

MALAYSIA AS ATTRACTION OF INTERNATIONAL FOREIGN WORKERS

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Abstract

This study discusses economic, political and socio-cultural Malaysia as a pull factor for foreign workers coming from various countries and a network of international interactions. The world is experiencing a migration of people who move away from their home country with people across national borders to be in another country. Most of them across the national borders are due to poverty, job opportunities, shelter, fleeing from political persecution, and conflict in the country, to gain knowledge or become an ambassador for the government in other countries. This study used a qualitative approach acquired through structured interviews with elite respondents and literature review. The results showed pulling factors of arrival of foreign workers into Malaysia is due to political stability and peace, privatization policy, economic development, dependence on foreign workers, the difference in wage rates, high demand from various sectors and providing various facilities in the flow of cross-border migration and socio-cultural.

Keywords --- foreign workers, economy, migration, international network, Malaysia

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the world is experiencing the migration of people who have moved away from their own country across the nation's borders to other countries. People migrate for many reasons such as poverty factors, seeking employment, knowledge, protection, escaping political oppression, ethnic conflict, becoming representatives of companies or states of ambassador administration in other countries (Azizah, 2002 & Naresh & Sidhu, 2005). The twentieth century is an era of mass population migration that has proven its truth through what has been and is happening all over the world (McAdam, 2012). This situation is driven by various factors of pull and push from within a country. International migration has been booming and its numbers have continued to rise. In the course of history, migration has shaped the international network, which has displaced the world's population since the fourteenth century.

Some of the world's population migrations continuing ties between the countries have been united by colonialism such as the flow of the Philippines to the United States and the people of India and Pakistan to the British island. In addition, there is also a flow of people from one country to another not connected by any previous ties such as Bangladesh to Italy and Indonesians to Saudi Arabia as workers (Munck, 2013). There is also an influx of workers leaving their home countries to work in rapidly developing countries such as Singapore and Malaysia. This study focuses on the rapid growth of Malaysia's economic development and political stability as a factor in attracting foreign workers to Malaysia and establishing an international network.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

History of Tanah Melayu began to experience changes not only in political, but also changes in social and economic in the 19th century. The development of tin and rubber industries has led to the arrival of Chinese and Indian to Tanah Melayu by the British (Abdullah, 2012). After independence until 1970s, the main issues related to the development of Malaysia were internal migration, especially from village to city and the effects of the

flow. One of the main consequences of the internal migration is that of rural people, where the rural area suffer from problems such as a shortage of labour, and idle phenomena as well as local labour shortage.

Other than that, the number of foreign workers into Malaysia has increased year by year. Among the countries that have entered Malaysia include Myanmar, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and also from African (Ramasamy, 2004). This situation is driving force for national development. Undoubtedly, the arrival of foreign workers is to fill vacancies in the fields of plantation, construction, agriculture, services and domestic workers. But now they are starting to monopolize the local jobs sector due to high demand from local employers and employees.

According to the Jordaan (2018), positive productivity effect created by foreign workers in Malaysia, especially in the industrial sector that uses semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Increasing foreign workers' access to Malaysia from source countries such as Indonesia, India, Nepal Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan is a response to the development of economic and political organizations in the international market.

According to Börzel & Risse (2019), the influx of foreign labour in Europe, Southeast Asia and the United States is due to the interdependence of regional and international economies in the domestic development process. Stephen and Miller (2009) pointed out that more than half the world's population lives in Asia Pacific and South East Asia where both the area has a lot of human resources. Thus the surplus of labour is a factor of migration whether through government policy, employer demand or the needs of a country. Rahmah & Ferayuliani (2014) describe the migration of migrant workers to Malaysia involving unskilled, semi-skilled and professional workers, with Indonesia being the largest country who exporter of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, followed by Bangladesh.

Most of the migrant workers from the Southeast Asian countries migrated to Malaysia due to factors such as wage differentiation, poverty, unemployment, long-standing social networks and demand from the Malaysian government itself (Anthony & Menju, 2015). Gentile (2019), the process of migrating foreign workers to Malaysia and ASEAN countries has benefited the country through foreign exchange rates, raised the standard of living of the people, increased family income and helped reduce domestic unemployment.

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative study design was used to implement the study. Qualitative research design deemed appropriate for the study because part of the data collected is through secondary data which is from library research. Secondary data refers to data that is collected by someone other than the user. Common sources of secondary data for social science include censuses, information collected by government departments, organizational records and data that was originally collected for other research purposes (Othman, 2009).

Meanwhile, the primary data used to get data through interviews with government officials, regulators, academics and NGOs. Among the government departments involved in the study were Malaysia Enforcement Agencies such as Immigration Department of Malaysia, the Royal Malaysian Police Agency (RMP), Ministry of Home Affairs and the Malaysia National Association of Employment Agencies. Personal interview survey, which is also called as a face to face surveys conducted with main informants who are directly involved in dealing with foreign workers and illegal immigrants.

Mills & Birks (2014) in the book *Qualitative Methodology: A Practical Guide* has explained that the qualitative method is the best approach to describe an event or behaviour in natural conditions of a particular subject or participation. Qualitative research also means that the findings obtained are not through statistical procedures and other forms of calculation (Othman, 2015). In addition, secondary data of this study were obtained in stages by electronic mail from the Royal Malaysian Police of Bukit Aman, the Immigration Department of Malaysia, Putrajaya and the Ministry of Human Resources. Researchers have made communication with law enforcement officials by phone and e-mail from time to time to get the right information for this research. The data and information received are in the form of reports, slides, maps, tables and statistics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Since gaining independence in 1957, Malaysia has successfully diversified its economy from one that was initially agriculture and commodity-based, to one that now plays host to robust manufacturing and services sectors that have propelled it to become a leading exporter of electrical appliances, electronic parts and components. Malaysia has successfully curtailed high poverty rates, reduced income inequalities, and also reduces unemployment (Gentile, 2019). This situation has attracted attention and has been a factor in attracting foreign workers to seek economic opportunities in Malaysia.

Political Stability and Security

Malaysia is a multicultural society of which the population is made up by different types of ethnic groups includes Malays, Chinese, Indian and more than 200 groups from Pribumi Sabah and Sarawak (Mardiana & Hasnah, 2014). According to Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019, Malaysia, as an upper-middle income country, estimated to have population of 32.6 million by October 2019 and have a strong political stability.

According to Gomez (2007), political stability of Malaysia can be measured by economic development and growth, the structure of the political system, the development of labour, governance,

political culture, technology development, environmental security and social development. In addition, a balanced political system is influenced by factors such as leader control, inflation, creation and innovation as well as public support as another indicator of ensuring political stability in Malaysia.

Thus, the governance and political system of the country need to be balanced like having good leaders, corruption control and a united society. According to the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2019 measures the state of peace in 163 countries according to 23 indicators that gauge the absence of violence or the fear of violence, Malaysia is ranked the 16th most peaceful country in the world. Domestic conflicts indicate that the scale is 1/5, both in control and in good faith. Although political instability shows a 1.4/5 scale that is still in control of the political system. As for domestic issues and international conflicts, Malaysia is at the 1/5 scale where Malaysia has no internal conflicts that threaten the stability of the country and conflicts with other countries internationally. The 2019 GPI indicates Iceland remains the most peaceful countries in the world, with New Zealand, Portugal, Austria, Denmark, Canada and Singapore ranking 7th.

The 2015 Global Peace Index (GPI) shows that the world is becoming increasingly divided with some countries enjoying unprecedented levels of peace and prosperity while others spiral further into violence and conflict. Iceland is the most peaceful country, with the ten highest ranking nations in the GPI all being stable democracies. Nordic and Alpine countries are particularly well represented. Asia-Pacific is also represented at the top, with New Zealand ranked 4th, Japan at 8th and Australia at 9th. Syria remains the world's least peaceful country, followed by Iraq and Afghanistan. The country that suffered the most severe deterioration in peace was Libya, which now ranks 149th of 162 countries. Meanwhile Malaysia ranked 28 in the latest Global Peace Index (GPI), behind Singapore at 24, but ahead of other countries in the region.

According to Institute for Economics and Peace (2015), the GPI measures a country's level of Negative Peace using three domains of peacefulness. The first domain, Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict, investigates the extent to which countries are involved in internal and external conflicts, as well as their role and duration of involvement in conflicts. The second domain evaluates the level of harmony or discord within a nation; ten indicators broadly assess what might be described as Societal Safety and Security. The assertion is that low crime rates, minimal terrorist activity and violent demonstrations, harmonious relations with neighbouring countries, a stable political scene and a small proportion of the population being internally displaced or made refugees can be equated with peacefulness. The third domain is militarization. Malaysia has moved up a notch in the 2019 Global Peace Index (GPI), claiming the 30th spot as the most peaceful country in the world. Malaysia also placed as the fifth most peaceful country in the Asia Pacific region after New Zealand, Japan, Australia and Singapore. North Korea and Philippines remained among the least peaceful countries ranking 150th and 138th, respectively.

Malaysia is a multicultural and multi-religious society of which the population is made up by different types of ethnic groups includes Malays (60%), Chinese (26%), Indian and the Native (14%). In fact, different ethnic groups have their own history, culture, belief system, value and language, there is thus unity among different ethnics is important in Malaysia (Population and Housing Census, DOSM 2019). The communities coexist in relative harmony, although there is little racial interaction. (BBC News, January 27).

Privatization Policy

The Malaysia government's intention towards privatization emerged in the 1980s through the establishment of Malaysian

Incorporated Policy (Malaysia Economic Planning Unit, 2018). The initial objective was to alleviate the financial burden of Malaysian government amidst the implementation of New Economic Policy (NEP) which in turn, was aimed at reducing poverty and eliminate inter-ethnic disparities. The huge amount of government's debt in the wake of establishing an increasing number of public enterprises drove the government to transfer public enterprises to private ownership. Thus, the public sector was no longer the prime engine of growth for economic development. The privatization program in Malaysia has significantly impacted its economic reform agenda. It has changed the structure of incentives, reduced government interventions, improved monitoring on the activities of public enterprises and introduced competition to the industry.

The country's economic development policy has affected the pattern of employment in Malaysia (Sabrina et. al, 2014). From the 1960s to the early 1970s, the agricultural sector was a key sector in the employment opportunities. As the country introduced labour-intensive industries to replace agriculture as the driver of the country's economic growth, the industrialization and urbanization process gradually changed the pattern of employment to the manufacturing and construction sectors. A variety of jobs have been created in the manufacturing sector to offset the decline in the rate of employment growth, particularly in agriculture and construction. The rapid impact of the country's economic development process has stimulated the increase in domestic and foreign labour.

Through the privatization policy, labour productivity is able to meet market demand (Jian Yee, et al., 2014). Labour productivity is a strategy of economic growth that is human capital investment through education and training received. Policies related to human capital development are necessary to increase productivity in potential sectors. In addition, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has a positive effect on productivity growth through technology and management skills. Meanwhile, local firms conducting R&D have the potential to increase productivity and drive national development.

In developing countries, governments often intervene early in the process of economic growth and development (Zulkilly & Nor Ghani, 1999). This intervention was done through the establishment of public and private companies. The main objective of the privatization policy is to ease the financial burden and the responsibility of government administration. The transfer of activities and functions to the private sector is expected to enhance efficiency, productivity and accelerate economic growth and increase national revenue. Through the privatization policy, private companies began to recruit foreign workers for the country's development process.

Until the 1990s, most jobs in the manufacturing sector were filled by low-skilled workers as production operators who were Malaysians, especially young women who had no formal education or high school education. Due to the increasing number of women receiving formal education and pursuing higher education institutions there is a shortage of manpower in the field (Che Hashim, 2009). This situation has opened up opportunities for the employment of foreign workers. The rise of women in formal employment has also led to high demand for maids to take over the jobs of working women in managing household and family matters especially for home, care for children and the elderly (Zulkepley, 2014). This situation clearly shows that the combination of economic growth and socio-cultural development plays a key role in stimulating high demand for foreign workers in various sectors of the economy such as manufacturing and domestic workers.

The planned development after independence under the New Economic Policy (1970-1990) has produced a number of

socioeconomic factors that encourage the employment of foreign workers (Economic Report, 1991/1992: 230 & 1993/1994: 23). Between 1996 and 1990 the role of the agricultural sector as a major driver of employment began to decline. Since 1991, the manufacturing sector has been the main driver of employment and has stimulated the process of urbanization and industrialization. Indemnification supported by foreign investment has created many employment opportunities in the field of construction and manufacturing.

Economic Progress

Malaysia's economy is showing resilience and is performing strongly. Growth is running above potential, driven by strong global demand for electronics and improved terms of trade for commodities, such as oil and gas. On the domestic front, Malaysia's strong employment is boosting private consumption, and investment is also helping to drive growth. This resilience has enabled the country's economy to sustain 3.4% overall growths since 1980. In 2012, growth rate was 5.6% and the Malaysian economy still relied on foreign labour as the catalyst for national development (International Labour Organization, 2012).

Malaysia is no exception and has benefitted greatly from the employment of foreign workers in several economically important sectors (Hugo, 2008). During the last two decades, these workers have helped to provide the labour that has fuelled the country's emergence into an upper middle-income country. Early entry of foreign workers occurred during the British colonial administration in the 19th century. The second was the influx of foreign workers during the administration of Tun Mahathir as the 4th Prime Minister (1981-2003). The third entry occurred after Malaysia registered growth and economic recovery following the 1997/1998 financial crisis. Compared to neighbouring countries especially the Philippines and Indonesia, Malaysia has better economic growth and lower unemployment after the post-crisis economy (Zarina & Nor Aziz, 2015).

Malaysia continues to be an attractive investment destination due the booming economic performance. As referred to Figure 2, inflows investment in Malaysia showed an increase from RM105.6 billion to RM235.9 billion within 2010 to 2014 respectively. These investments occurred in manufacturing sectors supported by export-oriented industries and led to an increase in the number of current labour demand.

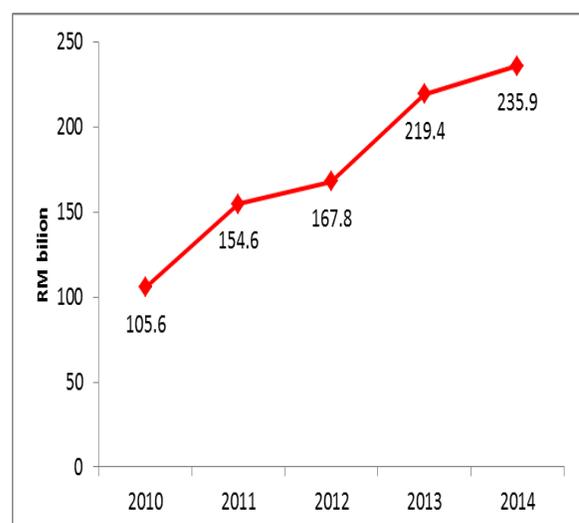


Figure 1. Total approved investments by Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA)
Source: MIDA (2017)

The Malaysian economy has also been seen to grow rapidly in recent years, especially after successfully ending the 1997/1998 economic crisis and becoming one of the new industrial nations (Rahman, 2000). This situation shows that the Malaysian economy has recovered from the financial crisis that occurred previously, and as a result, many sectors are now opening more and more job opportunities in various sectors within the country. Among the economic sectors that lack of work force at the time was agriculture, construction, services and manufacturing. The mega development projects are going well, resulting in many job opportunities and rising labour shortages. Malaysia is among the top ten countries listed as employers of foreign workers from around the world (Ramasamy 2006 & Ramesh et.al., 2012).

Malaysia is ranked 11th among 138 nations in the latest World Economic Forum Global Competitive Index 2016-2017 on quality, infrastructure and transportation. World Economic Forum (WEF) applause Malaysian private sector, which is highly sophisticated, ranked 15th and innovative, ranked 21st. All this bodes well for a country that aims to become a high-income, knowledge-based economy by the end of the decade (GPI, 2015). All of this is a good sign for a country that aspires to be a high-income nation based on economics and knowledge as well as its preparation to become a developed nation. Inadequate infrastructure problems and poverty are major obstacles to the development of most countries.

Global Gender Gap report published by the WEF, Malaysia ranked 119th of female participation in the workforce (119th); and the still comparatively low technological readiness (60th). Multinational and transnational companies are largely coming from developed countries. Some came from within Malaysia and some came from new Asia Pacific industrialized countries to invest in manufacturing. Enhanced foreign direct investment flows coupled with the rapid industrialization of the manufacturing industry, socioeconomic stability has enabled Malaysia's GDP to continue to grow and drive the influx of foreign workers into the national development process.

Dependency of Foreign Workers

According to Hugo (2004), Malaysia is an ASEAN country that promotes the entry of illegal foreign workers as temporary workers. Malaysia also plays a role as a recipient and contributor to the foreign workforce, however, from both roles Malaysia is seen as more popular as the country of receiving foreign workers. This phenomenon may occur due to geographical location that is so strategic when using the sea route and it is so close to other ASEAN countries.

Numbers of foreign workers are increased from year to year. Any attempt by the Malaysian government to reduce this number has been opposed by employers (Zulkepley & Hasbullah, 2014). It is undeniable that the foreigners working in Malaysia have contributed to the economic growth of the country, in particular by alleviating labour shortages in selected sectors of the economy but they still bring a lot of disadvantages to the country in terms of employment opportunity for local workers and effectiveness roles of trade union movement. As economic growth is highly dependent on foreign workers, there is agreement between the government and employers on the need to employ foreign workers and bring them in to work. The migration policy of foreign workers in Malaysia aims to bring them into the pure labour market and then once they are done, they will return to their home countries.

The huge inflows of foreign workers were mainly led by the rapid expansion of the Malaysian economy under Mahathir's leadership, when the several mega-infrastructure projects was built, the majority of the construction workers were from Indonesia and Bangladesh. Thus, to support the expansion and

the competitiveness of the economy, a steady supply of foreign labor was needed.

Years later, the Malaysian government has welcomed foreign workers from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and others employed in critical sectors. Many Malaysian are no longer willing to perform jobs that they consider it as 3D's (Dirty, Dangerous, Difficult) that contribute to the dependency on the foreign workforce. They are not interested working in a rough nature of work in site, which is needs more physical strength compared to working in air conditioned office. Initially, foreign workers were in the plantation, construction and domestic sectors, and then expanded into the manufacturing and services sectors (Nor Azizan & Zarina, 2015).

The growing presence of foreign workers in Malaysia can be explained by excess demand for labour associated with rapid economic growth especially during 1980s, 1990s until 2015, as well as the relatively cheaper cost of foreign labour. Foreign workers migration phenomenon is difficult to avoid especially when most countries in the world today are focusing on maximizing their economic development. Figure 2 shows the country's recruitment and dependence on foreign workers from 2006 to 2013.

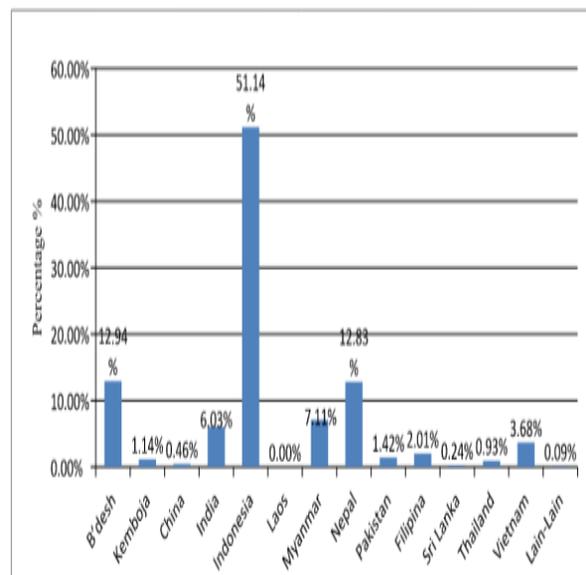


Figure 2. Foreign workers in Malaysia by source country (2006-2013)

Source: Adapted from the Immigration Department of Malaysia (2014)

Immigration Department of Malaysia statistics on the number of foreign workers by country of origin (2000–2015) identified at least 13 countries as the major source for foreign workers to Malaysia. The main contributor countries listed are Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand, Philippine, Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, China, Laos, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and India. Based on the supply patterns, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar can be considered as the major active contributors for Malaysia's foreign workforces. Figure 3 indicates Indonesia tops all other countries since year 2006 in supplying foreign workers to Malaysia. However, the overall percentage of workers registered declined every year. This situation was one of the effects of the 2008 economic downturn that has affected some foreign workers' recruitment processes, as well as the government's policies at the time of trying to use local power but which did not work.

The country of Laos has the smallest number of exports of labour surplus in Malaysia as it is a Southeast Asian country with a population of 6.6 million people and is one of the few Communist countries to open the door to foreign relations since 2004. Laos's national policy is still traditional and does not encourage labour migration nor is it a source of exports of labour surplus.

The number of foreign workers in Malaysia has grown rapidly over the last twenty years. However to accurately suggest the exact number is quite impossible, because the flawed data available. Economic growth is sustained by the government's policy actions that provide incentives or incentives for investors to continue to come, bring technology and leverage it into the country by utilizing some of their domestic energy needs (SME Economic Report, 2015). The influx of foreign investors brought changes, accelerated the growth and growth of the

manufacturing industry. Whereas local investors are able to increase the number of firms exporting goods for export and bringing changes to the Malaysian economic sector (Zaleha et al., 2011).

Differences of Wages Rate

Job opportunities and wage differences are influencing the arrival of immigrants to work in Malaysia. Huge job opportunities employ thousands of foreign workers to come to Malaysia every year in various sectors with much higher wages than their home countries. Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand are countries from Southeast Asia that make Malaysia one of the leading countries in the quest for higher wages or wages. Figure 3, is the comparison of wage rates or monthly wages by country.

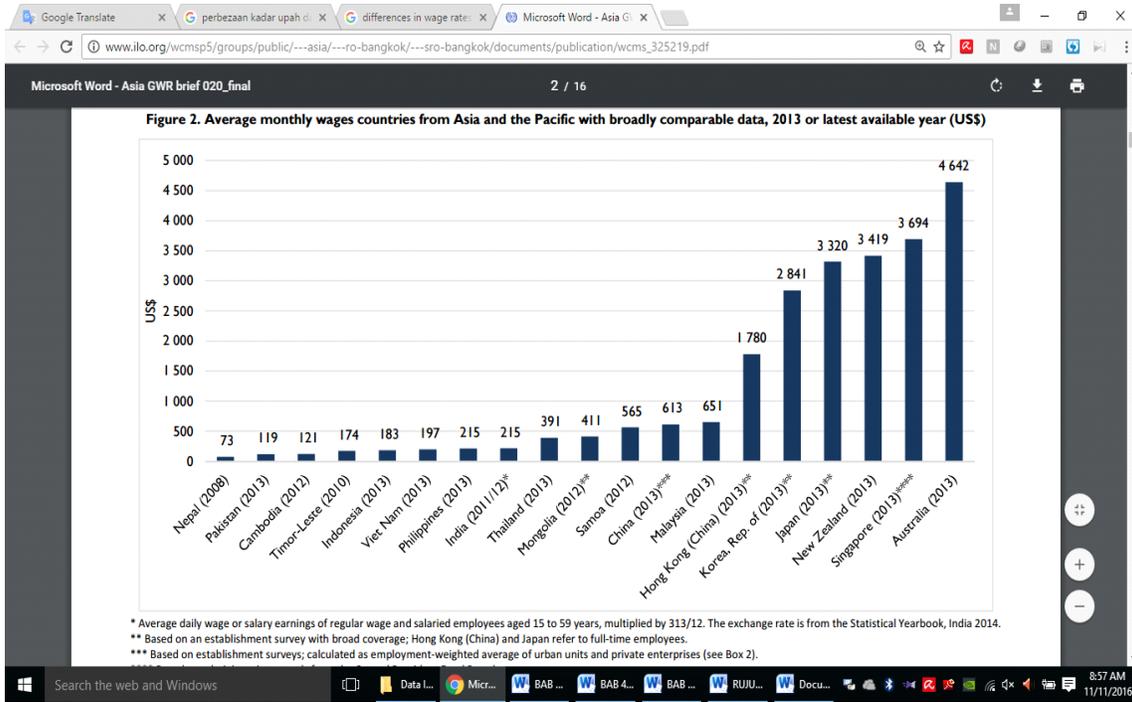


Figure 3. Monthly wage or monthly wage rate by country
Source: Global Wage Report 2014/15

According to ILO (2014) report, despite the recent growth, workers in many countries across Asia and the Pacific still earn extremely low wages. At the lower end, wage workers in Nepal earned US\$73 (RM324) per month in 2008, followed by US\$119 (RM528) in Pakistan (2013) and US\$121 (RM537) in Cambodia (2012). Due to the low wage levels, the latter two countries are also among those with the highest incidence of working poverty world-wide. For ordinary workers in India, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand their wages are better than those of Myanmar, Nepal, Cambodia and Pakistan.

Upper-middle-income countries such as China and Malaysia have higher monthly payrolls of between US\$613 (RM2,723) in China and Malaysia US\$651 (RM2,891) as compared to other developing countries. Although they still fell short of those in high-income economies where monthly average wages ranged from US\$1,780 (RM7,907) in Hong Kong (China) to US\$4,642 (RM20,620) in Australia (Global Wage Report, 2014). It can be concluded that Malaysia is among the countries with better wages rate than developing countries in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific. This situation is one of the factors that have led to Malaysia being flooded with illegal workers and PATI to seize

employment opportunities, while also being strengthened by political stability and national security.

Requirements and Higher Demand from Employer

The requirements and demands for workforce were high in industrial and constructional industry. In order to meet the demand of the labour workforce, Malaysia has allowed the industrial sector and service sector to hire the foreign worker. The foreign worker are been hired to do the critical jobs in the construction sector, plantation and others sector that cannot be fulfilled by local people. For example in the manufacturing, manufacturing and processing of daily food industries where local workers are said to be less interested in filling it. The growth of the Malaysian economy and the rapid growth of the Small Medium Industries (SMEs) in the country have been one of the key factors for the entry of foreign workers into Malaysia (Patricia, 2008).

The local workers are unable to fulfill the demand of construction market. Hence, the contractors are willing to import foreign workers to meet the needs and requirement of labour market in the Malaysia's industry. Foreign workers began to take up job vacancies in factories, semi-skilled and

skilled jobs. Employers also prefer to hire foreigners than locals because of the low wages and it give a lot of benefits. The most active sectors of employment received by foreign workers in Malaysia are manufacturing, agriculture, plantation, construction, services and domestic services. Table 1 shows the percentage of foreign workers active in the employment sector in Malaysia.

Table 1. Percentage of foreign workers active in the employment sector in Malaysia

Sector	Percentage
Manufacturing	36%
Plantation/Agriculture	23.5%
Construction	19.9%
Services	13.0%
Domestic Workers	7.5%

Source: Department of Foreign Workers Management Division (2016)

The manufacturing sector recorded the highest demand and dependence on foreign workers in all sectors at 36%. This industry has engaged foreign workers from many countries especially from Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar. The other sector have highest dependence on foreign workers is plantation/agriculture sector which is usually filled by Bangladesh.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, male and female foreign workers from the following source countries (Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) are allowed to work in all sectors, namely manufacturing, plantation, agriculture, services and construction. Only male foreign workers from Philippines are allowed to work in all sectors in Malaysia (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016).

Foreign workers from India are allowed to work in certain sectors only like service sector (only in restaurants), manufacturing sectors (high tension cable), plantation sector and agriculture sector. Male foreign workers from Indonesia are allowed to work in all sectors except the manufacturing sector. Meanwhile, female workers from Indonesia are allowed to work in all sectors. Bangladesh foreign workers are allowed to work in plantation sectors only (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016). They are legal and active workers who have temporary Work Pass documents and return to their home country after contract termination or return after renewal of contract.

The dependence of foreign workers continues to be an important factor in the development of the country today. However, the high dependence on foreign workers is not only facing Malaysia but also with countries with high economic growth rates such as Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Malaysia has become a country too dependent on foreign workers, especially in the services industry and the 3D (Dirty, Dangerous, Difficult) sector such as construction and agriculture (Iskandar et al., 2017).

Although foreign workers do not dominate the entire labour sector in the country, they continue to receive high demand from local employers. In general, the different streams of foreign workers inflows can be divided into two categories: first, the welcome inflows, consisting of high skill foreign workers in the managerial, executive and technical capacity that are engaged in both the private and public sector also known as expatriates; second, the problematic inflows, consisting of the low skill

foreign workers. Low skill foreign workers are recruited as lower workers in the Malaysian employment hierarchy and they are involved in one of the six sectors in Malaysia.

Environment and Socio-cultural

The international migration network has been facilitated through the provision of legally and illegally cross-border migration transportation. This transportation facility is one of the environmental factors that facilitate foreign workers and foreign workers without permission to come to Malaysia. The entry of foreign workers into Malaysia in two ways: by sea or by road; and through the main entrance with a valid document but does not leave after the visit or work permit has expired. In 2014, an estimated 6 million PATIs were still in Malaysia coming by air, sea and land (Immigration Department of Malaysia 2016, Azizah & Mustafa, 2014).

Based on interviews with Indonesian, Myanmar and Thailand workers (2014-2016), it was found that this process of migration occurred due to factors such as domestic stability; security; influence of friends; and Ambassadors and High Commissioners of their respective countries in Malaysia. All of these factors are included as environmental factors.

The next factor is the sociocultural factor of Malaysian society with foreign workers. Most foreign workers coming to Malaysia are made up of those who share the same religious and cultural background as the Malaysian people. This has made it easier for foreign workers to live their daily lives. For example, Myanmar and Thai society; the majority of Myanmar and Thailand people who are foreign workers are Buddhists and Muslims. Islam is the official religion of the Federation of Malaysia and other religions are guaranteed freedom of practice in the constitution. Islam has many followers in various foreign-source countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Middle East. Similarly, Hindus have similar religions in India and Nepal and Buddhism in China. The cultural sharing of Southeastern Asian societies has taken place over a long time in the form of multicultural cultures such as language, vocabulary, customs, values and usage. For example, *songkok*, cloth diapers, scarves, *kurta* shirts and so on.

There are several other aspects besides the transport and socio-cultural factors. Among them are, (i) geographical aspects: Southeast Asia is known as an equatorial climate or Tropical Rainforest. The equatorial climate has no significant summer and winter temperatures, but it is hot and humid all year long; (ii) aspects of food: where most countries in the Asia Pacific region make rice and bread as their staple or daily food other than halal-guaranteed foods. Rice is a major source of food in ASEAN countries. The other countries like India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh make bread as a main food; (iii) aspects of language: the use of the Malay language that is easy to learn and understand Malaysia as the country of choice for foreign workers. The study found that foreign workers who come to Malaysia will be proficient in Bahasa Melayu in three months because it uses a system of letters and easy to learn. They said speaking Malay is easy since the pronunciation of a word is based on its syllabus. Meanwhile, the grammar are not that hard to learn either; (iv) religious and environmental aspects: Malaysia has many similarities with most cultures in the Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific region such as cultural similarities, social bonds and international networks.

CONCLUSION

The "push" and "pull" factors at the international level in the region caused workers to migrate to Malaysia for employment. The accelerated economic development programs and the sustained high economic growth rates in Malaysia over approximately three decades caused the influx of immigrant workers to meet the increasing demand in the Malaysian labour market. Generally, there are many other reasons why these

foreign workers choose Malaysia as their destination. First, Malaysia geographical location, second, the stable and sound government, third, labours shortage, fourth, higher wages and finally, the employer attitudes.

Since independence, Malaysia has been governed by a stable government and with sound economic growth. This political and economic stability has become the main attraction for migration. Comparatively, Malaysia has been seen as the most stable nation in this region in comparison to its neighbours.

In particular, the economic, political, and security factors of Malaysia have been successful in attracting foreign workers into the country. This study has identified factors of immigrants to Malaysia which include factors of political stability and security, funding policies, development economics, depends on foreign workers, wage rate differences, high demand and demand from employers as well as environmental factors and socio-cultural similarities with the local people.

In conclusion, this study has identified factors that attract foreign workers to Malaysia. Among the factors are economic growth, political stability, and strong national security. In addition, there are factors such as policy of financing, dependence on foreign workers, wage differentiation, high demand from employers as well as environmental and socio-economic factors, and the same culture as the locals.

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