



Labor Export and Development in Rural Areas: The Role of Gender

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Abstract

Labor export is a socio-economic activity that contributes to human resource development, job creation, income generation and career improvement for workers. In addition, it helps to increase income sources for the country and strengthen cooperation between Vietnam and other countries in the world. Since 2006, an average of 70,000 to 80,000 Vietnamese workers have gone to work abroad every year; of which female workers account for 30-35% of total migrant workers. Women participate in labor export activities is considered as an important part of the country's socio-economic development.

The paper was conducted to analyze gender migration and development in Vietnam. At the same time, the paper focuses on analyzing the characteristics of women's labor export activities and their impact on socio-economic aspects in rural areas. On that basis, the article will propose some discussions and solutions as well as recommendations to continue promoting the role of labor export policy in contributing to improving the role of women in labor export activities as well as in society.

Keywords: Women, Labor export, Socio-economic development, Vietnam



1. Introduction

Over the decades, labor migration in Asia has tended to be feminized. Female migrant workers are on the rise in both absolute and relative terms. Women and girls accounted for 46% of all migrants in Asia (Wickramasekera, 2002), and account for over 50% of migrants globally in the 2000s (IOM, 2009). If domestic and international migrants are included, the number of female migrants is as large as that of men. It is worth noting that this trend is increasing with the voice in migration decisions and are not dependent on men as in the previous period. The feminization of migration will continue, even though the social attitudes and perceptions of female migration still change slowly in South Asia.

Vietnam is a country where the number of people working abroad has been increasing rapidly in the Asia-Pacific region. Currently, there are about 500,000 Vietnamese people working in more than 40 countries and territories around the world (*Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2018*). Since 2006, an average of 70,000 to 80,000 Vietnamese have gone to work abroad every year of which, female workers account for 30-35% of total migrant workers (*Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2018*). The labor export activities of Vietnamese women have contributed positively to the socio-economic development such as increasing incomes for workers, creating jobs for thousands of young workers, addressing labor stagnation, addressing employment pressure for the country, reducing social evils caused by unemployed workers. Through the annual export of labor, the country has saved a large amount of investment capital to create new jobs for workers. The State budget collects hundreds of millions of USD through social insurance premiums, sales tax of labor export enterprises based on the number of service charges collected from employees, fees for granting labor export operation licenses, fees for licensing contract performance, fees for granting passports, etc.

Although migration can open up new opportunities for women, migration policies and the labor market are still gender-driven. Assessing the impact of migration depends on the gender of the migrant. A report by the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (2017) shows that women working abroad often suffer disadvantages such as sexual abuse, low wages, lack of access to health care services, etc. During the migration process, women often lack legal knowledge so they are abused by traffickers. On the other hand, most of them are unskilled workers, their jobs have not been included in the labor law. Female migrant workers have become discriminated against three times in host countries: Migration, women, and workers.

Therefore, the research focuses on labor export activities by gender perspective in Vietnam aiming to propose solutions and recommendations to continue promoting the role of labor export policies. More importantly, the findings of this research also contribute to the socio-economic development of the country and proposing measures to protect the rights of Vietnamese female workers going abroad for labor export. Stemming from the above reasons, the authors conducted this study with three specific objectives: (i) overview the theoretical basis of gender and migration decisions: the case in Vietnam; (ii) Assess the characteristics of women who labor export and the



impact of women going to labor export to various aspects of economic and social issues in Vietnam;
(iii) Propose some recommendations to continue promoting the role of policies to protect the rights and legitimate interests of Vietnamese female workers working abroad.

2. Theoretical basis and method

2.1. The theoretical basis on gender and development: case in Vietnam

Migration decisions are a process in which one or more individuals determine who migrates, for what purpose, and where to go. This process is basically considered the operation of gender relations in the family. Recent migration research data in developing countries shows that in many countries, whether at different levels of economy, politics, culture, migrants are mainly for due to the economy (Thadani and Todaro, 1984; Massey et al, 1993; Todaro, 1976). This correlation can be explained by the common characteristics of developing countries such as labor surplus, limited development opportunities in the countryside, high levels of poverty among the population have forced people to leave elsewhere for change and a better life.

In fact, gender plays a central role in migration decisions. Previous studies in developing countries have shown that people who have a decisive voice are men, not women (Riley et al., 1995). Recent studies reflect that both women and men migrate for economic reasons, and the extent to which men make decisions depends on age, marital status, and education level. women's advice (Donato et al., 2006). The combined effect of social and human capital on migration decisions indicates that migration decisions are a complex and gender-driven process.

However, labor export is currently considered as one of the external economic sectors with great benefits both economically and socially, which is an important and strategic solution to create jobs. Labor export is considered as a way to create jobs for workers and collect foreign currency for the country. Through annual labor export, the State has saved a large amount of investment capital to create new jobs. At the same time, female workers working abroad have improved their professional and technical qualifications, foreign languages, acquired advanced technologies, industrial working styles, formed a workforce with high professional qualifications. As a result, their voice and roles are enhanced.

For migration in Vietnam, the household strategy approach and network theory appear to be more relevant when considering migration decision making processes. This decision is influenced by household characteristics and resources, the gender role and marital status of migrants. The migration decision is also influenced by the gender segmented labor market, which is changing in the process of integration and globalization in Vietnam. This process has important dimensions on gender and the effects of migration. The main destination for women in urban areas at first, and then quickly spreads across borders (GSO, 2006). This may be due to the high levels of poverty, the local labor force may be redundant, and in addition to the positive role of female workers in the current economy in Vietnam. Even when women migrate for family reasons, men and women still have the same goal of improving the economic situation (GSO, 2006).



However, migration in Vietnam may differ from other countries in the migration decision-making model. Married women often have a dominant voice in migration decisions in Vietnam, and are rarely influenced by others (GSO, 2006). More specifically, the wife sometimes goes with her husband (in many cases, wife go alone, especially rural female labors because their husbands have to be home to take care of children). Compared to women in other countries (Boyd, 1989; Lim, 1993; Chant, 1992) this may be a result of socialist ideology that promotes gender equality and opportunities at home and at work. Like men, women can empower themselves through education and knowledge, and earning money from the public and private sectors.

Compared to men, women are less likely to have the opportunity to: (i) the inherent gender bias that governs their rights and obligations; (ii) their childbirth and parenting roles. As a result, even if women gain the opportunity and authority, their voices in migration decisions are often less important than men. The previous study has shown that in Vietnam, regardless of age and marital status, the people who decide to migrate are mostly men rather than women, and if married, they decide to migrate more often, while unmarried women often migrate according to family placement decisions (Dang, 1998). Moreover, Vietnamese people in general, men and women alike, tend to rely on their social networks, especially during migration, to ensure safety and success. Because of the high cost of migration, many difficulties and barriers in destination, social relations play an important role in helping migrants to have more information and integrate into the labor market of destination (Dang, 1998; GSO, 2006).

Current theories of migration often fail to take into account gender in the interpretation. In fact, gender is an important factor for migration. Women are not recognized to have equal roles as men and are not considered as important as men. In Vietnam, female migrants still suffer from losses in the labor market, not only due to gender bias but also by rural and inter-provincial origin according to the classification of the household registration system. The inclusion of a gender factor in the study should be considered in terms of the positive and negative consequences of gender and migration; gender roles will change after migration, which can increase women's empowerment in family decision making, and in society overall.

2.2. Method

To achieve the research purpose, the study was conducted through a process that included the following steps:

(i) System approach: With this approach, labor export activities are approached as an integral part of the management functions.

(ii) Data collection and processing: To collect data related to the status and socio-economic indicators of labor export activities in Vietnam, the research uses a desk research methodology to collect the necessary data for research purposes. With data from the General Statistics Office; vamas.com; molisa.gov.vn; etc. The collected data will be sorted, aggregated, cleaned and entered

into the Excel software to calculate the necessary indicators and to draw graphs, data period: 2010-2019.

(iii) Data analysis: The study uses descriptive statistics and comparative analysis to find the variance of the analytical criteria.

To have a better understanding of the labor export in Vietnam through gender aspect, we applied the SWOT analysis to analyze the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities, and the threats of long-term development. In the analysis process, we delved into the analysis of two combinations: the strengths with the challenge; the weakness analysis with the opportunity to draw some key conclusions about appropriate solutions to boost the activities including more female laborers.

3. Results

3.1. Characteristics of women participating in labor export activities in Vietnam

a) An increase in the number of female workers participating in labor export markets

The number of laborers going to work abroad is constantly increasing over the years. Specifically, according to the Department of Overseas Labor Management, in 2010, there were 85,546 people going to work abroad (of which about 28,573 were women, accounting for 35.21%). However, in 2018, Vietnamese workers working abroad have increased significantly to reach more than 142,800 people (including about 50,300 female workers) exceeding 30% of the plan, up 6% compared to the previous year. This was the fifth consecutive year that Vietnamese workers working abroad have exceeded the threshold of 100,000 (see Chart 1).

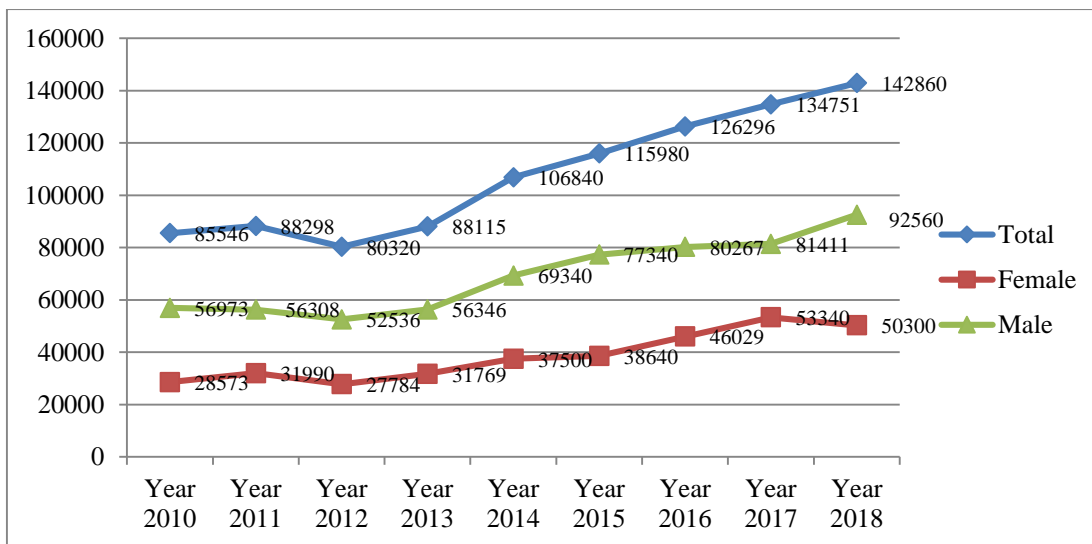


Chart 1. Size of Vietnamese employees going to work abroad from 2010 to 2018

(Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2018)

Currently, female workers make up about one-third of the number of Vietnamese working abroad. The proportion of female workers working abroad has increased gradually in recent years, from 10-15% in the 1992-1996 period, to about 30% in the period 2000-2005 and especially increase about 76% in the period 2010-2018. Furthermore, the ratio of female workers to men working abroad has increased in recent years, from 33.40% in 2010 to 35.21% in 2018 (*the Overseas Labor Management Department; Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs*) (see Chart 2). The main reason for an increase in numbers is that Vietnamese female workers are hard-working and hard-working, therefore many markets tend to favor female workers.

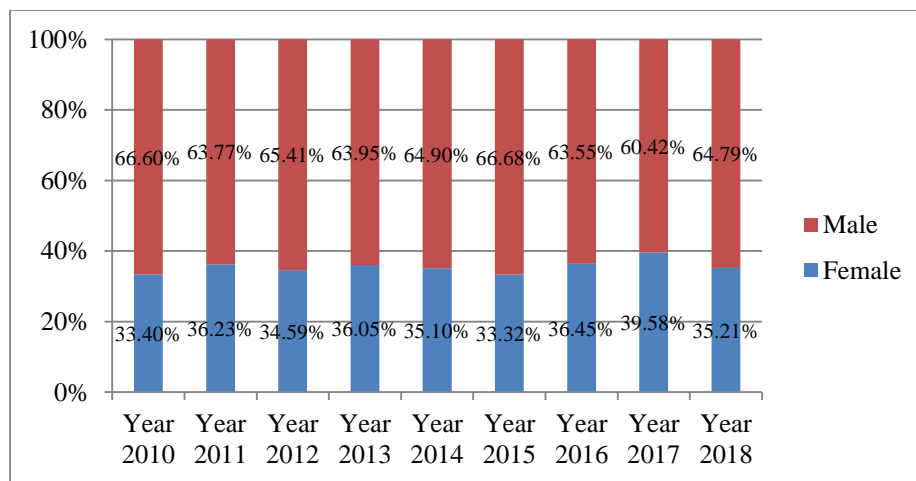


Chart 2. Vietnam's labor mechanics by gender going to work abroad from 2010 to 2018

(Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2018)

The increase in the proportion of women going to labor export has contributed positively to employment creation, income growth, and sustainable poverty reduction. At the same time, it creates favorable conditions for female workers to have the opportunity to learn from experience, integrate and train industrial manners, discipline in productive labor, and improve the quality of female human resources.

b) The labor market of Vietnamese women is mainly concentrated in Asia

The labor export market of Vietnam is very diverse, however, the main labor export market continues to have a high demand for recruiting Vietnamese workers are Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. Other markets still have stable demand, particularly in Japan, the demand for recruiting Vietnamese workers is increasing, diversifying in industries. However, 2018 also recorded the first time the Japanese market attracted the most labor with more than 68,700 people, surpassing Taiwan with nearly 60,400 employees; South Korea employs over 6,500 workers (see Table 1).



Table 1. Vietnam's labor structure going to work abroad 2010 – 2018

Year	Taiwan	Japan	South Korea	Other countries
2010	28,499	4,913	8,628	43,506
2011	34,998	6,373	15,049	31,878
2012	30,500	8,800	9,200	31,820
2013	46,000	9,600	5,500	27,015
2014	62,018	19,893	6,975	17,954
2015	67,121	27,010	6,019	15,830
2016	68,244	39,938	8,442	9,672
2017	66,926	54,504	5,178	8,143
2018	60,369	68,737	6,538	7,216

(Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2018)

According to statistics of the Department of Overseas Labor Management (Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, 2018), up to now, the labor export market in Vietnam has been continuously increasing in number. Among 142,860 workers going to labor export in 2018, the Japanese market had 68,737 employees (27,610 female employees, accounting for 40.17%), Taiwan: 60,369 employees (19,273 female workers, accounting for 31.91%), South Korea: 6,538 employees (736 female employees, accounting for 11.26%) and other markets. Based on statistics, it can be seen that the dominant labor export of Japan has become a career choice for a large number of workers, including female workers. With the advantage of salary and many attractive remuneration policies in 2018, Japan continues to maintain the first position, and the number of Vietnamese female employees registered to go to Japan has also increased significantly. Especially, this is one of the markets with good working conditions and income, which is interested in many Vietnamese female workers (see Table 2).



Table 2: Summary of high salary orders registered by many Vietnamese women going to Japan for labor export in 2018

Career	Advantages	Specific work	Salary/per month (USD)
Seafood processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe work, - Often working in houses, factories (working environment is guaranteed by enterprises very well) - Stable income, more jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lunch box, - Hotdogs - Processing meat, processing seafood, etc. 	1,400-1,800
Assembly of electronic components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work in line - Indoor working environment, safety - Stable job, high salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assembling electronic components, - Operator control panel, etc. 	1,400-1,700
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suitable for many labor experiences - Many part-time jobs - Often working in greenhouses 	Planting greenhouses, growing greenhouses, raising dairy cows, pigs, etc.	1,300 -1,500
Apparel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be supported with fees - Many part-time jobs - Good working environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weaving, - Making clothes, - Sewing the curtains, etc. 	1,200 -1,500

(Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2018)

Currently, the orders received by Japan are very suitable for Vietnamese female workers. The work gives female workers a high and stable salary with a good income regime. Orders are increasingly attracting the great attention of employees, mainly in food processing, garment and agriculture industries are light jobs, stable working time, and more jobs. This selection is mostly young workers from 18-28 years old and does not require experience.

c) The majority of female migrant workers come from rural areas of Vietnam, are hard-working but most are unskilled, without formal training before joining the labor force.

Vietnam is a country with a large population, relatively young population pyramid with the most abundant human resources ever. However, Vietnam's labor export market is diverse, but still mainly for unskilled workers, while for high-quality labor, it is very limited in terms of industry and quantity and is mainly concentrated in rural areas (see Chart 3).

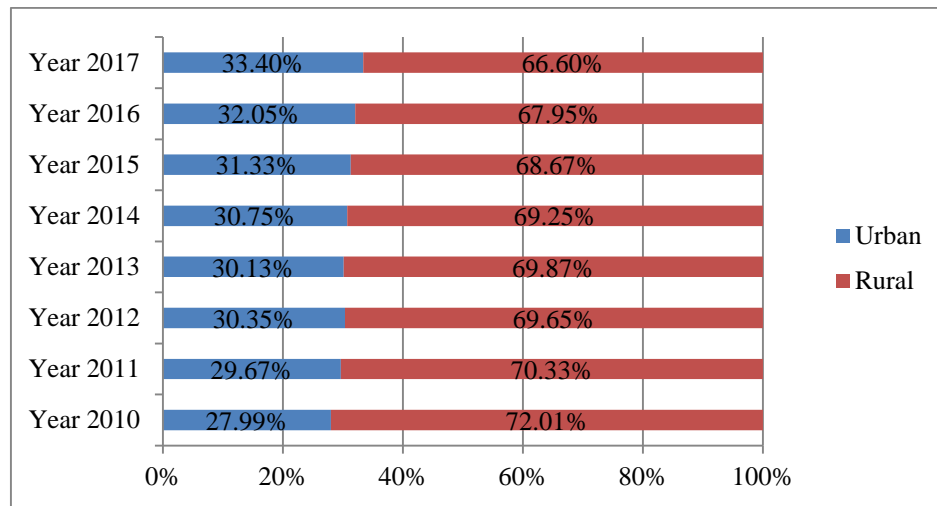


Chart 3. Vietnam's labor structure by region

(Source: GSO, 2017)

As of 2017, the working-age population of Vietnam was more than 72.04 million people (accounting for about 75% of the country's total population), of which, the labor force participation rate reached 75.5%, with 54.4 million people. Compared to 2010 (the labor force participation rate was 75%), the labor force as of 2017 increased both in percentage and absolute quantity (Statistical Yearbook 2017). In general, the labor force in our country is mainly concentrated in rural areas, accounting for nearly 65%. This number tends to decrease over the years but remains high.

The country has about 17 million rural youth aged 15-30 (GSO, 2017), accounting for 70% of the youth and 60% of the rural labor. However, 80% of these people have not yet received professional training (see Chart 4).

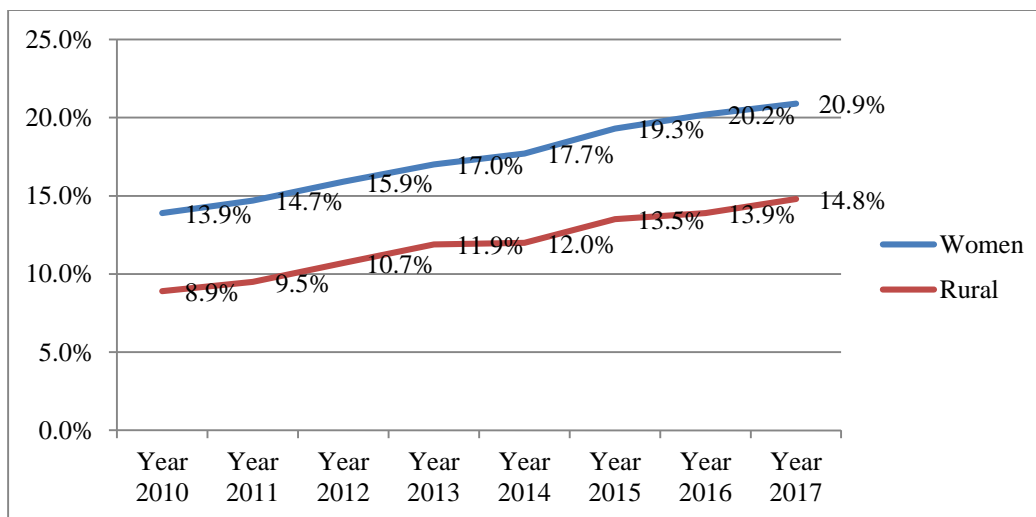


Chart 4. Structure of trained Vietnamese labor by region and gender

(Source: GSO, 2017)

The majority of female workers working in labor export come from rural areas. Practices in the past 10 years show that Vietnamese workers in general and female workers, in particular, are often recognized as hard-working, quick-absorbing and not afraid to do more work. However, the number of professional people only accounts for one-third. Vietnamese workers also show weaknesses such as weak physical strength, self-employment and unhealthy lifestyle. Most women are still in the middle of lower secondary school or have just graduated from primary school. Therefore, the labor of Vietnam exports is mainly manual labor, low skilled. Therefore, the income gap of female workers compared to male workers by educational level is very large (see Chart 5).

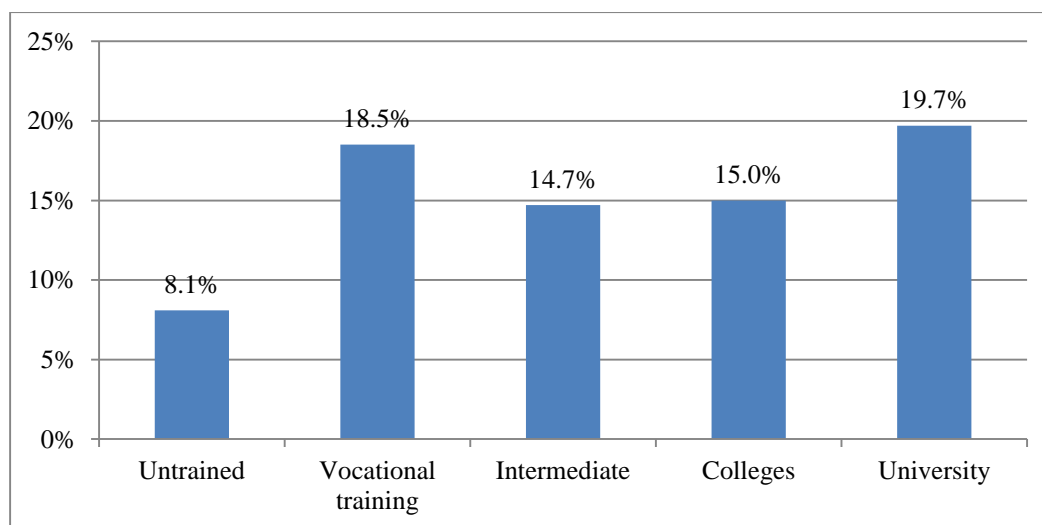


Chart 5. Income disparity between female employees and male workers by education quintile

(Source: Report on labor force surveys in 2016. General Statistics Office)

In terms of skills, the majority Vietnamese female workers do not receive any technical and professional training, averaging about three-quarters of the total number of exported workers. For example, before working as a domestic worker or in other jobs, female workers are only required to attend a number of short training courses to get used to the job and have minimal knowledge. About \$100 fee for short-term training, hiring companies and labor brokers often open intensive training courses within 1-2 weeks for workers, including simple conversations in foreign languages.

The quality of labor is low, mainly agricultural and rural laborers, which have not met the development requirements. The majority of workers come from rural areas, agriculture, carrying heavy production style of small-scale agriculture, arbitrarily in terms of time and behavior. Workers are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to work in a team, unable to cooperate and bear risks, afraid to promote initiative and share work experience.



Therefore, female workers often focus on jobs associated with traditional gender roles such as housework; nurses; hotel staff; tailors; Weaver; electronic equipment assembly (need meticulous, skillful) (United Nations Women's Agency and Overseas Labor Administration, 2013). Many studies show that female workers working abroad have low education levels and are significantly lower than male workers' education.

d) Female workers from Vietnam migrate to labor export at a very young age

In some countries, especially countries like Japan, Korea, etc, there is a limit on the age of labor export. Most foreign labor markets have specific age requirements for specific occupations. But it mostly focuses on young workers and prioritizes experienced workers, skills and skills in the industry. The age group most likely to participate in labor export is from 19 to 30 year old. For some specific industries such as mechanics, textiles, construction, etc, it can be up to 35 years old (see Table 3).

Table 3. Labor export age by occupation

Occupation	Suitable age
Construction	20-30
Agriculture	19-32
Textile	19-33
Electronic	19-28
Mechanical	19-32
Food	19-30

(Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2015)

Few foreign labor markets recruit female workers aged 18. The main reason is that it is very difficult for them to apply for a visa at this age, especially those who have just graduated from high- school. In addition, the foreign labor market does not want to accept female workers over 30 years old. Because they just want to go fast, do not want to follow the company's process and quickly get frustrated.

e) The reason for labor export is mainly economic



The majority (about 70%) of internal migrants are for economic reasons, including migrants seeking jobs and improving their living conditions. Participating labor export markets is considered as a "way out of poverty" of most young Vietnamese workers. Because the labor force in our country is mainly concentrated in rural areas, accounting for nearly 70%. This number tends to decrease over the years but remains high. On average, Japanese workers will receive a monthly income of about 1,200 -1,500 USD/month (excluding overtime and overtime) which is a huge amount of money for rural workers, helping them to earn income to build houses, raise children and improve the quality of life. On the other hand, it can be said that women who go to labor export are not simply working and earning money, but also an environment for them to learn new knowledge and skills in career, language, etc.

3.2. The impact of labor export activities on the socio-economy in Vietnam

a) The source of overseas remittance from the Vietnamese labor force for export tends to increase over the years, contributing a large proportion to the total remittance volume

According to the survey conducted by the Institute of Labor Science and Social Affairs, 2017, the remittance channels that workers use to send money back home are quite diverse, including remittances through credit institutions, through labor export enterprises, via private and other forms, in which the method of transferring money through the system of credit institutions is common. With the convenience of remittance channels, it is estimated that the total remittance of all employees over recent years has reached an average of about US \$ 2.5 billion. Thus, the income of workers abroad contributes significantly to the annual amount of remittances transferred to Vietnam (see Chart 6).

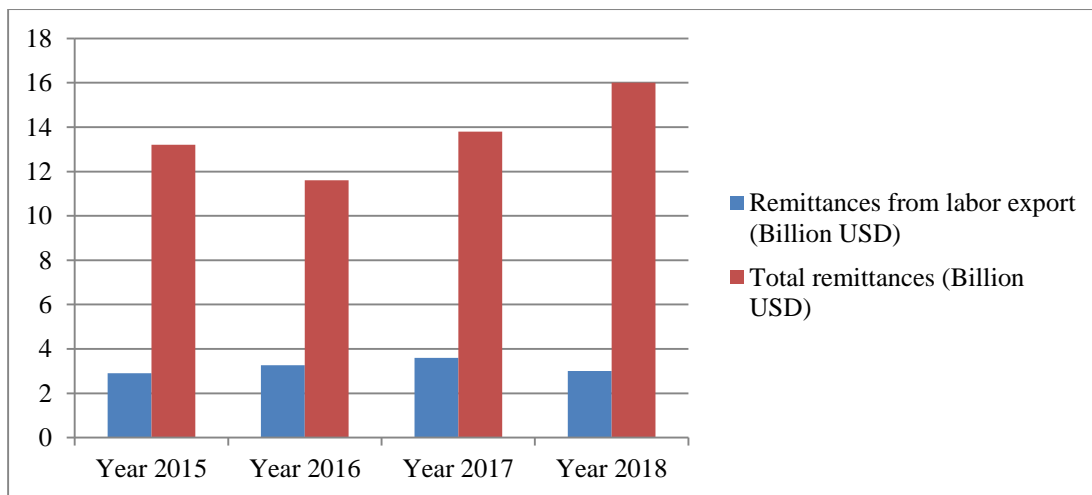


Chart 6. Number of remittances from labor export activities

(Source: World Bank (2018))



The annual remittance from overseas workers is about 2 -2.5 billion USD, the average growth rate in the period from 2010-2017 is 6-7% per year. Remittances can significantly affect Vietnam's development finance, apart from serving the purpose, remittances are transferred to investment, trading and moving out of a real estate or "accumulating" in the form of gold or foreign currencies. Remittances have contributed to the development of the national economy, increasing foreign exchange reserves and balancing the country's current account balance. At the same time, the direct positive impact on domestic households and relatives helps to improve lives, build houses and invest in production and business, education opportunities. Thus, the income of workers abroad contributes significantly to the annual amount of remittance transferred to the country.

b) Labor export activities contribute to creating jobs for female workers

According to the Vietnamese general census 2019, the total population of Vietnam on April 1st, was 96,208,984, of which the male population was 47,881,061 (accounting for 49.8%) and the female population was 48,327,923 (accounting for 50.2 %). With this result, Vietnam is the 15th most populous country in the world and ranked 3rd in Southeast Asia. However, our country is an agricultural country with 65.6% of the population living in rural areas, accounting for over 60% of the labor force of the country, the female labor force in this area accounts for a significant amount. over 50% (GSO, 2019). The shortage of jobs for rural women is one of the top concerns of the Party and the whole society because rural women are often poor, the unemployment rate accounts for a very large number.

Therefore, through labor export activities, it helps to create jobs for female workers, helps them improve their technical and foreign language skills, acquire advanced technologies and work style. To form a professional labor force, forming a highly qualified workforce.

c) Female labor export contributes to improving income and accumulation for households. Increase learning opportunities for children, promote children's independence and support other spiritual values.

The income of a female foreign worker can be 3-5 times higher than that of an average agricultural household in the commune. Remittances, in addition to building houses, paying debts, spending and covering necessary expenses, are also saved by households, buying gold or silver or investing in production. Valuable assets for life such as motorbikes, televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, phones are also invested in or upgraded. Many families have increased their investment in raising livestock, expanded their cultivated areas or invested in small businesses such as wedding and funeral equipment.

It can be seen that the money sent from labor export has helped families have better conditions to invest in their children's education. Many families buy computers to facilitate their



children's education. Thanks to the remittances, families can afford to send their children to more classes, tuition payments are not delayed. On the other hand, the separation makes the couple love each other more and the children better and more independent. Thus, the time of separation brought about by labor export is also a challenge for the sustainability of conjugal love, a time for both contemplating, thinking and understanding each other. A spiritual value, but also a fairly common mentality that parents often refer to in the exchange stories, that is their pride, pride in their neighbors, when children send money home to help their parents.

The integration in the new working environment with new activities, new economic opportunities, and new social relationships expanded both in space and time has partly changed the perception and attitudes of rural women in terms of their own situation, opportunities, difficulties, "gender" advantages and the ability to overcome challenges with the least injury or damage. There have been more women who have demonstrated the ability to negotiate employment contracts with hiring companies or hiring families when they go for later visits.

d) Negative aspects when female workers migrate abroad

The risk of fraud is high when female workers lack information, depending on the recruitment company. Rural female workers often have little information on the country of employment compared to men or urban female workers. They know less the working conditions, depend entirely on brokers or recruitment companies compared to male workers. The common feature of many businesses is that they are not yet professional. A number of licensed businesses are not diligent in searching the market, seeking contracts, but contracting to affiliates to find ways, including frauds, to attract workers.

The recruitment fee has been pushed too high, causing many female workers and their families to be in a state of debt and high risk. In order to migrate to find work abroad, many female workers paid a large amount of money to local and foreign job brokers, many times higher than the recruitment regulations. Poor women cannot afford the funds, often with high-interest loans from professional lenders, or from relatives and friends. South Korea and Taiwan are attractive countries and territories with male and female because of high salary but recruitment needs are limited. Because of its attractiveness, recruitment fees have been pushed up by many brokers, especially fees to South Korea (*Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2018*). Debt loans to pay brokerage fees are creating risks of instability for women and families.

In addition, Vietnamese female workers are more vulnerable due to their weak capacity to cope and integrate than male workers. Many female workers encounter uncertainties when facing many obstacles in their foreign lands. With limited educational attainment, female migrant workers in Vietnam are mainly engaged in simple manual jobs such as domestic work. Some female workers went to agricultural labor in remote and isolated rural areas. The obstacles faced by female workers can be categorized into the following groups: i) hard labor conditions, vulnerable to abuse;



ii) have difficulty in seeking legal assistance; iii) being dragged into or forced to participate in sex technology. Moreover, women experienced the poor working and living conditions, prone to abuse Women who do this work face issues such as working long hours at low wages and often subjected to abuse and exploitation, sexual abuse, risk of contagious social diseases (such as HIV/AIDS).

In fact, many female workers hardly found legal support services. The delayed negotiation of legal support activities and policies between Vietnam and the related countries has limited activities to protect the rights of Vietnamese workers abroad. Meanwhile, many Vietnamese workers are less knowledgeable about the laws in foreign countries, so when a conflict occurs, they often bring disadvantages to them. In many cases, labor export women are victims of trafficking subjects are often women in rural areas, girls who are young, have little education, lack of jobs, difficult life wants to go to labor export to do light jobs with high income.

e) SWOT analysis

Based on the SWOT analysis framework and the current status of labor export activities, we analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to those organizations development as the matrix below (see Table 4).

Table 4. SWOT matrix on female workers participating in labor export markets

Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The period of restructuring "Golden population" with high female labor force participation rate (accounting for 71.1%). The female labor force in working-age reaches 22.3 million, accounting for 45.6% of the total labor force in the age of the whole country (GSO, 2019). - Abundant and cheap labor force, with 65.6% of the population living in rural areas, accounting for over 60% of the labor force of the country, the female labor force in this area accounts for a significant amount of the above 50% (General Statistics Office, Q1, 2019). - The female labor force in the young age range from 25-49 years old accounts for a high rate of about 60.2% (General Statistics Office, 2018) .- Vietnamese workers in general and female workers, in particular, are often recognized as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of professional and technical workers only accounts for one-third of the total exported labor of about 52.1% in the group of simple female workers and 66.6% of family workers (GSO, 2018). - Low skill level, not meeting the needs of modern production technology but mainly exporting unskilled labor without vocational training, without technical qualifications. - The foreign language proficiency of labor is assessed to be very poor. Many workers returned to their home countries ahead of time due to the failure of the language proficiency requirements. - Many cases of workers fleeing illegally live adversely affecting the reputation of our labor and Vietnam's labor market. - The health of female workers in our country is still very limited, workers are only healthy enough to work in industries such as industry,



hard-working, hard-working, quick-absorbing and not afraid to do more work.	<p>agriculture, services, working in factories and jobs such as going to the beach, construction is not satisfactory.</p> <p>- Lack of discipline and lack of seriousness in implementing labor protection because female workers sent to work abroad are mostly rural workers and these workers mostly have not undergone a formal training course on skills.</p>
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
<p>- Opportunities for Vietnamese workers continue to expand in labor export markets because major markets such as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea have loosened some policies to attract foreign workers to work. Some European markets have initially invited Vietnam to cooperate in the field of health, nursing, etc, suitable for female workers.</p> <p>- The income of workers in foreign countries is increasing day by day because many countries have raised basic salaries, more remittances, contributed to poverty reduction and improved living standards for many families and localities.</p> <p>- In 2016 and beyond, Vietnam's labor export market promises to continue to increase from labor cooperation agreements signed in 2015 such as: Free Trade Agreement (FTA); ASEAN Economic Community Agreement (AEC). The Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Vietnamese laborers going to work abroad under contracts approved by the National Assembly.</p> <p>- The Government of Vietnam has established a mechanism of cooperation and dialogue to quickly resolve all issues of labor export activities.</p>	<p>- Intense competition between markets of labor-exporting countries such as Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, etc.</p> <p>- The integration period will require higher requirements for workers, with the criteria for recruiting workers to export labor to be higher, requiring human resources to have many skills other than professional knowledge such as: communication skills, teamwork ability, reporting skills or computer skills.</p>

(Source: Authors' illustration, 2019)

From the above analysis, Vietnamese female workers have many strengths that need to be enhanced, however, there are also many weaknesses that need to be overcome to take advantage of external opportunities and limit the challenges that may occur.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Labor export plays a special role in the country's socio-economic activities. The labor export market of Vietnam is very diverse, however, the main labor export market continues to have



a high demand for recruiting Vietnamese workers such as Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. Currently, the number of female workers who go to labor export tends to increase over the years. Currently, the majority of women migrant workers come from rural areas of Vietnam, with a very young age, hard-working but most have no skills, no formal training before participating in labor dynamic. A problem related to women participating in the labor export market is that most of them are married, so when they go to labor export, they have to leave their children in the countryside to take care of their husbands or relatives change in social structure.

The positive aspects associated with Vietnamese women 's work abroad analyzed above confirm findings from international studies. Due to various reasons, more and more women are working in foreign countries, surpassing the traditional migration patterns. The increasing participation of women in the labor force abroad has contributed significantly to increasing national and local resources, and directly increasing the income of their own households, thereby creating conditions for better material and spiritual life of the family. Moreover, with the increasing contribution of women, the status of women in family and social life has been enhanced.

However, some preliminary research results also show that there are still many negative aspects related to female labor export activities. These aspects are expressed both in the previous period, in the process of working abroad, as well as after returning from work abroad. This has a negative impact on the family life of female workers, making good expectations of labor export for female workers incomplete.

Based on the findings, we propose some recommendations: *Firstly*, continuing to improve the laws and policies related to labor export. On the one hand, it is necessary to supplement and amend mechanisms and policies that are lacking or inappropriate. *Secondly*, the state management agencies on labor should strictly control labor export companies when licensing recruitment and after licensing. Strictly punish companies that violate contracts with workers. There is a need for solidarity between all three parties, such as licensors, hiring companies, and workers when licensed businesses do not complete contracts with workers. *Thirdly*, the labor state management agency should support foreign workers by having appropriate policies to train skills and foreign languages for workers; there are programs and services that provide complete and accurate information for female workers in general and female workers in particular when they need to go to work abroad for their customs, life, country and the main jobs that workers will do during their time in foreign work. *Fourthly*, providing financial support for the poor, especially poor women, to go to work abroad to improve their living standards, help hunger elimination and poverty reduction effectively. *Fifthly*, there is a policy to protect the interests of Vietnamese workers abroad in general and female workers in particular in a quick and timely manner.

To strengthen the participation of female laborers in labor export markets, especially skilled and trained workers the local authorities and mass organizations, especially the Women's Union, where there are many labor export associations, should have activities to "help men" in looking after children and helping married husbands to work abroad. In addition, it is needed to grasp and



resolve family conflicts when detecting conflicts that may stem from issues related to spending, a perspective of living when women go to work abroad return their home country.

5. Limitations and Future Research

In a limited time, the author just stopped at analyzing the overview of gender relations and development: the case of rural female workers in Vietnam, so the article has some limitations. *Firstly*, the research paper only uses secondary data in the analysis but not the primary research methods. *Secondly*, the evaluation criteria of characteristics and analysis of socio-economic development have not been assessed in detail, but only give an overview of the overall representation. *Thirdly*, the regression model has not been applied to the analysis of gender relations and development.

In subsequent studies, the authors will conduct a more in-depth analysis of the labor export activities of Vietnamese rural women. *Firstly*, Female labor export, social stresses, and family economic in rural areas of Northern Vietnam. *Secondly*, Labour Market for women and Training Needs Assessment in Northern Vietnam.

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