

Intrahousehold Bargaining Among Women Workers in Thailand's Northern Region Industrial Estate

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Abstract

This study specifically evaluated the effects of women's participation in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) on women's bargaining power by using Thailand's Northern Region Industrial Estate (NRIE) as a case study. It explored how EPZ employment affects NRIE women workers' bargaining power. The empirical findings show that NRIE work provides opportunities for women to be included in formal employment, which brings higher earning to NRIE women workers compared with lower earning of hired women workers. Therefore, NRIE employment decomposes women's subordination by increasing the economic contribution of women within their households. However, the economic contribution of NRIE women workers does not radically increase NRIE women workers' intrahousehold bargaining power vis-à-vis their husbands. Household income keeping, control and management as well as household decision making and housework allocation do not tend towards a more egalitarian status in households. Although NRIE women workers are relatively well-off compared to hired women workers, they are more subservient under an age hierarchy in households due to the strong influence of matrilineality and matrifocality.

Keywords: Intrahousehold, Bargaining power, Women workers, Northern Region Industrial Estate, Thailand

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การศึกษาอำนาจต่อรองภายในครัวเรือนของแรงงานหญิง: กรณีศึกษาแรงงานหญิงในนิคมอุตสาหกรรมภาคเหนือ จังหวัดลำพูน

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบของการทำงานเป็นแรงงานในนิคมอุตสาหกรรมที่มีต่ออำนาจต่อรองของผู้หญิงในครัวเรือนโดยใช้แรงงานหญิงในนิคมอุตสาหกรรมภาคเหนือ จังหวัดลำพูนเป็นกรณีศึกษา ผลการศึกษาพบว่า การทำงานในนิคมอุตสาหกรรมเปิดโอกาสให้ผู้หญิงได้เป็นแรงงานในระบบและทำให้แรงงานหญิงเหล่านี้มีรายได้ที่สม่ำเสมอและสามารถหารายได้เข้ามาสู่ครัวเรือนมากขึ้นเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับผู้หญิงส่วนใหญ่ในหมู่บ้านที่เป็นแรงงานนอกระบบ ด้วยเหตุนี้ การทำงานในนิคมอุตสาหกรรมจึงเพิ่มสถานภาพและอำนาจของผู้หญิงในฐานะผู้นำเงินรายได้หลักมาสู่ครัวเรือน อย่างไรก็ตาม การหารายได้หลักเข้ามาสู่ครัวเรือนของผู้หญิงไม่ได้เพิ่มอำนาจต่อรองในครัวเรือนของผู้หญิงในทุกด้านเมื่อเทียบกับผู้ชาย เมื่อพิจารณาการเก็บรักษา การควบคุม และการจัดการเงินรายได้ของครัวเรือน รวมถึงการตัดสินใจและการจัดสรรงานบ้านในครัวเรือนยังพบว่าสถานภาพของผู้หญิงยังไม่เท่าเทียมกับผู้ชาย และแม้ว่าแรงงานหญิงในนิคมอุตสาหกรรมจะมีสถานภาพและอำนาจต่อรองในครัวเรือนที่ดีกว่าเมื่อเทียบกับแรงงานรับจ้างหญิงในหมู่บ้าน แต่แรงงานหญิงเหล่านี้ก็ตกอยู่ภายใต้การควบคุมของระบบเครือญาติที่แน่นแฟ้นเป็นศูนย์กลางเนื่องจากข้อจำกัดทางด้านอายุที่น้อยกว่า

คำสำคัญ: ครัวเรือน, อำนาจต่อรอง, แรงงานหญิง, นิคมอุตสาหกรรมภาคเหนือ, ประเทศไทย

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บทความชิ้นนี้คัดเนื้อหาสำคัญบางส่วนมาจากวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาเอกของผู้เขียน ณ University of Utah ประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา ในหัวข้อ
The Effect of Women Workers' Participation in Export Processing Zones on Women's Bargaining Power in Households: The Case Study of Thailand's Northern Region Industrial Estate.

1. Introduction

There has been a longstanding assumption in mainstream economics that the household is a site of altruism and cooperation. The resources within households are shared equally irrespective of gender or age hierarchies. The “new economics of the household,” spearheaded by Gary Becker (1981), holds such a vision of the household and economists working within this framework have produced what are called “unitary” models of the household (Barbara Bergmann, 1995; Cheryl R. Doss, 1996).

Gender economics have challenged such models, while conceptualizing households as sites characterized both by cooperation and conflict. They have pointed to the importance of socially constituted power relations within households in the distribution of resources and assets as well as the distribution of the paid and unpaid work burden (Ann Whitehead, 1981; Rae Blumberg, 1988; Carmen Deere and Magdalena León, 1982, 2003; Nancy Folbre, 1986; Bina Agarwal, 1990, 1994, 1997; Daisy Dwyer and Judith Bruce, 1988; Jan Pahl, 1989; Susan Tiano, 1994; Agnes Quisumbing and John Maluccio, 1994, 1999; Sherri Grasmuck and Espinal Rosario, 2000; Greta Friedemann-Sanchez, 2002, 2006). Gender-based and age-based power relations are two of the crucial axes on which bargaining within household takes place. Accordingly, the household is not simply a site of altruism and co-operation, but it is also a site of negotiation, bargaining, and conflict. This is referred to as the “cooperative-conflict” models of the household (Amartya Sen, 1983, 1990). One of the determinants of women’s bargaining power within this framework is women’s access to paid labor (Diane Wolf, 1992; Halen Safa, 1995).

However, women’s bargaining power is not simply determined by material factors such as economic factors, particularly women’s access to paid labor, but it is also determined by ideological factors such as views about the rights, the needs and the contributions of particular individuals and gender in society. In addition, the bargaining power of women is also determined by social structural factors such as the extrahousehold socioeconomic and legal institutions within the community and the state, which households are embedded in. For this reason, the complexity of the interaction of material, ideological and social structural factors in each society simultaneously determines the bargaining power of women (Gillian Foo and Linda Lim, 1989; Wolf, 1992; Quisumbing, 1994; Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Nazli Kibria, 1995). At the same time, it means that the micro level of intrahousehold level is linked to the macro level of social structure in each society.

Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, it has been recognized that capitalist development processes do not necessarily affect women and men in the same way. Women may in fact be left out of the development process. This was the marginalization thesis put forth by Ester Boserup (1970) in her pioneering work on women in the development process. Feminists advocate during this period argued that women had to be incorporated in the development process through participation in paid work. This was referred to as the Women in Development (WID) approach. The WID approach interpreted “development” mainly in terms of enhancing women’s

participation in paid labor or the market economy. It was assumed that women's well-being would improve alongside their incorporation in the paid labor force.

In the late 1960s, the intensification of intercapitalist competition, particularly among industrialized countries, led to the relocation of labor-intensive manufacturing industries from industrialized to developing countries. This relocation created demand disproportionate to women's paid employment, especially but not exclusively in export processing zones (EPZs) (Guy Standing, 1989). Gender economics, studying the conditions of work within such zones, have argued that this kind of integration of women in development processes does not necessarily eliminate women's subordination or increase their bargaining power. In addition, this does not necessarily lead to a rise in their shares of the resources within households or reduce their unpaid domestic work burden (Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, 1981a).

The relocation of production of certain kinds of manufactured products from the developed countries to the Third World leads to rapid incorporation of Third World women into the labor market (June Nash, 1983; Standing, 1989, 1999; Lydia Kung, 1993). As a consequence, Women's access to wage employment in the form of a "Global Assembly Factory," particularly EPZ employment, dominated women's employment in most developing countries for many decades since the 1960s (ILO, 2004). While there is agreement in the literature on a "Global Assembly Factory" that there is a rapid increase in women employed in the manufacturing industry, however there is disagreement on the implications of this employment for women workers (Aiwa Ong, 1987; Altha Cravey, 1998; Lim, 1990; Elizabeth Fussell, 2000; Kurt Alan Ver Beek, 2001; Bent Gehrt, 2002).

The debates on a "Global Assembly Factory" lead to two contradictory theses.

On the negative side, the exploitation thesis considers that EPZ employment in multinational factories takes advantage of the disadvantages of women workers because of their ages, education, and family status. In addition, they exploit women via harsh factory environments, where women workers suffer long hours, insecure, unhealthy, unsafe and poor working conditions with low wages (Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Elson and Pearson, 1981b; Ong, 1987; Kung, 1983; Safa, 1995; Standing, 1989; Altha Cravey, 1998; Fussell, 2000). On the positive side, the integration thesis considers that EPZ employment creates an opportunity for women to enter the sphere of social production, particularly formal employment, at better wages compared to agricultural and domestic services, which most women are in. It means the economic independence of women through EPZ employment gives them economic leverage, which finally increases their autonomy (Sen, 1990; Lim, 1990; Wolf, 1992; Tiano, 1994; Safa, 1995; Friedemann-Sanchez, 2002).

Nevertheless, the evidence of the effect of EPZ employment on women workers does not clearly situate in either thesis. On the contrary, most evidence shows that the effects of EPZs is mixed and nuanced. EPZ employment actually can, at the same time, decompose, intensify and recompose women's subordination (Elson and Pearson, 1981a). Consequently, the effects of EPZs on women workers are far from homogeneous. Still, the universally generalized presumption on the situation of women workers in EPZs is questioned.

For this reason, this study integrates feminists' household economics theoretical framework with the literature of the global assembly factory and try to answer what are the effects of women's participation in EPZs on their bargaining power within the household. In this study, Northern Region Industrial Estate (NRIE) women workers' bargaining power is elaborated and considered relative to various intrahousehold dimensions. The considerations in this study range from intrahousehold income allocation, income control and management, intrahousehold decision making and housework allocation. NRIE women workers' intrahousehold bargaining power is compared with males in households, particularly their husbands. In this study hire women workers are the representative of the majority of women workers in the villages. Also, NRIE women workers' bargaining power is compared with hired women workers who combine various kinds of hired work with household agricultural as the comparison group.

2. Fieldwork

Northern Region Industrial Estate (NRIE)⁶ located at Lamphun Province⁷ has been chosen as a case study based on 2 main reasons. First, the large majority of NRIE workers are women workers⁸. Second, the NRIE is located in a regional area where workers can remain at home with their households while they commute daily from their home villages to NRIE factories. Therefore, it would be relatively proper to see the interactions at the intrahousehold level compared to other EPZs, where most workers are migrants.

This study focused on women workers in Vieng Nong Long Minor district⁹. Vieng Nong Long Minor district is divided in to three subdistricts with 16 villages. However, this study chose to concentrate on three villages; Dong Luang , Dong Charoen and Dong Nua. "Snowball sampling" was used in this study. As a result, the study started with one woman worker and then this woman worker generated additional female subjects by asking her to name the other women workers whom she knows. Therefore, this study is based on a small and purposively selected sample. It particularly focused on two groups of women workers; 24 NRIE women workers and 26 hired women workers. A small sample of women workers in three specific villages is based

⁶The NRIE was established in response to the Thai governmental policy of spreading industrial development to the outlying regions as expressed in the Third Plan. It was the first IE established outside the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR). It was expected to become the center of industrial development in Northern Thailand

⁷ The characteristics of Lamphun province location, which were perceived as the advantages of NRIE, can be categorized into five main reasons. First, its general location is in a cooler region compared to BMR; this makes it more attractive to electronic manufacturers who can reduce necessary temperature control costs. Second, the location is near an urban center and a large labor force. Third, the combination of being located near Chiang Mai but at the same time located outside it, allowed the investors to simultaneously take advantage of both Chiang Mai urban amenities and Lamphun nonurban advantages. Fourth, it is the location that has easy access to Chiang Mai international airport and Bangkok via a superhighway which is connected to Bangkok. Fifth, this specific location within Lamphun is close to required water supplies. However, despite these locational advantages, the NRIE did not originally attract strong investors' interest (Glassman and Snedden, 2003; Glassman, 2004).

⁸In 2006, there were 65 factories operating within the NRIE of which 43 factories are in the EPZ while 22 factories are in the GIZ. The GIZ in the NRIE factories employed 49,401 workers; 33,666 of the workers were females and 15,736 were males. However, within the EPZ, 43 factories employed a total of 37,514 workers, of which 25,565 were female and 11,949 were male (NRIE, 2007)

⁹The administration of Lamphun province is divided into seven districts and one minor district. The seven districts are Muang Lamphun, Hya Chang, Li, Ban Hong, Ban Ti, Mae Tha, and Pasang. It has one minor district, which is Vieng Nong Long.

on the necessity for controlling the common historical and socioeconomic dimension among women workers, which may reduce bias in intrahousehold analysis.

Figure 1: Map of Lamphun Province



This study combined multiple qualitative methodologies which consisted of the documentary analysis, formal interviews via questionnaires, informal in-depth interview as well as partial participant observation to elaborate on and analyze the effects of NRIE factory work on women workers' bargaining power within the intrahousehold level from October 2005 to May 2006.

3. Women Workers and Households

The consideration of households encompasses various dimensions such as the composition, characteristics, lifecycles, number of household members in the labor force, earnings and assets of households, etc. The decomposition of the household was aimed at uncovering its underlying structure that incorporates gender and age bases in households. The underlying structure is not only the area in which the intrahousehold bargaining occurs, but it also affects the bargaining power or fallback position of household members, particularly women workers.

Both NRIE and hired women workers' households share very similar historical and socioeconomic backgrounds. Most households still were in the agricultural sector or claimed that they were in the agricultural sector even though agricultural earnings could not actually sustain their livelihoods. On the contrary, most households needed to combine various kinds of hired works with agricultural activities. Usually the larger proportion of total household income came from hired works rather than agricultural activities. The result is consistent with various former studies, which reported that large numbers of people in Thai rural areas remain in scarcely viable

agricultural activities under a reduced agricultural sector (Phillip Hirsch, 1990; Peter Warr, 1993; Chris Dixon, 1999; Phongpaichit and Baker, 1995; 1996).

Figure 2: Complete Nuclear Household

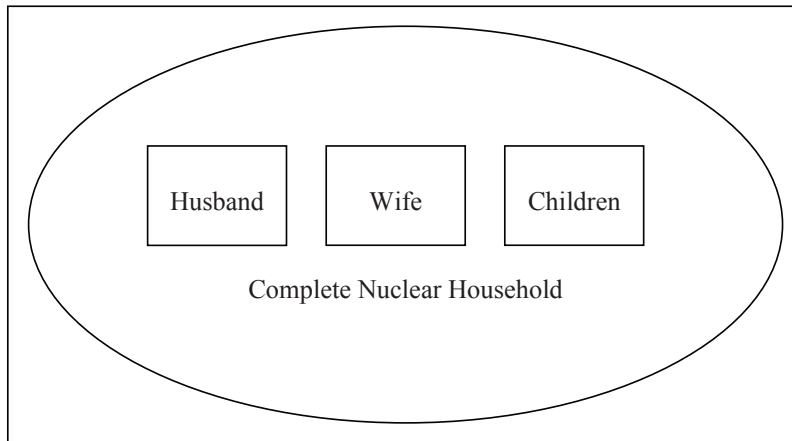
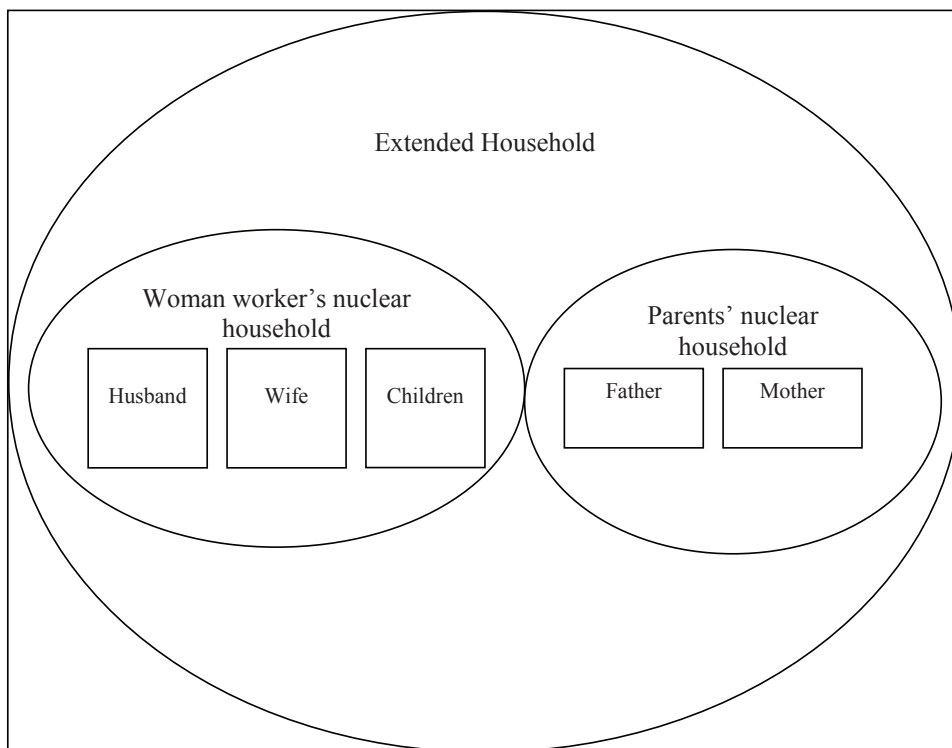


Figure 3: Extended Household



NRIE and hired women workers' households had a different composition, characteristics, and life cycle due to different ages between NRIE and hired women workers. The average age of NRIE women workers was 27 years, while the average age of hired women workers was 35 years. As a result, NRIE women workers were younger compared to hired women workers. Therefore, most NRIE women workers' households were extended households, particularly (see figure 3), which usually consist of a woman worker and her parents' nuclear household.

Most hired women workers' households were nuclear households (see Figure 2), which encompass a woman worker, her husband, and their children. Household structure is closely related to a pattern of postnuptial residence or a pattern of co-residence with parents¹⁰ particularly wife's parents in form of matrilocal residence. This pattern is consistent with various studies in the Northern, Northeastern, and Central regions in Thailand (John De Young, 1955; Konrad Kingshill, 1965; Stanley Tambiah, 1970 ; Sulamith Potter, 1977; Chai Podhisita et al., 1990; Jennifer Gray, 1990). Consequently, matrilineality and matrifocality, which dominate in the Northern region, strongly influence NRIE women workers' households.

All households owned land for a house and a house, while most of them owned land for longan as their major asset. Longan cultivation is the major agricultural activity and land for longan is the major source of income. NRIE and hired women workers' households have different patterns of asset ownership. NRIE woman worker's parents, either father or mother, was the major owner of NRIE women workers' household assets. On the other hand, a wife or husband was the major owner of hired women workers' household assets. As a result, NRIE women workers have weak fallback positions compared to their parents.

There are different patterns of asset ownership between males and females. Usually a male in the household was the owner of more valuable assets or assets that related to occupation such as land for longan, car, and livestock. However, a female was the owner of less valuable assets or assets that do not relate to occupation such as a motorcycle, bicycle, land for a house, and a house. Therefore, males in households have strong fallback positions compared to females in households relative to valuable assets or assets which are related to occupation. Nevertheless, the ownership pattern of houses and land for houses strongly reflects matrilineality and matrifocality, which give women workers more opportunity to access household assets.

Regarding household financial assets, usually a female in the household owned both informal and formal financial assets¹¹. Both husband and wife jointly owned cash as a household flexible financial asset¹². There are different ownership patterns of financial assets among the two groups of women workers. Most NRIE women workers owned formal financial assets in the form of bank saving accounts, but most hired women workers owned informal financial assets in the form of village saving or housewife saving accounts. Informal financial assets in this study are forced saving, which households need to keep as a guarantee for their borrowing. For this reason, hired women workers rely more on forced saving compared to NRIE women workers.

¹⁰The coresidence pattern is an important factor in providing economic justification for new couples to accumulate savings before they can establish their own residences.

¹¹ Formal financial assets mainly encompass bank savings accounts, while informal financial assets encompass a variety of informal saving groups, for example, village saving groups, and housewife saving groups.

¹² Flexible financial assets encompass assets which have high liquidity, such as cash and gold.

As a result, NRIE women workers have strong fallback positions compared to their husbands as well as hired women workers relative to the ownership of formal financial assets.

According to the cooperative conflict model, a household is made up of multiple actors with varying preferences and interests. These actors have different abilities to pursue and realize their own interests. The multiple actors within a household have different bargaining power, which depends on his or her fall-back position. The bargaining power of each actor would be defined by a range of factors, particularly the strength of the person's fall-back position or the threat point which are the outside options that determine how well-off he or she would be if cooperation fails.

There are various factors which affect a person's fall-back position. These factors can range from the quantifiable factors such as income and various kinds of property to unquantifiable factors such as social norms and perceptions about contributions and needs. However, different factors would carry different weight on a person's fall-back position within the household. The different influences of various factors are also related to the socioeconomic context, from which cooperative conflict within a household can occur.

In sum, the different influences of various factors among NRIE and hired women workers related to the socioeconomic context from which cooperative conflict within a household can occur shows that different household composition, characteristics, and life cycle between NRIE and hired women workers' households affect the ownership pattern of various household assets. Matrilineality and matrifocality have more influence among NRIE women workers' extended households. As a result, NRIE women workers have weak fallback positions compared to their parents within a household considering household composition and characteristics as well as life cycle. They also have weak fallback positions compared to their parents when considering household assets. On the contrary, NRIE women workers have strong fallback positions vis-à-vis their husbands when considering household composition, characteristics and household assets.

This study also shows that gender-based and age-based power relations are two of the crucial axes on which bargaining within household takes place. But age-based power relations play crucial roles in NRIE women workers' household due to the influence of matrilocality and matrilineality. However, age-based power relations have contradictory effects among NRIE women workers in the form that women workers needed to rely on their parents.

4. The Socioeconomic Background of Women Workers and the Conditions of Employment

Study of the socioeconomic background of women workers showed that NRIE women workers do not start out poor compared to their husbands and hired women workers. NRIE women workers were younger and had higher educational levels vis-à-vis their husbands as well as hired women workers. The result also suggests that NRIE work occupies a relatively privileged place in the local work spectrum because of stability, better pay, and more fringe benefits. However, this well-off position is offset by long hours of work and unhealthy and unsafe working conditions in NRIE factories.

The interview results showed that there was a trade-off between higher earnings as well as the stability of work and the various requirements of NRIE work such as the inflexible schedule of work, long hours of work, and repetitive work as well as the hazards of work. Various respondents had clearly compared the conditions of employment among NRIE work with agricultural-related and hired work.

It is clear that NRIE women workers had less leisure time compared to hired women workers. This difference is dependent on the conditions of NRIE work, which requires longer working hours and more days of work. From the interviews, some NRIE women workers stated that they could freely choose when they would like to work or not to work overtime. Actually, they had to work on Saturday whether they preferred to choose to work or not. Moreover, during some periods, NRIE women workers had to work on Sunday because the factory needed to accelerate the production process when they received a large amount of orders. However, most women workers stated that they would like to work during weekends, particularly on Saturday, because they needed to make more money.

There are different conditions of employment among NRIE work and agricultural as well as hired work that most husbands and hired women workers participate in. On the one hand, NRIE work can be categorized as formal employment because of contractual employment with stability of work, legal coverage, and various fringe benefits. On the other hand, most agricultural-related and hired work can be categorized as informal employment because it encompasses unstable work with lower pay and without legal coverage and fringe benefits.

For this reason, NRIE women workers have strong fallback positions compared to their husbands as well as hired women workers considering the conditions of their employment. However, hired women workers do not have strong fallback positions vis-à-vis their husbands when considering the conditions of their employment. Different conditions of employment also lead to different positions of workers. Consequently, NRIE women workers are clearly economically better off compared to their husbands and hired women workers who participate in agricultural-related and hired work.

NRIE women workers are included in formal employment under an export-oriented industrialization, which brings sources of foreign exchange to Thailand, but this economic development model at the same time is built on the back of women as Peter Bell (1997) reiterated. On the contrary, most workers in the village are pushed out of the agricultural sector because of the deterioration and unreliability of agricultural sector. Accordingly, these unqualified workers could only be included in informal employment.

The unreliability of agricultural activities depended on the combination of various factors ranging from limited amounts of land, uncertainty, and vulnerability of agricultural-related activities, and particularly uneven development of the Thai state. Thai economic development policies for many decades have been streamlined toward a more urban and export orientation while discouraging the agriculture and rural sector. The economic development process not only changes the structure of the Thai economy, but it has significant consequences for a skewed distribution of economic activities via rising national income disparities. The results of this study

help elaborate this explanation, particularly the unreliability of the agricultural sector and employment, while pushing most rural people into informal employment.

It is clear that no single household in this study draws a livelihood entirely from agriculture. On the contrary, the means of household earning are a combination of a variety of activities. Most households in this study construct their livelihoods by diversifying their means of income ranging from agricultural activities, various kinds of hired work which are related to agricultural or not related to agricultural activities, to self-employed work. However, the major source of income in most households predominantly comes from various kinds of hired work rather than from household agricultural activities as should be expected in a rural area.

The interviews show that most households used to work and invest in various kinds of agricultural activities in the past, particularly participating in longan, garlic, shallot or cabbage cultivation. Most of them stated that cultivation was a failure because the prices of these agricultural products were low and the costs of production were high. Currently, some of them still are in debt since they borrowed money to invest in these agricultural activities. As a result, some respondents mentioned the deterioration of agricultural activities that they perform or used to perform during the interviews.

This finding is consistent with the situation of other rural areas in the Northern region as well as other regions in Thailand. Contrary to conventional beliefs, a large percentage of households in rural Thailand, who identify themselves as farmers, actually draw their main income from nonfarm activities. Office of Agricultural Economics (1999) found that income from non-agricultural sources among agricultural households was higher than the income from agricultural sources in every region, except for the South.

The unreliability of agricultural income in this study is dependent on various factors. On the one hand, agricultural enterprises have met with a number of the limitations which are found in most rural areas. Major constraints of agriculture are associated with the small amount of land, the poor condition of agricultural activities, the fluctuation of agricultural production and prices, natural disasters, higher costs of production, etc. In addition, most agricultural areas in Thailand are primarily rain-fed, while only 22 percent of agricultural land is labelled as irrigated areas. These are coupled with low productivity, which has always been viewed as a major problem within the agriculture sector in Thailand (Na-Ranong, 2000).

On the other hand, this phenomenon is also related to the effects of the Thai government's economic and social development strategy and plans, which prioritize industrialization via export oriented strategy. Junichi Yamada (1997) found that the agricultural sector in Thailand grew by about 12.3 times in the 30 years during 1961-91, while non-agricultural sectors registered even more substantial increase at almost 55.9 times during the same period. As a result, the contribution of agricultural production to overall national GDP fell from 39.2 percent in 1961 to 12.4 percent in 1991 even though the labor share of agriculture sector was still high.

In short, the existing evidence from this study strongly challenges the common assumption that export factory women workers homogeneously suffer from insecurity and lower wages. NRIE women workers are poor compared to women workers in developed countries. They are also

poor compared to the skilled and professional Thai women workers, but they are relatively well-off compared to most of their peers in the villages, particularly their husbands and hired women workers as well as their parents.

NRIE factory employment in this study is significant because it is generally superior to other forms of agricultural related employment in the villages due to the deterioration of agricultural sector as well as people in this sector. This result asserts that the extra-household dimension such as economic and social development strategy also affects women's intrahousehold bargaining power.

5. Women Workers and Intrahousehold Bargaining

5.1 Income Allocation and Management

The uneven development that prioritizes the industrial sector provides new opportunity for qualified workers, particularly NRIE women workers, to be able to be included in the formal economy. But the unqualified workers, who mostly are in agricultural-related and hired work, are pushed into informal employment instead. This situation certainly weakens the fallback positions of males in the household, who usually participate in agricultural-related and hired work. The results show that most NRIE women workers contributed more into the household economy as a mainstay provider, while males in households, particularly their husbands, contributed less to the household economy.

The average percentage of NRIE women workers' monthly earnings in total household income was 58. This average percentage of NRIE women workers' earnings was higher than the average contribution that Thai women contributed to total household earnings, which was less than 50 percent (Kerry Richter and Napaporn Havanon, 1995). For this reason, the concept of "male breadwinner" is becoming a myth among NRIE women workers' households.

Most hired women workers contributed less to the household economy compared to their husbands. The average percentage of hired women workers' monthly earning relative to total household income was 36. Even though hired women workers are secondary providers, their earnings are not merely supplementary. Most hired women workers perceived that their household livelihoods could not be sustained without their earnings. As a result, a male breadwinner concept still prevails in hired women workers' households but it is certainly not solid.

In addition, the interviews showed that both NRIE and hired women workers recognized the importance of their contributions to their household economy. Hence, most of them claimed that it was necessary for them to work because if they did not work, the well-being of their households would certainly be affected.

NRIE women workers have strong fallback positions vis-à-vis their husbands and hired women workers considering their mainstay provider positions. On the contrary, hired women workers have weak fallback positions vis-à-vis their husbands considering their secondary provider positions. Still, the mainstay provider position of NRIE women workers does not automatically

increase their bargaining power in household income allocation and management. The intrahousehold bargaining power of women does not depend only on the amount of earnings, the percentage of earnings relative to total household income and the pattern of household provider. For this reason, it is necessary to further clarify the details of household income allocation and management.

This study also concentrated on three major dimensions of household income allocation and management: income information accessibility, household income keeping, and household management. Regarding income information accessibility, usually other household members, particularly husbands and parents, know about women workers' income information. The reverse is true: women workers also know about other household members' income information, particularly income information of their husbands or parents. The accessibility of income information among women workers and other household members is dependent on the nature and characteristics of both NRIE and agricultural-related as well as hired work.

Households usually pool income from various household members while a female in the household is the income keeper and decision maker. The result is also consistent with previous studies which found that Thai women generally were the people who kept the household purse (Don Lauro, 1979; Potter, 1977; Christine Mougne, 1984; Phongpaichit, 1982; Nappaporn Chayovan, Viparn Ruffolo and Malinee Wongsith, 1996).

However, what explains why household's pool income from various members is economic necessity or the insufficiency of male income in a household. In addition, a woman keeping the household purse or income does not imply that women automatically control household income. Therefore, the study will further explore household income decision maker, income allocation patterns, and management to clarify how household income is kept, controlled, and managed.

Figure 4: Pooled Income for Husband and Wife in a Nuclear Household (Wife as Income Keeper)

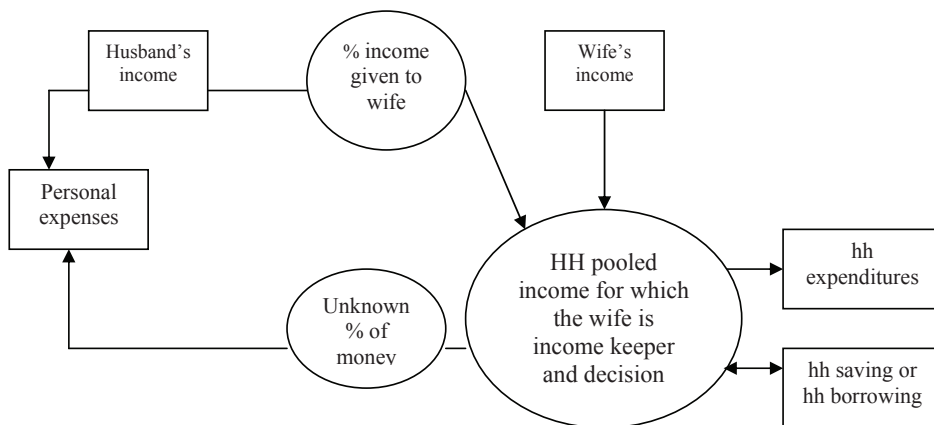


Figure 5: Pooled Income from All Household Members in Extended Household (Wife as Income Keeper)

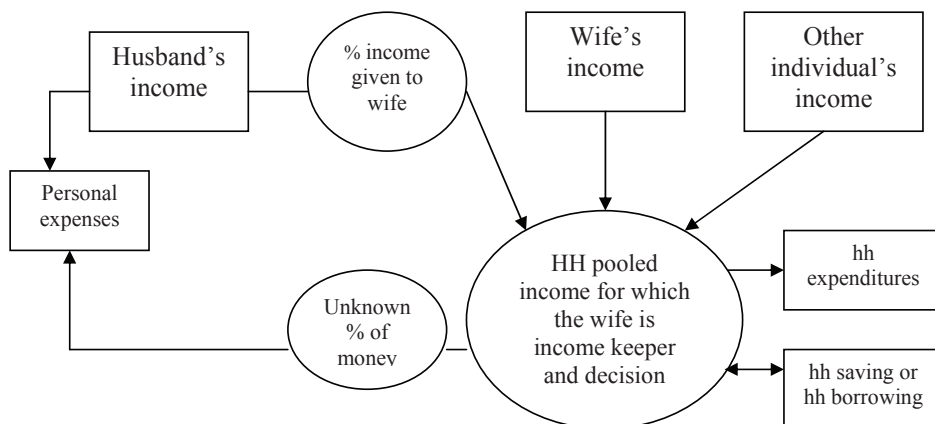
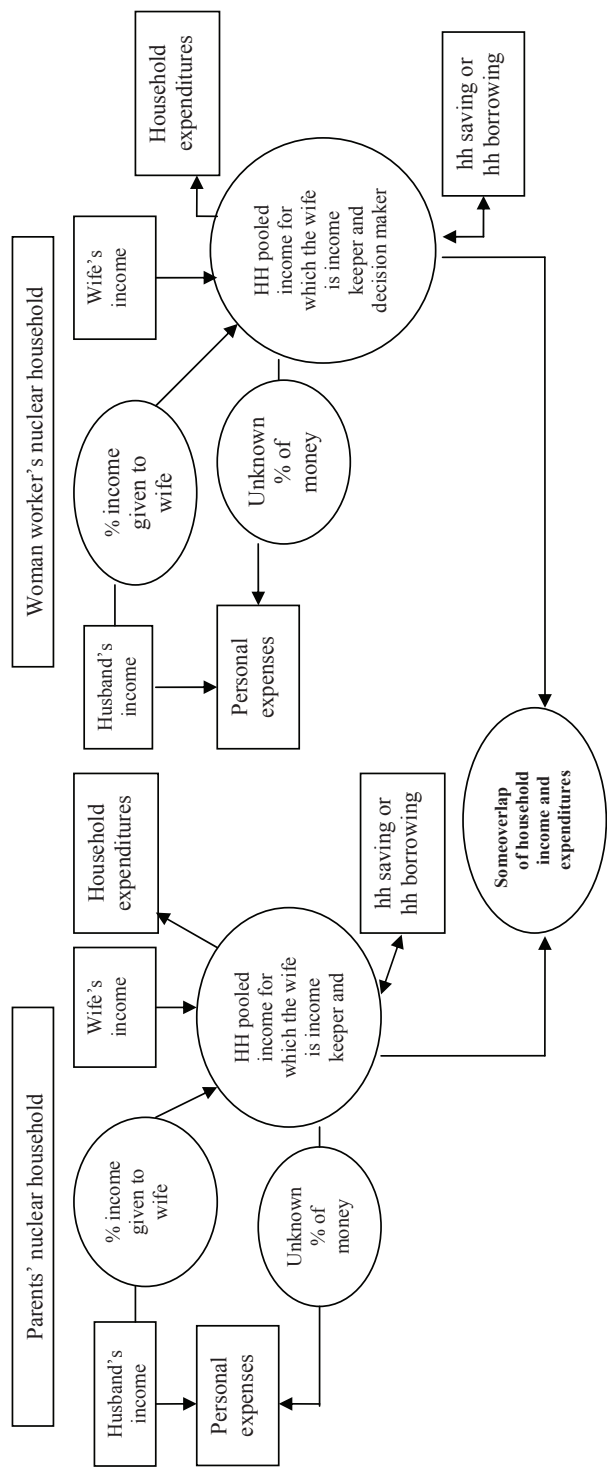


Figure 6: Pooled Income Pattern in Each Nuclear Household (Extended Household)



There are different patterns of income keeper and decision maker among NRIE and hired women workers' households. A woman worker or her mother was the income keeper and decision maker in most NRIE women workers' extended households, but a hired woman worker, as a wife, was the income keeper and decision maker in most hired women workers' nuclear households. (See Figure 4, 5, 6) As a result, matrilineality and matrilocality have more influence among NRIE women workers' households compared to hired women workers' households.

The proportion of women workers' income relative to total household income, particularly NRIE women workers, was more than 50 percent. In addition, the percentage of income which husbands gave to NRIE women workers was lower compared to hired women workers' husbands. For this reason, women manage and control household pooled income under conditions of economic necessity which means not much money to keep, control, and manage. Moreover, large proportions of household incomes which women workers, particularly NRIE women workers, keep and control are their own incomes. The study also found that husbands do not totally withdraw from household income allocation and management because after they give money to women workers, they still request some money back for their personal use and other payments. (See Figure 4, 5, 6)

The interviews also showed that even though most women workers stated that their husbands usually gave part of their earnings or all of their earnings to them, this did not reflect what has actually happened in reality. Further study found that usually a husband gave some or all of his earnings to his wife at first, but when he needed to use money to buy something even from his daily pocket money, he asked his wife to give money to him later from time to time. However, it was hard to ask women to compare the amount of money that their husbands gave to them to the amount that they gave back to their husbands because usually women did not know exactly how much money they gave back to their husbands; hence they did not notice or keep information about this.

"I manage all household income. When my husband goes to work, I know that he get 150 baht for male hired work per day. All hired male workers get 150 baht equally. He gives all of his income to me but he requests it back when he wants to use it.

When he requests for money I ask him how much money that he wants. Normally I give him 50 baht for motorcycle's gasoline, 50 baht when he goes out and 20 baht for his alcohol something like that. I do not know how much I give him each month but just know that when he requests if I have money I give some to him. If I do not have it, I do not give it to him." (A 28 year old hired woman worker)

"I am the person who takes responsible for household income-expenditure management. My husband gives some of his daily earning to me. In case that he goes out to work, I know it and also know that he gets 150 baht per day. Every male worker doing hired works get 150 baht equally. I have to manage all the things because if not he spends all his money on alcohol. I am the person who can economize and know what should buy or not. If he wants to use money I give it to him. No, I do not know exactly how much I give money to him each month. I just recognize that I give him 30 baht

or 40 baht per time if I have money that is all.” (A 30 year old hired woman worker)

“My husband gives his earning to me; I am the one who take responsible for household income management. Yes, I know how much he receives from work each day and he also knows how much I get each month. We actually talk to each other. There is no reason why I take responsible for household income management, but we did it since we got married. He gives all his earning to me and then when he needs to use money, he can ask me and I will give it to him. Normally when he goes out to work I give him 50 baht for his daily expense.” (A 28 year old NRIE woman worker)

“My wife is the person who is responsible for household income and expenditure management. I give all my daily earning to her in case that I go to work and receive money. And if I need to use some money I tell her. Normally she gives me 50 baht to 100 baht when I request her. I need to have some money in my pocket when I go out to work or meet some people outside.” (A 34 year old husband of hired woman worker)

Moreover, it is found that there was a bias in women workers' perceptions related to the money that they gave to other household members and their husbands. As the study showed earlier, after women workers received money from their husbands, normally women workers needed to give money back to their husbands. However, women workers did not think that giving money from pooled household income back to their husbands was giving money to others. On the contrary, women workers perceived that they already received money from their husbands; therefore, normally, the money that they gave back to husbands was also their husbands' money. In addition, there were two points which pertain bargaining to between husband and wife. First, bargaining may exist between husband and wife on the amount of money that the husband gives to the wife after he received his earnings. Some respondents mentioned that the husband gave part of his earnings to his wife and kept some for his personal expenses. On the contrary, some respondents stated that the husband gave all of his earnings to his wife. Second, the bargaining may exist between husband and wife on the amount of money that the husband requests from household pooled income, when he needs it. This is because the amount of the money that a husband requests from his wife and the amount of money that the wife gives back to her husband are debatable.

As a result, it can hardly be concluded that women workers have higher bargaining power compared to their husbands relative to household income allocation and management. Hence, women workers do not have higher bargaining power vis-à-vis their husbands when considering whose earning and under what conditions women workers actually keep, control, and manage household income.

5.2 Intrahousehold Decision Making

There are different patterns of decision making among NRIE and hired women workers' households related to different household composition, characteristics and life cycle. Usually a female in the household took responsibility in household decision making while women workers as wives were the major decision makers in most hired women workers' nuclear

households, and a woman worker and her mother were responsible as the decision makers in most NRIE women workers' extended households.

The study also found that there are different gender patterns in household decision making. The interviews showed that females in household usually are responsible for small issues related to daily life activities with inexpensive items such as food, products, and clothes used in households. On the contrary, males in household are jointly responsible for important issues or decision making related to expensive items such as durable goods, childcare, and health payment. This result is consistent with the previous study on household decision making in Thailand (Chayavan, Ruffolo and Wongsith, 1996).

"Usually I make the decision for food, products and clothes used in household. However, when we would like to buy durable goods which are expensive, I and my husband have to talk together to make a decision. I specifically initiate in buying refrigerator and cloth washing machine. My husband initiates in buying television and car. For example, he is the person, who refers that we need to buy car because our land is situated in Chiangmai province, which is far away from the village. As a result, if we have car it is easier to commute to our land." (A 28 year old hired woman worker)

"I and my mother make the decision for food, products and clothes used in households. But usually I buy them from Lamphun city when I go to work because I commute to home by hired car so I can bring them back home even sometime they are heavy. But for my daughter's clothes, I do not spend much money on them because my father complains that she will grow up later so do not buy many clothes, it is waste. For durable goods, we talk together before we buy them. My father initiates in buying television but actually we bought it before I got married. I initiates in buying radio, refrigerator something like that." (A 26year old NRIE woman worker)

This study also considered in detail whose income households usually used for various aspects of household payment. The results show that normally most households use pooled income to pay for these expenses. However, some NRIE women workers' households did not use household pooled income but used NRIE women workers' incomes to pay for these expenses instead. Some NRIE women workers were solely responsible for decision making on durable goods buying. But these NRIE women workers were also responsible for durable goods payment from their own incomes. On the contrary, no hired woman worker mentioned that she was solely responsible for durable goods buying.

In sum, NRIE women workers do not really have more bargaining power vis-à-vis males in households pertaining to household decision making because NRIE works do not radically change gender patterns in household decision. Nevertheless, NRIE work provided more opportunity for some NRIE women workers to have more says in household decision making compared to hired women workers. However, this opportunity could not be separated from women workers' payment responsibility.

Moreover, hired women workers' households are more vulnerable compared to NRIE women workers' households because they need to combine various sources of lending and various reasons for borrowing. However, the patterns of borrowing decision making among NRIE and hired women workers' households are different because matrilineality and matrifocality

dominate among NRIE women workers' households. Both husband and wife jointly decided on household borrowing among hired women workers' households, while a woman worker's parents, either father, mother, or both of them, were responsible for borrowing decision making in most NRIE women workers' households.

This study found that there were various sources of credit market or sources of lending. However, they can be categorized in two forms: formal credit lenders and informal lenders.¹³ A bank was the only formal lender in this study. However, there were various types of informal lenders such as village funds, housewife saving group, and relatives. It was found that males and females borrowed from different sources of lending. Usually, males in a household borrowed from a formal source and females in a household borrowed from an informal source. Therefore, males are less vulnerable compare to females in households considering the access to sources of lending.

5.3 Housework Allocation

Regarding housework allocation, there was a clear segregation among various kinds of housework in terms of which kinds were a female's responsibility and which kinds was a male's responsibility. Most women workers take responsibility for various kinds of housework. The various kinds of housework are female work, except repairing, which is male work.

Even though more NRIE women workers compared to hired women workers did not mention that they did various kinds of housework as their main responsibility, the interviews also showed that most NRIE women workers stated that they also did various kinds of domestic housework. This result is consistent with information on the leisure time activities of women workers, which reveals that usually women workers stated that they did housework during their leisure time.

"I do not have enough time at home and this is the reason that why my son does not familiar with me. Usually he stays with my mother and husband, who take turn taking care of him. When I come back from work I spend most time sleep and help doing some kinds of housework, such as cleaning dishes and house. But normally I have not enough time, my mother and husband taking care most of housework." (A 25 year old NRIE woman worker)

"Yes, I have leisure time. I take care of my child and do some housework if I have time on Sunday or after I come back from factory each day. I come back from factory around 8.45 in the morning. After I come back home, I take care of my children, preparing food for them, having breakfast with them and may be bring them to Sunday market on Sunday if they ask me. If not, I wash clothes and go to sleep. When I wake up in the afternoon I clean my house and prepare dinner. Then I prepare to go to work in the evening." (A 26year old NRIE woman worker)

"Normally I do various kinds of housework during leisure time. No, I do not take care of my son because he is grown up enough and likes to hang out with

¹³ A formal lender is a lender who frequently demands collateral in order to increase a borrower's creditworthiness to increase their risk-adjusted return on the loan. Therefore, formal lenders require physical collateral such as land. On the other hand, informal lenders use collateral substitutes such as third-party guarantees, tied contracts, or threat of loss of future access to credit as common devices instead of physical collateral.

his friends instead. I have a lot of available time, particularly after longan season. So, if no one asks me to work for them, I gather around with my sister and neighbors nearby. We talk, chat, and particularly complain to each other about this or that thing". (A 32 year old hired woman worker)

Normally if I have time I do weaving and if I do not weave, I do various kinds of housework instead. For example, in the morning I go to market, come back to prepare for breakfast. Then I take care of my child, send him to school and cleaning and then after seeing that everything is done then I start weaving. And during evening if my child come back home, I have to stop weaving and take care of him first. (A 30 year old hired woman worker)

The pattern of activities which women workers did during their leisure time showed that most women workers did not think that doing domestic tasks such as doing housework or taking care of children was work. The concept of "work" in their sense is activities that bring money into the household. Therefore, leisure time for women workers is the time during which they did not perform activities which brought in money, but it is the time that they performed women's duties in the form of doing various kinds of housework.

In sum, this pattern of activities that women workers do during their leisure time showed that women workers have to combine public work and private work together as their responsibility. In addition, they internalize the idea that housework is not work but it is the responsibility of women in households. Moreover, it is clear that women workers face a double day. Therefore, both NRIE and hired women workers have weak fall-back positions compared to their husbands when considering their duty and responsibility related to both public and private work. Nevertheless, women workers themselves could not solely take responsibility for various kinds of housework. Various kinds of housework needed to be allocated among various household members.

However, there are different patterns of housework allocation among NRIE and hired women workers' households. Usually hired women workers were responsible for housework as their main responsibility, while NRIE women workers were responsible for housework but not as their main responsibility. This difference is related to the conditions of NRIE work, which requires longer working hours six days a week.

Most hired women workers' households were nuclear households, usually the husband in each household needed to help. On the contrary, most NRIE women workers' households were extended households, usually other female members in the household needed to help. For this reason, matrilineality and matrifocality, which dominated in NRIE women workers' households, help to reproduce the traditional sexual division of labor in households rather than challenge it.

This result is consistent with the study of Halen Safa (1995), which reported that matrifocality actually encourages women's attainments in the household and their domestic work because it enhances the importance of women in the household.

As a result, NRIE works do not change or weaken kinship relations in the household. Moreover, the kinship relations via matrilineality help support women workers by shifting housework from women workers to other female relatives in the household. The reproductive

labor, which is shifted to other female members, helps reproduce the productive labor of NRIE women workers.

In brief, although women engage in paid work, women disproportionately take on more responsibility for housework compared to their husbands. Women's participation in paid work actually does not change the housework allocation pattern. Thus, women have a "double day" of both paid and unpaid domestic work. Moreover, they also internalize the idea that housework is not work but it is the responsibility of women in households. Therefore, both NRIE and hired women workers have weak fall-back positions compared to their husbands when considering their duty and responsibility related to housework allocation. Certainly, work-life balance should be considered as one of the crucial aspects of women workers' bargaining power.

6. Conclusions

The result shows that the relocation of production of certain kinds of manufactured products from the developed countries to the developing countries such as Thailand leads to rapid incorporation of women into the labor market. This integration certainly affects women workers' intrahousehold bargaining power. It certainly showed that NRIE work has both negative and positive impacts on women workers' bargaining power vis-à-vis their husbands as well as hired women workers. This situation confirmed the mixed effects of EPZ employment on women workers as Elson and Pearson (1981a) have mentioned.

On the one hand, NRIE work provides an opportunity for qualified women to enter into formal employment. It helps increase the contribution of NRIE women workers to total household income with their mainstay provider position. Therefore, NRIE women workers have strong fallback positions vis-à-vis their husbands. This existing evidence strongly challenges the common assumption that export factory women workers homogeneously suffer from insecurity and lower wages. On the contrary, hired women workers have weak fallback positions vis-à-vis their husbands considering their secondary provider positions.

NRIE women workers are poor compared to women workers in developed countries and the professional Thai women workers. But they are relatively well-off compared to most of their counterparts in the villages including hired women workers. As a result, NRIE employment decomposes women's subordination due to their contribution to household income. This economic contribution should create a material base that increases NRIE women's bargaining power within households.

On the other hand, while the mainstay provider position of NRIE women workers challenges the socially constructed "male breadwinner" role of their husbands, it does not radically increase women workers' intrahousehold bargaining power. Usually NRIE and hired women workers did not actually have economic power over household income because they manage and control household pooled income under conditions of economic necessity which means not much money to keep, control, and manage. Moreover, their husbands do not totally withdraw from household income allocation and management. Consequently, NRIE employment recomposes women's subordination related to household income control and management.

In addition, this result also reiterates the worsening rural conditions in rural areas in terms of land availability, employment as well as earning opportunities in the unreliable agricultural sector, which are the main problem facing most rural households including women workers' households. Thai economic development policies for many decades have been streamlined toward a more urban and export orientation while discouraging the agriculture and rural sector. The economic development process not only changes the structure of the Thai economy, but it has significant consequences for a skewed distribution of economic activities via rising national income disparities.

The results of this study help elaborate this explanation, particularly the unreliability of the agricultural sector and employment, while pushing most rural people into informal employment. Therefore, NRIE women workers are included in formal employment, which brings sources of foreign exchange to Thailand. But this economic development model at the same time is built on the back of women while deteriorates other members of households. As a result, the struggle for a qualitatively different development model, which alters the socioeconomic context that women are positioned in, is required if we would like to increase women's bargaining power.

However, NRIE employment does not change various aspects of household decision making to any degree even though some NRIE women workers may have more say in household decision making compared to hired women workers. In this study, it is clear that NRIE employment does not alter housework allocation and the sexual division of labor in households. This subservience is related to matrilineality and matrifocality, which combine age-gender hierarchies in most NRIE women workers' households. NRIE employment improves the economic status of women workers and their households but it makes little change to gender egalitarian direction in their households. Therefore, NRIE work intensifies women's subordination as related to household decision making and housework allocation.

For this reason, more specific policies, which help by increasing women's bargaining power, need to be considered, for example, programs or policies which support comparable worth among females and males; programs or policies which help by relieving women's double days; programs or policies which generate support directly in the area that women take responsibility for such as the area linked with household welfare or well-being; programs or policies which create egalitarian social value and gender relations atmosphere in society and the household, etc.

In sum, the results of this study showed that a household is not a black box with harmonious interests but it contains a dynamic of various dimensions of controlling, managing, and a decision making process. This study also asserts that women's participation in NRIE can intensify and decompose the existing forms of gender subordination while recompose new forms of gender subordination at the same time. While NRIE women workers are relatively well-off compared to hired women workers, they are more subservient under an age hierarchy in households due to the strong influence of matrilineality and matrifocality. The results affirmed that the effect of EPZ employment on women workers are mixed and nuanced.

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