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MIGRANTS INTEGRATION INTO THE ESTONIAN AND JAPANESE LABOUR
MARKET: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCES, STRATEGIES AND
PERSPECTIVES

Bachelor Thesis

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I have written this Bachelor Thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

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Introduction

In 2022, Europe attracted the most significant number of immigrants, accounting for 30.9 per cent of the total immigration flow, Asia ranked second with a share of 30.5 per cent (IOM, 2021). Although Estonia and Japan are not among the countries where the majority of immigrants want to stay, looking at the global migration tendencies, we can increasingly see the trend of the integration of migrants into ethnonational societies, which includes both countries (Liu-Farrer, 2020a; Oskolkov, 2023). Thus, the experience of immigrants is a crucial source contributing to the formation of more effective and adaptive strategies in the host society (Liu-Farrer, 2020a).

Japan was an attractive destination for immigrants due to its constantly growing economy, but they were not the reason for this growth. Due to depopulation and labour shortages, Japan is no longer a final stop for immigrants. To support the constant and growing flow of foreign labour, the Japanese government has decided to work out various immigration programs that should maintain the flow of labour regardless of external factors. However, these programs are only a short-term solution to labour shortages. (Maruyama, 2018)

In this case, many researchers began to call Japan an “emerging migration state” due to the fact that Japan has only recently begun to take confident steps towards integrating immigrants into its society (Liu-Farrer, 2020a). Due to the European migration crisis, the labour shortage crisis and the Russian-Ukraine conflict, Estonia was able to develop a strategy for integrating immigrants into its society (Kaldur et al., 2019; Lees & Espenberg, 2022). Estonia can now share experiences with Japan to enrich its immigration policies.

The decision to conduct a comparative analysis was made after studying various research papers on Japanese immigration policy. The studies suggested that comparative analyses could help to identify effective integration methods and solve issues in this area (Oishi, 2021; Yoshida, 2020). The choice to examine blue-collar workers is due to Japan's new immigration policy in 2018, according to which, for the first time, blue-collar workers are allowed to enter the country to work.

This bachelor's thesis aims to identify the challenges that blue-collar immigrants face when trying to integrate into Japan's labour market and find the practices from Estonia that could aid Japan's immigrant integration.

The tasks of this research are to:

- provide an overview of theories of migration and related research,
- provide an overview of Estonian and Japanese immigration policies in the labour market context,
- provide a comparative overview of immigrants' experiences of integration in the labour market in Japan and Estonia,
- identify the challenges that blue-collar immigrants face when trying to integrate into the labour market of Japan and Estonia,
- find out the good practices of immigrant integration into both countries' labour markets, which can be shared and adapted to suit the specific cultural and economic conditions of each country.

The theoretical background of this bachelor's thesis gives an overview of different migration theories. Also, it provides an overview of Estonia's and Japan's immigration policies and similar comparative research. The second chapter presents the empirical study, analysis, and recommendations. Both parts are mainly based on government documents and academic research on migration in Japan.

The empirical part of this bachelor's thesis is conducted by qualitative secondary analysis, which allows the application of a new conceptual focus to the original data and research issues (Long-Sutell et al., 2010). This method includes analysis of documents, scientific literature, reports from international organisations, and government sources, which are then converted into relevant recommendations for policymakers after the detailed comparative analysis.

Keywords: foreign workers, migration policy, immigrants, labour market, labour mobility, blue-collar workers, Estonia, Japan

1. Theoretical background of migration and migration policies

1.1. Theories of migration

Migration is the process of changing residence across administrative boundaries, which may include villages, cities, regions or countries. It comes in two primary forms: immigration, which refers to the inflow of people into a particular area, and emigration, which refers to the outflow of people from a given region. Migration can be either internal, occurring within one country, for example, from rural areas to cities or vice versa, or

international, when movement occurs across the borders of different countries. (Tsegay, 2023)

Migration theories play a crucial role in explaining the origins and factors behind migration, contributing to a better understanding of the patterns underlying many policy decisions. Existing modern theories of migration are divided into two main types: theories of the initiating causes of migration and theories of the self-perpetuating causes of migration. The first category includes neoclassical migration theory, new economics of migration theory and segmented labour market theory. The second category comprises network theory, cumulative causality theory, and institutional theory. (Karpestam & Andersson, 2019)

The theories mentioned should be considered interrelated since the migration process is complex and multifaceted, and only a combination of different theoretical approaches can fully explain it (O'reilly, 2022). In the following sections, we will examine these theories in more detail.

1.1.1. Neoclassical Theory of Migration

Neoclassical migration theory has long occupied a dominant economic position at the micro and macro levels. This theory assumes that individuals act rationally, using reasonable decisions. They are also viewed as risk-neutral and seek to maximise their utility. At the microeconomic level, migration for an individual is usually driven by potentially higher wages outside his current location. The decision to migrate is based on comparing the cost of migration with its benefits. Costs may include relocation costs, travel costs, lost time searching for a job, or other costs. If the benefits of migration exceed these costs, then a rational individual is inclined to migrate. (Karpestam & Andersson, 2019; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016)

At the macroeconomic level, the focus shifts from the individual to the theory of supply growth. This is due to the movement of labour from countries with low capital and relatively high labour force to countries with high capital and relatively low labour force. Instead, capital moves in the opposite direction, seeking higher investment returns in poorer countries. This interaction of factors contributes to more efficient resource allocation and increased global economy production. (Stahl, 1995)

Neoclassical migration theory does not comprehensively explain all aspects of the labour movement. This theory implies that individuals ignore risk when making migration decisions. However, migration is closely associated with risk and the opportunity to improve living standards. To gain a deeper understanding of these factors, additional theoretical

models have been developed that help better explain the mechanisms of migration processes. (Karpestam & Andersson, 2019)

1.1.2. The New Economics of Labour Migration Theory (NELM)

The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theory emerged as a result of the critique of neoclassical theory. It was initially developed to explain the movement of people from rural to urban areas in developing countries. Still, the theory has gained popularity over time in analysing international migration between developed and developing countries. (de Haas, 2010)

NELM theory considers that migrants have family ties, which leads to the fact that the decision to migrate is not an individual's decision but that of the household as a whole. In this context, the theory identifies three main hypotheses: the insurance hypothesis, the investment hypothesis and the hypothesis of relative deprivation. (Abreu, 2012; de Haas, 2010)

Under the first hypothesis, households may send migrants to increase their benefits or income, providing protection from possible economic shocks. In the case of the second hypothesis, sending migrants by households aims to increase income, which can be used for productive investments in the family business. The last hypothesis assumes that the motivation to send migrant is the desire of households to improve their financial situation to level themselves with other households. (Abreu, 2012; Taylor, 1999)

1.1.3. Segmented Labour Market Theory

The segmented labour market theory (SLM) by Michael Piore was developed to explain the social problems associated with labour migration. These problems typically include poverty, labour discrimination and low returns to education, which make it difficult for migrants to achieve higher wage levels. SLM theory is characterised by dividing the labour market into primary and secondary sectors. (Ashton & Maguire, 1984)

High wages, job stability and high returns to education characterise the primary labour market. Meanwhile, the secondary labour market experiences low wages, job instability, and vacancies often being filled by unskilled workers. Both labour markets are closely interconnected, influencing the mechanisms of labour supply and working conditions in the economy. (Ashton & Maguire, 1984; Harrison & Sum, 1979)

When the demand for low-skilled labour increases, raising wages in the secondary market becomes costly and unprofitable for employers. In such circumstances, raising wages requires the intervention of other markets since the difference between the two markets is often determined by institutional norms, such as a fixed minimum wage. In such cases,

employers turn to migrants as low-skilled labour to compensate for labour needs in the secondary market. That means international migration is often driven primarily by pull factors in receiving countries rather than solely by push factors in sending countries.

(Karpestam & Andersson, 2019; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016)

1.1.4. Network Theory

Network Theory has been proposed as a complement to the NELM theory. This theory suggests that migrants do not always take risky actions and maintain connections with family and friends at home. Risk-averse people may hesitate to migrate even if the expected benefits exceed their current situation. However, those who have already moved can provide valuable information about the new environment and thereby reduce risks for potential migrants. (Haug, 2008)

In the context of immigration, effective communication and setting up the institutional environment to provide comprehensive information and ensure effective communication are essential aspects. Such measures help reduce risks for migrants and contribute to more successful adaptation of the latter to the new social and cultural environment. (Haug, 2008; Liang et al., 2008)

1.1.5. Cumulative Causation Theory

Cumulative Causation Theory is often used to explain the incremental sequence of events in the context of migration. For example, if migrant household incomes exceed those of non-migrants, this may further increase migration flows, maintaining migrants' income levels. In addition, if the average labour productivity of migrants exceeds the average labour productivity of non-migrants, this may also stimulate additional migration movements. Additionally, specific jobs where migrants often work may become associated with preferred jobs for migrants, which in turn may reduce the attractiveness of these jobs to the local labour force. (Massey et al., 1993)

1.1.6. Institutional Theory

The creation of institutions in the context of migration can significantly influence the improvement of the situation and bring changes in this area. Encouraging international migration can lead to an increased inflow of migrants through improved logistics. Improving the convenience and cost-effectiveness of logistics processes also helps stimulate migration. On the contrary, restricting migration can lead to the emergence of informal institutions that support illegal migration practices. This could increase the number of illegal migrants in the

region, with some consequences. All these aspects are related to Institutional Theory in the context of migration. (Massey et al., 1993)

1.2. Overview of immigration policies

This chapter provides an overview of the immigration policies of Estonia and Japan, identifying the main trends and fundamental changes that occurred during their development. It also briefly looks at assessments and criticisms of Japanese immigration policies and considers the subsequent changes brought about by these criticisms.

1.2.1. Estonian immigration policy

The origins of Estonia's migration policy go back to the 1990s when restrictions were established on the number of immigrants in Estonia and the grounds for granting foreign residence permits. Since then, no fundamental changes have been made to Estonia's migration policy, and everything has been limited to modifications in connection with existing needs. Thus, in 1993, the Immigration Act adopted in 1990 was replaced by the Aliens Act. In 1997, it was supplemented by the Refugees Act, which was also returned in 2006 by the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens. The purpose of the changes was only to establish greater legal clarity. Both new acts laid down fundamental aspects of Estonian migration policy and are still essential. (Anniste, 2018)

The main restriction that Estonian migration policy has is a control on the number of immigrants. The Aliens Act stipulates a limit for third-world immigrants, which cannot exceed 0.1 per cent of Estonia's permanent population. Although there was no increase in the limit, the groups of immigrants who may be admitted to Estonia outside of the boundary have been expanded. Thus, in 1997, the control was not applied to citizens of EU member states, Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland. In 1999, citizens of the USA and Japan were also exempt from the restrictions. The expansion had an impact on international students as well. Moreover, in 2002, family migration became part of the exceptional group. The most significant change in migration policy towards white-collar immigrants was in 2007. Now, immigrants who specialise in ICT and start-up industries are free from restrictions. (Anniste, 2018; Lauren, 2018)

Changes in migration policy have also affected the employer's obligations to the government and immigrants. First, the employer must ensure that there is no opportunity to find a worker with the required specialisation in the home labour market. Secondly, when hiring an immigrant worker, the employer must pay him a minimum average wage to avoid displacement of domestic work. In the case of a highly skilled worker, the employer is

obliged to pay two times the average salary. Moreover, the fine for using illegal foreign labour increased in 2018 from 3,200 euros to 32,000 euros. In case of violation of the migration policy, the company can no longer participate in public procurements. (Anniste, 2018; Kaldur et al., 2019)

Becoming a European Union member also affected Estonia's migration policy, granting access to EU member state citizens the freedom of movement and the right to work in Estonia. Furthermore, without the need to register a temporary right of residence, citizens from European Union member states, the European Economic Area, and Switzerland can live and work in Estonia for up to 3 months. In 2016, foreigners staying in Estonia on the basis of a visa now have the opportunity to work for nine months instead of the previous six months with short-term work permission. In 2018, short-term work permission was extended from 9 months to one year. (Anniste, 2018; Lauren, 2018)

Due to its low birth rate and oldest population, Estonia is taking increasingly bold steps towards attracting the largest number of foreign talents. Also, skilled workers were not left out many of them fall into the category of blue-collar workers, which means that Estonia is not seeking only white-collar foreign workers. This is also confirmed by the shortage of skilled workers that has existed in Estonia for a long time. (Anniste, 2018; Kuum et al., 2022)

According to the Statistics Estonia (2022), as of 2022, 39,757 foreigners live in Estonia. The largest national group among them are people from Ukraine, numbering 33,217 people, followed by citizens of the European Union (3,457 people) and residents of other countries (3,454 people).

1.2.2. Japan's immigration policy

Although Japan's migration policy dates back to the post-war period, the first steps occurred in 1989, which marked the beginning of significant changes in Japan's migration policy. At this time, a law was passed in Japan, allowing immigrants with historical Japanese ancestry to work in Japan. Guest workers, called "trainees", also gained access to the Japanese labour market. New foreign labour arrived from Brazil, Peru and the Philippines, but most were unskilled labour, making this the first time blue-collar workers were allowed to work in Japan, although not officially. (Chung, 2019; Hamaguchi, 2019; Yoshida, 2020).

In 1993, the Technical Intern Training Program was established based on past experience with trainees. On the one hand, the program seeks to assist developing nations by accepting their citizens and providing practical training experiences in Japan through on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities (Kodama, 2015). On the other hand, the program was

founded to cope with labour shortages in agriculture, fishery and manufacturing. Rural areas depended on these trainees, and the National Governors' Association was also in favour of integrating immigrants into these industries, not only as guest workers but also as long-term settlers (Chung, 2019; Oishi, 2021). However, only after the 2009 amendment did the Japanese government start considering such activities of trainees as labour, which officially falls under labour law and should reduce the number of labour violations towards trainees (Hamaguchi, 2019).

According to Hamaguchi (2019), despite the 2009 amendment, the Technical Intern Training Program still faced criticism for exploitative conditions towards trainees. In that case, the Act concerning the Proper Implementation of the Technical Internship of Foreigners and Protection of Technical Interns was established in 2016, which made it possible for trainees to work in Japan for five years instead of three. Requirements for organisations were also restricted, and under the new law, companies who wanted to employ foreign labour needed now a licence. The system strictly controlled immigrant workers and minimalised their mobility. Chung (2019) and Liu-Farrer (2020b) note that the decision was also influenced by the 2020 Summer Olympics when Japan faced significant labour shortages. In response to this, Japan also expanded quotes for trainees in several fields, especially in construction, which was very important for the Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

Compared with programs for white-collar immigrants, programs for blue-collar workers were more restrictive and selective, which highlighted the Japanese government's resistance to openly accepting immigration and reluctance to accept unskilled immigrants (Liu-Farrer, 2020b). In agreement with Hamaguchi (2019), in 2012, the Japanese government introduced a point-based system for highly skilled immigrants, which can give preferential residence status based on academic background, professional experience, etc. In 2017, requirements for highly skilled immigrants softened even more. Individuals scoring 70 points or higher now qualify for permanent residency after three years, while those with 80 points or more can attain it in just one year (Assmann, 2016).

2018 was marked as the most significant year in Japan's immigration history. The reason is that Japan, for the first time, officially let unskilled labour from 14 industrial sectors work in its labour market. The classifications include agriculture, eldercare, and construction, previously labelled as "unskilled" and "semi-skilled" fields. Two residence statuses were also created for specified skilled workers (SSW1 and SSW2). (Takizawa, 2021)

SSW1 residency status is for professionals who can enter a certain level of work immediately without special training. Foreign workers with this status can stay for up to five years but are not allowed to invite family to Japan. Together with the technical internship period, this means a total period of work in Japan of up to ten years without the possibility of inviting family. SSW2 residence status is intended for highly skilled foreign workers who can autonomously solve complex professional or technical tasks. Workers with this status are allowed to extend their stay and have the right to invite family to Japan. (Hamaguchi, 2019; Liu-Farrer, 2020b)

Such a reform was influenced by the crisis of the disappearance of regional areas caused by Japan's rapidly ageing population (Oishi, 2021). 896 villages and towns in Japan are in danger of disappearing. The average age of farmers in 2017 was 67, and the agriculture sector's sustainability, like food security, is in danger. Yoshida (2020) notes that in 2019, the number of employees under the Technical Intern Training Program increased by 24.5% from 2018, proving this reform's effectiveness as a method of solving labour shortages in Japan. 80% of these trainees are under 40. Also, until 2017, international students could work only in the relevant sectors of their field of study (Oishi, 2021). Thanks to the NSSZ Act 2017, it is now possible for them to participate in various jobs. Such a decision was able to cope with labour shortage in industries where it need to be and develop country tourism.

Japan avoided foreign labour for a long time to solve a labour shortage crisis. Instead of integrating immigrants, Japan coped with the labour shortage by increasing wages and investing in technology to increase workers' productivity. That did not help. Such a situation triggered policymakers to make fast decisions to attract immigrants to Japan. Consequently, the requirements for immigrants were significantly lowered, including the requirements for the lowest income threshold, minimum work experience and applying for permanent residency. (Oishi, 2021)

By the end of June 2022, there were 2,760,635 foreigners living in Japan. The largest national group was the Chinese, numbering 744,551, followed by the Vietnamese (476,346) and Koreans (412,340). The number of permanent residents from the Philippines, Nepal, Indonesia and Taiwan was 47,956, while residents from other Asian countries were 554,246. For the TITP program, the most significant participants were from Vietnam, with 160,563, followed by the Chinese (374,891) and Indonesians (34,459). (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2022)

1.3. Similar comparative research

There are no studies directly comparing the immigration policies of Estonia and Japan. However, a considerable amount of research and reports examine the immigration policies of both countries separately (Anniste, 2018; Chung, 2019; Hamaguchi, 2019; Kaldur et al., 2019; Lauren, 2018; Takizawa, 2021). In addition, there are several reports examining practices in immigration policies of other countries and the possibility of adapting them in both Estonia and Japan.

The Institute of Baltic Studies (Kaldur et al., 2019) in 2019 conducted the most extensive study on immigration in Estonia. This study covered the analysis of the country's immigration policies, the identification of possible services for successful integration and, most importantly, the study of the experiences of immigrants in areas ranging from education and daily life to the labour market and health care. The results of the study revealed several main problems. Among them is limited access to information necessary to adapt to life in Estonia and learn the language. There is also poor cooperation and information exchange at local and national levels (Juurik, 2020). Criticism has been levelled at the lack of awareness among local organisations and employers about hiring foreign workers.

In addition to the study mentioned above, the Institute of Baltic Studies conducted a similar study in 2014, focusing on the study of policy decisions. This report examined various successful immigrant integration practices in Estonia, focusing on the experiences of Finland, Singapore, Denmark, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic. The study highlighted several valuable lessons that could be useful for Estonia. One of the main lessons highlights the importance of establishing an effective communication system between immigrants and the host society. The significant role of local governments and universities in integrating immigrants at various levels of society is also noted. It was found that the point-based system does not always meet the needs of smaller countries in an intensely competitive talent market. Instead, actively attracting talent from abroad is recommended, opening the door to actively recruiting talent abroad. (Kallas et al., 2014)

In 2016, a similar study was conducted, but this time by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) at the University of Tartu. This time, countries such as Canada, Denmark, and Slovenia were considered as examples. The study's conclusions are similar to those reached by the Institute of Baltic Studies in 2014. However, this study highlights the importance of providing all the information and characteristics of the host country before the

arrival of immigrants so that they can better understand the features and requirements of the host society. (Tamm et al., 2016)

The situation with comparative analyses of Japanese immigration policy is usually limited to comparisons with neighbouring countries or in-depth analysis of Japan's domestic immigration strategy. One of the researchers in this area is Gracia Liu-Farrer, whose work is widely cited and fundamental to studying Japanese immigration policy. Her scientific contributions are visible in almost every relevant study on this topic. One of her works is a book entitled "Immigrant Japan: Mobility and Belonging in an Ethno-nationalist Society", which came out in 2020. This comprehensive study examines Japanese immigration policies and the experiences of immigrants in the country. This paper examines a wide range of sectors, covering the labour market and the daily lives of immigrants. (Liu-Farrer, 2020a)

A 2011 paper by Yean-Ju Lee compared the immigration situation in Japan with similar phenomena in South Korea and Taiwan. The result revealed that many of Japan's problems during this period were typical of many countries in the East Asian region. However, in order to assert the existence of a specific "East Asian model", further research and comparisons with other areas are required to identify general trends and features in immigration policies and practices. (Y.-J. Lee, 2011)

Kenji Kaneko's (2009) study compared the immigration situation in Japan and Taiwan, identifying many common problems and noting differences. Thus, Taiwan once placed more hopes on South Asian immigrants, while Japan focused on immigrants with Japanese roots. The work suggested the possible closure of Japan to migrants due to unsuccessful assimilation. However, considering the current situation, these assumptions have not been confirmed. (Kaneko, 2009)

Several studies on Japanese immigration policy put forward the idea of the need to conduct comparative analyses in order to identify effective methods of integration and solve problems in this area. The relevance of this topic is also emphasised by new political initiatives in Japan aimed at liberalising its immigration policy. (Oishi, 2021; Yoshida, 2020)

2. Empirical study of experiences of blue-collar immigrants in the Japanese and Estonia labour market

2.1. Methodology and research methods

This comparative study of the immigrants' experiences in Estonia and Japan is mainly based on an analysis of secondary literature in English and Estonian, which allows the application of a new conceptual focus to the original data and research issues (Long-Sutehall

et al., 2010; Sherif, 2021). Such a cost-effective approach saves time and may reveal new patterns or themes not addressed in the original study, which is very relevant regarding limited time and volume of bachelor's thesis. This study includes analysis of documents, scientific literature, reports from international organisations, and government sources. Due to the language barriers, publications in Japanese are not included in this work. Most references are obtained from open and closed sources, gathered in a legitimate way.

An overview of immigrants' experiences in the Estonian labour market is mainly provided through three extensive and comprehensive reports (see Table 1) from the Institute of Baltic Studies, the Work in Estonia initiative and a commission from the Ministry of Culture. All three reports are based on extensive qualitative research on immigrants in Estonia, mainly using the interview method, which allows us to gain information from direct sources. The Institute of Baltic Studies report is the most comprehensive among others. It covers many different aspects, ranging from an overview of the experiences of immigrants in various areas of life to support for immigrants at multiple levels. Based on this report, an analysis and comparison of the experiences of immigrants in Japan are most often made. The second report from the Work in Estonia initiative also plays a significant role in the comparative analysis and covers certain areas not covered in other reports. These reports pay particular attention to employers' experiences recruiting and supporting foreign workers in the Estonian labour market, which is an integral part of providing a critical overview. The latest report, commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, complements the other two reports and includes further information on the situation.

Table 1

List of studies on immigrants' experiences in the Estonian labour market

Date	Author	Title
2019	Anniste & Masso	Work in Estonia sihtrühmade välisvärbamise protsessi kogemuse ja rahulolu uuringud 2019
2019	Kaldur et al.	Uussisserändajate kohanemine Eestis
2023	Voog et al.	Eesti ühiskonna lõimumismonitooring 2023

Source: compiled by the author based on Anniste & Masso (2019), Kaldur et al. (2019) and Voog et al. (2023)

Compared to studies in Estonia, the Japanese side does not provide such extensive and comprehensive reports and documents in a language accessible to the author, which would fully cover the experiences of immigrants from various points of view and aspects of their

lives. However, there are many more minor works (see Table 2), each specialising in a specific topic. In addition, among the numerous works, one can often find case studies on the experiences of blue-collar foreign workers in Japan and the Japanese labour market, significantly enriching this work. All these works are based on qualitative analysis, mainly using the interview method. In some cases, secondary literature is analysed, which supplements this work with additional information.

Table 2

List of studies on immigrants' experiences in the Japanese labour market

Date	Author	Title
2022	Kazuhiro Watanabe	Migrant trainees and social inclusion: a study of construction and electronics company in Japan
2021	Lee & Niiya	Migrant oriented Japanese language programs in Tokyo: A qualitative study about language policy and language learners
2021	Liang Morita	Some Doubts on the Efficacy of the New Blue-Collar Visas in Japan
2022	Liang Morita	Japanese norms in Japanese workplaces
2022	Pranasari & Iskandar	'Stay away from home': The role of social networks for the adaptation process of Indonesian trainees in Japan
2023	Qiaoyan Li Rosenberg	The control and agency dialectic of guest worker programmes: evidence from Chinese construction workers in Japan's Technical Intern Training Program (TITP)
2022	Siu & Koo	Temporary labor migration and skill transfer in Japan: Migration experiences and outcomes of technical intern trainees from Vietnam and China
2020	Yusy Widarahhesty	Otsukaresamadeshita!: A Critical Analysis of Japan's Toxic Work Culture
2020	Mai Yoshida	The Indebted and Silent Worker: Paternalistic Labor Management in Foreign Labor Policy in Japan

Source: compiled by the author based on S. J. Lee & Niiya (2021), Li Rosenberg (2023), Morita (2021, 2022), Pranasari & Iskandar (2022), Siu & Koo (2022), Watanabe (2022), Widarahhesty (2020) and Yoshida (2020)

Before analysing and comparing the experiences of blue-collar foreign workers in Estonia and Japan, it is critical to understand who they are, how to classify them, and how to characterise this category of workers properly. It is helpful to refer to the classification and coding standards proposed by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and

Working Conditions to classify blue-collar workers. According to these standards, blue-collar workers can be divided into low-skilled and highly skilled. Low-skilled blue-collar workers include plant and machine operators, assemblers, and other essential occupations. On the other hand, highly skilled blue-collar workers involve workers in agriculture and fisheries and professionals in craft and related fields that require more specialised and complex knowledge. Similar terminology can be observed in one of the Japanese studies on the classification of blue-collar workers (Oishi, 2021). In this comparative work, low-skilled and high-skilled blue-collar workers will be referred to under the umbrella term "blue-collar workers." Sometimes, the term "foreign worker" and "immigrant" will be used instead of this term. (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, n.d.)

In creating the Japanese review, in most cases, a significant amount of scientific work focused on the study of Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) trainees. This priority on research is because the TITP program is one of the first formal channels for blue-collar foreign workers in Japan and, therefore, should be included in the context of studying the experiences of blue-collar workers in the Japanese labour market. Based on this information, the author of this paper also took these factors into account and decided to focus specifically on TITP trainees since his views on the importance of this program in addressing the blue-collar experience are similar.

The creation of a comparative analysis of immigrants' experiences in the Japanese and Estonian labour markets was based on two main topics, which in turn were divided into several sub-themes. The first central theme concerns the barriers immigrants face when entering the labour market of both countries. It is further divided into language learning and adaptation to the work culture in both countries. This choice of coding was based on the study of many scientific works in both the Estonian and Japanese contexts, where mention of these topics is most common. Based on this, the author of this work decided to focus on this coding. The second theme concerns adaptation support in both countries and is divided into three aspects: aid for language learning, accommodation of foreign blue-collar workers and support for immigrant spouses. This coding was also chosen due to the frequent mention of these aspects in scientific works in both Estonia and Japan. However, the topic regarding assistance to spouses was an exception since information in a language accessible to the author was limited, unlike on the Estonian side. However, after analysing the materials from Estonia, it was decided to include this topic since it is an essential aspect of the adaptation of immigrants.

Based on all the information collected from various reports on the situation in Estonia and Japan, the final third section of this study, namely the discussion section, presents the main findings and final conclusions. These conclusions consist of summarising the results for each research topic and providing practices that can be adapted to each of the two countries, taking into account their social and cultural characteristics.

It is also important to note that this paper reviews the negative and unsuccessful aspects of blue-collar integration in Estonia and Japan. However, they do not constitute the bulk of successfully integrated. One of the purposes of this study is to provide an overview of the challenges immigrants face when attempting to integrate into the labour markets of Japan and Estonia. The results highlight negative aspects among other successful situations to understand the fate of those who experience difficulties with integration. The work also has limitations, such as limited knowledge of the Japanese language, which prevents the full use of Japanese language sources. It is essential to note that the scope of the bachelor's thesis does not allow for completely independent research or interviews with blue-collar foreign workers simultaneously in Estonia and Japan. These limitations also influenced the choice of research methodology in this work.

2.2. Comparative Overview of Immigrant Experiences in the Labour Market in Japan and Estonia

2.2.1. Barriers to Labour Market Entry

Knowledge of the Estonian language

The language barrier is an important topic when we discuss work opportunities for immigrant workers in host societies. It directly affects opportunities to find and stay in a new workplace, communicate, and integrate into society overall. In addition to aiding immigrants in adjusting to their new cultural surroundings, expanding their social circles, and accessing modern know-how, this can also enhance their competitiveness and career prospects. Immigrants who do not know the local language, at least at a basic level, may face challenges in finding suitable employment opportunities, which may be limited to low-paying and unskilled jobs. In addition, the lack of language skills can result in difficulties in understanding job responsibilities and instructions from employers, which may lead to job loss and unemployment. (Luuk, 2009)

According to the quantitative statistics regarding immigration in Estonia, a significant number of immigrants perceive the Estonian language through the prism of cultural and integration aspects. For many immigrants, knowing the Estonian language expresses their

respect for the country and is essential for full participation in Estonian society. Moreover, three-quarters of immigrants consider the Estonian language as a necessary tool for obtaining a high-quality education and a successful career, as well as for complete adaptation and life in Estonia in general. (Voog et al., 2023)

In that case, the main barrier to labour market entry in Estonia is language knowledge. This was stated not only by foreign employees but also by local employers. It was seen as a central problem in several blue-collar industries, for example, customer service, where lack of knowledge of Estonian is the foremost obstacle to communicating with clients, and the manufacturing sector, where the ability to operate machinery safely clearly depends on language proficiency. Such difficulty is not solely related to getting a job but also to integrating into a work environment. Some research highlighted that even if an employer is ready to hire a foreign worker who does not know the local language, in our case Estonian, there are still difficulties for foreign employees in communicating with colleagues (Anniste & Masso, 2019). As some interviews emphasised, local workers are not always ready to communicate with foreigners in English or in any other language, and foreign workers noted that because of that, they do not always feel united with others, as the dominant language of communication in the workplace is still Estonian. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

Language proficiency can be classified into two levels: passive and active. Passive language proficiency refers to the ability to understand a language but speak a limited amount, while active proficiency includes the ability to speak, write, and understand the language fluently. According to statistics for 2023, only 11% of immigrants have an active proficiency in the Estonian language, while 66% have a passive proficiency. The rest either do not speak it at the proper level or do not speak it at all. (Voog et al., 2023)

Additionally, it is worth noting that staying in Estonia affects the level of language proficiency of immigrants. For example, the percentage of people who do not speak Estonian at all decreases among those who immigrated earlier (from 9% to 26%) compared to those who arrived in the country later. There is also an increase in the proportion of people with an active level of language proficiency among those who moved to Estonia earlier (25%) compared to those who arrived later (9%). As a result of these changes, the group with passive language skills remains at approximately the same level (ca 66%). (Voog et al., 2023)

English occupies a leading position among immigrants in the context of communication in the workplace and/or in educational institutions. At the same time, in Estonian society, the Russian language is also essential due to cultural factors and the

emergence of crises. In particular, the conflict in Ukraine has contributed to an increase in the number of immigrants for whom Russian is one of the main languages. However, it is worth noting that the Estonian language is not as popular among immigrants since its use directly depends on the level of proficiency in this language. (Voog et al., 2023)

Knowledge of the Japanese language

Japan also experiences workplace situations similar to Estonia's, where differences in language communication complicate interactions with foreign workers. Many local employees expect communication to be conducted in Japanese, but due to foreign employees' limited knowledge of this language, there are difficulties in communicating overall. Even if Japanese workers speak English and can communicate in it, there are cases when they prefer to use exclusively Japanese and refuse to communicate in another language. (Morita, 2022)

The employer's reluctance to communicate in English or another language is also evident. For example, during the build-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, some immigrant workers recruited to participate in the event were given exclusively 3K (kitanai, kiken, kitsui) jobs - dirty, dangerous and demeaning jobs (Connell, 1993). Employers' rationale was that using immigrant workers to perform more complex tasks, such as operating forklifts or other equipment, could improve process efficiency. However, immigrants were not provided with more involved jobs due to the language barrier. Many Japanese workers noted that difficulties in communicating with immigrants arose due to their insufficient proficiency in the Japanese language, which prevented them from correctly understanding job responsibilities and instructions. The same study noted that before recruiting immigrant workers to prepare for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, they received at least several months of Japanese language training. This assumes they had basic Japanese language skills sufficient for simple communication. This suggests that, regardless of immigrants' ability to communicate in Japanese, local employees prefer collaborating with other local employees. This assumption also confirms that the concept of diversity management in Japan is predominantly focused on women's employment and on introducing family-oriented policies that promote the employment of workers' wives rather than the employment of immigrants (Assmann, 2016). (Morita, 2022)

Another study notes that there are cases where the primary purpose of an immigrant's arrival in Japan was to study and master the skills of the Japanese style of management. In this context, achieving the set goal was impossible due to the language barrier. Insufficient

knowledge of the Japanese language did not allow one to occupy positions required to develop specific management skills. (Siu & Koo, 2022)

Estonian work culture

Some studies noted that one of the main obstacles to integration into the labour market of Estonia is also the management structure and corporate culture, particularly informal relations in organisations. Informal relationships between management and subordinates, the length of probationary periods, the number of vacation days, and even the specifics of electronic messaging labels can confuse a new immigrant who is not accustomed to such specifics or is coming from an environment with a completely different system. All this can hinder their proper adaptation both in the labour market and in the social environment as a whole. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

Employers note that a critical aspect of corporate culture is the ability of a foreign worker to fit into the existing context. For innovators unfamiliar with the informalities of corporate culture, onboarding can pose a significant barrier to integration into the work environment, which can ultimately impact their performance and interactions with coworkers. Employers recognise the need to provide training and guidance on company culture to ensure successful onboarding. For example, problems arising from corporate environment mismatches may prompt employers to seek out foreign candidates who have previous experience in similar corporate environments or have a similar understanding of organisational structure. (Anniste & Masso, 2019; Kaldur et al., 2019)

In general, foreign workers surveyed confirm that differences in work culture and atmosphere have a negative impact on overall work productivity. Among the characteristics of Estonian corporate culture they highlight is a lack of cooperation and relative closeness to new ideas and people. It is also noted that a foreign worker does not always receive the necessary help or information until he takes the initiative. They also point out difficulties in communication and building trust between foreign and Estonian employees if the foreign employee does not speak Estonian or is unfamiliar with the local culture. In addition, from time to time, they note the cultural characteristics of their Estonian colleagues, such as a tendency to be depressed, sad and withdrawn, which may lead to difficulties in overall communication. (Anniste & Masso, 2019)

One of the additional unique problems identified among foreign workers in Estonia's labour market is the lack of transparency in recruitment processes, especially in the context of the lack of clear answers from potential employers throughout the various interview stages.

This problem also applies to online job search platforms, where foreign workers often encounter situations where employers do not respond to inquiries or report that jobs are no longer available. Foreign workers' reactions to such refusals vary, with some perceiving them as racist based on their differences from local workers due to skin colour or religious beliefs. In addition, some foreign workers note that finding work in Estonia is only possible through personal connections since many employers do not publish information about vacancies. Although similar situations occur among local workers, foreign workers leave a particularly negative impression, which can affect their attitude towards Estonian companies and their general opinion of Estonia in general, including perceptions of discrimination and exclusion. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

Japanese work culture

Unlike the Estonian corporate system, which is often associated with individualism, Japanese corporate culture glorifies collectivism (Chandra, 2012; Widarahhesty, 2020). This aspect represents an essential feature of corporate practice and reflects the characteristics of Japanese social culture. Employees in such a culture are renowned for their strong work ethic, enthusiasm, and organisational skills. However, despite its effectiveness, this approach includes several potential risks, often due to the country's cultural characteristics. Specific issues regarding immigrant workers and corporate culture have long attracted criticism in Japan. (Yoshida, 2020)

One of the main reasons immigrant workers enter the Japanese labour market is the desire to earn money, in most cases, to support their family abroad (Siu & Koo, 2022). This motive is key and forces blue-collar immigrants to accept any available job that offers wages since, in most cases, wages in Japan exceed those in their home country. One of the main tools that assist in this process is the TITP program, which allows immigrants to find employment in the Japanese labour market. It is essential to recognise that the TITP program is more than just a labour policy; it is also a carefully structured system for monitoring migrants. (Yoshida, 2020)

Many trainees are forced to accept circumstances and endure restrictions limiting their existence in the Japanese labour market. Such restrictions include limited mobility in the labour market, total control both in the workplace and outside of working hours, insufficient wages and violation of employee rights, extremely long work hours and challenging working conditions (Siu & Koo, 2022; Yoshida, 2020). These restrictions contribute to an increase in

job abandonment, which ultimately leads to a loss of control over immigrant workers (Siu & Koo, 2022).

Total control over employees is a subject of interest in several studies (Li Rosenberg, 2023; Siu & Koo, 2022; Yoshida, 2020). With the increase in flees, Japanese companies tightened controls, which worsened the situation. For example, one study indicates that some workers may be denied the opportunity to return to their home country to see their families. Employers argue that this is because it is essential for immigrants wishing to stay and work in Japan to focus on training and successfully integrating into the Japanese job market. Due to the terms of the contracts signed by immigrant workers, which usually do not provide for the possibility of changing jobs or organisations, the mobility of such workers is significantly limited. This situation most often occurs with interns within the TITP program. (Siu & Koo, 2022)

In addition to complete control in the workplace, cases of violence and exploitation are recorded. Violence most often refers to verbal and physical abuse. Employers usually look down on foreign labour, assigning them the most challenging and unpleasant duties. One study has documented cases of radical physical violence against immigrant workers (Li Rosenberg, 2023). One participant interviewed noted that his employer used a hammer to impose bodily harm to express his dissatisfaction with the immigrant's work. All this was also accompanied by verbal violence towards the worker. This behaviour is justified by the belief that immigrants should be grateful for the work provided and the opportunity to stay in the Japanese labour market (Yoshida, 2020). (Siu & Koo, 2022)

However, the leading and most frequently cited problem related to the work culture that foreign workers face in the Japanese labour market is long working hours. Some studies based on interviews with workers have found that without constant overtime, an immigrant worker does not earn enough to cover all his expenses. Expenses refer to Japan's living costs (food, housing, utilities, etc.) and the amount that immigrants send to their families abroad. It should be noted that sending money to families abroad correlates with the new economics of labour migration theory (NELM). It was also noted that access to overwork opportunities is not always provided to all workers, and most often, this decision depends on the worker's gender. Research indicates that this opportunity is more often given to men than women. One study also found that many immigrants, despite contractual terms limiting them to working for only one company at a specific workplace, often resort to illegal work for other

employers. There were also cases where they terminated their official contract, moved to another employer and became unofficial workers. (Li Rosenberg, 2023; Siu & Koo, 2022)

After analysing various case studies, it was revealed that in some cases, there is discrimination against immigrant workers in the Japanese labour market. Comparing the experiences of different ethnic groups in the Japanese labour market, one can notice that the attitude towards some nationalities is more discriminatory and radical. For example, the treatment of Chinese migrant workers is much worse than that of immigrants from Vietnam. Not only verbal violence can be applied to them, but also, as shown earlier, physical violence. Notably, this attitude towards foreign labour is not the norm among local workers and largely depends on the working environment the immigrant finds himself in. (Igarashi & Mugiyama, 2023; Li Rosenberg, 2023; Pranasari & Iskandar, 2022; Siu & Koo, 2022)

2.2.2. Adaptation Support for Blue-Collar Immigrants

When comparing Estonia and Japan regarding who is the first to assist immigrant workers, one can note similarities in the two countries' approaches. In Estonia, assistance is primarily provided by employers who have hired foreign workers. Many note that their employer is the first and primary source of support and provides the most help. This support includes finding housing, advice on tax and bureaucratic issues, and sometimes even assistance in organising relocation, medical services, etc. In Japan, the situation is similar: primary aid is provided by employers at the place of residence. The exception is sending organisations that prepare immigrants for work in Japan. (Anniste & Masso, 2019; Watanabe, 2022)

Recently, Estonia has also seen an increase in the supply of adaptation services for immigrants due to their steadily increasing needs. One report highlights the significant growth of organisations and projects that work to integrate and assist immigrants successfully. These activities in Estonia are carried out by both the public and private sectors and voluntary organisations. More often than not, the costs of the private sector are borne by the businesses that use the services of such organisations, and the voluntary sector receives grants and support for their work. The public sector, in turn, provides and maintains services by providing necessary instructions, materials and essential resources. Among the new changes in recent years are the emergence of international houses, integration projects of the private sector, and various organisations that assist in integrating and consulting migrants. It should also be noted that many enterprises that hire foreign labour take responsibility for the whole adaptation process, from paperwork to finding work for immigrants' spouses.

However, this behaviour is often seen only in high-skilled jobs like the information and communications technology (ICT) sector. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

Learning the Estonian language

Over the past few years, the availability of Estonian language training for immigrants has increased noticeably, mainly thanks to the provision of various free forms and teaching methods. Currently, immigrants can take advantage of multiple tools to learn Estonian, including introductory courses in onboarding programs, mobile applications, clubs and Estonian language and culture centres located in various major cities in Estonia. In addition, language cafes are popular, specifically targeting people with limited language skills and providing opportunities to develop communication skills in everyday situations. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

Research shows that many immigrants are satisfied with the availability of various methods of teaching the Estonian language in Estonia, especially free courses. However, multiple surveys reveal a general trend and typical problems immigrants face when learning a language in this country. One of the most significant problems is the lack of awareness of the available opportunities for learning the Estonian language. Many people do not know about various courses, especially free ones. In addition, many are not familiar with the different organisations and projects related to language learning. Some respondents also thought that they would use mobile applications for language learning if they had information about mobile applications. Those with experience using mobile applications note problems associated with the impossibility of advanced language learning through such applications. (Anniste & Masso, 2019; Kaldur et al., 2019)

The insufficient number of free advanced language courses and the lack of a structured teaching system lead to significant problems in learning the Estonian language, which correspondents note as the most pressing problem. The lack of language courses outside working hours, including weekends, is fundamental in this context. Many foreign workers who come to Estonia to work cannot participate in daytime Estonian language classes. In the evening, most respondents noted a lack of energy to study the language, and on weekends, many official educational institutions do not provide courses. Also, based on this information, it can be assumed that many blue-collar workers cannot afford to pay for Estonian language courses in private schools that could offer weekend classes. Because of this, some employers rarely provide language courses to their foreign workers through integration organisations during working hours. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

Among other problems, there are also difficulties associated with the complexity of the Estonian language and searching for information. Some respondents note that searching for information about learning the Estonian language is tricky, and finding the necessary information is not always possible. In addition, many employers note that they cannot always find information on their own or are unaware of the available options for teaching the Estonian language. Finally, it is worth noting that the Estonian language is a rather complex language, and those who come to Estonia for a short period to earn money do not always find the opportunity to study it. The most common reason for stopping learning a language is its difficulty. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

Learning the Japanese language

Before heading to Japan, many blue-collar foreign workers undergo several months of preparatory courses in their home country. These courses cover a wide range of areas, from language programs to courses on Japanese working culture. Many different companies, primarily private, are involved in sending foreign labour to Japan. Working in Japan is considered difficult not only because of the hard physical work but also because of the peculiarities of the work system, from language barriers to strict hierarchies. Therefore, thorough preparation in the country of departure is considered mandatory before working in Japan. In addition, the increasing incidence of foreign worker fleeing from workplaces is forcing private companies to take responsibility for preparing their employees for challenging work conditions. Even though many immigrants know the possible difficulties and challenges they may face in Japan, they still decide to continue their journey. (Pranasari & Iskandar, 2022; Siu & Koo, 2022)

Special attention is paid to learning the Japanese language not only because proficiency in it can significantly impact the work process and facilitate the integration of foreign blue-collar workers but also because to be employed in Japan for a living, a minimum of Japanese language level N4 is required, which is equivalent to the international level A2. However, one researcher's analysis argues that N4 Japanese language skills may not be enough to make a foreign worker feel comfortable in an environment where the workplace is reserved for local employees. This level does not provide sufficient language proficiency, including speaking, listening comprehension, and reading. (Morita, 2021)

The sending organisation's average duration of Japanese language training is 4 to 6 months. For this purpose, various universities or centres specialising in teaching the Japanese language are involved. However, many believe that such a short period of learning Japanese

is insufficient to reach a level that allows you to communicate with native speakers confidently. There is also a low quality of teaching, which leads to problems with Japanese language proficiency among foreign workers. This indicates issues explicitly associated with sending organisations and the quality of workers' preparation for work in Japan. Japan also lacks a structured Japanese language training system for TITP trainees, making sending organisations responsible for training trainees. In addition, it is noted that host organisations are not obligated to train foreign workers in Japan, which is similar to the situation in Estonia. Although the host organisation has the option to train foreign workers in Japanese, this often does not happen, and blue-collar workers are given assignments that do not require specific Japanese language skills. However, it is worth noting that there are separate organisations in Japan that teach Japanese to immigrants on a volunteer level (S. J. Lee & Niiya, 2021). (Watanabe, 2022)

Accommodation of immigrants in Estonia

Regarding living in Estonia, the situation for blue-collar foreign workers can be described as relatively favourable and satisfactory compared to other aspects. In most cases, private organisations that provide services for finding housing and solving all related processes for immigrants are ready to provide their assistance for a fee. Their services include residence registration, bureaucratic support, and finding suitable housing. In Estonia, it is common for blue-collar workers, when arriving for work, to resolve residency issues through the employer or the sending company. The most common method is to house foreign workers in multi-person apartments or work with various hostels to provide them with affordable and efficient housing. Also, in this situation, the employees' expectations regarding their place of residence play a significant role. In that case, blue-collar workers face fewer problems when finding a place to live compared to, for example, highly skilled workers. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

However, despite the favourable picture, some problematic cases deserve special attention. These cases become especially significant when a foreign worker independently searches for housing in Estonia. Inequality between locals and immigrants is visible in some incidents, such as racism, when a foreign worker is denied a rental because of his race or nationality. Secondly, the problem is the “black” rental market, where landlords demand payment in cash and do not formalise the rental for an immigrant worker. This creates unstable conditions for immigrants and can hurt their adaptation to society. It may also threaten their sense of security as they may be evicted at any time without the possibility of appeal. The third and most serious problem facing immigrant workers is the high barriers to

entry into the real estate market. High rental costs, security deposits, and brokerage fees increase upfront costs that a blue-collar worker may not always be able to afford. (Anniste & Masso, 2019; Kaldur et al., 2019)

Accommodation of immigrants in Japan

The situation with blue-collar foreign workers in Japan is similar to that in Estonia. By studying and analysing various case studies about the experiences of immigrant workers in Japan, identical behaviour patterns can be identified. In the context of residence, the situation for blue-collar workers in Japan is also relatively favourable compared to other aspects. The task of finding housing for immigrants is usually taken on by the employer and less often by sending organisations. The classic and most common method is to house foreign workers in apartments where they share accommodation with several co-workers, sometimes providing additional services such as a canteen. Sometimes, the rent and utilities costs are considered and deducted from the employee's salary. However, despite the generally favourable situation, this method is also accompanied by some problems. For example, some studies noted that many immigrants were crowded into one apartment, significantly limiting living conditions and privacy. It was also pointed out that some flats provided by the employer may be poorly equipped, and the immigrant worker will have to independently furnish his temporary housing for a long time at his own expense, which can seriously hit his finances. (Li Rosenberg, 2023; Siu & Koo, 2022)

Support for spouses of immigrants in Estonia

A final but important piece to consider in the context of worker support is support for spouses of immigrant workers. Although blue-collar workers most often come to another country to earn money, which is consistent with the neoclassical theory of migration (Karpestam & Andersson, 2019), and then send money abroad to their families, which is consistent with the new economics of labour migration theory (NELM) (Abreu, 2012), there are cases where they have long-term plans for their stay in the host country, including assimilation. Currently, situations requiring support for spouses of immigrant workers are more common in high-skilled jobs, but sometimes, such situations arise among blue-collar workers. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

If the employer does not take into account the interests of the spouses of foreign workers, this may lead to the immigrant himself leaving the host country or finding another job. Such situations do occur, and according to one study, 21% of dismissals were due to the inability of the employee's spouse to find work in Estonia. This problem becomes particularly

acute in Estonia, where many blue-collar workers come with their spouses. This highlights the importance of focusing not only on the employees themselves but also on their families for successful adaptation. It should also be noted that many immigrant workers coming to Estonia have plans for an extended stay in the country. (Anniste & Masso, 2019; Kaldur et al., 2019)

Since 2019, Estonia has had an adaptation program for spouses of foreign workers called the “spouse programme”, which provides full support in various matters from the Work in Estonia initiative. The study shows that respondents rate the program highly and note that they previously lacked support, often leading to their isolation from society. Employers found that thanks to this program, they could attract new employees. Some companies have begun to prefer hiring foreign workers and their spouses, promoting more excellent workforce stability. (Kaldur et al., 2019)

Support for spouses of immigrants in Japan

The situation with adaptation of spouses in Japan is much more complicated than in Estonia. For example, due to strict restrictions, Technical Intern Training Program trainees cannot bring their families to Japan. After completing a certain period of work as a trainee in this program and completing it, the foreign worker can apply for Special Skilled Worker 1 (SSW1) status, which expands his opportunities in Japan but still prohibits inviting his family into the country. Also, after a specific time, the trainee can apply for Special Skilled Worker 2 (SSW2) status, which, in turn, already allows inviting his family to Japan. If available, the spouse can also enter Japan under the TITP program or another visa. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.)

After analysing various studies in the languages available to the author, it became apparent that this topic has not yet received sufficient attention at the international level and has not attracted enough interest to intensify research.

3. Discussion

The results of this study provide the basis for further discussion on the following question: what are the effective practices for immigrant integration in both countries and which can be adapted in both countries, taking into account their social and cultural characteristics? In addition, when summing up the comparative analysis, it is crucial to identify the main differences and similarities in the experiences of immigrants in the context of integrating into the labour markets of both countries. In the end, conclusions will be

formulated, and recommendations will be proposed to improve the situation based on the information presented.

At the outset, it should be noted that blue-collar workers in both countries face similar challenges, which manifest themselves to varying degrees depending on the specific country. However, language issues are the main barrier to the integration of immigrants, which hinders free access to the labour market in both Estonia and Japan. Lack of knowledge of the Japanese language appears to be a more critical factor than lack of knowledge of the Estonian language since Japan is characterised by a linguistically homogeneous society where the use of the Japanese language predominates (S. J. Lee & Niiya, 2021). This is confirmed by the EF English Proficiency Index, according to which Japan ranked 55th out of 100 in 2020, characterised as a “low English proficiency” group, while Estonia ranks 25th and is included in the “high English proficiency” group (EF Education First, 2020).

In both cases, it can be observed that insufficient proficiency in the host country's language significantly slows down adaptation and creates difficulties in understanding job responsibilities and instructions, which in turn can lead to ineffective use of human resources in both countries. In addition, it should be noted that in both countries, there is a problem related to insufficient proficiency in the language of the host country, which can limit career opportunities, especially for managerial-level positions.

Staying on the topic of language, it should be noted that Estonia and Japan have similar problems with the availability of language training for blue-collar foreign workers. In Estonia, there is often no opportunity to study a language during free time, while in Japan, due to numerous voluntary overtime hours, there is a lack of time and energy among blue-collar foreign workers. However, in the opinion of the author of this study and based on the available information in the languages in question, the structure and opportunities for language education in Estonia are organised more effectively. All language learning opportunities are concentrated in Estonia, which makes it possible to keep track of the quality of language teaching. For example, the study showed that learning Japanese abroad, especially with the help of sending organisations, may sometimes be of low quality and may lead to insufficient adaptation of immigrants (Watanabe, 2022).

When we discuss corporate culture and related aspects in both countries, a significant difference in the immigrant experience becomes apparent. One of the critical problems existing in the labour market in Estonia is the lack of readiness of foreign immigrants for informal management structures of organisations and informal communication between

colleagues and management (Kaldur et al., 2019). Problems in this area are especially noticeable among foreign workers, who are often unfamiliar with such a system, and this is especially true for immigrants from third countries. Many bureaucratic aspects related to corporate culture in Estonia fall mainly under the regulation of the European Union. This is what prevents situations that blue-collar foreign workers face in Japan.

Compared to Estonia, Japan has a unique and distinctive system of corporate culture that creates significant barriers for foreign workers who are not previously familiar with it (Franklin, 2017). One of the severe problems faced by blue-collar workers is the violation of their labour rights, which manifests itself in various forms, from underpayment, which is the most common, to cases of violence by employers. In the reports analysing the situation in Estonia, none of the studies identified, or at least recorded, cases of violence by employers. This can be explained, in part, by European Union regulations and strict penalties for such violations. This suggests that despite Japan's long-term efforts to become more open in the labour market context, there is still a significant bias against foreign labour, especially blue-collar foreign workers, who are an essential part of this labour force, and discrimination against some nationalities.

In conclusion, based on the main differences and similarities in immigrants' experiences of integration into the labour markets of both countries, two of the vital themes about supporting the adaptation of blue-collar foreign workers in both countries are pretty similar. An exception is support for immigrant spouses in Japan since limitations associated with a lack of knowledge of the Japanese language make it very difficult to thoroughly analyse all possible sources on a given topic. Based on that, this topic regarding Japan remains open for further research. When it comes to supporting the residence of blue-collar foreign workers, the experiences of foreign workers are essentially the same in both countries.

In the context of the integration practices of blue-collar foreign workers that both countries have and that both countries could share, comprehensive language training for immigrants in Estonia should be highlighted. Unlike Japan, where only limited resources are available for learning the language, Estonia offers a variety of methods for learning Estonian. From mobile apps to language cafes where learning takes place on a hands-on level, immigrants have ample opportunities to acquire language skills. Language cafes are especially worth highlighting, as research shows that blue-collar foreign workers learning Japanese at a basic level are often limited to "classroom language" contexts that do not

always meet the needs of everyday communication and work in specific fields. One study also highlights the lack of opportunities for Japanese language learning in Japan (S. J. Lee & Niiya, 2021). Existing training options are not always effective enough. For example, many immigrants must rely solely on volunteers to learn Japanese, but this is often not enough to meet the demand for language training. This statement can be linked to institutional theory (Massey et al., 1993), which, in our context, suggests that supporting an appropriate infrastructure for the integration of immigrants can improve the overall situation and promote successful integration.

Suppose Japan has no practices for integrating immigrant spouses into the labour market. In that case, paying attention to the program implemented in Estonia called the “spouse program” is recommended. Recently, this program has demonstrated its effectiveness and proven its importance in the integration of immigrants. It is essential to note that this program can effectively complement the SSW2 status policy, which allows foreign workers to bring their families to Japan. The institutional theory also claims this idea, indicating that enhancing and improving institutions related to immigration and logistics will significantly aid the integration of blue-collar foreign workers into the labour market and society.

In turn, Estonia can pay attention to the policies of sending organisations to Japan and their programs to prepare foreign workers for the characteristics of the working culture. Given that many blue-collar foreign workers typically come from countries outside the European Union, it would be helpful to provide them with an understanding of Estonia's bureaucratic system and work culture before their arrival. This approach can significantly shorten the adaptation period for foreign workers to the Estonian work culture and help them understand what they can expect from their work in Estonia and what is expected of them in the workplace. It can also significantly reduce misunderstandings and possible culture shock. In line with neoclassical migration theory, we can confirm that there is a need to reduce the risks associated with displacement and integration, ultimately contributing to successful adaptation (Karpestam & Andersson, 2019).

It is also essential to highlight future changes in TITP policy, namely the recent announcement of a new program intended to replace the current TITP program. This new program is expected to solve many problems, including those highlighted in this study. Among the changes are amendments aimed at improving the mobility of immigrants by allowing them to change jobs after working for at least a year in their original company. It is also noted that the topic of Japanese language proficiency will be an essential aspect of the

new program since foreign workers in this program will be required to pass the relevant Japanese language skills exams and, at a minimum, achieve the lowest level of the Japanese language proficiency test N5. In addition, continued assistance is promised for foreign workers in obtaining SSW1 and SSW2 status, given that with each new status, the need for knowledge of the Japanese language will also increase to levels N4 and N3. (Osaki Exum, 2023)

Conclusion

This bachelor's thesis aimed to identify the challenges foreign blue-collar workers face when integrating into the labour market of Estonia and Japan, as well as to identify practices for assisting integration that both countries could share with each other. As a result, a detailed comparative analysis of the experiences of blue-collar foreign workers in Estonia and Japan was carried out, as well as a comparative analysis of the practices and strategies used in their integration process. In addition, the main recommendations that are worth paying attention to in further developing the integration system of both countries were given.

Proficiency in the host country's language represents one of the fundamental aspects of integrating blue-collar foreign workers into the labour market. Lack of knowledge of Estonian and Japanese languages is a severe barrier in both countries. Still, in Japan, this aspect is a more acute problem due to the linguistic homogeneity of society. In Estonia, where English proficiency in society is higher, the language environment is less problematic for foreign workers. However, both countries face various challenges in providing language education, although the results indicate a more systematic approach to language education on Estonia's part.

Also, among the difficulties of integration into the labour market of both countries, features of corporate culture that pose specific problems were identified. In Estonia, there is an informal management structure and specific communication norms. In Japan, there is a unique corporate culture which is also not always favourable to foreign employees, and there have been cases of labour rights violations and discrimination against foreign workers.

In conclusion, recommendations for improving immigrant integration vary depending on the strengths and challenges of each country. For example, the comprehensive language training programs and spouse integration initiatives implemented in Estonia can be valuable lessons for Japan. On the other hand, Japan may represent a model of foreign worker training programs, which will help foreign workers wishing to enter the Estonian labour market to understand local bureaucratic systems and work culture.

This work also faces limitations due to a lack of knowledge of the Japanese language. This prevents including Japanese language sources, which would likely provide greater insight into the issues and highlight aspects left unexplored in this work. Moreover, due to the limited scope of the bachelor's thesis, it relies heavily on secondary source analysis. However, for a more complete and in-depth study, it is essential to conduct independent research and interviews with blue-collar foreign workers simultaneously in Japan and Estonia. A more detailed analysis of different integration practices for blue-collar foreign workers in the Japanese labour market and possible comparative studies with other countries is recommended for future research. From now on, conducting similar studies will allow us to gain a deeper insight into the problems and most effective practices for the integration of blue-collar foreign workers. This, in turn, contributes to the development of more effective policies and support programs, as well as increased public awareness and international cooperation on this topic.

Resümee

Selle bakalaureusetöö eesmärk on kaardistada sinikraede väljakutsed Eesti ja Jaapani välistöötajate tööturгу lõimumisel ja nende lõimumist toetavad praktikad, mida mõlemad riigid võiksid teineteisega jagada. Eesmärkide saavutamiseks selgitati võrdleva analüüsi abil välja Eesti ja Jaapani sinikraede kogemused välistöötajate tööturгу lõimumisel ja lõimumisprotsessis kasutatavad praktikad ja strateegiad. Lisaks on bakalaureusetöös välja toodud peamised soovitusel, millele võiks mõelda mõlema riigi integratsioonisüsteemi edendamisel.

Vastuvõtva riigi keele oskus on sinikraede välistöötajate tööturule lõimumise üks põhiaspekte. Riigikeele kesine oskus on tõsine takistus mõlema riigi tööturгу lõimumisel. Jaapanis on see probleem teravam ühiskonna keelelise homogeensuse tõttu. Eesti elanikkonna inglise keele oskus on kõrgem ja seepärast on keelekeskkond võõrtöötajate jaoks vähem problemaatiline. Kuigi uurimistöö tulemused on näidanud, et Eestis on keeleõppe lähenemine süsteemsem, seisavad mõlema riigi ees erinevad väljakutsed keeleõppe pakkumisel. Lisaks kirjeldati riigi tööturule lõimumise raskustest spetsiifilisi probleeme tekitavaid töökultuuri tunnuseid. Eestis on mitteformaalne juhtimisstruktuur ja spetsiifilised suhtlusnormid. Jaapanis on ainulaadne töökultuur, mis pole alati soodne välismaiste töötajate jaoks. Samuti on esinenud tööõiguste rikkumisi ja välistöötajate diskrimineerimist ja väärkohtlemist.

Üldjoontes on selge, et soovitud sisserändajate integratsiooni parendamiseks võivad riigiti erineda, sõltuvalt iga riigi tugevustest ja väljakutsetest. Näiteks Eestis rakendatavad põhjalikud keeleõppeprogrammid ja abikaasade integreerimise algatused võivad olla Jaapani jaoks väärtuslikuks õppetunniks. Teisest küljest võib Jaapan olla eeskujuks välistöötajate koolitusprogrammide mudeli loomisel. See aitaks välistöötajatel Eesti tööturule siseneda ja mõista kohalikke bürokraatlikke süsteeme ja töökultuuri.

Ühtlasi peab tunnistama, et autori jaapani keele oskamatus tõttu on uurimisel teatud piirangud. Keeleoskamatus takistab jaapanikeelsete allikate kaasamist, mis annaks tõenäoliselt parema ülevaate lõimumisprobleemidest ja tõstaks esile töös uurimata jäänud aspekte. Piiratud mahu tõttu tugineb see bakalaureusetöö suurel määral sekundaarsele allikaanalüüsile. Täielikuma ja üksikasjalikuma uuringu jaoks on aga hädavajalik teha samaaegselt sõltumatuid uuringuid ja intervjuusid sinikraedest välistööstega Jaapanis ja Eestis. Teema edasiseks uurimiseks on vajalik Jaapani tööturul sinikraedest välistöötajatele suunatud lõimumispraktikate üksikasjalikum analüüs ja võimalikud võrdlusuuringud teiste riikidega. Tulevikus võimaldab sarnaste uuringute läbiviimine saada sügavama ülevaate sinikraede lõimumisprobleemidest ja tõhusamate praktikatest. See omakorda aitab kaasa tõhusamate integratsioonipoliitikate ja toetusprogrammide väljatöötamisele, üldsuse lõimumisest teadlikkuse suurenemisele ning rahvusvahelisele koostööle sel teemal.

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