

Protection on Indonesian Migrant Workers Under The Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA)

Naeli Fitria

Department of International Relations
Pertamina University, Jakarta

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ABSTRACT

Growing numbers of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan have become an intrinsic part of Indonesia-Japan bilateral cooperation, particularly through the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA). This essay examines the extent to which the rights of Indonesian workers are secured in this cooperation based on liberalism theory in international relations. Liberalism focuses much on interdependence, mutual gains, and institutional cooperation, which is seen in the controlled labor agreements between the two nations. Programs such as the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) and the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) scheme have encouraged skills development and economic growth for Indonesian workers in addition to alleviating Japan's labor shortages. Challenges exist, however, with issues of language, cultural adaptation, and workplace exploitation despite such controlled systems. Through response to these challenges, Indonesia and Japan have devised multi-layered associations with administrative units, business corporations, and Non-Government Organizations. Welfare services of employees fall under the ambit of organizations like the Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services (JICWELS) and the Association of Overseas Apprentices (AP2LN), whereas diplomatic interventions, such as performed by the Indonesian Consulate General of Osaka, complement preventive strategies. IJEPA is a legal framework for such collaboration, encouraging labor migration policies that respect the dignity and fair treatment of workers. This study underlines the necessity of continuous dialogue and policy enhancement to enhance the protection and economic contribution of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. Strengthening cooperation in the liberal framework can also ensure that labor migration is a win-win element of Indonesia-Japan relations.

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Corresponding Author:

Name: Naeli Fitria

Institution: Pertamina University, Jakarta

Email: naeli.fitria@universitaspertamina.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian migrant workers in Japan have become a key factor in the diplomatic and economic relations between the two nations. Over time, their presence has steadily grown, driven primarily by the promise of better wages and improved financial opportunities in Japan. This trend is expected to persist due to the significant gap in income levels and job availability between the two countries [1]. Most Indonesian migrant workers in Japan are part of the Technical Internship Program (TIP) and the Industrial Training Program (ITP). These initiatives provide them with valuable technical knowledge and hands-on experience in various industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare. By participating in these programs, workers enhance their skill sets, increasing their chances of securing more competitive job opportunities within Japan's labor market [2].

Despite the benefits offered by these programs, Indonesian migrant workers in Japan still face several significant challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the cultural and linguistic barrier between the two nations. The strict expectations surrounding Japanese language proficiency and cultural norms can create substantial difficulties for Indonesian workers as they navigate Japan's labor environment [3].

Beyond language and cultural differences, many workers experience mistreatment in the workplace. Some employers exploit migrant labor by imposing poor working conditions, excessively long hours, and inadequate wages. This mistreatment not only affects their financial stability but can also result in physical exhaustion, mental health struggles, and social isolation [4]. To safeguard the rights of its migrant workforce, the Indonesian government has implemented protective measures. The Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration (BPN/BKPM) is responsible for overseeing the deployment process, ensuring that workers meet necessary qualifications and receive appropriate

training before traveling to Japan. Additionally, the Association of Overseas Apprentices (AP2LN) plays a vital role in monitoring workers' welfare by conducting debriefing sessions and providing support services. These efforts are further reinforced through collaboration with organizations such as the Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services (JICWELS), which helps address any concerns Indonesian workers may encounter while employed in Japan [5].

In addition to formal governmental arrangements, numerous NGOs and civil society organizations support Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. These organizations offer essential services such as housing assistance, healthcare, and social integration programs to help workers adapt more easily to their new environment [6]. The effectiveness of these efforts is reflected in the rising number of Indonesian workers in Japan. As of October 2019, data from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare reported 51,337 Indonesian citizens employed in Japan. This number is expected to grow in the coming years as more workers seek opportunities in the country [7].

Over the past few years, the number of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan has surged significantly. Data from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) indicates that the migrant workforce in Japan expanded from 650,000 in 2011 to 1,724,000 in 2020. This sharp rise underscores Japan's increasing reliance on foreign labor to offset workforce shortages caused by its aging population [8].

Indonesia has emerged as one of the largest contributors to Japan's migrant workforce. In 2022 alone, the country sent a record 12,438 workers under the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) program. This trend is expected to continue, with projections suggesting that Indonesia will send an additional 100,000 workers to Japan over the next five years. The Indonesian government sees this as an opportunity to leverage its demographic advantage, as 70% of its population falls within the working-age bracket of 17 to 64 years old. This strategy is

also intended to help reduce the country's unemployment rate [9]. Indonesian workers are placed in Japan through various channels, including government-to-government (G-to-G) agreements, partnerships between Indonesian private enterprises and Japanese employers (P-to-P), and individual placements. In 2023, the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI) reported that the total number of Indonesian workers placed abroad reached 273,747, surpassing the initial target of 250,000. This rise in placements is expected to boost remittances, which play a crucial role in strengthening Indonesia's foreign exchange reserves [10]. Japanese employers have expressed appreciation for Indonesian workers, particularly for their strong work ethic and adaptability. Ambassador Masaki Yasushi highlighted that Indonesian workers are highly regarded for their diligence and their cultural affinity with Japan, which facilitates smoother workplace integration. Currently, Indonesian migrant workers contribute to key sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, nursing care, and manufacturing. Given Japan's ongoing labor shortages and demographic challenges, the government aims to attract even more Indonesian workers in the coming years [11].

Despite significant progress in protecting Indonesian migrant workers in Japan, several challenges remain. Language barriers, cultural differences, and cases of employer exploitation continue to affect workers' well-being. To address these issues, ongoing cooperation and dialogue between Indonesia and Japan are essential to ensuring that migrant workers' rights are fully safeguarded [12]. The protection of Indonesian workers is a crucial aspect of Indonesia-Japan bilateral relations, particularly within the broader context of labor migration. This cooperation aims to improve the welfare and safety of Indonesian workers, ensuring they receive fair treatment and respect. The Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), signed in 2007, provides the legal framework for this collaboration, outlining the conditions under

which Indonesian workers are permitted to work in Japan. As part of this agreement, the Technical Internship Program (TIP) and the Industrial Training Program (ITP) were introduced to equip Indonesian workers with valuable skills and experience in key sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare. These programs have significantly improved their employability and economic prospects in Japan [13]. Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services (JICWELS) also plays a critical role in facilitating the integration of Indonesian workers into Japan's labor market. The organization provides services that ease the transition for migrant workers, such as language training, cultural orientation, and job placement assistance, which help reduce workplace frustrations and improve overall adaptation [14].

On the Indonesian side, the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration oversees the deployment of workers to Japan, ensuring that only qualified and well-trained individuals are sent. This careful selection and preparation process helps maintain and enhance the overall quality and competitiveness of Indonesian migrant workers [13]. As labor migration continues to expand, both governments must strengthen their collaboration to address challenges and create a more supportive environment for Indonesian workers in Japan.

The introduction of programs such as the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) and the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) scheme has further reinforced the cooperative framework established under the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA). These initiatives have provided Indonesian workers with valuable opportunities to develop technical expertise in sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare. Additionally, these labor programs align with Japan's broader economic initiatives, including the government's push to expedite the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Secretariat's full operation. More recently, Indonesia has sought Japan's

support for the Peruvian Chairmanship of APEC 2024, signaling the continued commitment to regional economic integration. Under this holistic approach, IJEPA has played a crucial role in improving the competitiveness of Indonesian migrant workers, ensuring a fairer and more beneficial arrangement for all stakeholders.

The Association of Overseas Apprentices (AP2LN) also plays a key role in overseeing the debriefing and protection of Indonesian workers in Japan. Government-appointed representatives from AP2LN work closely with the Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services (JICWELS) to address any challenges workers may face during their stay [2]. Beyond these formal mechanisms, several NGOs and community organizations provide crucial support services, including assistance with housing, healthcare, and social integration, helping Indonesian workers adapt more smoothly to their new environment.

The success of these collaborative efforts is evident in the rising number of Indonesian workers in Japan. As of October 2019, data from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare reported 51,337 Indonesian citizens employed in Japan, with expectations for continued growth in the years ahead. However, despite these positive developments, significant challenges remain. Language barriers, cultural differences, and cases of employer exploitation continue to pose risks to workers' well-being. To address these concerns, ongoing dialogue and cooperation between Indonesia and Japan remain essential in safeguarding migrant workers' rights and ensuring their welfare [14], [15].

The Indonesian Consulate General in Osaka plays a vital role in facilitating labor cooperation between Indonesian institutions and Japanese companies. It collaborates closely with local authorities to ensure that Indonesian workers are treated fairly and their rights are upheld [16]. This paper evaluates the extent of Indonesia-Japan cooperation in protecting migrant workers under the IJEPA framework. The agreement

has been instrumental in enhancing worker welfare, strengthening economic ties, and fostering multi-layered cooperation in capacity-building. By streamlining recruitment processes, facilitating fair labor practices, and reducing remittance fees, IJEPA has established a foundation that prioritizes the dignity and fair treatment of Indonesian workers in Japan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Theoretical Framework: Liberalism*

In liberal theory, bilateral cooperation plays a crucial role in achieving mutual benefits, particularly in maintaining peace and addressing global challenges. Liberal theorists argue that while states operate within an anarchic international system, they remain rational actors capable of overcoming contradictions through dialogue and agreements. By engaging directly through bilateral partnerships, states can negotiate, find compromises, and establish clear rules, norms, and frameworks that reduce uncertainty and mistrust. This approach fosters long-term stability and prosperity, aligning with liberalism's emphasis on interdependence, diplomacy, and the power of shared governance.

A key perspective within liberal thought, liberal institutionalism, emphasizes the importance of institutions—whether multilateral or bilateral—in facilitating cooperation. In a bilateral context, agreements and treaties function as institutional mechanisms that support dispute resolution, policy coordination, and commitment

enforcement. [17] contends that even in the absence of a global hegemon, bilateral agreements can help states achieve common objectives by institutionalizing trust and mutual accountability. Bilateral trade agreements, such as free trade agreements (FTAs), exemplify this by fostering economic integration, benefiting both parties through expanded markets, lower tariffs, and increased investment flows.

The concept of "complex interdependence," introduced by [18], further supports the significance of bilateral cooperation. Nye argues that growing economic, social, and cultural ties among states make conflict less desirable while making cooperation more advantageous. Bilateral strategic alliances and trade agreements deepen this interdependence by creating shared interests in economic growth and security. For example, bilateral defense agreements provide mutual protection and deterrence against aggression, while cultural and educational exchanges strengthen connections between societies, fostering greater trust and collaboration.

A notable example of bilateral cooperation within this liberal framework is the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA). By promoting trade, investment, and human resource development, IJEPA demonstrates how bilateral frameworks can be designed to meet national objectives while fostering shared interests. Plans such as technology exchange and skilled workforce mobility align

with liberalism's core principle of mutual economic benefit. Agreements like IJEPA highlight the liberal belief that cooperation is not only feasible but essential for navigating globalization, mitigating conflict, and advancing a more interconnected and peaceful world order.

2.2 *Indonesian Migrant Workers Cases in Japan*

Between 2020 and 2024, Indonesian migrant workers in Japan have faced multiple challenges, with forced labor under the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) being one of the most critical issues. Reports from 2022 revealed that human traffickers specifically targeted these workers, underscoring the urgent need for stricter protections and regulatory oversight to safeguard their rights.

In response, the Indonesian government has been actively working with Japan to enhance the welfare of its migrant workers. A significant discussion took place in May 2024, where Indonesia's Minister of Manpower expressed hopes that Japan's new labor regulations would provide stronger protections and better welfare conditions for foreign workers, particularly Indonesians [19]. These efforts are aligned with the TITP (established in 1993) and the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) program (introduced in 2019), both of which have been central to Indonesian labor placements in Japan [20].

The number of Indonesian workers in Japan has risen sharply in recent years. By October 2023, Japan recorded a

40.3% increase in its foreign workforce over a five-year period, bringing the total to 2.05 million foreign workers. Among them, Indonesians accounted for the largest share, with 56% classified as specified-skilled workers [21]. This increase is largely driven by economic factors, such as better wages and favorable currency exchange rates, making Japan an attractive destination for foreign workers.

However, despite these economic benefits, Indonesian migrant workers still face hardships. Many endure difficult working conditions, legal uncertainties, and social isolation, revealing the hidden struggles behind migration success stories. Furthermore, immigration burdens on Indonesian asylum seekers in Japan have become an issue of concern. Their experiences shed light on varied reasons for migration, ranging from seeking better economic prospects to fleeing racial or political persecution in Indonesia [22].

The Japanese government has increasingly recognized the importance of language training for skilled Indonesian workers, acknowledging that proficiency in Japanese is crucial for their successful integration into the workforce. In April 2024, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Labor urged Japanese employers to support language training initiatives, highlighting the growing interest of Indonesian workers in securing jobs in Japan. These efforts aim to provide migrant workers with essential language skills, allowing them to adapt

more effectively to Japan's labor market and work environments.

The employment cooperation between Indonesia and Japan has continued to strengthen, extending beyond the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) and the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) program. A significant pillar of this collaboration is the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), which came into force on July 1, 2008. IJEPA has played a critical role in facilitating worker placements and has been instrumental in shaping bilateral cooperation on employment-related matters, improving labor conditions for Indonesian migrants.

However, despite these positive developments, concerns remain regarding human trafficking involving Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. Reports indicate that trafficking cases persist, prompting authorities to reinforce safeguards against labor exploitation. In April 2024, Secretary-General Anwar Sanusi once again called upon Japanese employers to provide language training without exploitation, ensuring that skilled Indonesian workers receive adequate support without falling victim to abusive labor practices. The 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report from the U.S. State Department acknowledged that Indonesia has taken steps to combat trafficking, including banning the placement of Indonesian workers in 21 Middle Eastern and North African countries. However, the report also noted that while progress has been made, Indonesia has not yet met

the minimum international standards for eliminating trafficking and must take stronger action to address the issue more effectively [23].

In response to these ongoing challenges, Indonesia and Japan have intensified discussions to enhance migrant worker protections. In May 2024, Indonesia's Minister of Manpower reiterated the need for stronger labor regulations that would ensure fair treatment and improve the welfare of Indonesian and other foreign workers in Japan. These negotiations aim to strengthen worker protections, reduce exploitation, and promote fair labor conditions, reinforcing the long-term partnership between the two nations.

2.3 Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers Under IJEPA

The Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) has played a vital role in strengthening cooperation between the two nations, particularly in the protection of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. This agreement is designed to enhance economic ties, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships while supporting multi-layered cooperation in capacity building across various sectors [2]. One of the key priorities under IJEPA is labor services, ensuring the rights and protections of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. Additionally, the agreement promotes trade and investment flows, reinforcing cooperation in areas such as customs procedures, intellectual property rights, and competition policies, which in turn create a

more transparent and efficient economic framework.

Beyond labor protections, IJEPA also supports Indonesia's economic and industrial growth. Under the agreement, Japan has committed to improving the quality of Indonesian products, particularly in manufacturing technology, sanitary standards, and food and beverage safety. These efforts are instrumental in boosting Indonesia's technical expertise, enabling local industries to enhance product quality and compete more effectively in both domestic and international markets. Furthermore, IJEPA has provided Indonesia with greater market access to Japan, ensuring that Indonesian exports remain competitive alongside those from other nations that have signed similar trade agreements with Japan. The agreement has also attracted significant Japanese investment in business and infrastructure development, benefiting Indonesian manufacturers and contributing to overall economic growth. By facilitating stronger economic ties, fair trade conditions, and skill development, IJEPA continues to be a cornerstone of Indonesia-Japan bilateral cooperation, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable economic relationship.

The Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) also plays a significant role in facilitating the placement of Indonesian workers in Japan, either through intergovernmental cooperation or collaborations between the Indonesian private sector and Japanese companies. As a result,

the number of Indonesian workers in Japan saw a substantial increase, with 273,747 new placements in 2023, surpassing the initial target of 250,000 workers for that year [24]. This expansion reflects Japan's continued commitment to strengthening its labor partnership with Indonesia, while also aligning with Japan's broader economic cooperation agenda, including its support for the Peruvian Chairmanship of APEC 2024.

One of the most complex and significant aspects of IJEPA is its provisions for Indonesian health workers in Japan. The agreement addresses ethical and operational challenges related to labor migration in the healthcare sector, ensuring that recruitment is fair and transparent. IJEPA also promotes low remittance costs and equitable recruitment practices, reinforcing the fair treatment and dignity of Indonesian migrant workers [2]. This collaboration is critical not only for enhancing the skills and competitiveness of Indonesian workers but also for supporting economic growth in both nations.

Beyond formal government agreements, various non-profit organizations and community groups actively provide support services for Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. These organizations assist workers in housing, healthcare, and social integration, helping them adapt more smoothly to their new environment. Additionally, worker representation has been strengthened through partnerships between Indonesian organizations and

Japanese companies in Osaka, highlighting the important role of the Indonesian Consulate General in Osaka in ensuring the rights and welfare of migrant workers. Through this multi-faceted cooperation, IJEPA continues to serve as a cornerstone for the protection and empowerment of Indonesian workers, fostering a sustainable and mutually beneficial economic relationship between Indonesia and Japan.

3. METHODS

The study employs a qualitative research approach to examine Indonesian migrant workers' protection under the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA). Document analysis is utilized in the study, examining the main documents such as the IJEPA agreement, Indonesian and Japanese labor legislation, and global labor standards. Additionally, secondary materials like journal articles, reports by international organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO), and government reports are analyzed to allow for a good understanding of how the agreement handles the protection of migrant workers. This way, it is easier to explore at length the policy and legal frameworks governing labor mobility between the two countries. To supplement the document analysis, this research also involves expert interviews with stakeholders, including policymakers, labor rights organizations, and representatives of migrant worker organizations.

Moreover, comparative analysis is conducted to ascertain how Indonesian migrant workers' protection under IJEPA differs from international labor standards, such as those defined by the ILO. By cross-referencing the terms of the agreement against best practice in other regional or bilateral labor agreements, the research evaluates whether IJEPA includes adequate protection from labor exploitation. By using this

methodological approach, systematic examination of the legal, institutional, and pragmatic aspects of Indonesian migrant worker protection is guaranteed within Indonesia-Japan economic cooperation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Discussion and Findings

The Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), signed in 2008, is a bilateral trade and economic cooperation agreement that encompasses various sectors, including labor migration. A key issue that has sparked ongoing debate and concern under this framework is the protection of Indonesian migrant workers from human trafficking. Indonesia has long depended on labor migration as a crucial part of its economy, with a significant portion of its citizens seeking employment abroad. However, the risks of exploitation and trafficking remain persistent challenges. In response, IJEPA incorporates several mechanisms designed to uphold the rights and safety of Indonesian workers, reinforcing efforts to combat human trafficking.

Under IJEPA, Indonesia and Japan have committed to ensuring that the recruitment and employment of Indonesian workers in Japan adhere to legal and ethical standards, preventing exploitative practices. The agreement includes strict regulations for recruitment agencies and employers, requiring compliance with labor laws and human rights protections. Additionally, IJEPA facilitates cooperation between the two governments to oversee labor practices, reducing the risk of trafficking and abuse. These measures are particularly vital, as Indonesian migrant workers are highly vulnerable due to language barriers, limited knowledge of local laws, and unequal power dynamics in the workplace [25].

A key achievement of IJEPA in combating human trafficking is the establishment of clear guidelines and legal frameworks aimed at protecting migrant workers. These guidelines define decent working conditions, fair wages, and access to legal remedies in cases of exploitation or

abuse. As a result, IJEPA has contributed to improving working environments for Indonesian workers in Japan, reducing opportunities for traffickers to exploit their vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the agreement promotes ongoing dialogue between Indonesia and Japan, allowing both nations to address emerging challenges in labor migration and human trafficking. This continuous engagement strengthens protective mechanisms, ensuring that Indonesian workers in Japan receive fair treatment and necessary legal protections.

The emphasis on training and capacity building in this agreement significantly enhances the protective role of the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) for Indonesian migrant workers. These initiatives provide workers with the necessary knowledge and awareness to ensure their safety while employed in Japan. Pre-departure training includes essential components such as labor rights, legal protections, and mechanisms for reporting workplace abuses, equipping Indonesian workers with greater awareness and reducing their vulnerability to human trafficking. Beyond ensuring safety, these measures also improve workers' overall well-being and productivity, a goal actively supported by the Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia.

Additionally, IJEPA strengthens legal cooperation between Indonesia and Japan to combat human trafficking. The agreement facilitates information exchange between the two countries, streamlining the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases. This collaboration is critical in dismantling transnational trafficking networks and ensuring that offenders face legal consequences. Strengthened cooperation between Indonesian and Japanese law enforcement agencies also reinforces the legal protection of Indonesian migrant workers against trafficking-related crimes [26].

IJEPA also provides mechanisms to safeguard workers' rights, ensuring access to complaint procedures and legal remedies. Indonesian workers in Japan can report any

instances of exploitation or trafficking through established channels, which guarantee timely responses and appropriate resolutions. These mechanisms serve as a crucial tool for protecting labor migrants and addressing human trafficking. Moreover, the agreement aligns with international human rights standards, further emphasizing its role in protecting Indonesian migrant workers. It incorporates principles from key conventions such as ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers and the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, reinforcing global efforts to combat human trafficking.

IJEPA has also streamlined the placement and registration process for Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. A notable contribution of this agreement is the introduction of the One Channel Placement System (SPSK), designed to enhance efficiency and transparency in worker placements. By ensuring that all Indonesian migrant worker placement companies (P3MI) have equal access to the process, the system mitigates exploitation risks and promotes fair treatment for workers.

The protection of Indonesian migrant workers involves multiple challenges that require comprehensive solutions. IJEPA tackles this issue by introducing measures to regulate placement fees, enhance worker training, and strengthen safeguards for migrants. By addressing illegal levies and unauthorized brokers, the agreement plays a crucial role in preventing exploitation during the worker placement process. These initiatives demonstrate a strong commitment to fostering a safer and more equitable environment for migrant workers, ensuring their rights and welfare are safeguarded at every stage.

In addition to these regulatory measures, IJEPA has also introduced innovative tools to better support migrant workers. One such initiative is the **SIAPKerja** application, designed to simplify administrative procedures for registration and placement while providing easier access to essential employment-related services and

information. This platform enhances one-stop integrated services and public service malls, extending service accessibility to key locations such as airports, seaports, and cross-border offices. These improvements have significantly expanded the availability of information and support for Indonesian migrant workers, empowering them to navigate the placement process with greater confidence [27].

The negotiation process for the **Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA)**, particularly regarding the protection of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan, follows a series of essential steps and considerations that have played a significant role in shaping the agreement.

4.2 Fair Recruitment and Labour Rights Under IJEPA

- a. **Fair Recruitment:** One of the key elements of the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) is its emphasis on ensuring fair recruitment processes for Indonesian migrant workers employed in Japan. The agreement incorporates various measures aimed at reducing remittance costs and enhancing overall working conditions, fostering a more equitable and secure employment environment. By establishing these protections, IJEPA ensures that Indonesian workers receive fair treatment and dignity in their workplaces, reinforcing their rights while mitigating the risks of exploitation (Global Forum on Migration and Development, 2015).
- b. **Labour Rights:** IJEPA places a strong emphasis on safeguarding the labor rights of Indonesian migrant workers, shielding them from forced labor, human trafficking, and other forms of exploitation. The

agreement promotes transparent and ethical recruitment practices, ensuring that workers are well-informed about their rights and empowered to prevent mistreatment in the workplace. By fostering greater awareness and accountability, IJEPA strengthens legal protections and contributes to a safer and more just labor migration framework.

- c. **Technical Intern Training Program (TITP):** A key feature of the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) is the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), which enables Indonesian workers to relocate to Japan and acquire specialized technical skills across various industries. This initiative not only enhances their expertise but also increases their competitiveness in the job market, providing them with better career prospects in Japan [28].
- d. **Specified Skilled Workers (SSW) Program:** Alongside TITP, IJEPA introduced the Specified Skilled Workers (SSW) program, which is designed to attract skilled workers from Indonesia to address labor shortages in Japan. This program grants workers opportunities to gain employment in specialized fields, advance their careers, and contribute to Japan's economy, strengthening the labor ties between both nations.
- e. **Domestic Politics Influence:** The domestic political landscape in both Indonesia and Japan has significantly influenced the formation and development of IJEPA. In Indonesia, civil society organizations and media advocacy for human rights and

democratic principles have played a role in shaping foreign policy, including the country's engagement with Japan. Similarly, in Japan, domestic political priorities influence economic cooperation policies, including trade agreements with Indonesia.

- f. **Negotiation and Review Process:** To ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance, IJEPA undergoes periodic reviews. For instance, in 2013, Indonesia formally requested a review of the agreement's terms, prompting both countries to engage in ongoing negotiations to refine the agreement and address emerging challenges. This reflects a sustained commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors.
- g. **RCEP Secretariat:** Japan has also played an active role in supporting the full operationalization of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Secretariat, aiming to accelerate the accession process and promote deeper regional economic integration among member nations, including Indonesia.
- h. **Implementation of Cooperation Projects in the Automotive Industry:** As part of their continued collaboration under IJEPA, Indonesia has invited Japan to explore new initiatives, such as joint ventures in the electric vehicle sector within the automotive industry. This initiative is intended to create fresh economic opportunities and strengthen trade relations, particularly within the growing electric vehicle market.

- i. **Legal Scrubbing Process:** IJEPA includes a legal scrubbing process to verify compliance with legal standards. This involves a thorough review and finalization of the agreement's protocol text in both Indonesian and Japanese, ensuring the treaty is legally sound and ready for enforcement.

At its core, the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) reflects a joint commitment by both nations to safeguard the rights of Indonesian migrant workers while simultaneously promoting economic growth and cooperation. Through its comprehensive provisions and initiatives, IJEPA continues to evolve, strengthening bilateral relations and creating better opportunities for workers from both countries. By ensuring fair labor practices, enhanced worker protections, and economic collaboration, the agreement serves as a foundation for sustainable and mutually beneficial progress.

4.3 The Success of IJEPA Cooperation in Protecting the Rights of Migrant Workers

The Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) has been a landmark achievement in strengthening ties between Indonesia and Japan, particularly in trade, labor migration, and industrial cooperation. One of its most significant accomplishments is the simplification and enhancement of the placement and protection process for Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. By addressing critical issues such as recruitment fees, legal frameworks, and worker protections, IJEPA has made meaningful progress in improving working conditions for Indonesian workers.

A key innovation under IJEPA is the One Channel Placement System (SPSK), which has revolutionized the administrative process for worker placement. This system ensures that all Indonesian placement companies (P3MI) have equal opportunities

to participate in sending workers to Japan, creating a fair and transparent process that reduces the risk of exploitation. With a regulated and structured system in place, workers can navigate their placement with greater confidence, knowing that the process is clear, fair, and protected.

IJEPA's emphasis on worker protection has also been a major success. The agreement introduces measures to regulate recruitment fees, enhance worker skills, and protect them from exploitation. By targeting illegal levies and unlicensed brokers, IJEPA strengthens safeguards for Indonesian workers in Japan, ensuring they can pursue employment opportunities without fear of mistreatment. This commitment to protecting migrant workers' rights reflects IJEPA's broader dedication to fairness and dignity in labor migration.

Another significant component of IJEPA is the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), which provides Indonesian workers with valuable technical training in Japan, improving their skills, employability, and competitiveness in the labor market. This program not only benefits workers during their time in Japan but also allows them to bring back valuable expertise to Indonesia, contributing to the country's long-term economic growth.

Additionally, the Specified Skilled Workers (SSW) program has become an important feature of IJEPA, allowing highly skilled Indonesian workers to find employment in Japan. This initiative helps address labor shortages in Japan while offering Indonesian professionals better career opportunities. By facilitating access to skilled jobs in Japan, the SSW program benefits both nations—supporting Japan's economy while advancing the international career prospects of Indonesian workers.

One of IJEPA's strengths is its adaptability and ongoing evolution. The agreement undergoes regular reviews to ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance. For example, in 2013, Indonesia formally requested a review of IJEPA's terms to ensure that both nations continued to

mutually benefit from the agreement. Current negotiations demonstrate both countries' commitment to refining the partnership and addressing emerging challenges.

A further success story under IJEPA is the Employment Information System and Service (SIAPKerja) application, which provides migrant workers with easy access to essential employment information and services. By extending its reach to airports, seaports, and border offices, the platform ensures that workers can receive support and guidance wherever they are. This initiative has streamlined and optimized the placement process, making it more accessible and efficient.

Beyond labor migration, IJEPA has also deepened economic collaboration between Indonesia and Japan, particularly in the automotive sector. By fostering cooperation in electric vehicle (EV) development, both countries have opened doors to new investment opportunities and technological advancements. This partnership strengthens Indonesia's role in the global automotive market while reinforcing economic ties between the two nations, paving the way for a more sustainable future.

At the regional level, IJEPA has contributed to the strengthening of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), with Japan playing a key role in supporting the RCEP Secretariat. This initiative promotes greater regional economic integration, benefiting Indonesia, Japan, and other Asia-Pacific nations. IJEPA's alignment with RCEP reflects its commitment to multilateral cooperation in today's interconnected global economy.

Lastly, IJEPA incorporates a legal scrubbing process to ensure that all provisions comply with legal requirements in both Indonesia and Japan. This rigorous review ensures that the agreement's text is thoroughly examined and finalized in both languages, establishing a solid legal foundation for ongoing cooperation. By reinforcing the legality and accountability of the agreement, IJEPA provides a secure framework for future bilateral initiatives.

5. CONCLUSION

The protection of Indonesian migrant workers under the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) is a reflection of the intersection of economic cooperation and labor standards in international relations. This study has examined the extent to which IJEPA provides legal and institutional mechanisms for protecting the rights of Indonesian workers in Japan. Both from the vantage points of liberal institutionalism and human security international relations theories, the evidence demonstrates that while the agreement facilitates the mobility of labor, there remain implementation and enforcement gaps that may expose workers to vulnerabilities. The presence of regulatory mechanisms is not sufficient; meaningful protection requires strict monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. The analysis reveals that IJEPA is within the economic interest of Indonesia and Japan, echoing realist claims prioritizing state interests.

Japan's need for a foreign workforce and Indonesia's aspiration to expand job opportunities abroad underlie the labor provisions in the agreement. However, the asymmetry between the two countries' bargaining powers influences the degree of protection for workers included in the agreement. The structural dependency of Indonesian laborers in the Japanese economy underscores the challenge to achieving equal protections, as realized through the lens of dependency theory. It shows that while IJEPA presents opportunities, it also has the potential to replicate unequal labor relations unless protections are radically improved. From a liberal institutionalist perspective, the IJEPA shows how international agreements may be employed to foster cooperation and set up mechanisms for labor mobility. The effectiveness of these agreements, nevertheless, hinges on the strength of their enforcement. While IJEPA has worker training and skills certification clauses, the lack of rigorous enforcement mechanisms limits its scope in shielding workers from exploitation. Bilateral institutional

strengthening and reinforcement of monitoring mechanisms could enhance the agreement's role in the protection of labor rights. From the perspective of human security, the study concludes that while IJEPA makes some provision for safeguards, such as certification of skills and pre-departure orientation, these are inadequate to avert the risks of labor exploitation, poor working conditions, or contract violation.

The absence of a consistent monitoring mechanism belies the potential of the agreement in terms of full compliance with international labor standards. To more effectively safeguard workers, Indonesia and Japan must enhance cooperation on enforcement mechanisms, legal assistance, and social protection programs for migrant

workers. In conclusion, while IJEPA provides a framework for the labor migration of Indonesian workers to Japan, its operationalization to protect migrant workers is a challenge. Addressing the gaps requires stronger institutional monitoring, stronger legal frameworks, and closer collaboration among governments, international organizations, and labor rights groups. Future research should investigate the lived experiences of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan to better understand the effectiveness of existing protections and recommend policy improvements. Strengthening worker protection under IJEPA not only benefits migrant workers but also enhances the overall economic and diplomatic relationship between Indonesia and Japan.

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