



## Female Migrant Workers under Patriarchal Society: Case Study in Taiwan

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### ABSTRACT

Through the lens of normative feminism, this article examines the many difficulties experienced by female migrant workers within Taiwan's patriarchal framework. Taiwan's economy has mostly benefited from the labor of migrant workers, most of whom are women. Because of the country's pervasive patriarchal system, these workers frequently face complex gender-based problems. This study explores the overlapping layers of marginalization, exploitation, and discrimination faced by female migrant workers via the lens of normative feminist theory, drawing attention to the many difficulties that these women face as a result of Taiwan's patriarchal norms interacting with the job market, social structures, and cultural prejudices. Utilizing non-participatory observation and internet-based literature research, this article finds that there is a lack of research on gender-based factors that cause these challenges. Though there has been international support from labor protection-focused organizations, there are still limitations and loopholes in the existing legal protections available in Taiwan and sending countries of these workers, causing cases of risks faced by female migrant workers go undocumented at a large number. This study pushes forth the urgency for more robust instruments and government bodies that bind and regulate the treatments and protections towards these female migrant workers.

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### Introduction

Globalization has become one of the biggest driving factors that drives the complexity of community mobility in the world. This is inseparable from the increasing opportunities for people in the world to move around in order to find a place to live and a richer life. Therefore, it is not surprising that this tendency can occur in groups of people from underdeveloped countries and developing countries. Where certain factors such as wages, working hours, opportunities and vacancies are supporting factors for mobility from underdeveloped and developing countries to countries with more rapid economic growth, such as Taiwan for example. For a long time, Taiwan has been a country that has

had quite high demand for foreign domestic workers. To meet the demand for scheduled construction projects, Taiwan approved a law in October 1989 that allowed the entry of foreign workers from a limited number of countries. This can be considered the beginning of Taiwan's official dependence on migrant workers, as previously there were migrant workers who held overstayed tourist visas or ended up becoming undocumented migrants (Deng et al., 2020).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Taiwan's economy grew rapidly, joining other East and Southeast Asian countries like South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore. However, in the late 1980s, Taiwan faced economic challenges such as stronger currency, higher wages, and a labor shortage. These conditions led many Taiwanese companies to move their production to China. As a result, Taiwanese manufacturers started hiring foreign workers, often from neighboring countries and these workers frequently used tourist visas to work illegally in Taiwanese factories (Deng et al., 2020).

In 1989, Taiwan's government introduced its initial labor migration policy through the "Response Measures to the Demand for Human Resources for Fourteen Major Construction Projects". This initiative marked the beginning of Taiwan's efforts to recruit workers from neighboring countries (Deng et al., 2020). Along with various labor migration laws enacted in the following years, this policy was seen as a significant step in aligning Taiwan's labor market with the broader labor system of Southeast Asia (Deng et al., 2020).

During its development, Taiwan grew to become one of the countries with a high level of demand for foreign workers. Therefore, it is not surprising that Taiwan is one of the favorite countries for developing countries in the Asian region. However, this actually creates a serious problem gap, especially for female migrant domestic workers. The group of female workers tends to be one of the groups with the potential to experience very high levels of violence. This happens due to various factors and often attracts the attention of the public and the international community. With the increase in the number of female migrant workers in Taiwan and the increasing number of reports of labor rights violations and cases of abuse by employers reported in the media, human rights organizations have increasingly criticized the government's policies. Although migrant workers are seen as individuals who have the freedom to move between countries, in reality they are considered as workers who are strongly tied to the work environment in the country where they work (Liu, 2000). The organization argues that the government is responsible for ensuring the human rights of migrant workers, including freedom in choosing an employer, flexibility in set terms of employment, and re-regulation of the private recruitment industry and employment agency practices (Ku, 2013).

When looked further upon, this generally occurs due to the large demands of work and the patriarchal cultural system that continues to exist strongly in Taiwanese society. Even though Taiwan has made significant progress in the feminist movement to oppose this, the culture of the patriarchal system still exists in some unaffected layers of society. So how was this culture born? This is inseparable from China's patriarchal history; one of the countries that practices foot binding on its women (Ku, 1988). Three millennia of documented history provide evidence of a gradual decline in the position of Chinese women. Women's voices and participation in large legacies are largely absent; their expression of intelligence, emotion, and vitality is restricted. Apart from limiting women's property rights, patrilineal traditions and dysfunctional marriages also place them below men both at home and in public spaces. Men and women were treated differently in ancient times because of the different economic values connected to them from birth (Ku, 1988). The rise in cases of violence against female migrant workers in Taiwan has attracted global attention and put pressure on the Taiwanese government to resolve the problem. It is not uncommon for the international community to intervene by providing support to communities of domestic female workers in Taiwan to face threats and potential violence. Not only that, responses also often come from countries that have a large number of citizens working in Taiwan.

In previous studies, there are certain gaps that determine the lack of gender-related and women-focused research. Previous research such as “Social Protection for Indonesian Domestic Workers in Taiwan” by Yusup (2023) and “Labor Migration from Southeast Asia to Taiwan: Issues, Public Responses and Future Development” by Deng et al., (2020) highlighted factors that cause labor migration, specifically towards Southeast Asian workers and the public response towards it. These articles have also mentioned the demography of female migrant workers as the majority and the issues they have faced, but lack an in-depth analysis of its gender-related root causes and are focused on analysis towards the population of migrant workers as a whole, regardless of gender, instead. Similar researches such as “Illegal Female Migrant Workers: Victims of Violence to Human Trafficking” by Ramli and Astawa (2020) and “Work-Life Experiences of Female Migrant Workers: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study” by Inayati, Tonapa, Sithichoksakulchai, and Priyanti (2022) both highlighted female migrant workers as a variable and discussed factors that cause female workers to migrate and work in Taiwan as well as the struggles they faced, but failed to address organic or history-rooted factors that cause these struggles, hence pushing the notion that these challenges faced are applicable to all workers of any gender, similar to the previous cluster of researches.

Studies such as “Women Migrants in Southern China and Taiwan: Mobilities, Digital Economies and Emotions” by Zani (2022), “Everyday Vulnerability: Work and Health Experiences of Live-in Migrant Care Workers in Taiwan” by Liang (2021) and “Indonesian Domestic Workers in Taiwan: An International Migration and Workers Rights Perspective” by Komarudin, Pramuji, Handoko and Irawati (2023) also possess a similar research gap, dedicating a larger portion of analysis heavily towards discussing government policies and not organic occurrences of the discrimination felt by female migrant workers. On the other hand, researches such as “The Endeavour of Indonesian Female Migrant Workers in Taiwan in Building Family Resilience” by Gusman (2024) and “Barriers to Health and Social Services for Unaccounted-For Female Migrant Workers and Their Undocumented Children with Precarious Status in Taiwan: An Exploratory Study of Stakeholder Perspectives” by Wang and Lin (2023) both highlighted challenges issues female migrant workers faced, but only specific to motherhood-related and failed to address non-family oriented challenges.

Through these previous studies, it is found that there has not been any research that provides a basic understanding of the roots of the problems originating from the patriarchal cultural system in Taiwan, nor there are researches that link international issues that act as responses to this issue. Thus, the research gap lies in the lack of further understanding of how the patriarchal system has become a serious problem that puts great pressure on the group of female migrant workers in Taiwan. This itself can actually be understood through a normative feminist approach. With this approach, policy makers and pressure parties are able to encourage the use of subjectivity guided by ethics, norms and values to describe the activities of women's groups to provide input for the preparation of humanitarian aid agendas, interventions and the protection of human rights which tends to be sensitive. Through this article, the writer wishes to provide an analysis on the deeply rooted patriarchal system in Taiwan and its influence on the position of the group of female migrant workers in Taiwan, as well as providing a solution by redefining security from a normative feminist approach. Therefore, this article wishes to answer the research question: How does a normative feminist approach resolve the issue of the patriarchal system in Taiwan and its influence on the level of violence experienced by groups of female migrant workers?

## Method and Theory

### *Design*

This study utilizes normative feminism as the principal framework for examining the challenges faced by female migrant workers, highlighting its applicability in tackling problems that are intrinsically associated with gender-based violence. According to Robert Cox's Critical Theory in Hadiwinata (2017), this lens recognizes the subjectivity that is inherently present in some topics, such as conversations about poverty and humanitarian disasters. This method, which is based on ethics, values, and norms, helps to place subjectivity in the framework of a certain political viewpoint. As a result, it is complimentary to theories of international relations by including ethics, standards, and values into frameworks that direct conversations about the defense of human rights, humanitarian action, and aid projects (Hadiwinata, 2017).

To further elaborate this, a qualitative approach with descriptive methods will be utilized. The aforementioned technique is purposed to reveal the complexity encountered by female migrant workers, who often come against power abuse motivated by patriarchal factors. Normative feminism allows for a perceptive analysis of multiple aspects of this problem from a sensitive perspective, particularly clarifying how deeply ingrained patriarchal norms in Taiwan serve as triggers for violence against female migrant workers. According to Menozzi & Hovy (2016), migration is still one of the few ways for women to find decent work and escape poverty, persecution, and violence, despite the fact that the conditions are usually adverse. Despite the numerous unfavorable problems involving laborers, there have been success tales of returnees that have inspired others to immigrate. Undoubtedly, the majority of workers have succeeded in earning a solid livelihood and securing a better future for their families, which has inspired others to accept the dangers associated with working abroad. Said group of migrant workers suffer from dual vulnerability as migrants and as women. The intersection of these two statuses that a female migrant worker possesses makes them the target of gender-specific mistreatments from their employers, whereas cases of mental and physical abuse to women are already frequent as it is.

### *Data Collection*

Data collection for this research takes place in the form of observation and literature review from previous case studies and research. The author of this research has completed one semester of university in Taiwan, allowing direct observation towards Taiwan's society possible. Observational methods allow for the gathering of firsthand information, which enhances the accuracy of data collected compared to self-reported data from surveys or interviews (Bryman, 2012). Specifically, non-participant observation will be used, allowing the observation of natural behaviour from subjects (Foster, 2006). Aside from observation, literature review is another means on evaluating and synthesizing existing research on this topic. Authors utilize internet-based research in the form of journal articles and documents, which facilitates the identification of areas that require further analysis (Benfield & Szlemko, 2006). These methods will collect data over the period of three months from September 2023 to December 2023.

### *Participants and Settings*

Participants of this research are composed of female migrants, specifically from Southeast Asia, who have come to Taiwan to be workers in different households. Female migrant workers may be of workers observed directly around authors or cases that have been published online through articles or news sites. One of these include publication by a Taiwanese BBC journalist, Cindy Sui, who pursued a set of sexual abuse cases towards female migrant workers. Cases include videos of attacks and harassment done by employers to these workers from 2016, which are just mere numbers of reported cases, excluding unreported ones.

## Result and Discussion

### *Labor Migration and Female Migrant Workers in Taiwan*

Labor migration has become a rising phenomenon in various countries. Most migrants engage in jobs involving labor-intensive agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and household tasks. The UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda views migration as a crucial aspect of development policy, especially target 10.7 which pushes forth the need for governments to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” (International Labour Organization, 2021). Furthermore, target 8.8 also stresses the need to “protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment” (International Labour Organization, 2021). For host or destination countries, contributions of migrant workers are viewed beneficial for fulfilling labor shortages and upholding the social security system. Meanwhile, in their origin countries, remittances that are received by migrant workers increase national savings and in general promote economic well-being. The International Labor Organization (ILO) stated that the global estimate for the number of international migrants per 2019 reach up to 272 million people, and 169 million of them are migrants that work in host countries (International Labour Organization, 2021). Out of this population, about 70 million of them are women, making up for 41.5 percent of the total number of migrant workers (International Labour Organization, 2021). This lower representation of women in the population of international migrant workers is subject to two reasons, which include the under-representation of women among international migrants of working age and that women migrants possess lower labor force participation than men among these international migrant workers. The aforementioned appeal of migrating to another country to seek job opportunities are proven by the large contrast between all workers and migrant workers in high-income countries like Taiwan, accounting for 18 percent of all workers but 67.4 percent of international migrant workers globally (International Labour Organization, 2021).

However, within these benefits lie various challenges that migrant workers, particularly females, have to face in their respective destination countries. By 2009, the population of female migrant workers in Taiwan reached 175,000 people, with the majority of them coming from Indonesia at 69 percent of the total number of migrant workers. This is followed by Vietnam at 17 percent and 13 percent from the Philippines (Fuchs, 2011). With this growing population of female migrant workers, there have been reports of discrimination and violence towards these workers during their migration in Taiwan. The Taoyuan City Serve the People Association, funded by the German Institute Taipei, started a one-year project focused on gender mainstreaming of foreign migrant workers in Taiwan. It was found that about 16 percent of respondents in the research admitted to experiencing gender-based violence. This indicates that 1 in 6 female migrant workers have fallen victim to gender-based violence incidents, where 90 percent of these incidents occur to domestic workers (Nianyi, 2023). Researcher Lin Yongpei from the Taoyuan City Serve the People Association collected a sample of 83 victims that experienced these violations. Half of the perpetrators were recipients of the care and service provided by the female migrant workers themselves, and 28 percent were their own employers (Nianyi, 2023). The forms of harassment are composed of different types, such as inappropriate physical contact, electronic, visual or verbal harassment, explicit sexual demands, crossing boundaries of the worker’s personal space, and force on displaying nudity or explicit content. 31 percent of the victims admitted to experiencing two or more forms of harassment simultaneously (Nianyi, 2023). It was observed that secondary and prolonged harm to these workers may be caused by the current judicial system that lacked cultural sensitivity and familiarity identical to the circumstances faced by the female migrant workers.



### ***Patriarchal System and Culture of Taiwan***

Taiwan had implemented various measures to ensure their position as a labor-receiving country. In reaction to these allegations, the Taiwanese government took a number of actions. The government wants to ensure that foreign workers in Taiwan are treated with "fairness and justice" and "equal living rights for all," as stated in the Measures for Protecting Rights of Foreign Workers (Deng et al., 2020). Simultaneously, a great deal of work was done by nongovernmental organizations to support labor migrants in Taiwan in speaking out and enhancing their social standing in their host nation. To rephrase its connection to one of their biggest labor providing country, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by the Indonesia Economic and Trade Office (IETO) in Taipei and the Taipei Economic and Trade Office (TETO) in Jakarta to enable the recruitment, placement, and protection of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. In Taipei, Indonesian Manpower Minister M. Hanif Dhakiri and Taiwanese Manpower Minister Hsu Ming Chun witnessed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by IETO Chief Didi Sumedi and TETO Chief John C. Chen. Moreover, an organization founded by youth called One-Forty in 2015. The fact that every single one of the forty persons who currently reside in Taiwan is a migrant worker is the source of this moniker. Their goal was to assist these folks in establishing "a migrant workers' school in Taiwan." In the future, this group hopes to enable migrant workers to return to their home countries as professionals or entrepreneurs by offering them workshops, training, professional skills, and local social contacts.

Despite these efforts, complications still do exist. The Employment Service Act, Chapter 5, which implements foreign labor policies, divides foreign workers into two hierarchical categories (Employment Service Act, 2023). While foreign nationals employed in white-collar jobs are seen as professionals, migrant workers employed in blue-collar jobs are stigmatized and perceived as unskilled. Migrant laborers are viewed by the government as a means of combating labor shortages within the workforce. The goal of the Taiwan Foreign Labor Policy, according to the Bureau of Employment and Vocational Training website, is "To fulfill the economic and social needs of the country" (Fuchs, 2011). This implies that migrant labor immigration is not desired; rather, it is viewed as a means of advancing Taiwan's industrial and economic growth. For instance, workers' work permits and visas are tied to their employers, and they are unable to change jobs without the consent of their original employer. Therefore, the goal of labor regulations is to keep migrant workers from becoming a social issue. Human rights and the welfare of migrants are disregarded by the legislation. They also fail to consider the special circumstances faced by female migrants and lack a gender perspective.

In response to criticism of its patriarchal system in the workplace, Taiwan passed the "Gender Equality in Employment Act," which attempts to prevent discrimination based on gender against all workers, including migrant female domestic workers. However, it can be difficult to effectively enforce these laws in private homes where domestic workers are employed. Cases of abuse or exploitation against female migrant domestic workers have been documented in Taiwan and other parts of the world, despite the existence of legislative protections. The spotlight lies on why this measure is still proven to not be fully effective in protecting female migrant workers, especially considering the nature of domestic work that could further emphasize the female migrant workers' vulnerabilities. The status of these female migrant domestic workers are sometimes ambiguous; where it intercepts the concept of work in the capitalist system. Eviota (1992) claims it is defined to be a production process that contributes to capital accumulation and exchange. Housework is mainly concerned with the process of reproduction, which is essential to the survival of the family, society, and does not directly lead to the process of accumulation and exchange (Cheng, 1996). Close proximity between employers and employees in household settings obscures their relationship, allowing for an unequal power dynamic that has a significant negative psychological impact on the

lives of these women. Within the confinement, until domestic workers are able and ready to leave the abusive circumstances, the abuses that occur within the house remain hidden. Furthermore, the seclusion of the home frequently prevents women from creating a network of support.

Indeed, Taiwan has the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA) that exists to moderate violence behind closed doors of a home, but are they applicable for these female migrant workers? Domestic workers who allege they have been abused by family members under the Taiwan Domestic Workers Protection Act (DVPA) must fulfill the standards outlined in Articles 2 and 3 of the Act. The former defines violent behaviors including physical injury and psychological threats as abusive acts. In the latter case, family members are defined as intimately related individuals and kin. Victims cannot file a lawsuit under this law or apply for assistance from local government service programs if these conditions are not satisfied. Pan and Yang (2012) implied that live-in domestic workers provide extremely personal services to families, but they are never considered family members and are not covered by the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA). Feminist researchers and practitioners in Taiwan have paid little attention to the mistreatment of migrant domestic workers, despite advocating for the DVPA's passage in the late 1990s. Furthermore, feminist scholars and women's group activists created the domestic violence prevention system and service program based on the feminist theory of gender-based power imbalances, or "gender politics."

The lack of legal protection, denial of access to the redress system, inadequate legal infrastructure, transfer of power from the state to private individuals, intrusive immigration regulations, and the limited role of the NGO community make migrant women domestic workers in Taiwan more fragile. Although migrant workers in Taiwan are able to use the official claims method, the legal system has not been updated or tailored to their needs. As long as no legal action has been taken, employers have the authority to invalidate migrant workers' work permits, terminate their contracts without providing notice, and have the workers return home. Nonetheless, the governments of Taiwan and Singapore continue to enact invasive immigration laws that discriminate against women. For instance, every six months, migrant women employed as domestic helpers in both countries are required to take a pregnancy test; if detected pregnant, they risk being deported right away (Cheng, 1996).

Alongside the efforts of Taiwan itself, international organizations have been putting efforts into maintaining the well-being of this particular labor group. International organizations such as Amnesty International, International Labour Organization, Migrant Rights International, United Nations Agencies like UN Women and UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have advocated and addressed labor issues that included protection of migrant workers and prevention of female migrant workers. However, these measures are still proven to not be effective as it does not specifically target Taiwan's patriarchal culture and the correlation between its high prevalence of mistreatment towards their foreign female labor.

### ***Experiences of Female Migrant Workers under the Patriarchal System of Taiwan***

There have been identifiable links between societal customs that place caregiving and traditionally feminine domestic responsibilities on female workers, increasing the possibility that these workers will be placed in unsupervised household settings. In 1992, migrant women were granted legal entry as domestic helpers and caregivers for the elderly, very young, and chronically sick (Loveband, 2004). Cheng (1996) stated that migrant women tend to be concentrated in certain positions, such as domestic services, entertainment industry and health care services, and she referred to Heyzer & Wee (1994) that these occupations put women vulnerable to violence of various kinds as a result of the context of their labor (Cheng, 1996). Its ambiguous character also contributes to the

fact that housework is not considered labor. Paid housework has a clear definition, whereas other employment have defined job duties, responsibilities, and working hours. Historically, women have been responsible for nearly every aspect of household management, from cooking and cleaning to tending to the mental and physical needs of family members. Cheng (1996) implies that, when migrant women work as domestic helpers, they typically do it in private, away from prying eyes. They are not regarded as workers and are therefore not entitled to the protection of the labor legislation because of the low social worth and status of their occupation (Noriel, 1993). Households are not subject to labor law regulations, meaning they are not subject to workplace regulations. Because of this, these migrant women's migration experiences differ significantly from those of migrant workers who are men. Cases of sexual abuse towards female migrant domestic workers by male members of the employers family in Taiwan is still frequent. A Taiwanese BBC journalist, Cindy Sui, pursued a set of sexual abuse cases towards female migrant workers. In 2016, a video of an Indonesian female migrant worker who got intimately violated by her employer was uploaded to YouTube for some while before being taken down. The maid's employer was seen attacking her maid, even though the woman had begged him to stop the action and tried to push him away. Another case pursued was a 22 year old woman, referred to as Esti, who was numerously violated sexually by her employer's brother from the restaurant she worked at (BBC News Indonesia, 2017; L. Huang, 2017). These were just two out of thousands of reported cases of exploitations, unreported cases excluded.

Frictions within the family could occur due to alterations to the traditional family customs that happens by the time a live-in domestic worker enters a home. This explains the reality of how the presence of another feminine figure in the household has the potential to threaten the womanhood and motherhood of a woman employer in a Taiwanese household. The dynamics of a typical Taiwanese family requires women to embrace values consisting of endurance and submission to maintain family harmony and, moreover, expects them to identity with family by acting as self-sacrificing mothers, wives, and daughters (Pan & Yang, 2012). Because migrant women domestic workers bring their own customs to the home, there can be power disputes between employers and employees regarding tasks and household administration. Beyond simple housework, this tension has an impact on close family ties. The way that female employers view and handle the gender relations between their spouses and domestic staff varies. The growing link between domestic workers and their children presents obstacles for them as they adjust to the changing dynamics between them. The changing dynamics between family members and domestic workers provide challenges for female employers.

There are some cases where the woman in the family of the perpetrator knows and chooses to turn a blind eye, or worse, start physically abusing the workers. A research report in 'Outsiders in the Family: Abuse of Migrant Domestic Workers' inserted primary data gathered from interviews with twelve live-in domestic workers (Pan & Yang, 2012). Omar, a 36 year old married Indonesian woman with two children suffers from sexual assaults by her employer's father, whereas Omar slept on the floor next to their employer's parents in the scenario that was described, often being harassed sexually. They shared a bedroom. Even after complaining about the state of affairs, the employer's wife, who was aware of her husband's improper behavior toward Omar, chose to act jealously rather than confront the matter. The employer's mother started to call her dirty names, looked for the smallest faults then beat her for it afterwards. Adding on to this, patriarchy protrudes in how the only thing that female employers could do in reaction to their husbands' sexual attacks on migrant domestic workers was to use their jealousy and rage as fuel for physical violence against these workers (Pan & Yang, 2012). Huang & Yeoh (2007) stated that women commit the majority of physical abuse cases, while men commit the majority of sexual abuse cases, this opinion was backed by data research on Singaporean abuse towards migrant workers. This argument challenged presumptions about links between gender oppression at home and the patriarchy, where it is commonly



presumed that men serve as the major perpetrator of the violence against these female migrant workers (Huang & Yeoh, 2007).

Despite the abuse going on, female migrant workers still had to sustain their job in order to meet ends for their family back home. These women have only limited resources in taking the matters to justice, and doing so just puts them at a disadvantage, the prevalence of reported exploitations remains high with steady demand of female migrant labor in Taiwan. The cases reported became known to the media from the home countries and gained a large amount of public sympathy. As an example, in Indonesia, one of the countries that send out the largest amount of female migrant workers, this raised a public outcry and sympathy towards the suffering of migrants, which then pushed the Indonesian government for stronger measures to protect their citizens overseas. Since at least the early 1980s, the Indonesian government has taken numerous steps to protect its citizens who wish to work abroad as one of the leading labor-sending nations in Asia. More protection for Indonesian migrant workers abroad was made possible by the 1984 Medan Agreement with Malaysia and subsequent bilateral agreements with the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Taiwan, and five other nations. The Indonesian government, which is a labor-sending state, has recently attempted to assume greater responsibility for migrant workers, including pre-departure, on-site employment, and the stage of return home (Koesrianti, 2018). It remains to be seen if tighter collaboration between NGOs and governments could improve the protection of migrant workers from Southeast Asia to adjacent countries (Deng et al., 2020).

### ***Addressing the Rights and Well-Being of Female Migrant Workers in Taiwan: Challenges and Solutions***

There are worries over the rights and well-being of women workers because the current legal safeguards and remedies for female migrant workers in Taiwan have encountered difficulties and flaws. Among the shortcomings and problems with the earlier versions of the solutions, such as vulnerability to abuse, inadequate worker protections, limited legal protections, and lack of awareness of rights. Starting with the first point—vulnerability to abuse, there have been multiple documented incidences of physical and sexual abuse of migrant workers who are female, especially domestic workers. People are less likely to look for work in Taiwan as a result of these infringements of workers' rights, which could affect vital industries that depend on migrant labor (Deng et al., 2020). The second point, inadequate worker protections. Migrant workers may be discouraged from pursuing employment in Taiwan due to the belief that the government does not offer sufficient worker protections. This has sparked worries about the possible long-term expenses of ignoring migrant workers' requirements across a range of industries (Deng et al., 2020).

The third point is limited legal protections. Despite the existence of laws prohibiting job termination on the grounds of pregnancy or marriage, there are still protection gaps, especially for domestic workers. There are differences in the legal protections afforded to migrant industrial workers and migrant domestic workers due to the application of Taiwan's Labour Standards Law to the former but not the latter (Asian Migrant Centre, 2015). And then the last point, the lack of awareness of rights. Taiwanese migrant women are particularly vulnerable, especially in cases of domestic abuse, because they frequently lack awareness of their rights. When faced with challenges, this ignorance makes it more difficult for them to ask for assistance and safety (Freedom United, 2019). These shortcomings show that comprehensive and practical solutions are required to address the rights, welfare, and social integration of Taiwan's female migrant workers. In order to guarantee the safety and dignity of all migrant workers, especially women, it is imperative that legislative protections be strengthened, working conditions be improved, and rights knowledge be increased.

Taiwan's legal safeguards for female migrant workers are influenced by normative feminism, which advocates for gender equality and women's rights. These safeguards

include steps to prevent job termination due to pregnancy or marriage, as well as initiatives to address the specific issues experienced by female migrant workers, such as maternity leave and campaigning for better working conditions. There are, nevertheless, gaps in protection, particularly for domestic workers, who are mostly women and are subject to bad working conditions and violence. The influence of normative feminism is visible in ongoing efforts in Taiwan to promote the rights and well-being of female migrant workers, as well as campaigning for gender-sensitive and gender-responsive social protection measures (Misra et al., 2022). Despite these efforts, sustained attention and assistance are required to ensure that these legal protections are effectively implemented and to address the remaining issues faced by female migrant workers in Taiwan.

The international community provides various forms of intervention and support to women migrant workers in Taiwan, especially from Southeast Asia. Some forms of support include stronger worker protections, access to health and social services, and a protection network through a dedicated hotline for foreign workers. However, there are still barriers such as language proficiency, time flexibility, and negative perceptions from local authorities. The success of these interventions and support varies depending on factors such as marital status, income, and availability of companions. Interventions and support involve various parties, including the Taiwanese government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international institutions. These efforts cover aspects of legal protection, education and information, and welfare support. In the context of legal protection, interactions between the Taiwanese government and international organizations can result in policy changes that better protect the rights of women migrant workers. Measures such as increased legal protection, including fair work rules and safeguards against harassment or discrimination, are integral to such efforts. In addition, education and information are an important focus in providing pre-departure training to give an understanding of the rights of women migrant workers (Babbitt et al., 2023). Information on the law and their rights in Taiwan is also provided as a preventive measure (Babbitt et al., 2023).

In supporting the well-being of women migrant workers, access to adequate health services and safe housing facilities are prioritized. International organizations play a key role in human rights advocacy, monitoring policy implementation, and providing mechanisms to report violations of women migrant workers' rights. The success of these interventions depends on policy implementation by the Taiwanese government, private sector involvement, and public awareness. Factors such as culture, language, and economic conditions can affect the effectiveness of the intervention. Cultural constraints or indifference from certain parties can be barriers, while law enforcement challenges and the fear of women migrant workers reporting violations require close collaboration between the government, international organizations, and NGOs. Nonetheless, more effective policies and further research are needed to improve access to health and protection services for women migrant workers in Taiwan.

The short-term impact of the issue of rights violations and abuse against women migrant workers in Taiwan can be seen in the mental and physical stress experienced by such workers. They may face unsafe and adverse working conditions, with the risk of physical and sexual harassment that can have a direct impact on their well-being. In addition, female migrant workers who feel vulnerable to abuse may experience emotional and psychological distress. In the long run, female migrant workers' dissatisfaction and insecurity may lead to a decreased interest in working in Taiwan. The potential for workers to refuse to work in the country could result in labor shortages in certain industries that rely heavily on migrant workers. This could trigger negative economic impacts, hampering Taiwan's economic growth and development.

Furthermore, refusal to work in Taiwan by female migrant workers can create a negative image for the country in the eyes of the international community. Red flags on human rights and worker protection issues can create distrust of Taiwan's labor policies. This impact can harm Taiwan's reputation as a migrant work destination, limit

employment opportunities for migrant workers, and discourage foreign investment. Therefore, resolving these issues is not only important for the well-being of individual women migrant workers but also for the sustainability of Taiwan's overall economic growth and reputation.

In addition, long-term impacts also include social impacts within Taiwanese society. The emergence of women migrant workers' rights issues may trigger discussions and debates at the local level, raising awareness of the importance of protecting their rights. This can be a trigger for social change and increased public awareness of gender inequality and human rights issues. Therefore, solving this problem is not only important for the well-being of individual women migrant workers but also for the sustainability of Taiwan's overall economic growth and reputation.

## Conclusion

Since the 1970s, Taiwan has had a significant demand for foreign domestic workers. Taiwan passed a law allowing foreign workers to enter the country in October 1989 in order to meet the demand for scheduled construction projects. This can be seen as the official start of Taiwan's reliance on migrant labor. Taiwan became one of the nations with the highest demand for foreign laborers as it developed. But in reality, this leaves a significant problem gap, particularly for migrant women employed as domestic help. One of the groups most likely to encounter extremely high levels of violence is the group of female employees. The strong patriarchal cultural system that still permeates Taiwanese society and the high demands of work are usually to blame for this. The international community frequently steps in to support Taiwanese communities of domestic female workers who are threatened or may face violence.

The "Gender Equality in Employment Act," which Taiwan passed in response to criticism of its patriarchal labor system, aims to stop gender discrimination against all workers, including migrant female domestic workers. Effectively enforcing these regulations in private residences where domestic workers are engaged can provide challenges. The use of this study method highlights the difficulties faced by migratory women, who frequently deal with abuses of power that stem from patriarchal influences. Normative feminism makes it possible to analyze this issue sensitively and perceptively from many angles. It especially makes clear how deeply rooted patriarchal norms in Taiwan act as catalysts for violence against migrant workers who are women.

Being one of the major labor-sending countries in Asia, the Indonesian government has adopted several measures to protect its nationals who want to work abroad, at least since the early 1980s. The 1984 Medan Agreement with Malaysia and subsequent bilateral agreements with the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Taiwan, and five other countries made more protection for Indonesian migrant workers overseas possible. The short-term effects of the problem of abuse and rights breaches against female migrant workers in Taiwan are evident in the physical and mental strain that these workers endure. Over time, the unhappiness and lack of security experienced by female migrant workers could cause them to lose interest in working in Taiwan. There may be a labor shortage in some businesses that significantly depend on migrant labor if employees decide not to work in the nation. In addition, if female migrant workers choose not to work in Taiwan, it could harm Taiwan's reputation internationally.

The early iterations of the solutions had a number of drawbacks and issues, including a lack of awareness of rights, a vulnerability to abuse, insufficient worker protections, and restricted legal protections. Normative feminism is evident in the continuous campaigns in Taiwan for gender-responsive and gender-sensitive social protection policies, as well as in the attempts to advance the rights and welfare of female migrant workers. The international community offers women migrant workers in Taiwan, particularly those from Southeast Asia, a variety of types of intervention and assistance. A few variables that affect the effectiveness of these interventions and support are

companion availability, income, and marital status. Several recommendations that can be suggested as implications from this study include:

- More sensible legislation and additional study are required. In order to map the actual situation in the field, it would be helpful for future study on the protection of the rights of foreign women workers in Taiwan to be able to use direct data gathering methods, such as questionnaires and interviews.
- Application of binding contracts between parties of sending and receiving countries. Labor-sending countries and destination countries need to regulate placement fees and mechanisms that robustly and legally bind these parties, such as the utilization of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and similar instruments.
- Stricter penalties on illegal employers and increased support towards law enforcement agencies in distinguishing undocumented workers and victims of violations or harassments between workers and their care recipients or employers. In this way, the number of undocumented workers and cases of violence may be diminished and there is a sense of safety felt within workers who may be under threat or fear of losing income or jobs to report these cases.
- Knowledge transfer on government and subsidiary bodies' policies in protecting female migrant workers. Given that the portion of migrant workers in high-income countries like Taiwan are largely contrasted compared to the total population of workers, similar high-income countries can exchange insight on the importance of female migrant workers protection and input them into their policies and vice versa.

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