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

Yueh-Hsiu Yang\*, Hsiang-Tsai Chiang\***\***

**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 "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers 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 questionnaire survey results demonstrate that the willingness of migrant workers to participate in the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" correlates with factors such as migrant workers' possession of professional licenses and their awareness of policy channels. The acquisition of professional licenses also correlates with migrant workers' age and their familiarity with policy channels. Over 40% of migrant workers rely on Taiwan Manpower Agencies as their primary source of policy information, confirming that most eligible migrant workers prefer Manpower Agencies assisted applications for the program. Given the intricate process involved in applying for the program, migrant workers seek assistance from Manpower Agencies for smoother application procedures.

Taiwan's government can capitalize on the expertise and credibility of Manpower Agencies, entrusting them to handle the promotion of the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program". This approach is likely to yield more substantial results than the current practice of independent applications by employers and migrant workers.

Keywords: migrant workers, skilled workers, immigration policy, manpower agency

JEL classification: F22，J61

\*Corresponding author; Feng Chia University.

\*\*Feng Chia University.

**INTRODUCTION**

Since 1989, Taiwan has been introducing foreign workers through special projects to address the issues of declining birth rates and aging population, leading to a shortage of labor in various industries. In 1992, the Employment Services Act was passed, focusing on the recruitment of foreign workers from Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand. As of February 2023, the number of foreign workers in Taiwan has exceeded 730,804, with Vietnamese workers comprising 253,766 (34.72%) and Indonesian workers comprising 254,000 (34.76%).

On April 30, 2022, Taiwan officially implemented the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" to align with its immigration policy. This program is applicable to industries such as manufacturing, slaughtering, construction, agriculture and elderly care, which have already employed foreign workers. Employers can retain foreign workers who have worked in Taiwan for more than 6 years or foreign students who have obtained associate degrees or higher qualifications. Applicants must meet salary and technical requirements and apply to transition to intermediate skilled foreign workers, with a minimum average monthly salary of NT$53,000. Once foreign workers become intermediate skilled, there is no limitation on the years of work in Taiwan. After working for 5 years, they can apply for permanent residency, with improved salaries and enhanced skills. Employers are not required to pay employment security fees. However, despite the policy's one-year implementation, the results have been unsatisfactory, with only 6,643 approved out of an estimated 208,000 eligible individuals (as of April 30, 2023), representing a pass rate of only 3.2%. The policy has not provided significant assistance to labor-shortage employers.

The survey results reveal that migrant workers show a significant willingness to apply for the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program," but the actual effectiveness has been subpar. The main reasons for this discrepancy are the complex application process, incomplete information dissemination, and the burden on employers who lack expertise in policy details. This poses a challenge as non-professional employers must balance their regular work while dealing with these intricate procedures, resulting in a lower willingness for employers to participate. Even though migrant workers have a high willingness to apply, rapidly increasing application numbers in the short term remains difficult.

In this policy, prefers employers themselves apply for the processing instead of engaging manpower agencies, leading to a lack of proactive promotion by manpower agencies. As a result, migrant workers lack complete understanding of the application process, dampening their enthusiasm. Despite their high willingness, they may hesitate to approach employers for the preparations, particularly for intermediate skilled professional certifications due to the intricate procedures involved.

For those Migrant workers with intermediate skilled professional certifications and work for 5 years are eligible to apply for permanent residency. According to Taiwanese media reports, from April 30, 2022 to April 30, 2023, a total of 9,164 foreign intermediate skilled workers applied for the program, including 3,740 from industrial sectors, 5,421 from social welfare fields, and 3 foreign students. A total 6,643 applications were approved out of the 9,164, comprising 2,841 from industrial sectors, 3,799 from social welfare fields, and 3 foreign students. However, the effectiveness of the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" has been questioned and argued due to high barriers and complexities, as reported by labor organizations (Foreign Workers' News Agency, 2023).

The survey results indicate that migrant workers possess professional certifications significantly affects their willingness to apply, and when the application process becomes less complicated with the assistance from Taiwanese manpower agencies, the number of applicants is likely to increase significantly. This implies a positive impact on the promotion of Taiwan's "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program."

**1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

1.1. Different Countries Technical Immigration Policies and Manpower Agencies

Facing the challenges of aging populations and declining birth rates, Japan has also begun to relax its policies for attracting foreign talent. Japan has established the "Special Highly Skilled Foreign Professional System" (Global Views Monthly, 2023). On March 16, 2018, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Labor and Social Development issued a statement allowing foreigners to invest in and operate manpower agencies, aiming to provide clients with more services and leverage international business experience (Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2018).

A review of the literature reveals that many countries enhance their outcomes in foreign worker recruitment by utilizing the expertise of manpower agencies. Foreign worker information sources and communication channels heavily rely on these manpower agencies. Therefore, in the case of Taiwan's "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program," Taiwan manpower agencies have a positive influence on the willingness of migrant workers to apply.

1.2. **Manpower Agencies in Taiwan**

Manpower agencies play a crucial role in recruiting and assisting the entry of foreign workers into Taiwan. They not only provide guidance on work and policy regulations but also cater to the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of these workers. The caring approach of manpower agencies positively influences the adaptation of migrant workers to life in Taiwan (Pan, 2016). Some agencies even built dormitories for migrant workers, providing services such as transportation, leisure activities, assistance with re-entry procedures, and flight tickets booking, along with various other support and information services (Liang, 2020).

In Taiwan, manpower agencies serve as important sources of employment information and job opportunities, offering flexible and highly responsive services (Cheng, 2005). In response to the government's promotion of the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program, their services have expanded to include training certificates, immigration, and more. Manpower agencies now fulfill multiple roles, ranging from personnel agencies to immigration consultants, translators, and vocational schools (CommonWealth Magazine, 2023). As a result, the information sources and communication channels for migrant workers heavily rely on these agencies. However, for the current Intermediate Skilled Professional Certification application process, while the employer initiates the application, manpower agencies are not able to charge fees for their services. This lack of revenue could increase their operational costs, discouraging the manpower agencies from actively aiding in the application process.

In 2007, Taiwan established the Direct Hiring Service Center, but only half of employers are aware of this system, and the percentage of employers who have used it is even lower, at around 20% (Hsiao, 2015). This suggests that without the involvement of professional manpower agencies, the effectiveness is limited. The complex application process and the lack of follow-up services may contribute to this inefficiency, as any mistakes could result in penalties for employers (Liang, 2020). Given that the supervisory authorities currently do not provide comprehensive services in migrant worker management, there is a greater need for manpower agencies to assist these authorities in control, service, promotion, and guidance for migrant workers in Taiwan. It is evident that migrant workers heavily rely on the trustworthiness of manpower agencies. Leveraging the advantage of their professional services and the trust that migrant workers place in them, allowing manpower agencies to take the lead in promoting the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program" could yield more significant results compared to the current system where employers and workers apply independently.

**2. METHODS**

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 research subjects. A total of 336 valid questionnaires were collected. Descriptive statistics of the research 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%).

**3. RESULTS**

The initial questionnaire design comprised 19 questions aimed at investigating the 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". 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.

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 |

3.1. 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 |
| 1. I have a thorough understanding of the application details. | 4.04 | 1.299 |
| 2. I agree that it is easy for me to apply as a mid-level technical worker based on my qualifications. | 3.40 | 1.479 |
| 3. I agree that it is easy for me to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan based on my qualifications. | 3.31 | 1.482 |
| 4. I agree that the procedures for applying as a mid-level technical worker are too complicated. | 3.73 | 1.384 |
| 5. I agree that the procedures for applying for permanent residency are too complicated. | 3.84 | 1.332 |
| 6. I agree that there are better job opportunities in Taiwan. | 4.43 | .969 |
| 7. 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 |
| 1. I want to apply to be an intermediate skilled foreign workers. | 4.01 | 1.323 |
| 2. I agree that Intermediate skilled foreign workers offers more stable salaries. | 4.23 | 1.107 |
| 3. I agree that Intermediate skilled foreign workers provides more job opportunities. | 4.18 | 1.135 |
| 4. I am willing to pay for learning technical skills or obtaining Taiwan certifications. | 3.93 | 1.355 |
| 5. 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 |
| 1.I want to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan. | 4.34 | 1.181 |
| 2.I believe that job opportunities in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency. | 3.60 | 1.495 |
| 3.I believe that the education environment in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency. | 3.42 | 1.502 |
| 4.I believe that the quality of life in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency. | 3.36 | 1.521 |
| 5.I believe that social security in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency. | 3.31 | 1.551 |
| 6.I believe that the political situation in Taiwan will influence my willingness for permanent residency. | 3.40 | 1.511 |
| 7.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 background 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 For-eign Workers Program. Among the various channels, the majority of respondents (161 individuals, accounting for 47.9%) obtained information about the program through manpower agencies. This finding indicates the importance of further exploring the role of manpower agencies in the appli-cation process of the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program.

No significant correlation was found between the 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 For-eign 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 awareness 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 institu-tional care, and NT$24,000 for family care ). Many migrant workers may not meet the salary crite-ria (only 35 individuals, accounting for 10.4%, had a salary above NT$33,000), which could ex-plain 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. 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 catego-ry," 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 certi-fications 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 certifica-tions fall within the 26-30 age range. It is recommended to conduct another Questionnaire specifi-cally 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 indi-viduals to obtain Taiwan professional certifications.

Furthermore, there is a significant correlation between the background variables of migrant work-ers, specifically the channels through which they obtain information about the " Long-term Reten-tion 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 For-eign 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: \*0.05, \*\* 0.01 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 8 provides the sample description. 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 satis-faction. 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 Taiwan professional certifications and they rely on manpower agencies for support in taking exams and organizing rel-evant 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 under 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. Integration of Research Findings**

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' background 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 a intermediate skilled foreign workers or to apply for permanent residency in Taiwan.

**CONCLUSIONS**

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.

The Taiwan government should harness the expertise and trustworthiness of manpower agencies to spearhead the promotion of the "Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program." This approach is expected to yield more significant results compared to the current practice of having employers and workers apply individually.

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 migrant 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.

**REFERENCES**

[1] Alexander Merho (2019). Labor migration through the prism of value judgments of a worker. Economics of Development, 18(1), 23-32.

[2] Cangiano, A. (2012). Immigration policy and migrant labour market outcomes in the European Union: New evidence from the EU Labour Force Survey (Working Paper).

[3] Cheng, Chih-Yueh (1999). Management of Manpower agencies and Foreign Workers - A Discussion on the Management and Employment Counseling of Manpower agencies, 17(2), 3-9.

[4] Cheng ,Wan-Chieh(2005).A study on roles and functions of private employment services institutes.

[5] Dustmann, C., Hatton, T., & Preston, I. (2005). The labour market effects of immigration. The Economic Journal, 115(507), F297-F299.

[6] Holbrow, H. J., & Nagayoshi, K. (2018). Economic Integration of Skilled Migrants in Japan: The Role of Employment Practices. International Migration Review, 52(2), 458–486.

[7] Huang, Yueh-Chin (2000). A New Theory of Labor Law. Han-Lu Publishing Co., 585.

[8] Liang, Yu-Ying(2020),A Comparative Study of Migrant Workers Management in Taiwan, Japan and Singapore.

[9] Marcel Paret & Shannon Gleeson (2016) Precarity and agency through a migration lens, Citizenship Studies, 20:3-4, 277-294.

[10] Phan,Thu-Huong (2016),A Study of Adaptability Factors of Foreign Workers in Taiwan - A Case Study of Vietnamese workers.

[11] Ryszard Cholewinski (1997), Migrant Workers in International Human Rights Law. TheirProtectionin Countries of Employment 3, Englamd: Oxford University Press, 28-33.

[12] Triandafyllidou, Anna and Marchetti, Sabrina. “Europe 2020: addressing low skill labour migration at times of fragile recovery,” Policy Paper, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Global Governance Programme, 15p. Florence, 2014.

[13] Viktoriia Apalkova, Sergiy Tsyganov, Nataliia Meshko, Nadiia Tsyganova and Serhii Apalkov (2021). Application of decision tree model for prediction of immigration policy in different countries of the world. Problems and Perspectives in Management, 19(3), 513-532.

[14] Xiao, Jia-Wen(2015),A study of “Direct Hiring Service” in Taiwan.

[15] CommonWealth Magazine,2023. <https://opinion.cw.com.tw/blog/profile/515/article/13611>

[16] Foreign Workers News Agency, 2023. http://flnews.sea.com.tw/

[17] Global Views Monthly,2023. <https://www.gvm.com.tw/article/100464>

[18] Information page for the Program for Employing Foreign Middle-Skilled Technical Workers. <https://fw.wda.gov.tw/wda-employer/home/mid-foreign-labor>

[19] National Development Council . https://www.ndc.gov.tw/Content\_List.aspx?n=005D4940D1DA0F9D

[20] Statistics Database of the Ministry of Labor. <https://statfy.mol.gov.tw/>

[21] Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,2018。https://www.roc-taiwan.org/sa/post/2276.html