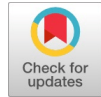# The Competency Level of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia

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Abstract:- Poor competency of construction workers in the construction industry is considered one of the most discouraging human resource issues in developing countries. This paper reports an investigation into the competency level of Indonesian migrant workers in the Malaysian construction industry. Data from this research was collected from the survey questionnaires with 300 Indonesian migrant workers. Results indicated that the levels of knowledge, skill and attitude among Indonesian migrant workers towards the trades in the construction industry only showed moderate levels. Suggestions for ways to overcome skill gap among Indonesian migrant workers were given in order to enhance their competency level in the construction industry.

Keywords: Competency, Indonesian Migrant Workers

I. INTRODUCTION

ASEAN economic cooperation began with the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 which among its objectives is to strengthen the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in Southeast Asia in addition to ensuring the national development towards peace and progress. ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) involved all ASEAN countries. The rationale behind this is that all ASEAN countries can enjoy equal prosperity and well-being while reducing the income inequality between the rich and the poor. The implementation of free market in Southeast Asia, also known as ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was started in 2015. According to Wangke (2014), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is the cooperation between ASEAN countries in setting up a free trade cooperation alliance in enhancing the competitiveness of the regional economics. The implementation of the AEC in 2015 has made Southeast Asia a free trade area among member states.

The cooperation between ASEAN countries in the context of economics will facilitate a free flow of goods, services and also labour between countries. In the context of workforce, ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) encourages professional or skilled manpower to meet the needs of the ASEAN market. Even though the ASEAN market only focus on the needs of the professional workforce in eight major industries of the doctor, nurse, dentist, architect, surveyor, accountant, engineer and tourism, but the workforce in the construction industry is also seen as a sector in need of skilled labour. This stems from the fact that the construction industry sub-sectors exert a strong influence on the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) for the ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, especially in the long-term. While in Malaysia and Indonesia, the construction industry sub-sectors are also important contributors to the country's GDP growth in the short-term (Md Tahir et al., 2009).

In a meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on December 15, 1997, ASEAN member states had agreed to ensure the success of the ASEAN Vision 2020, which aimed, inter alia, at improving the quality of human resources, economy, well-being and society through regional cooperation and through mutually beneficial cooperation among member states. Data from the ASEAN labour indicated that only about two per cent from 300 million workforce of ASEAN were categorised as professional manpower in eight major industries while the rest were categorised as semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Therefore, in the face of a free market in Southeast Asia of more than 500 million people, all parties should adhere to improve the competency level of human resources.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Competency

In accordance with the LOMA Competency Dictionary (1998), the definition of competency is the subjective aspects of an employee which enables him to achieve a level of excellent work. Here, the subjective aspects need to be identified first before it can lead a person to become a required skilled worker. Yet, Shippmann et al. (2000) defined competency as the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and other individual characteristics, also known as KSAOs. Here, individual characteristics refer to the motivation, personality traits, beliefs, values and interests. Moulton (2003) explained the meaning of competency varies across the organisation and individual. For organisation, competency can be defined as the ability of distinguishing technical organisation with competitors. While for the individual, competency is meant by the components of the knowledge, skills and abilities that affect performance. As a result of these three components, this is in a position to assess the level of competency of an employee.

Hoffmann (1999) identified two components of competency: (1) the result or the type of training that is also known as skill level; and (2) input or basic elements that need to achieve the level of skill. In line with input or basic elements component, Jackson et al. (2012) identifying domain competency with skills and knowledge required to fill a position that paid his wages.

B. Competency Model

According to Dubois and Rothwell (2004), the competency model not only can be used to explain the attitude needed for a worker but also to identify the appropriate competency in line with their job scope, as follows:

a) Knowledge

Possess the knowledge in the construction industry, for example in fixing steel, laying brick, concreting, plastering and so on. In the meantime, understand the regulations and laws that must be complied with when working in Malaysia. Employees should also be required to master the basic knowledge that is reading, counting and writing.

b) Skill

A workforce skills test includes fixing steel, laying brick, concreting, plastering and so on. The study also intends to identify what types of skills are in great demand in order to be the focus of the workforce in Indonesia. Odusami (2002) defined skills as the ability to perform the job well or better than normal. This also means the ability to transfer the knowledge to action.

c) Attitude

Attitude that covers in this study includes the attitude of workers when they performing their work in the construction site, attitude towards co-workers, aware of their safety in the workplace, attitude when using the building materials and so on.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this study, survey questionnaire was employed for data collection. Questions in the survey questionnaire were divided into three major sections. Section A is about the respondents' background, Section B consisted of questions which related to the job specification and Section C consisted of questions related to the job description.

The respondents of the survey questionnaires were Indonesian migrant workers who work in the Malaysian construction industry. Analysis of the data collected from the survey questionnaire was conducted by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) (Version 20, SPSS Inc., Chicago, USA). Descriptive analysis was used to determine the levels of knowledge, skill, and attitude among Indonesian migrant workers towards the trades in the construction industry.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

An assessment was conducted to determine the Indonesian migrant workers' levels of knowledge, skill and attitude towards trades in the construction industry. Respondents were asked to rank their knowledge, skill and attitude by using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1: The Level of Knowledge among the Indonesian Migrant Workers

Knowledge	Bricklaying	Steel fixing	Carpentry	Concreting	Plastering	Infrastructure
Low	61 20.3%	67 22.3%	58 19.3%	59 19.7%	71 23.7%	116 38.7%
Moderate	146 48.7%	176 58.7%	137 45.7%	118 39.3%	139 46.3%	108 36.0%
High	93 31.0%	57 19.0%	105 35.0%	123 41.0%	90 30.0%	76 25.3%

Level indicator: 1.00 – 2.32 (Low); 2.33 – 3.66 (Moderate); 3.67 – 5.00 (High)

Table 1 presents the results of the level of knowledge among the Indonesian migrant workers. The findings indicated that most of the Indonesian migrant workers rated their level of knowledge in laying brick, fixing steel, carpentry and plastering as moderate while only concreting and infrastructure were rated as high and low.

Table 2: The Level of Skill among the Indonesian Migrant Workers

Skill	Bricklaying	Steel fixing	Carpentry	Concreting	Plastering	Infrastructure
Low	74 24.7%	81 27.0%	47 15.7%	63 21.0%	79 26.4%	92 30.7%
Moderate	150 50.0%	148 49.3%	161 53.6%	131 43.7%	157 52.3%	154 51.3%
High	76 25.3%	71 23.7%	92 30.7%	106 35.3%	63 21.0%	54 18.0%

Level indicator: 1.00 – 2.32 (Low); 2.33 – 3.66 (Moderate); 3.67 – 5.00 (High)

Table 2 displays the level of skill among the Indonesian migrant workers. The findings revealed that most of Indonesian migrant workers rated their level of skill as moderate in laying brick, fixing steel, carpentry, concreting, plastering as well as infrastructure.

Table 3: The Level of Attitude among the Indonesian Migrant Workers

Attitude	Bricklaying	Steel fixing	Carpentry	Concreting	Plastering	Infrastructure
Low	40 13.3%	43 14.3%	38 12.7%	35 11.7%	61 20.4%	27 9.0%
Moderate	53 17.7%	86 28.7%	66 22.0%	44 14.6%	73 24.3%	83 27.7%
High	207 69.0%	171 57.0%	196 65.3%	221 73.7%	165 55.0%	190 63.3%

Level indicator: 1.00 – 2.32 (Low); 2.33 – 3.66 (Moderate); 3.67 – 5.00 (High)

The findings demonstrated that most of Indonesian migrant workers rated their level of attitude as high in all types of trades. Table 3 shows the level of attitude among the Indonesian migrant workers.

Further analysis was undertaken to determine the mean and standard deviation scores of each trade under the levels of knowledge, skill and attitude. The results of the analysis were shown in Table 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Knowledge

No	Trade	Mean	SD
1	Bricklaying	3.12 (Moderate)	0.98288
2	Steel fixing	2.92 (Moderate)	0.84467
3	Carpentry	3.14 (Moderate)	0.96885
4	Concreting	3.23 (Moderate)	1.04812
5	Plastering	3.01 (Moderate)	1.05175
6	Infrastructure	2.76 (Moderate)	1.09154
	Average mean score	3.03 (Moderate)	

Mean score indicator: 1.00 – 2.32 (Low); 2.33 – 3.66 (Moderate); 3.67 – 5.00 (High)

Table 4 displays the mean and standard deviation scores of the six trades under the level of knowledge of Indonesian migrant workers. The result showed that the mean score of all the trades ranged from 2.76 to 3.23, which indicated that the score as moderate. The result also indicated that concreting mean score (mean=3.23) was the highest and infrastructure mean score (mean=2.76) was the lowest among the six trades. As a whole, Indonesian migrant workers showed moderate level of knowledge towards trades in the construction industry.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Skill

No	Trade	Mean	SD
1	Bricklaying	3.01 (Moderate)	0.93440
2	Steel fixing	2.92 (Moderate)	1.03728
3	Carpentry	3.15 (Moderate)	0.90700
4	Concreting	3.19 (Moderate)	1.09841
5	Plastering	2.89 (Moderate)	1.04262
6	Infrastructure	2.81 (Moderate)	0.96408
	Average mean score	3.00 (Moderate)	

Mean score indicator: 1.00 – 2.32 (Low); 2.33 – 3.66 (Moderate); 3.67 – 5.00 (High)

Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of the six trades under the level of skill of Indonesian migrant workers. The findings suggested that concreting (mean=3.19) has the highest mean score among all types of trades. The second highest mean score showed in carpentry (mean=3.15), followed by bricklaying (mean=3.01) and steel fixing (mean=2.92). The mean score for plastering (mean=2.89) and infrastructure (mean=2.81) recorded the lowest. Overall, the findings also showed that the skill levels of all trades showed moderate levels.

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Attitude

No	Trade	Mean	SD
1	Bricklaying	3.68 (High)	0.97933
2	Steel fixing	3.55 (Moderate)	1.04675
3	Carpentry	3.67 (High)	0.99614
4	Concreting	3.80 (High)	1.01552
5	Plastering	3.42 (Moderate)	1.10109
6	Infrastructure	3.66 (Moderate)	0.95634
	Average mean score	3.63 (Moderate)	

Mean score indicator: 1.00 – 2.32 (Low); 2.33 – 3.66 (Moderate); 3.67 – 5.00 (High)

Table 6 reports the mean and standard deviation scores of the six trades under the level of attitude of Indonesian migrant workers. The result showed that the mean score of all the trades ranged from 3.42 to 3.80, which indicated that the scores were between moderate to high. The result also indicated that concreting mean score (mean=3.80) was the highest and plastering mean score (mean=3.42) was the lowest.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that the levels of knowledge, skill, and attitude among Indonesian migrant workers towards the trades in the construction industry were shown moderate levels. Hence, it can be concluded that the competency level of Indonesian migrant workers in the construction industry is satisfactory although there are a few parts need to be strengthened.

Based on the results obtained, the authorities can require the Indonesian migrant workers to attend courses or skill training programmes. This is because skills upgrading is an alternate way to upgrade the existing level of competency among the Indonesian migrant workers. The authorities can cooperate with skill institutes in organising the workshops or courses to improve the skills among Indonesian migrant workers. The skills of Indonesian migrant workers should always upgrade from time to time.

Moreover, provide assistance for the Indonesian migrant workers who wish to upgrade their skills is also very important. The authorities can offer more free or low fee courses to those who wish to improve their skills. In addition, Indonesia can also collaborate with countries that need Indonesian migrant workers in order to improve their existing level of competency. For example, countries that require Indonesian migrant workers can provide complimentary skill training programmes to the Indonesian migrant workers before giving them to come to their countries. Training like this seems to help the Indonesian migrant workers to adapt quickly to new working environments and make sure the smooth running of their jobs in other countries.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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