

Influence of Taiwan's Migrant Retention and Long-Term Utilization Initiatives: A Case Study of Vietnamese and Philippine Migrant Workers

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Abstract

This study reveals that Taiwan Manpower Agencies have a beneficial impact on Taiwan's "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program". Since the introduction of migrant workers in 1989, Taiwan's migrant worker population has surpassed 730,000. Initiated on April 30, 2022, the program has progressively relaxed its eligibility criteria to align with Taiwan's permanent residency system and future immigration policies. While around 208,000 individuals meet the criteria for the program, only 6,643 approvals have been granted as of April 30, 2023, resulting in a success rate of 3.2% only.

The results demonstrate that the willingness of migrant workers to participate in the program correlates with factors such as their possession of professional licenses and their awareness of policy channels. The acquisition of professional licenses also correlates with their age and familiarity with policy channels. Over 40% of them rely on manpower agencies as their primary source of policy information, confirming that most eligible migrant workers prefer manpower agencies assisted for smoother application procedures.

Taiwan's government can entrust manpower agencies to handle the promotion of the program. This approach is likely to yield more substantial results than the current practice of independent applications by employers and migrant workers.

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1. Introduction

Since 1989, Taiwan has been introducing a project to address the issues of declining birth rates and an aging population, resulting in a shortage of industrial labor force (National Development Council, 2023) [9]. In 1992, the "Employment Service Act" was passed, with the main source countries for foreign labor being the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand. According to statistics from the Ministry of Labor's Statistics Query Website [10], the number of migrant workers in Taiwan has now exceeded 730,000 (730,804 people as of February 2022), with Vietnamese nationals (253,766 people, 34.72%) and Indonesian nationals (254,000 people, 34.76%) being the most prominent.

On April 30, 2022, the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" was officially implemented to align with Taiwan's immigration policy. The Information page on the Retention of Foreign Intermediate Skilled Workforce Program [11] indicates that the program is applicable to industries that have already hired migrant workers, such as manufacturing, slaughterhouses, construction, agriculture, and long-term care. Employers can retain migrant workers who have worked in Taiwan for over 6 years or foreign students with a bachelor's degree or higher who meet the salary and technical requirements. Employers can apply to have them converted into Intermediate Skilled Workforce, with a requirement that the average total monthly salary must be at least 53,000 New Taiwan Dollars (NTD). Once granted the status of foreign Intermediate Skilled Workforce, there is no limit on their working period in Taiwan. After working for an additional 5 years, they can apply for permanent residency, further improving their skills and increasing their salaries. Employers are exempt from paying employment stabilization fees. However, the program's effectiveness has been subpar, with only 6,643 people approved out of approximately 20.8 thousand eligible individuals after one year of implementation (as of April 30, 2023), providing little assistance to employers facing labor shortages.

This study reveals that Taiwan's manpower agencies have a positive impact on promoting the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program." Survey results indicate that migrant workers have a significant willingness to apply for the program. However, the actual success rate is low. The reasons for this discrepancy are attributed to the complex application process, insufficient information, and the fact that employers, who are not necessarily well-versed in policy details, serve as the applicants. This results in an ineffective application process. Employers need to Balance their existing work responsibilities with the cumbersome application procedures diminishes employers' willingness to participate, making it challenging to expedite the application process even if the willingness of migrant workers is high.

In this policy, the employers act as the applicants, rather than manpower agencies offering fee-based services for application. As a result, manpower agencies are not incentivized to actively promote the program. Consequently, migrant workers may not fully understand the application process, leading to a lower willingness to apply.

Even if they have the intention, they may be hesitant to request their employers to apply for their intermediate-level technical professional certificates due to the cumbersome procedures, which also discourages employers from actively pursuing these certificates on behalf of their workers.

To be eligible for permanent residency, migrant workers need to possess intermediate-level technical professional certificates and then work for at least 5 years in Taiwan. According to reports in the Taiwanese media, the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" has been in effect since April 30, 2022. As of April 30, 2023, a total of 9,164 migrant workers have submitted applications, with 3,740 from the industrial sector, 5,421 from the social welfare sector, and 3 overseas students. After the first year, only 6,643 applications were approved, including 2,841 from the industrial sector, 3,799 from the social welfare sector, and 3 from overseas students. This program, although promising, faces challenges due to its high threshold and complex application process. Some advocacy groups criticize it for being "too difficult to retain talent," and claim it's a case of "all talk and no action" with high thresholds, employer-driven applications, and complex application procedures being the main reasons for the low approval rate (Foreign Workers News Agency, 2023) [12].

The survey results confirm that the application procedure for the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" is indeed complex. The majority of eligible migrant workers express a preference for applying through manpower agencies. The willingness of migrant workers to apply for the program is significant, and the complexity of the application process suggests that assistance from Taiwanese manpower agencies could effectively increase the number of applicants. Therefore, the promotion of the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" in Taiwan would benefit from involving manpower agencies in a positive manner, as it aligns with the preferences and needs of eligible migrant workers.

2. Research Method and Sample Description

The research aims to investigate the reasons for the ineffective promotion of Taiwan's "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" through a questionnaire survey conducted among migrant workers in Taiwan. The research framework is illustrated in the following diagram.

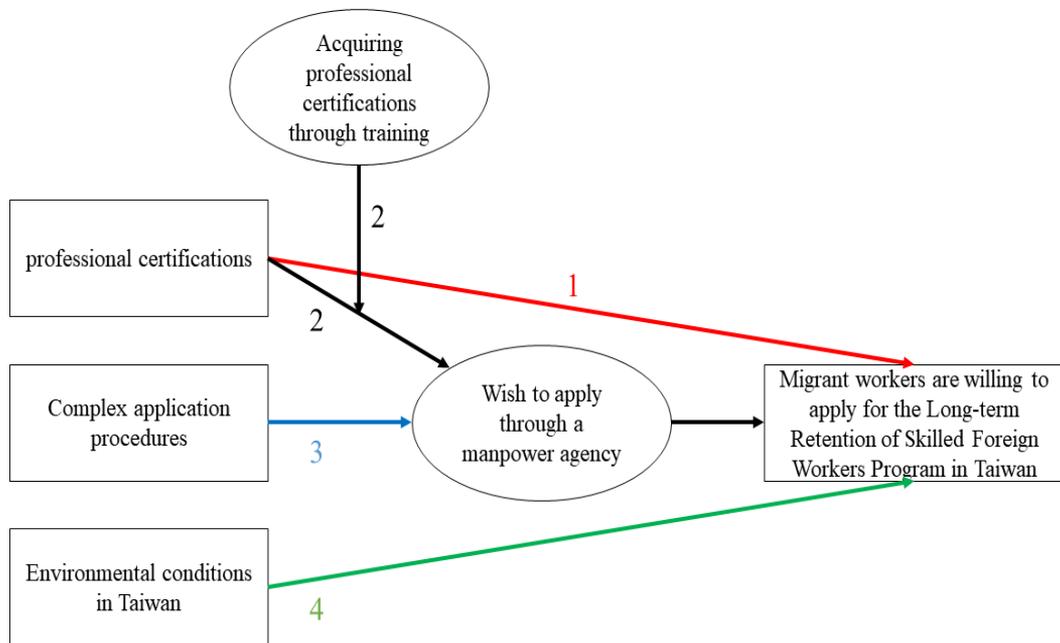


Figure 1: The research framework

H1: Professional certifications have an influence on the willingness of migrant workers to apply for the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program.

H2: There is a relationship between obtaining professional certifications and Manpower agencies (policy understanding channels), and migrant workers wish to obtain professional certifications through the assistance of Manpower agencies.

H3: Migrant workers perceive the application procedures as complex and prefer to apply for the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program through Manpower agencies.

H4: The environmental conditions in Taiwan have an influence on the willingness of migrant workers to apply for the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program.

The questionnaire survey was conducted through collaboration with a large-scale manpower agency specializing in migrant workers. Data collection and statistical analysis were carried out using the questionnaire, supplemented by literature analysis to verify the research hypotheses.

Given that the highest numbers of migrant workers in Taiwan are of Vietnamese nationality and that the actual highest number of approved applications for the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" is also Vietnamese workers, the study focuses on Vietnamese workers as the re-search subjects. A total of 336 valid questionnaires were collected. Descriptive statistics of the re-search subjects are presented in Table 1.

Among the 336 research subjects, 52.4% are male, 33.3% aged between 26 and 30 years, 87.5% with a high school education level and 55.7% are married. To apply for the program, one needs to have worked continuously in Taiwan for at least 6 years. Among the 336 subjects, 206 individuals (61.3%) have worked in Taiwan for less than 6 years, indicating that most migrant workers do not meet the application criteria. The minimum monthly salary requirement to apply is above NT\$33,000 for industrials, above NT\$29,000 for institutional caregivers, and above NT\$24,000 for home caring. Among the research subjects, 205 individuals (61.0%) currently earns between NT\$32,999 and NT\$29,000 per month in industrials, indicating that most migrant workers do not meet the salary requirement.

Less than 10% of the subjects have obtained professional licenses in Taiwan, with the majority (91.1%) not holding any Taiwanese professional licenses. 73.2% are aware of Taiwan's " Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program". and among them, 47.9% learned about the program through manpower agencies. The second most common sources of information are the internet (26.5%) and media and then media and newspaper (15.2%).

Table 1: Sample demographics of the first Questionnaire

Characteristic	n	%
Age		
18-25	102	30.4
26-30	112	33.3
31-35	76	22.6
35-40	42	12.5
>41	4	1.2
Gender		
Male	176	52.4
Female	160	47.6
Education Level		
Elementary School	3	0.9
Junior high school	21	6.3
High School	294	87.5
College degree or above	18	5.4
Marital Status		
Unmarried	149	44.3
Married	187	55.7
Cumulative time in Taiwan		
Within 6 years	206	61.3
More than 6 years	130	38.7
Job category		
Industry (including manufacturing, construction, outreach agriculture, marine fishing)	324	96.4
Social welfare (including institutional care and family care)	12	3.6
Current monthly salary (NTD)		
Above 33,000	35	10.4
32,999-29,000	205	61.0
28,999-24,000	87	25.9
Below 23,999	9	2.7
Do you have Taiwan professional certifications?		
No	306	91.1
Yes	30	8.9
Do you know about Taiwan's Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program?		
No	90	26.8
Yes	246	73.2
Through which channel did you know about Taiwan's Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program?		
Internet	89	26.5
Employer	6	1.8
Manpower agencies	161	47.9
Friend	18	5.4
Media (TV, newspaper, etc.)	51	15.2
Other	11	3.3

3. Main Results

The initial questionnaire design comprised 19 questions aimed at investigating the willingness of mi-grant workers to apply for the " Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program", "Be-coming intermediate skilled foreign workers" and "Apply Permanent Residency". The survey utilized a Likert five-point scale, where respondents selected an option from "Strongly Agree" (5 points), "Agree" (4 points), "Neutral" (3 points), "Disagree" (2 points), and "Strongly Disagree" (1 point) based on their personal perception.

3.1 Application Willingness

The survey results revealed the overall average willingness of migrant workers to apply for the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program", "Becoming intermediate skilled foreign workers" and "Apply Permanent Residency" to be 3.82, indicating a range between "Neutral" and "Agree."

In relation to the willingness to participate in the " Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" the overall average score was 3.88, falling within the range of "Neutral" to "Agree." Notably, the averages for "I believe staying in Taiwan provides better job opportunities" and "I believe staying in Taiwan offers better working conditions" reached 4.43. The statistical results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Application Willingness for the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program (N = 336)

Topics	Mean	Standard deviation
I have a thorough understanding of the application details.	4.04	1.299
I agree that it is easy for me to apply as a mid-level technical worker based on my qualifications.	3.40	1.479
I agree that it is easy for me to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan based on my qualifications.	3.31	1.482
I agree that the procedures for applying as a mid-level technical worker are too complicated.	3.73	1.384
I agree that the procedures for applying for permanent residency are too complicated.	3.84	1.332
I agree that there are better job opportunities in Taiwan.	4.43	.969
I agree that there is a better working environment in Taiwan.	4.43	.940

According to the Questionnaire on the willingness towards Intermediate skilled foreign workers, the overall average score is 4.11, indicating a range between agreement and strongly agree. Regarding the question about applying to become Intermediate skilled foreign workers, 26 individuals (7.7%) selected "agree" and 193 individuals (57.4%) selected "strongly agree," demonstrating that 65.1% of the migrant workers are interested in applying for mid-level technical positions. Only the statement "I am willing to pay for learning technical skills or obtaining Taiwan professional certifications" had an average score below 4 (3.93), falling between having Neutral and agreement. The analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Application Willingness for be a intermediate skilled foreign workers
(N = 336)**

Topics	Mean	Standard deviation
I want to apply to be an intermediate skilled foreign workers	4.01	1.323
I agree that Intermediate skilled foreign workers offers more stable salaries	4.23	1.107
I agree that Intermediate skilled foreign workers provides more job opportunities	4.18	1.135
I am willing to pay for learning technical skills or obtaining Taiwan certifications	3.93	1.355
After five years as Intermediate skilled foreign workers, I am willing to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan	4.24	1.198

According to the Questionnaire on the willingness to apply for permanent residency, the overall average score is 3.54, falling between having Neutral and agreement. Only the statement "I want to obtain permanent residency in Taiwan" had an average score higher than 4.0 (4.34), while the other statements scored below 4.0, indicating that migrant workers have various concerns regarding specific factors related to permanent residency. Regarding the item "I want to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan," 20 individuals (6.0%) selected "agree" and 240 individuals (71.4%) selected "strongly agree," indicating that 77.4% of the migrant workers express a desire to obtain permanent residency in Taiwan, which is higher than their willingness to apply for mid-level technical positions (65.1%). The analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Application Willingness for permanent residency (N = 336)

Topics	Mean	Standard deviation
I want to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan.	4.34	1.181
I believe that job opportunities in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency.	3.60	1.495
I believe that the education environment in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency.	3.42	1.502
I believe that the quality of life in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency.	3.36	1.521
I believe that social security in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency.	3.31	1.551
I believe that the political situation in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency.	3.40	1.511
I believe that the social welfare benefits (such as labor and health insurance) enjoyed by permanent residents will influence my willingness for permanent residency.	3.39	1.516

The survey on factors influencing the willingness for permanent residency (such as job opportunities, education environment, quality of life, social security, politics, and social welfare benefits enjoyed by permanent residents like labor and health

insurance) yielded average scores all below 4.0, indicating that these reasons do not strongly impact their desire to stay in Taiwan.

Before being eligible to apply for permanent residency, the Intermediate skilled foreign workers must work continuously in Taiwan for 5 years. The requirement does not have a significant impact on the intentions of the migrant workers.

3.2 Correlation of background variables of migrant workers

In this study, the chi-square analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the back-ground variable of migrant Workers and variables such as awareness of the Taiwan Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program and possession of professional certifications in Taiwan. When the Pearson chi-square value is less than 0.05, it indicates a statistically significant difference.

3.2.1 The correlation between the background variable of migrant Workers and awareness of the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program

The statistical results show that the "whether you have Taiwan professional certifications " and " through which channel did you know about the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program " are significantly related to whether you know the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program. Among the various channels, the majority of respondents (161 individuals, accounting for 47.9%) obtained information about the program through man-power agencies. This finding indicates the importance of further exploring the role of manpower agencies in the application process of the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program.

No significant correlation was found between the background variable of migrant Workers of "age," "gender," "education level," "marital status," "length of stay in Taiwan," "current job cate-gory," "current monthly salary," and awareness of the Taiwan Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program.

It is worth noting that meeting the requirement of having worked continuously in Taiwan for more than 6 years, which is necessary to apply for Intermediate skilled foreign workers, was achieved by 130 respondents (38.7%). This may explain why they showed less significant interest in the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program, as they had not yet met the necessary criteria.

Although no significant correlation was found between the current monthly salary and aware-ness of the Taiwan Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program, it should be noted that salary is one of the main criteria for application (NT\$33,000 for industry, NT\$29,000 for institutional care, and NT\$24,000 for family care). Many migrant workers may not meet the salary criteria (only 35 individuals, accounting for 10.4%, had a salary above NT\$33,000), which could explain their relatively lower interest in the program. The analysis is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: The correlation between the background variable of migrant Workers and whether they know the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program

Characteristic	NO (%)	YES (%)	Value	Pearson Value
Age				
18-25	8.0	22.3	4.878	.300
26-30	7.7	25.6		
31-35	5.7	17.0		
35-40	5.1	7.4		
>41	0.3	0.9		
Gender				
Male	11.6	36.0	.905	.341
Female	15.2	37.2		
Education Level				
Elementary School	0.0	0.9	1.749	.626
Junior high school	2.1	4.2		
High School	23.5	64.0		
College degree or above	1.2	4.2		
Marital Status				
Unmarried	13.4	31.0	1.593	.207
Married	13.4	42.3		
Cumulative time in Taiwan				
Within 6 years	15.2	46.1	1.117	.291
More than 6 years	11.6	27.1		
Current job category				
Industry	26.2	70.2	.650	.420
Social welfare	0.6	3.0		
Current monthly salary (NTD)				
Above 33,000	2.4	8.0	2.888	.409
32,999-29,000	15.2	45.8		
28,999-24,000	8.0	17.9		
Below 23,999	8.0	17.9		
Do you have Taiwan professional certifications?				
No	26.2	64.9	6.799	.009*
Yes	0.6	8.3		
Through which channel did you know about Taiwan's Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program?				
Internet	4.2	22.3	45.568	.000**
Employer	0.9	0.9		
Manpower agencies	14.6	33.3		
Friend	2.1	3.3		
Media (TV, newspaper, etc.)	1.8	13.4		
Other	3.3	0.0		

Note: Significant at: *0.05, ** 0.01 levels.

3.2.2 The correlation between the background variable of migrant Workers and Possession of Taiwan Professional Certifications

There is no significant correlation between the background variables of migrant workers such as "gender," "education level," "marital status," "accumulated time in Taiwan," "current job category," and "current monthly salary" with the possession of Taiwan professional certifications.

However, there is a significant correlation between the migrant background variable of "age" and the possession of Taiwan professional certifications. As age increases, obtaining professional certifications enhances self-competence and potential salary increases, allowing migrant workers to earn more income within their limited time in Taiwan. The majority of individuals with certifications fall within the 26-30 age range. It is recommended to conduct another Questionnaire specifically targeting this age group to understand their certification needs and their willingness to apply for certifications under related policies. This information can contribute to promoting foreign individuals to obtain Taiwan professional certifications.

Furthermore, there is a significant correlation between the background variables of migrant workers, specifically the channels through which they obtain information about the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program," and whether they possess professional certifications in Taiwan. The analysis is presented in Table 6. This indicates that providing assistance to migrant workers in obtaining Taiwan professional certifications and facilitating migrant worker training programs through manpower agencies can yield better results. Further research will explore the role of manpower agencies in the application process for the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program (see section 3.3 for more details).

Table 6: The correlation between the background variable of migrant Workers and whether they know the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program

Characteristic	NO (%)	YES (%)	Value	Pearson Value
Age				
18-25	28.3	2.1	9.976	.041*
26-30	28.6	4.8		
31-35	20.8	1.8		
35-40	12.5	0.0		
>41	0.9	0.3		
Gender				
Male	43.5	4.2	.012	.913
Female	47.6	4.8		
Education Level				
Elementary School	0.9	0.0	2.586	.460
Junior high school	6.3	0.0		
High School	79.2	8.3		
College degree or above	4.8	0.6		
Marital Status				
Unmarried	40.5	3.9	.014	.907
Married	50.6	5.1		
Cumulative time in Taiwan				
Within 6 years	54.5	6.8	3.275	.070
More than 6 years	36.6	2.1		
Current job category				
Industry	87.8	8.6	.005	.941
Social welfare	3.3	.3		
Current monthly salary (NTD)				
Above 33,000	8.9	1.5	4.452	.217
32,999-29,000	57.1	3.9		
28,999-24,000	22.6	3.3		
Below 23,999	2.4	0.3		
Through which channel did you know about Taiwan's Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program?				
Internet	25.3	1.2	20.906	.001**
Employer	1.8	0.0		
Manpower agencies	40.2	7.7		
Friend	5.4	0.0		
Media (TV, newspaper, etc.)	15.2	0.0		
Other	3.3	0.0		

Note: Significant at: *.05, **.01 levels.

3.3 The Role of Manpower agencies in the Application Process for the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program

Based on the statistical results of the correlation between migrant workers background variables, awareness of the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program, and possession of Taiwan professional certifications (as described in section 3.2), it was found that there is a significant correlation between the background variable of migrant Workers of "source of information about the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" and both awareness of the program and possession of Taiwan professional certifications. Therefore, this study further explores the role of manpower agencies in the application process for the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program.

3.3.1 Sample demographics of the second Questionnaire

Among the participants, there were 181 females (60.5%), and the most common age group was 31-35 years old (30.4%). In terms of education, the majority had a high school degree (56.5%), and there were 179 unmarried individuals (59.9%). Regarding the requirement for applying as an intermediate skilled foreign worker, which entails working continuously in Taiwan for at least 6 years, the study included 149 participants (49.9%) who had accumulated 6 or more years of residency in Taiwan. The salary requirements for applying as an intermediate skilled foreign worker are as follows: in the industrial sector, it should be above NT\$33,000 (exempted from technical requirements if above NT\$35,000); for institutional caregivers, it should be above NT\$29,000; and for family caregivers, it should be above NT\$24,000. Among the research participants, the highest number of individuals (141 people, accounting for 47.2%) had a current monthly salary ranging from NT\$28,999 to NT\$24,000. Over 80% of the workers were aware of the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program (80.9%), with 34.1% of them learning about it through "Manpower agencies", followed by "internet" (30.4%) and "media (TV, newspapers, etc.)" (13.7%). Table 7 provides the sample description.

Table 7: Sample demographics of the second Questionnaire

Characteristic	n	%
Age		
18-25	45	15.1
26-30	80	26.8
31-35	91	30.4
35-40	68	22.7
>41	15	5.0
Gender		
Male	118	39.5
Female	181	60.5
Education Level		
Elementary School	1	0.3
Junior high school	21	7.0
High School	169	56.5
College degree or above	108	36.1
Marital Status		
Unmarried	179	59.9
Married	120	40.1
Cumulative time in Taiwan		
Within 6 years	150	50.2
More than 6 years	149	49.8
Job category		
Industry (including manufacturing, construction, outreach agriculture, marine fishing)	281	94.0
Social welfare (including institutional care and family care)	18	6.0
Monthly salary (NTD)		
Above 35,000	25	8.4
34,999-33,000	31	10.4
32,999-29,000	71	23.7
28,999-24,000	141	47.2
Below 23,999	31	10.4
Do you know about Taiwan's Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program?		
No	57	19.1
Yes	242	80.9
Through which channel did you know about Taiwan's Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program?		
Internet	91	30.4
Employer	35	11.7
Manpower agencies	102	34.1
Friend	27	9.0
Media (TV, newspaper, etc.)	41	13.7
Other	3	1.0

3.3.2 Application Willingness and Requirements

According to the survey, an impressive 95% of the migrant workers expressed their desire to become intermediate skilled foreign workers. With a sense of security and contentment in Taiwan, 97% of the workers are willing to apply for permanent residency in the country. Furthermore, more than 75% of the workers expressed their preference for applying as intermediate skilled foreign workers or for permanent residency through manpower agencies. The analysis is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Application Willingness and Requirements

Topics	n	%
Do you want to apply to be an intermediate skilled foreign workers?		
No	13	4.3
Yes	286	95.7
Are you willing to apply for permanent residence in Taiwan when Taiwan is safe and secure?		
No	9	3.0
Yes	290	97.0
How do you want to apply to be an intermediate skilled foreign workers?		
By yourself	73	24.4
By Manpower agencies	226	75.6
How do you want to apply for permanent residence in Taiwan?		
By yourself	72	24.1
By Manpower agencies	227	75.9

3.3.3 Manpower agencies services

The statistical results indicate that 51.8% of the migrant workers expressed satisfaction with the current services provided by the manpower agencies, while 27.4% expressed high levels of satisfaction. With 75% of the migrant workers expressing their desire to apply as intermediate skilled foreign workers or for permanent residency through manpower agencies, it is essential to leverage the migrant workers' reliance on these agencies in the promotion and application process of the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program. The analysis is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Satisfaction with Manpower agencies services

Options	n	%
Very dissatisfied	6	2.0
dissatisfied	10	3.3
No comment	46	15.4
satisfy	155	51.8
Very satisfied	82	27.4
Total	299	100.0

The most commonly used services provided by manpower agencies for migrant workers, in order, are assistance with medical examinations (including document filing) at 98.8%, assistance with residence permits at 93.6%, translation services at 48.5%, assistance with medical treatment at 44.5%, dormitory services at 38.1%, and flight ticket booking services at 23.1%. As their time in Taiwan increases, migrant workers have reduced needs for translation assistance but still heavily rely on manpower agencies for document handling.

Migrant workers also expressed their desire for manpower agencies to provide additional services, in order of preference: assistance with professional certification exams at 59.9%, assistance with immigration at 30.8%, facilitation of paid education courses at 23.4%, assistance with the enrollment of their high school or higher education children in Taiwan at 19.4%, Taiwan travel arrangement services at 19.1%, assistance with finding work in other countries at 16.1%, and telecommunication services arrangement at 15.1%. These findings indicate that migrant workers face challenges in obtaining Tai-wan professional certifications and they rely on manpower agencies for support in taking exams and organizing relevant courses, which can enhance their career prospects and help industries with labor shortages find skilled professionals.

3.3.4 The correlation between the background variable of migrant Workers and whether they want to be an intermediate skilled foreign workers

By conducting a chi-square analysis to examine the relationship between Background Statistics of Migrant Workers and their desire to become intermediate skilled foreign workers. The analysis is presented in Table 10.

The results show that variables such as "willingness to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan un-der a secure environment," "age," "marital status," and "Cumulative time in Taiwan " are significantly associated with the desire to become intermediate skilled foreign workers.

Table 10: The correlation between the background variable of migrant Workers and whether they want to be an intermediate skilled foreign workers

Characteristic	NO (%)	YES (%)	Value	Pearson Value
Age				
18-25	5	40	19.004	.001**
26-30	8	72		
31-35	0	91		
35-40	0	68		
>41	0	15		
Gender				
Male	11	170	3.299	.069
Female	2	116		
Education Level				
Elementary School	0	1	.092	.993
Junior high school	1	20		
High School	7	162		
College degree or above	5	103		
Marital Status				
Unmarried	9	111	4.789	.029*
Married	4	175		
Cumulative time in Taiwan				
Within 6 years	10	140	3.892	.049*
More than 6 years	3	146		
Current job category				
Industry	13	268	.871	.351
Social welfare	0	18		
Current monthly salary (NTD)				
above 35,000	0	25	8.158	.086
34,999-33,000	0	31		
32,999-29,000	1	70		
28,999-24,000	11	130		
Below 23,999	1	30		
Are you willing to apply for permanent residence in Taiwan when Taiwan is safe and secure?				
NO	5	4	58.509	.000**
YES	8	282		

Note: Significant at: *0.05, ** 0.01 levels.

4. Reference citations

4.1 Foreign Technical Immigration Policies and Labor Intermediaries

The increasing trend of labor migration is evident in many countries worldwide, driven by globalization and open communication. (Alexander Merho, 2019) [1]. With constant updates and evolution in immigration policies, there is a growing interest in research findings that can guide future policy developments. (Dustmann,

C., Hatton, T., & Preston, I., 2005) [2]. More scholars are engaging in research to explore the impact of immigration policies in various countries on the labor market for migrant workers.

To effectively address labor shortages and manage migrant workers, countries often focus on maintaining their current levels of immigration while increasing the number of skilled workers. (Viktoriiia Apalkova, et al., 2021) [3]. Managing effectively labour migration is crucial. (Anna Triandafyllidou and Sabrina Marchetti, 2014) [4]. The mobility of international labor is determined by a country's immigration policies. Immigration policies of various countries are one of the factors affecting the migrant labor market, cross country differences in migration regimes may contribute to explain differences in immigrant labour market outcomes across EU countries." (Cangiano, A.,2012) [5].

From this, it can be understood that a country's immigration policy affects both the domestic and international labor markets. The establishment of policies that increase the workforce through the influx of migrant workers and immigrants requires insights and recommendations from experienced individuals and scholars to align with current trends and circumstances.

Due to the impact of Japan's aging population and low birthrate, it has also begun to relax its external talent recruitment policy and established a new "specially high-level (excellent) talent system." (Global Views Monthly, 2023) [6]. In the case of Japan, it has been found that detrimental employment practices often offset the human capital returns of skilled foreign workers, leading to a lack of willingness to contribute. (Holbrow, H. J., & Nagayoshi, K., 2018) [7]. An imperfect system will make foreign migrant workers reluctant to apply for or return to work in the country. An imperfect system and the lack of assistance from experienced and mature units will make migrant workers helpless and reluctant to give feedback.

On March 16, 2018, the Saudi Ministry of Labor and Social Development issued a statement allowing foreigners to invest in and operate labor intermediaries. (Economic and Cultural Representative Office of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Taipei, 2018) [8]. Saudi Arabia aims to provide excellent services to employers and migrant workers through labor intermediaries with international operating experience. In the face of labor shortages affecting economic changes, it is crucial to manage labor migration through effective units.

Literature discusses and confirms that many countries use labor intermediaries to assist employers and migrant workers in the recruitment of foreign workers. This helps in expediting the cross-border processes and overcoming language and cultural differences, resulting in improved outcomes in the progress of migrant workers. Migrant workers primarily rely on labor intermediaries for information sources and communication channels, thus demonstrating a positive impact of labor intermediaries on the willingness of migrant workers to apply for Taiwan's "Migrant Workers Retention and Employment Program".

4.2 Taiwanese Labor Intermediaries

The challenges of declining birth rates and an aging population are common global issues. (National Development Council,2023) [9]. Taiwan, like many other countries, is facing a labor shortage crisis. To address this issue, Taiwan has been introducing foreign migrant workers, with over 730,000 migrant workers in Taiwan as of February 2022. (Ministry of Labor's Statistics Query Website,2023) [10]. Additionally, the "Migrant Workers Retention and Employment Program" was officially implemented on April 30, 2022, to align with Taiwan's immigration policy and increase the number of foreign migrant workers. (Retention and Employment Program for Foreign Intermediate-Level Technical Workers In-formation Page) [11]. However, the program has been criticized for having "high thresholds, employer driven applications, and complex application procedures". (Foreign Workers News Agency, 2023) [12]. Moreover, the main applicants for the program are employers, resulting in a low number of applications, with only 6,643 applications as of April 30, 2023.

Based on past experiences in recruiting foreign workers through labor intermediaries, the government has established clear regulations to ensure that labor intermediaries can effectively assist employers and migrant workers. The Taiwan Migrant Workers' Rights Protection Report (2023) [13] emphasizes that labor intermediaries should fulfill their recruitment, selection, and care service obligations. Labor intermediaries are responsible for recruiting and assisting in the entry of foreign workers into Taiwan. They also need to provide guidance to help migrant workers understand their jobs and promote awareness of policies and regulations. Additionally, labor intermediaries must consider the mental and physical well-being of migrant workers and their living needs. These regulations underscore the importance and necessity of labor intermediaries, as their care and support have a positive impact on helping migrant workers adapt to life in Taiwan (Phan, 2016) [14].

In addition to meeting government requirements, labor intermediaries provide various services, including the construction of migrant worker dormitories, assistance with daily life, transportation, lei-sure activities, return procedures, flight ticket booking, and other services related to caring for and managing migrant workers (Liang, 2020) [15]. Given this frequent interaction with migrant workers, labor intermediaries play a crucial role in building a necessary level of dependence and trust among migrant workers.

Taiwanese labor intermediaries provide more flexible and highly mobile services (Cheng, 2005) [16]. In response to the implementation of the "Migrant Workers Retention and Employment Program" on April 30, 2022, labor intermediary services have become more diverse and complex. Labor intermediaries now play multiple roles, including acting as human resource agents, immigration consultants, translators, and vocational schools (Common Wealth Magazine, 2023) [17]. Consequently, information sources and communication channels for migrant workers, as well as employer application and management, primarily rely on labor

intermediaries.

However, the current application process for intermediate-level technical professional certificates requires employers to apply and assist migrant workers in the application process. Since labor intermediaries cannot charge fees for this service, they may not actively promote the application of intermediate-level technical professional certificates. The cumbersome application procedures can be time-consuming, and the absence of service fees for labor intermediaries can increase their operating costs.

Taiwan established the Direct Employment Joint Service Center in 2007, but only half of employers are aware of this system, and only 20% have used it. (Xiao, 2015) [18]. This suggests that without the assistance of professional labor intermediaries, employers may be reluctant to utilize the system. Therefore, the effectiveness of direct employment is limited, primarily due to the complexity of the process and the absence of follow-up management services, which makes employers hesitant to apply. Employers who make mistakes may face penalties. (Liang, 2020) [15]. The supervisory authorities currently do not provide migrant worker management services, so labor intermediaries, if they assist in the application process, would need to provide comprehensive post-service. In the event of errors, the labor intermediaries may be penalized. (Taiwan Migrant Workers' Rights Protection Report, 2023) [13]. Verifying the current situation of migrant workers is highly dependent on trusting manpower intermediaries, and through the professional services of manpower intermediaries and the advantages of trust of migrant workers, it will be more effective than the current application by employers and migrant workers themselves. In addition to strengthening management, "How to enable the positive and positive roles and functions of manpower intermediary companies to be brought into play". (Cheng,1999) [19]Taiwan has 30 years of experience in introducing migrant workers, Taiwan authorities and manpower intermediaries also have a certain understanding of employers and migrant workers, due to the increasing number of migrant workers due to the increasing number of migrant workers in the small birthrate and the shortage of workers is one of the shortcomings of the improvement of labor, the application process needs to be rigorous and will be complicated, inexperienced people are also complicated by the process and give up or dare not try, so that the policy promotion is not easy, the study shows that the use of human intermediaries to assist employers and migrant workers to apply is more effective and remarkable.

5. Conclusion

The results of the first survey indicate that the overall average score for the "application willingness towards the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program," "becoming Intermediate skilled foreign workers", and "permanent residency" is 3.82, falling between "agree" and "neutral." This suggests that while migrant workers generally hold a positive attitude towards the program, they still have some concerns. Specifically, the average scores for the statements "I

agree that staying in Taiwan offers better job opportunities" and "I agree that staying in Taiwan provides a better working environment" is 4.43.

There is a significant correlation between the migrant workers' background variable of "through which channel did you know about the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" and "whether they know the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program". It shows 47.9% of migrant workers rely on the channel of manpower agencies to obtain such information.

In addition, there is a significant correlation between the migrant background variable of "source of information about the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" and the possession of Taiwan professional certifications.

The results of the second survey indicate a significant correlation between migrant workers' back-ground variables and their willingness to become a intermediate skilled foreign workers. The analysis revealed that variables such as "willingness to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan under a safe and secure environment," "age," "marital status," and "duration of stay in Taiwan" are statistically significant. More than 75% of migrant workers expressed their wish to apply through manpower agencies to become an intermediate skilled foreign workers or to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan.

The implementation of the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" by the Taiwan government from April 30, 2022, yielded limited results as of April 30, 2023. With approximately 208,000 eligible candidates, but only 6,643 approved out of 9,164 applications. The question is why the response was so few. In the global context of addressing labor shortages due to declining birth rates and aging populations, various countries have implemented talent acquisition policies. Taiwan's "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" was introduced to align with immigration policies and to attract foreign intermediate skilled professionals to work in Taiwan. However, the current number of qualified individuals among the migrant workers in Taiwan remains limited.

The program allows for applications from migrant workers who have worked in Taiwan for over 6 years or foreign students study in Taiwan with at least an associate degree, qualifications are subject to salary and technical conditions. Once adopted as an intermediate skilled foreign worker, there is no limit on the duration of employment in Taiwan. After an additional 5 years of work and with an average monthly salary of at least NT\$53,000, eligible individuals can apply for Taiwan permanent residency, accompanied by salary increases and enhanced technical skills. Employers are not required to pay employment security fees.

While the number of applicants and approvals did not significantly alleviate Taiwan's labor shortage, survey results indicated a significant high willingness among migrant workers to apply for the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program." However, the effectiveness of this willingness is hindered by complex application processes, incomplete information and the need for employers to act as applicants on behalf of the migrant workers. Employers, often not well-versed in policy details, find it difficult to navigate the intricate application procedures while juggling their own responsibilities, resulting in reduced

motivation to participate. Even if the migrant workers express high willingness to apply, quick and substantial increases in application numbers are challenging within a short timeframe.

The fact that the policy relies on employers rather than manpower agencies to charge service fee for applications hinders its promotion. As a result, migrant workers do not fully comprehend the application process and thus exhibit reduced interest. While their willingness exists, the convoluted procedure discourages employers from actively applying for intermediate skilled professional certifications on behalf of migrant workers. This makes it challenging for migrant workers to take action towards obtaining intermediate skilled professional certifications despite their willingness.

In order to apply for permanent residency, migrant workers need to first acquire intermediate skilled professional certifications and then work for 5 more years. The possession of such certifications affects their willingness to apply for the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program." Over 40% of migrant workers rely heavily on manpower agencies as the primary channel for understanding policy details. Given the intricate application process, employing Taiwanese manpower agencies for assist employers and migrant workers in applying for intermediate skilled professional certifications could effectively increase the number of willing applicants.

This study, from the perspective of migrant workers, examines the acquisition of valuable information through surveys, highlighting a significant reliance on labor intermediaries. The research suggests that the Taiwanese government could capitalize on the professional services offered by labor intermediaries and their trusted position among migrant workers. Delegating the promotion of the "Migrant Workers Retention and Employment Program" to labor intermediaries would likely yield more significant results compared to the current practice of having employers and workers apply independently.

Another notable finding is that, among the research subjects there are 206 participants (61.3%) have accumulated less than 6 years of work experience in Taiwan, highlighting that a majority of migrant workers do not meet the eligibility criteria. Within the industrial sector, 205 participants (61.0%) receive monthly salaries ranging from NT\$29,000 to NT\$32,999, further demonstrating that many mi-grant workers do not fulfill the salary requirements. The challenge faced by migrant workers in obtaining Taiwan professional certifications due to the lack of suitable pathways and relevant courses. Facilitating the acquisition of intermediate skilled professional certifications for migrant workers could address the limited effectiveness of the policy in its current form.

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