

Selling a Resume and Buying a Job: Stratification of Gender and Occupation by States and Brokers in International Migration from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how state and commercial actors construct gender, occupation, and nationality hierarchies in guest worker programs by comparing the migratory procedures for female domestic workers and male industrial operators from Indonesia. Based on 19 months of multi-sited ethnography and 86 interviews in Indonesia, Taiwan, and Singapore, I introduce the notion of multilateralism to theorize the stratification of global migration processes. In multilateral labor markets, governments, brokers, employers, and migrants in multiple countries contend for labor and employment. The homecare market is governed under the rubric of “selling a resume,” whereby Indonesian regulators and labor suppliers pass on recruitment costs to employers, in a context where migrant domestics possess myriad destination options due to their reputation fostered by a government-organized credentialing program. By contrast, Indonesian factory workers expend upfront payment to “buy a job” from destination brokers amid rivalry with migrants of other nationalities. The Indonesian state’s inattention to elevating industrial migrants’ standing through skill formation has compelled private recruiters to vie for jobs by extracting brokerage fees and developing a patchwork of selection mechanisms. This article finds that social actors’ capacity to negotiate the terms of labor exchange is contingent on their structural locations within a global hierarchy of competing nation-states.

KEYWORDS: international migration; gender; work; globalization; Asia.

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“Men buy a job, as employers don’t need us. Women don’t pay for a job, as employers need them.”

Haryanto, 21

“Husbands should be our providers, but why are we the ones providing for them?”

Atun, 43

To land an entry-level factory position in Taiwan, Haryanto made a \$2,610 (USD) down payment in 2016 to a Taiwanese staffing agency and arranged to settle his debt to a local contractor through nine months of salary deductions. And, though Atun had preferred her husband to work abroad, he pressured her to serve as a caregiver on her third, employer-subsidized contract in Taiwan. While Indonesian guest workers, like Haryanto and Atun, share analogous demographics, a bifurcated international migratory system has emerged along gender and occupational lines. Presently, migrant domestic workers (MDWs) destined for Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore do not pay brokerage fees, are lent a \$210 incentive allowance, and pay off placement loans in six to nine monthly installments. By contrast, in addition to a similar debt-repayment scheme, migrant factory workers (MFWs) disburse between \$2,000 and \$2,900 in commissions to Taiwanese brokers, an equivalent of at least two years of blue-collar wages in migrant source communities. Whereas the Indonesian government bans commissions to foreign staffing companies, it regulates placement loans earmarked for Indonesian recruiters’ operational expenditures, including fees for services, passport, visa, airfare, training, and insurance.

In partnership with overseas employment agencies, Indonesian headhunters characterize Asia’s gendered mobility through the emic terms “selling a resume” (*jual biodata*) and “buying a job” (*beli job*). The modus operandi of homecare transactions is selling a resume, whereby Indonesian brokers pass on recruitment expenses to employers, who entice MDWs away from other destinations by advancing capital to support their cross-border passage. Conversely, Indonesian MFWs expend capital to purchase jobs from brokers in destination countries amid rivalry with laborers from other developing nations. Whereas employer sponsorship has deepened migrant women’s incorporation into the transnational care economy, the enormous financial barriers erected by foreign brokers have excluded low-income men from the global labor market and circumscribed migrant men’s livelihoods.

As the world’s largest provider of female MDWs and a burgeoning supplier of predominantly male MFWs, the case of Indonesia epitomizes how globalization has exacerbated inequality among labor migrants worldwide. Extant research attributes migrants’ divergent employment opportunities to demographic transition in the Global North (Lan 2006; Parreñas 2001) and excess labor in the South (Abella 2004; Platt et al. 2017). However, most studies examine migrant women or men in isolation (for exceptions, see Lindquist 2010; Sobieszczyk 2000), invoking abstract economic factors that overlook the stratification of migratory processes along gender, class, ethnicity, and other axes of difference.

Through a systematic comparison of Indonesia’s homecare and industrial migration streams, this study interrogates why and how states and brokers construct gender, occupation, and nationality hierarchies to mediate migrants’ insertion into the global labor market. While analysts conventionally examine a single migrant-receiving or -sending country, or deploy a binational standpoint, this study is among the first to propose a *multilateral* perspective, arguing that states and brokers are entangled in an occupationally segmented migratory order that straddles multiple destination and origin countries. Amid interstate rivalry for social reproductive labor, Indonesian regulators and recruiters have carved out a niche in the global homecare labor market by professionalizing domestic service, allowing them to externalize migrant women’s maintenance costs to host societies. In contrast to its strategic intervention in homecare, the Indonesian government’s inattention to elevating MFWs’ status in the *origin hierarchy* through a comprehensive training program has compelled labor purveyors in Indonesia to extract brokerage fees and formulate a patchwork of selection procedures to break into the global factory labor market. I conceive of origin hierarchy as a social stratification system in which migrants are

ranked in accordance with their aggregate qualifications, such as education, skills, international experience, and other characteristics typically associated with national origins.

Based on nineteen months of multi-sited ethnography and 86 in-depth interviews in Indonesia, Taiwan, and Singapore, this study contends that, although host countries reinforce guest workers' precarity through the denial of political rights (Anderson and Franck 2019), their leverage is contingent on the strategic actions of other players within a broader field of competing nations. In this supranational system, the demand for, and supply of, migrant labor are mutually constitutive, structured by state and commercial actors across several receiving and sending countries that simultaneously jockey for advantage. By concertedly cultivating their overseas citizens' global standing, origin countries are capable of seizing a market share and wresting concessions from more affluent economies in the realm of employment conditions. In this article, I explore power differentials between Indonesia and its key labor-trading partners, focusing on how states and brokers organize the transnational homecare and factory labor markets through external negotiations with their counterparts in other polities, as well as internal regulatory and brokerage practices.

THE STATE AND MIGRATION INDUSTRY

The migration industry is an ensemble of profit-oriented intermediaries, or brokers, that match mobile labor with place-bound capital by arranging paperwork, transportation, employment, and other services facilitative of transborder mobility (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sørensen 2013; Hernandez-Leon 2005; Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh 2012). The industry is rendered possible, even indispensable, by the global diffusion of guest worker programs, whereby governments maximize the developmental benefits from contract labor migration by outsourcing its management to commercial entities (Anderson and Franck 2019; Tseng and Wang 2013). Under neoliberal rationality, host states tend to regulate temporary migration by authorizing brokers to confine guest workers to occupations shunned by citizens and repatriate them at the time of contractual termination (Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan 2018). Devolution of migration governance ensures the renewal of a transient, malleable manpower supply in occupations experiencing acute labor shortages (McCullum and Findlay 2018). Likewise, sending states may nurture the migration industry to realize their own political and economic objectives, from lowering administrative expenses and alleviating population pressures, to harnessing remittances for development (Iskander 2010).

For industry actors, debt bondage is a pivotal profit-making mechanism. It is beneficial for recruitment as it obviates the need for cash-strapped individuals to mobilize funds for financing migration and for risk management as loans are recaptured through salary installments (Platt et al. 2017). Brokers may also appropriate direct payment from employers or workers, a method that, albeit lucrative, raises financial stakes for either employers or migrants (Sobieszczyk 2000). Yet, analysts have found that employers and grooms in countries from Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States, to Israel, Taiwan, and Japan sponsor the migration of domestics (Fernandez 2013; Kemp and Raijman 2014; Parreñas et al. 2018), brides (Bélanger and Wang 2013), and nurses (Guevarra 2009). Conversely, migrant men in agriculture (Anderson and Franck 2019), construction (Buckley 2012), and information technology (Xiang 2007) shoulder a combination of loans and lump-sum fees in the same destinations where migrant women are deployed. Consequently, migrant men are saddled with inordinate debt even before overseas departure and face financial ruin upon employers' dismissal (Abella 2004; Xiang 2007). Why, then, do brokers across the world devise profit schemes that vary by gender?

Scholars posit that gendered disparities in mobility arise from a demand for care work induced by population aging and intra-labor rivalry for a paucity of formal employment emanating from occupational change (Abella 2004; Lindquist 2010; Sobieszczyk 2000). In attributing primacy to these impersonal laws, however, both perspectives obscure the cardinal role of states and brokers in maneuvering transnational labor markets for political legitimacy and monetary gain (Iskander 2010;

Surak 2018). I propose a multilateral approach to theorize how interstate contestations fuel the reproduction of a gendered, supranational migratory system.

A MULTILATERAL APPROACH TO GENDERED MIGRATION

Analysts influenced by Bourdieu (1984) postulate that individuals' ability to elevate their social position is derived from the volume and composition of capital—economic, cultural, human, and social—at their disposal (Kim 2018; Paul 2017). In this view, the poor may prolong their overseas sojourn by amassing sociocultural and financial resources in lower-tier destinations, so as to pursue stepwise migration to economies with higher wages and stronger labor standards. Migrants embark on incremental trajectories to their ideal destinations, or societies high up in what Paul (2017) calls “destination hierarchies,” as the latter implement stringent admission criteria in the form of financial requirements, credentials, and work experiences. Whereas Bourdieusian migration research underscores how individuals strategically accumulate capital to realize their migration projects, it has not elucidated how such capacities are conditioned by their origin hierarchy status. Students of ethnic stratification, on the other hand, emphasize how employers' gender and racialized stereotypes have channeled migrants of myriad nationalities into distinct global occupations: Filipinas and Ukrainians into nursing and homecare (Guevarra 2009; Solari 2017); Lithuanians and Chinese, fishing and construction (Friberg and Midtboen 2018; Kemp and Raijman 2014); Mexicans and Moroccans, agriculture (Iskander 2010). While this literature underlines how ethnonational cleavages are concocted by host state forces to reinforce social control, I contend they are also molded by sending institutions vying to augment emigrants' employability in a broader migratory system.

The formation of international labor markets of a *multilateral* character is underwritten by the ratification of manifold guest worker agreements permitting governments to reduce their dependence on single countries for labor and employment (Garapich 2008; Parreñas et al. 2018; Rainwater and Williams 2019). That is, multilateralism allows employers to source labor from more than one country, and migrants to work in several destinations. The scope of this system is delineated by each nation's arsenal of bilateral labor accords, with some markets exhibiting more geographical breadth than others.¹ These markets, I maintain, are further stratified due to the gendering of migration policies worldwide.

Feminist scholars contend that gender ideologies are endemic to state practices (Enloe 2014) that unequally condition people's mobility. Societies in the Global South typically construe women's overseas work as a challenge to male prerogatives over providership and female sexuality, with migrant women perceived as in need of paternalistic protection (Gamburd 2000; Solari 2017). Accordingly, sending states tend to inhibit female mobility by implementing “value-driven emigration policies” (Oishi 2005) that may involve emigration bans and other exit barriers. Concurrently, industrialized economies strive to expand female workforce participation by encouraging working families to contract out reproductive labor—traditionally devalued, unpaid, and borne by women—to migrant women in the poorly remunerated, often ununionized informal economy (Parreñas 2001). Meanwhile, in the factory market, origin states conventionally stimulate male emigration to buttress the ideal of breadwinning masculinity (Oishi 2005; Xiang 2007). Under pressure from trade unions to protect formal jobs for male citizens, however, destination states typically enact immigration quotas and universalist labor standards to take wages out of competition (Surak 2018). Industrialists' demand for migrant labor is thus tempered by restrictions on labor import. When aggregated on a multilateral scale, these segmented migration regulations implemented by governments across the globe provide the objective circumstances—wherein supply outpaces demand in industrial employment, and vice versa in homecare—that skew the relative leverage of individual host and donor nations. Nonetheless, the mere presence of favorable conditions in a given market does not

1 The Philippines and South Korea, for example, have geographically extensive multilateral markets, having enacted labor agreements with 17 and 15 destination and origin states, respectively (Oh et al. 2012; Rodriguez 2010).

guarantee the possession of bargaining power, because countries are competing with one another for scarce resources. Hence, to determine the balance of power between individual labor importers and exporters requires investigating the full constellation of social actors, along with the organization of labor demand *in relation to* supply, in a multi-country field.

I bring together Bourdieusian and gendered migration scholarship to argue that, against the backdrop of global migration policies, source countries can proactively incubate “migration-facilitating capital” (Kim 2018) to construct a demand for their emigrant labor. A vital, yet understudied, mechanism for elevating migrants’ place in the origin hierarchy is deploying the symbolic legitimacy of official classification (Kim 2018) through public investment in education, training, and accreditation (Guevarra 2009; Ortiga 2014; Rodriguez 2010). States and brokers may further develop a comparative advantage in labor export by producing a workforce with desirable gendered attributes: physical labor for blue-collar workers; emotional labor for care workers (Lan 2016; McKay and Lucero-Prisno III 2012). This article mobilizes the notions of multilateralism and hierarchies to compare how origin and destination forces jockey for position to construct the market norms of transboundary homecare and factory employment.

THE INDONESIA-TAIWAN MIGRATION CORRIDOR

Since the inception of Indonesia’s labor migration program in 1981, the New Order authoritarian regime had invited the private sector to fulfill its ambitious development targets, with working-class women actively inducted into transborder domestic service (Silvey 2004). Nevertheless, the migration industry was marred by corruption, as the strongman, Suharto, prioritized political patronage over labor protection. This state-industry collusion enabled Indonesian recruiters to amass profit through illicit overcharging and salary underpayment (Palmer 2016). By the end of the authoritarian era, the market for MDWs had expanded with Indonesia’s negotiation of labor agreements with emerging Asian destinations (Hugo 2012). Sparked by the abuse of Indonesian housemaids in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia’s mass deportations of undocumented Indonesian migrants, the democratically elected administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono restructured the migration bureaucracy. Under the Board for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (*Badan Pelindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia*, the BP2MI), established in 2007, the world’s third most populous democracy enhanced its administrative capacities by regulating debt bondage, rationalizing pre-departure training, and installing labor attachés—embassy personnel tasked with migrant protection (Palmer 2016). While Indonesia has historically deployed irregular migrants to Malaysia’s agroindustry, it is more renowned as a sender of live-in domestic workers. As of 2018, caregivers and housekeepers were Indonesia’s top authorized emigrant categories, with women comprising 70 percent of contract labor (BP2MI 2018). Indonesian MDWs boast a significant presence across Asia and the Middle East, from Malaysia and Brunei to the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait (Killias 2018; Parreñas et al. 2018; Silvey 2004).

Coming on the heels of rapid industrialization that transformed Taiwan into an economic powerhouse, the Taiwanese authorities contained unauthorized migration by formalizing a guest worker scheme in 1992. To prevent the replacement of citizen labor, technocrats designed a restrictive immigration regime underpinned by a quota system, wherein a pre-determined volume of slots were distributed among employers’ associations (Tsay and Lin 2001). The island also signed memoranda of understanding with six countries to diversify sources of manpower, in what became a linchpin of “foreign labor diplomacy” (Lan 2006). Coupled with the state’s pro-employer stance, immigration quotas granted Taiwan’s migration industry leeway to expropriate guest workers, at a time when few Asian countries were importing labor (interview, CY, 2018).² However, a migrant riot during the construction of the Kaohsiung Metro ignited public demands for immigration reform (Tierney 2007). Over the past decade, Taiwan has enshrined policies to protect migrants by implementing a

2 I use the initials of those interviewed to maintain their anonymity.

24-hour crisis hotline, shelters, direct hiring, and worksite inspections (interview, SY, 2018). In 2019, Taiwan recorded the presence of 718,058 guest workers with an especially high demand for industrial migrants, who made up 61 percent of the country's migrant labor pool as compared with 35 percent for caregivers. In the same year, Indonesians captured the lion's share of MDWs at 77 percent (201,647), with Filipinas and Vietnamese trailing behind at 12 percent and 11 percent. Meanwhile, Vietnamese comprised 43 percent of MFWs, followed by Filipinos, Indonesians, and Thais at 28 percent, 16 percent (74,764), and 13 percent (Ministry of Labor, Taiwan 2019). From 2014 to 2019, Taiwan had been among the top three destinations for Indonesian migrants (BP2MI 2018).

While Indonesia and Taiwan constitute the focus of this article, I assert that their nexus must be situated in Asia's multilateral labor markets, which are mediated by occupationally segmented destination and origin hierarchies. At the top of Indonesians' destination hierarchy in homecare, Hong Kong is widely heralded as a regional trendsetter, with union representation, minimum wage, an unpaid day off per week, and fringe benefits for MDWs, including up to two weeks of paid vacation leave a year (Paul 2017). MDWs in Hong Kong may work as housekeepers, nannies, and elder caregivers. Taiwan, by contrast, mandates most migrant helpers to care for seniors and people with disabilities, and has no regulations on rest days, though workers are entitled to weekend compensation. A modest wage gap with Hong Kong, along with employers' expectations that MDWs provide 24-hour standby services (Lan 2016), has attenuated Taiwan's destination appeal. Singapore occupies among the lowest echelons of Indonesians' destination preferences, as its base salary for MDWs falls below East Asian standards (Paul 2017). In 2018, Hong Kong and Singapore were Indonesians' third and fourth leading destinations (BP2MI 2018). From employers' standpoint, Filipinas and Indonesians rank higher than Vietnamese and Burmese in the homecare origin hierarchy. Whereas some families prefer Filipinas for their college pedigree, cosmopolitanism, and English proficiency, those with elders value Indonesians' malleability, deference, and host language skills (Constable 2007; Lan 2016).

Japan and South Korea are Indonesians' preeminent destinations for industrial employment due to their high salaries and robust employment standards. Despite commanding lower wages, Taiwan has attracted steady inflows of migrant labor, as its entry barriers, placement volume, and employment tenure are comparatively liberal. Whereas South Korea and Japan mandate a high school diploma and destination language certification as entry criteria, Taiwan has no formal educational or language requirements, sets few limits on the intake of guest workers, and permits contractual extension for 12 years (Surak 2018). In 2018, South Korea and Japan were the seventh and sixteenth largest destinations for Indonesians, with a placement volume of 6,905 and 458 (BP2MI 2018)—a combined total comprising a mere tenth of Taiwan's. From industrialists' perspective, Indonesia ranks low in the origin hierarchy. The archipelago missed East Asia's peak demand for MFWs, entering it at a moment when other labor exporters had cemented their position (Hugo 2012; Rainwater and Williams 2019). In Taiwan, Thais and Filipinos are typecast as semi-skilled, and Vietnamese and Indonesians as unskilled, operators. In 1990, Thailand struck a deal with Taiwan to provide the island's first cohort of guest workers (Rainwater and Williams 2019). By the 2000s, the kingdom had become Taiwan's largest labor supplier in manufacturing and construction (Tsay and Lin 2001). Though a latecomer to the factory market, the Philippine state's active identification of overseas employment opportunities and promotion of higher education and pre-departure training has allowed Filipinos to gain a foothold in Taiwan's high-tech industry (Rodriguez 2010; Sills and Chowthi 2008).

METHODS

This article draws on 19 months of multi-sited ethnography and interviews with 86 brokers, credentialing accessors, state officials, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, and migrants in Indonesia, Taiwan, and Singapore (see Table 1). In 2014, I conducted a month of research shadowing Indonesian lathe operators on a metal factory's shop floor in Changhua, Taiwan. Subsequently, I began my fieldwork in Indonesia by following a MFW I had met at a Taipei-based NGO to his home village

Table 1. Characteristics of Sampled Respondents

Characteristics	Sampled Population	Country	
		Indonesia	Taiwan & Singapore
Government:			
National	12	11	1
Provincial	1	1	
Regency or Municipal	5	2	3
Employment Agencies and Training Centers:			
Management	26	22	4
Other Personnel	24	19	5
Credentialing Institutes:			
Assessors	6	6	
Nongovernmental Organizations	2		2
Migrants:			
Domestic Workers	5	5	
Factory Workers	5	5	
Total	86	71	15

in Ponorogo, the archipelago's sixth largest migrant source regency (BP2MI 2018). Between 2014 and 2017, I conducted participant observation in three Overseas Job Training Centers (*Balai Latihan Kerja Luar Negeri*; BLKLN) for MDWs in Ponorogo, and one in Jakarta. The four licensed firms annually dispatched 300 to 1,000 MDWs to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. A joint venture with foreign investors, the Jakarta agency deployed an additional 1,000 industrial operators to Taiwan each year. This company's recruitment of MDWs and MFWs offers a unique prism for comparing the two migration streams. My position as a male, middle-class, young American researcher of Taiwanese descent facilitated my entry into the four companies. Leveraging my proficiency in Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Indonesian, I served as an unpaid language assistant for an average of four months in each agency, during which I translated resumes, observed job training, and taught host languages. My immersion into company life provides rare insight into how brokers manage labor, observe the migration policies of several countries, and engage in business dealings with foreign clientele.

To extend my ethnography to Indonesia's commercial and regulatory ecosystem, I conducted semi-structured interviews, averaging one to two hours, with the management of 22 company headquarters and branch offices in Jakarta, Surabaya, Ponorogo, and Manado. Through referral and snowballing, I selected primarily firms with a placement volume of at least 200 migrants per year. While the majority specialized in the Asia-Pacific region, four were pioneers in the Middle Eastern market. To investigate the sending state's industry oversight, I interviewed 14 senior and mid-ranking officials in labor bureaus at the national, provincial, and regency level: nine at BP2MI; two at the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration; one at East Java province's manpower bureau; two at the Ponorogo and North Minahasa regencies' manpower bureaus. As part of a broader sample of 52 aspiring and returned migrants and their spouses, I used a subset of ten interviews with MDWs and MFWs to underscore how the migratory system unevenly structures migrants' lives.

Conversations with visiting foreign headhunters during ethnographic observation led me to consider how destination societies manage guest workers. Between 2017 and 2018, I interviewed a Singaporean staffing agent and Taiwanese brokers, bureaucrats, and NGO workers. My Taiwanese sample includes the management of seven placement agencies that sourced MDWs and MFWs from the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Though one was family-run, the remainder were certified "Grade A," the highest distinction awarded to Taiwanese firms. To understand the evolution

of Taiwan's guest worker program, I interviewed the leaders of two non-profit organizations and four senior and mid-ranking bureaucrats at the Taiwanese Ministry of Labor and New Taipei and Kaohsiung's municipal labor bureaus. Triangulating ethnographic and interview data involving diverse stakeholders in the three countries enabled me to verify informants' accounts. I used pseudonyms to protect my interlocutors' confidentiality.

My assistants and I transcribed interviews in Indonesian and Chinese separately, though I translated all of them on my own. I coded transcripts and field notes using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. Through a combination of theory-driven and inductive coding (Deterding and Waters 2018), I focused on recurring themes in developing my coding schemes.

HEMOCARE MARKET

Organization of Supply

By implementing a national accreditation program for domestic work, Indonesian state and market actors have solidified MDWs' status in the homecare origin hierarchy, permitting them to externalize the costs of labor maintenance to host societies via a combination of pay raises and resume sales (Figure 1).

Credentialing. Indonesia's stature as one of the world's pioneering female labor exporters has cultivated generations of seasoned MDWs who are valorized in the global care economy. Over time, as Indonesian brokers secured the loyalty of foreign customers, they utilized their international reputation to develop new labor markets. Sophia, a recruiter of European extraction who dispatched Indonesia's first cohort of housemaids to Syria, describes how Indonesia's expertise in labor provision to the Middle East aided the country's subsequent expansion to other destinations: "Saudi was the first to begin. Then, Brunei asked for [Indonesians], and the market began to *boom* there. After that, [demand in] Asia took off. Around the 90's, Singapore began, with Malaysia following suit." Indonesian brokers' foray into the Middle East, then, inaugurated a process of migrant succession, as they capitalized on their international know-how to meet job vacancies in Asia that were being increasingly relinquished by Filipinas, who had begun to pursue onward migration to the West (Paul 2017).

In particular, Indonesia's distinguished status in the origin hierarchy is enhanced by the specialized training women receive prior to arrival in employers' homes. In compliance with Indonesian state regulations, prospective MDWs for Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore undertake 400 to 600 hours of accreditation at Overseas Training Centers, usually managed by recruitment agencies with separate licensing. At the conclusion of training, candidates are required to pass the Professional Competence Examination (*Uji Kompetensi Profesi*) overseen by licensed Credentialing Institutes (*Lembaga Sertifikasi Profesi*; LSP). This national standard is intended to professionalize rural women, the backbone of Indonesia's emigrant population, to ensure that their care services meet foreign families' needs. I argue that this state-led skill formation has burnished Indonesia's prestige in homecare by producing a disciplined, multilingual workforce.

A cornerstone of credentialing is mental adaptation. During more than two months of resocialization, trainers acclimate would-be MDWs to status inequality in the employment relationship, along with work obligations, cultural norms, and house rules commonly observed overseas (Chang 2018). The Indonesian state further tailors migrant skillsets to host societies' occupational requirements. Whereas MDWs bound for Taiwan undertake 22 units of assessment focused on Mandarin language acquisition and nursing skills—such as wheelchair usage, sponge bath, and massaging techniques—those for Hong Kong and Singapore, who are primarily admitted as nannies and housekeepers, are expected to master 15 units composed of childcare, housework, and competency in Cantonese and English, respectively. Indonesian trainers place a strong emphasis on candidates' comprehension of employer commands in the languages of reception. Common interview questions concerning occupational protocols encompass what times of the day to deliver medication, how to explain patients'

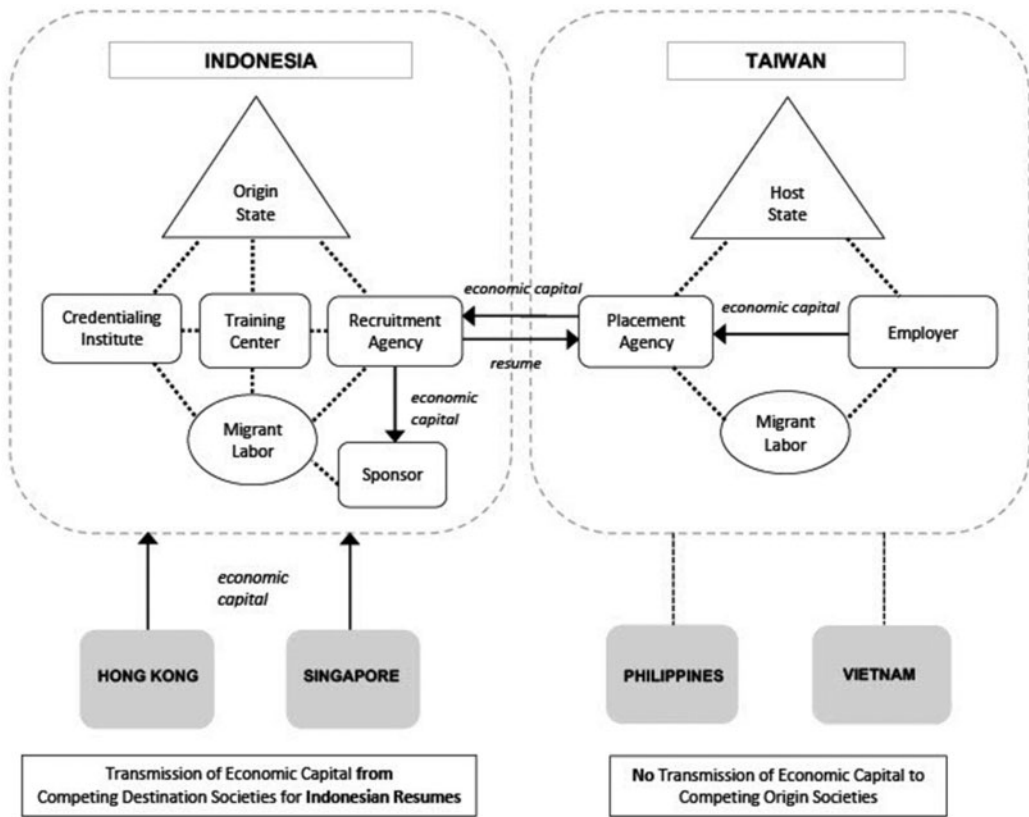


FIGURE 1. Selling a Resume in the Homecare Labor Market

illnesses to doctors, how to care for bedridden elders in hospitals, and how to handle telephone calls on elders' behalf.

A language test I observed reveals the state's effort at advancing MDWs' competencies vital for Indonesia's conquest of the homecare market. Sri, an examiner, tested a Singapore-bound trainee one day: "Translate [the English word] *command*. What does *command* mean?" The candidate gazed down at the floor but uttered nothing. Leaving the woman standing while awaiting a response, Sri summoned a returnee to Taiwan, posing in a shrill tone, "If you worked in Taiwan and your child was sick, would you return to Indonesia?" The trainee responded in Mandarin effortlessly: "No, I wouldn't. When I used to work in Taiwan, my father passed away, but I didn't return home." Seemingly satisfied, Sri wore a smile and excused the veteran migrant without further questioning.

This scenario illuminates how sending institutions fashion a pliable labor force by coaching MDWs to steadfastly abide by professional duties, even in the face of family emergencies. Indeed, from the state's perspective, language evaluations operate in tandem with mental preparedness to harmonize labor relations. Susanto, the head of a credentialing institute authorized to assess migrant credentials, notes that language testing assists the state in averting employment disputes through the alignment of migrants and employers' interests: "In the past, there were many problems, since Indonesians didn't understand destination languages. When told to cook corn, the maid cooked eggs instead. Or, when the employer had a stroke, she didn't help them. Hence, the government has prioritized language acquisition to reduce misunderstandings on the part of workers."

Beyond participating in the accreditation program, brokers design their own methods for instilling labor discipline. At a recruitment agency run by Koan, a Chinese-Indonesian broker, recruits are barred from leaving company premises until overseas departure, undertaking 13 hours of daily

training that includes two housekeeping shifts, eight hours of coursework, and two hours of obedience training at night. Commenting on his team's survey of the nation's brokerage agencies, Fajar, an Indonesian Manpower Ministry official, underlines how the managers they had interviewed rationalized labor control: "If a trainee wasn't mentally prepared to overcome [worksite problems], she wouldn't be able to adapt well and wouldn't be motivated to work."

State-industry ties in the promotion of MDWs' "export-value" (Guevarra 2009) have enabled Indonesians to make inroads in the global labor market, where they are esteemed for their skills, diligence, and adaptability. Late exporters, in turn, have had to contend with Indonesia's vaunted reputation. The perception that Indonesians excel in homecare is reflected in 60 percent of my Taiwanese and Singaporean respondents, most of whom ascribe the high demand for Indonesian MDWs to the latter's credentialing program, which is regarded as more holistic than the training offered by other sending countries. For instance, Lin, a manager of a placement agency in Taipei, stresses how credentialing has promoted Indonesian MDWs' competitiveness in several destinations:

Indonesians can go to Hong Kong or Saudi Arabia. They have a plethora of destination options. So, for them, Taiwan probably isn't their top choice. But we still prefer Indonesians. We think that Indonesia does a more thorough job of training care workers, because they have a longer duration of training compared to Vietnam.

Similarly, Supri, an Indonesian employee of a Hong Kong-based firm, avers that robust training has enabled Indonesia to outcompete other suppliers:

Indonesians are still dominant in Hong Kong. . . . But Hong Kong brokers are looking for workers from other countries since Indonesian regulations are too time-consuming: Indonesians have to undertake 60 days of training before being allowed to fly out. Hong Kongers are now sourcing labor from Myanmar and Vietnam, but those countries have low human capital. Their [Cantonese] and other skills also don't match Indonesians'.

Beyond nurturing MDWs' human and cultural capital, rigorous professionalization has contributed to employers' recognition of Indonesians as a compliant workforce. Though acknowledging Myanmar's position as a rising homecare provider, Juanda, a Singaporean broker with two decades of experience, conveys—in a mixture of Indonesian and Singaporean English—cross-national variations in labor traits that redound to Indonesians' benefit, racializing women of competing nationalities:

Indonesians are easier to manage. They're more obedient. Filipinas are smarter, but they're more *outspoken*. The Burmese aren't *educated*, but they're *stubborn* and hardheaded (*keras kepala*). If an employer gets angry and yells, "*You stupid, you stupid!*" the Burmese would retort, "*Ma'am, you stupid!*" I think this is due to their culture: Myanmar is so poor that hiring maids hasn't become a *trend* there.

Here, Juanda underscores Indonesians' nonconfrontational demeanor—a quality instilled during credentialing—as an asset for Singaporean families, juxtaposing it to Burmese's perceived unprofessionalism. While Juanda's view ostensibly mirrors Lan's (2016) observation that destination brokers manipulate migrants' ethnic characteristics to construct employer demand, I submit that regulators and brokers in source countries play an equally significant role in producing migrants that fulfill these racialized stereotypes. As the Indonesian, Singaporean, and Taiwanese brokers cited above suggest, while the growing demand for reproductive labor in wealthy economies may work to the advantage of developing countries, it is the concrete strategies adopted by sending institutions to improve their nationals' standing that are decisive for reaping a market share and boosting their overall leverage.

Interstate negotiations and industry regulation. In conjunction with privately organized labor management, the credentialing program has fostered Indonesia's ability to forge a monopsony in homecare, emboldening President Joko Widodo ("Jokowi") to advocate an agenda of emigrant wellbeing by demanding salary increases. My interview in 2016 with Wahyu, a former Indonesian labor attaché to Taiwan, elucidates how the Jokowi administration's strategy of labor protection has resulted in mounting hiring costs for employers. For nearly two decades since Taiwan opened its borders to Southeast Asians, the base salary for MDWs had stagnated at NT\$15,740 (\$525), nearly 20 percent below the minimum wage. In a feat covered in the Taiwanese press ([Central News Agency 2017](#)), Wahyu describes how Indonesian emissaries, with the endorsement of diplomats from other sending countries, accomplished an eight percent salary hike for all MDWs in 2015:

We negotiated for domestic workers' salary to be raised. This is significant, as the domestic sector isn't regulated. Our Taiwanese counterpart believes that wage levels should be determined by employers and workers, not the government. In the end, not only Indonesians, but all foreign [domestic] workers, including Filipinas, enjoy this wage hike.

Wahyu stresses that Indonesia's successful negotiation was rooted in its citizens' dominance in the Taiwanese homecare market. Indonesia has likewise exploited its market position to pursue a parallel bargaining strategy with Hong Kong and Singapore, both of which have granted salary raises for Indonesian MDWs ([Anya 2019](#); [Yi 2015](#)). Moreover, in the midst of the novel coronavirus pandemic in July 2020, Indonesia unilaterally declared that, starting in January 2021, foreign employers would be responsible for shouldering emigrants' pre-departure expenses. This announcement sowed anxieties among labor departments in Hong Kong and Taiwan that employers there could be saddled with additional hiring costs ranging from \$500 to \$3,330 ([Liberty Times 2020](#); [South China Morning Post 2020](#)).

In addition to promoting salary growth, the Indonesian state has lessened migrants' financial burdens by reducing placement loans to purge illegal middlemen, or sponsors ([Lindquist 2010](#)), who have historically appropriated migrants' earnings for assisting Indonesian agencies with scouring for labor. In fact, when MDWs first entered the Taiwanese market, they paid a double commission to sponsors and foreign agencies, as noted by Bambang, a manager in Jakarta: "Around 2005, domestics had to pay Indonesian recruiters around [\$210], but [they] also had to pay Taiwanese agents. The Taiwanese enjoyed more profits than as the demand for Indonesians was limited."

Under the state's rising oversight, however, Indonesian brokers are barred from charging recruitment fees to migrants, prompting them to pass on sponsor fees to employers through the sale of resumes. Liang, the CEO of a Taiwanese agency with an Indonesian subsidiary, explains how the sending state's regulatory measures have constrained employers' leverage, forcing them to finance the enlistment of Indonesian MDWs by paying for their resumes: "Under Indonesian laws, Indonesian agents are no longer able to net a profit to cover sponsor fees. So now the buyer's side has to purchase resumes." Amid a surge in demand for Indonesian labor, the origin state's curtailment of placement loans has tilted the balance of power from Taiwanese to Indonesian brokers. Chu, the head of a Taiwanese family firm, now coaxes employers to accept the new rules of exchange: "You gotta let employers know that it's the age of User Pays. If you instill this belief in them, then they'll learn to accept it, and recognize that they're responsible for buying a resume." The Indonesian state's intervention has likewise altered the norms by which Singaporean agents operate, who now require employers, rather than migrants, to cover recruitment costs, as described by Juanda: "In the past, we could lower employers' service fees, as we'd take a cut from maids through wage deductions. These days, due to Indonesian regulations, we're being pressured to reduce the maid's loan. So, service fees gotta go up." Through public-private partnership in skill training, then, Indonesia has constructed a comparative advantage in homecare, thereby bolstering its authority to negotiate more favorable terms of exchange on behalf of MDWs.

Organization of Demand

Two factors hinder Taiwan's capacity to organize the homecare market in its favor. First, employers across Asia are scrambling for a finite migrant pool controlled by Indonesia. Second, Taiwan's policy instruments have not adequately addressed the demands of an aging population.

Competing destination states and resume fees. A crucial deterrent for Indonesian MDWs is Taiwan's moderate position in their destination hierarchy. Evi, the CEO of an Indonesian agency supplying housemaids to Malaysia, extols Hong Kong's virtues as a prime destination: "It's only quality maids who end up in Hong Kong. That's because they get to enjoy four days off per month, during which they can take enrichment classes. But this isn't possible in Taiwan, where they have to care for grannies." Slamet, the chief of a pioneering training center in Jakarta for Taiwan-bound domestics, expresses a similar view: "For workers in Hong Kong, [having days off] gives them an opportunity to explore unrestrained freedoms (*pergaulan bebas*). In Taiwan, there's little entertainment, but in Hong Kong there's plenty of fun."

Taiwan's waning allure has stoked fears for the island's ability to replenish its female migrant supply. Huang, a labor official in Kaohsiung, explains how Taiwan's relationship with Indonesia has reversed over the course of a decade. Emphasizing that Taiwan once enacted a two-year entry ban on Indonesian MDWs in 2003 in response to their high rate of absconding from employers, Huang evinces the country's deteriorating leverage today: "It's no longer a buyer's market. If Indonesian caregivers chose not to come to Taiwan, more than 20 million households would suddenly face a shortage of caregivers." At the lower end of the destination ladder, Singaporeans confront additional recruitment hurdles, as Hong Kong and Taiwan's better work conditions are luring Indonesians away from the city-state. Juanda underscores how Singaporeans' nitpicky demands brew migrant discontent: "In Singapore maids have to *multitask*, and they even have to clean the walls! Singapore is a stressful country. They want maids to work fast, but the home still has to be clean. This makes the two parties clash."

This mounting international competition for Indonesian MDWs has compelled employers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore to bid for their resumes. Reflecting the archipelago's market leadership in Asia, the practice of resume-buying applies exclusively to Indonesian labor. Kao, the CEO of a Kaohsiung agency, explains why Taiwanese employers are willing to pay a premium for Indonesian caregivers, even though it is less costly to hire women of other nationalities: "We have a huge demand for Indonesian maids, as they're more obedient and more willing to comply with employers' needs. Thus, though Indonesians cost more, employers are willing to pay more because they feel it's worth it." The cost of an Indonesian resume in Taiwan hovers between \$300 and \$700, depending on employers' recruitment criteria, such as international experience, language skills, education, age, height, weight, and other traits. Resumes for candidates with overseas work histories generally fetch higher fees because employers value their experience with intercultural adaptation. Chu denotes the average price range of Indonesian resumes in Taiwan: "Resume prices are constantly ratcheting up. Caregivers who've been to Taiwan can muster around [\$500] as they're the cream of the crop. Those who haven't been to Taiwan cost around [\$258]. If they've been to Singapore, the Middle East, or Hong Kong, their resumes can fetch up to [\$386]."

Employers encounter other repercussions amid interstate rivalry. Chen, a Philippine and Indonesian labor specialist in Kaohsiung, describes prolonged wait times for employers: "Too many employers are trying to grab ahold of Indonesian caregivers! Our agency currently has 40 to 50 employers lined up waiting for them." Bosses in Indonesia's leading export markets are further pressed to remunerate sponsors with spiraling commissions. In an idiom of neoclassical economics, Lau, a Taiwanese-educated Indonesian broker, underscores how labor scarcities have amplified the costs of labor procurement: "When a commodity is scarce, in the end we'll need to buy people. Since many women have gone overseas, there're limited stocks available. [We'd tell sponsors], 'I'll hand you cash [from employers] for you to look for women.'"

That employers across Asia are racing to enlist Indonesian MDWs has profoundly impacted household decision-making, with Indonesian families tending to send women, rather than men, to work abroad. For example, employer sponsorship has encouraged Qoriah, 34, to return to Hong Kong for a second contract, despite leaving her spouse behind.

Qoriah: Wives working abroad are the ones making money.

Interviewer: Does your husband feel ashamed because you're making more than him?

Qoriah: No. . . . If my husband were to work abroad, he'd have to pay. But he doesn't have the money to buy a job. So, it's the wife who's forced to go overseas.

Limited alternatives. In a global migratory order often assumed to be dominated by developed nations, why has Taiwan depended on caregivers from Indonesia, rather than turning to alternative policy mechanisms or labor exporters willing to accept lower wages or recruitment fees? Despite Taiwan's passage of Long-Term Care Services Act in 2017—legislation mandating the integration of homecare, community care, and other social services—the island's expansion of subsidized care facilities has not kept pace with demand. Taiwan has, instead, relied on market solutions underpinned by low-cost migrant labor. Even with the recent pay raise, MDWs' base salary falls below Taiwan's minimum wage and averages four times lower than the typical salary scale for citizen caregivers. That Taiwan is reluctant to standardize wages and work conditions in homecare has to do with the absence of a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights and employers' lobbying (interview, SY, 2018). Yang, a senior official at Taiwan's Labor Ministry, suggests that weak regulations and low wages have reinforced a robust demand for MDWs: "Because they need quality but affordable care, families prefer to hire foreign labor. Also, migrant caregivers reside with employers, so they can be told to work at any time. . . . Without long-term care facilities, it's difficult to end employers' dependence on foreign caregivers."

Alongside deficits in affordable care, the dearth of countervailing manpower sources has exacerbated Taiwan's reliance on Indonesian labor. Like Singapore (Goh, Wee, and Yeoh 2017), Taiwan faces practical constraints in acquiring care workers from other developing nations. Though Taiwan had imported MDWs from Mongolia, it failed to gather momentum due to a low labor supply (interview, HH, 2018). Other countries, such as Sri Lanka, do not supply labor to the country for geopolitical reasons, as stated by Yang: "The Ministry of Manpower has been trying to find alternative labor pools. But some countries are unwilling to cooperate with Taiwan due to weak diplomatic ties." In short, a modest place in the destination hierarchy, combined with few options for procuring labor, has aggravated Taiwan's structural dependence on Indonesian labor. Expressing Indonesian MDWs' ascendance in Asia, Eko, the CEO of an Indonesian firm specializing in Hong Kong, opines, "Indonesian migrants nowadays are spoiled (*manja*). In the past, migrants strived hard to overcome challenges. These days, if employers are too demanding, migrants would ask to return home because they're *homesick*."

FACTORY MARKET

Organization of Supply

If Indonesia has reconfigured the stakes of the homecare market, why has it not replicated this success in the factory sector? While the state has dedicated administrative resources to credentialing MDWs, it has not spearheaded a compulsory training program for MFWs. Lacking state support, recruiters have strategized by training, screening, and expropriating migrants, without systematically elevating their position in the origin hierarchy. The Indonesian government's failure to professionalize MFWs has made it difficult to surmount the industry norm of job-buying, in a context where other developing countries have secured a niche through state-driven skill training (Figure 2).

No credentialing and competing origin states. Indonesia has not mandated accreditation for occupations beyond domestic service for historical and ideological reasons. A late entrant in formal employment, the archipelago has seized only a handful of destinations and unskilled occupations. Talim, a former labor attaché to the UAE, maintains how the low placement volume of MFWs has generated few incentives for investment in a national training program: “[The number of] housemaids once deployed to Saudi Arabia [was as high as] 15,000 per month. With such a huge quantity, it made sense for entrepreneurs to invest in training centers. [But few] Indonesian migrants are placed in ‘dirty, difficult, and dangerous’ sectors, such as factories, which don’t really require training.”

Beyond historical factors, as I have argued elsewhere (Chang 2018), the state has not necessitated training for migrant groups other than MDWs, because the latter occupy a unique place in Indonesian officials’ imaginary as vulnerable citizens. Yohanes, a BP2MI official, claims that “conditions for domestic workers are poor because they are *vulnerable worker[s]*. In the Middle East, Indonesian domestics are treated like slaves. They’re not given a salary, experience sexual harassment, and are denied rest.” For her, credentialing is useful for guarding MDWs against the vagaries of in-home care work by training women to regulate their professional conduct, such that they are, in the words of Yohanes, “competent, healthy, mentally prepared, linguistically proficient.” The ideology of state paternalism is a double-edged sword: while it subjects MDWs to skill formation in the name of their security, it renders invisible the market exclusion of MFWs, who are assumed to be protected by host states’ labor codes and not in need of improvement (interview, KM, 2017).

Indonesia’s differentiated treatment of emigrant labor—interventionist in homecare, laissez-faire in factory work—has unintentionally undercut MFWs’ employment prospects. Over the past three decades, governments in Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines have instated training programs to

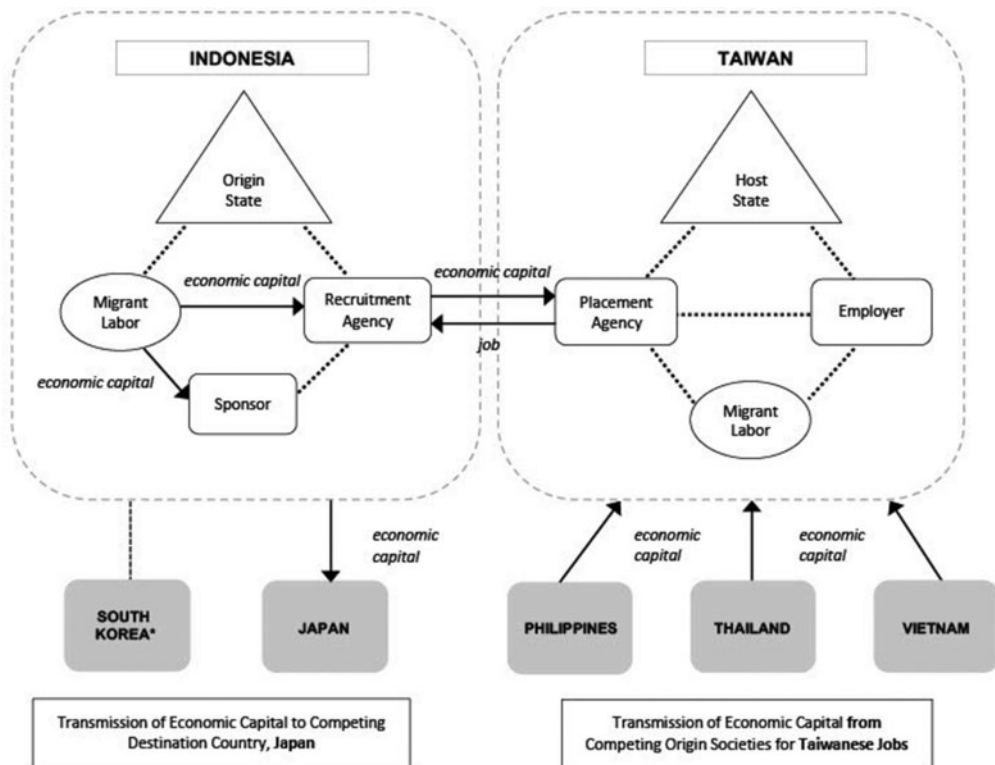


FIGURE 2. Buying a Job in the Factory Labor Market

promote their nationals' entry into global manufacturing jobs (Huong 2010; Sills and Chowthi 2008; Sobieszczuk 2000), so much so that Indonesians have had to await the exodus of other migrants to procure market access. For example, Lee, a Taiwanese manager of a caregiver agency in Surabaya, has dispatched a growing number of Indonesians to Taiwanese factories largely because of Thai workers' stepwise migration to higher-wage destinations: "Our hope is to replace Thai workers [in Taiwan], who are migrating to South Korea where they can earn a monthly salary of \$1,500." Lee acknowledges, however, that Indonesians possess little bargaining power in a market still dominated by other players: "Taiwanese agencies believe that, 'Now that Indonesians need a job, as long as there's a gap between supply and demand, you'll just have to kiss up.' As we can't compete . . . we'll have to give them meat."

Deficiencies in credentials have further dampened the reputation of Indonesian MFWs. Kao, a specialist in Vietnamese labor, avows that Vietnamese—despite sharing similar qualifications and timing of market entry with Indonesians—are paragons of efficiency: "Indonesians' work pace is slower. Factories emphasize speed, as they work on strict deadlines. Vietnamese work faster, and they're smarter. I have a garment factory client that uses piece rates, but if you work too slowly, that's not gonna fly." Chu, another Taiwanese broker, further asserts that manufacturers privilege Vietnamese labor because of cultural proximity: "Vietnamese culture is similar to ours. They also eat pork, and many are Buddhists, so they're easier to manage. But [industrialists] think that Indonesia is a high-risk country, where men are combative. That's because we learn from the news that Muslims are extremists." While conceding that Indonesian women are model caregivers, Chu uses the western trope of Islamic extremism to essentialize difference, viewing Muslim masculinity as incompatible with industrial employment. That Indonesian Muslims are simultaneously constructed as superior for care work, and undesirable for factory work, underscores how credentialing has improved the desirability of Indonesian MDWs, who are trained in Indonesian employment agencies to prepare pork dishes for foreign employers. Consistent with the two brokers' statements, Pai, a provider of Indonesian labor in Kaohsiung, stresses how poor credentials have impeded Indonesians' acquisition of Taiwan's manufacturing jobs: "We wouldn't consider placing Indonesian men in factory jobs requiring skills. Rather, we recommend them for menial labor, since they don't have any skills or training to speak of."

Private training. The absence of credentialing has led Indonesia's private sector to narrow what a Singaporean investor, Adri, calls MFWs' "skill gap." While few recruiters in my sample supply MFWs to Taiwan, two are among Indonesia's largest firms with industrial training programs of varying magnitude. With an ambitious plan to break into the Japanese and Taiwanese markets, Hsieh, a Taiwanese-born agent, operates thirteen recruitment locations in Indonesia and a reception office in Taoyuan, a manufacturing hub in northern Taiwan. In July 2017, I visited Hsieh's three-story boarding school in Jakarta designed to accommodate 1,000 students. I observed classes teeming with men in uniforms learning Japanese, using a Computer Numerical Control machine in a spacious warehouse, and driving a tractor along the basketball court. Hsieh models his managerial techniques after his training center for MDWs, requiring men to undergo two months of residential training in Japanese and Mandarin, fitness, obedience, and factory machinery usage. Having invested \$3,634,710 in building state-of-the-art facilities, Hsieh describes how his training is innovative in Indonesia's migration industry:

Indonesian factory migrants weren't trained in the past. That's why we need to constantly educate them. [We tell them,] "If you're unwilling to modify your behavior, we'll expel you after three warnings." We don't want our clients to think, "Why did you send us poorly behaved workers?" We take great care in evaluating workers' manners, work attitude, health, and stamina, since they're menial, not *office*, employees.

Whereas Hsieh runs a full-fledged curriculum, Koan, another Indonesian broker, inculcates recruits' occupational skills only when requested by employers, as it supplies predominantly unskilled operators to Taiwan's chemical, metal, and other labor-intensive industries. Koan's agency contains gender-segregated boarding facilities for MDWs and MFWs on the same plot of land. Most MFWs are taught basic vocabulary, with some undergoing a mere five days of learning Mandarin before departure. As Koan suggests, in Taiwanese, "Languages and skills aren't critical. What's more important is that factory migrants aren't too smart (*khiau*), are obedient, work slowly but attentively." The haphazard nature of Mandarin language training is evident during my observation one day when a 31-year-old man, who had resided at the center for a month, stuttered with "I am, am, am, am," in response to an instructor's command to translate the sentence, "My dormitory is in the factory."

Screening. Whereas the Indonesian government's accreditation program assists employers in vetting MDWs, Indonesian brokers develop their credibility as factory suppliers by weeding out unruly or incompetent recruits on their own. Koan scrutinizes applicants for their so-called "character," (*karakter*) devising elaborate metrics to appraise their attitude, agility, strength, intelligence, and work ethic, which are tabulated into numeric scores with descriptions affixed to resumes. A sample resume reads, "The worker is strong, has dark skin [implying a willingness to perform menial labor], works hard, is moderately intelligent, is not picky about jobs." During a pre-recruitment session with 80 candidates in Ponorogo, Koan, staring into their eyes and speaking in a growling voice, ordered men to hold a 30-kg sandbag on one shoulder while squatting down and standing up in succession. Those failing the physical test were eliminated, with only 30 qualifying for recruitment as unskilled laborers. Koan further prepared prospective recruits for harsh labor conditions with the following announcement, "You'll do work that Taiwanese people don't want. [It involves] hard work in a hot, uncomfortable, or unpleasant environment. These are the kinds of jobs that Indonesians are assigned to. Remember: you don't get to choose. If you make mistakes thrice, you'll be deported."

Candidates for semi-skilled jobs undertake an additional round of on-site selection by foreign headhunters. Tu, a Taiwanese broker, flew into Jakarta on March 4, 2016, to handpick Koan's trainees as a trial run for recruiting 400 MFWs for a Taiwanese electronics factory formerly staffed by Filipinos. Tu had recently visited the Philippines, where he claimed four of the country's largest agencies had organized a factory job fair consisting of 1,000 applicants. On Tu's selection day in Indonesia, men in white dress shirts and black trousers performed a timed sequence of exercises. Carrying a 40-kg sandbag on one shoulder, they ran four 12-meter laps, accompanied by horizontal bar hangs, pushups, and sit-ups. Three men tripped during their sprint, but quickly sprang up to complete the sequence. Candidates also took an "IQ test" evaluating their logical reasoning. In the final stage, Tu interviewed shortlisted candidates, during which he touched their palms to gauge hand sweat and ordered them to lift their shirts for inspection. Tu rejected a candidate with a scar on his torso, after learning he had suffered a work injury in Malaysia. To assess their likelihood of absconding, Tu interrogated applicants on their relationship status, motives for working abroad, and whether they had kith and kin in Taiwan. Among a handful of female factory candidates, a former MDW was turned down on the grounds of being a troublemaker, after admitting she had previously lodged a complaint to Taiwan's Labor Bureau.

As the cases above illustrate, Indonesian brokers have enacted selection mechanisms of uneven quality to promote factory labor in lieu of state sponsorship. Although such schemes facilitate individual firms' market entry, they lack the structural weight of a government credentialing program capable of raising Indonesians' international profile and allowing the latter to venture into Taiwan's factory labor market.

Inability to regulate overcharging. Indonesia's feeble status in the origin hierarchy has granted Taiwanese agents the authority to demand kickbacks for easing Indonesians' penetration into the factory market. Under this model of worker payout, sending brokers vie for jobs by transferring

economic capital from migrants to destination agents. Susanna, a Chinese-Indonesian manager of a Jakarta agency, notes that recruiters craving a market share compete by extorting money from migrants: “Agents here are bidding for job orders from Taiwan, and the fees are getting ridiculously high. The most daring ones are demanding loads of money from workers.”

Whereas the Indonesian government has achieved a wage hike for MDWs in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, lacking a monopsony in the factory market, it has been unable to combat the prevalence of job-buying, though it imposed a moratorium on factory placement to Taiwan in 2017. Krisna, a BP2MI official, states that migrants rarely report brokerage malpractices because “they’re afraid that they can’t go abroad. But once they arrive overseas, they’ll tell us that they paid by cash.” Krisna explains the state’s intervention in a narrative of emigrant welfare:

If the industry were healthy, the government wouldn’t need to interfere, because market prices are determined by *supply* and *demand*. But because industry competition isn’t healthy, workers’ interests are harmed. Migrant workers complain to us, “Why does the government let the market go untrammelled, and why are we being burdened with fees that are even higher than those approved by the Taiwanese and Indonesian governments?” Of the 500 or 490 recruitment agencies in Indonesia, fewer than 20 percent aren’t overcharging migrants.

The Taiwanese officials interviewed for this study insist that Taiwan revokes the licenses of agencies known to overcharge workers. However, though Indonesian bureaucrats place the blame on destination brokers, Taiwanese regulators absolve themselves by claiming that brokerage fees are extracted by recruiters outside their jurisdiction, as expressed by Lan, a New Taipei labor bureaucrat, “We can’t oversee how much money agents are demanding from workers in their home countries. Buying a job is an issue involving the [sending] government.” In summary, without instituting a comprehensive training program to match those of other labor exporters, Indonesia has encountered considerable difficulties in constructing a demand for its MFWs and outlawing commissions to foreign brokers.

Organization of Demand

Whereas their leverage in the homecare market is hamstrung by the Indonesian state, Taiwanese brokers have exploited their control over East Asia’s largest volume of manufacturing vacancies to expropriate MFWs through an assortment of brokerage fees, wage cuts, and substandard employment.

Labor market segmentation. Filipinos and Thais dominate semi-skilled jobs in Taiwan’s high-tech and large-scale factories thanks to their college education, international reputation, or English proficiency. Conversely, Taiwanese brokers exploit the weak credentials of Vietnamese and Indonesian workers to place them in the island’s technologically backward—typically family-run—manufacturing sectors. Brokers also stratify job pricing depending on sending states’ regulatory capacities, with Vietnamese paying the highest fees of \$4,000 to \$6,000, followed by Indonesians at \$2,000 to \$3,000, and Thais and Filipinos at \$1,000. The latter three nationalities pay less because their governments, aiming to protect emigrant welfare, set lower debt ceilings than Vietnam, which authorizes Vietnamese brokers to charge up to \$4,000 for factory placement.

While sending governments’ regulations on debt bondage and pre-departure training may moderate the extent of migrants’ brokerage fees, as is the case for Filipinos in high tech, Taiwanese agents generally assign migrants to jobs based on the level of commission. Taking advantage of weaker oversight in Vietnam, agents sell most of Taiwan’s unskilled jobs to the highest bidders, as revealed in Kao’s statement: “From the standpoint of Taiwanese agents, we’d definitely want higher brokerage commissions and recommend Vietnamese for employers.” In fact, Nguyen, an NGO worker of Vietnamese heritage, asserts that Taiwanese brokers maneuver loopholes by having their Vietnamese

collaborators collect fees under the table: “Taiwanese brokers deduct money in the name of their Vietnamese counterparts. It’s a smokescreen for extracting money from workers.”

Job pricing, wage cuts, and substandard employment. Taiwanese brokers further craft job pricing based on criteria other than nationality. Factories with decent work conditions and guaranteed overtime tend to garner higher brokerage fees, as they presumably allow migrants to pay off debt more quickly and enjoy a better quality of life. Yet, industrialists often pay below Taiwan’s legal overtime rate. At Koan’s firm, several candidates signed letters consenting to receive \$3.7 per hour in overtime, a 25 percent cost saving for employers. Brokers and bosses also connive to deploy overtime as a disciplinary technique by removing this “privilege” to punish recalcitrant migrants, or by coercing migrants to meet production targets. Consider the example of Rohim, who worked in a Taiwanese factory producing cardboard boxes for export. Rohim woke up at 7:30 a.m., but could not go to bed until 2 a.m. the next day, as his third shift ended at midnight. Rohim recalled teasing his Indonesian colleagues for being “lazy,” who, despite initially requesting overtime, experienced exhaustion after merely four months of employment. Industrialists, moreover, often resort to lengthening the workday by depriving MFWs of legally mandated rest. For example, Anto, a trainee, inked an agreement with a Taiwanese broker, consenting to a 12–14 hours workday and “running a machine while eating lunch” in place of a lunch break as mandated by Taiwan’s labor codes.

Employers engage in additional cost-cutting measures with the assistance of Taiwanese brokers. As a concession from the Taiwanese government (Tierney 2007), factory owners are permitted to deduct \$83 to \$150 a month from MFWs for room and board and dormitory utilities, costs that are waived for MDWs. In addition, industrial migrants often face arbitrary, illegal fines for minor infractions, such as public drunkenness and dormitory curfew violations. MFWs are further compelled to pay for their own recruitment. Whereas Taiwanese employers subsidize the enlistment of MDWs, Hau, an Indonesian recruiter, suggests that sponsors are authorized to extract a commission from MFWs: “We can pass on sponsor fees to industrial workers, [telling sponsors], ‘You can take a cut of [\$280-350] from workers.’” Consequently, though they are entitled to the minimum wage and work-site protection as formal employees in Taiwan, the average take-home salary for MFWs, excluding brokerage fees and overtime, is nearly equivalent to MDWs’ base salary.

High brokerage fees combined with systematic wage theft have meant that MFWs are unable to accumulate savings until the final years of their contracts, with many forced to mortgage property to muster funds to work abroad. Alfiah, 25, describes how he put together his \$2,810 down payment, and how long it would take him to break even: “I sold a cow and a motorcycle. But that wasn’t even enough to cover the down payment. If we were to work in Taiwan, it’d take a year to pay off brokerage costs. It’s only in the second year that we get to have money for ourselves, and it’s only in the third year that we get to start a small business.”

Finally, agents render migrant bodies disposable by reserving Taiwan’s accident-prone jobs for Indonesians. At Koan’s firm, two men’s hands were burned when smelting iron in a Taiwanese foundry. The pair returned to Indonesia within a week of work commencement, as the employer was unwilling to foot their healthcare bills. Yanto, a former worker at a Taiwanese battery manufacturer, relates a similar incidence of precarity: “The factory used toxic chemicals, so much so that my stomach bled, and my feet couldn’t move! Me and my Indonesian co-workers had to be hospitalized.” The dearth of human and cultural capital has rendered Indonesian MFWs multiply subjugated, compelled to pay high brokerage fees and take Taiwan’s “dangerous, dirty, and demeaning” jobs.

CONCLUSION

In a global migratory system that transcends national boundaries, guest workers increasingly vote with their feet by eschewing destinations with perilous work conditions for those with higher wages, stronger labor safeguards, and prospects for permanent settlement (Paul 2017; Rainwater and

Williams 2019). Origin states may further negotiate advantageous terms of exchange, besides promoting their citizens' admission into prestigious international professions (Guevarra 2009; Ortega 2014). A country's capacity to exercise its political clout, however, depends on its structural location amid competing nations. Bringing Bourdieusian migration research in conversation with gendered migration studies, this article advances a theory of multilateral labor markets as institutional arenas where actors across multiple countries contest to normalize the rules of exchange in gendered occupations. This multistate rivalry has the effect of reinforcing status distinctions among nations, permitting brokers to allot employment and labor based on one's configurations of capital linked to nationality. Consequently, employers and migrants at the bottom strata of destination and origin hierarchies encounter fewer prospects for inclusion into the global labor market.

By comparing the migratory procedures for Indonesian domestic and factory workers, this study further complicates the premise that demand unidirectionally shapes supply, or that labor is interchangeable and abundant for foreign capital to procure at will. Instead, states and brokers forge homecare and factory employment as segmented markets with contrasting regulatory logics, even as they produce and consume gendered laboring bodies. With women's commodified reproductive labor (Lan 2006; Parreñas 2001) progressively overtaking men's industrial labor in the maintenance of global capitalism, Indonesia has strategically leveraged its well-developed migration infrastructure (Chang 2018; Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh 2012) and surplus labor to manufacture ideal care workers through public-private partnership in labor management.

I have argued that the market for homecare labor is governed under the rubric of "selling a resume," or a system of employer sponsorship, in which bosses in several destination states jostle for migrant women's labor-power by rewarding agent chains in Indonesia. As a result of interstate competition and the sending state's intervention, host societies find themselves in a double bind: they withstand longer recruitment queues, along with galloping resume fees and wages. By contrast, the case of MFWs reveals that, when destination states erect barriers to reserve formal employment for citizens, source societies whose emigrants lack the requisite credentials encounter severe constraints for eradicating predatory brokerage practices. The factory market is regulated by a form of direct payment called "buying a job," whereby MFWs contend for jobs by transmitting economic capital to destination brokers. Amid host societies' quota control and variations in sending state regulations, the Indonesian government's attempt at curbing debt bondage, without enhancing MFWs' qualifications, has permitted rival nations to take the "high road" of competition by offering skills, or the "low road" by providing bribes. The absence of a state-organized industrial credentialing program has further propelled recruiters to subject Indonesian MFWs to innumerable conditions to win the confidence of foreign capital.

This study attends to recent calls by students of transnationalism (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994) to go beyond the nation-state as a unit of analysis, directing our attention towards the multifaceted resource struggles between and among receiving and sending states in a supranational migratory order. A multilateral approach to international migration alerts us to the gendered, classed, and racialized mechanisms by which state and commercial actors govern territorial borders, generating unequal valuations of migrants' worth in a globalizing labor market.

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