

# The Promoting Factor for Co-existence with Thais: A Case Study of Migrant Workers in Pathum Thani, Thailand

*Rattachart Thatsanai*

Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University under the Royal Patronage, Thailand

E-mail: kunrattachart@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

This research aimed at finding the promoting factors for co-existence with Thais of the migrant worker in Pathum Thani Province, Thailand. Data was collected from four hundred of migrant worker living in Pathum Thani Province. The research instrument was a rating-scale questionnaire. For data analysis, descriptive statistics included frequency, mean, percentage and standard deviation were applied for hypothesis testing, t-test statistic and one-way ANOVA also applied for this research. The findings revealed that most migrant workers came from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. There were ten promoting factors for co-existence with migrant worker which all of them was at the high level. The first three factors which had highest scores were 1) language and communication factors 2) law and security factors 3) religion factors. From the hypothesis testing, it was found that there were statistically significance at 0.05 level between samples with respect to nationality, age, income and duration of residing in Pathum Thani on the opinions regarding promoting factors for co-existence with Thais.

**Keywords:** Coexistence, Migrant Worker, Pathum Thani, Thailand

## **Background and Significance of the Problem**

Thailand has many migrant workers come to work and live in. That causes many problems, although Thai people in the community can benefit, such as rent or purchase goods and services from the Thai shop as well as learning and interacting, but it is just a superficial interaction. In addition, in communities or residences of Thais with migrants who live in nearby areas, Thais will have a fear or unsafe life and property. (Asian Institute of Development Research Institute, Thailand, 2003), in line with the concept and reproduction a paranoid image of migrant workers within Thai society which think migrant workers are dangerous while migrants themselves have to hide and be afraid of being arrested. These conditions were created as an illusion that pushed the Thai society to paranoid migrant workers (Mongkolmongkol, 2007). Fear and paranoidness among Thais cause the migrant workers to be afraid to interact with Thais. Living with each other but is full of paranoid each other. The important question is how can one maintain a status of friendship and peace when they are paranoid without mutual trust? In addition, the researcher considers that cultural insecurity, Thai laws and regulations and the inability to communicate with each other cause panic and unmutual trust lead to stress and pressure on both parties. From this situation, the risk of violence is always at risk especially in provinces or communities with large numbers of migrant workers.

Pathum Thani is a fast-growing economy. As a rural society, it has become a city and changes its production from agriculture to industrial production. In 2014, it has a total of 3,104 factories (Pathum thani, 2013) and the large wholesale markets for agricultural products in the country and region. With these conditions, the economic drive mechanism of Pathum thani province need to rely on migrant workers. It is found that Pathum thani

province has 125,626 registered migrant workers, the third largest in the country (Office of Migrant Workers Administration, The Ministry of Labor, 2015) while there are Thai population 1,074,058 people. (Pathumthani Provincial Statistical Office, 2015). Therefore, it can be said that Pathum thani province has more than 10% of migrant workers in the province not including latent population and illegal migrant workers. With so many migrant workers, both Thai and migrant workers have to interact with each other inevitably. Therefore, learning to coexistence with Thais is essential for migrant workers living in Pathum Thani. From the above, the researcher is interested to study. Factors promoting for co-existence with Thai of migrant workers in Pathum Thani Province. To build mutual understanding and to prevent problems that may arise from coexistence, which is likely to be a major problem in the future. Also, it provides guidelines for public and private sectors to set policies or programs regarding migrant workers in Thailand.

### **Research Objectives**

1) To study the interactions and opinions for coexistence with Thais of migrant workers in Pathum Thani Thailand. 2) To study the factors that promote coexistence with Thais of migrant workers in Pathum Thani Thailand Classifieds by demographic characteristics.

### **Literature Review**

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1998) discuss the concept of dependence that it refers to reciprocity sensitivity at least in a certain way, and the word "dependence" is also dependent on each other. Due to the necessity of the situation from inside and outside the country make each party need to seek mutual cooperation and assistance. Chulashep Chinnawano (2014: 203) has added that interdependence becomes more complex, which leads to cooperation in many areas consisting of law and security, economics, social factors which are consistent with three pillars of ASEAN Community Collaboration known as, as a support for learning on ASEAN diversity (ASEAN Department, 2015). Neuliep (2006: 4) considered the concept of communication with multicultural people that communicating with people of different cultures is essential to building relationships with others that lead to different interests including a good society, internationalization and increasing trade volume, and reduction of the conflict by making everyone love each other in the better coexistence. Many academics proposed promoting factor for coexistence. Lary Samovar (2001), and Kim (2001) focus on attitude and attitude and language and communication factors. Charles Hill (2003) has proposed activities and interaction that are important for adaptation to living. Harris Philp (1995) and Kim (2001) proposed behavior and socialization. Metta Wiwatanukul (2005) presented the mass communication and religious factors that both factor are important in the context of Thai society. This research aims to study the factors mentioned above. However, the above factors depend on the demographic characteristics and experience of the population in the study area. Yongyut Chalokwong (2005) studied the appropriate patterns of coexistence among Thais and their families of migrant workers in Samut Sakhon, Thailand and found that migrant migrants with different demographic characteristics in age, educational level, profession, and experiences with Thai have different opinions on Thais.

### **Research Methodology**

**Population and sample:** The population in this study is 125,626 migrant workers in total who live in Pathum Thani. The sample size were 400 samples and used accidental sampling in data collection.

**Tools used in Research:** This study is quantitative research. The tools used in the study were questionnaires in Burmese language (for Myanmar migrant), Cambodian language and Thai

language for Lao (Mostly of Laos can use Thai language) for samples group. The questionnaire is divided into four parts as follows: Part 1 questions about demographic factors, part 2 the interactions and opinions on coexistence with Thais, part 3 the promoting factors for coexistence with Thais of migrant workers (5 rating scale) and part 4 open-ended suggestion.

**Data analysis:** Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for descriptive statistics while T-test and analysis of variance were used for testing the hypothesis. In case of comparing difference mean, the researcher choose Least-Significant Different (LSD) as technique on the multiple comparison.

## Research Results

1) On demographic factors, the result was found that over half of the respondents were female (53.8 percent) with 56.5 percent of them were Myanmar, 28.8 percent were Cambodian and 14.8 percent were Lao. 67 percent of the respondents were not over 30 years of age. On income per month, 50.75 percent of the respondent earned not over 9,000 baht/month (238 €). In terms of length of stay, it was found that 67.75 percent live in Pathum Thani during 0 to over 4 years. (Table 1)

**Table 1** Number and percentage of migrant workers in Pathum Thani by demographic factors: gender, nationality, age, income per month, duration of residence in Pathum Thani

<b>Demographic Factors of Respondent in Pathum Thani Province</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	215	53.8
Myanmar nationality	226	56.5
Age not over 30 years	268	67
Monthly income not exceeding 9,000 baht (230 €)	203	50.75
Duration of residence in Pathum Thani: 0-4 years	251	62.75

2) The interactions and opinions for coexistence with Thais of migrant workers, 71.8 percent of the respondent had known or intimated with Thais, 66 percent thought that they should interact to each other to create learning and reduce their paranoid. Regarding on the interaction with Thais, 48.5% rarely interactions with Thais. With 54.5 of them perceived that language of communication was a major problem and barrier to interactions between Thais and migrant workers. More than half of respondents agree that activities that promote good interactions between migrant workers and Thai people are religious activities and charitable activities (37.5%, 19%, respectively). 41 percent used Thai language and 35.8 percent applied body language as a method of communication and interaction with Thais. On learning Thai language, 30.3 percent of migrant workers were very interested and 54 percent were interested respectively) (Table 2).

**Table 2** Number and percentage of interactions and opinions on the coexistence

<b>Interactions and Opinions of Migrant Workers</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
There are Thai people known or intimate.	287	71.8
Interaction to each other should be encouraged to create learning and reduce paranoidness	264	66.0
Rarely interaction with Thais	195	48.5
Language in communication is a barrier and a problem in the interaction between both side.	218	54.5
Participation in religious activities is a good interaction in promoting coexistence.	150	37.5

**Table 2 (Con.)**

<b>Interactions and Opinions of Migrant Workers</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Thai language to communicate Thais	164	41.0
They are interested in learning Thai at the level of interest and interest together.	337	84.3

3) There were high level of opinions of migrant workers on promoting factors of coexistence with Thais with 3.71 mean score. The five highest mean score factors were language and communication factor at 3.84, legal and security interdependence factor at 3.78, religious factor at 3.74, economic interdependence factor at 3.73 and ASEAN Community at 3.70 (Table 3)

**Table 3** Mean and Standard Deviation of factors promoting the co-existence with Thai for migrant workers in Pathum Thani Thailand

<b>The promoting factors for co-existence with Thai of Migrant workers in Pathum Thani Thailand</b>	$\bar{X}$	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Language and Communication factors	3.84	0.89	Very agree
Legal and Security dependence Factors	3.78	0.92	Very agree
Religious factor	3.74	1.02	Very agree
Economic dependence factor.	3.73	0.97	Very agree
ASEAN Community factor	3.70	0.95	Very agree
Activities and interaction factor	3.68	1.00	Very agree
Behavioral and Adaptive factors.	3.67	0.92	Very agree
Social and Cultural dependence factors.	3.67	0.96	Very agree
Mass Communication factors	3.66	0.99	Very agree
Attitude factor	3.65	0.99	Very agree
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>Very agree</b>

4) There were different opinions in mean between demographic factor and coexistence factor as follows: 1) Nationality factor and attitude, social-cultural interdependence, language and communication and religious factor ( $p = 0.02, 0.005, 0.007, 0.002$ , respectively) 2) Age factor and language and communication factor ( $p = 0.002$ ) 3) Income and attitude and ASEAN related factor ( $p = 0.047, 0.016$ , respectively) and 4) Duration of living in Pathum Thani and activities and interactions factor and religious factor ( $p = 0.031, 0.009$ ) (Table 4)

**Table 4** Results of the Hypothesis Testing between Demographic Factors of Migrant Workers and Promoting Factors for co-existence with Thais in Pathum Thani

<b>The promoting factors for coexistence with Thai of Migrant Workers in Pathum Thani Thailand.</b>	<b>t-test</b>	<b>F-test</b>			
	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Duration of Residence in Pathum Thani</b>
Language and Communication factors	0.877	0.78	0.002*	0.051	0.063
Activities and Interaction factors	0.287	0.59	0.091	0.107	0.031*
Attitude factor	0.191	0.002*	0.063	0.047*	0.533
Behavioral and Adaptive factors.	0.721	N/A	0.080	0.314	0.223
Social and Cultural dependence factors.	0.602	0.005*	0.602	0.136	0.824
ASEAN Community factor	0.746	0.075	0.122	0.016*	0.541
Mass Communication factor	0.558	0.007*	0.489	0.051	0.179
Religious factor	0.490	0.002*	0.279	0.416	0.009*

\* There was statistical significance at the 0.05 level, N / A variance was not equal.

### 5) Summary of Multiple Comparison

5.1) Demographic factors on nationality: 1. There were different in mean score of different respondents on attitude factors in two pairs of group: 1) Cambodia and Myanmar, 2) Cambodia and Laos at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.003$  and  $0.002$ ) 2. On social and cultural dependence factor, there were different in mean score of two pair of group: 1) Cambodia and Burma and 2) Cambodia and Laos at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.035$  and  $0.002$ , respectively) 3. Two pairs of group of nationality, Cambodia and Burma and Cambodia and Laos, had different opinions on mass media factor at the 0.05 level of significance. ( $p = 0.034$  and  $0.002$  respectively) 4. There were two different pair: 1) Cambodia and Burma. 2) Cambodia and Laos. Which had different opinions on religious factors at the 0.05 level of significance. ( $p = 0.002$  and  $0.006$ , respectively) (as shown in Table 5)

**Table 5** Comparison of Demographic factors with Co-existence factors, by nationality

Demographic factors (Nationality)	Co-existence Factors	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Sig
Cambodia and Myanmar	Attitude	3.86 and 3.59	0.71 and 0.78	0.003*
Cambodia and Laos	Attitude	3.86 and 3.48	0.71 and 0.73	0.002*
Cambodia and Myanmar	Social and Cultural	3.84 and 3.64	0.90 and 0.78	0.035*
Cambodia and Laos	Social and Cultural	3.84 and 3.42	0.90 and 0.81	0.002*
Cambodia and Myanmar	Mass Communication	3.84 and 3.63	0.90 and 0.83	0.034*
Cambodia and Laos	Mass Communication	3.84 and 3.42	0.90 and 0.77	0.002*
Cambodia and Myanmar	Religious	3.97 and 3.65	0.91 and 0.89	0.002*
Cambodia and Laos	Religious	3.97 and 3.58	0.91 and 0.75	0.006*

\* There was statistical significance at the 0.05 level

5.2) Demographic factors in age were found to be different in terms of language and communication factor. There were two pairs of differences: 1) Age 46-60 years group and not more than 30 years old group and 2) Age 46-60 years group and Age 31-45 group at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.001$  and  $0.015$ , respectively) (as shown in Table 6).

**Table 6** Comparison of Demographic factors with Co-existence factors, by Age

Demographic factors (Age)	Co-existence Factors	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Sig
Age 46-60 years old and not over 30 years old	Language and Communication	4.28 and 3.77	0.53 and 0.67	0.001*
Age 46-60 old and Age 31-45 old	Language and Communication	4.28 and 3.89	0.53 and 0.67	0.015*

\* There was statistical significance at the 0.05 level

5.3) Differences in income factor: 1. There was one pair of difference, income exceeded 9,000 baht group and income between 9,001-15,000 baht group, which had opinions on different attitude factors at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.018$ ). 2. There were one pair of difference, over 9,000 Baht group and between 9,001-15,000 Baht group, which had opinions on different ASEAN Community factor at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.01$ ) (as shown in Table 7).

**Table 7** Comparison of Demographic factors with Co-existence factors, by Monthly Income

<b>Demographic factors (Monthly income)</b>	<b>Co-existence Factors</b>	$\bar{X}$	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Sig</b>
Not over 9,000 baht and 9,001-15,000 baht	Attitude	3.56 and 3.75	0.82 and 0.70	0.018*
Not over 9,000 baht and 9,001-15,000 baht	ASEAN Community	3.60 and 3.81	0.83 and 0.74	0.010*

Note: \* There was statistical significance at the 0.05 level

5.4) Demographic factors in duration of residence in Pathum Thani Province showed the following differences: 1. There was one pair of difference, 0-4 years group and 11-15 years group, which had different opinions on activity and interaction factor at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.013$ ). 2. Three pairs of different opinions were found, 1) 0-4 years group with 5-10 years group 2) 0-4 years group with 11-15 years group and 3) Between 5-10 years group with 11-15 years group, which had different on religious factors at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.045, 0.001$  and  $0.025$ , respectively) (as shown in Table 8).

**Table 8** Comparison of Demographic factors with Co-existence factors, by Duration of Residence in Pathum Thani

<b>Demographic Factors (Duration of Residence in Pathum Thani)</b>	<b>Co-existence Factor</b>	$\bar{X}$	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Sig</b>
between 0-4 years and 11-15 years	Activities and Interaction	3.60 and 4.05	0.82 and 0.64	0.013*
0-4 years and 5-10 years.	Religious	3.64 and 3.84	0.92 and 0.80	0.045*
0-4 years and 11-15 years	Religious	3.64 and 4.31	0.92 and 0.66	0.001*
5-10 years and 11-15 years	Religious	3.84 and 4.31	0.80 and 0.66	0.025*

\* There was statistical significance at the 0.05 level

## Discussions and Conclusion

The study found that migrant workers in Pathum Thani Province had known Thai people or were close to them, but had infrequent interactions with Thais. Migrant workers used Thai language to communicate with Thai people first, then used the body language such as smile or hand language. Migrant workers in Pathum Thani see language as a major obstacle in their interaction with Thai people. However, it should be noted that there should be interaction with Thais in order to create learning and to decrease paranoid among each other. Religious activities such as going to temple together, merit making and public activities, such as jointly cleaning the painted community, are activities that promote good interaction between migrant workers and Thais. In addition, most migrant workers are interested in learning Thai language.

For factors that promote the coexistence with Thai of migrant workers in Pathum Thani, all factors are at a high level. It is found that migrant workers in Pathum Thani Province pay more attention to linguistic and communication factors. This is consistent with the results of the questionnaire that language is a major barrier to interaction with Thais. This is why migrant workers are interested in Thai language. A study of John W. Berry and Young Yun Kim, cited in Metta Wiwatanukul (2005), found that in order to encourage the coexistence of the common good in society, different culture communication is an important starting point. This corresponds to Neulip (2006) who said that communicating with people of different cultures is essential to building relationships with others that lead to different interests and

reduce the conflict by making everyone love each other better. The next key factor is legal and security one. It can be said that the regulations governing the oversight of migrant workers, as well as those of Thailand, are inadequate for economic growth and labor demand. The underdevelopment of the labor law of the country of origin of migrant workers makes Thailand unable to control or monitor the entry of migrant workers thoroughly. This is the source of many illegal migrants. Both migrant workers and employers are experiencing problems and are very concerned about illegal practices. The third factor that promotes coexistence with the Thais is the religious factor. Based on the findings of the study, migrant workers found that religious activity was an activity that promoted good interactions between migrant workers and Thais. In addition, Most of Thais and migrant workers are Buddhist. migrant workers from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia have high Buddhist beliefs, especially Myanmar migrants, which are the largest worker group. Religion is an important tool for reducing differences and increasing opportunities for the interactions. The next factor is economic dependence, ASEAN Community Factors, activities and interaction factor, behavioral and adaptive factors. Social and cultural dependence factors and attitude factors respectively.

The hypothesis testing was found that migrant workers in Pathum Thani province who have different have different nationality, age, income, and length of residence in Pathum Thani, had different opinions on factors that promote coexistence with Thais. According to the assumptions, it was found that Cambodian workers have different opinions from Myanmar and Lao worker in Social and Cultural dependence factor, mass communication and religion factor while migrant workers between the ages of 46-60 years group had different opinions from younger worker in terms of language and communication factor. Migrant workers with a minimum income of no more than 9,000 per month will have different opinions from workers in earning 9,001-15,000 per month group in terms of attitudes factor and ASEAN Community factor. A group of migrant workers who live in Pathum Thani for up to 4 years will have different opinions from a group of who live in Pathum Thani for 11-15 years group on activities and interaction factor and religion factor, while migrant workers who have lived in Pathum Thani 5-10 years will have different opinions on religion from who live in Pathum Thani province not over 4 years and 11-15 years.

## **Suggestion**

**Suggestions to use research results:** Government agencies in related provinces especially local organizations with large numbers of migrant workers in the area should be the main responsible for activities, as Tossutti Livianna (2009) studied urban management in Canada and managed migration from around the world which was found that urban management organizations should adopt the appropriate basic rules to accommodate the differences by making diverse form of local management that can accommodate cultural differences. In addition, it is important to understand government officials who are involved with migrant workers.

Relevant government agencies, as well as higher education institutions in Pathum Thani Province, should promote Thai language learning and communication to migrant workers. At the same time, it should encourage youth, state authorities and Thais in Pathum Thani to learn the language of migrant workers. However, the age of migrant workers who participate in the activity with monthly income and the duration of living factor should be taken into account. Brett (2006) discusses the acceptance of cultural diversity that adaptation of the different cultures, acceptance of open space, indirect communication and beaming will help in managing the diversity of people when they come to work or live nearby.

Frequency of interaction with Thais of migrant workers in Pathum Thani is low. The researcher suggests that the frequency of interaction should be increased by organizing

activities that are consistent with the findings, and more often, to achieve greater mutual recognition. Kim Y. Y (2001) wrote that even the differences in language and culture exist, but if there are frequent communication, it will be more understanding.

**Suggestions for further research:** 1) It should be a study in other areas with different context such as in border provinces or in other regions, as a guideline for further development in this area. 2) It should be a study on attitudes towards the promotion of coexistence between Thai and migrant workers from officials who works with migrant workers

## References

- Asian Institute of Technology Research Institute for Thailand Development. 2003. **The Study of the Social Impact of Migrant Worker**. Bangkok: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.
- Brett, B. 2006. **Managing Multicultural teams**. Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review.
- Chinnawano, C. 2014. **World in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.
- Hill, W. 2003. **Global Business**. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Mc Graw-Hill.
- Kim, Y. 2001. **Becoming Intercultural**. Thousand Oaks: Sege.
- Nulip, J. 2006. **Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach**. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. California: Sage Publication.
- Office of Migrant Workers Administration Ministry of Labour. 2015. **Information on the Work of Migrant Workers**. Bangkok: Ministry of Labor.
- Office of Pathum Thani. 2013. **Pathum thanee Development Plan 2015-2018**. Pathum Thani: Pathumthani Provincial Office.
- Pathum Thani Provincial Statistical Office. 2015. **Population in the Province of Tampere, Year 2014**. Pathum Thani: Pathum Thani Provincial Statistical Office.
- Philp, H. 1995. **Managing Cultural Difference Global Leadership Strategies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Pichapaphip, P. 2009. **Management of Cultural Dimensions**. Phitsanulok: D.K Copy.
- Keohane, R. and Nye, J. 1998. **Power and Interdependence in the Information Age**. Retrieved from [www.migrantaffairs.com/articles/1998-09-01/power-and-interdependence-information-age](http://www.migrantaffairs.com/articles/1998-09-01/power-and-interdependence-information-age).
- Samovar, A. 2001. **Communication Between Cultures**. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. California: Thomson Learning.
- Livianna, T. 2009. **Canadian Cities and Global Migration: Comparing Local Responses to Demographic Chang**. Toronto: APSA.