Factors Affecting the Quality of Life at the Destination for Baby Boomer Myanmar Migrants.

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ABSTRACT

This research study is part of the Myanmar Migrants Research Report: Quality of Life and Creating New Meanings. The study aimed to examine the quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand. It is a quantitative study covering 52 baby boomer Myanmar migrants in Thailand as the study sample. Questionnaires were used to collect the data, and statistical package were used to analyze the data for frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.) values. According to the study results, the quality of life of the migrant workers of Myanmar nationality in the baby boomers' group was moderate across the four facets of food, clothing, housing, and health (mean = 3.46, S.D. = 0.38). The highest average was with factors related to food (mean = 3.70, S.D. = 0.61), followed by those related to health at the moderate level (mean = 3.40, S.D. = 0.61). Clothing was at the average level (mean = 3.37, S.D. = 0.55) and housing was at a still lower level (mean = 3.36, S.D. = 0.46).

Keywords

The Quality of Life; Baby Boomer Myanmar Migrants

Introduction

The migration of Myanmar nationals to Thailand has been increasing. Like the Lao migrant workers and the migrant workers with Cambodian nationality, people of Myanmar nationality migrate to Thailand to become general contractors. Important strategies have been established in the country in this regard, namely the strategy for organizing a system for the migrants and an effective management strategy to change the status of the migrant workers escaping into the cities to be legally immigrant workers in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [1]. In addition, the Emergency Decree on Management of Foreign Workers 2017 has been in effect since 23 June 2017 to strengthen the security of the migrants and the economy and social security of the country. Accordingly, there were clearly defined duties and responsibilities for the employers of the migrant workers and the persons permitted to bring immigrants to work, in particular, and severe penalizations for any violations. These strategies and regulations have had an impact on the entrepreneurs in the industrial/business sectors and protected the migrant workers from termination of employment or having to return to the home countries. Subsequently, the head of the National Council for Peace and Order passed an order No. 33/2017, regarding provisional measures to correct the problems in the management of foreigners' work dated 4 July 2017 to waive law enforcement, provide opportunities for employers, and let immigrants work and conduct in accordance with the rules, procedures, and the conditions laid out [2].

The migration of Myanmar nationality workers to Nakhon Si thammarat in the south of Thailand has been mainly to find work as construction workers and workers in the fisheries and agricultural sectors. Those who come from Myanmar are found to be patient and diligent. This has led to an increase in the movement of Myanmar migrants to this province in southern Thailand and across the nearby areas [3]. The migrant workers who have come into this area include not only the youth but the baby boomers as well, aged 54–72 years [4]. For them to work in any establishment or sector, it is necessary that the baby boomer Myanmar migrants get the quality of life in line with the basic human needs [5]. As Maslow's theory of human needs goes, all human beings have basic needs of food, clothing, habitat, and health, the bases for sustaining life; the baby boomer Myanmar migrant workers also need to obtain these basic means of living [6]. As research studies by Promphakping et al. [7], and Ungsriwong et al. [8] point out, the overall quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers has been low or relatively low. However, research by Songthap & Thongsamsee [9] have found that Myanmar migrant workers had a life of moderate quality. The research works by Wanpen [10], Hongthong, et al. [11], and Smith et al. [12] have found that the quality of life of the Myanmar migrant workers by the overall picture has been at a high level. According to the six studies on Myanmar migrant workers mentioned here, the quality of life of the migrant workers differed considerably.

Looking from the age group of the baby boomer migrant workers of Myanmar nationality (aged 54–72 years), it is important that they get a quality of life that is consistent with the basic needs in terms of food, clothing, housing, and health. It will affect the ability to facilitate the job development of Myanmar migrant workers, which are a group of baby boomers who come to work in Thailand. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to understand the factors affecting the quality of life of Myanmar migrants of the baby boomer generation at the destination: in other words, the research question was: "What is the quality of life of baby boomer Myanmar migrants?" This study tried to confirm the ground situation in the region and was the first study or preliminary work done in this direction in the southern region of Thailand.

The study was also an attempt to obtain useful information in applying the research results to prepare for the development and management of Myanmar migrant workers and other nationalized workers in this province in the southern part of Thailand.

Methodology

The quantitative research was conducted between May 2018 and July 2019 and additional data were collected from October 2020 to January 2021, in the research area, Nakhon Si Thammarat in southern Thailand.

1. Population and sample groups

Myanmar migrant workers, limited to the baby boomer group, aged 55–75 years and coming to work legally in the province were considered as the study population; only 52 samples were collected, because of the COVID-19.

2. Data collection

The tools included a questionnaire created by the researcher from the documents analyzed in the study and the related research. The concept and theory of factors affecting the quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers, especially the baby boomer group, were studied from relevant research studies. A conceptual framework was set up to cover the content and the objectives. Following this, the questionnaire was created according to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks established in accordance with the query construction method. The questionnaire was divided into three parts, part 1 dealing with the general information about the respondents, namely gender, education, skills, working experience in Thailand, and monthly income. Part 2 included questions related to the factors affecting the quality of life of the baby boomer migrant workers, with respect to the facets of food, clothing, housing, and health. The questions were to be answered on a numerical rating scale with five points, where five points meant the most, four points meant high, three points meant medium, two points meant low, and one point meant the least. The interpretation criteria for the mean factors affecting the quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers were as given: the most if the mean value was in the range 4.51–5.00, high if the mean value was in the range 3.51–4.50, medium if the average value was in the range 2.51–3.50, low if the average value was in the range 1.51–2.50, and minimum if the value was in the range 1.00–1.50. Part 3 of the questionnaire focused on understanding any problems and getting suggestions through open-ended questions [13]. After the questionnaire was created successfully, it was evaluated to determine the quality of the tool. By presenting the completed questionnaire to experts and getting their feedback, the questions were modified to better suit the five levels and improve the quality of the instrument both in terms of content and structure. The questions on verifying the quality of the tools used for data collection were checked again. Subsequently, the questionnaire was revised, validated again, and published as a complete questionnaire to be distributed to the sample population of the study.

3. Information collection

Permission to collect the data was sought from Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University in southern Thailand.

Letters requesting permission to collect data for the research purpose were presented to the baby boomer Myanmar migrant workers in the selected locality, were the approvals received in writing. After distributing the questionnaires to the target audience, copies of the 100 questionnaire were distributed; only 52 responses could be collected.

4. Data analysis

The researcher analyzed the generic data about the respondents, namely those related to gender, education, skills, working experience in Thailand, and monthly income from the first part of the questionnaire. Data analysis and interpretation were done using the statistical package. By using the annotation table, the data on the factors affecting the quality of life of the baby boomer Myanmar migrants were analyzed from the second part of the questionnaire; statistical packages were used to find the mean values and the standard deviations.

Results

1. General information of respondents.

most of the baby boomers were male (32 in number; 61.54 percent) and had an educational qualification lower than a baby boomers bachelor's degree, accounting for 100.00 percent; 55.77 percent were unskilled workers (29 in number). There were 63.38 percent workers with less than ten years of experience working in Thailand (34 in number) and 88.46 percent with a monthly income in the range 5,001–10,000 baht (46 in number).

2. Factors affecting the quality of life of baby boomer Myanmar migrants, at the destination.

2.1 Food

Overall, food-related factors affecting the quality of life of Myanmar migrant workers were at a very high level (mean = 3.70, S.D. = 0.61). The factor with the highest mean was 'always consuming freshly cooked food' (mean = 3.92, S.D. = 1.01). This was followed by 'the ability to buy and procure food conveniently at any time' with a high mean (mean = 3.55, S.D. = 1.04); the item with the lowest mean was that 'food could be purchased and provided easily at all locations' (mean = 3.55, S.D. = 1.04).

2.2 Clothing

With related to clothing, the factors affecting the quality of life of the baby boomer migrant workers were founds to be at a moderate level (mean = 3.37, S.D. = 0.55) overall. In descending order of the average values, the factor with the highest average was 'having clothing that was suitable for work style,' with a moderate effect (mean = 3.49, S.D. = 1.11). Following this was the factor of 'having enough clothing that could be worn,' with a moderate level of influence again (mean = 3.44, S.D. = 0.98); at the lowest level was the factor of 'having clothing suitable for various occasions and festivals' (mean = 3.17, SD = 0.97).

2.3 Housing

Overall, the housing-related factors affecting the quality of life of the baby boomer Myanmar migrant workers were at a moderate level again (mean = 3.36, S.D. = 0.46). In descending order of the average values, the item with the highest mean value was 'having to pay for the accommodation itself and having sufficient income for

renting housing' (mean = 3.55, S.D. = 1.12). This was followed by the factor of 'having stable and well-proportioned housing,' with a high value (mean = 3.54, S.D. = 0.98); the one with the lowest mean was 'having a safe dwelling,' with a medium value (mean = 3.15, S.D. = 0.91).

2.4 Health

Overall, the health-related factors affecting the quality of life of the Myanmar migrant workers were also at a moderate level (mean = 3.40, S.D. = 0.61). In descending order of the average values, the factor with the highest mean was 'exercising or playing sports and games as desired' (mean = 3.78, S.D. = 1.09). This was followed by 'receiving medical benefits,' with a high mean again (mean = 3.62, S.D. = 1.06); the factor with the lowest average was 'receiving medical care and treatment when sick' with a moderate mean value (mean = 3.08, S.D. = 1.04).

2.5 Overall effect of all factors

The various factors affecting the quality of life of the Myanmar migrant workers, especially the baby boomers, were found to be at a moderate level, overall (mean = 3.46, S.D. = 0.38); from the perspective of understanding the influencing levels of the individual facets, the facet with the highest mean was food (mean = 3.70, S.D. = 0.61), followed by health at a moderate level (mean = 3.40, SD = 0.61); clothing was at a slightly lower moderate level (mean = 3.37, SD = 0.55) and housing was at the lowest position with a moderate level (mean = 3.36, SD = 0.46).

Discussions

To sum up, the factors affecting the quality of life of the Myanmar migrant workers at the destination were at a medium level (mean = 3.46, S.D. = 0.38). These results are consistent with the research results of Songthap & Thongsamsee [9], who had found that the Myanmar migrant workers had a moderate level of quality of life, overall; the researchers had found that the factors affecting the quality of life were complete according to the basic human needs, namely food, clothing, housing, and health keeping in line with Maslow's theory of basic human needs [6]. But, the findings of the current research are inconsistent with the results of Promphakping et al. [7], and Ungsriwong et al. [8], as these had found the overall quality of life of the Myanmar migrant workers to be low or relatively low. In the research of Srithongbai [14], it has been found that the basic services essential to life and hygiene were not as good as they could be; for instance, the investigated population often lived in overcrowded and unmanaged housing facilities with hygiene problems and stress disorders. Moreover, the current research is not consistent with the research studies by Wanpen [10], Hongthong, et al. [11], and Smith, et al. [12], where it was found that the quality of life of the baby boomer Myanmar migrant workers was at a high level, overall; the baby boomers, regardless of the quality of their lives, viewed it as a necessity to be able to live with the local people. According to the research by Khanamkhaew, et al. [15], the migrants of Myanmar nationality could adapt to survive, learn to adjust with the local people, and live happily. As in the research by Sarapirom, & Muensakda [16], the factor contributing to the quality of life of the migrant workers was a state of general well-being. However, in social relations, it is more important to recognize and get an understanding of the local values, that though the baby boomers are older and work slower than the young workers of the Myanmar migrant community, they should be recognized as "experienced workers" who can demonstrate and teach the work to migrant workers of other nationalities. As in the research by Charoensup, et al. [17], teach the work and the diversity in local wisdom, art and cultural to utilize as a co-learning and co-work.

Conclusion

The quality of life of the migrant workers of Myanmar nationality in the baby boomers' group was moderate across the four facets of food, clothing, housing, and health (mean = 3.46, S.D. = 0.38).

- Food at the high level (mean = 3.70, S.D. = 0.61).
- Health at the moderate level (mean = 3.40, S.D. = 0.61).
- Clothing at the moderate level (mean = 3.37, S.D. = 0.55)
- Housing at the moderate level (mean = 3.36, S.D. = 0.46).

Limitations and Future Studies

The effect of Covid 19 pandemic on data collection could be considered a limitation, perhaps.There were moderate factors affecting the quality of life of the baby boomer Myanmar migrant workers with respect to the housing. These factors must be taken up by the establishments or employers to manage the housing facilities, not congest the dwellings, and take care of hygiene. Such an environment of cleanliness and orderliness, for example, could encourage Myanmar migrant workers to recognize their self-worth as valuable human resources with work experience.

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