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Unveiling Coloniality and Reproduction of Racialized Others in Japanese Migration Policy

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GMD	Governance of Migration and Diversity
JITCO	Japan International Training Cooperation Organization
ICRRA	Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act
ISS	International Institute of Social Studies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OFW	Overseas Filipino Worker
OTIT	Organization for Technical Intern Training
SNS	Social Network Services
TITP	Technical Intern Training Program

Dedication

For all those who migrate for work and the organizations that work with them, it is time to be an act of solidarity towards the world in which embraces them as human beings not just as 'migrant workers,'

For all contributors, who share their experiences and welcomed me warmly. Since I promised my informants anonymity, I cannot acknowledge them by their real names. Yet, I am very grateful to those sharing their stories with me. The conversation we had will continue to inspire me.

For my family and friends who listened to my struggles, gave me advice, and kept me sane. Without your support, I would not be here. I am incredibly grateful to have you all.

My sincerest gratitude to ISS, including my supervision team. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to deepen my understanding and explore my curiosity. For Nanneke, a lovely supervisor, who has shown me endless wisdom, precise feedback, and guidance. Thank you so much for everything, this thesis would not be in the current condition without kind support, patience, and understanding. For Rosalba, the most supportive second reader with full of knowledge. Thank you so much for giving me a space to conduct research with decoloniality and for your guidance with needed critical eyes.

I appreciate for all those I have met in my life.

Abstract

Exploitation of migrant workers has been happening all over the world. Investigating labour migration policy with the lens of colonial matrix of power, I argue that concurrent labour migration policy is used as a tool to sustain historically created power hierarchies. This paper expands decolonial perspectives into Asia by starting from Japan as a former colonial power to expose coloniality in migration policy and explore its implication. Drawing on in-depth semi-structured interviews as well as a focused group discussion and program documents of Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) in Japan, I elucidate how historically informed racial ideology has been (re)produced and is articulated through migration policy. Moreover, this paper explicates how division of labour is deeply intertwined in capitalism and is operated by exploiting invented racial and gender categories that are articulated through domination via the dehumanization of the Other. The analysis takes its departure from the idea of 'trainee', demonstrating how TITP is used to reinforce colonial matrix of power, systematically putting migrants into 'low-skilled' positions, which reproduces the idea of 'Japaneseness' as superior to Other Asian countries. Throughout the research, by integrating decolonial approach, this paper aims to hold their multiple selves not just as 'migrant workers.'

Relevance to Development Studies

The relationship between migration and development has increasingly received attention in the past decades. However, power relations between those migrating and those who receive migrants set migration-development agendas deserve further scrutiny. This research raises a question about the idea of "development" itself in migration policy. The idea of 'development' is related to levels of modernity that are set by Western standards. The use of the word 'development' should be reconsidered since it might reproduce domination under migration policy. This research explores how development discourse strengthens an exclusionary national identity in the receiving country.

Keywords

Labor Migration Policy, Japan, Colonial Matrix of Power, Othering, Decoloniality, Domination.

Chapter 1
Introduction to My Research Journey

'Aitsura'

My grandfather oftentimes referred to people from different countries when we watch television as '*Aitsura*'. This is a disrespectful way of mentioning 'them' in Japanese. Every time I heard him saying this word, I was frustrated and even sometimes got a sudden urge to cry.

When I was thinking about my research topic, I encountered the news that in April 2023, the Justice Ministry Panel gave a recommendation of the abolishment of the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) (Otake and Exum, 2023) even though it still exist as of December 2023. Japan initiated TITP in 1993 with the aim of skills and knowledge transfer to 'developing countries' and to promote international cooperation, helping human resources to be 'agents' of development in their countries (JITCO, 2023). Under TITP, many cases of labour exploitation were reported (Chaigne, 2022; Matsumuro, 2022; Sim, 2022; Yoshikawa, 2022). With TITP, the Japanese government intended to compensate for labour shortages without increasing the number of 'migrants', safeguarding national Japanese identity. This stance reminds me of my grandfather. To address migrant othering, we need to unearth where such excluding positions come from. This research builds on my accumulated frustration toward my grandfather's attitude, Japanese policies for migrant workers, and my academic interest in migration.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the mechanisms and implications of migration policy that creates 'others' by conducting qualitative interviewing. First, I trace the migration-development history in Japan until the present day, especially focusing on TITP. Then, I expound the voices of my participants. This research contributes to expanding decolonial perspectives into Asia by starting from Japan as a former colonial power to deal with migrant othering. I aim to investigate distinct dynamics around migrant workers respectfully and committedly, reflecting on my positionalities and the methodologies required.

The relevance of this research lies in the possible outcomes for crucial actors in the discussion around the migrant worker organizations in Japan. Firstly, it can bring relatively new perspectives into the Japanese context, which may achieve valuable outcomes for migrant worker organizations working with migrant workers facilitated by Japanese migration regimes. Secondly, it contributes to getting the discussion of 'migrant workers' out of the 'othering' process in Japan. Before diving into the topic, it is important to provide a bigger picture of international labour migration coming to Japan.

1.1 Recent Flow of International Labour Migration in Japan

The number of migrant workers has been increasing year by year. According to Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2022), as of the end of October 2022, more than 1.8 million migrant workers were registered in Japan, and at the end of 2022, more than 3 million people from abroad reside in Japan, which were the highest records in history. Looking into details, nationality-wise, the highest percentage accounted for Vietnamese with more than a quarter of the whole, 25.4%. The second largest group was Chinese with 21.2 %, and the third was Filipino with 11.3%. Along with the number of migrant workers, that of companies employing migrant workers has been increasing to 298,790 in 2022 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2022).

There are four categories that people can enter when coming to Japan: (1) 'professionals' from abroad, who are eligible to work such as teachers (2) long-term residents, permanent residents, spouse or child of the Japanese (3) designated activities including technical internship program, applicant of EPA nurses, servant for diplomat, working holiday and so forth 4) permission for extra status activities, especially for a part-time job (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare). Of over 1.8 million migrant workers, 479,949 held professional and engineer visas while 73,363 had visas for designated activities such as researchers, sports athletes, and so forth. On the other hand, the number of technical intern trainees reached 343,254 in 2022 after a 2.4 % reduction from 2020 (see Figure 1). Geography-wise, Tokyo was the most popular destination for migrant workers, with 500,089, accompanied by the Aichi Prefecture with 188,691, and Osaka Prefecture with 124,570 (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2022; Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2023).

Figure 1: The number of technical intern trainees from 2011 to 2022
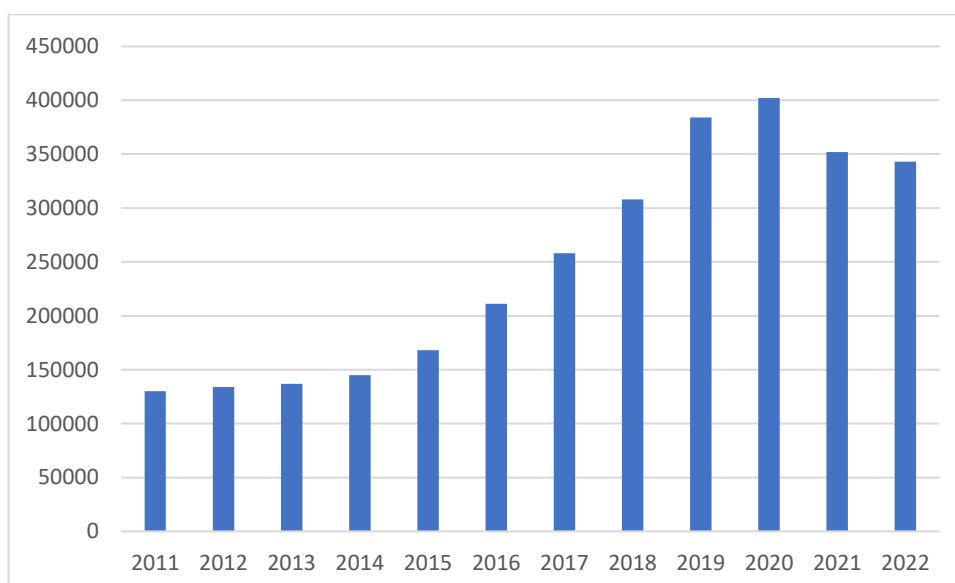
Source: Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2023).

The recent trend of migration to Japan results from its economic status worldwide. Until the mid-1980s, most foreigners were of Korean or Chinese origins, called '*Zainichi*'. Yet, in the late 1980s, Japan experienced rapid economic growth through overheating economic activity and inflation of assets, which is so-called bubble economy (Bayoumi and Collyns, 2000), which caused labour shortages. During that time, many *Nikkeijin* workers of Japanese origins mostly from Latin American countries such as Brazil, arrived in Japan as well as thousands of Asian migrants, including the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia. A lot of Asian migrants arrived because of labour shortages. Notably, many migrant workers facilitated by designated migration policies that attract workers are from countries that Japan once colonized such as Manchuria (current China) or occupied such as the Philippines or Northern French Indochina (current Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), and so on (Kublin, 1959; Taylor, 2013).

The recent demand for migrant workers reflects the current Japanese aging society. According to Statistics Breau of Japan (2022), the population aged over 65 years old consisted of 29% of the total population as of October 2022 while that aged under 15 years old occupied 11.6% of the total. As a result, there is a severe labour shortage in Japan. In response to the decline in population and the highly aging society, the Japanese government expanded the measures to recruit more skilled workers, for example, a point-based system introduced

in 2012. On the other hand, the government's reluctance to accept 'unskilled' workers was kept. Yet, the number of 'unskilled' workers increased because of the expansion of the targets of the technical intern trainee program and the extension of the length of stay in 2017 (Saito, 2022). Moreover, in 2019, Japan's immigration policy was modified to accept 345,000 new 'low-skilled' and 'semi-skilled' foreign workers such as caregivers under a specified skills visa program in five years, which was incentivized by the fact that about 30 % of the Japanese population was over 65 years old and the fertility rate has been decreasing over the past years. Japan's level of economic development attracts a lot of low-skilled workers (Pollman and Yashiro, 2020). Therefore, Japanese migration policy has been changing along with its demographic crises and labour market needs, which seems to incorporate and reinforce structural differences based on racial ideologies developed through colonial legacies.

1.2. Justification of the Research Problem

This research aims to analyse the mechanisms and implications of migration policies that create migrants as racialized Other, using TITP as a case study. With various lenses and approaches, many researchers have investigated the role of migration and the 'othering' process in it. Othering happens based on the binary of 'us' and 'them', separating the one from the other through space, knowledge production, and time according to Western standard of modernity (Strand, 2022). Othering can happen not evidently but implied by the use of language, for example 'Third World' in opposition to 'First World', which become institutionalized through policies and lived by people (Escobar, 2012). Additionally, its process does not occur suddenly rather is based on lingering colonial legacies that often go unrecognised (Kothari, 2006). Thus, othering can be used as a means to reproduce historically structured power hierarchies. Yet, a large body of literature focuses on the institutionalization of migrant othering with an emphasis on the process of victimization and vulnerabilities of migrants (Collins and Stringer, 2022; Fussell, 2011) and its relationship with racialized capitalism (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Mantz, 2019). Some researchers have investigated migrant resistance but there are fewer empirical studies (Mantz, 2019; Salim, 2023), but in Western context. Hence, there is a lack of empirical studies to understand the implications of how the colonial matrix of power that controls the power structure at every level (Mignolo, 2018a) impacts the everyday life of migrant workers, and how to embrace them as human beings not just as 'migrant workers' in Asian countries.

In the context of Japan, current narratives around TITP emphasize precarious labour conditions and labour exploitation especially in recruitment process and workplace (Belanger et.al., 2011; Tran, 2020; Yoshida, 2021). For example, by analysing the trainees' recruitment process, Belanger et.al. (2011) illustrate that how trainees experience oppressive workplace and show how recruitment process allows them to become unauthorised migrant workers after the training period. Moreover, Yoshida (2021) found that the Japanese restrictive migration policy encourages companies to supervise workers from abroad with careful eyes for them not to do something wrong. This strengthens the unequal relationship between workers and bosses, which (re)produces the idea of ideal migrant workers as silent trainees. Such a vulnerable situation of trainees was exacerbated by Covid-19 that threatens their livelihood because many receiving companies turned the blind eyes to trainees under economic difficulties (Tran, 2020). However, these studies often focus on the recruitment process or employee and employer relationship in the current context. It also is worth noting that previous research tends to see labour exploitation with the economic logic that makes profits by extracting surplus value and accumulating capital, which has its roots in the Eurocentric point of view (Grosfoguel, 2006) that conceals the darker side of modernity (Quijano, 2000). It is because it ignores the diverse forms of political economy and failed to grasp the resistance

to capitalism (Manz, 2021; Rojas, 2007). Then, decolonial approach is necessary to address these limitations because it uncovers racial and epistemic violence of modernity, silenced by the dominated (Rojas, 2007; Walsh, 2012). Thus, this paper seeks to go beyond such discussion by employing decolonial perspectives that situates labour exploitation stemming from domination via dehumanization having a racialized component and to build on its debate by providing new perspectives.

It is also important to integrate a decolonial perspective into Japanese migration regimes because colonial legacies influence concurrent politics and economies (Grosfogel, 2011). The difference comes from levels of modernity according to Western standards (Mignolo, 2018b). Historically, colonization functioned underlying the binary category of the civilized and uncivilized, which differentiated 'us' of Western society from 'the others' of the rest (Kothari, 2006). This othering consolidated power differences that are inherent in the current world in a way that countries of colonizers have relatively higher economic status and political stability while those once colonized have comparatively lower economic and political power (Quajano, 2000). This is reflected in so-called development aid and cooperation. For example, through examining the development partnership between the United Kingdom and South Africa that aims for South Africans to know how to use investments for better lives and for international cooperative development, Strand (2022) has found that it reinforces the difference and justifies hierarchies. Likewise, the core of TITP is knowledge transfer to 'developing' countries in Asia and the promotion of international cooperation through the assistance of developing human resources to become development 'agents' in their 'home' countries (JITCO, 2023). This program assumes a so-called triple-win situation (Wickramasekara, 2011) where migrants can acquire new skills, sending countries can 'develop' by growing economically, and Japan can receive labour forces to keep up its economy. Yet, in the name of this triple-win situation, many trainees have been abused (Chaigne, 2022). The government alleviates its borders to labour migrants, which seems good for migrants to get opportunities. Yet it still upholds power hierarchies, which may subordinate migrant workers. Importantly, most of the trainees are from countries Japan once colonized or invaded. Such colonial legacies need to be acknowledged and investigated to understand current inequalities. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate migrant othering, its mechanisms, and implications as evident through migration policies from decolonial perspective in order to see what is erased and unrecognized. This paper contributes to expanding the scope of time employing a decolonial perspective that allows us to examine current events as a historically continuing process and extending its context into Asian context.

1.3. Research Objectives

This investigation aims to combat the subordination of migrants in order to perceive them as human beings through unpacking mechanisms of 'othering'. It also contributes to putting the experiences of trainees at the centre of the program to keep reflecting on what is implied by 'trainees', which program to build, for whom, with whom, and how the othering processes occur. During this investigation journey, we need to keep in mind that positionalities are not fixed things, "but our positionalities surely affect our struggles, choices, and sacrifices we need to make to walk our paths" (Cairo, 2021, pp. 84).

1.4. Research Questions

With the objectives I mentioned, this paper proposes the following central question and sub questions:

1) How does Japan rearticulate colonial power hierarchies through migration policy, the Technical Intern Training Program?

    (a) How is the Technical Intern Training Program formulated and practiced?
    (b) How is the idea of 'trainees' as Other is constructed in relation to 'Japanesess'?

To answer these questions, this paper will offer theoretical considerations about labour migration in migration-development context, racialized labour segmentation, colonial matrix of power, and coloniality of state and state policy to frame this research (Chapter 2). This framework takes me to apply a qualitative methodology combined with decolonial approach that aims to unveil the implications of migration policy, constantly reflecting on my positionality (Chapter 3). By situating Japan as a former colonial power, this paper contextualises colonial matrix of power in Japan (Chapter 4). Then, it delves into findings that are divided into two chapters dealing with above mentioned sub-questions (Chapter 5 and 6). These findings lead to final reflection, pondering how coloniality is persist in migration policy, and its relation to Japaneseness (Chapter 7).

Chapter 2 Theoretical Considerations

2.1. Labour Migration in Migration-Development Context

Under the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, a migrant worker is defined as a person engaging in a remunerated activity in a place where the person does not have nationality. There are various types of migrant workers, such as frontier worker, seasonal worker, seafarer, itinerant worker, project-tied worker, specified-employment worker, and self-employed workers (OHCHR, 1990). The number of migrant workers went up to 169 million in the world (ILO, 2021). Its drivers are likely to be related to demographic trends such as aging society, labour markets, migration policies, and technology. Yet, in terms of international migration, migrants may face discrimination and barriers to get jobs such as language skills. The most of international migrant workers are prime-age adults, aged from 25 to 64. In 2019, prime-age adults occupied about 75% of them while youth constituted approximately 13 % and older workers 12.4% (ILO, 2021).

There are many reasons why people migrate to another country for employment. The neoclassical economic theory holds that international migration is caused by geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labour and is primarily directed at earning more money (Massey et.al., 1993). The other way is historical-structural theories of international migration that acknowledge social and economic structures transform the mobile population (de Haas, 2010). Current neoliberal capitalism was accelerated by cheap labours, benefitting from an oversupply of labour bringing many consequences such as growing unemployment rate in disadvantaged economies. It is also supported by competition and growth while emerging job insecurities such as precariousness. Under such capitalism, the flow of migrant workers is encouraged by win-win-win fiction that assumes migration is beneficial for all three parties: sending countries, receiving countries, and migrants themselves. However, this assumption overemphasizes the positive site of the remittances and skills development, ignoring the cost of migration. This triple win scenario is in favour of migrant receiving countries and large corporation that hire many migrant workers (Schierup et.al., 2015).

Labor migration policies encourage more workers to migrate to another place. They are sometimes combined with development policies or poverty reduction aims. In Asian sending countries, there are three main policy aims: (1) to protect migrant workers by regulating and controlling recruitment and providing support services (2) to promote employment and (3) to return and reintegrate into home countries (OECD, ADBI, and ILO, 2016). Yet, once again, migration policies are likely to favour receiving countries (Betts, 2011).

2.1. Racialized Labour Segmentation

Labour migration reinforces labour market segmentation partially through racialization. Traditionally, the labour market is segmented in two levels: primary sector and secondary sector. Jobs in the primary sector are paid highly and offer better working conditions while those in the secondary sectors are generally low-paid and offer poorer working conditions exacerbated by highly personalized employment relationships. Oftentimes secondary-sector jobs do not require formal skills, which makes the replacement of workers easy, increasing their insecurities (Piore, 1973).

In recent years, labour segmentation happens in a way that many migrant workers work in spatially fixed industries like farmers, construction workers, and domestic workers (Kothari, 2013). Migrant status, coupled with their skills, makes people willing to do the

dangerous jobs that nationals will not, at exploitative wages (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014; Yoshida, 2021), which is influenced by policies and practices both at local and national level (Chacko and Price, 2021). Migrant workers' 'skills' are related to their precarity of working condition. The precarity of secondary segment or 'low' skilled labours is worse than that of primary segment or 'high' skilled counterparts since primary sectors are more privileged and socially recognized as crucial. On top of that, workers in secondary sectors are substituted easily (Baron, 1973). This substitutability leads them to be seen as an economic alternative.

The labour segmentation involves racialization happened by categorizing bodies since race is socially created (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou, 2015). Research focused on the relationship between occupational segregation and race and gender (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Mantz, 2019) has shown that labour market structures interact with historically created differences by race and sex to reproduce differences and distribute resources along the specific groups of people. Baron (1973) illustrated how labour market has been divided by race using the case of the U.S. He argues that there is a reinforcing relationship between racial system and labour market segmentation, maintaining racial division of labour based on plantation work during colonization. Historically, even after colonization, Blacks were confined to the 'dirty' and 'lower-paid' jobs that are considered as secondary or 'low-skilled' jobs. Then, workers become related with the stigma people have towards their jobs (Wolkowitz, 2002). For example, Kalemba (2023) showcases that racialized migrant status justifies Black African youth to get a job in, what society considered as low-status sector such as cleaning in Australia. Furthermore, the research conducted by Grez (2022) shows that Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) in Canada has been used to inscribe an outsider status by limiting their access to racialized Mexican, which has a hand in constructing them as desired temporary workers who can be easily replaced. Assuming labour shortages as essentially temporary issues, government try to fill these jobs with workers from abroad. In doing so, the government permits their stay not for the purpose of settlement but for filling the shortages (Baron, 1973). If governments are unwilling to receive migrant workers, they will be recruited through temporary labour programs or through irregular migration (Castle, 2015). For instance, Weiler, Sexsmith, and Minkoff-Zern (2021) have shown that guestworker programs accelerate the flow of 'low-skilled' sectors such as agriculture, subordinating migrant workers. Labor division plays an important role in reinforcing secondary labour market. Moreover, temporary migration program is in favour of receiving countries and their 'nationals' while proper resources such as labour rights, salary, and housing are not distributed to them (Grez, 2022). Integrating racialization into labour market, certain group of people reproduce political and economic power domination determined by the racial line that is historically established.

2.3. Colonial Matrix of Power

Domination is an engine of world-making (Mignolo and Bussmann, 2023). Additionally, labour exploitation is a form of domination in a way that certain individuals are considered to be 'lesser' human or not human at all, involving othering (Smiet, 2022). Othering refers to the classification of people by invented categories. Racial classification was reinforced through colonial as well as imperial differences (Mignolo, 2018b). Coloniality is a continuing process of domination that colonial structures and cultures generate under modern capitalist society (Gurosfoguel, 2011). To help unveil what is ignored, this paper employs the colonial matrix of power as a theoretical framework.

The concurrent world-system is influenced by a colonial matrix of power that has colonial legacies in power structures and knowledge control. The colonial matrix of power is "a

complex structure of management and control composed of domains, levels, and flows" (Mignolo, 2018a, pp.142), affecting all the dimensions of social life including gender, economic, sexual, and political relations (Mignolo, 2018b). It has been established, changed, and managed by people, institutions, and languages (Mignolo, 2018a), hiding a coloniality of power that reproduces the uneven allocation of resources, strengthening unequal power hierarchies that "is achieved through a project of persuasion that works principally through claims to truth" (Alcoff, 2007, pp. 85). The coloniality of power is a product of 'economic coloniality', what Mignolo (2018b) refers to as capitalism, which strives to integrate multiple relations where political, economic, and cultural mechanisms are tangled (Grosfoguel, 2011). This establishes the coloniality of labour, articulating new forms of dehumanization and domination (Kalemba, 2023). Work is controlled by capital and world markets, configuring a new system called capitalism, a structure of domination that is inherent from various dynamics of colonial enterprises (Grosfoguel, 2011; Mantz, 2021). The international division of labour is formed in a way that capital accumulated in the core and workers works in the periphery in an authoritarian form (Grosfoguel, 2006). Historically speaking, as Quijano (2000) mentions, slavery was organized to produce goods globally and to meets the needs of capitalism, which was articulated specifically with one 'race'.

The coloniality of power came from the idea of race for social classification (Cariño and Montelongo González, 2022), explaining how the idea of 'race' constitutes the multiple hierarchies at the global scale (Grosfoguel, 2011). The concept of race formed a "dichotomous and hierarchical construction of the world, in which some populations were considered fully human, and others bestialized and dehumanized" (Cariño and Montelongo González, 2022, pp.545) upholding colonial difference that functioned as a classification strategy, establishing hierarchies. The colonial difference appears as a cultural difference by cultural distinction as a rhetoric of modernity, which allows people to distinguish humanity from 'less' humanity (Mignolo, 2018b). Additionally, the idea of racial superiority is maintained by the ruling society denying the ability of ruled society to think, to create, to live (Cariño and Montelongo González, 2022, pp.545, pp. 546), which brings the idealized notion of "Europe" and/or the "West". In this context, 'whiteness' is related to superiority. Based on invented racial categories, the arrangement of labour was done through racialization of labours in favour of the capital holders. At global scale, coloniality persists as a capitalism intertwined with international division of labour, which put its bases on colonialism.

Yet, colonial difference occurs not only in the domain of Europe versus the rest, but also within Asia since race is socially constructed, and racism or racialized bodies happen in relation to others. Also, what we know as 'race' is enunciated by people controlling knowledge (Mignolo, 2017). Knowledge control is referred to as coloniality of knowledge, through Euro-centred knowledge domination, portrays other knowledge, voices, and experiences as inferior or devalued, which justifies intervention and strengthens othering (Strad, 2022). Hence, migrants reach spaces polluted by colonial racial power structures, imagination, and knowledge (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou, 2015).

Race is not a component that can consist of itself. Intersectionality reveals the diversity of selves and reality. According to Crenshaw (2017), intersectionality refers to the multiple, intersecting social identities, ideologies, and forces through which power is expressed and interplayed. This multiplicity is the racialized and gendered self in relation to others. The perception towards others, seeing them as superior/ inferior, reflects how the social world is constructed. It may be fictional, yet real in the sense that the fiction is supported by a power structure and has real-life consequences. Intersectionality allows us to separate self-perception into subjectivity and intersubjectivity when we examine how people perceive themselves. For subjectivity, people identify themselves as with or without power in relation to 'others", using racial difference as a means to distinguish 'us' from 'them'. However, race is not a single factor of this othering process. All of them, selves, intersubjectivity, and society,

are shaped by power relations and within such hierarchical relations, certain individuals are subordinated (Lugones, 2012). Thus, intersectional perspectives are necessary.

2.4. Coloniality of Nation-State and State Policy

The domination is operationalized at state level as well. Nation-states are not only imagined but also products of power, which is composed of societies that makes diverse population into a homogenized subjects with power structures where certain people are upon others, oftentimes based on 'race'. Also, political power makes societies into nation-states. To establish nation-states, it is necessary to have a stable space for a long period of time, which requires centralized political power. In other words, nation-states are a space of domination that has been conflicted and defeated (Quijano, 2000). The process of nationalization of societies or nation-building is a way of homogenizing populations.

Homogenization occurs through knowledge management, allowing certain group of people to dominate the world. Tlostanova (2022) mentions that the Soviet nation completed state project through controlling knowledge. Under Bolshevik regimes, the drastic change of alphabet (to Latin in mid-1920s and to Cyrillic decades later) occurred, which made people inaccessible to their own culture. Moreover, one of the persistent Soviet colonial strategies was to erase all knowledges, links, and memories of the past to establish the nation-state based on myth, 'great Russian people' (ibid, pp. 7). In this way, the population appears to be homogenized based on racial myth that unites the population, allowing racial domination.

Such racial domination is reproduced through state policy which determines who can gain resources by categorizing and naming certain group of people. Sinc nation-sates were built based on homogeneity, 'common' race (Quijano, 2000, pp. 229), those with not 'common' race tend to be considered as threat and excluded. Investigating welfare system in Britain, Bhambra (2021) points out that the British imperial state was constituted through extraction, namely taxes while the idea of citizens as a nation was strengthened through redistribution such as welfare system. Even though colonized subjects paid taxes, the resources were not distributed to them since they are not recognized as 'citizens.' Colonized subjects are not recognized as a legitimate receiver of the resources and as contributors of the resources state appropriated, which means their humanity was erased. In this way, state policy defines who can be considered as 'proper' citizens, intensifying the domination that was established historically.

Migration policy is no exception. Historically, in the nation-building process, new migrants who have different features, such as skin colour or language, were perceived as a threat against maintaining nation-state as it is (Quijano, 2000). In the context of Japan, such racial domination may have a hand in reproducing a myth that Japan is based on uniform culture and bloodline and vice versa (Söderman, 2022). Hence, migration policy plays a pivotal role in maintenance of nation-states and national unity. Since migration studies speaking from a particular place may reproduce the power hierarchy (Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou, 2015), next chapter will reflect on my positionality along with methodology.

Chapter 3 Methodological Considerations

3.1. Positionality and Reflectivity

My participants were influenced by power dynamics I might have created since research is a communal sense of self, relational, and extensive (Cairo,2021). It is crucial to be mindful of "the dynamics involved in the social construction of knowledge" (Potts and Brown, 2005, pp. 261) to pursue social justice and to find multiple selves of those who I work with. This paper strives to achieve this by pondering how the research process was constituted by the distinct power relations and reflecting on my positionality. Before delving into it, let me briefly share my migrant journey with you as elaborated in previous work (Toyoda, 2023).

I am a Japanese woman who was born and raised in Japan and currently lives in the Netherlands, pursuing a master's degree in development studies with a specialization in Governance of Migration and Diversity (GMD) at International Institute of Social Studies (ISS). Before my migration journey started, I had imagined a wonderful 'European Dream' although the reality is different from what I expected. My Dutch life is not easy. It was challenging for me to take classes outside ISS, as a part of the GMD track because I was the only female student from an Asian country in an overwhelmingly 'white' classroom. My appearance of being 'Asian', coupled with my English competency made me feel isolated from my colleagues. Moreover, I sometimes could not get what my friends were talking about in informal conversation, which kept me from joining the conversation. Since my first language is not English, I did not get used to speaking English every single day. Under these formal and informal circumstances of the GMD track, I sometimes could not feel connected to me colleagues as much as I could feel at ISS. Aside from university life, I often encountered racism, for instance, I was constantly and mockingly spoken to by a group of non-Asian people in Chinese. Although it is me who chose the Netherlands as my destination because of fewer number of Japanese people in contrasted with other countries like Australia and because I wanted experience being a migrant as the one who studies migration, it was tough. In response to immersing myself in such a challenging environment, one day, I sensed my body was screaming. I found that it took five months to have my period after I came here. I had thought I was fine and kept telling myself "I am okay" as if reciting a spell. However, it turned out that it was not okay.

These experiences in the Netherlands led me to invent a 'migrant world' on top of the worlds I already had in Japan. As Lugones (1987) argues, cultural description a 'world' has as well as life production makes the 'world' more sense in real society and a society that has a non-dominant system. Moreover, 'traveling' is performed playfully. Yet, we need to be careful about agonistic playfulness that intends to dominate another world. In the end, such agonistic playfulness fails to travel worlds. Rather, it is rule-less activity that enables people to perform playful attitudes. In other words, playfulness comes with uncertainty, involving "openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to self-construction or reconstruction and construction or reconstruction of the 'worlds' we inhabit playfully" (ibid, pp. 17). During my research journey, such playful attitudes allowed me to enjoy its process. Usually, I am more of a person who stick to rules, plan, and hate taking risks. Yet, world-travelling allowed me to be playful and comfortable to uncertain situations. When the interviews I was supposed to conduct with a NGO got cancelled, I could easily accept the fact. Moreover, playful attitudes may have allowed me to listen to participants' stories with openness, which enabled me to do political listening I will elaborate on it more in the next section. Accordingly, 'world-traveling' requires us to be flexible, which is "willfully exercised by the outsider or by

those who are at ease in the mainstream" (ibid, pp.3). In this way, world-traveling makes it possible for us to love each other.

What I experienced in the Netherlands may be related to migrant workers' experiences in Japan. Of course, it is a different social position as a student seeking a master's degree and a worker. However, storytelling helped me to open a dialogue with my research participants. Since human communication is facilitated by what we have in common, it is important to share stories and struggles that helps to find common ground, enabling people to connect (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2011). Such a human bonds allows people to be at ease in a world (Lugones, 1987). Furthermore, sharing stories and struggles made it possible for me to hold space (Cairo, 2021). Holding space requires reciprocity, so we need to establish sincere relations with the people we work with. To hold space, we also need to build trust that set us up to create space safe enough to speak up and enough to be brave. In this research, holding space may have performed through sharing my stories and having conversations multiple times. Even now, we still keep in touch. Thankfully, my participants shared personal stories with me. In some cases, both of us cried while talking about what we went through. I would love to thank all my participants who share their stories and spend precious time with me.

Throughout this research, I continued to ask myself "how one is being constructed and how one is constructing one's world" (Potts and Brown, 2005, pp.283). In attempts to see multiple selves of migrant workers with whom I work, I contemplated how they related to the world and what formed their position in Japan. It is prominent for us to keep on asking ourselves with whom we know, pertaining to accountability process. Hence, this paper employs 'we' instead of the singular 'I'.

As a researcher, I might be embedded in a part of power structures by producing knowledge and interpreting the world from a certain point of view. It is important to note that knowledge is shaped by power. To be aware of the power hierarchies I am situated in, epistemic disobedience is worth considering because it requires us to ask what this research involved, critically engaging in different ways of knowing (Mignolo, 2017). I consider this research paper could exercise epistemic obedience in a way that kept reflecting who I really am and why, critically engaging in theories coming from non-European scholars and in multiple worldviews. Also, this exploration might contribute to stepping forward to do epistemic disobedience in Asian countries where racism in relation to positive images towards 'Westerns' and 'whiteness' persist by making people realise how our knowledge is shaped. White superiority and aspiration for the 'West' exists in a sense that Western knowledge is deemed as 'developed' and Western 'white' appearance is preferred in a society (Iwata &Nemoto, 2017; Russell, 1991), which might be associated with perceived cultural and economic superiority of the Westerners to non-white Japanese.

This research also comes from a political desire to contribute to offering a new perspective to the organization that work with migrant workers, exposing colonial legacy in migration policy. Governmental institutions can also inform transformative actions since it is government institutions that conduct a lot of research around migration. Yet, they uphold hierarchical power relations. Thus, applying the decolonial approach is necessary to find the voices erased by the history and to be more aware of our positionality.

3.2. Research Strategies

To unpack the mechanisms of othering, it is necessary to understand how historically established power structures shape migration policy and its implication. In doing so, data collection will be done through program documents and interviews with trainees in Japan. It is imperative to conduct this research as decolonial as possible to find the voices that are erased or ignored since othering involves oppressing people's minds (Thambinathan &Kinsella, 2021).

First source of data comes from program documents selected by availability and which organisations issued the documents to understand how the TITP was formulated. Since TITP has been administered by the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) and operated by the Organization for Technical Intern Training (OTIT), I chose programme documents such as pamphlet issued by these two organizations. Drawing from the existing literature (Escobar, 2012; Strand, 2022), the documents were read and coded with a focus on the use of words to strengthen possible othering (such as developed or developing), to characterise categories (such as progress), and to legitimatise intervention (such as expertise) and how those words interact with each other. Throughout documents, the words 'skill and knowledge', 'economic growth', 'developing countries' were cycled.

Second source of data comes from interviews. Participants were recruited purposive with three different strands of contacts which were gained through Construction Centre Business Cooperative, the owner of SNS consultation room for technical intern trainees, and my friends in addition to snowballing sampling techniques. I used snowballing sampling techniques, asking participants to recommend other persons fitting into my research (Parker et.al, 2019). In total, I got to interview with 10 trainees (8 from Vietnam and 2 from the Philippines) and 4 Japanese. The Construction Centre Business Cooperative is an organization that has accepted a lot of trainees for more than three decades, offering from practical training to support for arrival and return. The cooperative was chosen as a site for contacting trainees because it has a long history of receiving trainees, which may deepen my understanding of how the system works. SNS consultation room is a Facebook space that is owned by Kurematsu, who was a former board member of labour union in Japan. In this Facebook space, Vietnamese trainees can consult their problems with the organizers to solve them. I got to know the owner while I was contacting the NGO I was planning to interview with.

This research mainly draws on semi-structured interviews defined as interviews with a mix of closed and open-ended questions, often following why or how questions (Adams 2015). Since semi-structured ways allow the interviewer to ask an additional question as soon as interesting points were there, they were employed. To have a natural conversation, the researcher sometimes provided the topics that were relevant to the context of the conversation such as the experiences in workplace to proceed conversation. Though I prepared the interview guide (see Appendix A), sometimes I did not use it. I acknowledge that my research still holds a face of conventional research in a sense that I prepared interview topic and sometimes provided topic based on it, but critically reflecting my positionality and power dynamics and build reciprocal relationship as mentioned earlier may have allowed me to do research somewhat differently. Moreover, before semi-structured interviews, I did storytelling as an icebreaker and to hold space, as mentioned in positionality section. In attempts to co-produce knowledge, during interviewing, it was crucial to do 'political listening' that enables us to listen not for our expectations, but "for assumptions made both by ourselves as listeners and by speakers while attending to the dance of power" (Pottes and Brown, 2005, pp. 272). This enabled me to "violence of interpretation code" (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2011, pp. 16) that imposes certain biases. The wording of the questions was different from session to session and depending on participants' understanding. Before the session begins, I asked which language they felt comfortable with, English or Japanese and asked for the consent to

participate in the interview after explaining what this research is about and the name would be written in pseudonyms in the paper (see Appendix B). If participants felt uncomfortable sharing, they could have stopped the interview. In total, I conducted five interviews in-person and the rest online.

One sweltering day in July in 2023, I went to Yokohama in Japan to join Japanese language course which was held by one of the biggest construction cooperatives. There were 4 Japanese organizers, a Vietnamese translator, 7 Vietnamese trainees who work in construction industry and have worked in Japan for one year. Before class starts, the organizer gave me time to conduct a focused group discussion (FGD) with 7 Vietnamese workers with the help of a translator because it is difficult for some of them to communicatee neither in Japanese nor English. The purpose of this focused group discussion was to grasp the bigger picture of what they are doing and their life as a trainee in Japan as well as introduce my research and myself and to recruit participants to semi-structured interviews. I chose focused group discussions because they already knew each other, and some of them work in the same construction company. Moreover, they had many things in common such as nationality, gender, and the length of stay in Japan. To create a safe space for all participants, we discussed group rules of FGD by that every one of us raised at least one of what you like and dislike about sharing opinions. The content of FGD was mainly about their jobs, how they found TITP at first place, and how they like Japan in general, which lasted almost two hours. After FGD, I asked people who were in the language course, including trainee and organizer sides whether I could conduct one-on-one interview. Fortunately, all of them were kindly accepted this offer, and the other days in July, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with those who joined FGD and with 4 Japanese organizers individually. 5 of them were conducted in person while 6 were online, either LINE or Zoom, due to busy schedule.

Another day, a friend of mine introduced me to two male trainees from the Philippines, both are working in welding for more than 3 years. The interviews with them were conducted via the internet, Messenger in July of 2023. Each session continued about 1.5 hours and conducted several times. In addition, I got to know a female working in food processing industry through Kurematsu who manages the SNS consulting space for Vietnamese trainees on Facebook and conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews via Messenger. The name of the participants are pseudonyms in this paper to protect their privacy.

Table 1: List of interviewees who are referred in this paper.

Name	Nationality	Gender	Age	Job sector	Years of stay
Bao	Vietnam	Female	27	Food processing	4 years
Cong	Vietnam	Male	26	Construction	1 year
Dung	Vietnam	Male	24	Construction	1 year
Gun	Vietnam	Male	26	Construction	1 year
Jessy	Philippines	Male	27	Welding	2 years and half
Kasai	Japan	Female	56	Member of the Construction Centre Business Cooperative	8 years
Ruther	Philippines	Male	36	Welding	4 years

Sato	Japan	Male	75	Member of the Con-struction Centre Business Cooperative	15 years
Suo	Vietnam	Male	19	Construction	1 year

For data analysis, I employ the colonial matrix of power as an analytical framework with critical discourse analysis situated within decolonial approach to unpack the mechanisms of othering migrants. It is important to pay attention to the frames and wording not to cause othering and re-othering (Schenk, 2021). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) emphasises the power relationships and the way languages formulate the reality, shaping individuals' perceptions (Locke, 2004; Mulderring, Montessori, and Farrelly, 2020). The idea of power is from analysing the language used by authority. CDA sees discourses as a form of social practice, implying reciprocal relations between discourses. In this process, I need to pay attention to how, why, and whose words are chosen. Though CDA helped me unveil the mechanisms of othering and dehumanizing migrants, it does not uncover the erasure of their humanity since it is not possible to overcome coloniality, what the discourses disguise or hide (Mignolo, 2018a), without seeing from the perspective of migrants. In order to find the erasure of migrants' plural selves, decolonial approach is necessary. In doing so, I utilized storytelling in combination with holding a space as a strategy (Cairo et.al., 2023), which allowed me to centre the voices of trainees as much as possible and find their multiple subjectivities.

3.3. Limitations and Challenges

Indeed, there are some limitations and risks related to the security of the information and the engagement of those who I work with. Thus, the research was conducted with informed consent in two processes: (1) the use of information and (2) consultation processes where participants can decide whether they want the data to be used (Pottes and Brown, 2005). Moreover, it is important to consider the drawbacks of translation. Most of the interviews (12 interviews) were conducted in Japanese. When I quoted part of it in this paper, I tried to translate as correct as possible, sometimes using Japanese keyword. Yet, since it is possible to change the implication to some extent with choosing certain words (Berman, & Tyyskä, 2011), I need to acknowledge the accuracy might not be as solid as the one without translator or translation. While it is sometime challenging because of internet access, utilizing online tool allowed us to have conversations as much as possible. Sharing personal story to whom we only know each other online was also challenging. I felt that participants were hesitant to speak at first, but storytelling helped us connect even online because they shared their stories relating to what I shared, for example, "I know what you mean. I also experienced…." or "as you mentioned, I also found it difficult…" Even though small sample size is one of the limitations of this research, an extensive literature review of Japanese history is useful to answer research question.

Chapter 4 Japan as a Former Colonial Power

4.1. Contextualising Japanese History within Colonial Matrix of Power

Historically, racialization occurs to justify Japanese colonization or invasion of other East and Southeast Asian countries with the idea of Japan as a civilized and therefore superior nation, which was based on 'white supremacy'. The idea of 'white supremacy is based on the link between a 'higher' level of civilization, military power, and economic status (Morris-Suzuki, 1998; Robertson, 1998; Suzuki, 2003; Young, 1998a). Cultural distinctiveness from other Asian countries based on the idea of 'modernity' evolved during the Meiji Restoration starting in 1868. Due to the seclusion of the Edo period, the influence of Western countries was slight. Yet, after about 220 years of seclusion ended in 1853, when Japan forcibly opened its door because of the U.S. and European countries seeking to new marketplace, Japan entered a catchup period to make itself stronger by importing new technologies, cultures, and knowledge from Western countries to strengthen Japanese identity vis-à-vis other East and Southeast Asian countries and demonstrate its power (Armstrong, 1989) through otherization. Othering is a means to distinguish 'us' from 'them', taking distance between the two. The Other is perceived as outsiders, and sometimes inferior compared to 'us.' In Japanese context, 'the rest' of East Asians and Southeast Asians are essentialized into the 'Other' through legislation to 'educate' them to master Japanese languages and moral principles (Hotta, 2007). The 'Other' is put in lower positions in Japanese society political, economically, and socially.

The Meiji Restoration consisted of series of events that aimed to achieve industrialization, modernization with mass culture, and new social organizations as well as political pluralism that shifted power within the ruling class, changing the decentralized structure into a central state under the traditional sovereignty and modern monarch (Jansen, 1989; Young, 1998b)One of them is *fukoku kyōhei* (rich country and strong army), starting in 1871, which sought to demonstrate Japanese supremacy and to take leadership among Asian countries (Nishiyama, 2022; Suzuki, 2003). This so-called Meiji Restoration brought rapid economic and social development, strengthening Japanese economic and social status in the world. Japan tried to identify itself by comparing itself to the Western countries such as the U.S. and Europe (Armstrong, 1989; Young, 1998b). In other words, the concept of 'modernity' was defined compared to the Western societies, and European countries are considered as 'progressive' and thus 'superior'.

Japanese modern capitalism was built during the Meiji Restoration. After Japan opened its door to outside, Japan should have fulfilled the gaps in terms of 'development' between the one Westen countries had already achieved, and the one Japan had not attained yet. To catch up the Western countries through 'development', Japan needed to establish a modern capitalist nation. In the process of industrialization, political institutions were rebuilt in the Western fashion. Also, a strong army were set up to secure Japanese markets in Asian continent where world capitalism already spread. Furthermore, capitals were accumulated through the legalization of traditional status in agriculture. All in all, these elements brought Japan to the capitalist society with a divide between an organized capitalistic mechanism and a primitive agricultural sector while having strong concerns for global markets (Matsukata, 1934).

In the 20th century the victory in the Russo-Japanese War ending in 1905 increased its world position, showing Japan's stronger military power. This allowed Japanese people to see themselves as 'different' and 'superior' with national pride. Japan considered itself distinct from other Asian countries historically and economically while still positioning itself as

inferior to Western countries. This was reinforced by the eugenic idea of race and scientific racism, imported from Western countries during Meiji Restoration, that fitted to the objective of Japanese government that wanted to prove the Japanese race's superiority (Armstrong, 1989; Suzuki, 2003). The Japanese emphasized its racial superiority, differentiating from other Asian people, which led to imperialism that is so-called Pan-Asianism through which Japan expanded its power to East Asia and Southeast Asian countries, such as China, the Philippines, Indonesia, and so forth. It was instrumentalized to solidify their position in the world, proving the Japanese power against the West in the name of 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' ideology that underlies in the claims that Japan was advocating for liberating Asia from Western domination. For some people, such a statement appeared enough to justify Japanese expansion to Southeast Asia. Although Japanese occupation in Southeast Asian countries cannot be generalized, there was a certain ideology consistent, which was Japan was a leader of Pan-Asian countries, and it could bring the prosperity by homogenizing people and making societies more like Japan. The idea of modernity accelerated its domination. Many people believed Japanese superiority because of its success in 'modernization' and in 'Westernization'. Interestingly, most of Japanese cultural policies during wartime were based upon the paradoxical idea that Japan should be a leader of Asian countries due to its modernity measured by Western standard while the emperor was at the very top of the nation as the perfect example of both ancient and modern wisdom (Hotta, 2007). Importantly, the underlying assumption was Japanese superiority over 'other' Asian countries (Armstrong, 1989; Hotta, 2007; Suzuki, 2003). Namely, the imperialism was fueled and justified by the national ideology and racial superiority of Japanese.

From 1945, imperialism ended, and the zeal of nationalism cooled down while the idea of Japanese superiority remained as '*Nihonjinron*' (the Theories of Japanese). The impact of World War II on Japan was huge, nearly destroying the country. To rebuild Japan, the government desired to forget the imperial past, alienating the people from the imperial state and the guilt of war (Söderman, 2022). Then, Japanese policy makers and academia started to embrace the notion of Japanese nationhood, describing Japan as a homogeneous nation (Shin, 2010). This new idea of Japan as a homogeneous nation consisting of pure blood was attractive to most people who lost confidence because of the defeat of World War II (Yamamoto, 2015). Furthermore, the idea of racial purity and homogeneity was encouraged by the Japanese notion of a 'family state' figuring the emperor as the father. Every Japanese was associated by blood with other Japanese people, and all members of the family state were associated by blood to the emperor (Armstrong, 1989; Nishiyama, 2022; Robertson, 1998; Suzuki, 2003). This is highlighted by the emphasis on the maintenance of family names and traditions to keep family lineage. This notion of national family was a core part of Japanese nationalism. Thus, the dominant narratives around Japanese nationhood after World War II underlie Japanese blood.

This way of racialization in Japan as supported by *Nihonjinron* has been (re)produced based on the equation of race, culture, and ethnicity, emphasising Japanese uniqueness and its cultural distinctiveness emerging in the 1960s and 1970s (Barber, 2023; Suzuki, 2003; Yamamoto, 2015). It is important to make people be Japanese, meaning people cannot be Japanese without the 'Japanese race' and they cannot acquire culture without Japanese blood. There are crucial terms in Japan's racial ideology, which are *jinshu* and *minzoku*. The former is often translated as 'race' while the latter is cultural 'ethnicity' or 'ethnic groups.' However, these two are used interchangeably (Armstrong, 1989; Barber, 2023; Suzuki, 2003). The complex combination of race and cultural spheres (re) produces 'pure' Japanese and 'second-class' Japanese. Even among those having Japanese nationality, there is a difference. During the post-war period of Japan, people having multiple roots were racialized as *ainoko* (betweener) or *konketsuju* (mixed-blood offspring), implying negative meanings. In contemporary Japan, the distinction of people having multiple roots from 'pure' Japanese remains even though

there are increasing numbers of them as the word 'half' describes (Murphy-Shigematsu 2012). People without 'pure' Japanese blood are not considered Japanese no matter how well they can speak Japanese or assimilate into Japanese culture. By creating "secondary class" Japanese, Japan includes a larger population, establishing hierarchies. In this way, Japan legitimized its power over non-Japanese including colonized or occupied people while racializing them. Therefore, the process of racialization is based on a dominant discourse of racial purity according to bloodline and 'common' culture, such as languages. Racial ideology in Japan is influenced by Western ideology, namely Eurocentric idea of 'White', having aspiration for 'White' while drawing a distinction of Japan from 'the rest' of Asian countries. Such a racial ideology was the base of Japanese nation building and imperialism.

The self-image of Japan as homogeneous nation has justified restrictive migration policies, which in turn reinforces this myth of Japan as homogeneous nation. Hierarchical relations between Japanese nationals and migrants were emulated by many organizations in a way that hold exclusionary structures (Shin, 2010). Current migrant category called 'trainee' can be one of examples that may have a hand in reproduction of homogeneous self-image. The next two chapters delve into the mechanisms of inventing 'trainees.'

Chapter 5 Invention of 'Trainees'

This chapter takes its point of departure by exploring how 'trainees' are invented through the program documents and its practice. According to Immigration Control Agency and Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2023), the definition of a 'trainee' is a person only coming to Japan via the Technical Internship Training Program (TITP). What is implied by the word 'trainee'? In the dictionary, the word 'trainee' itself means "a person who is learning the skills and knowledge needed for a particular job" (Cambridge Dictionary). In other words, 'trainees' are the individuals who lack knowledge. It is of importance to investigate why they are called 'trainee', its underlying assumptions. In doing so, following pages are dedicated to unpacking how the trainee is invented through program documents and in practice.

5.1. Documents versus Reality

Historically constructed racial ideologies reflect Japanese migration policy. Japanese migration policy history originated from a no immigration policy, so-called *Sakoku* (seclusion). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Japan closed its door for a long time. Then after opening the door, the colonization started, when Japan colonized Taiwan in 1895, Karafuto (current Russia) in 1905, Korea in 1910, and Manchuria (current China) in 1931 as well as occupied Northern French Indochina (current Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) in 1940, Hong Kong in 1941, and Dutch East Indies, the Philippine in 1942 (Kublin, 1959; Taylor, 2013). At that time, the flow of migration was between Japan and its colonies. Especially during World War II, many colonized people were forced to engage in Japanese war and worked in mainland of Japan, where they were forcibly put to work either in manufacturing or manual-labour industries (Shin, 2010).

   After the World War II, Japanese migration policies were under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP). At that time, many colonial subjects who were forcibly committed to the war returned to their home countries although some of them remained in Japan (Kondo, 2002; Saito, 2022). The priority was to reintegrate Japanese soldiers and repatriates from its colonies and battle front, which had hand in rapid economic growth lasted until 1973 (Kōsai and Goble, 2008; Shin, 2010). As large number of Japanese soldiers and repatriates came back to Japan. Interestingly, Japanese economic growth arose with fewer foreign workers compared to European countries which attracted a lot of of economic migrants as guest workers. This might be due to enough farmers who migrate from rural to urban areas as well as automation of manufacturing process and higher number of part-time workers (Kashiwazaki and Akaha, 2016; Kondo, 2002). Since Japanese labour unions were weak, companies could hire part-time workers with cheaper salary more easily (Kondo, 2002).

   Until the mid-1980s, most foreigners were of Korean, Chinese, or Taiwanese origins, called '*Zainichi*'. Those colonial immigrants and descendants lost their nationality in 1952 when Japan gained independence from the U.S. occupation. Yet, after the Immigration Control and Refugee Act (ICRRA) was adopted in 1981 and enforced in 1982, Japan introduced new visa categories such as short-staying and training in response to its bubble economy and labour shortages (Saito, 2022). The shortages occurred in certain industries that were deemed as 3D, "dirty, demanding, and dangerous" (Kouba and Baruah, 2019, pp.19), which creates another mechanism of otherization that associates the other with 'lesser' profession. Japan asked for accepting more foreign workers to compensate for the labour shortage though it did mainly through encouraging the flow of people of Japanese descendants, called *Nikkeijin,* as well as those from Asian countries, including the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia

(Kondo, 2002; Saito, 2022). New visa categories favoured *Nikkeijin* to migrant of non-Japanese descendants in a way that *Nikkeijin* can access to residential status without any occupational restrictions and with their family while those of non-Japanese descendants cannot (Saito, 2022). Despite labour shortages, Japan kept its stance of welcoming professionals while not accepting unskilled workers. Yet, the labour shortages were so severe that Japan had no choice but to accept workers from abroad.

In response to labour demands, it was urgent to acquire new workers from abroad in Japan. In 1993, Japan initiated the TTTP. It was part of an international cooperation scheme through which employees of Japanese businesses in Asia can learn skills in Japan or take training in Japanese corporations. Why and how a higher number of overstaying migrant workers. Labor shortages because of the bubble economy in the late 1980-s led Japan to accept trainees who are not only directly employed by the Japanese companies, so-called individual enterprise type, but also those employed by the supervising organization, so-called supervising organization type (Yoshida, 2021). Over 98% of trainees came using the latter way (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2022) (see Appendix C and D in detail).

Multiple public sectors are involved in this program. The Japan Ministry of Justice established this program, and the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) has been in charge of administering it (JITCO, 2023). Also, the operator is the Organization for Technical Intern Training (OTIT) which works on legal issues such as the management of supervising companies and support for the trainees (OTIT, 2023). On the pamphlet issued by JITCO (2021), the aims and objective of the program are as follows:

> "….to transfer the **skills, technologies, and knowledge** (hereinafter referred to as 'skills and knowledge') which were developed by technical intern **trainees** while in Japan to **developing countries and regions**, as well as to promote **international cooperation** by contributing to **human resource development**, which plays a central role in the **economic development** of the applicable developing countries and region." (pp. 12).

Here, Japan positions itself as a nation that has more knowledge and skills than 'developing' countries with presumptions that skills in Japan are transferable, and it contributes to economic growth in other countries, referring to people who are willing to come to Japan for 'knowledge acquisition' as 'trainees.' Also, economic development is pursued by human resource developed in Japan based on the classical paradigm of development and modernization theory that assume interventions in knowledge and technology bring economic growth and industrialization, which results in development (Durán, 2019). This allows hierarchization of knowledge production. In other words, the idea of 'developing' countries entails less 'skills and knowledge' than those Japan has. Furthermore, othering happens by classifying people through binaries (Strand, 2022). In this case, othering of 'developing' and 'developed' counties come from levels of modernity set by Western standards (Kothari, 2006). Especially in Japan, as elaborated in the section 1.3.3., it is from the idea of Japan as 'progressive' countries according to 'modernity' set by Western countries. In these ways, Japan labels former colony as 'developing' countries, thus 'objects of knowledge' (Cook-Lundgren, 2023, pp. 533), distancing itself from them. Maintaining such a hierarchy of knowledge production, Japanese migration policy (re)produces the labour segmentation.

In 2022, the number of technical intern trainees reached 324,940 in total. As figure 2 shows, most of them, approximately 54% were from Vietnam while 14% were from Indonesia, 9% were from China and from the Philippines respectively (Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2023). Those are the countries Japan once colonized or invaded as mentioned before. Through colonization or invasion, the colonial difference took root in Asia, which makes the distinction of Japanese from 'the rest'. Therefore, even though colonization ended, coloniality still exists through Japan subordinating certain group

of people and maintaining its 'superior' power to the 'rest' of East and Southeast Asian countries.

Figure 2: The number of trainees by nationality
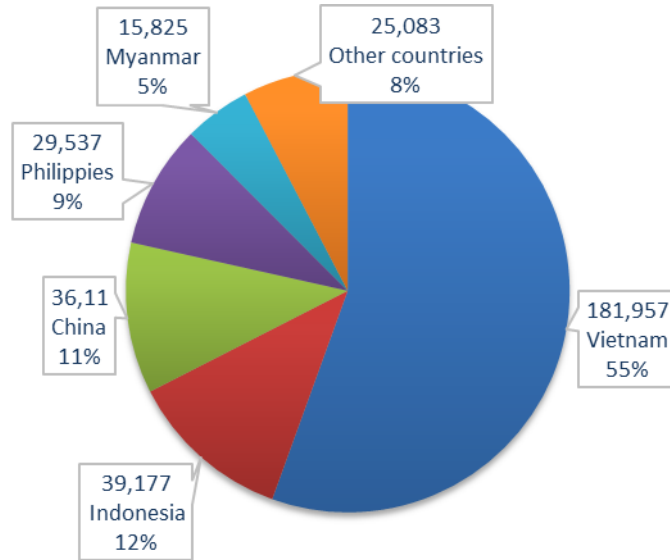
Source: Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2023).

On the other hand, the program acknowledges neither the unpopularity of the applicable job sector in Japanese society nor the labour shortages in this sector. Through TITP, many workers from abroad work in diverse sectors including 146 jobs in 82 sectors with a contract of a maximum of 5 years (Yoshida, 2020). Most of jobs are so-called 'low-skilled' jobs, those that Japanese people do not consider 'good' jobs, or colonized subjects worked during the war period, such as construction (21%), food processing (20%), and mechanics (25%) (see Figure 3). Gender-wise the rate is similar; male trainees add up to 57.8% and female trainees 42.2%. However, the different sectors are gendered. For example, the trainees in construction sector are predominantly men while those in the food processing sector are women (OTIT, 2022).

Figure 3: The number of trainees by industry
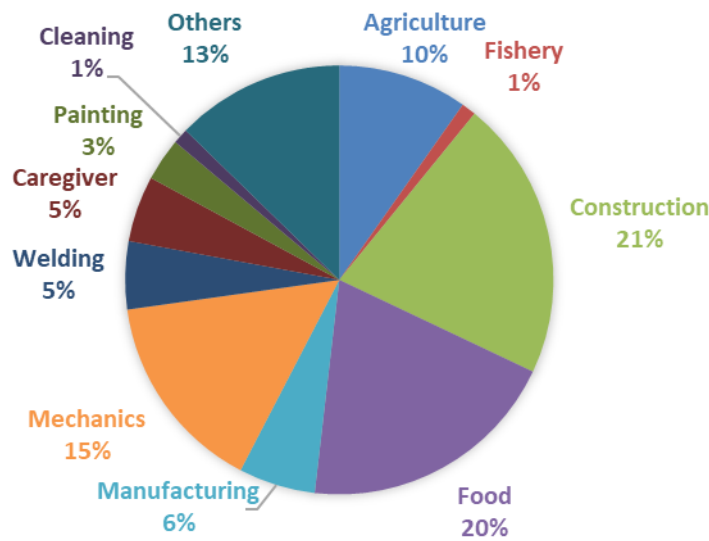
Source: Immigration Services Agency of Japan (2022).

Trainees are not referred to as 'unskilled' workers in official documents since Japanese migration policy refuses to accept 'unskilled' workers. Yet, the idea of trainees as 'unskilled' workers is implicitly held in a way that most of them are young assigned to small companies in 'low-skilled' industries. To compensate for the lack of young workers, most trainees are in their 20s, 42.2% are 20-24 and 25% are 25-29 years old. Also, most of companies that accept trainees are small, and about 67% of them have less than 20 Japanese workers (OTIT, 2022). Even though to join TITP of the supervising organizations type, the candidate must: (1)be more than 18 years old (2) understand the objectives of TITP (3) have a plan [1] to engage in the field that requires skills acquired in Japan after returning to their home countries (4) have either (a) experience of engaging in the same field as which that they intend to do in Japan or (b) an exceptional situation where they have to engage in supervising organizations type, and (5) a reference from a public institution in the country or region where they have nationality (Immigration Control Agency and Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2023), half of my interview participants do not have any previous working experience. Even if they had previous experience, the working experience in their home countries is not perceived to be sufficient, and they must learn it from the beginning with novices and take exams.

The period of technical intern training, with a maximum of 5 years, are mainly divided into 3 phases; (1) Technical intern training (i) of 1st year, (2) technical intern training (ii) of 2nd and 3rd year, and (3) technical intern training (iii) of 4th and 5th year (see Appendix E in

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[1] According to Immigration Control Agency and Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2023) plan should include following things: 1) basic information of applicants such as name and address (in addition to the name of company representative for supervising type). 2) if trainees come via supervising organization, the information on the name and address of company officers (6 people at most) 3) the name and address of the company/office trainees work for 4) trainees' name and nationality 5) the type of TITP 6) the goal of technical training, indicating the exam and level they seek to pass 7) the name of the person in charge in the office/ company trainees work for
7) the length and amount of time of technical intern training 8) information on supervising organization such as name and address of the organization and name of the representative 9) treatment of technical intern trainee such as salary, workload, number of holidays, the amount of money the trainees have to cover (see pp. 38 and 404 in detail).

detail). After entering Japan via TTTP, trainees will take 2 months lectures at either the implementing organization for individual enterprise type or the supervising organization without employment relationships. Then, practical training will start with employment contracts. After 1 year, trainees have to take both practical and written exams [2] of a national trade skill test. For those who pass the exams and who work in the sector that sending countries have needs in, an official skill evaluation system is organized, they can gain or change the residence status as Technical Intern Training (ii) (a)&(b). After the 3rd year, trainees are obliged to take the practical exam of a grade 3 trade skill test. If they pass the exam, they can go back home for at least 1 month either before beginning the technical intern training (iii) or within 1 year after the technical intern training (iii) starts. Finally, before going back to their home country with completion of 5 years of training, they are required to take the exam of a grade 2 trade skill test (OTIT, 2023).

After 5 years of training, they can apply for visa of Specified Skills Workers that allows them to work for another maximum 5 years. Yet, their temporariness functions to limit worker's right and to expand state's power (Collins and Bayliss, 2020). Amendment of immigration law of 2010 revised to extend the maximum years of stay from 3 to 5 while it remains not allowed to either change jobs and or to bring family members (JITCO, 2023), which deprives the labour mobility of employees. In other words, resource related to work is allocated in favour of 'Japanese' workers while trainees can only access them restrictively (see Table 2 in detail).

Table 2: Differences in access to resources between Japanese workers and trainees

	Trainee	Japanese workers
Average monthly salary (yen)	177,800	311,800
Job transfer	Not allowed (in principle)	Allowed
Contract period	Maximum 5 years	Extendable
Dormitory	Assigned or fixed	No need
Citizenship	Without citizenship	With citizenship
Legal means to labour conditions	Inaccessible	Accessible
Family	Cannot accompany	Can accompany

Source: JITCO (2021).

In the name of 'development', through the TTTP, Japan reinforces its distinction from 'the rest' of Southeast and East Asian. Seeing development as a historically established narrative, the word 'development' invents the so-called Third World (Escobar, 2012), functioning as an "empty plus" (Ziai, 2009, pp.198) signifier in a way that technical intervention underlying expert knowledge will bring benefits to the society while drawing the clear line according to Western modernity. TTTP itself is structured in a way to encourage the temporary labour flow into the job sectors that Japanese do not want to engage with and consider as 'low-skilled' or 'undesirable', referring to the former invaded or colonized countries as 'developing' counties and putting them into 'second-class' in Japan, securing the employment for Japanese nationals by setting a maximum number of trainees the company can employ. Also, accepting them in the fixed period, they are not considered as 'citizens' but 'disposable

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[2] According to my research participants, a written exam involves questions concerning how to apply the proper techniques and methods to perform specific tasks in the sector trainees are engaging in, safety and dangers and so on. As of 2022, the exam was multiple choice. For practical exam, it requires trainees to perform their work. For example, if they work in welding, they need to perform how to weld.

labours' to compensate for labour shortages. Formally, the 'trainee' refers to the individuals who participate in TTTP in the official documents. Yet, in the implementation process, the 'trainee' becomes the one who works in certain sectors that Japanese consider 'unskilled'. In the colonial period, workers in 'the rest' of Asian countries were forced to produce goods at cheaper cost for Japan in manufacturing or physically demanding industries. This seems to remain, constructing 'Southeast' and 'the rest' of East Asian as an Other who can deal with lower cost and harsh living and working conditions to some extent.

Chapter 6 Exploration of 'Trainee'

This chapter tries to answer how the idea of 'trainee' is lived by themselves and understood by Japanese nationals who may enforce racial distinctions at the local level. It is important because migration policy categorising certain group of people influences a domestic perception towards them (Collins& Bayliss, 2020; Egan, 2020). Racially stratified migration policy in Japan (re)produces the idea of 'trainees' as poor Southeast Asian Others who are not acknowledged as knowledge carriers.

6.1. Encountering Japaneseness

I was sweating under the strong sun and high humidity on the way to meet Kasai, a Japanese woman from the cooperative, who has been working there for more than 8 years. Sitting over the coffee, our conversation got livelier as we found out that our hometown was close, which got us to feel close and the conversation went into more personal. She asked me about my life in the Netherlands, concerning financial matters and relationship as well as about the plan after graduation. When I told her that I did not have any plan after graduation, but I might be going to go back to Japan depending on job opportunities. Then, while she gave me a piece of advice about how to build a career, she mentioned that:

> **Kasai**: "…. If trainees go back to Vietnam, they will be asked to go back to Japan for work to earn money by their wife or family, like *dekasegi* after getting married and have a child. Because they can earn much more money here (Japan). Even now, Vietnamese trainees want to overwork to earn extra money. It is reality, you may not be able to understand though…. they want to make more money and send it to their family, partner, and so on. They can earn more money here because Japan is more developed in various dimensions, you know." (Translated by the author)

Here, her understanding of a 'trainees' is not a person who comes Japan to acquires skills, as indicated in aims of the program, but rather the one who comes to Japan to earn more money. The idea of 'trainee' as those who desire to earn money is related to *dekasegi*. *Dekasegi* is a Japanese word that refers to temporary migrant workers who come to Japan for money. Originally, the word comes from the idea of Japanese farmers immigrating from rural areas to the warmer cities temporarily for seasonal work (Tsuda, 1998). Yet, these days, it is usually used for Japanese Brazilians who came to Japan with the intention to work temporarily. implying a negative image of migration caused by poverty (Hosoe, 2003, Tsuda, 1998). In other words, the category of '*dekasegi*' (temporary migrant workers) is linked to a person in lower classes with the intention to avoid poverty. This idea and use of language function actively as othering while justifying the racialized job market where people from 'developing' countries work in 'low-skilled' sectors and are considered to be 'unskilled' while those coming from Japan work in white collar sectors. This is in line with previous studies (Iwata &Nemoto, 2018) that also discovered the level of economic development is likely to be used for Japanese people to perceive one's position in the racial hierarchy where those from 'developing' countries are positioned subordinately.

Making money to send it to family oftentimes holds negative images since in Japanese context, it is not as common as different countries to send or get remittances. According to comprehensive survey of living conditions conducted in 2019 (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Wealth, 2020), about 5.5.% of Japanese households sent money, including 2% of households sent money to parents while around 3% of households did it to children. Looking into

the flow of the money from children to parents, a lot of children in their 50s sent 20,000-40,000 yen (around 127 euro- 254 euro) to their parents. This implies that most remittances are sent to those who retired jobs since retirement age in Japan is 60 (61 for civil servants). On the other hand, parents sent 40,000-60,000 yen (around 254 euro- 381 euro) to their children mostly for the purpose of education. In order for children to concentrate on their studying, parents sent money. It is also common for Japanese students to make money, working at part-time (Watanabe, 2018). These data show that receiving remittances is not common. Rather, it is considered better to make money by oneself once children get jobs and are allowed to work legally. This unfamiliarity of remittances makes '*dekasegi*' stereotypical with negative connotations and works as a marker of non-Japaneseness.

This understanding is reinforced by some trainees. One boiling day in July, I got to contact Bao, a 27-year-old female trainee from Vietnam, who used to work as a waitress at a restaurant in her hometown and has been working in food processing industry for 4 years. We had conversation multiple time online and sometimes texted each other. On the third interview day, she told me that her first company was bankrupt and moved to the second one that required her to do different tasks written in the contract. As I will elaborate on it later, she manages to move to current company with support.

Interviewees: How do you think about your workplace?

Bao: I like my current workplace since I can work extra hours, which allows me to make more money. I liked my first workplace because I sometimes got food that we cannot sell, but I cannot work extra hours as much as I can do now. Also, it bankrupted." (Translated by the author)

Although, the majority of my respondents working in the construction industry told me that they do not want to work extra hours since it is physically demanding, to some extent the understanding of trainees who desire to work a lot is constructed and reinforced by Japanese and trainees themselves. While some trainees are willing to do overtime work, the others are forced to do so. Liu and Wang (2022) revealed that there are a number of cases where the overtime wages are often unpaid. One common strategy is to pay lower rates than the labour standards. In a similar vein, the basic salary is underpaid. Additionally, some employers raise the cost of rent and utilities to reduce the net monthly expenses that they need to make to the trainees. This can be done because trainees coming through supervised organizations are accommodated by employers. Oftentimes, the trainees live in companies' dormitories under their supervision. For instance, the dormitories owned by a supervising organization in Kagoshima have 16 trainees per room, which broke the rule set by the government. Moreover, they cannot open windows freely and the use of air conditioning is limited (Uchida and Nagata, 2023). However, it is difficult for them to voice up and resist the unfairness due to the lack of Japanese competence. The desire to earn money intersected with language unfamiliarity puts them in subordinated positions. In this way, a 'trainee' is invented as the worker driven by the need of money, reproducing the hierarchy where Japanese is superior and reinforcing racialized labour segmentation.

The economic power relations are also internalized in a way that many trainees aspire to work in Japan for 'better' life and salary. When I went to Japanese language session, I got to know Dung, a 24-year-old male trainee working in construction industry where he used to work back home as well. Throughout our conversation, he showed his interest in my life in the Netherlands since it has nice nature as he told me. After he asked me the reason why I decided to study abroad and why I chose the Netherlands, he also shared the motivation to participate in TITP:

Interviewee: "…. studying abroad was always my dream though I do not know exact reason why… what about you? What made you decide to join TITP?"

Dung: "My neighbour joined TITP, and I saw how his family benefitted from it. Then, I thought I wanted to make money like him and longed for the life in Japan. When he returned, he told me about his life in Japan, and it sounded awesome." (Translated by the author)

His statement shows that his aspirations towards Japan comes from its economic status. Cariño and Montelongo González (2022) argue that the aspiration for Europeanization is one of the consequences of coloniality of power that set up systemic oppression, which permeates access to work, knowledge production and so forth. Also, a racialized economy (re)produces a coloniality of being that generates the colonial difference at ontological level, expanding symbolic realities (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). These may lead 'trainees' to internalize binary economic status of 'developed' and 'developing' with the desire of 'Japanization'. Importantly, this does not mean 'trainees' do not have agency. Rather, I would like to imply that their way of thinking, to some extent, might be influenced by how world-system works that is impacted by coloniality.

Not only money and lifestyle, but also working conditions such as compensation put Japan into 'developed' countries. One day a mother of my friend introduced me to Jessy, a man from the Philippines working in welding. He joins TITP with his brother, and his mother also used to work as Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) when he was a kid. So, for him, it was natural to think of working abroad.

Interviewee: "But, what made you choose Japan as your destination?"

Jessy: "I got immersed into Japanese culture since I was a kid, watching anime etc. And I found culture is similar although language is quite different and difficult. Also. after I talked with my friends working in Japan, and knew compensation the other side, I wanted to work in Japan. Japan is developed in this respect too."

For him, working conditions are important aspects of finding a job. His statement shows that he categorizes Japan as 'developed' in relation to his home country according to compensation.

It is worth noting that not all trainees are motivated by making more money. One example is Ruther, a 36-year-old man from the Philippines, who has worked in welding for four years. I met him through one of the participants, Jessy. Before coming to Japan, he used to work in construction site in part-time for 2 years. Then, he moved to Japanese company based in the Philippines, and worked there for 7 years. After that, he pursued college. He passionately told me about his work and in our conversation, he mentioned that:

Jessy: "I came to Japan to improve my skills and knowledge because I used to work in the same sector in the Philippines."

Yet, to some extent, economic status of home countries is internalized in a way that 'trainees' aspire to work in Japan, perceiving it as 'developed'. At the same time, their motivation towards migration is different from person to person as the participants and previous research showed (see, for example, Hagen-Zanker, Hennessey, and Mazzilli, 2023).

Also, the idea that trainees are willing to overwork and to earn money is generalized. This willingness to work longer hours is appreciated by Japanese companies. Sato, a 75-year-old Japanese male from the cooperative, has been engaging in TITP for more than 10 years when I met him. He explained TITP in detail and how it works in reality. As conversation went on, he showed the concern about recent media that only shows bad supervising organizations and may play a role in stigmatization of trainees as well as possible misunderstanding between Vietnamese and Japanese colleagues. During conversation, he mentioned:

Sato: "There are many trainees from Vietnam. Recently, there are increasing numbers of Vietnamese couples working in Japan both as trainees for making more money. The man works in construction and the woman in food industry. Vietnamese work really hard. So, many companies welcome them. The concerns are they tend to respond 'yes' to the all the questions even if they do not understand. So, I teach them not to say 'yes' immediately, and if they have questions, let them ask. But, these days, many young people are quick learners compared to the old ones." (Translated by the author)

Again, he also emphasized money aspect, which was also found by Murakami (2019). Additionally, his statement describes the idea of 'desirable worker', which can feed into exploitation and domination, determined its obedience to follow what people said and hard work. Preference of younger people is also implied because of their adaptability. People perceive hard work comes from the desire to earn as much money as possible. Also, his statement implies gendered labour segmentation where men work in construction while women in food processing industry. The idea of gendered labour division is also held by trainees. During focused group discussion, Gun, a 26-year-old male Vietnamese trainee mentioned that:

Interviewee: "If there is one thing you can change in your work/workplace, what would it be?"

Dung: "I want to change my work! Food industry!"

Suo: "No, you cannot."

Interviewer: "Why you cannot?"

Gun: "yeah, I would like to work in the food processing industry like making *bento* because it is not physically demanding. But for me it is easier to get a position as a trainee in construction. I may not be able to work in food processing because many women work there." (Translated by the author)

Their statements imply that it is easier for men to get a job in construction industry rather than food processing. Even though the program does not mention anything about gender and job allocation, gendered labour division is structured in a way that men work in physically demanding jobs while women are preferred in jobs that requires patience such as food processing. This bias comes from gendered traditional roles that women work inside and household chores while men work outside as well as sexually essentialist concept of workplace where men's tasks require physically demanding while women's tasks demand repetition and endurance (Messing et.al., 2000). The gendered labour segmentation is reproduced in a way that more opportunities in the construction industry open to more males while those in food processing open for females, and workers tend to follow gendered working segmentation to become a 'trainee.'

The command of Japanese language also plays a huge role in the othering process. It was rainy but so humid day when I had another conversation with Cong, a 26-year-old male trainee from Vietnam, working in construction industry. He is chatty and into Japanese culture such as anime. When I met him in language course, I got the impression that he was so enthusiastic about learning Japanese, which got me to ask him the following questions:

Interviewee: "How do you learn Japanese? Watching anime? Do you have any tips for learning another language? I am struggling to learn Dutch."

Cong: "As you know, I go to Japanese language course every Sunday. But, other than that, I have no time to study Japanese. Watching anime helps me, but not much."

Interviewees: "But your Japanese is good."

Cong: "No, I cannot speak Japanese fluently, without accent. Like what you have experienced, language is important…. When I make mistakes, I'm always scolded by seniors with

bad words such as *baka* (idiot), *boke nasu* (foolishman), or *shine* (go to hell). Maybe they don't think I can understand, but I know the meanings, I searched…. I remained silent at that time because if I respond what they said, they will do other things to me. I heard the case where my Vietnamese friend was bullied because he did resist. For me, I want to be here at least for three years. So, it is hard, but it is what it is. Job is hard, but I have no choice but work." (Translated by the author)

Since appearance does not give saliant difference in terms of hair, eyes, and skin colour compared to people from other parts of the world, Japanese fluency is a significant marker. This kind of bullying (being told bad words) is also reported by other participants, especially if they do not perform well or cannot speak Japanese. Having an accent in Japanese draws a clear distinction between 'us' (Japanese) and 'them' (foreign workers), which functions to legitimate harsh treatment toward 'them'. Iwata and Nemoto (2017) revealed that command of Japanese plays the most influential role in measuring 'Japaneseness', and obvious 'foreign' appearances legitimizes unfamiliarity with Japanese culture and language. Yet, in this study, since people from Southeast Asian countries look like Japanese, their accent in or unfamiliarity with Japanese language is not tolerated and becomes a source of dehumanization even though language proficiency is not necessary part of the application process. It is important to highlight the possible dehumanization because Cong's statement implies that the colleagues' power dominating over trainees, which might result in not consider him as equal human being as them. To employ more people, the entry requirement might be lowered. Jessy, one of the participants told me that he chose to join TTTP because it was the easiest way to work in Japan for him. Cong's statement also illustrates the oppression where he cannot resist his bosses as well as where he has no choice but to stay since the right to transfer to another workplace is not distributed to the trainees in principle. The restrictive migration policy allows companies to dominate the power over employees to some extent.

Intersectionality is at play. Cong's age of 26 coupled with his migration status as 'trainee' might place him in a vulnerable position where he cannot resist against the seniors who are predominantly Japanese older people. In this almost homogeneous industry where mostly older Japanese men work, young 'foreign' men are dehumanized though the situation might be different according to the size of the company that determines how many trainees it has.

The company size plays a role in dehumanization process. The smaller the company is, the higher the risk trainees are exposed to being bullied. The maximum number of trainees the company can hire is set by the government. For example, the company Cong works for has only one trainee while the one Bao works for has 10 trainees. Bao accounts that:

Bao: "I have a good relationship with senior Vietnamese trainees. They are so nice. I like my seniors very much. We had a company trip and BBQ party in my company. They were a lot of fun."

Interviewer: What about your relationship with Japanese coworkers?

Bao: "My company has many workers, some of them are difficult to approach. Almost all Japanese workers are elderly and older, so it is difficult to communicate. Also, I can speak Japanese only a little bit, so sometimes I use google translate. Yeah, it's difficult to communicate." (Translated by the author)

Having more trainees give them the opportunity to interact with those from the same nationality, but at the same time, it allows them to minimize the interaction with Japanese as much as possible. In other words, the workplace is divided by nationality. This is used as a strategy to avoid severe dehumanization by the trainees. Bao continued that:

Bao: "I changed companies because the company I used to work for was physically demanding. They said my task was to process meat, but in reality, it was to carry heavy stuffs like 20kg

or 30kg all day. And, I had only 40 minutes break. It was crazy. So, I asked for help to Kurematsu via Facebook. Then, he helped me to transfer company. My current company is much better than before. I have longer break time, and many Vietnamese coworkers. My previous workplace has fewer trainees…."

Interviewee: "How do you feel about your relationship with Japanese coworkers?"

Bao: "They are my bosses. I think it's okay. I don't have any big issues. It's a working relationship. I can say it is okay." (Translated by the author)

If the company has many trainees, they can be allies. With fewer number of trainees, Japanese workers might feel more superiority and more authority. When employment opportunity is lacking, workers tend to be treated as disposable (Stevano, 2019). Since there is a lack of opportunities for migrants to get a job in Japan, they tend to accept the situation. However, Bao's statement highlights her agency to change the situation, asking help via SNS. In principle, trainees cannot change their workplace, and if the person needs it, they have to submit the necessary documents in Japanese, which requires a lot of information and Japanese competency. So, in many cases it is difficult for the trainees to do it by themselves, and they try to flee from the workplace, attempt to go back to the home country, or commit suicide at the worst scenario (Sim, 2022). However, Bao actively searched for people she can ask for help and managed to do it in cooperation with Kurematsu. He helped her to transfer her workplace by submitting the documents to OTIT and Labor Standards Inspection Office.

Intersectionality of gender and migration status put pregnant women into the most vulnerable circumstances. There are increasing number of cases reported that trainees got pregnant and abandoned their children. For instance, in 2019, a 22-year-old trainee from China, who worked in a food processing company, gave birth without others knowing, and abandoned her child because she was scared of getting fired (The Japan Times, 2019). A similar case occurred in 2020 to a Vietnamese female trainee of 21 years old who worked on a fruit farm. Soon after she delivered her twin children, she realized they did not breathe, then she put their corpses into a cardboard box on a shelf (Itakura, 2023; Kuris, 2020). Although women's reproductive rights are protected by the Technical Intern Training law, every year there are over 20 cases of abandonment reported (Chonlaworn, 2021). Trainees sometimes do not have any choice but to abandon their children because of pressure to send money to families or to pay back their debt. Having a child will endanger their job in Japan, which makes them decide to give birth secretly and abandon newborns (Chonlaworn, 2021; Itakura, 2023; Kuris, 2020). Reproduction is controlled by employers or society itself in a way that female trainees are penalised by the employers if they figure out pregnancy (Oono and Ishida, 2021). Underlyingly, there is a patriarchy that refers to "the relations of hierarchy and subordination" (Cole, 2005, pp. 907) according to gender. Unfair attitudes towards maternity workers happen to Japanese women as well. Employers have a negative impression of pregnancy and consider pregnant workers as a burden based on the assumption that women quite their work once they get pregnant and stay at home to take care of children. In the case of female trainees, intersectionality of gender and migrant status worsens the situation. 'Trainees' are perceived as racialized Other coming from 'developing' countries, putting them below 'Japanese' in the power hierarchy. Among them, female trainees are put under male in patriarchal society, sustaining Japanese gender system as well as colonial gender system where colonized women were in the lowest positions of the society (Cariño and Montelongo González, 2022).

Chapter 7 Coloniality and Rearticulation of Japanesenss

7.1. Discussion

Migrant regimes that determine who can enter, in what kind of job categories, for what reasons, and from which countries function to reinforce and reproduce racial hierarchies and ideologies. Acknowledging coloniality offers a new perspective to examine how historical relationships play a role in concurrent economic, cultural, political, and social relations. It is of significant importance to account for how historically constructed idea of 'Japaneseness' has been reproduced and maintained and is articulated through migrant management. Migration policy works in a way that strengthens Japanese identities. Oftentimes people in power at the workplace are Japanese. In this way, 'Japaneseness' is associated with salary and authority, which is similar to the colonial administration. This demonstrates a recurrence of the colonial matrix of power that resonates differentiation which constitutes hierarchies through racialization in the labour market. In such a society, coloniality is articulated in erasure of humanity, which justifies domination via dehumanization of 'others.' Japanese migration policy rooted in long seclusion history continues to racialize migrants, keeping racial order within Japanese society.

The coloniality of labour is articulated in how their nationality justifies which sectors they get into and how they are treated. As Iwata and Nemoto (2017) figured out, migrants' nationality works as a marker to deem them as culturally different. This paper adds to their insight, examining the role of migrants' nationality as a historical creation from decoloniality perspectives. Japan sustains its power hierarchy established by colonial history and uses it to justify unfair treatment of people from those countries Japan once colonized or occupied. Racial ideology is reproduced through the invention of 'trainees.' As indicated before, Japanese racial ideology underlies in a dominant discourse of racial purity in terms of bloodline and 'common' culture such as languages. Thus, 'trainees' who do not have Japanese blood and cannot speak Japanese 'perfectly' without accent are regarded as 'non-Japanese.' This 'non-Japaneseness' is also associated with a trainee's economic status. Historically established economic status which puts Japan into 'developed' countries draws a clear line between Japan and 'the rest' of Asian countries, possessing aspiration for 'Western' countries. The intersection of Westernized racial hierarchies with Japanese ingrained racial structures operates to classify migrants according to their nationality and language proficiency. This research also shows that economic status of mother nations coupled with the tendencies for trainees to send remittances to home, which is rare for Japanese nationals, categorizes them as *dekasegi* trainees.

Moreover, historically speaking, colonization established power hierarchies, through which capital concentrated in certain countries. This concentration of capital serves a means for the coloniality of labour distribution (Quijano, 2000). This paper elaborates on how labour control has been racialized over decades through migration policy.

Migration policy such as TTTP encourages migration from other Asian countries to compensate for labour shortages. Officially, it is in line with the positive discourse of development and migration. Yet, it worked to extract labour power while redistributing limited access to the resources that Japanese workers have. This migration management functions to reconstruct Japaneseness and domination. As implied using the word 'trainee', TTTP participants are not deemed as a knowledge carrier. Coloniality sees the knowledge of racial Others as inferior (Cook-Lundgren, 2022). Subordination of Southeast Asian countries works to accumulate the capital in Japan, which epistemically privileged Japanese qualifications and

culture such as language over 'the rest' of Asian countries. Othering is justified by coloniality of knowledge and economic status of the mother nation. Coloniality of knowledge is articulated in a way that people from 'developing' countries can learn something from Japan, implying knowledge and skills discrepancies. Putting the face of 'development', TITP (re)produces a racialized Other. This is intersected with coloniality of labour in a sense that people from 'developing' countries have less skills and knowledge (implied by its documents), so they are segmented into lower-skills positions. Coloniality of power distributes work along racial lines. As a result, Japanese nationals consider them not as knowledge carriers, but as *dekasegi*, who desire to earn money and send it to family in stark contrast to its objective. Such an idea reestablishes the idea of 'Japaneseness' in relation to 'trainees.' Trainees are invented in a way to rearticulate Japaneseness and the Japanese domination over other Asian countries in the name of development and international cooperation. This is similar to how Japanese imperialism worked in the past. As mentioned before, Pan-Asianism was operated to help Asia thrive, putting Japan as a leader. Migrant policy, specifically TITP might be rearticulation of imperialism. It is equally important to acknowledge that some 'trainees' are actively resisting against such a power structure in their own ways, and they have multiple selves as my research participants imply. By inventing 'trainee', the difference that already existed was homogenized and erased, looking at them as a single unity. Yet, trainees' experiences are different from each other, and they are not just 'trainees' as this research illustrates. In sum, a national project is operated in relation to migrant management and the presence of 'trainee' reconstructs Japaneseness, reproducing historically established power hierarchies.

7.2. Conclusion

This paper shows that migration policy maintains colonial history, reproducing racialization of migrants. 'Trainees' in Japan are individuals who go through the colonial landscape of nation and are subject to racialized and gendered state power. Racialization justifies how the dominant race subordinate racialized individuals. Japanese becomes 'Japanese' in relation to other people. This research implies that migration policy explicitly racializes certain groups of people, which oftentimes reinforces colonial power hierarchy even it came from good intension. The findings might give the organization that works with migrant workers in Japan and migrants themselves new insights into how migration policy upholds colonial legacy that brings potential dehumanization of migrant workers as a result of domination. This research may shed light on the paths that can make a change in the geopolitics of knowledge in addition to the building of shared insights into how our bodies and minds are chained. The starting point is political and epistemic projects of decoloniality.

Additionally, this paper underscores the importance of examining migration policy using the colonial matrix of power as a theoretical framework and integrating decolonial approach. The colonial matrix of power is actively at play in the current world-system. In terms of migration policy, since nation-state is a product of domination and power and distributes resources through policies, it is significant to understand who is included and who is not, as well as to whom the resource is distributed and its historical background. What I found might contribute to the debates of state policy and coloniality in relation to migration as a historically continued process. What is more, it helps to understand how people reconstruct national identity in relation to migrants, reproducing domination. Integrating decolonial approach is prominent to embrace epistemic diversity and find the voices that have been erased and to see from perspectives as much as possible.

Because of the small sample size, the result cannot be generalized. Yet, this small sample size allowed me to deeply engage in the data I have. This allowed me to carefully examine how colonial matrix of power is exercised in migration policy and its implication. Though

beyond the scope of this research, future research can be done with more focus on Japanese colleagues, and how they interact with migrant workers at workplace. Looking back to history is important to know who we are.

This research journey was not easy at all. I had to face the darker side of Japanese history, my roots, which made me have a lot of emotions words cannot describe. Reflecting on myself laid bare my soul. I realized that I have been influenced by the historically established structures and what I have hidden at the bottom of my heart, the hate towards my country. I realized that I unconsciously thought I am not enough to meet global standards, and I have been oppressed. This research allowed me to know more about myself who has been struggling with something that I could not define.

Finally, since this research begins with my story with grandfather, I would like to conclude my personal feeling towards him. One day in August, I got the news of him passing away. Fortunately, I got to go back to Japan in July, and could meet him. However, the person I saw was totally different from who I have known for a long time. I could not say anything that I wanted to say. I wanted to tell him about my research, and I wanted to tell him why I took distance from him. However, the very last conversation we had was just "How is your life in the Netherlands?" and "Good.". After I got the news, I remembered the memories of him being a good grandfather of mine. It might be because I come to know where he comes from throughout my research journey though I cannot forget what he said and forgive him. This made me regret not to say thank you to him. Thank you for buying me ice creams on New Years Day, thank you for taking me everywhere, and thank you for being my grandfather. I cannot see you again, grandpa, but if you are there, this is my research that starts with the story with you.

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Appendices

[Brief introduction to my research and ask for the consent of participants for recording, and the use of interview. Explain the name is written in pseudonyms in the paper and if participants feel uncomfortable to share, they can skip the question or stop the interview. Share the story of my migration journey and struggles in the Netherlands]

1. Background Information:
Before we begin, would you mind telling me a bit about yourself?
   - Where do you live? Where are you from?
   - How long have you been in Japan?
   - Where do you live? Did you live/work any other places before coming to Japan?
   - How old are you?
What do you do for a living?
What is your previous job experience in home countries and in Japan?

2. Technical Intern Training Program:
How did you get to know about TITP?
   - Do you have anyone who participated in TITP before?
What did you find interesting about it?
What made you think it was for you?
What does the application process look like?
What kind of support did you need to make it happen?
   - What kind of alternatives were there?
Who / what influenced the decision and why?

3. Work Life:
How do you like about your job?
   - What made you think so?
Could I ask about your weekday? How does your daily schedule look like?
How do you experience your workplace?
What kind of tasks do you perform?
   - How would you describe the relationship with your colleagues and managers?
What do you like and dislike about your job?
   - What do you do if you do not like something?
If there is one thing you can change in your work/ workplace, what would it be?
How and where do you spend your free time?
How do you picture yourself in the future?

4. Personal Life:
How would you like to spend your free time?
   - Whom do you interact with?

Appendix B: Example Consent Form Used for TITP participants.

I am asking you to participate in a research study about migrant workers in Japan. I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. This study is led by Moet Toyoda, International Institute for Social Studies (ISS), the Netherlands. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Nanneke Winters at ISS.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine the mechanisms and implications of the idea of 'migrant workers,' especially joining Technical Intern Training Program. This research centers on the experiences of migrant workers to better understand the implication of migrant policy. Based on this research it aims to unpack the mechanisms of power hierarchies between various actors in Japan.

I will ask you to participate in semi-structured interviews. I may contact you again to request your participation in a follow-up study. As always, your participation will be voluntary, and you can withdraw from participation anytime when you feel uncomfortable or do not want to join anymore.

May I contact you again for follow-up interviews?   Yes/No

If yes, please write down the email/ phone number: _____

_____

Duration

This research will be conducted in informal ways depending on the way you feel comfortable. While I am excited about having conversations multiple times, if it does not sound good, we can find alternative.

Possible Usage

Your story will be used by me, Moet Toyoda, to comprehend the implications of migration policy such as Technical Intern Training Program. With your consent, our conversation (including your responses) will be quoted in the paper that will be accessible to the public.

If you have questions later, you may contact Moet Toyoda [659265mt@eur.nl].

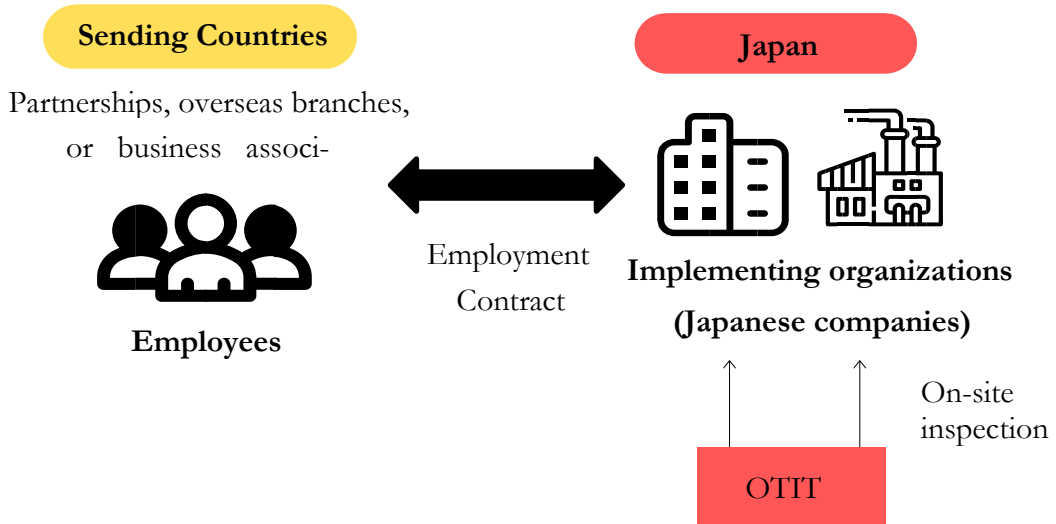I have read and understand the above information. I consent to voluntarily participate in this research.
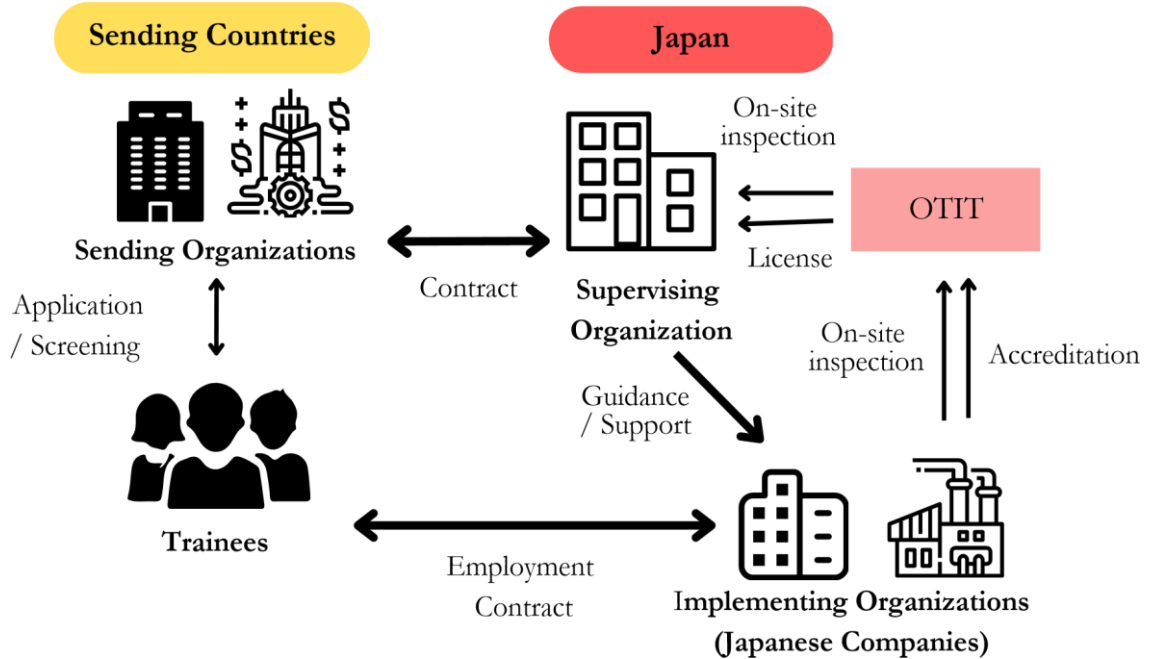→If yes, please sign below.

Signature of participants _____ Date_____

Name of participants _____

Signature of researcher _____ Date_____
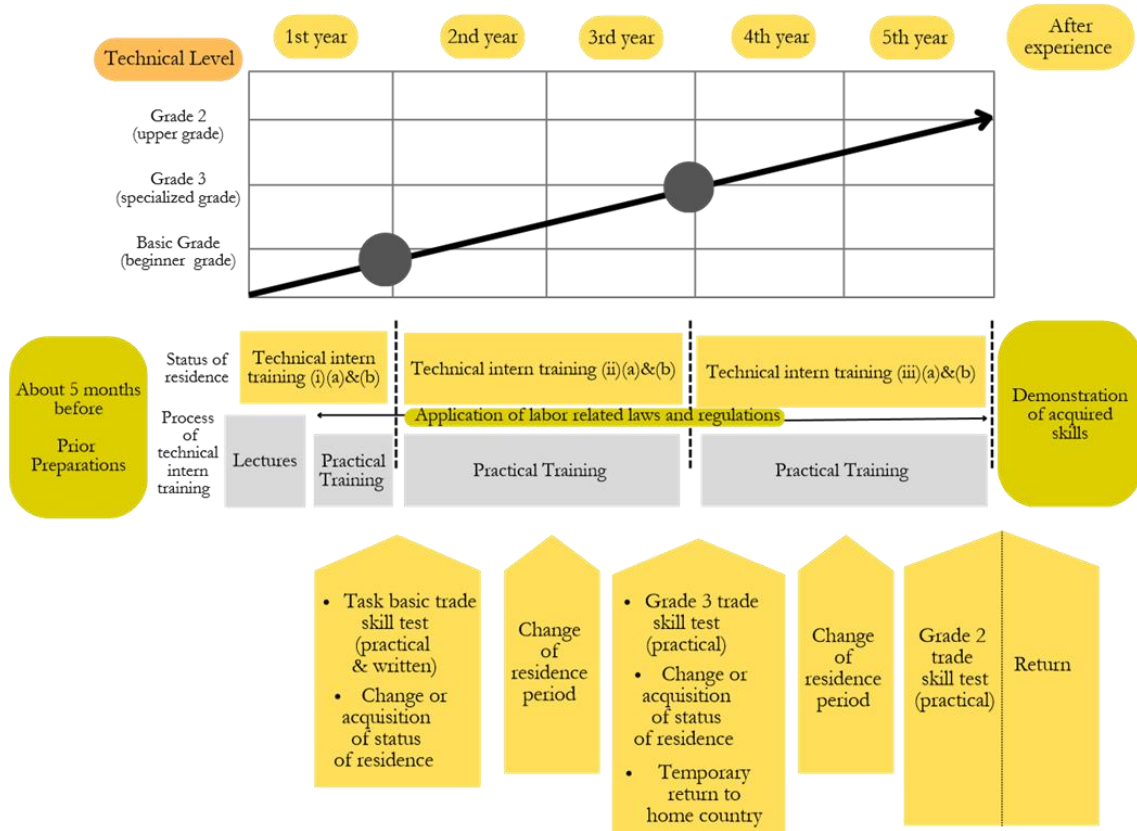
Appendix C: Individual Enterprise Type

Appendix D: Supervising Organization Type

Source: JITCO (2023)

Appendix E: the Flow of Technical Intern training Program

Source: JITCO (2023)