



## How Significant Are Training and Certification in Shaping Indonesian Migrant Workers' Long-Term Careers?

Yunus Riansyah\*, Lela Nurlaela Wati, Rita Yuni Mulyanti  
Universitas Teknologi Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Indonesia

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### Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of competency certification in supporting the career continuity of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) in host countries. Mandated by Law No. 18 of 2017, competency certification is a prerequisite for placement, on the assumption that it ensures the quality and competitiveness of Indonesian labor. However, many IMWs continue to experience repatriation due to perceived incompetence. This research employed a qualitative case study approach through in-depth interviews with eight informants, three informal-sector IMWs in Taiwan, and five officials from BP3MI/KP2MI across various regions, supplemented by a focus group discussion with two policy experts. Thematic analysis using NVivo 12 identified five key themes: (1) challenges of varying standards, costs, and limited access; (2) the need for international recognition; (3) the role of government and private actors in monitoring and support; (4) certification as a driver of competitiveness and employment opportunities; and (5) certification as a legal safeguard and instrument of quality standardization. The findings show that certification positively influences IMWs' entry into the international labor market and enhances their confidence. However, its long-term impact remains limited due to the absence of global recognition, misalignment between training curricula and workplace demands, and weak post-placement support. These results align with the Theory of Attitude and Behavior and the Theory of Planned Behavior, indicating that training fosters positive attitudes and social norms, yet sustained professional behavior is hindered by low perceived behavioral control caused by structural barriers. The study recommends harmonizing certification standards with destination countries, improving the relevance of training curricula, and strengthening institutional support after placement. Ultimately, competency certification must be complemented by continuous learning systems to effectively enhance IMWs' quality and career sustainability.

**Keywords** *Indonesian Migrant Workers; Competency Certification; Job Training*

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) make a significant contribution to the national economy, particularly through remittances, which in 2023 reached IDR 159.6 trillion (BNI, 2024). Data from the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI) recorded that in 2023, more than 270,000 IMWs were deployed to various destination countries, especially in the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions (BP2MI, 2024). However, this large deployment has not been matched by an equivalent improvement in the quality of competencies that meet global labor standards (Fabbri et al., 2023).

One of the government's main strategies to ensure the preparedness of IMWs is the provision of pre-departure training and competency certification, which is a mandatory requirement before placement (Riansyah et al., 2024). This policy is regulated under Law No. 18 of 2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, stipulating that only workers who have obtained competency certification may be placed abroad (Kemnaker, 2023). The certification is intended to guarantee that prospective IMWs possess the technical, non-technical, and behavioral skills needed in their target sectors abroad (Rahayu, 2018).

In practice, however, holding a competency certificate does not always guarantee success in retaining employment overseas. Cases of repatriation due to perceived incompetence remain frequent. BP2MI (2023) reported that destination countries forcibly repatriated more than 1,700

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IMWs for failing to meet job standards, particularly in the domestic and manufacturing sectors. This highlights a gap between the competencies tested in Indonesia and the actual demands of work abroad (Rahayu, 2019).

Many IMWs also reported that the training provided was too short, lacked contextual relevance, and did not reflect the real working conditions in destination countries (Susanti & Ramadhan, 2022). On the other hand, the government faces constraints in aligning training curricula with international standards and the dynamics of the global labor market (Kemnaker, 2022). This situation raises a critical question: To what extent are competency certificates truly effective in supporting the work continuity of IMWs abroad?

Previous studies have largely focused on legal aspects (Zamroni, 2020), labor supervision (Maulidah, 2021), and placement processes (Fauziah & Handayani, 2022). Few have examined in depth the personal experiences of IMWs with training and certification or explored policymakers' perspectives on how effective these instruments are in sustaining employment abroad (Riester & Newland, 2018). Yet, evidence from the field shows that competency is a crucial factor in migrant worker protection that often escapes thorough evaluation (Fudge, 2011).

To address this gap, this study adopts a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews with three IMWs who have overseas work experience and five officials from the Migrant Worker Protection Agency (KP2MI). Using thematic analysis assisted by NVivo 12 software (Walsh & Jha, 2012), the study seeks to identify perceptions, barriers, and opportunities for improving the training and competency certification system for IMWs (Suwarsi et al., 2020). Consistent with organizational and user-experience studies, Wati et al. (2024) highlight that users' satisfaction and prior experiences strongly influence loyalty and long-term engagement, while Permata et al. (2025) emphasize that structured training, management support, and process efficiency play a critical role in shaping competency quality and sustaining migrant workers' employment overseas.

Specifically, the research is guided by the key question: "How effective is the role of competency certification in supporting the employment continuity of Indonesian Migrant Workers in destination countries?" This focus aims to provide policy insights that are more adaptive to global labor market needs and grounded in the experiences of workers and key stakeholders (Wati et al., 2024). By incorporating these perspectives, the findings are expected to contribute to strengthening the training and certification system and to encourage the establishment of national standards that are more closely integrated with global labor frameworks (Jiayan et al., 2023).

This study, therefore, addresses a clear practice gap between the policy framework and the realities experienced by Indonesian Migrant Workers in destination countries. While the certification system was designed to enhance employability and protection, its implementation has not consistently achieved these goals due to misalignment between policy intent and field practice.

Accordingly, this research aims to examine how competency certification contributes to job retention, professional continuity, and protection mechanisms for IMWs abroad, while identifying the institutional and structural factors that influence its effectiveness. Theoretically, this study extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior by exploring how training and certification shape migrant workers' attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and sustainable work behaviors. Practically, it provides policy-relevant insights to bridge the gap between regulation and implementation, contributing to the design of a more responsive and globally aligned certification system. Through these contributions, the study seeks to strengthen Indonesia's human capital strategy and promote the long-term welfare and competitiveness of its migrant workforce.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on migrant worker competence and certification highlights three key

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dimensions: (1) behavioral and psychological factors influencing work performance, (2) institutional and policy frameworks governing training and certification, and (3) the interaction between both in shaping employment continuity. This review synthesizes relevant theoretical and empirical studies that explain how competency certification affects Indonesian Migrant Workers' (IMWs) professional behavior and long-term employment outcomes.

The Theory of Attitude and Behavior serves as the primary theoretical framework for this study (Skiba, 2020). Triandis (1980) argues that the interaction of individual attitudes, social norms, and established habits shapes behavior. Attitude reflects one's evaluation of a behavior, social norms indicate perceived expectations from the social environment, and actual behavior depends not only on intention but also on the degree of control or opportunity available to act (Lee et al., 2021).

In the context of migrant workers, this theory is highly relevant because decisions to act professionally and maintain employment abroad are influenced not only by technical skills but also by personal beliefs, social pressures, and habits formed during training (Nguyen, 2021). When competencies built through training and certification are successfully internalized, Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) become better prepared to meet the challenges of foreign workplaces (Koesbardiati et al., 2021). Positive attitudes toward work standards combined with supportive social norms encourage professional conduct (Mindarti & Anggraeni, 2020). Furthermore, Triandis (1980) highlights that individuals are more likely to behave professionally if they believe it will lead to positive outcomes, such as employer recognition, job security, and long-term career continuity. Conversely, if IMWs perceive no benefit from following international standards, their motivation to comply diminishes. Therefore, training and certification programs must clearly convey the value and advantages of adhering to these standards (Musfiroh, 2021).

Building on Triandis's behavioral framework, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) expanded this perspective through the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which posits that intention to act is influenced by attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms. However, TRA overlooks the extent of individual control over their actions (Li & Wang, 2019). Ajzen (1991) addressed this gap by introducing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which adds perceived behavioral control, an individual's belief in their ability to perform the behavior. In the context of IMWs, this reflects their confidence in applying skills learned during pre-departure training when facing real working conditions abroad (Jiang et al., 2022). TPB thus strengthens the predictive power of behavioral models by combining attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control, all of which are crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of competency training and certification (Nickell & Hinsz, 2023). Effective programs are expected to build positive attitudes, foster professional norms, and enhance self-confidence, ultimately influencing work continuity (Hojeij et al., 2024).

These theoretical perspectives collectively underline that the effectiveness of certification depends not only on technical training outcomes but also on psychological readiness and contextual support systems that reinforce desired professional behaviors. Applying these theories helps explain why some IMWs succeed while others fail to sustain their jobs. Insufficient or irrelevant training may fail to shape the expected attitudes or norms, and low perceived control, such as a lack of confidence in overcoming workplace challenges, reduces the intention to behave according to standards, thereby threatening job continuity (Dall'Ora et al., 2020).

While these theories explain behavioral mechanisms, the institutional framework also plays a vital role in shaping how competency certification operates in practice. In Indonesia, Law No. 18/2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers provides the main legal basis for mandatory pre-departure training and certification (Mindarti & Anggraeni, 2020). Article 41 mandates that all prospective IMWs must hold an official competency certificate as proof of readiness and quality assurance. This certification functions not only as a technical assessment but

also as an administrative requirement for obtaining work visas and accessing the global labor market (Widiasanti et al., 2021). Supporting documents such as BP2MI's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) detail training processes, required competencies, and authorized training institutions. BP2MI's annual reports also provide data on the number of certified workers, the main destination countries, and the challenges encountered in training implementation. Nevertheless, despite this regulatory framework, several studies and oversight reports highlight gaps between training content and actual workplace demands in host countries. Consequently, evaluating the effectiveness of certification policies is essential to ensure that legal protection is matched by improvements in job continuity and the overall well-being of IMWs.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore in depth the effectiveness of competency certification in supporting the work continuity of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) in destination countries. This approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to capture meanings, subjective experiences, and the social dynamics underlying the implementation of training and certification for prospective IMWs. A qualitative case study also allows a nuanced understanding of the complex social realities and contrasts in perspectives between IMWs, as frontline actors, and policymakers, as system designers.

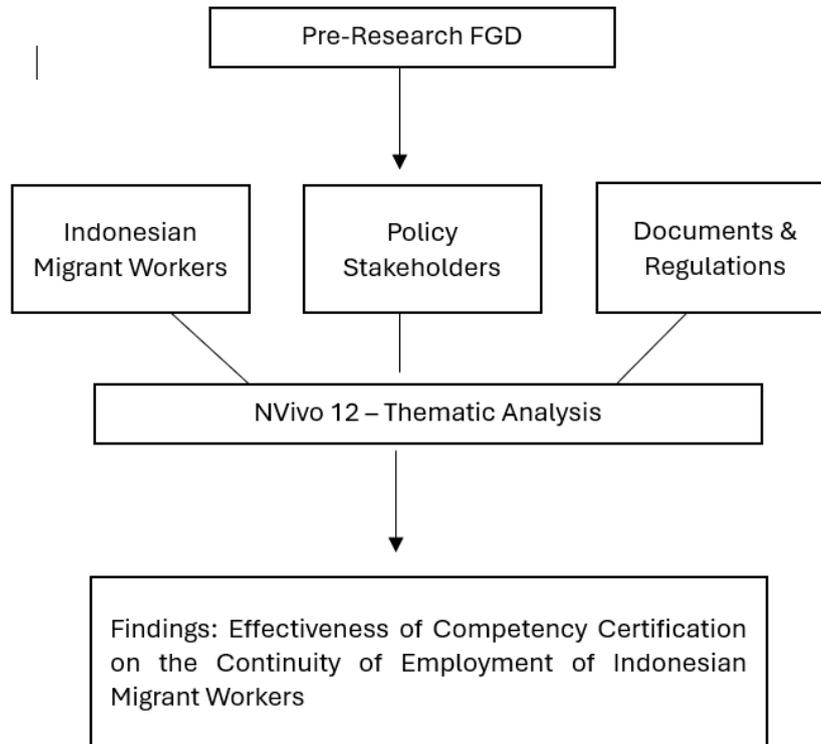
This study is exploratory in nature, as it seeks to uncover and interpret the real-world mechanisms underlying the implementation of competency certification among Indonesian Migrant Workers rather than to test pre-determined hypotheses. The exploratory design aligns with the study's qualitative case study approach, which emphasizes depth of understanding, context sensitivity, and interpretive insight into lived experiences. Such a design is particularly suitable for analyzing complex institutional and behavioral phenomena, such as competency certification, where multiple actors, perceptions, and contextual factors interact dynamically across different levels of governance and practice.

The selection of informants followed a purposive sampling strategy, focusing on individuals who possess direct experience or institutional involvement in the training and certification processes of IMWs. The sample size of seven primary informants, three IMWs, and five BP2MI/KP2MI officials was determined using the principle of data saturation, where additional participants were deemed unnecessary once no new insights emerged from the interviews. Although the sample is small, it provides sufficient depth and diversity to capture contrasting viewpoints between field practitioners and policymakers, ensuring analytical richness over numerical generalization.

Prior to the main data collection, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with three experts specializing in labor training policies, international migration, and migrant worker protection. The FGD served to validate and refine the interview guide, identify key field issues, and provide preliminary triangulation between theory and practice. Insights from the FGD informed the design of the in-depth interview protocol used in the subsequent stage.

The primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with two main groups of informants. The first group consisted of three active IMWs who had completed competency training and certification and had work experience in destination countries. The second group comprised five officials from the Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI/KP2MI) or related institutions directly involved in training policies and placement processes. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the research topic and their ability to provide detailed and relevant information. To complement the primary data, document analysis was also conducted on official regulations such as Law No. 18 of 2017, standard operating procedures (SOPs) on training, and BP2MI annual reports.

Data from the FGD, interviews, and document reviews were analyzed thematically with the assistance of NVivo 12 software. The software facilitated the coding process, the development of thematic nodes, and the visualization of key themes emerging from the participants' narratives. The main nodes included perceptions of training effectiveness, challenges in certification, alignment of competencies with international standards, and the impact of these factors on job continuity. NVivo further enabled comparison of themes between IMWs and policymakers, identification of recurring key narratives, and the creation of structured thematic maps.



**Figure 1.** Qualitative Research Triangulation Flow  
Source: Pre-research flow, 2025

The diagram illustrates the systematic triangulation process applied in this study. The process began with a pre-research Focus Group Discussion (FGD), which provided both theoretical and practical foundations for developing the interview instruments. This was followed by primary data collection from two key sources—IMWs and policymakers—and secondary data from official documents and regulations. All three data sources were integrated and analyzed using NVivo 12, enabling an in-depth and comprehensive identification of key themes. This multi-layered approach ensured that the findings were conceptually valid and empirically tested from multiple perspectives.

To ensure data credibility, the study employed source triangulation (comparing perspectives from IMWs, KP2MI officials, and experts), methodological triangulation (interviews, FGD, and document analysis), and member checking, whereby key points from interview summaries were confirmed with the participants. These strategies were applied to guarantee that the data interpretations accurately reflect the authentic experiences and views of the informants.

From an ethical standpoint, all research procedures adhered to the principle of informed consent. Participants were fully briefed on the study's purpose, the confidentiality of their data, and their right to withdraw at any stage. Personal names and identifying information were anonymized, and all records were securely stored in compliance with qualitative research ethics protocols.

**Table 1.** Pre-Research Triangulation (Initial FGD) – Effectiveness of Competency Certification

Key Question	FGD Findings	Preliminary Interpretation
<b>How effective is competency certification in ensuring the job continuity of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs)?</b>	<p><b>LP:</b> Certification is mandatory as a legal requirement for deployment, but its practical benefits in the field are limited if not accompanied by workplace supervision and post-placement support.</p> <p><b>AH:</b> Certificates function mainly as administrative documents and for insurance claims. However, many IMWs are still repatriated due to health issues, work behavior, and discrepancies between contracts and actual working conditions.</p>	<p>Competency certification primarily serves as an administrative and legal requirement. Without strong protection mechanisms, fair contracts, and continuous monitoring, certification alone cannot ensure the job continuity of IMWs in destination countries.</p>

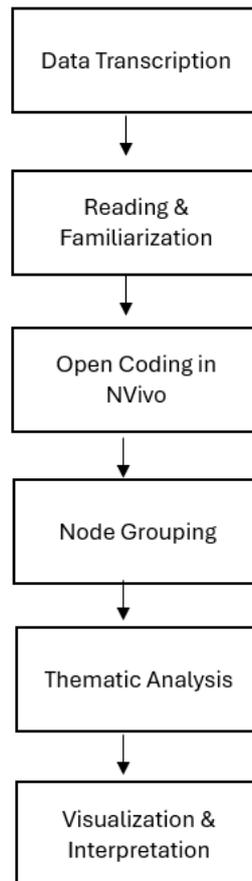
Source: Pre-research FGD with informants LP & AH, 2025.

The preliminary discussion conducted through an FGD with two key informants (LP and AH) reinforced the initial findings regarding the effectiveness of competency certification on the job continuity of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs). From the perspective of both informants, certification is considered essential as an administrative prerequisite and a requirement for legal placement (including for insurance claims); however, its practical benefits in the workplace remain limited. They emphasized that many IMWs are still repatriated despite holding certificates, mainly due to factors such as health issues, work behavior, and mismatches between contractual agreements and actual working conditions in the destination country.

These initial triangulation results indicate that certification alone is insufficient to ensure job continuity; it must be accompanied by strict workplace monitoring, post-placement support, and an effective protection system. The FGD findings are consistent with previous individual pre-research interviews, thereby providing early validation that the issue of certification is indeed relevant to be studied further. Consequently, this triangulation process strengthens both the theoretical and practical foundations for continuing the study into the in-depth data collection stage.

Overall, this methodological framework was designed to answer the research question on the effectiveness of competency certification for sustaining IMWs' employment, supported by strong triangulation, robust digital analysis tools, and data validity ensured through credible, cross-perspective sources. The study aims to contribute valuable insights for developing training and certification policies that are more adaptive, context-specific, and aligned with global labor demands.

The data analysis process was conducted in a step-by-step manner using a thematic approach facilitated by NVivo 12 software. It began with the transcription of interviews, followed by a thorough reading to gain an understanding of the informants' narratives. Open coding was then applied to identify key pieces of information, which were assigned codes representing emerging themes. These codes were subsequently organized into thematic nodes to explore relationships among themes, structure narrative patterns, and generate visualizations of the findings.



**Figure 2.** Data Analysis stages (for NVivo 12)  
Source: Pre-research flow, 2025

This stage was carried out iteratively to ensure that every emerging theme accurately represented the authentic narratives and experiences of the informants. NVivo 12 was used not only as a technical tool but also as an aid in interpreting meaning and exploring the interconnections among themes identified in the data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Overview**

BP2MI, which has now been transformed into KP2MI under Presidential Regulations No. 165 and 166 of 2024, is a non-ministerial government agency responsible for the comprehensive protection and empowerment of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) from the pre-departure stage through to post-placement. Formerly known as BNP2TKI, the agency has undergone institutional strengthening to address the complex challenges of migrant worker protection more comprehensively and holistically. With a vision of delivering dignified and equitable protection, KP2MI/BP2MI implements a range of programs, including pre-departure training, grievance services, legal assistance, and international cooperation. Its core functions encompass labor placement, protection during the migration process, and empowerment through training and skills development.

The agency's structure includes strategic divisions such as services and protection, empowerment, and international relations. In addition, private recruitment agencies (P3MI) play an essential role in the recruitment, training, and placement of IMWs to destination countries. The practical insights from P3MI and the first-hand experiences of IMWs themselves provide crucial input for evaluating the effectiveness of training and competency certification programs. Therefore,

collaboration among the state, the private sector, and workers is key to building a sustainable and adaptable migrant protection system that can respond to global challenges.

**Profile Respondent**

**Table 2.** Distribution of Research Respondents

No.	Informant Code	Age	Work Experience	Position/Status	Education	Institution / Destination Country
<b>A. IMW Informants (Indonesian Migrant Workers)</b>						
1	NIK*****	40	>10 years	Informal Migrant Worker	Senior High School	Taiwan
2	NAN*****	46	>15 years	Informal Migrant Worker	Senior High School	Taiwan
3	FIT*****	26	5 years	Informal Migrant Worker	Senior High School	Taiwan
<b>B. Policymaker Informants (BP3MI/KP2MI)</b>						
4	AND****	41	>5 years	Junior Expert	Master's	BP3MI Jakarta
5	SYA*****	44	>15 years	Junior Placement Officer	Bachelor's	BP3MI Yogyakarta
6	LOS*****	37	>10 years	Junior Legal Counselor	Bachelor's	BP3MI NTT
7	TUL*****	41	>10 years	Junior Legal Counselor	Master's	BP3MI Banten
8	M.*****	25	<5 years	Skilled Computer Operator	Diploma (D3)	BP3MI Lampung
<b>C. FGD Informants (National Policy Experts)</b>						
9	LP	50	>20 years*	Director of IMW Capacity Development	Bachelor's	KP2MI (FGD)
10	AH	55	>20 years*	Director General of Placement	Master's	KP2MI (FGD)

Source: results of researchers' data processing, 2025.

\*Note: LP and AH participated in the FGD session as national policy expert informants.

The distribution of respondents demonstrates the diversity of data sources utilized in this study, divided into three main groups: Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs), policy implementers from BP3MI/KP2MI, and national policy experts involved in the pre-research FGD. The interviewed IMWs all come from the informal sector and work in Taiwan, with senior high school educational backgrounds and more than five years of work experience. This group represents an appropriate field sample for evaluating the effectiveness of training and certification.

Meanwhile, informants from BP3MI represent a range of regions, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, NTT, Banten, and Lampung and occupy strategic positions directly related to the training, protection, and supervision of IMWs. The two additional informants from KP2MI/BP2MI who participated in the FGD hold director and director-general level positions, providing macro-level policy insights. This combination of informants allowed the study to capture a holistic perspective, from grassroots experiences to national-level decision-making, and strengthened data validity through source triangulation.

**Results of NVivo testing and data analysis**

**Table 3.** Summary of Themes, Number of Files, and References

Main Theme	Number of Files	Number of References
The Role of Government and Private Sector in Monitoring	4	5

Main Theme	Number of Files	Number of References
and Support		
Certification Enhances Competitiveness and Job Opportunities	5	5
Certification as Legal Protection and Quality Standardization	4	4
International Standards and Global Recognition	2	2
Challenges: Differing Standards, Costs, and Limited Access	2	3

Source: Results of researchers' data processing, 2025.

The analysis of interview data revealed five key themes related to certification and competencies of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs). The theme most frequently discussed by respondents concerned certification as a means to enhance competitiveness and job opportunities, reflected in 5 files with 5 references. Respondents emphasized that possessing a competency certificate makes it easier for IMWs to secure jobs with better positions and salaries, both domestically and internationally, as certification is considered evidence of professionalism.

Next, the role of government and the private sector in monitoring and support also emerged strongly (4 files, 5 references). The government is viewed as responsible for formulating policies and standards, while private institutions including training and placement agencies act as facilitators of training and intermediaries with certification bodies. Synergy between these two parties is considered essential to ensure that certification is not just a formality but has a real impact on improving IMW quality.

The third theme was certification as a form of legal protection and quality standardization (4 files, 4 references). Respondents noted that certification serves not only as recognition of skills but also as a legal safeguard when IMWs face problems in destination countries, since their work quality has been formally validated.

Another theme concerned international standards and global recognition (2 files, 2 references). Some respondents expressed a desire for Indonesian certifications to be recognized internationally, so that competency recognition abroad would not need to be repeated, thus facilitating cross-border labor mobility.

Finally, challenges in implementing certification were also raised (2 files, 3 references). The main issues highlighted were differences in standards between countries, the relatively high cost of certification, and limited access to certification facilities in certain regions. These factors create barriers for some prospective IMWs to obtain the required certification.

Overall, these findings indicate that although certification is seen as crucial for improving competitiveness and protecting IMWs, structural challenges need to be addressed, particularly with regard to costs, accessibility, and standard harmonization so that certification can bring equitable benefits.

**Table 4.** Summary of Findings Based on Themes, Sources, References, and Coverage

Main Theme	Source (Name)	No. of References	Coverage
<b>Challenges: Differing Standards, Cost, and Limited Access</b>	Policy Stakeholders (1)	1	0.02%
	Policy Stakeholders (2)	2	0.04%
	IMWs (1)	1	0.01%
<b>International Standards and Global Recognition</b>	IMWs (2)	1	0.01%
	IMWs (3)	1	0.01%
	Policy Stakeholders (1)	1	0.04%

Main Theme	Source (Name)	No. of References	Coverage
<b>Role of Government and Private Sector in Monitoring and Support</b>	Policy Stakeholders (1)	1	1%
	Policy Stakeholders (3)	2	6%
	Policy Stakeholders (4)	1	1%
	Policy Stakeholders (5)	1	2%
<b>Certification Enhances Competitiveness and Employment Opportunities</b>	Policy Stakeholders (1)	1	0.01%
	Policy Stakeholders (2)	1	0.01%
	Policy Stakeholders (3)	1	0.02%
	Policy Stakeholders (4)	1	0.01%
	Policy Stakeholders (5)	1	0.01%
<b>Certification as Legal Protection and Quality Standardization</b>	Policy Stakeholders (1)	1	0.01%
	Policy Stakeholders (2)	1	0.01%
	Policy Stakeholders (3)	1	0.01%
	Policy Stakeholders (5)	1	0.02%

Source: Results of researchers' data processing, 2025.

Based on the data analysis, the theme "The Role of Government and Private Sector in Monitoring and Support" emerged as the most dominant, indicated by the highest number of references and the greatest coverage, particularly from the interview with Policy Stakeholder (3), which reached 6%. This highlights the importance policymakers attribute to collaboration and synergy between government and private actors in regulating, facilitating, and supervising the certification process for Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs).

The theme "Certification Enhances Competitiveness and Job Opportunities" appeared consistently across five interview sources, although each with relatively small coverage (ranging from 0.01% to 0.02%). This confirms that certification is perceived as a key factor in improving IMWs' competitiveness, bargaining position, and access to employment, both domestically and abroad.

The theme "Certification as Legal Protection and Quality Standardization" was also discussed by four policy stakeholders, with coverage ranging from 0.01% to 0.02%. This indicates that certification is not solely about technical skills, but also functions as a legal instrument that provides standardized and recognized protection in the workplace.

The theme "International Standards and Global Recognition" was raised by both IMWs and policymakers. Although coverage remains low, the convergence of views from four sources underlines the need for Indonesian certifications to gain international recognition, so that verification does not need to be repeated in destination countries.

Meanwhile, the theme "Challenges: Varying Standards, Cost, and Limited Access" was raised by two policy stakeholders, with coverage between 0.02% and 0.04%. These challenges include discrepancies in certification standards across countries, relatively high training costs, and the limited availability of certification facilities in remote areas, all of which hinder potential IMWs' access to certification.

Overall, the table illustrates that certification is widely regarded as crucial for strengthening the competencies and legal protection of IMWs. However, its implementation still faces significant challenges, particularly in terms of cost, accessibility, and standard harmonization across international labor markets.



opportunities, followed by its role in skills recognition and global acknowledgment. Other notable segments include certification as a prerequisite for work, the importance of international standards and global integration, as well as standardized training, costs, and accessibility. This visualization emphasizes that while all aspects are relevant, the most dominant focus remains on improving employability and meeting global standards through certification.



**Figure 5.** Compared by number of coding references  
Source: Results of researchers' data processing, 2025

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of themes related to certification in the context of migrant workers. The largest portion highlights how certification improves competitiveness and job opportunities, followed by its role as a requirement for employment. Other significant themes include the role of certification in ensuring skills recognition and global acknowledgment, the importance of international standards and global integration, and the need for standardized training, cost-effective mechanisms, and accessibility. Overall, the figure emphasizes that certification is seen as a key factor for enhancing employability, meeting standards, and achieving international recognition.

**Table 5.** Thematic Analysis of Work Competency Certification on the Sustainability of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs)

Theme (Node)	Key Findings	Sources & Number of Quotations	Key Interpretation
<b>A. Challenges: Different Standards, Costs, and Limited Access</b>	Differences in certification standards between countries, high certification costs, and limited access.	Policy Stakeholders (1): 1 quotation; (2): 2 quotations	These challenges reduce the effectiveness of certification because not all IMWs can access or utilize it in destination countries.
<b>B. International Standards and Global Recognition</b>	Certification is only effective if it is internationally recognized.	IMWs (1-3): 3 quotations; Policy Stakeholders (1): 1 quotation	Without global recognition, Indonesian certification has limited influence on employment sustainability abroad.
<b>C. Role of Government &amp; Private Sector in</b>	Continuous support from the state and private sector	Policy Stakeholders (1): 1 quotation	Monitoring, mentoring, and institutional cooperation are essential

Theme (Node)	Key Findings	Sources & Number of Quotations	Key Interpretation
<b>Monitoring and Support</b>	determines the effectiveness of certification.	1; (3): 2; (4): 1; (5): 1	for certification to truly enhance employment sustainability.
<b>D. Certification Improves Competitiveness and Job Opportunities</b>	Certification opens up job access and improves initial placement positions.	Policy Stakeholders (1–5): 1 quotation each	Effective for obtaining jobs and better positions, but its impact diminishes after the initial placement phase.
<b>E. Certification as Legal Protection and Quality Standardization</b>	Certification provides legal protection for IMWs and ensures competency standards.	Policy Stakeholders (1, 2, 3, 5): 1 quotation each	Certification serves as a legal and quality assurance tool, but implementation in destination countries remains limited.

Source: Results of researchers' data processing, 2025

This analysis indicates that work competency certification has a positive impact, but its effectiveness is highly context-dependent:

1. As a “gateway” certification strengthens the initial competitiveness and bargaining position of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) during the recruitment stage (Nodes D & E).
2. Not a guarantee of long-term employment – job sustainability is largely influenced by other factors such as adaptability, language skills, and working conditions in the destination country (Nodes A & B).
3. Institutional support is crucial – the involvement of government bodies, private institutions, and international recognition is essential to ensure that certification remains beneficial in the long run (Node C).

Based on the thematic analysis addressing the research question “How effective is the role of work competency certification in supporting the employment sustainability of Indonesian Migrant Workers in destination countries?”, five key themes were identified.

1. First, the theme of challenges (varying standards, costs, and limited access) highlights those differences in certification standards between countries, high certification costs, and limited access for prospective IMWs serve as major obstacles. These factors reduce the reach and effectiveness of certification because not all IMWs can meet the requirements equally.
2. Second, the theme of international standards and global recognition indicates that competency certificates can only be fully effective if recognized by the destination countries. Testimonies from both IMWs and policy stakeholders expressed doubts about the recognition of Indonesian-issued certificates, limiting their influence on employment sustainability.
3. Third, the theme of the role of government and private sector in monitoring and supporting underscores that competency certification cannot be separated from continuous institutional backing. Monitoring, mentoring, and collaboration between government, private agencies, and international certification bodies are vital to ensure that certification has a meaningful impact.
4. Fourth, the theme of certification improving competitiveness and job opportunities shows the positive effect of certification at the initial stage. Competency certificates open job opportunities, enhance bargaining power, and lead to better placements. However, these advantages tend to diminish after the placement phase.
5. Fifth, the theme of certification as legal protection and quality standardization reveals that certificates are also viewed as legal instruments and competency assurances that facilitate the proof of skills. Nevertheless, these benefits have yet to be supported by consistent recognition

mechanisms in destination countries.

Overall, this study emphasizes that while competency certification positively contributes to access to employment and legal protection, it has not yet been fully effective in guaranteeing long-term employment sustainability for IMWs. The effectiveness of certification strongly depends on the harmonization of international standards and the strengthening of institutional support systems.

## Discussion

This study examines the effectiveness of competency certification in ensuring the sustainability of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in their host countries. The main findings indicate that while certification has a positive impact on initial readiness, competitiveness, and legal protection, its effectiveness in guaranteeing job continuity remains limited due to external factors such as differing standards, lack of global recognition, and limited post-placement support.

### 1. Challenges: Differences in Standards, Costs, and Access

The research highlights fundamental obstacles such as varying competency standards across countries, high costs, and limited access to training in rural areas. These findings are consistent, who notes that formal training often does not align with the actual needs of the international labor market. The [BP2MI \(2023\)](#) report also emphasizes the unequal distribution of training facilities, making it difficult for prospective migrant workers from remote regions to meet certification requirements.

From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior ([Ajzen, 1991](#)), these conditions weaken perceived behavioral control, which is the belief that workers are capable of meeting job demands. Psychologically, although a positive attitude is formed, actual opportunities to apply it are hindered by structural barriers.

### 2. International Standards and Global Recognition

The second theme reveals that Indonesian certification is often not recognized in destination countries, limiting its benefits to the recruitment stage. This aligns with the study on labor migration in Asia, which underscores the importance of mutual recognition of skills between countries. In Taiwan's domestic sector, employers prioritize work experience over certificates. In other words, the value of certification is more administrative than substantive.

These findings highlight the need for national policies to be harmonized with international standards rather than focusing solely on pre-departure processes.

### 3. The Role of Government and Private Sector in Monitoring and Support

The third theme shows a lack of continuous monitoring and post-placement support. Policymakers interviewed acknowledge the need for a structured mentoring system. This supports who emphasizes that the sustainability of PMI employment requires public-private partnerships so that the competencies acquired are not limited to initial certification.

Within the TPB framework, weak support systems also influence subjective norms that should encourage consistent professional behavior among PMIs.

### 4. Certification Enhances Competitiveness and Employment Opportunities

All informants stated that certification boosts self-confidence, facilitates job placement, and adds value when applying for jobs. This finding is consistent who concluded that certified PMIs have a higher likelihood of being accepted by employers.

From [Triandis' \(1980\)](#) theory, certification helps shape positive attitudes toward professional conduct. However, without structural support, these attitudes do not always translate into actual behavior.

#### 5. Certification as Legal Protection and Quality Standardization

The final theme highlights the role of certification as a legal protection instrument, as stipulated in Law No. 18 of 2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, which mandates competency certification (Article 41). Certification is also regulated in detail by BP2MI's Standard Operating Procedures related to pre-departure training and certification.

However, interviews show that this protection is largely administrative. Without international recognition, certification has limited effectiveness in protecting PMIs in practice.

#### **Linkages with theory and previous research**

The findings of this study reinforce the relevance of the Theory of Attitude and Behavior (Triandis, 1980) and its further development through the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The analysis shows that certification can foster positive attitudes among Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) toward international work standards and strengthen social norms through community support and government policies. However, the aspect of perceived behavioral control remains weak due to structural barriers, including differences in standards, high costs, and limited international recognition of certificates. This imbalance explains why certification has not yet been fully effective in encouraging consistent professional behavior in destination countries.

Compared to previous studies, these findings align with highlights the mismatch between training and the needs of the international labor market, and which emphasizes the importance of mutual recognition of skills across countries. The findings also support assertion on the importance of post-placement guidance, strengthening the results which indicate that certification can enhance the competitiveness of migrant workers. However, this study uncovers an additional dimension that has rarely been discussed: the influence of work culture and employer expectations in host countries on the effectiveness of certification. Cultural factors are shown to play a decisive role in the career sustainability of PMIs, beyond the technical aspects of certification and training.

The findings of this study reveal that the positive effects of competency certification are not uniform across all contexts, suggesting that certification alone cannot guarantee the long-term employability of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs). An unexpected result emerged from the interviews with policymakers. Despite recognizing certification as a legal and professional instrument, many admitted that its field implementation often becomes a formality, driven more by administrative compliance than skill validation. This contradiction highlights a gap between institutional intent and field-level execution.

Another notable insight concerns the differing perceptions between workers and policymakers. While policymakers emphasized certification as a strategic tool for global competitiveness, most IMWs perceived it mainly as a requirement for deployment rather than a means of continuous professional development. This divergence underscores the importance of aligning policy communication and training delivery to ensure that certification translates into behavioral change and practical competence in the workplace.

From a broader perspective, this study contributes to the literature by deepening the understanding of how certification systems function within the socio-behavioral dynamics of labor migration. It expands previous research by emphasizing that the long-term impact of certification depends not only on technical competence but also on institutional consistency, cross-border recognition, and post-placement mentoring. Therefore, policies on migrant worker training and certification must evolve beyond administrative compliance toward an integrated system that supports skill mobility, professional adaptation, and sustainable employment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that the training undertaken by prospective Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) plays an important role but has not yet been fully effective in determining the quality of IMWs who hold competency certificates. In general, the effectiveness of training can be summarized in three main aspects:

1. Improvement of technical skills and initial preparedness. Training has a positive contribution in shaping basic skills relevant to the field of work and providing general knowledge about labor standards in destination countries. This preparation helps IMWs become more administratively ready and more confident when entering the international labor market.
2. Limited relevance to workplace needs in destination countries. Field findings show that the training content provided in Indonesia often does not align with actual work practices and employer expectations abroad. As a result, the competency certificate functions to function more as an administrative requirement rather than as substantial proof of quality that is recognized at the workplace.
3. Limited long-term impact. Pre-departure training is not followed by ongoing support, skills upgrading, or post-placement monitoring. Consequently, the impact of training on work quality and career continuity for IMWs remains limited, particularly when they face challenges related to adapting to workplace culture and new technologies overseas.

These findings address the research questions by emphasizing that competency certification alone does not guarantee the long-term employability of Indonesian Migrant Workers. Theoretically, this study contributes to extending the Theory of Attitude and Behavior and the Theory of Planned Behavior by illustrating how training and certification influence workers' attitudes, perceived control, and professional norms. Practically, the results highlight the urgent need for continuous skills upgrading, post-placement support, and closer policy coordination between Indonesia and destination countries. Strengthening these aspects would ensure that certification systems not only fulfill administrative functions but also foster sustainable employability, professional growth, and the protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers abroad.

## LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, comprising three informal-sector IMWs and five policymakers, which may not capture the full diversity of experiences across sectors and destination countries. While the insights generated are rich and contextually grounded, they may not be generalizable, particularly to IMWs employed in the formal sector or those working outside Taiwan. Second, the analysis focused mainly on actors at the micro and meso levels (IMWs and national policy implementers), excluding perspectives from employers and receiving-country institutions. Including these viewpoints could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how competency certification is recognized and valued internationally. Third, the study relied solely on qualitative data, without quantitative measures to substantiate broader patterns or compare outcomes between certified and uncertified workers.

Future research should broaden the respondent base to encompass IMWs from diverse sectors and destination countries, as well as employers and international stakeholders. Adopting a mixed-methods design could further enhance analytical depth by integrating qualitative insights with quantitative indicators to assess the measurable impacts of certification on job retention, performance, and wages. Moreover, longitudinal studies tracking IMWs from pre-departure training through post-placement stages are recommended to provide a holistic view of the long-term effectiveness of training and certification systems.

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