

Unpacking gender inequality for inclusive development: A case
study of Myanmar female migrant workers in Samut Sakhon
Province, Thailand

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แกะกล่องความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศสภาพ: กรณีศึกษาผู้ใช้แรงงานหญิงชาวเมียนมาในสมุทรสาคร
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การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อแก้ไขปัญหาคือความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศในอุตสาหกรรมอาหารทะเลของประเทศไทย โดยเน้นเฉพาะแรงงานข้ามชาติหญิงชาวเมียนมาในตำบลมหาชัย จังหวัดสมุทรสาคร แม้ว่าแรงงานข้ามชาติหญิงจะมีบทบาทสำคัญต่อเศรษฐกิจของประเทศไทย แรงงานกลุ่มนี้ก็ยังประสบปัญหาต่างๆ ในอุตสาหกรรมที่มีค่าแรงต่ำ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศซึ่งยังคงเป็นปัญหาสำคัญในสถานที่ทำงานที่ใช้แรงงานทักษะต่ำ เช่น อุตสาหกรรมอาหารทะเล แม้ว่าจะมีการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับการย้ายถิ่นฐานที่มีทั้งชายและหญิงหรือเน้นเฉพาะผู้หญิง แต่ประเด็นเกี่ยวกับเพศยังไม่ได้รับการเน้นย้ำเพียงพอในการทำความเข้าใจประสบการณ์ของแรงงานข้ามชาติหญิง โดยเฉพาะในอุตสาหกรรมอาหารทะเล งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเติมเต็มช่องว่างนี้โดยการสำรวจของความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศในสภาพการทำงานและสภาพความเป็นอยู่ของแรงงานข้ามชาติหญิงชาวเมียนมาในอุตสาหกรรมอาหารทะเลที่หลากหลาย โดยใช้ทฤษฎีอำนาจทับซ้อน (Intersectionality Theory) การวิจัยใช้วิธีการเชิงคุณภาพกรณีศึกษาโดยการรวบรวมข้อมูลปฐมภูมิและทุติยภูมิ มีการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างแบบตัวต่อตัวกับแรงงานข้ามชาติหญิงชาวเมียนมา 10 คนจากอุตสาหกรรมอาหารทะเล ทั้งภายในและภายนอกโรงงานอย่างเป็นทางการ รวมทั้งสมาชิกองค์กรภาคประชาสังคม 2 คนจากเครือข่ายแรงงาน Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN) จากการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาและนำเสนอกรณีศึกษาเฉพาะของแรงงานข้ามชาติหญิง ผลการศึกษาพบว่าแรงงานข้ามชาติหญิงเมียนมาในอุตสาหกรรมอาหารทะเลเผชิญกับการเลือกปฏิบัติทางเพศและความไม่เท่าเทียมกันทางเพศจากปัจจัยที่ทับซ้อนกันหลายประการ เช่น เพศ สถานะการย้ายถิ่นฐาน สถานภาพการสมรส ชาติพันธุ์ เกี่ยวข้องกับการตัดกัน ลักษณะความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศและการเลือกปฏิบัติมีมากขึ้นเมื่อมีการเพิ่มสถานะการย้ายถิ่นในส่วนที่แยกระหว่างเพศและสถานภาพการสมรสในอุตสาหกรรมอาหารทะเล ผลการวิจัยนี้จะทำหน้าที่เป็นแหล่งข้อมูลอันมีค่าสำหรับผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านการพัฒนาและผู้มีบทบาทนอกภาครัฐในการพัฒนากลยุทธ์ที่ตอบสนองต่อเพศสภาพและเพื่อส่งเสริมบทบาทของแรงงานข้ามชาติหญิงในการเติบโตของอุตสาหกรรมในประเทศไทย

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The study aims to address the issue of gender inequality in Thailand's seafood industry, with a specific focus on Myanmar female migrant workers in Mahachai (Samut Sakhon province). Although women migrant workers play a significant role in Thailand's economy, they have been facing various challenges in low-wage industries. Gender inequality remains a prominent concern in these low-skilled labor-intensive workplaces like seafood industry. While there have been studies on migration that include both men and women or focus solely on women, gender has not received sufficient emphasis in understanding the experiences of female migrant workers, particularly in the seafood industry. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the prevalent features of gender inequality in the working and living conditions of Myanmar female migrant workers in the seafood industry by applying the intersectionality theory. The research adopts a case-study qualitative approach, by collecting primary and secondary data. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews are conducted with 10 Myanmar female migrant workers from the seafood industry, both within and outside formal factory settings as well as 2 civil society organization members from the labour network called Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN). By using content analysis and presenting unique case studies of female migrant workers, the study finds that Myanmar female migrant workers in the seafood industry, face gender discrimination and gender inequality based on multiple intersecting factors such as gender, migration status, marital status, ethnicity that relates to intersectionality. Gender inequality and discrimination features are more prevalent when migration status is added in the intersection of gender and marital status in the seafood industry. The findings of this research will serve as a valuable resource for development experts and non-governmental actors to develop gender-responsive strategies and to promote the role of women migrant workers in Thailand's industrial growth.

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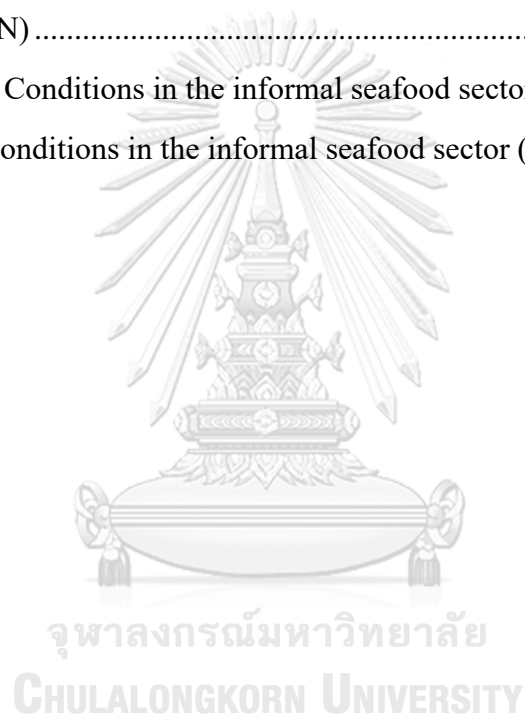
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The rationale of the study

1.1.1 Introduction

In the Southeast Asia region, Thailand's economic growth becomes a major destination for the workers from neighboring countries to migrate (IOM, Thailand Migration Report, 2011). Higher earnings and more plentiful employment possibilities are the typical factors that "pull" or attract migrants to Thailand, whereas poverty and unemployment are the reasons that "push" migrants to leave the country of origin (IOM, 2009). Moreover, informal interpersonal connections between people in the nations of origin and destination frequently assist migration process and the majority of migrants move to Thailand with the help of family members or friends. To be more specific, due to neighboring countries' political instability, armed conflicts, or natural disasters, Thailand has become a regional migration hub since the mid-1980s. At present, Thailand industries become more dependent on migrant workers to fill its excess demand for low-skilled workers and the situation of migrant workers makes a substantial contribution to Thailand's economic growth. Migrant workers are now working in a range of sectors, particularly in agriculture, seafood and fisheries, manufacturing, construction, and domestic sectors of low-paid and low-skilled Thailand industries, which are often described as "triple-D" jobs (dirty, demeaning, and dangerous) (DennisArnold, March, 2005).

Currently, there are an estimated 3-4 million migrant workers, including undocumented migrants in Thailand from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, with Myanmar migrants being the largest migrant worker population, numbering estimated 2.3 million (Ruth Pearson & Kyoko Kusakabe, 2012). Among the current numbers of 2,167,937 registered migrant workers (MinistryofLabor, 2022), approximately 70% are from Myanmar and an estimated 43% of Myanmar migrants are women. Remarkably, the center of the trading of fishing and seafood in Thailand, Samut Sakhon, is a province with a high concentration of Myanmar migrants, accounting for 91% of all migrant workers (Sarapirom, Muensakda & Sriwana, 2020). Additionally,

the numbers of undocumented female migrant workers have increased following the 2021 military coup – Myanmar, as reported by a male representative from the Migrant Workers Rights Network in May 2023.

1.1.2 Gender inequality issue in migration (Thailand)

Even while it is evident that migrant workers, particularly women, are crucial to Thailand's socioeconomic development and account for over 10% of the country's labor force, gender inequality issues continue to have a negative influence on them in low-wage jobs. Women migrant workers' experiences with migration are not always secure. They continue to be disproportionately affected by a range of risks deriving from their mobility because they may be more likely than men to encounter human rights violations at every stage of their migratory journey (IOM Gender Report, 2009). Although women migrant workers are in high demand among employers in many low-paid sectors of Thailand, they are at greater risk due to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality. (ILO, Yearly Report, 2018) described that considerable gender wage gaps, gender division of labor and unequal treatment have been identified within several industries despite many years of advocacy by women's groups. To illustrate this, the distribution of male and female migrants across different occupations is still unequal in the majority of labor-intensive sectors in Thailand (IOM, 2009). At the factories that require a large labor force, women are more likely than men to work long hours without taking rest to meet the production targets. In addition, women are significantly experiencing worse working conditions, by receiving lower wages than males. While working full time, they are much more likely to shoulder the dual responsibility of caring for their families and young children.

According to migration trajectories, in order to provide safe migration and employment for migrant workers, Thai government has also implemented legislation and policies, including a bilateral agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding - MOU recruitment procedure. It signed a MOU with Myanmar in 2003 to ensure a channel for regular migration that migrants are officially registered. The MOU's terms reiterate that migrant workers who have entered the country under the MOU must receive equal protection to Thai nationals (Temprosa, 2013). However, after

enrollment, the migrant workers have the restricted choices in regards to their employment arrangement and the selection of their employer. Until recently, only a small percentage of migrants have entered Thailand under the MOU.

Apart from MOU, there are other ways to legalize the status of irregular migration in Thailand. In 2004, the nationality verification system was introduced as a temporary measure to register the irregular migrants from Myanmar, already residing and working in Thailand. From this process, the registered migrant workers who entered Thailand irregularly are allowed to work as the laborers or domestic workers for a limited time frame. In addition, the migrant workers who wish to legitimize their status through nationality verification system must acquire certification documents from their home country, like a temporary passport or certificate of identity (CI), to apply for a work permit. Furthermore, certain migrants can also use a border pass as an alternative method to legalize their migrant status in Thailand as the Thailand Government enables employers to employ workers from Myanmar via regular channels.

Nonetheless, due the time-consuming, complicated, increasingly restrictive and expensive registration processes, many Myanmar migrant workers enter Thailand irregularly (MinistryofLabor, 2022) and women migrant workers continue to face various forms of exploitation and inequality issues with the lack of full protection that leaves many of them in informal employment in vulnerable positions in Thailand labor-intensive workplaces. Despite national laws and regulations that equally apply to all workers regardless of gender or migration status and women migrant workers desire to find decent work outside the home country, they still face structural obstacles due to the combination of discriminatory regulations, gendered societal norms and lack of legal protections.

1.1.3 Situation of Myanmar female migrant workers in Thailand labor-intensive workplace

Covid19 pandemic had a disproportionately negative impact on women migrant workers in terms of their health, income, and employment security and made many inequalities in the labor market. They had to work in hazardous situations

without access to proper safety equipment or all the information necessary to follow to public health regulations (ILO, 2020). According to the ILO's most recent Global Wage Report, the effects of the pandemic have been felt differently between men and women, in many ways that include wage gaps in the labor market. To illustrate this, many female migrant workers who were laid off within the pandemic spent all of their time at home, taking on extra responsibilities: unpaid care work and unequal household work distribution that was made worse by the increased needs for child care during the pandemic.

It is certain that the abovementioned gender challenges can be occurred among Myanmar female migrant workers, who occupy the largest proportion of migrant workers in Thailand. Before migration, Myanmar female migrant workers have been bearing the burden of responsibility for their families' well-being in Myanmar patriarchic society filled with stigma. Even when they move to Thailand, the disparities they have been familiar are still persisting in their life and work outside the home country. Despite their hopes to improve their livelihood and work conditions, they surely face inequalities as migrants, and also as women. Therefore, gender disparities make women to vulnerable situations and gender inequality becomes an important issue that should not be ignored in the country's development procedures as an essential topic into the academic debates.

1.1.4 The role of female migrant workers in seafood industry supply chains, Thailand

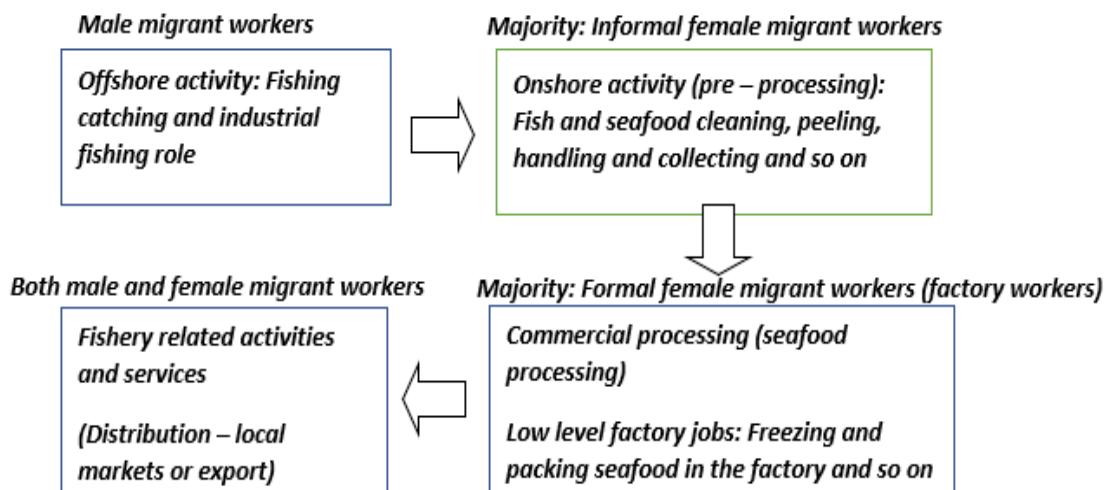


Figure 1 Female Involvement in the seafood industry, Thailand

By looking into the duties of women migrant workers in the fishing and seafood industry, informal and formal sector can be seen as the places where the female migrant workers are mostly working. In the formal sector, gender roles within the workplace are clearly defined, with women primarily assigned basic tasks such as wet fish cleansing, drying, dividing types of fishes while men are typically responsible for lifting and arranging raw seafood boxes. Freezing, stamping, packaging and distributing are processed by both men and women migrant workers. In the informal sector outside the factory, women migrant workers are often paid within a piece rate based on the amount of seafood processed or peeled (paid by kilogram) (ILO, 2018) while the women factory migrant workers may receive a fixed daily wage. Therefore, they must produce outputs until certain targets to receive a higher wage.

Significantly, in the pre-processing sector (market area – informal sector) which less formalized and characterized by verbal agreements, irregular work, and payment based on piece, women are often paid less than men (Oxfam, 2021). As female migrant workers are paid based on piece work, their income is dependent on

the demand, making it easily disrupted by uncontrollable factors. Consequently, they find themselves in a more insecure position with limited savings under extreme financial challenges. In the formal sector, the female migrant workers also face uncertainty without guarantee about their long-term employment prospects in the factories. They are only called in when needed, which further adds to their uncertain positions. Due to these situations that has forced many of female migrant workers into debt or other precarious circumstances, precarious word is used in the study.

Overall, women migrant workers are in vulnerable situations and they may find challenging to meet their basic needs and equal opportunity as compared to male workers. Spending long hours at work, working physically demanding tasks, workplace violence, and underpaid wages, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, limited access to resources and decision-making power within the factories, indicates that women migrant workers are mostly engaged in the lower levels of the fishery and seafood value chains.

1.2 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To identify the prevalent features of gender discrimination in the seafood industry of Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand
- To find out the effective information to help reducing gender inequality challenges in the seafood industry

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are evaluated in this study:

1. What are gender discrimination practices faced by women migrant workers in the precarious seafood industry, Samut Sakhon Province?
 - How do they face a) labor exploitation, b) marginalization, c) powerlessness, d) cultural dominance between men and women, and e) violence?
2. How do female migrant workers face gender inequality barriers in accessing equal opportunities in the seafood industry?

- What are the gender inequality barriers that women migrant workers are facing in a) legal, b) economic, c) social and d) cultural dimensions

1.4 Research Methodology

The research used case-study qualitative research using primary and secondary data collection in order to understand the context and prevalent features faced by female Myanmar migrant workers regarding gender inequality in different dimensions and additionally identify intersecting forms of discrimination that migrant workers have been encountering. It was figured out with the following sub-headings; area of the study, data collection, interview strategy table, and data analysis, based on Samut Sakhon Province as the study location of the seafood industry in Thailand. The research study was conducted by using qualitative research approaches and data will be sought from sample groups including 10 selected members of Myanmar female migrant workers in Samut Sakhon, and 2 stakeholders (from civil society organization called Migrant Workers Rights Network - MWRN). Among 10 female participants, 4 case studies are explored through in-depth interview.

1.4.1 Area of the study

The study is conducted in Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand, where largest numbers of Myanmar migrant workers have been residing for a quite long time. As stated by the Asia Pacific Migration Network, a mere 10 percent of the population in Samut Sakhon Province, consists of Thais, while the remaining majority are migrant workers. In the neighborhoods of Samut Sakhon Province, the signs and menus of local restaurants are displayed in Myanmar language, and people communicate in Myanmar language. Even at karaoke establishments, migrants have the opportunity to sing Burmese songs. It is also common to encounter migrants wearing their traditional attire while walking along the streets. Therefore, Samut Sakhon serves as a central hub for Myanmar migrant workers. In addition, since 2014, the seafood industry in Thailand has attracted mostly negative attention from global media, trading partners, overseas buyers, unions and others for forced labor and more routine abuses: poor working and living conditions, low wages, long working hours and limited social protection for workers (ILO, 2020). So, it is necessary to study Samut Sakhon province, where many gender-based challenges may exist among Myanmar female

migrant workers. Practically, I am currently working with the grassroots member-based association called Migrant Workers Rights Network in Samut Sakhon to gain access to Myanmar female migrant workers. For this reason, Samut Sakhon province will be chosen as a significant location to study and explore the gender inequality issue in the seafood industry.

1.4.2 Data Collection

Primary Data Collection

Adopting qualitative data collection method, face to face semi-structured interviews is conducted to 10 Myanmar female migrant workers from seafood industry (both formal– inside the factory and informal – outside of the factory), and two civil society organization members in May, 2023. The initial focus of the research findings will be on four distinct case studies among the participants. These case studies will involve conducting in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the life experiences and gender-related obstacles encountered by female migrant workers in Samut Sakhon province area. The interview exercises took about 3 weeks after making plan for data analysis, interpreting and report writing. As a part of data collection, demographic information including age, ethnicity, marital status and migration status is collected. Semi-structured interview is designed as a tool to capture the qualitative information and a list of open questions that need to be covered during the interview, were built. The open question choice aims to give a qualitative analysis of the current prevalent features of gender inequality and help me in gathering new information on cases and stories and, present them in the research. In addition, interviewees will be allowed the freedom and space to express their views in their own terms regarding the questions asked and prompts and different questions that are relevant and understandable were provided if necessary.

Secondary Data Collection

The secondary data will be obtained from the existing literature related to the topic and documentary review which includes online articles and some existing academic articles.

Sampling Design

The study chose 10 Myanmar female migrant workers from Samut Sakhon by emphasizing both formal female factory workers (legal MOU workers) and informal female migrant workers who migrated with illegal channels outside the factory area. Within the context of this study, the term "female migrant workers from the formal sector" refers to individuals who migrated to Thailand through the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) legal channel. On the other hand, "women migrant workers from the informal sector" are defined as those who initially entered Thailand illegally. According to the rules and regulations of the seafood factories, those who possess valid documents or cards are granted legal entry and are considered to have legal status, enabling them to work in the factory. Conversely, individuals without such valid cards are classified as illegal since they are unable to secure employment within the factory sector. ¹With the assistance of Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN), 10 Myanmar female migrant workers were selected from diverse categories and backgrounds, specially basing on three identities: migration status (legal formal worker and illegal informal worker), ethnicity (Burmese and non-Burmese) and marital status (single, married women who have kids, and single mother) in according to the intersectionality theory. In addition, another two civil society organization members (1 male CSO member and other 1 female CSO member from welfare committee of Migrant Workers Rights Network – MWRN), were interviewed to explore the prevalent features of gender inequality and discrimination practices in the seafood industry.

Unit of Analysis

Myanmar female migrant workers who are formal factory workers and informal migrant workers outside the factory are considered the unit of analysis in this research.

¹ Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN) is a grassroots member-based association in Samut Sakhon area and is composed of members who strive to safeguard the rights of migrant workers residing and working in Thailand, primarily from Myanmar. Formed in 2009 by nine leaders from the Myanmar migrant community, the organization was established in response to witnessing widespread exploitation and mistreatment of migrant workers within various sectors in Thailand, including the seafood industry.

Data Collection Steps

For data collection, I verified the information gathered through the literature review and prepared to familiarize myself with the interview guidelines. MWRN staff helped me to facilitate the collection and recruitment of 10 Myanmar female migrant workers who expressed their interest and willingness to participate in my data collection process, allowing themselves to share their personal stories, experiences, and perspectives on gender inequality. After getting permission for the identification of beneficiaries from MWRN to gain access to Myanmar female migrant workers, I went to the field area, Samut Sakhon, to be familiar with the interview participants and field area nature first. After that, for my field interview data collection, I started a brief explanation of the purpose of study that enables the participant to take part in the research and addressed questions on how they generally think/experience about gender exploitation, discrimination, gender inequality in terms of working and living conditions including promotion, salary, livelihood and other social protections. I also arranged materials for data collection including printing, photocopying of questions, pens, pencils, notebooks and electronic device for recording. Moreover, I detail-captured what is said during the whole interview process. The interviews are conducted based on the questions provided in the below interview metrics table.

Table 1, Methodology Matrix and Interview Strategy

Questions	Sub-questions	Data needed	Interviewee/origin of sources	Methods of Data Collection
1. What are gender discrimination practices faced by women migrant workers in the precarious seafood industry?	1.1 How do they face a) labor exploitation, b) marginalization, c) powerlessness, d) cultural dominance between men and women, and e) violence?	Data relating with workspace - job promotion, income, working conditions, labor exploitation or violence at work	10 Myanmar female migrant workers from Samut Sakhon's seafood industry 1 female representative from welfare committee - (Migrant Workers Rights Network, Samut Sakhon Province) 1 male representative from local (Migrant Workers Rights Network, Samut Sakhon Province)	Primary data (Semi-structured interview) Secondary Data review (records from government announcement or official organizations such IOM and ILO)
2. How do women migrant	2.1 What are the gender inequality	Data including both work	10 Myanmar female migrant workers from	Primary data (Semi-structured

<p>workers face gender inequality barriers in accessing equal opportunities in the seafood industry?</p>	<p>barriers that women migrant workers are facing, in a) legal, b) economic, c) social and d) cultural dimensions?</p>	<p>and domestic space: livelihood conditions, social protection, property, and expenditure management within family</p> <p>The roles attached to the men and women workers, in daily lives and work</p> <p>How female migrant participants take care kids within paid work</p>	<p>Samut Sakhon's seafood industry</p> <p>1 female representative from welfare committee - (Migrant Workers Rights Network, Samut Sakhon Province)</p> <p>1 male representative from local (Migrant Workers Rights Network, Samut Sakhon Province)</p>	<p>interview)</p> <p>Secondary Data review (records form government announcement or official organizations such IOM and ILO)</p>
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The data for this study was gathered in May 2023 through fieldwork conducted in Samut Sakhon Province, with the assistance of the Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the Myanmar migrant workers, lasting approximately forty-five minutes to an hour per person.

Demographic information of 10 female participants

Table 2, Demographic data

No	Age	Marital status	Ethnicity	Migration status
Female participant 1	30	Single	Bamar	Legal channel, Formal Sector
Female participant 2	25	Single	Dawei	Legal channel, Formal Sector
Female participant 3	38	Married with 3 children	Kayan	Legal channel, Formal Sector
Female participant 4	43	Married with 1 child	Bamar	Legal channel, Formal Sector
Female participant 5	38	Married with 5-month-old kid	Bamar	Legal channel, Formal Sector
Female participant 6	30	Married with 1 child (Pregnant now)	Bamar	Illegal channel, Informal Sector
Female participant 7	46	Married with 3 children	Karen	Illegal channel, Informal Sector
Female participant 8	35	Single	Mon	Illegal channel, Informal Sector
Female participant 9	53	Single	Bamar	Illegal channel, Informal Sector
Female participant 10	34	Divorced (Single mother with 1 child)	Mon	Illegal channel, Informal Sector

Apart from 10 female participants, another two civil society organization members (1 male CSO member and other 1 female CSO member from welfare committee of Migrant Workers Rights Network – MWRN), were interviewed to explore the prevalent features of gender inequality and to get effective information to help reducing gender inequality challenges in the seafood industry.

1.4.3 Data Analysis

This study analyzes the resulted data and unique case-studies from interviews to see how female participants describe prevalent gender inequality features they are facing in the industry and how they show their participation in labor workplace to see whether they have influence or equal chances or if they do not. For the research questions, it focused on the features of gender inequality by mainly asking on the issues of employment situation, wage, livelihood condition and industrial conflicts. Content analysis, a useful tool for qualitative research, was used in this study to identify patterns and features of gender inequality in the seafood industry, Thailand. Firstly, the interview data were recorded and memorialized several times to get a sense of the whole. Secondly, the transcribed text was divided into the units of meaning, which will be labelled with codes. Thirdly, the codes were compared by finding similarities and differences and sorted into the categories. After verifying the coding is harmony with the units of meaning, the findings and results were summarized and presented. Data observed was interpreted in accordance with the proposed research objectives, conceptual framework and previous studies.

1.5 Significance of the study

It is undeniable that for many important aspects of migration, gender matters. Most importantly, gender has become a primary concern to be considered in the mainstream discourse of development and gender perspective has also been adopted by the international organizations such as WTO, World Bank, and UN agencies in the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals. Nearly all of the study on migration has either included both men and women or has concentrated solely on women; nonetheless, gender has not received much emphasis. Moreover, the inequalities between men and women cannot be adequately explained or covered, not even with the information now available from the reports of international organizations that are

working on the issues of migrant workers in Thailand. The empirical studies on Myanmar female migrant workers in the seafood industry are also under-researched meanwhile there are many existing research on female migrant workers in other low-wage sectors, such as the garment industry. About gender issue, most previous research has only explored gender-related challenges in the garment sectors of other countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and ASEAN region, gendered constraints of Myanmar female migrant workers on mobility to Thailand and overall gender discrimination practices in five provinces of Thailand. By seeing this, focusing on the issue of gender inequality in the seafood sector of Thailand is still limited in the current academic studies and the seafood industry which is also one of the low-wage industries should be explored. Therefore, it is significant that there is a dearth of accurate data relating to the experiences of female migrant workers who have been facing gender challenges in the seafood sector.

More importantly, fishing and seafood is the industry where physical abuse and discriminatory practices occur most frequently among labor-intensive workplaces, while women are more likely to experience verbal abuse than men in other fields. At the same time, harsh working conditions can be occurred in the fisheries and seafood sector for migrants in Thailand (Brennan, 2009). Among the various industries in Thailand, this research selects seafood industry that is dominated by the male workers, but requires empirical data attention regarding with gender inequality issue. In order to ensure that women migrant workers within this sector do not face a dead-end when it comes to their career and overall life, it is important to understand the existing prevalent features of gender inequality regarding with their working and living conditions.

Overall, this research aims to understand gender inequality features that exist in Thailand seafood industry. As the main purpose of this study, it primarily explored on gender inequality issue by connecting with migration – a particular focus on Myanmar female migrant workers in the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon province, Thailand. To summarize, this thesis will contribute to academic knowledge of gender inequality with the potential to effectively impact policy experts at policy formulation

processes to reduce gender inequality challenges and to improve the lives of Myanmar female migrant workers in labor-intensive seafood industry, Thailand.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The study was conducted in only Samut Sakhon seafood industrial zone area, hence, ideas of other industrial seafood zones in Thailand and the whole female labor populations will not be captured in the findings. Moreover, due to gender is a sensitive issue for the targeted participants to answer, if the participants are not available to do in-person interviews, I will prepare finding research assistance in advance to do online interviews through using the social media platforms such as Signal or Line group chat and will contact the local labor network to help for family visits if necessary for data collection. Furthermore, my empirical material does not incorporate women migrant workers from other countries, even though they also suffer from many obstacles. My case-study is small-scale and does neither account for various stakeholders, nor for detailed information about all different contexts in Thailand. The sample selected may be small according to the study context and therefore, answers could reflect only part of the reality and the contextual information of the study area may have not fully covered in this study.

1.7 Ethical Considerations of the study

As a researcher, I ensure maximum maintenance of respondents' privacy with full respect by participating as a part of their community. In order to present about my positionality, I am a Myanmar woman and my native language is Burmese and therefore, I can build trust and comfortable relationship by speaking Burmese language with Myanmar female migrant workers in the seafood industry. Such effective communication allowed me to be able to get the reliable empirical data and make sure their answers and experiences about the prevalent features of gender inequality that my thesis mainly explored. Even though I originate from the mainland region of Myanmar, I have become increasingly aware of the hardships faced by marginalized women groups, in terms of inequality and social injustice challenges through my educational and professional journey. Hence, as a female researcher from Myanmar, I am profoundly driven to carry out my research with the aim of creating a positive impact on the lives of the vulnerable women migrant workers.

In accordance with ethical consideration, I assured the interviewees of their anonymity in the study, ensuring that no real names were used to refer to the female participants. Any personal information or history included in the study was done with the consent of the participants. Verbal consent was obtained from all the informants. Women responders were asked in full protection and public safety places on their day off – Sunday so that a rapport may be built without interfering with their daily work. The vulnerable respondents have been requested for personal consent and informed of the study's objectives by explaining that I will keep confidential without releasing any information from the respondents regarding their face profiles, name, work or home location for their safety.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories, Multi-dimensional concepts and Previous studies of Gender Inequality

This chapter explores theoretical approaches on gender inequality, concepts relating with gender inequality, review of previous research articles, academic papers and journals that link to gender inequality, including gender inequality issue and case in labor-intensive workplace, and gender inequality facing Myanmar female migrant workers in Thailand following with different dimensions in labor-intensive workplace. It will find out the gap to explore in this study and at the end of the chapter, this thesis provides a conceptual framework that will be used for the whole study.

2.1 Theoretical approaches on gender inequality

Due to the diversity of concepts, there are several theories of gender inequality, however, the most closely related theory will be used in this study. The study fully incorporated the existing intersectionality theory, conducted empirical research, and used this theory to explain gender inequality, a problem observed in the real world.

Feminist theories on gender inequality

Liberal Feminism

The main claim of liberal feminism is that gender inequality can be eliminated if women are granted the same rights as men through systemic changes in the legal, political, educational, and other reforms (Wolff, 2007). The disparities between the sexes are caused by socially formed patterns of behavior rather than any "natural" distinctions between the sexes. Liberal feminists highlighted the crucial part that marriage and families play in maintaining societal gender norms and stereotypes. They criticized the nuclear family model because they believe it discriminates against women and establishes boundaries by expecting women to stay at home to care for the children and elderly and for males to work outside the home to support the family. They also demonstrated that husbands continue to refuse to help their wives with

domestic tasks even when both of them are working, meaning that women who do pursue careers bear an additional burden of household work in addition to maintaining successful jobs. As a result, even when women join the workforce, the conventional gender roles of men as breadwinners and women as caregivers remain in place.

Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism is a critical paradigm that seeks to systematically investigate and explain gender inequality (Holmstrom, 2002). It alludes to a collection of theoretical frameworks that resulted from the intersection of feminism and Marxism. Feminism views gender inequality as the main form of oppression in patriarchal society, while Marxism addresses a kind of inequality that results from the class dynamics of capitalism. Marxism and feminism both look at the various systematic inequalities that marginalized people, especially women, encounter the experiences of oppression (Ehrenreich, 1976). According to (Hennessy, 1997), women's labor is a socially necessary labor that is essential to the capitalist accumulation of surplus value. The aim of the Marxist feminist framework is to liberate women by changing the circumstances that lead to their exploitation and oppression.

Intersectionality Theory

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, intersectionality as a conceptual framework was introduced to mainstream social sciences. The idea of intersectionality has become very important when discussing gender. The viewpoint of Patricia Hill Collins on intersectionality and the interlocking of oppressive systems has had a significant influence on the study of gender inequality (Bose, 2012). Research on women who endure several forms of oppression has substantially advanced with the emergence of intersectional theory (McCall, 2005). Gender intersects with other social identities and categories, including age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social class.

Intersectionality is a key component of feminist theory, which is the idea that social identities are mutually constitutive of one another. When compared to one group, an intersecting position may be disadvantageous, but advantageous relative to another. The study of how inequality, dominance, and oppression are produced and perpetuated led to the theoretical underpinnings of intersectionality. “The

understanding that the intersections of gender with other social identity aspects serve as the standing point of theory” (Crenshaw, 1991). According to Crenshaw's argument, intersectionality refers to the study of how various forms of oppression, dominance, or discrimination intersect. Hence, intersectionality serves a purpose by offering a critical sort of analysis, enabling people and groups to be looked at from different angles.

Among these aforementioned theories on gender inequality, the intersectionality theory is used to study women migrant workers from different backgrounds and it is the valuable tool to explore how oppressions are experienced simultaneously. It includes other identities into the exclusionary constructions of the woman and highlights because only focusing ‘woman’ alone is not enough in studying gender and gender inequality. Therefore, this study applied the ‘intersectionality theory’ to see how women migrant workers are made more vulnerable in different contexts by different identities and situations. The vulnerability of women migrant workers in labor-intensive workplace, seafood industry, is the best illustration of the intersection of gender, ethnicity, marital status and migration status etc.

2.2 Concepts on gender inequality

Feminization of labor

The phenomenon of women's greater engagement and participation in labor markets around the world since the 1980s is commonly referred to as the "feminization of labor." Whilst several theories have been put up for this pattern, Guy Standing, an economist, first proposed it between 1989 and 1999, as a result of the global regulatory framework established during the Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan administrations (Akorsu, 2018). With flows within East and Southeast Asia having greatly increased, international labor migration has become a more regionalized phenomenon. These cross-border journeys in pursuit of employment are being populated by an increasing number of women, to the point where migration academics have been referring to this trend as the "feminization of labor migration" (Piper, 2003).

Gender Inequality

Defining gender is the first step when we study women's practices and situations in seafood industry. Gender exists as a social identity-marker across a spectrum, intersecting with e.g., race/ethnicity, nationality/citizenship, age, health/ability-status and sexual orientation. Analysis of the extent of disparities present in the modern workplace requires a thorough comprehension of the idea of gender. "In contrast to the biologically established sexual features of men and women, gender is conceptualized as the socially constructed masculine and feminine characteristics, roles, norms, and relationships" (Kågesten, 2016). Therefore, Gender is a social construct that creates hierarchies, and inequalities between societies. Gender-relations are hierarchical and construct power-imbalances at micro (family/household), meso (institutional), and macro (national/international) levels, reinforcing "vulnerabilities and differences due to bias and discrimination, leading to a vicious circle of cumulative disadvantage" (ILO, 2016b:13-14). Therefore, gender can be defined as the set of characteristics, roles and behavior patterns that distinguish women from men which are constructed not biologically but socially and culturally (Gunawardane, 2016).

Gender inequality is a multidimensional concept which is defined in different forms across cultures and countries. It derives not from any inherent biological features of men and women but from three main socio-historical circumstances (Gunawardane, 2016). Sen (2001) defined gender inequality as "not one homogeneous phenomenon, but a collection of disparate and interlinked problems" (Mishra, 2021). Gender inequalities exist in the workforce for example, wage gap between men and women and unequal treatment meted out to women in higher promotions, postings etc. Hence, it can be conceptualized that gender inequality means disparities between individuals or rights groups based on gender or unequal opportunities. Gender equality is critical to development outcomes and gender inequality has a prominent influence that hinders the country's sustainable economic and human growth. Higher rates of gender inequality correlate with a greater risk at country improvement and limit economic and human development which in turns

creates more inequality in a vicious cycle. If development policy and initiatives that consider gender equality is put in place, there will be an inclusive and equal growth.

Gender Discrimination

In the patriarchal culture, socioeconomic class or social segregation as well as gender have a role in the gender discrimination that women encounter. Gender inequality serve as “the foundation for discrimination against women because they place men in positions of authority in the public sphere while placing women in roles that are irrational, emotional, weak, and associated with motherhood” (Ida Rosida&Lestari Rejeki, 2017). Gender inequality and gender discrimination are mutually reinforcing and to bring the concept of gender discrimination, it refers to unfair treatment of someone and presumptions made about them, often based on their gender and the role they should perform in society. However, the different role cause harm and result in the loss of one's rights in life, particularly for women who live in patriarchal cultures. The concept demonstrate how stereotypes, subordination, and violence against women are felt by the female character in the society as a result of discrimination based on gender.

Five faces of oppression

Exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural dominance, and violence are the key characteristics that can be evaluated to comprehend the idea of gender inequality and discrimination. (Young, 1990) explored those five forms of oppression that can illustrate how female migrant workers may lead to face oppression and discrimination in the precarious working conditions of the seafood industry in terms of the low-skilled female labor force.

The ability of oppressed women to express their needs, thoughts, and feelings in daily life is somewhat constrained. The disparity between people's access to wealth and power is referred as exploitation. Transfer of the rewards of physical labor to men and transfer of sexual energy to men are the two components of gender exploitation. In addition, the patriarchal family's institutional structure has also been the focus of gender exploitation and by seeing this, the increasing numbers of women migrant workers may experience certain types of gender exploitation in the modern labor-intensive workplace.

In terms of marginalization, an entire group of people, such as low-skilled female migrant workers, are excluded from contributing to social life and may therefore be exposed to extreme material hardship. Thus, marginalization is unfair because it prevents female workers from using their abilities in ways that are socially defined and acknowledged. Powerlessness is another important factor in understanding discrimination. Also, it denotes a position in the hierarchy of needs that provides little opportunities for women to hone their abilities. The powerlessness has little to no job autonomy, little judgment in work, uncomfortable communication skills—especially in formal or public settings—and do not demand respect.

A dominant group's experience and culture are universalized and made the standard through cultural domination. It alludes to the idea that one group is superior to others in terms of experiences, cultural manifestations, and history. By subjecting the other groups to its dominating norms, the dominant group solidifies its hold on power. As a result, the difference between men and women is generally recreated as inferiority. Women may experience paradoxical oppression in labor-intensive workplaces where they are simultaneously rendered invisible and singled out by stereotypes. Fear is the driving force behind violence, which takes many different forms, including rape, beatings, killings, and harassment of women, people of color, homosexual people, and other marginalized groups. Gender discrimination facing low-skilled female migrant workers can be examined under these classifications that can help us comprehend the gender inequality and discrimination in the precarious employment situations.

Vulnerability

According to (Elson&Pearson, 1981), the rise of the feminine workforce is a result of employers looking for cheap labor, which has resulted in labor exploitation and pushed women in vulnerable conditions. Hence, vulnerability is “the result of gender inequalities and hierarchies that prevent the individual from satisfying basic needs, accessing resources, and exercising their rights” (Bankoff, 2002). In terms of vulnerabilities of Myanmar migrant workers, the state of origin, Myanmar, neither provide full protection for women nor have strong collaboration with Thailand. Significantly, female migrant workers from Myanmar are an especially susceptible

and exploitable source of low-cost labor in the excessive and precarious workforce, including frequent overtime, unsanitary housing arrangements, and arbitrary wage deductions.

Social Exclusion

In the policy discourse, promoting social inclusion have arisen widely and social inclusion is mainly aimed at ensuring that women, as a previously disadvantaged group, have equal opportunities and resources to participate in the social, political, cultural and economic spheres of life. However, in the context that the study will explore, the issue of social exclusion is important to highlight gender inequality concept and to understand whether female migrant workers feel excluded from inclusivity or other benefits. More precisely, in accordance with the conceptual definition from (UN, 2016), social exclusion refers to a situation where individuals face limitations in their ability to engage fully in economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of life. The central aspect of almost all definitions of social exclusion is the absence of active involvement in society. This lack of participation can be attributed to various factors, such as inadequate access to essential resources like income, employment, land, housing, as well as vital services like education and healthcare, which are fundamental for overall well-being.

2.3 Gender inequality issue and case in labor-intensive workplace

(Durbin & Fleetwood, 2010) examined gender inequality in employment with the goal of exploring the relationship between the causes of gender inequality and policies designed to address it. The research methodology is based on a theoretical reflective approach that drew the several measures of gender inequality across 26 countries in the UK and European context. The authors refer to the fact from the debates in Equal Opportunities International that highlights that even if the gender pay gap were eliminated, many other aspects of gender inequality in employment would continue to exist. In the context of their findings, they point out hiring decision processes in the workforce that may cause a negative impact on women employees. For example, pregnant women are often not welcomed in the workplace because recruitment decisions sometimes change to women who have children, or who intend to have them because employers believe that these women are likely to add the extra

costs and inconvenience to the organization. In addition, the authors cited another major cause of gender inequality which is “gendered division of labor” that results from gender stereotypes in society at large. When paid employment is combined with unpaid domestic work, a double burden falls on the backs of women, meaning that domestic responsibilities are the constraints to the jobs of female employees. In conclusion, the authors displayed that the policies that have been implemented about gender equality have not produced in the successful results and recommended to focus on the root causes first before policy implementation to eliminate gender inequality.

(Bobbitt-Zeher, December 2011) examined gender discrimination in the workplace in the context of gender inequality by linking gender stereotypes and institutional policies in the different work environments. The author interviewed women about their experiences with workplace discrimination using 219 narratives from sex discrimination cases at the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. The researcher organized the narratives with a summary of the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of discrimination in each case file and used a standardized coding system to systematically extract detailed information about contexts and dynamics. She argued that gender discrimination is related to stereotypes that define women as less invested workers and sexual objects, and that view women's characteristics as incompatible with specific jobs in the organizational context. The fact that workplace policies and practices are highly conducive to discrimination is also considered in her research analysis. Therefore, her analysis proved that organizational policies and practices should be considered as the primary mechanisms for how gendered assumptions reinforce the discriminatory outcomes for women in the workplace. She concluded that gender discrimination results from a combination of cultural beliefs based on gender stereotypes and structural policies that affect women and men in a different way. Her findings therefore primarily examined how discrimination evolves in terms of structural and cultural gender dimensions, and despite organizations focus on more gender-neutral methods, it showed that they are still selective policies that disadvantage women.

(Ridgeway, 1997) has similarly conducted the extensive research on gender inequality in the workplace, citing beliefs about gender status and sex categorization

in organizational settings as an underlying factor that causes a variety of gender inequality effects. Bureaucratic politics within organizational structures and institutionalized practices related to gender status continue to create inequality because men are given more favourable positions than women in the workplace. In addition, she pointed out the fact that gender status beliefs create expectations for rewards that favour men over women of equal status. Because of these beliefs, men may react negatively when they are offered the same reward as a woman. In conclusion, the author recommended that interactional gender mechanisms can act as an invisible hand that rewrites gender inequality in the future.

(Mamun, A. A., & Hoque, M, 2022) used a qualitative method to identify the impact of paid employment on the empowerment of female garment workers in Bangladesh and conducted semi-structural individual interviews with 27 female workers who work in the Readymade garment - RMG sector. From the research findings, it is evident that paid employment in the RMG sector has a positive impact on women workers because, as their responses, they were able to save money with the income from working in the sector and felt fortunate to be able to provide money for their families. With the increasement of economic capacity, they have the confidence to make household decisions and life choices related to marriage, family, children's education, and well-being. On other hand, however, there are still some constraints among some respondents. It was found that some women still need to inform their husbands about their salary income and that they have struggles and difficulties in doing household chores alone, which described that social norms regarding household work remain a crucial challenge for women. In addition, people in their villages were still giving negative attitudes to female garment workers because of the social stigma about women working outside. Therefore, this research study highlights that women's empowerment through paid employment can be an effective change if an enabling women-friendly and respectful working environment is certainly established.

(Gunawardane, 2016) studied gender inequality in Sri Lanka by examining in the areas of education, labor market, unemployment and politics and using secondary data gathered from a literature review. The objective of this study was to examine how gender inequality manifest itself in different dimensions in Sri Lankan context.

The author poignantly described that the marginalization of women is a global phenomenon by explaining theoretical perspectives on gender inequality including functionalism, conflict theory and feminism. Thanks to the support of government for women's empowerment, because of successive governments' support on women empowerment, the status of women in Sri Lanka has improved in recent decades. However, the findings of this study showed that poor women in Sri Lanka are still facing several problems due to unequal factors in political participation, labor force participation and decision-making process.

(Nair, 2019) examined female labour in ASEAN by mainly focusing on gender inequality and work. Due to the growth of labour-intensive industries in the ASEAN region, many women were taken from home and encouraged to enter the workforce during the 1980-1990 period. However, the author argued that men had more opportunity to obtain higher-skilled jobs while women continued to work in the production line with low wages and encountered constraints in the workplace. The wage gap between men and women and domestic house care responsibilities still set on the back of women. The author strongly summarised some of the challenges faced by female workers in ASEAN countries under four categories: education, occupational bias, impact of technology and political will. To bring related argument for gender inequality in the workplace, she mentioned gender segregation and occupational bias against women in ASEAN countries.

(Marshall, 1985) conducted the exploratory study - a cross-sectional investigation of the impact of industrialization on women economic participation in 60 less-developed countries with a per capita Gross National Products (GNPs) of less than \$1000 in 1970. The objectives of this study are to offer comparative data on the general situation of women in less-developed countries, to establish a relationship between societal development and the status of women into the study of development and to make observations concerning the conceptual gender stratification. She explained that industrialization has facilitated a dramatic improvement in female participation in the labour market, further developing the traditional structure in less developed countries and providing an opportunity for women to break themselves free from the patriarchal family and obtain employment opportunities. However, women

workers are still found into low-paying, low-status occupations in a gender-segregated labour market that continues to perpetuate women's subordination to male breadwinners.

To summarize the abovementioned arguments, all authors have posited gender inequality faced by women at labour force. Women workers are seen as a vulnerable position and not welcome in the workplace. For example, pregnant women are often not welcomed in the workplace. In addition, paid employment is combined with unpaid domestic work, imposing a double burden on the backs of women. As yet another argument, organizational structures and institutionalized practices related to gender status continue to create inequality because men are given more favourable positions than women in the workplace. Moreover, women workers face gender discrimination, gender-division of labour, low-paying, low-status occupations in a gender-segregated labour market that continues to perpetuate women's subordination to male breadwinners. Considering the various factors that drive gender inequality in the labor force market in different countries around the world, it is undeniable that gender inequality is still persisting as a critical phenomenon in diverse places, evolving in terms of structural and cultural gender dimensions. Therefore, the opportunities of females are clearly affected by gender inequality challenges in the labor-intensive industries.

2.4 Gender inequality facing Myanmar female migrant workers in Thailand

(Ruth Pearson & Kyoko Kusakabe, 2012) demonstrated the complexity of Burmese migrants' cross-border care-strategies in the paper "Who Cares". Researchers from the Karen (one of Burma's minority ethnic groups) were involved in the study, which was done among Burmese female industrial employees in the three regions between 2007 and early 2011. It examines Burmese women working in Thailand's factories in order to protect both the generational reproduction of their children and their own labor force through life-history interviews and surveys. Despite the unfavorable social and working conditions, many people remain committed to staying in Thailand. According to the research, further barriers to women workers' mobility include the requirement for long work hours, the difficulty of changing occupations, and a variety of deductions from nominal pay for the

purpose of paying for work permits, fines, and other costs. Women are viewed as invisible and ignored in social policy and provisioning, as well as in civic and political rights, as a result of the limitations and challenges. This demonstrates the "gendered limits on their mobility, autonomy, and ability to improve the value of their labor" that Burmese manufacturing workers experience.

(Sunee, Patcharaphan & Natthapon, 2018) looked at the reasons why Burmese women migrate to Thailand and how these conflicts affect Burmese women's access to justice in the study on Burmese Migrant Women and Access to Justice in Thailand. Data for the qualitative study was gathered through in-depth interviews with 120 people, including 60 NGO workers and 60 Burmese migrant women, as well as police officers, lawyers, and judges. According to the study, poverty, military rule, conflicts involving ethnic minorities, and violations of human rights were the main reasons why Burmese women left their country for Thailand. Then, Burmese migrant women could experience a variety of negative consequences in Thailand, including forced labor, exploitation, sexual harassment, prostitution, and inaccessible justice. Their inability to access the court system and the lack of their right to justice made it difficult to combat those harmful impacts. The main cause of the restriction on the right to justice is illegal immigration to Thailand, which puts people in a difficult situation due to the high cost of living, financial constraints, inevitable migration and legalization, and official charge. In certain occasions, agencies, including immigration officers, overcharged or offered large amounts of bribery. Thus, the study recommended that cooperation between the Thai and Burmese governments be sought in order to address the difficulties because Burmese migrant women in Thailand are vulnerable and lack access to opportunities and human rights.

(Yongyuth, Raphaella & Khanittha, 2010) examined on female migrant workers from Myanmar in the publication called "Exploitation and Discrimination Experience of Migrant Workers in Five Provinces, Thailand". A total of 607 samples were gathered in the target provinces, and the results showed that more than 48% of the sample had experienced a salary reduction without prior warning, 21% had gotten a late payment, and 17% had received no compensation for the task they had completed. This study makes a major case for several gender inequality issues like

gender exploitation and abuse. According to the survey, the majority of pregnant employees were permitted to hold their jobs throughout specific times; however, some pregnant women apparently experienced maternity issues and were fired as a result. Particularly, individuals employed in the fishing industry received the fewest physical examinations. In addition, Samut Sakhon Province faced the highest level of gender abuse; the majority of participants there reported having been subjected to pay reductions, unfair pay, and abuse from their Thai manager or supervisor.

(Dahlquist, 2017) described how Burmese female migrant workers are affected by complicated social relations and power dynamics in Thailand's seafood industry in the article "Like Machines in Thailand's Seafood Industry", by illuminating the uneven and oppressive material-symbolic repercussions. More women chose paid employment, but they continued to be underpaid and in charge of childcare. In addition to informal, non-standard, insecure work within global supply chains (GSC) and production patterns, labor rights violations allow Thailand's seafood sectors to produce inexpensive, high-quality goods with significant profit margins. The study used a mixed, qualitative data-creation technique to conduct semi-structured individual and group interviews with Burmese female seafood processors in Samut Sakhon, Thailand. The investigation revealed that systemic judgments of value that are replicated at the micro, meso, and macro levels significantly influence the experiences of female migrant workers from Burma. These experiences shape, replicate, and subject women's labor to complicated undervaluation. By highlighting the fragility, poverty, and marginalization of Burmese seafood workers, the author brought attention to the lack of awareness of the intricate interactions between the racialized gender elements of precarious and underpaid productive employment.

2.5 Different dimensions on gender inequality in labor-intensive workplace

Gender awareness to know how gender inequality exists on legal, economic, social, and cultural dimensions in low-paid workforce are examined.

2.5.1 Political/Legal Dimension

International legal Frameworks

Gender equality has gained in prominence as a result of international agreements and organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank. One example of the promotion of equal rights for women and men is the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEADAW), which was adopted by the UN Assembly in 1979. It defines “discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (UN, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1979). The International Labor Organization (ILO) also protects women's rights to safe working conditions at the workplace or at home and the fifth of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," refers to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990) commonly referred to as the Migrants Rights Convention, is the most comprehensive international agreement on the rights of all migrants and the members of their families. It outlines the responsibilities of the states that host them, welfare, and rights of migrant workers regardless of their status. The agreement primarily addresses “nondiscrimination, fundamental human rights, and migrant rights for migrants in a regular situation. Regardless of “their sex, race, color, language, religion or conviction, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, nationality, age, economic position, property, marital status, birth or other status” (UNWomen, 2021), migrant workers and their families are protected from all forms of discrimination and their rights shall be secured.

National Legal Frameworks

Thailand signed a MOU with Myanmar in 2003 to ensure a channel for regular migration that migrants are officially registered. However, up until recently, only a

small proportion of migrants have entered Thailand under the MOU. Due to the complicated, time-consuming, increasingly restrictive and expensive MOU processes, many Myanmar migrant workers enter Thailand irregularly (Ministry of Labor, 2022). In addition, although Myanmar female migrant workers are covered under the same labor protection laws as Thai workers, they are still excluded from protections under the labor laws to engage with the broader social and political structures (Dahlquist, 2017). The different attitudes and perceptions around women migrant workers as women and as migrants manifest in multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (ILO, 2019). Therefore, Myanmar migrant women are exposed to dual vulnerability, as migrants and as women.

In accordance with Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017), section 27 describes that “gender equality between men and women should be included in legal protections to prevent discrimination on the grounds of origin, race, language, sex, age, disability, physical or health condition, personal status, economic and social standing, religious belief, education or political views” (UN Women, 2021). According to the new Labor Protection Act (No. 7) B.E. 2562 (2019), it emphasizes the same basis of rights and protection of migrant workers as Thai nationals. Under such new Labor Protection Act, it can be remarkably noted that a pregnant female employee is entitled to maternity leave of not more than ninety-eight days for each pregnancy. Gender equality in workplaces (e.g., equal opportunities for employment, equal wages and freedom from sexual exploitation, harassment, and abuse) are also provided under this Act (UN Women, 2021).

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol were ratified by Thailand in 1985 and 2000, respectively. Due to Thailand's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), all employees, regardless of nationality, are protected from discrimination during pregnancy under Sections 41 (Chapter 3) and 59 (Chapter 5) of the Labor Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998). Furthermore, it is not permitted to fire someone for being pregnant or on maternity leave. Pregnant employees from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Myanmar can receive prenatal and postnatal care under

social security in Thailand (ILO, 2021). Thailand also endorsed the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) in 1995 and vowed to adhere to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 (UNWomen). Men and women "shall enjoy equal rights," according to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017), but it cannot yet guarantee the rights of workers to organize and protection from discrimination, and women migrant workers are still underrepresented and at risk of discrimination and violence due to their gender, migration status, ethnicity, and the precarious nature of their work. Since their jobs are not covered by national legislation, many women migrant workers in low-skilled and informal employment face disparities and challenges accessing development opportunities, which restrict their access to decent employment and job promotion.

Even though the aforementioned laws and agreements provide some protection for women migrant workers, in practice, it is still difficult for them to live in safety in Thailand. The protections already in place might not be sufficient to meet all of the needs and inequalities of women migrant workers. As a result, discrimination and violence against women migrant workers may still occur both at work and in the home. Therefore, although it can be said that national laws and policies seem to protect women migrant workers, Female migrant workers are in a precarious legal position.

2.5.2 Economic, Social and Cultural Dimension

In Myanmar society, Myanmar women are likely to carry a dual burden of work, such as housework, and childcare as well as follow the decisions of male husband or male father about household administration. About migration to work, many instances of rape and other sexual abuse against women by the Myanmar military have been documented by non-governmental organizations and military personnel are immune from punishment in these cases. One issue in particular that should be taken into account as a prominent problem for migration and as a violation of migrant rights is gender-based violence or abuse. There are some claims that women are the main victims, and there is unquestionably abundant evidence that violence against women occurs (Caouette&others, 2000). For instance, a study at the Mae Tao Clinic, which assists migrants close to the Thai-Myanmar border, detailed

multiple instances of migrant males physically and verbally abusing their wives. Alcohol use and financial arguments were the two top causes mentioned by (Maung&Belton, 2005). Women are more likely to suffer verbal abuse at the hands of male employers, husbands, or senior employees.

In terms of employment and income, the ILO claims that women are overrepresented in low-paying, informal parts of the supply chain, which includes irregular or unequal employment. They are less likely to have secure employment, receive lower pay, have fewer maternity rights, and more childcare options than males. Regarding with family and household, women have to take the responsibility of taking the entire burden of household chores and childcare, apart from the income-generation and therefore, they are left on the shore to manage a double burden of paid and unpaid work (PlanInternational_in_Asia, 2018). In terms of social network supports, women migrant workers typically have little to no leverage in negotiations and few to no possibilities to build networks in order to get information and social support (IOMGenderReport, 2009). Consequently, they are particularly susceptible to discrimination, economic and sexual exploitation, and acts of harassment, intimidation, and threat.

In terms of cultural obstacles in labor-intensive workplaces, gender stereotypes and stigma limit the types of jobs that women can do, among employment impediments. Due to the fact that women and girls are mostly expected to conduct unpaid care work in their households, societal norms have a significant impact on the options available to women in the job. Women are frequently expected to carry out reproductive tasks or other delicate care-related duties (such as cleaning, cooking, and laundry), and their labor appears to be undervalued in comparison to that of men (UNWomen, 2021). To illustrate this, there are some prejudice and cultural segregation on women migrant workers in low-wage jobs including seafood industrial sector. There is a blatant gender stereotype and gendered standard that says males should work on boats and women should engage only in the work of land or shore because employers may believe that men are stronger than women and that only men should work as seafarers (Plan-International, 2018). The seafood industry in both developed and developing countries is ruled by the “patriarchy paradigm, where

hierarchy, authority, power, competition, development, control of human and natural resources” (Monfort, 2015) and domination is shaped by males to their benefit. In this environment, the voices of men are valued more than the voices of women remain quiet (FAO, 2012). It does not mean that women do not take part in productive or industrial operations. They do, but in disadvantaged conditions.

Taking into account the perspectives of previous study and multidimensional concepts of gender inequality, it conveys that gender inequality is a complex and multi-dimensional concept that should be addressed as a top priority in the development debates. Considering the detrimental factors of gender inequality from the concepts and literature, existing scholarship orients me to move beyond demonstrating that gender inequality exists in garment industries and to further investigate on the other labor-intensive industry – seafood sector. Therefore, many studies in the existing literature have established the existence of gender inequality in labor-intensive, low-paying workplaces across the globe; however, relatively few studies have looked into the issue in the seafood sector, which is predominately occupied by men, particularly in Thailand. Research on female migrant workers in Samut Sakhon Province's seafood industry was conducted in the past, but the results may no longer be valid. Therefore, the extensive review of the literature revealed a scarcity of empirical research looking at Myanmar women migrant workers in Thailand's seafood industry.

Importantly, the issue of gender inequality linking with migrant workers has yet to receive systematic attention. Meanwhile, much attention has been given to the general concerns of migrant workers in the context of Thailand industry, but, exploring the dominant features of gender inequality on Myanmar female migrant workers in seafood industry has been typically ignored by the literature and there is insufficient understanding of female seafood-workers' burdens as well. Therefore, the focus of this study is narrowed down to explore more specifically the prevalent features of gender inequality in the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand and identified a substantial part of addressing the effective information to reducing gender inequality by assuming that vulnerable Myanmar female migrant workers are crucially affected by gender inequality.

2.6 Conceptual Framework with multidimensional concepts of Gender Inequality

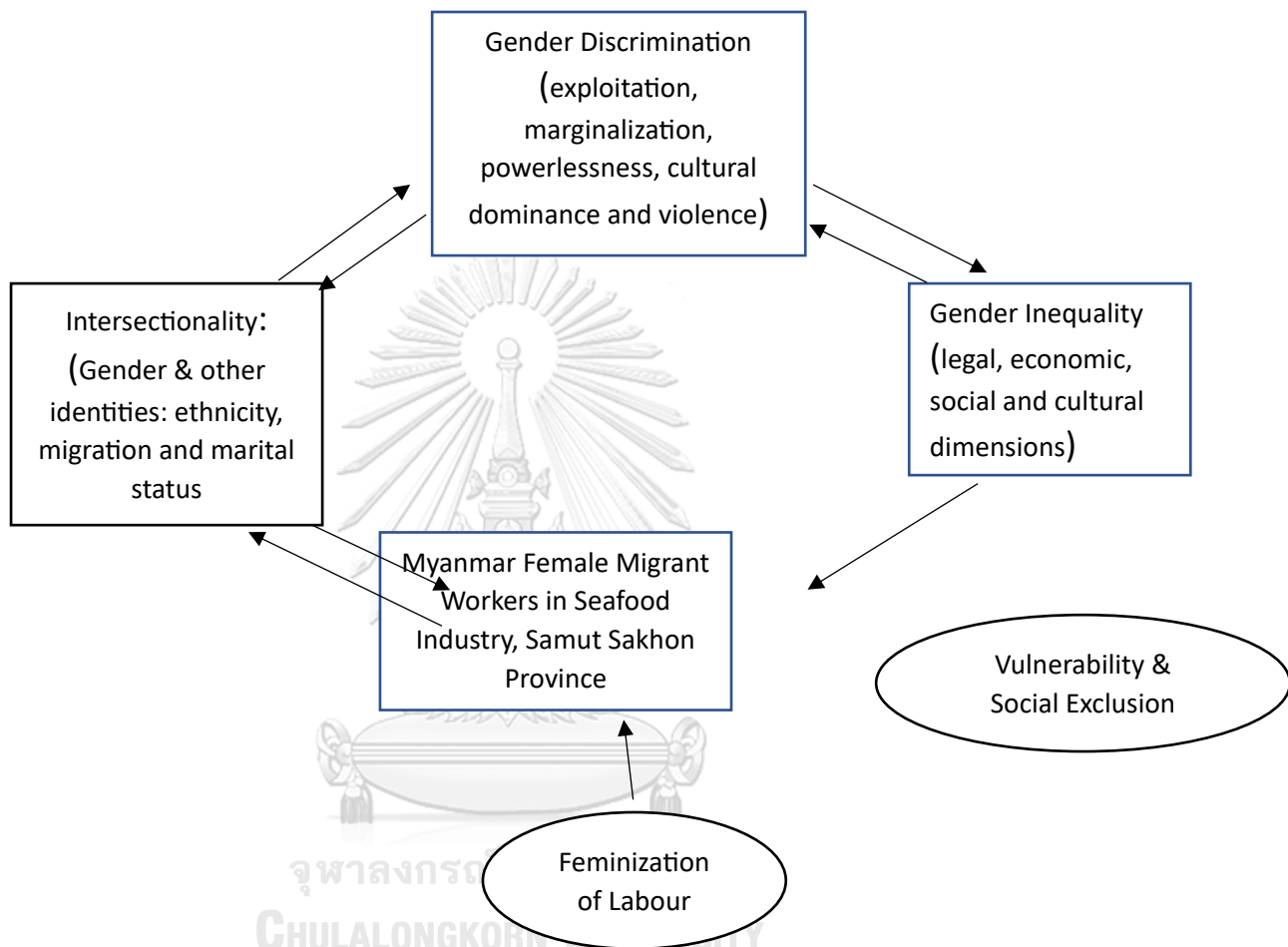


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework Diagram

As shown in the diagram, this study applied the intersectionality theory as a foundational (baseline) theory to clarify the occurrence of “gender inequality” along with gender discrimination, facing Myanmar female migrant workers in seafood industry. The diagram shows that in terms of feminization process, many employers in labor-intensive industries can benefit for production targets from the workforce of a great numbers of women migrant workers, “flexible and cheap labor”. For the research 1, when gender intersects with other different forms of identities such as

ethnicity, and migration and marital status, it resulted discrimination in five faces of oppression including exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural dominance and violence and pushed women migrant workers in vulnerable condition that prevent the women from satisfying equal treatments at risk of multiple intersections of discrimination based on gendered identities. For the research question 2, by looking at the indicators – legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions, the research can be able to answer the features of gender inequality that exist in the seafood industry in terms of unequal access to decent work and life in labor-intensive industry. Thus, the conceptual framework model is able to support this study in exploring the gender inequality issue in seafood industry, Samut Sakhon province, Thailand.



CHAPTER 3

Female Migrant Workers in the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon Province and their Life Stories

This chapter of the thesis will begin by presenting an overview and introduction of the research site, Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand. Subsequently, the focus will shift to examining the experiences and life stories of female migrant workers in the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon Province. This exploration will be accomplished through four case studies. The distinct cases of 4 women migrant workers are selected among 10 female participants, because they are more vulnerable and significant than the other 6 female participants. According to the observation - unique interview findings and vulnerability extent, based on different backgrounds and identities that include ethnicity, migration status and marital status, 2 from formal and other 2 from informal working sector are selected: Case 1 – Bamar single formal worker, Case 2 – Bamar married formal worker with a kid, Case 3 – Bamar pregnant informal worker with a kid and Case 4 – Mon single mother with a kid from informal sector. In addition, those life stories are mentioned in order to realize gender discrimination and gender inequality barriers in both of the public and private spaces as well as to understand their life experiences that show how female migrant workers have been dealing with the gender-based challenges in their lives. This section also shows the importance of women empowerment in the community, in coping with unequal burdens among women migrant workers.

3.1 Introduction of Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand

Samut Sakhon province is situated, approximately 40 kilometers away from Bangkok and merely 5 kilometers from the Gulf of Thailand's coastline. The total land area of Samut Sakhon spans around 870 square kilometers and in 1704, a canal was constructed in the area, leading to a name change to "Mahachai." However, it was subsequently renamed "Samut Sakhon" by King Rama IV (Barrow, 2022). Notably, Samut Sakhon is a province which is renowned as the center of fishing and seafood trade in Thailand, stands out for its significant population of Myanmar migrant workers. It is the province that is popular for its seafood industry. According to information from the Samut Sakhon Provincial Employment Office (2023), it was

found that there are 276,178 migrants who have been permitted to work in Samut Sakhon Province. Myanmar migrants comprise the remarkable 244,759 numbers, making up 91% of the total migrant worker population. Out of 244,759, it is estimated that approximately 70% of the total Myanmar migrant workers are female.

In recent years, the Thai seafood industry has faced growing the notable enhancements, especially within the larger, more export-oriented processing factory sector (Oxfam, 2021). Especially, Samut Sakhon Province produces a lot of income for the nation from the seafood industry due to the majority of manufacturers in Samut Sakhon Province belong to the fishing and seafood processing industries. Therefore, the area is one of the world's largest fish and seafood industries and the sector is of vital importance to Thailand economy. Its GDP consistently ranks in the top ten when compared to other provinces in Thailand. Being the largest coastal province in terms of seafood production, job opportunities and income from the seafood industry draws a significant number of migrant workers, primarily from Myanmar.

The fishery sectors employ around 100,000 migrant workers in approximately 3,000 factories (Karnjanatawe, 2012). In Samut Sakhon's seafood production area, there are labor and migrant rights organizations that include the Labor Rights Promotion Networks (LPN) and the Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN) which are working for Myanmar migrant workers in order to actively advocate for the labor rights and opportunities of the migrant workers. In addition, Samut Sakhon area reveals a diverse population in terms of ethnicity, primarily comprising of migrant workers. Among them include Mon, Burmese, Karen and Shan women migrant workers from Myanmar. Among the migrant population, Mon ethnic group is a significant presence occupying the largest numbers in the workplace of the seafood industry.

In the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon Province, women migrant workers are a vital but underappreciated group, making up half of the industry's workforce across fisheries, aquaculture, seafood processing, and related services. Their contributions are mostly invisible, and they tend to be concentrated in low-paying land-based jobs while men dominate higher-paid offshore and industrial fishing roles. The processing

of mixed fish or shrimp, as well as tuna or mackerel, is a typical activity in the seafood industry, and except fish catching or offshore activity, the hands of female migrant workers play a significant role in cleaning fish at the pier or market, de-heading, deveining, peeling shrimp, freezing and packing seafood for export and selling in the local markets. Unfortunately, these jobs are generally poorly compensated and receive little recognition for their contribution to the economy and employment.

Although the Thai government shows a growing awareness of their isolation and vulnerability to exploitation and violence, there is little data available documenting the realities and challenges under the questions of what features of gender inequality they are facing. In recent years, the seafood industry has faced criticism for unfair labor practices and the exploitation for its predominantly female migrant workers. In order to suggest state management direction that would promote better living conditions for women migrant workers, Samut Sakhon will be focused as a special area that requires empirical attention.



Figure 3 Map of Samut Sakhon Province (Source: Patrick Lepetit)

3.2 Disheartening experiences of female migrant workers in the seafood industry

Yee Yee

A 30-year-old single Bamar female migrant worker, who is originally from Min Hla City, Magway Region, Myanmar. She is currently staying in Samut Sakhon, with her elder sister who is also a migrant worker. She has worked for 5 years at the Thai Union seafood factory but later moved to the Unicord seafood factory a year ago due to feeling over exhausted. Her responsibilities at the factory include cleaning fish, drying seafood, and packaging. She entered Thailand through the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) channel and is also a volunteer at MWRN (Migrant Worker Rights Network). She receives her daily wages once every 15 days or twice per month. Her working time from 8 am to 5 pm, six days a week. She earns a regular daily wage of around 363 THB without overtime fees, and her wage is not usually cut except for medical insurance deductions per month.

Regarding employment conditions, there are distinct roles assigned to men and women in her workplace. Women workers primarily engage in tasks such as fish cleansing, drying, freezing, stamping, and packaging, while men are responsible for lifting and placing raw seafood boxes. Each role or line in the factory is supervised by one worker leader who oversees around 30 workers. The reason why she left her previous work is mainly due to verbally abusive actions and strict pressures from the factory leaders. At both previous and current workplaces, men predominantly occupy top-level positions in the factory and according to her opinion, she feels that women are not given yet priority level and equal attention compared to men workers. Although there is no unequal wage between men and women in the same position, she mentioned that there is a gender bias and lack of recognition for the capabilities and contributions of women in the workplace.

Moreover, promotions are not easily attainable for regular Myanmar woman migrant workers in the factory. To advance to a higher level in the quality control (QC) section, she would need to be proficient in speaking Thai. Exploitation and violence are prevalent in her workplace. They exert intense pressure on workers to exceed the daily target of seafood processing without considering working hours. She has also experienced marginalized attitude from her Thai colleagues, who attribute the

rising number of COVID-19 cases happen due to an increase of Myanmar migrant workers in the Thai industry. Hence, negative and discriminatory perspectives already exist towards Myanmar women migrant workers.

Regarding with her living conditions, she usually sends remittances to her parents in Myanmar on a monthly basis. However, due to increased rental prices in Samut Sakhon, she struggles to send a stable amount to her family. Despite being a single woman without the heavy burden of marriage, she cannot use her money for herself because she must prioritize sending remittance to her aging and unhealthy parents, placing a significant financial strain on her. It is disheartening to witness her inability to manage her own money for personal needs. She is willing to work overtime to earn extra income, but currently, there are no overtime opportunities in the factories. Additionally, the limited rest hours during working days have resulted in back pain, raising concerns about her health.

Despite experiencing emotional stress and unfair treatments within her working conditions, she copes with the verbal abuse and discriminatory experiences at work by speaking to her elder sister. It seems that she feels hesitate to speak out or report her problems at work. It demonstrates the importance of having a supportive network, particularly within the context of family relationships. Sharing her feelings with a trusted family member helps her alleviate the emotional burden associated with her unfair working environment.

For gender discrimination and inequality challenges, she demands those practices and attitudes to completely disappear in the future. Women are also human beings and deserve to get equal opportunity and equal positive perspective like men at work. According to her opinions on laws and regulations of the migrant workers, she still does not believe that the MOU workers are under full protection of laws.

Mee Mee

Case 2 is about a 38-year-old married woman, from Magway Region, who has been working in Pataya seafood factory as a MOU worker for five years. In her role at the seafood factory, she works in the fish cleansing department, specifically removing blood from fish and the daily wage she receives for her work is 353 THB. During this

time, she has been grappling with severe financial difficulties. The lack of overtime opportunities at the factory, coupled with the additional expenses of her five-month-old baby, has made her daily life extremely challenging. Recently, her husband also encountered a situation where he was apprehended by the police due to incomplete documentation process. Despite her limited finances, she managed to secure his release by borrowing 10,000 THB to give the authorities. Due to such financial constraints, she is unable to send money back to her parents in Myanmar. With her husband who is currently unemployed, she bears the sole financial responsibility for her family, leaving no room to use her income for personal needs.

Within the workplace, Myanmar women migrant workers are subjected to verbal criticism and unfair treatment as compared to men. She has had first-hand experiences of discriminatory practices at her work. Within her pregnancy period, she was strictly monitored when she needed to use the restroom, and if it exceeds 15 minutes, the supervisors reprimanded her using various justifications. In addition, the factory leaders frequently shout and yell at her, creating a hostile work environment. When it came to maternity leave, she was only granted 45 days of wages out of the mandated 90-day leave, falling short of receiving the full maternity benefits she deserved. Despite facing excessive workloads and abusive practices from leaders, she chose to remain patient and did not speak out her concerns, as she wishes to maintain her employment in the factory, inadvertently perpetuating inequality and limiting access to equal opportunities and rights.

In her personal life, she experiences a heavy and unequal workload, leaving her with little freedom. Financial burdens often lead to conflicts with her jobless husband who does not contribute equally to household chores when she returns from work. In her view, she believes that pregnant women migrant workers should have their rights upheld without unnecessary barriers. In the workplace, they should be granted sufficient rest time and treated with kindness, while restrictions should be minimized. She believes it would be beneficial to establish more women affairs committees or offices in the future.

Tin Tin

A 30-year-old Bamar pregnant woman migrant worker from Mon State, Myanmar, has been residing in Thailand for approximately 15 years, initially entering the country through an illegal channel. Eventually, she regularized her status and found employment in the formal seafood sector first but later moved to work in the informal sector - the onshore/market area after getting married and having her first child. During interview, she multitasked, doing her side job to earn additional income and taking care of her household responsibilities. Meanwhile she was talking her life story that filled with extreme difficulties, she became emotional, and tears welled up in her eyes.

She works in the market zone, selecting and categorizing seafood, primarily prawns. Unlike the fixed working hours in a factory, workers in the informal sector have more flexibility. If they complete their assigned tasks quickly and meet the employer's daily targets, they can finish early and return home. Typically, work begins as early as 3 am and continues until completion. She earns a daily wage of 340 THB and engages in a side hustle selling street food to supplement her income. She faces the issue of debt even she is working every day without official holidays or sufficient rest. Moreover, in the informal sector, the pregnant women migrant workers are not entitled to the maternity benefits afforded to factory workers. So, if she does not go to work, she will not be able to save money for the maternity period. Advancement or salary increases at work are not easily attainable for her and in her workplace, there is a wage discrepancy between men and women, with men earning a slightly higher wage. Especially, most male counterparts get more opportunity for wage promotion based on the belief that men are physically stronger and can work more effectively than women. Discriminatory practices and favouritism also exist in her workplace, with employers showing bias towards workers they are familiar with, but she refrains from reporting her problems due to the fear of discomfort at work. She also faced discrimination and exclusion from the majority group at work. The majority group who are Thai nationals or major dominant ethnic workers, often excluded and discouraged her in common activities.

In her personal life, she struggles with an unsupportive relationship with her husband, who does not share the financial burdens, even during her current pregnancy. Despite her exhaustion from the day's work, she must still prepare food for her husband and child. In addition, she expresses her deep-rooted feelings of unfairness and inequality, that make her difficult to persevere. Whenever she attempts to discuss the unjust situations with her husband, she often faces verbal abuse and dismissiveness. She wants to get emotional support from her husband, to openly discuss each other. If he could truly understand the challenges of a working wife, their relationship would improve, and some of the burdens could be shared. Worst of all, her husband thinks that household chores and childcare are primarily wife's responsibilities. While she is extremely tired during pregnancy, he continued with his daily activities: playing games, resting and socializing with friends over tea or alcohol.

To deal with stressful unequal burdens within paid and unpaid work in her life, due to the fear of facing discomfort in the workplace, she chooses not to report her problems at work. Additionally, whenever she tries to discuss the unfair situations with her husband, she frequently experiences verbal abuse and dismissive behaviour. However, there are occasions when she opens her difficulties to her supportive female friends living near her, who provide comfort and some relief. Despite facing financial difficulties and unequal responsibilities in her life, her friends always help to lend her money, ensuring to meet daily basic needs and receive necessary medical care for her unborn baby. In addition, she advocates for women's rights and gender equality within the migrant worker community. She desires greater empathy and understanding from men regarding the unequal burdens women face in their daily lives. She calls for the elimination of societal norms that perpetuate women's subordinate roles and highlights the need for maternity benefits and support for women in the informal seafood sector. Overall, her life is marked by complex emotions, financial hardships, and limited options. She strives to support her family but faces numerous unequal challenges as a pregnant migrant worker in the informal sector, navigating through a male-dominated society.

Khin Khin

A 34-year-old Mon ethnic single mother with a kid, has been residing in Samut Sakhon for approximately 16 years. She arrived as a teenager through an illegal channel and initially worked in the seafood industry for over 10 years. After acquiring a basic education level and developing proficiency in the Thai language, she got an opportunity to work in the quality control (QC) department where only a limited number of Myanmar migrant workers were employed. However, due to health issues and the inability to work night shifts, she had to leave her job and currently works as an informal labourer in the market area. Despite aspirations for education, she put her dreams aside to support her family in Myanmar. She supports her parents in Myanmar and saves money for her son's future, taking on the responsibility of all family expenses. During interview, she was overcoming with tears and could not stop crying. Her decision to become a single mother is influenced by gender inequality and the lack of support from her ex-husband, who engaged in domestic violence and misused her income. Her ex-husband never understood the daily burdens she carried. He used her income for his personal matters and did domestic violence during their arguments. As she is unable to endure these unequal, and violent experiences, she chose to become a single mother.

In her previous job in the quality control section, she experienced targeted aggression from certain male Thailand co-workers in similar positions. Despite being capable of performing the same tasks, they undermined her abilities and held negative views towards her, suggesting that she was unworthy of being there. She faced exclusion from group work and activities and was subjected to constant scrutiny, with her mistakes at work being singled out. Currently, in the market area, her tasks involve dividing shrimps and assisting in the sale of shrimp products. Unlike in formal factory settings, there are no specific minimum wage in the informal sector. She earns a daily wage of approximately 350 THB. Her status as a single mother becomes a vulnerability that others can exploit. As a single mother working in the informal seafood sector, she encounters various forms of discrimination from multiple groups, including her employer, colleagues, and society. As she is a single mother and also woman migrant worker from Myanmar, men in both her personal and

professional environments tend to look down on her work performance and regard as an easy target for sexual violence.

In the face of prejudice and discrimination from different groups such as her employer, colleagues, and society, she confronts her challenges by adopting a silent approach due to fear and timidity, which has unfortunately become her normal response in such stigmatizing circumstances. She refrains from sharing her emotions with her family members in Myanmar and she finds relief in expressing her feelings through tears, considering it to be her most effective coping mechanism. Sometimes, her friends who are working in the same workplace listen to her concerns and make her feel comfort. In order to manage the financial burdens associated with caring for her son, she often receives financial assistance from her female friends who offer mutual support and look out for each other during difficult times.

In terms of her aspirations, she strongly desires to witness a society that embraces empathy and respects single mothers. Single mothers deserve to experience equality and empowerment just like any other individuals. They should not be subject to condescension from colleagues or community members. Men should refrain from discriminating against them based on negative preconceptions. Women often hesitate to seek help when faced with sexual violence and abuse. Consequently, relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) should actively work to raise awareness about women's rights and address these issues, helping women overcome their fears and regain a sense of security.

Conclusion

From the life stories of female migrant workers in the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon Province, it is evident that gender discrimination and inequality persist in both of the formal and informal seafood sectors. In the domestic sphere, they tend to have lack of influence to manage their own income and their expenditures are more than that of men within the family as they have to spend for their parents, husband or kids rather than for their personal use. As the distinctive feature of gender inequality in the seafood industry, female migrant workers in the seafood industry tend to face gender challenges between paid and unpaid work.

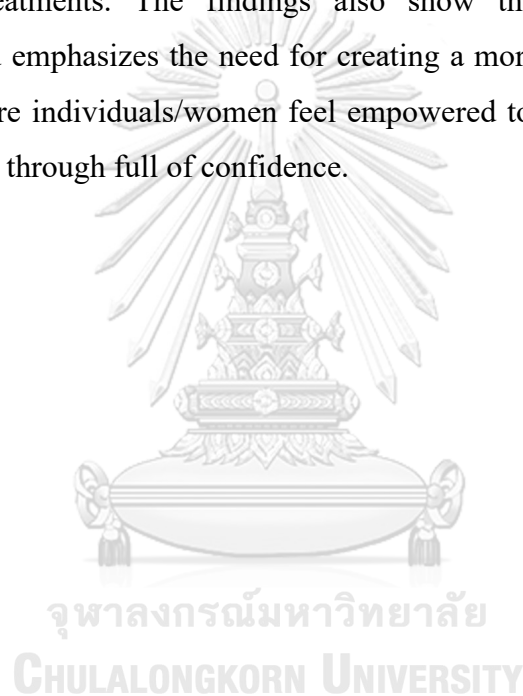
The lives of female migrant workers in the seafood industry differ significantly. Their demanding work schedules, which often extend to full days or overnight shifts, greatly impact their ability to balance paid work with unpaid housework and family care responsibilities. In the informal sector, female migrant workers are required to go to the market as early as 3 am. This poses even greater challenges for married women workers who have children, as they must navigate the complexities of childcare. Furthermore, these women are also expected to fulfill household and family responsibilities according to the traditional gender norms. Consequently, the lives of women migrant workers in the seafood industry are marked by considerable challenges, as they contend with gender dynamics and unequal burdens.

Among the cases, apart from case 1 who is a single female formal worker, other cases who are married or single mother experience a heavier load of uncertainties and responsibilities for their entire household. Moreover, female migrant workers in the informal sector encounter more limited opportunities and rights, leaving them more susceptible to vulnerability because of lack of legal protections and social security benefits. Overall, all of four cases demonstrate that Myanmar women migrant workers encounter discrimination, inequality, verbal abuse, limited economic opportunities, weak legal enforcement, unsupportive married relationships and burdens as well as social and cultural exclusion as compared to men. These actions reflect a gender bias and perpetuate unequal power dynamics, reinforcing gender inequality.

Regardless of gender discrimination and gender inequality experiences, we can see some coping methods or how female migrant workers overcome gender-related barriers in their lives according to the case findings. They mostly choose silence approach without speaking out. Regarding with discriminatory practices and abusive practices at work, they decide to remain patient and do not voice their concerns to maintain their employment in the factory. Due to fear and the potential discomfort at workplace, they chose not to report most of their problems at work. Female migrant workers cope with the emotional stress at work and life by seeking

emotional support from their family members or female friends in the community and get some relief from the burdens within paid and unpaid work.

Overall, these coping strategies demonstrate the importance of having a supportive network, seeking emotional support from trusted individuals, and finding ways to alleviate the burdens associated with an unfair work environment and unequal responsibilities in the private lives. The findings highlight that women empowerment activities remain weak and they should be promoted so that women migrant workers become speak out and report their voices without staying silent regarding with work-related unfair treatments. The findings also show the importance of women empowerment and emphasizes the need for creating a more supportive and equitable environment, where individuals/women feel empowered to speak up and assert their rights without fear through full of confidence.



CHAPTER 4

Gender discrimination practices in the precarious seafood industry

This chapter of the thesis aims to answer research question number one about gender discrimination practices in the precarious seafood industry, Samut Sakhon, and find out whether female migrant worker face gender discrimination. The study explores the findings based on the concepts – five faces of oppression (exploitation, violence, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural dominance) that relate with the issue of gender discrimination and help evaluating to comprehend the idea of discrimination in the precarious seafood industry. Based on the findings, the female participants are let to answer the research question number one on those five topics. In both formal and informal working sectors, we can clearly see the oppressive characteristics of discrimination. In the second part of this chapter, the analysis part will be concluded by connecting with the conceptual framework and the key main findings.



Figure 4, Semi structured interview with a formal female migrant worker



Figure 5, Semi structured interview with an informal female migrant worker



Figure 6, Semi structured interview with a female CSO member from welfare committee (MWRN)

4.1 Exploitation

Firstly, some oppressive experiences of exploitation are found from the experiences of female migrant workers in the factory. In terms of exploitation, it includes whether they get gender exploitation or sexual exploitation as a woman, a labour or a migrant in the seafood industry. Transfer of the rewards of physical labour to men and transfer of sexual energy to men are the two components of gender exploitation. Some oppressive gender exploitation practices are found from the experiences of female migrant workers as below:

“The factory leaders easily understand when men workers come work late and spend a long time in the restroom within the working hours. But, when woman worker does the same like man, they give warning that she will be fired if she does the next time.” (Female participant 1 – single Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“Leaders impose me to clean 30-40 kilos of fish before the first break. They don’t care I was pregnant; they just care their production target” (Female participant 5 – married Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“When men workers are absent at work and we have to take replacement, we face more intensive pressure because the factory leader is not satisfied on our work performance and holds the assumption that only men are capable of handling important workloads.” (Female participant 7 – married Karen informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

It is clearly evident that some female migrant workers in the both sectors of the seafood industry face some gender exploitation experiences according to the female participant 1, 5 and 7. The findings collectively argue that the factory leaders exhibit gender discrimination by treating male and female workers differently, failing to consider the well-being of pregnant workers, and holding biased assumptions about the capabilities of female workers.

In addition, the disrespectful behaviors of the worker leaders lead to sexual exploitation. For example:

“During my pregnancy, whenever I took a rest from standing for a long period at work, the leader closely monitored and scolded me for taking too long, using his leg as a signal of disapproval.” (Female participant 5 – married Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

It highlights a lack of respect towards women and such actions perpetuate gender stereotypes by reinforcing unequal power dynamics within the workplace. Instead of recognizing and appreciating the worker's efforts, women's contributions are devalued along with the negative perceptions, hindering the access to equal opportunities and rights.

Female participants 4 and 10 clearly mentioned other exploitative experience within the Covid-19 pandemic as below:

“I have faced extreme financial challenges within the Covid-19 period because I got just only half of total wages. As compared to men, most of female migrant workers faced the same situations like me.” (Female 4 – married Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“During the Covid-19 pandemic, my employer ceased work operations, leading to me being laid off without receiving any compensation or benefits. As compared to men, in the market area, there are many informal female workers who did not get any income from work and only did housework during the pandemic period.” (Female participant 10 – Divorced Mon informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

Not getting full wages within the Covid-19 pandemic let the female migrant workers in the both of the formal and informal sector feel stressful and lose freedom of rights in the workplace, but making female migrant workers from the informal

sector more vulnerable to termination for any reason without any compensation and benefits.

Overall, both formal and informal female migrant workers in the seafood industry face various forms of exploitation, including gender exploitation, sexual exploitation, and financial exploitation. The experiences shared by the female participants reveal unequal treatment, gender discrimination, disrespectful behaviours, and a loss of rights and opportunities for women in the workplace, particularly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the women migrant workers from the informal sector are more particularly susceptible to termination without receiving any compensation or benefits. Unemployment and lack of compensation or underpaid wages during the Covid-19 period are more experienced by informal female migrant workers when the intersection of gender and migration status, specifically illegal channel, is considered.

4.2 Violence

In terms of violence, it includes discriminatory and abusive actions towards female migrant workers. Gender exploitation can be seen as a component of violent actions in the seafood industry. Some male workers view female migrant workers as subordinate and weak, leading to instances of sexual violence and harassment. Factory leaders, employers and some male counterparts frequently engage in those violent actions in the seafood industry and instances of violence have been reported by some female participants as follow:

“I occasionally face verbal abuses from supervisors. They look down on my work performance and their manners are terrible. But if I fail to meet the targets, I get harsh scolding, often being referred to in derogatory terms – animals in Thai language.” (Female participant 3 – married Kayan formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“The leaders scold whenever we work at a slower pace by saying: can't you see? Why are you being careless with your work? Why aren't you cleaning the fish properly? Are you more interested in men than work? Are you neglecting your duties because you're thinking about your

husbands?" (Female participant 5 – married Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

"I face verbal abuse from some leaders when I made occasional mistakes. They wrongly assume that our lack of focus on the task is due to being more interested in the opposite sex or unrelated matters, rather than fully engaging in our assigned tasks." (Female participant 8 – single Mon informal worker and female participant 9 – single Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

The female participant 3, 5, 8 and 9 from both formal and informal sectors described their experiences of abusive and violent practices in the workplace. Especially, verbal abuse is one obvious form of oppression, across all different marital status and migration status. We can see gendered languages that target to women migrant workers through verbal violence, rude manners and inappropriate behaviours. Such treatment not only creates a hostile work environment but also reinforces gender stereotypes and undermines the well-being of the female workers. Apart from verbal violence, there have been instances of sexual violence against Myanmar women migrant workers in accordance with some data result as below.

"I got sexual violence from some male worker leaders, including intimidation and inappropriate physical contact disguised as a joke. I am not there to entertain as a toy for men, however, some male counterparts see me as subordinate and weak." (Female participant 1 – single Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

"I face inappropriate behaviours from male workers. They touched my cheek and hands without my consent. Sometimes, they display some body languages that leads to sexual harassment." (Female participant 10 – Divorced Mon informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 1 and 10, female migrant workers face sexual violence, intimidation, inappropriate physical contact, and sexual harassment from male worker leaders and colleagues in both formal and informal sectors.

Interestingly, intense sexual violence instances are more occurred among single and divorced female migrant workers and it highlights the importance of marital status. The mindset of some male workers is still ingrained with gender exploitation as something normal and acceptable in the seafood industry.

Overall, to conclude the findings of violence section, female migrant workers in the seafood industry face verbal abuse, gender-based discrimination, and sexual violence from some supervisors, leaders, and male colleagues. The findings provide evidence of a hostile work environment, reinforcement of gender stereotypes, and the presence of cultural mindsets that perpetuate gender inequality. Verbal violence is pervasive across different marital statuses and migration statuses and sexual violence is predominantly observed among single and divorced female migrant workers. It is therefore apparent that sexual violence is more prevalent when the intersection of gender and marital status is taken into account.

4.3 Marginalization

Marginalization in the seafood industry refers to the process how certain groups or individuals including Myanmar women migrant workers are treated and face social, economic, or environmental exclusion. It is unfair because it prevents female migrant workers from using their abilities in ways that are socially defined.

Firstly, some female participants strongly mentioned how female migrant workers from both formal and informal sector face challenges of marginalization in the seafood industry as below. The below narratives particularly emphasize the exclusion of pregnant factory workers from social benefits.

“I did not receive any special benefits as a pregnant woman. I had to endure long hours of standing and perform physically demanding tasks. I am not included to be considered as a priority”. (Female participant 5 – married Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“There are still many pregnant workers who have to continue working at their original positions without any reduction in their workload or responsibilities within the factory. For instance, they do not receive

sufficient rest breaks and are required to stand for extended periods throughout the day.” (Female CSO member – woman leader from welfare committee, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 5 and female CSO member, it can be found that generally, some pregnant women migrant workers in the formal sector are not still receiving special benefits or considerations in their workplace, enduring physically demanding tasks, work long hours. Meanwhile, the female participant 6 expressed the absence of maternity leave benefits in the informal sector that she feels compelled to continue working throughout her pregnancy without being able to take sufficient rest, for saving the cost of her childbirth.

“There is no alternative option and maternity leave benefits in the market area. So, I must continue working even during my pregnancy, without taking adequate rest, for my childbirth.” (Female participant 6 – married Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

This highlights the challenging circumstances faced by pregnant women in the informal sector, where the absence of supportive policies and provisions places them at a disadvantage and potentially jeopardizes their health and well-being.

Secondly, there is one example case of marginalized attitudes perpetuating in the formal sector of the seafood industry within the Covid-19 pandemic as below.

“Within the pandemic, I faced a marginalized attitude from Thai male colleagues. They said that we should not be here and not get the treatment because the increasing number of Myanmar migrant workers is the reason behind the rise in COVID-19 positive cases.” (Female participant 1 – single Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

The female participant 1 showed her experience of encountering a marginalized different attitude from her Thai male colleagues within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This highlights the discriminatory treatment and prejudice

faced by the participant and shows on the negative attitudes towards female migrant workers in the midst of the pandemic.

Thirdly, age is used as a justification to attribute the perceived weakness, marginalizing female migrant workers in the seafood industry according to the female participant 2 in the formal sector.

“I face discrimination from the worker leaders and elder male colleagues. As I am young, whenever I makes sudden mistakes, they scold me realizing as a less-skilled worker. Most of them unwelcome me to the group activities at work.” (Female participant 2 – single Dawei formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

She shared her experience of facing discrimination from worker leaders and elder male colleagues in the factory. Due to her young age, she is often scolded and treated as a less-skilled worker when she makes sudden mistakes, being excluded during group activities at work. These discriminatory actions have created a sense of insecurity for the participant, highlighting the negative impact of age and gender discrimination on her overall work experience.

Overall, to conclude the findings of marginalization section, the discriminatory treatment and marginalized attitudes are observed. Remarkably, both formal and informal pregnant women migrant workers are often not given priority and are still expected to perform physically demanding tasks without any reduction in workload. To add more, pregnant women workers in the informal sector face the additional challenge of lacking official labor and maternity benefits and it highlights the increased prevalence of marginalization when gender intersects with different marital status (pregnant women) and migration status (illegal informal worker). Furthermore, it indicates that age is also utilized as a justification to discrimination female migrant workers, resulting in disrespectful and teasing behaviors from male colleagues and older workers in the factory. Thus, it becomes apparent that a pattern emerges where discrimination practices arise when gender intersects with age.

4.4 Powerlessness

In terms of powerlessness, it denotes a position in the hierarchy of needs that provides little opportunities for the marginalized groups that include women to hone their abilities. Firstly, there are a great number of female migrant workers who still hesitate to speak out their problems. Some findings show that there is still a lack of influence from women migrant workers as compared to men in the seafood industry as below.

“Even in the face of sexual violence, domestic abuse, or mistreatment, we feel reluctant to speak up, unsure of how to address these issues.”
(Female 4 – married Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“In instances where male workers demonstrate careless performance at work, such as carelessly dropping fish boxes, at that time, we, the women workers are left to pick up the split fishes on the ground. During such moments, the worker leaders show understanding towards the men while neglecting the women's contributions. As a result, remaining silent becomes the normal status in such situations.”
(Female participant 7 – married Karen informal worker and Female participant 8 – single Mon informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“Despite the presence of labour networks and unions in the area, most women migrant workers are hesitant to speak up about their problems due to shyness and fear of being negatively judged by society.”
(Female CSO member – woman leader from welfare committee, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 4, 7 and 8, there is a gendered disparity in the treatment, responsibilities, and recognition of male and female workers in the seafood industry. Women workers often face the burden of cleaning up after the mistakes of male workers while their contributions are overlooked. This creates an unequal power dynamic and silencing of women's voices in the workplace. It

underscores the reluctance of numerous female migrant workers in both formal and informal sectors to openly address their problems including issues such as sexual violence, domestic violence, or unequal treatment as compared to men in the seafood industry due to shyness, fear of negative judgments, and the belief that their voices may not be heard, revealing a lack of influence within their workplaces. The CSO female leader from welfare committee also confirmed the psychological barriers and social pressures that hinder women migrant workers from voicing their concerns and seeking support or assistance.

Secondly, powerlessness evidence can be observed within the personal conflicts between the workers, where employers show favouritism towards certain individuals or groups, such as Thai worker leaders or Mon ethnic workers who are being the largest numbers in the workplace. In this case, minority women workers mean Bamar or Karen ethnics and Mon ethnic workers are considered as the mainly ethnic group because of having the largest numbers in the migrant community network and seafood industry of Samut Sakhon area. The worker leaders often ignore the voices and perspectives of women migrant workers, particularly those who belong to minority groups. Some discrimination practices that ignore the voice of the women migrant workers can be seen as below.

“We feel discrimination when we are in the conflicts. Employers often show bias towards Thai worker leaders and other Mon ethnic workers, they are familiar with, without thoroughly investigating the truth of the situation. So, I am weary of sharing my problems with others.”
(Female participant 6 – married Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

The female participant 6 states discrimination that she has experienced as a Bamar female worker (being minority within minority) in the conflicts of the informal workplace. Female migrant workers belonging to minority ethnic groups experience ignorance, unequal treatment and discrimination due to their intersectional identities as a female, migrant, and low-skilled worker.

Thirdly, not only in the workplace but also in the personal life, some female participants answered their experiences of powerlessness relating with financial management and taking care of kids within the family as follow.

“Despite I feel tired from the day's work in the market, I am the one who is solely responsible to take care of my kid. I must prepare food for my husband and child.” (Female participant 6 – married Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“My father, is the one who manage financial expense in my family. I cannot spend my own personal income freely and can only use the amount my parents give to me.” (Female participant 2 – single Dawei formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

Overall, to conclude the findings of powerless section, the female participants from all diverse identities and backgrounds, express their hesitation in confronting problems like sexual violence, domestic abuse, and mistreatment, driven by uncertainty and fear. In their personal life, they still have lack of influence to manage their own income and their expenditures are more than that of men within the family as they have to spend for their parents, husband or kids rather than for their personal use. It also emphasizes that greater discrimination and powerlessness are also experienced by women migrant workers who belong to minority groups and illegal informal sector. Thus, it highlights the power dynamics that constrain the voices of women migrant workers within the seafood industry and underscores the various dimensions of powerlessness experienced by female migrant workers, both within the workplace and in their personal lives, due to factors such as gender, ethnicity, and migration status.

4.5 Cultural Dominance

In terms of cultural dominance, one group is superior to others in terms of experiences, cultural manifestations, and history. It was clearly found that informal Myanmar women migrant workers experience paradoxical oppression in seafood industry where they are simultaneously rendered invisible and discrimination is singled out by language barrier, cultural norms and gender stereotypes.

“There are complaints from Thai workers about receiving the same wage with us. They don’t like to see us getting the equal payment.” (Female participant 8 – single Mon informal worker and female participant 9 – single Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 8 and 9, there are complaints from Thai workers about receiving the same wage in the informal sector. They have a negative attitude towards the women migrant workers receiving equal payment, possibly indicating a perception of unfairness or superiority.

Meanwhile, we can also see some evidence that some minority groups women migrant workers face discrimination from both Thai group and Mon ethnic workers who are who are being the largest numbers in the workplace as follow.

“Senior Mon women workers and Thai male leaders discriminate and do not provide guidance how to work properly. They don’t like to see us receiving equal opportunities compared to them.” (Female participant 6 – married Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 6 who belongs to Bamar ethnic that is a minority group at her workplace, we can see that she faces discrimination from both Thai groups and the Mon ethnic workers in the market area. The complaint of dominant groups to minority group women about receiving equal opportunities highlights a bias and a desire to maintain their own advantages. In addition, women migrant workers face discrimination based on the local language barriers. The female participant 7, who is a Karen woman, described her experience in accurately pronouncing the Thai language as below.

“As a Karen woman, I have to struggle with pronouncing the Thai language accurately. I face discrimination at my workplace due to the weakness of my language. I feel loss of confidence to communicate and that is why I cannot participate in the majority group’s activities.”

(Female participant 7 – married Karen informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

The female participant 7 faces discrimination based on language proficiency that leads to a loss of confidence in communication and prevents her from actively participating in activities within the majority group. This discrimination creates a barrier that hinders her integration in the workplace. The limited understanding of the local language hampers effective communication and restricts the ability to comprehend the rights or seek help.

Moreover, women migrant workers tend to face different attitudes and unequal treatments in both workplace and the patriarchal society. The discrimination based on marital status and gender highlights the unfair treatment and negative stereotypes faced by women as compared to men in the industry. The female participant 10, on the other hand, despite being a part of the Mon ethnic group in her workplace, even faces discrimination and stigmatization due to her marital status as a single mother as below.

"Some Thai male workers blamed me and they told me that the reason why I am being a single mother is because of having low moral standards and weakness. I face different attitudes from male counterparts in my workplace and environment without getting equal treatment." (Female participant 10 – Divorced Mon informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 10's answer, she experiences different attitudes and unequal treatment. Whatever she does, being a single mother is always a reason and those kinds of attitudes and perceiving her marital status as a weakness are the main challenging first-hand experiences she has been witnessing. Hence, this discrimination is based on her marital status and gender, and it highlights the unfair treatment and negative stereotypes she encounters.

Overall, to conclude the findings of cultural dominance section, the oppression from cultural dominance is primarily observed in the informal sector of the seafood industry. Within this sector, there is a clear pattern where gender intersects with

migration status (being in the illegal informal sector) and ethnicity (belonging to a minority group), leading to increased discrimination. Due to the status as minority ethnic individuals, as well as the roles as female migrants and low-skilled labourers, female workers within the minority group face discrimination, resulting in differentiation based on their multiple intersecting identities. Moreover, the discrimination based on marital status and gender highlights the unfair treatment and negative stereotypes faced by women as compared to men in the industry. To highlight this, women migrant workers with single mother status tend to face different attitudes and unequal treatments in both workplace and the patriarchal society. In summary, the cultural dominance within the industry manifests itself through certain groups considering themselves superior and subjecting others, particularly minority groups, to discriminatory attitudes and treatment.

4.6 Analysis

According to the findings from Chapter 3, this analysis part will connect between the conceptual framework and the key main findings that relate with gender discrimination.

Gender Discrimination

. Gender discrimination practices encompass various forms of unequal treatments and oppressions and the findings highlight the vulnerabilities and social exclusion experienced by female migrant workers. In the concepts of five faces of oppression, some exploitation practices are occurred among the female migrant workers in the seafood industry.

In terms of exploitation, female migrant workers in the seafood industry experience various forms of exploitation. Gender exploitation, such as differential treatment and transferring physical labour and sexual energy to men, is prevalent. Female participants highlight instances of unequal treatment, and disrespectful behaviours from leaders and male colleagues. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the exploitative conditions, leading to financial challenges while unemployment with lack of compensation and benefits during the Covid-19 period is mostly experienced by informal female migrant workers.

In terms of violence actions, some male workers view female migrant workers as subordinate and weak, frequently engaging in the violent actions in the seafood industry. Female migrant workers face violence in the seafood industry, including verbal abuse, sexual violence, and harassment. Instances of sexual violence, intimidation, and inappropriate physical contact are reported, revealing a disregard for women's value and reinforcing power imbalances. While verbal abuse actions are occurred from all diverse identities and backgrounds, sexual violence is more occurred among single and divorced female migrant workers.

In terms of marginalization, discriminatory treatment and marginalized attitudes towards female migrant workers are observed. For example, some pregnant women migrant workers in the formal sector face social exclusion, not receiving reduction in workload or special social considerations in their workplace, by enduring physically demanding tasks while pregnant women workers in the informal sector face the additional challenge of lacking official labor and maternity benefits. Furthermore, in the form of marginalization, age is also utilized as a justification to discrimination female migrant workers, resulting in disrespectful and teasing behaviors from male colleagues and older workers in the factory. Young women migrant workers are likely to be treated as less-skilled workers under negative prejudice, being excluded during group activities at work and marginalized different attitude from Thai male colleagues within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is also one oppressive feature.

In terms of powerlessness, it highlights the power dynamics and barriers that constrain the voices of minority group women migrant workers (e.g., Bamar or Karen female migrant worker) within the majority Thai people or other minority dominant Mon people who are the largest group in the workplace in the seafood industry. Female migrant workers belonging to minority ethnic groups experience ignorance, different treatment and discrimination due to their intersectional identities as a female, migrant, and low-skilled worker. Fear of negative judgments, shyness, and cultural barriers prevent them from speaking up about issues such as sexual violence, domestic abuse, or unequal treatment.

In terms of cultural dominance, cultural dominance is evident in the seafood industry, where certain groups exhibit superiority and discrimination. If the female migrant worker is one of the minority group members (Bamar or Karen) within the majority groups (Thai people) or mainly group (Mon ethnic workers who are the largest numbers) in the workplace, it is likely to see more discrimination due to one of the reasons: language barrier or the factory leaders often neglect the side of the minority group by giving favour to the dominant groups in the workplace or the complaint of dominant groups to minority group women about receiving equal opportunities to maintain their own advantages. The discrimination based on marital status and gender also highlights the unfair treatment and negative stereotypes faced by women as compared to men. To illustrate this, women migrant workers with single mother status tend to face different attitudes and unequal treatments in both workplace and the patriarchal society.

Overall, through the findings in the concept of gender discrimination, verbal violence and hesitation to speak out the problems including sexual violence, domestic violence, and unequal treatment as compared to male counterparts are the most common challenges faced by the female participants from all diverse identities and backgrounds. Therefore, the unequal treatment, biased attitudes, and limited opportunities for advancement create significant challenges and vulnerabilities for women migrant workers in the seafood industry, hindering their ability to fully participate and thrive in the workplace.

Intersectionality

To connect the findings with the various intersecting forms and different identities that include “ethnicity, migration status and marital status” in this study, the issues of migration and marital status plays a significant role in the prevalence of exploitation, violence and marginalization. Meanwhile, the issue of ethnicity is only significant in the oppressive forms of powerlessness and cultural dominance between dominant groups and minority group. Importantly, the gender aspect as being a woman is strongly evident as a reason of every oppression in terms of gender discrimination and age is also utilized as a justification to discrimination female

migrant workers, resulting in disrespectful and teasing behaviors from male colleagues and older workers in the factory.



CHAPTER 5

Gender inequality barriers in different dimensions

This chapter explores the findings for the research question number two about gender inequality barriers in the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon, by basing on different 4 dimensions (political, economic, social and cultural dimensions) in the following section. In this chapter, not only at the working space (public life) challenges but also hardships within the domestic space (private life) of female migrant workers are evaluated how gender inequality exists obviously in their lives. After that, the chapter will be concluded with the analysis from the findings of the research question two by connecting with the conceptual framework.

5.1 Legal/ Political dimension

A significant gap between existing legal protections and their enforcement

The legal dimension presents several barriers for female migrant workers in the seafood industry. Despite the existence of international organizations and agreements promoting gender equality and migrant workers' rights including maternity leave benefits, women in the industry still face significant challenges. Firstly, the enforcement of legal protections is often insufficient, leading to delays and a lack of priority given to women's cases and problems including sexual violence, abuse, labor exploitation or mistreatment. Female migrant workers reported delayed and low-priority actions on their cases, a lack of awareness of sex education and women's rights, and inadequate protection as mandated by laws.

“Our cases/problems are often delayed and not given priority yet. There are many women migrant workers who lack awareness of sex education, and women rights, resulting in unplanned pregnancies, and abandonment by their partners.” (Female participant 3 – married Kayan formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“Women migrant workers don’t receive adequate protection as mandated by laws. Some workers including me are still fully unaware of the procedures to report issues. There are no effective training

programs in the factory” (Female 5 – married Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

The protections already in place might not be fully sufficient to meet all of the needs and inequalities of women migrant workers in the seafood industry. The female participant 3 states that the female migrant workers in the factory still think that there will be limited action taken to address women concerns and it might cause the workers to hesitate to engage in collective activities. In accordance with female participant 5, there are many women migrant workers who do not understand individual rights themselves and legal protection measures. Hence, it can be found that the collective strength of women migrant workers and the prioritized procedures for women rights and protections still remain weak in the seafood factory.

Inadequate support by existing labour networks and organizations

Many women migrant workers lack awareness of their rights with limited training programs available in their society. This indicates a weakness in the collective strength of women migrant workers and the prioritization of women's rights and protections in the industry. The existing labor networks and organizations are also not fully effective in addressing the challenges faced by women migrant workers. Therefore, collective strength, prioritized procedures for women's rights and protections, and effective training programs are still lacking in the seafood industry according to the findings from some CSO members.

“Many women migrant workers remain unaware of their rights and legal regulations are not fully effective yet. As pregnant women lack knowledge about benefits available to them, some employers fail to provide full wages for the 90-day maternity benefits.” (Male CSO member from Migrant Workers Rights Network, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“Public discussions and protests just focus on the rights of all workers, with little attention given to the specific rights and challenges of women migrant workers.” (Female CSO member – woman leader from welfare committee, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

Regarding with labor networks, the male CSO member from MWRN mentioned the weakness of legal dimensions about women migrant workers' rights. Due to the lack of understanding about legal rights and regulations, pregnant women workers are vulnerable to exploitative actions by employers. Additionally, female CSO member highlighted the need for greater recognition and advocacy for the unique issues and struggles that woman migrant workers encounter, suggesting that current discussions and protests lack inclusivity and fail to address the gender-specific aspects of labor rights violations and protections. Moreover, the focus of public discussions and protests on migrant workers' rights tends to overlook the specific rights and challenges faced by women migrant workers, further marginalizing their concerns.

Obstacles in accessing legal protections in the informal sector

Informal women migrant workers face greater barriers in accessing legal protections due to the illegal migration status. The absence of legal regulations specific to the informal workplace leaves them vulnerable and uncertain about their individual rights. They are unable to receive additional social security support from legal agencies and community organizations. Thus, legal laws specific to the informal workplace are still needed to address the rights and welfare of informal women migrant workers in onshore area. Exclusion from legal dimension in the informal sector of seafood industry can be seen as follow:

“In the market, there is no legal regulations and guidelines. We are unable to receive additional social security support from legal agencies and community organizations.” (Female participant 8 – single Mon informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“As we are not working in the factory, we do not have official guarantees. The absence of legal laws in our workplace leaves us unaware of how to protect and assert our rights as women.” (Female participant 6 – married Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“I don’t know how to protect my individual rights and respond to instances of violence or abuse in the workplace.” (Female participant 9 – single Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“Even in the formal sector, there are many challenges that CSO organizations cannot fully address for every individual female factory worker. Therefore, it is too far to reach out for the women migrant workers in the informal sector.” (Female CSO member – woman leader from welfare committee, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 8, 6 and 9 from informal sector, accessing legal support and benefits remains unattainable for them. The female migrant workers from the informal sector are still excluded from important policy priorities at the policy level, further marginalizing them. Due to informal employment status, they do not receive additional social support from community organizations. The absence of legal laws specific to the informal workplace leaves the informal female workers unaware of how to protect and assert their rights as women. To add more, the female CSO member highlighted that there are many limitations in the formal sector and so, it is more challenging to provide support for women migrant workers in the informal sector.

To conclude legal dimension section, gender inequality exists across different identities, but evident in the intersecting aspects of gender and marital status (pregnant women) within the realm of legal dimension. On the other hand, in the informal sector, women migrant workers are further excluded from legal protections, and there is a lack of regulations to safeguard their rights. Therefore, gender inequality feature is more prevalent when migration status is added in the forms of intersections. Legal solutions for women migrant workers are obviously far from accessible, particularly in the informal sector of the seafood industry. Overall, legal protections are not effectively addressing gender inequality among Myanmar female migrant workers. Implementation of existing laws and agreements is insufficient, labour networks are weak, and informal workers are still excluded from legal protections.

5.2 Economic Dimension

Persistence of gender bias and unequal practices in the workplace

Employment with unequal treatment and opportunities are prevalent among female migrant workers in the seafood industry. In the formal sector, although there is no disparity in wages between men and women in the same position, discriminatory and unequal practices persist in the workplace. In the factory, higher-level positions are predominantly occupied by men and there is an unequal bias in favour of male workers displayed by the worker leaders. Men tend to receive preferential treatment and positive recognition, while women migrant workers, despite shouldering intensive workloads, do not receive the same level of attention and appreciation. It is found that men workers are treated more favourably and regarded in a positive light, while women migrant workers, despite shouldering intensive workloads, do not receive the same level of attention as below.

“When men workers are absent at work and we have to take replacement, we face unequal treatment because the factory leader is not satisfied on our work performance and holds the assumption that only men are capable of handling important workloads.” (Female participant 1 – single Bamar formal worker, In-depth Interview, May 2023)

“While men are often seen as recognition for lifting heavy boxes, the same perspective should be extended to women migrant workers who tirelessly do under the intense pressure imposed by employers on a daily basis.” (Female participant 3 – married Kayan formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“Even among workers performing the same tasks, supervisors tend to have more positive appreciation with men, while we are often viewed from a negative perspective as weaker workers.” (Female participant 5 – married Bamar formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the data from female participant 1, 3 and 5, female factory workers disagree with the notion that men and women get equal opportunities at work

because women migrant workers are burdened with greater intensive workloads compared to male counterparts, but men tend to receive preferential treatment compared to women. This unequal appreciation further contributes to the unequal treatment and opportunities for female migrant workers.

Gender disparity in daily wage rates within the informal sector

In the informal sector, there is a gender disparity in daily wage rates for certain tasks, specifically assisting in seafood sales. Male workers receive higher wages than female workers for this particular section of the seafood market. This disparity highlights the existence of unequal economic opportunities for women in the informal sector of the seafood industry. The female participant 10 mentioned that:

“The wage is generally equal for the section of shrimp peeling and cleansing in the market onshore area, but when it comes to the role of helping the employers

to sell fish and seafood, male workers receive higher wages than the female workers.” (Female participant 10 – Divorced Mon informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

To conclude the economic dimension, despite the absence of wage inequality between men and women in the same positions in the formal sector, unfair practices persist in the formal sector. There is a biased preference towards male workers exhibited by factory leaders. Men tend to receive more favourable treatment and recognition compared to the female counterparts, even though women migrant workers often shoulder intensive workloads. This inequality is evident in the unequal distribution of attention and appreciation towards male and female workers. In the informal sector, there is a gender disparity in daily wage rates for certain tasks, such as assisting in seafood sales, where male workers receive higher wages than their female counterparts. Overall, it highlights the prevalent inequalities and biases faced by female migrant workers in terms of economic opportunities and treatment within the seafood industry.

5.3 Social and Cultural Dimensions

Unequal responsibilities in private lives

Gender inequality between men and women is not limited to the workplace but also extends to the domestic sphere – private life of female migrant workers. Women migrant workers bear unequal responsibilities in their private lives compared to men. They often find themselves burdened with household chores and caregiving duties, while struggling to find time for self-care and personal development amidst their busy schedules of paid and unpaid work. The participants from the formal sector and informal sector share their experiences of shouldering additional responsibilities without adequate support from their husbands.

“I feel fatigue when I return home from work as I have to help with household chores and assist my father with his daily tasks. It leaves me with limited free time to pursue self-learning development.” (Female participant 2 – single Dawei formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“My daily routine is extremely hectic, leaving little room for rest and rejuvenation. I do all household chores without adequate support from my unhealthy husband, feeling I am solely responsible.” (Female participant 3 – married Kayan formal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 2 and 3 from the formal sector, they have to take the additional responsibilities of helping with household chores, regardless of different marital statuses. Apart from marital statuses, traditional gender norms and expectations play a significant role in shaping the experiences of the female participants. As a daughter or as a mother, the gender norms place a disproportionate burden on women when it comes to household responsibilities. Women are often expected to maintain and fulfil traditional gender roles, regardless of their personal circumstances. This can lead to fatigue, limited personal time, and an imbalance in the distribution of responsibilities within the household.

Patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes in limiting women's opportunities and freedom of rights

Patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes play a significant role in limiting women's job opportunities and freedom of rights. Women migrant workers are expected to perform unpaid care work in their homes, including tasks related to reproductive or delicate care work, such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, and laundry. These expectations hinder their access to higher leadership positions and equal opportunities, perpetuating gender inequality. In the informal sector, such experiences of extreme unequal burdens can be seen as below.

“I must handle all household chores alone without any assistance from my husband. I think that I carry the heaviest burden within my family and I am the most exhausted person.” (Female participant 6 – married Bamar informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“I am solely responsible for all family matters without no emotional and financial support from my husband. I am the sole provider, having to secure government loans with my income from work.” (Female participant 7 – married Karen informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

The female participant 6 and 7 pointed out the unequal distribution of household responsibilities and the participants' sense of being overwhelmed and unsupported from their husbands, shouldering both the emotional and financial burdens of the family.

Financial and emotional burdens faced by women migrant workers

Women migrant workers, particularly those in the informal sector, face financial and emotional burdens within their families. They often experience domestic violence and financial strain due to their husbands' irresponsible spending on alcohol, drugs, games, and excessive socializing. This further impacts their well-being and adds to the inequalities they face. Despite the resilience and hard work, we can see that women migrant workers continue to encounter barriers in accessing higher

leadership positions and equal opportunities under the society filled with stigma and societal pressure, as below.

“My husband said that taking care of children is the main duty of a mother. I am the only one who feel worried about my children. As a mother separated from my children, I have worries and guilt how to raise them well. A person shouldering a heavier burden than the other is unfair.” (Female participant 7 – married Karen informal worker, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

“In personal life of married women migrant workers, domestic violence is a prevalent issue among married couples. Women dislike their husband’s spending money on unnecessary personal items such as alcohol, drugs, games, and excessive socializing.” (Male CSO member from Migrant Workers Rights Network, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

According to the female participant 7, her husband holds the belief that taking care of children is solely the mother's main duty. It asserts that it is unfair for one person, in this case, the mother, to bear a heavier burden than the other parent in terms of child-rearing responsibilities. It needs to shared responsibility and involvement from both parents in raising children. Meanwhile, the male CSO member emphasized that women are feeling stressful with their husbands' spending money on unnecessary personal items such as alcohol, drugs, games, and excessive socializing these days. This highlights the financial strain and unhealthy behaviours within the married relationships, which contribute to domestic violence and negatively impact the well-being of women migrant workers.

The lack of understanding regarding menstrual pain faced by women workers

Menstrual health is a current big concern, as women migrant workers are willing to take time off from work for menstrual pain, however, they have been

struggling to get the understanding from the worker leaders at the workplace for this concern.

“The women want to take rest for monthly menstrual pain. The laws state that they can take off at that moment, in reality, most factory supervisors fail to understand these circumstances, continuing intensive workloads without considering.” (Female CSO member – woman leader from welfare committee, Semi-structured Interview, May 2023)

The female CSO member additionally mentioned that women often struggle to take time off from work for menstrual pain due to a lack of understanding from their supervisors.

To conclude the social and cultural dimensions, women migrant workers face societal pressure and norms to perform unpaid care work, which obstructs their progress in attaining equal opportunities. The inequalities and vulnerabilities persist for women in both their work and private lives. Participants in the study shed light on the difficulties faced by female migrant workers, including menstrual health, household chores, caregiving responsibilities, and domestic violence. In addition, married women migrant workers, in particular, are more susceptible to vulnerability in their work and personal domains as they bear the burden of household chores and child caregiving without sufficient support from their husbands. Moreover, domestic violence is a prevalent issue, with husbands misusing their wives' income and disregarding their financial and emotional needs. The data indicates that married women migrant workers, both in formal and informal sectors, experience an unequal additional load in their daily lives and the impact of traditional gender norms create additional challenges and constraints for women, in their personal lives. A notable aspect of gender inequality in the social and cultural dimension is the intersection of gender with marital status.

5.4 Analysis

The findings from this chapter highlight the gender inequality challenges and barriers faced by female migrant workers, including financial strain, unhealthy

behaviors and unequal burdens within married relationships, and insufficient legal enforcement. The analytical findings connecting with the conceptual framework will be explained as below.

Gender Inequality

In the concept of gender inequality, it means disparities and unequal opportunities between individuals based on gender. According to the findings from the Chapter 4 that answered the research question two about gender inequality, the challenges and barriers faced by female migrant workers are clearly found out in the seafood industry through the lens of four different dimensions. Gender inequality barriers reinforce vulnerabilities and differences, leading to a vicious circle of cumulative disadvantages to Myanmar female migrant workers in both public and private lives.

From the legal dimension, legal protections are not effectively addressing gender inequality barriers among women migrant workers. Legally, women migrant workers have limited awareness of their rights and face difficulties under reluctance when reporting their situations including violence cases. To illustrate this, due to pregnant women migrant workers lack legal awareness about benefits available to them, some employers still fail to provide full wages for the 90-day maternity benefits. Moreover, women migrant workers in the informal sector are further excluded from legal protections and social supports due to informal employment status. The absence of legal regulations specific to the informal workplace leaves them vulnerable and uncertain about their individual rights. The current discussions and protests also lack inclusivity and fail to address the gender-specific aspects of women labor rights violations and protections. Thus, implementation of existing laws is insufficient, fully support from labour networks are inadequate and collective women activities are weak as well as informal female migrant workers are still excluded from legal protections, further marginalizing and exacerbating the difficulties in accessing legal support and benefits.

Gender inequality is also evident in the unequal distribution of attention and appreciation between male and female workers in the seafood industry from the economic dimension. Men tend to receive preferential treatment and positive

recognition for engaging in heavy tasks, while women migrant workers, despite shouldering intensive workloads, do not receive the same level of attention and appreciation. While wage disparities between men and women may not be apparent in the formal sector, there is a gender disparity in daily wage rates in the informal irregular sector, for certain tasks, such as assisting in seafood sales, where male workers receive higher wages than their female counterparts. The prevalent inequalities and biases faced by female migrant workers in terms of economic opportunities and treatment within the seafood industry are the prominent challenges facing female migrant workers.

The inequalities and vulnerabilities experienced by female migrant workers, including menstrual health, household chores, caregiving responsibilities, and domestic violence are mostly occurred in social and cultural dimension. It argues that married women migrant workers are particularly vulnerable, as they often bear the burden of household chores and childcare without adequate support from their husbands. Regardless of marital status, gender aspect is also prevalent in these dimensions. Gender norms and expectations also contribute to the unequal distribution of household responsibilities among women. Moreover, domestic violence is a prevalent issue, with the conflicts between married relationships for husbands misusing their wives' income and disregarding the financial and emotional needs of women. Within patriarchal society, women migrant workers are expected to maintain gender norms and perform unpaid care work in their homes, including tasks related to reproductive or delicate care work, such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, and laundry. These expectations hinder their access to equal opportunities, perpetuating gender inequality. Therefore, married women migrant workers, both in formal and informal sectors, experience an unequal financial and emotional burdens in their daily lives, potentially leading to physical and mental exhaustion.

Intersectionality

Contrary to gender discrimination practices from the research question one, the significance of ethnicity is not as prominent in the findings discussed in this chapter regarding gender inequality barriers. The issues of gender aspect, migration status and marital status continue emerging as the most prevalent identities across all

dimensions and so, female migrant workers face more unequal burdens, primarily based on their gender, migration and marital status. The legal and economic dimensions prominently argue the unequal opportunities faced by female migrant workers in the public space (weak legal enforcement to prioritize women rights, unequal appreciation at work, and unequal wage between men and women in the informal working sector) while gender inequality in social and cultural dimensions significantly show the unequal difficulties of female migrant workers whose roles are irrational, emotional, weak, and associated with motherhood in the private space.



Figure 7, Working Conditions in the informal seafood sector (Market area)

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



Figure 8, Living Conditions in the informal seafood sector (Market area)

CHAPTER 6

Key Summarized Findings, Recommendation, Suggestion for further research and Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the key summarized findings of two main research questions, related to the gender discrimination practices in the precarious work, and gender inequality barriers in different dimensions. Following the main highlighted findings, this chapter includes with recommendation and suggestion for further research as well as the conclusion section as follows.

This thesis would like to confirm that Myanmar female migrant workers in the seafood industry in Samut Sakhon Province, face gender discrimination and gender inequality based on multiple intersecting factors such as gender, migration status, marital status, ethnicity that relates to intersectionality. The gender related challenges contribute to the vulnerabilities and social exclusion in both public and private lives of Myanmar female migrant workers. In accordance with intersectionality, this thesis can also affirm that gender inequality and discrimination features are more prevalent when migration status is added in the intersection of gender and marital status in the seafood industry. Among different identities, gender, marital status and migration status are the most prevalent factors in exploring to understand gender inequality and gender discrimination as observed in the case study of seafood industry in Samut Sakhon, Thailand.

6.1 Key Summarized Findings

The findings can prove women's greater engagement and participation in the seafood supply chains of Thailand. Many employers in the seafood industry can benefit for production growth from the workforce of a great numbers of Myanmar women migrant workers. But female migrant workers are simultaneously rendered invisible and singled out by stereotypes, experiencing gender inequality and gender discrimination challenges in this study.

According to the key analyzed findings from two main research questions, intersectionality has been the main crosscutting for both of the issues of gender

discrimination and gender inequality. It can confirm that gender discrimination and gender inequality are clearly occurred among Myanmar female migrant workers in the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon area.

In terms of three more intersecting factors that include ethnicity, migration status and marital status, to unpack gender inequality and gender discrimination, it can be argued that the female migrant workers who are working in the informal sector (working on piece-rate payment outside the factory) are more vulnerable, by facing more inequalities with lack of legal labour rights, as compared to those who are working in the formal sector (working inside the factory) that relates to the intersectionality of legal (migration status) situation. So, the lives of Myanmar women migrant workers in the informal sector are far from comfort, as they are subjected to more limitations with lack of freedom of rights and violent actions at their working environment, by experiencing irregular working conditions, uncertain living conditions, wage disparities between male and female as well as potential unemployment situation without compensation due to any reason. Meanwhile, for those who are working in the formal sector, their decisions and voices are still overlooked when we look at the positions of female members at the welfare committees of the labour unions/networks. In both factories and welfare committees, higher-level leadership positions are predominantly occupied by male members.

Furthermore, pregnant/ married or divorced female migrant workers in the informal sector face additional challenges bearing the burden of household chores and childcare without adequate support from their husbands rather than those with single status, by experiencing lack of legal maternity benefits, unequal burden within paid and unpaid work, societal norms and stigmatization. The negative attitudes and stigma from the working environment and the society filled with patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes prominently impact on them, leading into unequal and marginalized situations. They are less likely to have secure employment, receive lower pay, have fewer maternity rights, and more childcare options than males. Therefore, only focusing 'woman' alone is not enough in studying gender inequality and to connect the findings with intersectionality theory, it can claim that an intersecting position where one identity intersects with other different identities, is tend

to be more disadvantageous, relative to another advantaged groups. When gender intersects with one or more than one identity, gender inequality and gender discrimination tend to be more prevalent and significant.

Overall, it does not mean that women migrant workers in the formal sector and those within the single marital status do not face gender-related challenges in the seafood industry. They do, but the women migrant workers in the informal sector with the different marital statuses (pregnant/ married or divorced) are in more disadvantaged and marginalized conditions. Therefore, according to the theory of intersectionality and case findings, it can prove that gender inequality and discrimination are more prevalent when migration status is added in the intersection of gender and marital status. On the other hand, the significance of ethnicity depends on the specific context, and gender discrimination is more apparent among minority female migrant workers due to one of the reasons: language barrier or getting ignorance with less favor than the main groups in the workplace or the complaint of dominant main groups to minority groups about receiving equal opportunities.

To summarize, the analyzed findings can prove that there is the linkage between intersectionality and gender inequality along with gender discrimination and the intersecting identities with gender help to explore how women migrant workers in the seafood industry, Samut Sakhon, are made more vulnerable in different contexts by different identities and situations.

6.2 Recommendation and Suggestion for further research

According to the findings and data analysis, the study will include with this recommendation and suggestion section regarding promoting equal measures, inclusiveness, women empowerment and better well-being of Myanmar female migrant workers in Thailand. Based on the findings of the research, there are some recommendations to address gender inequality and discrimination in the seafood industry, particularly among female migrant workers. These recommendations include:

Firstly, in order to help female migrant workers getting equality in both public and private lives, it is necessary to strengthen the existing legal provisions and

promote fair working environments within the seafood industry. Specifically, the laws and regulations pertaining to women migrant workers should be enhanced, along with the provision of social security benefits that address their specific concerns. In the seafood factories, although it is stated in the laws that women are entitled to rest during their menstrual period, the practical implementation of this provision is often challenging. Factory supervisors often fail to understand the circumstances and well-being of women, making it difficult for them to take time off. To address this issue, factory-level leaders and employers should take proactive measures such as reducing intensive workloads and letting to take rest when female migrant workers experience menstrual pain on a monthly basis. Moreover, pregnant women migrant workers frequently have to continue working in their original positions without any reduction in workload or responsibilities. This leads to inadequate rest breaks and prolonged periods of standing throughout the day. In such cases, it is essential to consider suitable working conditions that prioritize the well-being and health of female migrant workers, such as providing a comfortable working space and reducing physically demanding tasks, such as transitioning from prolonged standing activities to more comfortable tasks.

Furthermore, to foster equal and fair working environments, it is crucial to promote inclusive behaviors and fair labor practices that explicitly prohibit discrimination and sexual violence within the workplace. Factories should take proactive measures to create transparent mechanisms and safe spaces where workers can openly discuss and report any instances of discriminatory practices. These solutions should be implemented in a fair and unbiased manner. Additionally, it is essential to extend such protections and measures beyond the formal sector to encompass irregular female migrant workers who are in onshore areas such as markets. The informal female migrant workers are often more marginalized and overlooked in various aspects, so they should have access to healthcare services and social support to ensure their well-being and rights are safeguarded.

Secondly, it is essential to empower women, enabling them to express their concerns and participate in decision-making processes, to increase the numbers of women in the positions of welfare committees in the labor unions/networks and to

ensure the protection of women's rights and welfare concerns including reproductive rights and better childcare options. To achieve this, there is a need to enhance access to information and communication networks for female migrant workers in the seafood industry. While there are labor unions and civil society organizations for migrant workers, there is a lack of women-focused organizations or women's rights networks in Samut Sakhon Province. Consequently, many female migrant workers are unaware of their rights, and only the small numbers of the workers know how to report or address their problems through labor network organizations. The seafood industry currently lacks collective strength, well-defined procedures for women's rights and protections, and effective training programs. Furthermore, public discussions and protests concerning migrant workers' rights often fail to address the specific challenges faced by women migrant workers, further marginalizing their concerns. Moreover, there is a lack of women staff and leaders who champion women's rights and empowerment initiatives in the community. Therefore, establishing a reliable and authentic women's rights network in the Samut Sakhon area is necessary. This network should provide a platform and a space for female migrant workers to express their voices. Additionally, there should be greater involvement of women migrant workers in social welfare supports and women's rights programs through improved communication channels in the future.

Having reliable communication networks plays a crucial role in mitigating social conflicts and addressing personal challenges such as sexual violence, domestic violence and unhealthy dynamics within marital relationships. It is important to increase awareness among women migrant workers about their rights and provide them with information on reporting abuse and seeking assistance. The women's rights network can serve as a valuable resource and central platform for accessing information related to gender issues and finding solutions to personal challenges faced by women migrant workers. This network will guide female migrant workers in making informed decisions about their livelihoods, empowering themselves, and subsequently empowering other women in the community.

Thirdly, it is important to enhance cooperation among various stakeholders, including government officials, private sectors, non-governmental organizations, civil

society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and women's associations, who are actively involved in promoting gender development and women's rights in Thailand. Strengthening this cooperation is required to address and reduce gender inequality issues prevalent in both formal and informal sectors of the seafood industry. By collaborating effectively, these stakeholders can identify the underlying issues affecting women in both public and private spaces, considering the diverse intersecting factors that contribute to their challenges. Employers should be encouraged to implement gender-sensitive policies and practices that promote equal treatment, provide safe working conditions, and protect female migrant workers from sexual harassment and violence. It is also important to provide training and support programs that empower women migrant workers, enabling them to enhance their skills and knowledge for their overall well-being. Facilitating the exchange of challenges, difficulties, and ideas related to the issues faced by migrant workers will benefit all stakeholders involved. Regular monitoring of factories and industry sectors, coupled with improved access to legal benefits, will help enforce fair labor practices and ensure that women workers have access to the rights and benefits they deserve.

It is crucial to focus the actual voices of female migrant workers in order to address the genuine needs of the community. Promoting the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) is necessary for implementing women's empowerment initiatives, supported by a capable and skilled workforce. Policymakers should also actively engage in discussions to promote gender empowerment and educate the public about the challenges faced by marginalized female migrant workers. Efforts should be made to strengthen equal protections and ensure respectful and fair treatment for this marginalized population, thereby expanding their opportunities to exercise their rights and access equal opportunities and social services.

Although labor networks and unions exist in Samut Sakhon's community, many women migrant workers are reluctant to voice their concerns due to the fear of societal judgment and negative attitudes. In order to address this issue, it is necessary to tackle cultural and social norms that contribute to gender inequality and discrimination. This involves challenging stereotypes surrounding women's

subordinate roles and responsibilities both at home and in the workplace. It is important to establish well-crafted measures that promote women's empowerment and challenges deeply ingrained social and cultural norms. To truly empower women, they need to overcome their fears and distrust stemming from these societal norms. This can be achieved through advocacy efforts aimed at eliminating gender discrimination and fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

In terms of future research, this study has certain limitations. It primarily focused on female migrant workers in the seafood industry, utilizing an intersectionality theory and empirical evidence. However, due to time constraints, it was unable to incorporate a quantitative approach and perform statistical analysis to validate the findings with larger population data and co-relation between gender inequality and other variables. Therefore, for a more comprehensive exploration of gender studies in migration and to uncover additional aspects of gender inequality, future research could incorporate statistical analysis and expand its scope to include other marginalized and vulnerable groups such as the LGBTQ+ communities. These groups should not be overlooked, as they might also face significant challenges within Thailand's precarious low-wage industries.

6.3 Conclusion

Gender inequality is a key pertinent feminist issue, particularly in the world of migration. It is also one of the prominent topics that should be included to discuss in the field of international development studies. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) both prominently highlighted gender empowerment as an essential step for a nation to take in order to address challenges brought on by gender inequality. Barriers for inclusive participation and equal opportunities of women migrant workers in labor-intensive workplace may undermine severely overall economic performance and social development for the receiving country. According to (WorldBank, 2003), development policies and initiatives that fail to address the gender disparities have limitations towards development. Hence, the pace of development in each country largely depends on the inclusive participation, including all groups. Without

considering gender equality, a country cannot fulfil its potential as a stable, peaceful, inclusive and economically productive members of the international community.

As a development studies scholar, paying attention to the nexus between gender inequality issue and migration aspect is important for strengthening overall well-being of female migrant workers populations and for promoting women empowerment among marginalized communities. So, this study is a part of migration in the international development studies. The findings of the study spotlight on the presence of gender inequality and gender discrimination practices within Thailand's seafood industry, where women migrant workers face inadequate living conditions and precarious working environments within the marginalized situations. It is evident that female migrant workers continue to experience the vulnerabilities and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality based on their different backgrounds and identities. Despite these challenges, the findings also identify coping strategies employed by female migrant workers.

All in all, the study serves as a valuable resource for policymakers and non-governmental organizations, providing insights that can inform gender-responsive policies and actions. It emphasizes the need to enhance the role of women migrant workers in Thailand's industrial growth and improve the overall well-being of Myanmar female migrant workers in the labor-intensive seafood industry. By addressing the gender issues in migration, the study would like to promote a more comprehensive approach to building an inclusive migrant worker population through the academic contribution of gender development.

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Appendix

List of Research Participants

Participants	Marital Status	Age, Ethnicity and Type of work	Date of Interview
Female participant 1	Single	30-year-old Bamar ethnic factory worker	May 7, 2023
Female participant 2	Single	25-year-old Dawei ethnic factory worker	May 7, 2023
Female participant 3	Married with 3 children	38-year-old Kayan ethnic factory worker	May 7, 2023
Female participant 4	Married with 1 child	43-year-old Bamar ethnic factory worker	May 7, 2023
Female participant 5	Married with 5-month-old kid	38-year-old Bamar ethnic factory worker	May 7, 2023
Female participant 6	Married with 1 child (Pregnant now)	30-year-old Bamar ethnic informal worker	May 14, 2023
Female participant 7	Married with 3 children	46-year-old Karen ethnic informal worker	May 14, 2023
Female participant 8	Single	35-year-old Mon ethnic informal worker	May 14, 2023
Female participant 9	Single	53-year-old Bamar ethnic informal worker	May 14, 2023
Female participant 10	Divorced (Single mother with 1 child)	34-year-old Mon ethnic informal worker	May 14, 2023
CSO Member (Male)	-	Committee Member (Migrant Workers Rights Network)	May 21, 2023
CSO Member (Female)	-	Leader from Welfare Committee (Migrant Workers Rights Network)	May 21, 2023

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