

## **Related Literature on Migrant Workers' Situations in Thailand**

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Most of the literature related to this paper is derived from academic papers. There is a wide range of views on both domestic and global issues surrounding the situations of migrant workers, who are continuing subjects of study at many levels. Thus, the author divided the review of migrant workers' situations in Thailand into two categories: (1) Viewpoints of foreigners and international organizations on migrant labourers; and (2) Viewpoints of Thai academics. Each category established from the literature review is as follows:

### **(1) Viewpoints of foreigners and international organizations on migrant labourers**

Unskilled labour is the largest and most vulnerable category among foreign migrant workers, in part because of the power relationships between the parties involved (Piper, 2004). Two-thirds of the world's migrant workers live in Europe and Asia. Between the years 2000 and 2015, there were more migrants in Asia than in other areas (IOM, 2015). Castle (2000) found that most countries lacked effective labour management, while Pearson and Kusakabe (2014) and Derks (2013) pointed out that employers are not interested in complying with labour laws. Moreover, trafficking in labour groups is common practice, which means that the demand for vulnerable labourers is constant, while enforcement is still in a state where marginalized groups are regularly exploited (Molland, 2010).

In response to the situation of migrant workers in Thailand, the ILO (2006-2015) commented that Thai society wrongly perceives the role of migrants, while specifying that Thai law is inefficient in its enforcement and its high cost of the registration process. Despite these shortcomings, Thailand has to rely on primarily unskilled migrant workers (ILO, 2008) because Thais work more often in skilled labour positions, resulting in an absence of workers at the lower levels.

Kaur (2010) stated that migrant workers are a big problem both in Thailand and in Malaysia. The migrant labour situation in Thailand is increasing because of the needs of employers (ILO, 2013). However, both employers and migrant workers still face barriers (IOM, WHO & UN,

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2013). For example, Huguet (2014) says that in Thai society, there are barriers to prevent migrants from accessing welfare benefits. Arnold (2014) and OECD/ILO (2017) point out that although the number of migrant workers is increasing, there is still lack of integration. And even though migrant workers have a positive impact by boosting the Thai economy (Hall, 2011; Huguet, 2014; OECD/ILO, 2017), they also face problems of discrimination (IOM, 2013) and are still perceived as a threat to national security (UNDP, 2015). Furthermore, Cernadas et al. (2015) found that migrants in Thailand are subject to unequal treatment.

## **(2) The viewpoint of Thai academics concerning the situations of migrants in Thailand**

Thai workers have no interest in being part of the unskilled labour market. This is primarily due to the expansion of education from primary education to secondary school, meaning an increasing number of Thais are educated to a higher level, and because of increased investment in the service sectors (Chantavanich, 2007b), allowing migrants to work as unskilled labourers and in 3D jobs (Chalamwong & Prugsamat, 2009). According to a study by Mungmuang (2014), the shortage of Thai workers means employers need to hire foreigners, though they are more satisfied with Thai workers. The private sector pressures the state to allow the hiring of foreign workers (Chantanavanich, 2007a; Jantara-nakratch, 2017).

The major pull factor for coming to work in Thailand is the established network of migrants already living and working in the country (Rukumnuaykit, 2009). Chalamwong's study (2011) found that working as an unskilled labourer is a job that Thais do not want, while the employment of migrants is an option at a lower cost. The key push factor for migrants leaving Myanmar is political instability in their country (Petchkhiew, 2006).

There are also many problems that have arisen from the Thai management system, such as a slow registration process for migrants entering the country, a discontinuity of measures in the registration policy, including a decentralized database of migrant registrants, as several agencies are involved in caring migrants (Chantanavanich, 2007). These situations reflect a Thai migrant workers' management policy that is both confusing and complicated (Rukumnuaykit, 2009). Even though migrant workers play a significant role in the Thai economy, the policies affecting them are inconsistent (Chalamwong, 2017).

Not everyone agrees with this assessment, however. Jantara-nakratch (2017), the Deputy Chairman of the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI), believes that the private sector's hiring of migrant workers is not associated with low costs. Contrary to Chalamwong, Jantara-nakratch claims that the high costs of the hiring process offset the perceived low cost advantages, but that employing migrants is a necessity due to the shortage of Thai labourers.

Previous studies also found that Thai people have misunderstandings and prejudices against Burmese migrants, believing they spread germs and diseases (Kanchanaphan, & Samniang 2014; Sunpuwan & Niyomsilpa, 2012). Srichaiwong (2014) addressed protection in Thailand for Myanmar workers, saying it is dependent on law enforcement and employers complying with the law as the two most important factors.

Thailand has made efforts to address the issue of human trafficking and develop policies against its taking place. One of the key reasons for the effort to deal with this situation is that in the year 2017, the United States placed Thailand at the Tier 2 level of the human trafficking index (MGR Online, July 2017), which impacts expectations for foreign aid that is essential for Thai society (Naewna Online, June 2017).

Executives from the Ministry of Labour confirmed that, “the human trafficking rating is a part of what it does to confirm that Thailand is taking care of migrants in all areas according to international standards” (Smiti, M.L., 2017). Similarly, the opinion of Distakul (Ministry of Labour, 2017) is that “the Ministry of Labour will take care of the legitimate migrant workers by following international standards without affecting the security of the country.”

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