

Study on Employment Strategies for Korean Youth Seeking Employment in Japan

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Abstract: This study aims to propose strategies to provide practical employment opportunities and support the successful settlement of Korean youth seeking jobs in Japan. With Japan facing a labor shortage due to a declining population and aging society, policies to attract foreign talent are being implemented. Simultaneously, Korea's high youth unemployment rate has led to increased interest in overseas employment, with Japan being a favorable option due to its geographical and cultural proximity and stable working environment. The research analyzed Japan's labor market, demand for foreign labor, and trends in Korean youth employment through literature reviews, case studies, and expert interviews. Key findings highlight Japanese language proficiency (JLPT N2 or higher), cultural adaptability, and network utilization as critical success factors. Successful cases demonstrated strong language skills, understanding of business etiquette, and effective use of employment support programs like K-Move. Conversely, failures were linked to insufficient preparation, cultural challenges, and lack of local settlement support. The study recommends integrated Japanese language and cultural training, enhanced settlement support, and labor exchange models through government and private-sector collaboration.

Keywords: Employment in Japan; Japanese Language Proficiency; Cultural Adaptability; Settlement Support; Workforce Exchange

1. Research Purpose and Methods

This study aims to propose strategies for providing practical employment opportunities and supporting the successful settlement of Korean youth seeking employment in Japan. Japan is actively accepting foreign talent to address serious labor shortages caused by rapid population decline and aging (Korean Labor Institute, 2021), and Korean youth show great interest in Japanese employment due to high unemployment rates and limited employment environments. Based on the complementary relationship between the two countries, this study analyzes Japan's labor market characteristics, employment processes, and foreign labor acceptance policies to find ways for Korean youth to successfully obtain employment and settle in Japan.

Three research methods were employed. First, existing research and reports were analyzed to understand the structural problems of the Japanese labor market and the need for foreign labor (Jeon, 2016). Second, success and failure cases of Japanese employment were analyzed to derive success factors including Japanese language proficiency, local cultural adaptability, and network utilization, while identifying failure factors such as insufficient prior information, culture shock, and lack of support (Kim, 2012). Third, practical advice and insights were obtained through interviews with Japanese employment specialists (Toyo University, 2019).

2. Theoretical Background and Prior Research

2.1 Characteristics of the Japanese Labor Market

Japan is one of the world's most rapidly aging nations, significantly impacting labor force reduction and economic growth. Since 2013, labor demand has exceeded supply due to declining working-age population, and the Japanese government has implemented policies promoting the influx of foreign workers to address this issue (Kim, 2018). In particular, the Specified Skills Visa introduced in 2019 was designed to hire foreigners and support long-term residence in sectors with severe labor shortages such as agriculture, caregiving, and construction. Additionally, the Japanese labor market provides a stable employment environment, emphasizing employee welfare through long-term employment and regular promotion systems (Jeon, 2016). While these advantages are attractive to foreigners, they simultaneously present high entry barriers for foreigners lacking Japanese language proficiency and cultural adaptability.

2.2 Trends in Korean Youth Employment in Japan

Korean youth are seeking overseas employment to address high domestic unemployment rates and low employment quality, with Japan emerging as an attractive employment destination due to geographical proximity and stable employment environment (Hankyung, 2017). Korean youth employment in Japan has been steadily increasing across various sectors including IT, manufacturing, and service industries. Those with JLPT N2 or higher Japanese language proficiency utilize exchange student programs, working holidays, and K-Move programs for preparation (Monthly Joongang, 2018; Korea Industrial Human Resources Corporation, 2023). Common elements in success cases include Japanese language proficiency, business manners, and local network utilization, while information deficiency, cultural differences, and initial settlement problems serve as major obstacles.

2.3 Importance of Employment Placement and Settlement Support

Overseas employment involves not just obtaining a job but also the process of settling in a new environment. Government-led programs such as K-Move provide comprehensive support including language and job training, employment placement, and follow-up management to assist Korean youth in Japanese employment (Korea Industrial Human Resources Corporation, 2023). Settlement support helps foreigners adapt to Japanese society through initial housing, living information, psychological and legal support, while the Japanese government supports foreigners' long-term residence through specified skills visas (Toyo University, 2019).

3. Case Analysis

3.1 Success Cases

Cases of Korean youth who successfully obtained employment in Japan demonstrate that Japanese language proficiency, local cultural adaptation, and network utilization are key success factors. Mr. Kim succeeded in the IT industry and Mr. Park in manufacturing, both possessing JLPT N2 or higher Japanese proficiency and understanding Japanese business culture (Maeil Kyungje, 2018). Mr. Kim built his network through IT seminars and job fairs, while Mr. Park obtained employment opportunities through the K-Move program. These success cases emphasize specific preparation directions and the importance of network utilization for those aspiring to employment in Japan.

3.2 Failure Cases

Japanese employment failure cases show that insufficient prior information, language barriers, and cultural adaptation failures are primary causes. Mr. K experienced difficulties due to gaps between reality and expectations from insufficient investigation of company size and working conditions, and failed to adapt due to inadequate Japanese language proficiency and isolation. This suggests that Japanese language proficiency, understanding of companies and culture, and strengthening of local adaptability are essential. Furthermore, information collection bias, disregard for market demands, and lack of action have been exacerbating Japanese employment failure factors in the post-COVID era.

4. Strategic Recommendations

4.1 Development of Japanese Employment Placement Programs

Customized educational programs linked with universities should be designed to strengthen Japanese language,

corporate culture, and employment procedure education. Education designed around Japanese conversation and business language supports employment preparation and practical adaptation. In particular, internship opportunities should be provided through network building with Japanese companies to accumulate field experience and increase the possibility of leading to employment (Toyo University, 2019; Kyungnam University Newspaper, 2023).

4.2 Japanese Settlement Support Measures

Initial housing and living information provision programs should be operated to support stable Japanese life for job seekers. Additionally, business Japanese and cultural education should help smooth communication and collaboration in the workplace, and adaptability to Japanese corporate culture should be strengthened. This will increase psychological stability for job seekers and improve work efficiency (Machine Newspaper, 2018).

4.3 Government and Private Sector Cooperation Model

Employment support policies of both governments and cooperation with private enterprises should be strengthened to build a sustainable employment creation model. By linking Japan's foreign support policies with Korea's K-Move program, employment preparation, education, and settlement support should be operated in an integrated manner, contributing to expanding international employment opportunities (Korea University Newspaper, 2024; MediaBill, 2020).

5. Conclusion

This study explored measures to provide practical employment opportunities and support the successful settlement of Korean youth seeking employment in Japan. Japan's labor shortage problem and Korean youth's overseas employment demand can be resolved through a complementary relationship. Customized employment programs and settlement support systems strengthen the foundation for sustainable human exchange and cooperation between the two countries, and stable employment forms and cultural adaptation enable employment success and long-term career development (Korea Industrial Human Resources Corporation, 2023; Machine Newspaper, 2018).

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