

# Japan's Foreign Labor Recruitment Strategies: Diversity Visa

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**Abstract.** Japan, facing demographic challenges such as an aging population and declining birth rates, increasingly relies on recruiting foreign labor to address resulting labor shortages. This qualitative descriptive study explores the efforts of the Japanese government to tackle this issue and integrate foreign workers. Framed within public policy theory, the research delves into the complexities of Japan's recruitment strategies, to comprehensively analyze these initiatives. Initial findings reveal that a diversity visa is one of the strategies, including work or long-term stays and general visa categories. Key initiatives include using different forms of claim for each foreign laborer. These strategies are expected to address labor shortages, boost economic growth, and maintain crucial social services for an aging population that needs extra care. Through analyzing government actions, this research aims to provide insights into Japan's policies on recruiting foreign labor. It prioritizes creating a friendly and structured environment, which is included in the application of the cultural element of the social system.

**Keywords:** Japan, foreign labor, recruitment strategies, diversity visa, social system.

## 1 Introduction

Japan's aging population and declining birth rate have led to a labor shortage that has impacted Japan's employment sector. Oishi revealed that the low birth rate, which causes low demographics, reduces the labor force and cannot meet the economy's needs [1]. In its efforts, the Japanese government is undertaking various strategies to increase the labor force in Japan once again. The Japanese government is trying to increase employment opportunities for the elderly and women in Japan; Shipper emphasized that this national recruitment effort focuses on industries with labor shortages [2]. In addition, the Japanese government also opens more expansive opportunities for foreign workers, especially those engaged in industry, especially in the construction, nursing, and agriculture sectors. This is the main trigger in easing Japan's immigration policy, especially for developing countries interested in earning a decent living by working in Japan. According to Conrad, foreign workers from Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia are attracted to Japan for economic opportunities and better living conditions [3].

To meet this challenge, the Japanese government made modifications regarding entry visas for foreign workers. The 2019 modification of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act allows for a significant increase in foreign workers under

the new Specified Skilled Worker visa category. This effort to ensure that the recruitment of foreign workers is done to fill existing vacancies and boost Japan's economic productivity is important in achieving Sustainable Development Goals point 8 target 8.3, especially in promoting development policies that support productive activities and decent job creation [4].

Farrer stated that visa liberalization, language training, fair working conditions, and integration support are national recruitment efforts to attract many foreign workers to work in Japan [5]. The Technical Intern Training and Specified Skilled Worker visa programs are government initiatives to fill labor market shortages. Foreign labor is especially needed in Tokyo, Osaka, and sparsely populated rural areas. Construction, industrial, agricultural, and healthcare workers depend on immigrant workers.

Research on the Japanese government's strategy for facilitating foreign workers to enter Japan was found before this research was conducted. Research on Japan's efforts to protect foreign workers was previously discussed by (Paramasatya & Fauzan 2022) with the results of cooperating not only to send labor but also to develop science and technology that can be applied [6]. Elsy (2018), in her research, also found that foreign labor began to fill the void of Japanese human resources to become nurses who care for the Japanese elderly [7]. However, this research will specifically highlight how the Japanese government's strategy in facilitating foreign workers to enter through visa diversification as workers in Japan.

## **2 Methods**

This qualitative research will describe or explain an event that is connected systematically and chronologically based on data. The data used is secondary data obtained from various official pages of the Japanese Embassy in Indonesia and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as all readings regarding Japanese public policy towards foreign workers working in Japan. The theory used for this research is the public policy theory, according to Bridgeman and Davis, which has 3 interconnected dimensions, namely explaining public policy as a goal, public policy as a legal choice of action, and public policy as a hypothesis.

## **3 Result and Discussion**

The Japanese government, in its immigration policy, has established several types of visas for foreigners living and working in Japan for a certain period. The Ministry of Justice established the immigration policy to address concerns and abuse of the system [8]. By expanding and varying the types of visas, the Japanese government

can be more flexible in responding to labor needs, increase innovation, and become one of the long-term strategies for sustainable economic growth. Distinguishing the use of visas for foreign workers can be seen from the type. Working or long-term visas are for foreign workers who already have a permanent job, while general training visas are used by foreign workers who have not yet determined a permanent job; the difference will be explained in this research.

### 3.1 Foreign Worker Visa Diversification

The Japanese government categorizes the visas used by foreign workers into two types as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Categorization of work or long-term stay visa and general visa.

Work or long-term visa			General Visa		
No	Category	User	No	Category	User
1	Highly skilled professional visa	This visa is used by someone who wants to fill a specific position that requires a high level of technical skill or expertise.	1	Cultural activities visa	Used by person or group who wishes to study or participate in Japanese cultural activities officially.
			2	Student Visa	Intended for those who wish to study at a recognized school, university, or educational institution in Japan and usually awarded according to the duration of the program.
2	Work Visa	These visas are specifically for foreign workers who are accepted to work in Japan for a specific purpose.	3	Training Visa	Granted to a person who wishes to attend a specific training or education program in Japan sponsored by a company or organization approved by the Japanese government.
			4	Dependent (Family stays) visa	Intended for family members of work visa holders and allows them to stay in Japan.

Source: Proceeded from the official page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

From Table 1, the first category of work or long-term stay visa types is the high-skilled professional visa, whose use is based on a point system on the factors of

education, work experience, annual compensation, age, etc. The point system itself is further divided into two categories. The second category of long-term stay visas is work visas, which are usually used by foreign workers who come to Japan to work on a contracted job application in their home country.

On the two categories of working or long-term residence visa types in table 1, the one that can be used for foreign workers to enter Japan as workers is the international humanities/service engineer/specialist visa. This visa is available to foreign workers interested in working in Japan if they have graduated from a college or graduate school with a degree. Foreign workers who have graduated from a Japanese vocational school and hold a specialist degree.

The Japanese government regulates and facilitates the recruitment of foreign workers through different visa systems for foreign-skilled workers, domestic workers, and others. The Japanese government introduced visas such as "specific skilled technician visas" and "education and research visas" to get foreign laborers to come to Japan more efficiently, especially in sectors with a local labor shortage. By applying Bridgeman and David's public policy theory, the Japanese government is trying to ensure that fair labor laws and decent living standards protect foreign workers living in Japan.

In this case, Japan also seeks to cooperate with various countries to build international partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals point 17, target 17.6, especially in enhancing cooperation between Japan and the countries of origin of migrant workers to obtain reciprocal agreements [9]. This includes ensuring the protection of their rights, improving oversight mechanisms for fair and transparent recruitment practices, and promoting the principle of equality in international labor recruitment for migrant workers in Japan.

Hamaguchi stated that in December 2018, the Japanese government prepared this to support foreign workers in Japan intersect with providing decent work with their daily lives from a broader perspective [10]. It aims to effectively employ foreign workers in Japanese society, reduce social tensions, and promote respect for cultural diversity. It is not uncommon for foreigners to see undesirable phenomena when they are working in a country that is not their home country. Otake also said that there are still Japanese people who show some attitudes towards foreign workers in Japan [11]. This shows that there are also people who prefer to avoid the presence of immigrants from outside their own country. Scholz said that a certain level of inequality is based on how society shapes individuals into an upper or lower class and makes the desired excuse to provide more incentives for successful entrepreneurs [12].

The general visa types are then divided into four categories as shown in Table 1. Foreign workers who wish to work in Japan can apply for a training visa. Although a training visa is a general type, it can be used by someone who wants to work in Japan except for not settling down in a particular job. Training visas are usually used by apprentices who come to Japan intending to find a job or work for a particular company, even though the job is not permanent. Training visas are also valid for a particular time according to the foreign worker's job.

This differentiation of visa types is an achievement of the Japanese government to realize a public policy related to immigration or the entry of foreigners to seek employment in Japan as a legal act; foreign workers who settle in Japan also feel that they are given guarantees for their lives. By implementing a fairer immigration policy, foreign workers can feel welcome in Japanese society, reduce social tensions, and promote a harmonious working environment between local and foreign workers.

With visas as legal residency for foreign workers, they can also have fair access to education, healthcare, security, and other social activities. The strategy of the Japanese Ministry of Justice in establishing visa diversification has expanded immigration policies to facilitate the entry of foreign workers into Japan, thus meeting Japan's labor needs and helping their economy. Japan prioritizes creating a welcoming and structured environment for foreign workers, which is included in the application of the cultural element of the social system. Japan is increasingly aware of the importance of cultural diversity in society and the development of time and technology.

### **3.2 Difference between Working or Long-Term Visa and General Visa for Foreign Workers**

There is a difference between a working visa and a general visa for them. This lies in the use, conditions, and application.

From the official page of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is explained that working visas are given to foreign workers who already have a permanent job or employment contract with a company or institution in the destination country [13]. This visa allows them to work according to the agreed conditions. At the same time, the official page also explains that a general visa for foreign workers only grants permission to look for work but does not directly grant permission to work unless a job has been found and a separate work permit obtained [14].

The conditions for use are also different. Working visa holders must have a precise employment or placement contract before the visa is granted. After arriving in the destination country, they may need to apply for additional work permits or other

relevant licenses. The Japanese government's streamlining of visa procedures and increased immigration controls are designed to prevent human trafficking [15]. On the other hand, foreign workers holding a general visa must comply with the applicable provisions in finding a job, such as the time limit allowed to look for a job, regulations on informal employment, and others. The application process is also differentiated from the documents, which complement the work visa, which is an employment contract accompanied by a job offer letter, education requirements, or specific skills, for foreign workers using general visas, especially training visas, financial evidence that shows the ability to find a job without burden is required.

As such, working visas are for those with a job lined up in Japan, while general visas for foreign workers are more for those seeking employment in the destination country. This distinction is important because each visa holder must fulfill different requirements and purposes.

#### 4 Conclusion

The diversification of visas created by the Japanese government to recruit foreign workers aims to facilitate the entry of foreigners seeking employment in Japan and reduce their anxiety about their safety while living or staying in Japan because they are protected by procedures provided by the government and applicable laws. This strategy is expected to address labor shortages, boost economic growth, and maintain crucial social services for an aging population that needs extra care.

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