Runaway and Resistance against and within Migration Infrastructures: The cases of Vietnamese migrant workers in Japan and Taiwan

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1. Introduction

> *I ran away because I did not want to work as a domestic worker anymore.*

My Anh, a Vietnamese woman from a rural area in northern Vietnam's Hai Duong Province, said. She was a woman who had worked as a migrant domestic worker in Taiwan and, eventually, had fled from her employers. When I visited her home in a rural village, she was continually cooking, tidying up the house, and looking after her children. She worked tirelessly in this hot and humid environment, and naturally, her face was beaded with sweat. Nevertheless, she kept a smile on her face. Her husband ran a small barbershop with just a mirror and one chair in the house's corner. His friendly nature was evident in his occasional jokes. Their daughter, now in her teens, would help her mother and take care of her little brother. The interview began amicably in My Anh's house's living room, where laughter was always present. However, when the conversation turned to her employment situation during her time in Taiwan and her experiences running away from her employer, My Anh's face clouded.

It was a summer day a few years ago. I was waiting for Xuan, a Vietnamese woman, in a subway station in downtown Tokyo. As I was waiting in front of the ticket booth in the subway station, Xuan came running up to me. She was a young Vietnamese in jeans and a T-shirt, carrying a small backpack over her shoulder. She was friendly and easy to talk to although we had never met before and just communicated via Social Networking Service(SNS). Xuan worked as a technical intern trainee under Japan's Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) at a sewing company in the western regions of Japan.

However, she chose to run away from the company one day, and then ,she moved to the Greater Tokyo Area.

For both My Anh and Xuan, labor migration abroad has initially been a “hope” to improve their family’s economic situation. Nevertheless, they fled from the employers in their host societies, lost their legal residency status, and became undocumented migrant workers. Why did they choose this trajectory? Moreover, what did running away mean to them?

If migrant workers face problems, some go to support organizations such as labor unions or join the labor movement or government’s consultation counters to solve their problems. If a migrant worker with low level of bargaining power because of inadequate education and work experience or lack of language skills is disadvantaged at the place of employment, it is not easy for them to negotiate alone with the employer or intermediary company to restore their rights.

In fact, in Taiwan, support organizations such as the Vietnamese Migrant Workers and Brides Office have been working to protect migrant workers’ rights, including forming solidarity with other organizations to improve their treatment while supporting Vietnamese migrant workers (Sunai 2017). In Japan, labor unions and support organizations, including the Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ), have developed a movement to elevate migrants’ status.

However, many Vietnamese workers cannot access those organizations and social movements. In my interviews, many Vietnamese migrant workers said they either had information on support organizations or knew of them but had never contacted them. Therefore, it is necessary to consider other ways to solve these problems. This paper shows that one of the ways to do this is to run away or illegalize the worker’s former legal status.

Currently, the crackdown on migrants who do not have legal residence status has been tightened worldwide, and there is a growing trend to treat those who do not have legal status as “criminals,” subjecting them to arrest, detention, and deportation. In Taiwan and Japan, temporary migrant workers, especially domestic workers, and technical intern trainees are linked to their residence, employment, and legal status. If they leave their employer’s home or company, the migrant workers immediately lose their residence, employment, and legal status, and if they work for another employer, they are working without legal status. If the authorities find them, they could be detained or deported. However, “fleeing,” or the illegalization of legal status, does not only bring risks to migrant workers. There is another aspect of “fleeing.” It is an aspect of promoting improvement in the economic situation. I argue that “fleeing” from the

employer’s house or company can be seen as an act of restoration of migrant workers’ rights and resistance within the migrant infrastructures.

Based this, the paper[1] analyzes the trajectory of running away by migrant workers in East Asian countries and the backgrounds in which migrant workers choose to flee. Then, looking at migrant workers’ agency and background of running away, the paper will introduce the analytical framework of everyday forms of resistance (Scott 1989) and the migration infrastructure theory (Xiang and Lindquist 2014) to examine what it means for migrant workers to run away from their employers’ control.

It is difficult to believe that anyone can escape like they would want to, and to flee, they need access to “networks” that encourage them to escape. I believe that in accessing networks, migrant workers mobilize their own capital (Bourdieu 1986). Based on the above, the following sections will cover the following:

1. The background behind the decision of Vietnamese migrant workers to “run away.”
2. The functioning of the network that enables migrant workers to “run away.”

The factors that make it possible for migrant workers to work without legal status after “running away” are also examined. Then, I will discuss the implications of “fleeing” for migrant workers in the Vietnam–Taiwan and Vietnam–Japan migration infrastructures. Also, the background and trajectory of running away are analyzed by looking at destinations, occupations, and gender; thus, to deepen the analysis, this paper compares the following:

1. Female migrant domestic workers in Taiwan.
2. Female technical intern trainees in Japan.
3. Male technical intern trainees in Japan to further analyze migrant workers’ flight and discuss how destination, occupation and gender are related to the background and trajectory of running away and the illegalization of workers’ legal status.

2. Conceptual framework

This section introduces the main concepts that will inform the theoretical framework of this paper. For the time being, the section provides a brief definition of each concept.

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[1] This study integrates the discussion of illegalization of residency status/runaway by Vietnamese technical intern trainees in Japan by Sunai (2019b) and Vietnamese domestic workers in Taiwan by Sunai(2020) and comparing Taiwan and Japan's cases. Sunai (2019b) and Sunai(2020) discuss illegalization of residency status/runaway using Scott's (1989) discussion of everyday forms of resistance, and this study uses these ideas to examine the escape of Vietnamese migrant workers in Japan and Taiwan while comparing them with a gender perspective.

2.1. Migration infrastructure

Migration infrastructure is an analytical framework to understand the phenomena of temporary migration developed using the case of Asia. Xiang and Lindquist (2014) explain that the *"notion of "migration infrastructure" – the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility – opens up such spaces of mediation to analysis"*. Migration infrastructure is a concept that starts with the migration industry. The migration industry includes meso or intermediary actors that act between states and individuals to facilitate or hinder migration. For example, smugglers, consultants, border service vendors and humanitarian organizations are part of the migration industry. The authors Xiang and Lindquist propose incorporating all the actors and technological devices that participate in the movement of people within this concept.

Migration infrastructure is a framework that captures complicated migration phenomena with five dimensions: (1) commercial, such as recruitment intermediaries which conduct commercial activities to have economic profits, (2) regulatory, which is linked to the state apparatus and documentation, licensing and training processes/procedures, among others (3) technological. which includes communication and transport tools, (4) humanitarian, which supports the rights of migrants and includes NGOs as well as international organizations, and (5) social, which represents the social network of migrants. The infrastructural involution, an important component of migration infrastructures, exposes how the interplay between these different dimensions makes them self-perpetuating and self-serving. Involution does not empower the migratory capability of people; rather, it further subordinates and controls them.

This paper will engage critically with the concept of infrastructure in three ways. First, while Xiang and Lindquist (2014) focus their analysis of the migration infrastructures of Asian sending countries, such as China and Indonesia, they fail to consider the impact of destination countries. Thus, this peper will mobilize the concept of migration infrastructure to capture the articulations and experiences of illegal migration from the perspective of both sending and destination countries. Second, gender is missing from the proposed framework; a gender perspective will be central to this project, since infrastructures are not gender blind. Studies have shown the gendered aspects of recruitment and personal networks, policies and regulations, including the fees and remuneration of migrant workers. Third, while the framework provides a thorough perspective on the structural aspects of migration, it puts forward a very deterministic approach. For this reason, this study will put women's agency center stage by focusing on their acts of resistance within an oppressive temporary migration regime. The

following concepts aim to build on, expand and provide a critical development of the migration infrastructure framework.

2.2. Everyday forms of resistance

The analysis of the illegalization processes of female migrants will additionally benefit from the theorization of the notion of everyday forms of class resistance. While a lot of previous research explained precarity and vulnerability of illegal migrants as the passive victims of oppressive structures, this research focuses on illegal migrants' resistance. As such becoming illegal is not merely presented as the outcome of precarity, but a cause of forms of legal precarity (Goldring et al, 2009).

Scott (1989) examines *everyday* forms of class resistance which is "*an integral part of the small arsenal of relatively powerless groups"* such as peasants and "*include such acts as foot-dragging, dissimulations, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage, surreptitious assault and murder, anonymous threats, and so on*" (*P. 34*). Class resistance, usually considered in terms of social movements, dissident sects and revolutionary movements, has been extensively documented by journalists and social scientists. Everyday forms of resistance are often ignored in the historiography of the peasantry and other subordinate groups.

The study will develop the notion of everyday forms of resistance to examine the daily actions taken by migrant women to deal with the difficulties they encounter within migration infrastructures. The concept of everyday forms of resistance will highlight the diverse and complex ways migrant women exert their agency to improve their situation and to recover their autonomy against structural exploitation and discrimination in their everyday life. This concept will provide the theoretical grounding to examine how migrant women develop strategies and actions to counteract oppressive migrations infrastructures.

2.3. Integration of concepts

This paper will aim to better understand how female migrants deploy strategies, such as "running away" from their employer, illegality and filing complaints, to counteract oppressive and exploitative structures by building on the concepts of migration infrastructure, resistance and gender. The analysis will seek explaining how resistance is

enacted by migrant women in the grip of an oppressive migratory infrastructure that makes them vulnerable, but also provides them with opportunities to improve their power and autonomy. Whereas recent studies usually focus on the experience of migrants within single destination countries, a comparison of the experiences of female migrant workers in two destination countries, namely Taiwan and Japan, will contribute to develop the analysis of irregular migration in East Asia. Finally, it will also examine factors including class, age, human and social capitals. This will additionally build on and be informed by a contextual framework of both sending and destination countries, which will include the macro-political dimension.

3. Multilayered Deprivation Situations

This section first shows how Vietnamese migrant domestic workers in Taiwan and Vietnamese technical intern trainees in Japan are deprived of their rights and freedoms in everyday life and in the labor market of the destinations because of several factors, including the states' policies. The deprivation of these rights and freedoms prevents domestic workers and technical intern trainees from accessing support organizations or social movements.

The first deprivation is the institutional deprivation of freedom and rights. Domestic workers in Taiwan and technical intern trainees in Japan share the following points in common:

1. They cannot change jobs or employers freely.
2. They must return to their home country after the visa expires.
3. They cannot bring their family.

The Taiwanese government has been accepting foreign workers as care workers and domestic workers, dividing them into "caretakers" who take care of people in facilities, "home-based care workers" who take care of people at home, and "home helpers" who work at home as domestic workers (Ono, 2010). Migrant domestic workers are not free to change employers. Only if an older person needing care dies can change employers. The contract is for three years, and the worker can work for up to more than 10 years by renewing the contract. However, even if they can renew the contract, they are only temporary migrant workers, here with the assumption that they will return to their home country after ending the contract and that they cannot apply for permanent residence. Also, they are not allowed to bring their family members along, so they must always go to Taiwan alone to work (Asato 2013).

As domestic workers, Vietnamese technical intern trainees in Japan are also unable to change jobs freely. If the host company violates regulations or goes bankrupt, the technical intern trainees can change the company after completing specific procedures. However, as a general rule, the transfer is limited to companies with the same job type. Simultaneously, the transfer procedure is complicated and often takes time to complete because it is necessary to find a new company within the same job category. As with migrant domestic workers, the period of stay in Japan is limited. Previously, the maximum stay in Japan was only three years. After the Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees ("Technical Intern Training Act") came into effect on November 1, 2017, the reform extended the maximum period of stay to five years. However, the interns are required to return to their home country after their visa expires. Starting with the Specified Skilled Worker VISA (Tokutei Gino visa) system in 2019, technical intern trainees can now change their visa to the Specified Skilled Worker VISA if they pass an exam. However, a certain level of language proficiency and skills are needed to pass the Specified Skilled Worker VISA exam. Technical intern trainees are also not allowed to bring their families with them. Therefore, like domestic workers in Taiwan, they must travel to Japan alone and be separated from their families.

The next type of deprivation of freedoms and rights is because of the occupation's nature. For domestic workers in Taiwan, their contact with the outside world is limited because their work is always done in the "intimacy space" or closed space of a home. In many cases, employers do not allow domestic workers to leave home freely. As mentioned above, domestic workers are not subject to labor laws and regulations, and their work is diverse. Particularly in the case of care workers, the workload is extensive, and they work long hours. Thus, they do not have time to go outside in their everyday lives. This situation deprives domestic workers of their rights and freedoms.

In the case of technical intern trainees in Japan, this deprivation of rights and freedoms because of their occupation can be seen in the women trainees' garment industry. The majority of the technical intern trainees in the garment industry are women. It has long been pointed out that the sewing industry is one that secures its profits by taking large orders at low unit prices and having employees work long hours. As a result, the garment sector's technical intern trainees often work long hours, sometimes extending into the middle of the night, and often have little or no private time (Yasuda 2007, Kurematsu 2017, Sunai 2019). Another occupation with these characteristics is construction, where most workers are men. In the case of construction, the working hours are often around eight hours a day. However, the travel time to the construction

site is usually long, and it can take anywhere from one to two hours just to reach the construction site. Hence, if it takes two hours to go to the construction site, the workers have to spend four hours traveling. Also, some companies require technical intern trainees to work long hours in other occupations. Dairy farming, pig farming, and other jobs that handle living things tend to have long working hours. Also, some jobs, such as food processing, require night shifts. The long hours and irregular working hours resulting from these types of occupations are a factor that hinders technical intern trainees' contact with the outside world and their ability to move freely.

The next area of concern is the deprivation of geographical freedom. Although domestic workers in Taiwan are working in relatively urban areas such as Taipei City, the technical intern trainees in Japan are located all over Japan, and there are numerous technical interns working in remote areas. This deprivation of geographical freedom is also related to the type of industry where technical intern trainees work. For example, because of the characteristics of agriculture, dairy farming, poultry farming, and fishery industry, businesses are often located in remote areas and rural and fishing villages. Transportation is not convenient in these areas, making it difficult for technical intern trainees who do not own a car to get around and access these supporting organizations.

Finally, this section focuses on the deprivation of experience and means for resistance. Domestic workers and technical trainees come from the rural areas of Vietnam, and their educational backgrounds are not exceptionally high. Also, Vietnam is a one-party state, and the only national center—the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor—is a suborganization of the Communist Party of Vietnam, meaning that the labor movement is not independent and not well developed. Therefore, few people are likely to have enough experience in labor and social movements. Technical intern trainees take on a large amount of debt because of their predeparture costs; however, their income is low, meaning they do not have enough economic capital. Therefore, with the combination of Vietnam's political and social situation, which leads to a lack of resistance experience and economic capital, trainees have trouble acquiring a means of resistance. A limited number of migrant workers interviewed said they had tried to restore their rights by consulting trade unions and other support organizations or joining social and labor movements.

Thus, although both Vietnamese domestic workers in Taiwan and Vietnamese technical intern trainees in Japan are working under legal residence status, their rights and freedoms are limited because of multilayered deprivation situations. They face large hurdles in accessing support organizations. Many domestic workers in Taiwan and technical intern trainees in Japan choose to run away to solve their problems. However,

if they flee from their employers, they lose their status of residence, housing, and income.

4. The Combination of the Multiple Factors for the Background of Illegalization: Debt, gender, and Exploitation

4.1 The Cases of Domestic Workers in Taiwan: Low Wage, Hard Work, and Responsibilities for Family

First, this section will look at the case of two Vietnamese migrant domestic workers, Huong and My Anh, to capture the background of a runaway, including economic exploitation and the gender role of being a good mother/wife.

Huong was born in 1966 in a rural area of Hai Duong Province in northern Vietnam, and after graduating from high school, she married at the age of 21. Later, she and her husband had two children. However, her family's economic situation was not prosperous, with a household income of only four million VND a year. At one point, she decided to go to Taiwan to improve her family's economic situation. In Vietnam, women must deliver children and take care of the family as a good mother/wife because of gender norms; simultaneously, both women and men have the responsibility of bringing money to the family. Therefore, working abroad is an occasion for women to play their gender role. Huong was introduced to an intermediary company in Hanoi by a female friend who had worked as a domestic worker in Taiwan. Huong's family did not have the money to pay the costs, so she borrowed all the money from the State Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development Bank of Vietnam (Agribank) to pay the intermediary company's fees.

After three months of predeparture training in the Chinese language, elderly care, and housework, including cooking, she started working in Taiwan in November 2002. Like the other Vietnamese domestic workers in the current thesis, Huong was born and raised in Vietnam during the war and throughout the postwar economic difficulties, so she entered the international labor market without the experience of modern labor relations.

However, from the very beginning, Huong's employment in Taiwan was fraught with challenges because her employers refused to give her their home address for fear of her "running away." She was also not allowed to leave the house freely. The job was hard on her. The employer's family consisted of seven members: an elderly couple, a couple

in their late thirties, and three children. Most of their work consisted of taking care of the elderly couple. Huong took care of the elderly couple while staying in the same room as them. She also did all the household work. She had no holidays, and she worked on Sundays and Chinese New Year. The elderly couple's husband did not want Huong to sleep, and when she tried to sleep at night, he kicked her bed with his foot. So she only got three to four hours of sleep a day.

There was also the issue of wages. The Taiwanese intermediary company collected a monthly "commission" from Huong's wages, and she earned only 500,000 VND in the first two months, 900,000 VND in the third and fourth months, and 13,000 VND in the fifth and sixth months. Huong did not know why her wages were so low, so she called the Vietnamese intermediary company in Hanoi, but they did not help her.

> *I called the intermediary company in Vietnam, but the company just said, "You have signed the contract!" and did nothing. I did not know that they take these high commission fees out of my wages. I also complained to my employers that my wages were too low, but they also said, "You signed the contract!" Also, I did not think the Vietnamese government's embassy or the Taiwanese police would help me. (Huong)*

Huong complained to the intermediary companies and her employers about her wages, but they ignored her. At the same time, she did not believe that Vietnamese government agencies or Taiwanese police would be on her side and help her. Faced with harsh working conditions, harassment from her employers, and low wages, she also had to pay back the debt for her predeparture costs and had a responsibility to send money to her family in Vietnam as a mother and wife. As a result, Huong did not have any way to improve her working and living conditions, and finally, Huong fled from her employer's home six months after starting work to look for a better job and life in the informal labor market.

In a way, this shoes how gender responsibility, the debt for predeparture costs, and work and life challenges as a migrant domestic worker drove her to "flee." In other words, for her, "fleeing" was an action to change the situation and solve these problems.

Next, this section will present the case of My Anh. Her case also shows that economic exploitation and gender roles relate to running away and the illegalization of legal status. Her case demonstrates that the debt of predeparture costs and the exploitative working/living conditions produced within the migration infrastructures between Vietnam and Taiwan bring disappointment with the occupation as migrant domestic workers.

My Anh was born in 1980 and grew up in a rural area in Hai Duong Province. My Anh married in 2001 after graduating from high school and had a daughter the following year. However, before labor migration, she and her husband worked as farmers, but they had little cash income, and the household income was limited to 1,000 VND per month. My Anh began to think about improving her family's economic situation by working abroad. So she visited a Vietnamese government-related organization in Hai Duong Province that she had heard about through a TV commercial. At the time, many women from My Anh's village had gone to work in Taiwan, so she obtained information about working in Taiwan through them.

My Anh decided to go to Taiwan as a domestic worker because domestic workers' predeparture costs were lower than those of factory workers. At the time, the commission fees were $700–$1000 for a domestic worker and $6000–$7000 for a factory worker in Taiwan. My Anh paid a total of US$700 to this organization for visa fees, other fees, and fees for predeparture training. Most Vietnamese women in the my interviews used a private intermediary company; however, My Anh used a government-related organization. Her case was unique in this way; nonetheless, she still needed to pay exorbitant fees.

In September 2002, after three months of predeparture training in the Chinese language, caring for the elderly and disabled, taking care of children, and other general household chores, My Anh started working as a live-in domestic worker in Tainan City, Taiwan. Like Huong, My Anh had never done any wage work under the modern labor relations in Vietnam before working abroad as a migrant worker.

My Anh's employer's family in Taiwan consisted of eight people: a couple in their 80s, two daughters in their 50s, a son and his wife in their 40s, and two children. Her job consisted of caring for the family, but she was also responsible for all the household chores. She had a few breaks and no days off. The care work usually kept her awake at night because she had to take care of the elderly couple all the time. It was not long before she started to worry about her health. Also, My Anh said that her employer's

daughter, who was in her 50s, monitored My Anh always, and the relationship with her employers was never good.

There was also the issue of wages. In the contract, My Anh’s wage was 8.5 million VND a month, but after deducting commissions from the intermediary company, her wages were only 1.5 million VND in the first month, 2.5 million VND in the second to fifth months, and 4 million VND in the sixth month. The woman My Anh was caring for died, so she had moved to another employer’s house. The second employer’s house had a couple in their 70s and 80s, a couple in their 40s, and two children. My Anh worked long hours in this house and took on general domestic work, mainly care work. A second employer also treated My Anh harshly, and she again felt that her employer was monitoring her actions. There was also the issue of wages. The contract wage was 8.5 million VND a month, but a commission was deducted here as well. After two years and three months of working at the home of the second employer, My Anh decided to run away.

> *I ran away because I did not want to work as a domestic worker anymore because of the low salary. I wanted a higher wage. (My Anh)*

To improve her family’s economic situation by remittance from her salary, My Anh paid her predeparture fees to come to Taiwan to work away from her family, but the work in Taiwan was not easy and did not pay as much as she had expected. Nonetheless, My Anh could not change both the employer and the occupation because she was a migrant domestic worker. Thus, My Anh did not want to work as a domestic worker anymore and decided to run away to seek better wages and working conditions in the informal labor market. From this point of view, the challenges, including the predeparture costs, hard work of domestic workers, abuse and discrimination by employers, and the limited rights embedded in the migration infrastructure between Vietnam and Taiwan led My Anh to run away.

4.2 Case of Female Technical Intern Trainee in Japan: Exploitation in the Gendered Workplace

This section explains the case of a female technical intern trainee from Vietnam to show how debt, exploitation in the gendered occupation, and abuse relate to running away.

It was a sweat-drenched afternoon in August 2017. I was waiting for a woman at the subway station in Tokyo. A woman in jeans quickly came down from the escalator leading to the platform. She was wearing a tight-fitting T-shirt and had a small backpack slung over her shoulder. It was Xuan, a woman in her 20s from the central part of Vietnam. She looked like an ordinary young, well-groomed woman with a smile on her face. Without knowing her situation's intricacies, it would be impossible for anyone to imagine that she had escaped from such hard conditions.

Xuan had tried to escape from the garment company's harsh working conditions, where she had worked as a technical intern trainee under the TITP.

Xuan was born in Vietnam in the mid-1990s, the second of five siblings when diplomatic relations with the United States had been restored. Her father was born during the Tet Offensive, and both parents were of the Vietnam War generation.

Xuan's home village is located in central Vietnam and was heavily damaged during the war. Numerous bombs, including cluster bombs, were dropped on this region during the war. Many explosive devices remain in the ground, which detonate from time to time, causing casualties. The undetonated ordinances are also hindering the development of the surrounding areas. While the southern city of Ho Chi Minh City and the capital city of Hanoi form Vietnam's two largest economic regions, the central region has long lagged.

Xuan's parents raised their children to farm. However, her mother was often ill, and the family always had to bear her medical expenses. Xuan had younger siblings who are of school age and must pay for school fees. As soon as Xuan graduated from junior high school, she decided to work as soon as possible to earn an income and help her family instead of going to school. After leaving the family home, Xuan got a job in a restaurant. She lived and worked in the restaurant from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day.

At the time, her monthly salary was only about US$70 to US$80 a month. She sent the money she earned to her parents to help them. After that, she worked for two years at a local sewing company, during which she also had a part-time job. She sat in front of a sewing machine in the sewing factory from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Then, she worked in a cafe and restaurant until 11 p.m.

The monthly wage at the sewing company was about US$250. Including part-time wages, Xuan's monthly income was about US$300. Her father's income from farming

was about US$150 a month, and together with Xuan's income, the household income was about US$450 a month. However, with siblings going to school and their mother's medical expenses, their income was still not enough.

Around this time, Xuan's family received information about labor migration and becoming a technical intern trainee in Japan. The information was brought to them by an independent private broker (*nguoi moi gioi*) who introduced workers to the intermediary companies that sent the technical intern trainees to Japan.

When Xuan's parents heard about the brokers, they told her that she could earn money by going to Japan as a technical intern and that Japan's wage standard was high. Thus, her parents asked Xuan to go to Japan. In Vietnam, where Confucianism is a strong influence and the patriarchal system is deeply rooted, children must accept their parents' wishes. Thinking of her mother, who was ill, and her siblings, who had to pay school fees, Xuan understood her parents' feelings and agreed to go to Japan, fulfilling her role as a good daughter.

Xuan's parents gave the independent broker US$1,000 and paid a commission of US$4,500 and a deposit of US$3,500 to an intermediary company in Hanoi that has been introduced by the broker. Xuan then spent eight months studying the Japanese language at the company's predeparture training center. Her tuition was included in the fee, but she had to pay additional expenses for food and living expenses during the training period. As a result of these various expenses, Xuan's parents spent about $10,000 on predeparture expenses. Xuan's parents did not have this much cash on hand, so they had to borrow it all from a bank.

With all this debt, Xuan came to Japan in 2015 when she was just 20 years old, and although she was in her 20s, she was already under massive debt and working in a strange country. Still, she had high hopes for Japan.

> *Before I came to Japan, I wanted to take a flight. That day, I boarded a plane for the first time in my life and arrived at a town in Japan. (Xuan*)

She ended up working at a sewing company in a local city in the Shikoku region of Japan. The sewing company had dozens of technical intern trainees. The company used to accept Chinese trainees, but it had begun accepting Vietnamese trainees recently. Because of China's rapid economic growth, fewer Chinese people wanted work in

Japan as a technical intern trainee. Xuan started working, and there were more Vietnamese trainees than Chinese trainees. As is usual in the garment industry, all the trainees were women. Under the TITP, technical intern trainees can work in agriculture, fishing, construction, food manufacturing, textile and clothing, machinery and metal, furniture manufacturing, printing, bookbinding, plastic molding, painting, welding, industrial packaging, paper container and cardboard box manufacturing, ceramic industrial product manufacturing, automobile maintenance, building cleaning, and nursing care (Organization for Technical Intern Training [OTIT] 2020). In this context, there is gendered job placement, such as with construction, which is a workplace for male technical intern trainees. Concerning the sewing sector, most technical intern trainees are women. Indeed, the women from Asian countries support Japan's sewing industry, which always faces the pressure of cost reduction, international competition, and labor shortages.

However, the sewing industry has long been subject to violations against labor codes and human rights, including long working hours and overtime pay below the minimum wage (Yasuda 2007, Kurematsu 2017, Sunai 2019). Some Vietnamese intermediary companies and Japanese supervising organizations do not want to dispatch technical intern trainees for the sewing sector because there are many problems, including long working hours, low wages, and underpay. Although not all companies receiving trainees in the sewing sector have problems, there are still issues with continued violations. Xuan was also facing various difficulties, and sooner than expected, she found herself in a challenging work situation.

The day after she arrived in Japan, Xuan stayed until after 3 p.m. to receive Japanese training. Then, she was required to work on a sewing machine until 3:00 a.m. the next morning. Generally, after arriving in Japan, technical intern trainees spend a month or so at the center of the supervisory organization to receive training in Japanese language, culture, and life, and after a month of training, they are assigned to their company. However, in her case, she started work right away during her "training" period and was made to work until 3:00 a.m. after her culture training.

The company's president and chairman of the supervising organization are one in the same. The supervising organization must supervise whether or not technical training is adequately carried out. In this situation, what kind of "supervision" is possible?

After the "training" period was over, Xuan's routine was to sit in front of the sewing machine and work from 8 a.m. until 3 a.m. She took a lunch break from 12 p.m. until 1 p.m. She would then work from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and have dinner from 5:00 p.m.

to 6:00 p.m. After dinner, they continued to work until 3 a.m. She worked around 17 hours a day. Also, she had only four days off in a month, at the most, three at the least. Her living environment was also a challenge. They lived in a dormitory set up by the company, a prefabricated shack with three bunk beds crammed into a space that did not have enough room. There was no private space, and it was not a comfortable place to live. There was no bathroom with a bathtub, and they had to wash in simple showers outside, taking turns using these showers. The kitchen and eating area was not clean. Even in the cold winter months, they were required to use these simple showers.
Xuan was also told by the company that the wage was 698 yen per hour. This was about the same as the minimum wage in the province where Xuan's company was located. However, after the rent and electricity were deducted from her salary, she only managed to earn between 80,000 and 90,000 yen per month because the company did not pay overtime. Xuan and her colleagues wondered why they were getting this little money for all their work, but there was no sufficient explanation from the company. In addition, there was a timecard in the factory, but Xuan and the other trainees were not allowed to punch it by themselves, so the manager had to punch it for them. Xuan kept a record of their working hours in a notebook. Unless they kept their records, there was nothing to record the correct hours worked. Also, the company did not want Xuan and the other trainees to go out on their own.

> *I once went to the nearby community center to learn about Japanese culture, but other than that, we had almost no contact with Japanese society, and the only thing we did was go shopping in supermarkets. The company was located far from any shops and other areas. Even going to the supermarket required a car. The company regularly provided a car, and the technical trainees would take it to the supermarket. We were not allowed to shop freely. (Xuan)*

They were verbally abused at work. They had no connection with Japanese society and worked long hours, so they had no time to learn Japanese, so Xuan and the other technical intern trainees could hardly understand Japanese. However, they understood the phrase "go back to Vietnam" (*Vietnam ni Kaere*) or "stupid" (*baka*) used by the company's staff.

In this situation, Xuan was distressed and looked for a solution. Finally, she used social networking services to talk to someone outside the company and connect with Yamada, a Japanese woman supporting technical intern trainees. Because technical intern trainees work during the day and because there are many technical interns who work long hours, they can only be interviewed at night or on holidays. Yamada has continued to do this on a volunteer basis. While incidents of human rights violations against technical interns are occurring all over the country, ordinary citizens like this Japanese woman are supporting them at the grassroots level, in addition to labor unions and lawyers who step in and help.

Upon being contacted, Yamada communicated with Xuan many times, interviewing her in detail about her working conditions, living conditions, wages, and other matters. Yamada interviewed Xuan about her working and living conditions and wages and informed the government agencies of what she was told. At one point, the government officers came to Xuan's company and investigated. As a result, the company reviewed the working hours and reduced them significantly. She used to work until 3 a.m., but after that, she could finish at 8 p.m.

However, even after the authorities came in, she was not paid for overtime. Moreover, although her working hours at the factory were temporarily shortened, she was again forced to work long overtime hours not long after the government officials came.

Thus, Xuan continued to appeal to the outside world to improve the situation and get back her unpaid wages. However, many of the trainees were willing to put up with the situation and continue working. Like Xuan, other technical intern trainees in the company also borrowed money to come to Japan; they had to repay their debts and send money to their families in the rural areas of Vietnam. Some of the technical intern trainees were mothers who left their children behind in their home villages. If the women come into conflict with the company, they could be forced to return home. No matter how difficult the situation is, some women want to avoid confrontation with the company as much as possible.

Xuan thought long and hard about the situation, but she decided to leave the company. Then, one night, she left the company's dormitory alone to look for another job in the informal labor market. It had been more than a year since she came to Japan.

For Xuan, it was an escape from the exploitative working and living environment with its long hours working, abusive language, and low wages. Simultaneously, it was a way for her to show resistance. The Japanese government uses the term "disappearance" to describe a technical intern trainee running away from a company. However, the reality facing the technical intern trainees is not as simple as these words suggest.

4.3 Male Technical Intern Trainee in Japan: Exploitation and the Role of Son

Another essential factor to consider when examining the background of migrant workers who run away is the country of origin. As pointed out by Ogaya (2016), the phenomenon of migration is a transnational process, and the influence of the country of origin is also essential.

The case of Thanh is a testament to this. In addition to the burden of the predeparture costs and low wages in Japan, Thanh's case shows that the lack of a strong social security system in Vietnam and the gender role of the "son" in a patriarchal society can form the background of running away.

Born in northern Vietnam in the late 1980s, Thanh studied mechanical skills at a two-year vocational school after graduating from high school. He then went to work at an electronic parts factory set up in Vietnam by a Taiwanese company. His salary at the time was only 5 million VND a month.

> *Before I came to Japan, my family was in an exceedingly difficult financial situation, and I had no money. I decided to go abroad because I wanted to change my life while working and earning money to help my parents. (Thanh)*

At the time, Thanh's elder brother was working in South Korea. In addition, many of Thanh's relatives and friends in his home village had gone to work in Taiwan and Japan, so he received information about working overseas.

Initially, Thanh wanted to go to South Korea, as did his brother. South Korea's Employment Permit System (EPS) excludes intermediary companies, so the Vietnamese government directly sends out workers to South Korea. Furthermore, at the time, the period during which they could work was longer than in Japan, and it was possible to change companies within a specific range. However, migrant workers must take a Korean language exam to go to South Korea, and this is a high language barrier. Thus, Thanh ultimately decided to give up on going to South Korea and instead go to Japan.

Thanh paid a fee of 10 million VND (about US$500) to an independent intermediary (*nguoi moi gioi*) that introduced him to an intermediary company (company B) in Hanoi. The independent intermediary was a friend of his brother. He paid Company B 100 million VND (about US$5,000) as a commission. To raise the money, Thanh's family borrowed 80 million VND (about US$4,000). Some of Thanh's friends had paid

a fee of 200–300 million VND (US$10,000–15,000) for the labor migration to Japan, but the company's fee was cheaper in comparison. However, this fee was still a substantial financial burden for Thanh and his family.

Thanh came to Japan in 2014 and began working for a company in the Kanagawa Prefecture. The host company was a steel mill, and his work was iron processing. There were several other Vietnamese technical interns in the company.

The job ran from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with a one-hour break for lunch. In addition to a one-hour break for lunch, there was a 15-minute break in the morning and afternoon. Occasionally, there were days when they had to work overtime until 7:00 p.m. Their breaks were on weekends. The days off were Saturdays and Sundays, but he occasionally went to work on Saturdays as well. The hourly wage was 905 yen, which was the minimum wage in the Kanagawa Prefecture in 2015 (Kanagawa Labor Bureau 2019). The base salary was 134,000 yen, from which 65,000 yen was deducted every month for taxes, social insurance (pension and medical insurance), dormitory fees, utilities, and Wi-Fi fees. As a result, if he did not work overtime, his net income was only 69,000 yen per month. Working 30 to 40 hours of overtime a month, he would earn barely 100,000 yen a month. Each dormitory was a four-person room with a monthly dormitory fee of 30,000 yen per person. Despite having four people in a room, each person had to pay 37,000 yen a month for the dormitory, utilities, and Wi-Fi fees, totaling 148,000 yen a month. In addition to low wages, he also had debts. As a result, Thanh had to cut back on his monthly living expenses and spent almost nothing on anything except for food. The cost of food was only about 20,000 yen a month, and after paying this, he would only have 50,000 yen on hand. The Japanese employees received a bonus every year, but the technical intern trainees received only 10,000 yen twice a year. Thanh sent most of his salary to his family in Vietnam.

Low wages have been a problem for technical intern trainees. However, the technical intern trainees' situation could be described as a form of poverty. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare's Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions (2019), "the poverty line in Japan is 1.27 million yen per year for a single-person household in 2018."

Thanh's income was just below this poverty line. Moreover, this was the case even though he was working full-time. On top of that, he had to pay off his predeparture debt. The TITP also does not allow technical intern trainees to change companies.

After being forced to work for low wages and being unable to change companies, Thanh was struck by an unexpected event. His brother, who had returned from South Korea, was seriously injured in a traffic accident and spent two years in a general hospital in

Hanoi, where he was treated for his injuries. Because of this injury, his brother was unable to work. The cost of his medical treatment totaled 500 million VND.
Although social welfare system implementation is ongoing in Vietnam, there are still many people in Vietnam who are not covered by medical insurance. Thanh's brother also did not have medical insurance at the time of the accident. It was not until after the accident that Thanh's brother was covered by medical insurance.
Furthermore, Thanh explained that bribery of medical personnel was rampant in Vietnamese medical institutions. Although the official medical fees are not extremely high, the amount of money spent on bribes is high. Thanh's brother was hospitalized for as long as two years, and the amount of money he had to pay for treatment and bribes was half a billion VND. Even if his brother had spent all the money he had saved from working in South Korea and all of Thanh's earnings in Japan, it would not have been enough. For this reason, Thanh's family had to borrow money to cover the shortfall. Moreover, Thanh's brother had a wife and children, and Thanh's parents were elderly. Thanh was now burdened with debt for his brother's medical treatment and responsibility for his family's condition. In Vietnam, a son's role is being the breadwinner and creating family ties for the household. When the elder brother, or the "eldest son," was unable to fulfill his role as the breadwinner and cannot protect his family, his younger brother, Thanh, took over the role of the "eldest son," bearing the responsibility of supporting the family as the son, even though Thanh was single and young.
In the end, Thanh was troubled, but he finally decided to run away from the company. If he worked as an ordinary worker in Vietnam, he would not be able to pay back the 200 million VND debt, and he would also have to pay for his brother's care and his family's living expenses. However, Thanh could only earn 50,000 yen a month in Japan. Even if could pay the substantial predeparture fees, be separated from his family, cross the border into Japan, and work full time, he would not gain much economically.
Under these circumstances, Thanh ultimately chose to run away from the company. There was no way to solve the problems he faced except to work in a more profitable place, even if he had to abandon his legal residency status. Thanh's case suggests that the burden of his predeparture fees and low wages in Japan, the underdeveloped social welfare system in Vietnam, and the gender roles for men in rural families were all related to his escape decision.

4.4 Male Technical Intern Trainee in Japan: Physical and Psychological Violence and *Ijime*

Physical/psychological violence and *ijime* (bullying) against technical intern trainees in the male-dominated workplace has existed for a long time. Female technical intern trainees are also frequently the victims of this violence, but male technical intern trainees in particular have issued many complaints of violence. Under the TITP, if a company commits a violation against regulations, the technical intern trainees can be transferred to another company in the same occupation. However, it is not easy to record evidence of violence on video or with a recorder. Violence exists in an easily understandable form, but it can also take the form of verbal abuse and *ijime*, making it difficult to record in evidence. It is also tricky for technical intern trainees to consult with external organizations because of the lack of information and language barriers. At the same time, because they are burdened with debt from their predeparture expenses, many technical intern trainees are obligated to repay this debt, so they try to put up with the problems and continue working to pay off their debt.

However, violence, verbal abuse, *ijime*, and power harassment can be emotionally distressing for technical intern trainees who live in dormitories and work in a single workplace and from where they cannot go out as they wish because of a lack of money. Many trainees live in the rural and remote areas in Japan; thus, they are geographically isolated. In addition to their predeparture debts and low wages, the violence forms a backdrop further pushing technical intern trainees to run away from the workplace.

The story of Huy shows the problematic situation of how violence in the male-dominant workplace can form the background of running away.

Huy was born in the mid-1990s in the northern Vietnamese province of Hung Yen. After graduating from high school, he worked for a local company that dealt with construction materials. His monthly salary was four million VND. His parents also ran a food store, and although the family was not wealthy, they could make ends meet. Even so, Huy still longed to work abroad. In particular, he was drawn to Japan.

> *Japan is a very developed country. That is why I wanted to find a chance to work in Japan, earn money, and save for my future.*
> *(Huy)*

He sought out an intermediary company in Hanoi on the Internet and paid this company 250 million VND as a commission. At the same time, the intermediary company asked Huy to provide a deposit of 100 million VND. The deposit would be returned upon the contract's expiration but not if he ran away from the company during the contract period. Huy's family was self-employed and had a relatively better income, but they could not afford such a large amount of money, so they borrowed 250 million VND from the state-owned Agricultural and Rural Development Bank of Vietnam (Agribank).

After three months of studying Japanese at the intermediary company's predeparture training center, Huy went to Japan and began working for a company in the Hokuriku region. At the time, he felt so hopeful.

However, he was greeted with a grim reality. His workday was supposed to start at 8:00 a.m. and end at 5:00 p.m. and come with a lunch break. However, in reality, he often worked until nigh. In some peak seasons, his monthly overtime was about 100 hours. Furthermore, no matter how much overtime he worked, he was not paid for his overtime. His basic salary was 140,000 yen per month. After taxes, social insurance, and a rent of 30,000 yen has been subtracted from this amount, the remainder was only about 100,000 yen per month. From this 100,000 yen, he only spent 20,000 yen on food and other living expenses and sent the rest back home to pay off his pretrip debt expenses. However, it took him a year and a half to pay off the debt because his income was not that high.

Huy's problems were not limited to his salary. His boss was a strict man, often shouting at him and telling him to work extra hours. Sometimes, the boss threatened them with going back to Vietnam. Moreover, he was sometimes hit by other Japanese employees. Huy was petrified. However, he could not talk to the police or the supervising organization because if he complained about the violence and was sent back to Vietnam, he would not pay back the debt he owed. He did not think his friends, who were technical trainees working for large companies, experienced much discrimination or violence. Nevertheless, many of his friends who worked in small companies as technical intern trainees were beaten and shouted at.

He had come to Japan longing for progress, even borrowing money to do so. However, what Huy was confronted with was unpaid overtime, violence, verbal abuse, and threats. Moreover, he had no one to talk to about this. Indeed, many technical interns do not have an outside source of advice. Some technical intern trainees seek advice from supporters such as labor unions, but those who do so are few in number. The technical

intern trainees who can reach out to their supporters are the lucky ones. There are cases where trainees do not know where to go for help when problems arise, and many of them are afraid of being forced to return to their home country during their technical internship for fear of being in debt. Under the laws, supervising organizations are responsible for supervising the companies they are training to ensure there are no problems in taking care of the technical intern trainees. However, some supervising organizations are on the companies' side and do not protect the technical trainees. In some terrible cases, the supervisory body and the company's representative receiving the trainees turn out to be the same person. Under such circumstances, there is no such thing as supervision. Huy also had no one to talk to outside the company.

Because he is a man, he worked in the construction sector in Japan as a technical intern trainee under the TITP, where most workers are men and where masculine behavior can be seen. He was then burdened with unpaid overtime, low wages, violence, verbal abuse, and *ijime* at the company. After much deliberation, Huy decided to leave the company to look for another job with better working and living conditions in the informal labor market. Thus, Huy's case suggests that debt for predeparture expenses, unpaid overtime, low wages, gender-based violence, and *ijime* in the workplace were intertwined to construct the background that pushed him to run away.

5. Running Away as Resistance and Runaway Networks

This section discusses how migrant workers use the networks that facilitate and condition migrant workers' runaway and illegalization by mobilizing their capital. Even if migrant workers want to run away, it is not easy to do so. They do not know the local language, culture, and labor market conditions. They also lack sufficient local human connections as domestic workers and technical intern trainees, who are faced with multilayered deprivation situations. Thus, this section discusses how Vietnamese migrant workers in Taiwan and Japan fled by mobilizing their capital to realize runaway and illegalization as a resistance within the migration infrastructures.

5.1 Commercial and Social Capital of Runaway Networks in Taiwan: Regaining Profits and Continued Exploitation

As mentioned earlier, Huong left her employer's house six months after she started working in Taiwan. To make the "escape" happen, Huong first called a Vietnamese

friend in Taiwan who introduced her to a Vietnamese broker. This Vietnamese broker gave Huong information about the Taiwanese broker. The Taiwanese broker introduced Huong to an employer in Taipei, and she was able to get a job as a live-in domestic worker again without legal status.

However, the second employer, a woman who had lost her husband, was in a bad financial situation and could not afford to pay Huong's wages. The Taiwanese broker said the employer would pay 900,000 VND per month for Huong, but the Taiwanese agent suddenly disappeared and could not be contacted. After one month of working at this employer's house without pay, the employer introduced Huong to another employer. At the third employer's house, Huong received more than 900,000 VND per month, which was more than the wage she had earned as a legal migrant domestic worker in the first employer's house. No commission was charged for the work because there were no intermediaries between them. Even though Huong's residency status was now illegal, "running away" brought economic advantages to her. Subsequently, Huong was referred by her third employer to her next employer. After that, Huong worked at her fourth employer's house for a total of 22 months, doing all the domestic work and selling poultry at her employer's butcher shop in the market. The wage was increased to 10 million VND per month. Her salary was 500,000 VND per month when she worked a domestic workers with legal status. After she ran away, her salary increased to more than 500,000 VND . However, while working at the fourth employer's home, Huong was taken into custody by the Taiwanese authorities because of her illegal status. She was discovered when selling chicken at the market. Nonetheless, she sent her family a total of 100 million VND by working in the informal labor market. Despite the illegalization of her status, she achieved her initial goal of earning money and sending it back to her family.

During this process, she first tried to find work after her escape by being introduced to a Vietnamese friend's intermediary. In doing so, it can be said that she accessed the intermediary by mobilizing her network. This intermediary was referred work after Huong paid a commission, which meant that Huong mobilized the economic capital. Nevertheless, the Taiwanese broker later disappeared, and she did not get an income-generating job. After that, her employer introduced her to the next assignment, again using her social capital. Huong then exercised her agency while mobilizing the capital necessary to access the runaway network.

In another example, My Anh worked for six months in her first employer's home before moving to work in another employer's home after the older person she was caring for

died. Two years and three months after she began working at the second employer's home, she ran away and became an undocumented migrant worker.

During this time, My Anh was introduced to a Taiwanese intermediary by her friend, a Vietnamese woman who worked as a domestic worker in Taiwan. The Taiwanese mediator offered My Anh a job at a restaurant. My Anh did not want to work as a domestic worker anymore, so she chose the restaurant job.

The intermediary collected a monthly "commission" from her monthly salary of 12.5 million VND in the restaurant, so she ended up with a take-home pay of 900,000 VND. Even with the commission, the income was more than that of domestic work under legal residency status. My Anh invested economic capital in commissions, and with the help of intermediaries, she was able to "escape" and earn a higher income than before.

The runaway or illegalization of migrant workers can be seen as a paradoxical migration process that encompasses the contradictory elements of exploitation by intermediaries and then an improvement of economic conditions. This paradoxical migration process is intertwined with the migration infrastructure between Vietnam and Taiwan, the exploitative employment conditions faced by live-in migrant domestic and care workers, the networks that encourage running away, and the state of the Taiwanese labor market, which includes migrant workers with an illegal residence status.

5.2 Expanding the "Illegal" Labor Market in Japan

Running away in Japan shows the more complicated and commercialized informal economy in the country than in Taiwan because of the size of the population and the economy.

With Xuan, a female technical intern trainee, her story shows that the informal economy and the expansion of the illegality industry absorb runaway migrant workers. At the same time, the involvement of technology, commercial, humanitarian and social aspects relate to the runaway's trajectory.

One day, Xuan found an intermediary company on the Internet through SNS and contacted the company. The company offered jobs to foreign nationals who had no legal resident status, such as technical intern trainees who had run away from their employers.

When looking at the routes and means by which technical intern trainees who have escaped from companies find a job, some of them use a broker system consisting of intermediary companies and individual brokers in this informal economy. Those economic entities or individuals in the informal economy consist of both Japanese and

foreign nationals and provide jobs, accommodations, and other needed things, such as fake passports and fake Zairyu Cards (residence cards) for migrant workers who do not have legal status. Thus, I call this informal system as the illegality industry.

The intermediary company introduced her to a job at a food processing company in the Kanto region near Tokyo. Xuan worked at the food processing company six days a week for eight hours a day. Vietnamese, Filipinos, Indonesians, and other foreigners were working there, so for this company, foreign workers were indispensable.

Although Xuan finally arrived at her new job, she soon realized the reality. The company's salary was initially supposed to be about 200,000 yen a month. However, the intermediary company deducted about 70,000 yen from her paycheck to cover the dormitory fees, utilities, transportation, and uniforms. After the deduction, Xuan kept only about 120,000–130,000 yen a month.

The migrant infrastructures between Japan and Vietnam create debt-laden workers; simultaneously, the runway networks of migrant workers also squeeze money from these undocumented migrant workers. Ironically, however, when working as a technical intern trainee under a regular resident status, she worked long hours until 3 a.m. without taking a break but earned only about 80,000–90,000 yen. Even if the intermediary company after she ran away charged her a monthly fee of 70,000 yen, her working conditions and income were better than when she was a technical intern trainee with legal status. Xuan spent 20,000 yen on food and other living expenses and sent the remaining 100000–110000 yen to her family in Vietnam. Her family used the money to pay off the debts she had taken on to come to Japan as a technical intern trainee.

After working for the first company for several months, Xuan was sent to another company. It was also a food processing factory, but its working hours were 12 hours, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. The monthly salary was about 200,000 yen, and the intermediary company deducted 70,000 yen for dormitory, utilities, transportation, and uniforms, and she could again keep around 120,000–130,000 yen.

The intermediary company introduced the job to the technical intern trainees who had fled. It was unknown if the two employers knew Xuan's legal status. For the other technical intern trainees who had escaped, they were hired directly by companies, not through intermediary companies. The employers knew that they were working outside their visa status.

On the other hand, for the two companies she worked for, being a young, foreign worker with a clear goal of earning money would have been a welcome presence due to the labor shortage. Foreign laborers, including technical intern trainees, international

students, Japanese-Brazilians, and foreigners married to Japanese individuals, have long been an indispensable part of Japan's industrial sectors, including for small and medium enterprises. Both before and after running away, Xuan continued to be exploited by the broker system, and as a result, she supported the Japanese industry from the bottom up.

One day, however, something happened to Xuan, who had been working for a food company. On that day, an immigration investigation was carried out in the dormitory provided by her temp agency. Many foreigners lived in the dormitory, and the Immigration Bureau of Japan conducted a crackdown on foreigners without resident status. At that time, Xuan was not there, but when she learned that the Immigration Bureau had arrested dormitory residents, she began to worry that she would be detained someday.

At the time, Xuan had not finished paying off the debt she had borrowed for the commission paid to the agency before coming to Japan. There was her sick mother and siblings going to school she had to worry about, so she had to make some money for her family.

However, Xuan could not overcome her anxiety. One day, she left the dormitory and ran into an acquaintance's room. Moreover, she had no choice but to live there and hide. She still owed the commission she paid to the agency when she came to Japan, and she had to send money to her sickly mother and younger siblings in her hometown.

What happened to Xuan after that? Although she "escaped" from a company she had worked for as a technical intern and fled to another place, she could not give up her unpaid wages at the sewing company where she worked as a technical intern trainee. Then, she found out about a labor union that supported foreign laborers, including technical interns, and rushed over there.

The union called for collective bargaining with the company and the governing body, seeking remedies for violations of the Labour Standards Law, including long working hours and unpaid overtime that came with the risk of death from overwork, poor living conditions, collection of periodic dormitory fees, numerous irregularities in violation of the Technical Intern Training Law, and serious human rights violations. They were also able to get financial support from the local Catholic community, which works with trade unions. For technical interns who are protected by their supporters, including labor unions, it is essential not only to negotiate with the company but also to make a living. Again, technical intern trainees lose their jobs and homes once they leave the company. Xuan lived at her friend's house, but she had run out of living expenses by the time she

contacted the labor union and was in dire straits. Meanwhile, the local Catholic community supported Xuan in her daily life by providing her with some money.

Although the company and the supervising organization initially did not agree to collective bargaining, the labor union's persistent efforts resulted in the company and supervising organization apologizing to Xuan and paying her unpaid overtime months after starting collective bargaining. Xuan finally regained her rights. However, she spent a long time recovering those rights, and there are only a few people like her who can reach these support organizations.

What emerges from Huy's and Thanh's subsequent runaway trajectories is how vital the informal labor market is to the technical intern trainees who flee. Simultaneously, it is clear that technical intern trainees continue to contribute to Japan's industrial sector, even after they have run away and become undocumented migrant workers. Moreover, the existence of a Japanese labor market that swallows up undocumented migrant workers is a factor that encourages migrant workers to escape and become undocumented, allowing them to stay after they have escaped.

After deciding to flee the company, Huy got on the train one day. Distressed, he headed farther away, with no place to live or work next. Many of the interviewed technical intern trainees who had run away from their companies had planned to find a new place to live or work before running away. Because it is difficult for foreigners to find housing and work, they followed a network of friends and acquaintances, including those from their hometown or intermediaries to secure housing and jobs. They mobilize their accumulated social-related capital and economic capital to make their escape possible.

In contrast, migrant workers like Huy are so discouraged that they leave the company with no destination in mind. Usually, it is the supervising organization's job to take care of the life and work problems of technical intern trainees working in Japan. However, in reality, there are many cases where the supervising organizations do not support the technical intern trainees. Many of the technical intern trainees have no connection with local Japanese society. They are filled with stress and anxiety and leave the company with no destination in mind.

Huy took the train and eventually ended up at a station in another part of the country and decided to stay at a guesthouse in the area. During this period, he contacted a friend in Vietnam in an attempt to find a place to work in Japan. His friend put him in touch with another Vietnamese individual living in Japan, which eventually led to him finding another job. The network of Vietnamese people across the border was the key to his job opportunity. However, it took him several months to find a new job.

Huy found a job in a hotel. The hospitality industry in Japan is in dire need of workers. The hotel he worked at was also short on staff, so he worked various jobs, from reception to room cleaning, washing dishes, and cooking. He worked from 9 a.m. to around 8 p.m., excluding an hour lunch break. There was so much work that he sometimes worked 17 hours a day, especially during the busy winter season. He had four days off a month but no time off for busy seasons. The work was hard, but the hotel president was kind to Huy and taught him how to work carefully. The president knew that Huy was a technical intern trainee who had escaped, but he treated him without discrimination and even offered him a room in the hotel to stay for free.

Huy was paid 1,000 yen per hour, but his monthly salary was in the 180,000–300,000 yen range because of the long hours he worked. It was a tough job, but even so, Huy's treatment had improved. Although fleeing from the company where the apprenticeship took place carries the risk of losing one's residency status, it can be a solution to improving how one is treated.

However, some of the technical intern trainees who fled were also exploited at their next workplace, while others returned to their home countries without finding a workplace. In a way, after fleeing, it is up to luck what happens. Nevertheless, the reality is that for the technical intern trainees who face debt, low wages, violence, and verbal abuse, escaping is seen as a way to solve their problems.

From the hotel's point of view, it was difficult to secure workers because of the shortage of labor, but the hotel must have been grateful to Huy for him being a young worker who was willing to work long hours.

Huy worked hard at the hotel and built a good relationship with the president, but he decided to leave Japan. His parents told him to return to Vietnam and get married. In Vietnam, where the Confucian-influenced patriarchal family system is essential, marriage is vital for young people. Moreover, parents' opinions are crucial in the family. Huy explained his parents' wishes to the president and decided to return to Vietnam. The president of the hotel understood his position. Huy turned himself into the immigration authorities and spent about a month at a friend's house in another province before returning to Vietnam. He moved to the friend's house because he "felt that if the Japanese immigration office knows that he had been working at that hotel, it will cause trouble for the boss." Huy has since returned to Vietnam, but he is still communicating with the hotel's president.

The president was kind, and he said he would come to Vietnam if he had the chance. The president wants me to go back. I want to go abroad again. It is not easy to find a good job in Vietnam. It is more comfortable, and the income is high abroad. Next, I want to go to Korea or Germany. (Thanh)

When Huy worked as a technical intern trainee with the legal status of residence, he was underpaid and subjected to violence and verbal abuse. By fleeing, he was able to build relationships with Japanese people. Moreover, the experience of working and earning money after escaping was something Huy appreciated. That is why he wanted to go abroad again.

In contrast, what kind of trajectory did Thanh follow in his escape? One day, with a friend's help, Thanh snuck out of the company and arrived at a town in the Kanto region. Although Huy left the company with no idea what to do, Thanh had secured a network of people to escape from the company in advance. Because the number of Vietnamese residing in Japan has increased, a Vietnamese network has been formed in Japan. Here, Thanh succeeded in mobilizing his social capital to flee.

Thanh paid 50,000 yen to an intermediary who introduced jobs to the technical intern trainees who had fled the company, and he found a job at a food processing factory. He got a job as an escaped technical intern trainee in exchange for money or mobilizing his economic capital.

Thanh then began working at a food company. His job at the new company was a 12 hour night shift, from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. He also worked Saturdays and only had four days off a month. Moreover, the pay was 1,000 yen per hour. The Japanese workers were paid between 1,300 and 1,400 yen per hour, but Thanh was paid less than the Japanese employees. As in Huy's case, Thanh's employers knew about his background.

The hourly wage was still higher than when he was working full time as a technical intern. At the same time, he worked long hours, and his monthly salary was about 280,000 to 290,000 yen. After paying for rent, utilities (15,000 yen), and food (50,000 yen), he had about 210,000 to 220,000 yen left. Although the working conditions were harsher than those of the Japanese, with lower hourly wages and longer hours, Thanh's earnings had improved significantly from the 69,000 yen he had earned while working as a technical intern trainee.

His departure from Japan came not after he was ready, as in Huy's case, but instead suddenly. One day, when he was about to go to work, he was detained by the authorities

near the company. Then, after being detained for 10 days, Thanh was sent back to Vietnam.

6. Factors That Keep People Working After They Escape

It is also important to note the factors that kept people working after they have fled. What factors enabled these individuals to continue working with irregular status after running, and what factors helped them work with an irregular status? The case study suggests that the migrant workers had an economically motivated desire to continue working after becoming undocumented. The migrant workers had strong economic motivations before as migrant workers because they chose to go to work abroad even though they had to borrow money to pay for the high predeparture costs and agency fees. On the other hand, the wages for live-in domestic/caregiver workers and technical intern trainees were not extraordinarily high came with various difficulties, including low wages, underpay, long working hours, violence, discrimination, and harassment. Under such circumstances, running away became one option for migrant workers to overcome the situation, even if their residence status had become illegal. Furthermore, working illegally after fleeing was an opportunity to achieve their economic goals.
The "enabling factor" for to work illegally seems to be the existence of an "informal labor market" involving intermediaries who arrange migrant workers with an illegal status into various workplaces and employers who employ migrant workers with an illegal tatus. The "informal labor market" provides work opportunities for migrant workers with an illegal status. However, informal migrant workers risk becoming weak negotiators with employers because of their residency status, foreignness, and familiarity, especially in the Taiwanese situation. In addition, if an intermediary comes between an informal migrant worker and the employer, a "commission" is collected from the informal migrant worker's wages. Thus, the informal labor market benefits employers and intermediaries rather than just the escaping domestic workers, which is why this set-up exists.
Moreover, although the "informal labor market" is ostensibly a problem for the Vietnamese, Japanese, and Taiwanese governments, it indirectly underpins these governments' migrant labor policies. For the Vietnamese government, its citizens working in an informal residency status risks damaging these workers' home countries' reputations. However, even if these migrant workers' status is undocumented, they continue to work and earn an income, which they remit to their household or take back with them when they return home. Households of origin can use this cash to cover

living expenses, health care, education, house construction, and small businesses. Spending this money on the health and education sectors has the effect of compensating for the inadequacies of Vietnam's social welfare. Spending on consumer durables, such as daily necessities and on houses and motorcycles, in turn support Vietnam's consumer market. Regardless of whether the government intends to have this effect or not, workers, whether legally or illegally, are indirectly compensating for the inadequacies of the Vietnamese government's policies and support the consumption sector.

On the other hand, for the Taiwanese and Japanese governments, undocumented migrant workers are targeted in crackdowns, and the governments suffer the cost of performing these crackdowns. On the other hand, undocumented migrant workers, such as the research subjects, who continue to work after running away, support Taiwan's and Japan's economic and care sectors.

The Vietnamese, Japanese, and Taiwanese governments experience the risks and benefits of the presence of undocumented migrant workers under the expansion of labor migration and the expansion of the migrant infrastructures as a result of the state's policies, as well as the changes in the sending and receiving societies because of the development of labor migration.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined the background of running away, the network, and the trajectory of a runaway by taking up the case of Vietnamese migrant workers who entered Taiwan and Japan from rural areas of Vietnam under regular residence status.

We can see that first, the background of migrant workers in the premigration period, the formation of the migration infrastructures, and the development of a migration industry based on the sending and receiving policies of the Vietnamese, Taiwanese, and Japanese governments along with the development of commercial intermediary companies has led to high predeparture costs financed by debt.

These migrant workers grew up in rural villages in the post-Vietnam War era and after Doi Moi, when Vietnam was experiencing international isolation and national life was impoverished. They could not acquire sufficient educational and professional backgrounds, making it difficult for them to earn an income while farming in their origin villages. Although they lived through the economic challenges of the postwar era and after Doi Moi in Vietnam and the social changes that came with this time, they had not fully benefited from an era of economic growth. As a result of the Vietnamese,

Taiwanese, and Japanese governments' policies on migrant labor and the migrant industry's resulting expansion, they borrowed money to pay expensive predeparture fees to an intermediary company and then traveled to Taiwan and Japan.

Although the migrant workers worked in Taiwan and Japan with a legal status, they faced long working hours, harassment, violence, *ijime*, and low wages. In their desire to change this situation, running away emerged as an option because these legal migrant workers cannot change their employers freely. The background for "escape" was not only caused by individual reasons but was developed through a combination of the historical, social, and economic environment of the rural villages in Vietnam, the infrastructure for migration between Vietnam, Japan and Taiwan, and the employment conditions of the live-in domestic workers and the technical intern trainees.

The existence of a network that encouraged "flight" and subsequent employment helped these workers mobilize their capitals to access this network. After working in a labor market without legal status, many of the interviewed workers were taken into custody and placed in detention centers before being deported.

In looking at the process of motivation for "escape," the implementation of "escape," the subsequent undocumented work status, and detention and deportation by the authorities, what emerges is that the infrastructure of migration between Vietnam and Taiwan produces migrant domestic and care workers who flee from their place of work.

On the other hand, even when working without legal status, the interviewed women could remit or save their Taiwanese earnings back home. Regardless of whether the migrant worker's status was formal or informal, the migrant workers' remittances positively affected the Vietnamese economy. This also provided cheap labor to the Taiwanese labor market and helped reduce the Taiwanese government's care budget. Also, it contributed to the expansion of the migrant industry, which has spread in both countries.

On the other hand, in "fleeing" and subsequently working without legal status, the specific risks to which Vietnamese migrant workers are subjected to are greater than those of the state, intermediary companies, and employers involved in the migration infrastructure. Employers who employ foreign workers on an informal basis are subject to fines. In contrast, if arrested, migrant workers are subject to forced departure from the country and restrictions on re-entry, in addition to paying fines. Although the state, intermediary agencies, and employers have been forced to deal with "escape" and working in informal status, sometimes including crackdowns, much of the responsibility for "escape" and illegally working rests on the migrant worker. For example, among the

stakeholders in the Vietnam–Taiwan care sector, migrant women face the most risks than other stakeholders when working illegally because of "fleeing." The challenges of low wages, long working hours, unfair exploitation, harassment, custody, and deportation always fall exclusively on migrant domestic workers.

Regarding migrant workers taking on the responsibility for care, this should not be a simple "outsourcing of care." Instead, amid the widening economic gap between developing and developed countries in the expanding global economy, the expansion of policy-driven for-profit migrant industries, and the commercialization/depublicization of the care sector, attention should be paid to the aspects that lead to the cycle of exploitation and disempowerment of the more fragile actors. To break out of the difficult situation caused by the structure, some workers have chosen to "escape." Alternatively, it could be said that these workers were forced to flee. They mobilized their capitals to access networks that encouraged them to "escape" and work in an informal residence status. In the Taiwan and the Japan case, it was, as Scott (1989) puts it, women and men's resistance to the Vietnam–Taiwan and the Vietnam–Japan migration infrastructures and the buying and selling of care or cheap and vulnerable workers on the global market.

However, as the women and men fled and worked in the informal labor market, they were again subjected to exploitation as workers with little bargaining power and were taken into custody and ultimately deported by the Taiwanese and Japanese authorities. These women and men were able to "escape" by attempting to exert their agency, resist the migration infrastructures, and then continue to work without legal status in Taiwan and Japan for a while, earning an income. However, their economic gains were small gains after other stakeholders skimmed some of their profits.

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