Exploring Employment Integration Paths for Young Immigrants from a Global Perspective: Challenges, Practices and Policy Innovations

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Abstract. This study adopts a comparative research method and policy analysis method, integrating empirical data from developed countries and emerging economies, to systematically explore the global landscape, structural obstacles, typical international practices and optimization paths of young immigrants' employment integration. The research defines the multi-dimensional connotation of employment integration, clarifies the institutional, market and individual barriers faced by young immigrants, and summarizes the innovative experiences of European, North American and Asia-Pacific models. Finally, it puts forward a multi-level solution system covering policy innovation, social support networks and individual empowerment, and proposes targeted suggestions for sending countries, receiving countries and international organizations. The research is expected to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for promoting the high-quality employment integration of young immigrants globally.

Keywords: Young Immigrants, Employment Integration, Structural Barriers, Policy Innovation, Comparative Study.

1. Introduction

In the context of the accelerating process of globalization, the cross-border flow of labor factors has become increasingly frequent, and young immigrants, as a group with strong labor mobility and potential, have gradually become the main force of international migration. According to the latest data released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the global number of international migrants has exceeded 281 million by 2023, among which young immigrants aged 15-34 account for about 35%, reaching nearly 98 million. This group shows distinct characteristics: on the one hand, they are in the golden period of career development, with strong learning ability and labor productivity; on the other hand, they are more likely to face risks such as cultural shock, skill mismatch and social exclusion in the process of cross-border migration. In addition, the positive employment integration of young immigrants helps to reduce social conflicts caused by unemployment and exclusion, and promotes social harmony and stability. However, in practice, young immigrants in many countries are facing severe employment difficulties, such as high unemployment rates, low-quality non-regular employment and serious skill mismatch. Therefore, exploring the employment integration paths of young immigrants from a global perspective, identifying the key challenges and innovative practices, and putting forward targeted policy suggestions have important theoretical and practical significance [1-5].

This study defines young immigrants as individuals aged 15-34 who have moved from their country of origin to another country for residence and employment, excluding temporary migrant workers and international students who do not have the intention of long-term residence. The age range of 15-34 is determined based on the definition of youth in the "World Youth Report" of the United Nations and the actual characteristics of global youth labor participation. Compared with other immigrant groups, young immigrants have obvious particularities: first, they are in the critical period of human capital accumulation, and their employment experience and skill development in the receiving country will have a long-term impact on their lifelong career development; second, they have a stronger desire for social integration, and their adaptation to the culture, language and

workplace norms of the receiving country is more rapid; third, they are more vulnerable to the impact of labor market fluctuations and policy changes, and have higher employment instability.

Employment integration is not a single economic concept, but a multi-dimensional process involving economic participation, career development and social identity. From the perspective of economic participation, it refers to young immigrants' ability to enter the formal labor market of the receiving country, obtain stable employment and equal labor remuneration, and get rid of the state of unemployment or non-regular employment. From the perspective of career development, it means that young immigrants can realize the matching of their own skills and job requirements, have the opportunity to receive vocational training and promotion, and achieve the continuous improvement of their career status. From the perspective of social identity, it refers to the fact that through employment, young immigrants establish interpersonal relationships with residents and colleagues, recognize and accept the workplace culture and social norms of the receiving country, and thus enhance their sense of belonging to the receiving society. These three dimensions are interrelated and mutually promoting: economic participation is the foundation of employment integration, career development is the core driving force, and social identity is the ultimate goal of employment integration.

This study adopts the comparative research method, focusing on comparing the employment integration practices of young immigrants in developed countries and emerging economies. Developed countries represented by OECD member states have a long history of immigration management and relatively mature employment integration policies, while emerging economies such as Singapore and Malaysia have gradually become important immigration receiving countries in recent years, with distinctive characteristics in the employment integration of young immigrants. By comparing the differences in institutional environments, policy tools and implementation effects between the two types of countries, this study can better identify the universal laws and specific characteristics of young immigrants' employment integration, and provide a more comprehensive reference for the formulation of relevant policies [6-7].

The policy analysis method is used to systematically sort out and evaluate the employment integration policies for young immigrants in typical countries, including the design concept, implementation process, supporting measures and policy effects of the policies. At the same time, this study integrates a variety of empirical data sources, including official statistical data released by OECD, ILO, UNDESA and other international organizations, survey data of young immigrant groups in typical countries, and case study reports of academic institutions. Through the integration and analysis of these data, this study can accurately grasp the current situation and development trend of young immigrants' employment integration, and enhance the authenticity and reliability of the research conclusions.

2. Global Landscape and Theoretical Perspective of Young Immigrants' Employment Integration

OECD countries are important receiving areas for global young immigrants, and their employment data of young immigrants can reflect the overall situation of developed countries. According to the "OECD International Migration Outlook 2023", the average unemployment rate of young immigrants aged 15-34 in OECD countries in 2022 was 14.2%, which was 5.3 percentage points higher than that of local young people (8.9%). There are obvious differences between countries: the unemployment rate of young immigrants in Southern European countries such as Greece, Spain and Italy is relatively high, exceeding 20%, while that in Northern European countries such as Germany, Sweden and Denmark is relatively low, below 10%. In terms of employment rate, the average employment rate of young immigrants in OECD countries in 2022 was 56.8%, which was 8.7 percentage points lower than that of local young people (65.5%). This data shows that young immigrants in OECD countries are generally in a disadvantaged position in the labor market, facing greater employment pressure. In

addition to high unemployment rates, young immigrants in many countries also face the problems of informal employment and skill mismatch [8-10].

Integration refers to immigrants' maintaining their own cultural identity while accepting and adapting to the culture of the receiving society. This theory holds that the cross-cultural adaptation of immigrants is a two-way process involving both immigrants' active adaptation to the receiving society and the receiving society's acceptance of immigrants. For young immigrants' employment integration, cross-cultural adaptation is a key link. Only when young immigrants can adapt to the workplace culture, communication methods and social norms of the receiving society can they better integrate into the labor market. At the same time, the acceptance and recognition of young immigrants by the receiving society, especially employers and colleagues, is also an important condition for their successful employment integration.

Labor market segmentation theory holds that the labor market is not unified and perfect, but is divided into different segments with obvious boundaries. The most typical is the dual labor market theory proposed by Doeringer and Piore, which divides the labor market into the primary market and the secondary market. The primary market has the characteristics of high wages, stable employment, good working conditions and perfect promotion channels, while the secondary market has the characteristics of low wages, unstable employment, poor working conditions and a lack of promotion opportunities. This theory can well explain the employment status of young immigrants. Due to factors such as institutional barriers, discrimination and lack of social networks, young immigrants are often excluded from the primary market and can only enter the secondary market, engaging in low-quality and unstable jobs.

Human capital conversion theory emphasizes that the human capital accumulated by immigrants in their country of origin (such as education, skills, work experience, etc.) cannot be directly applied in the receiving country and needs to go through a conversion process. The conversion effect of human capital is affected by many factors, such as the recognition of educational qualifications and professional qualifications in the receiving country, language ability, and cultural adaptation level. For young immigrants, although they may have certain human capital in their country of origin, due to the differences in educational systems and professional qualification certification systems between countries, their human capital often cannot be effectively converted and utilized in the receiving country, resulting in skill mismatch and waste of human capital. Therefore, promoting the conversion of human capital of young immigrants is an important way to improve their employment integration level.

3. Structural Barriers to Young Immigrants' Employment Integration

Many countries do not have corresponding transitional employment permit policies for newly arrived young immigrants, which makes them unable to work legally during the adaptation period, and can only engage in informal employment, which poses hidden dangers for their subsequent employment integration [11-13].

Employer discrimination is a common market barrier facing young immigrants in the employment process. Some employers in the receiving country hold prejudices and discrimination against young immigrants due to factors such as cultural differences, language barriers, and national stereotypes. According to a study by the European Commission, in the European Union, the average wage of young immigrants is 18% lower than that of local young people with the same educational level and work experience, which fully reflects the existence of the "immigrant employment premium" phenomenon.

Social networks play an important role in the process of job search and career development. In many countries, the labor market has the characteristics of "relationship-based employment", and many jobs are not recruited through open channels but through internal recommendations and interpersonal introductions. However, young immigrants, as new members of the receiving society, often lack effective social networks. They have few contacts with residents and colleagues, and it is

difficult to obtain valuable job information and employment opportunities. Compared with local young people who can rely on family, friends and school networks to find jobs, young immigrants are at a disadvantageous position in the job search process.

Language ability is the basic premise for young immigrants to integrate into the labor market of the receiving country. Poor language ability will not only affect their communication with colleagues and superiors in the workplace but also make it difficult for them to understand job requirements, work rules and workplace culture. If young immigrants cannot adapt to these cultural differences in a timely manner, they may have conflicts with colleagues and superiors, which affects their work efficiency and job stability. For example, in some individualistic countries, the workplace emphasizes personal ability and independent work, while young immigrants from collectivist countries may be more accustomed to teamwork and collective decision-making, leading to adaptation difficulties.

In addition to professional skills and language ability, soft skills in the workplace (such as communication skills, teamwork ability, problem-solving ability, time management ability, etc.) are also important factors affecting the employment integration of young immigrants. However, due to the differences in educational systems and social environments between countries, the soft skills mastered by young immigrants in their country of origin may not meet the requirements of the workplace in the receiving country. For example, young immigrants from some developing countries may lack experience in formal workplace communication and negotiation, which makes it difficult for them to adapt to the communication mode of the workplace in developed countries. In addition, the lack of understanding of the workplace rules and etiquette of the receiving country also puts young immigrants at a disadvantage in the employment process. Many employers in the receiving country attach great importance to the soft skills of employees, and the lack of soft skills has become an important reason for young immigrants to be rejected in job interviews or to be unable to be promoted after employment [14-15].

4. Conclusion

Young immigrants face multiple structural barriers in the process of employment integration, including institutional barriers such as differences in qualification certification systems and work visa restrictions, market barriers such as employer discrimination and lack of social networks, and individual ability gaps such as language and cultural adaptation shortcomings and lack of workplace soft skills. Then, typical countries in Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific region have formed distinctive employment integration models, which provide valuable experience for other countries. Lastly, promoting the employment integration of young immigrants requires the joint efforts of multiple subjects, and a multi-level solution system covering policy innovation, social support networks and individual empowerment should be established. Based on this, this study proposes the "three-dimensional success indicators" of young immigrants' employment integration, namely economic independence, career development and social belonging. Only when these three indicators are simultaneously achieved can we say that young immigrants have realized true employment integration.

Receiving countries should take the lead in building a "step-by-step integration" policy system for young immigrants' employment integration. The system should cover the entire process of young immigrants' arrival, employment and long-term development, and formulate targeted policies according to different stages of their integration. In the initial stage of arrival, focus on providing transitional employment permits, language training and cultural adaptation services; in the employment stage, focus on promoting the mutual recognition of qualifications, eliminating employer discrimination and improving the efficiency of job matching; in the long-term development stage, focus on providing career development support, gradually empowering welfare and promoting permanent residence. At the same time, receiving countries should strengthen the coordination and cooperation between different departments (such as immigration, labor, education, social security, etc.) to form a joint force to promote the employment integration of young immigrants.

Sending countries should strengthen the pre-departure vocational skill reserves of young immigrants to improve their employment competitiveness in the receiving country. First, according to the labor market needs of major receiving countries, adjust the content of education and training, and carry out targeted vocational skill training for young immigrants. Second, strengthen the training of language ability and cross-cultural communication ability of young immigrants, helping them adapt to the life and work environment of the receiving country as soon as possible. Third, establish a pre-departure counseling system to provide young immigrants with information on the laws, regulations, labor market and social culture of the receiving country, helping them understand the potential risks and challenges of migration. In addition, sending countries should strengthen cooperation with receiving countries to establish a joint training mechanism for young immigrants, improving the international recognition of their vocational skills.

International organizations (such as the United Nations, ILO, OECD, etc.) should play a leading and coordinating role in promoting the construction of a global skill standard mutual recognition framework. First, organize relevant countries to formulate unified global skill standard guidelines, providing a basis for the mutual recognition of vocational qualifications between countries. Second, establish a global skill standard information platform to promote the sharing of skill standard information between countries. Third, provide technical support and capacity-building services for countries, especially developing countries, helping them improve their own skill standard systems and qualification certification capabilities. In addition, international organizations should strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the employment integration of young immigrants globally, and promote the exchange and sharing of experiences between countries. The construction of a global skill standard mutual recognition framework can break the institutional barriers caused by differences in skill standards between countries and promote the free flow and optimal allocation of young immigrant labor globally.

This study has certain limitations: first, due to the limitations of data availability, the research mainly focuses on the employment integration of young immigrants in typical countries, and the research conclusions may not be fully applicable to all countries and regions. Second, the research adopts a macro comparative analysis method, and the analysis of the micro-level factors affecting the employment integration of young immigrants (such as individual psychological factors, family background, etc.) is not in-depth enough. Third, the research focuses on the current situation and practices of young immigrants' employment integration, and the prediction of future development trends is relatively insufficient.

In the future, the following research directions can be carried out: first, expand the research scope, include more countries and regions (especially developing countries) in the research, and improve the universality of the research conclusions. Second, strengthen the micro-level research, using empirical research methods such as questionnaires and interviews to deeply analyze the impact of individual factors on the employment integration of young immigrants. Third, pay attention to the impact of global changes (such as population aging, technological progress, regional conflicts, etc.) on the employment integration of young immigrants, and predict the future development trends of young immigrants' employment integration. Fourth, carry out in-depth research on the long-term effect of employment integration policies for young immigrants, and provide more targeted policy suggestions for the optimization of policies.

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