



Export Labor Activities and Vietnam's Economic Growth

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Abstract

Considered to be an economic field that needs attention, foreign labor export over the years has increasingly affirmed its advantages and role as a "life changing" method to help Vietnamese people eradicate poverty and improve living standards. The source of remittances from labor export activities has made this activity one of the sectors that join the billion-dollar club. In 2018, the number of Vietnamese workers working abroad reached more than 142,800 workers and the amount of deposits that workers transferred reached over 3 billion USD. This paper identify the factors influencing labor export remittance and focuses on the positive effects of remittances received through labor export activities to Vietnam's economic growth.

Key words: Remittances, Labor export, Socio-economic development, Economic growth, Vietnam.



1. Introduction

Due to unequal development of socio-economic level, as well as uneven distribution of resources, population, science and technology among regions, resulting inadequate and synchronous development of necessary factors for production and economic development in Vietnam. To solve the above instability, labor export has been identified by Vietnam Government as an important external economic sector, it plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development of the country. Labor export activities of Vietnam are increasingly expanding to many countries and territories around the world, meeting part of the labor needs of countries, with many kinds of jobs. At the same time, the activity has provided for Vietnamese workers with many opportunities to work and find good sources of income, also contribute to Vietnam economic growth.

According to the National Assembly's Committee of Social Affairs, from 2010 to 2017, the country had 821,862 workers going abroad to work under contracts. From 2014 to now, the average number of laborers going to work abroad is over 102,000 people per year, accounting for 7% of the total new jobs of the whole country. The number of workers participating in labor export market increased rapidly in Japan, the average period of 2013-2017 increased by 461% compared to the period of 2010-2013. At the same period, the number of workers going to work in Taiwan increased an average of 183%, the Middle East increased an average of 120%. Other markets had growing gradually.

The average income (including overtime) of workers going to labor export is 400-600 USD per month in the Middle East market, 700-800 USD per month in the territory of Taiwan, 1,000-1,200 USD per month in Korean and Japanese markets. In general, during the period of 2010-2017, workers working abroad often have higher and more stable incomes than those working in the same industry and qualifications. "The increase in the number of workers working in high-income markets has made Vietnam one of the countries with the largest number of remittances from overseas workers", authorities of the National Assembly's Committee of Social Affairs said. The annual amount of remittances sent by foreign workers to the country is about 2.5 billion USD, the average growth rate during the period of 2010-2017 was approximately 6.5% per year.

The paper focuses on analyzing and clarifying the relationship between labor export activities and economic growth, aims to identify those issues: (i) Exploring the situation of overseas remittance from labor export activities in Vietnam; (ii) Impact of remittance sources from labor export activities to Vietnam's economic growth; (iii) Developing and forecasting a model of economic growth from remittances and labor export activities; (iv) Giving recommendation in order to improve the effectiveness of labor export activities.

2. Overview of the impact of remittances on economic growth

2.1. Literature Review

The links between migration and development are widely acknowledged to be complex. Many papers argued that there is a lack of solid information about the ways in which migration affects development or development affects migration. In the last 10 years, many countries has been paying more attention to the effects of international migration on home country development. They believed that in a world of volatile capital flows, remittances are a stabilizing component of external resources transfers to the developing countries. Remittances have been growing in both



absolute as well as relative volume, being an important external financial resource. The effect of remittances can be decomposed into effects on savings, investment, consumption, economic growth, and poverty reduction and income distribution. According to Hugo (2003), Martin (2004), Carling (2004), Wets (2004), Solimano (2003), Griffin (1976)⁶, Stark (1978)⁷ and WESS (2004), the impact of remittance on growth of remittances in receiving economies is likely to act through savings and investment as well as short-run effects on aggregate demand and output through consumption.

Theoretically, the total saving effect of remittances comes from the total of foreign savings and domestic savings effects. Oversea workers remittances is a component of foreign savings and they complement national savings by increasing the total pool of resources available to investment (Solimano 2003, Carling 2004, Wets 2004, and Ghosh 2005). Ghosh (2005) demonstrated that recipients of international remittances have a high propensity to save. Remittances can also open the way to credit for use as investment capital, they provide valuable capital for small businesses.

A remarkable feature of remittances is that remittances tend to be a stable financial flow for developing countries, and even have a counter-cyclical effect in times of economic hardship (Solimano 2003, Ratha 2005). They typically serve an altruistic purpose for the migrants. In the model of remittances as altruism, migrants can increase their remittances back home when there is an economic downturn in the home country (as the incomes of their families decline). In this case, remittances would be the equivalent of a private “welfare payment” is sent from abroad to help smoothing consumption of the recipients at home countries.

Remittances may also have a poverty reducing and income distribution effect. For example, the recipient of remittances are often low and middle income families whose relatives left the country to work abroad. In a way, emigration is a response to escape poverty at home and improve the income-earning capacity of the emigrant by attempting to enter export labor markets in developed countries. At the same time, remittances serve to alleviate poverty of the families of emigrants in the home country by supporting their income through transfers and domestic activities (farming, running small businesses,...). Wets (2004) argued that countries of origin stand to benefit through the inflow of remittances, but also from access to knowledge, new technologies and new markets through the linkages to their migrant communities, as well as the eventual return of their expatriate skilled manpower and their superior training and skills, management experience, their ties to foreign institutions and networking capacity acquired while abroad.

In contrast to positive points, many socio-economic studies presented a strongly negative view of remittances. It was argued that remittances were allegedly discouraging labor-supply and effort on the side of the recipients, thus increasing dependency and delaying rural development and change. This, in turn, can impair efforts to escape from poverty through education and work by the recipients of remittances. Other negative effects are the loss of skilled manpower (mainly are head of the households) and the loss of return on the investment made by the country of origin towards the training and education of its nationals (especially qualified laborers). However, it is also increasingly acknowledged that the emigration of the highly skilled labor is not necessarily a net loss, and that it may in fact benefit both receiving and sending countries (Wets 2004).



Obviously, remittances have both positive and negative impacts on socio-economic development of the country of origin. Some academics suppose that the development effect of remittances depends on the “life-cycle” of the whole migration process at the level of countries. For growing economies with rising per capita incomes, differentials in incomes per head across countries will narrow-down, reducing the incentives for emigration. Therefore the relative importance of remittances is likely to decline as a country moves up in the development ladders. However, this is valid mainly for remittances from low-skilled migration, such as the case of Vietnam. In the case of high-skills, well-educated individuals migration flows are likely to continue at high per capita income levels. Due to the limitation of the data, this study mainly focuses on the positive effects of remittances on economic development in Vietnam.

2.2. Research Method

To achieve the research aims, the following approaches were applied.

(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; online source (such as: vamas.com; molisa.gov.vn; World Bank, etc). The collected data will be sorted, aggregated, cleaned and entered into the Excel software to calculate the necessary indicators for drawing graphs.

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

* Based on the literature review and data, the authors have built and reflected the model of factors affecting remittance sources from labor export activities. move by the least squares method Ordinary Least Squared (OLS). The research model has the following form:

$$KHXL\hat{D}_i = a_0 + a_1.TN + a_2.LP + a_3.TGHD + a_4.LS + a_5.SLN + a_6.GDPBQ + u_i;$$

Independent Variables includes:

+ TN: Vietnam's unemployment rate (%);

+ LP: Vietnam's inflation rate (%);

+ TGHD: Vietnam exchange rate (%);

+ LS: Interest rate (%);

+ SLN: Number of people going to work abroad for years (thousand people);

+ GDPBQ: GDP per capita (current US \$), labor export:

Meanwhile, the dependent variables are remittances from labor export (current billion US \$). The relationship between remittances and GDP was analyzed through the correlation of pearson.

GDP Vietnam's gross national product, used to calculate economic growth (%). Measurement is based on the difference in gross product (at constant prices in 2009).

The data used are mainly annual data from the General Statistics Office (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018), 10-year period (2009-2018), World Bank data and Department of Foreigners Administration, Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs. Data



after collection, sorted and sorted according to different topics. Survey data are organized and processed on computers using Excel program and analyzed applying the econometric model using SPSS software.

3. Research results

3.1. The situation of labor export activities in Vietnam

a) Labor export scale

In the past 10 year, many businesses operating services to send workers abroad under contracts have been actively seeking and developing foreign labor markets, investing in the work of creating resources and training workers on skills and foreign languages before leaving the country. Consequently, the number of Vietnamese workers in the international markets is constantly increasing (see Chart 1).

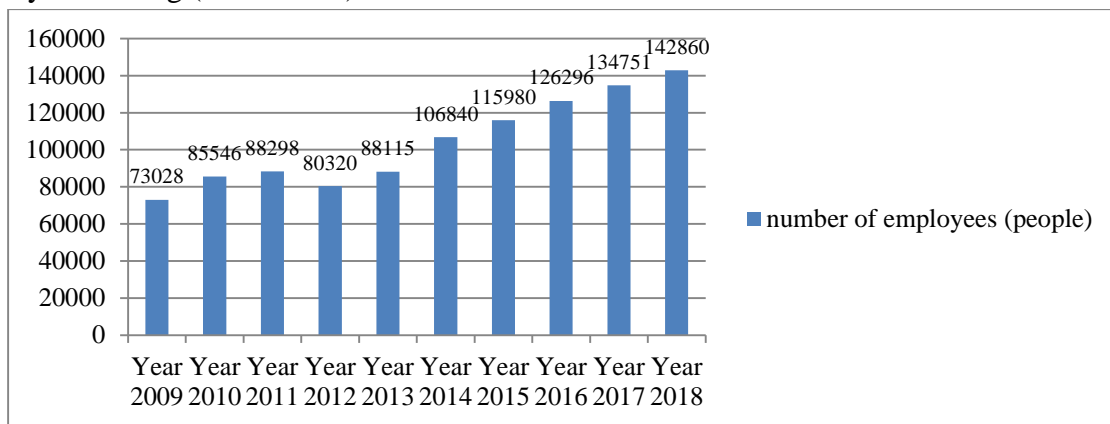


Chart 1: Scale of Vietnamese employees going to work abroad 2009 – 2018

(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, 2017*), up to now, the labor export market in Vietnam has been continuously increasing in number. Regarding the labor market share, the markets that receive a lot of Vietnamese and fairly stable workers are Taiwan, Japan and South Korea (see Chart 2).

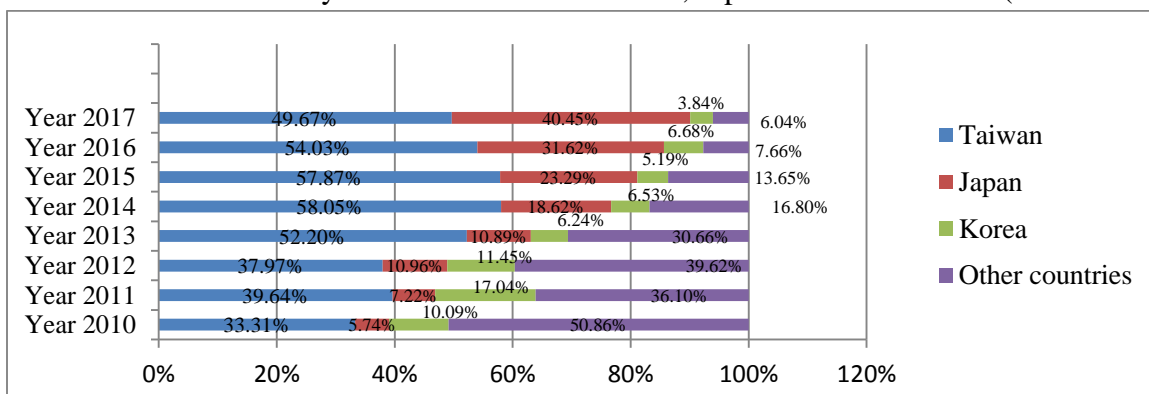


Chart 2: Vietnam's labor structure going to work abroad 2010 - 2017

(Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2017)

Based on the data, we can see that the labor export market of Vietnam is very diverse, however, the main labor export market continues to have high demand for recruiting Vietnamese



workers such as Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. Other markets still have stable demand, the demand for recruiting Vietnamese workers is increasing and diversifying in industries.

b) Quality of labor export

Assessing the response of Vietnam's labor export to the education and training standards: Vietnam's labor export, mainly manual labor, is not highly skilled. According to the Department of Overseas Labor Management, the trained workers exporting is about 30%, of which, intermediate-level trained laborers reach 20% and qualified laborers university about 10%. In particular, skilled workers still account for a very small proportion, the number of engineers and architects reaching ASEAN standards is also lower than that of neighboring countries like Indonesia and Myanmar (see Chart 3).

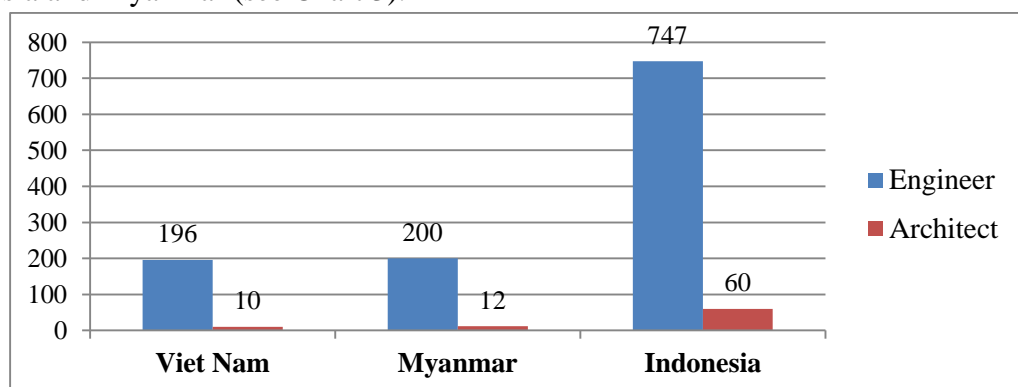


Chart 3: Number of employees with the qualifications of engineers and architects recognized by ASEAN in 2016

(Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2016)

Regarding to responsiveness of Vietnamese export labor to the standards of social awareness: Currently, according to the assessment of many countries using imported laborers, the discipline in the industrial environment of Vietnamese export workers is weak, in many cases, workers are less aware of breaching contracts, violating labor discipline.

Assess the level of responsiveness of Vietnam's export labor with physical standards: In terms of height and health, compared to the world, the stature and physical strength of the US Federation of Labor Federation is of low average, the average height of men is about 163cm, the average height of women is about 153cm, shorter than laborers in regional countries such as Thailand and Singapore, leading to the use and operation of modern machinery, limiting labor productivity, forcing workers to work hard and increase risk of labor insecurity.

In terms of age: This is an outstanding advantage of Vietnamese export laborers, most of the labor force is in between 18 to 35 years old, this is the age that labor importing countries often choose in the current period.

3.2. Situation of Vietnamese remittances from labor export activities and economic growth

a) Income levels of export workers in some key markets

Income of exporting labor is the most important factor affecting the amount of remittances sent to Vietnam. Participants in labor export programs are mainly from low or middle-income



families. Most of their income is mainly sent to their families in Vietnam to save or pay debts from exit costs (see Table 1).

Table 1: Average monthly income of employees

Unit: USD

Numerical order	Labour market	Average wage (USD per month)	Other average income (USD per month)	The percentage of the average salary of labour compared with the average salary in the host country (%)
1	Taiwan	650	200	45.8
2	Korean	1000	250	35.2
3	Japan	1400	200	42.2
4	Malaysia	300	111	46.1
5	Saudi Arabia	320	100	5.7
6	Laos	300	113	180
7	Russia	800	200	41.7
8	Qatar	320	100	4.9
9	Germany	1137	200	31.1
10	Australia	4000	800	93.8

(Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2016)

Japan is currently the hottest market for labor export. With the preferential treatment extremely preferential treatment for workers makes this a very ideal market. After 3 to 5 years working in Japan, workers usually send back about 21,500 to 30,500 USD. Korea is the market that many people desire to participate in today with a relatively high income. However, at present, only the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs is allowed to send people to Korea to work.

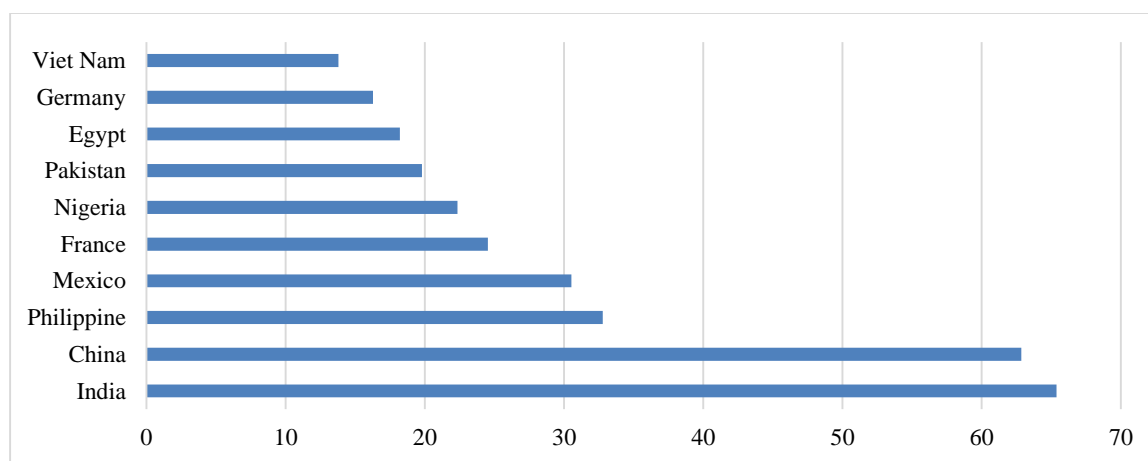
Taiwan is currently a market that receives a large number of laborers from Vietnam. Receiving workers of many professions and ages. The cost for going to Taiwan is cheaper than the Japanese and South Korean markets and it does not require too many exit procedures. It takes from 1 to 2 months for workers to having working contrast. **The income of workers working in Australia is very high, about 45,000 AUD per year. Each year, after deduction of the cost of living, labor can accumulate from about 26,000 to 31,000 USD. Moreover, employment contracts in Australia are relatively long (over a period of 5 years). It can be seen that, the Australian labor export, this is a great attraction but requires quite a lot of strict requirements about language and skills.**

Although workers are paid a very high salary compared to income they could received in Vietnam, that number is still much lower than the income of the laborers in host countries. Even in

some markets such as Saudi Arabia or Qatar, the actual income of labor export workers is less than 10% of the wages of local workers (5.7% and 4.9% respectively). In some other markets such as Taiwan, Japan, etc, the average income of workers ranges from 30 to 50% compared to the wages of workers these countries. Especially in Australia, the income is almost equivalent to 93.8%.

b) Source of remittances from labor export activities in Vietnam

Vietnam is one of the top 10 countries receiving the largest number of remittances in the world, with about 2.5% of the total global remittances in 2018, The report "Finance for Sustainable Development in Vietnam" published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) shows (see Chart 4). Of the total remittances into Vietnam, the US is the largest source, accounting for 55%, followed by Australia, Canada, France, Germany and South Korea. . The main target groups that send overseas remittances to Vietnam are overseas Vietnamese and export workers, with overseas Vietnamese mainly residing in the US, Canada, Germany and France, accounting for the majority of 80-90% of the remittance sent home. In the period of 2009 - 2018, remittances accounted for 6-8% of annual GDP, higher than other developed countries on average accounting for 1-2% of GDP.



(Source: World Bank, 2018)

Chart 4: The ten largest receiving countries in the world

Along with the increasing number of labor exporters and the expanding markets, the source of remittances from labor export activities has also changed in an increasing direction. In the growth of remittance sources in general, the amount of labor export people sent home to the country over the years also increased incessantly, from USD 0.82 billion (accounting for 0.691%) in 2009, to VND 3.05 billion USD (accounting for 1.245%) in 2018. In fact, labor export plays an important role in the amount of remittances sent to Vietnam, and remittance is one of the three important parts of the foreign economic sector, contributing to promoting GDP growth. In 2014, GDP is 186 billion USD, remittance accounts for 12 billion USD (equivalent to 6% of GDP), labor export is 1.8 billion USD (accounting for 1% of GDP). Labor export accounts for a small proportion of the total remittance, but is increasing with the rapid increase of labor export to countries like Japan and South Korea. The amount of remittance from overseas workers sent home annually is about 2.5 billion USD (equal to 1.2% of GDP) .



The rapid increase in the amount of labor export remittance sent home and the number of remittances is actually a significant source of national revenue. In 2014, Vietnam had nearly 20 items with export turnover of over US \$ 1 billion (the highest was the manufacturing of phones and components of US \$ 23.6 billion, followed by textiles of over US \$ 20 billion, goods electronics, computers and components more than 11 billion USD ...). Vietnam has also continuously become the world's second-largest exporter of rice, pepper, cashew, coffee, catfish. Therefore, remittances from labor exporters of US \$ 1.8 billion have joined the country billion-dollar export club. It contributes to the process of industrialization and modernization.

However, while remittances (in general) in other sectors increased relatively steadily, remittances from labor export were not stable, with an erratic increase or decrease (see Table 2). The reason is that remittances from labor export depend on the change in the number of labor export, which is strongly influenced by the labor market and economic crises.

Table 2: Remittances from Vietnam's labor export sources and Vietnam's GDP

Unit: Billions USD

Year	Remittance (in general)	Remittances from labor export	GDP	Remittances from labor export / GDP (%)
2009	6.02	0.82	106.115	0.691
2010	8.26	1.1	115.932	0.949
2011	8.6	1.2	135.539	0.885
2012	10	1.56	155.82	1.001
2013	11	1.67	171.222	0.975
2014	12	1.8	186.205	0.967
2015	13.2	2.1	193.241	1.087
2016	11.88	2.54	205.276	1.237
2017	13.781	2.78	223.78	1.242
2018	15.9	3.05	244.948	1.245

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

c) The impact of remittance sources from labor export activities to Vietnam's economic growth

Remittance from labor export has brought many impacts to the socio-economic development of Vietnam, contributing to promoting economic growth, stability and improving the lives of people despite many remaining negative sides.

* In terms of economic aspect

Firstly, remittances play an important part in the national economy. Table 2 shows that the national GDP has steadily increased over the years. From 2009 to 2018, GDP increased by US \$ 138,833 billion (2,308 times), which showed that Vietnam's economy grew relatively stable. Along with the development of the economy, remittances from labor export contribute an average of 1% of GDP annually, of which some years account for 1.6% (2009), approximately 1.25% (2017, 2018). However, in the economic growth momentum, the amount of remittances increased and



decreased erratically, so the contribution rate was also unstable. Despite this, remittances from labor export are still a significant part of economic growth.

Secondly, remittances from labor export are an important source of capital for economic investment, particularly investment in production. A part of the labor export people returned to their home countries to actively participate in service activities, especially trading and trading, by accumulating capital in the process of exporting labor abroad.

The reason for the division of jobs after returning home is that workers working in developed countries have higher income, so money and capital accumulate more than small and medium developed countries. In addition, before exporting labor to developed countries, workers have been trained more carefully so their ability to learn and apply is more sensitive.

* In terms of social aspect

Firstly, the source of high and regular remittance over the years is the motivation to attract people to labor export, contributing to solving the unemployment problem.

Secondly, labor export contributes to creating a qualified and skilled labor force. Labor export in industries and services in developed countries, requires a workforce that is not only qualified for health but also requires workmanship, as well as the ability to work with modern machinery and equipment. Therefore, before exporting labor, workers often undergo short-term training courses to improve their skills to serve the labor and employment process. Of the total labor export, the most common is skilled labor and unskilled labor, although the number is low but the number of experts is also increasing.

Thirdly, the source of labor export money increases the income for workers. The accumulated capital will not only reduce poverty but also invest in production and business and stabilize the economy. Besides increasing the income for workers, the labor export enterprises also gain a lot of profits.

In addition to the positive aspects as above, due to the large amount of remittances from labor export, which quickly changes the lives of many families with people going to labor export, it is inevitable that the phenomenon of workers in agriculture village pledged land and houses, etc, as a deposit for intermediary brokers but have been tricked into losing their assets. At the same time, in many villages, social problems such as lottery, gambling, alcohol originated from remittances from labor export. Stories like his wife going to Taiwan to send money to her husband to take care of the children and to renovate the house, the husband used money to gamble, lots of money, etc.



3.3. Modeling the relationship between remittances, economic growth and a number of related factors

Based on the data, the least squares method (OLS) was applied, the results are as follows (see Table 3).

Table 3: Model estimation results affecting remittances from labor export activities

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.360	0.163		2.204	0.0852
	TN	.018	0.005	0.063	3.505	0.0648
	LP	-.034	0.007	-0.235	-4.398	0.0257
	TGHD	-.209	0.141	-0.483	-1.479	0.236
	LS	.113	0.052	0.511	2.154	0.120
	SLN	.009	0.002	0.256	3.477	.0236
	GDPBQ	.002	0.0006	1.392	3.062	0.055

Statistical significance: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: Authors' calculations, September 2019

The results show that the factors of unemployment rate, the number of people participating in the annual labor export influence much with the increase of remittances from export activities. In Vietnam, the country has a high annual population growth rate, an abundant human resource, while domestic production is still underdeveloped and has not attracted many laborers. Thus the pressure on employment increases, requiring the government to find output for redundant labor to reduce unemployment and underemployment.

In recent years, the number of people participating in labor export has been increasing (Figure 1), leading to an increase in remittances from labor export activities (see Table 2). Some other factors such as exchange rates, GDP per capita, interest rates or inflation have sig. < 0.05 and have t test $<$ standard t level so it does not make much sense in the model. * Analyze the correlation between remittances from labor export activities and economic growth. Based on the data in Table 2, input into SPSS software, run Pearson analysis between the two remittance variables from labor export and GDP:



Table 4: Pearson correlation between remittances from labor export activities and GDP

		GDP	KHXKLD
GDP	Pearson Correlation	1	.982**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	18806.408	301.481
	Covariance	2089.601	33.498
	N	10	10
KHXKLD	Pearson Correlation	.882**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	301.481	5.007
	Covariance	33.498	.556
	N	10	10

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

We can see the significance level of Sig. <005, so these two elements are related. The relatively high 0.9ear pearson correlation coefficient proves that the relationship between remittances from labor export and GDP is quite tight.

4. Conclusion

In the last 10 years, the labor export activities has been paid great attention by the Vietnamese Government. There has been many policies and mechanisms have been created to create favorable conditions for people to work abroad. Labor export is not only a work to solve the useful work, create income for employees but it is also extremely important for the whole country. Employees participating in labor export are basically trained on necessary knowledge when going abroad, giving them life and work skills in accordance with international law, vocational training and foreign language learning to work and international communication. Workers going to labor export not only bring back an income for themselves and their families, but also bring back many international relationship that Vietnam is in great need in the period of deep integration of international economy with other countries in the world. Each of these international relations will help others realize their dreams of going to labor export, helping their country to attract investment capital, support and help the production and business process of Vietnam go beyond The border contributes to creating a strong export-import turnover, etc.

The field of labor export and remittance service activities are focused on investment, becoming one of the important and basic economic sectors of the country's comprehensive renovation. Remittance from labor export is one of the major sources of foreign currency for the country, contributing to increasing GDP, creating economic capital, solving employment problems, increasing incomes for workers. The results show that the factors of unemployment rate, the number of people participating in the annual labor export influence much with the increase of



remittances from export activities Although there are some limitations, the achieved results, successful or not, have left valuable lessons for the next steps of labor export and its source of remittance in the country's comprehensive renovation.

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