

The Transformation of *Kizukai* Habitus on Asian Trainee in Japan: Striving and Competition of Labor Market in ASEAN

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Abstract

In the 1990s, Japan faced a severe economic downturn known as the "Lost Decade." To address labor shortages and strengthen economic and political ties with developing nations, the Japanese government has initiated a trainee program to provide individuals from developing countries in Asia with the opportunity to gain work experience in Japan for three years. The research aims to explore the impact of Japan's trainee program on participants who left Japan between 2000 and 2010. Specifically, it investigates how these individuals adapt to Japanese society through the concept of '*kizukai*' (empathy and concern for others) and examines their success in establishing businesses in their home countries. The research employs an ethnographic approach, utilizing direct interviews and a literature review. The ethnographic method, utilizing direct interviews with former trainees, offers qualitative insights into their social adaptation, business success, and engagement with Japanese cultural practices, enriching the understanding of their lived experiences. The literature review complements this by providing a theoretical framework, particularly Bourdieu's theories of habitus, field, and capital, to analyze the changes in trainees' behaviors and their impact on business

practices. The research finds that many trainees have successfully integrated into Japanese society by internalizing Hiroyuki Inoue's concept of *kizukai*. This integration plays a significant role in their entrepreneurial success upon returning to their home countries, where they establish prosperous businesses. The findings suggest that while the trainee program has shortcomings, it contributes to strengthening international economic relations and offers lessons for improving future trainee programs.

Keywords: *Kizukai* Habitus, Asian Trainee, Labor Market

Introduction

The monetary crisis in Japan throughout the 1990s has resulted in bankruptcies, unilateral job terminations, rising divorce rates, declining birth rates, and a culture that is becoming older. The government has permitted access to the global job market to preserve Japan. The interest of several ASEAN workers presents a perplexing situation for migrants. According to Mori (1999), Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam express a desire to engage in training activities. Hence, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare and Cabinet Office have established a trainee program intending to disseminate Japanese technology, skills, and industrial expertise to the trainees' countries of origin, with the ultimate goal of enhancing human resources and industries (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2019; Cabinet Office, 2019).

Globalization enhances and broadens the labor market, impacting occupations and geographical locations. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is an instance of a regional agreement that has been developed by member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to foster regional integration and establish a cohesive market and manufacturing foundation. The initiation of the AEC accord in 2016 marked the establishment of market and production norms for member nations. The AEC deal relies heavily on the presence of a skilled workforce. The agreement entails heightened domestic and global rivalry for a highly skilled workforce. Each nation dispatches employees overseas to acquire knowledge about novel technology and cultures to attain a competitive advantage. Japan implements a trainee program that aims to facilitate information exchange and talent cultivation. The geographical area, occupational domain, and job opportunities are also expanding. Notwithstanding their participation in ASEAN, governments occasionally engage in competition and exhibit a deficiency in mutual support (Human Development Reports, n.d.).

The Japanese government has committed to ensuring that this program effectively eradicates poverty and stimulates economic growth in the nations involved. Japan holds significant financial appeal for high school and vocational school pupils. According to Dewanto (2020), middle-class households, which are 75–125% of the community's

median per capita income, choose to work overseas to increase their earnings. Employing oneself in Japan can enhance one's social standing due to the provision of elevated income, professional exposure, specialized knowledge, and financial resources for purposes such as marriage and family support. Alumni who have contributed funds from Japan also possess narratives. Companies or institutions dispatch employees to Japan for employment prospects, improved prospects, and other motives. According to Dewanto and Hadi (2022), the employment of vocational school graduates and employees in Japan has been permitted since 1993.

Working in blue-collar jobs is unpleasant, hazardous, and physically demanding. In Japan, the significance of 3K, namely *kitanai*, *kitsui*, and *kiken*, has diminished among local workers. Physical exertion poses significant risks to both physical and emotional well-being, and mortality can occur at any given moment. On the other hand, remuneration should align with the level of job complexity and risk. Some perceive this training program as a form of human trafficking, which can lead to fraudulent activities, exploitation, and conflicts of interest between Japan and the authorities involved. The trainee program, characterized by its substantial workloads, inadequate remuneration, precarious employment opportunities, and absence of legal safeguards, may be regarded as a contemporary form of servitude (BBC News Indonesia, 2023; U.S. Department of State, 2023)

Throughout these interviews, graduates divulge their triumphs, highlighting how Japanese *kizukai* culture influences their conduct and mindsets. This cultural environment cultivates reverence and collaboration, diligence, the capacity to scrutinize and assess information, a resolute dedication to serving others, and a keen consciousness of one's obligations. Former training program participants successfully impart the principles to their colleagues and foster an attitude that prioritizes sustainability.

The working ethic in Japan, characterized by conscientiousness, attentiveness, discipline, and reliability, plays a crucial role in producing high-quality products, customer satisfaction, and preserving the company's reputation. A significant proportion of trainees intending to repatriate aspire to establish a company that integrates Japanese culture to manufacture goods of comparable quality. Moreover, it can be utilized to establish business connections and create new prospects for companies, employment chances, and other related matters.

The research investigates the cultural transfer of trainee graduates to explore the potential benefits of *kizukai* in terms of personal development, business growth, and international cooperation. Additionally, it sheds light on the challenges faced by trainee alumni and the opportunities they must enhance their lives and contribute to their home countries.

The research enhances the credibility of trainees from ASEAN countries who are seeking employment opportunities in Japan. In the absence of job opportunities in Japan and

Indonesia, candidates and alumni trainees must possess a prominent level of psychological preparedness to actively seek out their economic, social, cultural, and symbolic assets. This study examines the evolution of *kizukai*, or the Japanese culture of concern, among graduates of Indonesian programs. The researchers analyze the evolution of *kizukai*, a Japanese cultural phenomenon characterized by heightened consciousness and concern, and its impact on human conduct and financial matters. Japanese culture has significantly influenced the Japanese lifestyle and capital, impacting several aspects such as bodily hexis, ethos, ideology, and aesthetic inclinations. Blue-collar workers engage in this behavior due to the challenges they face in obtaining promotions and career progression. Hence, it motivates them to acquire additional technical and interpersonal proficiencies.

Literature Review

Several scholarly works on the trainee program in Japan delve into the subsequent trajectory upon repatriation to Indonesia. First, Widarahesty (2018) investigated a common subject matter, specifically exploring the experiences of trainees who embarked on a journey to Japan to enhance their financial resources compared to their native Indonesia. Despite the low earnings, individuals often encountered challenges in finding satisfactory jobs upon their return to Indonesia. The trainee system functioned as a labor market platform with the potential to contribute to the progression of Japan's workforce. For selecting trainees, this opportunity could function as a significant milestone in their career progression, potentially leading to future employment within the same organization.

Second, Rustam (2023) centered on an analysis and critique of the labor conditions experienced by Indonesian trainees in Japan, specifically highlighting the prevalence of physically demanding, hazardous, and menial tasks assigned to them. In Indonesia, the widespread application of the newest scientific and technological advancements needed to be improved due to the disparities in fishing methods. The interviews' findings revealed a lack of available opportunities for alumni to secure trainees within their respective fields, hindering their ability to apply and further develop the scientific knowledge and practices acquired during their time in Japan. In his dissertation, Rustam also examined the phenomenon of physical violence victims and the inequities in rights and obligations.

Third, Suldina et al. (2018) conducted a study on the training practices employed in Japan for employees. Despite their status as trainees, these individuals were assigned tasks comparable to those of their local counterparts, which entailed significant levels of responsibility. Proficiency in Japanese language communication, the ability to read and write Japanese characters, and the development of social skills that could be refined in Indonesia were considered essential skills and competencies. In addition to this, a considerable number of apprentice program graduates aspired to utilize their acquired talents in the workforce.

However, it was noteworthy that the government had yet to demonstrate significant endeavors towards optimizing the development of these skill sets.

Fourth, Fahreza (2018) mentioned that trainees in Japan acquired knowledge about the Japanese work ethic, leading to the development of new Human Resources (HR) skills and competence. Obtaining job experience in Japan while residing in Indonesia necessitated a thorough and meticulous examination to maximize its potential benefits upon repatriation to Indonesia. In addition, the wages derived from Japan might be utilized as capital to establish a business in Indonesia, thereby serving as a means of sustenance.

Fifth, Iwashita (2018) focused on the Indonesian trainees who had repatriated to their country of origin due to either being sacked or voluntarily terminating their contractual agreements. The research was conducted through interviews with thirteen male participants residing in Java, Indonesia. The technical trainee training programs in Japan mostly focused on industries related to machinery and metal. However, it is worth noting that these programs exhibited a gender bias as they attracted male participants.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework examines two main themes: (1) the Japanese culture of *kizukai*, and (2) the habitus of *kizukai*. By exploring these themes, the review aims to thoroughly understand the cultural background and motivations behind *kizukai* and its implications on individuals' habitus.

1. Japanese Culture of *Kizukai*

Concern for oneself, others, and the environment are all included in Japan's *kizukai* culture, known as the culture of concern. This culture is based on the *wa* (harmony), *kei* (respect), *sei* (purity), and *kyaku* (impermanence) principles derived from the Japanese tea ceremony and traditional feast or banquet culture. Calligraphy, flower arranging, and martial arts are just a few extracurricular activities that strongly emphasize this principle. It is also included in the curriculum of philosophy classes that are taught in Japanese schools. Participants are instructed to bow to both their ancestors and the other people in the room to show respect for their ancestors and the other people in the room (Mitsuno & Imajo, 2017).

In Japanese martial arts bud, the five virtues derived from Confucianism are *jin* (benevolence), *gi* (justice), *rei* (courtesy), *chi* (wisdom), *shin* (sincerity), and *yū* (courage). The *kizukai* culture emphasizes concern, anxiety, discomfort, and attention to others, which are expressed with reluctance and negativity and frequently accompanied by personal distress. Even though they intend to demonstrate empathy, Japanese people may exhibit inhibition when empathizing with others, which may come across as rude or angry. As expressions of concern for others, this culture encourages empathy,

compassion, kindness, tenderness, solitude, sadness, resentment, distress, anxiety, and grief (Mitsuno & Imajo, 2017).

2. The Habitus of *Kizukai*

The concept of *kizukai* encompasses an intricate interaction of different components, such as physical appearance, moral principles, beliefs, and artistic style, which collectively influence the actions, principles, and perspectives of individuals in Japanese society (Inoue, 2021; Heffernan, 2022):

- a. Bodily hexis pertains to the tangible manifestation of cultural norms and behaviors. Within the realm of *kizukai*, corporeal hexis encompasses the visible manifestations and movements that communicate concern, compassion, and regard for others. The cultural value of *kizukai* is exemplified through many nonverbal cues, such as soft gestures, attentive listening, and polite body language. These behaviors play a significant role in cultivating peaceful relationships within the community.
- b. Ethos refers to the fundamental beliefs, values, and principles that serve as a guiding force for individuals' behaviors and attitudes within a given cultural context. Regarding *kizukai*, ethos is centered on principles such as empathy, collaboration, and societal accountability. Individuals who embrace the principles of *kizukai* place a high value on the welfare of others, exhibit empathy and kindness in their relationships, and actively participate in the betterment of their community. The common ethos serves as the fundamental basis of *kizukai* culture, exerting influence upon collective conduct and societal conventions.

In brief, the habitus of *kizukai* is distinguished by the manifestation of care and concern through bodily gestures (hexis), which are guided by values of compassion and kindness (ethos). These components influence individuals' attitudes, actions, and engagements, cultivating a culture of compassion and understanding within Japanese society (Inoue, 2021).

Methods

One of the researchers adds data from individual experiences gained while working in Japan from 2005 to 2008 and data gleaned from interviews with Indonesian trainee alumni. Most of the work involves supervising Indonesian trainees and teaching them various welding techniques, iron casting, and ship engine assembly procedures. Aside from that, he has taught Japanese to trainees, taught Indonesian to Japanese workers, translated documents verbally, received counseling from trainees, looked after trainees who had accidents at work, attempted to pick up workers or drop off finished contract workers at Osaka airport, received counseling from trainees.

Collectively, the researchers have the chance to analyze and deliberate on various subjects, including the determinants behind their choice to travel to Japan, the pre-departure

strategies that are devised, the present circumstances in Japan, the cultural shifts experienced during their stay, the assimilation of these changes into a habitual way of life, and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills that impact work practices, performance, and discipline. Furthermore, the researchers acknowledge the potential for fresh advancements. Consequently, the researchers persist in monitoring the present circumstances of other alumni.

The proposed study employs an ethnographic research methodology and undertakes a thorough examination of pertinent scholarly literature. This study centers on individuals who have repatriated to their country of origin within the period spanning from 2000 to 2010. The techniques mentioned earlier encompass a series of steps in conducting ethnographic research (Madison, 2020). These steps include identifying the contextual factors relevant to the writing, formulating inquiries to guide the research endeavor, making decisions about the selection of individuals to be observed, as well as determining the appropriate time and location for gaining access. Additionally, establishing a positive rapport with the subjects, adopting a suitable role within the field, attaining a shared understanding with the informants, documenting observations, conducting ethnographic interviews, analyzing the outcomes of these interviews, and compiling an ethnographic report are integral components of this research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The present study conducts a comparative review of the literature about trainee programs in ASEAN countries to evaluate the efficacy of these programs concerning their implementation in Japan.

The researchers have successfully obtained testimonials from eight trainee alumni who have achieved notable success in establishing enterprises, occupying influential positions, fostering attitude transformations, and cultivating a positive mindset. The sources comprise:

1. Mr. OS, aged 51, worked as a trainee in Japan from 1998 to 2001. Currently, he is the proprietor of a company that deals in spare parts for heavy equipment and is open to accommodating custom orders from customers.
2. Mr. I, aged 40, worked as a trainee in Japan from 2006 to 2009. He serves as the Deputy Attorney General for Intelligence in the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia.
3. Mr. AJ, aged 35, worked as a trainee in Japan from 2009 to 2011. He works as an e-commerce sales marketer in Malaysia.
4. Mr. LY, aged 41, worked as a trainee in Japan from 2008 to 2010. He works in Japanese language instruction and facilitates the placement of potential apprentices in Japan.
5. Mr. DS, aged 36, worked as a trainee in Japan from 2005 to 2007. Currently, he holds the position of Sales Director for automotive care goods.
6. Mr. RM, aged 49, worked as a trainee in Japan from 1997 to 2000. Currently, he is employed as an instructor of Japanese Literature at a private institution in Jakarta.
7. Mr. AT, aged 47, worked as a trainee in Japan from 1999 to 2002. He possesses and operates language schools and dispatch agents in Sulawesi and Java.

8. Mr. EW, aged 49, worked as a trainee in Japan from 1998 to 2002. Currently, he holds the position of Chairman at the Indonesian Kenshusei Entrepreneurs Association (IKAPEKSI) and is the proprietor of a company that specializes in producing sweet soy sauce.

Then, the researchers incorporate the research of Iwashita (2018) and Rustam (2023), who have extensively studied trainee alumni in both Japan and Indonesia, to provide further literature on this subject. Furthermore, the research uses data obtained from other Japanese government entities, including the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare and the Cabinet Office (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2019; Cabinet Office, 2019).

Analysis

The Transformation of *Kizukai* Habitus in Bodily Hexis

During their employment in Japan, foreign workers have gradually assimilated the bodily hexis and ethics prevalent among the local Japanese workforce. The morning briefing, known as *chōrei* in Japanese, is a cultural practice in Japan that often induces culture shock among foreign workers, including the individual in question. This briefing entails the exchange of information regarding the current state and circumstances of employment to achieve cost, energy, and time efficiency. While briefing, the Japanese individuals document the information, strategize subsequent tasks, and seek resolutions in the event of any issues. Indonesian trainees or workers who lack familiarity with Japanese cultural practices, such as the act of notetaking or memo-writing, gradually develop proficiency in utilizing the Japanese language for reporting, communicating, and seeking advice for other days.

Chinese and Vietnamese workers prioritize adherence to Japanese manners, particularly the practice of *aisatsu*, which refers to the act of exchanging greetings. Japanese greetings encompass more than mere verbal salutations and physical gestures of bowing. They possess profound cultural significance (Innovative Organization for Human Resource Cultivation and Encouragement, 2021). For instance, when individuals express welcome in an unfriendly or unfavorable manner, Japanese society tends to perceive the foreigner as impolite and may develop a negative disposition towards their presence in Japan. Consequently, the foreigner may encounter difficulties in establishing harmonious relationships with others.

Aisatsu refer to the verbal expressions and accompanying physical actions that are ceremonially conveyed during formal occasions or while bidding farewell to both familiar and unfamiliar individuals. The term "*aisatsu*" also encompasses the concept of psychological preparedness during interpersonal encounters (Inoue, 2021). When encountering a supervisor or colleague, it is expected that they possess the ability to extend a warm greeting, which may include a smile and a vocalized salutation. This statement suggests that the individual in question is prepared to engage in work-related activities and seeks collaboration from others.

According to Iwashita (2018), by exhibiting mental preparedness, individuals can effectively communicate their readiness to engage in work despite potential conflicts that may have arisen in the past.

Iwashita (2018) found that Vietnamese individuals who participated in a trainee program in Japan and then returned to Hanoi and its surrounding areas experienced several notable benefits. These included improving their Japanese language skills, familiarizing themselves with Japanese customs, and gaining exposure to unique Japanese work methods. Furthermore, it is argued that receiving education in Japan can significantly improve an individual's job opportunities. Individuals who possess a high level of competence in the Japanese language may experience advantages in acquiring knowledge and cultivating business acumen compared to those who do not possess such ability.

Kizukai habitus, which refers to bodily hexis, can be categorized into two main groups: tangible and intangible. They have a comprehensive understanding of emerging technology, culture, and education for the tangible category. While in the intangible category, individuals demonstrate original knowledge, exemplary ethical ideals, strong standards, and linguistic proficiency that can be applied effectively in their professional activities (Inoue, 2021).

The prevailing attitudes among trainees pertain to the work practices witnessed in Japan. They encompass various aspects, including time management, reporting protocols, dynamics of teamwork, diligence, strategies for planning, adherence to etiquette, problem-solving methods, organizational abilities, respect for others, dynamics within groups, accuracy, and initiative-taking preparation. During this educational endeavor, numerous participants have undergone a notable metamorphosis, evolving into conscientious and accountable practitioners who demonstrate a profound feeling of contentment and autonomy within their professional endeavors. Moreover, these individuals exhibit a fervent and unwavering dedication to acquiring knowledge, coupled with the virtues of patience, politeness, ambition, discipline, and forbearance.

According to the perspectives of Mr. OS, Mr. I, Mr. AJ, and other individuals, they experience a sense of pride after obtaining many diplomas and their involvement in an internship program in Japan. Then, it transforms into concrete cultural capital. Simultaneously, they assimilate numerous intangible elements, such as exchanging greetings (*aisatsu*). Individuals who engage in verbal greetings often lack an understanding of the cultural context. The cultural practice of greeting in Japan entails a state of mental preparedness and motivation toward the one being greeted. They can establish a secure, tranquil, and profitable environment by extending a cordial greeting.

If individuals are greeted unfriendly or impolitely, the recipient may likely experience offense, animosity, or a strained connection. Individuals tend to participate in social interactions with others solely when they possess the requisite capabilities to do so. According to Oyama (2017), those who can attain a condition of inner harmony have the potential to alleviate feelings of exhaustion, boredom, discomfort, and unpleasant emotional states.

Many trainees have arrived at the understanding that greetings extend beyond casual conversation. They serve to express thoughts of concern, apprehension, sadness, and grief. The act of expressing greetings as an extra mechanism for promoting communication is essential in the cultivation of peace, integrity, and ethical behavior. The perceived absence of reciprocal gestures from the Japanese towards Indonesians may have engendered feelings of animosity among the latter, stemming from the compassion previously offered to the former. The absence of reciprocation can be perceived as a disrespect for the emotional welfare of the Japanese populace. The individual's actions lead to an expansion of their *kizukai*, encompassing altruistic tendencies, a collective orientation, and a commitment to values.

Based on the perspectives of Mr. OS, Mr. I, Mr. AJ, Mr. LY, Mr. DS, Mr. RM, Mr. AT, and Mr. EW, together with the other workers, it is suggested that persons in Japan may acquire an extra skill, namely the capacity to multitask while simultaneously sustaining their concentration effectively. Businesses can enhance the quality of their products and services by strategically allocating money to the education and training of their workforce. Moreover, this investment has the potential to enhance operational efficiency and facilitate cost reduction. Consequently, these companies will acquire improved capacities to engage in competition within their market sectors efficiently.

The following points delineate many benefits of participating in this training program, with the primary goal being the acquisition of extensive knowledge and expertise in the field of occupational safety. It is of utmost importance to guarantee that people possess a thorough comprehension of their obligations regarding safety-related duties and efforts. By acknowledging the potential risks that may or may not occur, the individual can perceive potential concerns and formulate methods to tackle them effectively. Furthermore, they possess the capability to build uniform protocols aimed at averting the repetition of such challenges in subsequent instances and fostering an elevated state of awareness.

The Transformation of *Kizukai* Habitus in Ethos

International workers have found the rotational work system surprising. The implementation of this system in their country is unlikely due to perceived risks and the time required to acquire new work skills. The rotation of employees inside the organization is not limited to a single individual. Instead, it also encompasses all international workers to enhance their skill sets. Before undertaking such tasks, Japanese colleagues or manufacturing supervisors are instructed on work methodologies to prevent errors. They need to document the operational process to prevent forgetfulness and record unfamiliar Japanese terminology to avoid forgetting it. Once the workers can perform the task, they will observe their performance under supervision to see if everything goes according to plan. As an example, during his time in Indonesia, Mr. OS was informed about his prospective employment as a machine operator in Japan. However, following several months of work and acclimatizing to his professional role, he was required to undertake more responsibilities.

Instances of work failures and flaws can sometimes arise unpredictably and persistently. However, organizations tend to maintain strict policies for extended periods of time until they yield good results. The implementation of a rotation system in the Japanese work culture enables a methodical and comprehensive approach to tasks, assuring their diligent execution until their successful conclusion. The analysis of the Japanese work ethic entails understanding the complexities, diligence, and responsibility associated with maintaining high levels of productivity and performance. At times, individuals undergoing training may encounter feelings of irritation when perceiving disparities in the workload and allotted duties, noting that others bear less strain and derive greater enjoyment. When a trainee is offered a task that they consider less tough, they typically find the job more demanding than they previously expected. The process of acquiring new knowledge is accompanied by many problems and involves specific responsibilities.

Moreover, rotation systems are commonly employed in Japanese firms to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of work processes and enable employees to acquire new knowledge and skills. The outcomes of adopting new work procedures must be rational and align with established norms. Concurrently, foreign workers embark on acquiring work-related responsibilities. Subpar work quality can have detrimental impacts on subsequent processes, potentially rendering the final product unusable. A notable aspect trainees retain is the importance of honesty, emphasizing awareness of colleagues' circumstances and company objectives. Trainees also gain an understanding of Japanese collaborative work practices and express a desire to assimilate acquired knowledge and skills into their cultural capital plans for application in their home countries.

However, some Chinese trainees express dissatisfaction with Japanese work culture, citing difficulties in understanding contemporary technology, challenges in maintaining steady employment, and ambiguity in training positions. Negative sentiment towards Japan among Chinese trainees may stem from historical factors, potentially resulting in psychological distress. The responsible organization for dispatching trainees may have failed to provide adequate pre-departure instruction on Japanese culture. Despite challenges, Chinese trainees continue seeking job prospects in Japan, primarily driven by financial incentives (Asano, 2024).

Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese workers in Japanese labor contexts receive praise for attributes such as discipline, obedience, and youthful dynamism. Despite past colonization, Indonesians maintain openness to cooperation with Japan, influenced by exposure to Japanese technological advancements. Japanese workers are known for expeditiousness, attentiveness, conscientiousness, and a commitment to client satisfaction. Indonesian individuals pursue traineeships in Japan to acquire knowledge applicable upon return, alongside financial benefits. Similar situations exist in Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia, hindered by a lack of advanced technology in their home countries (Osaki, 2020).

Following their tenure in Japan, the trainees and other Japanese workers have acquired knowledge and understanding of these strategies. After successfully finishing the trainee program, the individuals in question proceed to implement the strategies in their respective

professional environments upon their repatriation to their respective places of origin. The inefficiency in time allocation within the sphere of employment can be observed in the low transferability of knowledge obtained in Japan to one's professional and entrepreneurial efforts. The enhancement of customer satisfaction through applying *kizukai* in the workplace may be likened to acquiring the same talent through diverse approaches.

***Kizukai* Habitus Emerged as a Novel Capital Motive within the Local Culture**

According to Rustam (2023), the existing body of literature depicts apprentices as a discrete group of unskilled laborers. Furthermore, it is suggested that these apprentices can serve as a means for sectors that have difficulty recruiting Japanese nationals and do not recognize their credentials as legitimate employment credentials to exploit a loophole. In 2017, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, NHK, compiled a series of negative remarks. However, it is important to note that most young folks from Asian countries prefer to go to Japan with hopeful ambitions. Frequently, the consequences of this issue for trainees are disregarded. Hence, it is imperative to conduct a more thorough examination of the current system (Rustam, 2023).

Consistently, surveys conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (2019) reveal that talents are held in the highest regard. The regulating organization promptly distributes the survey form after the trainee's repatriation, and it is subsequently dispatched from their initial location. The observed statistical significance of the results may be ascribed to the sample's restriction to participants who possess a favorable perception of the training system. Moreover, it is relevant to inquire about the effectiveness of the skills that the participants have gained, given that less than half of them obtain employment immediately after returning to Japan. An additional obstacle that impedes learners' ability to comprehend the current situations they encounter fully is their limited understanding of the pertinent characteristics. Additionally, it has been observed that the survey receives an insufficient number of responses, which further exacerbates the limitations of the research. Possible avenues for further investigation may involve evaluating systems via an examination of the professional development trajectories of trainees after their reintegration into Japanese society.

A significant number of trainees exhibit an initial inclination to pursue employment opportunities in Japan, mostly motivated by egoistic tendencies and the pursuit of financial gain. Upon recognizing the nature of employment in Japan, their underlying drives have transformed, shifting towards an emphasis on altruism, egoism, collectivism, and principlism. The individuals in question lay a significant emphasis on the importance of exercising greater caution in their jobs, prioritizing workplace safety and environmental hygiene, and implementing effective working methodologies. Furthermore, they disseminate this information to their workforce, promoting professional development and cultivating a culture of accountability. One of the working principles implemented at the company under discussion is the 5S method, which incorporates visual aids to foster a secure and well-structured environment, enhance quality, and boost productivity. The 5S method includes:

1. *Seiri* (Sort): Eliminate unnecessary items from the workspace.
2. *Seiton* (Set in Order): Arrange items for easy access and efficient workflow.
3. *Seiso* (Shine): Clean the workspace to maintain standards and identify issues.
4. *Seiketsu* (Standardize): Establish procedures to maintain the first three steps.
5. *Shitsuke* (Sustain): Develop habits and discipline to continuously follow these procedures.

The habitus of persons is shaped by the cultural experiences and expertise gained from international workers and alumni workers from Japan, particularly to *kizukai* culture. It is possible to acquire a full understanding of *kizukai* culture by participating in significant experiences when working in Japan. Considering this, persons from other countries who comprehend this idea are comparable to Japanese people who comprehend the significance of striking a balance between motivations, including altruism, egoism, collectivism, and principlism (Inoue, 2021; Heffernan, 2022).

The *kizukai* motive sets forth an objective or desired outcome that involves the cultivation of individuals who possess heightened levels of empathy, an inclination towards pursuing professional careers, a deep dedication to humanitarian values, and a rigorous adherence to pertinent principles or regulations. The attainment of this purpose is accomplished through the integration of four separate reasons: altruism, egoism, collectivism, and principlism (Batson, 2018).

The presence of altruism motive in *kizukai* among foreign trainees in Japan acts as a stimulant for the cultivation of empathy and associated behaviors. Trainees can incorporate empathic principles into their interactions and make beneficial contributions to their work surroundings through many means, such as cultural immersion, role modeling, cross-cultural understanding, professional advancement, and personal introspection.

The idea of *kizukai*, with its diverse motivational contexts, significantly influences the behaviors and attitudes of foreign trainees in Japan. In specific ways, the trainees are influenced by these different settings, namely altruistic, egoistic, collectivistic, and principlistic. This atmosphere fosters the cultivation of empathy, ambition, collaboration, and adherence to ethical standards. Here are examples of how the *kizukai* habitus can be transformed based on these four motives:

1. *Kizukai* is driven by altruistic motives. This motive encourages foreign trainees in Japan to develop empathy and other positive behaviors. Through cultural immersion in Japanese work standards that promote empathy, trainees adopt these principles, enriching their cultural perspective and improving communication skills. Observing empathetic Japanese coworkers provides tangible examples for trainees to emulate, enhancing team cohesion and communication. This experience also boosts their professional reputation, relationships, and collaboration skills.
2. *Kizukai* driven by egoistic motives. This motive drives individuals to be ambitious, self-improving, and achieve personal success. Foreign trainees in Japan are motivated to

develop ambitious attitudes and self-reliance, acquire necessary skills, and take a proactive approach to career advancement. Egoistic motivations also push them to achieve performance excellence and enhance their professional reputation.

3. *Kizukai* driven by collectivistic motives. This motive encourages trainees to prioritize collective goals, fostering a collaborative culture and adherence to group norms. The process of social integration helps trainees to become a part of a cohesive work community, respect hierarchy, and share responsibilities in cooperative tasks. This motive results in increased team productivity and effectiveness.
4. *Kizukai* driven by principlistic motives. This motive influences trainees to adhere to strict ethical standards in the workplace. Exposure to Japanese workplace ethics helps them to develop a strong commitment to moral principles, enhance professional integrity, and encourage compliance with rules. The emphasis on ethical behavior improves their reputation and trust among peers and supervisors and motivates high performance and an honest work environment.

Overall, the different motivational contexts of *kizukai*, including altruistic, egoistic, collectivistic, and principlistic motivations, all have distinct influences on the behaviors and professional growth of foreign trainees in Japan. Trainees can improve their interpersonal skills, professional capabilities, and general success in the workplace by comprehending and incorporating these principles.

In essence, the concept of principled *kizukai* fosters a cultural environment characterized by adherence to regulations, reverence for norms, professional ethics, and a dedication to achieving high standards among international trainees in Japan. Alumni trainees emphasize the significance of effective communication for the achievement of a firm in Japan. It is essential for personnel to proficiently communicate their ideas to their superiors and clients to accomplish long-term firm objectives (Osaki, 2020). Efficient communication within a work team exposes the capabilities of human resources, fosters robust connections, and enhances the firm's overall performance. Within the realm of Japanese culture, non-verbal communication holds significant significance, encompassing a range of attributes, including first impressions, physical cues, clothing preferences, gestures, interpersonal connections, and direct eye contact.

Professional experiences in Japan have contributed to the development of leadership abilities and other areas of personal growth. Leaders must possess self-motivation, self-directed learning, a well-defined vision and mission, collaborative abilities, outstanding job performance, and analytical thinking. Gaining insight into the abilities and strengths of a team or work partner can enhance the effectiveness of collaboration, facilitate the attainment of goals, and boost motivation. To progress professionally, one must prioritize tasks and have a comprehensive awareness of many work environments.

The workers prioritize several facets of human development, such as cultivating leadership abilities. Leadership necessitates the capacity to motivate oneself and partake in

self-directed education, support a distinctly defined vision and mission, actively collaborate with team members, execute exceptional work, and engage in critical thinking. Improved cooperation, goal planning, and motivation can be achieved by comprehending the skills of each team member. Developing an understanding of different work cultures and mastering the skill of prioritizing tasks are essential for career progression in Japan (Japan Organization of Occupational Health and Safety, 2022).

The international trainee can self-encourage and self-motivate, actively engage in personal growth, uphold a distinct vision and mission, cooperate effectively with a team, excel in performance, and engage in critical thinking. By comprehending the underlying talents and competencies of a team or collaborative partner, it is feasible to pinpoint and enhance specific domains, hence enabling the fulfillment of goals and enhancing team motivation. Thoroughly examining and organizing jobs in a hierarchical manner are crucial for comprehending their methods and cultures.

Trainees who possess the ability to engage in negotiations with clients or stakeholders at various levels of an organization establish mutually advantageous business partnerships and proficiently articulate and advocate for their ideas and viewpoints. Dependable influencers and decision-makers are essential for a firm. Personnel participate in a morning workshop aimed at enhancing outcomes and minimizing incidents. It is essential to provide a serene, courteous, principled, and passionate work environment to enhance communication between supervisors and employees (Osaki, 2020).

A cohort of former trainees devises an economic investment strategy to empower employees by fostering knowledge exchange, accountability, and ingenuity. The organization places significant emphasis on empathy as a fundamental component of its curriculum. It promotes the adoption of this cultural norm among new employees, fostering a healthy work environment. The primary objective is to establish a workplace that is secure, pleasant, and encouraging for the employees. When working in Japan, individuals are required to acquire and adjust to Japanese culture, with particular emphasis on *kizukai*.

Individuals will possess the capacity to maintain a harmonious equilibrium between selflessness, self-interest, communalism, and ethical standards. *Kizukai*, a concept rooted in Japanese culture that emphasizes a deep sense of concern and consideration, has had a profound influence on Japanese society and behavior (Batson, 2018). This phenomenon is evident in the physical embodiment practices and attitudes, which have nurtured peace, reverence, integrity, and perseverance in Japanese culture and its labor force for thousands of years. It is imperative for Japanese trainees to acquire, adjust to, and cultivate novel behaviors to enhance economic growth and promote national progress.

The changes in Japan have had a significant impact on the physical appearance, ethical values, religious beliefs, and artistic preferences of its population. Consequently, the participants' ability to reflect on and comprehend the intricacies of interpersonal dynamics has improved. This section addresses the second significant characteristic of cultural capital. This is a result of shifts in Japanese culture, specifically in the realm of *kizukai*. Successful implementation validates these improvements. The *kizukai* culture emphasizes individual and

collective accountability towards oneself, others, and the environment. These former trainees have successfully converted their interpersonal talents into practical life skills in their respective hometowns.

An example of the successful transformation of *kizukai* may be seen in the individuals Mr. OS, Mr. I, Mr. AJ, Mr. LY, Mr. DS, Mr. RM, Mr. AT, and Mr. EW. After completing their study in Japan, they return to Indonesia and establish a community center with the main goal of promoting Japanese cultural ideals and *kizukai*. Their endeavors have not only strengthened local ties but also created a platform for cultural exchange and mutual learning. Upon returning to their countries, they have also used *kizukai* principles in their businesses. Their emphasis on empathy, respect, and meticulousness in customer service leads to a significant increase in customer satisfaction and business growth.

Trainee programs in Japan provide a multitude of advantages for both the Japanese government and companies in the country. These programs aid the government in cultivating human capital by augmenting the abilities and expertise of young employees. In addition, they facilitate cultural interchange and diplomacy, enhancing global connections and assisting in resolving labor shortages across different industries. Trainee programs not only attract educated young workers but also stimulate creativity and contribute to economic progress.

For companies, these programs offer the opportunity to gain access to highly skilled young individuals who have the potential to be hired as permanent employees in the future. Trainees can enhance company efficiency by providing support on supplementary projects or duties. Companies can also enhance and improve their internal training programs by incorporating feedback from interns. Furthermore, interns from diverse backgrounds and cultures can offer unique viewpoints and innovative concepts that enhance the company's performance. Participating in trainee programs also improves the company's reputation as a workplace that prioritizes the professional growth of young individuals.

Both in Japan and upon their return home, the participants have demonstrated proficiency in establishing social connections and offering social assistance. This technique is prominent among Indonesian graduates who have joined IKAPEKSI to establish and expand their social connections. Social capital is the third significant determinant. The individuals have established a social network and received social assistance in Japan, which has persisted even when they return to their native country. This affiliation enables alumni of a specific educational institution or Japanese investors to communicate and share information more efficiently, optimizing corporate operations.

Success demonstrates to trainees that they can alter their viewpoint. These applicants, who have put in significant effort in Japan, benefit from this fresh outlook, enabling them to persevere. An individual prioritizes success over all other considerations. Prior to achieving prosperity, the issuers engaged in manual labor. After finishing their traineeships and returning to their homes, these individuals have transitioned from manual labor to professional, management, or administrative positions.

The favorable results of embracing *kizukai* are evident in their professional trajectory. Following their training, they have emerged as pivotal figures within their organizations, advocating for a work environment rooted in *kizukai* principles. Their methodology not only elevates workplace morale but also results in groundbreaking business solutions and enhances team performance. These instances emphasize the profound impact of *kizukai*, demonstrating how its concepts can be successfully incorporated into various professional and personal situations, resulting in notable accomplishments and beneficial transformations.

Conclusions

The study investigates the evolution of Japanese culture, namely the concept of caring or *kizukai*, by conducting interviews and reviewing pertinent literature. The emphasis placed on this concept by the participants is a key aspect of the research. Japanese firms employ a variety of regulations, processes, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Standard Operating Methods (SOMs), training programs, examinations, and other measures to effectively uphold and guarantee the quality and quantity of their output. The establishment of norms has been based on prior instances of mutual agreement. However, despite the challenging conditions brought about by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals have demonstrated resolute resolve in their efforts to overcome the economic decline, the imminent threat of bankruptcy, and the anxiety associated with undertaking new ventures. The presence of failures and errors is an inherent aspect of human behavior. Nevertheless, individuals possess the capacity to recognize remedies, engage in analytical reasoning, and exhibit a feeling of accountability, which can be a great asset for effectively addressing difficulties within various circumstances.

The phenomenon of cultural transition requires individuals to possess the capacity to adjust, undergo metamorphosis, and persist within a specific context. Individuals who seek to gain knowledge about a new culture must immediately adapt and exhibit a resolute dedication to the process of learning cultural knowledge as a valuable resource. If individuals are to swiftly acquire knowledge, they will probably encounter emotions of inadequacy or remorse over their employment in Japan. In light of these circumstances, individuals may decide to terminate their current plan or objective and instead elect to return to Indonesia for leisure purposes or to save the remaining amount of their financial resources. However, individuals who possess a comprehensive comprehension of the benefits acquired from their experiences in Japan will cultivate innovative techniques and incentives to inspire others.

The interviews performed with former alumni trainees yield some significant findings. A noteworthy observation pertains to the primary motivation of the interviewees, which centers upon the need for financial advancement. Nevertheless, it has been seen that this incentive experiences a gradual metamorphosis over a period, resulting in a shift towards a pursuit of symbolic authority. The primary factor contributing to this transition can be primarily ascribed to the accumulation of cultural and social capital acquired during their training in Japan. Moreover, individuals exhibit unique motivations and strategies to promote

economic, symbolic, biological, genetic, and educational investments to benefit themselves as well as others. Unfortunately, both the Indonesian and Japanese governments have a deficiency in actively participating in the reintegration process of trainees following their return to their home countries. This phenomenon occurs in several ASEAN nations since individuals return to Japan to produce wealth while also contributing to the growth of their countries. These two countries possess the capacity to provide graduates with numerous advantages, including opportunities for employment, mentorship, entrepreneurial education, research possibilities, and other relevant pathways.

As a summary, the research explores the development of Japanese culture, focusing on the concept of *kizukai*, through interviews and literature review. It highlights strategies used by Japanese companies to maintain product quality and quantity. Despite COVID-19 challenges, individuals have shown resilience in overcoming economic hardships and adapting to new ventures. Cultural adaptation requires flexibility and a commitment to learning. Former trainees' motivations shift from financial profit to symbolic power, emphasizing cultural and social influence. However, governments in each ASEAN country and the Japanese government fail to adequately support returning graduates, despite the potential benefits.

Subsequent investigations should prioritize the examination of the extended professional paths of past trainees and their impact on both their home nations and Japan. Moreover, additional research can explore the assimilation of the trainees' acquired skills and knowledge into the Japanese labor market, as well as their contribution and influence on the overall workforce. Another fruitful approach for the research is the comparative examination of analogous training programs in other nations to identify exemplary methods and formulate more efficient strategies for international labor exchange. Ongoing research is also necessary to investigate and address ethical concerns associated with these programs, such as exploitation and human trafficking, to safeguard the well-being of all participants.

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