

TETO Surabaya's Role in Promoting Indonesian Labor Migration

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of technology has dissolved geographical boundaries, integrating economic, political, and cultural dimensions. This has intensified societal connectivity through increased economic productivity and cultural exchanges, including labor migration. Taiwan, currently grappling with a labor crisis driven by declining birth rates and an aging population, has become a key destination for Prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers (CPMI). The dependency ratio between the non-productive population (over 65 years) and the productive population is rising, with the elderly expected to make up 19.8% of the population by 2025, posing significant challenges to Taiwan's productivity and economic growth. Conversely, remittances from Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMW) represent a vital opportunity for Indonesia's economic growth and serve as a strategic approach to addressing labor market disparities. This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology to analyze the role of Taipei Economic and Trade Office (TETO) Surabaya in facilitating international labor migration from eastern Indonesia to Taiwan, drawing on secondary data. Applying Lee's push and pull theory (1966), the study concludes that through TETO Surabaya's guidance and support, factors such as push-pull dynamics, intervening obstacles, and personal factors have ultimately promoted IMWs migration to Taiwan.

Keywords: CPMI; Eastern Indonesia; International Labor Migration; Push and Pull Factors; TETO Surabaya.

Abstrak

Kemajuan teknologi yang pesat telah meleburkan batas-batas geografis, mengintegrasikan ekonomi, politik, dan budaya. Hal ini memperkuat konektivitas masyarakat melalui peningkatan produktivitas ekonomi dan pertukaran budaya, termasuk mobilitas tenaga kerja. Taiwan, yang saat ini menghadapi krisis tenaga kerja akibat penurunan angka kelahiran dan populasi yang menua, telah menjadi tujuan utama bagi Calon Pekerja Migran Indonesia (CPMI). Rasio ketergantungan antara penduduk tidak produktif (usia >65 tahun) dan produktif terus meningkat, dengan populasi lansia diproyeksikan mencapai 19,8% pada tahun 2025, yang menghadirkan tantangan signifikan bagi produktivitas dan pertumbuhan ekonomi Taiwan. Sebaliknya, remitansi dari Pekerja Migran Indonesia (PMI) memberikan peluang penting bagi pertumbuhan ekonomi Indonesia dan menjadi strategi dalam mengatasi kesenjangan pasar tenaga kerja. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis peran TETO Surabaya dalam mendorong migrasi tenaga kerja internasional dari Indonesia bagian timur ke Taiwan, dengan memanfaatkan data sekunder. Dengan menerapkan teori push and pull dari Lee (1966), penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa melalui bimbingan dan dukungan dari TETO Surabaya, faktor-faktor seperti dinamika push-pull, hambatan yang menghalangi, dan faktor pribadi mengoptimalkan migrasi CPMI ke Taiwan.

Kata Kunci: CPMI; Faktor Pendorong dan Penarik; Indonesia bagian timur; Migrasi Tenaga Kerja Internasional; TETO Surabaya.

Introduction

Ravenstein's observations have captured the diverse motivations driving migration: "Bad or oppressive laws, heavy taxation, unattractive climate, uncongenial social surroundings, and even compulsion (slave trade, transportation) all have produced and are still producing currents of migration..." (Chapter II, p. 286). In today's context of globalization, international labor migration has evolved beyond being a mere result of increased cross-border flows. Instead, it represents a complex phenomenon, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions, as people move from one country to another in search of employment. With millions of people migrating across borders for different reasons, economic opportunities have been the main factor driving foreign workers to move to high-income regions, which Platonova (2023) describes as the "uneven distribution of economic resources between countries." A neoclassical concept of migration suggests that the movement of Indonesian workers to Taiwan can contribute to balancing wage levels and stabilizing the global labor market. This occurs because of the complex interdependence between labor-abundant countries (Indonesia) and labor scarcity in Taiwan. Piore (1979), as cited in Platonova (2023), justifies this concept by stating that for developed countries, importing labor from lower-wage countries is often more profitable than increasing the minimum wage for the same occupational category. Similarly, Massey et al. (1993) argue that to manage the labor market effectively, host countries should implement policies or regulations to attract labor from countries with labor surpluses.

According to the National Development Council (2017) in Chen (2023), the labor force participation rate for the "working age" population (15-64 years) is expected to decline from 71.1% in 2020 to 67.4% in 2025. Furthermore, the potential support ratio—the ratio of the working-age population (20-64 years) to the population aged 65 years or older—is anticipated to decrease from 4.4 workers per elderly person in 2020 to 3.4 workers per elderly person in 2025. Therefore, the dependency ratio of the non-productive group (those over 65 years old) on the productive population is increasing annually, resulting in a growing need for medical and health services. These significant demographic changes pose a major challenge to productivity and economic growth in Taiwan. In response to this dynamic, the Taiwanese government has been intensively allocating budgets to prioritize programs that enhance social welfare and healthcare facilities.

On the other hand, the trend of international labor migration has become a valuable opportunity for Indonesia, given that the open unemployment rate (TPT) remains far from the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN)'s target of 3.6-4.3%. The disparity between population growth and job availability, along with the workforce shortages,

significantly contributes to the high unemployment rate in Indonesia, leading many to seek employment opportunities abroad. In addition to the impact of reducing unemployment, remittances from labor migration also significantly support infrastructure development in Indonesia, which reflects the Indonesian government's commitment to promoting labor migration policies. As Artina (2022) demonstrates, remittances are primarily allocated to support the families in the home region. Given this context, it is not surprising to find a significant and positive correlation between Indonesian labor migration, remittances, and inflation in relation to economic growth. In support of this argument, Adam Jr & Page (2005) in Noveria (2017) provided the positive impact of remittances on family welfare and poverty reduction across 71 developing countries, including Indonesia. Reflecting this understanding, Indonesia's National Remittance Plans and Presidential Regulation No. 82/2016 emphasize remittances as an essential aspect in the strategy for advancing financial inclusion.

The first section of this study introduces the background, significance, and trends of international labor migration among IMWs to Taiwan, considering the challenges and opportunities faced by both countries. It also reviews relevant literature, particularly focusing on economic disparities between sending and receiving countries as a primary motivation driving labor migration. The following section details the methodology, including data collection and analysis methods. This is followed by findings that examine the extent to which the TETO's Surabaya promotes the push and pull factors that serve as key drivers of international labor migration to Taiwan, particularly IMWs from eastern Indonesia. The study concludes with recommendations for TETO Surabaya to improve its services, maintain bilateral relations with Indonesia, and ensure the protection of IMWs while addressing Taiwan's labor market needs.

Methods

Considering the subjective, interpretative, and descriptive aspects of data analysis, this study adopts a qualitative research approach. This approach is carried out to gain a deep understanding of the reasons, processes, and outcomes of phenomena. In-depth interviews with IMW candidates at TETO Surabaya form the primary method of data collection for this study. Using purposive sampling to ensure the reliability and credibility of the participants, the objective of this approach is to generate well-interpreted data.

Our interviews were conducted by approaching prospective IMWs who appeared available for interviews while they were waiting in line for the VISA interview process. A total of 12 informants participated, each assigned a pseudonym, with other identifying characteristics fictionalized (*Table 1*). Among them, 80% had never worked overseas, while 20% had

previously worked abroad two or more times. The informants were diverse; interestingly, most were from Central Java, primarily from Kewarung, Purwodadi, and Tawangmangu, followed by East Java, including Banyuwangi, Tulungagung, Kediri, and Blitar. There were also a few participants from Indramayu, Lombok, and Lampung.

Additionally, the findings are presented through descriptive analysis to offer an accurate depiction of events and to explore the significance of subjects related to these events. A qualitative descriptive design is used when an uncomplicated description is desired that focuses on the details of what, where, when, and why of an event or experience (*Qualitative Descriptive Research* 2023). To accomplish this, both primary data (obtained through direct and indirect interactions with correspondents) and secondary data (derived from relevant literature resources) are used as data collection methods.

In accordance with the suggestions made by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), data are processed by selecting, simplifying, and separating data that encompasses the full textual section in the form of interview transcripts with resource individuals, relevant documents, and other empirical materials. Following this process, the research includes a data presentation phase, during which collected data is condensed and refined to reach conclusions. This stage involves evaluating data from the initial collection to presentation, identifying patterns, and providing explanations. Drawing conclusions demonstrates that the study was systematically conducted, with a data triangulation approach applied to ensure validity. This approach verifies data by cross-checking information from multiple sources and at various times to assess its reliability.

These methods enabled an in-depth exploration that provides a context-specific analysis of the push-pull factors driving the increasing number of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan, as well as an assessment of the extent to which TETO Surabaya contributes to promoting international labor migration from eastern Indonesia to Taiwan. By conducting in-depth interviews with CPIMs and reviewing relevant literature, this study aimed to explore the opportunities emerging from the Indonesia–Taiwan bilateral relationship to address the labor-abundant and labor-shortage challenges faced by the two governments, with a focus on the role of TETO Surabaya.

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Table 1 Participants’ sociodemographic characteristics

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Occupation	Place of Origin
1	Tari	Female	37	Caregiver	Indramayu
2	Yati	Female	35	Caregiver	
3	Vina	Female	44	Household care	Banyuwangi
4	Hartini	Female	45	Caretaker	Central Java
5	Retno	Female	35	Caretaker	Tulungagung
6	Farid	Male	28	Manufacture worker	Lombok
7	Rida	Female	30	Household care	Kediri
8	Guntur	Male	36	Construction worker	Purwodadi
9	Na’im	Female	39	Caretaker	Blitar
10	Sekar	Female	26	Caregiver	Lampung
11	Rahayu	Female	50	Nursing home worker	Central Java
12	Indra	Male	32	Manufacture worker	Karawang

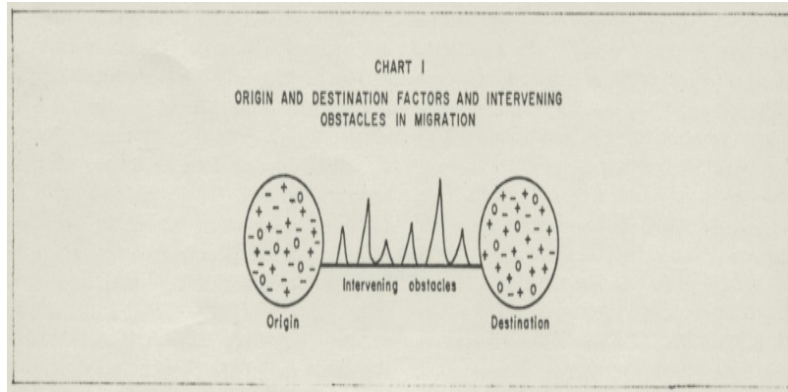
Source: Author’s own processed data

Lee’s (1996) Push and Pull Model

The Push and Pull Theory, also known as the Intervening Obstacles Model, was first introduced by Everett Spurgeon Lee, a sociology professor at the University of Georgia, as a foundational migration theory. This model seeks to explain the dynamics behind labor migration between regions by incorporating both opportunities and challenges as influencing factors—a trend anticipated to increase in the coming years. In his book, “A Theory of Migration”, Lee identifies four primary factors that shape migration volume and migrant characteristics: (1) factors at the place of origin, (2) factors at the destination, (3) intervening obstacles, and (4) personal factors (Lee 1966). Lee elaborates on these categories, noting that each region has unique factors that may influence an individual’s decision to migrate, remain, or leave to a particular area. While push factors are the negative elements that exist in the home country and push people to leave that location (e.g. labor abundance, poverty, and limited job availability), pull factors are the positive elements of the host country (e.g. better wages, job market abundance, and supportive neighborhood) (Nikou et al. 2023).

The first three of these factors are illustrated schematically in (*Figure 1*). Lee does not specify which conditions (social, political, economic, etc.) serve as primary features of origin or destination areas. Instead, he states, "In every area there are countless factors which act to hold people within the area or attract people to it, and there are others which tend to repel them. These are shown in the diagram as + and – signs. The others, shown as o's, to which people are essentially indifferent" (Lee 1996). Lee emphasizes that each region—whether origin or destination—has diverse characteristics and unique features influencing an individual's decision to migrate or remain. These indicators are represented by the symbols +, –, and o. For example, Lee illustrates a good quality school system that may be viewed positively (+) by parents with children, negatively (–) by homeowners without children who pay high property taxes, and neutrally (o) by an unmarried man without taxable property who is indifferent to this factor (Lee 1996). The o symbol marks conditions excluded as push or pull factors. In other words, the factors that attract (+) or deter (–) migration, whether at origin or destination, are subjective and variable. Lee also notes that while no specific + or – factors are universally identifiable, common patterns can still be observed within groups of individuals regarding certain factors at the origin and migration destinations.

Figure 1 Lee's scheme of the push and pull theory.



Source: Lee, 1996,

Furthermore, between every two points there stands a set of intervening obstacles which may be slight in some instances and insurmountable in others. The most frequently studied of these obstacles is distance, which, though ever-present, is by no means the most significant. People are, of course, affected differently by the same set of obstacles (Lee 1996). Additionally, there are numerous personal factors that influence individual thresholds and either facilitate or hinder migration. It is not merely the

actual conditions at the origin and destination but rather the perception of these conditions that drives migration. Personal sensitivities, intelligence, and awareness of conditions elsewhere contribute to one's evaluation of the situation at the origin, while knowledge of the destination depends on personal contacts or information sources that may not be accessible to everyone. In addition to these personal factors, Lee argued that the decision to migrate is never a hundred-percent rational; for some, the rational component is far less influential than the irrational. For example, children may migrate with their parents, or a spouse may accompany their partner for career advancement or higher education. Other examples include transient emotions, mental health conditions, or unexpected events, which account for a significant proportion of total migration (Lee 1996).

Results and Discussion

During the period of Taiwan's democratization in the 1990s until the launch of the "long-term retention" program in April 2022, the strategy of importing foreign labor by the Taiwanese government has been a longstanding focus of policy analysts. For example, the study by Komarudin et al. (2023) highlights the dynamics of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan, focusing on their living conditions, work experiences, and the level of legal protection they receive. The study challenged the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks in Taiwan in addressing issues concerning migrant workers, emphasizing the need for better protection and recognition of migrant workers as skilled labor. Previous findings have shown that migration in the Asian region has been influenced by economic reforms, demographic changes, and urbanization, leading to increased demand for labor. This key point is also supported by Deng et al. (2020) who argue that economic disparities between sending and receiving countries drive labor migration. Specifically, high unemployment rates in some Southeast Asian countries push people to seek work abroad. Taiwan's evolving labor migration policies have also been significant in this context. The government has aimed to encourage the immigration of talent into Taiwan, through a "long-term retention" program, offering permanent residency to low-skilled contract foreign workers who have stayed in Taiwan for a long time. This approach not only benefits Taiwan but also has a significant impact on home countries, such as Indonesia, with economic remittances playing a crucial role in their economies (Wirastyani et al. 2016; Noveria 2017).

Using Lee's well-known migration theory as push and pull factors, previous research identified the push and pull factors that drive Indonesian migrant workers to leave their home countries. Push factors include low productivity, high unemployment, and poor economic conditions, while pull factors include better economic opportunities and higher income in

the destination countries (Djafar 2012; Iqbal and Gusman 2015). Aside from the contributions of earlier studies, by understanding the role of the TETO in Surabaya this research focuses on the fast-growing number of international labor migrants, particularly from Indonesia's eastern region to Taiwan. In addition to these objectives, this paper explores socio-cultural aspects and government pro-labor migration policies, to understand why Taiwan is the second most favored destination for IMWs among receiving countries. Researcher have identified several push and pull factors driving CPMI migration to Taiwan, including:

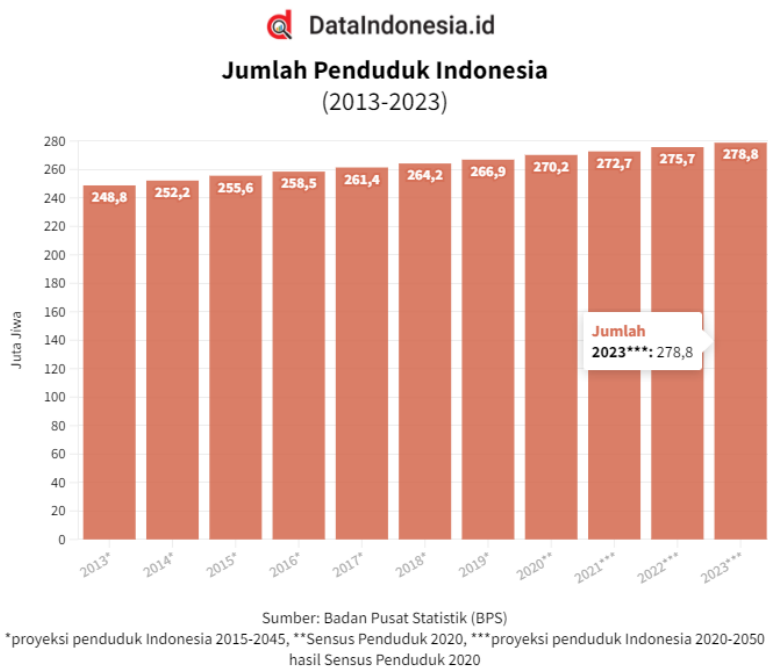
Pushing factors; job market scarcity, low-income country, and remittance.

The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) recently reported a 9.89% drop in unemployment in Indonesia compared to February 2023, leaving approximately 7.2 million unoccupied individuals as of February 2024 (CNN Indonesia 2024). However, according to Katadata's 2023 Databoks, BPS records show nearly 10 million Indonesians of productive age (15–24) classified as NEET (not in education, employment, or training) (Muhammad 2024). This reflects an open unemployment rate (TPT) of 5.32% of the total labor force as of August 2023 (Nurrahman 2024). Based on the Human Development Index (HDI), Indonesia's unemployment rate still falls short of the RPJMN target of 3.6–4.3% (Putri 2023). The imbalance between *population growth and job market scarcity*, along with *workforce shortage*, are seen as a significant contributor to Indonesia's rising unemployment rate (*Figure 2*).

Population growth rate, defined as the average annual increase in population over a specified period, has increased by 1.1% from 2013 to 2023, reaching 278.8 million compared to 275.7 million the previous year (Rizaty 2023). This situation is concerning, as 69.13% of Indonesia's population falls within the productive workforce age (15–64 years). As the population grows, job availability tends to decline, posing an additional challenge. The increasing population, coupled with a growing workforce, will likely lead to higher unemployment if not matched by sufficient job opportunities. Employment prospects will improve only if job availability aligns with the expanding labor force (Agnesia et al. 2023). This issue arises due to the mismatch between the qualifications of the workforce and the needs of companies. Currently, many sectors that employ large numbers of workers, such as manufacturing and construction, are beginning to require a minimum qualification level for recruitment, often a university or diploma degree. For some prospective migrant workers with limited educational backgrounds, these requirements pose a significant challenge, comparable to the difficult decision of seeking employment abroad. Among the workforce, only 8.08% hold a university or equivalent four-year

degree (DIV), and 1.92% have a one- to three-year diploma (DI/DII/DIII) (Persentase Angkatan Kerja Menurut Pendidikan Tertinggi - Tabel Statistik - Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Penajam Paser Utara 2022). Meanwhile, 44.48% of the workforce has an education level of elementary school or below, and 14.52% have completed only junior high school.

Figure 2 Indonesia’s Population Growth Rate Chart (2013-2023)



Source: Databoks

Ironically, the wage distribution disparity between high-income countries (such as Taiwan) and low-income countries (like Indonesia) continues to be a significant driver of the increasing number of IMWs in Taiwan. According to Todaro (2011) in Sungkar et al. (2015), income distribution inequality refers to the disproportionate allocation of a country’s total national income across different households. Djafar (2012) argued that income and unemployment rates are “cointegrated” as pull factors contributing to the rise of IMW in Malaysia. In an interview with a former PMI from Central Java, this perspective was echoed. She confirmed their consideration of returning to Taiwan (repeated international labor migration) due to the limited employment opportunities in Indonesia for lower-income groups without higher education.

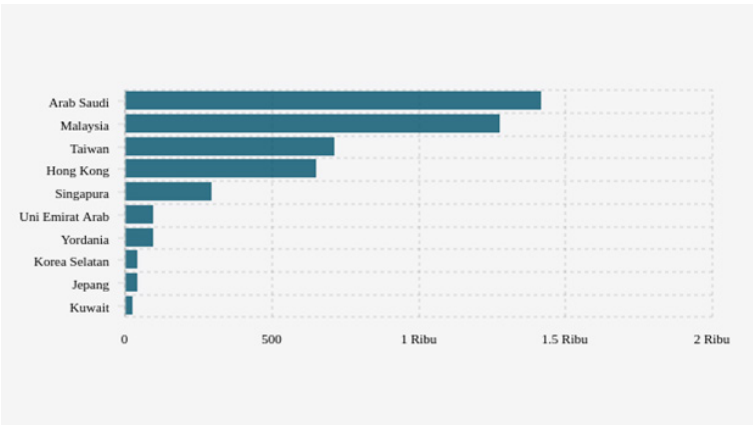
Even if there are job opportunities, they would likely be domestic workers. The work is the same, the days are the same, and the months are the same, but the wages are different—significantly higher in Taiwan. (Results of interviews with P-11)

Ms. Sekar, a former PMI from Lampung with work experience in Singapore and Taiwan (2015-2022), expressed similar motivations. Having worked as a factory worker and babysitter, she now seeks a role in a nursery home. After a year back in Indonesia, the differences in work culture and income between Indonesia and Taiwan have strengthened her desire to return to Taiwan. These accounts suggest that income disparity between the two countries is a key factor driving IMW migration to Taiwan.

In addition to wage disparities, the lower exchange rate of the Indonesian rupiah compared to the New Taiwan dollar (NTD) presents a crucial push factor: remittances and the desire to improve family living standards. According to the International Monetary Fund, remittances are “when migrants send home part of their earnings in the form of either cash or goods to support their families; these transfers are known as workers’ or migrant remittances” (Ratha 2023). Artina (2022) states that remittances are primarily used to support families left behind, often fulfilling daily needs, and their significance is underscored by data showing that increased remittances in 71 developing countries—including North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South Asia, East Asia, and Indonesia—by 10% have reduced the proportion of people living on less than US\$1 per day by 2.1%. Furthermore, a 10% increase in a country’s income from remittances leads to a 3.5% decrease in its poverty rate (Noveria 2017).

The G20 also acknowledges the relationship between remittances, family welfare, and poverty, stating that “...remittance flows from various parts of the world serve as a crucial income source that sustains not only families and businesses but also national economies” (*Figure 3*) (Susilo and Evi 2022). Indonesia also recognizes remittances as part of its strategy to achieve financial inclusion, as outlined in Presidential Regulation No. 82/2016 on the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (Susilo and Evi 2022). Therefore, it can be argued that the likelihood of the Indonesian government continuing its international labor migration policy in the future may contribute to the push factors driving Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) mobility to Taiwan.

Figure 3 Top 10 Destination Countries for Indonesian Migrant Workers' Remittances (2022)



Source: Databoks

Pulling factors; strong economic, job market availability, supportive neighborhood

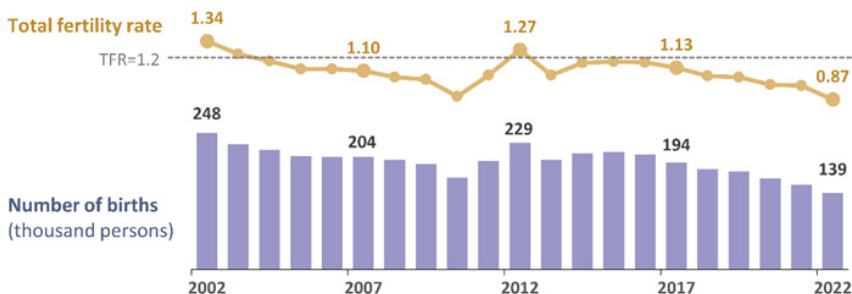
With strong expertise in managing the semiconductor market, Taiwan has successfully competed with and even outpaced the Four Asian Tigers—surpassing, for instance, Hong Kong—with an average economic growth rate of 3.5% projected for the period 2020-2030 (2024). Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) dominates more than 60% of global semiconductor production, and nearly 90% of the world’s most advanced chips used in AI applications and quantum computing are available solely in Taiwan. As a result, Taiwan’s dominance in the semiconductor industry has established it as a trendsetter and focal point among international economists. This sector contributes around 15% of Taiwan’s GDP, placing it among the top 20 global economies. The global surge in demand for semiconductors and high-end chips led to a 6.51% increase in Taiwan’s exports in Q1 2024, exceeding the expert estimate of 6% (Qu et al. 2024). Notably, Taiwan—known as an “export-oriented island”—derives 40% of its export commodities from the semiconductor industry (Yang and Chiang 2024).

In January 2024, the minimum wage in Taiwan increased from 26,400 New Taiwan Dollars to 27,470 New Taiwan Dollars, equivalent to approximately 13 million Indonesian Rupiah per month. The hourly minimum wage is now set at 183 New Taiwan Dollars, or roughly 88,000 Indonesian Rupiah (Cesilia 2024). This wage growth undeniably enhances Taiwan’s appeal, particularly among IMWs. Studies by Budijanto (2005), referenced in Wirastyani et al. (2016), show that higher wage standards—selected

by 73.3% of respondents—and job market abundance are significant features for IMWs seeking international migration (Wirastyani et al. 2016). Known for its rapid economic growth, driven by “cutting-edge semiconductor production,” Taiwan now faces the need to cultivate a highly skilled workforce to maintain production quality. Dr. Shih Chin-tay, former head of TSMC, highlighted TSMC’s success factors in a BBC News interview, saying, “We had brand new facilities, with the most up-to-date equipment. We recruited the best engineers. Even the machine operators were highly skilled...” (Wingfield-Hayes 2023).

However, jobs characterized by what are known as the “3Ds”—dangerous, dirty, and difficult—are facing a labor shortage as a growing number of Taiwan’s population chooses to study and work abroad. This situation is further exaggerated by the declining birth rate, which has fallen below 1.2% annually since 2003 (*Figure 4*) (Dean-Richards 2023). This trend is shaped by social dynamics such as “marrying later, not marrying, choosing to be child-free, and having children later in life.” At the same time, Taiwan’s mortality rate has surpassed 200,000 annually, with a sharp contrast between birth and death rates leading to a population decline of 69,797 (Focus Taiwan 2024). In response, the National Childcare Policy for ages 0-6 was introduced, aiming to boost birth rates through measures like expanding access to affordable education, increasing childcare subsidies, reducing school fees, and enhancing support for child-rearing—a significant fiscal commitment for the government to address these challenges.

Figure 4 Taiwan Birth Rate Chart (2002-2022)



Source: Pctr.com

While individual motivations for migration are often driven by a rational cost-benefit analysis and economic opportunities, shifting patterns in IMWs reflect an expanding range of social, cultural, and even political motivations. Improved communication, transportation, and globalization further support factors behind foreign labor migration to certain countries. For instance, Mrs. Vina was motivated to apply as an IMW not only

by the prospect of better income but also by her interest in Taiwanese culture. Similarly, Mrs. Sekar expressed a desire to learn about Chinese cultural norms, such as simple dress and a disciplined work ethic. Additionally, the presence of Muslim communities like Penerus Cabang Istimewa Nadhlatul Ulama (PCINU) Taiwan and the Indonesian Muslim Student Association in Taiwan facilitates easier cultural integration for the predominantly Muslim IMWs.

This supportive social environment is a significant factor for Mrs. Sekar and Mrs. Rahayu, both of whom are considering returning to Taiwan due to the sense of safety and the familial treatment provided by their employers. They share stories of Taiwan's warm and appreciative attitude toward IMWs. For instance, Mr. Guntur, who is currently applying as a construction worker, has received heartwarming stories from former migrant workers about Taiwanese employers' respectful treatment of employees. A study by Deng et al. (2020), as referenced in Komarudin et al. (2023), compared cases of abuse against IMWs in Taiwan with those in other destination countries such as Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, revealing significantly lower incidents of physical and sexual harassment in Taiwan (Komarudin et al. 2023). In contrast, Malaysia, despite its cultural and linguistic similarities with Indonesia, is often less favored by workers like Mr. Guntur, who are more drawn to experiences in South Korea or Japan, seeking unique environments and new experiences abroad. This aligns with findings by Anggara et al. (2024), where "story-sharing" by peers about exciting foreign work experiences encourages others to pursue similar opportunities (Anggara et al. 2024).

Intervening Obstacles; Distance and Personal Factors

As Lee explains in the "Theory of Migration," "intervening obstacles" frequently arise as barriers in migration decisions, with distance being one of the most common. A significant distance between the place of origin and the destination can be a key consideration for individuals, influencing whether it motivates or hinders their migration intentions. In the case of Indonesian labor migration to Taiwan, the geographic barrier between the two countries, which necessitates air travel, is one such barrier that CPMI must consider. Additionally, the cost of airfare plays a crucial role. According to CPMI, apart from physical readiness, financial preparation is a major challenge in the migration process to Taiwan. Beyond these factors, the VISA requirement adds further complexity, including the attention needed for the application, the time required for visits to the TETO Surabaya, and the energy spent waiting for VISA interview callbacks. These logistical demands form another set of physical obstacles faced by CPMI.

Furthermore, personal factors can also facilitate or restrict migration. Awareness of conditions in other regions and general knowledge play a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions of their home environment, while information about the destination often relies on personal connections or specific sources, which may not be accessible to everyone. Personality also significantly influences migration decisions: some individuals resist change, while others embrace it easily. For some, a solid reason is essential to migrate, whereas for others, a mere suggestion or promise is enough to trigger a decision (Blazhevskia 2017). In the context of Indonesian labor migration to Taiwan, nearly 80% of interviewees reported that this was their first experience traveling abroad, with 90% having no prior experience as IMW. Despite this, they were motivated by a strong desire to improve their family's economic situation. One significant example is Mr. Indra, who, despite having never traveled abroad or worked as an IMW, prepared himself mentally to provide for his wife and child. His family not only served as a support system but also offered advice on suitable destination countries, with Taiwan emerging as the best option. In addition to family support, some acquaintances with prior international work experience informed Mr. Indra that employers in Taiwan generally treat workers well.

Understanding TETO Surabaya's Role in Promoting Indonesian Labor Migration in Eastern Indonesia Region

The Taipei Economic and Trade Office (TETO), formerly known as the Taiwan Commercial Chamber for Jakarta, serves as the official representative office of the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in Indonesia. Established in April 1971 and initially led by Chen, Chung (John C. Chen) (), TETO expanded its reach on December 18, 2015, by opening a branch in Surabaya. This expansion reflects Taiwan's commitment to its "New Southbound Policy," with the Surabaya office, located at Jl. Indragiri No.49, Darmo, Kec. Wonokromo, Surabaya, East Java 60241, operating under the leadership of Director General Isaac Chiu (*Figure 5*). The main mission of TETO Surabaya is to promote Indonesia-Taiwan bilateral relations by providing consular services for the Taiwanese expatriate community and visa issuance for PMI, particularly for those from eastern Indonesia. In line with the New Southbound Policy, TETO Surabaya's programs focus on strengthening cooperation in education, business, culture, and tourism. The office was established specifically to support CPMI from eastern Indonesia.

Figure 5 Daily Activities in TETO's Consular Services

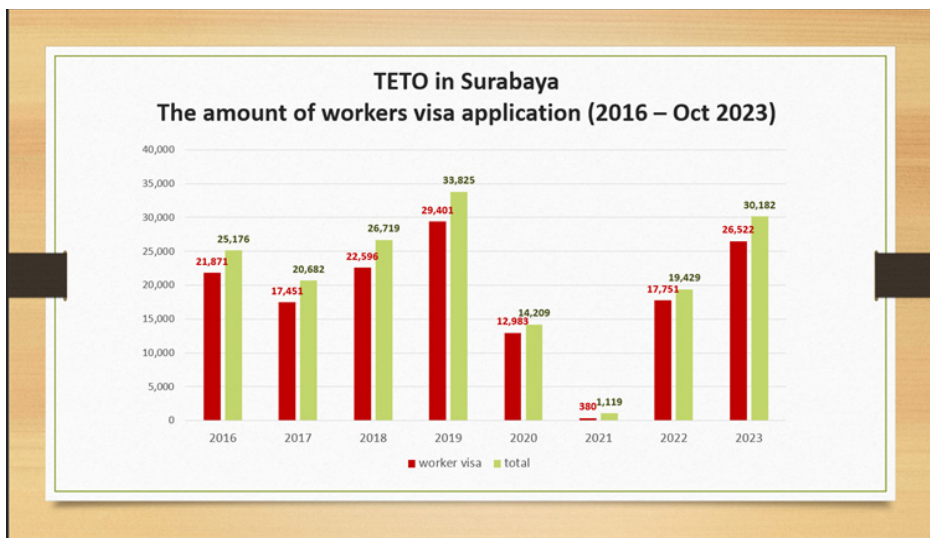


Source: Author's own processed data

Director General Isaac Chiu reports that, as of October 2023, eastern Indonesia remains the primary source of migrant worker applicants to Taiwan, with approximately 30,182 migrant workers currently working in Taiwan (*Figure 6*). TETO Surabaya functions as a 'gatekeeper', validating visa applications before allowing applicants to travel, study, or work in Taiwan. Two visa types are available: the General Visa, for tourism or study, and the Migrant Worker Visa (PMI Visa) for employment purposes. For PMI Visa applications, specific documents are required, such as a notarized employment contract, an original job order from Taiwan's Ministry of Labor, and a placement fee agreement endorsed by BP3MI East Java. These documents ensure that visa applications are credible and authentic, since the data falsification has been increasing throughout the years. To address these challenges, TETO Surabaya has intensified its application review process, as noted by Mrs. Rahayu, a former migrant worker who has worked in Taiwan for seven years. She observed that the visa application process has become more rigorous, with TETO requiring applicants to provide additional documentation, such as proof of consistent signatures between old and new passports. This measure helps prevent data falsification, which can have adverse consequences for migrant workers in Taiwan. Working closely with KDEI Taipei, the Migrant Worker Task Force (TP PMI) receives and addresses worker complaints. They verify issues and forward them to KDEI Taipei for resolution, ensuring that any discrepancies in workers' documentation are promptly addressed.

In addition to providing consular services, TETO Surabaya supports the needs of immigrant spouses through orientation sessions for Indonesian Taiwanese couples. These sessions include explanations of visa types, employment service centers for labor information and assistance, as well as guidelines on legal and cultural expectations for foreign nationals. The sessions also cover differences in identification documents, such as the ARC (Alien Resident Certificate), APRC (Permanent Resident Certificate), and Taiwan's national ID. Furthermore, couples are encouraged to learn basic Mandarin, which can be beneficial for residency documentation, medical appointments, and other essential services. These orientations also familiarize participants with important Mandarin legal terminology related to marriage rights, such as divorce, child custody, and inheritance, alongside available hotlines for women's and children's services. TETO Surabaya's role in supporting international migration is further demonstrated through educational collaboration efforts, led by Director General Isaac Chiu. For example, on May 2, 2024, Director Chiu was invited by Airlangga University's Faculty of Social and Political Sciences to give a guest lecture titled "Taiwan's Semiconductor Industry and Geopolitics." In this session, Chiu emphasized that Taiwan's robust semiconductor industry thrives on a skilled workforce, introducing Taiwan's "long-term retention" policy aimed at attracting talented individuals for both study and work opportunities. Chiu highlighted Taiwan as an ideal partner for Indonesia in the semiconductor industry, with job openings in the sector projected to increase by 20% (2024).

Figure 6 Graph of Total Number of PMI VISA Applications



Source: TETO Surabaya

Recognizing that many PMI visa applicants are Muslim, TETO Surabaya has made efforts to foster interfaith cooperation by collaborating with religious leaders in Surabaya. For instance, on March 8, 2024, Director Chiu, accompanied by Deputy Director William Jiang, visited the Al-Akbar National Mosque (MAS) to strengthen mutual respect between Indonesia and Taiwan. During this visit, Chiu extended an invitation to Dr. KHM Sudjak M.Ag., Chairman of MAS, to Taiwan, where he could observe interfaith dialogue practices and meet with Taiwanese community leaders. Chiu highlighted Taiwan's commitment to religious freedom by mentioning the increasing availability of certified halal restaurants, prayer spaces in transportation hubs, and restroom facilities equipped with handheld showers and toilet flushes for Muslim travelers. To carry out its mandate, TETO Surabaya collaborates closely with institutions such as BP3MI East Java. BP3MI serves as the labor authority, verifying and endorsing the documents of PMI workers before their departure, while TETO Surabaya acts as a document verifier for compliance with Taiwanese requirements. In special cases, such as deaths or minor legal infractions involving migrant workers, BP3MI East Java, KDEI Taipei, and TETO Surabaya work together to provide support, handling cases with a quick and effective response. Through TETO Surabaya, BP3MI gains access to emergency contacts within work contracts, facilitating timely communication with the families of migrant workers in times of need.

TETO Surabaya has actively fostered Indonesia-Taiwan relations through institutional collaboration, legal and administrative support, and nation branding, which contribute significantly to the international migration of PMI workers from eastern Indonesia to Taiwan. Through its partnership with institutions like BP3MI East Java, TETO Surabaya ensures thorough verification and document authentication, reducing the risk of fraud and confirming compliance with Taiwan's requirements. This partnership encompasses not only administrative aspects but also offers support and guidance for IMWs. Additionally, TETO Surabaya serves as an updated information source on employment opportunities in Taiwan, enabling PMI candidates to prepare with relevant skills for Taiwan's labor market. In March 2019, as reported by *TribunJatim.com*, Director General Benson Lin invited local government officials, travel agency representatives, and PMI agency heads to an informational seminar (*Figure 7*). This session covered the procedures and types of Taiwan visas, such as tourist, work, family visit, language study, and medical visas. This seminar was organized to address the growing demand for migration to Taiwan, which had increased by 11.5% at the time (Firmansyah 2019).

Figure 7 TETO Surabaya Conducts Seminar on Taiwan VISA



Source: Tribun Jatim

Additionally, on August 28, 2023, NTB Governor Dr. H. Zulkieflimansyah welcomed Director General Isaac Chiu to initiate cooperation between NTB and TETO in education and economic fields (*Figure 8*). As part of TETO Surabaya's mission to promote bilateral relations between Indonesia and Taiwan in eastern Indonesia, this partnership focuses on NTB student exchange scholarships with Taiwan's Science and Technology Park. This initiative was well received by Dr. Zulkieflimansyah, who also hopes for further collaboration in sectors like mining, food industry, and agricultural technology.

Figure 8 Director Isaac Chiu Visited NTB's Governor (Dr. H. Zulkieflimansyah)



Source: AdPim Bureau of NTB Province

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that international labor migration is the movement of individuals from one country to another for employment purposes, influenced by various economic, social, cultural, and political factors. This phenomenon highlights the consequences of increasing cross-border movement due to globalization. Using Lee's (1966) "push-pull" theory as a framework, several push and pull factors are identified that contribute to Indonesian labor migration to Taiwan. Push factors include unemployment, low regional minimum wages, and the positive relationship between remittances, family welfare, and poverty reduction. Meanwhile, Taiwan's economic growth, job availability, and supportive socio-cultural environment serve as pull factors. Intervening obstacles—such as geographic distance, travel costs, and visa requirements—along with personal factors like individual readiness, awareness, and family influence, also significantly shape Indonesian labor migrants' decisions to work in Taiwan.

Established on December 18, 2015, TETO Surabaya operates as an extension of the Taiwanese government, implementing the "New Southbound Policy." TETO Surabaya plays an active role in promoting Indonesia-Taiwan bilateral relations by processing consular services for the Taiwanese expatriate community and issuing visas for prospective IMWs (CPMI), particularly those in eastern Indonesia. Aligned with the New Southbound Policy, TETO Surabaya's programs focus on strengthening cooperation in education, business, culture, and tourism. Through institutional partnerships, legal and administrative support, and nation branding, TETO Surabaya has become a primary driver of international labor migration from eastern Indonesia to Taiwan. This conclusion is supported by Taiwan's governmental interventions in providing updated information on employment opportunities and economic growth, ensuring that migration processes run smoothly, migrant workers are protected, and Taiwan's labor market needs are adequately met.

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