

Research Article

# Issues of Adaptation and Ethnic Struggle of Southeast Asian Migrant Workers in a Foreign Land - Taking Migrant Workers in Taiwan as an Example

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore the adaptation process of Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan and the ethnic struggles they face. Utilizing social science observational methods and literature analysis, the research focuses on the complex interactions between migrant workers and the local society, particularly the conflicts and collaborations among different ethnic groups. The findings indicate that Southeast Asian migrant workers, while living in a foreign land, must not only overcome cultural differences and language barriers but also face structural discrimination and exclusion from the local society. These phenomena can be understood through the theoretical frameworks of nationalism and racism. Nationalism emphasizes the impact of national identity on social integration, while racism reveals the existing power inequalities and exclusion mechanisms within society. Additionally, the theory of multicultural formation provides insights into how different ethnic groups interact and coexist in shared spaces. Despite these challenges, migrant workers demonstrate strong adaptive abilities, gradually achieving social integration by establishing community support networks and actively participating in local economic activities. This study aims to provide empirical recommendations for migrant worker policies and social integration strategies to promote the coexistence and development of multiculturalism, as well as to offer a theoretical foundation for future related research. Finally, this paper summarizes the following conclusions and follow-up suggestions: first, "cross-cultural conflict" will make the physical and mental conditions of foreign migrant workers unhealthy, and management measures should be based on "human rights issues" to allow foreign migrant workers to have a certain degree of freedom and development in their right to work and socialize, so enterprises should formulate relevant measures to allow foreign migrant workers to get physical and mental adjustment in a foreign land. to promote more effective communication and cooperation.

## Keywords

Nationalism, Foreign Workers, Ethnic Conflict, Socialization

## 1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, Southeast Asian migrant workers have become a crucial driving force behind the economic development of many countries. In Taiwan, as the industrial structure transforms and labor demands increase,

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**Received:** 26 July 2024; **Accepted:** 3 September 2024; **Published:** 11 September 2024



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migrant workers from Southeast Asia have gradually become an indispensable part of the workforce. However, they face multiple challenges in their lives and work abroad, including cultural adaptation, social discrimination, and ethnic struggles.

Regarding cultural conflicts, many scholars in Taiwan have conducted research on cultural conflicts in transnational marriages, as well as on conflicts of interest and cultural exclusion related to immigrants. From a global perspective, the lower and middle classes may oppose migrant workers due to conflicts of interest but may also support them due to economic needs. In terms of cultural identity and values, cultural prejudice stemming from racial discrimination can affect people's attitudes towards marriage migrants, but it does not impact their attitudes towards migrant workers. In summary, emphasizing multicultural identity is conducive to accepting different immigrant groups, while nationalism tends to result in the exclusion of both migrant workers and marriage migrants [1]. Therefore, current academic research in Taiwan related to this area in sociology has focused only on topics such as "transnational marriages" or "cultural adaptation of migrant workers." When it comes to discussions about struggles or violent conflicts involving migrant workers after they arrive in Taiwan, there is only one thesis from 2010 [2]. Over a decade has passed without further research on this issue, yet the problem still persists in Taiwanese society. Such issues are usually only visible in social news, which is one of the purposes of this study.

The occurrence of conflicts may be common around the world; however, conflicts involving foreign migrant workers should receive significant attention from society. Especially when 'transnational laborers' experience conflicts in the country where they work, whether it's a language-related conflict or physical violence, it constitutes 'workplace violence' or 'bullying.' Many times, people dismiss these issues as personal matters between individuals, but often these incidents can escalate and make headlines in social news, potentially leading to the 'ethnic conflicts' we dread. Therefore, we should pay more attention to understanding why these conflicts arise. Reducing workplace violence and exclusionary discrimination is something that is continually advocated internationally. This article will discuss the causes of conflicts involving transnational laborers and the solutions to these issues.

This paper aims to explore the adaptation process of Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan and the ethnic struggles they encounter. First, it will analyze the living conditions of these workers in their new environment, their social support networks, and how they cope with language and cultural differences. Secondly, it will delve into the roots of ethnic struggles, including social stereotypes, economic competition, and policy restrictions, all of which may affect the social status and mental health of migrant workers.

Through the exploration of these issues, this study hopes to reveal the true circumstances of Southeast Asian migrant

workers in Taiwan and promote attention to and protection of their rights. Ultimately, this is not only an understanding of individual migrants but also an important reflection on the coexistence of diverse cultures and social harmony.

## 2. The History of the Introduction of Southeast Asian Migrant Workers in Taiwan

This chapter will explain the reasons and current situation of Taiwan's introduction of Southeast Asian workers.

### 2.1. Motivation for the Introduction of Migrant Workers from Southeast Asia

Since the 1980s, Taiwan has introduced foreign migrant workers in response to industrial demand. However, at that time, the government had not officially approved the recruitment of foreign workers, nor had any relevant legislation been established, making the employment of these foreign workers illegal. It was not until April 1992 that Taiwan officially opened the door to foreign "domestic caregivers" under strict "quota" controls. Subsequently, on May 8 of the same year, relevant laws were enacted and announced, marking the formal legalization of foreign labor recruitment.

Due to the transformation of Taiwan's industrial structure and changes in the labor market at that time, along with the expansion and popularization of higher education, these factors contributed to economic development, leading to increased income and consumption capacity. As a result, most local laborers were unwilling to engage in physically demanding and dangerous jobs in basic manufacturing and construction, known as "3D jobs" and "3K industries," which faced labor shortages. Given the long-standing manpower shortage in Taiwan's 3K jobs, the only way to alleviate this issue was to introduce foreign migrant workers through the "supplementary principle." [3]

Foreign caregivers enter Taiwan to supplement the substantial manpower needed for long-term care, originally intended to address the shortage of domestic workers under the principle of 'non-replacement.' However, after many years, a 'difficult to replace' situation has emerged. This inability to replace is not related to professionalism, but highlights a serious dependence on foreign caregivers.

Taking household helpers and caregiving personnel as examples, Taiwan's population and family structure are undergoing changes, accompanied by an aging population and the rise of small family units. Traditionally, women have served as family caregivers, but with rising educational levels and a significant entry into the labor market, families can no longer bear the responsibility of caring for disabled individuals. As a result, they have begun to seek external paid caregiving labor. The trend of globalization has made cross-border mobility possible, and foreign caregivers have

become the preferred choice for families with disabled members due to their affordable caregiving services. However, long-term care policies differ from general public policies and are often viewed more as economic issues. The "Care Welfare Services and Industry Development Program," led by the National Development Council, aims to promote the development of the domestic caregiving service industry, intending to reduce the influx of foreign caregivers. The hiring regulations for foreign caregivers are adjusted in response to conflicts among different interest groups, oscillating between the reality of limited resources and the ideals of human rights practices.

## 2.2. "Quota Limit", "Limited Industry", and "Limited Quantity" for the Introduction of Migrant Workers

In order to prevent the introduction of foreign migrant workers from affecting the employment rights and interests of Taiwan in disguise, after the passage of the Employment Service Law in 1992, the introduction of foreign migrant workers was officially legalized. In the context of time and space at that time, migrant workers could not freely choose their jobs in Taiwan, and the restrictions on the work they could do were not only limited to the "type", but also further stipulated that, except for Article 46, Paragraph 1, Paragraph 10 of the Employment Services Act, which stipulates that workers who are permitted by the central competent authority to engage in "manufacturing" and "construction" work are not eligible for restrictions, other types of foreign workers are subject to restrictions on professional skills, academic qualifications, certificates, and even "seniority" and "age" [4].

Since the government opened the door to foreign labor, the competitive relationship between foreign workers and domestic workers in the job market has attracted widespread attention. The decision to allow or restrict foreign workers profoundly impacts the supply and demand in the domestic labor market as well as wage levels. From an economic theory perspective, if there is a complementary relationship between foreign and domestic workers, an increase in foreign workers will encourage companies to hire more domestic workers, thereby positively affecting the wages and employment of domestic workers. [5] Furthermore, the introduction of foreign workers can lower production costs, leading to a decrease in product prices and an increase in demand. This, in turn, enhances the overall output level of the economy, further raising the wage levels of domestic workers.

As scholars have pointed out [6], the number of foreign workers in the industry decreased in 2009 due to the impact of the global financial crisis compared to 2008. However, since the implementation of the 3K5 system in 2010, the number of foreign workers in the 3K industries has shown an increasing trend. The number not only surpassed 200,000 but also saw an increase of over 30,000 for the first time, representing nearly a fivefold growth compared to the period be-

fore the 3K5 system was implemented. In terms of average annual growth rates, excluding the heavily impacted year of 2009, the average annual growth rate of foreign workers in the industry from 2002 to 2008 was 1.21%. In contrast, from 2010 to 2014, the average annual growth rate reached 14.41%. This indicates that the implementation of the 3K5 system in 2010 has indeed been a significant factor in the recent sharp increase in the number of foreign workers in the industry.

## 2.3. The Problem of Labor Shortage and the Pull of Migrant Workers

Although facing the advent of globalization and the era of artificial intelligence, many manpower will be replaced by machines, but Taiwan's internal manpower problems still exist. For example, many industries cannot recruit employees, especially the manufacturing and service industries. This problem is usually Because of social status issues, people are usually unwilling to engage in manufacturing and service industries. This has a lot to do with academic qualifications and social expectations. The two industries of manufacturing and service are regarded as "unskilled" and "unprofessional" jobs in Taiwan, resulting in people with higher education not being willing to engage in them. Related work.

In order to strike a balance between the economic efficiency and fairness of the introduction of foreign workers, it is necessary to set a quota for foreign workers, and then publicly auction the employment rights of foreign workers in the market, and use the income to subsidize vocational training and public construction. Such a proposal would not only allow the limited number of foreign workers to be used most efficiently and generate the greatest added value to our national welfare, but would also balance the deteriorating distribution of income through taxation (i.e., auctions) and subsidies (vocational training and public works) [7].

According to the latest labor demand survey released by the Ministry of Labor, the expected number of job vacancies by the end of April 2024 is projected to increase by 61,000 compared to the end of January, while the number of job reductions is projected to be 8,000. Overall, the total number of job vacancies is expected to increase by 53,000. The main reasons for the labor shortage are "company expansion or diversification," which accounts for 54.5%, followed by "replacement of retirees," accounting for 27.3% [8].

Comparing different industries, the industrial sector's labor demand is expected to increase by 23,000 by the end of April 2024 compared to the end of January, while the service sector's demand is expected to increase by 30,000, marking the sixth consecutive quarter where the service sector demand exceeds the industrial sector. Among the major industries, manufacturing sees the highest net increase with 20,000 more employees needed. In a detailed analysis of this industry, the electronic components manufacturing industry is expected to require 4,000 workers, the computer, electronic products, and

optical products manufacturing industry is expected to need 3,000 workers, and the machinery and equipment manufacturing industry is projected to need 2,000 workers. The second highest demand is in the accommodation and catering industry, with an expected increase of 7,000 workers, followed by the wholesale and retail industry with an expected increase of 6,000 workers.

### 3. Social Problems Caused by Foreign Migrant Workers

There are often many disputes about labor issues in your own country, not to mention workers from foreign countries. Of course, they will also have the same problems, and many disputes will attract great attention from society, such as: issues of human rights exploitation, labor rights and interests, or even issues of social conflict.

#### 3.1. Basic Labor Issues for Migrant Workers

Foreign migrant workers play a crucial role in Taiwan's labor market. They not only serve as the primary caregivers for the elderly but also contribute significantly in factories, construction sites, fishing boats, and eateries across Taiwan. Despite their importance, their contributions often go unrecognized. Foreign migrant workers fill the labor shortages in Taiwan, yet their labor rights and safety protections are seldom given due attention, making them almost invisible in Taiwanese society.

Currently, nearly 230,000 individuals are engaged in domestic and industrial work, performing physically demanding, high-risk, and sometimes dirty jobs such as fishing and factory work. The challenges faced by foreign migrant workers include high brokerage fees, low wages, inability to exercise contractual rights, and lack of protections regarding leave and working hours.

The primary issues surrounding cases of migrant workers illegally entering, absconding, overstaying, and working unlawfully need urgent attention from the government. If neglected, these issues will continue to escalate and become increasingly problematic, exacerbating various labor shortages. There is ongoing debate about whether enhancing migrant workers' rights might impact Taiwanese workers or welfare. Opinions vary widely on this matter. However, finding a way for harmonious coexistence is not only a test for government policies but also a matter that affects everyone.

From a human rights perspective [9], improving the safety and security of migrant workers and creating a friendly environment can lead to a positive cycle that benefits both employers and employees, reducing the occurrence of the aforementioned issues. This would be advantageous not only for social order and the employment market in Taiwan but also for Taiwan's human rights reputation internationally. Given Taiwan's urgent need for a substantial influx of migrant workers across various industries and caregiving sectors to

address labor shortages, the government must carefully enhance the rights of foreign migrant workers.

Despite the frequent amendments to relevant regulations over the past 30 years to improve the labor rights of blue-collar foreign migrant workers in Taiwan, and the many commendable administrative measures, the number of complaints filed with the 1955 hotline has not significantly decreased. According to official statistics available online from the past five years, there were 46,296 complaints in 2017 and 46,634 in 2021. In comparison, the number of complaints filed by domestic workers through the 1955 hotline is significantly lower than those filed by foreign migrant workers. For example, in 2017, complaints by domestic workers were only 10% of those by foreign workers, and this ratio declined to just 6.4% in 2021. Considering the total number of workers, Taiwan has about ten million domestic workers and approximately 700,000 foreign workers. Despite this, there are as many as 40,000 to 50,000 complaints annually from foreign workers, which means that about 6 out of every 100 blue-collar foreign workers file a complaint. In contrast, only about 3 out of every 10,000 domestic workers file a complaint, indicating a substantial disparity. Given the unfamiliarity with the environment, laws, language, culture, religion, and customs, coupled with a more imbalanced power dynamic between labor and management, it is not surprising that blue-collar foreign workers in Taiwan file a large number of complaints. In fact, the high number of cases reported through official channels suggests that the actual number is likely underestimated, raising concerns about the practical effectiveness of regulatory amendments.

Another issue worth noting is the nature of the complaints filed by migrant workers through the 1955 hotline. According to official statistics, management issues have consistently ranked as the top complaint over the past five years, followed by wage and contract issues, with a significant number of complaints also related to brokers. This data highlights a crucial fact: migrant workers face substantial challenges in their life and work after arriving in Taiwan, with management playing a key role. What efforts has the government made in managing migrant workers? Some insights might be gleaned from the "Regulations on the Permission and Management of Private Employment Service Agencies" and the "Discretionary Criteria for the Foreign Worker Living Care Service Plan." [10]

#### 3.2. Cross-cultural Adjustment

As global competition intensifies, more and more people must leave their home countries to work and live in foreign countries. Migration can cause personal adjustment difficulties and have a negative impact on physical and mental health and quality of life [11]. The cross-cultural gap faced by many foreign migrant workers or expatriates can cause difficulties in work, interpersonal interactions, and life [12]. Cultural differences stem from the disparities in symbols and psychology between interacting parties. These differences arise

from the varying understandings of members from different cultural backgrounds. There are significant cultural differences between Taiwan and countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand, which are sources of foreign workers. These differences include language, religion, beliefs, customs, and habits. Therefore, a process of cross-cultural adaptation is necessary, which refers to the degree of psychological comfort with various aspects of a foreign culture.

It has been 32 years since Taiwan opened up large-scale migrant workers from Southeast Asia. Currently, there are nearly 750,000 people in Taiwan. Due to the innate barriers of language and culture, the emotions accumulated by Southeast Asian migrant workers due to language and adapting to the new environment in the early days of their arrival in Taiwan have been difficult. They have experienced the feeling of "aphasia". Having no one to talk to about their troubles and pressure from their employers often become the last nightmare of migrant workers. Over the past 30 years, many regrets have arisen from "aphasia". However, language barriers are usually the first to bear the brunt. We all know that working in a completely unfamiliar country requires not only strong psychological construction, but also a lot of learning, such as learning Chinese and even local dialects, and of course food. Part of it is also a key issue.

However, since the migrant workers discussed in this article come from Southeast Asia, this means that they all belong to the Asian region and have similar eating habits. Although there may still be some differences, dietary issues derived from religion, what usually troubles Indonesian migrant workers the most is that many Indonesian migrant workers generally believe in Islam. They believe in Allah and do not eat pork. However, Taiwan's domestic care workers are usually from Indonesia. According to statistics from the Ministry of Labor, at the end of 2023, the total number of industrial and social welfare migrant workers in Taiwan is 753,000, including 272,000 from Indonesia, 263,000 from Vietnam, 149,000 from the Philippines, and 67,000 from Thailand; among them, about 234,000 are social welfare migrant workers, and the industry. There are approximately 519,000 migrant workers. It is worth noting that Indonesian migrant workers usually live in their employer's home, and their meals usually follow their employer's side. In other words, the migrant workers eat whatever their employer eats, so they may eat pork or even pork. It hurts the religious beliefs of Indonesian migrant workers.

This article observes that many migrant workers come from vulnerable families. "Aphasia" is not just a language barrier; most migrant workers left their hometowns at a young age and have never experienced "being listened to" in their lives. Due to the lack of attention to mental health in Southeast Asian countries and generally low levels of education, their self-awareness is relatively low, making it difficult for them to clearly articulate their suffering. This is a predicament that Taiwanese people have often overlooked in

discussions about migrant workers. Many migrant workers have the bodies of adults, capable of working abroad and supporting their families, but their minds are still immature. These problems should be assisted by the society and given timely care, which is also a corporate responsibility and a way to sustain talents. Because people who choose to work across the sea are usually also because they want to improve the poverty situation of their original family, they should be sympathetic and do not discriminate.

### 3.3. Migrant Workers' Conflict and Social Problems

There are many reasons why migrant workers have conflicts, one of which is because of ethnic issues, which are divided into two types: "conflicts between the same ethnic groups" and "conflicts between different ethnic groups".

It is not uncommon to see news about migrant workers fighting in groups, especially in places where migrant workers gather, usually in industrial areas, where migrant workers form a small living circle, such as Zhongli District in Taoyuan City, where a large number of migrant workers from Southeast Asia gather in front of the station. The phenomenon of foreign workers fighting in groups at stations often involves multiple social, economic and cultural factors. The following is an analysis of this phenomenon and its similarities to earlier fights:

**Social exclusion and isolation:** Migrant workers often face social exclusion and lack of local social support systems. They may be excluded and isolated because of language barriers, cultural differences, or social prejudices, lacking emotional support and a sense of belonging. In such situations, they are more likely to take drastic actions to vent their frustration and anger when faced with stress or conflict.

**Economic pressure:** Foreign workers tend to have an unstable working environment and relatively low incomes. Financial stress makes them feel anxious and helpless, and this constant stress can increase their frustration. When financial stress is combined with other stressors such as job injustice, exploitation, etc., these frustrations can easily translate into violent behavior.

**Cultural Differences and Misunderstandings:** Foreign workers from different cultural backgrounds are prone to misunderstandings in communication and interaction. These cultural differences may include language, behavior, values, etc. When foreign workers are faced with tension or conflict, these misconceptions can quickly escalate into violent conflict.

**Group identity:** Foreign workers will place more emphasis on group identity in an unfamiliar environment in order to seek security and support. In such cases, when their group is threatened or provoked, it is easier for members to react collectively, form group actions, or even resort to violence to protect their own group interests and dignity.

The group conflicts among modern migrant workers bear many similarities to the factional fights between people from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in early Taiwan. Firstly, differences

in social structure and status played a significant role in both cases. Whether it is modern migrant workers or participants in early factional fights, they are marginalized and oppressed groups. When facing injustice, they often resort to violence to express their discontent. Economic pressure and competition for resources are also crucial factors in these conflicts. Early factional fights often involved disputes over land and property, while modern migrant worker conflicts are more related to job opportunities, wages, and working conditions.

Cultural differences and group identity also play a key role in these conflicts. [13] Both early factional fights and modern migrant worker conflicts demonstrate that in environments with significant cultural differences, group members are more likely to unite and resist external threats. This sense of group identity makes their collective response more intense when facing provocations. Lastly, the lack of effective mediation mechanisms is another commonality between the two. Both early factional fights and modern migrant worker conflicts reflect a societal lack of effective mediation and support systems. When society cannot provide effective means of resolving disputes, violence becomes a means to solve problems.

All in all Ethnic identity and cohesion are no longer viewed as natural outcomes but rather as phenomena that require explanation. Researchers are interested in understanding which modern social, political, or economic conditions and contexts enable marginalized groups to unite through ethnic mobilization to resist the oppression of dominant groups [14].

## 4. Materials and Methods

Firstly, this study employs both document analysis and observation methods. Document analysis involves collecting and examining literature related to market information, survey reports, industry trends, and other relevant materials to gain a comprehensive and precise understanding of the research issue. This method requires gathering a rich and extensive array of sources, which are then analyzed and synthesized to understand the origins, causes, background, impacts, and significance of the issue. The sources of document analysis can include government reports, industry research, document databases, corporate records, library books, theses and journals, newspapers, and more. The analysis process typically involves four steps: reading and organizing, description, classifying, and interpretation [15].

The second method used is observation. In social science research, observation, interviews, and archival analysis are often listed as the three main qualitative data collection methods. For qualitative researchers, understanding the meaning of various phenomena, events, or behaviors in daily life is a primary concern, making observation a fundamental method for exploring these social phenomena. Generally, social science research observation refers to a purposeful and planned activity where researchers systematically observe phenomena, behaviors, or events using sensory perception or

scientific instruments. In contrast, everyday observation is usually less systematic, without specific goals, and does not rely on scientific instruments [16].

This study employs social science observation methods to examine the issues faced by Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan, including conflicts among them and an analysis of the causes of these conflicts [17]. The study focuses on the Taiwanese context and uses observation to explore various aspects of these workers' experiences, such as cross-cultural adaptation, conflict, and social issues. After reviewing existing literature and establishing a theoretical framework, the study engages in a dialogue between observed phenomena and the literature, aiming to identify the root causes of these events and propose potential solutions.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Long-term Exploitation and Discrimination Lead to Poor Physical and Mental Conditions

At the end of 2023, a news headline read, "Migrant Workers March in Protest, Urging Government to End Exploitative Broker System: Brokers, Get Out." The main goal of the protest was to urge the government to directly hire migrant workers, eliminating exploitation by private brokers. Approximately two hundred migrant workers and labor groups protested at the Ministry of Labor's Direct Hiring Service Center, calling for the abolition of the migrant worker broker system and its replacement with a government-to-government mechanism. Labor groups unanimously believe that brokers charging migrant workers "exorbitant fees" constitutes severe exploitation. They aim to abolish the broker system and establish a more worker-friendly environment.

The long-term exploitation of foreign migrant workers can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the high agency fees are a significant issue. Migrant workers often have to pay exorbitant fees to brokers, leading them to incur substantial debt. This debt burden makes them more susceptible to exploitation, as they are desperate to earn money to repay these debts. Secondly, inadequate legal protection is another crucial reason. Many migrant workers lack sufficient legal safeguards; they are unfamiliar with the host country's laws and face language barriers, making it difficult for them to seek help or assert their rights. Additionally, poor working conditions are a significant contributing factor. Migrant workers often work in harsh environments, facing long hours, low wages, and a lack of proper rest and benefits. Furthermore, social isolation plays a major role. Migrant workers are far from home, separated from their families and social networks, and lack support systems, increasing their vulnerability. Finally, cultural differences and discrimination make it even more challenging for migrant workers in both their work-

places and daily lives, adding to their stress and difficulties. These exploitative conditions have severe impacts on the physical and mental health of migrant workers. Prolonged exploitation and stress can lead to psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress. The unfair treatment and sense of social isolation severely affect their mental well-being. Harsh working conditions and excessive labor, coupled with inadequate medical care, make migrant workers more prone to health problems like chronic pain, occupational diseases, and other health issues. The lack of social support and the cultural shock and isolation intensify their mental health problems. Continuous exploitation and unfair treatment damage their self-esteem and confidence, making them feel devalued and disrespected.

These physical and mental health traumas not only affect the quality of life of migrant workers but also negatively impact their work efficiency and workplace safety. Therefore, improving the working and living conditions of migrant workers and providing more legal and social support is crucial to ensuring their physical and mental health.

## 5.2. The Nature of the Work Leads to Class Discrimination

Social stratification refers to the formation of enduring status and role hierarchies in the social system based on different privileges, prestige, influence, and power. This stratification may arise from inequalities arising from the positions held by individuals, or from inequalities due to the high level of power and control over resources by certain individuals or groups, or both.

In terms of the Asian region, Taiwan officially entered the ranks of "emerging industrial countries" after World War II. However, with the rise of feminism and women's education, numerous issues related to gender equality have gradually gained attention. Nevertheless, the traditional societal stereotype of "male superiority and female inferiority" remains difficult to completely eliminate, resulting in the persistence of class distinctions in Taiwan. Additionally, the ideology related to "economic nationalism" often sparks a series of discussions within a country as it establishes legislation to introduce migrant workers in order to retain local enterprises.

Foreign migrant workers generally engage in non-knowledge-based work or care-based work. Although from the perspective of industrial relations, the labor schedule must be "subordinate", which means that there will be workers who need to obey the employer. Behavior can be called a labor relationship, and each other's labor behavior will be judged according to their subordination. Of course, foreign workers are no exception, and this class difference between the top and the bottom is even more intensified. If the employer is at the top level, then the level below is not foreign migrant workers, but workers of your own nationality, and the ones below are foreign migrant workers. In other words, foreign migrant workers usually have the

lowest status in the company. This should be attributed to people always outsourcing the work they don't want to do. Of course, the class differentiation will be more obvious and difficult to eliminate, although the current consensus in society hopes to eliminate all discrimination and prejudice. According to a global survey conducted by the International Labour Organization on the issue of "forced labor," it is estimated that nearly 43 million people are trapped in what is referred to as "modern slavery," based on the average figures from 2016. However, due to the introduction of the so-called "guest worker system" in our country, foreign workers in Taiwan receive different rights protection due to their different professional status, such as white-collar workers and blue-collar workers, which shows a kind of differential treatment [15].

The ethnic issues and class issues discussed here are quite different from general racism. In addition to the typical "exclusion", the causes of the class issues and ethnic issues discussed in this article are also due to the fact that these immigrants from Southeast Asia Workers are usually moved abroad due to the push of the home country, and the strong "suction" of the country to which they are headed. Therefore, it is generally believed that the construction of the home countries of these migrant workers is very backward, or that the educational level of these people who come to work is extremely poor. Another aspect is due to the nature of the work. Although modern people no longer have a deep concept of "slave", domestic helpers are often even enslaved by their employers. This is a class consciousness that is deeply ingrained in humans and difficult to change. Of course, this is the behavior of a few people, but it is still heard from time to time. This move is currently condemned by most people. However, as the world moves towards the goal of becoming an advanced country, and many countries have become highly developed, people who left their hometowns to work due to "push and pull" will gradually return to their hometowns. In other words, ethnic issues, discrimination, and class will not remain stagnant forever, and of course they will be driven by globalization and technology.

However, it is extremely difficult to completely eradicate such prejudice and discrimination in society. Next comes the foreign domestic helpers, whose class divisions are equally obvious. Especially the type of domestic helpers, because the nature of their work is to help with housework or take care of the elderly. This may give people the illusion of hiring slaves. Although this situation has been reduced a lot with the improvement of concepts, in many cases people's subjective consciousness is still unable to eliminate this ideology of class stratification.

## 5.3. Conflicts Between Ethnic Groups Create Security Problems

The phenomenon of foreign workers fighting in groups at the station can be further analyzed through relevant ethnic the-

ories and racial consciousness. These factors play an important role in fighting between the same country and different countries. In the struggle with the state, "social identity theory" provides a powerful framework. According to this theory, individuals divide themselves into different social groups and strengthen their identification with the groups to which they belong. When foreign workers face economic pressure and social exclusion, they are more likely to rely on their ethnic identity for support and recognition, which can lead to tensions and competition within the group, especially when resources are limited. This strengthening of ethnic consciousness may make conflicts among foreign workers more intense.

In the armed fighting between different countries, "racial consciousness" has become a key factor. Foreign workers from different countries are prone to forming opposing ethnic identities due to differences in cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This racial consciousness not only affects their social behavior, but may also trigger hostility, further exacerbating conflicts. For example, certain ethnic groups may be hostile because of historical conflicts or competitive relationships, which is especially true in multicultural work environments. Moreover, social exclusion and discrimination will also strengthen the racial consciousness of foreign workers. When they encounter unequal treatment in society, they will often emphasize their ethnic identity more and form hostility towards other ethnic groups. In this case, the conflict between foreign workers is not only a competition for economics or resources, but also a confrontation of identity.

Interestingly, after reviewing past news events, these conflicts between migrant workers are usually conflicts between foreign migrant workers. Generally, Taiwanese people are not likely to fight in groups with foreign migrant workers, although the "discrimination issue" mentioned above is often caused by Taiwanese people. There is strong discrimination and rejection against these foreign migrant workers in Southeast Asia, but these prejudices are only at the "psychological and conscious" level and will not lead to physical conflicts or even armed fights.

This phenomenon can be analyzed from multiple perspectives. First of all, Taiwanese society's discrimination and rejection of foreign migrant workers is often based on cultural differences and differences in socioeconomic status. Taiwanese may have stereotypes about Southeast Asian migrant workers, believing that they are very different from themselves in language, culture, and living habits. This psychological distance may lead to a sense of rejection, but it does not necessarily translate into direct conflict.

Conflicts among foreign migrant workers often stem from competition in the work environment, life pressure, or the lack of social support systems. Their lives in Taiwan are relatively isolated and lack sufficient social networks and resources, which makes it easy for migrant workers of different nationalities to cause friction over trivial matters. These conflicts usually occur within their communities rather than with Taiwanese people, because most interactions between Taiwanese and for-

oreign migrant workers are based on work relationships and lack deep social contact. Many Taiwanese people's attitude towards foreign migrant workers is mostly out of sympathy or helplessness, because they understand the situation of these migrant workers and rely on their labor force to some extent. This dependence makes Taiwanese less likely to take the initiative to conflict with migrant workers, because doing so will not only not help solve the problem, but may actually affect their own lives and work. Finally, social norms and laws also inhibit Taiwanese's violence against foreign migrant workers to a certain extent. Taiwanese society generally values harmony and stability, and there are clear legal sanctions for any form of violence, which makes people more inclined to seek peaceful solutions when facing conflicts rather than resorting to violence. The interaction between Taiwanese and foreign migrant workers is mainly based on work and economic relations. Psychological discrimination does not directly translate into physical conflicts. Instead, it is friction between migrant workers due to the common living environment and pressure. More common.

To sum up, the phenomenon of foreign workers fighting in groups at the station is deeply influenced by relevant ethnic theories and racial consciousness. These factors not only reflect the economic and social difficulties faced by foreign workers, but also reveal the importance of ethnic identity in conflicts. Solving these problems requires fundamentally improving the social status of foreign workers and promoting understanding and cooperation between different ethnic groups to reduce the occurrence of conflicts.

#### 5.4. Chronic Negative News Leads to Prejudice and Discrimination

Negative news coverage of migrant workers can significantly impact societal perceptions, which can be explained through several relevant theories, including stereotype theory, social identity theory, and media effects theory. First, stereotype theory suggests that people's views of certain groups are often influenced by existing stereotypes. When the media continuously reports negative incidents involving migrant workers, these reports reinforce negative stereotypes, such as "migrant worker violence" or "disrespectful behavior." This reinforcement leads to a decline in the overall perception of migrant workers, resulting in increased prejudice and discrimination against them. Second, social identity theory emphasizes how individuals' group identities affect their behavior and attitudes.

When negative news about migrant workers is prevalent, the general public may strengthen their identification with their own national or ethnic group, viewing migrant workers as "the other." This "us vs. them" mentality reduces societal acceptance of migrant workers and deepens negative impressions. Additionally, media effects theory, including agenda-setting and framing theories, posits that the content and manner of media reporting can shape public perception and attitudes. When the media focuses on negative events involving migrant

workers, these incidents become focal points for public discussion, influencing people's views. Selective reporting and emotionally charged language can exacerbate negative feelings, further deteriorating societal perceptions of migrant workers. In summary, negative news coverage not only reinforces societal stereotypes about migrant workers but also intensifies the perception of them as "others," while the media's influence alters public cognition and attitudes. These factors collectively contribute to a poor societal perception of migrant workers, affecting their social status and living conditions. Addressing this issue requires the media to adopt a more balanced reporting approach and promote a positive understanding and acceptance of migrant workers in society.

## 6. Conclusions

The introduction of foreign migrant workers has provided our economy with a large pool of low-cost labor, effectively helping businesses reduce production costs and enhance their competitiveness. This policy not only addresses labor shortages in the production and manufacturing sectors but also offers services to Taiwanese families, such as elder care, long-term care, childcare, and household chores, alleviating the burden of elderly care, child-rearing, and household tasks.

With the advancement of globalization, cross-border population movement has become increasingly frequent. In this process of migration, individuals need to adapt to different cultural environments, making cross-cultural adaptation skills more important than ever. When dealing with migrant workers, businesses must address the issue of "cross-cultural adaptation," which refers to the various psychological and organizational behavior strategies and efforts individuals employ to effectively communicate and interact across cultures when entering a new cultural environment. Factors such as language barriers, education levels from their home countries, cultural differences, personal factors, policy environments, and complex social factors all influence cross-cultural adaptation.

For migrant workers coming to Taiwan, the initial challenges they face often include "language barriers," "value conflicts," "cost of living differences," and "religion," among other cross-cultural adaptation difficulties. Observing the lives of most migrant workers, it can be seen that their social interactions are usually limited to the workplace and dormitories, making it relatively difficult for them to integrate into Taiwanese society. Even within organizations of the same cultural background, communication gaps often exist and require considerable skill to resolve. This challenge is even greater for overseas migrant workers from different cultures, who inevitably face more communication barriers, impacting organizational operations. Therefore, if there are gaps within an organization, efforts should be made to avoid barriers and even conflicts arising from cross-cultural differences.

## Author Contributions

**Yun-Hao Chuang:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

**Hao-Chun Huang:** Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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## Biography



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## Research Field

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