

AKADET CHAICHANAVICHAKIT

Waseda University, Japan

DECODING LABOR MIGRATION IN THAILAND**Abstract:**

To facilitate its export-oriented economic policy, Thailand has employed a large number of migrant workers from its neighboring countries. Migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos have been filling the demand of low cost and low-skilled workforce in labor-intensive manufacturing industries. However, several manufacturing industries in Thailand are currently facing risky circumstance as Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos have started to pick up the pace for their economic development, which is resulted from regional economic integration as well as domestic political and economic reformation. This study attempts to examine the dynamic, characteristics, and level of dependency on low-skilled migrant worker in Thai manufacturing sector by the means of interview, observation, and investigation of relevant statistical data. Findings show that seafood processing industry is at the forefront of this potential labor shortage crisis as 86.79 percent of the industry's workers are immigrants. While Myanmar has been the largest source of immigrants in Thailand, the number of immigrants from Cambodia has grown pervasively at 1,349 percent during the past ten years, compared to 333 percent growth of Burmese immigrants. Data further reveals that apart from economic factors, certain social factors especially social networks and community perception in origin area also play important role in migrant's migration decision.

Keywords:

circular migration, migration decision, low-skilled immigrant, immigrants in Thailand, Burmese immigrants, Cambodian immigrants