

Strategic Analysis of Influx of Foreign Workers in Malaysia

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Abstract

Foreign workers play a crucial role in filling labor gaps and supporting the workforce of this country for years. Nevertheless, uncontrolled foreign workers' influx can result in various challenges. This paper primarily focuses on the Malaysian Ministry of Human Resources (MoHR) effort to address the influx of foreign workers and its impact on the labor market. The study begins with external and internal analyses of the MoHR, utilizing the PEST analysis and a custom-made internal audit. Secondary sources and interviews with MoHR staff provide insights for the analysis. The SWOT matrix is used to present the findings and the TOWS Matrix guides the development of alternative recommendations. Through adoption of BOS, this paper proposes a set of strategic recommendations based on the strategic analyses using strategic management tools and techniques. These recommendations aim to address the challenges posed by foreign worker influx and improve the MoHR's management capabilities.

Keywords: Foreign Workers, Migrant, Human Resource, Strategic Analysis, Government, Labor Market

INTRODUCTION

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The definition of a foreign worker might vary depending on the focus of scholars and studies, but a foreign worker is someone who works outside of their country of citizenship or so-called migrant workers that migrate to the country for the participation of the labor force. A group of foreign nationals who are legally permitted to work in a nation where they have been formally recruited are referred to as foreign workers (Omar et al., 2017). A foreign worker in this study is someone who is traveling from outside the country and has a valid visa to work in a country. Foreign workers are those who work abroad without having the advantages of citizenship in the host nation and without having any plans to permanently relocate there. Some are hired to supply talents on a contract basis that the host country needs or to temporarily boost the workforce of the host nation. Others are hired directly by a private business that may have to verify that it is unable to locate employees within the local populace. As their own population refuses to do certain jobs, host nations may also import foreign labor to work for a certain industry or services.

Furthermore, MoHR is the ministry that is associated with the development and quality of national talents including the foreign workers. Serving as the top decision-making body for labor-related issues, the ministry collaborates with governmental organizations, employers' groups, labor unions, and other stakeholders to create policies that adapt to the changing labor market demands. The areas covered by the ministry's

portfolio include labor laws, workplace safety and health, employment services, industrial relations, and workforce development. Under the MoHR, there are 9 departments and 5 agencies responsible for controlling and regulating human resource policies and decisions. These departments include the Department of Labor Peninsular Malaysia, Department of Labor Sabah, Department of Labor Sarawak, Department of Trade Union Affairs, Department of Skills Development, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial Courts of Malaysia, Manpower Department, and Department of Occupational Safety and Health. Additionally, the MoHR oversees several agencies, such as Skills Development Funds Corporation, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, Human Resource Development Fund, Social Security Organisation, and Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad.

Although foreign workers contributed significantly to the development of this nation, nonetheless, MoHR confronted with numerous issues and challenges and being criticized by the public in ways how the ministry and its related agencies handling the foreign workers issues and well being. With regards to foreign workers, the increasing number of them is alarming; creating fuss and discomfort among local people. Influx of foreign workers poses several key challenges politically, economically, and socially. The challenges related to influx of foreign workers in Malaysia is discussed in the following section.

CHALLENGES RELATED TO INFLUX OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia's economic structure, which has changed from a more capital-intensive model to a more labor-intensive model that is tilted towards low- and semi-skilled workers, can be partly blamed for the country's heavy reliance on foreign labor where two developments in Malaysia's two major economic sectors, the services, and industrial sectors, serve as indicators of this. This is hardly shocking considering the government's intended assistance role in the welfare of immigrants from the beginning. As a result, notwithstanding the current efforts made by many parties aid is deemed to be insufficient without a systematic strategy, and many foreign workers, especially those hiding out for fear of prosecution and those employed in remote fields like the plantation, manufacturing, and domestic work, are certain to be left behind (Muhamad Noor et al., 2020). When the population of the host country is racially and culturally homogeneous and the culture and look of the foreign employees are noticeably

different, or when economic downturns amplify the propensity to place blame on others, large influxes of foreign workers may incite xenophobia.

The World Bank Group (2020) stated that the Department of Statistics of Malaysia (DOSM), estimates that there were 1.9 million migrant workers in 2021 and that number increased to 2.1 million in June 2022 across all economic sectors. As stated despite the high unemployment rate of 690,000, especially among youth, employers in the 3D sectors which are dirty, difficult, and dangerous, face extremely difficult in getting the manpower they need because locals are not interested in taking up such jobs. In Malaysia, the term "foreign worker" specifically implies a foreigner doing low-skilled work because foreign labor is concentrated in low-skilled occupations that a minority of the locals does not want to participate in. Plus, as being stated in a report by the World Bank Group, there were 2.96 million to 3.26 million foreign employees in Malaysia overall in 2017. Of them, 1.23 million to 1.46 million were thought to be irregular foreign workers (Knowledge and Research World Bank Group, 2020).

Due to its rapid and consistent economic growth and greater rate of old-age dependency, Malaysia has become a draw for foreign workers from nearby low-income countries. Labour Force Surveys (LFS) conducted by DOSM show that the percentage of the overall labor force made up by foreign workers has been hovering around 15% in recent years. Although the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members have pledged to make it easier for high-skilled workers to move around, the majority of foreign workers in Malaysia tend to be low-skilled, live in Sabah, Selangor, and Johor, and work in labor-intensive industries like manufacturing, construction, plantations, agriculture, and domestic help. Direct macroeconomic effects result from this foreign labor engagement. As an immediate effect, low-skilled foreign workers fill labor shortages in these sectors. A continued influx of foreign workers in the labor market supports the competitiveness of labor-intensive Malaysian goods by containing wage costs for low-skilled labor. Consequently, low-skilled foreign workers complement the majority of Malaysian workers and contribute to creating jobs for higher-skilled Malaysian natives, enabling Malaysians to specialize and increase their wage premiums. Foreign workers typically have lower levels of education than the average Malaysian and tend to engage in manual, elementary occupations. Low-skilled foreign workers fill labor shortages in certain industries right away. By keeping the cost of low-skilled labor down, an ongoing infusion of foreign workers into the labor market helps Malaysian goods that require a lot of labor to be competitive. Therefore, low-skilled foreign

workers complement the bulk of Malaysian employees and help to provide positions for native Malaysians with higher levels of education, allowing Malaysians to specialize and earn more money. Generally speaking, foreign employees are less educated than the average Malaysian and work in laborious, simple jobs. They anticipate making at least the minimum wage, which was raised in January 2019 to RM1,100 per month (Knowledge and Research World Bank Group, 2020).

Human Capital and Digitalization

The challenges could also be seen in terms of human capital of the ministry in charge where the organization has to face in the aspect of budgeting which is insufficient financial allocation where there is a limitation in implementation of the programs, events or even campaign for the foreign workers apprehended activities. It has been said that it is hard to seek improvement in organization for certain activities or strategies as there are financial restraints from the ministry. In 2015, the deputy home minister, Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, disclosed that up to RM29 million had been spent on "illegal immigrants" in terms of the cost of food in detention facilities as well as the cost of raids, investigations, and repatriations where there were social implications (Knowledge and Research World Bank Group, 2020). In addition, this could also be looked at by Malaysia social security where the government is unable to provide good social security to foreign workers.

In this context, the digitalization for foreign workers is one of the key challenges that organization should implement and improvise as these days as people are relying on the gadget and software to makes things much easier than past decade methods, which is keeping filing in a paper or document that could consume time in findings and keeping them. The low usage of digitalization in the ministry or department is where there is no specific system in recording data for the supposed organization that could be accessed by the main ministry for easy access and fast information from the department in charge of managing the foreign workers. There is a lot of illegal migrant workers that does not comply to a supposed area they should work for as there is certain reason such as enter without documents or appropriate documents, abuse recruitment process, abuse Visit Pass (Temporary Employment) or called as VP(TE) terms and conditions, exploited by employers and Overstay VP(TE). Knowledge and Research World Bank Group (2022) reported that, approximately 15% of the initial applications for new jobs and renewals were turned down by the Department of Labor between January and

September 2018. This is largely due to mistakes made by the employers, who often have a poor track record of hiring foreign workers and providing facilities that are out of compliance with regulations.

Ineffective Management and Procedures in the Public Sector

In the case of the influx of foreign workers in Malaysia the challenges are ineffective management in handling the migrant workers. An excellent management has great communication between employer and agency that handles the foreign workers in terms of information given by the agency, or any data given. In facing the challenges of catering the influx of the foreign workers in Malaysia, there is a limitation that the government must encounter which is in the management of the supposed government that handles the foreign workers as there are always the 'agents' that try to meddle in the integrity of the workers in the department.

This has been a problem for the ministry to get exact data and information about the migrant workers as there are 'third parties' that join hands in the interruption of getting the valid data of the foreign workers in Malaysia. This could also coexist in the management where there are also agencies in charge within the partnership of private and public sector that involve in malpractice by abusing their entrusted power for private gain of themselves. This is also supported by the Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, where these "agents" ' who act as middlemen are to blame for the country's inefficient migrant labor management procedures which leads to the influx of foreign workers that is illegal. The corruption and bribes must be stopped or taken into action in the foreign management system as it gives consequences not only to the people but also the country's economy (Free Malaysia Today, 2022).

In addition, there is a high bureaucracy that should be faced by the employers in recruiting the foreign workers as there are too many procedures and steps that should be taken by them in the process of validation of legal foreign workers pass. This would lead to the employers getting the illegal foreign workers and making use of them to satisfy their needs while giving a 'helpful' hand for the workers. Along with enhancing national security by eliminating corruption and enhancing economic security by lowering unnecessary expenditures for employers, protecting migrant workers from abuse can easily coexist. There are in fact some ethical hiring procedures in place in Malaysia and other worker-source nations. These need to be emphasized and expanded

in ways that are both economically and practically viable. The rule of law and worker welfare should take precedence during the processes for regularizing irregular workers, where corruption should be eradicated and pointless middlemen between companies and employees eliminated (Hall, 2023).

Regulating Labor Markets and Employment Trends

The regulation of labor markets becomes crucial in ensuring a balance between meeting the demands of employers while safeguarding the rights and interests of local and foreign workers alike. Varying external conditions lead to fluctuation in labor migration patterns and hence, placing additional pressure on the MoHR to adapt policies and strategies in to effectively manage foreign workers inflow. Below are the reasons why it is challenging for MoHR to regulate labor markets and employment trends.

First, the influx of foreign workers is mainly uncontrollable due to the preference of employers to hire migrant labor more than the local labor. The dependence on foreign labor, which makes up 15% of the labor supply in the country, is recognised due to employers favoring unskilled foreign workers over local talents mainly in the 3D sectors like construction and manufacturing (DOSM, 2023). These foreign workers are willing to accept lower wages and work under poor conditions, thus providing businesses with cost advantages and increased productivity (Al Masud, 2020; Devadason, 2021). However, this practice of hiring cheaper foreign labor has hindered Malaysia's transition to a high-income developed economy, as firms prioritize labor cost savings overpaying reasonable wages despite increased productivity (Wei et al., 2018). Moreover, the concentration of foreign workers in certain sectors has created fierce job competition, leading to job displacements, negligence of employee benefits, and overcrowding in the labor market, with some foreign workers failing to secure employment opportunities (MIDEQ, 2021). The need to manage employment regulations for diverse employees further complicates the process and if foreign workers quit after a short period, it may not yield desirable returns for employers.

Second, technological advancement brings numerous benefits but also raises concerns in the labor markets as many automated and routine jobs are being replaced by sophisticated technologies, hence leading to job loss in certain industries. This displacement of human capital limits job opportunities and reskilling options for those

in affected industries. This potentially leads to unemployment and challenges in finding suitable employment for some local and foreign workers. While automation and efficiency gains can increase productivity and cost savings for employers, short-term disruptions may occur as labor markets adjust (Novakova, 2020). The shift towards more technology-driven jobs increases the demand for higher-skilled workers in fields like data analysis, programming, artificial intelligence, and robotics (Wei et al, 2018). Continuous learning and reskilling are crucial for workers to remain competitive in the evolving job market. However, income inequality may widen as technological benefits primarily accrue to certain sectors or individuals. Therefore, MoHR should pay attention to policy interventions to address potential inequalities and support displaced workers during this transition.

Third, MoHR faces challenges in managing the influx of foreign workers due to interference from various parties, such as the Ministry of Economy and other industry associations, who advocate for more foreign workers to achieve GDP growth targets (Lai, 2023; The Star, 2023). Additionally, new requirements for hiring foreign employees have been implemented in January 2023 to provide better protection against all types of harassment, discrimination, and particularly human trafficking and forced labor. However, it is found that the problem lies on the third party, which is the recruitment and employment agencies. Some of these agencies tend to exploit foreign workers by taking commission from their hourly wages and at the same time, charging employers excessively for their services. Moreover, the government-to-government (G2G) agreements have been criticized for lacking transparency and therefore allowing room for monopolization in the migration industry (Aun & Pereira, 2023). Political intervention has been recognized as its cause where political parties and senior politicians are reportedly involved in the high-level decision-making process and selection of companies to serve as few exclusively licensed immigration recruitment agencies (Low, 2020; Wahab & Yusof, 2022). These challenges complicate the formulation and implementation of effective and just migrant workers' management, hence contributing to labor supply issues in the country.

Adverse Complications of Health, Environmental, Social and Economic Imposed to the Country

While foreign labor can be beneficial in meeting workforce demands and driving economic growth, an excessive influx can lead to various effects that warrant careful consideration by MoHR as it extends beyond labor market dynamics. It is recognized

that multifaceted challenges arise when faced with high numbers of foreign workers, such as health and safety problems, environmental sustainability, rise in criminal activities, and significant remittance outflows.

First, the influx of foreign workers can lead to serious health and environmental issues. The concentration of foreign workers in labor-intensive industries like construction is due to employers being reluctant to utilize labor-reducing technologies. In 2020, MoHR discovered that employers that purposely hire foreign laborers as a cheaper alternative were lax in providing accommodations that comply with Employees' Minimum Standards of Housing, Accommodation, and Amenities Regulations 2020 (Lumayag, 2023). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on MIDEQ towards the issue of the foreign workers' living conditions that made them more vulnerable to contracting the virus. It is not only cramped and overcrowded, but their living conditions are also often unhygienic, leading to rapid transmission of infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, and hepatitis B. Other serious environmental threats that need to be paid attention by MoHR is the higher waste management, carbon emissions, energy consumption, limited resources, and uncontrolled development due to the increase in the number of population (Kalkowska, 2023; Rahman et al, 2022; WHO, 2021). It is crucial for policymakers and relevant authorities to address these challenges to ensure the well-being and sustainability of both the host country and its foreign workforce.

Second, the increase of foreign workers has also led to a rise of crime rates in this country, particularly in urban areas. Those immigrants that are highly disadvantageous at salary as they usually end up working in 3D sectors and low-paying jobs will have difficulties to meet the cost of living in the city. As a result, they mostly turned into a resentful urban poor with prevalence of hate crimes as an expression of societal rejection (Wagner et al., 2020). In 2019, the Home Affairs minister reported 42,451 crime cases in the country involving foreigners (The Star, 2019). It has become a common scene as there are frequent complaints how these immigrants cause a nuisance by roaming in the neighborhoods with inappropriate dressing, drinking alcohol, fighting, and quarreling among themselves. They are also often associated with unhealthy activities such as burglary, homicide, and snatch theft. As a result, it inflicts anxiety and fear among the locals that live in the same residential areas. However, the issue of labor trafficking cannot be ignored, especially as some of these foreign workers may be subjected to harsh labor trafficking due to the existence of unstructured and complex migration agencies (Low, 2020). The government's approach to combating

human trafficking has been criticized for focusing on crime control rather than victim-centered measures, hence leading to negative public perception and lack of support for labor-trafficked survivors (Ormond & Nah, 2020; Wahab & Yusof, 2022).

Finally, and above all, it is known that these foreign workers that work abroad will tend to send part of their earnings to their home countries to support their families. The outflow of money from remittances will reduce the money within the country and put pressure on the balance of payments, especially if outflows exceed inflows. Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) revealed that approximately RM70 billion were remitted legally and illegally by foreign workers (DOSM, 2022; Radhi, 2022). Not only that, but remittances also create imbalance in the balance of trade due to higher demand for foreign currencies than the local currency in the international markets. As a result, the value of the country's currency depreciates relative to other currencies, and this will increase the prices for imported goods and services. In Malaysia, excessive remittances have been a concern since the 2000s. Initiatives by corporations facilitating remittance services such as SunwayMoney and DiGiRemit have contributed to this trend. Experts warn that the high outflows can complicate the domestic economy and hinder Malaysia's ability to compete with economically powerful neighbors like Singapore, making foreign direct investment crucial for counteracting this situation (Wei et al., 2018).

The challenges discussed above were then further analysed comprehensively and categories according to opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses. This categories are pivotal to provide clear understanding with regards to the issue being discussed. Based on the above discussion derived from review of literature, this paper proposes a set of strategic analyses and recommendations using strategic management tools and techniques.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs several key strategic management methods to address the influx of foreign workers into Malaysia that are applicable to be implemented by the MoHR. The study begins by conducting external and internal analyses of MoHR to comprehensively understand the challenges related to the influx of foreign workers. The external analysis utilizes the PEST analysis technique, which examines the political,

economic, social-cultural, and technological factors impacting MoHR beyond its control.

Simultaneously, an internally focused custom-made audit analysis is used to assess MoHR's strengths and weaknesses. Both external and internal analyses draw from various secondary sources such as articles, news, reports, and the Strategic Plan of MoHR, supplemented by semi-structured interviews with MoHR staff. The interview was carried out with MoHR representatives from Policy Planning and Strategic section to help verify the external and internal analyses in which the informations gathered were handed beforehand. This validation of internal and external information is to enable analyses of SWOT and TOWS to be carried out at a later stage. To present a clear perspective, all findings derived from internal and external analyses were further examined using a SWOT matrix as shown in Table 1. As indicated in Table 1, all key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are synthesised based on the past studies discussed in the previous section.

Table 1:
SWOT Analysis

Strengths 1. Well established mission, vision and objectives will provide clear direction and focus on strategic implementation 2. Excellent and reliable top management derived from good leadership skills 3. Coordinated policy implementation which no agencies working in silos which can prevent redundancy 4. Continuous policy implementation evaluation with effective monitoring process and monthly inspection 5. Have experts in employment laws implementation (legal experts) that can be referred to makes effective law implementation and protection	Weaknesses 1. Ineffective communication and management of of migrant workers which affect the migrant worker system 2. High bureaucracy with red tape and top-down approach in the ministry lead to longer and slow process in resolve an issue 3. Insufficient financial allocation leads to u makes it h and leads to unaffordability in providing good social security to foreign workers and difficult to seek budget for some programs. 4. Lack of digitalisation with ministry has no specific system to record data and the use of traditional system, while still using old method 5. The ministry ineffectively allocated foreign workers. according to their skills and did not comply with a supposed area they should work
Opportunities 1. Good employment laws that promote social protection for human capital such as Akta Kerja 1955 (Akta 265), Akta Standard Minimum Perumahan, Penginapan dan Kemudahan Pekerja 1990 (Akta 446), Akta Pampasan Pekerja 1952 (Akta 273) etc 2. Increase labor market since the demand for foreign	Threats 1. Interference from various bodies who advocate for more foreign workers and monopolization in the migration industry. 2. High remittance of money as foreign workers tends to send part of their earnings to their home countries. 3. Create job competition with the local labor as employers

workers in supposed industry keep increase as to strengthen the human capital - Updated and fast technological development lead to easy access system for the foreign workers - Good networking and maintain good collaboration with agencies and NGOs around the ministries - Good international relationship between countries that the government has specifically targeted has enhanced the process of importing foreign workers.	prefer to hire foreign workers in the six industries, namely construction, manufacturing, plantation, agriculture, services, and mining and quarrying. - Increase of foreign workers has led to a rise of crime rates in this country, particularly in urban areas. - Serious health and environmental issues due to low compliance towards the health and safety standards and regulations. - Technological advancement leads to shifts of demand in the labor markets especially in pro-automated industries.
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Subsequently, alternative recommendations are developed based on the TOWS Matrix, considering both the internal and external environments of MoHR as depicted in Table 2. The goal is to provide effective solutions to address the identified challenges. The TOWS Matrix was employed to identify several key alternative strategies by mapping both the internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) related to the the influx of foreign workers. As depicted in Table 2, several set of key alternative strategies are derived from a TOWS matrix analysis. The matrix comprehensively has 4 quadrants which are SO (strength-opportunity), ST (strength-threats), WO (weaknesses-opportunity) and WT (Weaknesses-Threats). Therefore, all the 4 quadrants are derived from the SWOT analysis that was done as depicted in Table 1.

Table 2:
TOWS Analysis

SO Strategies S5O1: Enhance law enforcement for foreign workers advantages S4O4: Establish strategic alliance with agencies and private sectors in data gathering for evaluation S3O5: Streamline policy implementation with international standards S2O3: Leveraging the strategic thinking of top management to promote innovations and technology S1O2: Strengthening the development of modules to safeguard and retain foreign workers	WO Strategies W1O3: Strengthening an IT platform as a communication channel W3O4: Collaborations with other agencies/ministries to pool financial resources W5O5: Create a task force with the embassy to provide specific FW quality W4O3: Generate smart digital partnerships with fast-paced digital technology W2O3: Leverage for an effective and efficient system W4,W5,O2,O3: Develop internal talent using smart software to nurture high-potential employees within the organization
ST Strategies S2T1: Stakeholder engagement and collaboration S3T3: Education and skills alignment S5T4: Collaboration with law enforcement agencies for	WT Strategies W2T1: Streamline internal process to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy W5T3: Facilitate alliance with private sectors for effective

crime prevention S4T3: Targeted support for disadvantaged groups S2T5: Resource efficiency and waste reduction policy S2T6: Strategic workforce planning S1T2: Approach investment in infrastructure and industries	allocation of laborers W1T5: Develop employer-agency communication policy that focuses on sustainable solutions W4T4: Utilize technology advancement to filter permit applications W3T2: Seek grants to do more R&D to mitigate issues in the future W3T6: Seek external funding to develop IT-related training and courses
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Next, the key alternative strategies from each quadrant are then undergone a thorough analysis using several key principles underlined by BOS (Blue Ocean Strategy), one of the utmost recent technique in strategic management realm. These key alternative strategies are being selected via comparative analysis by which this approach emphasizes on the following BOS criteria of (i) high impact project or activities, (ii) cost-efficiency project or activities and (iii) fast execution project or activities, as shown in Table 3. These criteria were cross-checked with the recommended strategies before the best alternative strategies are then ranked accordingly based on strategy attractiveness, feasibility of the project or activity, and stipulated timeline.

Table 3:
Comparative Table of Strategies Attractiveness by using the Blue Ocean Strategy Method

Quadrant	Strategies	Low Cost	Fast Execution	High Impact	Ranking of Strategies
SO	S5O1: Enhance law enforcement for foreign workers advantages	/	/	/	1
	S4O4: Establish Strategic Alliance with agencies and private sectors in data gathering for evaluation	x	/	/	3
	S3O5: Streamline policy implementation with international standards	/	x	/	5
	S2O3: Leveraging the strategic thinking of top management to promote innovations and technology	x	/	/	4
	S1O2: Strengthening the development of modules to safeguard and retain foreign workers	/	/	x	2

ST	S2T1: Stakeholder engagement and collaboration	x	x	/	7
	S3T3: Education and skills alignment	/	/	/	1
	S5T4: Collaboration with law enforcement agencies	/	x	/	4
	S4T3: Targeted support for disadvantaged groups	x	x	/	5
	S2T6: Strategic workforce planning	/	x	x	6
	S2T5: Resource efficiency and waste reduction policy	x	/	/	2
	S1T2: Approach investment in infrastructure and industries	x	x	/	3
WO	W1O3: Creating IT platform as communication channel	x	x	/	6
	W3O4: Collaborations with other agencies to pool resources	/	x	/	2
	W5O5: Create a task force with embassy to provide specific FW quality	/	x	/	3
	W4O3: Generate smart digital partnership with fast paced digital technology.	x	/	/	4
	W2O3: Leverage for an efficient system for wise and easy procedures.	x	/	/	5
	W4W5O2O3: Foster internal talent using smart software to nurture high-potential employees within the organization	/	/	/	1
WT	W2T1: Streamline internal process to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy	/	x	x	6
	W5T3: Facilitate alliance with private sectors for effective allocation of laborers	/	x	/	3
	W1T5: Develop employer-agency communication policy that focuses on sustainable solutions.	/	/	/	1
	W4T4: Utilize technology advancement to filter permit applications.	x	/	/	4
	W3T2: Seek grants to do more R&D to mitigate issues in	/	x	x	5

	the future				
	W3T6: Seek external funding to develop IT-related training and courses.	/	x	/	2

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR MOHR

Based on the comparative analysis using BOS 3 main principles, we are able to identify the most attractive strategies from each quadrant (SO-WO-ST-WT) to be implemented or considered to be implemented by MoHR to combat influx of foreign workers in Malaysia. As noted, each quadrant has come out with the best strategies which are (i) SO - enhance law enforcement for foreign workers advantages, (ii) ST-education and skills alignment, (iii) WO - develop internal talent using smart software to nurture high-potential employees within the organization and (iv) WT - develop employer-agency communication policy that focuses on sustainable solutions. Then, all the strategies chosen are being recommended and explained as a strategic thrust in this section.

Enhance Law Enforcement for Foreign Workers Advantages

The aim of this initiative is to enhance the law enforcement measures related to employment laws, particularly those concerning foreign workers, in order to ensure successful implementation and compliance. The focus will be on preventing labor exploitation, promoting fair treatment, and safeguarding the rights of international workers. Malaysia's strong employment rules offer an opportunity to enhance law enforcement and ensure compliance, safeguarding the rights of international workers (Fitria, 2023). By leveraging these beneficial employment laws, the department can develop a robust system to detect violations, enforce proper documentation and work permits and promote the welfare of local and foreign workers. Implementing just and moral hiring procedures can prevent exploitation of foreign workers and contribute to a more equitable labor market, discouraging excessive foreign labor influx (Alsawady et al., 2022). Additionally, strengthening monitoring methods and imposing stricter penalties on non-compliant employers can address the issue of unauthorized immigrant labor, effectively limiting their influx. Therefore, under these initiatives, there will be 3 projects proposed to solve the issue.

The first project under the initiatives of strengthening the law enforcement is the “Law Monitoring Program”. It is a comprehensive initiative comprising two strategic efforts aimed at bolstering the enforcement of laws pertaining to foreign workers, ensuring their rights and well-being are safeguarded effectively. There will be 2 programs under this project which the first program aimed to bolster the oversight of employment law enforcement, the program will establish a dedicated and proficient "Special Monitoring Team." These teams will work diligently under the Department of Labor and the MoHR, in collaboration with the other departments. With an adequate budget, the Special Monitoring Teams will be equipped with the necessary resources to carry out comprehensive assessments and evaluations of law compliance, ensuring foreign workers' rights are adequately protected.

Next, the second program under the first project is recognizing the value of gathering feedback directly from foreign workers. The program emphasizes collaboration with employers and agencies to conduct annual satisfaction surveys on employment law enforcement. The surveys, spearheaded by the Department of Labor and the Department of Foreign Workers, will provide valuable insights into the experiences of foreign workers, and identify areas of improvement. This initiative aims to foster a better understanding of foreign workers' needs and concerns, fostering a more equitable and harmonious labor market. The second project is establishing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the agencies and ministries. The objective of Project 2 is to establish an effective Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to standardize policies related to migration regulations. The MoU aims to initiate an agreement between ministries involved in the employment of foreign workers, with a focus on setting quotas for the number of foreign workers allowed into the country each year and other pertinent policy aspects. KPIs for this project target the signing of MoU by relevant Ministries to work hand in hand. The Legal Division of MoHR should lead and coordinate this inter-ministry initiative. The Legal Division will facilitate the collaboration and communication necessary to create a comprehensive and mutually beneficial MoU. By standardizing migration regulations through this MoU, it will promote consistency and fairness in the employment of foreign workers, ensuring a balanced labor market and safeguarding the rights of both foreign and local employees where the MoU will bind parties together to the regulations agreed.

Lastly, the third project to enhance law enforcement is called MyLaw Workshop. There will be 2 programs under this project to focus on the workshop for the participants. The first program consists of conducting two workshops per year to review

and identify any loopholes in the current employment laws related to foreign workers. The workshops will bring together experts, stakeholders, and relevant authorities to analyze the existing laws, identify shortcomings, and propose necessary amendments or improvements. The participants also will be the employers and also the private sectors. The KPI for this program is to conduct a total of 10 workshops, with two workshops held each year. The Department of Skills Development MOHR and HRD Corp MOHR will be in charge of organizing and managing these workshops. The budget need to be allocated for this initiative which will cover venue costs, facilitators, materials, and other workshop-related expenses. The second program involves setting up monitoring and audit sessions to assess the effectiveness of law enforcement regarding foreign workers' rights and protection. The Department of Labor and Manpower Department will be responsible for conducting these sessions. The aim is to conduct 10 audits in total, with two sessions held each year. During these audits, the authorities will assess compliance with employment laws, identify any violations, and take appropriate actions to ensure better enforcement. According to Dzikrullah et al (2020), the audit session in an organization or company is important to avoid mismanagement, fraudulent financial statements, and regulation compliance.

Education and Skills Alignment

The MoHR's Department of Labour intends to address the issue of the influx of foreign workers in Malaysia by implementing an education and skills alignment plan. This strategy emphasis includes a variety of programmes focused on the TalentCorp and HRD Corp, MOHR, aiming at integrating education and skill development with labor market demands in Malaysia. One key strategy is the Work-based Learning Opportunities initiative. This program fosters as a toolkit for partnerships between educational institutions, industry, and enterprises to provide students and job seekers with practical training and hands-on experience. This initiative aims to reduce reliance on foreign labor by equipping local employees with industry-relevant skills and linking job seekers with employment possibilities.

Another crucial component of the education and skill alignment plan is the Industry-Informed Career Counseling initiative. TalentCorp, an agency under MoHR is collaborating with a number of partners on this initiative to provide career suggestions by developing an application based on industry requirements and trends within two years. By offering trustworthy information about job prospects, skill requirements, and training courses, the project assists individuals in making informed career decisions

(Miles, 2023). By allowing natives to obtain skills in demand by Malaysian businesses, this strategic concept reduces dependency on foreign labor. Furthermore, the Inter-Ministry Collaboration Programme plays a significant role in the education and skill alignment plan by launching an analysis undertaken by the Manpower Department, MoHR, and Department of Industrial Relations. The plan ensures a coordinated and comprehensive approach to skill development by fostering collaboration between various government ministries and groups involved in industry, labor, and education. This concerted effort aims to reduce reliance on foreign workers by linking educational initiatives with industry needs.

Finally, the establishment of the Institution to Industry (I to I) project strives to bridge the gap between educational institutions and enterprises. HRDCorp and TalentCorp can function to guarantee that curriculum and training programmes meet the particular skill demands of Malaysian businesses by collaborating closely with technical and vocational institutions, universities, and industry associations. Students get valuable experience in real-world enterprises through 10 sessions held twice a year, internships, and industrial immersion programmes move forwards. The Department of Labour under MoHR's education and skills alignment strategy able to addresses the flood of foreign workers in Malaysia by preparing the local workforce with industry-relevant skills and reducing dependency on foreign labor. The Department of Labour creates a workforce that fulfills labor market demands and contributes to Malaysia's socioeconomic progress through programs such as Work-based Learning Opportunities, Industry-Informed Career Counseling, Inter-ministry Collaboration, and the Institution to Industry program.

Develop Internal Talent Using Smart Software to Nurture High-Potential Employees Within the Organization

The government should focus on the internal management by developing internal talent using smart software which will be focused on the internal management to nurture high-potential employees that could bring more quality for the organization. This includes recurring opportunities to review and update the high-potential employee success profile if the organization currently has one. In a dynamic market, organizational goals change frequently, and high-potential personnel profiles must keep up to date to maintain their value. Organizations may efficiently train high-potential individuals, increase employee engagement and retention, and secure a pipeline of qualified leaders for the future by utilizing smart software for talent development. In

order to foster a culture of growth for their high-potential employees, organizations should think about recognising these people and giving them the proper training and resources. In production they become successful, engaged team members who contribute to the success of the organization by making an investment in their development (Kaliannan et al., 2023). These could be implemented by inventing programs or any software that emphasize and focus on the internal system of the organization which would be a great improvement in having quality employees with their potential and knowledge about the foreign workers management. In this strategy, there are three highlighted programs that the strategy has encountered which is Smart Talent Analysis, Protege Program Skills System, and Learning Management System (LMS) which focuses on the internal strategy for a betterment of the internal management system in systematic approaches.

The first program is Smart Talent Analysis where the initiative for this strategy is to create smart digital software to review talent within the organization such as data driven succession planning. Succession planning is a procedure for locating, training, and monitoring high-potential leadership vacancies for advancement. This is to generate competencies within the organization as competencies are a crucial tool in workforce and succession planning because they, at the very least, allow for the identification of the skills, dispositions, and traits required to fill open positions now and, in the future, as organizational priorities and strategies change, and they concentrate employee development efforts to close the skills gap. Proactive planning, targeted development, and greater talent alignment with the changing demands of the government sector are all made possible by the use of data-driven insights. The programs would enhance talent within the organization by evaluating and monitoring the employee's performance throughout the smart system and this could motivate the employees to give a high performance considering there will be benefits in achieving their roles goals.

In accordance with the strategies that focus on to foster the internal talent within the organization, the programs that can be implemented are a protégé program skills system for the new employees that works as a new starter for their learning and upskilling about the system in the ministry itself. Instead of making them learn only in one system, the government can fully utilize them by conducting 3 months course training for employees on hands and 3 months specifically for systems used in the organization so that they would know the basic use of the system and learn it deeper when they are getting occupied beforehand. By offering them specialized training, mentoring, and support, the Protege Program Skills System can be a useful strategy for

identifying and nurturing talent within a government organization.

Furthermore, the LMS is one of the initiatives where it can be done by utilizing the learning management system to deliver training and development programs to high-potential employees. In this context, the MoHR should focus on the talent that have high skills and knowledge in generating new ideas to polish their knowledge more in order to make the system more effective and can be handled well by these potential workers. In this program of learning management system, as the focus are on the high-potential employees' betterment, it could be developed within the organization by establish a pre-potential system as a start-up that gives high exposure of knowledge and innovation system to the employees which could create a widen acknowledgement of the organization internal system in managing the foreign workers. It improves learning, gives learners flexibility, and helps businesses to monitor, assess, and maximize their training program system could be used as training workforce where it gives a designation of goals and targets which is challenging and to make it more interesting a privilege or benefits for the potential employees in the purpose of them being motivated.

As a result of these strategies, the employees in the MoHR could be highly skilled workers with great problem solver skills in managing an issue. Moreover, the internal talent can be nurtured within the organization with these high potential skills that can supervise and help in the decision making for certain strategies in the organization. The internal growth is important to be looked at and should not be avoided or ignored as they are the one who derive the organizational goals towards the one, they want to achieve.

Develop Employer-Agency Communication Policy That Focuses On Sustainable Solutions

The objective of this strategy mainly aims to ensure that foreign workers can have sustainable employment and at the same time, increase the retention rates of labor among foreign workers. Effective communication between the ministry and the stakeholders is crucial to mitigate the threats, which in this context is due to overcrowding of foreign workers that can harm the country's environment. Hence, this policy is designed to provide a framework for a feedback system and initiate discussion between the public and private sectors primarily to address the rising employment issues and concerns. It is believed that communication and transparency is important for

data-driven policymaking. A better understanding of job requirements and skills would allow MoHR to identify suitable candidates and provide relevant training or upskilling programs, creating sustainable employment opportunities, and reducing labor market imbalances. Open lines of communication would enable agencies to understand employers' current and future labor needs, leading to responsive training and education programs that combat overcrowding and improve job satisfaction for both local and foreign workers. Overall, the feedback and evaluation can promote continuous improvement in the ministry-employer relationship, promoting better workforce coordination, and enhancing workforce adaptation towards sustainability.

The first project to be initiated under this strategy is setting up a Communication Policy Revision Team. The main objective of this program is to establish good relations between MoHR and the employers, as well as other relevant stakeholders. The committee members would comprise members from the Division of Migrant Workers Management and representatives from Department of Labour branches. This project requires two years of execution where in the first year, the committee will review the current communication efficiency and effectiveness and identify shortcomings and areas of improvement. Besides the internal analysis, the committee will also seek input from the private sector and other stakeholders to understand the common challenges faced by them in complying with the labor standards and requirements. In the second year, the committee will produce the module and run a pilot study to assess its feasibility, which will be assisted by the Division of Planning, Strategy, and Development. It is forecasted that, a module outlining clear communication policy between public and private sectors will be published and performed accordingly.

Next, information technology is often hailed as a tool for capturing, tracking, sorting, and disseminating data to advance knowledge and enhance service delivery. Therefore, the second project suggested is Sustainability Assessment and Reporting Tool. Before proceeding to software development, the AIC which are the Department of Labour and Department of Industrial Relation will need to define the sustainability problem. They will identify key environmental and social issues associated with foreign workers' employment, such as their living conditions, health and safety measures, energy consumption, and waste management practices. By defining these problems, the AIC can establish certain targets and criteria to assess the sustainability performance of the employers. Then, the next step is to build the software by the Department of IT which includes indicators and metrics to measure energy usage, waste generation, workers well-being, and compliance with the labor standards. This software will serve

as an online platform that employers can access and use to evaluate their sustainability practices. Most importantly, the software can generate reports based on the assessment result which can be used for screening by foreign workers. Probably, with the artificial intelligence (AI) inclusion, it can provide some insight and recommendations that can be useful for employers to improve their “sustainability” performance. For example, if the employer has high energy consumption, the report can suggest energy-saving technology that the company can adopt. Overall, this software can ensure that employers who hire foreign workers can have better sustainability practices, emphasize the well-being of the workers, and be more responsible to the labor standards.

The third program suggested under this strategy is Networking Events and Conference. Such events are necessary in facilitating professional development and fine-tuning organizations’ research and advocacy skills. The primary objective of this program is to promote sustainable relations among employers, agencies, and relevant stakeholders that can provide benefits to the labor market. The conference focuses on creating a communication space for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and discussion around sustainability practices in the context of employment. It should foster a deeper understanding of sustainability issues, share best practices, and inspire participants to take proactive steps towards sustainability, especially in foreign labor employment. Meanwhile, the networking events aim to invite participation from employers, recruitment agencies, industry experts, sustainability professionals, government representatives, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders in the employment sector for sustainability empowerment in the labor market. The set KPIs include conferences, networking events, and external funding. Budget should be allocated to organize the networking events and conferences and further expenses will be financed through external funding from strategic partners in a mutually pooled fund called Sustainability Initiative Fund with a hope to expand the potential of this program’s delivery. The AIC will be the Department of Labour and the Department of Industrial Relations of MoHR.

The fourth program under this strategy would be the Training and Certification Program. Training programs help to intensify knowledge, expertise, and ability of employees. The objective of this program is to focus on educating employers about sustainable practices with the hope of developing sustainable employment and hiring. The training camp should accommodate various topics such as energy conservation, waste management, water efficiency, sustainable procurement, ethical labor practices, diversity and inclusion, employee well-being, and community engagement. At the end of this program, it is hoped that participants can learn about the importance of

incorporating sustainable principles into the administration and organization of their foreign labors. Upon completion of the training program, participants can be awarded certifications or recognized for their commitment to sustainability. This certification validates their knowledge and skills in sustainable practices and serves as a credential that demonstrates the employers' dedication to sustainability to attract top-notch foreign talents into their organization. The program will be carried out annually by the Department of Labour and the Department of Industrial Relation of MoHR. A three-day camp that will be held in three different locations each year, which are in Southern, Sabah, and Sarawak.

CONCLUSION AND MOVING FORWARD ACTIONS

The MoHR has established a comprehensive plan to efficiently handle the influx of foreign employees in Malaysia. This plan includes a number of efforts, such as improving law enforcement through the Law Monitoring Programme and an inter-ministry MoU. It also emphasizes education and skill alignment through programmes such as Work-Based Learning Opportunities and Industry-Informed Career Counseling. Furthermore, the MOHR focuses on developing internal talent through Smart Talent Analysis and the Institution to Industry programme. Furthermore, the ministry intends to encourage long-term solutions through a Communication Policy Revision Team as well as Networking Events and Conferences. The MoHR is tackling the difficulties of international labor while fostering local talent and sustainable development through these programmes.

By allocating a separate budget for the Department of Labour and investing in research and development programmes, we may solve under-budgeting and a lack of R&D spending. This assures adequate resources for programme execution and supports technology developments to satisfy labor market demands. Next, improve digitalization for faster task execution by defining a clear digital strategy, reviewing current infrastructure, and delivering complete IT solutions. This simplifies information management, enhances decision-making, and promotes data-driven initiatives. In addition, address noncompliance with quality control requirements through inspections, audits, and training programmes. Collaborate with industry to improve quality practices, resulting in increased competitiveness and less dependency on foreign labor. Furthermore, by collaborating with trade organizations and adopting productivity development strategies, you may increase cost management procedures and

productivity. This enables firms to reduce their reliance on foreign labor while also optimizing expenses. Increase staff motivation further by clearly expressing strategic goals and expectations. Establish milestones and KPIs, which will serve as a roadmap for staff growth and generate a sense of achievement. Finally, address opposition to technological change by giving extensive training and cultivating an innovative culture. Involve workers in the process and provide ongoing assistance during the change. By addressing these next steps, the MoHR will be able to reinforce its plan for managing the influx of foreign workers, assuring Malaysia's long-term growth and competitive workforce.

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Conflict of interest

The authors would like to state that no conflict of interest whatsoever in connection with the publication of this paper. All research results, analysis and interpretation of

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