

## **Intention to Stay or Return? Motivation and Factors Influencing Indonesian Nurses Working in Japan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

As part of the 2008 Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), Japan promised to engage Indonesian nurses as nurses and care workers in Japan. Japan is currently experiencing a labor shortage due to an aging population, whilst Indonesia has an oversupply of nurses. The purpose of this study was to discover why Indonesian nurses desired to work in Japan and what factors influenced their decision to stay or return to Indonesia when their contracts expired. An online survey was completed by 103 persons for this descriptive, quantitative study. According to descriptive statistical analysis results, high remuneration and a better working environment were the pull factors, whereas a low salary and poor working conditions in Indonesia were the primary reasons (push factors) why Indonesian nurses sought to work in Japan. Furthermore, 69% of the 103 respondents stated they wanted to stay in Japan once their contract expired, while 31% wanted to return to Indonesia. Last, hopefully, this study provides a comprehensive overview of Indonesian nurse workers and contributes to the study of international migration.

**Keywords:** Indonesian nurses, Japan, Migrant workers, Motivation, and Intention.

### **ABSTRAK**

*Sebagai bagian dari Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) 2008, Jepang berjanji untuk melibatkan perawat Indonesia sebagai perawat dan pekerja perawatan di Jepang. Jepang saat ini mengalami kekurangan tenaga kerja karena populasi yang menua, sementara Indonesia memiliki kelebihan pasokan perawat. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui mengapa perawat Indonesia berkeinginan untuk bekerja di Jepang dan faktor-faktor apa yang mempengaruhi keputusan mereka untuk tinggal atau kembali ke Indonesia ketika kontrak mereka berakhir. Sebuah survei online diselesaikan oleh 103 orang untuk penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif ini. Menurut hasil analisis statistik deskriptif, ditemukan bahwa kompensasi yang tinggi dan lingkungan kerja yang lebih baik adalah faktor penarik, sedangkan gaji yang rendah dan kondisi kerja yang buruk di Indonesia adalah alasan utama (faktor pendorong) mengapa perawat Indonesia berusaha untuk bekerja di Jepang. Lebih lanjut, 69% dari 103 responden menyatakan ingin tetap tinggal di Jepang setelah kontrak mereka berakhir, sedangkan 31% ingin kembali ke Indonesia. Terakhir, semoga penelitian ini memberikan gambaran yang komprehensif tentang pekerja perawat Indonesia dan berkontribusi pada studi migrasi internasional.*

**Kata kunci:** Perawat Indonesia, Jepang, Pekerja Migran, Motivasi dan Niat.

## Introduction

For more than 60 years, Indonesia and Japan have looked at developing diplomatic ties. One such economic pact between Japan and Indonesia was the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), which was signed in 2008. One of the provisions were to recruit Indonesian nurses as nurses in Japan.<sup>1</sup> While Indonesia enjoys a surplus of nurses, Japan is experiencing a labor shortage due to an aging population. The number of unemployed nurses in Indonesia turned out to be overwhelming, with at least 28,000 nursing graduates becoming unemployed each year.<sup>2</sup> Many nurses are unemployed even two years after graduation or work only as volunteer nurses. Conversely, the increase in the elderly population in Japan has created a high demand for care workers. The Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare estimates that Japan will require an additional 380,000 nurses and care workers by 2025.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, many Indonesian nurses' associations began to think about overseas migration. Overseas migration could potentially solve the lack of employment opportunities in Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> Indonesian labor migration is not a new phenomenon and part of the international migration process. International migration refers to the movement of the population, whether carried out by individuals or groups, that cross the boundaries of a State and stay outside their usual country of residence for at least one year.<sup>5</sup>

Every year, Japan accepts 200 nurses and 300 care workers from Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> However, meeting this quota is not easy. The actual number of nurses and care workers who come to Japan through this agreement has never reached this number. According to this agreement, applicants must meet strict requirements and pass several examinations. In Indonesia, graduating with a nursing degree from an Indonesian Academy or University is one of the primary requirements. These degrees are divided into several levels: diploma, bachelor, and certified nurse. To obtain these degrees, individuals need to finish three years of education for a Diploma and four years for a Bachelor of Nursing degree. Next, the applicants depart to Japan after passing the screening process, psychological testing, nursing test, medical examination, and learning the Japanese language for six months in Indonesia.

After that, they spend an additional six months studying the Japanese language and culture in Japan. Although all the candidates are recognized as professional nurses in Indonesia, they begin their careers as nurse assistants and care worker assistants in Japan. To be recognized as professional nurses or care workers, they must pass the licensed examination. Nurse assistant candidates have three chances to take this examination during their three-year employment contract, whereas care worker candidates have only one chance in the final year of their four-year employment contract. However, this examination requires a great deal of time and effort to pass as the candidates must work and study for the examination at the same time. Since 2008, only around 20 percent of nurse and care worker

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<sup>1</sup> MOFA Japan, "Agreement Between Japan and the Republic of Indonesia for an Economic Partnership," 2008, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/indonesia/epa0708/agreement.pdf>. Accessed September 20 2022

<sup>2</sup> Faisol Hadi, "Puluhan Ribu Lulusan Perawat Nganggur Tiap Tahun," *Murianews*, 2017, <https://www.murianews.com/amp/2017/03/24/110709/puluhan-ribu-lulusan-perawat-nganggur-tiap-tahun>. Accessed August 2 2022

<sup>3</sup> Hirano Yuko, "Foreign Care Workers in Japan: A Policy Without a Vision," *nippon.com*, 2017, <https://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00288/>. Accessed September 22 2022

<sup>4</sup> IOM, *World Migration Report 2010: The Future of Migration - Building Capacities for Change*, 2010th ed., 2011, <https://doi.org/10.18356/4c12813b-en>.

<sup>5</sup> Khalid Koser, "Introduction: International Migration and Global Governance," *Global Governance* 16, no. 3 (2010): 301–15, <https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01603001>.

<sup>6</sup> JICWELS, *Acceptance of Candidates for Foreign Nurses and Care Workers Based on an Economic Partnership Agreement* (JICWELS, 2021), [https://jicwels.or.jp/files/EPA\\_2021\\_pamph.pdf](https://jicwels.or.jp/files/EPA_2021_pamph.pdf). Accessed September 7 2022

candidates have successfully passed the national nursing examination.<sup>7</sup> Until 2019, only 174 of 691 nurse assistants had passed the examination, whereas 470 of 2092 care worker assistants succeeded in passing the licensed examination.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, successfully passing the examination does not automatically lead to their retention. Around 38% of those who passed emigrated back to Indonesia.<sup>9</sup>

Sending nurses and care workers is a type of international labor migration, which is specifically described as the movement of people from one nation to another in search of employment. Speaking of international nurse migration, retention of these foreign-educated nurses is important for the success of bilateral cooperation. The employment process for these skilled workers takes considerable time and financial resources from the recruitment process until training, especially for the hospital or healthcare institution.<sup>10</sup> The problem occurs when health personnel choose to come back to their country or choose early retirement for variety reasons.<sup>11</sup> The desire of migrants to stay for a long time is expected to fill the labor vacancy in the destination country. In light of worries about the sustainability of the future labor supply linked to migrant workers, retention of stayers is even more crucial than that. On the other hand, the emerging early turnover means the company lost some labor that already costed from recruitment to get ready made labor and certain vacant position must be filled immediately. If the workers leave Japan before the termination of the contract, the employers lose skilled workers who have been training for many years. Consequently, they have to spend more money to recruit new employees. It becomes problematic when migration is expected to reduce demographic problems such as unemployment but ends up creating new problems for the employers and returnee nurses.<sup>12</sup>

Previous research about Indonesian nurses mostly focused on and discussed nurses' lived experience and challenges in Japanese licensed nurse examination.<sup>13</sup> Little is known about the preferences of Indonesian migrant nurses after contract termination whether they want to continue working in Japan or they would rather go back home to Indonesia. This paper explained the migrant Indonesian worker's intention toward stay or leave their initial destination rather than actual behavior. The intention is important as the embodiment of real stay or leaving actions and as a proxy to investigate full recognition of the migration process.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, intention is the best predictor of

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<sup>7</sup> BNP2TKI, "Penempatan TKI Melalui Program G to G Ke Jepang," <http://ppid.bnptki.go.id/index.php/informasi-berkala/404-penempatan-tki-melalui-program-g-to-g-ke-jepang>. Accessed August 5 2022

<sup>8</sup> JICWELS, *Acceptance of Candidates for Foreign Nurses and Care Workers Based on an Economic Partnership Agreement* (JICWELS, 2021), [https://jicwels.or.jp/files/EPA\\_2021\\_pamph.pdf](https://jicwels.or.jp/files/EPA_2021_pamph.pdf). Accessed September 7 2022

<sup>9</sup> Hirano Yuko, "Foreign Care Workers in Japan: A Policy Without a Vision," [nippon.com](https://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00288/), 2017, <https://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00288/>. Accessed September 22 2022

<sup>10</sup> Wako Asato, "Nurses from Abroad and the Formation of a Dual Labor Market in Japan," *Japanese Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (2012): 652–69, [https://doi.org/10.20495/tak.49.4\\_652](https://doi.org/10.20495/tak.49.4_652).

<sup>11</sup> Kari Zizzo and Yu Xu, "Nurses on the Move: Migration and the Global Health Care Economy," *Health Care Management & Practice* 9, no. 4 (2007): 346–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1084822307311394>.

<sup>12</sup> Gabriele Vogt, *Population Aging and International Health- Caregiver Migration to Japan* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018). *Cham: Springer International Publishing* 28, no. 1 (2019): 209–211. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijjs.12095>.

<sup>13</sup> Sally Moyce, Rebecca Lash, and Mary Lou de Leon Siantz, "Migration Experiences of Foreign Educated Nurses: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 27, no. 2 (2016): 181–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659615569538>.

<sup>14</sup> Sonia McKay, "Temporary Labour Migration in the Global Era: The Regulatory Challenges, Edited by Joanna Howe and Rosemary Owens. *Oñati International Series in Law and Society*, Hart Publishing, Oxford and Portland, Oregon," *British Journal of Industrial Relations, London School of Economics* 55, no. 1 (2017): 215–17, <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12225>.

someone's behavior.<sup>15</sup> Intention to stay or leave is the good predictors of whether a migrant workers will stay or leave in their future actions. The influence factors related to either intentions or future actions of decisions to stay or leave in host country are exactly the same.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is beneficial to classify migrants into distinct groups according to the reasons for their migration or the outcomes they hope to achieve.

This study put forth the following inquiries considering the problem statement above: 1. What are the intention of Indonesian nurse working in Japan after contract termination? 2. What are the factors behind the Indonesian nurses' intention to stay in Japan or return home after the contract termination? This essay tries to explain the preferences of Indonesian nurses in Japan, including whether they intend to stay in Japan or return to their home country after their contract expires. In addition, their motivation to work abroad is also a concern in this study as a research entry point.

## Literature Review

Indonesian labor migration is not a new phenomenon. This is a part of the international migration process. International migration refers to the movement of a population, carried out by individuals or groups, that cross the boundaries of a State.<sup>17</sup> According to the study, migrant nurses are Indonesian nurses who are employed full or part-time in nursing-related fields abroad. These people stay outside their country of residence for at least one year.<sup>18</sup> Most people working abroad are driven by diverse factors. These factors are often explained through the push and pull point of view. Push factors come from dissatisfying conditions in the initial or origin countries that lead to migration, whereas pull factors usually originate from the destination place or area that fascinates them enough to move out.<sup>19</sup>

In general, economic reasons are a common push factor for migrant workers to migrate. This is caused by limited access to employment opportunities at home, low wages,<sup>20</sup> job insecurity, and bad working conditions.<sup>21</sup> The push factor alone is not strong enough as a reason to motivate someone to migrate abroad; pull factors in the destination country also become determinant factors. Destination countries provide relatively more job opportunities with higher wages and better welfare.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, some migration cases occur because people want to continue education at a higher level or improve

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<sup>15</sup> Jørgen Carling, Marta Bivand Erdal, and Rojan Ezzati, "Beyond the Insider–Outsider Divide in Migration Research," *Migration Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 36–54, <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnt022>.

<sup>16</sup> Philippe Wanner, "Can Migrants' Emigration Intentions Predict Their Actual Behaviors? Evidence from a Swiss Survey," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 22, no. 3 (2021): 1151–79, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-020-00798-7>.

<sup>17</sup> OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2015*, 2015, [https://doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2015-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2015-en).

<sup>18</sup> Baltica Cabieses, "Research on Migration and Health in Chile: Pushing Forward," *Revista Medica de Chile* 144, no. 8 (2016): 1093–94, <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0034-98872016000800020>.

<sup>19</sup> Manisha Nair and Premila Webster, "Health Professionals' Migration in Emerging Market Economies: Patterns, Causes and Possible Solutions," *Journal of Public Health* 35, no. 1 (2013): 157–63, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fds087>.

<sup>20</sup> Erlinda Castro-Palaganas et al., "An Examination of the Causes, Consequences, and Policy Responses to the Migration of Highly Trained Health Personnel from the Philippines: The High Cost of Living/Leaving—a Mixed Method Study," *Human Resources for Health* 15, no. 25 (2017): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-017-0198-z>.

<sup>21</sup> Hisaya Oda, Yuko Tsujito, and Sebastian Irudaya Rajan, "An Analysis of Factors Influencing the International Migration of Indian Nurses," *Journal of International Migration* 19, no. 3 (2018): 607–24, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0548-2>.

<sup>22</sup> Chris D. Campbell, "Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective," by T. Tsuda (Ed.), *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 9, no. 3 (2012): 190–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2012.691137>

their skills and gain experience. There may not be enough opportunities for specialized training in their native countries, and the curricula may be out-of-date or inappropriate.<sup>23</sup> Indonesian nurses are highly motivated to work in Japan because they see a bright future for themselves in the country and want to take advantage of it by moving there. Many nurses in Indonesia are still paid below the industry standard, thus many are looking for work in Japan instead. Working overseas provides better-paid career prospects and greater employment protections, and this is one reason for the growing trend of nurse dispatches.

However, migration is not only about higher wages. The success of previous migrants or relatives who are already working overseas can be a reference and a source of information for prospective migrants. Some people have also migrated because of religion, government policies, culture, and recruitment agency activities.<sup>24</sup> Wanting to avoid uncomfortable and unsafe conditions in their home countries may also push people to move overseas.

Go on to the next issue regarding intention. In general terms, employees' intention to stay refers to their conscious and purposeful desire to continue with the organization.<sup>25</sup> The intention to leave, on the other hand, is characterized as a conscious and purposeful desire to leave an organization as soon as possible, and it is the final step in the withdrawal cognition process.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, intention is the best predictor of someone's behavior.<sup>27</sup> And once again, it is essential to categorize the migrant population workers according to their purposes or objectives.

Some researchers have found factors behind migrant workers' intention to stay. Heponiemi<sup>28</sup> found, through the study of foreign-born physicians in Finland, that high living satisfaction and good working conditions were associated with intentions to stay, whereas discriminatory experiences, employment barriers, and language problems were associated with intentions of leaving the country. Carlos<sup>29</sup> also expressed the same idea about Filipino nurses in Japan and the UK. The nurses wanted to leave when they were treated unfair, and given unequal salaries compared to their Japanese colleagues. They also experienced more stress in the nursing homes. Carlos also mentioned that living with family was an important factor that contributing to their willingness to stay.

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<sup>23</sup> Erlinda Castro-Palaganas et al., "An Examination of the Causes, Consequences, and Policy Responses to the Migration of Highly Trained Health Personnel from the Philippines: The High Cost of Living/Leaving-a Mixed Method Study," *Human Resources for Health* 15, no. 25 (2017): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-017-0198-z>.

<sup>24</sup> Nurhazani Mohd Shariff and Zainol Abidin Azlan, "Profiles and Motivational Factors of International Migrant Workers in the Langkawi Tourism and Hospitality Industry," *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites* 24, no. 1 (2019): 237–45, <http://dx.doi.org/10.30892/gtg.24118-355>.

<sup>25</sup> Robert P. Tett and Jhon P. Meyer, "Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Turnover Intention, and Turnover: Path Analyses Based on Meta-Analytical Findings," *Personnel Psychology* 46, no. 2 (1993): 259–93, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1993.tb00874.x>.

<sup>26</sup> Charles E. Michaels and Paul E. Spector, "Causes of Employee Turnover: A Test of the Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino Model," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 67, no. 1 (1982): 53–59, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0021-9010.67.1.53>.

<sup>27</sup> Carling, Erdal, and Ezzati, "Beyond the Insider–Outsider Divide in Migration Research"; Marta Bivand Erdal and Rojan Ezzati, "Where Are You From' or 'When Did You Come'? Temporal Dimensions in Migrants' Reflections about Settlement and Return," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 7 (2015): 1202–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.971041>.

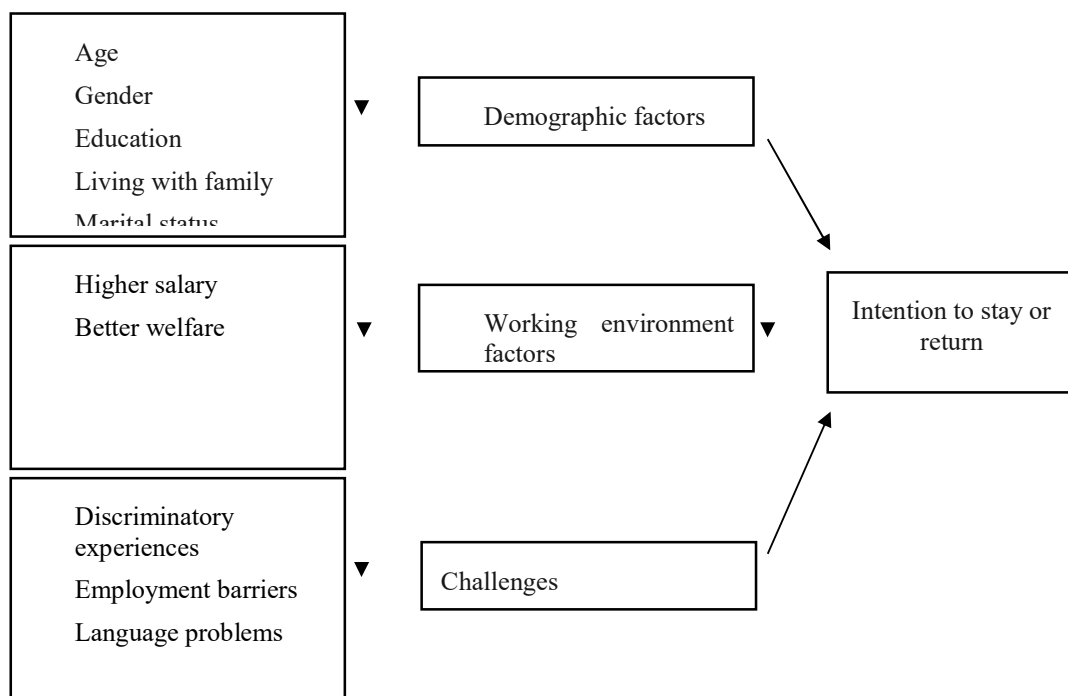
<sup>28</sup> Tarja Heponiemi et al., "The Turnover Intentions and Intentions to Leave the Country of Foreign-Born Physicians in Finland: A Cross-Sectional Questionnaire Study," *BMC Health Services Research* 19, no. 1 (2019): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-019-4487-1>.

<sup>29</sup> Maria Reinarith D. Carlos, "Multiculturalism Policies and the Stepwise International Migration of Filipino Nurses: Implications for Japan," *Multiculturalism and Conflict Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific: Migration, Language and Politics*, 2016, 162–89, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-40360-5\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-40360-5_9).

Demographic factors and personal traits also contributed to the intention to stay or leave. Sapeha<sup>30</sup> explained the demographic factors among immigrants in Australia. Immigrants with a working partner and satisfactory employment tended to stay on. Contrarily, unmarried, well-educated people or couples with a single earner were more mobile and expressed their intention to move to another location instead of considering settlement. Kusnin<sup>31</sup> argued that personal characteristics such as self-efficacy and emotional intelligence among professional employees in Malaysia's manufacturing sector have an important influence over the intention to stay.

The intention of Indonesian nurses and care workers to stay in Japan or leave the country is influenced by a variety of circumstances, including individual factors that influence the migrant worker's decision choices to stay or return to Indonesia. Individual characteristics such as age, gender, degree of education, marital status, years of service, and so on are examples of these. Job satisfaction and challenges also play a role in determining whether nurses want to stay or return, such as: higher wages, better welfare, high living satisfaction, good working conditions, discriminatory experiences, employment barriers, and language problems.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



## Methodology

<sup>30</sup> Halina Sapeha, "Migrants' Intention to Move or Stay in Their Initial Destination," *International Migration* 55, no. 3 (2017): 5–19, <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12304>.

<sup>31</sup> Nurhazimah Kusnin and Roziah Mohd Rasdi, "The Influence of Personal Factors on Professional Employees' Intention to Stay: Job Satisfaction as Mediator," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 8, no. 10 (2018): 989–1004, <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v8-i10/4794>.

This study set out to determine whether Indonesian nurses working in Japan intended to stay in their positions or return home after contract termination. This study will go over their motivation for working in Japan as well. This study relied on primary data from questionnaire surveys and used a descriptive quantitative method in order to explore influence factor and intention of Indonesian nurses who work in Japan. A survey was conducted online to find out migrant nurses' motivation and intention. The surveys are anonymous in order to protect the privacy of the study's participants. A questionnaire was created to assess the sample's characteristics, intent to stay or return, and circumstances that may have influenced them to stay or return home. The questionnaire surveys were in Bahasa Indonesia and contained 44 items divided into four sections: basic demography (age, status, and education), motivation or reasons behind working in Japan, living conditions in Japan and intentions to stay or leave Japan. The questionnaire consisted of two kinds of questions—closed queries with multiple forced choices and open-ended questions.

The primary variables in the questionnaire were chosen from a conceptual framework based on literature findings, such as: higher wages, better welfare, high living satisfaction, good working conditions, discriminatory experiences, employment barriers, and language problems. In the first stage of the study, information about the participants was gathered before they left the country to find work abroad. This part includes the individual's age, as well as their highest level of nursing education and the number of years they have been employed. In addition, this section inquiries about the workplace, the applicant's most recent nursing role, the type of institution, as well as the location of the applicant's employment. In the second section, an investigation into the motivations of Indonesian nurses working abroad is presented. In this subsection, we will take a look at five of the most significant motivating elements that contribute to international nursing migration. The personal, the familial, the professional, the economic, and any other relevant variables are included here. The researcher included column in each of the questions for the participants in the study to put down any additional reasons they might have for participating. In the third section, we will investigate the most recent information available to nurses regarding the benefits and difficulties of living in Japan. In the fourth part of the questionnaire, they are asked about their intentions following the completion of their contract, namely whether they intend to remain in Japan or go back to Indonesia. In addition, this portion probed the rationale behind their preferences.

The data was collected from March 6<sup>th</sup> to April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, through an online survey using Google forms. The link of the questionnaire was embedded in the email. Initially, the link of the questionnaire form was sent to the 300 respondents via email on March 6<sup>th</sup>. The link was resent two weeks later as reminder. From these, only three of the 300 respondents responded to the questionnaire. To get more data, the questionnaire was distributed through Instagram and Facebook. This resulted in a higher number of responses than before. From these social media, 100 respondents completed the questionnaire. The total number of respondents in this research is 103 respondents.

Following a comprehensive evaluation of the returned questionnaires, 103 were declared appropriate and complete for analysis in this report. After that, descriptive statistics were used to draw conclusions. Descriptive statistics are used to provide more full information by describing the object under study using sample or population data in an easy-to-read format. Limitation of this research relate to the data used by the authors, which is only focused on questionnaires, and no in-depth interviews were conducted on each sample because doing so would have taken a lot of time. In addition, sampling may also be viewed as a limitation due to the fact that only some nurses working in Japan were included in this study at a particular point in time.

## **Analysis**

This study involved 103 respondents. The criteria for respondents in this study were Indonesian citizens who graduated from nursing schools in Indonesia and were working in Japan as nurses or care workers through the IJEP agreement. The respondents were scattered in all prefectures around Japan; the distribution of the questionnaires was effective only because they were sent online. The respondents' ages ranged from 22 to 36 years. Their educational backgrounds varied from, what in Indonesia is referred to as, D3 (three-year vocational nurse education), S1 (four-year nurse college education), S1 + ners (four-year college education along with one year of professional education in nursing), and master's degrees. Most of the respondents were unmarried.

**Table 1. List of Respondents**

	Number	Nurse			Careworker			Total		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Age	<25				7	20	27	7	20	27
	26-30	4	5	9	14	21	35	18	26	44
	31-35	4	4	8	10	5	15	14	9	23
	>36	3	3	6	2	1	3	5	4	9
	total	11	12	23	33	47	80	44	59	103
Status	Divorce					2	2	0	2	2
	Married	8	5	13	14	7	21	22	12	34
	Single	3	7	10	19	38	57	22	45	67
	total	11	12	23	33	47	80	44	59	103
Education	DIII	3	6	9	26	29	55	29	35	64
	S1	2	1	3	3	8	11	5	9	14
	S1 + Ners	5	5	10	4	10	14	9	15	24
	S2	1		1				1	0	1
	total	11	12	23	33	47	80	44	59	103
Origin	Bali				5	5	10	0	5	5
	Jawa	7	8	15	24	24	48	31	32	63
	Kalimantan		2	2				0	2	2
	Nusa Tenggara	1		1	2		2	3	0	3
	Sulawesi	1	1	2	1	4	5	2	5	7
	Sumatera	2	1	3	6	11	17	8	12	20
	total	11	12	23	33	44	77	44	56	100

Source: Result of survey in 2020

There was a total of 103 respondents. A majority of the respondents held a Diploma 3 or an associate degree from three years of education in a nursing school in a university or Institution. The respondents who wanted to go to Japan were from all over Indonesia. To be more precise, most of the respondents came from Java Island, whereas the rest were from Bali, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, and Sumatera. More than half of those surveyed had less than five years of job experience when they left Indonesia to work in Japan. This was in relation to their previous experiences in Indonesia.

The result of the survey showed that more than 90% of the respondents learned Japanese before applying for the job. Most of these respondents had already received the Japanese Language Proficiency certification. The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (*nihongo nouryoku shiken*) is a test intended for people who have a native language other than Japanese. The grades are rated on a scale of N1 (advance level) to N5 (low level). The results from the questionnaire showed that 30 of the 103 respondents had received N3 (middle level) certification. Studying the Japanese language before going to Japan was regarded as a key aspect in passing the licensing examination.<sup>32</sup>

Table 2. Income Comparison

Job/Income in Indonesia (Rp)	<25	26-30	31-35	>36
Nurse	15	48	29	11

<sup>32</sup> Ishikawa and Setyowati, "Social and Cultural Issues of Indonesian Migrant Nurses in Japan." *The Malaysian Journal of Nursing (MJN)* 10, no. 1 (2018): 49–56. <https://doi.org/10.31674/mjn.2018.v10i01.007>.



<1.000.000, -	12	21	10	1
1.000.000, - s/d 3.000.000, -	1	20	13	6
3.000.000, - s/d 5.000.000, -		7	5	3
>5.000.000, -	2		1	1
Job/Income in Japan (Yen)	<25	26-30	31-35	>36
Nurse	0	6	10	6
100.000, - s/d 200.000, -		6	7	5
200.001, - s/d 300.000, -			3	1
>300.000, -				1
Care worker	15	42	19	4
100.000, - s/d 200.000, -	15	39	13	
200.000, - s/d 300.000, -		2	5	4
>300.000, -		1	1	

Source: Result of survey in 2020

As shown in Table 2, income before leaving for Japan was grouped from under one million rupiah as the lowest level to above five million rupiah as the highest. The most common income in this study was under one million rupiah, for workers under 25 years of age. The low income of the respondents was also recognized as one of the push factors to migrate abroad. A majority of the respondents graduated three years of nursing school. Although graduating from nursing school is considered a high level of education in Indonesia, 43 % of respondents claimed to have received salaries below one million rupiah.

### Development of IJEPA and Indonesian Nurse

The Indonesia Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, also known as the IJEPA, is a kind of economic cooperation between Indonesia and Japan that includes free trade and investment by reducing customs tariff. To put it simply, relations between the two nations are positive and mutually beneficial.<sup>33</sup> In August 2007, Shinzo Abe, who was Prime Minister at the time, and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who was President, signed this agreement and implemented effectively since 2008. This bilateral cooperation aims to strengthen relations between the two nations in the economy field through three main pillars as main concept those are liberalization, facilitation, and cooperation. Overall, this agreement consists of eleven sectors of cooperation to enhance broader economy in two countries.

One of among these sectors is the agreement regarding health services is listed in the sector of trade in services and movement of natural persons. Follow up this agreement, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indonesian government represented by the National Placement and Protection Agency Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI), with the Japanese government represented by The Japan International Corporation of Welfare Service (JIWELS). As for the

<sup>33</sup> Arfin Sudirman and Animbyo Cahya Putra, "Disaster Diplomacy as an Alternative Approach for Indonesia's Instrument of Foreign Policy in ASEAN," *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional* 14, no. 1 (2018): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v14i1.2772.1-12>; Vrameswari Omega W, Stanislaus Risadi Apresian, and Elisabeth Dewi, "The Collaboration Between Indonesia and Pasific Island Countries in Facing Environmental Challenges," *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional* 14, no. 1 (2018): 137–48, <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v14i1.2834.137-148>.

implementations, Indonesia agrees to send Indonesian nurses to work as nurses and care worker candidates in Japan with the Government to Government (G to G) framework.

This recruitment of nurses working to Japan must fulfill strict requirements. Applicants must be registered nurses who have earned a Diploma III from an accredited nursing program or a bachelor's degree from an Indonesian nursing school, and who also have at least two years of relevant work experience. Next, the applicants depart to Japan after pass the screening process, psychological testing, nurse test, medical examination and learning Japanese language for six months in Indonesia. They spend another six months in Japan studying the language and culture. Although each of the candidates is a licensed professional nurse in Indonesia, their jobs in Japan are either that of a nurse or a care worker assistant.

To be recognized as professional nurses or care worker in Japan, they must pass the licensed examination in Japan. If they fail in the licensed test, then they must return to Indonesia after the contract period and have a chance to retake the nurse's or care worker licensed examination even after return to home country with the procedure's information provided by JICWELS. In addition, as support for nurse and care worker candidates who have returned to Indonesia, Japanese government also provided some learning materials related to licensed exam.

### Motivation Factors Working in Japan

Migration across international borders is typically caused by either push forces, which motivate individuals to leave their home country, or pull causes, which originate in other nations and lure people to go there. According to the survey, the majority of the respondents' motivation behind working in Japan was associated with economical, personal, and familial factors. Economic factors were the dominant driving force behind Indonesian nurses migrating to Japan. It encouraged most migrant workers to go abroad to improve their economic status (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Motivation behind Working in Japan



Source: Result of survey in 2020

#### a. Low Salary

A majority of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the salary they received as nurses in Indonesia. Approximately 60 % respondents felt their salary was outweighed by the responsibilities and workload they had to endure. Nursing, particularly in the private sector, is one of

the lowest paid professions in Indonesia. Many nurses still get paid below the regional minimum wage set by the government, less than one million rupiahs. Some nurses even end up becoming voluntary health workers, working without an income.<sup>34</sup> Their wages are not on par with the heavy workload, high work risks, and responsibilities.

Additionally, when responding to the motivation behind going to Japan, 66 respondents stated that their wages as nurses in Indonesia were not enough to support their family. Wanting to procure more money to help and improve the family finances was the dominant response. The Japanese government offered a much higher income than the public and private sectors in Indonesia. A higher salary was the most dominant factor for Indonesian nurses to seek employment in Japan, as they wanted to improve family welfare and obtain better living conditions.

### **b. Poor working conditions in Indonesia**

Thirty-four respondents claimed that the working conditions in Indonesia were not good, as a result of which they wanted to work abroad. Unemployment has become a major factor behind workers migrating. Indonesia tends to have high unemployment rates and low labor absorption in the formal sector. The nursing industry already has a high unemployment rate, and it's getting worse because of the lack of jobs for recent grads. Every year, students graduate from many universities and nursing institutes in Indonesia, but the employment rate of nurses remains less than 10 percent. Currently, there are 863,000 nurses in Indonesia, but only 439,000 are employed in workplaces such as hospitals, health centers, and clinics and the rest are becoming unemployed.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding the employment aspect, there was a working condition gap between Indonesia and Japan. Respondents felt uncomfortable with the working conditions in Indonesia. Working as a nurse in Indonesia meant many responsibilities and high working hours with an inadequate salary. They felt the salary was outweighed by the responsibilities and workload they had to endure. Their wages are not on par with the heavy workload, high work risks, and responsibilities.

### **c. Influence of friends or relatives**

The survey revealed that relatives or friends already working abroad or returning to the home country had an influence over their decision to migrate to Japan. Of the 103 respondents, 76 claimed to have been encouraged by someone working overseas. The lack of employment in Indonesia encouraged people to look for jobs abroad and migrate. Working overseas is considered full of promise in many aspects. There are many stories of nurses working in Japan earning much more money compared to those in Indonesia. This is also supported by a large number of nurses returning home, building houses, buying vehicles or other luxury items. This attracts other people to work overseas. The influence of friends was the one of the major reasons behind workers wanting to seek job opportunities abroad.

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<sup>34</sup> Zainal Abidin, Y. Trihoni Nalesti Dewi, and Tuntas Dhanardhono, "Human Rights Perspectives on Voluntary Health Workers Nurses Who Work at Government Agencies," *SOEPRA* 6, no. 1 (2020): 153–75, <https://doi.org/10.24167/shk.v6i1.2385>; Daniel H. de Vries, Stephanie Steinmetz, and Kea G. Tijdens, "Does Migration 'Pay Off' for Foreign-Born Migrant Health Workers? An Exploratory Analysis Using the Global Wageindicator Dataset," *Human Resources for Health* 14, no. 1 (2016): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-016-0136-5>.

<sup>35</sup> Edy Mulyadi and Langsa Muhammad Husaini, "Gambaran Kinerja Perawat Di Puskesmas Langsa Lama Dan Puskesmas Langsa Kota Tahun 2019" (STIKes Cut Nyak Dien, 2019). *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Praktik Kesehatan* 3, no.1 (2019) 44–53.

**d. Toward new experiences**

Regarding personal aspects, more than half the respondents dreamt of becoming nurses in Japan. Working in Japan was seen as a matter of pride, because of the challenging nature of the job as compared to that in Indonesia as well as the image of Japan as a technologically developed and modern country. There were many assumptions that working abroad would enhance their credibility and skills and increase their chances of getting a nurse job in Indonesia once they return.

The survey also revealed that many respondents sought a new way of life. They stated that working in Japan provided a different living experience and taught them lessons like learning to be more independent, as they were forced to live alone on their own for the first time. Cultural differences, the weather, the local language, different state regulations, and way of life made Japan attractive choice for Indonesian workers. Additionally, some respondents claimed that they were interested in caring for the elderly as a new experience—something the Indonesian nurses were not familiar with.

**Choices of Indonesian Nurses in Japan: Intention to Stay or Return**

Survey revealed that 69 % (45% male and 55% female) of the respondents intended to stay in Japan after contract termination. On the contrary, 31% (37.5% male and 62.5% female) of the respondents intended to return to Indonesia.

Table 3. Age Factor

Age	<25	26-30	31-35	>36	Total
Return to Indonesia	11	10	5	6	32
Nurse		2	1	4	7
Care worker	11	8	4	2	25
Stay in Japan	16	34	18	3	71
Nurse		7	7	2	16
Care worker	16	27	11	1	55

Source: Result of survey in 2020

Age was also one of the characteristics that influenced the judgment in determining the desire to settle or return home. The age of the respondents ranged from 21 to 46 years. From Table 4, it is seen that of the 103 respondents, 43% were in the 26–30 age group, whereas the smallest proportion was over 36 years of age. Most of the respondents across age groups, except those over 36 years of age, intended to stay in Japan. The survey data showed that 67% of the oldest age group (> 36) chose to return to Indonesia, whereas other younger age groups chose to settle in Japan.

### Japanese language factor

Table 4. Japanese Language Factor

Learning Japanese Language before going to Japan			
	No	Yes	Total
Return to Indonesia	6	26	32
Nurse	1	6	7
Care worker	5	20	25
Stay in Japan	2	69	71
Nurse	2	14	16
Care worker		55	55

Source: Result of survey in 2020

A majority of the respondents claimed to have studied the Japanese language before going to Japan. Overall, 89% of respondents learned the Japanese language, of which 75% preferred to stay in Japan after contract termination. However, less than 10% of respondents did not learn the language, of which 75 % of preferred to return to Indonesia. According to Geurt<sup>36</sup>, proficiency in a second language is considered the most important factor as it contributes to migrants' social and structural integration. Additionally, Heponiemi<sup>37</sup> stated that, significant linguistic difficulties predicted a greater risk of intention to leave.

<sup>36</sup> Geurt Essers, "Clarifying the Role of Context in Doctor-Patient Communication" (Disertasi, Radboud University, 2014), <https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/127233>.

<sup>37</sup> Tarja Heponiemi et al., "The Turnover Intentions and Intentions to Leave the Country of Foreign-Born Physicians in Finland: A Cross-Sectional Questionnaire Study," *BMC Health Services Research* 19, no. 1 (2019): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-019-4487-1>.

### Working condition factors in Japan

Table 5. Job Burden Factor

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Total
Return to Indonesia	2	7	14	9	32
Nurse	1	2	1	3	7
Care worker	1	5	13	6	25
Stay in Japan	11	14	39	7	71
Nurse	3	2	8	3	16
Care worker	8	12	31	4	55

Source: Result of survey in 2020

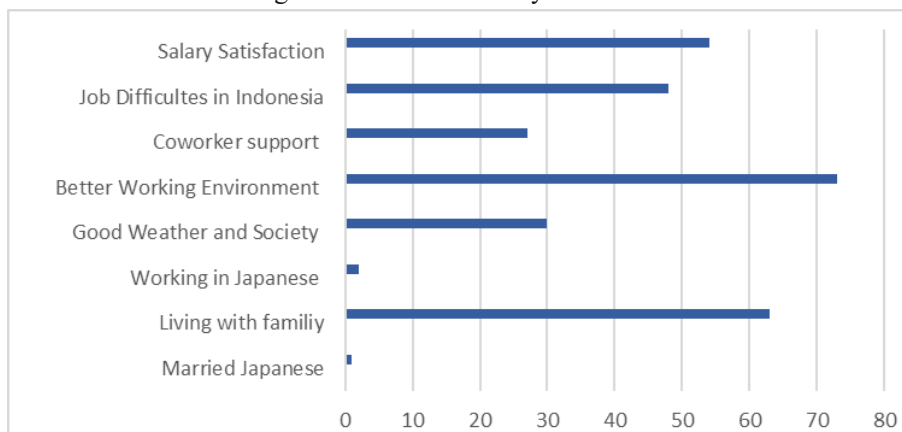
With regard to burnout experiences in Japan, more than half the respondents felt burdened by their job. Of these respondents, a majority preferred to stay back in Japan. Conversely, the remaining respondents, who often felt tired and burdened, preferred returning to Indonesia after contract termination. The burden of this Indonesian nurses in Japan mostly come from managing their time in Japan as they have to work and learning at the same time.

Time management was one of the biggest challenging parts according to 26 % of respondents. They claimed to have had trouble managing time between working and studying for the licensed examination. Most of the respondents felt burdened when they had to work an average of 40 hours a week and prepare for the exam at the same time. Reason for Staying or Returning

#### a. Reasons for Staying

Survey revealed several reasons behind the preferences of stay in Japan after contract termination were influenced by job conditions, economic and familial reasons.

Figure 3. Reasons for Stay



Source: Result of survey in 2020

Economic reasons predominantly determined the respondents' preference to stay back in Japan. Their high income in Japan became the biggest bargaining power in their intention to stay. Meanwhile in Indonesia, most respondents expressed those wages as nurses in Indonesia were not enough to support or improve their family economy. Most respondents expressed they intend to stay in Japan since they felt satisfied with their income in Japan. More than half the respondents felt satisfied with their income in Japan and intended to stay back, whereas 7% felt unsatisfied with their wages and wanted to return to Indonesia.

With regard to working condition in Japan mostly respondents want to stay longer in Japan since they get support from their employers and Japanese coworkers. Almost all the respondents claimed to have received other benefits besides the monthly salary. Mostly the respondents were provided housing and insurance by the employers. Some respondents also received food and transportation to support their life in Japan. The survey also revealed that most of respondents were supported and encouraged by their employers to become licensed nurses or care workers. On the other hand, mostly respondents prefer working in Japan longer since the working condition in Indonesia is more challenging. The respondents need to re-adjust with Indonesia's working conditions if they return to Indonesia.

Almost half the respondents stated that job difficulties in Indonesia were a major factor behind wanting to stay in Japan. A similar notion was mentioned in a previous study, where Indonesian nurses who returned to Indonesia had difficulties finding jobs since their experiences and skills from Japan were not considered by employers in Indonesia.<sup>38</sup> There are differences in the use of nurse expertise in

<sup>38</sup> Mujiati Mujiati and Hatimat Hendrawan, "The Post Placement Empowerment of Nurse Returnees in Indonesia. Advances in Social Science, Education, and Humanities Research," in *Intenational Conference on Progressive Civil Society (ICONPROCS 2019)*, 2019, 104–7, <https://www.atlantispress.com/proceedings/iconprocs-19/125908570>. Accessed September 5 2022

Indonesia and Japan. In Indonesia, nurses may carry out medical treatments such as injections, whereas they are not allowed to do so in Japan. Moreover, nurse returnees who worked as care workers in Japan may also face difficulty finding jobs in Indonesia because of the high rate of unemployment and deskilling. Deskilling is mostly experienced by care workers because of their differing duties as nurses both countries. In Japan, their job requires them to bathe, provide food to, and help the elderly's daily activities in Japanese nursing homes. In Indonesia, they have the legal right to apply their nursing skills.

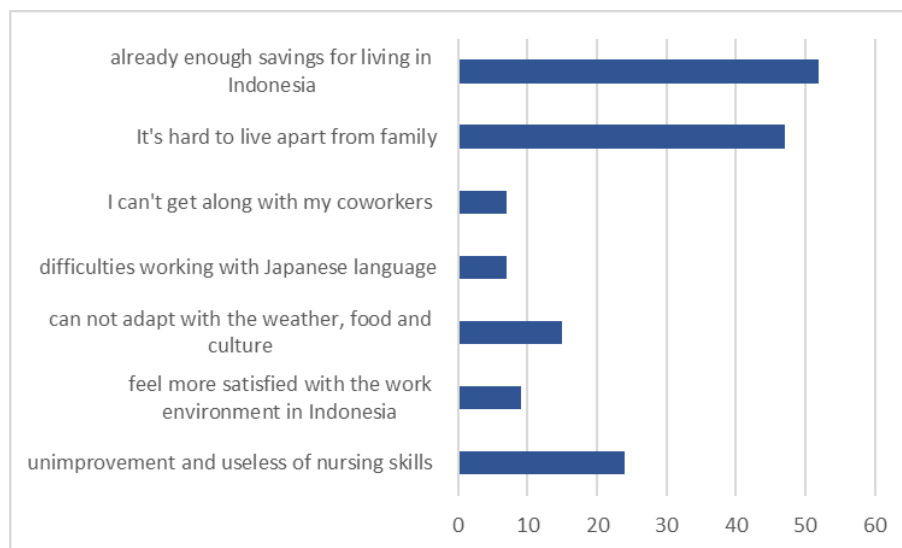
Additionally, the age limit for job seekers in Indonesia becomes a cause for concern for nurses returning to Indonesia. A majority of job opportunities in Indonesia require applicants less than 35 years old. Moreover, some respondents claimed it would be difficult and complicated to obtain the nurse certification (STR), a certificate that is mandatory to be recognized as a health service worker by the Indonesian government. This certificate, without which nurses cannot be employed in health services, takes a long time to be issued.

Intention to stay in Japan also influenced by the society and environment in Japan. Respondents felt interested due to the good weather, society, and the language in Japan. Indonesian nurses also enjoyed living in Japan because of the environment and the well-organized public services.

Moreover, respondents preferred to stay in Japan because they could live with their families. Indonesian nurses who bring their family members migrate or the one who live with Japanese spouse tend to have intention to stay longer in Japan. The presence of families living with may result in increased social support and turn to make stay longer plan in destination country. Living with children or a partner in a host country was an important factor that contributed to the migrant worker's willingness to stay.

#### b. Reasons for Return

Figure4. Reason for Return



Source: Result of survey in 2020

Conversely, those who preferred to leave Japan after contract termination cited several factors as follow economic, working environment, deskilling, weather, and family reason. With regard to economic factors, respondents felt they already had enough money to lead a new better life or become



entrepreneurs in Indonesia. The respondents have met the financial target to prepare their return to home country as they were motivated by earning money to build a new better life in the country of origin.

As mentioned before, living with family contributed to a willingness to stay; however, living separately was also reported as a reason to return to home country. Family members provide special boundaries, attachment, and social support to create more comfortable life in destination country. Living without family members tend to easily feel lonely and uncomfortable with the environment that led to detachment from the present place of residence (less attachment to Japan).

Among the factors influencing return intention was unable to adjust or get along with their coworkers and difficulties working with Japanese language in daily life. Lack of acceptance perception as foreign workers in destination country increase the desire to return to home country. Moreover, respondents mostly found the Japanese language the most challenging part and largest barrier in their life in Japan. All conversations with patients, doctors, and coworkers were in Japanese. Moreover, Japanese literacy skills are also an absolute requirement to be able to pass the certification exam. As the examination uses advanced Japanese language, the questions often contain ambiguous language structures and expressions. Learning kanji and other unfamiliar terms in Japanese nursing also proved to be a challenge. Additionally, from the viewpoint of the institution and the employer, this language problem causes poor communication and leads to misunderstandings in carrying out work orders. Difficulties in social integration and language barrier lead migrant workers to feel that they never being part of the destination county population, which makes them have intention to return home.

Intention to leave is strongly influenced by working environment.<sup>39</sup> Respondent reported their intention to leave Japan associated with deskilling experience in Japan. They feel that their nursing skills was useless as they cannot do medical procedures as they experienced during work in Indonesia. Unrecognized nursing skills and knowledge were perceived by majority care workers in Japan as their job and working environment in nursing home mostly related to caring for elderly rather than treat the sick like nurses in Indonesia generally do. Carlos<sup>40</sup> stated that limited opportunities to indulge in specialized nursing contributed to an intention to return.

Difficulties to adjusting to weather, food and culture's differences between Indonesia and Japan are the reasons make respondents intent to back to home country rather than stay in Japan. Difference in religion of Indonesian nurses and majority populations in Japan can be viewed as one cultural gap lead different way behavior. Most Indonesian nurses who work in Japan are Muslims, the inaccessibility of spaces for religiously affiliated activities and food restrictions (halal-haram) become factors that increase the desire of Indonesian nurses to return to their home countries.

## Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate the intentions of Indonesian nurses who are now employed in Japan after contact termination whether the prefer to stay in Japan or return to home country. Based on survey, most respondents 69% intended to stay in Japan for a longer period. This choice was made due to the positive and beneficial conditions, such as higher salaries and better working and living conditions in Japan. This preferences of Indonesian nurses in Japan come with more positive factors than negative which reflects the benefits provided and felt by Indonesian migrant workers in Japan

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<sup>39</sup> Maud M. Heinen et al., "Nurses' Intention To Leave Their Profession: A Cross Sectional Observational Study In 10 European Countries," *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 50, no. 2 (2013): 174–84, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2012.09.019>.

<sup>40</sup> Maria Reinartuth D. Carlos, "Multiculturalism Policies and the Stepwise International Migration of Filipino Nurses: Implications for Japan," *Multiculturalism and Conflict Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific: Migration, Language and Politics*, 2016, 162–89, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-40360-5\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-40360-5_9).

triggered by the cooperation between the Japanese and Indonesian governments. The benefits of this collaboration are expected to be sustainable with the hope that the intention to stay reflects the retention of Indonesian nurses in Japan. Moreover, Cooperation between the two countries is also expected to occur for other types of job.

The above findings shed light on the strategy of Indonesian nurses and care workers towards leading a better life. Interestingly, they are more interested in staying back in Japan for a longer period after contract termination. However, even though Indonesian nurses are strongly motivated by economic factors, becoming a registered nurse or care worker in Japan is a challenging process. Passing the national exam may affect their future actions whether they will stay in Japan or go back to Indonesia. The role of both government in helping and encouraging migrant workers in Japan to pass the exam will have huge impact for the sustainability and mutual benefit for this cooperation.

The aspects explained in this paper explain the reasons people plan to settle in destination country or another prefer to back to country of origin. However, this paper cannot explain or predict the duration or length of time Indonesian migrant workers will stay in Japan. In addition, the intention of Indonesian nurse in Japan to move or migrate to other country also need to be studied and explore more. The scope of this study is limited to educated Indonesian migrant laborers (nurse) and focuses solely on one theoretical framework. This research is also meant to be a more in-depth examination of Indonesian migrant workers who are employed in other nations, which will contribute to the field of research pertaining to international migration. s

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