



## Human Capital Transformation In Global Migration: Insight From The Lived Experience Of Indonesian Workers In Taiwan

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**Abstract:** Labor migration has become an essential part of Indonesian society and plays a significant role in supporting the national economy. Beyond economic motives, migration also represents a profound process of learning and personal transformation. This study aims to explore how overseas work experiences contribute to human capital transformation among Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. Using a qualitative approach with a single case study design, this research examines the lived experience of an Indonesian migrant worker through online interviews and thematic analysis. The findings reveal that the motivation to migrate is initially driven by economic needs and family aspirations but gradually evolves into a process of self-discovery and personal growth. Cultural adaptation fosters the ability to interact within different environments, internalize new values, and build emotional resilience. Workplace learning helps workers strengthen their technical skills, communication abilities, and professionalism, enriching their overall human capacity. These interconnected processes show that migration is not merely an economic movement but a human journey toward growth and empowerment. The study concludes that migration has strong potential to enhance human capital and should be supported through sustainable policies and training programs that emphasize capacity development and migrant workers' well-being.

**Keywords:** Migrant Workers, Human Capital Transformation, Motivation, Cultural Adaptation, Workplace Learning

### INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly dynamic landscape of global employment, migration has become an essential part of the human journey to survive and thrive. Amid economic uncertainty and rapid changes in social and demographic structures, cross-border labor mobility serves as an adaptive strategy for people in developing countries to expand economic opportunities, acquire new skills, and enhance human capital capacity (Ryndzak & Bachynska, 2022). Labor migration is no longer viewed merely as a physical movement for work, but as a social and learning process that transforms how individuals perceive themselves and their work (Grebeniyk et al., 2021).

For Indonesia, migrant workers play a significant role in supporting the national economy. Data from the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI) indicate that more than 297,000 Indonesian citizens are employed overseas, with Taiwan being one of the main destination countries, particularly in the domestic and caregiving sectors (*LAPTAH Laporan Publikasi Data*



PMI, 2024.). Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan often face considerable challenges such as physical strain, cultural differences, and communication barriers (Liao, 2022). Nevertheless, amid these difficulties, many workers demonstrate remarkable abilities to adapt, learn, and discover new meaning in their work (Pham et al., 2024).

Within the framework of human capital theory (Becker, 1993), overseas work experience can be understood as a long-term investment that enhances individual skills and capacities. However, this classical approach tends to emphasize technical and economic aspects. More recent perspectives suggest that human capital is not static but evolves continuously through reflective and adaptive processes, known as human capital transformation (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). This perspective highlights the importance of cross-cultural learning, the formation of new values, and the strengthening of individual creativity in navigating an increasingly flexible and uncertain world of work. In this context, sustainable human resource management plays a vital role in ensuring fair, dignified, and sustainable employment relationships by improving the quality of the psychological contract between workers and organizations (Griep et al., 2025).

Previous studies in Indonesia have highlighted the job resilience of migrant workers in relation to motivation and social support (Anwar & Mustika, 2024; Nasir et al., 2025). The findings indicate that intrinsic motivation to improve family well-being, along with social support from communities and employers, plays a crucial role in maintaining work endurance. However, further exploration is needed to understand how migration experiences can trigger the transformation of human capital—from merely sustaining resilience to achieving continuous growth and learning.

The concept of human capital transformation opens a new perspective for understanding migration as a complex and multidimensional learning process. This process encompasses individuals' abilities to adapt, internalize new values, and develop a more mature professional identity (Grebeniyk et al., 2021b; Malik & Garg, 2020). In the context of Indonesian migrant workers, overseas work experiences not only enhance technical skills but also foster interpersonal competence, a sense of responsibility, and self-confidence (Anita, 2025; Guritno & Aryo, 2025). Thus, migration can be viewed as a continuous process of human transformation rather than merely an economic movement.

Although several studies have examined the well being and resilience of migrant workers, an in depth understanding of how cross-border work experiences shape human capital



transformation remains relatively limited. This study is important to broaden the discourse on sustainable human resource development amid the growing trend of global labor mobility.

Based on this gap, the present article aims to explore how global migration experiences trigger the transformation of human capital among Indonesian workers in Taiwan. Using a qualitative approach with a single case study design, this research seeks to understand the processes of learning, adaptation, and meaning-making experienced by migrant workers. The findings are expected to enrich the theory of human capital transformation and provide an empirical foundation for human resource development policies that emphasize sustainability and the empowerment of Indonesian migrant workers.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a single case study design to explore the experience of an Indonesian migrant worker in Taiwan within the process of human capital transformation. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of an individual's lived experience, including the meanings, learning processes, and value changes that occur throughout their employment abroad (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The informant in this study is an Indonesian female migrant worker who has been employed in the caregiving sector in Taiwan for more than five years. The informant was selected purposively, considering that her extensive work experience and reflective capacity provide rich insights into the processes of adaptation and self development in the host country.

The primary data were obtained through in depth interviews conducted online using written communication. This approach was chosen because it allowed for a more flexible conversational process and gave the informant time to reflect and articulate her experiences and perspectives more thoughtfully. The interviews focused on three main themes: (1) motivation for working abroad, (2) the process of cross cultural adaptation and learning, and (3) the formation of meaning related to work and migration experiences. In addition to the interviews, supporting documents such as BP2MI reports, labor policy documents, and relevant news and publications were reviewed to understand the broader social and economic context of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan.

Data analysis followed a thematic approach as outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The process involved repeated reading of the data, coding, clustering of meanings, and identification



of major themes. The results were then interpreted within the framework of human capital transformation to explain how migration experiences contribute to the development of individual capacities and values.

The validity of the findings was ensured through source and method triangulation (Patton, 2014). Triangulation was carried out by comparing interview results with supporting documents and the researcher's reflective notes throughout the analysis process. In addition, *member checking* was conducted by confirming the interpretations with the informant to ensure that the meanings derived accurately reflected her actual experiences.

All research procedures adhered to ethical standards for social research. The informant's identity was kept confidential, and informed consent was obtained prior to the interview. The informant was also granted full autonomy to skip questions or withdraw from participation at any time. This approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how the global migration experience serves as a meaningful process of human capital transformation for Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study seeks to understand how global migration experiences shape the transformation of human capital among Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. Through in-depth online interviews and an examination of supporting documents, the findings reveal that this process unfolds gradually and in multiple dimensions. Migration experiences are not merely economic journeys to earn a living but also social, emotional, and spiritual learning processes that foster resilience and the formation of a renewed identity.

Based on thematic analysis, three main themes were identified to reflect the dynamics of human capital transformation: (1) migration motivation, (2) cross-cultural adaptation and learning, and (3) the formation of work meaning and self-transformation. These themes together illustrate a continuous process in which migrant workers gradually reshape their ways of thinking, behaving, and perceiving the meaning of their work.

### **Migration Motivation: From Economic Needs to Personal Values**

The initial stage of human capital transformation begins with motivational drives for migration. The informant revealed that the decision to work abroad was rooted in a desire to



support the family's economic well-being back home. Economic necessity served as the primary trigger; however, as time went on, other dimensions emerged such as a sense of responsibility, pride, and the aspiration to prove one's capability.

In one of her statements, the informant expressed a wish to “*change family's fate without burdening others.*” This simple statement reflects the intersection between economic motivation and moral values. Over time, this motivation evolved into a form of psychological energy that strengthened her mental resilience. These findings reinforce the results of previous studies by (Anwar & Mustika, 2024) and (Nasir et al., 2025), which highlight that intrinsic motivation and social support play crucial roles in sustaining migrant workers' enthusiasm in facing work-related pressures. Motivation functions not only as an initial driving force but also as the foundation for perseverance and the ability to learn from experience.

This initial stage can be understood as a phase of value orientation, in which migrant workers begin to place their economic goals within a broader framework of meaning family responsibility, independence, and self-worth. This phase marks the first entry point toward human capital transformation, as it shifts one's self-perception from merely a breadwinner to an individual with life purpose.

### **Cross Cultural Adaptation and Learning: Building Resilience and Social Skills**

The next stage emerges when migrant workers enter a work environment that differs culturally, linguistically, and socially. The informant described the early period of working in Taiwan as a time that was “*full of pressure and loneliness.*” Communication barriers and differences in lifestyle often led to misunderstandings. However, she gradually discovered ways to adjust by observing her colleagues' behaviors and learning directly from her own mistakes.

This adaptation process served as an informal yet deeply meaningful form of cross cultural learning. The informant learned to understand the more direct communication style of Taiwanese people and to appreciate their strong sense of punctuality and discipline. She also developed patience and empathy in caring for the elderly individuals under her responsibility.

These experiences illustrate how individuals cultivate social and emotional competence, which (Griep et al., 2025) describe as part of sustainable human capital development. Cross-cultural learning helps individuals broaden their perspectives, enhance cognitive flexibility, and strengthen emotional regulation in stressful situations.



Adaptation was not always easy. In the researcher's reflective notes, several moments of crisis were observed that became turning points for personal growth. For instance, when the informant felt she had failed to communicate effectively with her employer and almost gave up, she later realized the importance of shifting her mindset: "If I keep rejecting the situation, I won't learn anything." This statement captures the process of internalized learning that builds psychological and mental resilience.

This finding supports (Malik & Garg, 2020) who argue that resilience in the workplace is not solely shaped by formal training but also through reflective experiences that foster the ability to manage pressure, conflict, and value differences. Thus, cross cultural adaptation becomes the core of human capital transformation where individuals learn to align their competencies and personal values with new realities.

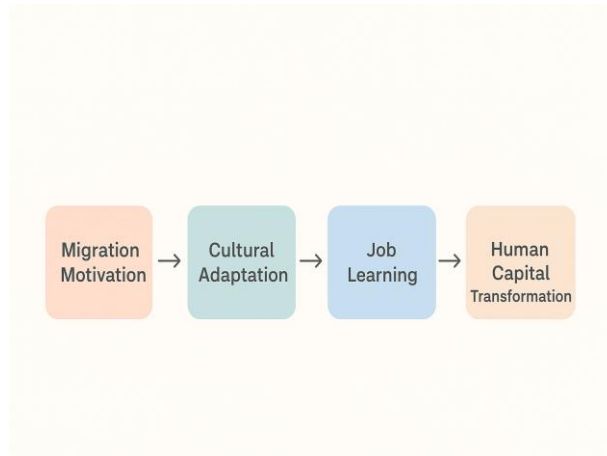
### **Constructing the Meaning of Work: From Economic Responsibility to Existential Growth.**

The final stage of human capital transformation is marked by the emergence of a new awareness about the meaning of work. After undergoing a period of adaptation, the informant began to view her job not merely as a source of income but as part of a life journey that shapes her character. She perceived migrant workers as having an important social role, both for their families and their communities back home.

In the interview, she referred to her work as a "*school of life*," where she learned patience, responsibility, and appreciation for hard work. This perspective illustrates that migrant workers are no longer passive laborers but active agents who construct their professional and personal identities through everyday experiences.

This finding aligns with the theory of human capital transformation proposed by (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011), which suggests that learning and work experiences can alter how individuals perceive themselves and their roles within organizations and society. In this context, migration becomes an arena for identity formation and capacity building.

The informant's experience reveals that meaning-making does not occur suddenly but through a gradual process of reflection. She came to realize that success is not solely measured by the amount of money sent home, but by her ability to become more patient, skilled, and wise in facing challenges. This transformation signifies a shift from *economic capital* to *human capital*, where the core value lies in personal capacity rather than financial outcomes.



*Figure 1. Conceptual Framework*

Figure 1 illustrates the process of human capital transformation experienced by Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. The three main themes migration motivation, cultural adaptation, and work-related learning reflect the long journey of individuals in adjusting to a new environment. This process demonstrates that the decision to migrate is not merely driven by economic necessity but also by the desire for self-development and broader life experience.

The stage of cultural adaptation plays a crucial role in this journey. In facing linguistic, cultural, and workplace differences, migrant workers learn to build tolerance, empathy, and cross-cultural communication skills. This ability to adapt helps them discover new meaning in their work, turning pressure into learning opportunities and fostering self-confidence. Successful adaptation ultimately strengthens individuals' resilience and readiness to deal with complex work situations.

Through the learning gained from their work experiences, migrant workers develop new capacities that go beyond technical skills. They come to understand the values of hard work, responsibility, and discipline key components of personal transformation. Therefore, migration can be understood as a holistic process of change that not only improves economic well being but also nurtures individuals to become more resilient, reflective, and adaptive in the face of global change.



## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the migration experiences of Indonesian workers in Taiwan are not merely about earning a living, but also about learning and personal transformation. Migrant workers develop strong motivation and determination to improve their lives while cultivating the ability to adapt to new environments. These experiences help them grow into more resilient, confident, and open-minded individuals.

Beyond its economic benefits, migration also contributes to shaping a more mature mindset and work attitude. Through cultural adaptation and workplace learning, migrant workers learn to manage challenges, appreciate discipline, and understand the meaning of responsibility and hard work. This process demonstrates that migration can serve as a vital pathway for holistic human capacity development.

The experiences of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan can be understood as a form of human capital transformation. Migration not only relocates labor but also transforms how individuals perceive themselves, their work, and their future. Consequently, policies and training programs for migrant workers should emphasize learning, psychological well-being, and self-empowerment to ensure that migration experiences bring sustainable benefits for both individuals and the nation.

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