

'Stay away from home': The role of social networks for the adaptation process of Indonesian trainees in Japan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the challenges faced by Indonesian trainees, especially the participants of Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), in the process of adapting to Japan's socio-cultural system. Furthermore, this study finds out how the role of social networks in the process of adapting the lives of the trainees. Social network theory and social capital will be used as a perspective to analyze the existing phenomena. Data collection process and analysis of findings will be carried out based on qualitative research methods. Primary data sources were taken by using in-depth interviews towards three Indonesian trainees, complemented by secondary data from related research and articles. The results of the study show that the challenges faced by Indonesian trainees include difficulties in adapting to work, limitation of Japanese language proficiency, lack of opportunities to practice prayers regularly, and difficulties to build social relationships. In dealing with these problems, trainees receive moral assistance and information about the way of life in Japan from the Indonesian networks. The adaptation process of Indonesian trainees in Japan is supported by social networks that are formed informally, and plays a role in maintaining the continuity of the migration pattern of Indonesian workers to Japan.

Keywords: *Adaptation process, Indonesian trainee, social network, TITP*

Introduction

The vast mobilization in the modern era encourages an increase in cross-border migration. According to world systems theory, migration is a natural consequence of economic globalization and enables firms to operate across its national boundaries (Wallerstein, 1974). As the only Asian country that managed to make rapid progress in the 1960s to 1980s, Japan achieved an average annual economic growth of more than 10% through this phenomenon (Kapur, 2018). This outstanding progress has attracted developing countries in Asia and outside of the region to seek better economic opportunities in Japan. Based on the government statistics for 2021, there are 2,887,116 foreign residents living in Japan, either as workers, students, permanent residents, or spouses of Japanese people. This figure covers 2.02% of the total population of Japan.

Indonesia is also taking part in this migration process and brought 66,084 Indonesians in Japan, based on the numbers appeared in Chart 1. This figure is predicted to keep increasing in the next few years (Nawawi, 2010), although it slightly declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main reason is the increasing demand from Japan to fill in less desirable job positions, including 3K jobs (*kiken*: dangerous; *kitsui*: difficult; and *kitanai*: dirty). This becomes an opportunity for Indonesian workers to get a relatively high salary, as well as to gain upward social mobility by working abroad (Nawawi, 2010).

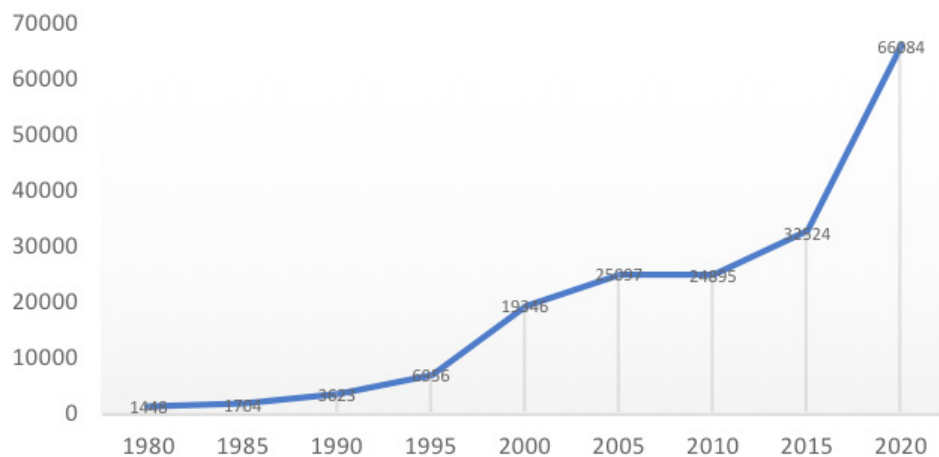


Chart 1 Number of Indonesian Population in Japan
 Source: Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2021

The presence of a small number of Indonesian migrant workers, along with other foreign workers becomes a solution for the labor deficit in Japan since the economic bubble period of the 1980s, coupled with the condition of the aging population. At the same time, it becomes an opportunity for Indonesia to tackle labor shortages. Thus, the G to G cooperation between Indonesia and Japan can strengthens relations between the two countries and addresses the needs of both parties. The cooperation in the labor aspect consists of various schemes, including the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), and the Specified Skilled Workers (SSW). Between these three schemes, TITP contributes most to the total population of Indonesian citizens in Japan, as illustrated in Chart 2.

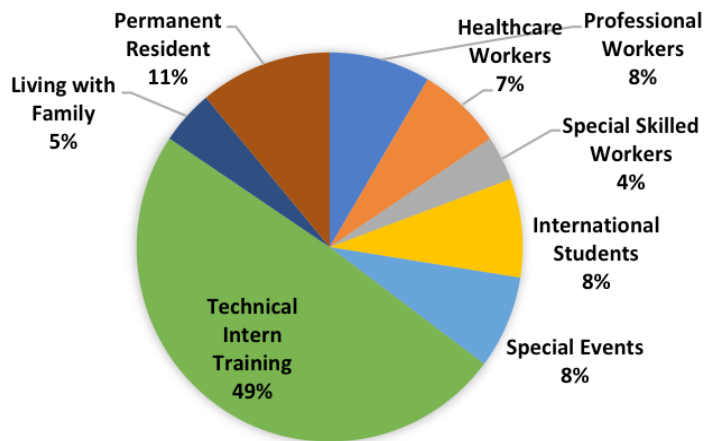


Chart 2 Number of Indonesian Population Based on the Type of Visa
 Source: Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2021

The TITP has been implemented since 1993, to foster Indonesian human resources through improving skills and knowledges from Japan’s industries (JITCO, 2011). It is also expected to support technology transfer between the two countries, so that workers can improve their abilities and get suitable jobs after leaving this program. The number of TITP participants covers almost 50 percent of the total Indonesian citizens in Japan, consisted of the first-year (*kenshusei*) and the second to third-year participants (*jishhusei*). The recruitment is carried out through the cooperation route between the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower (Kemnaker) and the

International Manpower Development Organization Japan (IM Japan), as well as through private cooperation intermediaries which is the Registered Training Organization (RTO).

Indonesian Migrants in Japan

As a Muslim-majority country, the arrival of Indonesian migrants to Japan not only increases the number of foreign residents, but also affects the social characteristics of Japanese society. Table 1 shows that Shintoism and Buddhism are two religions which dominates Japan. A research by Hirofumi Tanada (2021) estimates that there are at least 183,166 Muslims living in Japan. This number includes Indonesia as the largest Muslim migrants in Japan, followed by Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Egypt, Nigeria, Uzbekistan (Ministry of Justice, 2019). The prefecture with the largest Muslim population in Japan is Tokyo Prefecture with 32,103 inhabitants, followed by Aichi Prefecture with 22,350 inhabitants, Saitama Prefecture with 21,603 inhabitants, Kanagawa Prefecture with 16,135 inhabitants, and Chiba Prefecture with 15,113 inhabitants (Tanada, 2021). These numbers are expected to increase, considering the rise of foreign residents' population in Japan.

Table 1 Japan's Religious Population

Religion	Number of People
Shintoism	88,9 million
Buddhism	84,8 million
Christian	1,9 million
Other (Islam, Baha'i, Hinduism, Jewish)	7,4 million

Source: Data US Office of International Religious Freedom, 2020

In this sense, Indonesian Muslim migrants in Japan are a minority of the minority. This can complicate the process of their assimilation into Japanese society. Japan is known as a secular society that places religion as the individual business of its people without any interference from the state. In addition, Japanese society is also attached to the idea of *nihonjinron*, which is the view of Japanese society as a unified whole and has the national character of *yamato damashii*, which literally means 'the spirit of the Japanese nation', and *kokutai*, which means 'one political body of the Japanese nation' (Mouer & Sugimoto, 1986). This discourse promotes the character of Japan as a homogeneous nation with one ethnicity and one culture only, while people outside that character are considered as 'other'.

Because they are classified as a minority, the lives of Muslims in Japan cannot be separated from various challenges. Some of the common problems experienced by Muslim minorities in religious life in Japan at the beginning of the development of the Muslim community include the lack of understanding about how important prayers and worships for Muslims, limited worship facilities, difficulties in accessing halal food supplies and restaurants, and the absence of a special Muslim burial ground in Japan that is adequate and easily accessible (Anis, 1998). This of course has an impact on the problem of spiritual needs in carrying out their lives in Japan. However, with the openness to knowledge about Islam, coupled with the popularity of halal tourism as a promotional material for Japanese tourism since the 2010s, the development of Muslim-friendly public facilities has been intensified (Ayyub, Bahri & Iskandar, 2020).

To overcome this problem, Muslims in Japan formed associations so that the process of exchanging information and values based on religion continued. This is done to show a significant role in spreading understanding about Islam, especially regarding Halal rules (Ayyub, Bahri & Iskandar, 2020). The Muslim community in Japan is a community whose shape is centered around a mosque, not based on where they live. The activities they carry out not only include religious activities, but also other activities that support their life in Japan. These various activities function to integrate and bridge relationships that are oriented both internally and externally to groups, based on the cohesive function and the bridging function in social capital (Putnam, 2001: 19-21).

Based on this explanation, this research will find out more about the challenges faced by Indonesian migrants, especially those who are participants in the TITP program in adapting to the life and work system in Japan, and examine the role of the community as a social network to help these apprentices. Several previous studies have examined the lives of Indonesian migrants in Japan, especially TITP participants (Fahreza, 2018; Maemura, et al., 2009; Nawawi, 2010; Ratnayake, et al., 2016; Pitoyo, 2006). These studies examine the adaptation process of migrants and TITP participants in the work environment and social environment, as well as how the TITP program mechanism takes place. However, these studies have not specifically discussed the role of networks in migrants' adaptation process into the receiving country. In addition, this study also shows that the formal social network model is less important for TITP participants, when compared to informal social networks among trainees.

Literature Review

Studies related to the dynamics of international migration in its development emphasize the importance of kinship and friendship networks in shaping and sustaining migration continuity through a coherent structure for the migrant population (Fawcett 1989; Massey et al., 1993). Social network theory sees that the relationship between sending and receiving countries, as well as household and family conditions can influence the process of forming an individual's policy on migration. Based on this theory, the formation of social networks will affect the sustainability of the migration system through the connection between migrants with friends or family at home to be involved in international migration behavior and encourage new migration movements. Other than that, social networks also reduce the risks that new entrants may face in the initial adaptation process.

Epstein and Heizler (2016) explain that migrants will have an urgency to maintain relations between the country of origin and the receiving country. This is achieved through a connection formed by combining dedication to the home country and commitment to the host country (Epstein & Heizler, 2016:15). These connections are important for the creation of migrant networks, so that members can gain access to knowledge and networks of trade systems in both the host and domestic market, financial resources, and opportunities to create and enhance business partnerships with other network members (Epstein & Heizler, 2016; Thompson, 2014). Other benefits of the relationship between the receiving country and sending country manifest in various forms, such as the influence of cross-border families on developing opportunities, social capital, symbolic capital, and a sense of belonging in religious contexts.

There are two main roles played by a social network in migration (Gurak & Caces, 1992). The first role is that the social network system plays a role in assisting the adaptation process of migrants to the receiving country. Social networks can be useful to help migrants to find housing, funds, and information regarding job vacancies and survival strategies in the short-term adaptation process. Meanwhile, the second role is as a filter or observer of migrants who will be involved in the sustainability of migration. This occurs in a long-term adaptation process, namely that social networks provide access for migrants to build and maintain relationships between sending and receiving countries. In this way, the formation of social network pockets will occur by itself and spread in many places in the receiving country.

The migration process that takes place globally will be followed by the development of social capital as part of the existing network system. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as a collection of potential resources associated with ownership of a network of relationships, acquaintances or reciprocal recognition with other individuals (1986: 248). Bourdieu's definition makes it clear that social capital allows individuals to claim access to resources owned by other parties, so that the amount and quality of resources obtained will be more varied. Bourdieu also focuses on the acquisition of social benefits and resources by individuals that can only be achieved through participation in groups and with the intention of organized social construction (Bourdieu, 1986: 249).

Meanwhile, according to Francis Fukuyama (2001), social capital is an informal norm that promotes cooperation between individuals. Social capital is generated by a hierarchical authority that sets norms and expects compliance, for example from religious or cultural institutions. These norms arise from the results of

bargaining in society, and are passed on from one generation to the next through a process of socialization in the form of habits. Social capital is obtained through the process of adaptation of an individual into a social context—or what he called as 'habitus'—who believes in their existence. The adaptation process is useful for individuals to gain recognition and trust from the group.

The three basic functions of social capital are to be the source of social control, source of family support, and source of profit through extrafamilial networks (Portes, 1998). While economic capital can be seen in its form and existence, human capital can be felt for its influence on humans, social capital is inherent in the structure of interpersonal relationships. In the context of the migrant network, the relationship that is built both with the country of origin and the country of origin is the real source of profit. Community networks play an important role as a vital resource for the sustainability of the social and economic life of migrants abroad. These resources are the initial capital to build bonds, advice and input on business opportunities, access to markets, and workforce.

Methods

This research is carried out based on qualitative methods because it is considered the most appropriate method to explore and understand the meaning given by individuals or groups in dealing with social problems (Creswell, 2009:10). With qualitative research methods, researchers have tools to track important findings that do not arise from quantitative research. Therefore, the meanings that cannot be seen from the numerical findings can be explored more deeply, so that the research findings can be more comprehensive.

Data collection process is carried out on primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data collection process was carried out by means of in-depth telephone interviews with informants who were selected based on their experience regarding the technical intern program to provide the best information about the research problem being studied (Creswell, 2007), with details in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2 Research Informants' Details

Initial	LY	AR	RO
Gender	Female	Male	Male
Age	25 years old	23 years old	22 years old
City of Origin	Yogyakarta	Nganjuk	Sukoharjo
Length of Stay	3 years	3 years	2 years
Company	Fujikichin, Kanagawa	PT. Korenaga Shoukai, Osaka	PT. Ohi Seisakusho, Kanagawa
Type of Industry	Food processing	Construction materials assembly plant	Machinery assembly plant
Reason of Migration	Suggestion from parents	Improving technical skills and knowledge, as well as Japan's work ethic	Stepping stone to get a better job

Results of the interviews will be supplemented with secondary data findings in the form of statistical notes and literature from other authors, or official government offices. The data that has been collected is then processed and analyzed based on the principles of explanatory descriptive research to describe the situation as it is, without the author's control over the research variables (Kothari, 2004: 3).

Results and Discussion

The image of Japan's modernization attracts Indonesian migrant workers to experience a more decent life, both economically and socially. Through industrial training programs and technical internships, Japan has received many foreign trainees, including those from Indonesia. Most of the selected participants were in their 20s, and had graduated from high school or an equivalent institution. After passing the selection stage, they must pass several screening tests and a preparation program with high competition. Unlike other destination countries, most PMIs come to Japan with the main intention of gaining knowledge and skills from the Japanese companies where they work. Regardless of the various labor transfer schemes available, all PMIs need to be well prepared when deciding to work abroad. This preparation is related to the adaptation of the work system, life, and ways of socializing with local people. For Indonesian migrants in Japan, this adaptation process can determine the sustainability of the migration process, or makes life in Japan to be difficult at all (Nawawi, 2010).

This study interviewed three selected informants related to their experiences as participants in the apprenticeship program from 2018 to 2022. The first informant, LY had participated in the program for three years from January 2018 to July 2021. LY knew about this program after previously getting encouragement from her parents. LY officially joined the training program at LPK (Job Training Agency) Kartika Yogyakarta in 2017.

"I was just a high school graduate, I wanted to go to college, but I can't because of economic reasons. At that time, I actually had no intention of going to Japan at all, nor had I ever liked anything about Japan. But because my parents advised me to join the job training agency, and I obeyed. After I participated in the training for about a year, then I took the qualification test for the program. I wasn't expected that I can be accepted in only one test."

Another informant, RO is a program participant who started his training at a machinery assembly plant in Kanagawa since March 2020, and will return to Indonesia in 2023.

"My older brother was a Japanese literature graduates. He told me a lot about Japan and how to work there. After graduating from Vocational High School, I initially wanted to go straight to work. I tried to find a job, but I haven't had any luck. Then I was advised to go straight to Japan. Since my brother is also a *sensei* at LPK, so it is easier for me to get into the LPK. My goal to go to Japan is to make it as a stepping stone for better work."

Last informant, AR is a trainee who came to Japan in October 2019, and will complete the program in October 2022. AR works as a technician at a construction materials assembly plant in Osaka. AR got information about the apprenticeship program from his superior where he previously worked, the Honda manufacturing in Jakarta. At that time, AR was introduced to an apprenticeship program from IM Japan and even got a recommendation from his superiors. Through these recommendations, AR then participated in a preparation program at an LPK in Bekasi.

"The reason for working in Japan, apart from getting better knowledge and skills, is to learn the work ethic in Japan. Our competence and skills in work are also assessed and given appropriate appreciation. It makes me feel appreciated and happy while working here."

Contrast to the experience of AR who went to Japan due to individual motivation, the statements from LY and RO prove that family has a big influence on the decision to migrate. Even though LY had no previous attachments or interests to Japan, she continued to follow the training program at LPK and left for Japan. Similar to LY, RO's decision to go to Japan was not just an individual decision that he made on the basis of a desire to develop knowledge and skills. The role of his older brother who is more or less determines RO's preferences to choose which country he will go to. Thus, although individuals are the main actors as well as decision makers in the migration process, the role of the people around them also determines how these decisions are made.

Other than the reason for migration, informants explained that they lived in accommodation provided by the company. All informants stated that they lived together with other Indonesians in their accommodation. LY

lives with three other female interns who work in the same company, but through a different program scheme. The four of them were one of the first foreign employees to work for the company where they worked. In AR's residence, there are four other Indonesians who live in the same accommodation, and work at the company where AR works. However, the five Indonesians came in different years. Meanwhile, RO lives with two other Indonesians who also work in the same company.

The living conditions of these three informants have described are quite ideal. Even though they live far from home, the presence of some other Indonesians in the same residence can certainly give a little sense of safety to their initial adaptation process. The similarity of individual capital in the form of shared identity, shared understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity (Bourdieu, 1986) is a provision for the formation of new effective social capital for the establishment of good interpersonal relationships as well. In addition, the living conditions of these three informants show the characteristics of Southeast Asians, especially Indonesians who feel safe living together with fellow Indonesians. When compared to Japanese people who prefer to enjoy private life in a closed manner, Indonesians tend to have a closer and more open social life. This lifestyle becomes additional social capital for them because it can save their monthly expenses in one kitchen, so that they send more remittances home (Iskandar, 2017).

Obstacles Faced by the Trainees

Based on research by Maemura, et. al. (2009), some of the problems that affect the adaptation process of the trainees in the workplace include length of stay, language skills, relationships between participants, behavior of co-workers, company characteristics, and understanding of religious differences. Length of stay also becomes one of the main factors to predict this adaptation process. Senior trainees, which have more frequent contact with their Japanese counterparts, can build more informal relationships and cultivate a positive image. In addition, length of stay also constitutes trainees' Japanese language skills, because trainees who stay in Japan longer usually can speak Japanese more fluently (Maemura, et.al., 2009). Maemura's research also shows that Muslim trainees do not experience religious difficulties at work because the company provides facilities that support the worship of Muslim apprentices.

This research shows that the use of Japanese in their workplace does present its own obstacles in the process of adjusting to the working system. This is especially true in the early days of the program. In the TITP program, prospective participants are required to have Japanese language skills (Nawawi, 2010). Although not all participants are required to have the JLPT certificate, the requirement for language skills is intended to make it easier for workers to adapt to working conditions at Japanese companies that always use Japanese.

"In my opinion, the biggest challenge during my stay in Japan is the language, especially when I meet people outside of Tokyo or Kanagawa area where they speak different dialects. It is very difficult to understand and often causes miscommunication, even fights." - *Informant AR*

"I had difficulties adapting to work, because I don't have any basic Japanese language at all before I joined LPK. In my work, I have to memorize all types of vegetables that we use in the factory, where in fact there are vegetables that only exist in Japan, but not in Indonesia. So, I have to learn new words." - *Informant LY*

"When I first came to Japan, I was a bit shock to found that people here talk in a daily vernacular which I didn't learn during the preparation program and it confused me for a bit." - *Informant RO*

From these statements, the problem of language use arises not only because of its correlation with the length of stay of migrants as found by Asato (2008), Maemura (2009), and Iskandar (2017), but also because of the differences between the language learned formally during the training process and the daily vernacular that is being used in the workplace. In addition to the lack of specific vocabulary, the use of informal language in daily contexts is also an obstacle for the three interns, especially AR and RO who have difficulty communicating with colleagues due to the use of certain dialects.

This shows that the pre-departure training program was not carried out properly and effectively. Language training for interns is provided on a general basis, without any specification for each type of work available in the program. Language training often only refers to the JLPT test material which teaches only the formal forms. Meanwhile, in the direct conversation, Japanese people use a more casual sentences that are different from the teaching material. This condition certainly makes it difficult for trainees, most of whom have not mastered the Japanese language well. In line with Maemura's research (2009), language barrier is a determinant of the smooth process of adaptation into a new environment. For trainees, this problem obviously affects their working performance. The limited use of language when they first arrived to Japan prevented them from carrying out orders given by their superiors, or had difficulty asking their co-workers for help.

In addition to language problems, the three informants stated that there were difficulties in adapting at work due to feelings of not being compatible with co-workers or superiors, as explained below:

"I've also felt some kind of racism by Japanese people. I really feel like Indonesians in Japan are considered like the lowest ranking in this company. It feels like *kenshusei* is the one who owns the factory, (meaning) always come early in the morning and return late at night. But I don't know if it's just at my factory or in other places like this." - *Informant AR*

"The main obstacle I experienced while living in Japan was because of my boss is very moody, picky with the people he likes. Even if that person makes a mistake, he's still prioritizes them. Other than that, there are a lot of people who don't match up with some people at work. It's a bit stressful for me too." - *Informant LY*

However, for RO, his working conditions provide good support for all trainees adjusting to the work systems.

"In general, I found no problems, because the co-workers are good people. Japanese people respect Indonesians, never speak rudely and understand that they are hiring foreigners. Because there must be obstacles, such as language, or culture, people already know the consequences. So, they teach slowly and tell slowly"

These differences indicate that the length of stay is not the main obstacle in the process of adapting to work patterns in the company. This depends on external factors from the work environment. A supportive and understanding environment for RO earned him a 'sense of safety' in his company. So, even though RO has certain limitations, his co-workers around him can understand these limitations. On the other hand, the work environment of AR and LY shows that there are limitations for foreign workers to be able to fully adapt in Japanese working condition. This gave rise to an attitude of rejection, either implicitly or explicitly, which caused discomfort for both informants.

Aside from the language barriers, another problem faced by the trainees related to differences in cultural backgrounds, especially religion. A research conducted by Maemura, et. al. (2009) shows that Muslim trainees do not experience religious difficulties at work, because even though Japan does not have many Muslims, companies are trying to provide places of worship and provide halal food menus. However, findings from this research indicate that there are obstacles for trainees to carry out the obligations of worship. For LY, praying five times a day is something that cannot be done during working hours because of the company's strict working hours and rest hours.

"I can't perform prayers during break time, because in our company we have to have lunch together. So, if someone is missing, it must be obvious. Other than that, there is no specified place in the factory for Muslim to perform prayers, nor is there a place for ablution. So, I can't perform prayers at the factory."

With this limitation, LY was forced to hold the prayer session after the working hours ended. However, LY who initially wears hijab stated that it is not an issue for her, because the her working attire requires her to use head coverings as personal protective equipment. Therefore, even though LY did not wear her own hijab, she was

still able to cover her head. In contrast to LY, the other two informants are relatively easy to perform their prayers, considering their place of residence is in the same location as the factory where they work.

"The problem of worship really depends on the prayer schedule. Sometimes I can get permission to pray for a while at my *apato*. But some other times I can't go out from work. To be honest, I've never been very religious. So, this uncertainty does not really affect me." - *Informant RO*

"In my place, I can't ask for leave to participate in Eid prayers, but for regular day prayers, I can get 30 minutes. I can pray in my own room. So if I want to pray, I go back to the *apato*, and just go back to the factory again." - *Informant AR*

With this condition, male informants are more likely to carry out obligatory worship on time, except for Friday prayers. Due to the limited number of mosques in Japan, and usually located in big cities or in crowded centers, not all Muslim migrants have access to these mosques. However, the informants said that obstacles in carrying out worship did not necessarily reduce their sense of faith. Muslims are allowed to combine the time of their prayers into several times, so that these informants can still carry out their worship after working hours. According to them, they still hold on to their identity as Muslims, even though they are often forced not to perform obligatory prayers or celebrate Eid al-Fitr.

In fact, for Indonesian migrants, worship is an important thing that forms the basis of life and supports their worldly life. Religious and cultural institutions act as social control as well as a life guidance for their daily life. It can also help migrants to synergize with the culture of Japanese society, because of the teachings to comply with norms through their behavior in the receiving country. Therefore, it is important for employers to understand the needs of the TITP participants, especially the need to perform prayers. Because, it can help trainees to improve their working performance.

Bourdieu believes that every individual action is carried out outside full awareness, because of the influence of habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). This also happened in the social context of Japan. Ethnic and cultural homogeneity has become the root of Japanese nationalism, indirectly instills through the superiority of Japan based on one kind of value and culture. Japan has not been prepared for anomalies that arise along with their openness to massive international migration. Thus, the existing attitudes and policies have not been able to facilitate this anomalous condition.

The Role of the Community as a Network of Indonesians in Japan

The findings of this research show how informants build relationships with other Indonesians in Japan, and form a network of Indonesian in Japan, usually because of the similar identity as trainees, close proximity of accommodation location, or similar hobbies and interest. For example, AR's regular participation in the Indonesian futsal community in Osaka every weekend, or RO's close relation with other Indonesian trainees have become his choice of socializing with other Indonesian in Japan.

"I get together with Indonesians usually through the Indonesian futsal club association every Saturday night or Sunday morning. This activity facilitates me to hang out and socialize with other Indonesian friends here in Japan." - *Informant AR*

"There is a senpai who came from the same hometown as mine. He likes to invite me to get together every Sunday night to have a barbecue party at his *apato*. Besides, because I like soccer, I also like to join football fans' club, as well as futsal club with other Indonesians." - *Informant RO*

The social network that the informants choose to engage in is determined by personal preference. This preference becomes an individual capital that is brought in the interaction process. According to Boisot (1995:48), meaningful communication requires a common understanding of the context among the parties involved in the exchange of information. This context will affect the formation of meanings, representations and interpretations

that individuals or groups have with each other. Therefore, the preference of the informants to interact with fellow trainees, or with people who have similar hobbies, or with other Indonesians who live near their place of residence, rather than with other Indonesian diaspora communities, is one of the most possible way chosen by the apprentices to form a social bond.

For RO and AR, support from Indonesian co-workers who live in the same residence is also coupled with support from people in the hobby community they follow. Regular community gatherings on weekends are usually a means of socializing and looking for help adapting to the new life in Japan. Previous studies on Indonesian Muslim groups have shown that for Indonesian migrants in Japan, the Muslim community acts as a 'second home' and functions as a 'charger of faith', as well as a platform for exchanging ideas and enriching knowledge about Islam (Handayani, 2021). In line with this research, findings show that the support from social networks plays a significant role in the smooth process of adapting their lives. At the initial arrival, for example, the three informants both received support from fellow Indonesians who lived together in their place of residence.

"I got a lot of information about shopping for daily necessities from my *senpai*. There were three Indonesians in my company who came to Japan earlier. This *senpai* taught me everything, starting from a place to look for halal food, and also teach me how to dispose of garbage." - Informant RO

"When I came to Japan for the first time, I felt that the adaptation process became easier because I lived with other Indonesians. I lived in one house with four girls from Indonesia. We were the first Indonesians to work there. We like to tell stories to each other while cooking. [...] They are a place where I can share my stress, so I can feel more relaxed and helped." - Informant LY

"Before coming to Japan, my *sensei* at the LPK taught me about the way of living in Japan and things to prepare before going to Japan. After I arrived, I met some acquaintances who had been there before, and the share about any information they know on adapting to new life in Japan, where to find cheap Indonesian grocery stores, as well as Indonesian restaurants. There are often get-togethers, eating together with Indonesian friends." - Informant AR

The role of senior trainees during the adaptation process of the trainees is closely related to the duration of their stay. Seniors who have been in Japan longer can accumulate social and individual capital which is then passed on to newly arrived trainees. This is in line with Bourdieu's thinking that individual involvement in social networks from time to time will encourage individuals to accumulate their social capital, so that in the end they can access resources that provide their own benefits (1986). *Jiishusei* or second- and third-year trainees will have more experience dealing with colleagues or acquaintances elsewhere than *kenshusei* (first-year trainees). Thus, trainees who stay longer have formed a habitus from their environmental social capital, for example information on daily needs, group beliefs and teachings about group values and norms.

The involvement of migrants in associations with fellow Indonesians proves the theory of the role of social networks from Gurak and Caces (1992), namely in assisting the adaptation process of migrants. Before leaving for Japan, migrants are required to take part in a series of training programs and preparation for departure. However, the living habits and culture of the local people in the receiving country will be easier to understand directly in everyday life. The life stories of these three informants prove that the presence of other people with the same nationality identity, or at least speaking the same language, can help them live their lives overseas. From these three stories, we can see how trainees still get support from other Indonesians, in the community they are more familiar with. This also shows that the formation of social networks that are carried out informally can still play the role and function of the network as it should be.

In the lives of the three informants, the role of the network in ensuring the sustainability of migration has also worked well. This can be proven by statements from the informants:

"I was one of the first people who work in Japan from my hometown. When my friends found out that I

was in Japan, many people asked about ways to join this program. But when I told them how much would it cost or prepared, they usually backed down because it's too expensive for them." - *Informant AR*

"Many friends back in my hometown asked me for information about how to work in Japan, but I didn't immediately recommend them to go. I asked them back, 'Are you ready to work in Japan? It's hard, you need a lot of money before leaving,' so that they can prepare everything first. Because if they're not ready but push themselves, they might make it difficult for themselves and get scolded too much at work."

In general, the internship program's intermediary only provides formal information regarding the departure preparation process and working mechanism. Meanwhile, trainees or alumni who have experienced firsthand how the program runs can provide more realistic information about working in Japan. In this case, the role of the trainees and alumni network is important to ensure a smooth adaptation process for the arrival of new interns. The statements from RO and AR show how trainees have been able to maintain dedication to their country of origin, through useful information for potential migrants in the migrants' decision-making process.

Conclusion

The decline of Japanese human resources has brought Japan's position to a dependency for foreign workers. Despite being a good opportunity, sending foreign migrants to Japan comes with various challenges. These include language barriers, cultural differences, expensive living cost, homesickness, and other cultural hindrance especially for Muslims who have to exert extra energy to find halal food supplies, and limited time to perform mandatory prayers. This condition is also exacerbated by the work ethic in Japan which of course becomes another pressure for Indonesian migrants in Japan. Like it or not, migrants have to face it in order to stay afloat.

The research findings showed that Indonesian trainees experienced difficulties through the adaptation process to a new environment. Informants of this study stated that despite the various challenges they faced, there are many parties who also helped them in the adjustment process. They get most of the help from fellow Indonesians in the same workplace. Apart from that, they also get help from fellow Indonesians they know outside the workplace. Usually, the assistance provided is in the form of information about daily living in Japan, or information about how to get halal food. The informants also stated that even though they had difficulty in performing mandatory prayers, each of them was able to work around this problem by summarizing their worship time.

The role of social networks as a support system for migrants provide a strong sense of security and communality based on the similarity of the area of origin. Various activities that are carried out through this network become a survival strategy in the midst of the difficulties they experienced in Japan. In addition, migrants can also build strong relations with each other. The result of this study indicates that the presence of Indonesian migrants in Japan has become a social network that supports the international migration system. The two main roles of social networks as a means of gathering information and adapting, as well as connecting migrants with countries of origin and recipient countries, are carried out through casual interactions between Indonesians in associations. In addition, the experiences built on the duration of their stay in Japan can be social capital in the form of useful information for potential migrants.

Trainees as the program participants are important actors in building a strong bonding system. The life experience of the participants or alumni of the program becomes an important social capital to maintain the sustainability of this system. For this reason, trainees need to actively maintain good relations with fellow trainees, co-workers in the company, and even employers. This will be the basis for ensuring the formation of strong social ties in the migration system from Indonesia to Japan. In addition, there needs to be intervention from the Indonesian and Japanese governments so that the lives of migrants in Japan are more secure. It should be realized together that sending Indonesian migrant workers to Japan not only answers the problem of limited employment opportunities in Indonesia, but also the problem of labor shortages in Japan. Therefore, the Japanese government

must facilitate the existence of interns with Muslim-friendly policies, so that acts of racism and discrimination can be minimized.

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