

THE RISING TREND OF BALINESE MIGRANT WORKERS AS A FORM OF GLOBAL DISJUNCTURES

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Abstract

This article examines the rise of Balinese migrant workers as an expression of the disjuncture that accompanies globalization. Drawing on Appadurai's framework of Global Cultural Flows, the analysis explores the misalignments embedded within the economic and political structures surrounding Bali's tourism sector, which are shaped and continually reshaped by global flows. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach and relies on secondary sources, including academic articles, books, reports, and news coverage, all of which are relevant to the topic. The findings show that the growing trend of Balinese labor migration cannot be understood simply as a matter of individual economic choice. Rather, it reflects deeper structural disparities produced by global flows, visible across the domains of ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape, mediascape, and ideoscape. The study underscores the paradox of globalization: while Bali's tourism industry continues to expand and generate substantial economic value, the benefits are not distributed proportionally to local workers, who remain marginalized within the broader structure of profit accumulation.

Keywords: Bali, disjunctures, globalisation, migrant workers

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The tourism sector has become a central driver of Bali's economic and social transformation, particularly as global flows increasingly penetrate local spaces (Suka Arjawa, 2016). Economic restructuring has taken place alongside the entry of foreign investment and the expansion of tourism infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, and supporting service industries. Social transformation has followed in parallel: the shift from an agrarian landscape to a tourism-based economy has encouraged Balinese communities to rely heavily on tourism for their livelihoods, while simultaneously adapting to global values and commodifying cultural expressions to meet international tourism demands. The strategic position of tourism is reflected in its labor absorption capacity. As it is stated by the data from the Bali Province statistic agency in August 2023, the accommodation and food-and-beverage sector employed approximately 42.92 thousand workers (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2023), and by 2024, tourism contributed Rp107 trillion, which is 44% of Indonesia's national tourism foreign exchange (Samudero, 2025).

Despite this rapid expansion, Bali's tourism industry generates a complex structural dilemma. Competition from non-local workers, combined with weak regulatory support for local entrepreneurship and employment, limits the extent to

which Balinese communities benefit from tourism development (Winatha, 2018). Many jobs within the sector remain seasonal and low- to middle-wage, offering limited prospects for financial stability (Widyantara, 2023; Winatha, 2018). Moreover, a growth-oriented and capital-driven tourism model has not been matched by adequate human-resource development strategies, creating structural inequalities that constrain young Balinese workers' access to secure and formal employment. In this context, working abroad, both in general migration streams and in the cruise-ship industry, has become a strategic response to limited local opportunities (Desiandra, 2024).

The rising number of Balinese migrant workers highlights the depth of this structural tension. Between January and June 2025 alone, 5,631 Balinese migrant workers departed for overseas employment. The primary destinations included Turkey (1,940 workers), Italy (1,936), and Bulgaria (382), with occupations concentrated in spa therapy (1,461 workers), food-service positions such as waiter/waitress (943), and housekeeping roles (415). These patterns show that migration extends beyond low-skilled labor and increasingly encompasses medium-skill service work (Dinas Ketenagakerjaan dan ESDM Bali, 2025). At the same time, although Bali's accommodation and food-service sector continues to show employment growth, it has not expanded sufficiently to absorb the island's young workforce. This mismatch illustrates that migration is not simply a matter of personal preference; it is a systemic response to economic pressure and the limited availability of sustainable local employment (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2025a).

A number of academic studies have examined the motivations and structural conditions underpinning Balinese labor migration. Candrika Sari and Tisnawati (2024) identify poverty and unemployment as major drivers of international migration from Bali, while minimum wage levels appear to exert a suppressing effect. Similarly, Ningrat and Karmini (2023) find that poverty significantly influences cruise-ship migration, reinforcing the argument that economic necessity remains a central determinant. Qualitative research by Nilan and Artini (2013) reveals that young Balinese workers often view migration as a pathway to escape inadequate local work experience within the tourism sector and to pursue a higher social status through international exposure. Collectively, these studies emphasize that migration is perceived as a logical means of overcoming economic constraints and improving income prospects, while also enabling the accumulation of financial and social capital.

While previous research has shed light on these motivations, it has not fully accounted for the broader global structures that marginalize local workers within Bali's tourism economy. This article argues that migration from Bali is shaped not only by individual economic considerations but also by uneven global processes that produce structural exclusion. This gap in the existing literature underscores the need to situate Balinese labor migration within the context of globalization's disjunctures.

Recent public statements by the Bali Regional Parliament, cited in local media, describe the growing number of young Balinese working abroad as an "anomaly" occurring amid the province's booming tourism sector (Samudero, 2025; Winata, 2025). This phenomenon highlights a clear disconnect between the economic growth generated by tourism and the sector's ability to provide decent employment for local residents. Tourism, as one of the most visible conduits of global flows, enters local spaces but distributes benefits unevenly. Bali's experience illustrates how globalization is marked by frictions and contradictions: while capital, labor, and global cultural values circulate rapidly, their gains do not translate evenly at the local level.

Accordingly, aims to examine the phenomenon of rising Balinese migrant workers as a manifestation of global disjunctures, with a focus on the structural and economic factors that limit local employment opportunities despite Bali's rapid tourism-driven development. It critically explores how the uneven flows of capital, labor, and global cultural values create disparities in welfare for local communities. The study further seeks to highlight the paradoxes and contradictions of globalization, demonstrating how Bali's integration into global tourism generates both opportunities and structural constraints for its youth. Furthermore, this study is guided by a central research question: How can the growing number of Balinese migrant workers be understood as a manifestation of global disjunctures? This question directs the analysis toward examining how Bali's incorporation into global tourism produces a complex set of outcomes, offering new economic opportunities while at the same time imposing structural constraints on young Balinese workers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Cultural Flows

In his influential essay *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy* (1990), Arjun Appadurai offers a fundamental critique of conventional understandings of globalization. He argues that globalization cannot be viewed as a linear or harmonious process that produces uniform cultural integration across the world. Instead, it is a terrain marked by multiple global flows that move at different speeds and according to distinct logics, creating structural gaps and discontinuities which he refers to as disjunctures.

Appadurai challenges any assumption that the contemporary world is becoming culturally homogeneous, or that globalization has produced a singular "global culture." Rather than convergence, he observes intensifying differentiation, tension, and uncertainty generated by the intersection of these global flows. To capture this complexity, he introduces five analytical categories: ethnoscaples, technoscaples, financescaples, mediascaples, and ideoscaples, which together constitute the landscape of the global cultural economy (Appadurai, 1990; Appadurai, 1996).

Ethnoscaples encompass the mobility of people who are tourists, migrant workers, students, professionals, and refugees whose movements carry experiences, aspirations, and knowledge across national borders. Technoscaples refer to the global circulation of technology, from industrial machinery to communication systems. These flows are unevenly distributed, generating disparities in how societies can participate in global economic networks. Financescaples describe the circulation of capital, currency, investment, and financial markets that operate with speed, volatility, and a high degree of speculation. Mediascaples involve the movement of images, narratives, and information through television, film, digital media, and the internet, shaping new imaginaries and cultural references. Ideoscaples consist of the global flow of ideas, values, and political narratives such as democracy, human rights, and nationalism that travel through institutions, media, and transnational networks.

The significance of Appadurai's framework lies not only in the identification of these five flows but also in the recognition that they do not move in harmony. Each flow operates according to its own logic and trajectory, often intersecting in uneven or contradictory ways. Media flows, for example, can circulate faster than economic opportunities; ideological narratives may spread to regions that lack the technological

infrastructure to support them; and global capital can advance far ahead of the capacity of local labor markets. Such unevenness is what Appadurai defines as disjuncture, the misalignment between the different global flows that produces inequalities, paradoxes, and contradictions experienced by specific social groups.

For Appadurai (1990;1996), disjuncture is not an anomaly but an inherent feature of globalization. The world is not neatly integrated but shaped by crossing and colliding flows whose interactions create new forms of instability and opportunity. Globalization, therefore, must be understood not as a unifying force but as a process that generates fractures, tensions, and unequal possibilities. It is within these asynchronous movements of people, technology, capital, media, and ideas that individuals and communities negotiate their identities, aspirations, and future trajectories.

In this sense, disjuncture provides a critical lens for understanding globalization as a field structured by systemic inequalities rather than smooth or symmetrical integration. Appadurai emphasizes that any global phenomenon must be interpreted through the disruptions and irregularities produced by these global flows, for it is within those disjunctures that the core dynamics of the contemporary world are revealed.

2.2 Migrant Workers

Migrant workers can be understood as individuals who move across national borders in search of employment and improved living conditions. Such movements do not occur in isolation; they are shaped by broader transformations within the global economy. Globalization has integrated labor markets across countries, opening new opportunities while simultaneously intensifying inequalities in particular regions (Castles and Miller, 2009).

The contemporary global economy is therefore both interconnected and uneven. On one hand, globalization generates cross-border labor demand through the expansion of service industries, manufacturing, hospitality, and maritime sectors that require flexible labor. On the other hand, it produces economic disparities that encourage people to seek work beyond their local environments (Sassen, 1998). Within this context, migration emerges as a rational household strategy to cope with local economic stagnation, reduce risk, and secure income through remittances (Massey et al., 1993).

Appadurai (1990; 1996) conceptualizes the global arena as a space where multiple flows of labor, capital, media, technology, and ideas intersect while moving at different tempos. Human mobility is intertwined with imagined possibilities elsewhere, shaped by media exposure and global narratives. Yet the rapid circulation of capital and technology often outpaces the capacity of local communities to benefit from these flows. The lack of alignment among these global currents creates structural conditions in which migration becomes a logical response.

Seen from this perspective, migrant workers navigate both opportunities and constraints produced by globalization. Their movement is driven not only by household economic motivations but also by the uneven ways in which global structures open and restrict access to labor markets. Cross-border labor mobility thus emerges from the interplay between individual aspirations, international labor-market dynamics, and the structural imbalances created by global flows that extend far beyond national boundaries.

3. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the phenomenon of Balinese migrant workers as a manifestation of global disjunctures. The qualitative approach is suitable because it allows an in-depth understanding of social, economic, and structural factors that influence migration decisions. Data were collected through document analysis of secondary sources, including statistical reports, official government documents, and prior empirical studies. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between migration trends and structural conditions produced by global flows, with particular attention to the interplay between economic opportunities, structural limitations, and globalization dynamics. Although the study does not test formal hypotheses, it is guided by the proposition that the increasing number of Balinese migrant workers reflects unevenly distributed global flows that generate structural disjunctures at the local level.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Labor Migration Trends Amid Bali's Expanding Tourism Industry

Bali's tourism industry has endured repeated crises such as the Bali Bombings in 2002 and 2005, the global financial crisis of 2008, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these disruptions, the sector has consistently demonstrated a strong capacity for recovery. In the post-pandemic era, this resilience is evident in the renewed surge of international arrivals that once again positions Bali within global tourism networks. According to the Bali Provincial Statistics Agency, international visitor arrivals reached 637,868 in June 2025, marking a 5.92 percent increase from the previous month, while the occupancy rate of starred hotels remained high (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2025b). These indicators show that Bali has successfully restored its global appeal and continues to function as a major node of international mobility.

Table 1. International Tourist Arrivals to Bali by Region of Origin (2020–2024)

Region of Origin	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Annual Arrivals	1.069.473	51	2.155.747	5.273.258	6.333.360
ASEAN	100.967	–	337.769	699.924	713.315
Malaysia	31.587	–	91.064	207.573	246.145
Philippines	16.642	–	30.427	85.866	103.665
Singapore	23.463	–	129.089	236.203	218.926
Thailand	7.208	–	19.025	41.438	37.354
ASEAN Lainnya	22.067	–	68.164	128.844	107.225

Other ASEAN Countries	334.247	–	353.456	1.270.111	1.789.472
Saudi Arabia	5.234	–	4.460	11.024	14.595
India	68.199	–	182.091	–	550.379
Japan	48.800	–	19.366	116.232	176.856
South Korea	42.856	–	63.353	226.789	294.024
Taiwan	18.435	–	7.460	83.942	103.509
Tionggok	118.617	–	33.085	280.111	448.446
Other Asian Countries	37.340	–	48.095	122.622	201.663
Americas	79.010	–	156.313	379.472	403.312
Europe	300.264	–	645.617	1.440.736	1.668.849
Oceania	244.227	–	645.125	1.430.752	1.691.351
Africa	10.758	–	17.467	52.263	67.061

Sources: Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2025b

Although tourist arrivals and hotel occupancy have stabilized (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2025b), these gains have not translated evenly into improved welfare for local workers. Despite steady inflows of tourists and investment, most job opportunities for Balinese workers remain temporary, short-term, or low-to-middle-wage, offering little long-term security. As a result, the expansion of tourism has not automatically generated meaningful improvements in local livelihoods.

Reports from local media reinforce this imbalance, stating that tourism-driven development tends to benefit large capital holders and external investors more than local communities (Wahyuni, 2024). The conversion of agricultural land, the commodification of communal spaces, and the growing dominance of foreign investment have contributed to the gradual erosion of the economic position of Balinese households, especially those dependent on agriculture, subak systems, and informal work. Although the poverty rate declined to 193,780 people, or 4.25 percent, in March 2023 (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2024), the available local employment has not guaranteed sufficient upward social mobility.

Under these conditions, overseas labor migration emerges as a rational and strategic response shaped both by local economic pressures and by skills accumulated through long engagement with the tourism industry. Nilan and Artini (2013) found that many young Balinese pursue overseas employment to improve family welfare and gain professional experience, supported by transferable skills from the hospitality sector, such as communication, service management, and intercultural competence.

Data from the National Agency for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BP2MI) (2024) further illustrate this pattern. The majority of Balinese migrant workers are employed in hospitality-related occupations, including spa

therapists, waitstaff, room attendants, housekeeping staff, cooks, and bar workers. BP2MI also records that 99.5 percent of Balinese migrant workers are placed in formal employment, with a total of 9,043 formal placements in 2024 (BP2MI, 2024). Migration has thus become increasingly institutionalized. This shift is also visible in the rising number of annual placements, which increased from 5,491 workers in 2021 to 9,771 in 2022 and then to 10,087 in 2023 (Dinas Ketenagakerjaan dan ESDM Provinsi Bali, 2023).

Academic research supports these findings. Candrika Sari and Tisnawati (2024) show that poverty and unemployment play a significant role in driving international migration from Bali. Ningrat and Karmini (2023) similarly find that poverty strongly influences the migration of Balinese cruise-ship workers. It was emphasized in the article that the importance of remittances as a strategy for Balinese households to navigate local economic uncertainty. Together, these studies frame labor migration as a rational response to structural economic constraints that limit pathways for social mobility within Bali.

Overall, the rising trend of Balinese labor migration reflects a wider structural mismatch in the dynamics of globalization. Tourism grows rapidly, foreign capital flows into the island, and international arrivals continue to rise. Yet the availability of stable and rewarding jobs for local residents remains limited. This imbalance encourages many Balinese workers to seek opportunities abroad, often in the same sector, because the domestic market does not offer adequate prospects for economic advancement. In this sense, labor migration becomes a clear manifestation of the uneven and asynchronous nature of globalization that shapes everyday economic decision-making in Bali.

4.2 Analysis of Balinese Labor Migration as a Manifestation of Global Disjunctures

As Appadurai argues, globalization unfolds through multiple flows of people, capital, technology, media, and ideas that rarely move in perfect alignment. The lack of synchronization among these flows produces what he terms global disjunctures, conditions in which one stream accelerates while others lag behind or move in conflicting directions. In the Balinese context, the rising trend of labor migration illustrates a concrete manifestation of these asymmetries. This pattern can be understood through four domains of disjuncture, each of which shapes the dynamics of labor mobility on the island.

4.2.1 Ethnoscape Disjuncture: Global Tourist Flows and Local Labour Constraints

Tourism has long served as the primary gateway of globalization in Bali. The continuous movement of visitors, capital, and transnational cultural practices enters the island most visibly through everyday interactions in destinations such as Kuta and Ubud. The presence of international hotel chains, globally connected enterprises, and sustained cross-cultural encounters reflects how tourism enables global values, lifestyles, and economic practices to merge with local life (Picard, 1996). Consequently, the sector operates not only as an economic engine but also as a strategic channel that accelerates social and cultural globalization. This process illustrates the broader phenomenon of deterritorialization, a condition in which geographic boundaries lose their capacity to regulate social and economic

interactions (Appadurai, 1996). The trend has intensified alongside advances in transportation technology that facilitate faster, cheaper, and more extensive cross-border mobility (Held and McGrew, 2007).

Within this broader landscape, Bali's tourism sector becomes a visible arena in which ethnoscape disjuncture takes shape. The industry increasingly absorbs labor from outside the region as well as foreign workers, while local residents remain limited in their access to higher-level or strategic positions. A report by Junior (2025) notes that the number of foreign workers in Buleleng rose from 116 individuals in 2023 to 162 in 2024, occupying roles in tourism that were traditionally held by local workers. Employment data from the Bali Provincial Office of Manpower and Energy (2024) indicated that by 2023, approximately 3,600 foreign workers were active in Bali, most of them positioned in tourism, restaurant services, and the broader hospitality sector. This pattern aligns with earlier observations by local tourism analyst Wayan Sukamada, who pointed out that many foreigners enter the island as tourists yet work informally as tour guides or surf instructors (Kumparan News, 2025).

Following Appadurai's framework (1996), these forms of mobility reshape the social landscape into one that is fluid, uneven, and marked by asymmetries in access to employment, social capital, and economic influence. The presence of long-term or semi-permanent foreign residents, together with the rising trend of remote foreign workers noted by Wang (2024), shows that mobility in Bali's tourism sector is no longer temporary but has lasting implications for the island's socio-economic configuration. At the same time, monitoring and enforcement remain pressing concerns. The Directorate General of Immigration recorded 378 deportations in the third quarter of 2024 due to visa violations, highlighting the extent of irregular and poorly regulated mobility (Direktorat Jenderal Imigrasi Republik Indonesia, 2024).

The simultaneous influx of foreign workers and the outward movement of local labor reveal that Bali's tourism sphere functions as a socio-political arena rather than a purely economic system. Global and domestic newcomers tend to enjoy the emerging opportunities within the sector, whereas many Balinese face competition that pushes them either to accept lower-tier positions or to seek employment beyond the island. As a result, tourism produces intense human mobility but also deep structural imbalances. Ethnoscape disjuncture not only surfaces but actively shapes new hierarchies within Balinese society, underscoring the relative marginalization of local residents in the ongoing processes of globalization.

4.2.2. Finanscape Disjuncture and Economic Inequality in Bali

Bali's tourism growth has attracted substantial inflows of foreign investment. International hotel chains, luxury villas, premium beach clubs, upscale restaurants, and property developments catering to digital nomads are built largely with global capital. IQI Global reports that land prices in prime areas such as Canggu and Uluwatu increased by nearly 20 percent in 2024, while villa rental yields reached between 12 and 15 percent annually (IQI Global, 2024). A survey by Bank Indonesia shows that commercial property development in Bali grew by 8.46 percent in the same year, a trend indicating that foreign investment dominates the island's tourism-driven real estate (Bank Indonesia, 2024)

Although these capital flows generate impressive economic expansion, the distribution of financial gains remains highly uneven. Much of the profit is captured by global and national investors, while local workers remain concentrated in low-wage, low-mobility positions. Data from the Bali Provincial Manpower Office show that the province's minimum wage in 2024 stood at only Rp 2.8 million per month, far below the value generated by the premium tourism sector (Dinas Tenaga Kerja dan ESDM Provinsi Bali, 2024). Foreign investors often prioritize returns from high-value rentals and luxury property markets, yet they rarely invest in improving local labor skills or raising wage standards. Within Appadurai's theoretical framework of the *financescape*, capital moves rapidly into Bali's tourism sector, but the benefits do not circulate back to the local population in the form of meaningful economic welfare (Appadurai, 1996).

The dominance of foreign investment has also intensified gentrification. The conversion of residential land into commercial and premium rental properties has pushed housing prices, rents, and living costs upward, making it increasingly difficult for local residents to secure affordable accommodation. Reports indicate that gentrification is reshaping Bali's socio-economic landscape by transforming traditional neighborhoods into consumption spaces for global middle-class migrants and expatriates (Baliexpat, 2025). Even as tourism revenues rise sharply, wage levels for local workers remain stagnant, with minimum wage growth unable to keep pace with market dynamics driven by global capital. The increase in the Bali Provincial Minimum Wage (UMP) in 2026 to approximately IDR 3.2 million per month, or approximately 7 percent higher than the previous year, has not been able to address the cost-of-living pressures faced by workers, particularly in tourism areas. Various calculations of living needs indicate that the minimum income remains far below the estimated Living Needs (KHL) of around IDR 5 million per month (Utami, 2025). This situation highlights the structural imbalance between the expansion of the tourism economy and the welfare of workers, where the growth of leading sectors does not proportionally translate into improvements in workers' quality of life.

The primary consequence of this *financescape* mismatch is the growing pressure on local residents to seek alternative economic pathways in order to achieve meaningful upward mobility. Overseas migration becomes one such strategy, as noted by Sassen (2001), since global capital arriving in Bali does not automatically translate into high-quality employment or substantial income improvements for local households. The *financescape* disjuncture in Bali, therefore, illustrates how global capital benefits the tourism industry while leaving the economic welfare of local communities behind. The result is a deepening of long-term socio-economic inequality, a visible expansion of gentrification, and a weakened bargaining position for local workers whose wages remain stagnant despite the rapid growth of the tourism economy.

4.2.3. Mediascape–Ideoscape Disjuncture: Bali's Hyperreality and the Cultural Life of the Balinese

Global mediascapes have long constructed Bali as a tropical paradise, an island of the gods, and a global spiritual destination (Winarya & Winaja, 2018). These narratives circulate widely through international media, travel vlogs, TikTok content, tourism campaigns, and state-led branding initiatives, creating a highly

idealized image of the island (Appadurai,1996). This representation generates strong global expectations of hospitality, premium service, and professional performance from local workers. The hyperreal image that emerges positions Bali as a laboratory for global tourism experiences, often disconnected from the everyday social and economic realities of its inhabitants.

These global narratives intersect uneasily with the ideoscape shaped by local cultural obligations, communal structures, and religious practices. As described by Suryawan (2018), Balinese social life is deeply rooted in customary obligations (*kewajiban adat*) that require significant time, labor, and financial contributions. Ceremonies such as *ngaben* (cremation ceremony), *odalan* (temple anniversary ceremony), and *ngayah* (community service) involve substantial collective investment and are integral to maintaining social legitimacy. Individuals cannot easily withdraw from these obligations without risking sanctions or social exclusion. As a result, the level of professionalism expected within Bali's premium tourism sector often conflicts with the demands of cultural participation that structure local life.

This contradiction produces a tangible disjuncture. Local workers find themselves navigating competing pressures between cultural commitments and globalized service expectations. Many feel that the income earned in the high-end tourism sector does not compensate for the social and cultural costs they must bear. This tension encourages outward migration, both toward major Indonesian cities and toward international labor markets that provide more stable earnings and fewer cultural obligations (Suka Arjawa,2016). The trend illustrates how global flows of media and cultural representation do not necessarily yield balanced economic and social benefits for local communities. Instead, they widen the gap between global perceptions of Bali and the lived experiences of its population.

At the core of the mediascape–ideoscape mismatch lies a profound structural paradox. The world envisions Bali as an idyllic tropical sanctuary, while many local residents experience the island within the constraints of economic precarity and dense cultural obligations. The hyperreality produced by global representation rarely accounts for the social costs, ritual responsibilities, and structural limitations embedded in Balinese daily life. This analysis shows how global representational flows can collide with local ideological and cultural structures, producing systemic tensions that reinforce labor migration and deepen the economic marginalization of local workers (Appadurai 1996; Suryawan 2018).

4.2.4 Technoscape Disjuncture: Digital Advancement vs Local Readiness

Global technological flows have become a central driver of Bali's tourism-led globalization and have given rise to a clear technoscape disjuncture (Appadurai 1996; Sassen, 2001). Digital platforms such as Airbnb and Agoda have extended Bali's visibility in international tourism markets, attracting digital nomads and long-stay visitors while reshaping the island's economic landscape. According to Airbnb–Oxford Economics data, the platform contributed an estimated Rp 17.5 trillion to Bali's GDP in 2024, supported 112,900 jobs, and generated Rp 3.8 trillion in wages (Tempo.co, 2025; ANTARA News, 2025). Yet, the distribution of these benefits is far from even. Ganapati, Sukwika, and Sulistyadi (2021) show that the expansion of Airbnb significantly reduced occupancy rates in traditional hotels across Bali, while most financial gains accrued to well-capitalized hosts, many of

whom are foreign property owners. In contrast, smaller Balinese hotels and homestays captured only marginal benefits.

The same study also identifies deeper structural disadvantages experienced by local operators. Interviews with hotel managers indicate that competition with Airbnb extends beyond service quality to include regulatory and fiscal asymmetries. Local small-scale enterprises often struggle to meet the digital compliance standards, tax requirements, and platform-driven operational norms that larger or foreign owners can navigate with relative ease. Paired with the influx of digital nomads who drive up long-term rental prices, this dynamic intensifies gentrification pressures, raises living costs for local communities, and further marginalizes traditional hospitality businesses (Suyadnya, 2021). The result is an expanding technological integration that broadens Bali's global market reach but exceeds the absorptive capacity of local workers and businesses, generating tensions in employment opportunities, income distribution, and market access.

This technoscape disjuncture intersects with both ethnoscape and financescape dynamics. The erosion of small hotel revenues and the limited generation of stable, high-quality employment reproduce the ethnoscape disjuncture in which Balinese workers confront a labor market increasingly influenced by foreign hosts, digital intermediaries, and automated systems. These pressures, combined with stagnant wages, often propel local workers to seek opportunities abroad where their tourism-related skills are more competitively valued (BP2MI, 2024). Within the financescape, capital associated with luxury rentals and digital nomad accommodations circulates heavily through foreign-owned or externally financed enterprises, reinforcing longstanding economic inequalities (Wahyuni, 2024).

The interaction of global technology, mobile capital, and transnational labor mobility thus produces layered structural disjunctures in Bali's tourism economy. While digital platforms enhance market access and visibility, they simultaneously constrain local economic participation and intensify social stratification. The case of Airbnb demonstrates that technological innovation can generate new opportunities while widening existing inequalities, particularly when local regulatory capacity and economic resources lag behind global technological flows. Understanding labor migration, economic marginalization, and local vulnerability in Bali requires situating technoscape alongside ethnoscape and financescape, highlighting how global technological systems interact with local structural limits in the broader context of uneven globalization.

Based on the above analysis, this study helps fill a gap that earlier research has not fully addressed. Previous studies often discuss tourism growth, foreign investment, or labor migration in separate strands, but they seldom explain how these forces interact and shape each other in Bali. This research brings these elements together by using Appadurai's global cultural flows framework to show how mobility, capital, technology, and media create structural pressures that influence people's decisions to work abroad. The findings show that migration among Balinese workers is not only a personal choice but also a response to economic limitations and unequal benefits within the tourism sector. By linking global processes with local realities, this study provides a clearer understanding of why migration continues to rise even when tourism appears to be successful.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study highlights the paradox of globalization by showing that the rising migration of Balinese workers is not merely a matter of individual choice or household economic pressure. Instead, it results directly from the uneven rhythms of global flows at the local level. Bali has become highly open to global capital, technology, information, and cultural imagination, especially through its international tourism sector. Yet the benefits of these flows are unevenly distributed. Local communities face competition from foreign labor, automation, digital platforms, and limited access to technological education and high-quality employment. This mismatch creates structural gaps, leaving young Balinese struggling to find decent work in their own homeland.

The migration of Balinese workers underscores how globalization can be both uneven and contradictory. While Bali is globally perceived as a tourist and spiritual paradise, locals often experience economic and social marginalization. Global flows, uniform in narrative, collide with heterogeneous local realities, generating structural pressures that make migration a rational strategy to secure economic mobility. In many ways, Bali serves as a microcosm of globalization, a place where global currents converge, yet local communities must navigate a system that does not always serve their interests.

Consequently, the movement of young Balinese workers should be understood as a response to structural gaps in the economy, technology, and labor markets created by global flows. Future research should examine how the misalignment of global currents shapes migration preferences, particularly considering international power dynamics and the influence of transnational actors in shaping opportunities and mobility imaginaries. Such an approach must integrate global political-economic analysis, transnational mobility studies, and local socio-cultural dynamics to understand why migration remains a key mechanism for addressing inequality in an uneven globalized world.

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