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# The Impact on Thai Workers Caused by the Employment of Migrant Workers and Opinions Regarding the Strategic Management of Migrant Workers in Thailand

ผลกระทบต่อแรงงานไทยที่เกิดจากการจ้าง  
แรงงานต่างด้าวและความคิดเห็นต่อการจัดการ  
เชิงยุทธศาสตร์แรงงานต่างด้าวของประเทศไทย

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## บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบจากการจ้างแรงงานต่างด้าวของผู้ประกอบการต่อแรงงานไทย และศึกษาความคิดเห็นของแรงงานไทยต่อการจัดการเชิงยุทธศาสตร์แรงงานต่างด้าวของประเทศไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างคือ แรงงานไทยที่ทำงานกับผู้ประกอบการในจังหวัดสงขลา จำนวน 322 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลคือ แบบสอบถาม สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล คือ ค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน t-test ANOVA และการวิเคราะห์สัมประสิทธิ์สหสัมพันธ์เพียร์สัน ที่ระดับนัยสำคัญ .05 ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผลกระทบจากการจ้างแรงงานต่างด้าวต่อแรงงานไทยในภาพรวมมีผลกระทบระดับปานกลาง และเมื่อพิจารณารายด้านก็มีผลกระทบระดับปานกลางในทุกด้าน ทั้งด้านการทำงาน ด้านค่าตอบแทน ด้านความมั่นคงในงาน ด้านจิตวิทยา และด้านสังคม สำหรับความคิดเห็นต่อการจัดการเชิงยุทธศาสตร์แรงงานต่างด้าวของประเทศไทยนั้น กลุ่มตัวอย่างเห็นด้วยในระดับปานกลาง การทดสอบสมมติฐานพบว่า 1) แรงงานไทยที่มีระดับการศึกษาแตกต่างกัน ได้รับผลกระทบจากการจ้างแรงงานต่างด้าวของผู้ประกอบการแตกต่างกัน ทั้งในภาพรวมและรายด้านในด้านค่าตอบแทนและด้านความมั่นคงในงาน 2) แรงงานไทยที่มีระดับการศึกษา และปัจจัยด้านการทำงาน คือ ลักษณะงาน และจำนวนพนักงานในสถานประกอบการแตกต่างกัน มีความคิดเห็นต่อการจัดการเชิงยุทธศาสตร์แรงงานต่างด้าวของประเทศไทยแตกต่างกัน และ 3) ในภาพรวมผลกระทบจากการจ้างแรงงานต่างด้าวของผู้ประกอบการต่อแรงงานไทยไม่มีความสัมพันธ์กับความคิดเห็นต่อการจัดการเชิงยุทธศาสตร์แรงงานต่างด้าวของประเทศไทย

**คำสำคัญ:** แรงงานไทย แรงงานต่างด้าว ความคิดเห็น การจัดการเชิงยุทธศาสตร์

## Abstract

This research aims to study the impact on Thai workers caused by the use of migrant workers, as well as the opinions regarding the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. The sample used for this study comprised 322 Thai workers employed by entrepreneurs in Songkhla province. A questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The statistics used in this study were percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA and the Pearson correlation coefficient at the level of significance .05. The results showed that the overall impact on Thai workers of employing migrant workers was at a moderate level. Considering each aspect individually revealed that the effect was at a moderate level for all aspects, including the work, compensation, job security, psychological, and social aspects. In terms of the opinions regarding the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand, the respondents agreed at a moderate level. The hypothesis test firstly found that Thai workers with different education levels were

affected differently by the employment of migrant workers overall, but especially with regards to compensation and job security. Secondly, it was found that Thai workers with different levels of education and work factors (i.e., work type and the number of employees working in an establishment) had different opinions regarding the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. Finally, the overall impact of the employment of migrant workers on Thai workers had no relation to opinions regarding the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand.

**Keywords:** Thai Workers, Migrant Workers, Opinions, Strategic Management

## Introduction

Since 1961, the National Economic and Social Development Plan, as the tool for the country's development, has resulted in a significant shift in Thailand's economy. The industrial economy has now overtaken the agricultural economy. As a result, a big change has occurred in the structure of the production and labor markets. Cheap, skilled labor is an important production factor for every entrepreneur to gain a competitive advantage from his or her current production factors. The continuing expansion of investment and economic growth in Thailand will increase the demand and compensation for all levels of the labor force. Many native Thais are no longer interested in jobs that are risky, arduous, or dirty, so most businesses have to hire non-Thai labor instead (Wongmulitthikorn, 2009). Recently, the number of non-Thai laborers has clearly increased, especially those from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia, and these laborers usually work in the fishing industry,

construction, household service, agriculture, restaurant service, and Thai massage (Thitilak, 2010).

The migrant worker statistics for Thailand in October 2013 showed a total of 1,234,495 migrant workers, including 1,211,104 legal workers and 23,391 illegal workers (Thailand, Ministry of Labour, 2014). However, migrant workers in Thailand are a problem in terms of management and skill segmentation to achieve the optimal usage. Moreover, the labor laws for foreign workers in Thailand are not concise or strict enough. The Thai government should organize alien workers by limiting the number of laborers each year, classifying laborers according to their skills, and giving them training. In terms of employers, they should follow the law seriously and act fairly toward their employees. In the case of the government officials involved, punishment for breaking labor laws should be increased. The drug problem is a concern because this can lead to other problems. Solving all the problems

through an integrated collaboration between the public sector, enterprises, and employed workers is also significant (National News Bureau of Thailand, 2012).

Songkhla is a province in the economic center of southern Thailand, and it draws a large number of migrant workers. According to the labor data for Songkhla province in 2013, there were 13,061 verified migrant workers, with 11,991 (91.81 percent) being classified as Burmese, 221 (1.69 percent) as Laotian, and 849 (6.50 percent) as Cambodian. As regards the 4,366 migrant workers under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the States, 2,212 people (50.66 percent) were classified as Burmese, 390 people (8.93 percent) as Laotian, and 1,764 people (40.40 percent) as Cambodian. Meanwhile, 6,008 people are unemployed in Songkhla, representing 0.70 percent of the population (Office Workers Songkhla, 2014). The researchers are interested in studying the impact caused by the employment of migrant workers in Songkhla Province. This will enable agencies to find ways to mitigate the effects resulting from the employment of migrant workers in Thailand.

## **Objectives**

1. To study the impact on Thai workers caused by the use of migrant workers.

2. To study the opinions regarding the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand.

## **Hypotheses**

1. Thai workers with different personal factors and work factors are affected differently by the employment of migrant workers.

2. Thai workers with different personal factors and work factors have differing opinions regarding the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand.

3. Impact of the employment of migrant workers on Thai workers is relevant to opinions about the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand.

## **Research Methods**

### **Data Source**

To get the most complete information, data was collected from multiple sources using the following methods:

1) Documentary Research: A study of documents, books and texts about the concepts, theories, and related research was used as the guide for conducting this research.

2) Field Study: Data were collected from Thai workers employed by entrepreneurs in Songkhla Province by means of a questionnaire.

## Population and Sample

The population studied in this research was Thai workers employed by entrepreneurs in Songkhla Province, which comprises a total of 853,468 people (Office Workers Songkhla, 2014). According to the Askin and Colton table (1963: 151), a sample size of 322 is at a 95% level of confidence with 5% error for a population over 500,000. Simple random sampling was then used.

## The Research Instrument

The questionnaire used to collect data was divided into three parts:

Part 1: personal factors and work factors of Thai workers.

Part 2: the impact on Thai workers caused by the use of migrant workers.

Part 3: the opinions regarding the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand.

## Monitoring the Quality of the Research Instrument

This study examined the quality of the questionnaire used in the following ways:

1) Validity: Content validity measurements were constructed according to a comprehensive definition of the terminology used in the research and found to substantially meet the aims of the research. After that, the questionnaire was referred to experts. Finally,

the accuracy of the questionnaire was tested.

2) Reliability: The researchers used the questionnaire responses from outside the study area in order to test the internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, which must be at least .70 to be used as a tool (Cronbach, 1951: 297).

The reliability test of the scales used in this study found that, with reference to the impact on Thai workers caused by the use of migrant workers and their opinions regarding the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand, the coefficient of reliability was at a very high level with values of .921 and .926, respectively.

## Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a computer program. The details for this are as follows:

1) Descriptive statistics: percentage, mean and standard deviation.

2) Inferential statistics:

2.1) t-test and ANOVA for testing hypotheses 1 and 2.

2.2) Pearson correlation coefficient for testing hypothesis 3.

## Findings and Discussion

### Personal Factors of the Sample

Of the sample of Thai workers employed

by entrepreneurs in Songkhla Province, most were female (55.6 percent). Respondents aged 21–30 years accounted for 44.7 percent of the sample. Most respondents had either a senior secondary/vocational school, junior secondary school, or undergraduate education, accounting for 25.8 percent, 23.0 percent and 20.8 percent of the sample, respectively. The marital status of respondents was fairly evenly split, with 49.3 percent being married and 45.7 percent still single.

### **Work Factors of the Sample**

Of the studied sample, most worked daily, with their wages being paid on a monthly basis (57.5 percent). A minority worked for daily wages (23.6 percent). In terms of the types of establishments they worked for, the top three were services (e.g. restaurants and shops), construction, and manufacturing, accounting for 29.2 percent, 21.1 percent and 14.0 percent, respectively. Most of the sample (59.0 percent) worked in establishments that employed 1–20 people. Just over half of the sample (50.9 percent) indicated that their workplaces did not have any migrant workers, while 32.9 percent had 1–10 migrant workers in their establishments. In terms of job descriptions, most respondents worked in sales/waitering/cooking (26.7 percent), followed by factory workers (23.9 percent), and supervisors (22.0 percent). Almost half (44.1 percent) had a monthly revenue between

7,501 and 10,000 baht per month. The largest group in the sample had worked for 6–12 months (29.2 percent), followed by those working for two years (26.4 percent).

### **The Impact on Thai Workers of the Employment of Migrant Workers and Opinions regarding the Strategic Management of Migrant Workers in Thailand**

The data collected from the sample of Thai workers revealed that the overall impact on Thai workers of employing migrant workers is at a moderate level. Considering each aspect individually, it was revealed that the effect is at a moderate level for all aspects, including the work, compensation, job security, psychological, and social aspects. However, the psychological effect is greater than with the other aspects. The average score was 2.98 with a standard deviation of 0.96. Meanwhile the work aspect was affected to a lesser degree, with an average score of 2.54 and a standard deviation of 0.78. This contradicts the results of Wanitnopparat (2008: Abstract) and Moonla (2010: Abstract), which found the work aspect was impacted more than other aspects because migrant workers take jobs in Thailand, causing unemployment and a lack of income for workers. This differs with the opinions of operators, who believed that employing migrant workers did not affect Thai laborers (Archa, 2007: Abstract). This is consistent with the study of Sunthornthada and Phattharawanit

(1997: Abstract), which found that most Thai laborers agreed that operators and employers benefit most, because they will be able to compensate for labor shortages. The business being conducted involves low labor costs, which makes it competitive with foreign employers. However, the downside is that migrant workers will compete with Thai laborers for jobs, and this can depress the wages of Thai laborers. It also contributes to the problems of drugs and crime, as well as the spread of infectious diseases, such as malaria and filariasis, to Thai people, especially those living near the border. The studies of Lorwithee (1998: Abstract), Prutthikun (1998: Abstract) and Utthayod (1999: Abstract) found that migrant workers may have an impact on the economy, national security, public health, and psychological and social problems.

In terms of the opinions toward the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand, the respondents agreed at a moderate level. The average score was 3.31, and the standard deviation was 0.87. This may be because the strategy involves the protection, monitoring, and control of migrant workers, as well as Thai workers, including intercepting illegal migrants looking to work in the country. Consistent with the study of Lorwithee (1998: Abstract), the majority agreed with the government's policy of pushing back migrant workers. Meanwhile, the study of Sunthornthada

and Phattharawanit (1997: Abstract) found that more than two in five Thai people disagreed with an outright ban on migrant workers, with most arguing that there are labor shortages in Thailand. Migrant workers are easy to find, especially for dirty, dangerous, and heavy jobs that Thai people do not want to do. This is consistent with the theory of international labor migration, which indicates that more developed countries will have a demand for laborers to work in socially undesirable jobs, which the local population do not want to do because they are hard and/or dirty. Local people want to earn higher wages and work less, because they have the opportunity to choose their jobs (Sriwatthanakunkit, 1998: Abstract). This is consistent with the studies of Phumephakdee (2003: Abstract), Joyjamrat (2004: Abstract) and Wanitnopparat (2008: Abstract). This may be caused by the fact that migrant workers are patient and willing to work hard. Moreover, the government has allowed some provinces to hire migrant workers according to a cabinet agreement in 1996.

The private sector now has a greater choice by including migrant workers in their business operations. Migrant workers are generally unskilled, but they are cheap and hardworking, and they do not go home as often as Thai laborers. They also do not get the same deals as Thai workers. Although there are some communication issues, this is

generally not too much of a problem. However, the study of Prutthikun (1998: Abstract) found that the operators thought that the laws about migrant workers were not effective. There are some problems, such as corruption and a lack of harmonization among officers. The study of Utthayod (1999: Abstract) found that policies to control illegal migrant workers had little success. They could not solve the problem of hiring undocumented workers, and this just promoted the smuggling of illegal migrant workers even more. Meanwhile, the study of Joyjamrat (2004: Abstract) found the registration and policy barriers for allowing migrant workers to be effective, because the rules frequently change and several agencies must be contacted. However, Thailand still needs migrant workers, so the government should set a clearer policy regarding the hiring of migrant workers (Archa, 2007: Abstract). The study of Phurahong (2008: Abstract) found that the impact of the migrant labor policy on small businesses was at a high level, because it requires migrant workers to register, undergo examinations, and get work permits. Also, it must ensure the earnings of migrant workers are equal to those of Thai workers, according to the laws of Thailand. Moreover, having to pay for work permits for migrant workers reduces the profitability of an organization.

## **Hypotheses Testing**

### **Hypothesis 1**

The results found that Thai workers with differing personal factors regarding gender, age and marital status were affected by the employment of migrant workers, and the effects were not significantly different between the overall situation and in each individual aspect. Meanwhile, Thai workers with different education levels were affected differently by the employment of migrant workers, especially with regards to compensation and job security. This is consistent with the study of Sunthornthada and Phattharawanit (1997: Abstract). This could be because workers with lower education levels have more limited career choices. They might be more affected by the use of migrant workers, especially in terms of compensation, which is an important factor in life, but also in terms of job security. Migrant workers may have more patience or be willing to work for lower wages, so an operator may choose to replace Thai workers with migrant workers.

Thai workers with different work types and the number of employees were affected by the employment of migrant workers, and the effects were not significantly different between the overall situation and each individual aspect. Meanwhile, Thai workers with different types of establishments, numbers of migrant workers in the workplace, monthly

incomes, and employment durations were also affected by the employment of migrant workers. However, some aspects were affected significantly differently at the .05 level. Thai workers working in establishments with different types of enterprises were affected by the employment of migrant workers differently in the social aspect. Meanwhile, Thai workers with different work factors in the areas of the number of migrants working in the establishment, monthly income, and employment duration were differently affected by the employment of migrant workers in the work aspect. This is consistent with the study of Lorwithee (1998: Abstract). Additionally, Thai workers in different positions are also affected differently by the employment of migrant workers, both overall and in individual aspects. This could be because a position reflects the experience and expertise of the worker. Workers in higher positions may well be less affected by the employment of migrant workers. Migrant workers tend to take lower positions, especially those that involve tasks that are dirty, dangerous, heavy, or performed in the sun.

## **Hypothesis 2**

The results showed that Thai workers with differences in the personal factors of gender, age and marital status did not have different opinions toward the strategic management of migrant workers. However, it was found that Thai workers with differing levels

of education had differing opinions toward the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. This may be because education influences individuals in many ways, including their ability to think and analyze (Rattana, 2008: 79). On July 22, 1977, His Majesty the King gave the meaning of education as an important tool in the development of knowledge, ideas, attitudes, values, and moral conduct of individuals. It encourages people to be good citizens with quality work and good performance, and it helps the seamless development of the country. Moreover, education certainly affects the results (Chiang Mai Information Center Public Relations Office, District 3, n.d.), so workers with different levels of education are likely to have different opinions about the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand.

Thai workers with different work factors in the areas of type of establishment, the number of migrant workers in the establishment, position, monthly income, and employment have different opinions about the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. It was also found that Thai workers with differing work types and numbers of employees in an establishment also have differing opinions toward the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. This may be because entrepreneurs often hire migrant workers to do the jobs that many native Thai workers do

not want to do, because such jobs are often dirty, dangerous, or arduous (Sunthornthada and Phattharawani, 1997: Abstract). The Thai workers who do work in such jobs may be more affected than other workers, and this is consistent with the study of Chattrakom (1988: 76). This may explain why this group would have a different opinion about the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. In addition, when an establishment has more employees, the impact on Thai workers of hiring migrant workers is less than it is in smaller establishments. This may explain why workers in establishments with differing numbers of employees have different opinions about the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand.

### **Hypothesis 3**

The overall impact of the employment of migrant workers on Thai workers has no relation to opinions toward the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. When considering each aspect, it was found that the effects on the psychological and social aspects were associated with opinions toward the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand at a low level and in a positive direction. The psychological and social impacts are perhaps the ones that relate most to the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. The strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand includes (Thailand Development

Research Institute, 2009: 67):

- 1) A strategy for the management of migrant workers
- 2) A strategy to standardize the employment of migrant workers
- 3) A strategy to prevent the smuggling of migrant workers
- 4) A strategy to pursue the arrest and prosecution of smugglers of migrant workers
- 5) A strategy to drive and repatriate migrant workers
- 6) A strategy for public relations and the organization of migrant workers, and
- 7) A strategy for monitoring and evaluation.

### **Suggestions**

1. Agencies should take measures to reduce the impacts of hiring migrant workers, especially with regards to the psychological impact, by providing accurate and complete information to promote an understanding and awareness of migrant workers among Thai workers.

2. Agencies should review the strategic management of migrant workers in Thailand. In order to solve the problems of migrant workers, it must find the right balance in order to respond to the needs of both entrepreneurs and Thai workers.

3. Thai workers should improve their capabilities to undertake additional tasks. This could decrease the incentives to hiring migrant workers, which would in turn reduce the impact of migrant workers on Thai workers.

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