

## **Management Model for the Well-Being of Migrant Workers**

**By**

**Maytavee Tarndamrong**

Graduate School, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

Email: [s62584917026@ssru.ac.th](mailto:s62584917026@ssru.ac.th)

**Chandej Charoenwiriyaikul**

Graduate School, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

Email: [chandej.ch@ssru.ac.th](mailto:chandej.ch@ssru.ac.th)

**Ananta Rasmee**

Graduate School, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

### **Abstract**

The purposes of this research were to study 1) the factors affecting the well-being of migrant workers, and 2) the management model for the well-being of migrant workers. This research focused on using mixed methods: quantitative and qualitative research. The samples for the quantitative research consisted of 400 migrant workers from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia who received a work permit in the category of labor in the area of Bangkok. A stratified random sampling method and a structural equation modeling analysis were used in this research. Data collection for qualitative research was carried out through in-depth interviews with 17 informants in four different groups: 1) the Inspector general of the Ministry of Labor, 2) six employers whose employees were Cambodian, Laotian, or Burmese migrant workers of at least one nationality, 3) six migrant workers divided into two per nationality, and 4) four district directors. The research results revealed that: 1) life satisfaction had the overall influence on well-being at the highest level, followed by job satisfaction, job resources, job demand, and cross-cultural adaptation respectively, and 2) the management model for well-being consisted of three areas: 1) The government sector must regularly organize training and public relations on related issues for personnel within the unit, as well as provide an interpreter to communicate and explain legal matters. 2) Employers must accept migrant workers without insult and provide fair remuneration. And 3) Migrant workers must adapt to Thai culture, be responsible, and have appropriate time management between assignments.

**Keywords:** Migrant workers, well-being, job satisfaction

### **Background and Significance of the Study**

Over the years, there has been a shortage of labor in the manufacturing, industrial, agricultural, fisheries, and construction sectors due to the lack of Thai labor in the fields. Simultaneously, intense competition has caused many businesses to start looking for ways to reduce costs, especially labor costs, which are very high each year. Therefore, both legal and illegal employment of migrant workers has become one popular approach nowadays. Migrant workers entering Thailand are either Burmese, Laotian, Cambodian, or Vietnamese. They all need better living conditions, and their main purpose is to work here and send money back to their families at their homes. The occupations that migrant workers are allowed must be stipulated by law, such as occupations in fishing, farming, construction, the business of continuing fishing, or domestic servants. The migrant workers are not allowed to legally work

in other areas that are not prescribed by law. (Notification of the Ministry of Labor: Prescription of the Prohibited Occupations for Foreigners, 2020).

For this reason, there have been many types of migrant workers entering Thailand, including migrant workers born in Thailand or aliens who have entered the country legally holding a work permit, or migrant workers who entered Thailand legally but did not leave Thailand despite their visa expiration, etc.

The major problems faced by migrant workers are the nature of work categorized as risky, laborious, and dirty, making workers work hard, at risk of unfair wages, and unstable depending on the season. In addition, migrant workers have to work outdoors for long hours without days off. In some cases, migrant workers are forced to do illegal work, such as deforestation in reserved forests, which puts them at risk of being arrested without the employer's help. Furthermore, migrant workers face problems with adapting to Thai society. The use of the Thai language or language barrier is used by employers as an important criterion in determining wages, salaries, and positions of migrant workers. Many migrant workers have difficulty finding good jobs due to the inability to communicate with employers, and this leads to the migrant workers getting verbal and physical abuse. Moreover, the issue of ethnic bias can cause migrant workers to get serious physical abuse and sexual harassment from an employer without social assistance (Namsanguan, et al., 2018).

The problem has led to the cooperation of the government and private sectors to lay down the measures and policies to enhance the well-being of migrant workers who come to work in Thailand legally. It focuses on the improvement of quality of life as part of objective well-being, prioritizing the living conditions and lifestyles of individuals (Kinderman, Schwannauer, Pontin., & Tai, 2013; Tavares, Matias, Ferreira, Pegorari, Nascimento, & Paiva, 2016; Veenhoven, 2004). It also places importance on self-esteem and good mental health, so the migrant workers can be ready to deal with various problems that occur in their working settings and daily life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). This article aimed to study 1) factors affecting the well-being of migrant workers, and 2) management models for the well-being of migrant workers.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Concepts and theories on labor and migration***

Phutinat (1997) defined "labor" as the labor of a human only, not the labor of machines or animals. It may be considered as two types: 1) A person who works in the production, distribution, or provision of goods or services in a variety of capacities, such as employees or self-employed individuals. Therefore, in this sense, labor means a person in the labor force, and 2) the strength of human effort, both physically and mentally, which is a factor in the production of goods and services to obtain income. In conclusion, labor is defined as a person who puts physical or mental effort into producing goods or services to obtain income. In this study, the researcher focused on migrant workers working in Thailand. Therefore, the idea of working abroad has been put forward. The details are as follows:

### ***The concept of working abroad***

This concept is to study and compare the socioeconomic conditions of households before and after workers travel to work abroad. The main motivations which are the primary reasons that motivate workers to decide to work abroad should be thoroughly considered. According to the literature reviews, the three motivations for migrating for work are as follows:

### ***Economic motivation***

It is the motivation that can be determined from the analytical framework of the push and pull theory. Considering the origin and destination in line with Lee (1966), the four factors of migration were: the origin factor, new local factor, obstacles along the way, and personal factor.

This economic incentive is also an important job motivation, that is, it contributes to migration due to three motives:

1. Moving to seek work due to unemployment or seasonal unemployment, coupled with poverty and insufficient production for consumption, causes local workers to move to work outside the locality.
2. Relocating to find a better job with higher pay, a better environment, and a job that is more suited to individual abilities.
3. Moving for career advancement, that is, being employed but wishing to transfer or relocate to perform duties elsewhere to advance to a better or higher position.

### ***Social motivation***

It is a motivation for better jobs that enhances economic incentives to be more important and necessary. The need to have relatives, the motivation that arises in social institutions, members of society, and other components of society represent the relationships of individuals who live in society. Social motivation may be classified into various forms, such as educational motivation to pursue higher education and family motivations, including marriage and relationships with relatives or family, which can cause migration to live with their family or relatives.

### ***Life motivation***

This is an important reason for migration that can be divided into two types: push and pull. This motivation causes migration of lifestyle changes due to boredom. Dislike of the way of life leads to the need to escape the monotony of daily life, to seek migration for a more enjoyable and more exciting life, and to get to know other interesting people, etc.

It shows that migration is caused by many factors, especially the motivation factor that drives migration for different reasons. The researcher put forward motivation theories to support this research idea.

Since many people have explained the meaning of the word "motivation", most of the meanings are focused on the inner driving force of the individual causing some behaviors. Migration-related motives refer to the reasons or objectives of migration that drive migrants to move from their former place of residence to a new place. This may be due to reasons related to the former place of residence as a driving force, or reasons related to the new place as an attraction, or a combination of both.

Most of the studies on motivation theory were related to psychology. Therefore, the theory of motivation can be broadly divided according to the beliefs of each theory in psychology which believes that motivation is caused by the following reasons:

### ***The need-drive-incentive theory***

It is a motivation theory that believes the needs of the body create a drive that drives a person to act in a certain way, such as hunger or thirst. Motivation arises as a consequence of the incentive system, and it leads to sensory, curiosity, affiliation, aggression, desire for success

(achievement), the need for power (power), and the need for independence. All of these will motivate humans to react or relate to the environment.

### ***Cue-stimulus theory***

It is another theory of motivation to assume that individual behavior is driven by the control of purpose rather than drive. For example, hearing a knock on the door prompts a person to act out. Likewise, a very high income with success is, therefore, a stimulus for the decision to work abroad, etc.

### ***Psychoanalytic theory***

It is a motivation theory that believes that sex is the fundamental driving force of all kinds of behavior. Some affairs are pleasing, some are unsatisfactory.

### ***Cognitive theory***

It is a theory that motivation is based on the principle of rationality and the belief that the ability to have a reason for making decisions praises the sincerity of human will and desires, stimulating the behavior to be free to act or make decisions rationally and to know what one wants. This theory focuses on the desire for something regardless of what causes the behavior, and how humans make choices from their ideas or values.

In short, as a result of economic problems and unemployment, these motivations are the driving forces that drive migrant workers to work in Thailand. In addition, when working abroad earns higher than working in the country, it contributes to the driving force of migrant workers to seek high-income jobs. Moreover, when some migrant workers who have been working abroad have noticeably improved their well-being, others would also decide to take a chance to go abroad for their job opportunities.

## **Concepts and Theories of Well-Being**

Objective well-being theory generally presents a "list" of essentials that a population should have to be able to lead a good life. The theory develops objective indicators to assess well-being, public welfare, or the level of development. For example, the theory of subjective well-being is a fundamental theory of necessity. One criticism of the theory is the neglect of the diversity of fundamental necessities that vary according to culture, and differences between groups and individuals.

While subjective well-being refers to the diversity of dimensions of a person's assessment or view of one's own life. It includes life satisfaction based on one's cognitive judgment as well as one's emotions. Thus, subjective well-being includes: 1) overall life satisfaction and satisfaction in various areas of life; 2) frequent positive emotions; 3) few or infrequent negative emotions; 4) feelings or views that life has meaning and the ability to achieve what is hoped for. This subjective assessment of well-being based on self-assessment (self-report) relies heavily on self-assessment which is often included in subjective self-assessment surveys.

A person's well-being can be measured by two key elements: Subjective well-being and objective well-being. However, when examined in detail, it is usually found that objective well-being focuses primarily on the living conditions, lifestyle, and the way of life of a person, such as food, housing, or quality of life. While subjective well-being is broken down into several aspects, it is most often considered from a psychological perspective, such as self-worth, life satisfaction, happiness, and positive and negative attitudes a person has about

oneself. According to Hutz, Midgett, Pacico, Bastianello, & Zanon, (2014), the study of the subjective well-being of Americans and Brazilians found that the majority of the American samples considered subjective well-being as carefulness of life (conscientiousness) or consensus (agreeableness). While the Brazilian samples saw that subjective well-being was a positive effect on self-esteem. This was in line with the research results of Tavares, Matias, Ferreira, Pegorari, Nascimento, & Paiva (2016) about the quality of life of the elderly in society. It was found that good quality of life started with self-esteem and the freedom to live (autonomy).

## Research Methodology

The mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative research were applied in this study. The samples of the quantitative study were 400 Cambodian, Laotian, and Burmese migrant workers under Section 63/2, Alien Category, WP. 23, who came to work under the MOU and whose work permits expired as a result of the law under Sections 50, 53, and 55 of the Royal Decree on the Management of Foreign Workers. The sample size was determined by multiplying by 20 the observed variable criteria using stratified random sampling. The data were collected using a questionnaire validated for content validity with IOC values ranging from 0.80-1.00. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of the observed variable used in this study was between 0.774 and 0.969, and the whole edition was 0.985 analyzed by a structural equation model.

Qualitative data collection was carried out using content analysis of in-depth interviews with a total of 17 key informants, namely: 1) one government official as an inspector general of the Ministry of Labor, 2) six employers whose employees were Cambodian, Laotian, or Burmese migrant workers of at least one in each nationality, 3) six migrant workers divided into two in each nationality; 4) four district directors responsible for migrant worker management in Bangkok who were in charge of inspecting and supervising migrant workers' work.

## Research Results

Research results were presented according to the research objectives as follows:

### *Factors affecting the well-being of migrant workers*

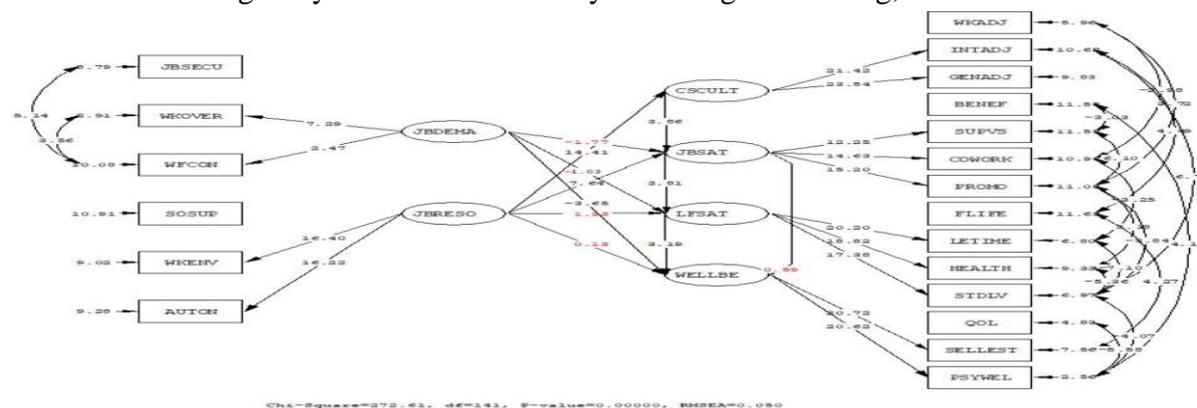
According to Table 1, it was found that life satisfaction had the greatest influence on overall well-being, followed by job satisfaction, job resources, job demand, and cross-cultural adaptation, respectively. It also reflected job demand influencing or negatively correlating with well-being.

**Table 1:** *Direct influence, indirect influence, and total influence of the studied factors*

variable influence	Cause and effect relationship		
	Direct	Indirect	Total
job demand	-0.22**	-	-0.22**
job resources	-	0.28*	0.28*
cross-cultural adaptation	-	0.16*	0.16*
job satisfaction	-	0.30*	0.30*
life satisfaction	0.39**	-	0.39**

**Note:** \*\* is statistically significant at .01 level, \* is statistically significant at .05 level

When considering only the factors directly affecting well-being, it was found that life



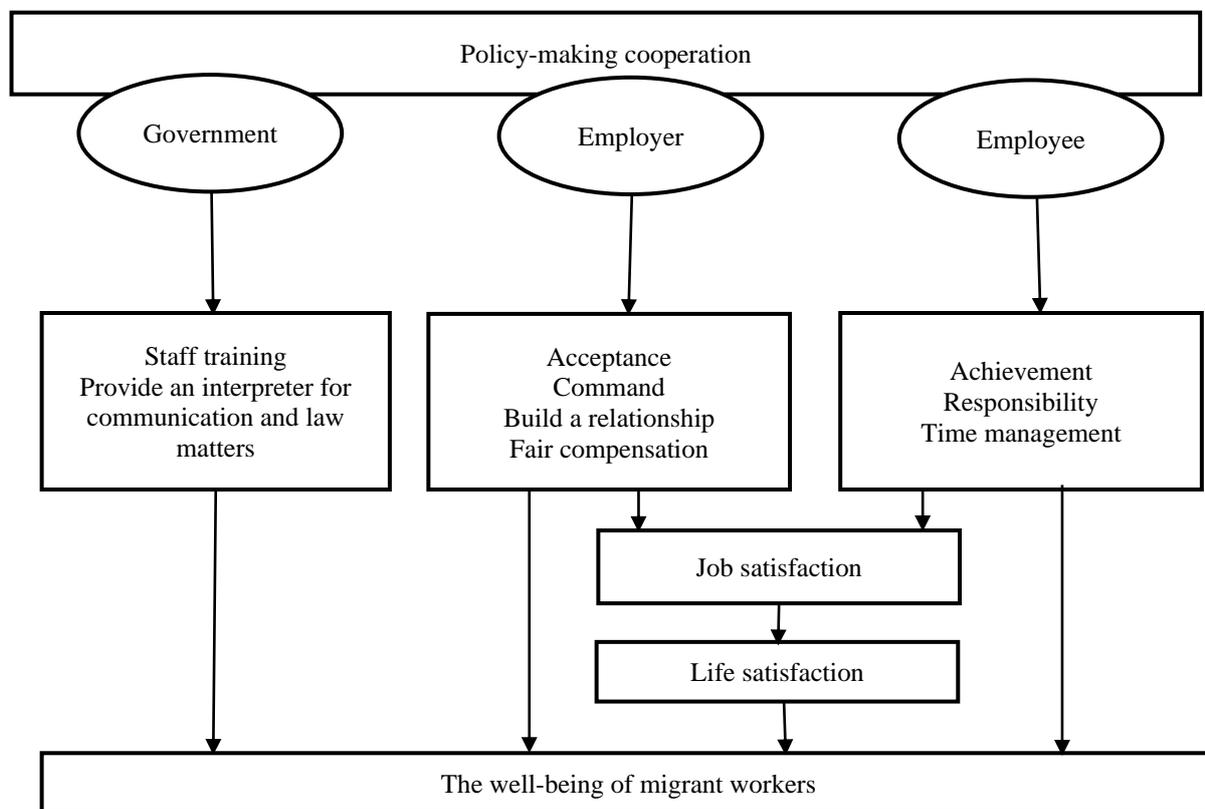
**Management model for the well-being of migrant workers**

According to the data analysis, the proper form of management for the well-being of migrant workers required cooperation from all parties, especially from employers and employees (migrant workers). Both sides must work together to create a guideline to manage the well-being of migrant workers by incentivizing the workers to be appreciated and congratulating them on their work and abilities. Therefore, migrant workers would be motivated to work their best and help increase the efficiency of the work. The important factors consisted of the following: 1) Achievement: Migrant workers were able to complete the work and had great success; 2) Recognition: Migrant workers were respected by the supervisor, colleagues, group of friends, and other people. This recognition could sometimes be expressed in the form of admiration; 3) The nature of work (Work itself): The good and bad feelings about the nature of the job, such as whether it is difficult, easy, monotonous, tiring, or challenging, can influence workers' creativity; 4) Responsibility: The satisfaction that arose from being assigned a new responsibility and having the power to take full responsibility for the work; and 5) Advancement: A change in a person's status or position within an organization. However, in the case of a person moving from one department to another within the organization without changing their status, it is only considered an opportunity to take on new responsibilities, not real career advancement.

Additionally, there were component factors that were not directly related to the work but related to the performance. The factors that could make migrant workers satisfied or dissatisfied with their work were as follows: 1) Command: The knowledge and ability of the supervisor in terms of the operation, administrative justice, as well as the willingness or unwillingness of the supervisor to give advice or assign various responsibilities to subordinates; 2) Policy and administration: the management and administration of the organization as well as empowering individuals to accomplish tasks; 3) Working condition: The physical environment that facilitates work, such as light, sound, air, equipment, etc., as well as the amount of responsible work; 4) Relationships with superiors: meetings, conversations, friendships, and learning from supervisors; as well as obtaining assistance from superiors; honesty; willingness to listen to suggestions from subordinates; and trust of subordinates in superiors; 5) Relationship with subordinates: Meetings, conversations, and interactions at work show a good relationship between superiors and subordinates; 6) Relationship with peers: meeting, chatting, friendship, learning, working in a group, and feeling part of the group; 7) Status: Aspects of a person's occupational status that influence how they feel about their job; 8) Job security: A person's feelings about job security, including the organization's stability; 9) Salary: Satisfaction with the salary received; and 10) Personal life: Certain situations or characteristics of work affect personal lives and make a person feel one way or another about

a given job. For example, the organization wants the employee to move to a new area, which may be far away and cause difficulty, etc.

From the results of the data analysis, it could be defined as a management model for the well-being of migrant workers as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Management model for the well-being of the migrant workers

## Conclusion and Discussion

### *Life satisfaction*

It was the most important variable that directly affected the well-being of migrant workers since life satisfaction reflected the quality of life of an individual. That showed how the person was physically and mentally successful. It was a positive attitude that individuals assess for their perceived quality of life over a lifetime (Veenhoven, 1991). It was consistent with Maslow's hierarchical theory of motivation that the need a person sought to satisfy one's needs from a low level of basic needs and developed to a higher requirement. When those needs were met, the person was very satisfied. If the demand was met less or was not met at all, there would be little or no satisfaction. Therefore, it was very difficult for human beings to have the highest satisfaction in life, or to have satisfaction in life all the time. The highest satisfaction could be achieved in a short period because humans always had needs in other areas (Maslow, 1970).

### *Job satisfaction*

Job satisfaction indirectly influenced and had the second-largest overall influence on the well-being of migrant workers through life satisfaction. That was because life satisfaction depended mainly on the assessment of an individual's life experience. For example, in a job

assessment, individuals might have their income level assessed, executive support, employment, working environment, or other factors. Simultaneously, such satisfaction also affected the person's overall satisfaction with life. Therefore, it could be said that job satisfaction was related to a person's life satisfaction. Working life was a time when a person had to trade one's free time for work, and better economic well-being (Yahyagil, 2015). Conversely, if the person was unemployed, their perception of their level of well-being was also reduced (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). The previous studies found that the influence of satisfaction levels on well-being depended on other factors such as labor cost versus the number of working hours, temporary or permanent employment or self-confidence in the organization (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017) as well as job satisfaction (Cannas, Sergi, Sironi, & Mentel, 2019).

### ***Job resources***

Job resources indirectly influenced the well-being of migrant workers. A study of the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011) showed that pull and push factors affected the well-being of the workers both physically and mentally. Due to job demand, it was compared as physical and mental pressure, social pressure, work pressure, and organizational expectations of an individual, becoming the physiological and psychological costs that an individual must pay to make the job successful. Job resources referred to physical and mental factors including social, organizational, and work environment support that helped encourage individuals to achieve the work objectives. In other words, job resources also reduced job demand and the physical and mental costs that a person had to sacrifice and helped a person learn and develop one's potential for more efficient work.

### ***Job demand***

Job demand influenced direct, negative effects on the well-being of migrant workers as job demand was a variable component of the job demand-resources model. It was a source of work stress that affected a person's body and mind (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The results of past studies found that job pressure was negatively correlated with job satisfaction among the samples (Jang, Lee, Zadrozny, Bae, Kim, & Marti, 2017). According to a study on Malaysian nurse satisfaction conducted by Tahir, Hussein, & Rahim (2020), the results found that emotional demands had a negative influence on job satisfaction due to the overload of daily tasks.

### ***Cross-cultural adaptation***

Cross-cultural adaptation had an indirect influence on the well-being of migrant workers through job satisfaction. Since those who worked abroad were often faced with adaptation to a foreign culture in terms of work interacting with local people as well as daily use which partly depended on the cultural experience a person had in the past (Black, et al., 1991).

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