Migrant Adjustment in Thailand :
Adjustment Problem During the First Month

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Introduction

Several National Economic and Social Development Plans have been used to push Thailand to the stage of modernity, emphasizing the increase of industrial products and promoting agricultural products for export. These types of development strategies have resulted in the increase of the gross national product at very rapid rates. The per capita income of the Thai population has increased (Kaewthep, 1992: 81–92).

As a result of such development there have been problems in the economic structures of communities. The majority of the people who lived in rural areas and engaged in agricultural occupations have remained poor. Their per capita income is low when compared with the urban population who engage in industrial and service activities. Prosperity is clustered in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region and its adjacent areas as well as in urban centers in the provinces. Rural areas have lagged behind in all aspects. As a consequence of the inequities of socio-economic development, many rural people have had to migrate from rural areas to seek better economic opportunities in the cities. Some went to cities, especially Bangkok, to gain employment (Payomyont, 1990: 7–10).

Migration does not only mean the change of place of residence but also include the change to other societies and new environments. Therefore, migrants need to adjust themselves to the new situations.

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The first month after moving is the most important or critical period of migration since the new migrant has to face new environmental conditions completely different from those in the area they used to live. They have to try to obtain employment and have to adjust themselves to a new place of work, a new type of work and new colleagues. Furthermore, they have to adjust themselves in regards to eating, sleeping, language, neighbors and the community, all of which could be very different from that found in their former place of residence.

The fact that migrants may have to adjust themselves most during the first month period makes it important to examine whether or not migrants have to face problems during the first month after they move. This study is divided into two sections: analysis of the characteristics of migrants related to adjustment problems during the first month, and the factors affecting adjustment problems during the first month.

The results of this study will lead to a better understanding of adjustment patterns of migrants in Thailand. This could be useful for government agencies responsible for migration or migrants and their plan for helping migrants in the future.

The Process of Adjustment

Migrant adjustment is a process by which the migrant accepts attitudes and behavioral patterns of the society in the destination community as their ways of life in order to have similar characteristics to the people in the destination community (Tirasawat, 1977: 21). The above statement is consistent with Brown (1983 cited in Goldscheider, 1983: 187) claiming that the migrant adjustment is a process by which the migrant is trying to change themselves in areas of roles, duties, values, standards and skills, and making them similar to those who live in the destination community. Besides, the scholars in the field believe whether or not the adjustment process will be successful depends significantly on the length of time the migrant has stayed in the place of destination.

In summary, adjustment is a process that the migrant uses for responding to changes they have to face at the place of destination, which could be physical, economic or social changes, in order to live their life happily in the destination community according to their intended purposes of migration.

The process of migrant adjustment is believed to occur step by step, meaning that the migrant must adjust themselves to the beginning step first before they proceed to adjust themselves to the second and following steps. Several scholars including Germani (1965: 163-166), Gehmacher (1974: 168) and Chamratrithirong, Archavanitkul and Kanungsukkasem (1979: 5-6) have divided the adjustment process of migrants into 3 stages, and each stage has very communal and similar characteristics. They are in turn described as follows:

1. ***Adjustment stage*** is when the migrant tries to adjust to the new environmental conditions which have changed from those they used to live with, for example, ways of eating, sleeping, travelling, seeking employment, learning about roles and duties in his employment, work systems, relations with colleagues, etc. This step of adjustment would occur in the beginning period after arrival in the destination community. For those who do not adjust or only adjust poorly, it could result in emotional and mental tensions. In the group of those who failed to adjust, some may want to return to their origins, but others remain there out of necessity and for other reasons. There are those who succeed in adjusting themselves to the second stage, while others fail and therefore may need to spend a longer period of time getting adjusted to step one, and then to step two.

2. ***Assimilation stage*** is when the migrant has been able to adjust in stage one including getting employment, earning wages, having a suitable place to stay. They may start to adjust and become part of the new society by learning to speak a local language, visiting places during holidays (including department stores, theatres, public parks), and participating in various activities together with other people in the destination community as meeting of the labor unions, religious procession, religious activities, ordination ceremonies, and wedding celebrations. Each migrant may use their time in a variety of ways in order to adjust.

3. ***Integration stage***   is when the migrant decides to permanently settle down in the destination community and shows obvious signs of this, such as building a house or purchasing land with a house, getting married to people of the destination community, transferring their name into local registration books, and taking part in such political activities as standing for election of the village committee member or municipal council member.   Having decided to participate in these activities, the migrant should be in a similar economic and social condition as the local people in the destination community regarding education, occupation, income and getting recognition from the people in the destination.

In this study, the author is specifically interested in the adjustment stage during the first month after the migrant has moved into the destination.   The most important problem during the first month is an indicator of competence in adjustment. If the migrant has regarded any problem as the most important one during the first month, this means that he has adjustment problem.

Research Methodology

Source of Data

The source of data for this study is taken from the   'National Migration Survey of Thailand (NMS)" which was conducted by the Institute for Population and Social Research of Mahidol University in 1992. The objectives of the project were to identify micro-level migration patterns within Thailand, and to examine the determinants and consequences of migration at the community, household and individual level. There were 3,771 randomly selected and interviewed respondents.

Sample for This Study

The term "migration" in this survey is defined as a change of the living place from one village to another for a period of one month or longer. It is considered that

moving between villages within the same district or province require little adjustment by migrants since their new place of living would be similar in economic and social conditions to those in the original area. Therefore, in this research, "migrant" is defined to mean any person who changes his place of living from one province to another for a period of one month or longer for the purpose of working and not being a return migrant. Thus the sample by definition in this research is reduced to 516 persons.

Variables Used in This Study

The most important problem during the first month is a dependent variable. It is measured according to the response from the following open-ended question: "When you move in here in the first month, what is the most important problem for you?" and this variable is classified into five subcategories:

1. No problem
2. Income problem
3. Living place problem
4. Employment problem
5. Other problems

Two sets of dependent variables are used in the analysis.   Demographic variables are composed of sex, age at moving and marital status at moving. Economic and psycho-social variables are composed of employment finding, decision to migrate, having relatives or friends in the destination, migrating experiences, migration streams and number of persons moving together with.

Data Analysis

The characteristics of migrants who had adjustment problem during the first month were analyzed by descriptive statistics and chi-square test while the factors affecting adjustment problem during the first month were analyzed by multinomial logistic regression.

Limitation of the Study

After migration, there were some migrants who can not adjust themselves to conditions at the destination. These migrants usually decide to return home. Therefore, the sample of this study are migrants who remained in the destination. This sample might include the migrants who have had adjustment problems and those who could adjust themselves very well in the destination. Therefore, the results of this study will cover only the migrants who continued living in the destination community and hence there is a selectivity bias in the analysis.

Results and Discussion

1. Characteristics of Migrants Who Had Adjustment Problems During the First Month

In light of the demographic characteristics of migrants, it was found that age at moving and marital status at moving was associated with the adjustment problem during the first month (See Table 1). The adolescent migrants were more likely to have 'no problem' than the young adult and middle-aged adult (71.20%, 62.10% and 59.80%, respectively). While middle-aged adult migrants were more likely to have 'income problem' than the young adult and adolescent migrants (23.80%, 17.70% and 9.60%, respectively). Besides, the adolescent migrants were about twice more likely to have 'employment problem' than the young adult and middle-aged adult migrants (8.30%, 4.10% and 4.10%, respectively).

The single migrants were more likely to have 'no problem' than the married, widowed, divorced and separated migrants (69.40% and 58.90%, respectively). The married migrants were about three times more likely to have 'income problem' than single migrants (24.80% and 8.90%, respectively) whereas the single migrants were more likely to have 'living place problem' and 'employment problem' than the married migrants.

It can be said that the middle-aged adult migrants and the married, widowed, divorced and separated ones were more likely to have 'income problem' than other groups. This was probably because most of the middle-aged adult and married migrants were heads of the family. Therefore, they had to look after their children and spouses while their incomes were limited.   Thus, the middle-aged adult and the married migrants could have more 'income problem' than any other groups.

It can be observed that both of the adolescent migrants and the single migrants were more likely to have 'employment problem' than any other groups. This was probably because the adolescent and single migrants were of less working experiences or skills than any other groups; thus, it was difficult for them to find a job.

When the economic and psycho-social characteristics were taken into account, it was found that none of the variables were associated with the adjustment problem during the first month as shown in Table 1.   However, we found some significant trends or similar direction of some variables. For instance, the income problem of the migrants having relatives or friends but with no assistance from them was twice higher than that of the migrants having no relatives or friends in the destination (24.80% and 12.20%, respectively). Moreover, the proportion of living place problem and employment problem of the migrants having no relatives or friends was twice higher than that of the migrants having relatives or friends but with no assistance.

The migrants moving from rural to rural areas were most likely to have living place problem while the migrants with 3-13 persons moving together with them were most likely to have income problem and employment problem.

In conclusion, only two characteristics of migrants, namely age at moving and marital status at moving were found to affect the patterns of adjustment problem during the first month.   However, it was found that some characteristics of the migrants not affecting the patterns of adjustment problem can indicate the similar direction of relationships as well.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Migrants Who Had Adjustment Problem During the First Month by Demographic, Economic and Psycho-social Factors.

Factors	No problem	Income problem	Living place problem	Employ ment problem	Other problems	Total
Demographic factors						
Sex						
- Male	60.40	16.50	11.10	6.70	5.30	100(258)
- Female	68.80	17.0	8.20	3.50	2.20	100(231)
Age at move[*]						
- Teenage (15-19 yrs)	71.20	9.60	8.20	8.30	2.70	100(146)
- Young adult (20-29 yrs)	62.10	17.70	11.70	4.10	4.40	100(248)
- Middle adult (30-44 yrs)	59.80	23.80	8.20	4.10	4.10	100(122)
Marital status at move[***]						
- Single	69.40	8.90	11.20	6.60	3.90	100(258)
- Married, widowed, divorced and separated	58.90	24.80	8.50	3.90	3.90	100(258)
Economic and Psycho – social factors						
Employment status						
- Employed	64.30	17.30	9.70	4.50	4.20	100(403)
- Unemployed	63.70	15.00	10.60	8.00	2.70	100(113)
Decision to Migrate						
- Deciding alone	65.30	15.90	9.70	5.40	3.70	100(435)
- Deciding by others	58.00	22.30	11.10	3.70	4.90	100(81)
Having relatives or friends in destination						
- Having relatives or friends and with assistance	65.30	16.00	9.70	5.20	3.80	100(288)
- Having relatives or friends but with no assistance	64.80	24.80	5.70	2.90	1.80	100(105)
- Having no relatives or friends	61.00	12.20	13.80	7.30	5.70	100(123)
Migration experiences						
- First time migration	68.30	14.50	7.60	7.60	2.00	100(145)
- Repeat migration	62.50	17.80	10.80	4.30	4.60	100(371)

Table 1:   (Continued)

Factors	No problem	Income problem	Living place problem	Employ ment problem	Other problems	Total
Migration streams						
- Urban to urban	57.50	18.10	13.40	6.30	4.70	100(127)
- Urban to rural	66.90	20.50	7.90	3.10	1.60	100(127)
- Rural to urban	68.00	13.30	7.40	5.90	5.40	100(203)
- Rural to rural	59.30	18.60	15.30	5.10	1.70	100(59)
Persons moving together with						
- Moving alone	68.10	13.20	9.50	5.80	3.40	100(325)
- Moving with 1-2 persons	61.10	20.60	11.00	2.90	4.40	100(136)
- Moving with 3-13 persons	49.00	29.10	9.10	7.30	5.50	100(55)

$* p<.05, \quad *** p<.001$

2. Factors Affecting the Adjustment Problem During the First Month

In this section the net effect of each independent variable on adjustment is examined. Multinomial logistic regression is the method employed to undertake the analysis. The dependent variable is divided into five categories as follows: 1) no problem, 2) income problem, 3) living place problem, 4) employment problem, and 5) other problems.

These five categories were then matched into 10 pairs so that a comparison of each pair could be made. See Table 2 for details of the pairing. The findings shown in Table 2 indicate that variations in six independent variables have significant effects on adjustment problems during the first month.

2.1 Sex

From Table 2 when the comparisons were made between employment problem and no problem, the study reveals that male migrants were more likely to have employment problem during the first month than the female migrants (β=1.215). When the comparisons were made between employment problem and income problem, male migrants were more likely than female migrants to have employment problem during the first month (β=1.222).

It is possible that most male migrants are the head of families, so they would be expected to look after all members of their family. When they are unemployed or employed with low wages or the work is too hard, or too risky, they are disappointed. Therefore, they might feel that employment is the most significant problem for them.

2.2 Marital status at move

Data in Table 2 show that, when comparisons were made between income problem and no problem, single migrants were less likely to have income problem than were married, widowed, divorced and separated migrants (β= -0.773). This result is consistent with the studies of Chamratrithirong, Archavanitkul and Kanungsukkasem (1979 : 1-23), who found that single migrants had more income satisfaction than married migrants. This was probably because the single migrants used their income alone, or sent only part of their income to parents, while married migrants had to look after their spouse and children while their incomes were limited. The married migrants therefore could have more problems with income than the single migrants.

When comparisons were made between living place problem and income problem, it was found that the single migrants were more likely to have living place problem than married, widowed, divorced and separated migrants (β=0.968). This was probably because most single migrants were adolescents. They did not have experience in the new environment especially in living places completely different from their original home. Hence they felt that living place was the most important problem.

2.3   Employment status

When comparisons were made between employment problem and no problem and between employment problem and income problem, it was found that employed migrants were less likely to have employment problem than the unemployed migrants (β= -0.944 and -1.272 respectively). The finding are consistent with those described in Table 1.   Unemployed migrants seemed to have two times higher likelihood of employment problem than did employed migrants. It could be concluded that, migrants who could not find employment during the first month tended to have higher probability to face employment problem than migrants who could find employment.

2.4   Having relatives of friends at destination

When comparison is made between living place problem and income problem, (Table 2), it was found that, migrants who had relatives or friends but who received no assistance from them were less likely to have a living place problem than were migrants who had no relatives or friends at the destination (β= -1.344). This finding indicates that migrants who had no relatives or friends in the destination during the first month have a higher probability of facing a living place problem than are migrants who had relatives or friends. This is probably because most migrants in Thailand are poor. They can not rent rooms which are expensive. Hence, if they did not have relatives or friends in the destination and could not find employment, they had to sleep at the railway station, bus station or the public park.

2.5   Migration experience

From Table 2 it can be seen that when comparisons are made between employment problems and living place problems, first time migrants were most likely to have an employment problem than were repeat migrants (β= 1.218). According to Archavanitkul (1989: 190-193), migrants in small towns in Thailand who were the first time migrants would had lower occupational levels than repeat migrants. This was probably because first time migrants did not have much information, such as the channels for finding employment, sources of career information and the methods for

adjusting themselves to fit   working conditions. They thus felt that employment problems were the most important problem during the first month after moving.

2.6   *Persons moving together with migrant*

When comparison is made between income problems and no problems (Table 2), it was found that migrants who had more relatives or friends moving together with them were more likely to have an income problem than migrants who moved alone (β= 0.175). According to Clark (1983 : 47-59), migrants in Korea who moved together with spouses or family members had a higher proportion of the unemployed than those who moved alone. This may be because migrants who had more relatives moving together with them were mainly unskilled laborers and the employer often employed all of them but wages were low. In some cases, those persons who were moving together were children or elderly, so the migrants had to work to provide for them. The migrants thus felt that income was the most importance problem during the first month after migration.

Table 2: Multinomial Logistic Regression Coefficient of Migrants Who Had Adjustment Problem During the First Month by Demographic, Economic and Psycho-social Factors.

Factors	Income problem vs. No problem (1)	Living place problem vs. No problem (2)	Employment problem vs. No problem (3)	Others problem vs. No problem (4)
Demographic factors				
Sex (Ref: Female)				
- Male	-0.006	0.410	1.215*	1.041
Age at move	0.031	-0.001	-0.001	0.010
Marital status at move (Ref: Married, widowed, divorced, separated)				
- Single	-0.773*	0.195	0.193	-0.141
Economic & psycho-social factors				
Employment status (Ref: Unemployed)				
- Employed	0.328	-0.250	-0.944*	0.133
Decision to migrate (Ref: Deciding by others)				
- Deciding alone	-0.368	-0.010	0.440	-0.360
Having relatives or friends (Ref: Having no relatives or friends)				
- Having relatives or friends and with assistance	0.374	-0.267	-0.587	-0.097
- Having relatives or friends but with no assistance	0.443	-0.901	-0.863	-0.580
Migration experiences (Ref: Repeat migration)				
- First-time migration	0.128	-0.509	0.709	-0.813
Migration streams (Ref: Rural to rural)				
- Urban to urban	0.245	-0.354	0.397	0.819
- Urban to rural	0.029	-0.892	-0.284	-0.462
- Rural to urban	-0.004	-0.965	0.146	1.176
Persons moving together with	0.175*	0.084	0.120	0.151
Constant	-2.359**	-0.984	-3.020	-3.966

Table 2: (Continued)

Factors	Living place problem vs. Income problem (5)	Employment problem vs. Income problem (6)	Others problem vs. Income problem (7)	Employment problem vs. Living place problem (8)
Demographic factors				
Sex (Ref: Female)				
- Male	0.417	1.222*	1.048	0.805
Age at move	-0.032	-0.032	-0.021	-0.000
Marital status at move (Ref: Married, widowed, divorced, separated)				
- Single	0.968*	0.966	0.632	-0.001
Economic & psycho-social factors				
Employment status (Ref: Unemployed)				
- Employed	-0.578	-1.272*	-0.195	-0.694
Decision to migrate (Ref: Deciding by others)				
- Deciding alone	0.358	0.808	0.008	0.450
Having relatives or friends (Ref: Having no relatives or friends)				
- Having relatives or friends and with assistance	-0.641	-0.961	-0.471	-0.321
- Having relatives or friends but with no assistance	-1.344*	-1.305	-1.023	0.038
Migration experiences (Ref: Repeat migration)				
- First-time migration	-0.637	0.581	-0.941	1.218*
Migration streams (Ref: Rural to rural)				
- Urban to urban	-0.599	0.152	0.574	0.752
- Urban to rural	-0.921	-0.313	-0.491	0.608
- Rural to urban	-0.961	0.151	1.181	1.112
Persons moving together with	-0.905	-0.055	-0.024	0.036
Constant	1.374	-0.661	-1.608	-2.036

Table 2: (Continued)

Factors	Other problems vs. Living place problem (9)	Others problem vs. Employment problem (10)
Demographic factors		
Sex (Ref: Female)		
- Male	0.632	-0.173
Age at move	0.011	0.011
Marital status at move (Ref: Married, widowed, divorced, separated)		
- Single	-0.336	-0.334
Economic & psycho-social factors		
Employment status (Ref: Unemployed)		
- Employed	0.383	1.077
Decision to migrate (Ref: Deciding by others)		
- Deciding alone	-0.350	-0.800
Having relatives or friends (Ref: Having no relatives or friends)		
- Having relatives or friends and with assistance	0.170	0.491
- Having relatives or friends but with no assistance	0.321	0.282
Migration experiences (Ref: Repeat migration)		
- First-time migration	-0.304	-1.522
Migration streams (Ref: Rural to rural)		
- Urban to urban	1.174	0.421
- Urban to rural	0.430	-0.177
- Rural to urban	2.142	1.030
Persons moving together with	0.067	0.031
Constant	-2.982	-0.946

Model chi-square = 76.540 with 48 degrees of freedom

Pseudo R^2 = 0.068

** $p < .01$,   * $p < .05$

Conclusion

This research comprises two sections according to the objectives of the study. These sections are arranged as shown below: (1) the characteristics of migrants who had adjustment problem during the first month, and (2) factors affecting the adjustment problem during the first month, and the following conclusions can be drawn.

First, there are two characteristics of migrants that were significantly related to the pattern of adjustment problem, namely age at move and marital status at move. Adolescent migrants were more likely to have no problem during the first month after the move when compared to young adult and middle-aged adults. While, middle aged adult migrants were most likely to have income problems and teenage migrants were most likely to have employment problems during the first month after the move. Married, widowed, divorced and separated migrants were more likely to have an income problem than were single migrants. While single migrants were more likely to have a living place problem and employment problems than the married, widowed, divorced and separated migrants.

Second, there are six variables which affected the adjustment problem during the first month after the move, namely sex, marital status at move, employment status, having relatives or friends in the destination, migration experience and persons moving together with the migrant. Male migrants were more likely to have an employment problem than were female migrants. Single migrants were less likely to have an income problem than were married migrants. However, single migrants were more likely to have a living place problem than were married migrants. Migrants who could find employment during the first month were less likely to have an employment problem than were migrants who could not find employment. Migrants who had no relatives or friends in the destination were more likely to have a living place problem than were migrants who had relatives or friends but who not receive assistance from them. First time migrants were more likely to have employment problems than were repeat migrants. Migrants who had more relatives or friends moving together with them were more likely to have an income problem than were migrants who came alone.

Adjustment problems of migrants during the first month after the move are the foundation for understanding not only the consequences of migration for the individuals involved, but also the direction to the prevention of these problems in the future. It can be assumed that the first month after migration is the most important period of migration. If the migrants could not adjust themselves during this period they are likely to return to their places of origin or move elsewhere. However, for different reasons there were some migrants who could not adjust themselves and still lived in destination.

Policy Implications

The results of the analysis of migrant adjustment during the first month after a move reveal that income problems were the ones most encountered by migrants; next came the problems of living place and employment.   It was also found that married migrants and those migrants moving together with a large number of other persons were more likely to have income problems.   It was further found that male migrants and first-time migrants were more likely to have employment problems while those migrants having no relatives or friends in the destination were more likely to have living place problems.

It is thus quite beneficial for these people if the government or its concerned agencies are willing to set preventive measures as policy implications in order to help solve problems most likely faced by migrants.   Such proposed measures include the following:

1) Establishment of Public Information Center for Migrants

The government or its related agencies should have a 'Public Information Center for Migrants' established as a central unit for public information and data concerning employment situations, manpower demands, job types, job positions, zones of labor demands, zones of high unemployment rate, qualifications of labor demanded by employers, such as sex, age, education and other details concerning work, for instance, salary, social welfare, etc. These data should be widely publicized and could

reach the target groups of people through the channel of radio, television and printed media. If migrants or those intending to migrate were informed of such basic information, they would be able to decide whether or not to migrate, migrate to where, what kind of work to undertake, and preparation or qualifications for such a job and how to adjust oneself to the new environment, and so on.

In the near future it is expected that each locality may have a radio station or television station built and run by local people, This will help increase the potential for publicizing various types of information and news so that potential migrants in remote areas could he reached and be well-informed.

2) Establishment of Counseling Center for Migrants

The government or its concerned agencies should have a 'Counseling Center for Migrants' established in urban areas where there are a great number of migrants, such as Bangkok Metropolis, Chiang Mai, Cholburi, Rayong, etc. This Center could provide counseling services in the urban areas. Its staff could assist migrants in various aspects, such as finding employment, finding a place to live while unemployed, providing basic training in certain jobs, self adjustment to working condition, to co-workers, adjustment to neighbors and community of residence and so on. This Center would be directly beneficial to the migrants, especially first-time migrants, the young, those still unemployed, with no relatives or friends in destination, and those having a hard time in getting acquainted with or making friends with co-workers or neighbors.

Acknowledgments

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