

LIFE DIFFICULTIES AMONG UNDOCUMENTED FEMALE MIGRANT WORKERS FROM MYANMAR IN SEAFOOD PROCESSING FACTORIES, SAMUT SAKHON, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Undocumented female migrant workers from Myanmar are still facing a lot of life difficulties in Thailand. This research focused on the life difficulties of Myanmar undocumented female migrant workers related to health care accessibility, working environment and life as women in seafood processing factories in Samut Sakhon, Thailand. An exploratory qualitative research design, using in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, has been done based on political economy and gender perspectives. The sample was derived from purposive sampling for three health care providers and the snowball technique for twelve Myanmar migrant workers.

The finding showed that undocumented female migrant workers reported inaccessible health care, wages lower than that reported by limitedly documented and documented workers were forced to purchase protective equipment for work whereas limitedly documented and documented workers were provided with this equipment by employers. In addition, they were not entitled to any leave (sick, maternity and annual leave) but the rest of migrant workers were allowed to take these kinds of leaves. Another findings described that undocumented migrants worked long hours but they were not paid extra wages. Unlike the undocumented migrant cases, other types of migrant workers worked eight hours per day and they were paid overtime for their extra hours. Additionally, undocumented migrant workers faced more life difficulties regarding not only taking multi roles and responsibilities for their families based on their religious and cultural background but also working for long hours in their place of work. Undocumented workers lacked relaxing time while the rest of migrants had a chance to help with household chores. From the standpoint of political economy, undocumented female migrants were facing more exploitation in the areas of health care access, wages, safety and other benefits compared with migrants. The results recommends that the employers should provide equal benefits and full labor rights to all migrant workers. The relevant officials should support equalizing the necessities in health care access and safe workplaces for undocumented migrants. According to the gender perspective, they should not be discriminated in the division of labor based on gender roles. It shows that both men and women should be balanced their roles and responsibilities in the families. Domestic chores should not be a burden only on women. It should be shared by all members of their families.

KEY WORDS: UNDOCUMENTED/ FEMALE MIGRANTS/ DIFFICULTIES/ HEALTH CARE / EXPLOITATION/ UNEQUAL POWER

234 pages