

Remittance Behavior of Myanmar Workers Surat Thani Province

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Abstract: The research objective is to study the behavior of money transferred back to the country and to study factors related to the remittance of Myanmar workers in Surat Thani Province. The samples in this study consisted of 400 Myanmar workers in Surat Thani Province. The tool used in collecting data was a questionnaire, and the data analysis employed descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and inferential statistics, including Chi-Square Test and Regression Analysis. The research explored the expense behavior of Myanmar workers in several aspects. For the consumption side, the average cost of the food and beverage category was 2,561.45 baht/month, which was the highest expense. The expense in the housing category was 1451.63 baht/month, and that in the vehicle and transportation service category was 824.31 baht/month. The data on workers' behavior related to debt revealed personal debt for consumption as the highest average. Their motivation to return to the country was identified at a moderate level overall, accounting for 3.08 /5 on average. The migrant workers' behavior related to money transfers to the home country mainly involved remittances to parents in support of their living expenses. The average amount of the remittance was 3,722.22 baht per month, with a frequency of 16 - 20 times per year. Money transfer was only made when needed, and service points were local stores providing the service without much document involved, with no complicated procedures. The transferring process was short while the fee was low. The service was convenient for both parties. For transfer, servicing stores were prevalent in the local region, and a slip confirming the transfer was immediately issued. For recipients in Myanmar, the amount was directly transferred into the account in no time. Recipients did not have to wait for a middleman or relatives to deliver the money in person when returning to Myanmar.

Keywords: Remittance behavior, migrant workers, Myanmar.

INTRODUCTION

There are laborers from several countries today, such as Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, etc. The lower rate causes the movement of migrants to substitute for the Thai labor shortage. The migrant laborers working in Thailand consist of three nationalities from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos. Especially the Myanmar workers who have been coming to Thailand consistently become the necessary laborers of the country (in 1977, there were 2,350,677 foreign workers, Foreign Workers Administration Office, 2017 – 2019). The remittance of these laborers is considered the crucial refuge of the family.

Surat Thani province is another province of Thailand with crucial industrial sectors regarding agriculture and livestock, any enterprises extending to agriculture, and construction, including food and beverages production factories. The number of foreign workers who come and work in this province is mostly Myanmar. They stay widespread in almost every area. These laborers regard as the necessary labor of the group working in the factorial and agricultural fields. They likely tend to appear in Surat Thani province and increase until the numbers are up to 60,316 persons (Source: Surat Thani Provincial Employment Office, 2022, the data on 25 July 2022). Each family has many members as a big family. They have lived and brought other

members from their country to Thailand. This group of people works and sends money back to the rest members from the places they have left. The number of remittances is not equal depending on their income each time, including several channels, such as through a bank, broker, or any shop offering the transfer service, etc.

Hence, the research studied how often the Myanmar foreign workers had transferred their money back to their country, the factors affecting the remittance, and factors that had a relationship with the motivation to return to their country. Such issues of the study help realize the disappeared economic values due to the frequency of remittance from these foreign workers. The objectives of this research include 1) to study the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers in Surat Thani province and 2) to study the factors which had a relationship with the remittance of the Myanmar workers in Surat Thani province.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population used in this research is Myanmar workers legally registered to work in Surat Thani, Thailand, in 2022 for 60,316 persons (Source: Surat Thani Provincial Employment Office, 2022, data on 25 July 2022). The calculated sample size was from Taro Yamane's formula (1973). The samples included 400 persons using Convenience sampling methods.

The instrument used in the study is a questionnaire from the literature review to conclude and determine the scope and content of the questionnaire. The created questionnaire was improved and adjusted by the advisor or experts to achieve appropriateness and validity according to the contents, including finding the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The Mean of the questionnaire was equal to 0.91. Furthermore, the language and questions were adapted to be concise and easy to understand, including translating into the Myanmar language for data collection with the sample group.

For research statistics, the researcher brought the questionnaires to investigate and process the data using the statistical software package using descriptive statistics, which consisted of Frequency, Percentage, and Standard Deviation, including Inferential Statistics, which consisted of Regression Analysis and Chi-Square.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Remittance is an essential process for foreign workers because it is a method by which the laborers can deliver their money from working back to their destination or hometown for any purpose. There is a lot of research that can prove that remittance behavior has a relationship with the intention to be back in their country. It indicates that the migrants or laborers who intend to return to their hometown tend to deliver their money higher than the ones who do not have such intention. Most of the associated research uses the same based-theories: the New Economics of Labor Migration NELM, described by Stark and Bloom (1985), and Three Waves Theory by Poirine, (1997). Therefore, the relationship between the intention to return to the country and remittance behavior can describe by using these two Models: (1) New Economics of Labor Migration – NELM Stark and Bloom, (1985). It explains the relationship between returning to their hometown toward the amount of money sending back in a relationship form between laborers and their families living in their country. The Model describes that the family relates to sending laborers to work in foreign countries since they are responsible for the initial expenses of sending their members to work. Thus, when the mission succeeds, the laborers send some money to their families as compensation, (2) Three Waves Theory Poirine (1997, Page 589-611 cited in Buch, Kuckulenz, Le Manchec, 2002, Page 6-7) indicates that the remittance behavior of the laborers in

foreign countries in the Three Waves Theory form can divide such behavior into three phases, which include (1) Pay Back Phase, namely when the laborers can work in a foreign country, they will send a lot of money back as the debt payment caused by the travel expenses, (2) Loan Phase, the laborers have enough incomes to return the money borrowed from their relatives. It appears less amount of money sending back because not all laborers require to send their money back to their relatives, and (3) Investment Phase, the laborers prepare to return to their home country after having finished the investment in a foreign country and have collection enough to be back in their home country. Hence, the amount of money in this Phase is up at a higher level again.

The concept of Motive to Remit by Lucas and Stark mentions that the remittance is a response toward three motives as follows:

1. Pure Altruism: remittance of the migrants is a behavior caused by their pure feelings toward the persons living in the origin-destination by realizing the welfare and advantages of the persons who do not follow them;
2. Pure Self-Interest: the migrants send some money back to the persons in the origin household who do not follow the migrants. The decision to remittance depends on three crucial reasons; considering the heritage to receive from the persons they send some money to, the motive to remit for investing in various properties in the origin-destination, and the intention to move back to their origin-destination;
3. Temporary Altruism; or obvious self-benefits. This type of motive mentions that remittance is like management as promised, which is a behavior expressing affection between migrants and the persons who do not follow the migrants.

RESEARCH RESULT

Data Analysis of Personal Factors

From 400 samples, most of them registered legally (99.50%), male gender (57.50 %), aged between 36 and 40 years old (29.80%), got educated (89.50%), marital status (73%), worked as workers in factories/ corporates' employees (51.75%), income between 8,001 – 10,001 baht (56.75%), categorized according to the number of years working in Thailand found more than 20 years (56%).

Data analysis of expense behavior of the Myanmar workers in Thailand, the study result shown is as

follows:

Table 1: Data on expense behavior of Myanmar workers

Expense behavior of Myanmar workers	\bar{x}	S.D.
Behavior of consumable goods		
Expenses on food and beverage group	2586.75	878.310
Expenses on entertainment group	742.00	430.115
Expenses on dwelling-place group	1243.00	670.391
Expenses on clothing group	525.25	464.086
Expenses on vehicles and transportation service group	1012.75	522.681
Expenses on tobacco and alcoholic drinks group	389.25	384.290
Expenses on medical treatment group	800.25	365.114
Expenses on children's education group	923.25	1024.504
Debt Behavior		
Debt for house construction and car repair	239.75	651.349
Private debt for consumption	466.25	974.222

Table 1 identifies that the expense behavior on consumable goods had more quantity than the debt. The consumable goods aspect had the expense on the food and beverage group the most ($\bar{x} = 2586.75$, S.D. = 878.310), secondly, it was the expense on dwelling group ($\bar{x} = 1243.00$, S.D. = 670.391), and beverage group the most and vehicles and transportation service ($\bar{x} = 1012.75$,

S.D. = 522.681), while the expense behavior on the debt was the private debt for consumption the most ($\bar{x} = 2586.75$, S.D.).

Analysis of the motive to return to the home country of Myanmar workers, the study result shown is as follows:

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the Information about factors related to the motivation of returning to home country

Motivation to return to home country	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of perception
1. Because of failure to find income or get a job.	3.16	0.98	Moderate
2. Because of the retirement	2.61	1.00	A little
3. Because of requiring to live closely with their family	3.47	1.25	Much
Total	3.08	1.08	Moderate

Table 2 indicates that the motive to return to their home country overall had a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 3.08$ and S.D. = 1.08), and had the perception of returning because of requiring to live closely with their family at a high level ($\bar{x} = 3.47$ and S.D.= 1.25).

Analysis of remittance behavior of Myanmar workers in Surat Thani province

The study reveals that the Myanmar workers mostly had remittance behavior (74.25%). In case they did not remit, they had invested in residence or business (70.87%). Secondly, they had only cash (18.45%) and bought gold (10.68%). For the reason that they did not remit because most of them did not have burdens to remit (53.40%), they settled down in Thailand (44.70%) and others (1.90%), respectively. The persons they wanted to transfer to were parents or family members (96%)

and brokers (4%). The objectives were to help reduce burdens to their parents (77.44%). Secondly, it was for children's education (10.44%), secondly was to save (6.06%), pay debts (5.39%), buy a house or car (0.67%), respectively. The number of money they remitted monthly was more than 3,500 baht (34.35%). The frequency of remittance (yearly) was 16 - 20 times per year (51.52%), transferred through the transfer service shop (88.90%), broker (4.7%), relatives (4.40%), and Automatic Teller Machine- ATM (2%), respectively, they did not have an idea to settle down in Thailand (81.82%), and they would transfer money when necessary (72.05%).

Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis 1 Income and expense factors relate to the number of remittances to Myanmar workers.

Table 3: Analysis result of multiple regression done by Stepwise technique: Income and expense factors relate to the number of remittances to Myanmar workers

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1944.678	358.085		5.431	.000
Food_Exp	.527	.122	.259	4.336	.000
Creation_Exp	-.565	.223	-.138	-2.536	.012
House_Exp	.318	.150	.117	2.114	.035
Verhicle_Exp	.459	.220	.125	2.085	.038
a. Dependent Variable: Remittance					
R= 0.381 R Square=0.145 Adjusted R Square=0.134 Std. Error of the Estimate=1748.947					

Table 3 has the variable on the expense of consumable goods group, entertainment group, dwelling group, and vehicles and transportation service group affecting the number of remittance of the Myanmar workers by statistical significance (p-value < 0.001) that can explain the variance at 14.50 (R2 = 0.145). It can be written as the forecasting equation as follows:

$$\text{The number of money for remittance} = 1944.678 + 0.527 (\text{expense on consumable goods group: Food_Exp}) - 0.565 (\text{expense on entertaining group: Creation_Exp}) + 0.318 (\text{expense on dwelling group: House_Exp}) + 0.459 (\text{expense on vehicles and transportation service group: Verhicle_Exp})$$

Hypothesis 2 Personal factors had a relationship with the remittance behavior of Myanmar workers.

The test of the relationship between personal factors and the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers reveals that gender, educational level, occupation, number of family members living in Myanmar, and number of years working in Thailand had a relation

nship with the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers in every aspect. Age and marital status are related to the amount of money remitted (baht/time) and remitting frequency (time/year). Income had a relationship with the remittance channel. The number of family members living in Myanmar related to the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers in every aspect, except the remittance situation, by statistical significance at 0.05 levels.

Hypothesis 3 The expense behavior of Myanmar workers relates to the remittance behavior of Myanmar workers.

The relationship test between the expense behavior and the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers on the consumable goods found that the expense of the dwelling group, clothing group, medical group, and children's education group had

a relationship with the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers in every aspect. The expense of the food and beverage group had a relationship with the quantity of remitted money (baht/time), remittance frequency (time/year), and channel to remit. The expense on the entertainment group had a relationship with the remittance channel, the idea to settle down in Thailand, and the transferring situation. The payment of vehicles and transportation services had a relationship with the quantity of remitted money (baht/time), frequency of remittance (time/year), and transferring situation, and the expense of tobacco and alcoholic drinks had a relationship with the quantity of remitted money (baht/time), frequency of remittance (time/year), transferring channel, and idea to settle down in Thailand. The relationship test between the expense behavior and the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers on the expense of debt burden found that the debt for consumption had a relationship with the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers in every aspect. Debt for house or car purchases was related to the quantity of remitted money (baht/time) and remittance situation by the statistical significance at 0.05 levels.

Hypothesis 4 The motivation to return home country of the Myanmar workers has a relationship with the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers.

The relationship test between the motivation to return to the home country of Myanmar workers and the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers found that the failure to find income or occupation related to their remittance behavior in every aspect. Returning to the home county because of retirement and requiring to live closely with family members had a relationship with the remittance behavior in every aspect, except the remittance channel, with the statistical significance at 0.05 levels.

DISCUSSION

According to the personal factor, most of the samples registered legally (99.50%), most of them were male gender, aged between 36 - 40 years old, held an occupation of factory worker/ corporates' employee, and the income was between 8,001 – 10,001 baht. When they had stable careers and residences, they would bring the rest of the members to live together in Thailand. It is concordant with the concept of Maslow about the requirement of constructing stability, physical and mental requirements, and the realization of self-ability to achieve life success. It is also concordant with the research of Parat Jongdee, Lalita Jantarawong, and Pisan Nguitrakul (2018), which studied factors of migration, obstacles, and problems of migration, and the work of the Myanmar workers. From the theory based on attracted and migrant drive factors, the initial migrant at the first stage started with a few members. If the occupation, residence, and life quality went well, they would persuade other family members living in Myanmar to come to Thailand until it became the migration and generated a massive family in Thailand.

The expense behavior indicates that in the daily life of Myanmar workers, they mostly had the expense in the food and beverage group between 2,501 - 3,500 baht. They usually bought a lot of stuff at one time. Hence, the payment was likely high. It agreed with Angsutorn Tueannadee, (2018) that the average expense was commonly on the food group because the workers had no time to buy necessary things, and the nearby shops were the target place. For the dwelling expense group, it was between 1,001 - 1,500 baht. It is because some employers provided residing places to workers, and the only payment was mostly on utilities. For the medical expense group, it was between 501 - 1,000 baht (64%) on household medicine and an unserious illness without going to the hospital. If the workers registered legally, they had the legal right to medical care. It is concordant with the research of Sudarat Pimolrattanakarn and Narin Sangraksa, (2017) about the health treatment of foreign workers when facing illness that they mostly used the health assurance card. In case of sickness, they would use the health card or social insurance card provided by their establishments.

The motivation to return to the home country of Myanmar workers in Surat Thani reveals that they

had the perception of returning because they wanted to live closely with their family members at a high level (Mean= 3.47). The high expenses included the payment of consumable goods and dwellings. If it increased continuously, it would stimulate the workers to return to their home country because they had to pay for such things daily. If the money from working had to use for a living without saving or remittance, it affected the home country's return more. It agreed with the migrant theory that considers the migrant together with the economic factors focusing on the decision-making at the household level that the migrant is a result of the decision-making of the family members as the main.

For the remittance behavior of the Myanmar workers, they mostly remitted for more than 3,500 baht/time, and the frequency was between 16 – 20 times per year. They transferred through the transferring service shops (88.90%) because the travel was convenient, the documents used for the transfer had no difficulty, the time of service was quick with low fees, the transfer slip confirmed was immediate, and the date and time identified clearly. It is concordant with the research of Wananya Pongsub (2015), which studied the obstruction of remittance transactions of Myanmar workers via commercial banks under the measure of the work permit of Thailand. It is because the number of Myanmar foreign workers who had a work permit in Thailand tended to increase, but the transfer was a little compared to the remittance transfer through other channels.

The study of income and expense factors that had a relationship with the quantity of money remitted to the home country of the Myanmar workers indicates that there was a variable in the expense of consumable goods group, entertainment group, dwelling group, and vehicles and transportation service group affecting the quantity of the money remitted to the home country of Myanmar workers. Such expenses were essential in a routine life, and it was inevitable. If these expenses increased, the number of remittances would decrease.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THE STUDY

According to the study of remittance information, there was the remittance through transfer service shops than Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) and bank branches that do not make income to the commercial banks in Thailand. Hence, commercial banks should reduce their difficulty with

documents and steps of service uses, including reducing the fees to increase the portion of transferring channels to the banks. For example, it should provide various languages, and employers pay the salary via bank accounts, and foreign workers can transfer money through this formal channel.

From the study of motivation to return to the home country of the Myanmar workers that had a relationship with the remittance behavior, there was the motivation because the workers needed to live closely with their family members. Therefore, it should have measures or help these workers by providing welfare and rights to become the motivation to work in Thailand.

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