific contexts of reception (Levitt, 2009).

The analytical point is that weak infrastructure does not merely describe community life. It becomes part of the broader pattern of constrained mobility because limited collective representation leaves institutional filters and everyday discrimination largely unchallenged, reinforcing the perception that recognition and mobility within Greece remain uncertain. When barriers are managed primarily through household strategies rather than collective leverage, the durability of filtering and channeling increases and the plausibility of exit-oriented planning grows.

5.5 Exit-oriented horizons and the limits of local incorporation

Onward migration emerges in the findings as a horizon that reorganizes present-day decision-making rather than only as a future event. Participants' comparative evaluation of other European destinations as places offering better opportunities, clearer procedures, or greater stability suggests that mobility is assessed across jurisdictions, especially where citizenship procedures and administrative delays in Greece are experienced as protracted or unpredictable. The findings also support a distinction between aspiration and movement. Even when onward migration remains an intention rather than an accomplished move, it shapes current educational and occupational strategies and influences willingness to invest in long-term local futures. In this sense, exit-oriented horizons function as feedback. Institutional uncertainty sustains the appeal

of leaving, while the prospect of leaving can weaken incentives for deep local institutional navigation and longer-term collective investment.

6. Implications

Taken together, the findings suggest that mobility constraints for second-generation Filipinos in Athens are produced through the intersection of institutional filtering in education and citizenship-related access, labor-market channeling, and a family moral economy organized around a "*debt of sacrifice*", while low collective visibility and weak organizational capacity reduce the ability to contest exclusion and reshape public recognition. The implications are therefore to intervene at the points where these linked processes convert educational engagement into constrained mobility. In education, this means reducing bureaucratic deadlocks around certification and eligibility and strengthening transparent, supported routes into public higher education so that non-mainstream schooling trajectories are not structurally pushed toward private markets or vocational default pathways. In the labor market, it requires moving beyond generic anti-discrimination commitments toward mechanisms of recognition and access that limit discretionary gatekeeping and widen early-career entry points outside tourism and hospitality, including clearer pathways for credential recognition and professional progression. In the community sphere, it requires treating low visibility as a self-reinforcing condition and supporting stable hubs and representative capacity that can engage institutions and public discourse without shifting risk onto individuals, thereby increasing collective leverage and reducing long-term reliance on private, exit-oriented strategies under uncertainty.

7. Limitations

The findings should be interpreted within the scope conditions of this qualitative, interpretive study. The analysis prioritizes analytical depth over statistical representativeness and is based on second-generation Filipinos living in Athens during the study period. Recruitment through snowball sampling and community networks may have privileged participants with stronger social ties and a greater willingness to narrate experience, potentially underrepresenting more detached, less visible, or more precariously positioned profiles. The evidence is also grounded in self-reported accounts, which may be shaped by retrospective sense-making and situational self-presentation, particularly in relation to discrimination, educational experiences, work trajectories, and family obligation. In addition, while the study includes participants with diverse educational and employment backgrounds, the findings do not support claims about the prevalence of particular pathways or constraints across the wider population. Finally, given the hermeneutic and context-sensitive design, the study offers transferable insights for comparable contexts rather than claims of universal generalizability.

8. Conclusion

This study examined the educational trajectories, labor-market transitions, and mobility horizons of second-generation Filipinos in Athens. The findings show that mobility constraints are produced through a recurring intersection of educational filtering, citizenship-related uncertainty, labor-market channeling, and intergenerational obligation. Across the data, a persistent mismatch emerges between educational effort and institutional recognition. Access to higher education is narrowed for some participants by certification regimes, language requirements, and documentation-related barriers, while labor-market segmentation and informal gatekeeping channel skills and aspirations into a limited range of occupational pathways.

The study further shows that educational and occupational decision-making is shaped by a family moral economy structured around a "*debt of sacrifice*." Narratives of parental migration and hard work influence how participants evaluate risk, success, and responsibility, often encouraging precaution and making more secure or socially legible pathways appear preferable. Under these conditions, family support can function as an important resource, but it can also narrow the range of options that participants feel able to pursue.

At the same time, low collective visibility and limited organizational infrastructure reinforce these constraints by restricting the capacity to contest exclusion, expand networks of support, and reshape public recognition. When institutional barriers and workplace inequalities are managed primarily at the individual or household level, constrained mobility becomes more durable. In this context, onward migration emerges as a plausible horizon for securing improved opportunities, greater stability, and more predictable futures. Even when it remains an aspiration rather than an accomplished move, it shapes present-day decisions about education, work, and long-term settlement in Greece.

By foregrounding the relationship between educational filtering, labor-market channeling, family obligation, and onward migration, this study contributes to scholarship on second-generation incorporation beyond the documentation of an under-researched case. It shows how mobility constraints are reproduced through the interaction of institutional gatekeeping, segmented labor-market incorporation, and intergenerational moral expectations in the Greek context. Future research could build on these findings through comparative work across migrant groups and urban settings, as well as through longitudinal analysis of how educational pathways, labor-market positioning, and migration aspirations evolve over time.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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