Zainichi Indonesiajin: Assesing Socio Economic Opportunities and Challenges Toward The Vision of Golden Indonesia 2045

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Abstract. Japan's declining demographics present opportunities for the Indonesian diaspora, including *Zainichi Indonesiajin*, whose population currently stands at 149,101, to secure residency permits. This group primarily consists of migrant workers classified as Specified Skilled Workers (SSW) and trainees (*Kenshuusei*). However, not all members of the diaspora meet the qualifications required for these categories. Many migrant workers, driven by the "Japan dreams" phenomenon, are often reluctant to return to Indonesia due to the significant wage disparities. This trend is particularly concerning given Indonesia's growing need for skilled labor to support its development goals ahead of its centennial in 2045. This study seeks to explore the opportunities and challenges faced by Indonesian migrant workers in Japan within the context of Indonesia's labor market demands and its broader objective of achieving Golden Indonesia 2045. Employing a qualitative methodology and literature-based analysis, the findings indicate a rising number of migrant workers obtaining permanent residency in Japan, highlighting the risk of human capital flight. The outmigration of skilled labor presents a significant challenge for Indonesia, exacerbated by insufficient domestic employment opportunities and inadequate wages for returning migrants. However, remittances sent by these workers contribute to the economic growth at the micro-level. In the context of the Golden Indonesia vision, the state's failure to address and support the needs of skilled workers may exacerbate the outflow of talent, thereby hindering efforts to maximize the country's human capital potential.

Keywords. Zainichi Indonesian; Migrant Mobility; Human Capital Flight; Golden Indonesia 2045

INTRODUCTION

Japan is facing a profound demographic crisis, characterized by the dual challenge of a declining fertility rate and an aging population, both of which successive governments have struggled to address effectively. The annual number of deaths consistently surpasses births, leading to a significant and rapid population decline. This trend has far-reaching implications, including a shrinking workforce, economic stagnation, increasing strain on welfare systems, and transformative effects on the nation's social structure (Yeung, 2024). According to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, based on residency registrations as of January 1, 2023, the population of Japanese nationals declined by approximately 800,000 individuals, or 0.65%, to 122.4 million in 2022. This marks the fourteenth consecutive year of population decline (Yamaguchi, 2023).

In 2023, Japan's population decreased by 0.7%, with a net loss of 861,237 individuals. This figure included a record influx of 329,535 foreign nationals. The non-Japanese segment of the population reached its highest recorded level, but the declining birthrate persisted, and regions such as the northeastern prefectures of Tohoku experienced significant population losses. Among major regions, only Tokyo recorded a marginal

population increase. As of January 1, 2024, Japan's total population stood at 121,561,801, according to data released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on July 24. These statistics are based on the government's Basic Resident Register. The annual population decline was the largest since the survey began in 1968 (The Asahi Shinbun, 2024).

As Japan's birthrate continues to decline, the net increase of working-age individuals entering the labor force has slowed significantly. In 2022, the population aged 15 to 64 was 71,741,119, representing a decrease of 521,056 compared to 2021. This working-age population is now only slightly more than twice the number of individuals aged 65 and older, a demographic typically retired and reliant on the working population to sustain social security systems. The elderly population increased by 26,355 over the same period, reaching 3,571,738. Consequently, 29.38% of Japan's population is now aged 65 or older. At the prefectural level, Tokyo was the sole administrative area to experience a population increase, rising by 3,933 individuals (0.03%) from the previous year. This growth was primarily driven by "social growth," or the net migration of individuals relocating to Tokyo from other parts of Japan. Although the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily slowed this inflow, it has since resumed and is accelerating. However, the broader Tokyo metropolitan area, encompassing Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa prefectures, experienced a population decline of 0.19%, marking the third consecutive year of decline. Similarly, the Kansai metropolitan area saw a 0.63% decrease, and the Nagoya metropolitan area experienced a 0.71% decline, with no indications that these trends are abating. Among Japan's 47 prefectures, Akita recorded the highest population loss, with a 1.83% decrease compared to the previous year. Aomori followed with a 1.72% decline, while Iwate experienced a 1.61% reduction (French, 2024).

In response to its demographic challenges, the Japanese government has intensified efforts to recruit and retain foreign workers, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare and construction. These measures include expanding the issuance of short-term visas, extending the maximum residency period from three to five years, and centralizing the immigrant registration system under the national government, thereby eliminating the need for re-entry permits. In 2010, there were 2,136,161 foreign residents, coinciding with the creation of the *Gaikokujin Ginō Jisshū Seido* or Technical Intern Training Program (TITP). The number decreased slightly to 2,080,519 in 2011, but with the introduction of the New Residency Management System in 2012, including a point-based system, the foreign resident population grew to 2,031,870. In 2013, the number rose to 2,065,276, and the Japan Revitalization Strategy was launched to attract highly skilled professionals. The following year, in 2014, the foreign resident population increased further to 2,121,952, driven by projects designed to facilitate the acceptance of foreign entrepreneurs and workers in national strategic special zones. By 2015, the number had reached 2,232,981, with new initiatives to support foreign construction workers and shipbuilding projects. In 2016, the population grew to 2,383,714, influenced by the implementation of the Technical Intern Training Act and additional projects to attract foreign agricultural workers. The number continued to climb, reaching 2,561,767 in 2017, with further projects aimed at accepting foreign workers for agricultural work. In 2018, the foreign resident population hit 2,731,829, and in 2019 it grew to 2,933,137, marked by the establishment of the Specified Skilled Worker System. By 2020, despite the pandemic-related border control measures in response to COVID-19, the number of foreign residents had risen to 2,887,116. This data illustrates the steady increase in foreign residents in Japan over the decade, along

with the government's evolving immigration policies aimed at addressing labor shortages and attracting skilled professionals (Oo & Tsukai, 2023).

Japan is seeking to attract more international students by providing special visas that allow them to search for employment after graduation. Although COVID-19 travel restrictions significantly reduced the number of foreign students in Japan, their population increased by 20.8% between 2022 and 2023. As of May 2023, there were 279,274 foreign students in the country, and the government aims to raise this figure to 400,000 by 2033. These students not only contribute to Japan's economy through part-time work but also frequently choose to remain in the country after completing their studies. Japan has placed significant emphasis on addressing labor shortages in key economic sectors through initiatives such as the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) and High Skilled Foreign Professionals (HSFP) programs. SSW program provides visa status for up to five years, aiming to attract mid-skilled workers in fields such as construction, agriculture, nursing, and food service. The program offers various forms of support for SSW workers, including housing assistance, orientation programs upon arrival in Japan, access to communication networks, and salaries equivalent to those of Japanese workers. However, eligibility for the program requires candidates to pass a Japanese language proficiency test, which poses a significant challenge for many foreign applicants (Faber, 2024).

The demographic composition of Japan is undergoing significant changes due to an increasing influx of immigrants. In 2000, foreign nationals accounted for 1.34% of the population. By 2023, this figure had risen to 3.4 million, representing 2.7% of the total population. In Tokyo, 10% of residents in their 20s are foreign-born, while in smaller towns such as Shimukappu, located in Hokkaido Prefecture, over 15% of the population consists of individuals born abroad. Although Japan is often characterized as ethnically homogeneous and occasionally perceived as resistant to immigration, these demographic shifts have elicited minimal public opposition (Inoue, 2024).

Figure 1. Total Population by Prefecture
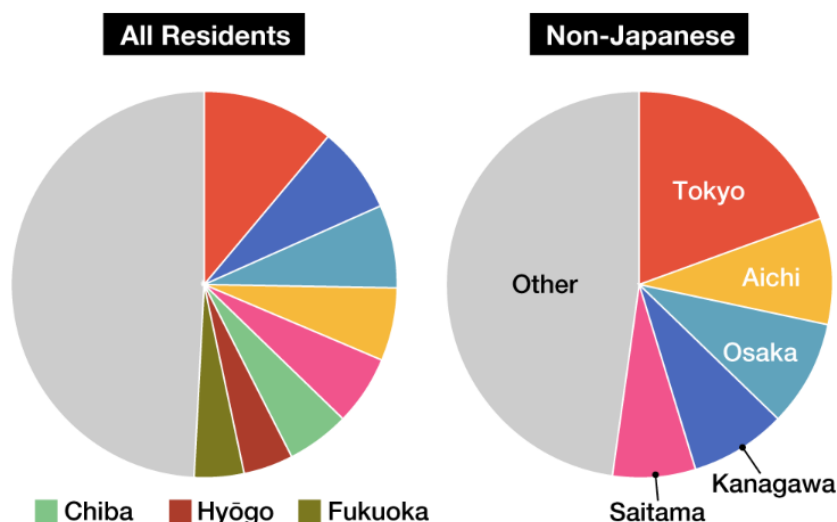
Sources: Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2024.

In 2023, the number of non-Japanese residents in Japan reached 3,323,374, marking a year-on-year increase of 329,535, or 11.0%. This rise was largely attributed to the

relaxation of entry restrictions previously imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The total represents the highest recorded since the compilation of such statistics began in 2013. Tokyo remained the most populous prefecture, with 13,911,902 residents, followed by Kanagawa with 9,208,688, and Osaka with 8,775,708. Conversely, Tottori Prefecture had the smallest population, totaling 540,207, approximately one twenty-fifth of Tokyo's population. The combined population of the three major metropolitan areas centered on Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya totaled 66,041,511, accounting for 52.9% of Japan's total population despite a decline for the fourth consecutive year. The concentration of foreign residents in metropolitan regions is even higher, with 52.2% residing in Tokyo, Aichi, Osaka, Kanagawa, and Saitama Prefectures (Japan Data, 2024). Tokyo holds the largest total population, with 13,911,902 residents, followed by Kanagawa (9,208,688) and Osaka (8,775,708), while Tottori is the least populated prefecture, with just 540,207 residents, followed by Shimane (650,624) and Kōchi (675,623). Similarly, Tokyo has the highest number of non-Japanese residents, totaling 647,416, followed by Aichi (301,924) and Osaka (296,579). In contrast, Akita has the smallest non-Japanese population, with only 5,222 residents, followed by Tottori (5,509) and Kōchi (5,966). Urban areas, particularly Tokyo, Aichi, and Osaka, demonstrate the highest concentrations of both total and non-Japanese populations, reflecting their roles as major economic and cultural hubs that attract foreign residents. In contrast, rural prefectures like Tottori and Shimane have significantly smaller populations, with fewer economic opportunities likely contributing to their low non-Japanese resident numbers (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2024).

Figure 2. Japan Basic Survey on Foreign Residents in 2022
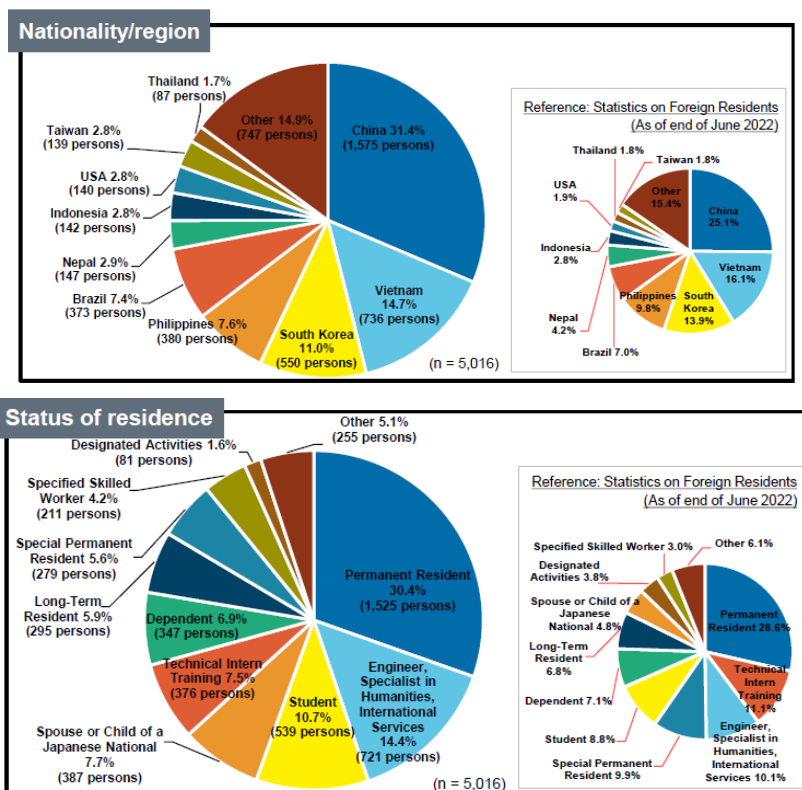
Sources: Immigration Services Agency, 2022.

The data illustrates the demographics of foreign residents in Japan based on nationality/region and status of residence, with a total population of 5,016 individuals. By nationality, residents from China dominate, comprising 31.4% (1,575 people), followed by Vietnam at 14.7% (736 people) and South Korea at 11.0% (550 people). Other significant groups include the Philippines (7.6%), Brazil (7.4%), and Nepal (2.9%), with smaller contributions from Indonesia, USA, Taiwan, and Thailand, each around 2.8% to 1.7%. A notable 14.9% (747 people) are categorized as "Other". In terms of residence status, the largest group is Permanent Residents, accounting for 30.4% (1,525 individuals), followed by Engineers/Specialists in Humanities/International Services at 14.4% (721 people). Other major categories include Students (10.7%), Spouses or Children of Japanese Nationals (7.7%), and Technical Intern Trainees (7.5%), alongside dependents and long-term residents. Smaller percentages are represented by Special Permanent Residents (5.6%), Specified Skilled Workers (4.2%), and those with Designated Activities (1.6%), while Other statuses account for 5.1%. Indonesian citizens represent 2.8% of the total foreign resident population in Japan (Immigration Services Agency, 2022). This places them among the smaller nationality groups, alongside others like the USA, Taiwan, and Nepal, but below larger groups such as China, Vietnam (14.7%), and South Korea. Indonesians share a similar proportion with other mid-range groups, reflecting their modest presence within the broader foreign population.

The Japanese immigration system offers various visa categories based on the type of work being performed (Liu-Farrer et al., 2023). One such category is the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) visa, which grants eligibility for a resident visa and allows foreign workers to work in sectors such as construction, agriculture, nursing care, and hospitality. There are two types of SSW visas: (1) SSW Type 1, which allows a stay of up to five years without family accompaniment; and (2) SSW Type 2, which permits family accompaniment and offers the potential for long-term residency. Another category is the Specialist Worker visa, designed for professionals in fields like international business, technology, and engineering. This visa provides eligibility for a resident visa and can lead to long-term or even permanent residency in Japan, depending on the individual's qualifications and contributions to the field. In contrast, the Trainees/Kenshusei visa is not intended for permanent residency. It is granted to individuals participating in temporary training programs aimed at acquiring technical skills, which they are expected to apply in their home country. As such, trainees are not eligible for a resident visa under this category (Aeni, 2022).

Zainichi Indonesiajin refers to Indonesians residing in Japan, typically for extended periods or permanently, similar to the historical *Zainichi* Koreans. The number of Indonesian nationals (WNI) in Japan has increased year by year. Although there are some WNI who are in the country illegally, the majority hold legal status with proper documentation to work and reside in Japan. In 2019, a report indicated that the number of WNI in Japan reached 56,346, a figure obtained during the occurrence of Typhoon Hagibis, which caused significant casualties in the country. By June 2020, at least 66,084 WNI were recorded in Japan, according to data released by the Japanese immigration authorities following a major earthquake in Fukushima and Miyagi Prefectures. In 2021, based on data from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, the number of WNI in Japan was estimated to be around 67,000, showing a slight increase compared to 2020. In October 2022, the number of WNI in Japan had nearly reached 78,000, marking a significant increase compared to the period of the pandemic. In 2023, the number of WNI

living in Japan was estimated to be nearly 90,000, and according to the Immigration Service Agency of Japan, this number is projected to reach 180,000 by 2024 (Nurhadi, 2024).

The significant number of Indonesian citizens residing in Japan is attributed to employment opportunities arising from demographic phenomena. In the context of officially recognized internship programs, Japan offers 12 sectors, 8 of which are open to workers from Indonesia. One of the sectors with the highest number of interns is nursing and elderly care, which accounted for 76,898 interns as of June 2023, approximately 6,000 of whom were from Indonesia. Additionally, Indonesian workers are engaged in the building cleaning sector, as well as various manufacturing fields, including materials, industrial machinery, and electronic information technology. Other categories available to Indonesian interns include hospitality, such as hotel services, and agriculture, where many Indonesian interns assist Japanese farmers. The fisheries sector has also been opened to Indonesian workers, enjoying a special status; as of December 2023, Indonesia remains the only country permitted to send interns in this sector, while workers from other nations are still restricted. However, there are four sectors that remain unavailable to Indonesian interns, one of which is construction, which remains closed to interns under the SSW (*tokutei ginou*) status (Nurhadi, 2024).

This work-related migration of residency has the potential to contribute to brain drain in the country of origin, which in this context is Indonesia. The conventional literature on brain drain has regarded the outflow of human capital as a detrimental phenomenon for developing nations. It has proposed various policy measures to mitigate this exodus or alleviate its adverse effects on the countries of origin, including the implementation of taxes on migrants' overseas income. These findings are considered valid regardless of other potential impacts of brain drain on education levels, whether mediated by remittances or by the skills gained by returning migrants in destination countries (Schiff, 2021). Brain drain is recognized as a significant issue in international development, characterized by the migration of skilled individuals due to underdevelopment in their home countries. Evidence indicates that each year, a substantial number of healthcare professionals migrate from developing regions to more developed ones. This migration is driven by various factors, including the inability to escape poverty, the pursuit of better employment opportunities, higher salaries, improved living standards, and other related motivations (Jannah, 2018).

There are both pros and cons to the issue of brain drain. In developing countries, a moderate level of brain drain can be economically beneficial, as the income-maximizing threshold of skilled emigration is typically positive. Brain drain can incentivize education, facilitate remittance flows, lower international transaction costs, and generate benefits for source countries through the contributions of returnees and the diaspora abroad. By implementing appropriate policy measures tailored to the specific characteristics and objectives of the source country, the positive outcomes of brain drain can be enhanced while mitigating its negative impacts. In most developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, South East Asia and smaller nations, the brain drain often surpasses the income-maximizing threshold. This excessive emigration can result in fiscal losses, reduce the overall stock of human capital, and lead to imbalances in occupational structures. These effects can ultimately hinder the development and growth potential of the source countries (Docquier, 2014).

The migration of Indonesian citizens to Japan is expected to result in a decline in the availability of skilled workers, particularly in blue-collar sectors. This situation poses a

significant consideration in Indonesia's efforts to achieve its Golden Era in 2045. Indonesia is aiming to achieve the status of "Golden Indonesia" by 2045. During this period, the country will enter its golden era, marking 100 years of independence (Silmy, 2024). Indonesia aspires to become one of the world's largest economies by 2045, with sustainable and inclusive economic growth. In addition to economic growth, the Golden Indonesia vision also encompasses the development of high-quality human resources, social justice, and environmental sustainability. This vision integrates all aspects of national life to create a prosperous, just, and globally competitive society (Agung et al., 2024). The Indonesian government has outlined four main pillars that serve as the foundation for achieving the Golden Indonesia Vision 2045: (1) Human Development and Mastery of Science and Technology, (2) Sustainable Economic Development, (3) Equitable Development and Strengthening of Regions, and (4) Strengthening National Resilience and Governance (Wena, 2020). However, achieving this vision is not an easy task. Indonesia must confront various complex challenges across multiple sectors, including the economy, education, health, environment, and social issues. Key challenges include the persistent economic disparity, uneven infrastructure development, the need to improve the quality of education, and global challenges such as climate change and fluctuating geopolitical dynamics (Wena, 2020). Based on these phenomena, this study seeks to explore the opportunities and challenges faced by Indonesian migrant workers in Japan within the context of Indonesia's labor market demands and its broader objective of achieving Golden Indonesia 2045.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method with data collection techniques through literature review. According to Sarwono (2016), a literature review involves the examination of data from various reference books and previous relevant research to establish the theoretical foundation for the problem being investigated. A literature review is also referred to as library research or desk research. This study draws from books, articles, and previous theses that share a similar theme with this research (Munib & Wulandari, 2021). This study selects a literature review approach due to the involvement of two countries, which presents limitations in fieldwork. The data sources are chosen from credible articles published in reputable journals, as well as reports and regulations released by the governments of both countries.

To enrich the data in this study, interviews were conducted with Indonesian migrant workers who are still employed in Japan as well as those who have returned to Indonesia. These interviews provide insights into the perspectives of migrant workers regarding the employment opportunities in both Indonesia and Japan, and the conditions that influence the pillars of the Golden Indonesia Vision 2045. The interviews were conducted online in a structured manner using research instruments that were tailored to the scope of the study. This process involved 10 informants, consisting of 5 Indonesian migrant workers residing in Japan and 5 Indonesian migrant workers who have returned to Indonesia, with in-depth engagement. In-depth interviews are a process aimed at obtaining detailed information and exchanging ideas for research purposes through a question-and-answer interaction conducted face-to-face between the interviewer and the respondent. Interviews are also used to verify the information or details obtained earlier (Mazaya & Suliswaningsih, 2023). Through interviews, information can be explored in-depth, openly, and freely concerning

the issues and focus of the research. The in-depth interview method was carried out by preparing a list of questions in accordance with the topic or issue to be addressed.

Data analysis is the process of methodically reviewing and organizing interview transcripts, field notes, and other collected materials to enhance your understanding and to facilitate the presentation of your findings to others (Sugiyono, 2018). According to Miles & Huberman (2014), activities in qualitative data analysis are conducted interactively and continuously until the data becomes saturated. These activities include data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Therefore, in this study, the researcher employs the data analysis technique based on the Miles & Huberman model, which involves the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Zainichi Indonesiajin (Indonesian Migrant Worker in Japan)

Currently, Japan is facing a significant issue with the declining workforce of working-age individuals. According to the Japanese think tank Recruit Works Institute, Japan is projected to experience a shortage of more than 11 million workers by 2040. The working-age population is expected to decrease by 20 percent, reaching 59.8 million by 2040, and the supply of workers will shrink by approximately 12 percent by that time. The Japanese government is making efforts to halt the decline in birth rates and has allocated approximately ¥1 trillion (Rp104 trillion) for worker training programs over the next five years as a solution (Anugrah, 2023). The origins of the bilateral cooperation between Japan and Indonesia, as well as the benefits for Japan arising from the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), are outlined. IJEPA is a bilateral agreement between Japan and Indonesia that was established and signed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on August 20, 2007 (Tombalisa et al., 2022). This situation also presents opportunities for foreign labor to enter and work in Japan, attracting young Indonesians interested in working in Japan and undergoing various training programs at Vocational Training Institutions / *Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja* available in different regions.

Since the implementation of IJEPA in 2008 until 2017, the agreement has predominantly benefited Japan, despite other interests underlying IJEPA. These benefits include: (1) the utilization of Indonesia's natural resources, such as oil and coal, to meet Japan's energy needs; (2) an increase in Japanese investments, leading to the establishment of various technology and transportation companies in Indonesia, driven by the availability of cheap labor and low production costs; and (3) the deployment of skilled labor from Indonesia to Japan to address the growing aging population. Indonesian migrant workers in Japan face several challenges, including discrepancies in employment contracts, widespread violence due to insufficient Japanese language proficiency, unfavorable working conditions, and irresponsible labor brokers. These issues may lead to the potential for workers to become illegal workers. The presence of illegal workers is often attributed to a lack of awareness regarding their rights and obligations as migrant workers (Anugrah, 2023).

Before leaving for Japan, many migrant workers from Indonesia face significant financial burdens, including debts incurred to cover the costs of job placement and training. As evidenced in the case of Nakula, some Labor Placement Agencies charge high fees for training, even though there is no guarantee of securing employment in Japan. This situation often forces workers from lower-income backgrounds to take out loans to cover these

expenses. Some placement agencies work with lenders to recommend loans to workers to help them pay the high costs. As a result, many Indonesian migrant workers find themselves in significant debt while working in Japan. Furthermore, some workers resort to unofficial channels to secure higher-paying jobs or extend their stay in Japan, as they struggle to pay off the debt from their placement fees. A report by Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) highlights the common practice of inflated fees by private sending institution, often with little oversight from the government. This discrepancy is particularly evident in private placement schemes (P to P), where government intervention is minimal, allowing price manipulation to occur. Migrant workers also face a lack of clear information about the job roles they will undertake in Japan, which exacerbates their challenges upon arrival, as some experience significant mismatches between expectations and reality, particularly in sectors like healthcare (Kirnandita, 2020). Numerous private recruitment agencies in Indonesia systematically violate the rights of prospective migrant workers by failing to provide adequate information about their legal rights and health protections. Furthermore, these institutions often rationalize acts of violence under the guise of "mental strengthening" during training. This aligns with findings from a Human Rights Watch Group Indonesia report, which revealed that many prospective migrant workers are subjected to systemic fraud and exploitation before their departure.

Table 1. Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Inspection Data by Category of Violation From 2012-2016

Category of Violations	Percentages from 2012-2016
Workplace Safety and Health Violations	37%
Wage Violations	26%
Working Hour Violations	21%
Labor Contract Violations	9%
Company Policies Violations	4%
Dormitory Safety and Health Violations	3%

Sources: Widarahesty, 2022.

On the other hand, there are notable advantages, particularly in the work culture, gained by migrant workers during their employment in Japan. Three dominant aspects of Japanese work culture that can be adapted include: (1) Communication Skills, specifically *Hourenso* (法蓮祖), a structured approach emphasizing timely reporting, consultation, and communication; (2) Management Skills, such as *Kaizen* and the 5S principles (Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain), which focus on continuous improvement and workplace organization; and (3) Punctuality, or the cultural emphasis on being on time and responsible with the job. In Japan, the principle of *Hourenso*, an acronym for "*Houkoku*" (報告, reporting), "*Renraku*" (連絡, informing), and "*Soudan*" (相談, consulting) is a cornerstone of communication within organizations. This practice emphasizes the importance of clear, timely, and accurate communication between team members and superiors. In the practice of *Hourenso*, employees are encouraged to actively report on their work progress, notify superiors of significant changes or issues, and seek advice from managers or colleagues when encountering challenges or making critical decisions. This framework fosters efficient workflow and underscores the importance of communication skills in any workplace. Contrary to common misconceptions that *Hourenso* operates solely in a top-down manner, the concept promotes two-way communication, involving both

upper and lower management as well as peer interactions, to ensure collaboration and informed decision-making. It emphasizes transparency in the workplace by ensuring that superiors are consistently informed about the activities and progress within their teams. This practice fosters accountability among employees by requiring periodic updates on their tasks, which can vary in frequency (daily, weekly, or monthly) based on the nature of their work. In situations involving significant issues, changes, or urgent decisions, immediate reporting is essential to keep supervisors aware of critical developments (Kuswara et al., 2024).

Another essential management skill in Japan is Kaizen, a philosophy focused on continuous improvement, often implemented through the 5S system. The 5-S stands for "*Seiri*" (整理, Sort), "*Seiton*" (整頓, Set in order), "*Seiso*" (清掃, Shine), "*Seiketsu*" (清潔, Standardize), and "*Shitsuke*" (躾, Sustain), which together aim to optimize efficiency and maintain a clean, organized, and productive work environment. Punctuality is a deeply valued aspect of Japanese work culture. Being on time is seen as a sign of respect for others' time and a reflection of one's professionalism and discipline. The concept of kaizen culture, particularly when applied to management and business contexts, refers to a process of continuous and incremental improvement achieved through the active and dedicated involvement of all employees in every aspect of the company's activities. Consequently, it can be understood as a change strategy that is consistently implemented across all areas to enhance organizational performance. This approach is characterized by ongoing and sustainable efforts, with participation from employees at all levels within the organizational hierarchy (Ekhsan et al., 2023).

2. Challenges and Opportunities for Returnees Challenges in the Context of Employment

Based on the interview findings, several challenges and opportunities were identified for Indonesian migrant workers who have been employed in Japan. These conditions significantly impact Indonesia's labor force and directly influence the country's economic growth.

Table 2. Challenges and Opportunities for Indonesian Migrant Worker Returnees

Challenges	Opportunities
Job Seeker	Job Matching
Work as a Japanese Instructor in Job Training Agency	Career Support and Developing Human Resources
Back to Japan with another type of Visa	Job Monitoring
Join the branch office of the company in Indonesia	Entrepreneurship Workshops
Be an Entrepreneur	
Pursue Futher Study	Education Workshops

Sources: Interview Result, 2024

Indonesian Migrant Workers returning to their home country face significant challenges in determining their career paths after working abroad. Many returnees struggle to secure employment due to the lack of recognition for their overseas experience and the limited availability of jobs that match their skillsets. For those who seek employment as Japanese language instructors in job training agencies, the absence of formal teaching certifications and the limited demand for such roles, particularly in rural areas, present considerable obstacles. Consequently, their ability to utilize language skills

gained abroad is restricted by structural and institutional barriers.

Another notable challenge involves Indonesian Migrant Workers who aspire to return to Japan with a different visa type. This option requires individuals to fulfill stringent administrative and legal requirements, which often include meeting specific skill or qualification standards, alongside the financial burden of visa applications and travel arrangements. These factors can deter returnees who lack the necessary resources or support to navigate the process. Similarly, Indonesian Migrant Workers aiming to join branch offices of multinational companies in Indonesia encounter difficulties in adapting to local workplace cultures and managing expectations regarding salaries and benefits, which are often lower than their overseas earnings.

For those who intend to become entrepreneurs, the transition from employment to self-employment introduces unique challenges, such as limited access to financial capital, inadequate entrepreneurial training, and a lack of business networks. These barriers are compounded by the inherent risks associated with starting a new business, particularly for individuals without prior experience in entrepreneurship. While self-employment provides an opportunity to achieve economic independence, the absence of structured support systems further complicates the success of these initiatives.

Finally, pursuing further education emerges as a pathway for some Indonesian Migrant Workers to enhance their qualifications and competitiveness in the job market. However, this option is constrained by the significant financial investment required for tuition fees, as well as the academic readiness of returnees who may have been away from formal education for extended periods. These challenges underscore the systemic limitations that inhibit the reintegration of Indonesian Migrant Workers into productive and sustainable economic roles upon their return to Indonesia.

Upon returning to Indonesia, many Indonesian migrant workers expect comprehensive support programs from Job Training Agencies or the government to help reintegrate them into the workforce. One of the primary expectations of returning migrant workers is access to job matching services. They seek assistance in aligning their newly acquired skills and experience from abroad with suitable employment opportunities within Indonesia. Job matching programs help ensure that workers are placed in roles that make full use of their capabilities, providing a smoother transition back into the local job market. Many returning workers also hope for career guidance and support in navigating their professional paths. This could include counseling on career development, skill upgrading, and potential job promotions. Given that many migrant workers often face a challenge in finding employment that reflects their level of experience abroad, career support programs are crucial to help them move forward in their professional lives.

Another key expectation is job monitoring services. Migrant workers are concerned about job security and the long-term sustainability of their employment after returning home. They expect the government or LPKs to track their employment progress, ensuring that they remain employed in stable conditions, and to provide guidance or intervention if they face issues in their workplace. For many migrant workers, returning to Indonesia means the opportunity to start their own businesses. They look forward to entrepreneurship workshops and training programs that can provide them with the knowledge and tools to start, manage, and grow their own ventures. This is particularly important for those who may not want to re-enter the formal labor market or those who have developed business ideas during their time abroad.

3. **Indonesian Migrant Worker in Japan and Returnees Impact to Golden Indonesia Vision 2045 (Assesment Scenario)**

Indonesian government fails to fulfill the expected support programs for returning migrant workers scenario, it could have several negative impacts on the country's goal of achieving "Golden Indonesia 2045," which envisions Indonesia as a developed and prosperous nation by its 100th independence anniversary. Migrant workers play a crucial role in Indonesia's economy through both their remittances and the expertise they acquire abroad. However, insufficient support for their reintegration may hinder their ability to secure stable, well-paying employment or establish businesses, thereby diminishing their economic contribution. This could undermine efforts to develop a skilled workforce and promote local entrepreneurship, which are vital for regional and national development. Moreover, the absence of adequate post-return programs could lead to dissatisfaction among returning workers, prompting them to seek employment opportunities overseas once more. This "brain drain" would result in the loss of valuable human capital, which is critical for driving economic growth, fostering technological advancements, and encouraging innovation, key elements for realizing the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. Additionally, the lack of support may exacerbate social inequality and create economic instability in communities heavily dependent on migrant labor, further obstructing sustainable development goals. Without comprehensive reintegration strategies, Indonesia risks failing to maximize the potential of its migrant workforce as a driver of national progress.

If returning migrant workers encounter difficulties in securing employment or starting businesses, they may face prolonged unemployment. This situation could lead to growing social dissatisfaction, particularly in rural areas where job opportunities are already scarce. Increased unemployment and economic hardship among migrant workers have the potential to escalate social unrest, jeopardizing national stability and progress. Furthermore, inadequate support for the workforce reintegration of returning migrants could intensify income inequality and elevate poverty levels, especially in regions heavily dependent on migrant labor. Such conditions would pose significant challenges to achieving Indonesia's goals for equitable economic development, as envisioned in the Golden Indonesia 2045 strategy. Without effective reintegration programs, the Indonesian government risks impeding economic growth, deepening social inequalities, and diminishing its human capital, key components necessary for realizing this ambitious national vision.

The experiences and networks gained by Indonesian migrant workers in Japan present significant opportunities to support Indonesia's vision of becoming a developed and prosperous nation by 2045. Their contributions can be outlined in three key areas, diplomatic, human resources and economy. Indonesian returnees with experience in Japan can act as bridges for fostering diplomatic and economic collaborations. Their connections with Japanese companies and investors can attract foreign direct investment to Indonesia, stimulating the growth of local industries and creating new economic opportunities. Exposure to Japanese work culture equips Indonesian workers with a mindset focused on discipline, efficiency, and continuous improvement. By integrating these principles into Indonesia's workplaces, these returnees can help raise productivity and establish higher operational standards across various industries, enhancing the quality of the nation's human capital. Returning migrant workers often serve as informal ambassadors who strengthen cultural and business ties between Indonesia and Japan. By leveraging their

knowledge and networks, they can facilitate trade, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding, which further contributes to economic growth and bilateral relations. These contributions highlight the vital role Indonesian migrant workers can play in advancing national development goals and aligning with the broader aspirations of the Golden Indonesia 2045 vision.

CONCLUSION

The outmigration of skilled labor poses a substantial challenge for Indonesia, as it not only leads to a depletion of talent but also creates an imbalance in the labor market. While remittances sent by migrant workers play a crucial role in stimulating economic activity at the micro-level, these financial transfers often fail to compensate for the loss of skilled professionals who could otherwise contribute to the country's long-term development. The returning migrants, however, face significant obstacles in reintegrating into the workforce due to limited domestic employment opportunities and the insufficient wages offered in comparison to those abroad. These factors may lead to dissatisfaction among returning workers, exacerbating the challenge of ensuring their full participation in Indonesia's economic growth.

In the context of Indonesia's vision for Golden Indonesia 2045, the state's failure to effectively address and support the needs of returning skilled workers further exacerbates the outmigration of talent. Without comprehensive programs for reintegration, including job matching, career development, and entrepreneurial support, many skilled workers may be discouraged from staying in the country. This talent drain not only reduces Indonesia's capacity to harness its full human capital potential but also undermines efforts to build a competitive, innovative, and resilient economy. The lack of adequate domestic opportunities for returning workers can further deepen existing inequalities and contribute to a cycle where talent continually seeks better prospects abroad, thus impeding progress toward the national development goals set for 2045.

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