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Promoting Local Economic Development Through the Study of Adaptation and Long-Term Settlement Intentions of Gen Y Immigrant Laborers in Can Tho City, Vietnam

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Abstract

Labor migration is an inevitable trend in the process of development, and immigrant labor has become a significant force contributing to economic growth. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing the adaptation and long-term settlement intentions of Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City. Using a linear structural model and survey data from 267 immigrant workers in Can Tho City, the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method was employed to analyze the data. The research findings revealed that 'Employment and Economic Motivation' positively influenced both the adaptation and long-term settlement intentions of Gen Y immigrant laborers. Additionally, 'Adaptation,' 'Medical care conditions,' and 'Educational conditions' were also found to have a positive impact on long-term settlement intentions. Based on these research results, the author proposes several recommendations for the local government and businesses in Can Tho City to help immigrant workers adapt better and increase their long-term settlement intentions.

Keywords: Adaptation, Long-term settlement intention, Gen Y immigrant laborers, Can Tho City, Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration is a social phenomenon that occurs in most countries worldwide, especially in developing nations. Vietnam has witnessed significant migration events in its history, driven by various factors. However, internal migration in Vietnam is primarily attributed to labor distribution, job searching, and poverty reduction. Can Tho City, situated in the heart of the Mekong Delta, has attracted a substantial influx of migrant labor, primarily from other provinces and cities within the Mekong Delta region. The Generation Y immigrant labor force in Can Tho has become a vital contributor to the city's economic growth. Their key characteristic is their ability to generate economic returns through labor force participation, income growth, savings, and increased demand for goods and services, thus contributing to the city's economic development.

On the other hand, Can Tho City has also implemented various policies to support immigrant labor through social housing projects, job placement services, and more. However, these solutions have proven less effective in addressing the challenges faced by immigrant laborers in terms of integration and building a sustainable life in the area.

The report by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam has measured the satisfaction levels of immigrant laborers in various aspects of life. However, it has not comprehensively assessed social relationships or identified which life aspects best meet the needs of immigrant laborers (General Statistics Office, 2015). On the other hand,

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other studies have identified significant factors but have mostly focused on specific life aspects, such as addressing labor shortages in urban areas, choosing between entrepreneurship and wage employment, and evaluating job quality (Loc et al., 2013). Loc et al. (2017) suggested that improved job opportunities and better living conditions significantly impact the long-term intentions to stay. Dustmann and Gorlach (2016) demonstrated the complex, multidirectional relationship between migration intentions and economic outcomes. Other research has shown that the length of stay in a destination and economic behavior are independent of each other, neglecting this interaction.

Additionally, most studies in this field in Vietnam have measured long-term settlement intentions through subjective assessments, with few employing quantitative research methods based on migrants' perspectives. Therefore, this study aims to assess the interplay between factors related to living conditions, employment, and economics with adaptation and long-term settlement intentions. Identifying crucial life aspects that impact adaptation and long-term settlement intentions will serve as a foundation for proposing practical, feasible policy recommendations to improve support for immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH MODEL

2.1 The Adaptation of Immigrant Laborers

Research conducted by OECD and EU (2018) defines adaptation as the capacity of immigrant laborers to attain economically and socially comparable outcomes to local workers when they share similar individual characteristics. This is measured across three dimensions: the skills of immigrant laborers and their adaptation within the labor market (education, language proficiency, training, job quality), living conditions (income, housing, health status, and participation in healthcare systems), and involvement in civil activities and societal adaptation (voting, racial discrimination, etc.). In a more systematic and comprehensive framework, Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) also describe the results of the process of life adaptation through four factors encompassing ten aspects of life. These aspects include means and indicators (employment, housing, education, health), social connections (social bridges, social support, social linkages), incentives (language and culture, safety and stability), and foundations (workers' rights).

Chiswick (1978) was a pioneer in conducting experimental research on economic adaptation, measuring it through wage convergence between immigrant laborers and local workers. Chiswick (2014) referred to this as labor market adaptation and concluded that the income of immigrant laborers depends on the human capital accumulated at their destination and the length of time spent there. Borjas (1985, 2014) argued that economic adaptation is the convergence over time between immigrant laborers and local workers regarding economic outcomes, such as employment opportunities and income. Borjas (1985, 2014) concluded that the adaptation capability of immigrant laborers decreases over time, becoming increasingly dependent on social welfare programs or social protection. Furthermore, recent experimental research by Dustmann and Gorlach (2016) also measures the economic outcomes of immigrant laborers, including employment, wages, savings, occupations, entertainment, consumption, and human capital investment. They measure long-term or temporary intentions to stay through the length of time spent at the destination. Qiu et al. (2011), Ren and Folmer (2016) assess the socio-economic status of immigrant laborers based on income and educational attainment.

From a macro perspective, Social adaptation is a societal objective wherein all individuals partake in the shared activities of society, exercise roles, voices, and influence as individuals, and express the commonality of society. The social adaptation of immigrant labor groups not only ensures their rights to live, reside, and experience social equality but also creates favorable conditions for their livelihoods and development. This

contributes to maintaining the stability of urban life and social order. From a multidimensional perspective, social adaptation is seen as a research orientation aimed at creating sustainable social development. It is not limited to economic adaptation, such as income and employment, but also extends to other dimensions, such as social participation, social capital, and social services.

Thus, it can be understood that the level of adaptation is measured through shared outcomes across various economic, educational, and health dimensions. However, this research is limited in scope to economic aspects, evaluating living conditions based on the mentioned dimensions but excluding participation in civil, social, and political activities and the exercise of civil rights. Moreover, since the majority of immigrant laborers in Can Tho City come from various provinces and cities within the Mekong Delta region, the cultural differences among them are relatively minor. Therefore, the study also overlooks the factor of cultural adaptation.

2.2 Literature review

Employment and Economic Motivation

Life Adaptation, Achieved Outcomes, and Long-Term Settlement Intentions exhibit a complex multidirectional relationship (Christian et al., 2016; Honghao et al., 2016). Employment status is the first and consistently crucial aspect considered in all studies, specifically measured through job quality (Loc et al., 2013). OECD and EU (2018) affirm that an employment-centered approach positively influences the Adaptation of immigrant laborers, concluding that immigrant laborers face difficulties in labor market integration due to discriminatory treatment. Consequently, the poverty rate within the immigrant laborer group tends to increase over time and diverges significantly from the local labor force. Loc et al. (2017) also confirm that employment opportunities positively impact the length of stay at the destination.

Besides, most studies suggest that the migration of Vietnamese citizens to urban areas is primarily driven by economic motives, stemming from both "push" factors at their place of origin and "pull" factors at their destination. The "push" factors include issues such as limited agricultural land, job scarcity, and low income, while the "pull" factors at the destination comprise higher income opportunities and easier job prospects. Prospective immigrants anticipate an increase in their potential earnings at their destination, with the expectation of higher wages compared to their previous residence. Additionally, they often factor in the possibility of saving more money by reducing transportation and other expenses, which encourages them to move. Some studies also highlight that wages for jobs in industrial areas and the manufacturing sector in urban regions are often several times higher than those in agriculture. Thus, in rural areas with low productivity, job scarcity, and low income in agriculture, these factors play a significant role in motivating individuals to seek opportunities in areas with better employment prospects. Moreover, Chun and Sang (2012) identified two primary motivations for migration in Vietnam: job scarcity (stability) and low income in rural or peri-urban areas, which are also determinants influencing the Long-Term Settlement Intentions of immigrant laborers. Building upon these inherited arguments, the authors propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Employment and Economic Motivation has a positive impact on the Adaptation of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

H2: Employment and Economic Motivation has a positive impact on the Long-term settlement intentions of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

Educational conditions

Ren and Folmer (2016) argue that local amenities such as education, healthcare, shopping areas, entertainment, and the quality of the living environment have a positive impact on their satisfaction level and adaptation to the local community at their destination.

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Consequently, they are less motivated to move away from that community. In addition to economic factors, education is also one of the crucial motivators for migration decisions, driving individuals to seek a better life. De Brauw et al. (2013) found that education influences the attitudes, aspirations, and confidence of migrants, as well as their ability to integrate into the community at their destination. Many migrants decide to stay and work in urban areas after completing their education, rather than returning to their hometowns, due to the growing disparity in opportunities and living conditions between urban and rural areas. Although many rural residents now have relatively high incomes, some still choose to migrate to cities to seek better educational opportunities for their children. Providing children with a better education will significantly impact the future employment opportunities for the next generation. Therefore, the author proposes the following research hypotheses:

H3: Educational conditions has a positive impact on the Adaptation of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

H4: Educational conditions has a positive impact on the Long-term settlement intentions of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

Medical care conditions

According to the European Organization for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2004), the quality of life encompasses a range of factors, including basic living conditions and opportunities available to individuals, such as employment, education, and healthcare. Several studies have developed detailed measurement scales to assess these life aspects, aiming to gauge the level of life integration among migrant workers. The IIM model, established by Force (2016), serves the purpose of evaluating the integration process of immigrant laborers in Gdansk, Poland. Its objective is to identify the needs and challenges faced by immigrant laborers, evaluate the resources and capacities at their disposal to address these needs, and assist them in integrating into their new environment.

Moreover, urban areas typically offer superior healthcare services compared to rural regions. Consequently, many migrants make decisions to either remain in urban settings or relocate to urban areas to access better healthcare services. As a result, medical care conditions also play a significant role in influencing the process of adaptation and the long-term settlement intentions of Gen Y immigrant laborers. Therefore, the author proposes the following research hypotheses:

H5: Medical care conditions has a positive impact on the Adaptation of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

H6: Medical care conditions has a positive impact on the Long-term settlement intentions of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

Adaptation

The research conducted by Ette et al. (2015) highlights the significant role that adaptation plays in shaping the long-term settlement intentions of immigrant laborers. Their study underscores the idea that effective adaptation, encompassing factorspositively influences the decisions and intentions of immigrant laborers regarding permanent settlement. Similarly, findings from Liu et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of social capital, smooth social integration, and voluntary cultural adaptation in enhancing the sense of belonging among Chinese migrants. This sense of belonging is a crucial determinant of settlement intentions, as it fosters a desire for a stable and long-term future in the host country. Building upon the findings of these research studies, the author proposes the following research hypotheses:

H7: Adaption has a positive impact on the Long-term settlement intentions of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

2.3 Research model

Based on the theoretical framework and the proposed research hypotheses, the author presents the research model for measuring adaptation and long-term settlement intentions of Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City, Vietnam, with components as illustrated in Figure 1, as follows:

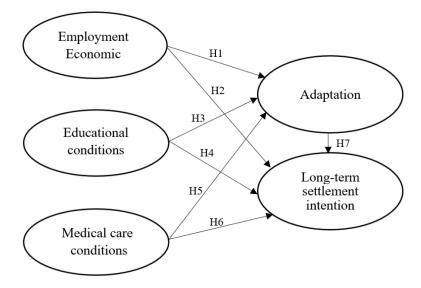


Figure 1: Research model

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative Research

The qualitative research method was employed to construct the research model, explore its components, and develop preliminary scales through expert interviews and group discussions. These activities aimed to refine and enhance the measurement scales and questionnaire items for the formal research. The preliminary findings of this qualitative research phase resulted in the formulation of the official questionnaire to be used in the main study.

Quantitative Research

The observed variables in the survey questionnaire were constructed based on the results of the qualitative research. Measurement scales for the factors in the research model were developed using a 5-level Likert scale.

Sampling Method and Sample Size: Convenience sampling method was employed. To calculate the sample size ratio as proposed by Bentler & Chou (1987), a ratio of 1:5 was used, meaning that for every known variable, the sample size could be determined. Thus, this study had 27 observed variables. However, to ensure the reliability of the research processing in the PLS-SEM model, a sample size of 300 was chosen.

The research sample consisted of 300 Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City, Vietnam, from which 267 valid samples were collected. Data collection took place from March 2022 to April 2022.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The characteristics of the 267 Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The characteristics of Gen Y immigrant laborers

Characteristic	Immigrant Laborer	Percentage
Gender		
- Male	162	60.7
- Female	105	39.3
Occupation		
- Office worker	85	31.8
- Business	53	19.9
- Freelancer	36	13.5
- Worker	79	29.6
- Other	14	5.2
Education level		
- High school	43	16.1
- College	78	29.2
- University	116	43.5
- Postgraduate	18	6.7
- Other	12	4.5
Hometown		
- Soc Trang Province	39	14.6
- Vinh Long Province	7	2.6
- Hau Giang Province	41	15.4
- Tra Vinh Province	43	16.1
- Kien Giang Province	9	3.4
- An Giang Province	15	5.6
- Bac Lieu Province	63	23.6
- Ca Mau Province	27	10.1
- Dong Thap Province	23	8.6
Total	267	100.0

Source: Statistical results from survey data

Evaluate the reliability, validity, and discriminant validity of the structure in the model

According to Hair et al. (2016), the steps to assess the reliability and validity of the structure include assessing internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Reliability is evaluated through outer loadings for indicators/observed variables, Cronbach's Alpha, and composite reliability (CR). Outer loadings should be greater than or equal to 0.7, and both Cronbach's Alpha and CR should be greater than or equal to 0.7 (Hulland, 1999). Convergent validity is assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), which should be greater than or equal to 0.5 to confirm convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results of the assessment indicate that the variable EC3 from the Educational conditions scale had an outer loading less than 0.7 and was therefore removed.

Upon reanalyzing the model after removing the EC3 variable, the results in Table 2 show that all scales achieved internal consistency (outer loadings for indicators/observed variables are all greater than 0.7, and Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability for all scales are greater than 0.7). Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all scales is greater than 0.5, confirming convergent validity. Therefore, all scales/constructs in the study demonstrate convergent validity.

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity Results for the Scales

Scale		Indicator	Outer	Cronbach's	Composite	Average Variance	
			Loading	alpha	Reliability	Extracted	
		EEM1	0.791				
Facility and		EEM2	0.825		0.782	0.701	
		EEM3	0.770	0.645			
Employment Economic	and	EEM4	0.726				
Motivation		EEM5	0.780				
Mouvation		EEM6	0.730				
		EEM7	0.805				
		EEM8	0.844				
		EC1	0.728			0.728	
Educational		EC2	0.763		0.794		
conditions		EC4	0.812	0.731			
conditions		EC5	0.730				
		EC6	0.753				
	care	MCC1	0.839	0.772	0.819	0.737	
		MCC2	0.726				
Medical		MCC3	0.761				
conditions		MCC4	0.778				
		MCC5	0.770				
		MCC6	0.832				
Adaptation		AP1	0.736		0.893	0.836	
		AP2	0.738	0.804			
		AP3	0.733	0.804			
		AP4	0.770				
Long-term settlement intention		SI1	0.792				
		SI2	0.810	0.787	0.837	0.788	
		SI3	0.794				

Source: Statistical results from survey data

In terms of assessing discriminant validity, prior research typically relied on the Fornell-Larcker criterion. However, Henseler et al. (2015) introduced an alternative measure known as the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Consequently, in this study, the HTMT ratio is utilized to appraise the differentiation between constructs. According to the HTMT criterion, the values for pairs of constructs should be equal to or less than 0.85 (Kline, 2015).

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Coefficients

	EEM	EC	MCC	AP	SI
EEM					
EC	0.177				
MCC	0.095	0.239			
AP	0.375	0.334	0.059		
SI	0.131	0.084	0.044	0.150	

SI 0.131 0.084 0.044 0.150

Source: Statistical results from survey data

The results in Table 3 indicate that all Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Coefficients are less than 0.85, confirming that the constructs in the model exhibit discriminant validity.

Evaluating the PLS-SEM Structural Model

According to the criteria outlined by Hulland and Bentler (1999), a model is considered appropriate for real-world data when it achieves an SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) value lower than 0.1. Beside, the results in Table 4 indicate that the variance inflation factor (VIF) for all independent variables is less than 3, suggesting that there is no issue of multicollinearity in the research model. Consequently, given the

SRMR value of 0.028, which falls below the 0.1 threshold, it can be concluded that the research model is well-suited for the study carried out in Can Tho City.

The coefficient of determination, denoted as R-squared, manifests a value of 0.547, implying that approximately 54.7% of the variance in the Adaptation of Gen Y immigrant laborers can be elucidated by the independent variables integrated into the model. Furthermore, the R-squared value stands at 0.586, signifying that around 58.6% of the variance in the Long-term Settlement Intentions of Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City is comprehensible through the factors considered in this study.

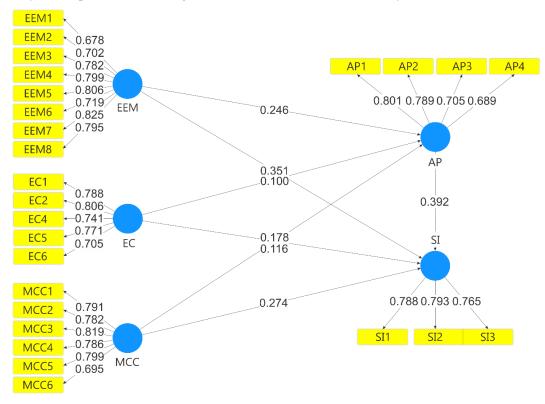


Figure 2: PLS-SEM estimation results

Source: Statistical results from survey data

Because the data analyzed in PLS is assumed to be non-normally distributed, the significance of coefficients, such as path coefficients, cannot be tested using traditional parametric hypothesis tests commonly used in regression analysis. Instead, PLS relies on bootstrapping of non-parametric methods to assess the significance of coefficients (Hair et al., 2014). To examine whether path coefficients significantly differ from zero, t-values are calculated through bootstrapping. In this study, the non-parametric bootstrapping technique was applied to 267 observations, with 5,000 resamples, ensuring the robustness of the structural equation model testing.

Table 4. Research Hypothesis Testing Results

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Relationship	Hypothesis	Original weight	P value	2.5%	97.5%	VIF	Result
EEM → AP	H1	0.246	0.000	0.129	0.339	1.048	Accepted
EEM → SI	H2	0.351	0.001	0.264	0.487	1.154	Accepted
EC → AP	Н3	0.100	0.067	0.021	0.153	1.036	Rejected
EC → SI	H4	0.178	0.004	0.109	0.284	1.121	Accepted
$MCC \rightarrow AP$	H5	0.116	0.185	0.073	0.192	1.084	Rejected
MCC → SI	Н6	0.274	0.027	0.210	0.368	1.327	Accepted
$AP \rightarrow SI$	H7	0.392	0.000	0.294	0.510	1.499	Accepted

Source: Statistical results from survey data

The results presented in Table 4 demonstrate that the original weights are significant, with all weights falling within the 95% confidence interval. Therefore, it can be concluded that the estimates in the model are reliable. Additionally, it is evident that only the factor Employment and Economic Motivation (O = 0.246) has a statistically significant positive impact on the adaptation of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City, supporting hypothesis H1. However, the results do not provide statistical evidence regarding the impact of Educational conditions and Medical care conditions on the adaptation of gen Y immigrant laborers. Consequently, hypotheses H3 and H5 are rejected.

Furthermore, the research results indicate that all four factors, namely Employment and Economic Motivation, Educational conditions, Medical care conditions, and Adaptation have a positive influence on the long-term settlement intentions of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City. Among these factors, Adaptation (O = 0.392) exerts the strongest impact on settlement intentions, followed by Employment and Economic Motivation (O = 0.351), Medical care conditions (O = 0.274), and lastly, Educational conditions (O = 0.178). At present, despite significant administrative simplification efforts by the Vietnamese government, the issue of residency registration procedures, both temporary and permanent for immigrants, still poses numerous challenges. This results in immigrants facing significant hurdles in accessing essential social services, including healthcare and basic education for themselves and their families.

The estimation results reveal that "Employment and Economic Motivation" is a crucial factor influencing both adaptation and long-term settlement intentions of gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City. Many of these laborers migrate from other provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta to Can Tho City in search of employment and higher income, making it a vital determinant in their decision to settle in Can Tho City. To successfully integrate into their new lives, they require a stable income and secure employment to cover their living expenses.

Furthermore, Educational conditions and Medical care conditions in Can Tho also play a significant role in influencing long-term settlement intentions. This is particularly relevant because, as of 2023, the Millennial generation falls within the age range of 29 to 41 years old and constitutes the primary workforce in the economy. They have substantial demands for self-improvement through education and, notably, for access to quality healthcare and education facilities in Can Tho City for the subsequent generation when considering their long-term settlement intentions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the linear structural analysis have demonstrated that 'Employment and Economic Motivation' is the only variable among the three included in the model that significantly influences the adaptation of Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City. Furthermore, 'Adaptation' is the variable with the strongest impact on the long-term settlement intentions of Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City. 'Employment and Economic Motivation' is the second most influential factor on long-term settlement intentions. Additionally, 'Educational conditions' and 'Medical care conditions' are also factors that have a non-negligible impact on long-term settlement intentions. In summary, 'Employment and Economic Motivation' is a highly significant factor because it affects both 'Adaptation' and 'settlement intentions.' Therefore, addressing the need for stable employment with income commensurate with one's abilities, sufficient to support the family, and providing assistance to relatives is crucial for Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City.

Based on the research findings, the author proposes several recommendations to help Gen Y immigrant laborers in Can Tho City adapt better and enhance their long-term settlement intentions in the city. To ensure the successful implementation of these

recommendations, close coordination between the local government and businesses is essential.

For the local government in Can Tho City, it is crucial to reinforce the provision of information and support related to employment opportunities and the labor market through social organizations. Disseminating information about laws and providing legal support services for immigrant workers is vital. In the current era of technological advancement, establishing and operating job information channels to connect employers and workers is necessary. These channels should encompass a wide range of industries, including skilled labor, rather than focusing solely on common job opportunities. Furthermore, organizing and enhancing training, retraining, and skill development for immigrant workers is essential. Regulatory macroeconomic roles should be played to create a fair environment for immigrant and local labor. The local government must act as a bridge to achieve consensus between businesses and immigrant workers.

On the other hand, businesses in Can Tho City, as labor employers, must take responsibility for ensuring the stability and development of immigrant labor. They should establish mechanisms to support immigrant workers, such as building workers' housing and childcare facilities for employees' children. These efforts contribute to maintaining an average living standard for workers, including immigrant laborers. Furthermore, continuous investment in training and retraining to enhance the skills of immigrant workers is essential. There should be no discrimination between local and immigrant labor, and businesses must adhere to all legal requirements related to labor utilization. This includes the signing of labor contracts, ensuring occupational safety, and participating fully in healthcare, social insurance, and unemployment insurance for all workers, irrespective of whether they are local or immigrant laborers.

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