

Doctoral Thesis

The Role of Indonesia in Technical Intern Training
Program in Japan: Disciplining Pre-Departure
Orientation, Normalizing Silence, and Recycling the
Dream

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The Role of Indonesia in Technical Intern Training
Program in Japan: Disciplining Pre-Departure
Orientation, Normalizing Silence,
and Recycling the Dream

(日本の外国人技能実習プログラムにおけるインドネシアの
役割：渡航前調教、沈黙の通常化、夢のリサイクル)

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Abstract of Doctoral Thesis

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This thesis is about Indonesia's participation in Japan's Technical Intern Trainee Program or TITP. Japan's TITP has been studied by many scholars; most of whom focus on the Japanese side issues—for example, developments of Japanese immigration policies as a receiving country; changes in Japan's socio-political-economic conditions toward the trainee program; and human rights violations occurred in the workplace against trainee participants. However, few researchers have attempted to examine Japan's TITP from the perspective of a sending country, such as Indonesia. Since TITP involves bilateral arrangements, it is impossible to reveal the complex problems embedded in it without analyzing the role of the sending country. Against the background, this thesis attempts to fill the gap by looking at this program through the eyes of Indonesia as a sending country.

This thesis investigates the roles of various actors, including the Indonesian government, the supervising organization, the Indonesian community, alumni, and the trainees themselves. We examine these actors through three different (but interlocking) stages, namely (1) pre-departure stage, (2) on-the-program stage, and post-program stage. What are the roles of above actors in these stages and how they contribute to the existence and consolidation of Japan's TITP, which has been widely criticized by international community? This is the question throughout this thesis.

We found that different actors in different stages—i.e., pre-departure, during the program, and post-program—have contributed to the systematic 'silencing' of critical voices against the program. We argue that this silencing is the key to understand the 'resilience' of the TITP, and these findings bring new insights into the scholarship of Indonesian studies, particularly for Indonesia's migration studies. Besides, this thesis—which highlights the role of a labor sending country—envisages a broader implication for the study of migration in Japan as it questions the mainstream narrative that tends to see the bilateral relationship between Japan and the sending countries as that of 'exploiting' and 'being exploited.' The mechanism on the ground is highly complex in a way that undermines such a dichotomous perception.

博士論文要旨

日本の外国人技能実習プログラムにおけるインドネシアの 役割：渡航前調教、沈黙の通常化、夢のリサイクル

立命館大学大学院国際関係研究科
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本論文は、日本の外国人技能実習プログラムに参加するインドネシアの実態を分析するものである。外国人技能実習制度に関しては、従来から多くの研究がある。しかし、その多くが受入国としての日本の問題に注目するもので、例えば日本の移民政策の変容や、技能実習制度を取り巻く社会的・経済的・政治的な環境の変化、さらには実習現場での様々な人権侵害などが研究されてきた。反面、送り出し国の視点からの研究は、皆無ではないものの、それほど多くはない。とりわけ、インドネシアに関しては、技能実習に関する総合的な研究は行われてこなかった。しかし、このプログラムが二国間の取決めで維持・継続されてきたことを鑑みれば、送り出し国が果たしてきた役割を十分に分析することなく、技能実習にまつわる複雑な問題を解明することは不可能だと言える。その溝を埋めるのが本研究の目的である。

本論文では、技能実習プログラムに関与するインドネシアの様々な主要アクターを考察し、それぞれの役割を分析する。代表的なアクターは、インドネシア労働省であり、監理団体、在日インドネシア人コミュニティ、元技能実習生、そして現役実習生たちである。それらのアクターが、プログラムに関わる3つの過程——すなわち渡航前、実習中、実習後——において、どのような役割を果たしてきたのか。それらが、国際的にも批判が多い技能実習制度の持続にどのように貢献してきたのか。この2つの問いを追究するのが本論文である。

エスノグラフィーを中心とした実証研究を通じて、本論文が明らかにしたことは、上記のアクターが、各ステージ（渡航前、実習中、実習後）において、プログラムに対する批判の声を体系的に封じ込めている力学である。その上で、この「封じ込め」の沈黙作用こそが、インドネシア人技能実習プログラムに安定と強靱性を与えてきたことを議論にする。これらの分析は、インドネシアの移民研究に新たな知見を提供することで、インドネシア研究の前進に大きく貢献する。また、送り出し国の問題を中心に捉えることで、日本の外国人単純労働者受け入れに関する主流な言説——すなわち搾取する日本と搾取される送り出し国というナラティブ——を問い直すきっかけを与えよう。その二項対立的な議論は現実と乖離しており、複雑な実態を客観的に分析することの重要性を本論文はアピールする。

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List of Abbreviations

AO	Accepting Organization/ Supervising Organization
AP2LN	Association of Overseas Apprentice Organizers
BLKLN	Balai Latihan Kerja Luar Negeri
BP2MI	Badan Pelindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia (The Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency)
BINALATTAS	Direktorat Jenderal Pembinaan Pelatihan dan Produktifitas (Directorate General of Training Development and Productivity)
BUMN	State-Owned Enterprises
BPJS Ketenagakerjaan	Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial (National Social Security Agency for Employment/ BPJS Employment)
BPS	Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EPS	Employment Permit System
G-to-G	Government to Government
ICJ	Indonesian Community of Japan
IET	Individual Enterprise Type
IM JAPAN	Foundation International Manpower Organization
IKAPEKSI	Indonesian Kenshusei Entrepreneurs Association
IPTIJ	Indonesian Technical Intern Trainee Community
JITCO	Japan Technical Intern Trainee Cooperation
JLPT	Japanese Language Proficiency Test
KUR TKI	Kredit Usaha Rakyat Untuk Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, for Indonesian Overseas Workers
LPK	Private Sending Organization
NU	Nahdatul Ulama
OTIT	Organization for Technical Intern Training
P3MI	Perusahaan Penempatan Pekerja Migran Indonesia, Indonesian Migrant Workers Placement Agency
P-to-P	Private to Private

PPI	Indonesian Student Association
G-to-G	Government to Government
SELEKNAS	National Selection
SEAMEO	Southeast Asia Ministers of Education
SO	Sending Organization
SOT	Supervising Organization Type
TITP	Technical Intern Training Program
TKI	Indonesian Migrant Workers
UPTD BLKDLN	The Foreign and domestic Training Facilities
MOJ	Ministry of Justice (Japan)
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PMI	Indonesian Migrant Workers
QITEP	Regional Center for Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel in Language

Chapter I

Introduction

Research Aim and Objective

Since its introduction 30 years ago, many criticisms related to the implementation of foreign technical intern trainees [*gaikokujin ginou jishuusei*] in Japan have been made by Japanese and overseas scholars. However, Indonesian government has relied on and promoted the apprenticeship program with Japan—namely Japan’s Technical Intern Trainee Program (TITP)—because, apart from promoting human resource development, it is the hope of the Indonesian government to help reduce the continued increase of unemployment among productive workers in the country. Given that, the government has promoted the ideas of “transfer of technology” and “transfer of knowledge” from Japan to Indonesia, and insisted that the program is fairly distinctive and different from other regular migrant worker programs. In response to these, this research carries out ethnographic fieldwork in Japan and Indonesia with Indonesian foreign trainees and also all the actors who are involved in this program, such as the Indonesian Government, Indonesian communities, NGOs, supervising organizations, and the alumni trainees to reveal why and how this program has been maintained, stabilized and glorified. We will examine various aspects, including recruitment process, pre-departure mechanism, contractual arrangements, living facilities, working conditions, characteristics of Indonesian trainees and their problems both in Japan and upon return to Indonesia.

The main aim of this research is to elucidate the role of Indonesia in consolidating Japan’s TITP and the mechanism in which Indonesian actors play roles in every different stages—i.e., pre-departure stage, on-the-program stage, and post-program stage. By examining these processes, we attempt to understand the complex patterns and structures that have established Indonesia’s unique ‘migration regime’ that works hand-in-hand with Japanese government and businesses.

Background

Despite its long history of migration, until recently Japan was not generally regarded as a country of migration. Although academia overcame this myth, it is still reflected in the opinion of the Japanese government (Douglass & Roberts, 2000, p. 9). It is clearly seen in Japan’s immigration policy, which places highly strict restrictions on hiring foreign labors, especially unskilled labors. While there has been some relaxation of the limitations on foreign workers,

especially for professionals and skilled workers, there is still a sizable asymmetry between the inward and outside migration policies (Saito, 2022).

Systematically, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act of Japan operates as a framework to provide different legal classificatory channels for foreign nationals to legally enter, work and reside in Japan. Foreign citizens must have residence status in Japan as a permanent resident spouse or child of a permanent resident, spouse and children of Japanese citizens, and permanent residents who reside over the long term (The Ministry of Justice (Japan), n.d.). The type of work that can be done by foreigners is set by Japan's immigration policy with different categories which allow those who have special skills such as diplomats, engineers, or those working in humanitarian organizations and other international organizations to reside and work. This was brought about by changes in immigration policy and labor of Japan in 1990¹ which refused to accept unskilled workers while opening the door wide for acceptance of foreign workers who have special skills. The law was changed in great part to broaden the scope of legal activities for foreigners in certain skilled or professional categories, extend quotas for accepting workers under a trainee category, the revision of an entertainer category visa, and provide legal permission to South Americans of Japanese descent and their spouses/nikkeijin to stay and work in Japan. Nevertheless, the classification framework is a grey area regarding what is considered to be skilled/non-skilled as it is predicted on what is desirable employment (Sato, 2004).

Employment categories that go into this type of non-skilled works in Japan are derogatorily referred to as "3K": dangerous, difficult, dirty (*kitsui, kiken, and kitanai*). At that time, the Japanese government did not encourage the entry of foreign workers who did not have special skills or were not in Japan to obtain them under so-called knowledge transfer programs, such as the technical intern trainee program (Sugimoto, 2010). Occupations classified as 3K have shown a tendency to be filled with foreign workers from Asian countries such as China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Although the Japanese government has banned the entry of foreign workers who do not have special skills, there are gaps in the policy so that Japan can still meet the needs of workers without any special expertise through the so-called "side door," namely by having these workers enter on student and trainee visas.²

¹ In the 1990 immigration policy reforms, a new status of residency called "special permanent" was introduced as a result of the revised Act, which recognised the rights of Koreans and Chinese who had lost their Japanese citizenship as a result of World War II. Additionally, the act partially complied with the request to accept more foreign workers in order to address the labor shortfall (Saito, 2022).

² The term "side doors" refers to visa categories that are not intended for employment in Japan and were made to attract workers while maintaining the idea that low-skilled labor was prohibited (Farrer, 2020).

The emergence of a type of work under the trainee visa system in Japan is different from ordinary workers since changes in immigration policy in 1990. In that year, a trainee program was formed in cooperation with the Japanese government and the business sector in Japan. It began with forming the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (hereinafter referred to as JITCO) in 1991 to regulate the system of international trainee program delivery to Japan. Under this program, trainees stay for up to four years in Japan; the first year is to learn new knowledge under the trainee visa, and then a visa extended for three years under the status of technical intern where they will begin to work directly under a practical apprenticeship scheme in a company while receiving a salary (Japan International Cooperation Organization, 2017).

There are essentially two categories of technical intern trainees: 1) The individual enterprise type (often referred to as IET) and 2) The supervising organization type (hereinafter referred to as SOT). IET is the hiring program by which firms and other organizations (Implementing Organizations) in Japan accept staff members from overseas local subsidiaries, joint ventures, or trading partners (JITCO, 2017). SOT, on the other hand, is the acceptance system that incorporates the supervising organization (*Kanridantai*, the Japanese placement agencies, also known as AO) and the sending organization (*okuridashi kikan*, the recruiting agencies in the nation of origin, also known as SO) (JITCO, 2017). Meanwhile, the SOT recognizes two schemes: 1) government-to-government (hereinafter referred to as G-to-G), where the Japanese government-appointed supervising organization is IM JAPAN (International Manpower Development Organization hereinafter referred to as IM Japan); and 2) private-to-private (hereinafter referred to as P-to-P), in which private supervising organizations act as private placement and management agencies for technical intern trainees in Japan (Azis et al., 2020).

On the other hand, from the perspective of Indonesia's Labor Law (Law No.13/2003 on Manpower), apprenticeship is defined as a vocational training system that integrates training at a training institute to work directly under the guidance and supervision of an instructor or workers/laborers who are more experienced, in the process of production of goods and/or services in the company, to master a certain skill or trade.³

Based on the "skill system" established by the government of Japan, hundreds of thousands of Indonesian interns have been recruited through the Ministry for the internship program for 1 to 3 years. Until now, there are two schemes: an internship program for foreign

³ See Law No.13/2003 on Manpower (UUD No.13/2003 *tentang Ketenagakerjaan Indonesia*).

workers, namely the Industrial Training Program (ITP), and Technical Internship Program (TIP). In practice, the combination of the ITP scheme (maximum 1 year) and TIP scheme (maximum 2 years) is common, so overall it can work for a maximum of three years (Organization for Technical Intern Training, 2017). In general, the interns get a payment of 80,000 yen in the first year. The figure cannot be considered as salary in Japanese Labor Law which categorizes these workers as *kenshusei* or trainee. In the second and third years, referred to as *jisshusei* (trainee), there is a salary of about 100,000 yen per month not including overtime, meal allowances, health insurance, pension, and so on, as the amount depends on the individual company policy, and also, in the second year, participants are allowed to do overtime every month (Nugroho, 2022).

At present, 14 countries send their employees to Japan, and Vietnam is the largest sender (Japan International Cooperation Organization, 2022). There are seven fields of work: (1) agriculture; (2) fisheries; (3) construction; (4) the food processing industry; (5) the textile industry; (6) industrial machinery and metal goods; and (7) other industries such as furniture, printing, painting, and packaging. The jobs available to apprentices include 62 categories with 114 sub-categories of a particular job. After the signing of an agreement between the Ministry of Manpower and the Government of Japan, where the recipient institution in Japan has been IM Japan since 1993, the Indonesian government has sent many workers selected through the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) initiated by the Japanese government.

In total, the number of Indonesian trainees sent to participate in the program in Japan exceeded 100,000 people (between 1993 and 2022). This number continues to increase by about 5,200 people per year. A group of young workers within the age 20-30 is trained for four months under a program organized by the Ministry of Manpower branch in various regions in Indonesia. Only those (workers) who are recognized as being disciplined and enthusiastic are selected (Hadi, 2010; Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). For almost 30 years this cooperation has taken place under the ongoing TITP for sending workers to Japan, with the slogan of technology transfer from Japan to developing countries, with a three-year stay permit and a partial extension to five years starting from 2017. The number of participants in the TITP has been increasing since its launch in 1993.

However, criticism of the program has come from various circles, including a 2022 report from the United States government on human trafficking, which assessed Japan's efforts at the Tier 2 level for three consecutive years from 2018, due mainly to the serious human rights

violations against trainees and exploitation of their labor (US State.Gov. 2022).⁴ The impact of the report is that the Japanese government was considered to have “not taken any measures to hold recruiters and employers accountable for labor trafficking crimes under this system” (Asahi Shimbun, 2022).

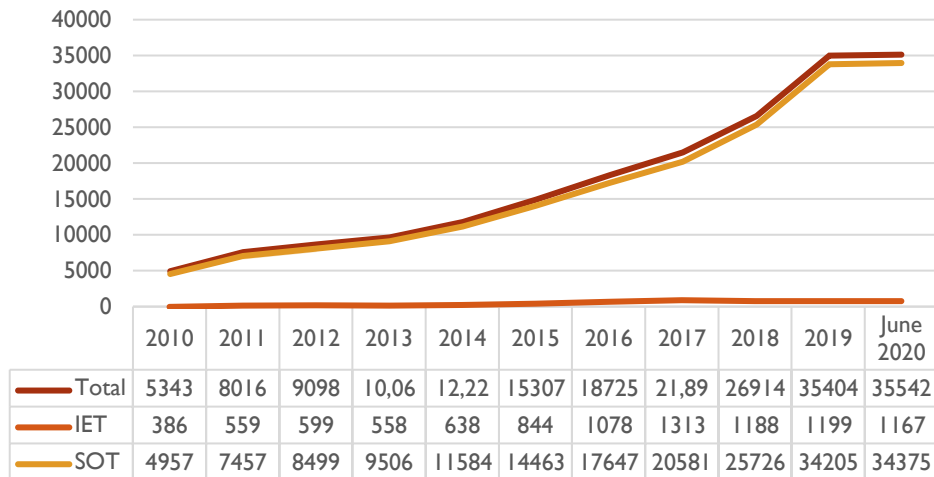
Meanwhile, on the Indonesian side, this program remains popular among young Indonesians. For example, in December 2019, the Ministry of Manpower of Indonesia in cooperation with IM Japan, agreed to continue the deployment of workers under the TITP and even to increase the number of Indonesian technical intern trainees. New training facilities have already been prepared by the government for aspiring migrant employees under the TITP. The Indonesian government plans to further increase the number of trainees sent to Japan. Ida Fauziyah, the Indonesian Minister of Manpower, said that the two parties have agreed to increase the number from previous years, and will deploy 5,000 more technical intern trainees each year over the next two to three years from 2019 (Fanani, 2019).

The following graph shows the number of Indonesian trainees from 2010 to 2020 who came to Japan as seen from two types of entry routes: The first is SOT, which stands for Supervising Organization Type, and the second is IET or Individual Enterprise Type where Japanese companies as implementing organizations accept staff members from their overseas offices, joint ventures, or business associates and conduct the training (The Organization for Technical Intern Training , 2022).⁵

⁴ Tier 1 is the highest ranking, as it satisfies the requirements to combat trafficking. In the meantime, Japan was ranked as a Tier 2 country in the study due to the country's ongoing lack of political will to combat all kinds of trafficking as well as identify and protect victims.

⁵ In this study, the author limits the focus of the research to the types of trainees who enter through the SOT route.

Graph 1 The Number of Indonesian Trainee IET and SOT (Types of Entry Routes) (2010 June-2020)



Source: Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2021

As seen in the above graph, the popularity of TITP in Indonesia increase while promotions are also intensively encouraged by both the government and private institutions. TITP continues to secure a place among young Indonesians amid an onslaught of criticism.

Why is it so? What makes Indonesia so excited to involve in Japan’s TITP? In this thesis, we are going to investigate and analyze the role of Indonesia in sustaining this TITP amid the mounting criticism. What are the harsh reality and characteristics of Indonesian trainee participants in the field, and who are the actors contributing to the sustainability of this program directly or indirectly? To answer these questions, this study will use ethnographic methods; ethnography is seen as a suitable method to be employed to address the questions in this research since it allows us to more thoroughly understand how this system is upheld by various actors, particularly when viewing it from the perspective of the trainees themselves.

Before explaining our ethnographic approach, it is necessary to place this research in the context of migration studies literature, and, more particularly, studies of Indonesian migration in Japan.

Literature Review

Migrant workers have been the focus of many researchers. Current work has contextualized the global flows of migrant labors, with many migrant streams from the so-called global “South” to the so-called developed “North.” More increasingly, the movement has been within the global South itself (with great intra-regional labor mobility taking place in regions like

Southeast Asia). Migration flows are both male and female with different industries prioritizing and requiring different types of cheap (and unfortunately seen as easily disposable) gendered migrant labors. Rodriguez (2010) critically shows how the Philippines has developed labor export strategies to release pressure on an underdeveloped labor market by exporting pools of trained labors to countries including Japan. Others have focused on how female migrants settle in developed nations such as Japan and contribute to the social policy at a community level (Douglas & Roberts, 2000; Lieba, 2009). Research has also focused on Japan's aging and demographic shrinking population and how highly skilled migrant laborers are being trialed in the healthcare sector (See Vogt et al., 2014). Migrant workers, however, are only marginally present in policy approaches to Japan's demographic change, if Japan does not openly promote a policy to accept large, systematic influxes of foreign workers; and there exists a tension between a notion of Japan as a homogeneous nation-state and the stark need for trans-border labor importation to ensure the continued supply to the short-term labor workforce that can potentially diversify the Japanese body politic (Ohnuki, 2015). Recently, when migrant labor entered Japan, it has been through economic partnership agreements (EPAs), or state-recognized programs, as the case of skilled Indonesian nurses and caregivers (Ohno et al., 2012). Migration overall occurs through a variety of (mostly legal) state-sanctioned channels, and many prefectures in Japan are taking a more inclusive approach toward both short-term and long-term residents (Milly, 2015). These literatures above are somehow helpful for us to understand the background of developing Japan's TITP. No doubt there are many other works related to the topic, but our primary focus is not these works on Japan. Rather, it is the scholarship of Indonesian migrant workers.

In fact, there have been several studies on Indonesian migrant workers abroad, and many of them focusing on the Middle East, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan. Indonesian migrant workers have gradually increased to join a global pool of migrant labors in other countries and regions. In 2021, there were approximately 37.7 million Indonesian workers who were working overseas in 2022 (Rizaty, 2022), and many coming from low-income households in rural and remote parts of Indonesia. Through regular remittances to local bank accounts, many support families and villages at home with more than USD 8 billion per year (as of 2014). The World Bank has estimated these remittances lowered the poverty rate in Indonesia by 26.7% during 2000-07 (World Bank, 2014, p.6). Remittances are of tremendous importance for "inclusive growth" and equitable opportunities for the Indonesian countryside and form an undercurrent in the decisions that Indonesians make to travel overseas to countries such as Japan in search of work. And as a major source of migrant labor in Southeast Asia, gendered

migration has also become a phenomenon in Indonesia (Listiani, 2019).

Japan has also become one of the favorite destinations for Indonesian migrant workers to improve their lives. Some preliminary research has been conducted on Indonesians who have traveled to Japan to work as trainees in Japan's Industrial Training and Technical Internship Program. Nawawi brought attention to the issue with this program by discovering that many of the young Indonesians taking part in it were actually regarded as cheap labor in order to fill Japan's labor shortage. The majority of them also perform menial tasks or are designated to a small area of the business, like cutting, packaging, lifting, and excavating (Nawawi, 2010). In her research, Romdiati tried to identify a general typology of Indonesian migrants currently employed in Japan and examined the individual condition and human rights of migrants in several destination cities. She emphasizes the findings of human rights violations in this program. Although these individuals are essentially "workers," their "trainee" status prevents them from asserting their rights and forces them to put up with inadequate working circumstances, for example: being paid an allowance instead of a wage; compulsory overtime; physical abuse by management; and forced savings (Romdiati, 2003). There is also a comparison between the labor migration policies of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan and South Korea. The research explained the different immigration policies and living conditions of Indonesian workers in the two countries (Kartikasari, 2013). Another comparative study observed Filipino and Indonesian nurses and caregivers in Japan (Ohno, 2011). On the other hand, Isabel (2016) looked closely at the state of social movement among Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong and Japan. Her essay attempts to understand migrant workers as active participants in social and cultural movements. Meanwhile, Gusnelly and Devi Riskianingrum (2018) sought to digest the transfer knowledge from the alumni trainees in the agriculture sector as a lesson learned from Japan, while Rustam (2021) looked at the religious activity of Indonesian workers in Hiroshima working for oyster cultivation betting. He found that there were many violations related to the prohibition of religious practices during the program. In addition, Kurniaty et al. (2017) explored the lived experiences of Indonesian nurses who previously worked as caregivers in Japanese residential care facilities. Kurniaty found that there are skill gaps that cannot be applied by them after the program as they work as nurses. Risda (2022) looks at the advantages of the TITP and claims that sending Indonesian workers to Japan can boost the capacity of Indonesian human resources, and social interaction between Indonesian and Japanese workers fosters acculturation as a sociocultural reality.

As seen above, the existing studies have provided useful explanations about the condition of Japan's immigration policy as a whole and Japan's demographic conditions that

trigger changes in Japan's migration policy from time to time. In addition, the existing research on Indonesian technical intern trainees in Japan has emphasized the reality on the ground that is not in accordance with the objectives of this program such as the findings of human rights violations. Some studies also focus on the implementation of the program and its advantages and disadvantages. Comparative studies with other countries have been done to see how the program operates in terms of regulations and policies.

However, the existing literature on Indonesian migrant workers in Japan has predominantly looked at the TITP as policy, legal and institutional issues that create various problems and misconducts in Japan. Of course, such research is crucial to see whether this program is in line with what is intended or not. Nevertheless, we should not neglect the perspective of Indonesia as a sending country, since this is bilateral cooperation. It is important to analyze the role of Indonesia as a sending country by examining actors involved in this program. The mainstream narrative in the previous studies tends to see the bilateral relationship between Japan and the sending countries as that of 'exploiting' and 'being exploited.' However, what is happening on the ground is more complex in a way that undermines such a dichotomous perception. This study attempts to demonstrate the complexity by clarifying the role of Indonesia's migration industry in enduring Japan's TITP for more than three decades.

Research Questions and Approaches

Following the literature review, we now recognize the importance of examining the role of the sending country (i.e., Indonesia) in understanding the problem of Japan's TITP. Why has the TITP been sustained even though many criticisms have been addressed? What is the role of Indonesia in sustaining this problematic program? Who are playing what roles in maintaining the program? These are the main questions throughout the thesis.

To analyze these questions, the author will investigate various actors: the government, the recruitment agency, trainees, supervising organizations, and alumni. Examining just one actor—as typically seen in previous studies—is insufficient to understand the structure of how each actor is interconnected and contributing to the resilience of this program. Different actors must be examined in order to fully understand Indonesia's role and contribution as a sending country in perpetuating this program.

At the same time, we will observe three different stages: before departure, during the program, and after the program. The time period is crucial in understanding how different mechanisms work in different stages for the direction of reproducing the rationality of TITP.

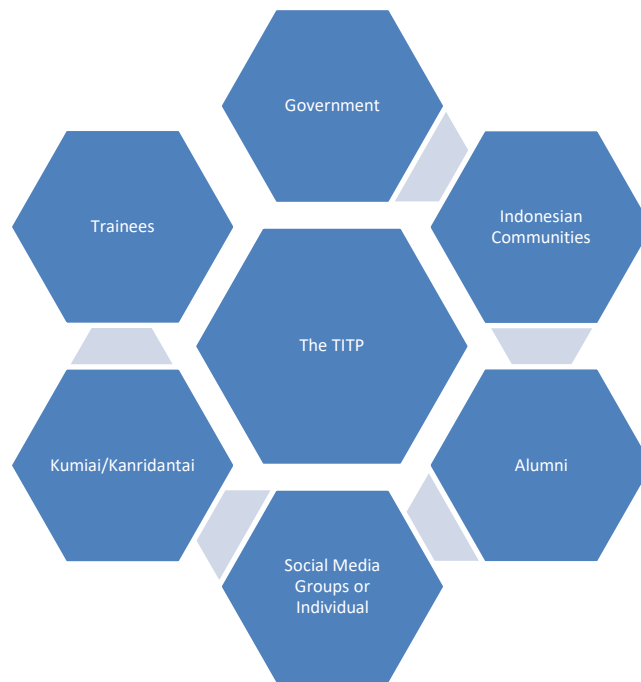
We cannot grasp the whole picture simply by observing one stage, such as the pre-departure period or the time spent in the destination country; rather, we must observe how the program functions throughout all of its phases, from the pre-departure period to the time spent in the destination country, and from the time the program is finished to the time when participants return to their home country. These two approaches significantly distinguish this research from the previous research, and it is through these two approaches that we attempt to contribute to the scholarship of Indonesian migrant workers.

Terminology

As explained above, the author analyzes the sustainability of TITP and precariousness of the circle from three different stages and also from the perspectives of the actors involved in these stages. Here we need further explanations about who these actors are and the terminology that will be widely used in this thesis.

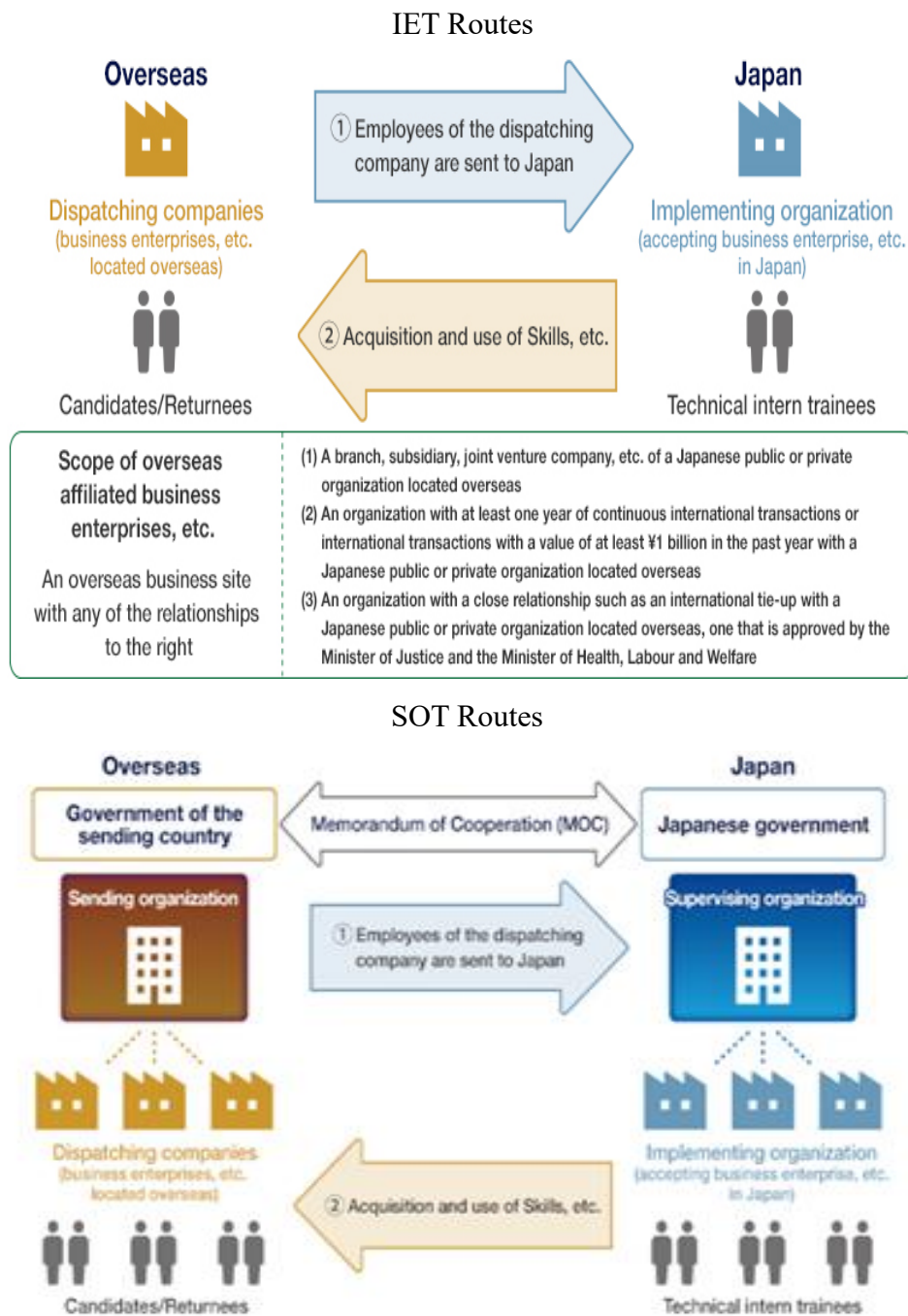
The first is the actors involved in this thesis. We identify the Indonesian government. Then, we have the trainee workers themselves, both active and prospective technical intern trainee participants. Then are also the alumni of the trainee program. Indonesian community groups in Japan, both religious, ethnic, and special associations formed by certain professional groups or social movements are examined, along with social media groups such as Facebook groups or Instagram groups both owned by individual trainees or groups. Other actors, from the perspective of the business group, include the supervising organization, particularly those who are working as translators in the supervising organization or *kanridantai/kumai*, who function as an intermediary between the trainees and the company. The following figure shows the main actors studied in this thesis.

Figure 1 Actors who are involved in this Technical Intern Trainee Program



Then, for the type of TITP, this thesis will investigate trainee programs handled by the SOT, namely the supervising organization type, that has both G-to-G route and P-to-P (private-to-private) route. For government agencies, G-to-G is a collaboration between the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and IM Japan. Following is the detailed flow and explanation about the IET and SOT routes:

Picture 1 The Technical Intern Trainee IET and SOT Routes



Source: JITCO, 2017

Methodology

The main part of this work is the result of ethnographic fieldwork, netnography, interviews, and participant observation of the relevant parties to gauge what issues/problems they are aware of. Fieldwork was conducted on/off sites and also with current and former alumni of the technical trainee program in Indonesia as well as interviews with the stakeholders, such as

policymakers from Japan and, particularly in Indonesia, and the supervising organization (*kumiai/kanridantai*). The strength of this research lies in talking to people who are or have been on the scheme and building a picture of it from the perspective of Indonesians who are/have been on the program. The interview techniques I used are so-called unstructured and naturalistic interviews, and my participation in local communities to talk to informants both in and out of work.

Ethnography and Netnography

The ethnographic and netnographic methods were employed to examine the TITP's complexity from an Indonesian perspective and the diverse experiences of the individuals involved. In general, ethnography is a qualitative practice that involves engaging with and observing a group of individuals over time to comprehend their perspectives, interactions, and relationships (Naidoo, 2012, p. 1). According to Bryman (2012), it might be challenging to discern between participant observation and many other definitions of ethnography. Both emphasize how the participant observer/ethnographer spends a significant amount of time in a group, monitoring behaviors, listening to what is said during dialogues with other members of the group and the fieldworker, and asking questions (Bryman, 2012 p. 432).

Why do we conduct participant observation? Because participant observation is one of the research methods that supports the "deep hanging out" style, which is the method by which a researcher establishes and maintains a complex relationship over a considerable period with a human association in a setting where it naturally occurs to gain a scientific understanding of that association. Besides the ability to put researchers close to real data or close to people (meanings), participant observation also enables us to study what people say they do, and what people actually do (attitudes, behavior) (Bryman, 2019).

In addition to ethnography, netnography is also utilized as a methodology in this thesis since it is necessary to make observations in daily life, one of which is making observations on social media, to examine interactions in natural settings regarding the dynamics of this trainee program. Robert Kozinets invented the field of netnography, which focuses on studying online communities and cultures as separate social phenomena rather than isolated pieces of content. It is an adaptation of ethnography for the online world (Kozinets, 2019). Social media research is regarded as human research in netnography. Netnography is a type of cultural inquiry that aims to better understand people. To engage in netnography is to keep an interest in humans from an anthropological perspective (Kozinets, 2016, p.3).

Netnography was conducted in this study on the social media groups (Line and WhatsApp) from the two largest religious organization groups in Indonesia, namely Muhammadiyah Kansai, also known as PRIM Kansai, and Nahdlatul Ulama, also known as NU. In addition, the author follows the Facebook and Instagram groups IPTIJ (Indonesian Japanese Trainee Fraternal Association), job vacancies in Japan, and *kenshusei.id*, as well as several individual trainee participants on Facebook and Instagram.

Since the objective of this study is to comprehend the cycle of the technical intern trainee program from the perspectives of Indonesians, ethnography and netnography were selected as the appropriate approach for this project. Ultimately, gaining access to a social setting is one of the most important and yet most difficult steps in ethnography; therefore, as a measure of transparency in how this research was conducted, the following is an explanation of data collection.

Data Gathering and Access

In the participant observation, sometimes referred to as ethnographic research, a researcher joins the group s/he is investigating to gather information and comprehend a social phenomenon or problem. During participant observation, the researcher attempts to simultaneously play the roles of subjective participant and impartial observer (Crossman, 2019). In this study, participant observation served as the main approach for gathering data during the study process, which is also what gives ethnography its unique style. Participant observation helped the author understand and see issues as a whole.

To engage people, the "snowball strategy" was employed. One of the key purposes of snowballing is to reach hard-to-reach people. Snowball sampling begins with one or more study participants. Afterward, it proceeds with their suggestions (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The interview sites ranged from a mall, restaurants, coffee shops, government buildings, training facilities, mosques, and a trainee dormitory. A few interviews took place in the residences of the interview subjects who were asked a series of open-ended questions on everything from their upbringing to their experiences while living in Japan. The majority of respondents were persons the author already knew since some of the respondents employed the longitude design, which involved the author following the respondent at three separate stages (pre-departure, during the program, and post-program); therefore, the author made a few minor changes to the questions based on

participant observations for each of them.⁶ Naturally, if a topic was brought up by a participant, the author sought to follow their lead. The author employed a semi-structured interviewing method when having a conversation with the experts. More specific inquiries were made, but the author made an effort to keep up with the discussion. In general, conducting interviews with a variety of people helped create a thorough understanding of the phenomenon.

Being a lecturer and a doctoral university student at the same time could become a barrier. To make this less intimidating, the author decided to identify herself as a student rather than a researcher, even though that sometimes didn't quite earn their trust. As is well known, in the context of Indonesian culture, gaps and hierarchies between migrant workers and intellectual groups often become obstacles. Wahyu Susilo, an activist and a founder of Migrant Care, pointed out that discussions about the Indonesian diaspora have always had political and class biases. To date, what the bearers of this aspiration have understood or pushed is that the Indonesian diaspora is those "Indonesian professionals working abroad" and because of these traces they "make the nation proud" (Tempo.co, 2021). As a result, there is a perceived separation between the diaspora of intellectuals and the diaspora of migratory workers. It is so ironic that, while they are frequently enslaved abroad, groups of Indonesian migrant workers are forced to deal with the stigma of marginal class at home as well.

Fortunately, the author already knew several trainee participants from previous studies in Japan, namely at a private foreign language institution in West Java where the author had worked as a part-time lecturer. It was in this place that the author first saw the phenomenon of young people who are enthusiastic about pursuing their dreams in Japan by participating in this apprenticeship program. Some of them even decided to drop out of college to take part in an internship program in Japan. It was with the trainee participants who were former students that the author had the opportunity to gain their trust and was able to stay for a few days in their dormitory to observe their daily lives as trainees at Omi Hachiman in Shiga prefecture.

To get a wider range of participants, besides going on safari from mosque to mosque to meet Indonesian trainee associations in various regions of Japan, such as Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka, Tokyo, and Kobe, the author also decided to work part-time or *baito* at a halal restaurant. The halal restaurant was chosen because it was the place most visited by Indonesians, especially technical intern trainees. The author felt a different reaction when the technical intern trainees

⁶ In longitudinal studies, researchers repeatedly examine the same individuals to detect any changes that might occur over a period of time. One of the advantages of longitudinal studies is to allow researchers to follow their subjects in real time. This means we can better establish the real sequence of events, allowing our insight into cause-and-effect relationships (Thomas, 2022).

saw the author as a part-time worker in a halal restaurant as a cashier and waiter. The sense of acceptance and trust was more pronounced than when the author was seen as a researcher or a Ph.D. student. Naturally, it helped a lot because a vital and frequently difficult stage of ethnographic research is gaining access to the field. It takes more than just banging on a door to get it to open to gain access; rather, it's a dynamic, relational activity on par with conducting field research (Huber & Imeri, 2021, p.5).

The author worked as a part-time worker in the halal restaurant for one year, from April 2021 to April 2022, every Saturday or Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The author was paid 950 yen per hour for working as a cashier and waitress. But sometimes the author also helped in the kitchen, such as by washing dishes and preparing rice and drinks. For about the first four months, the author received training in Japanese hospitality (*omotenashi*).⁷ Working in a restaurant was a busy job, and it was very difficult to interact with guests, but, because in 2021 conditions were still pandemic and Japan had not yet opened its borders, there were not too many visitors, and 80% of those who came were foreigners, and most of them from Indonesia. This is where the author's interaction and communication with guests, especially TITP participants, were built. Interviews were conducted at a later date after the author gained the participants' trust. While at the restaurant, information related to research was recorded in field notes, mostly on cell phones. The restaurant was chosen as a stepping stone to reach a wider range of trainees, observe the dynamics of interaction in a natural setting, and preserve the author's outsider status to avoid any conflicts of interest or the risk of "going native." The phrase "going native" refers to the predicament that is allegedly occasionally experienced by ethnographers who lose their sense of self as researchers and become entangled in the worldview of the people they are researching (Bryman, 2019, p.445).

Here the author met many technical intern trainees from various regions in Japan; apart from trainees living in Shiga, Kyoto, and Osaka, many trainees from Shizuoka, Saitama, and Tokyo also came. Interestingly, apart from trainees from Indonesia, the author also met and discussed with trainees from Bangladesh and the Philippines, who used to hold farewell parties for trainees who would return to their home countries after they finished their program in Japan. The author also met several Indonesian trainees from Shiga in this restaurant who would frequently host farewell celebrations with the business owner after their training program was

⁷ Translations into other languages of the Japanese phrase "omotenashi" are generally not very precise or direct. "Hospitality" is perhaps the closest English equivalent, but that term doesn't fully capture the essence of omotenashi. Omotenashi is the Japanese concept of treating a visitor or customer with respect (<https://japanintercultural.com/free-resources/so-what-is-omotenashi-actually/>).

over. In addition, the author met with a larger network of Indonesian migrant workers, including engineers, nurses, and carers for the elderly. The following is a photo of the author working at the halal restaurant with a group of trainees from Lombok in Hamamatsu who routinely visit this halal restaurant in Kyoto every big holiday.

Picture 2 Indonesian Lombok Trainee Community from Hamamatsu



Source: Author

Participant observation is the way the author utilizes in joining the group's core activities. The author has full membership of the group and my status as a researcher is known. In closed environments, such as organizations, the author frequently enters into a research agreement with the organization to get access or acceptance; in open environments, the author is a regular in the area and actively participates in the main activities. For example, in the close setting of Islamic organizations like NU and Muhammadiyah, the author needs permission to join their Line social media and gain their trust.

Ethical Considerations

The participants' informed consent was obtained throughout the research. Participants were told of the author's status as a researcher and the motivation for writing a PhD. thesis. Verbal consent was obtained; no written permission was requested. The immediate, intense, and extended involvement of the researcher with the group being studied is what makes ethnographic research unique. According to Huber and Imeri, informed consent in ethnographic research 'requires dynamic negotiations and generally cannot be fixed with a contractual

gesture signed in advance' (Huber & Imeri, 2021, p.5). The author also mentioned that the data would be made into a thesis, which might turn into a book. Before each interview, the author verbally captured consent. They replied in the affirmative when the author inquired if they were willing to take part in an interview. As a result, interviews were granted verbal consent. The research does not contain any information that could identify the participants' identities, and their names and particular locations are anonymized. Additionally, all photos that appear in this thesis have the participant's consent and permission to be used. Field notes were used to capture observations, interactions, and reflections. For netnography, data were visually recorded using screenshots and the copy-and-paste technique (Kozinets, 2016, p.12). The author's status was revealed to the leader of the group or organization (here Muhammadiyah and NU), the purpose of the research was explained, and anonymity was guaranteed.

Structure of Thesis

This thesis has nine chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the focus of each chapter can be summarized as below.

Chapter 2 examines the perspectives of the Indonesian government on the TITP. This chapter analyzes the development of bilateral discourses between Japan and Indonesia regarding the TITP since early 1990s and how they have contributed to the building of the legitimacy for the program continuity.

Chapter 3 is about the pre-departure training program in Indonesia. This chapter analyzes how the Indonesian government-established control mechanism during the training period before departure is working and how it is adopted by the private agencies to manipulate the image of working in Japan and implant certain mindsets.

Chapters 4-7 examine different faces of Indonesian TITP participants in Japan. First, in Chapter 4, we will focus on the generation gap among Indonesian trainees. How have generations shaped the characteristics of trainees? We will find the power that seniority culture has in shaping the behavioral norms and characteristics of trainees until the present.

Chapter 5 is about supervising organizations. It examines how the supervising organization functions to contain complaints and problems at the workplace voiced by trainees. We will particularly highlight the role of Indonesian translators who are expected to bridge the communication between trainees and companies.

Chapter 6 looks at the role of the Indonesian community in Japan. We will examine different activities of Indonesian communities/groups in Japan and find out how they construct

the characteristics and images of Indonesians in Japan. We will also discuss how they play a role of stabilizing and helping participants in dealing with internal problems during the program.

Chapter 7 focuses on the role of social media. It analyzes how social media use among Indonesian trainees and alumni has played a significant role in creating a positive, idealized image of the TITP and indirectly succeeded in promoting the program. The main part of this chapter uses ethnography and netnography by observing the natural interactions among the participants through their social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounts owned by the TITP participants and alumni.

Chapter 8 focuses on the post-program stage. It investigates how the implementation of this program can be evaluated from the objectives of this program, namely the transfer of knowledge and technology through the TITP alumni who have either departed through the government (G-to-G) or the private sector (P-to-P). What is the struggle of the alumni after returning from the program? How extensive is the government's support for retired trainees upon their return to their homeland? What motivates the alumni to continue engaging in the program and becoming part of the TITP regime? We will find answers to these questions.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by summarizing its findings, providing a coherent answer to the research question, and underlining scholarly contributions of this thesis.

Chapter 2

Training, Transferring Knowledge, and Making a ‘Win-Win’: Bilateral Discourses Between Japan and Indonesia

As a country with the fourth largest population in the world (Worldometer, 2023) and being categorized as a developing country, there are naturally many things that are the responsibility of the Indonesian government to make this demographic bonus not a threat but an advantage. Indonesia itself is projected to get this demographic bonus in 2030 until 2040. The National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) estimates that, by 2030, Indonesia will have a population of productive age reaching 64% of its total population (National Development Planning Agency, 2017). But of course, there are many things that can become threats, such as unemployment, which is one of the challenges for Indonesia in demographic bonuses along with education, health, inequality, and poverty.

Japan, on the other hand, is becoming more concerned about the long-term viability of its economy due to its aging population. Regarding the aging population in Japan, 2005 was a turning point for its demographic conditions. According to official Tokyo statistics, the number of deaths in that year was very small compared to the number of births (Eberstadt, 2012). With the decline in the average number of births, the total population of children has decreased, and this has resulted in a drop in the population of productive age, which will have an impact on the lack of human resources in Japan.

The problem of population decline is certainly a potential threat to the existence of Japan as a country, because it both directly and indirectly has an impact on other aspects. One of them is the employment aspect, whereby a reduction in the population of young people will also result in a reduction in the population of productive age or workforce population, which means that the number of human resources in Japan will also decrease (Ganelli & Miake, 2015). In line with the aging problem, the population crisis is exacerbating current conditions in Japan, where the rate of participation of productive age workers has also diminished. At present, many companies and the employment sector in Japan are experiencing a severe shortage of labor.

Under these circumstances, it is clear that TITP, a program for developing nations to enhance their human resources, is connected to the interests of both Japan and Indonesia. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to identify and analyze how Japan and Indonesia are trying to legitimize this cooperation by utilizing the slogans "transfer of technology" and "transfer of knowledge." What is the development of bilateral discourse during the three decades and how have they contributed to the longevity of the program? This chapter consists of five sections.

First, we will look at the history of cooperative relations between Indonesia and Japan, especially in the development of labor cooperation. Second, we will examine the condition of Indonesia as a sending country. Third, we will analyze the bilateral discourses between Indonesia and Japan regarding the TITP. Following these, we will draw some conclusions.

History of Cooperative Relations between Indonesia and Japan in the Employment Sector

The post-war relationship between Indonesia and Japan began in April 1958, marked by the signing of the Peace Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Indonesia. In the same year, the War Treaty Agreement was also signed as compensation for past Japanese occupation. To help realize Indonesia's economic and social development, the Japanese government has established many collaborations with Indonesia for more than 60 years in various fields, such as assistance in the flow of funds, technology, and emergency relief for natural disaster victims including cooperation in the field of employment (Indonesian Embassy of Japan, 2018).

To fulfill the workforce need in the industry, cooperation in the field of employment between Indonesia and Japan also started with apprenticeship programs or technical intern trainee program. This trainee program, established by the Japanese government in 1954, initially aimed to encourage international cooperation and provide assistance to developing countries. This program was formed due to cooperation between the Japanese government and the business sector in Japan, in response to its domestic economic expansion after World War II and a shortage of labor since the early 1970s. This then encouraged the arrival of newcomers or foreign workers from Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia from the 1960s to the 1980s (Nawawi, 2010).

As a result, it may be claimed that Japanese society first accepted trainees around the end of the 1960s, when many Japanese businesses began to expand abroad and were given permission to train local employees at their headquarters in Japan. The current "Individual Enterprise Type (IET)" of TITP is this acceptance scheme (Saito, 2020). The acceptance of foreign workers who entered the workforce in Japan through the trainee system became a controversial subject in the political, economic, and social arenas in the late 1980s because the Japanese government officially took the position of opposing the acceptance of unskilled workers from abroad and traditionally interpreted "unskilled workers" as those whose participation in the Japanese economy may harm the economy and society (Kuwahara, 2005). As a result, in 1990, the Japanese government revised the training system that had previously

been in place by making it possible to accept trainees in a wider range of occupations and aiming to divert Japanese technology as a contribution to the development of human resources in developing countries. With the transmission of knowledge and skills acquired by "trainees" from such nations, the ostensible stated goal is to assist in the industrial growth of emerging nations (Hayakawa, 2017).

As noted in Chapter 1, the Ministry of Justice issued a notification that established the new Supervisory Organization Type (SOT) route in addition to the Individual Enterprise Type (IET). This historic liberalization made it possible for trainees to be accepted by SMEs (Small Medium Enterprises) in Japan. As the main point of contact for trainees arriving from the sending organization and as a connection to the receiving companies, associations of cooperatives and other similar organizations act as the supervising organization (implementing organizations). It can be said that the fundamental framework of the current TITP was constructed at that time.

Along the way, many problems were found in the field related to this program, which ultimately led to many critics who insisted on the need for changes. According to the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare's report, there were violations such as violence, excessive working hours, and unpaid overtime, in 72.4% of all workplaces in 2008 and 70.5% in 2009. Based on these conditions, the Japanese government finally revised the program in 2010 by providing trainees with a clear legal status and protection (Kodama, 2015, p. 6). Unlike the previous period, when trainees' status was not covered by the protection of Japanese labor law, this protection statute was enacted for technical intern trainees to improve the protection of interns, by allowing them to live in Japan for a maximum of three years while receiving "technical intern training" and taking use of the protections provided by labor laws and regulations (ILO, n.d.).

The Act on Changes to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act and the Special Act on Immigration Control both contain these modifications. A new residency status known as "technical intern training" has been established by this new regulation. Technical Intern Training 1 refers to "activities focused on the acquisition of information through classes" and "activities focused on the development of skills, based on an employment contract. Likewise, "Technical Intern Training 2" refers to activities in which a party who has gained skills through "Technical Intern Training 1" would be involved in duties acquired as part of an employment contract, in order to master the skills. It is necessary to pass a competency test, such as the national trade skill examination, to transition from Technical Intern Training 1 to Technical Intern Training 2 (Watanabe, 2010, p. 59).

Subsequently, in 2016, The Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees (hereinafter referred to as the Technical Intern Training Act) was promulgated and came into effect in the following year. For the aim of optimizing the system, the law adopted an accreditation system for technical intern training plans, a notification system for Implementing Organizations, a licensing system for Supervising Organizations, and by establishing the Organization for Technical Intern Training (hereinafter referred to as OTIT) as an approved organization that also conducts protection toward the Technical Intern Trainees (OTIT, 2017). Furthermore, under this law, it is allowed to increase the quotas and extend the training period from three to five years (those who continue the fourth and fifth years are referred to as "Technical Intern Training 3") for excellent Supervising Organizations and Implementing Organizations, and increase the number of approved occupations (JITCO, 2017). The following is the development of changes from the technical intern trainee program.

Table 1 The Development of the Technical Intern Trainee Program

1960s	Expansion of Japanese business companies overseas → Acceptance of local staff to parent companies/main offices in Japan → Individual Enterprise Type (IET) Interns
1980	One-year internship (Not protected by labor law)
1990	Supervising Organization Type (SOT) apprenticeship G-to-G via Indonesian Ministry of Labor and IM Japan P-to-P via job training institutions (licensed private sending organizations) and Supervisory Organization (<i>kanridantai, kumiai</i>) who served as an intermediary between trainees and companies
1993	TITP (unprotected by Labor Law)
2010	TITP (protected by Labor Law)
2017	The technical intern trainees are allowed to increase the quotas and extend the training period from three to five years (fourth and fifth years are designated as Technical Intern Training 3)

Source: Watanabe, 2010 and JITCO, 2017

Looking at the table above, we can see that from the Japanese side, the technical intern program has undergone many changes since its establishment in 1993. Even more recently, the Japanese government also appointed a special panel to consider changing the TITP, due to demands and criticism from various parties. On the other hand, when considered from an Indonesian perspective, TITP is described as “a job training system that is carried out in an integrated manner in Indonesia and abroad by job training institutions, government agencies, businesses,

and educational institutions under the supervision and guidance of the Indonesian government.”⁸ In the meantime, Indonesia, as the sending nation, has not recognized technical intern trainees as migrant workers since the program's establishment in 1993 until the present (Azis et al., 2020). Till the present, the Indonesian government's position towards TITP has not changed.

After the TITP cooperation program in 1993, other cooperative relationships pertaining to employment between Indonesia and Japan have emerged under the umbrella of the IJEPA (Indonesian-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement), which is an agreement regarding an economic partnership between Indonesia and Japan based on the principle of the EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement). IJEPA was ratified on July 1, 2008, after being signed on August 20, 2007, in Jakarta by the leaders of the states of Japan and Indonesia. IJEPA is built on three primary pillars: cooperation, investment/trade facilitation, and liberalization. Specifically, Japan provides opportunities for sending nurses and elderly nurses to work in Japan as part of this labor collaboration. (Indonesian Ministry of Trade, 2008).

Further, Japan created the “Specified Skilled Worker” or SSW (hereinafter referred to as SSW) status of residence in April 2019 to welcome competent foreign specialists to operate in specific industrial fields in Japan as ready-to-work workers without prior training. Philippines, Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and Indonesia are among the nations that can send employees with SSW visa status (Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, 2019). Accordingly, since its inauguration of technical intern trainees in 1993, the number of Indonesian trainee participants in this program has been increasing and continues to experience popularity among young Indonesians. Coupled with the opening of new types of visas of SSW, the enthusiasm and popularity of Japan as a destination country for Indonesian migrant workers have been increasing.

Indonesia as a Sending Country

Indonesia is a developing country that has an abundant productive-age workforce.⁹ The existence of the demographic bonus issue where the productive age will reach a very large number in the next few years, plus the high number of youth unemployment in addition to the

⁸ See Government Regulation No. 08/2008 on Regulations for Conducting an Apprenticeship Program Outside of Indonesia (Peraturan Pemerintah No.08/2008 *tentang Tata Cara Perizinan Penyelenggaraan Program Pemagangan di Luar Wilayah Indonesia*).

⁹ Indonesia is a country dominated by productive age, i.e. between 14-64 years of age. The number of productive age reaches 70% of the total population (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2022).

insufficient availability of jobs is a crucial problem. The problem of high unemployment will have impact on poverty, crime, and other socio-political problems. This demographic issue will also affect the high migration flows continuously, which are caused by the number of productive workers who cannot be accommodated domestically. Consequently, it becomes a complex workforce problem. Indeed, the problem of unemployment has become a frightening specter, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia. Developing countries are often faced with high unemployment rates because of the narrow employment opportunities and large rapidly growing population.

So far, the government has not been able to overcome unemployment and have not been able to reduce the high unemployment rate in Indonesia. In 2019, for example, the government made efforts to tackle the unemployment rate, including 1. Conducting job fairs, 2. Providing job training, 3. Improving the quality of education, 4. Improving the entrepreneurial spirit, 5. Providing job vacancy information and 6. Transmigration (Abdi, 2019). However, it is becoming increasingly clear that these efforts have not had a significant impact on reducing the unemployment rate in the country. Meanwhile, for high school and vocational school graduates, 28.2% and 24.5%, respectively, diploma education is only 3.1% and the undergraduate education level is 10.5%. Of course, this is very surprising because the unemployment rate is dominated by the younger generation with a high level of education (Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics/BPS, 2020). Meanwhile, by the mandate contained in Indonesia's Constitution, the government is obliged to provide a decent living for its citizens. This is stated in Article 27 of the Constitution which reads "every citizen has the right to work and earn a decent living, the government is obliged to provide employment and protect the rights of workers."

One of the causes of the difficulty in reducing unemployment is structural poverty. Structural poverty is poverty caused by rulers who make unjust policies, and we can see a great deal of evidence of the causes of structural poverty in Indonesia. Corruption, collusion, and nepotism have been ingrained in everyone from high-ranking officials to low-ranking officials in the country. Several attempts to break this vicious circle have failed.¹⁰ Likewise, the oligarchic economy in Indonesia further aggravates the situation of the poor. Poverty is a

¹⁰ It is believed that Indonesia is not serious about addressing and resolving corruption. This is evident from the fact that private enterprises are the source of 59 percent of corruption accusations in Indonesia. Apart from that, corruption offences such as unlawful enrichment (accumulating wealth through illegal means), overseas bribery (bribery between businesses and foreign officials), and influence-trading are not yet subject to regulation (corruption carried out by people who are not state administrators but control state projects by exploiting their closeness to power) (Satria,2021).

dominant factor that leads to other social problems, such as backwardness, ignorance, neglect, and premature death. Indeed, the problems of illiteracy, dropping out of school, street children, child labor, and human trafficking cannot be separated from the problem of poverty (Mulyadi, 2016).

Thus, labor migration is a reflection of economic growth and inequality of development between one country and another. Workers from countries of lower economic growth rates move to countries with higher economic growth rates, higher wages, better environmental conditions, and greater job opportunities. Labor focuses on differences in wages and working conditions between regions or between countries. The high number of unemployed in Indonesia and the narrowing of job opportunities make many people choose to migrate abroad to find work. The economic conditions in many developing countries in recent decades have not been able to provide enough job opportunities to keep up with population growth, so the problem of unemployment is getting more serious (Puspitasari & Kusreni, 2017). Table 2 is an overview of the number of Indonesian workers abroad since 1960s until mid-1990s.

Table 2 The Development of the number of Indonesian workers working abroad from Repelita (Five-year Development Plan) I to V

Repelita	Period	Number of Migrants
I	1969 -- 1974	5,624
II	1974 – 1979	17,042
III	1979 – 1984	96,410
IV	1984 – 1989	292,262
V	1989 – 1994	652,272

Source: Sukamdi, 2007, p.116

As the table shows, the number of Indonesian migrant workers increased from year to year, although, if we look at history in the 1960s, the placement of Indonesian workers abroad did not involve the government, but was arranged individually, through kinship, and traditional methods. After 1970, the government set up rules to regulate the dispatch of migrant workers because they recognized that it had a positive and high economic value (Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency/BP2MI, n.d).

Ultimately, Indonesia becomes the second largest supplying country of migrant workers in ASEAN after the Philippines, and it is not only the economic benefits they provide, such as

remittances, which make these Indonesian migrant workers "heroes of foreign exchange" but also their contribution to reducing the problem of unemployment. Looking for better job opportunities is one of the factors driving the ever-increasing number of migrant workers in Indonesia.

Further, according to ILO, labor mobility in Indonesia is also triggered by several factors, as follows:

1. There is no meeting point between locations where job opportunities continue to increase and locations where job seekers live.
2. The level of education continues to grow which encourages young people to be reluctant to work in the agricultural sector and seek work in other sectors.
3. The process of rapid commercialization of the agricultural sector, which replaces labor inputs with capital inputs. Strong cultural values held by several ethnic groups encourage people to move out of their hometowns to gain employment and experience.
4. The strong tradition of responding to local and regional conflicts by moving to safer locations, either temporarily or permanently.
5. The rigid patterns adopted by the majority of Indonesians in which families try to increase their sense of security by encouraging family members to work outside their hometowns. In this way, they have many sources of income, which will reduce the harm if one of those sources is lost.
6. The rapidly increasing spread of the "migration industry" in Indonesia involves the recruitment of people/institutions, travel service providers, and other intermediaries that facilitate the flow of labor to destinations and abroad.
7. The tradition of responding to crises is by sending family members to areas that have job vacancies and can generate more attractive income than in their hometowns. The economic crisis that occurred from 1997-98 has dramatically changed the map of the Indonesian economy. The crisis not only affected the existing pattern of labor mobility but also triggered new mobility in response to the crisis (ILO, 2004, p.3).

Thus, there is a long tradition in Indonesian society of addressing poverty through certain mobility strategies. There is a long-established pattern in which families seek to increase their sense of security by encouraging family members to work outside their hometowns. This method makes the family have many sources of income and it makes them safe if one source of income can no longer be counted on. Indonesian people are widely spread in various regions both in their own country and in other countries to increase the opportunities for their lives and their families. Indonesia has now become one of the main sources/suppliers of migrant workers in the world. Indonesia has implemented a so-called "transmigration" program to move people from areas close to the capital to more remote areas, and this has been going on throughout the 20th century. However, the program was discontinued in 2000 following the 1997/8 economic crisis because the government considered the move inappropriate and not well-targeted. In 1982, along with the decline in oil prices, there was a shift in the Indonesian economy toward

promoting investment in manufacturing. During that period, investment and job creation were only concentrated on the island of Java. So, it is not surprising that, in the second half of the 1980s, the flow of migration to Java increased sharply (ILO, 2004).

It is interesting to note that Indonesian workers abroad are carefully selected from certain groups and regions. This is mainly due to the increasing importance of chain migration. Thus, the impact of international labor migration is concentrated in certain areas of Indonesia, and although the impact of international labor migration at the national level is limited, it remains an important issue in some regions and many communities (ILO, 2004).

However, the government always link the issue of the sending of Indonesian workers abroad with the discourses of economic development which provides an economic multiplier effect on both the national scale and in the area of placement for the workforce. This includes a surge in foreign exchange transactions, the fostering of a family economy, driving the economy of the people, increased savings, lower unemployment, greater public knowledge and education, and new skills gained.

It is known that places such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia have always been favorite destinations for Indonesian workers. Besides the high standard of salary and the longer working contract period, several other reasons, such as the similarity of the language in Malaysia, are also the main factors that drive the decision of migrant workers to choose their destination country. Apart from that, Korea and Japan are also among the favorite countries, which are always in the top 10 most targeted countries for Indonesian migrant workers (Republika, 2023). The following table shows Indonesian migrant workers' top destination countries from 2017 to 2022.

Table 3 Placements of Indonesian workers overseas from 2017 to 2022

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2017	Malaysia 88,991	Taiwan 62,823	Hong Kong 69,182	Singapore 13,379	Saudi Arabia 6,471	South Korea 3,728	Brunei Darussalam 6,623
2018	Malaysia 90,671	Taiwan 72,373	Hong Kong 73,917	Singapore 18,324	South Korea 6,905	Saudi Arabia 5,894	Brunei Darussalam 5,707
2019	Malaysia 79,663	Taiwan 79,574	Hong Kong 70,840	Singapore 19,354	Saudi Arabia 7,018	South Korea 6,193	Brunei Darussalam 5,639
2020	Hong Kong 53,206	Taiwan 34,415	Malaysia 14,630	Singapore 4,474	Saudi Arabia 1,793	Brunei Darussalam 1,202	Poland 798
2021	Hong Kong 52,278	Taiwan 7,789	Italy 3,225	Singapore 3,217	Poland 1,195	Turkey 874	Saudi Arabia 747
2022	Hong Kong 60,096	Taiwan 53,459	Malaysia 43,163	South Korea 11,554	Singapore 6,624	Japan 5,832	Saudi Arabia 4,676

Source: BP2MI, 2017; BP2MI, 2018; BP2MI, 2019; BP2MI, 2020; BP2MI, 2021; BP2MI, 2022

However, unfortunately, in its development, the condition of Indonesian migrant workers abroad has always been very vulnerable to exploitation and they often become the victims of human rights violations, such as the victims of violence by employers in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the victims of human trafficking in South Korea, and others.¹¹ Various cases of human rights abuse are very frequent and prone to occur in these countries. Malaysia and Saudi Arabia are the two countries that account for the most cases of violence against Indonesian migrant workers because the placement of Indonesian migrant workers is mostly in these two countries. The concerns involved—such as physical and sexual abuse, forced labor, and unpaid wages—have been highlighted by reported cases, particularly among female domestic employees. As a result, the government responded to these problems by imposing a two-year prohibition on immigration to Malaysia starting in 2009 and by outlawing the mobility to Saudi Arabia of female domestic migrant workers starting in 2011. Twenty-one nations in the Middle East, North, and East Africa, as well as Pakistan, had their

¹¹ On July 13, 2022, the Indonesian government decided to stop the cooperation in sending migrant workers to Malaysia. due to a violation of the MOU. Previously, for 11 years, the sending of Indonesian migrant workers to Saudi Arabia was also stopped because there were many human rights violations experienced by them while working there (Aida, 2022).

moratoria extended in 2015 (World Bank, 2017, p.4). Here are the data reports regarding the amount of complaints from various places abroad, which are based on the annual reports published by BP2MI (Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency).

Table 4 The number of complaints submitted by Indonesian workers abroad, 2017 -2022

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6*
2017	Malaysia 1,704	Saudi Arabia 874	Taiwan 622	United Emirates Arab 199	Singapore 172	Japan 26
2018	Malaysia 3,460	Saudi Arabia 368	Taiwan 238	Hong Kong 163	United Emirates Arab 113	Japan 15
2019	Malaysia 4,845	Saudi Arabia 1,372	United Emirates Arab 943	Taiwan 437	Jordan 311	Japan 28
2020	Saudi Arabia 374	Malaysia 353	Taiwan 176	Hong Kong 176	China 121	Japan 5
2021	Malaysia 403	Saudi Arabia 265	Taiwan 143	Fiji Island 121	Hong Kong 112	Japan 5
2022	Saudi Arabia 475	Malaysia 451	Taiwan 197	Hong Kong 117	United Emirates Arab 112	Japan 51

Source: BP2MI, 2017; BP2MI, 2018; BP2MI, 2019; BP2MI, 2020; BP2MI, 2021; BP2MI, 2022

As seen in the above report, Japan is the country that has the least number of complaints compared to other countries. Japan is not in the top 20 countries with the most complaints. This is what later became one of the reasons the Indonesian government was aggressively promoting and supporting efforts to send Indonesian workers to Japan. As mentioned above, the cooperation between Japan and Indonesia under the TITP then became popular as an attractive program for parties such as Japanese companies, the Indonesian government, and brokerages sending prospective participants to become technical intern trainees in Japan. The image that this program is considered a better program than other destination countries can be seen through an interview with a representative of the Technical Intern Trainee division of Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development (or Binalattas, hereinafter referred to as

Binalattas) who stated that “the TITP is not the same as regular Indonesian migrant workers; here the trainee will be trained to gain the transfer knowledge and technology from Japan to increase the quality of our human resources” (Binalattas, Jakarta, January 22, 2020). In the next section, we will examine the bilateral discourses developed by Japan and Indonesia to strengthen the legitimacy of TITP.

Technical Intern Trainee Program Through the Japanese Lens

“Please come back to your hometown and promote this program to your friends and your neighbors!” (Masanobu Komiya, General Manager IM Japan, 2020)¹²

The above is a fragment of a speech delivered by Masanobu Komiya, chairman of IM Japan, at the graduation ceremony for technical intern trainee graduates at the training center in Bekasi, West Java. For trainee participants who enter through the government or G-to-G route, apart from being required to attend pre-departure training, upon their return, they are also required to attend a graduation ceremony and debriefing before the participants are inaugurated as having completed their duties as trainee participants properly. In the speech, it was emphasized several times that trainee participants were the main key to maintaining the good name of this program by discussing and spreading information about it to the public as a good program.

Cooperation between Indonesia and Japan in TITP has been going on for 30 years. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, various criticisms from both domestic and international environments about this program have also erupted, such as criticism in the US trafficking reports of 2021 and 2022 which suggest that the Japanese government has failed in handling the trafficking case on the trainee program. Also in October 2017, the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB, 2017) released a report to promote international awareness of Japan’s TITP in which critics allege to have widespread exploitation and human rights abuses, including forced labor and human trafficking. Even though the policies that have been revised by the Japanese government, so far, they have not shown any alignment with equality efforts.

¹² A speech given by the general director of IM Japan, Masanobu Komiya, at the graduation ceremony for trainees on January 23, 2020, at the Cevest Bekasi training centre. Cevest Bekasi is the Center for Vocational and Extension Service Training (CEVEST). CEVEST was founded in 1985 with assistance of the Japanese government as a form of cooperation in developing human resources (HR). Here, potential apprentices who are going to Japan via G-to-G take departure exams. CEVEST also conducts welcome ceremonies for technical intern trainees who succeed upon their return. For more details about CEVEST, see (https://blkbekasi.kemnaker.go.id/profile/profile_singkat).

Meanwhile, the discourse on the ‘transfer of technology and knowledge from Japan to developing countries’ is also a paternalistic concept developed from Japan's historical heritage in interpreting and understanding the concept of "work" in Japanese society. Yoshida in his research said: “The government’s migrant policy is designed to support and produce these ideal workers who silently contribute to the Japanese economy” (Yoshida, 2021, p. 76).

An understanding of how the ideal discourse developed by the Japanese government in this program can be seen as follows:

On (恩) stands for indebtedness or obligation. Ruth Benedict (1946) analyzed the meaning of “On (恩): indebtedness” in Japanese society in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. On (恩) is a kind of reciprocity ideology in Japan, which is key to understanding Japanese paternalism. One is expected to “pay” debts or return these obligations. But in this context, debts do not refer to the exchange of mathematical equivalence or contract-based indebtedness. It is a social relationship that subordinates the receiver (the debtor) of On (恩) from the superior (creditor: emperor, parents, one’s lord including employer and teacher) so it is more of a passively incurred mental obligation. For example, once the employee (the debtor) receives On (恩) from his/her employer (the creditor), he/she will work harder for the company to repay the indebtedness or debt of gratitude (Yoshida, 2021, p. 77).

In this context, it can be argued that the phrase "transfer of technology and knowledge," which is marketed as this program's primary goal, has succeeded in illustrating that Japan is a "giver" country and a developing country is a "receiving" country. Ultimately, this condition encourages trainees to feel grateful for being hired and taken care of; this relationship is reciprocal, and a return call for paying it with "gratitude" is expected until the end of this program. Ultimately trainees are required to repay by being silent workers (Yoshida, 2021). Hence, through this program, Japan seeks to develop a discourse that it is a form to make Japan’s “international contribution” by accepting foreign nationals from developing countries, for a limited period of time to learn technical skills that can then be transferred to their home countries. So how are the "technology transfer" and "knowledge transfer" slogans, which are held as the program's core purposes and objectives, understood by sending countries? The acceptance and construction of this program within the scope of Indonesia's interests as a sending country will be discussed in the following section.

Technical Intern Trainee Program Through Indonesian Lens

Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development, or Binalattas, is responsible to the TITP, and Nita Dwi Apriliawati as the representative for the apprenticeship sector

commented as follows:

The trainee program to Japan must be superior because it was created to train Indonesian workers abroad to return to Indonesia. This is what clearly distinguishes it from the workforce program. In contrast to Indonesian workers in other places such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and so on, the trainee program in Japan is intended for them to build their own country after returning. The trainee program is not the same as for the PMI (Indonesian low-skill migrant workers). This program is for gaining the transfer of knowledge, so the Indonesian government needs to support this program as we can see that we are far behind Vietnam because the Vietnamese Government has the Ministry of Representatives to promote their trainees in Japan (Jakarta, January 24, 2020).

Yet, if we go back in time, the only and the first case of cooperation in training programs was between Japan and Indonesia in the context of developing human resources. Certainly, for the Indonesian government, this program offers a point of difference and a glimmer of optimism in terms of not only for employment creation but also human resources development. It was only in 2006 that the first G-to-G migrant worker program between Indonesia and South Korea was carried out. Two years later, Japan opened the G-to-G collaboration for a nurse under the IJEPa cooperation in 2008, which was then expanded to include it in TITP coverage in 2017 (BP2MI, n.d).¹³

Thus, even though the trainee program is the first collaboration that started through G-to-G cooperation, it cannot be said to be a cooperation program for migrant workers because of their status as trainees, not workers. Therefore, these technical intern trainees are in a disadvantaged position because of their "apprentice" status, albeit in practice they work like regular workers in general. On that account, it can be said that Indonesian apprentices to Japan are not included in the framework of the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection.¹⁴ As a consequence, there is no maximum limit on departure fees, especially for P-to-P, and there is no social protection as a migrant worker from the Social Security Agency for Employment (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan), such as work accident insurance, life insurance, assistance for returning departure fees (Azis et al., 2020).¹⁵ However, the program that carries out "technology transfer" has always been a mainstay and has always been proudly mentioned in

¹³ The placement of parents' caregivers, and caregivers in general, is in accordance with the economic cooperation between Japan and Indonesia (IJEPa) implemented in 2008. In the agreement, Indonesia promised to send 600 nurses and 400 caregivers of parents to Japan, which would be facilitated by the Japan International Corporation of Welfare Service (JICWELS).

¹⁴ See Law No.18/2017 on Indonesian Migrant Worker's Protection (UUD No.18/2017 *tentang Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia*).

¹⁵ There are four main features in the social security for employment, namely 1) Labor-related Accident Insurance, 2) Life Insurance, 3) Pension Plan, and 4) Special Benefits. For more details, see (<https://www.bpjsketenagakerjaan.go.id/tentang-kami.html>).

the narrative of efforts to develop human resources in Indonesia to this day.

In the early years when the Japanese and Indonesian apprentice collaboration program was founded, Ligia, the former head of technical intern trainee to Japan under the Binalattas in the 1990s, stated “this program had become a pioneering program. To ensure that potential apprentices are prepared for their arrival in Japan, Indonesia has also carefully prepared the prerequisites and training that must be completed by them. In the end, it appears that only the most talented individuals and chosen participants have left to take part in this internship program” (August 23, 2021, via WhatsApp). Further, Ligia explained when this program first started in the 1990s, it quickly rose to prominence as the Indonesian government's main development initiative. As a result, a semi-military selection process and a physical examination that nearly left participants half-naked were implemented to ensure that the participants who left were the best participants. Ligia then discussed her opinions in the interview with relation to the training's narrative in the 1990s.

If you look at the narrative, the purpose of this program was actually formed to meet the ever-decreasing shortage of Japanese manpower, but here we can see how good Japanese diplomacy is, as we know that Japan has a culture of “*honne*” and “*tatemae*,” namely, what is in the heart is not allowed to be expressed.¹⁶ Hence, the true purpose of this initiative is to address the labour shortage, particularly in the blue-collar sector; however, this is not made explicit; rather, it is concealed under the idea of knowledge transfer from Japan to emerging nations. On the other hand, given Indonesia's situation at the time—where poverty and poor educational levels were rampant in the 1990s and young Indonesian youngsters were primarily junior and senior high school graduates—the prospects that Japan offered were undoubtedly like a rescue for Indonesia. As a result, Japan's diplomacy places us in a position to embrace Japan's generosity and feel fortunate because we are a recipient country that desperately needs jobs due to our demographics being the opposite of Japan's (Ligia, March 7, 2023, Via WhatsApp).

Thus, it was obvious when the apprenticeship cooperation program first began, it was eagerly anticipated and became the hope of young people of productive age in the 1990s amid the difficulties of their looking for work, and for the Indonesian government, this was a great opportunity to advance Indonesia's national interests in reducing unemployment. These narratives continue to this day. Fahri Hamzah, a parliamentarian and a former supervisor for the delegation of migrant workers, for example, stressed that this kind of apprenticeship system only exists in Japan. Therefore, this is a very good opportunity that must be taken advantage

¹⁶ *Tatemae* is a Japanese word that means “*façade*” or “*appearance*,” but “*honne*” indicates “the genuine aim.” Hence, *tatemae* is akin to “*face*,” though not a fixed face but rather a face that is appropriate for a given occasion. (Furuoka & Kato, 2008).

of. Fahri further stated: “We are ready to support cooperation (apprenticeship) to fulfill the existing market so that it can run well. We agree that Japan is the best country for fulfilling workers' rights” (Nasrullah, 2018).

Two years earlier, the Indonesian Minister of Manpower, Hanif Dhakiri, had negotiated with the Japanese government to specifically request an increase in the quota for apprentices from Indonesia. This was revealed during a ministerial-level bilateral meeting on September 7, 2015, in Tokyo, between the Minister of Manpower, M Hanif Dhakiri, and the Japanese Minister of Health, Labor, and Welfare, Mr. Yasuhisa Shiozaki (Widayati, 2015). For a long time, what has always been a concern for the Indonesian government regarding this program is the addition of quotas and promoting the performance of apprentices from Indonesia as the best participants. In an interview with the Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas, the head of the trainee division also emphasized the same thing, saying that Indonesia really hopes that Japan will prefer participants from Indonesia and increase its quota because it is proven that Indonesian participants are known for their discipline (Nita, Jakarta, January 24, 2020).

In addition, requests for additional quotas are also expected to spread, not only on the island of Java. The request that the participants sent also spread widely to all regions in Indonesia and has also become a concern for local governments. For example, in the Papua region, a request to be able to send local young generations in an apprenticeship program was submitted throughout 2015, but it was only realized in 2017, when two districts, namely Biak and Marauke, were chosen to participate in the trainee selection (The Papua Province Government, 2017).

To this day, the enthusiasm for increasing the quota continues to intensify. In December 2019, the Ministry of Manpower of Indonesia in cooperation with IM Japan, agreed to continue the deployment of workers under the TITP and even to increase the number of Indonesian technical intern trainees. The ministry has already been preparing new training facilities for prospective migrant workers under the TITP. By looking at the number of trainees sent in previous years, the Indonesian government plans to further increase the number of trainees sent to Japan. Ida Fauziyah, the Indonesian Minister of Manpower, said the two parties have agreed that, in order to increase the number from previous years, Indonesia will deploy 5,000 more technical intern trainees each year over the next two to three years. According to the Organization for Technical Intern Training, the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower has stated that there are more than 200 sending organizations (SOs) licensed to deploy Indonesian migrant workers to Japan as of March 2020 (Fanani, 2019).

Meanwhile, amidst domestic and international criticism that the technical intern program is a way for businesses to import cheap labor rather than transfer skills to underdeveloped countries, the Japanese government ultimately organized a special meeting to assess the viability of this scheme, which, due to take place around Fall 2023, composed of a 15-member panel, that includes academics and the heads of municipal governments. The panel will compile its final report on the foreign technical intern trainee program and the system for workers with specific skills, the former of which is under scrutiny due to allegations of physical abuse and pay withholding (Kyodonews, 2023). On the other hand, Indonesian Minister of Labor Ida Fauziah emphasized that Japan really needs apprentices and workers from Indonesia. This was emphasized after the Minister of Manpower met with companies in Japan that handle the training, apprenticeships, placement of Indonesian workers, and general employment services. Furthermore, during her meeting with the Indonesian Ambassador to Japan, Heri Akhmadi, and the association of overseas apprentice organizers (AP2LN) in Tokyo in November 2022, Fauziah said, "They (Japan) really need apprenticeship participants from Indonesia and skilled workers from Indonesia because Japan is satisfied with Indonesian workers because they are diligent, obedient, don't break the rules, and don't complain too much" (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2022).

In addition to the "training" discourse which is always used as legitimacy to claim that this program is better than the "Indonesian workforce" program or commonly known as PMI, in general, material benefits are also one of the discourses that the Indonesian government has always promoted as an advantage of this program. "Come on, who doesn't like being trained and paid too," is one of the promotional excerpts that can be heard through the internship program promo video which can be seen on the website of the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower specifically for the training and apprenticeship division (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2020). A large salary, being trained to acquire new technological skills and new knowledge, learning disciplines, and Japanese work culture are discourses that have legitimized the TITP as one of the leading programs.

The following is a poster promoting an internship program to Japan posted on the social media channel of the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, which emphasizes the economic benefits gained when participating in this program, by including the salary that will be obtained in the amount of rupiah, which is around Rp.20,000,000 to Rp.24,000,000 (approx. 180,000-220,000 yen) per month, while the costs involved in participating in this program through the G-to-G route only cost Rp. 1 million, so that it can appear bigger, and more profits will be obtained.

Picture 3 Poster Promoting the Technical Intern Trainee Program



Source: BP2MI Official Instagram

Meanwhile, for those who apply through P-to-P route, there is no need to be worried because the government is offering bailout aid that can be financed through people's business loans program or abbreviated as KUR (Kredit Usaha Rakyat) or at lower bank interest rates.¹⁷ Under the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, the Indonesian government has partnered with five banks to offer a credit program for potential migrant workers.. This endeavor is meant to assist potential migrant workers (including technical intern trainees) pay the recruitment fees. Further, as a means of collaboration with private sending organizations that send workers or technical intern trainees to Japan and abroad, this bailout aid program is also made available to private sending agencies (Santia, 2020).

Thus, the government always emphasizes the benefits that will be obtained after this program is completed, in addition to new skills acquired, disciplined work culture, Japanese language skills and also economic assets from the amount of salary earned during the internship program. Apart from that, the cultural concept of accepting debt to repay kindness is also owned by Indonesian culture, if previously in the explanation of the Japanese discourse it was explained that the concept of work culture is known as a reciprocal relationship of debt of gratitude, then this also fits the cultural pattern that exists in Indonesia. The feeling of privileges that are always exalted for selected participants who will depart are always instilled during the

¹⁷ See Law No. 22/2015 on Technical Instructions for Financing the Placement of Indonesian Workers Abroad Via Business Loans for Indonesian Workers (UUD No. 22/2015 tentang *Petunjuk Teknis Pelaksanaan Pembiayaan Penempatan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia ke Luar Negeri Melalui Kredit Usaha Rakyat Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*).

debriefing period before departure, wherein they should feel grateful and maintain a good name and repay this opportunity as well as possible by completing this program well.

Conclusion

Our examination in this chapter reveals that both Japan and Indonesia carry a discourse that seems outwardly ideal but the main goal itself is to cover up the problems faced by each country. Under the Colombo Plan and through ODA, Japan is committed to becoming a provider of assistance to developing countries meanwhile Indonesia, as a developing country, can receive aid programs from developed countries in order to follow and achieve an economic balance. In accordance with what is stated in the Colombo Plan, Japan has a commitment to contribute to the development and economic progress of developing countries. In particular, Japan is committed to sharing the technological advantages it has with developing countries, one of which is Indonesia, through cooperation agreements in technical intern trainee programs.

However, as we found in this chapter, the cooperation between Indonesia and Japan through the technical intern trainee program has emphasized a “win-win” solution to their own issues. On the one hand, the Japanese government has sought a large number of workers to fill the vacant spots in its labor force due to declining demographic conditions. On the other hand, to reduce the number of unemployed people and to compensate for a large population that does not have enough jobs available, Indonesia, via the technical intern trainee program, hopes to satisfy the demand for these jobs.

However, as many critics have claimed, the more pragmatic agenda for Japan is to fill the labor shortage particularly in 3D (danger, dirty and difficult) type of works. Hence, TITP is utilized as a tool to beautify Japan’s commitment to support the improvement of human resources under the slogan "train and transfer" Japanese technology and knowledge. As a result, these conditions encourage trainees to feel thankful for being hired and cared for. Workers are conditioned to feel grateful for the privilege of being able to go to Japan and participate in the program, and trainees are expected to pay this back by being silent workers, working diligently, and being disciplined, persistent, and never giving up until the program is finished. The discourse to which they are exposed is that they come to be trained, to receive technology and knowledge transfer, and to return to their country to contribute to the economic development of their village: “Then please go home and tell your friends and neighbors that this program is an ideal program.”

Chapter 3

Harsh Discipline as a Strategy in Pre-Departure Training

The implementation of a 3-to 6-month training period in a dormitory provided by the sending agency, whether those departing through government agencies G-to-G or private P-to-P, is one of the characteristic elements of this technical intern trainee program in Japan. The participants get training from seniors and trainers before their departure, and they are expected to be able to carry out and complete the program until it is concluded.

This orientation culture is not exclusive to technical intern trainee programs (TITP) to Japan. In Indonesia every time someone enters a new beginning, such as a public civil servant's office, a school, or a university, it has been customary to carry out this orientation culture as an introduction. From a historical perspective, this orientation practice has developed into a culture since the colonial era. This was documented in the renowned Indonesian book *Siti Nurbaya*, published in 1920.¹⁸ The story claims that Marah Rusli, the protagonist, underwent hazing during orientation at one of the educational institutions or schools of Javanese doctors (STOVIA) in Batavia City around 1898 (Tempo.co, 2022).¹⁹

Unfortunately, orientation activities that were intended to be a period of introduction and mental instillation frequently resulted in acts of violence that even resulted in disasters such as death. In practice, there is often violence perpetrated by seniors against their juniors (Liputan6, 2019). Then what about the orientation in the pre-departure period for migrant workers? In general, for migrant workers themselves, according to Indonesian Law on the protection of migrant workers, a Final Departure Briefing (PAP) is enacted, namely the activity of providing a briefing or information to prospective Indonesian migrant workers who will go to work abroad so that they have the mental and knowledge readiness to work abroad, understand their rights and obligations, and be able to overcome the problems that will be faced, and the training materials for pre-departure briefing consist as follows:

1. laws and regulations for two hours of lessons
2. work agreement for 4 hours of study

¹⁸ *Siti Nurbaya* is a phenomenal novel by Marah Rusli, an Indonesian writer of the Balai Pustaka class, or the literary period that emerged during the Dutch colonial period around the 1920s and 1930s (Ningsih, 2022).

¹⁹ A session of orientation is also available to future public civil servants (used to be abbreviated as CPNS), in addition to students and university students. The CPNS orientation phase aims to inculcate in personnel a love of their organizations and employment as well as a sense of nationalism in the context of defending the nation. The most crucial aspect of orientation for CPNS is that they should be able to comprehend organizational values and norms to perform their duties and functions according to such values. (Muhlis, 2018).

3. introduction to culture and customs during two hours of lessons

4. Mental coaching lesson for 1 hour (Sumasa, 2020)²⁰

Subsequently, the TITP in Japan, as mentioned in the previous chapter, based on terminology, is a training program to acquire skills and technology from Japan, and the pre-departure orientation period carried out by technical intern trainees to Japan is different from the pre-departure program for Indonesian migrant workers, which is carried out at Overseas Job Training Centers or BKLN. For the technical intern trainees, it is carried out under the supervision of the Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas and IM Japan for departures from G-to-G, and carried out by private institutions for departures through P-to-P, whose orientation period varies from 3 months to 6 months which is longer than the standard migrant worker's pre-departure training time.

Thus, the main aim of this chapter is to analyze how the Indonesian government has established control mechanism and pattern of regulations to construct the characteristics of Indonesian technical intern trainees in Japan during the training period. How is it working and followed by the private agencies as a standard requirement before departure? How have the pre-departure training program for the G-to-G route and P-to-P route contributed to the making of a discipline strategy in pre-departure training? To answer these questions, this chapter investigates the pre-departure training for technical intern trainees and elucidates its nature.

The Pre-Departure Program for TITP in Japan

Before looking at the pre-departure or briefing program from Indonesia to Japan, it is necessary to understand the regulations and the stages that the technical intern trainee participants are required to pass. One of the unique elements of the internship program to Japan is the implementation of a pre-departure training program, where prospective participants must stay for several months in a dormitory that has been provided by the organizers, both government and private institutions. Below, Table 1 shows the migration process of technical intern trainees from Indonesia to Japan.

²⁰See Law No. 4/2013 on Procedures for Implementing Indonesian Labor Overseas. (UUD No.4/2013 *tentang Prosedur Penempatan Pekerja Migran Indonesia di Luar Negeri*).

Table 5 The Selection and the Flow Process of the TITP

A. The selection process for the technical intern trainee participants	B. The flow of the technical intern trainees from arrival in Japan to return to Indonesia
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Administration check 2. Math test 3. Ability 4. Physical endurance 5. Interview 6. Medical check-up 7. Language test preparation 8. Japanese language test 9. Training 10. Departure <p>Note: from 1 to 6, dropout rule is applied (i.e., if one fails at any stage between 1 to 6, s/he cannot move on to the next stage).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entered Japan as a Technical Intern Training (level 1) 2. Two months theory lesson/orientation 3. Practical training in the company for 10 months 4. Change of residence status to Technical Intern Training Level 2 (only given to participants who pass the basic level theory and practice exams) 5. Update duration of stay 6. Return to Indonesia (permanently for those who complete the 3-year program and temporarily 1 month for those who continue) 7. Change of residence status to Technical Intern Training (level 3), only given to participants who pass the Level 3 Theory and Practice Exams 8. Update duration of stay 9. Participants take the level 2 theory and practice exam -> return to Indonesia

Source: Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2020

From Table 5, we can see the process that these technical intern trainees must go through. After going through the document and administrative tests, those who pass must take a written test in mathematics. If they pass the written test, they continue to the next stage which provides Japanese language and cultural skills, physical endurance training, an interview test, a medical checkup, and so on. After passing stages 1 to 8, they continue the training period for 2 to 3 months in a dormitory provided by the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower for the G-to-G route or a dormitory provided by a private agency by a P-to-P route.

During stage 9 of the training program before departure, they receive Japanese language training, a cultural briefing, and a physical endurance test. Here they are physically trained and also do a lot of physical activity to show their abilities. This test is intended to determine the extent of the endurance and physical health of prospective participants, by conducting various kinds of dexterity tests with the following standards (Department of Manpower and Transmigration North Sumatra Province, 2019):

1. Run 3 km non-stop in 15 minutes in an open field.
2. Do 35 Push-ups with perfect posture with both palms open.

3. Do 25 Sit-ups with a perfect form.

The following is a picture of one of the activities of the prospective technical intern trainee participants during the pre-departure test in West Nusa Tenggara Province:

Picture 4 Prospective Technical Intern Trainee Participants waiting to run and push up in West Nusa Tenggara Province.



Source: Department of Manpower and Transmigration West Nusa Tenggara, 2019

At this stage, if they cannot follow the training properly it is considered as failure, and they cannot proceed to the next stage. However, before getting to this stage, they already must pass a medical test and physical examination. During the medical examination, apprentices must not have any tooth cavities, skin diseases, or physical disabilities. A chest X-ray is also required to prove the intern is not a former smoker. They are not allowed to have piercings or tattoos. The minimum height is 160 cm with a proportionate weight (height minus 110 cm) using a steel ruler. They must not have any physical disabilities, for example (broken bones, deafness, hernia, skin disease, artificial limbs, or organ malfunction); therefore, each participant is examined by the organizing committee while half naked to ensure that they do not have the prohibited items. This physical examination is carried out in an open place so that fellow participants can see each other clearly and witness how the examination is carried out (Department of Manpower and Transmigration North Sumatra Province, 2019). The purpose of the preparation of pre-departure training is to harmonize the pattern of the recruitment/selection system for the selection of candidates for apprenticeship programs to Japan for recruitment/selection implementing officers to obtain prospective apprentices to Japan following the established standards.

Necessarily, based on the applicable rules, the safety and health of these trainee candidates must be protected. If we refer to the Indonesian Law No.59/2021 on the implementation of protection for Indonesian migrant workers, it is stated that it is mandatory to provide protection to Indonesian migrant workers candidates and/or Indonesian migrant workers starting from before the pre-departure period (registration or training period in the country of origin), during work period (in the country of destination), and after the program (until they return to the country of origin), and Pre-employment Protection covers all the activities from the registration process until departure. This means that every prospective worker must get security guarantees on the implementation of a safe immigration process. The law stated that:

“Pre-Departure Orientation abbreviated as OPP is the activity of giving debriefing and information to prospective workers Indonesian migrants who go to work to abroad so that Prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers have the mental readiness and knowledge to work abroad, understand the rights and obligations and can solve problems that arise and will be faced.”²¹

Meanwhile, in the interview with Nita from the Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development, Ministry of Manpower (Binalattas) as a representative of the apprenticeship program division, she stated that this series of departure was carried out as an effort to enable prospective technical intern trainees to have strong mental and physical strength later in Japan, especially considering the differences in natural conditions and weather between Japan and Indonesia. Of course, this provision is the most important stage.

“Rigorous physical training before departure is our effort to train them mentally and physically before arriving in Japan because as we all know Japan has a different climate and seasons with Indonesia, so they must be prepared for that” (Nita, Jakarta, January 24, 2020).

It is clear from the observation above that the technical intern trainees in Japan are trained to be physically fit in order to handle the demands of the working world. This is why the potential apprentice applicants engage in a variety of physical activities, including a three-kilometer run, push-ups, and sit-ups. Before being chosen to travel to Japan, apprentices must pass a series of selection phases in addition to being physically fit, such as initial selection, where they must be able to quickly solve a large number of simple math problems and understand the Japanese language and culture. (Department of Manpower and Transmigration,

²¹ See Law No.59/2021 on The Implementation of Protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers (UUD No.59/2021 *tentang Pelaksanaan Pelindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia*).

West Sumatra Province, 2019).

Harsh Discipline as a Strategy in Pre-Departure Training

“It is rather mistaken to think that the Government-to-Government scheme of labor migration is completely safe. In fact, prospective migrant workers are vulnerable to a string of rights violations along the migratory process” (Azis et al, 2020).

The above quote was a comment of Rani (a pseudonym), a former TITP participant in Japan who arrived via the G-to-G route for the nursing program, which was conveyed during the discussion during the launch of the Human Rights Watch Group (HRWG) Report on May 20, 2020. Rani's experience was not unique. In celebrating International Migrant Day 2022, organized by Migrant Care, one of the demands of Indonesian migrant workers was improvement and protection for migrant workers, especially during the pre-departure period. This is because there are still many frauds committed by irresponsible agency during the recruitment period which leads to human trafficking (Mediana, 2022). This recruitment problem affects migrant workers who are travelling to many different destinations, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and, without exception, Japan.

In the interviews with three alumni who recently returned through G-to-G of TITP, all three expressed their extraordinary expressions and admiration for Japanese technology and Japan's economic progress. These three alumni worked in the construction sector. And when the question was specifically asked about how their experience was long before arriving in Japan, namely during the three-month briefing period in the dormitory, the three answered very carefully. Through their answers it can be felt that what was experienced during the pre-departure training period was difficult to deal with:

“Suffering from verbal violence and sometimes physical exhaustion during the pre-departure training program is common, we must be strong. We are men so we shouldn't be whiny, and this examination is for our benefit later in the program” (NF, Alumni from IM, Bekasi, January 23, 2020).

In the interview, the participants seemed very careful in expressing their opinions. In order to be able to interview alumni who had just returned at the official welcoming ceremony organized by the Indonesian government, the author had to get help from the committee to gain the participants' trust by explaining that the author was a doctoral University student, and to find alumni who were willing to be interviewed for research purposes. The caution in answering these interview questions is not without reason. Long before departure participants have been trained to be careful in expressing their feelings towards this program and must also

have high compliance to complete the program well. This can be seen in the statement expressed by a representative from the apprenticeship division who in his welcoming ceremony also stated: "After you leave this room please say and tell everyone good things about this program" (Nita, Bekasi, January 23, 2020).

For technical intern trainee alumni who entered through the government or G-to-G, they agreed to share the benefits of participating in the pre-departure program for three months in Indonesia before arriving in Japan. For them, the physical and mental training helped preparing them mentally to face climatic conditions, weather, and also a work culture that is very different from conditions in Indonesia.

In an interview, with Eggy Ligia Emila Muchtar, the head of the apprenticeship division to Japan (Binalattas) for the 1990s era, stated that "this rigorous selection test was indeed carried out to get the best participants to go to Japan so they could carry out this program well, hence a series of semi-military tests and training carried out and supervised directly by TNI (Indonesian Armed Forces), although not as rigorous as military training in general" (Ligia, Jakarta, March 7, 2023, Via WhatsApp).²² Further Ligia explained that "physical activity such as running, push-ups, and checking body postures such as height, not being disabled, and not having tattoos aside from being for aesthetic purposes is also to show the discipline and physical capacity of prospective participants. Balding hair is also applied to participants who pass as well as imitating military methods to make them look neat," said Ligia, and as previously mentioned, all of these participants were examined by experts both medical and military in half naked. In addition, Ligia admits that "when this cooperation was initially opened in 1993, 400 of the best participants were sent, and they successfully completed the program well; consequently, this rigorous pre-departure using the semi-military procedures has persisted to this day" (Ligia, March 7, 2023, via WhatsApp). The following (Picture 2) is an image of a pre-departure ceremony for TITP participants held by the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower in collaboration with IM Japan. As we can see, all of the participants have balding heads as a sign that they have successfully completed the selection and examination processes

²² Semi-military here means such an exercise as it is typically performed by the military: running 3000 meters non-stop, push up 35 times, sit up 25 times and several private institutions also demand the capacity to lift weights as a prerequisite for admission, and the trainers for this physical activity are members of the Indonesian military, who are professionals in their specialty, and some locations hold physical training sessions led by police officers directly. One such location is the Riau Islands Police in the Riau region (Media Center, 2019). Additionally, those who enter through the G-to-G route are required to become bald during the departure training and selection test phases. (Jokkajo, 2021). This baldness is a military characteristic and hairstyle that has also become part of the culture in Indonesia during the orientation period (Dewati, 2019).

and are ready for their departure.

Picture 5 Pre-departure Ceremony for the IM Japan Technical Intern Trainee Participants.



Source: Imandiar, 2022

Physical and mental training, which resembles semi-military physical training, has also become a standard imitated by other private sending organizations or P-to-P sending organizations. The semi-military training has become the standard requirement for private sending organizations/LPKs and has led to physical violence against trainees during training before departure. This practice has been normalized as a way of increasing the mental and physical resilience of prospective trainees before leaving for Japan. Furthermore, in an interview, SA, a female staff member who works in a private technical intern trainee sending agency for fisheries or fishermen in the Cikarang area, West Java, revealed that:

“I only worked for a few months at this LPK/Private Sending Organization as an administrator. I was very surprised when I heard voices from the classroom like a table and chair falling, after I saw that the trainees who were being physically trained while being scolded and occasionally beaten and kicked, and these were prospective trainee participants to become fishermen in Japan” (SA, female, Bekasi, January 16, 2018)

According to her, the conditions of physical and verbal violence that were held before departure for prospective trainee participants in the fishing sector were normal, as they were being prepared to face various harsh natural conditions at sea later, explained one of the trainers when asked about this by the staff member. Also, this staff member only managed to work for a few months at that place, because according to her working there and having to continue to witness the violence in front of her eyes was against her conscience, so she decided to quit and

look for another job.

In addition, technical intern trainee participants who entered through the P-to-P sending organization route revealed their experiences during the pre-departure training period in their interviews:

“During the training period before departure, we had to stay in a dorm for a month. There I witnessed and experienced many verbal and physical acts of violence and bullying from trainers and seniors. They said this was part of the program to train our mentality for later in Japan” (DA, female, Bekasi, January 25, 2020).

“During the training period prior to departure, we were doing push-ups, running, and we were even beaten and abused verbally with the aim of training us mentally, and some of us even experienced heavy bleeding, injury, and pain, but we had to either endure it or fail to continue the program” (RP, male, Cikarang, January 18, 2020).

“We had to do our pre-departure training while staying in a dormitory, and they separated the women and men. We trained physically and learned Japanese language and culture. At that time there were many participants who got sick or tired with the training program, but our trainer kept reminding us that we had to be strong and not get sick and give up. We had to ‘gambatte’ (never give up). We didn't know that we had the right to have health care during the pre-departure program. We just had to focus on how to survive otherwise we would fail the program” (FZA, male, Cikarang, July 11, 2020).

When looking back at the contents of Indonesian Law on the protection of migrant workers which regulates the pre-departure period for prospective Indonesian workers abroad, it is written that the pre-departure training period before departure should include the provision of knowledge and knowledge related to matters relating to law, including what are the rights and obligations for workers while abroad to avoid various problems.

Furthermore, in the report of Indonesian National Legal Development Agency in the Ministry of Law and Human Rights (BPHN) it is stated that the policy of placing Indonesian workers abroad is an effort to realize equal rights and opportunities for workers to obtain decent work and income, which is carried out with due regard to the dignity, human rights, and legal protection as well as equal distribution of employment opportunities and the provision of manpower following national needs.²³ It is also stipulated in Indonesian Law No.39/2004 on Placement and Protecting Indonesian Labor Abroad "the placement of migrant workers is a service activity to bring together Indonesian migrant workers (or PMI) according to their talents, interests, and abilities with employers abroad which includes the entire recruitment

²³ For more details, see Indonesian National Law Development Agency/BPHN (2012).

process, document, management, education and training, shelter, preparation for departure, departure to the destination country, and return from the destination country.”²⁴

However, as mentioned in chapter 2, TITP participants to Japan are not categorized as migrant workers or PMI, so technical intern trainee participants are not included in the framework of the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection.²⁵ The terminology of “trainee” is used because this program is considered an intern who studies and gets transfers technology and science from Japan. However, when referring to the Organization of Technical Intern Trainee (OTIT), regulations, trainees are entitled to protection during the migration process, namely before departure and during the program and until their return to their country of origin (JITCO, 2020).

Hence, protecting the dignity and worth as well as the protection of human rights for prospective job seekers is the duty and obligation of the State which must guarantee this. However, by looking at the series of health checks for participants in the training program where participants are required to be "almost naked" in public to check their physical perfection until they arrive at the pre-departure briefing period, it is certainly very far from the legal mandate of the Indonesian government. In addition, the pre-departure training held by both government and private institutions does not emphasize understanding and knowledge regarding law and labor rights but instead emphasizes disciplinary efforts which ultimately lead to normalize all forms of violence.

Ultimately, due to minimal provisions regarding law and labor rights, many participants are not realizing what forms that can be categorized as a violation in the world of work. For instance, many participants are not realized that the detention of valuable documents by sending agencies is a type of violation and includes the crime of human trafficking. As a result, not only sending organizations trap a large number of technical intern trainees into debt servitude, they also have to deal with irresponsible parties seizing important documents (Tuasikal, 2020). Even things as obvious as the physical and verbal violence experienced during the pre-departure orientation period are not recognized by the participants as serious violations, due to the fragility and vulnerability that are exploited for the benefit of a handful of irresponsible parties in the name of mental and physical resilience.

In response to violations during the pre-departure period, in the report launched in 2020,

²⁴ See Law No.39/2004 on Placement and Protecting Indonesian Labor Abroad (UUD No.39/2004 tentang *Penempatan dan Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia di Luar Negeri*).

²⁵ See Law No.18/2017 on Indonesian Migrant Worker’s Protection (UUD No. 18/2017 tentang *Pelindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia*).

Human Rights Watch Group Indonesia (HRWG) urged the Japanese government to renegotiate cooperation in the TITP. This is due to the widespread use of unethical recruitment practices in the field, characterized by high fees and the practice of exploitation, lack of supervision, and other unethical treatments of participants starting even before departure and continuing until they reach their destination country (Media Indonesia, 2020).

Yet, according to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), crimes committed during the recruitment process in pre-departure stages are classified as part of human trafficking. The following were the crimes committed during the pre-departure recruitment period: employment agencies use coercive recruitment procedures, such as debt bondage, isolation, and surveillance; withholding of funds; use of physical violence and threats of physical violence; and holding workers' passports and identification cards (UNODC, 2015, p.5).

Meanwhile, the pre-departure training program was made with the justification of shaping the discipline and toughness of prospective Indonesian workers in Japan in the future. Praise for the success of this program has come from various parties using their services. According to the Indonesian ambassador Masafumi Ishii, for instance, "Indonesian workers have great opportunities in this cooperation due to the large number and also the many positive impressions from Japanese companies that prefer Indonesian workers who are considered hardworking, diligent, and polite" (Jatmiko, 2019). A similar expression was also stated by several Japanese companies that had accepted technical intern trainees from Indonesia. One of them is the Toyota Company, which stated, "Japanese companies are very satisfied with the performance of apprentices from Indonesia who are persistent, friendly, and very disciplined," said Masamichi Tanaka from Toyota Company in Japan (Prasetyo, 2020).

From the statement above, we can see how positive the image of Indonesian technical intern trainees in Japan is. Director of IM Japan, Tamura Hidetaka, suggested that as many as 85,000 technical intern trainee participants from Indonesia had participated in trainee program starting from 1993 to 2022 (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2022). This figure does not include the number of participants sent through private institutions, which is increasing year after year, with 300 private sending institutions expected by 2023 (Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas, 2023). So far, assessment reports from companies in Japan have shown that technical intern trainee participants from Indonesia have competence and positive ethics. "They are enthusiastic, friendly, and willing to work hard," said Tamura Hidetaka in his remarks at the release of 74 Indonesian trainees to Japan at the Cevest Vocational and Productivity Training Center (BBPVP), Bekasi city, West Java

(Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2022). The following is a photo showing technical intern trainee participants during the pre-departure training period.

Picture 6 Pre-Departure Training for Care Givers Trainee Program, Bekasi West Java 2020²⁶

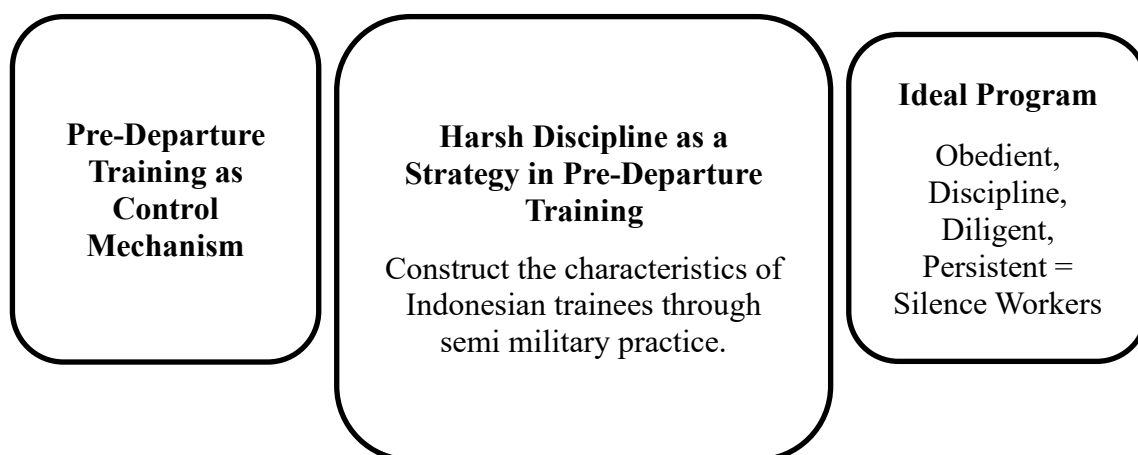


Source: Author

Thus, it can be said that the pre-departure training program which is intended for Indonesian trainees to Japan is a strategic mechanism to shape the character of Indonesian trainees in Japan so that participants can carry out the program well and depart in compliance with the necessary criteria (Department of Manpower and Transmigration/West Java, 2015). In addition, it is also to form the discipline and compliance of participants during the program. The following table describes how the control mechanism of the pre-departure program works.

²⁶ The picture shows aspiring technical intern trainee participants in the field of carers. They have been trained to line up and stand straight for hours, answer every question from the trainers quickly and decisively, and always salute and bow to the trainers in the manner of the military.

Table 6 The Pre-Departure Training as a Control Mechanism and the Construction of Characteristics of Indonesian Trainees



As I describe in the table 6, we now can understand that the control mechanism through pre-departure training in a semi-military style has become the standard and it has been used and normalized by the sending institutions, both government and private. The existing pre-departure program emphasizes the efforts of mental and physical strength, obedience, discipline, and Japanese work culture to develop obedient participants capable of successfully completing the program. Compliance patterns are the main key that participants must follow in this pre-departure test and training, where not only compliance with the company but also compliance with sending agencies, supervising organizations, and hierarchical senior and junior relationships are used to shape this program into ideal. The technical intern trainees are informed during the orientation period that their departure would advance Indonesia's reputation, so obedience and discipline are absolute requirements. However, taking compliance literally under all circumstances without outlining what must be done in terms of human rights equals to making these trainees into passive obedience and vulnerability, which actually keeps them away from being empowered but silent.

Conclusion

Based on the ethnographical approach employed in this research, we found that the harsh discipline during the training period before departure has contributed as a tool to construct the Indonesian trainees' behaviors in Japan. The practices in training are used to discipline and familiarize prospective participants to be obedient and disciplined and to be ready to cope with

any circumstances in the field later. This semi-military approach has contributed to building a predominantly unyielding character, discipline, obedience, and persistence. Moreover, these characteristics have given a positive image to Indonesians employed in Japanese companies, and many such companies are satisfied with their Indonesian workers' performance. This positive impression certainly shows the success of the pre-departure training program organized by the Indonesian government.

However, in practice, many technical intern trainees experience violence during the training period before departure, even suffering oppression and human rights violations as part of their mental strengthening which normalizes the dominant hierarchical power. Systematic abuses and exploitations against trainees already start from the recruitment process and continue during the preparation and training program. This chapter shows that the semi-military practice adopted by sending agencies both from the government and private sending parties has successfully contributed to the 'character-building' of Indonesian trainees sent to Japan. When we look at other countries, as reported by Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency, reports of complaints from Indonesian workers in Japan are very few, namely only 5 people in 2020 and 2021. However, our observations through ethnography clearly reveal that the small number of complainants does not mean that workers in Japan are in a much better situation. What this actually shows is a pattern of unhealthy silencing that is passed from generation to generation.

Further, this pattern is also shown in the form of an endless cycle of violence, as many of the trainers in private sending institutions are those who were former trainee alumni who also experienced the same violence in the past. So, the oppressed later become oppressors. The justification for this is that all applicants have to endure a hard struggle without giving up achieving success. In the end, a lot of things happens in the field of training activities which are improvised by the trainer and are outside the applicable requirements such as cursing, hitting, kicking, and bullying behavior to sublimate the participants' mentality. This chapter reveals that the good image of the trainee program that appears on the outside obscures unacceptable standards of treatment. In the next chapter, we will look at trainees' life in Japan after completing the pre-departure training. We will see how seniority culture in Indonesia helps strengthen passive obedience—one of the outcomes of pre-departure training—and how it is sustained across successive generations.

Chapter 4

"Seniority is First": The Dynamics of Senior-Junior Relations

TITP has lasted for approximately 30 years and it has experienced many developments and changes, both in the policy and the implementation of the program. Meanwhile the trainees, who are also active pawns in this program, have a lot of influence in shaping the characteristics of Indonesian trainee workers in Japan. On the surface, as seen in Chapter 3, the image of Indonesian workers who are increasingly considered to be good and well-disciplined has become an incentive for Japanese companies to accept them as trainees.

Apart from the touted image that looks so good and fascinating, and apart from the government-business elites who play a role in perpetuating this program, what is the actual role of the technical intern trainees themselves? How did they become the main key to shaping the desirable characteristics and image of technical intern trainees in Japan? This chapter aims to investigate how certain characteristics of the technical intern trainees' generation have contributed to maintaining the "myth" and propaganda of TITP until the present, and how the built-in seniority culture influences behaviors and norms among Indonesian technical intern trainees in Japan. We attempt to reveal and explore the power seniority culture has in shaping the behavioral norms and characteristics of technical intern trainees, and to compare different characteristics that have developed among subsequent generations of trainees. Below, we first try to understand the overview of Indonesian trainees in Japan. We will then examine the feature of the first-generation trainees. The second (and the present) generation is analyzed next.

Indonesian Trainees in Japan

As seen in chapter 2, Indonesia has become one of the largest sending countries for migrant workers in Southeast Asia. There are 37.7 million Indonesian workers working overseas in 2022 (Rizaty, 2022). For Japan the total number of foreign workers in October 2022 rose 5.5% from a year before to 1,822,725, and the total number of Indonesian workers in Japan was 77,889 (Japan News Yomiuri, 2023). The number of Indonesian trainees itself, as of June 2022, was around 39,177 (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). It seems Japan has an attraction that never fades. Japan's popularity also competed with the "American Dream" trend among young Indonesians during the 1970s, when everything Japanese, from cars, motorcycles, and computers to games, films, dramas, anime, and cartoons, was readily

accepted. It can be said that the "heart to heart" diplomacy of the Japanese government launched by Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda in 1977, known as the Fukuda Doctrine, succeeded in embracing the hearts of the ASEAN Community, including Indonesia.

This positive image portrayed by Japan enhanced its success and progress not only in the eyes of ASEAN countries but also the world. "Japan as Number One," which was later coined by an American Sociologist Ezra Voegl, further emphasized Japan's position as an influential modern State.²⁷ This had an effect of further motivating developing countries to establish various cooperation agreements with Japan. Among these agreements was the cooperation in sending trainees to gain technical knowledge under the supervision of Japanese professionals, so that they could become reliable human resources capable of developing technology and knowledge when they return home. However, in practice, the implementation of the TITP has suffered from problems, including:

1. While the program has the stated objective of transferring skills and technology from Japan to other countries, it has become a source of cheap labor for small and mid-sized companies unable to secure enough personnel.
2. Training is often not conducted as planned, or wages are not paid as required.
3. Brokers intervene in the process and demand that trainees pay deposits.
4. Interns may be fugitives from the law (JIL, 2016 p.72).

However, despite the numerous issues in the field, this program continues to be highly regarded in the eyes of the younger generation in Indonesia. Why? We need a deeper scope of analysis particularly on how intern trainees—who are considered as active pawns in this program—directly or indirectly play an important role in shaping the characteristics and norms perpetuating the TITP. Here, we focus on the role of cultural values, such as the power of seniority and the generation-gap ideology operating between the senior and junior generations of Indonesian technical intern trainees in Japan.

Here, "senior and junior" refers to the generations of trainees. Firstly, they are divided into two generations based on the year of their entry into Japan as part of this program. The first generation is the one that arrived in Japan when this program was first being established. Specifically, the 1990s generation refers to people who arrived in Japan between 1993 and the mid of the 2000s. The second generation is the one that arrived in Japan between the mid-2000s and the present. The division of generation was enhanced in accordance with the initial entry

²⁷ Vogel's book *Japan as Number One*, published in 1979, detailed the path to Japan's growth and was written mainly as a guide for the United States. But his observations were also keenly noted in Southeast Asia. Leng Leng Thang, associate professor and head of Japanese Studies at the National University of Singapore (NUS), said Vogel's book was novel in proposing Japan as a model for world economies to emulate (Siow, 2020).

of social media particularly Facebook in Indonesia. Facebook began to be widely used by Indonesian people for the first time in 2008 (Wahono, 2011). Facebook eventually became a benchmark that influenced changes in interaction and communication styles of the Indonesian technical intern community in Japan, which is marked by the establishment of many Indonesian communities in Japan through social media, particularly Facebook, such as ICJ (Indonesian Community of Japan), IPTIJ (Indonesian Technical Intern Trainee Community), Tohoku family, and others. The generation known as the social media generation is the millennial generation, born between 1980 and 1995 (Durfy, 2022).

Secondly, the seniors in this program are also those who arrived early during the program (on-going senior), those who have graduated from the program (Returnee), those who have a sending agency, the pre-departure trainers, and the pre-departure teachers who graduated from the program (Japanese language teacher). Below, we analyze the behavioral differences in the first generation of Indonesian technical intern trainees.

Behavioral Differences in the First Generation (80s and 90s Comers) ²⁸

Among the Indonesian trainees in the first batch of the 1990s period, almost all the participants whom the author interviewed expressed the same enthusiasm, and when the author asked them their main reason for taking part in the TITP, they answered that it was due to the image of Japan as having a strong economy and advanced technology. EW (Initials) fifty-six years old, said in the interview: "I decided to take part in the TITP to get a better job and because Japan is economically strong and has advanced technology." A similar sentiment was conveyed by MS (Initials), fifty-five years old, who stated: "Of course I wanted to go to Japan because Japan is known as a developed country with advanced technologically, and besides, finding a job was very difficult at that time, especially for me coming from Aceh."

The first generation of Indonesian trainees in Japan is mostly described as a tough generation and has a strong fighting spirit as described in terms of "The Spirit of 45" (semangat 45). The Indonesian phrase "The Spirit of 45" is frequently used to encourage individuals to

²⁸ According to Beresford Research, there are generational characteristics according to the year of birth; for example, the early generation who came to Japan for TITP are called Baby Boomers (those born in 1946-1964 and aged between 57-75 years in 2021) and generation X (those born in 1965-1979 and aged between 40-55 years in 2021). The competitive tendency in Baby Boomers is probably due to the large number of individuals born in this generation, so they have to compete fiercely for a place in society (Nugroho, 2021). In Indonesia in general, people in this generation grew up after the war, where the main characteristic is holding on to principles and customs so that they are known as "conservative," aka "maintaining habits," or in other words, "old-fashioned." All work and competencies are mastered through a long process and are considered a "source of power," and this is not something that is easy to make this generation change its habits as has been done by the generations below it (Bernadeta, 2021).

persevere in their endeavors. This sentence is a reflection of the nation's values, and it illustrates the fighting spirit of Indonesian youths during the era of independence war (1945-9), who never gave up in their fight to gain independence (Putri, 2020).

SG, a former first-generation trainee who currently resides and works in Japan (around 50 years old) for example, stated that the current trainees' attitude is far different from when the program began. He said that the TITP participants or *kenshusei* from Indonesia at this time are very "spoiled" and do not have a "fighting spirit" like the previous generation.

"Trainees nowadays are very spoiled and do not have a strong fighting spirit. If there is a slight problem, they soon hurry to report it. They complain easily and are not strong enough. They need to learn about and imagine what it was like for our first generation, when there were no communication tools like today's cellphones. If we wanted to report a violation, we had to go to the city that was a long distance away to find a public telephone, while today's trainees can easily report their complaints immediately. (SG, man, Kyoto, April 4, 2019).

This is like what was expressed by MS (first generation trainee alumni) who currently has his own company in the field of machinery in Bekasi, West Java province, and ZH who currently owns a private sending organization in West Java. They say:

"Because of the difficulty in finding jobs and opportunities in Indonesia we ignored all the problems and obstacles we faced in Japan. Difficulties must be faced and lived through as lessons in life." (MS, male, Jakarta, July 21, 2018).

"I come from Aceh province, and as you know, finding a job was very difficult at that time, and trying to be part of the training program was my only hope. So, if during the program we received verbal violence it was a normal thing, and everyone also experienced the same thing. Yes, we have to persevere in life and remain enthusiastic whatever happens. We are men so we shouldn't be whiny." (ZH, Male, Cikarang West Java, January 23, 2020).

SG, MS and ZH represented the first generation of Indonesian trainees and all of them agreed that the determination and fighting power of the first-generation trainees was very persistent and they did not give up easily or complain. However, they admitted that as trainees they often saw violence with their own eyes and even experienced it themselves, but they regarded it as a lesson that must be endured and they tried to survive and encourage one another, and they also believed that Japan is a country that has a *ganbaru* spirit (persistent spirit) that they could all learn from.²⁹

²⁹ The meaning of Ganbaru is to do one's best or hold up under pressure, as in the phrase *ganbarō Nippon* (Don't Give up/Keep on going Japan) or in the English term usually called do your best, keep up the good work. Ganbaru could have other positive associations, particularly since it is often directed at people trying to learn something. It

Furthermore, when asked in the interview what type of violations usually happened as a trainee, they mostly gave the same answer, such as excessive working hours, verbal and even physical violence, inadequate living facilities, and work accidents. Clearly, numerous violations happened and were experienced by the first generation of Indonesian trainees. Then how did they react to it?

“We tried to survive, even though there were some trainees who could not stand it and chose to run away from the program, but not so many.” (EW, male, Bekasi, West Java, January 22, 2020).

“We tried to prove to the supervisor that we were persistent, diligent, and as hard working as the Japanese workers were, so that they would realize it and then appreciate us. Actually, my business cooperation with a Japanese company today started from gaining my boss’s trust.” (MS, male, Jakarta, July 21, 2018).

“I think wherever we work, something like this will happen, not only in Japan but also in Indonesia, right? So, we must keep up our spirits! It will make us stronger and successful.” (ZH, male, Cikarang West Java, January 23, 2020).

As the first generation of the trainee program, they have succeeded in building a discourse about the characteristics of this program. Before they left Indonesia, they had indeed received advice, training, and briefing on this program from their recruitment until their departure. They had already trained their minds and bodies to survive and be strong in facing various obstacles, so their attention could focus more on how to survive abroad. Moreover, realizing that being able to “work abroad” was an opportunity that could not be obtained easily by everyone made them ready to struggle hard under any circumstances. In dealing with acts of violence or injustice, they preferred to be patient and encourage each other to avoid giving up and stopping halfway. Now many of these early generations have become involved in the business of recruiting trainees, whether they are giving motivational lectures or starting their own trainee dispatching agencies, such as ZH from Aceh who currently owns a sending agency in West Java. Here, the cultural reproduction effect continues.

Regarding the fighting spirit of the first generation of the program, it is also in line with what was expressed by Nita, who is a representative of the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower specifically for the division of Indonesian Trainee programs to Japan (Binalattas). In my interview with her, she said: "There is indeed a significant difference between the current generation and the previous generation, especially current trainees who are graduate students.

is also commonly used by well-intentioned people to cheer sports teams, buck up depressed friends and galvanize employees of companies experiencing difficult challenges in business (Jones, 2015).

Typically, they join this program just for fun, so their fighting spirit is minimal. They are quite different from the previous generation or those coming from remote rural areas, who usually take this program seriously and have a strong fighting spirit because they are determined to change their fate.” (Nita, Jakarta, September 2, 2018).

If we look at Indonesia in the 1990s, employment opportunities were still very limited, and especially in the rural regions, social inequality between the rich and poor was very wide, and the conditions of minimum wage were very hard. So, for the first generation of trainees, being able to work in Japan was an attractive opportunity. In 1971 for example, 73.04 percent of people worked in the agricultural sector, 11.19 percent in the manufacturing sector, and 15.76 percent in the service sector. By 1986 the percentage of the labor force working in the agricultural sector had decreased to 55 percent and the rest worked in other jobs, namely manufacturing and services. Then employment increased sharply in 1990 in trade (14.7 percent), services (13.1 percent), and manufacturing (11.4 percent) (Saliman, 2005). These changes in employment were the result of Indonesia's economic development in the 1970s and 1980s. Economic development indicators were also followed by changes in employment status, which is indicated by the number of workers in the formal and non-formal sectors. The number of workers in the formal sector increased from 26 percent (1980) to 35 percent (1997), while the number of informal workers dropped from 74 percent (1980) to 65 percent (1997), but in total, the percentage of informal workers was always greater than the workforce in the formal sector (Saliman, 2005).

Furthermore, the economic crisis that occurred in mid-1997 turned the Indonesian economy into a ravaged state. Many private sector businesses went bankrupt, so many workers were laid off just as new workers began looking for work. In the end the people's purchasing power became very weak as a result of rising unemployment; increasing poverty, and ignorance became a disease that was difficult to cure. One of the national problems that have not been solved is the problem of unemployment which is expected to continue to color the present Indonesian employment conditions where poverty has nearly doubled to 28%. (Hofman, 2004). The fact was that in 2001 the national economic growth of 3.3 percent was only able to create employment opportunities for 970 thousand people, while the workforce had increased by 2.5 percent from the previous year. This number constituted 8.10 percent of the Indonesian workforce in 2001, and this percentage of open unemployment was greater than the percentage of open unemployment in 2000 which amounted to 6.08 percent of the total workforce (Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics/BPS, 2001).

In addition, the difference between the minimum wage earned by Indonesian workers

in Indonesia and Japanese workers in Japan is very great, especially in the provinces. This stark difference still exists today. In 2013, for example, Japan's minimum wage was around IDR 21.26 million or equal to 1,752 US dollar per month, while the lowest salary in Japan was IDR 16.38 million or equal to 1,350 US Dollar per month, and Indonesia's minimum wage based on the statistical data of Southeast Asia is the third from the bottom. The salary at the high end of the minimum wage range of Indonesian workers is only IDR 2.2 million equal to 181 US Dollar or just 10.3% of the wages of workers in Japan, while the lowest wage received by workers in Indonesia was IDR 830,756, only 5% of the salary of workers in Japan (Liputan6, 2013).

Due to pressure from other nations to end the practice of "sweatshops," which coerce workers with low wages, long hours, and unsuitable workspaces, Indonesia's minimum wage policy, which had just recently begun in the 1970s, was really promoted in the early 1990s (Pratomo et al, 2011). Thus, it can be said that, when compared to industrialized nations like South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan, for example, the minimum wage circumstances for Indonesian workers in the 1990s were still very poor and unequal. This then became the primary motivation for the rising trend of Indonesian workers migrating abroad, which was also consistent with a government program in Indonesia that aimed to increase the number of Indonesian workers migrating abroad, which reached 1.5 million between 1990 and 1999 and quadrupled between 1995 and 1997. As previously mentioned, the economic crisis caused migration to reach its peak in 1997 (Sukamdi, 2007).

As most of the first-generation trainees had joined this program for economic reasons, they said in their interviews that they were satisfied and lucky to have been part of the program and realized that their current success cannot be separated from their past journey as a trainee despite living a hard and difficult life. Interestingly, this opinion has been passed on by the first generation of trainees to new generations of trainees today. Thus, it should be understood that the situation of the first generation of Indonesian trainees who came to Japan in the first era of the 1990s was the experience of Indonesia's transition from agriculture to industry. Most of the trainees came from rural areas with the highest level of high school education or equivalent, and the mindset of the superiority of Japan as a modern country with advanced technology emerged in this generation.

Seniority is First: Current Generation and its Perspectives (The 20s generation)³⁰

Since the 1990s, Japan has been known not only for its economic power but also for its soft power through its popular culture or so called “Cool Japan.” Of course, the success of Japan as a developed country has led to the ‘Japanese Dream’ among developing countries, and Indonesia is one of them. Japan’s popularity among Indonesians started from the era of the 1970s and continued to increase from year to year. The Japanese Dream emerged after the previous American Dream succeeded in successfully spreading to various countries. Therefore, the TITP cooperation between Japan and Indonesia was easily accepted over time and very much in demand by Indonesian society.

In addition, in the period after the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998, Indonesia's economic condition gradually stabilized (World bank, 2004). During this period, production and investment activities increased, and as a result the poverty rate showed a decline in August 1999, when the poor population had decreased to about 23.43 percent compared to an estimated 47.97 million people in December 1998 (Djumena, 2018). In this period, Indonesia's economic cooperation also improved, and this is shown by increasing cooperation regionally and bilaterally in the employment sector under the G-to-G scheme, such as between Indonesia and South Korea, and then with Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and also Taiwan and China and of course with Japan (International of Migration/IOM, 2010). For Japan itself, investment in Indonesia gradually increased from 1967 to 2007. There were approximately two thousand Japanese companies operating in Indonesia and these companies employed more than thirty-two thousand Indonesian workers which made Japan the top job-providing country for Indonesia at that time (Embassy of Japan, n.d.). Ultimately, the trend of Indonesian workers migration to Japan also experienced a sharp increase from year to year, especially since the inauguration of the TITP in 1993.

At present, the discourses of the positive impression of this trainee program can be seen clearly not only from the government side but from the pictures shown by the trainee participants in Japan through their social media such as Facebook and Instagram. Of the ten trainees interviewed by the author in 2018, nine of them displayed a very positive image of the

³⁰ The generation born in 2013 and later is referred to as Post-Gen Z, or the generation of the 20s. Gen Z is the group of people that were born between 1997 and 2012. They currently range in age from 8 to 23. Millennials, meanwhile, are those who were born between 1981 and 1996. (currently aged 24-40 years). The Millennial Generation in Indonesia is a generation that was born during the transition from the traditional to the contemporary age. This generation is known as a generation that still adheres to culture even though they are starting to use technology actively. This generation enjoys working together online and on social media, and they have high levels of digital intelligence. The Baby Boomer generation, often called the "Colonial Generation," is considered to be more hardworking than the millennial and Z generations due to the convenience of their time (Bernadeta, 2021).

program through their social media (Widarahesty, 2019). Of course, this phenomenon is in contrast with the first generation which at that time did not have any access to telephones and social media at all.

When the author asked the participants from the current generation (2000s) their reasons for participating in TITP in Japan, most participants voiced similar admiration and hope for their future like the first trainees' generation. However, there are other things that distinguish them. While the first generation focused on the economic and technological advances that Japan has achieved, the current generation is not only impressed by Japan's power capabilities (in the economic sense) but also by soft power features like Japanese popular culture. For example:

“My reason to go to Japan by taking part in the TITP is because I want to experience Japanese culture directly. I was impressed by Japanese Pop Culture, and I also want to improve my Japanese language skill.” (SS, female, Shiga, November 20, 2018).

“I am a big fan of Japanese anime, manga, cartoons and comics, I want to feel what it's like to live in Japan and practice my Japanese language skills that I have gained during college.” (PA, female, Shiga, November 20, 2018).

The second generation come not only from rural areas but from also urban areas, and their final educational status is also more diverse than the first generation, being not only high school students, but also having diplomas, being university students, and university graduates.

I decided to take part in the TITP to improve my Japanese language skill. I graduated in Japanese literature so I don't feel confident with my Japanese language skill, so by living in Japan I hope that my Japanese language ability will improve, and I can communicate fluently.” (RP, male, Jakarta, January 21, 2020).

I decided to quit college because I felt that by studying at a college, I would take a long time to be able to speak Japanese fluently, and I heard that many of my seniors who had graduated from the TITP can still continue to study after completing the program. So I decided to take part in the program, and anyway, such an opportunity to live in Japan is rare.” (SR, male, Shiga, September 26, 2018).

When they were asked as to whether this program met their expectations, they answered:

“It turned out that undergoing this program was not in accordance with my previous expectations. I worked sixteen hours a day. We lived with minimal facilities; our air conditioner was broken. We lived with ten people in one home with one toilet. The home was far from the city and we had to be ready to work even on Sundays.” (SS, female, Shiga, November 20, 2018).

“It’s not easy. We live in a dormitory with twenty people and only have two bathrooms and toilets. Every morning there is a conflict between us because everyone is in a rush. And the job is also tiring.” (PA, female, Shiga, November 20, 2018).

“We work harder than other regular workers but for lower pay. Our contract is only in Japanese, and no one explains it to us, they just ask us to sign it. Verbal violence is a usual thing to happen in the factory.” (SR, male, Shiga, November 26, 2018).

Then how do they deal with this situation?

“We try to survive and enjoy our lives here in Japan. Every holiday we always try to go to the city or outside of the city like Osaka and Tokyo to refresh and enjoy the luxury life in Japan like other people do, like buying Tokyo bananas, visiting AKB48 in Tokyo, and going to Nanba etc.” (SS, female, Shiga November 20, 2018).

“Japan is a beautiful country, I love the culture, mostly the popular culture, so I try to entertain myself by exploring the beautiful cities of Japan, and also enjoy the seasons, like snow that we don’t have in Indonesia, even though sometimes I really want to go home, and I will not come back to Japan as trainee anymore.” (PA, female, Shiga, November 20, 2018).

“I try to survive and learn Japanese by myself every night and on holidays. I promise myself that I will succeed so that I will not have to work like this again in the future.” (SR, male, Shiga, November 26, 2018).

I asked: have you ever tried to complain and report your situation, like your living facility and working hours conditions?

“Yes, we have, we tried to report this situation to the *Kumiai* (An Association that acts as an intermediary between the trainees and the company), but they just said that we have to be patient and have a “*ganbaru* spirit” (perseverance) like Japanese people.” (SS, female, Shiga November 20, 2018).

“Sometimes before we complain to the *Kumiai*, our senior (Indonesian) says that this situation is normal, so we must struggle and not give up, or be a complainer, or a spoiled whiner! They said that we must be grateful that we could come to Japan and work here while many people want our position now.” (PA, female, Shiga, November 20, 2018).

“Before I came to Japan, our senior in Indonesia told me that, living in Japan is not as easy as you think, but you have to survive and go through it because you can benefit from it after you finish the program. So I am trying to survive even though sometimes I can’t bare it and I am too tired; even though I heard there are many Indonesian trainees who chose to run away in the end.” (SR, male, Shiga, November 26, 2018).

“We find it difficult to complain, yes, because sometimes our Indonesian seniors are the ones who detain us; they are more powerful and manage us, sometimes arbitrarily. We are asked to obey and not to damage the image of Indonesian workers who have been good so far in the eyes of the company.” (FZ, male, Kyoto, July 12, 2020).

“We are forced to follow what our seniors say, even though there are many disappointments, such as having to sign a work contract that has been changed, and we are made to sign it by our senior who was asked by the company. However, the seniors don't explain anything to us, and instead tell us not to ask too many questions.” (RR, male, Kyoto, July 26, 2020).

From these interviews, we can importantly find that these trainees, due to the precariousness and vulnerability of their conditions, have indirectly contributed to the forming of habitual patterns in dealing with internal problems during the program. Advice from seniors to be patient, disciplined, and obedient in order to maintain the good name of Indonesian participants in Japan has been embedded in their minds since before departure. Moreover, seniors are often used as mentors by the company to guide new participants.

In the above cases, the majority of my respondents are from Java, and two are from Sumatra. Of course, regional background makes a significant contribution to the formation of the character of Indonesian trainees in Japan. Based on its history, Javanese people believe in a strong culture of harmony. According to Clifford Geertz, a well know anthropologist, Javanese society believes that individuals play a role as a harmonious part of the family group (Geertz, 1961). In Javanese society, people see their roles as harmonious members of the family unit. The traits that promote harmonious social integration are valued in Javanese culture. Obedience to superiors (*manut*), kindness, avoiding confrontation, understanding others, and empathy are all exemplary human virtues. Additionally, adherence to a social structure ensures harmony. In many facets of social behavior, the traditional Javanese belief that all men are socially unequal is manifest (Santoso, 2012).

Given these cultural values, and the fact that the majority of trainees come from Java, it is difficult to deny the cultural influence in shaping the characteristics of Indonesian trainees in Japan. In my interview with Nita, the representative of Indonesian Ministry of Manpower (Binalattas), she stated that, “Since the inauguration of this program, most participants have come from Java, mostly from West Java and then from Central Java.³¹ These two areas are the ones that send the most apprentices to Japan” (Nita, Jakarta, January 23,2020).

Access for this program is also concentrated mostly in Java rather than outside Java. In an interview with an alumnus from Aceh, who currently runs a private sending institution known as training and skill institute or used to abbreviate as LPK (Lembaga pelatihan dan

³¹ Indonesia consists of various ethnic groups and the Javanese, with 95,217,022 people, are one of the five largest ethnic groups according to the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS). This figure represents 40.22 percent of Indonesia's population. The second most populous ethnic group in Indonesia is the Sundanese who inhabits West Java. The number of Sundanese in the 2010 reached 36,701,670 people, equivalent to 15.5 percent of the total population of Indonesia (Ciputra, 2022).

keterampilan), he explained that his decision to open a trainee sending institution in West Java was the right decision:

“I think opening a dispatch business in West Java was the right decision, because West Java has one of the highest numbers of potential trainees. Besides, opening a dispatch agency in Aceh is not easy because, apart from being remote, the cultural characteristics of the people of Aceh are different from Java, maybe you've heard that there was a case where participants from Makassar were suspended due to behavioral problems during the program? Yes, it can be said that Acehnese' character is also tough. Although we can't generalize, once there is a problem, it will surely give a bad impression and have an impact on our trustworthy reputation.” (ZH, West Java/Indonesia, January 19, 2020).

In 2018, for the first time, Makassar was finally allowed to send apprentices to Japan again after 13 years. Of course, this was welcomed by the Makassar local government and the people who had been waiting for the opportunity to go to Japan for a long time (Hasanudin, 2018).³² As seen in Chapter 3, apart from the strong influence of seniority culture, obedience training is also socialized by spending two to three months together in a dormitory during the pre-departure period. This intense training period is organized by the Indonesian government for those who depart through the government or G-to-G route, while for those who depart via the private route P-to-P, training varies, with some pending two to three months, others only a month, and some having no intense training at all. During intense training, obedience is instilled in the participants, and they are taught by a senior who was previously in this program. Of course, *manut*, or obedience, has become an essential element and a symbolic justification for the power hierarchy which plays a very important role in shaping behavioral norms among the Indonesian participants.

Based on an interview with Noriko (a pseudonym), who had worked as a consultant at the Organization of Technical Intern Trainee (OTIT) to assist Indonesian technical intern trainee participants who reported problems with their mother tongue consultation, the Indonesian language, she stated in the interview that among the many reports that came from TITP participants from Indonesia, there were many cases of violence involving fellow seniors from Indonesia. In the interview she said:

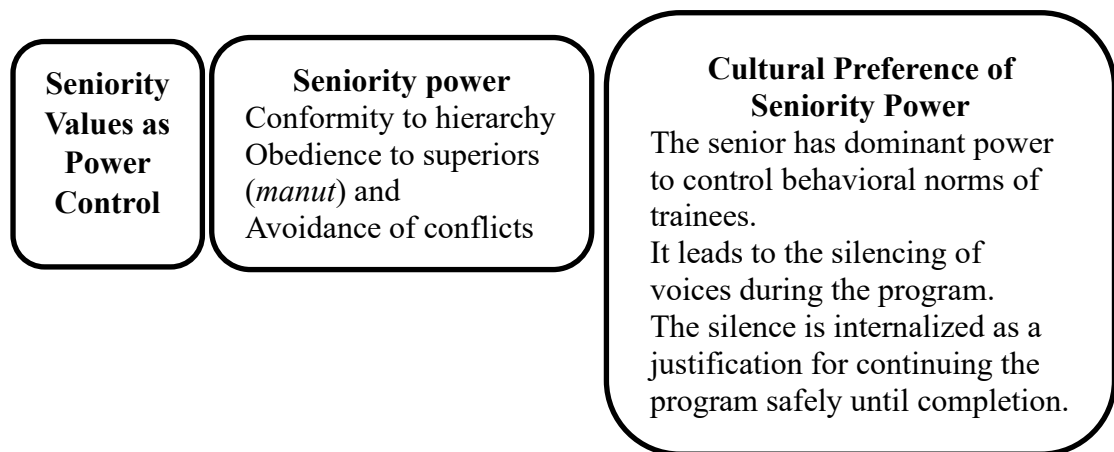
“Among the reports that came from TITP participants from Indonesia, complaints that usually come in are: prohibited annual leave, inappropriate work contracts, and violence that was not only perpetrated by the company but also by fellow seniors from Indonesia, such as being beaten, kicked, and discriminated by their seniors, and this

³² According to the Director General of Training and Productivity of the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, Bambang Satrio Lelono, Makassar and South Sulawesi have been blacklisted for 13 years. The reason Makassar was blacklisted from IM Japan was because several participants ran away before the contract expired (Rakyatku News, 2018).

really surprised me, because the violence occurred precisely from their fellow seniors from Indonesia themselves.” (Noriko, Via Zoom, January 14, 2023).

From these stories, we can now clearly understand how the culture of seniority affects the manner in which Indonesian technical trainee participants interact. Let us visualize the structure in Table 1 below.

Table 7 The Influence of Seniority Cultural Values on the Use of Power in the Process of Interactions and Behavioral Norms among TITP participants



It is expected that we now see how seniority value is applied and maintained during the months of pre-departure training which is perpetuated from generation to generation. This eventually leads to a senior-junior hierarchical relationship that requires passive obedience of the junior to the senior who is able to suppress and control the trainees’ attitudes by encouraging them to finish the program with the appearance of looking "excellent."

Conclusion

From my investigation, it became clear that the characteristic of the first generation of Indonesian trainees in Japan was mostly perseverance. This persevering image of the first trainee generation certainly cannot be separated from the hardship and limited employment opportunities they experienced at home. Most first-generation trainees came from rural or remote areas with the highest level of high school education or equivalent, under the condition of economic transition where the gap between rich and poor was very wide and the conditions of minimum wage employment were very hard.

On the other hand, many of the current generation trainees have come to Japan to join the program due not only to their admiration of Japan's hard power in the economic sense, but also their attraction to its soft power ability as in its popular culture or Cool Japan. Moreover, they have come not only from rural areas but also urban areas, and their final educational status is also more varied than the first generation, being not only high school students, but also having diplomas, being university students, and university graduates.

The first generation of trainees was the generation who admitted that as trainees they often saw violence with their own eyes and even experienced it themselves. They regarded it as a lesson to learn that must be endured and they tried to survive and encourage one another, because they believed that Japan is a country with a *ganbaru* spirit that they could all learn from and that it would benefit them in the future. Most of them joined this program for economic reasons and believed that they were satisfied and lucky to have been part of the program. They realized that their current success could not be separated from their past journey as a trainee, despite living a hard and difficult life.

Meanwhile, the positive impression of the current generation of trainees can be seen clearly from the pictures shown by participants in Japan through their social media such as Facebook and Instagram (we will examine this in the later chapter). Of course, this phenomenon is in contrast with the first generation who did not have access to cellphones or social media in their day. However, behind their admiration for the power of Japanese popular culture, in practice, the current generation also experiences many difficulties during the program, such as physical violence, verbal abuse, and long working hours. In the end, they are forced to agree that there is no choice but to accept the discourse of courage, patience, and an unyielding spirit as the only solution, even though they have tried to express their problems to their seniors or intermediaries.

These findings show that seniority cultural values, including loyalty to the top level of the hierarchy, obedience to superiors and the desire for conflict avoidance, have the power to suppress any complaints and conflicts during the program. Seniority is not only linked to the hierarchal structure of the programs but is also causing the perpetuation of an "unhealthy silence" among the participants during the program. However, these behavioral norms also enable networking with the long-established and well-known alumni of this program, and as a result, the positive image of the obedience and good characteristics of Indonesian workers continues among Japanese companies.

The patience of trainees in keeping complaints amongst themselves is proof that their precarious conditions have indirectly helped perpetuate the TITP system. Their vulnerability

causes them to survive so that they can perform their duties as long as they participate in the program. The narrative of obedience to their superior is maintained among fellow trainees and has developed into a habit that continues to be reproduced, finally forcing them to finish the program safely until the completion. For some of the trainee alumnae, it has become the continuation of their livelihoods as they join the world of trainee programs after returning to Indonesia. From the experiences of the trainees, we can see that their weak situation makes them vulnerable, but they will still persevere to have an opportunity to make a better future for themselves, even at the expense of their human rights.

The results demonstrate that seniority cultures, such as obedience to superiors and a desire to avoid conflict, are important determinants of how trainees engage with one another while resolving internal issues throughout the program. Furthermore, this powerful cultural influence is maintained through pre-departure training programs of sending institutions owned by the program's alumni themselves, promulgating a continuing unhealthy culture of hierarchy, silencing voices, and compliance. We argue that those cultural influences have contributed to the way Indonesian trainees react to the challenges, while indirectly forming the "good image" and "unhealthy silence" that perpetuates the TITP.

Chapter 5

The Role of Supervising Organization (*Kanridantai*)³³

One of the key differences between the TITP and the regular foreign worker program, apart from aiming to obtain technology transfer, is the presence of a supervising organization, bridging the gap between companies and apprentices. The purpose of such an organization is to monitor the participants and provide them with assistance in various ways during the program, from issues concerning housing to problems at work.

The term “supervising organization” refers to a Japanese nonprofit juridical agency that engages in the business of supervision of training (hereinafter referred to as “supervision business”) by obtaining a license to supervise (MHLW, 2017). According to Japan Technical Intern Trainee Cooperation (JITCO), supervising organizations include: (1) organizations that are able to accept technical intern trainees supervised by OTIT (Organization of Technical Intern Trainee), (2) accepting organizations/associations, such as chambers of commerce and industry, societies of commerce and industry, medium- and small-sized business associations, agricultural cooperatives, fisheries cooperatives, public interest incorporated associations, public interest incorporated foundations, and (3) other organizations (JITCO, 2010). According to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, Article No.57/1972, the obligations of this supervisory agency are set as follows:

“The supervising organizations shall be conscious of the fact that they perform an important role in the proper implementation of technical intern training and protection of the technical intern trainees, shall appropriately fulfill their responsibilities in supervision of the training, and shall cooperate with the measures being implemented by the national and local governments. Associations of which an implementing organization or supervising organization is a member shall endeavor to provide the necessary guidance and advice to the implementing organization or supervising organization in order to ensure the proper implementation of technical intern training and protection of the technical intern trainees.”³⁴

Even legally the supervising organizations aim to protect trainee participants during the program, in reality, however, there are many cases of neglect on account of these organizations, even resorting to intimidation and other actions that work against trainee participants. This

³³ Kanridantai, or what is called the "supervising organization," is the intermediary organization that assists in the implementation of the TITP during the program, and those who work in the supervising organization are used to be called Kumiai or Kumiai staff. The supervising organization staff in this chapter will be referred to hereafter as Kumiai.

³⁴ The Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, Article No.57/1972 (Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees).

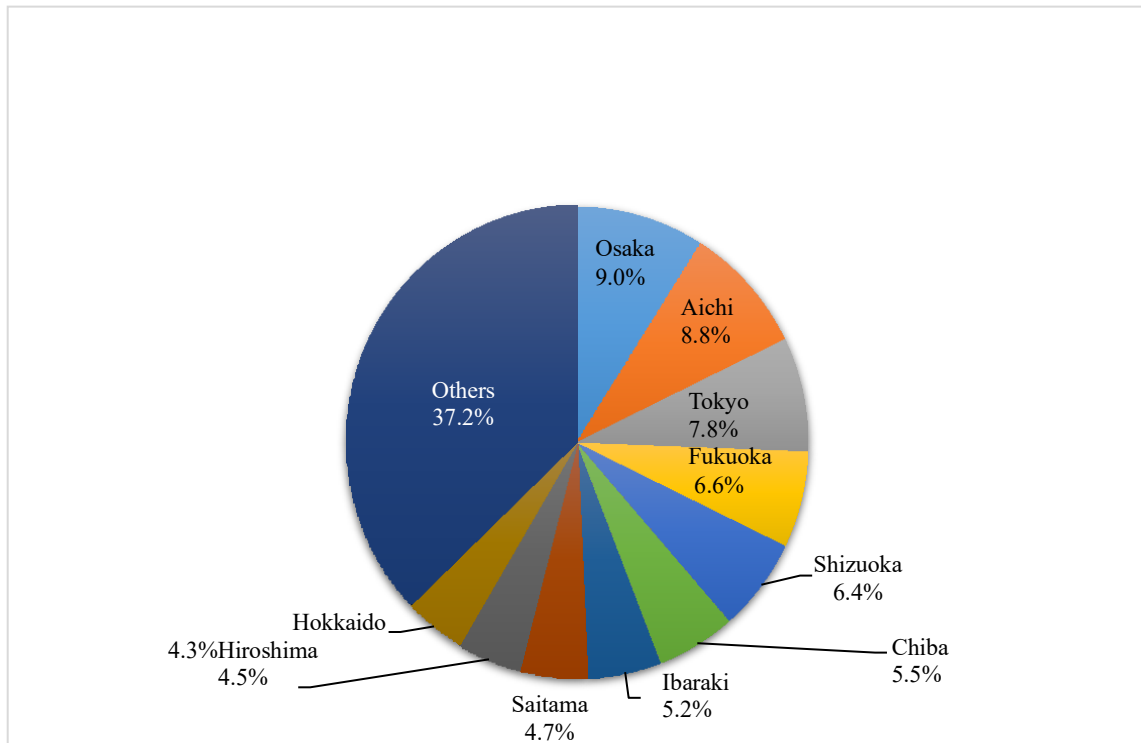
problem has also received a lot of criticism from both within and outside the country, leading to various changes. The most recent being the plan in which the Japanese government appointed a special group of experts at the end of 2022 to improve the program. The main points discussed were costs of departure leading to debt bondage, excessive working hours, and unpaid overtime. The meeting also addressed the inadequacy of existing supervising organizations acting as mediators between trainees and employers, and the government-run Organization for Technical Intern Training (Kyodo News, 2022).

Then, what about the experiences of Indonesian trainee participants in Japan? What are the dynamics in the relationship between the Indonesian technical intern trainee participants and the supervising organization in Japan, especially the Indonesian translators who work at the organization's supervising agency? This chapter aims to reveal how the supervising organization contributes to the continued silencing of workers during the program, which is especially prominent in the case of Indonesians working for the supervising organization. To answer the questions above and analyze the precariat conditions between the technical intern trainee participants and Indonesian translators in the supervising organization, who act as intermediaries between companies and apprentices, our examinations below will be conducted in the following order: Supervising Organizations, Indonesian Translators for Supervising Organizations, and Precarious Conditions of Supervising Organizations.

Supervising Organizations

The supervising organization license has two categories, i.e., excellent supervising business and normal supervising business. The excellent supervising business license allows the licensee to engage in supervising business for all types of supervising-organization-type training for the technical intern trainees in the first year or abbreviated as (i), second year (ii), and third year (iii). The normal supervising business license allows the licensee to only engage in supervising-organization-type training for first-year trainees (i) and second-year trainees (ii) (JITCO, 2017). According to the Organization of Technical Intern Trainee, the number of licensed supervising organizations (By excellent category in FY2023) is 1909. By normal supervising business was 1723 (OTIT, 2023). The following is a list of licensed supervising organizations spread across various Japanese prefectures.

Figure 2 Number of supervising organizations
licensed (by prefecture, percentage)



Source: OTIT, 2020, p. 17

Based on the figure above, with regards to the prefectures where the supervising organizations are located, Osaka prefecture accounts for the largest share with 38 organizations or 9.0%, followed by Aichi prefecture with 37 organizations 8.8%, and Tokyo with 33 organizations or 7.8%. With regards to the job categories for supervision, designated by the supervising organization at the time of applying for a license, the construction category has the highest share, 1,854 or 47.7%, followed by Machinery, 687 or 17.7%, and “Others,” 678 or 17.4% (OTIT, 2020).

The number of implementing organizations and supervising organizations on which OTIT conducted an on-site inspection for during the period of April 2019 to March 2020 was 18,057. Of these, the number of implementing organizations and supervising organizations found to violate the Technical Intern Training Act was 6,253. This brings the violation rate to 34.6% of which the number of violations was 10,708 cases. The most major cases of violation are as follows:

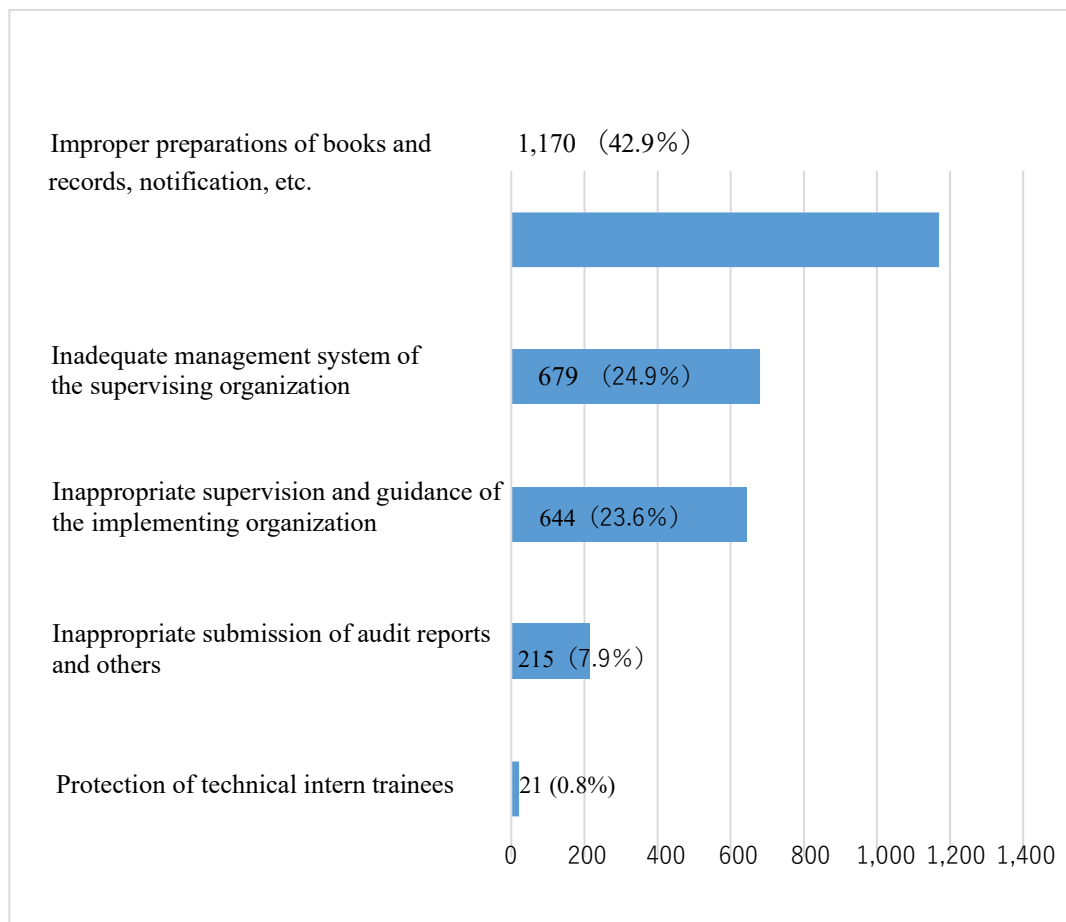
1. With regards to implementing organizations, “Insufficient preparations of books and

records,” 2,258 cases, followed by “Training content, etc. differs from the training plan,” 1,575 cases.

2. With regards to supervising organizations, “Improper preparations of books and records, notification, etc.,” 1,170 cases, followed by “Insufficient management system of the supervising organization,” 679 cases (OTIT, 2020, p.23).

The detailed figure that illustrates the types of violations most often committed by the organization’s supervisory agency are as follows:

Figure 3 Violation cases
(Supervising Organization)



Source: OTIT, 2020, p.26

From the report above, we can see that it was common to find violations committed by supervising organizations during the program. These violations include violations on improper preparation of books and records, notification for 1,170 cases, inadequate management system for 679 cases, inappropriate supervision and guidance for 644 cases, inappropriate submission of audit reports for 215 cases, and violation of protecting the technical intern trainee participant

for 21 cases. One example of such a violation that failed in protecting trainee participants was the incident concerning trainee participants from Vietnam in Okayama, in which the immigration authorities revoked the license of a supervising organization that admitted its failing to stop the physical abuse of a Vietnamese trainee. The Immigration Services Agency announced on May 31, 2022, the punishment of Okayama Sangyo Gijutsu Kyodo Kumiai (Okayama industrial technology cooperative association), which had caused the Vietnamese man to endure two years of physical abuse while working at the Okayama-based construction company (The Asahi Shimbun, 2022).

The trainee tried to discuss the situation with the cooperative association, but the physical assault persisted until he eventually reported to the neighborhood union, which gave the trainee shelter in October 2021. The union was able to obtain a video of the trainee's maltreatment, and in January 2022, they made it available to the public. Consequently, this incident surprised many people and caused anxiety, especially among technical intern trainees. According to Soichi Ibusuki a lawyer known for advocating trainees' rights said that "for supervising organizations, companies that accept trainees and pay the cost of their training are 'clients.' As the result, the organizations tend to be less strict in overseeing the training to avoid making those firms feel annoyed" (The Asahi Shimbun, 2022).

According to Noriko (a pseudonym), who previously works at OTIT as a special translator for Indonesian mother language consultation, many occurrences in the field are unreported by technical intern trainee participants, and that frequently occurs among trainee participants from Indonesia. This can be regarded as contributing to the violations of human rights. In the interview, Noriko revealed:

"In reporting to OTIT, there are several stages. First, we receive a report, or what is called a *shinkoku*. If the case is severe, we will convey it to the top, but often what happens is that technical trainee participants from Indonesia suddenly stop their report midway. This happens because participants often end up under pressure from the company or supervising organization. In fact, there are many cases that do not reach OTIT because they are prevented from being reported by officials who are naughty and irresponsible, and in the end, many cases go unreported in the field." (Noriko, January 14, 2023, Via Zoom).³⁵

For Indonesian trainee participants, it is common knowledge among them that these supervising agencies are more inclined to defend the company, instead of the trainees. Some of the workers who act as intermediaries during the program are usually fellow Indonesians

³⁵ On the research design of this chapter, see Appendix 3.

who have good Japanese language skills. This is to facilitate and make communication between the intermediary institutions and the apprentices smoother and more open. But what about the reality on the ground? Is this relationship ideal in handling and protecting participants during the program? Before going into further details about the dynamics of Indonesian workers who serve as intermediaries during the program, it is first necessary to explain how the process works.

Working as a Translator for a Supervising Organization

Japanese is one of the most popular foreign languages in ASEAN. Based on research conducted by SEAMEO (Southeast Asia Ministers of Education) and QITEP (Regional Center for Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel in Language) and the Indonesian University of Education (UPI), collaborating on Language Policy Research and Language Education in Southeast Asia, it was found that the six most popular foreign languages in ASEAN countries were English, French, Mandarin, German, Korean and Japanese (Kasih, 2022).

Apart from Japan being a popular tourist destination for Indonesians, Japanese is also one of the most popular languages that young Indonesians want to learn. This is, of course, related to prospects of work, since more options become available with a proficiency in Japanese. For Japan, Indonesia is an investment destination with high market growth potential, with around 1,700 Japanese companies currently investing in Indonesia (Indonesia window, 2021). In addition, until 2021, there were around 2,000 Japanese companies in Indonesia, the existence of which is considered to have contributed greatly to the progress of the Indonesian economy, such as through creating jobs and expanding exports (The Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). Thanks to this, the job opportunities for graduates of Japanese literature in Indonesia have become wider, such as becoming translators, language teachers, and generally working in Japan. In fact, based my interviews, it seems evident that many graduates of Japanese literature took part in the technical intern trainee program after graduation to realize their dream of working in Japan, as well as to practice or hone their Japanese language skills. Among many opportunities, one is to become a translator in a supervising organization, and act as intermediary between companies and trainees.

Job vacancies to become translators at supervising organizations are usually not only open to people living in Indonesia, but also Indonesians already in Japan. Usually, this position gets occupied by graduates of Japanese literature or Japanese language education, since

language skills are needed to act as a communication link between the technical trainees and the companies. The recruitment process, which is carried out in Indonesia, usually consists of vacancy information obtained through private sending organizations (LPK), where the translator's position is still in Indonesia, but will be placed in Japan at the supervising institution. Apart from Japanese literature graduates, there are quite a few alumni from these technical trainee programs occupying the translator position, having acquired good Japanese language skills by the time of graduation.

However, apart from the recruitment process in Indonesia, the job of finding translators to work for supervising agencies is also carried out in Japan, by looking for Indonesians who are already in the country, so that the accommodation and travel fees borne by the company would not be too expensive. The recruitment of translators for intermediary institutions in Japan is open for people with various types of visas, as long as the visa has a valid work permit. For this reason, Indonesian students who are currently studying in Japan and have good Japanese language skills are considered good candidates for this position by companies, though their working status would not be that of a permanent worker, but as a part-time worker. Though, there are also supervising companies that look for university students in Japan who have already graduated, for the more permanent positions. The following table is one of the vacancy advertisements intended for the translator position at a supervising organization. It is open to both those already in Indonesia and those currently in Japan:

Table 8 Job Vacancy for Translator in Intermediary Organization

<p>Job vacancy: Job Vacancies for those currently in Japan. <u>As Kumiai Staff</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indonesian intern mentor - Translator and Marketing - Location: Osaka, Sakai-shi or Osaka-shi <p><u>Requirements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Must have a Japanese driving license - JLPT minimum N2 level - Previous work experience in <i>Kumiai</i> preferred <p><u>Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salary: 210,000 ~ 250,000 (Depending on applicants' ability) - Transportation allowance: Yes - Bonuses: None <p>Contact Person: D (080-*****)</p>	<p>(URGENT)</p> <p>We from LPK Bangkit Indonesia have a client who needs administrative staff to be placed in Aichi Ken.</p> <p><u>Requirements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - JLPT N2 - University graduate (any major is welcome) - Capable of operating a computer - Base Salary: 210,000 yen - Allowance: 30,000 yen <p><u>The main tasks:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Handle Indonesian trainees in Japan. 2. Translating from Japanese to Indonesian and vice versa. <p>The interview will be held in Jakarta around February 20, 2020.</p> <p>Send CV in Japanese and English to email lpkbangkitindonesia.co.id</p>
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Source: PPI³⁶

From the table above, we can see that vacancy advertisement for translator in intermediary organization emphasizes having Japanese language skills, but the type of visa and educational background do not require certain criteria. This type of vacancy advertisement is also commonly spread around in various Indonesian communities in Japan such as the Indonesian Student Association (PPI), and religious groups, like the Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia. In addition to translator vacancies, positions of intermediaries for technical intern trainee program participants in Japan are also commonly shared in the Indonesian Japanese Translators Association group.

However, many companies ask their employees to voluntarily become translators and assist the needs of other technical trainee participants, even though the status of the worker in question is not that of a translator who is dedicated to helping protect technical intern trainee participants during the program. So, the energy expended by these workers can be regarded as additional work that does not result in more compensation. These workers usually have the

³⁶ Indonesian Students Association, abbreviated as PPI, is an association that is spread all over Japan, from Kanto and Kansai to the Chugoku area. This association has branch in every prefecture, one of which is in Kyoto-Shiga or PPI-Kyoto-Shiga. Every branch has a social media group, usually Line, to facilitate communication between members for more details about ICJ please see: (<https://ppikyotoshiga.com/about>).

status of senior engineers, and because they are Indonesian citizens, they are considered by the company as capable of helping other technical trainee participants during the program. The following is a screenshot of the thoughts shared by an Indonesian worker holding an engineer working visa, in one of the largest Indonesian community social media groups, namely the Indonesian Community of Japan (ICJ).³⁷

“Good evening ICJ colleagues. Almost 7 years I worked for the same company as a design engineer. The first time I entered the company, I was only given a job designing precast concrete products. But more recently, I have been asked to take care of Indonesian technical trainees translating documents, selecting technical trainee candidates, and handing over projects that have been completed in Indonesia. From the beginning I entered, I always worked in group design. Calculating and designing the structural strength of a product. It’s just that 3 years ago I couldn’t focus on work because the company always asked for help from various fields. I had protested to my boss because I was a member of the design group. They reasoned that [among the] foreign permanent employees [there was] only me who could do it. I always try to help the technical trainee from Indonesia, but sometimes I get angry because I have other work to finish right away. I am not given any additional benefits from the company at all for work that has nothing to do with my field. Here I just want equality with other employees. Is this a common thing in Japanese companies? Please share your opinion. Thank you” (ICJ, Facebook, December, 2022).

From this problem raised by a member of the Indonesian community group in Japan above, what is most interesting is reading the responses, wherein most try to normalize these conditions, even while giving accounts of the same experiences while working in Japanese companies in Japan as technical trainee participants. Many also gave the advice to be patient and sincerely provide help to Indonesian technical trainee participants regardless of the excessive working hours and lack of compensation (ICJ, 2022).

In addition, FZ in an interview reveal that:

“I found that many of the technical trainees themselves were asked to become translators and provide guidance on various matters to newly arrived junior technical trainee participants. These more experienced trainees were asked to guide the newly arrived ones throughout the program because they were considered more knowledgeable about various conditions in the field.” (FZ, Kyoto, male, March 13, 2021).

³⁷ Indonesian Community of Japan, abbreviated as ICJ, is a social media group for Indonesian living in Japan with various types of visas. ICJ was established in 2007, founded by several young Indonesian professionals working in finance and IT in Japan.

The requirements to become a member of this group are:

1. Members must ALREADY be domiciled in Japan.
2. Members may not use an account with a company name.
3. The account must have a clear identity.
4. Before sending messages or comments, members must first answer screening questions.

The current number of members in this group is about 17,400. for more details about ICJ please see: (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/icjnetwork/media/>).

The minimum language proficiency requirements with regards to the Japanese Language Proficiency Test is level 2, and those possessing it may be considered very qualified to be a communication link between technical trainee participants and companies. However, in practice, when translating matters and acting as an intermediary, you cannot rely on Japanese language ability alone, but it also requires the ability to understand labor and immigration laws, insurance rights, pensions, taxes and other things which are crucial to protecting participants during the program. This important ability is not even the main one required to occupy the position. Moreover, many workers were asked to voluntarily be involved in translation and mentoring of technical trainee participants during the program. The following section describes the conditions in the field, as experienced by translators who work in supervising organizations, and their relations with the TITP participants themselves.

Precarious Relations between Trainees and Translators

From the interviews with the translators at the supervising organizations, I found that what motivated them to arrive in Japan is to realize their dream of working in Japan and be able to put into practice the knowledge they had acquired during their studies at college. In an interview, two of the translators explained:

“Before working in Japan, I studied Japanese at a private university in Indonesia, to be precise in Bekasi, West Java. After graduating I joined the program, a *nihongo gakko* Japanese course for 6 months. After that my fate brought me to become a translator at a supervising organization in Tokyo. At first, I didn’t believe I could make this dream come true, because my dream was simple, being able to set foot in Japan I was already happy, plus being able to work, of course, make it more very happy” (HS, male, Saitama, March 4, 2021, Via Zoom).

“Before working in Japan, I studied Japanese literature at a state university in Bandung, West Java. With Japanese [proficiency] level 1, I decided to find a job in Japan. Because indeed my dream is to work abroad, at that time the country I wanted to go to was either Japan or Australia. A fate brought me to Japan” (RI, female, Osaka, March 5, 2021).

Then, is the job of being a translator, tasked with acting as an intermediary between technical trainee participants and companies, an ideal job, based on these aspirations? The fact of the matter is that language skills alone are not enough. In the interviews the two translators explained how they struggled to learn many things that were unrelated to document translation, including various other works that went far beyond their expertise and control such as machinery, assembly, construction, agriculture, even nursing. There is also the case that one of the translators had to protect and assist participants from countries of origin in Southeast Asia

such as Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia.

The tasks they performed as permanent staff translators in a supervising organization included receiving reports from each branch of the supervising organization (*kumiai*) from several regions throughout Japan and making visits and field checks to several areas. Additionally, the tasks may include resolving problems in the field that requires contact with the Indonesian embassy, or branches of supervising organizations in several different regions of Japan and Sending Organizations in Indonesia. In the interview, they explained the situation:

“The job as a leader in charge of 100 companies throughout Japan to supervise Indonesian technical trainee participants in Japan is very tiring and not easy, especially in the field many problems have accumulated because the translator staff working at the branch office cannot solve problems for example, so I have to intervene” (HS, male, Saitama, February 13, 2021, Via Zoom).

“For me, the most difficult part of this job is that we must be ready to listen to the complaints of the technical trainees and solve their problems. In fact, I must be ready to receive complaints 24 hours a day, sometimes they call at night when it’s already outside working hours, such as midnight, two o’clock in the evening, weekend, holidays and so on. I don’t blame them because they can only contact me during those hours because in office hours, they also must work even overtime, sometimes I feel tired of having listen to everyone’s problems where I as a human being also have problems but have no room to complain. It’s like irony” (RI, female, Osaka, March 5, 2021).

For HS and RI, who possess the status of permanent workers with positions as leaders in charge of dozens of supervising organization branches throughout Japan, of course it is not that easy. The load of their work is highly dependent on the cooperation of the staff in the supervising organization branch offices, spread all over Japan, where each month they are required to provide a report on the conditions in the field. Meanwhile, the branch offices of the supervising organization are usually staffed by part-time workers with various visa statuses, such as student or dependent, as long as they have working permission.

For part-timers such as AH, ZS and WT, who work as translators in a supervising organization, there is also a story to tell. AH, for example, a doctoral student who started working part-time to supervise and assist technical trainee participants from Indonesia, especially fishermen workers in the area of Kesenuma, in an interview shared the following story:

“Every three months, I must visit the Indonesian fishermen’s dormitory in the Kesenuma area, there I will ask how their conditions are regarding their daily life and work problems. Apart from visiting them, to facilitate communication I have also created a FB messenger group for them so that they can easily consult without having

to wait for my visit. Working part time as a translator, I really learned from scratch about many things, because before that I did not know anything about labor laws, which in practice intersected a lot. Apart from that, when there are problems in the field, we as translators are often faced with a feeling of dilemma. On the one hand, we must protect the participants, but on the other hand, we also receive a lot of pressure from the company, especially as we are only translators” (AH, male, Sendai, March 20, 2021).

In a similar vein to AH, WT, who is also a doctoral student in Tokyo, shared her own experience in the interview:

“Being a translator who works as an intermediary in a supervising organization is not easy, we witness many things and must translate and convey to apprentices in all kinds of conditions. For example, when the company is angry and utters harsh words, we must translate according to these conditions, and that’s where we seem to be at war with our conscience. I myself have been scolded by the company for not translating according to their expectations. When I had to convey their anger in front of the technical trainees, I translated it in polite language. So, it’s not surprising that translator positions in supervising organizations also come and go; not a few give up and decide to stop. Moreover, usually one staff member must take care of at least 40 trainees” (WT, female, Tokyo, May 29, 2021, Via Zoom).

From the stories above, we can learn that those who work permanently and part-time as translators, whose job is to act as intermediaries between companies and technical trainee participants, are overwhelmed with information, especially related to labor laws. The labor laws may be regarded as the main key of knowledge in protecting technical trainee participants. Other shared experiences include uncertain working hours due to being ready to accept consultations and complaints from technical trainee participants at any time during the program, and being in a powerless position, because they feel pressure from the company that employs them.

From the interviews, the problems that often arise and are consulted by the technical trainees during the program include:

1. Bullying by fellow Indonesian seniors, or by senior workers from Japan
2. Employment contracts that are not the same as those described in Indonesia or Japan
3. Escaping from the program
4. Staff at branch offices who are unable to bridge or solve problems in the field, which eventually leads to problems piling up
5. Physical and/or verbal violence within the company
6. Work accidents³⁸

³⁸ These are the type of complaints and consultations that came up as a result of the interviews with the five translators who work as intermediaries in a supervising organization (Kumiai Staff).

Their impressions while working as translators at a supervising organization for technical trainee participants varied. Some felt sorry for the trainee participants because the salary did not match the difficulty of the work being done while many participants had experienced debt bondage before departure. At the same time, here were also those who felt that the participants were mentally weak and too often complained about trivial things. In the interview, HS explained:

“What is also difficult is that when facing technical trainee participants who do not have high enthusiasm. Many *kenshusei* participants give up easily, complain easily, are not mentally strong, difficult to manage, and protest a lot” (HS, male, Saitama, Via Zoom, February 13, 2021).

On the other hand, we must consider the powerless position of the staff who work in the supervising organizations, because they are also part of the company’s employees and it ultimately causes an increasingly unequal relationship. WT explained in the interview that the most difficult thing is when they face cases of violations experienced by technical trainees. The feeling of being faced with this kind of dilemma can even go so far as to make them experience mental health problems. It gets worse when they do not even receive a good solution from the authorities, like the Indonesian embassy. In their interview, WT explained:

“In practice, when there were problems with violations experienced by technical trainee participants, when we got stuck, we complained to the Indonesian embassy in Tokyo, but administratively, unfortunately, the Indonesian embassy in Tokyo did not have a special division that handles Indonesian workers in Japan, while there is a special education division. The biggest number of visa holders of Indonesian citizens in Japan are using work visa, especially technical trainees” (WT, Female, Via Zoom, May 29, 2021).

Then, what about the experience of the apprentices themselves regarding their relationship with the supervising organization that is intended to protect them during the program? SH, a female participant who became pregnant in the middle of an internship program at Utsunomiya shared her experience regarding her relationship with the Indonesian staff who worked as translators in a supervising organization:

“I experienced pressure and discrimination from Indonesian staff who worked at a supervising organization, namely when I was taken to the hospital to check my pregnancy. When I arrived at the hospital, without prior discussion, the *kumiai* asked the doctor whether my pregnancy could still be aborted. After returning from the hospital, the *kumiai* gave me a choice if I wanted to continue the pregnancy, I was asked to stop working and return to Indonesia; if I wanted to continue working, I had to abort my pregnancy, at that time I was very confused” (SH, female, Utsunomiya, Via Zoom, December 17, 2022).

Meanwhile, RB, a technical trainee participant who worked in a construction field in Chiba, also experienced discrimination by *kumiai* staff. In his interview, RB explained:

“I have experienced discrimination at work, excessive working hours, and physical violence by seniors from Indonesia, such as being kicked, beaten, and thrown things. The company did not care about my complaints. When I complained about this to *kumiai* staff, *kumiai* said there was no way to change jobs or companies, and asked me to return to Indonesia instead. The *kumiai* staff also suggested that if I felt weak physically, I have to work out at the gym.” (RB, male, Chiba, Via Zoom, September 29, 2022).

In contrast to SH and RB, whose staff is always present to check working conditions, but is discriminatory, the 10 trainees in Shiga’s Omihachiman area had never been visited by their *kumiai* staff at all. Various complaints that were submitted were never followed up, such as the room’s air conditioner being broken. Participants experiencing illness had to take care of themselves. The *kumiai* staff only communicated by telephone, giving encouragement so that the participants would remain enthusiastic about completing their assignments, though only for one year (SS, Omihachiman, September 20, 2018).

Together with interviews with the staff who work directly in supervising organizations, and the technical trainee participants themselves, the author also interviewed NGOs, who also had experience dealing directly with cases that come in from the consultations they receive daily. Two NGOs were selected, one in Nagoya and one in Osaka; these two places are the areas with the largest number of Indonesians trainees living in Japan (OTIT, 2020).

In the interview, AS, a woman holding a permanent resident visa in Japan, being married to a Japanese person, shared her experience of working as a translator at an NGO in Osaka, which opened consultations with mother tongue sessions for several foreign countries, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, China, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. In interview, AS explained that the relationship between technical trainee participants and *kumai* staff was very unequal in practice, as many *kumai* staff were more inclined to defend the company rather than the trainees:

“*Kumiai* staff, both [those] Indonesian and Japanese, have not been balanced in their efforts to protect technical trainee participants in the field. Especially for Japanese *kumiai* staff, cultural understanding about each country is still minimal. In general, the *kumiai* staff focuses too much on what must be obeyed and what the participants’ obligations are, and puts more emphasis on trainees’ understanding of Japanese work culture and Japanese culture in general. But they are negligent in efforts to fulfill participants’ human rights. As for Japanese *kumiai* staff, there are still a few who want to learn the culture of other countries like Indonesia. So many problems occur in the field. What is most found is the issue of prohibition on religious rights such as praying and fasting.” (AS, female, Shiga, April 11, 2021).

In line with the explanation above, Natsuko Saeki, an associate professor from Nagoya Gakuin University who is also the founder of the NGO *Soudan* in Nagoya, explained in interview:

“One of the most frequent violations that occurred actually came from the *kumiai* staff, such as discrimination. Pressure was mostly carried out by the *kumiai* staff who were fellow Indonesians themselves. Violations included prohibitions of movement, such as being prohibited from leaving the dormitory, and the use of communication devices, such as cellphones, and illegal wage deductions. Also they inclined to defend the company rather than helping technical trainees” (Saeki, Nagoya, March 15, 2021).

Thus, in practice, the ones that play the biggest role in resolving problems during the program are the independent institutions that are not employed by the company, such as NGOs, community volunteer groups, and academic practitioners. These parties are independent and have the power to voice their rights before the company. In interviews with the 15 technical trainee participants in Sendai, all participants stated that it was mostly the NGOs and the Tohoku family association that helped solve the problems in the field (Sendai, March 21, 2021).

Conclusion

As investigated in this chapter, the unequal relationship between TITP participants and the supervising organization (*kumiai*) staff illustrates the vulnerable position of both. The excessive working conditions of *kumiai* staff, such as having to be on call 24 hours a day to receive complaints, having the pressure of translating in the field, and supervising at least 40 apprentices or hundreds of apprentices from different regions of Japan with various types of work, certainly show that being intermediaries is as vulnerable as technical intern trainees themselves. Essentially, the recruitment process of the *kumiai* staff, which does not require the ability to understand labor law, also contributes to the inability of *kumiai* staff to deal with problems in the field.

For WT, ZS, and AH, whom we saw above, working as part-time workers in a supervising organization is also a part of their survival strategy as they must pay for their studies in Japan. The study period of more than three years certainly forces them to think hard about how to be able to meet their daily needs and tuition fees as foreign students in Japan. With a position that is also very vulnerable as a student with their own problems, working as an intermediary that is expected to protect apprentices by being available 24 hours to receive complaints, coupled with their lack of understanding regarding labor law, certainly makes the condition even more vulnerable and fragile.

It is a well-known criticism of supervisory organizations that they are too inclined to defend companies. However, what causes this condition and how it can occur has not been properly addressed. Both technical trainees and staff who work as intermediaries in supervising organizations have vulnerabilities. Their positions are equally powerless under the pressure of companies that employ them with the aim of boosting productivity and profit. In the end, the seemingly calming words that appeared to make the problem being resolved—such as “be patient, don’t be weak, keep up the spirit, hang on”—effectively strengthen a toxic positivity circle. From the discussion in this chapter, we find that Indonesians working as part of the supervising organization play an important role in silencing voices while promoting a good image of Indonesian TITP participants during the program.

Chapter 6

Community as a Coping Mechanism: Religious Groups, Ethnic Communities and Social Collectivism of Tohoku Family

In the middle of various problems experienced by Indonesian migrant workers abroad, these workers have their own ways of dealing with the problems during the abroad, for example reducing their stress by joining religious activities, traveling, posting issues to social media (Widarahesty, 2019), and *guyub* that means gathering with the same ethnicity, religion, or local origin. In places like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, this *guyub* culture can form and build collective action that is able to provide advocacy to its fellow members, namely, to become a “union.”³⁹

Then how about Indonesians in Japan? For Indonesian technical intern trainees themselves, more than a hundred batches of trainees have been sent to Japan and participated in this program according to Budi Hartawan, the director of BINALAVOTAS (Directorate General of Vocational and Productivity Training Development), Ministry of Labor. He revealed that since 1993, the Indonesian government has dispatched approximately 94,348 apprentices to Japan and “currently around 13,699 people are still taking apprenticeships in Japan.” (Liputan6, 2022). In practice, these participants have certainly played an active role in shaping the characteristics of Indonesian migrant workers residing in Japan (Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas, 2022). Thus, this chapter analyzes the inside of Indonesian communities or groups, which indirectly or directly construct the characteristics and images of Indonesians in Japan and play a significant coping role in dealing with problems during the program.

According to Lazarus and Folkman, “coping” is the continuously changing use of cognition and behavior to deal with specific external and/or internal demands that are thought

³⁹ Indonesian migrant workers have succeeded in transforming the *guyub* culture into a forum for advocacy for Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in places like Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. This is a result of several factors, including the employment structures that exist in each place and the existence of NGOs, academics, and practitioners who are able to empower groups of Indonesian migrant workers in these places by embracing workers, especially those who have experienced violence or fraud, and assisting them to encourage workers to speak out and embrace other fellow workers in order to end the cycle of injustice. For instance, there is a tragic story of woman named Erwiana in Hong Kong who was abused by her employer and tortured so that she was permanently disabled. After being tortured, Erwiana was taken back to the airport by her employer and left there, and Erwiana did not dare to report it because she had been intimidated and threatened with death for 7 months, and her parents would also be killed. With the support of many parties, justice finally came. A Hong Kong court sentenced Erwiana's former employer to 6 years in prison on February 27, 2015. Since then, Erwiana has become a symbol of the struggle of migrant workers. Even TIME magazine listed Erwiana in its list of the 100 most influential people in 2014 (Liputan6, 2015).

to be taxing or exceeding the person's resources. Lazarus and Folkman proceed by emphasizing that for the most majority of immigrants, refugees, foreign students, sojourners, and even members of ethnic groups whose parents were immigrants, coping strategies are natural and unavoidable components of acculturation and cultural transformation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.141).

Hence, the aim of this chapter is to understand how TITP participants overcome and respond to various changes and problems during the program. To do so, the first section will discuss Indonesian ethnic communities in Japan. We then look at Indonesian religious community in Japan. Third, we will examine a collective movement of Indonesian workers in Japan by highlighting Tohoku Family.

Indonesian Ethnic Communities in Japan

Indonesian society consists of various ethnic groups, cultures, and religions. This cultural diversity makes Indonesia known as a multicultural nation. Indonesian diaspora abroad also instinctively seeks and builds ethnic communities where Indonesian migrant workers gather on their days off. In Taiwan, for example, Indonesian migrant workers usually gather near railway stations in the Taoyuan, Taipei, and Kaohsiung areas (Koike, 2015). In Hong Kong, every week, Victoria Park is filled with a sea of Indonesians who gather to enjoy Indonesian specialties to the extent that the park is known as “Little Java” (Joseph, 2017). Meanwhile, Indonesian migrant workers in Japan are, besides having various types of work visas, such as engineers, trainees, care givers, elderly nurses, part-time student workers, and, most recently, special skilled workers (SSW), hindered in the formation of a solid community by non-uniform holidays and working hours that often exceed the specified time. This is as expressed by Isabella in her research of the production of Shared Space, comparing Hong Kong and Japan:

“One possible aspect that restrained Indonesian migrant workers from developing a self-organized community in Japan is that they are dispersed in several remote areas in the country. Costly travel has made frequent physical gatherings very difficult. Moreover, compared to Hong Kong, which has strict rules for domestic migrant workers’ holidays, Japan’s labor laws are not enforced for providing workers with a proper weekly day off. Many migrant workers who work in agriculture and fisheries have irregular days off, therefore, they rarely meet with each other at those times, even with friends who live in the same accommodation” (Isabella, 2016).

The following is a photo of Indonesian migrant workers regularly gathering every week at Hong Kong's Victoria Park.

Picture 7 Gathering Event of Indonesian Migrant Workers Every Sunday at Victoria Park, Hong Kong



Source: Dwyer, 2022⁴⁰

If we look the experience of Indonesian migrant workers in other countries, it is vulnerable conditions of workers that motivate the *guyub* culture more than just a gathering event, but they are also directed to advocacy actions for their fellow members. At least that is what Friends of Indonesian Migrant Workers in various parts of the country do, as seen in IMWU (Indonesian Migrant Workers Union), IDF (Indonesian Domestic Workers), JBMI (The Networking of Indonesian Migrant Workers), and others who have branches in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Netherlands. This collective movement has a lot of support and assistance from local NGOs, enabling the realization of protection for Indonesian workers in these countries.

Meanwhile, based on interviews and observations in the field, in Japan, groups of Indonesian migrant workers have also established ethnic-based groupings in various regions where membership is quite varied. Some consist of various types of work visas, including engineers, trainees, and nurses, but there are also those on specified visas, such as the

⁴⁰ A large park in Hong Kong, Victoria Park, is where migrant workers from Indonesia (PMI) socialize. They typically meet up on the weekends, which are their days off. Due to the Hong Kong employment system's regulation of the PMI holiday schedule, they can all come together on the same holiday. If permit holders, often known as PMI employers, fail to give their staff vacation days, they will be fined. In Hong Kong, PMI are primarily employed as household assistants, nannies, and eldercare caregivers. PMI goes to Victoria Park to express her emotions and unwind from her everyday duties (Dwyer, 2022).

Association of Indonesian trainees from the West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) ethnic group in Hamamatsu, Makassar in Aichi and Minahasan in Ooarai as well as others. Pudjiastuti (2005) explained, “many Minahasan people from North Sulawesi reside in the Japanese port town of Oarai and work in the local seafood processing companies. Most of these immigrants were irregular migrants until the Minahasan nikkeijin (Japanese-descended foreigners) started to be recruited in 1999.”

In an interview, one of the technical interns who is a member of the NTB/Lombok ethnic group in Hamamatsu explained that their association activities are nothing more than an association based on ethnic similarities, and activities simply involve breaking fast together, having meals, celebrating Eid al-Fitr, and others.

“We only get together because we come from the same ethnicity, and most of Lombok people work in the same area in Hamamatsu. Then we do activities, such as breaking the fast together, having meals, and so on to get rid of boredom and loneliness. But when it comes to solidarity, for example, when someone is having problems, we don’t get that far, usually we just say be patient” (DK, Kyoto, August 13, 2021).⁴¹

What happened to the Lombok ethnic community also happened to other ethnic groups in Japan. For example, the Padang ethnic community in Kyoto, whose participants consist of various types of visas, such as students, engineers, and former apprentices who had settled in Japan because they married Japanese people, carries out activities involving gathering to eat together, celebrating members who have just given birth to a child, moving assistance to a new apartment, breaking the fast together, celebrating Eid al-Fitr, and others. What marks the uniqueness and similarity of patterns for Indonesian ethnic groups in Japan is that seniors are considered as the key and respected by each of the members, especially former trainees who eventually settled in Japan because they married a Japanese person or continued their program to pursue an engineering visa.

The presence of this ethnic community certainly serves as an ideal coping mechanism for the Indonesian diaspora in Japan, including the trainees. The Indonesian population in Japan mostly consists of ethnic groups from Padang, Sunda, Lombok, Minahasa, Makassar, Bali, and others. In an interview, one intern stated:

“Gathering together with fellow Indonesians is a fun thing and it relieves fatigue and also work fatigue; it also eliminates the feeling of missing Indonesia because get-togethers usually provide a variety of Indonesian specialties” (DK, Kyoto, August 13, 2021).

⁴¹ For the research design of this chapter, see Appendix 4.

The existence of this ethnic group certainly helps facilitate the adaptation process for TITP participants who have just come to Japan. Typically, due to the different culture and weather in Japan upon their early arrival, many trainees felt homesick. Here, the presence of seniors and friends of the same ethnicity will certainly provide a lot of information regarding new things that will be faced while in Japan, such as food, places of worship, gathering, and introducing social media networks as media used to communicate with fellow ethnic groups. Besides that, the sense of solidarity that is built because there is a sense of ethnic similarity is also a convenient thing for members who join this ethnic group. For example, the culture of “gotong royong,” or mutual help, is usually done to help with various things such as moving from one apartment to another, accompanying to the hospital, helping to translate Japanese for members who do not have sufficient language skills, and others. Such assistance is often done voluntarily by fellow friends of an ethnic group member.

Apart from that, the existence of this ethnic group is also an opportunity to earn additional income; not a few Indonesians living in Japan sell certain regional specialties, such as Padang food, South Sumatran food, Balinese food, and others, which are of course a remedy for homesickness for certain ethnicities while living abroad including technical intern trainees. This information is passed down from ethnic group members in Japan.

Ultimately, Indonesian ethnic groups in Japan, no doubt, function as a coping mechanism for Indonesian people in adapting to or facing problems during their program, but such ethnic groups also contribute to distancing or dividing Indonesians into several groups, which can indirectly become a barrier to the formation of unity. In an interview, a participant elaborated on this.

“We are not members of any ethnic group because indeed we cannot meet anyone other than fellow participants in this program and also [with] our working hours, holidays cannot be determined, so it is difficult to gather. Besides that, we think the most important thing is not ethnic groups, but unions that can protect us as workers, such as the Indonesian Labor Union in Taiwan and Hong Kong” (RR, Kyoto, July 11, 2021).

What was stated by one of the apprentices above certainly shows that the Indonesian ethnic community in Japan has not significantly reached all circles of Indonesian apprentices in Japan. This lack of reach can be due to several factors, such as work area, type of work, and working conditions, as only certain areas could have access to or reach this ethnic community. Many of the respondents interviewed answered that they had not yet joined an ethnic group in Japan. Among those who answered that they had joined an ethnic group were participants who worked in the construction sector. In the end, those who can pull various ethnic groups into one

common group are usually religious communities because participants come voluntarily to places of worship, such as mosques and churches, to carry out their obligations. Below, we examine the religious community of Indonesians in Japan, especially the Islamic community, because most of the technical intern trainees from Indonesia are Muslim.

Integration of the Indonesian Religious Community in Japan

In Indonesia, there are two large Islamic religious organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah.⁴² Both groups have many followers and are well-structured religious organizations. The two organizations also have membership branches in various regions of the world, such as America, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, as well as Japan.

These religious groups are usually led and managed by Indonesian diaspora who have permanent resident visas in Japan. Many are also managed by Indonesian students and trainees. Below are groups of religious communities that exist in several regions of Japan.

Table 9 Indonesian Muslim Communities in Kansai Area

No	Name of Community	Members
1	The Indonesian Muslim Community in Hyogo	Caregivers, Trainees, Students, Engineers
2	Istiqlal Mosque in Osaka	6000 members from different nationalities
3	Bumi Kita Community	No specific number of members
4	Annur Notogawa Mosque	80% trainees, 20% Mixed Marriages
5	Daihatsu Ikeda Muslim Community	400 members (trainees and engineers)
6	PRIM Kansai (Muhammadiyah)	Professional Workers, Students, etc.
7	PCNU – Japan (Nahdlatul Ulama)	Trainees, Students, Engineers, etc.

Source: Indonesian Embassy in Japan/KJRI, 2021⁴³

In addition to gathering in religious activities at mosques, the two largest religious groups, NU and Muhammadiyah, have special communication groups through social media, like LINE

⁴² Hereinafter, the Nahdlatul Ulama community in Japan will be referred to as NU Japan.

⁴³ This information is based on Indonesian Embassy's Zoom meetings with Indonesian Muslim Associations and Community in Kansai area in April 2021.

Groups and WhatsApp. The group with the largest membership is the NU Japan group whose members consist of more than 400 where almost 70 percent of the members are technical intern trainees. Mosques that were established in several areas in Japan also received a lot of donations from these trainees. In an interview with one of the administrators of a mosque in the Shiga area, for example, it was said that “for the construction of this mosque, most of the funds and the largest donations came from the technical intern trainees. It was because they needed a place to worship. As a place of worship was not always available at their workplace, they want to contribute to building a mosque, so that it can be useful for Muslims living in Japan, and also for future technical intern trainees” (LL, Shiga, January 3, 2020).

Because a mosque is the only place that is exclusively intended for Muslims in Japan, the mosques in Japan not only function as places of worship, but also as places to share activities and togetherness in a shared space. Activities, such as celebrating Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, are routine on the agenda of mosques in Japan, which are attended by various groups, including technical intern trainees.

According to Keiko Sakurai, a professor at the School of International Liberal Studies, Waseda University, “foreign-born Muslims, representing 80% to 90% of the Muslim population in Japan, immigrated in the mid-1980s and early 1990s mainly for economic reasons...and were an inconspicuous presence until the mid-1980s, when the influx of Muslim foreign workers migrating to the country for economic reasons began to attract attention” (Sakurai, 2008, pp. 70-71). Sakurai further explained that most Muslim expatriates in Japan came from Indonesia, after that Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Iran. For Indonesia itself, the largest group of Muslims in Japan came from technical intern trainees (Sakurai, 2008). The photo that follows is an example of a gathering that trainees and other Indonesian groups in Japan typically have at the mosque.

Picture 8 Celebration of the opening of the Shiga Notogawa Mosque (attended by 90 trainees from the Shiga area and the Consulate General of Republic of Indonesia in Osaka)



In the front row are representatives of the Indonesian students' association (PPI- Kyoto- Shiga), Indonesian Embassy representatives, Consulate General of Republic of Indonesia /KJRI-Osaka, board members of the Mosque with trainees from Shiga and Kyoto in the back row.

Source: Author

Currently, the growth of Muslims and mosques is becoming apparent in Japan, and this is due to the increase in the number of students coming to Japan and especially the influx of technical intern trainees themselves. Based on the research of Hirofumi Tanada, at the end of 2018, there were 105 mosques in 36 out of 47 prefectures in Japan (Uzuka, 2019). This cannot be separated from the contribution of Muslims living in Japan.

In addition to gathering activities at mosques, most interactions between Indonesian Muslims in Japan are carried out through social media groups like WhatsApp and Line. For example, the NU Japan LINE group, which has more than 400 members, usually provides group information about religious activities, celebrations, lectures, and information about halal food, halal restaurants, or donations.

Importantly, apart from informing about matters related to religion, this religious group is also an effective tool in encouraging its members to survive as immigrants in Japan. For example, encouraging their spirits to adapt to various conditions, such as differences in weather, culture, and encouraging them to carry out their role properly as part of a minority group by obeying local laws and regulations, so as not to damage the image of Muslims in particular and Indonesians in general in the eyes of Japanese people. The presence of this religious group is certainly an important part of the coping mechanism of Indonesian workers in Japan.

For the trainees themselves, the presence of mosques and existing activities are a release of longing and a communication space for members outside their workplace. In fact, not a few also use religious groups as a place for consultation when facing problems in the workplace during their internship program. In an interview with one of the NU Japan LINE group members, AZ explained:

“That there are not [just] a few technical intern trainees who are members of the NU-Japan Islamic group who try to complain about their working conditions or problems they face in the world of work. There are some who have complained about tiring working conditions, working 16 hours a day and only being given minimal rest time. There were also those who received huge salary cuts without any explanation for what the deductions were for. There were also some who even experienced acts of physical violence, namely being beaten by the leader. But because usually the trainee has debt bondage before departure, like my case too, we are afraid to be sent home, so we choose to be silent or run away” (AZ, Chiba, November 20, 2019, Via LINE).

In line with the explanation above, one of the trainees who is also a member of the NU Japan Line group complained in his interview about his problems in the Line group. This trainee is a 24-year-old male and arrived in Japan in late 2018. He entered through private channel, P-to-P and, for 6 months, and experienced the exploitation of working hours and types of work that were different from what was outlined in the work contract. The trainee tried to complain about the issues to supervising organization and the company to explain that he was very tired and asked for a reduction in working hours. Because no solution could be reached, he finally asked for suggestions on what to do with his current condition in the NU Japan Line group (DJ, Iwate, February 19, 2019, Via LINE). However, because this Line group focuses on religious matters with members from various types of visas, the suggestions provided do not significantly form a concrete solution to the problem. What is certain is that the efforts that can be made among members, namely giving encouragement and praying for each other so that the problem is quickly resolved, are often demonstrated to apprentices who report their complaints.

One of the senior NU Japan Muslims, who is also the elder and respected by the members, explained that:

“Indeed, there are some members who are technical intern trainees that often ask for advice regarding problems of unfavorable working conditions. Unfortunately, we are not experts on Japanese labor laws, so we can’t provide concrete solutions to their problems. Usually, we ask in the group who can help with the problem or ask the complainant to seek information from an official institution to resolve the problem. But usually problems, such as fatigue, long working hours, and others are common and experienced by many Indonesian workers in Japan, so we ask for encouragement from seniors on how to get through that and, most importantly, don’t forget to be patient and grateful for all conditions...” (MA, Tokyo, January 23, 2019, Via LINE).

Usually in addition to religious celebration activities, such as Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, several NU mosques in Japan have weekly routine activities attended by many technical intern trainees. For example, one mosque in Akihabara in Tokyo holds a Quran reading activity every Friday night, which is attended by 40 trainees. According to MA, the senior of Nu Japan said that, through this activity, it is hoped that the Indonesian diaspora in Japan can continue to carry out positive activities and always maintain their faith while, at the same time, providing encouragement to always try their best while living in Japan.

Activities carried out by the NU Japan are also commonplace for other Islamic religious groups in Japan. In the case of the Annur Notogawa Mosque in Shiga, 80% of the annual celebrations and routine activities are attended by technical intern trainees living in the Shiga and Kyoto areas. Interestingly, every time a trainee member returns to their homeland because the trainee have completed their internship or moved to another area to continue with another type of visa, such as the Special Skill Workers or *Tokutei Ginou* visa, mosque members will hold a farewell party as gratitude for having completed the program well as well as a thank you from members of the mosque group for contributing as active members of the mosque. The following is a picture of the farewell party activities for trainees.

Picture 9 Celebration of a farewell party for technical intern trainees in Shiga (Annur Notogawa Mosque 2022)



In the front row are the seniors (former technical intern trainees) who already have permanent visas in Japan as they married Japanese citizens; in the back row are ongoing technical intern trainees and student visas holders. Source: Author

Like NU-Japan, the Annur Notogawa Shiga Mosque has also become a place for technical trainees not only as one of worship and release of longing, but a place to complain about the problems they face. Usually, the main advisors for these trainees are the Indonesian diaspora who have already settled in Japan and are the founders and administrators of mosques. Most of the diaspora also came to Japan as technical intern trainees and then married Japanese people.

AR is 30 years old, a woman, and one of the seniors who used to be a trainee before later marrying a Japanese citizen and settling in Japan. She shared,

“As seniors, we feel we have an obligation to provide advice and encouragement to recent trainees. Many of them expressed their living conditions and problems, from family problems and not a few also with uncomfortable working conditions, because I also used to come as a trainee and at least I know how the conditions in the field are. And indeed, there are still many things that have not changed, such as the *kanridantai* (supervising organization) suppressing apprentices, large salary cuts, arbitrary companies and others. Even our mosque once accommodated trainees who fled due to physical violence in their company. We immediately tried to help and contact as there are various parties who can help, including the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia..., so actually I feel sorry for the condition of many trainees who experience stress and some even experience mental disorders. Many of them are afraid to report or there are those who report, but are not responded to” (AR, Shiga, January 26, 2021).

Thus, it can be said that the presence of a mosque is not only a place of worship, but also a place for various types of support during life in Japan. As an apprentice, this is an important place. A trainee, NS from Shiga, who works in a beverage factory expressed, “I can't imagine how to survive in Japan if there are no mosques.” Also, seniors or mosque administrators who always give encouragement have become a cooler amid the harsh burdens of life in Japan. But the hope is that these apprentices also have a wider group and solid groups, such as the existence of a collective movement, like a union, which would certainly be very significant in helping trainees who are experiencing problems” (NS, Shiga, March 27, 2021).

Keluarga Tohoku (Tohoku Family): the Making of Social Collectivism

Indonesian communities in Japan that are not related to ethnicity and religion are very few. But the author found the Tohoku family an association founded by a group of Indonesians who are mainly in the Tohoku region and intended for any type of visa, although TITP participants are in control as administrators. My description about the history of the Tohoku Family is the result of an interview with one of the founders of the Tohoku Family in March 2021, after being delayed for a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the visit, there was also an opportunity to make observations on the Tohoku Family chairperson election, which was also the first time to be held. It was delayed for two years due to the pandemic.

The Tohoku Family was founded in 2014, with the initial name of *sahabat*, which means *satu hati kerabat* (brothers of one heart). This group was established by several Indonesian diaspora who married Japanese citizens, including Mr. Yudi who came to Japan from Lumajang village for the first time as part of an exchange program to learn about the agricultural system in Japan with the JICA program. In his interview, he described his first impression when he came to Japan:

“When I first lived in Japan, I experienced great difficulties. I couldn’t speak the language, I didn’t have connection, and it was difficult to find a job as there was no one I knew. The first Indonesians I met were university students because there were a lot of Indonesian students here. I immediately joined PPI (Indonesian students association) activities, but I felt that there was a distance that I felt with my PPI friends. Maybe it was because of our low self-confidence. Then I met Indonesian sailors. I was told by the Japanese that in the coastal areas, there are many Indonesian sailors, so I went there and when I met Indonesian sailors, I was very happy.

Yudi's interaction with the Indonesian fishing community led him to meet many Indonesian interns in Tohoku, including the technical intern trainees from Iwata Prefecture. Then all of them regularly gathered. Because the people often gathered, they formed a group with the name "One Heart relatives/friends." Finally, over time, these members grew in number. The membership increased to about 80 people and, after the 2011 tsunami, the membership became more than 100, accepting all men and women, and regardless of their religion and ethnicity. Finally, they changed the name from *Sahabat* (one heart relatives) to Tohoku Family, in order to accommodate all from various regions, namely Miyagi, Yamagata, Fukushima, Akita, Iwate, and Aomori.

This community becomes a space for them to release their burdens. Usually, the things they complain about are the working conditions. The biggest moment for the group to get bigger and attention was the Great East Japan earthquake in March 2011. According to Yudi, that moment was a big loss for the community as they lost a lot of Indonesian fishermen. However, no one paid attention to the group, particularly from the Indonesian government. In the interview, Yudi revealed:

“Indonesian government paid more attention to students and even provided free planes for students to go home. My disappointment was very deep. We’re not an intellectual group, we’re just workers, blue-collar workers, maybe that’s why our lives don’t really matter. Since then, we have been more determined. If they have a group of smart people, let us make a group of ‘stupid people’! That became our motivation. Finally, we are getting more and more aggressive in gathering workers and cooperate under the

banner of the Tohoku Family. We work hand in hand to help those in difficulty, especially those affected in coastal areas. Our efforts are also greatly assisted by the Japanese, and we work hand in hand. Then, our number has increased from what was previously only 300 members. Now there are 800 people.”

This organization has routinely engaged in cooperative activities ever since the tsunami disaster. A website was also made, and a chairperson was chosen every year. It is ruled over by an intern. Gatherings to mark August 17 (Indonesia’s independence day) are another customary activity. In order to provide legal counseling in Japan, such as learning about traffic laws and cooperating with the fire brigade, this group formed a partnership with the local police after their activities eventually gained the attention of local residents, local governments, and the tourism division of Tohoku. The following is a picture of their gathering at the leader election event for the period 2021-2022.

Picture 10 Tohoku Family Gathering Event for the Leader Election in 2021



Source: Author

From the story about the formation of the Tohoku Family above, we can clearly see that for the trainees to form a community, a community space becomes a medium of coping mechanism. However, the collective movement providing empowerment and supporting the lives of technical intern trainees while in Japan should be noted as the biggest role of the Tohoku Family.

As mentioned above, collective movements formed by migrant workers in places like Hong Kong have contributed to suppressing the exploitative actions experienced by migrant

workers and have served as empowerment for such workers. IOM claims, “trade unions have always had a particularly important role in supporting decent work globally, representing workers in labour disputes, but also in collective bargaining and social dialogue processes, especially in countries where forced labour and child labour are rife” (IOM, 2007, p.1).

In Japan, those trainees who come through the TITP are under the auspices of the OTIT (Organization of Technical Intern Trainees) that is officially appointed by the government to be protectors and supervisors during the program. Trainees are mediated by a supervising organization, a *kanridantai*, which is expected to provide protection for them during the program. However, as seen in the previous chapter, the fact is that these *kanridantai* are more inclined to defend the company. Therefore, forming a solid group that can help defend and empower workers is not easy.

In the interview, Yudi Suko stated that, in the course of its establishment, the most difficult obstacle that hindered the formation of the Tohoku Family was the existence of the ethnic group itself, which was fragmented, and it made them reluctant to unite. “We tried to explain that we are one Indonesia, regardless of ethnicity and religion, and by being together, we will be strong” (Yudi Suko, Sendai, March 21, 2021). Surely, it is with this unity that a collective movement is made possible. The leader of the Tohoku Family stated:

“The Tohoku Family plays a very large role in guiding and advocating for members who have problems, not like the *Kumai* who only listens but takes no action on solutions. I really hope that, in the future, the Tohoku Family can have more power like a work union” (KM, Leader of Tohoku Family, Period 2020-2021, Sendai, March 21, 2021).

It can be said that the presence of the Tohoku Family is a space for Indonesian apprentices, especially in Tohoku, not only to increase knowledge, but also to create a solid network and be able to advocate for each other if they have problems. The presence of the Tohoku Family has been significant in solving problems experienced by its members as these problems—such as verbal/physical violence and exploitation of clocks at work—cannot be solved by supervising organizations. In an interview with one of the workers at a supervising organization in the Tohoku region, he stated that:

“The presence of the Tohoku Family is very instrumental in reducing and helping to solve problems faced by interns. Those interns who become members of the Tohoku Family become more confident and brave in voicing their rights. They are not afraid” (AH, Sendai, March 20, 2021).

The presence of the Tohoku Family as a collective movement can be understood as

quite effective in attracting the attention of various parties, including the Indonesian embassy in Japan. Due to the large number of members, and even more understanding of the working conditions of Indonesian workers in the Tohoku area, the Indonesian government feels being helped by the presence of this group. “We deliberately attended the PPI gathering where representatives of the Indonesian ambassador from Tokyo would be present. That’s where we introduced ourselves as the Tohoku Family and they were surprised by our large membership. Then they started to consider us. Finally, when there is a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, they start contacting us, not only PPI” (Yudi Suko, Sendai, March 21, 2021).

Not only the authorities, such as the local government, the police, and the Indonesian embassy, but this group also managed to attract the attention of the local population. Technical intern trainees from the Tohoku Family are actively involved in regional events in Tohoku, such as matsuri, and some members of the Tohoku Family routinely participate in processions organized by the Tohoku region (Yudi Suko, Sendai, March 21, 2021). The closeness of Indonesian workers with residents in the Tohoku region can also be said to be unique and distinctive.

Tohoku is indeed known as the most disaster-prone area in Japan. After the big earthquake in 2011, many young people in Tohoku migrated to other cities due to trauma, to avoid the tsunami disaster, and also due to radiation from the explosion of nuclear powerplants, especially in Fukushima (Abe, 2004). This condition eventually affected the entry of Indonesian technical intern trainees into Tohoku, as many prospective participants avoided getting jobs in the Tohoku area (AH, Sendai, March 20, 2021). Regardless of these conditions, for the current Tohoku Family, strengthening networks and groups is a mission that must be done, especially as this group aspires to make their group recognized as a legal entity into a union that can truly support and protect its members. Valuable lessons may be ignored when a major disaster occurs, but it becomes an encouragement for this group to be independent and show that they have the power to speak up. This is the hope for all members of the Tohoku Family who feel the benefits and advantages of being a member. Together, they fight against acts of injustice in the world of work while supporting and advocating for one another.

Conclusion

The identification of individuals with their social and communal grouping is promoted not only by languages, beliefs, ceremonies, cooperative labors, and social interactions, but also by contrast and distinction with non-members and outsiders. The existence of Indonesian

communities or groups as a coping mechanism has constructed the characteristics and images of Indonesians in Japan, and indirectly played a role in stabilizing and helping them in dealing with problems.

Ethnic groups such as Sunda, Makassar, Lombok, Aceh, Padang, and others, become places to express various feelings and to strengthen each other as fellow migrant workers who are migrating far from their hometowns. Although the association's activities do not significantly provide concrete solutions to the problems that occurred in the field during the program, this ethnic group directly became part of the coping mechanism of the TITP participants to release stress during the program. With the establishment of religious groups, namely the two largest religious organizations in Indonesia, NU and Muhammadiyah, they have played a role as an integration space for all these ethnic groups to gather into one forum. Activities are also carried out in an organized manner through religious events in mosques that spread across several regions in Japan.

However, while both ethnic and religious groups have not concretely provided actual solutions for problems that occur in the workplace, both contribute directly or indirectly in calming participants into being able to get through various obstacles and trials during their program. Especially religious activities provide positive interactions for trainees.

In the end, the Tohoku Family group emerged, with a clear aim of uniting all Indonesians, beyond race and religion, into a collective movement that is able to provide solutions to the problems experienced by participants during their internships. The Family has been developed into a solid group in a way that removes ethnic and religious boundaries.

However, of the three, be it ethnic groups, religions, and the Tohoku Family, all of them make a similar contribution in calming, stabilizing and helping TITP participants who struggle with various problems during the program. Importantly, these calming and coping functions of Indonesian communities unintendedly help create a 'standardized' image of Indonesian workers in Japan as hardworking, disciplined, and obedient. This is nothing but the image promoted by the sending organizations during the pre-departure stage, and it is the image that has attracted Japanese companies willing to recruit trainees via the TITP scheme.

Chapter 7

The Self as an Active Agent: ‘Let’s Make TITP Cool for Everybody!’

Since the 1990s, Japan has been known for its soft power through popular culture or “Cool Japan.” The success of Japan’s soft power has led to a Japanese dream among developing countries and Indonesia is one of them. Based on a report from Indonesia’s Ministry of Manpower and Labor, Japan, for the last few years, has become a favorite placement country for Indonesian migrant workers. The appeal of Japanese soft power is even a promotional strategy carried out by labor-sending institutions to Japan or commonly called LPK (job training institutions) in Indonesian. Various private sending institutions use Japan’s soft power appeal to attract young Indonesians to work in Japan. Moreover, the appearance of social media—that depicts daily life displayed by the trainees themselves—is also an attraction. It can be said that the current generation of trainees live in an advanced world of technology and the internet, where social media has become a common tool not only for communication, but also as a means of self-expression. For this reason, trainees often use social media as a tool to express their experiences during their internship program in Japan, particularly through Facebook, Instagram, and even YouTube. What is the impact of social media in shaping the nature of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan?

This chapter analyzes how the role of social media, used among Indonesian trainees and alumni, has played a significant role in creating a positive, idealized image of the TITP and indirectly succeeded in promoting the program. The main part of this chapter uses ethnography and netnography by observing the natural interactions among the participants through their social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounts owned by the TITP participants and alumni. Below, we first examine history of Cool Japan and young labor migration phenomenon. We then analyze the ways Indonesian trainees use social media in everyday life.

‘Cool Japan’ and the Indonesian Young Labor Migration Phenomenon

Japan’s economic progress after World War II was successful in putting Japan as an important player in the international arena in the 1980s, allowing for the deployment of Japanese popular culture globally. It could be said that the economic success was the gateway for the entry of Japanese popular culture in other countries. Through technology products and industries, such as automotive companies that spread globally like Honda, Toyota, Yamaha, and others, Japan

succeeded in penetrating the Japanese brand and it helped export cultural elements including Hello Kitty, sushi and ramen to various parts of the world.

In Asia itself, Japanese popular culture is received with enthusiasm. The presence of Japanese popular culture was thought to bring a new style into an industrial culture that continues to be enjoyed in Asian countries. The popularity of Japanese culture marked Japan as the first Asian country to successfully spread its influence not only through the economy, but also through a ‘soft cultural’ power known as Cool Japan. As said by journalist, Douglas McGray, who published an article in a Foreign Policy magazine that attracts attention with the fairly well-known term of Japan’s Gross National Cool, “Japan is reinventing super-power through the export of cultural goods and styles that have become not only conspicuous proof of Japan’s international relevance, but also a powerful commercial force” (McGray, 2002, p.1).

Japanese pop culture successfully presents as an important instrument that appeals to young people in various parts of the world, in accordance with what is expected by the targets and goals of the Japanese government. This is reflected in a speech at the Digital Hollywood University on “A New Look at Cultural Diplomacy: A Call to Japan’s Cultural Practitioners” by former Japanese Foreign Minister, Taro Aso, who expressed his opinion about the Japanese culture diplomacy.

“...Pop culture carries another meaning as attractive, interesting, funny, and cool. Pop culture can play a role as an instrument to invite or attract people from other countries, especially the younger generation to learn more about Japan. Japanese pop culture can be used to ‘polish’ the brand of Japanese products in other countries. Japan must build strong English-language broadcasts to introduce Japan to the world. The Japanese media releases should not domestically oriented but should be internationally oriented” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs/MOFA, 2006).

In Indonesia, the influence of popular culture on the lifestyle of young people can be found in everything from music, fashion, food, and entertainment industries of gaming, drama, movies, manga, and anime. In explaining the success of Japanese popular culture in Indonesia, we need to distinguish the success of said popular culture in East Asia and the Southeast Asia (not in America or Europe). Some argue that “cultural proximity” (proximity culture) determines the course of the spread of cultural flows or they argue the influence of “Asian fragrance” (fragrance Asia), which easily resonates among local consumers (Otmagzin, 2008).

Based on a survey conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, 2019) as an opinion poll on the image of Japan in ASEAN member states (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) in February 2018, it was found that 87% of the respondents answered that Japan is a “friendly”

or “somewhat friendly” in regard to how they viewed their country’s relations with Japan. This result indicates that Japan has been establishing a positive image among ASEAN member states and 85% of the respondents also answered that Japan has consistently followed the path of a peace-loving nation for the past 70 years since the end of World War II. 83% of the respondents answered that Japan has a “very important role” or “somewhat important role” in the stabilization and growth of the world economy. This result indicates that ASEAN member states appreciate Japan’s contribution to the world economy. Finally, about 65% of the respondents chose Japan as the country that has contributed the most to the development of ASEAN over the last 50 years, which was the highest rating.

From the poll, it can be understood that Japan plays a special role and has won hearts in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, which from year to year has shown a positive response to Japan. Even Japanese popular culture is well received, an example of which is JKT 48, which is a replica of AKB 48 in Japan, an idol group that is well loved and enthusiastically followed by young Indonesians (Han, 2015). It seems that soft power has a significant influence on a person’s decision to choose a destination country to migrate. In interviews with several trainees, I found that the generation who participated in TITP from around the 2000s to the current generation was mostly motivated by an interest in Japanese popular culture, although the main goal was still inseparable from economic goals. The following are the results of interviews with 5 trainees who departed in the 1990s, referred to as the first generation, and also 10 trainees who departed after the 2000s, referred to as the second or current generation of trainees. The basic question asked was: what was their motivation to follow the trainee program and why did they choose to migrate to Japan as their country of choice?

Table 10 The Motivations of Indonesian Trainees in Japan

Motivations	1st Generation (1993- 2000s)	2 nd Generation (mid 2000- now)
Better Salary Expectation	√	√
Lack of Job Opportunity	√	√
Looking for Experiences	√	√
Attracted by Cool Japan (Anime, Manga, J-pop etc.)	-	√
For Improving Japanese Language Skill	-	√
Gain Transfer Knowledge and Technology from Japan	√	√

Sources: Interviews in 2018, 2019, 2020⁴⁴

From the interviews, it was found that five of the TITP participants who departed around the 1990s all used economic reasons as their motivation to choose Japan and join the internship program. In their interviews, they explained, at that time, they did not think of the reason for choosing Japan as linked to their fondness for Japanese popular culture. As mentioned in Chapter 4, for this early generation, the difficulty of finding work, especially in rural areas, was a massive issue, so that was what prompted them to join this program. Then, why did they choose Japan? Simply because opportunities existed, and they were open at that time to an internship program in Japan. The following is a recollection of a senior trainee participant who came in the 1990s:

“I come from Aceh, and as you know, finding a job was very difficult at that time, and trying to be part of the training program was my only hope...” (ZH, man, Cikarang West Java, January 20, 2020).⁴⁵

While the answers of the current generation, namely the generation that departed after

⁴⁴ This table is based on a summary of the author’s interviews in 2018, 2019, 2020 from 15 trainee participants.

⁴⁵ For the research design of this chapter, see Appendix 5.

around the 2000s, hold various motivations. Both generations have economic reasons as the basic goal. However, when asked why they chose Japan, 9 out of 10 trainees interviewed all answered that it was because they had an interest in the appeal of Japanese popular culture, such as anime, manga, and so on.

In addition to the immaterial motivation above, another point that distinguishes the current generation of trainees from the early generations or those who came around the 1990s is educational background. Many of the current generation of trainees come from diverse educational backgrounds, not only high school graduates, but many of them are university graduates. The followings are some of the results of interviews with trainees who were asked about their motivation for participating in TITP, especially those who have a university education background.

“I love Japanese culture and history, and even though this was a hard decision, I decided to quit from university in my last semester for this opportunity, but I hope I can continue my study after I finished the trainee program” (SR, man, Shiga, September 16, 2017).

“I want to be experiencing the Japanese life and culture, and because my bachelor’s degree is Japanese literature, I think this is an important opportunity for me to go to Japan by trainee program and I hope through this program I can improve my Japanese language skill” (SW, female, Kyoto, September 15, 2017).

“I like Japanese culture and anime, and to get the real experience living in Japan is a great opportunity, besides to improve my Japanese language skill. I hope I can pass the 2kyu of JLPT after I finish the program. So this achievement can complete my Japanese literature bachelor’s degree” (SP, female, Kyoto, September 15, 2017).

Thus, the strength of soft power can be quite influential on a person’s decision to migrate to a country. This can be seen based on the results of a survey conducted by *remitle.com*, which analyzes the favored destination countries for immigrants as seen from the results of remittances. It was found that Southeast Asian and Indonesian immigrants are mostly interested in heading to Japan, making it the preferred option for the region as a whole (Remitle, 2022). In addition, according to the latest edition of the Boston Consulting Group’s *Decoding Global Talent*, workers are most likely willing to head to the United States, Germany, or Canada, and Japan placed at number ten among ten popular countries for foreign workers from 2014 to 2018 (Grey, 2018).

Among the reasons why Japan is a favorite destination for immigrants are: because it raises living standards; is known as a safe country; has a unique and interesting culture and so on (Grey, 2018). Such statements are based on a report from the Global Peace Index, which

places Japan in ninth place as a safe country. Japan has been among the top ten countries in the Global Peace Index for 13 years, consistently receiving high marks for low crime rates, internal conflict, and political terror (Grey, 2018).

The attractiveness of Japanese soft power can be seen more clearly from how Indonesian TITP participants share their experiences while living in Japan through their social media. Many of them share positive experiences and show the attractiveness of Japan as a country with its diversity and cultural uniqueness, and as a place that looks ideal as a destination country for foreign workers. These postings have succeeded in attracting attention. This ideal and positive image is not only shown by the personal social media accounts of the trainees themselves, but also cultivated by social media groups, such as the *kenshusei.id* Instagram account,⁴⁶ IPTIJ (Indonesian Japanese Trainee Workers Association),⁴⁷ and others that post many activities that include the uniqueness of Japanese culture and daily activities carried out by the technical intern trainees in Japan.

Social Media and ‘the Self’ as an Active Agent

Social media is one of the buzzwords that came along the web 2.0 rhetoric, along with some other terms, somewhere around 2005. As such, the concept does not have a strictly defined meaning, but people using the concept want to stress that it is part of a new era. In social media, people voluntarily share content, such as videos, texts, images, music, through online platforms and with the help of applications that are based on social software. The content in social media has its own audience as the traditional media, like TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers have, but the biggest difference is that people enjoy sharing the content they have made themselves or maybe copied from others. In this context, to see the image from the trainee program in Japan, the “netnography” methodology is useful to gauge their daily activities, which are displayed through their social media accounts.

⁴⁶ Kenshuseihits, kenshujapan.id, are Instagram accounts that facilitate information while extending an opportunity to express the activities and daily life of Indonesian trainees in Japan. Through this account, all trainees are free to send photos showing their daily activities or anything during their stay in Japan. For more about these group see the link below:

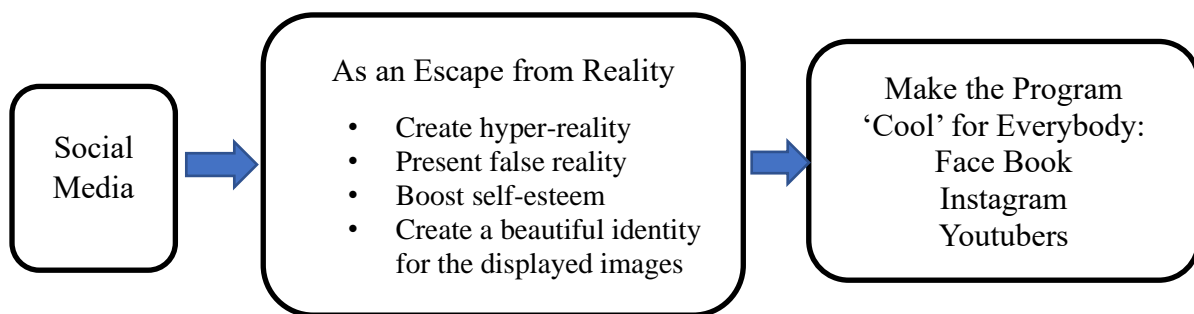
(<https://www.instagram.com/kenshujapan.id/?hl=en> , <https://instagram.com/kenshuseihits?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>).

⁴⁷ IPTIJ is an independent organization that brings together all Indonesian trainees (apprentices and nurses) in Japan. IPTIJ was established on May 5, 2005 in Otsuka, Japan with the following objectives: 1. Become a place for trainees to share and gain knowledge, 2. Develop organizational skills for trainees, 3. Form good people personally and socially, 4. Establish work programs that benefit the community. For more about IPTIJ please see the link below: (<https://www.facebook.com/IptijJapan/>).

Then, how should we understand the role of social media in the expression of the self? The expression of the self-according to Goffman (2022, p. 52), is “a performance that constitutes one way in which performance is socialized, molded, and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented.” Further, in relation to empirical research regarding social media, it was found that people use social networking services (SNS) in order to present themselves as better than they actually are. People's online identities are more imaginative than their true selves. Our presence on social media seems to be customized for an audience (Qi et al., 2018, p. 96).

To fulfill the expectations of the audience and social norms to gain positive feedback, the participating individual tries to present their “idealized” self and present themselves in the best possible light. Therefore, they exaggerate certain aspects of their personality while suppressing or completely hiding the negative ones. This way the participant presents him or herself in a certain role and controls the impression made, thereby also influencing the opinion formed in the minds of the audience. Goffman calls this strategy “impression management” (Merunková & Šlerka, 2019, p.250). The following is the flow of the framework used to analyze the influence of social media with the formation of the images and characters of Indonesian TITP participants in Japan.

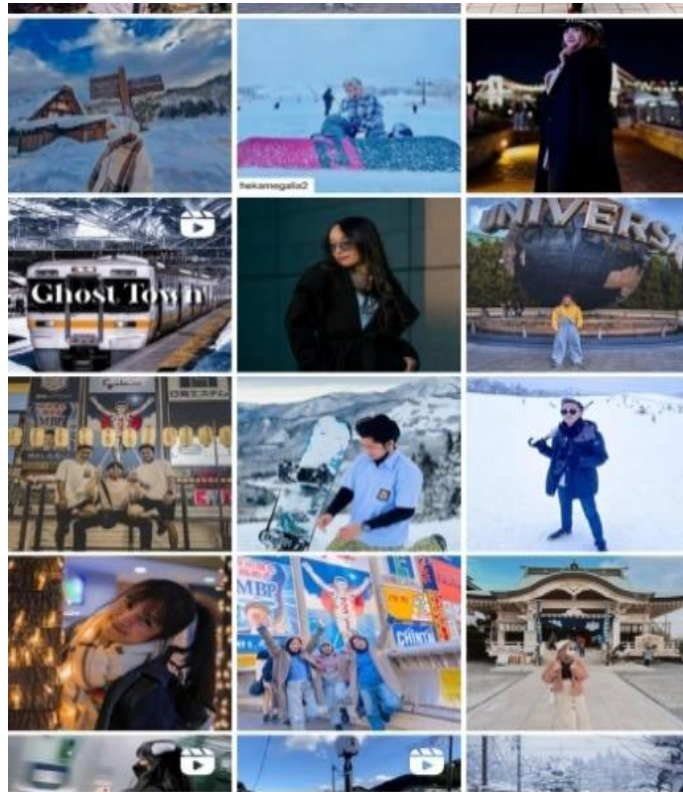
Table 11 The Influence of Social Media in Shaping a Good Image and Promoting the Program



As I show in Table 11, social media here functions as a tool and a medium to express themselves as “the self,” while undergoing TITP in Japan. It is the representation and image that most of these trainees want to display, which is then considered a representation of themselves during their trainee program in Japan. As described by Goffman in his theory of social media, someone in cyberspace tends to manipulate to get a positive image or impression for others who see it, i.e., “online identity is more imaginative than their true self.”

The Self as an Active Agent: The Presentation of Trainees in Everyday Life

Picture 11 Kenshusei Instagram Account



Source: Kenshusei.id

The picture above is an example of an image from social media, Instagram, owned by the technical intern trainee community. The concept carried through this Instagram is that any member can and may post photos and activities freely while in Japan. Among many activities posted are sightseeing activities in several areas of Japan that show the beauty of each season, nature, and popular culture.

After doing field observation by following and looking deeper into the activities of these trainees, it turns out there are some things that are found contrary to what they display through social media. The photos of happiness taken in every corner of the sparkling cities of Japan are not representative of as the daily sacrifices of trainee life, although this cannot be generalized. Sacrifices that involve exploitation of working hours and inadequate facilities for the residences of the trainees. Still, trainees are often reluctant to express any constraints and problems. Besides the variance in language skills, there is also a lack of understanding for the trainees regarding the flow of mechanisms related to the rules which are applicable in their

employment agreements. However, the difficulties faced by these trainees did not stop their hopes. They still hope that after returning from Japan, they can develop a career and work in a better place in Indonesia by no longer working for a 3-K type of job (Kitsui, Kiken, Kitanaï).

“Because I love Japan and want to get a lot of experience in Japan, I choose to quit from university and decided to go to Japan to get more real experience, and now I think I won’t go back to continue my study at university after I finished the program” (FZA, male, Kyoto, July 12, 2019).

“I just want to get better condition; in the class I see a lot of *senpai* (senior) already fluent in speaking the Japanese language, and they got the skill from trainee program, so I decided to learn directly through trainee program, same as a lot of *senpai* did in my university before” (AR, male, Kyoto, July 12, 2019).

However, given the hardships and tough life as trainees, these trainees use social media as part of their coping mechanism and self-healings during the trainee program in Japan.

“I don't want people in Indonesia, especially my family, to know about the difficulties and sufferings of our life while here. Of course it will only make them sad and worried. So it's better if the difficulties are left to myself to feel” (SS, female, Omihachiman Shiga, November 20, 2018).

In interviews, many trainees admitted that social media played a major role that pushed them to finally decide to become trainees in Japan because they saw social media posts from their seniors during their trainee days in Japan. This shows the pattern of an “aspiration to move” in migration theory. Previous conservative theories looked at historical and functionalist perspectives, namely push factor, with a tendency to assess and view migration actors as passive groups, whereas migration is a complex matter. Among them, the aspiration to move is one of the most significant factors in establishing the migration phenomenon. In his book, *A theory of migration: the aspirations capabilities framework*, Hein De Has stated:

“...although local living conditions had improved significantly in preceding decades, people’s general life aspirations had increased faster, leading to growing migration aspirations. Improved education, increased media exposure alongside the regular return of the migrant ‘role models,’ and exposure to their relative wealth had all contributed to rapidly increasing material and changing social aspirations of people living in the valley. Particularly international migration had become so strongly associated with material and social success that many youngsters had become virtually obsessed with leaving.” (De Has, 2021, p.17).

This phenomenon can be seen in the following interview, which shows that trainees are obsessed with deciding to migrate to a place based on the achievements they see from their seniors who are considered to be role models for them in changing their lives. Today, those

who participate in the trainee program are not only those who have a high school education background, but many of them are also university graduates with bachelor's degrees and live in urban areas with some already having jobs in Indonesia.

“Yes, I saw through social media that being a trainee in Japan is very interesting, being able to travel to interesting places while being a trainee, experiencing different seasons such as snow, Sakura, and others, and of course being able to feel how it is to live in Japan as I expected” (PH, female, Kyoto, November 19, 2018).

For the trainees, social media is one of the most powerful promotional tool used by owners of private sending institutions in Indonesia to attract prospective apprentices. Most of the owners of these private sending institutions are also alumni trainees who can be called seniors, so they understand what can attract the attention of young Indonesians to register as apprentices in Japan. In addition, currently many trainees are starting to bloom using social media, not just to make personal posts, but deliberately creating content that is disseminated to earn other income, such as sharing their daily lives while being apprentices in Japan to YouTube or Instagram channels. Such efforts have received attention and appreciation from the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, which then created a short movie competition for Indonesian apprentices in Japan.

The Minister of Manpower, Ida Fauziyah, expressed appreciation toward Indonesian trainees and alumni who have succeeded in becoming YouTubers with life content in Japan. She believes that the ability of the TITP participants in producing short film productions can improve the standard of living for themselves and their families. The social media presence also “helps the government’s task, reducing the number of unemployed because it can create jobs,” said Ida Fauziyah in her speech at the announcement of the winners of the Short Movie Competition (SMC) entitled “The Colors of Life Following the Apprenticeship Program in Japan, Jakarta” (Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas, 2021). The following is a poster announcing the short film competition organized by the Ministry of Manpower for technical intern trainees in Japan.

Picture 12 Short Movie Competition Organized by Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and IM Japan.⁴⁸



Source: Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2021

This program was also appreciated by the Director of International Manpower Development of Organization Japan (IM Japan) in Jakarta, Mr. Tamura, who was also present at the awarding ceremony for the SMC winner. Ida Fauziyah reaffirmed at the event that the initiation of the Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas through this SMC competition, hopefully, would be more successful. Many people understand the apprenticeship program in Japan and can provide material for publication and promotion of apprenticeship programs abroad, which so far have not been widely accessed by the public. “This SMC has provided space for work and appreciation for Indonesian trainees in Japan who have hobbies and abilities in the film industry,” Mr. Tamura said. Since its start in 1993, as a result of the cooperation between the Ministry of Manpower and IM Japan until January 2021, the apprenticeship program has dispatched 85,415 apprentices to Japan” (Imandiar, 2021).

Currently, there are about seven Indonesian technical intern trainees who are well-known as YouTubers in Japan, including Neo Japan, who started his career as an intern through

⁴⁸Through the Short Movie Competition program, the Indonesian government seeks to provide an overview to prospective TITP participants who will take part in the trainee program to Japan and attract the interest of job seekers to be able to take part in the apprenticeship program and can increase the target of sending participants. the Indonesian Minister of Manpower also invited one of the famous film directors, Hanung Bramantyo, to be a judge in this competition. The four best films will receive prizes from the Ministry of Manpower in the form of cash in the amount of 10 million rupiah for the first winner, 7.5 million rupiah for the second winner, 5 million rupiah for the third winner, and 3 million rupiah for the 4th winner. The main theme of this competition is "colorful life following the apprenticeship program to Japan." Regarding the competition see (https://imm.or.jp/news/docs/kompetisi_film_pendek_id.pdf).

IM or G-to -G route, then continued his career in Japan and married a Japanese person, ultimately staying in Japan to live with his family. Then, there is Hoho Ardian who is also a former intern and continues his career in Japan. Sudaru Hitori, another former intern in Japan, and Abay Abadi, an IM intern who often records his daily activities are also prominent YouTubers. When working in Japan Tito Herdianti and Edi Peny also attract a lot of public attention in Indonesia, and often discuss Indonesian workers in Japan, especially information related to internships in Japan and other unique things through YouTube channels. Finally, there is Kohai Japan who is also an Indonesian intern on the IM or G-to-G route in the 302nd batch and often shares his journey to workplace by bicycle. All of them are Indonesian interns who share their unique experiences while living and working in Japan, attracting the attention of many Indonesians. The following picture is a photo showing seven influential Indonesian ex-TITP YouTubers in Japan.

Picture 13 7th Indonesian Favorite Trainee and Ex Trainee YouTubers in Japan.



Source: Jokkajo.com⁴⁹

However, behind the glittering social media displayed by the trainees who become aspirations and attract young Indonesians to decide to migrate, it is found that many of them are still

⁴⁹ YouTubers from Indonesia who share their daily activities during TITP have become an attraction for young Indonesians. On these people, see the following link (<https://www.jokkajo.com/2021/10/Pemagang-jepang-sukses-jadi-youtuber-favorit.html>).

experiencing a harsh reality in their real lives as trainees. Like a pyramid, what is visible on the surface does not show the full picture, where there is a lot of violence, human rights violations, fraud, and such in this program. In their interview, the trainees explained:

“Japan is indeed very beautiful, from the seasons, culture, urban life, natural atmosphere, and others, but the beauty is only for a moment. It feels better to be a tourist than workers like us. In real life, the body feels tired of having to work 16 hours a day. Inadequate dormitory facilities, strict seniors, and unclear salary deductions make us tired physically and mentally. That’s why every holiday we try to take advantage of traveling to famous places in Japan, such as Namba, Shinjuku, and eating Tokyo banana cakes to relax and feel what rich people feel when enjoying Japan” (SS, female, Omihachiman, September 20, 2018).

“Instead of lamenting and suffering, enjoying and being grateful and also laughing make life easier, and posting good things on social media also creates a positive aura back to us. For sure the reality of life here is zonk for me and I promise I will never return to Japan as an intern!” (PA, female, Omihachiman, September 20, 2018).

Based on observations through the Facebook and Instagram social media groups, such as kenshusei.id and kenshusei-hits, as well as interviews with 10 TITP participants around the Kansai area, the SNS postings that were made the most during the program in Japan were related to the following:

1. Natural beauty
2. Traditional Japanese celebrations
3. Food
4. Urban glitter
5. Salary
6. Japanese popular culture
7. Daily life
8. Japanese technology, such as shinkansen, robots, and others

In this way, social media functions as a self-healing and coping strategy that is quite effective for trainees to take a break from the fatigue of work life and daily routines. Some also serve as validation of their struggles and successes in realizing their dreams in Japan.

Conclusion

Social media has functioned as something that replaces reality with its representation. It can also function as an escape from reality, create hyperreality, present a false reality, boost self-esteem, and build some sort of identity around these images. Likewise, for Indonesian trainees in Japan, social media can be used as self-healings, validation of success, and essentially coping strategies that ultimately shape the identity and character that they want to form for the trainees

in Japan. The positive image displayed through social media has succeeded in becoming an attraction and inspiration for the migration of young Indonesians to Japan to realize their dreams or change their future.

To fulfill the expectations of the audience to gain positive feedback, the participating individual tries to present their “idealized” self in the best possible light. Therefore, as we have observed in this Chapter, many of the trainees were shocked because what they previously imagined and saw described through social media was starkly different from the reality of the program. No one conveys how hard life in Japan is, especially for those who work in field areas, such as construction, agriculture, and fishing. Instantly, the dream can collapse with the sound of harsh words and physical abuse that turned out to have been normalized to some as part of Japanese work culture. Social media is just one way to escape and entertain themselves from the struggles of their lives while in Japan.

For trainees, social media may be just an escape, validation, self-healing, or self-esteem boost. However, by looking at their conditions, which turn out to be contrary to those imagined, there is a real class struggle that trainees must go through in order to realize what they consider to be “Japanese dreams,” even at the expense of their humanity. Conversely, the sparkling social media posted by the trainees was able to become a simulacrum, specifically something that replaces reality with its representation, which later turns into an attraction for further popularizing this program among Indonesian youth. Then, such popularization is justified as the success of this program by certain parties, which then use it as a promotional tool to attract participants through private sending institutions and even by the government. In fact, the glitter of social media is able to obscure real problems but does not make this program any better.

Chapter 8

Welcome Back Home! Willingness and Readiness to Return

The mainstay of the TITP program is to get technology transfer and knowledge transfer from Japan to Indonesia. In accordance with its objectives, trainees who receive on-the-job training for one year to three years (and can be extended to five years) are expected to return to Indonesia after completing the program and acquiring new skills, new technology, and new knowledge, which can then be applied in their homeland. That is why the Indonesian government stated that this program is better than others in terms of return after sending non-skilled or semi-skilled workers, also known as PMI (Indonesian regular migrant workers).⁵⁰ In her interview, Nita, a representative of the Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development or Binalattas, noted the following:

“What needs to be underlined from the trainee program to Japan is the transfer of technology and knowledge for participants, so that they can gain skills to develop their country, especially their hometown; therefore, this program is different from sending ordinary workers, such as TKI” (Jakarta, January 23, 2020).⁵¹

In line with this statement, the Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas, Budi Hartawan, while accompanying the Indonesian House of Representatives' Commission IX for a working visit and conducting dialogue with the AP2LN (Association of Overseas Apprentice Organizers) in Tokyo, emphasized:

“This opportunity for trainees in Japan is good momentum for the Ministry of Manpower to continue to encourage various efforts to increase the competence of Indonesian human resources. The apprenticeship program is part of the job training. For this reason, trainees abroad, such as going to Japan, must be intended as learning and training. Apprenticeship participants must master the scientific side as well as their work ethic and productivity. In fact, job training with an overseas apprenticeship is intended as an effort to increase the ability of our human resources to approach multinational industrial standards, so that later they are able to compete in the global job market... After completing the internship program and returning to their respective countries, apprentice workers can practice their knowledge and skills” (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2022).

The narrative that is built from this program is that there is a sustainable economic contribution being made by the alumni trainees in their hometown, and it is the main target of this program. The improvement in the quality of Indonesian labor resources in all sectors

⁵⁰ Hereinafter referred to as PMI.

⁵¹ TKI is the term for Indonesian migrant workers, before the name was officially changed to PMI in 2017.

resulting from the education of Japanese companies during the program has become the mainstay of the government to pursue the quality of its resources, so that Indonesia is able to catch up economically with other developing countries as well as developed countries. These trainees are expected to return to their hometowns to then build their villages and their country by applying the new knowledge and abilities they got during their internship program in Japan.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how the implementation of this program is measured and seen from the objectives of this program, namely the transfer of knowledge and technology through the trainee program alumni who have either departed through the government (G-to-G) or the private sector (P-to-P). Questions we seek to address are: 1) What is the struggle of the alumni after returning from the program? 2) How extensive is the government's support for retired trainees upon their return to their homeland? 3) How is the circle that brings alumni together to bond within this trainee program? To answer these questions, we first try to understand the nature of what we call return migration. We then examine the returnees of Indonesian workers abroad. Finally, we investigate the willingness and readiness of TITP alumni to return to the TITP industry.

Understanding Return Migration

There are many terms to describe return migration, such as reflux migration, homeward migration, reimmigration, return flow, second time migration, repatriation, and retro migration. Meanwhile, in terms of terminology, return migration is the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle (Gmelch, 1980). According to the explanation of ILO, "returning international migrant workers are defined as all current residents of the country who were previously international migrant workers in another country or countries.... The minimum duration of labour attachment abroad for a person to be considered as a return international migrant worker [is] relatively short, such as 6 months" (ILO, 2018, p. 15).

Indonesia and the Philippines, which are larger-scale migrant exporting countries among the ASEAN countries, have been the subjects of numerous studies on returning migrants. However, economic reintegration in the context of skills gained in the host countries is discussed more often regarding skilled or semi-skilled workers, such as nurses from the Philippines. For unskilled workers returning to Indonesia, the social adjustment aspects are emphasized, but economic reintegration, including the skill development of unskilled or low-skilled workers, has received less attention (Hatsukano, 2015). In addition, classic problems, such as weak data collection for returnees, seem to be common knowledge. As Russel King

suggested, it is well known that international migration statistics suffer from lack of accuracy and consistency. Statistics of return migration are especially poor. Many countries fail to even record returning migrants, let alone note their characteristics (King, 1978, p.176).

According to the ILO, "traditionally, return migration has been positively perceived as a popular approach to "reverse the brain drain" produced by the permanent departure of qualified individuals abroad. Due to apparent connections between migration and development and the rise of temporary labor migration programs, the repatriation of migrants and their reintegration in their home countries have recently attracted increased attention. The temporary migration cycle, which includes the predeparture, working abroad, and return stages, depends on workers' return. At the same time, programs for the aided return, readmission, and deportation of rejected employees in irregular status have been implemented by destination countries as a result of forced migration (ILO, 2019, p. 1).

ILO described the different types of return as follows: occasional returns (for instance, members of the diaspora – defined as communities of nationals who have settled in other countries); seasonal returns (of workers migrating for seasonal work); return of temporary workers at the end of their work contracts; and return of permanent residents who were settled in other countries (ILO, 2019, p. 5). Migrants return for various reasons, including successful completion of their migration objectives or targets, retirement, lack of success and poor integration in destination countries, family reasons, rejected asylum applications, and deportations, among others. In the temporary migration cycle predominant in Asian and Middle Eastern countries, migrant workers must return to the origin country when the contract ends. A long-term migrant may decide to return for retirement, because conditions in the origin or destination country have changed, or because they have achieved their targets in migration.

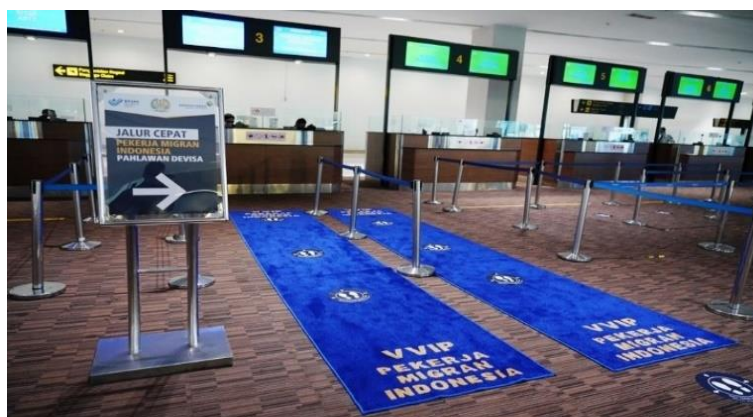
Indonesia's Return Migration

Apart from that, Indonesia, as one of the largest overseas sending countries in Southeast Asia, is also working to improve the system for accepting and returning migrant workers. One of the most recent being the holding of Focus Group Discussion, which specifically discuss reintegration and protection for returning Indonesian migrant workers. As stated in Law No.18/2017 on Protecting Indonesian Migrant Workers, one of the rights of prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers or PMI is to obtain guaranteed protection for the safety and

security of PMI returning to their place of origin.⁵²

One of the steps carried out by the Indonesian government in order to show its concern for the protection of the process of returning migrant workers to their homeland is making nine priority programs and efforts to make PMI classified as VVIP (Very Very Important Person) via Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI) in collaboration with State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) launched lounges, help desks, and fast track (immigration fast track) facilities at five international airports simultaneously (Migrant Workers Protection Agency/BP2MI, 2022).

Picture 14 of the Fast Track for Indonesian Migrant Worker Returnees
(VVIP/Very Very Important Person)



Source: Warta Kota Pontianak (2022)⁵³

Meanwhile, the return of the Indonesian TITP participants from Japan itself varied. For participants departing on the G-to-G route, a graduation ceremony or commonly known as a ‘welcome ceremony’ is held for each class. The welcoming ceremony is held at Chevest, primarily the training and education center provided by the Indonesian government in Bekasi, West Java. At a former welcoming ceremony, the event was filled with official speeches

⁵² See Law No.18/2017 on Protecting Indonesian Migrant Workers (UUD No.18/2017 *tentang Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia*).

⁵³ The route for returning migrant workers at the airport historically had a dedicated path that was distinct from the general public entry route until the VVIP lane became available for returning Indonesian migrant workers. Nevertheless, previously the separation of these pathways led to numerous discriminatory behaviors, such as extortion, fraud, and broker entrapment, committed by improper individuals as well as the negative stigma of migrant workers, who are viewed as a marginal group due to the type of work they perform in the 3D/K field (which is dangerous, demanding, and dirty; *kitsui, kiken, kitanai*), where they frequently experience inhumane treatment (Rizal, 2022).

delivered by representatives of the Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas and the chairman of International Manpower/IM Japan, whose contents congratulated them on completing the task well and also encouraged them to build and work in their own country by applying the knowledge they had acquired during the program in Japan.

After completing this task successfully, participants are awarded a certificate of achievement for having completed the technical trainee program and becoming “alumni trainees.” Thereafter, they are expected to build the economies of their respective home regions upon their return. However, since 2017, a former apprentice trainee started to have two choices: complete program obligations for three years and then return to develop the region in Indonesia or extend the apprentice program for another two years, making the total program for five years. (OTIT, 2020).

With the policy being able to extend this program to five years, trainee participants also have other alternatives besides returning to their hometowns. At the training institute during the welcoming ceremony for the arrival of the trainees, Japanese companies were already lined up and ready to accept alumni who wanted to work for Japanese companies in Indonesia for interviews. Alumni who are interested in working in Japanese companies in Indonesia can immediately choose where they want to work and go through the interview process (Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, 2019). In addition to interviews with companies, alumni trainees are also advised not to talk to strangers to avoid being entangled in fraud. What are the conditions of alumni at the time of their return? How is the implementation of ‘technology transfer and knowledge’ assessed after the return? How do the alumni struggle to reintegrate with their place of origin? We will investigate these in the following section.

Willingness and Readiness of Indonesian Trainee to Return

“I want to go to Japan!” Such a statement held the enthusiasm expressed by most of the participants before departure. The image of Japan as a developed country, as well as the opportunity to work and live in Japan, feels like going “to the future.” Moreover, most of the participants came from remote areas of Indonesia, where technological progress has become their dominant image when describing Japan. Undertaking a trainee program for a period of one to three years, or even five years, is certainly not a short time nor relatively long. This type of temporary migration calls for young Indonesians of productive age to migrate to the Land of Sakura to create a better life.

Migrating with a program that is endorsed by the government through G-to-G cooperation is surely considered a safe way to get a better life abroad. Unfortunately, the story on the ground is often found to be different from what was expected. One of the alumni expressed his views at an event organized by the Human Rights Watch Group Indonesia during a discussion regarding the need to renegotiate the cooperation between Indonesia and Japan in terms of the TITP; “it is rather mistaken to think that the G-to-G scheme of labor migration is completely safe. In fact, prospective migrant workers are vulnerable to a string of rights violations along the migratory process” (Azis et al, 2020). This phrase is not unique as many reports have revealed the number of breaches that have taken place. But how do participants feel when they return to their home countries when the program is over?

The author has observed the attitudes of TITP participants by asking questioned about their (1) reasons for leaving at first, (2) perceptions while participating in the program, (3) aspirations upon returning home and several years after establishing themselves in Indonesia. These three distinct stages are necessary to understand the complexity of this program from the perspective of the technical participants themselves. The following is a table showing the results of interviews with TITP participants at three distinct stages showing diverse answers.

Table 12 Perception Changes Before, During and After the Program⁵⁴

Participants	Pre-Departure	During the Program	Post Program
SW (Female) University Graduate	I want to experience Japanese life and culture.	My hand has thinning skin that is severe enough to cause me to go to the doctor, I just want to go home!	I work at a private sending institution and select potential participants who will go to Japan to take part in the TITP.
PA (Female) University Graduate	I want to feel what is like living in Japan.	I was exhausted because I had to work 16 hours a day. I feel cheated by the program, and I want to go home!	I want to go back! Working at a Japanese company in Indonesia only gives me cheap salary, compared to what I earned in Japan.
SR (Male) Choose to drop out of university	Seeing that some seniors had lived in Japan with an internship program, I thought I should join the program.	We are often asked to work overtime, verbal violence is usual, and I'm very tired!	I am a broker that distributes Indonesian workers for TITP to Japan now.
Y (Female) University Graduate	I've admired Japan since I was a child and always imagined myself living there.	Tired, feel cheated by this program, and just want to go home. There is no time to rest!	I have been unemployed for two years, which is very difficult, so I think I want to return to Japan.
RR (Male) University Graduate	Japan has always been my dream country.	I had two work accidents that were not handled by the employer, unknown income reductions, and a lot of fatigue.	As I no longer wish to work for the corporation, I started a food stand as my own little business.
FZA (Male) University Graduate	My dream would be to work in Japan because I love anime, manga, and all aspects of Japanese popular culture.	I thought working in Japan was sophisticated and disciplined, but it turned out that I had to operate a machine without a license.	After working in Indonesia, I feel that working in Japan is better in terms of income, so now I am continuing to work in Japan with a <i>tokutei gino visa</i> now.

Source: Author (the longitudinal interview from 2017 to 2022)

⁵⁴ The longitude approach, in this chapter, interviewed the same participants over three different stages, i.e., the pre-departure stage, during the program, and post-program stage. For the research design of this chapter, see Appendix 6.

From the interviews above, we can see clearly that what was expected before departure changed when the participants encountered many problems that did not meet their expectations during the program, and it was very clear that returning to Indonesia was the only hope for participants who encountered many problems. However, after one and two years, when the author re-interviewed them after the program, many of whom were looking for ways to return to Japan, and some even already became brokers, technical intern training coaches, or worked at private sending organizations.

During the welcome ceremony graduation party at the Indonesian training center in West Java, the author also conducted random interviews with alumni participants in addition to the longitude design. The following is a photo of the welcome ceremony graduation for participants who graduate from the program organized by the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower.

Picture 15 Welcome Ceremony Graduation Event



In the Middle is the Head of IM Japan, Mr. Komiya, and the Alumni Trainees

Source: Author

The following are the results of interviews with alumni who questioned their future plans after the program.

“I was confused what to do after I finished the program, so I got the information from my senior that I can invest my money in some private sending organization and can earn the profit from there, so I decided to join” (NF, Male from IM, January 23, 2020).

“I am an IM alumni who then applied to work at IM to train prospective trainees before departure. I want to share my experiences during the program and educate future participants, so that they are mentally and physically prepared” (AH, Bekasi, January 23, 2020).

“I want to get married soon, start a family, and establish a private sending organization (LPK) for trainee dispatch agency business with my friends, in my hometown of Bandung after my graduation” (DA, Bekasi, January 26, 2020).

It is obvious how this cycle of migration functions and how, in the end, these alumni are reunited with Japan from the findings of several interviews using the longitude approach as well as random interviews conducted by the author during participant observation in the welcome graduation ceremony. Some alumni, who had struggled to reintegrate into their hometowns because of a lack of employment, were even more frantic and hopeful of returning to Japan when they were interviewed a year or two later, despite the fact that their lives there were not going well.

Furthermore, what is also interesting is that they have developed an alumni association solidly formed as a community.⁵⁵ The main alumni organization is called IKAPEKSI (Indonesian Kenshusei Entrepreneurs Association).⁵⁶ Of course, to analyze the returnees and evaluate TITP, interviews with alumni who are members of IKAPEKSI are needed. Below is a picture in 2020, when the author participated in the IKAPEKSI annual gathering event in Cikarang, West Java.

⁵⁵ No other groupings of former migrant workers abroad are solid and well organized like IKAPEKSI or alumni trainees from Japan. This was acknowledged by Nita as a representative of Directorate of Training and Productivity Development, who explained that the alumni association from Japan, IKAPEKSI, is the only alumni association of workers who have a solid characteristic compared to others (Nita, September 10, 2018).

⁵⁶IKAPEKSI was founded in 2013 as an alumni apprenticeship association in Japan. IKAPEKSI members are apprentices who have completed their internship in Japan and can continue their activities in Indonesia, either to become entrepreneurs or to pursue a career in private companies, especially Japanese companies in Indonesia. For details see its website (<https://ikapeksi.id/>).

Picture 16 Annual Gathering of Alumni Trainees



The event attended by 90 members of IKAPEKSI and representatives of IM Japan and journalists
Source: Author

IKAPEKSI was established with the knowledge that they have a sizable alumni base but were not connected. Many people have started businesses. The decision was made to collect all the alumni, from tiny to large businesses. Then, they frequently host regular meetings and invite subject-matter experts. And they also provide provisions for candidates who want to go to Japan as trainees, such as what must be mentally prepared, as well as preparations for those who have returned from Japan, so they can manage finances and business plans and not be easily deceived.

This alumni association always promotes TITP. With IKAPEKSI, the quota for sending technical intern trainees doubled because they ended up getting a lot of media coverage and became a separate promotion for this program. One of their slogans is 'United to build the country.' Ultimately this association succeeded in obtaining permits for the recruitment of trainee programs in a number of previously closed or non-existent areas, but it has also now reopened a number of others. And, in the end, they were also approved and allowed to carry out a national independent selection for recruiting potential trainees through IKAPEKSI. For this reason, the association started to register some of the private sending organizations (LPK) as a business owned by alumni throughout Indonesia to become an IKAPEKSI member

business, so that this national selection (SELEKNAS) can provide benefits for members and the wider community in general. To see how the alumni play a role in revitalizing the TITP business, here is the flowchart for the departure of the trainee program organized by IKAPEKSI.

Table 13 Selection of TITP Participants by IKAPEKSI

No.	Sequence of the National Selection Process for TITP Participants by IKAPEKSI
1.	IKAPEKSI will open registration for LPKs, which are mostly alumni-owned businesses, to become IKAPEKSI members. This national selection will prioritize LPK businesses owned by IKAPEKSI members.
2.	Prospective participants register for selection through a LPK, which is already registered as an IKAPEKSI member.
3.	Through its affiliated LPKs around the country, IKAPEKSI conducts local selections (SELEKDA) of participants before being registered to participate in the IKAPEKSI's national selection (SELEKNAS). Only participants who have passed SELEKDA can take part in SELEKNAS. This is done to keep the graduation rate high and to avoid buying and selling registration forms. The target for passing national selection is 95% of all participants.
4.	IKAPEKSI's SELEKNAS must be in accordance with the permission and approval of the government or the ministry.

Source: Interviewed EW, Cikarang, January 19, 2020

According to the flowchart above, it is obvious that IKAPEKSI, which has 90% of its members who are ex-trainees dispatched via the G-to-G route, has a special closeness with the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower. This closeness has allowed IKAPEKSI to expand its business wings and become an empire of private sending organizations (LPK) supported by the government.

The author also interviewed IKAPEKSI members who set up organizations for sending private trainees to Japan to get a direct perspective from the alumni who founded a LPK. However, because gaining trust of LPK owners who are willing to be interviewed was indeed quite difficult, several LPK owners eventually withdrew from being interviewed. The following is the result of the author's interview with an owner of LPK and several others who work at the LPK.

"I used to do business in the manufacturing sector, but it turned out to be not very promising, so I finally switched to sending organizations because I thought the opportunities were more promising and I wanted young people to also experience what I had when I was in Japan" (Y, Cikarang, January 19, 2020).

“Since many competent young people lacked the financial ability to go to Japan, I faced business difficulties as the founder of LPK. And for that reason, we at IKAPEKSI plan to apply for open loans through cooperation that can provide financing for the younger generation who can't afford to go to Japan” (Y, Cikarang, January 19, 2020).

“There is a large competition in the private sending organization (LPK) business, so many LPKs are competing to provide facilities, both financial and competence requirements, such as providing debt that can be paid after being accepted as an intern, and also a business of ‘buying and selling’ the quota of G-to-G trainees for private sending organizations” (RP, LPK Staff, Bekasi, January 25, 2020).

As seen above, alumni who have completed TITP perceive the business of sending technical intern trainees to Japan as more promising and accessible. Although the availability of money is an impediment for prospective participants, in the end, this financial issue becomes a way for private sending organizations to open money lending businesses in order to attract young people.

Further, the author asked these returned trainees questions regarding the initial purpose of this program, namely, how did they get the transfer of technology and knowledge that was promised as an advantage during the program, and how did this help their struggle when trying to reintegrate with society in Indonesia. MI, who is currently an entrepreneur in the West Java in the construction sector and has established partnerships with several Japanese companies in the Kansai region, said that only about 20 percent of the alumni trainees who are members of IKAPEKSI are working in the same field. He also shared what he did when he was first a trainee:

“I wanted to master the machine, learn about the machine, and build this business entirely on my own. I really learned on my own initiative, without anyone’s direction” (MI, Bekasi, July 21, 2018).

The same sentiment was also expressed by EW, who is an administrator at IKAPEKSI and currently has many independent businesses in several regions of Indonesia. He revealed in his interview:

“There weren’t many new things I learned technically, aside from work culture, discipline, and other things, but I genuinely battled for myself to study technology because I enjoy learning and I was determined to enroll in this program in order to improve my life. In reality, after I finished the program, my own failing experience taught me a lot about business” (EW, Bekasi, July 14, 2018).

It is obvious that the curriculum of the apprenticeship program does not address preparedness in terms of both physical and mental steps necessary to achieve empowerment. Therefore, it is difficult to envision this program fulfilling its original aim. Moreover, the

motivation for their departure to Japan was based on the lack of job opportunities in their homeland, which caused them to find ways to struggle abroad to get jobs. Not to mention, the economic conditions of families in Indonesia have characteristics of the “sandwich generation,” which is a term given to individuals who must meet the economic needs of many parties at the same time, including yourself, your immediate family, and your parents (Sukmana, 2020).⁵⁷ As a result, the network available to participants who graduate from TITP seeks to create or reconnect with this program without contributing to improvements. This can be seen from the continued increase in the number of LPKs, which is evident year to year. The following is the number of private sending organizations in 2023.

Table 14 List of Private Sending Organizations

No.	Province	Number of SOs
1	West Java	114
2	Central Java	35
3	East Java	25
4	Bali	33
5	Special Capital Region of Jakarta	20
6	Special Region of Yogyakarta	11
7	Banten	16
8	West Sumatera	8
9	West Nusa Tenggara	6
10	Lampung	5
11	North Sulawesi	5
12	North Sumatera	5
13	South Sulawesi	3
14	Gorontalo	1
15	Riau Islands	1

⁵⁷The term “sandwich generation” refers to a condition in which a person has multiple responsibilities to support two generations at once. The two generations are the upper generation, parents or in-laws, and the lower generation, i.e., biological children or even grandchildren. The sandwich generation is often found in developing countries like Indonesia, which are thick with kinship values. Finances are the main cause of this sandwich generation. Other causes, such as the failure of parents to prepare financially for old age, still matter (Revita, 2022).

16	Southeast Sulawesi	2
17	West Kalimantan	1
18	West Nusa Tenggara	9
	TOTAL	300

Source: Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development/Binalattas, 2023

However, as the number of LPKs increases, the number of pre-departure fraud cases also increases. Victims are usually lured by high salaries, but beforehand, they have to send various forms of pre-departure money in fantastic amounts (Azis et al, 2020). Still, many victims are reluctant to disclose these cases due to a “mental barrier.” For example, the perpetrators of fraud are seniors, teachers, neighbors, and others, causing victims to hesitate to raise their case.

Conversely, alumni who have succeeded in building a business after returning from the trainee program are a measure of the success of this program. Many of them were invited by associations and even the government to provide motivation to juniors who had just returned from Japan. The Head of the Office of Manpower and Transmigration of the Province of West Nusa Tenggara, I Gede Putu Aryadi, for example, in the regional ‘Work to Japan Training Program Batch 34-01/343’ at the foreign and domestic training facilities (UPTD BLKDLN) of the Province of West Nusa Tenggara, invited the participants to follow the example of the alumni of the TITP, most of whom had returned to their homeland and became successful people (Department of Manpower and Transmigration/Disnakertrans, 2022).

Unfortunately, the government does not offer any programs that are particularly designed to assist TITP graduates in their efforts to reintegrate with society. Returned Indonesian migrants lack support in general and call for government action. The founding members of IKAPEKSI admitted this. The former apprentices who went on to create their own businesses emphasized that they handled the ups and downs of their businesses independently of government direction. Some graduates also took the initiative to form associations in order to foster a sense of community among alumni and to collaborate openly with other alumni who went on to create enterprises after finishing the apprenticeship program (EW, Cikarang, February 2020).

Conclusion

Based on the longitudinal approach employed in this research, we found that returnees are becoming the active agent of reproducing the TITP industry. The struggle after returning home, more so than the difficult departure period, was one of the challenges the participants

experienced when the program came to an end. Many of the interviewees were unsure about what to do after the program was over. Further, a lot of participants were not financially prepared because they had to pay high deductions for the company-provided apartments as well as pre-departure debt repayments to LPKs. They then set aside the remaining funds to cover living expenses while in Japan and sent the remaining portion to their parents or other family members back home. As a result, the program's promised human resources and financial potential could hardly be realized.

Participants who were able to set aside their money and return to their country of origin to then build an independent business, have eventually become the benchmark and the role model for junior trainees to follow in the steps of their seniors. Among the easiest businesses to do is one related to this trainee program. In fact, there are many who only invest their money in existing private sending organizations or LPKs without having to work hard to build an LPK business from scratch. This business model is spread through word of mouth from seniors to trainees who will complete the program.

After all, the struggle of the alumni after returning from the program, the lack of support from the governments for retired trainees upon their return to their homeland, and the circle that brings alumni together to bond again with this trainee program all display that this program falls far short of what was promised to be the goal of TITP. For the participants, whether the terms are "trainee" or "PMI" (Indonesian regular migrant worker), what they need is the availability of jobs to make ends meet. The government's slogan that carries and boasts the term "apprentice" in developing the country is not an important metric in their life dictionary. TITP is only one among many prospects for survival. Here, the glorification of "transfer of technology and knowledge" becomes an important device to conceal the systematic exploitation at various stages and justify the continuation of this bilateral cooperation program. As we have observed in this Chapter, it should be noted that the alumni returnees are playing a significant role in revitalizing the TITP industry by promoting the program, building LPK businesses, beautifying the 'go-to-Japan dream,' recruiting new trainees, and enriching themselves as well as the migration industry.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

This thesis is about Indonesia's participation in Japan's Technical Intern Trainee Program or TITP. Many studies on TITIP already exist, but most of them concentrate on Japan-specific issues, such as changes of Japan's immigration laws as a recipient nation, shifts in Japan's sociopolitical and economic conditions towards the trainee program, discrimination and human rights violations occurred in the workplace against trainees. A few researchers have examined Japan's TITP from the perspective of a sending country, such as Indonesia. Since TITP involves bilateral arrangements, it is impossible to reveal the complex problems embedded in it without analyzing the role of the sending country.

My study aimed to fill this academic gap by developing our examination with central questions: why has the TITP been sustained even though many criticisms have been addressed?; what is the role of Indonesia in sustaining this problematic program?; who are playing what roles in maintaining the program? These are the main questions throughout the thesis. To answer these questions, we have investigated the roles of various actors, including the Indonesian government, the supervising organization, the Indonesian community, alumni, and the trainees themselves. We examined these actors through three different (but interlocking) stages, namely (1) pre-departure stage, (2) on-the-program stage, and post-program stage. What are the roles of above actors in these stages and how they contribute to the existence and consolidation of Japan's TITP, which has been widely criticized by international community? This thesis revealed the dynamics. In this concluding chapter, let us first overview our discussions in each chapter. We then highlight our research findings. Finally, we underline scholarly contributions of this thesis.

Overview

The empirical examination of this thesis started from Chapter 2 that examined the history of cooperative relations between Indonesia and Japan in the labor sector. We analyzed the nature of the bilateral discourse since 1990s and how has it contributed to the longevity of the TITP. We argued that Japan and Indonesia have been trying to legitimize TITP cooperation by beautifying the slogans of "transfer of technology" and "transfer of knowledge."

Chapter 3 focused on the pre-departure stage. It observed how the Indonesian government has established control mechanism for sending organizations and how they

construct the characteristics of Indonesian technical intern trainees being sent to Japan. The discussion in chapter 3 showed that the harsh discipline during the training period before departure has contributed as a tool to formulate the Indonesian trainees' behaviors in Japan. The pre-departure trainings are effective enough to discipline and familiarize prospective participants to be obedient and to be ready to cope with any circumstances in the field later.

Chapter 4 examined the generation gap among trainees. We investigated how certain characteristics of trainees' generations have contributed to the silencing of critical voices against the program and how the built-in seniority culture influences behaviors and norms of Indonesian technical intern trainees in Japan.

Chapter 5 examined the roles of supervising organizations. These organizations are expected to be a bridge between companies and TITP participants, and they are also designed to assist the trainees in adapting to the working environment. We revealed how supervising organizations effectively recruit Indonesians as translators and contributed to the continued silencing of trainees during the program.

Chapter 6 focused on the roles of Indonesian communities or groups in Japan. We examined how ethnic gatherings and religious communities have been established and how they have constructed the characteristics and images of Indonesians in Japan. Along with these groups, we looked at the Tohoku Family's role of making social collectivism for Indonesian trainees. We argued that all these communities are lifelines for TITP participants in dealing with various problems during the program. In this sense, they play a significant role as the coping mechanism.

Chapter 7 examined the social media use among Indonesian trainees and alumni who have played a significant role in creating a positive, idealized image of the program and indirectly succeeded in promoting the program. We saw how sending organizations and the government also use it as a promotional tool to attract trainee candidates. This chapter also discussed how 'Cool Japan' has a strong influence on Indonesia's young labor migration phenomenon to Japan.

Chapter 8 investigated how the TITP program can be evaluated from the designed objective of this program, namely the transfer of knowledge and technology through the alumni trainees. We saw the struggle of the alumni after returning from the program and how the circle then brings alumni together to bond within this trainee program. Ultimately, we found that returnees are becoming the active agent of reproducing the TITP industry.

Research Findings

Throughout the thesis, we found that different actors in different stages play different roles, but they all help sustaining, perpetuating, and beautifying the TITP, either directly or indirectly, especially by developing various devices of silencing voices and calming trainees. The discovery of this comprehensive structure should be highlighted as the main finding of the thesis.

The structure has been secured by the government-level agreement. The TITP cooperation between Indonesia and Japan has emphasized a “win-win” solution to their own issues. On the one hand, the Japanese government has sought a large number of workers to fill the vacant spots in its labor force due to declining demographic conditions. On the other hand, to reduce the rate of unemployment and to compensate for a large population that does not have enough jobs available, Indonesia, via the TITP, hopes to satisfy the demand for these jobs. Interestingly the Indonesian government has succeeded in promoting an patriotic narrative of TITP by emphasizing that the program is different from the Indonesian migrant workforce, or PMI, and that the program seeks young workers’ contribution to develop the country. Provoking this sense of nationalism surely helps glorify the bilateral business cooperation in the name of TITP.

We also found that the widely employed ‘semi-militaristic’ discipline training in the pre-departure stage not only functions as a tool for standardizing behaviors of trainees, but it also helps strengthen the seniority culture among them, which justifies irrational obedience of juniors to seniors. Furthermore, we found that the supervising organizations, which are employed by the companies to be intermediaries between them and trainees, practically defend the company more than trainees, due mainly to the dilemma and vulnerability of Indonesian translators working at the supervising organizations. The system of silencing is also embedded in this process. Our finding also extends to the role of Indonesian communities in Japan, which significantly serve as various coping mechanisms for trainees in calming and relieving the situation while in Japan. Similarly, their use of social media should be understood as an escape from the harsh reality during the program, but it also ironically and indirectly contributes to the beautification of the program led by the trainees themselves. Finally, we found the unique role of post-program returnees who reunite alumni with the program by replicating the program for their survival strategy as returnees in their home country by promoting the program, creating LPK businesses, enhancing the "go-to-Japan dream," hiring new trainees, and benefiting themselves as well as the migration industry. Certainly, alumni returnees are significantly contributing to the revitalization of the TITP regime. In the end, all of the above actors in

different stages have significantly contributed to the maintenance and perpetuation of the program while creating an unhealthy system of silencing trainees. These are the core arguments of this study.

Contributions to the Scholarship

Let us conclude this study by spotlighting its scholarly contributions. First, my study expects to have a contribution in the field of labor migration studies, particularly Indonesian labor migration to Japan under the TITP. The existing literature on the TITP predominately focuses on the Japanese side issues. This thesis should be recognized as the first in-depth study examining the TITP from the perspective of the sending country, Indonesia.

Second, this study advances our understanding of the complexities of TITP by clarifying the roles played by various Indonesian actors, ranging from the government, alumni, supervising organizations, Indonesian communities in around Japan, and trainees themselves. By using the ethnographical approach, we revealed the evolving system of ‘noise’ silencing embedded in the entire process of this bilateral labor cooperation. Such a new insight is expected to contribute to the advancement of Indonesian studies especially in the field of transnational labor migration.

Beyond Indonesia, this study expects to provide a broader implication to the scholarship of migration in Southeast Asia. The region is very rich in case studies of transnational labor migrations. What are the characteristics of bilateral migration industries, for example between Japan and Vietnam, Malaysia and Myanmar, Singapore and Philippines, and between Thailand and Cambodia? Does the system of silencing exist and, if so, how does it differ from the case of Japan-Indonesia? My study, which provides an analytical framework of ‘noise silencing,’ can be a comparative tool for the analysis of labor migration in Southeast Asia. In this sense, I do hope that this study will be a future reference for comparative studies of labor migration in Indonesia and beyond.

Appendix I

Researching Harsh Discipline as a Strategy in Pre-Departure Training

To get a better understanding of the reality of the scheme and pattern of this program from before departure in Indonesia, and to examine how the G-to-G program and P-to-P program procedures and training before departure contribute and construct the characters of this program as a discipline strategy in pre-departure training. In this chapter, a narrative inquiry using oral narratives was conducted with 8 (4 G- to- G and 4 P-to-P) trainees' participants, 2 private sending organizations, 2 Indonesian representative of Ministry of Manpower. The oral narrative in this study employed semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Naturalistic Interview) which were conducted several times over a three-year period, from 2018, through 2019, to 2023.

The interviewer asked the trainees the following questions:

- a) What are your reasons for taking part in the TITP program?
- b) What were your experiences during the recruitment process?
- c) What are your feelings regarding the pre-departure training program held by the G to G?
- d) What are your feelings regarding the pre- departure training program held by P to P?

In addition, the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower representative was asked:

- a) What is the purpose of pre- departure training program?

And the two P-to-P sending organizations were asked:

- a) What is the purpose of the pre- departure training program?
- b) What is the standard examination?
- c) Is there any surveillance from Indonesian government in the implementation of the program particularly for the private sending agency?

Appendix 2

Researching Seniority

The aim is to explore distinguished contexts within the two generations of Indonesian technical intern trainees in Japan, instead of making generalizations. Some participants were interviewed using a “longitudinal study” (before departure, during the program, and after completing the program).

Our interview employed semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Naturalistic Interviews) which were conducted several times over a three-year period, from 2018, through 2019, to 2023. Interviews were conducted in two ways: individual interviews, and pair interviews. The duration of the interviews ranged from two hours to five hours (in the case of pair interviews). The interviewees were asked questions about:

- a) their reasons for taking part in the TITP program,
- b) what their main goals were,
- c) what obstacles or barriers they faced,
- d) what lessons they had learned during the program,
- e) what difficulties they had encountered,
- f) how their imagination of life in Japan differed from the reality they were facing, and
- g) how they dealt with the problems during the program,
- h) how they felt about the current generation or their senior generation in this program respectively,
- i) the influence of the seniors’ role in dealing with internal problems during the program.

As additional data, the author also conducted participatory observation by joining in their daily life activities and attending association gatherings in Indonesia and Japan, as well as joining their social media group. Some of the descriptions in their social media (such as Facebook and WhatsApp) that were related to their experiences as a trainee in Japan were included as well. All interviews and communication through participant observations and social media were conducted in Indonesian. The following is detailed information about the participants.

Table 15 List of Participants

NAME (INITIALS)	SEX	YEAR COMING TO JAPAN	WORK CATAGORY	SENDING ORGANI ZATION	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	YEAR AND PLACE OF INTERVIEW
YH	M	1996	Construction	G to G	High School	2020 in Indonesia
EW	M	1996	Construction	G to G	High School	2018 and 2020 in Indonesia
MS	M	1996	Construction	G to G	High School	2018 in Indonesia
SG	M	1995	Construction	G to G	High School	2019 in Japan
TS	M	1998	Welding	G to G	High School	2020 in Japan
Y	F	2017	Food Processing	P to P	University Graduated	2020 in Japan
SS	F	2017	Food Processing	P to P	University Graduated	2018 in Japan and 2020 in Indonesia
PA	F	2017	Food Processing	P to P	University Graduated	2018 in Japan and 2020 in Indonesia
DA	M	2018	Food Processing	P to P	Study Leaves	2020 in Indonesia
RP	M	2017	Welding	P to P	Quit from University	2020 in Japan
FA	M	2019	Welding	P to P	Quit from University	2019 in Japan
SR	M	2016	Welding	P to P	Quit from University	2018 in Japan

Appendix 3

Researching The Role of Supervising Organization (Kanridantai)

To analyze the role of supervising organization during the program, this chapter uses a naturalistic interviewing style with five Indonesian translators who work in supervising organizations. Two of them work as permanent workers in Osaka and Tokyo respectively, while the other three work part-time in Tokyo and Sendai, one in Tokyo and two in Sendai, respectively. The author also interviewed three experts regarding the technical intern trainee program, the first Natsuko Saeki, an Associate professor at Nagoya Gakuin University who also has an NGO that helps Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. Then AS (a pseudonym), who works as a translator at an NGO in the Kansai region that opens consultations in the mother tongue for all foreign nationals, including Indonesian citizens who are in Japan. Then a translator named Noriko (a pseudonym) who had worked at the OTIT institution for 5 years and was also in charge of receiving consultations from technical intern trainee participants from Indonesia. The following is the detailed information of the interviewees:

Table 16 The Detail Information of Interviewees

No	Interviewee	Area	Sex	Education	Position	Category of Company to Assist
1.	HS (Initial Name) Supervising Organization Staff	Tokyo	Male	Bachelor's degree in Japanese Literature	Permanent Worker (Leader of Translator for protecting Indonesian Trainee participants)	100 companies Manufacturing Industry and Construction all around Japan
2.	WT Supervising Organization Staff	Tokyo	Female	Japanese Literature Degree (ongoing doctoral program at university)	University Student, working part-time as translator	19 companies Agriculture in Tokyo Area
3.	RI Supervising Organization Staff	Osaka	Female	Bachelor's degree in Japanese Literature	Permanent Worker (Leader of Translators protecting Trainee participants from Southeast Asia)	10 Companies in the Food industry in Osaka Area
4.	AH Supervising Organization Staff	Sendai	Male	Japanese Literature Degree (Doctoral student)	University student, working part-time as translator	Fishery Company in Kesenuma Area
5.	ZS Supervising Organization Staff	Sendai	Female	Physics (Doctoral Student)	University Student, working part-time as translator	Manufacture Industry Sendai Area
6.	As NGO	Osaka	Female	Unknown	Working part-time as translator at NGO	Indonesian Workers any type of visa in Japan
7.	Natsuko Saeki NGO	Nagoya	Female	Associate Professor	Owner of NGO in Nagoya	Indonesian with any type of visa who living in Japan
8.	Noriko	Tokyo	Female	Unknown	Working as translator at OTIT	Indonesian Technical Intern Trainee visa

In order to see and analyze the precariat relations between the trainee participants and the supervising organization, the author also interviewed on-going technical intern trainees, 15 trainees (10 male, 5 female) in Sendai, 5 trainees in Osaka (male), 2 trainees in Nagoya (male and female), 15 trainees in Kyoto and Shiga (10 female, 5 male), which were asked to relate their experiences and relations with their own translators, who work as intermediaries at the supervising organization.

Appendix 4

Researching Tohoku Family

To get a better understanding of how ethnic communities, religious communities, and Tohoku Family play a significant role as coping mechanisms for Indonesian trainees in dealing with their problems during the program, the author used a natural interviewing and participant observation throughout their daily activities and during events.

The primary data in this chapter was obtained through ethnography and a netnography approaches, which include observation of participants in annual event activities, the joining of the religious community through their LINE groups and WhatsApp groups.

About 5 participants are coded within longitude design, where the author has followed the participant in pre-departure and during the program until they finish. Some of the participants were interviewed as a group. Here is detailed information on the interviewees: 5 trainee participants from a private sending organization in West Java's Cikarang started the program in 2018 and finished in 2019 (initial names SS, PA, FA, RR, DA); 8 trainees in a group from a private sending organization in Hamamatsu from Lombok were interviewed in 2021 during their program (DK and friends); 20 members of Tohoku Family were interviewed in 2021. The duration of the interviews ranged from two to five hours. The author asked the participants the following questions:

- a) Are you joining community groups during the trainee program in Japan?
- b) How often do you go to religious activities and mosques?
- c) What are your opinions on the ethnic community and religious activities?
- d) How important is the ethnic community and religious community for you?
- e) For the Tohoku Family, questions for the founder were about the history of the making of the Tohoku Family, the role of the association, the barriers, the objectives, the feelings, and hopes of the members.

In addition, the author also tried to see natural interactions among the trainees by joining their religious community in their social media groups. The author joined the two largest religious community groups in LINE and WhatsApp for the Indonesian Nahdlatul Ulama in Japan (NU Japan) and interviewed the leader of NU Japan through social media.

Appendix 5

Researching the Self as an Active Agent

To understand their behavioral norms and characteristics in social media as well as the influence of social media in shaping a good image and promoting the program, we use the qualitative methods of ethnography, participant observation, and netnography (participant observation through social media).

In this section, a narrative inquiry using oral narratives was conducted with five (male) Indonesian alumni trainees, who now reside in West Java and joined the program in the 1990s, and seven ongoing trainees, who joined the program through a private sending organization from 2017 and beyond. The author also follows the Instagram accounts of the trainees themselves and the association accounts, such as IPTIJ, Kenshusei.id, kenshusei.hits, and some Indonesian trainee YouTubers in Japan.

The duration of the interviews ranged from two to five hours. I asked the trainees the following questions:

1. Before you joined this program, have you ever been interested in someone's social media postings who lived in Japan as a trainee?
2. If the answer is yes, did this affect your decision to migrate to Japan through an internship program?
3. How did/does social media have a positive impact as a means of self-expression during the program in Japan?
4. What did/do you usually post on social media during the program?
5. Have you ever expressed difficulties while living in Japan through social media?

Appendix 6

Researching Returnees

To analyze the willingness and readiness of return for Indonesian technical trainee participants, we use a naturalistic interviewing style with the Longitude Design approach in which the author follows 8 trainee participants from before the departure, during the program, and after the program. The table below lists the information of all the interviewees.

Table 17 Table of Interviewees

No.	Initial Name and Category of Interviewee	Period of Interview
1.	EW Alumni (Head of IKAPEKSI)	2018 and 2020
2.	MI Alumni (Member of IKAPEKSI)	2018
3.	ZH Alumni (Member of IKAPEKSI)	2020
4.	AH Alumni (IM trainer)	2020
5.	SS Alumni (IM trainer)	2020
6.	SR Trainee Participant (Shiga)	Longitude approach (2017, 2018, 2019)
7.	SS Trainee Participant (Shiga)	Longitude approach (2017, 2018, 2020)
8.	PA Trainee Participant (Osaka)	Longitude approach (2017, 2018, 2020)
9.	AS Trainee Participant (Shiga)	Longitude approach (2017, 2018, 2020)
10.	FZ Trainee Participant (Kyoto)	Longitude approach (2017, 2019, 2022)
11.	RR Trainee Participant (Kyoto)	Longitude approach (2017, 2019, 2022)
12.	TS Trainee Participant (Fukuoka)	Longitude approach (2019, 2021, 2022)
13.	TA Trainee Participant (Nagoya)	Longitude approach (2017, 2019, 2021)
14.	IN Trainee Participant (Nagoya)	Longitude approach (2017, 2020, 2023)

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