

Time-Use in Childrearing in Migrant Workers' Families in Thailand: An Ordered Logistic Regression

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Introduction and Objective

Thailand is the largest destination country for migrant workers in the Asia Pacific region, especially from those from neighboring Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. The estimated number of migrants-workers and family members - is around 2-3 million. The number of migrant workers without work permit is unknown due to its clandestine nature. Thailand is also expected to host an increasing number of the migrants' children, number of pregnant migrant workers and number of childbearing migrant workers.

Childrearing has been documented to affect how children develop and turn out. Childrearing values influence not only people's behaviors in raising children but also children's destination in the social structure. Given the importance of childrearing and the increasing number of migrant workers and their family members in Thailand, this research aims at investigating the situation of childrearing in migrant workers' family, from a time-use perspective, in Samut Sakhon province, as an important case study, given the record of the 2nd largest number of migrant workers after Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand.

Methods

Data used in this study come from a field survey conducted by the investigators during April to May 2011. The survey targeted families of migrant workers with children under 15 years old in Samut Sakhon province. The survey followed the snowballing method. For the survey, each respondent must be the main caregiver in a household with at least one child under 15 years old. Out of approximately 15,000 children or 12,000 households identified by Samut Sakhon Public Health Office, the survey covers 385 households. The questions cover the following issues: socio-demographic characteristics, which include general intra-individual characteristics and family role environment of the main caregivers; information on time use in childrearing; and information regarding education and health of the first child. Besides the descriptive analysis, ordered logistic regression is relied upon in the analysis of the data.

Results

This study finds that for the majority of migrant workers' children in Samut Sakhon province, the mother is the one taking up the main childrearing role. Most of the children live in a household

where both the mother and the father are present. The study also finds that relatives can play an important role in childrearing, in particular among monthly income earners. Moreover, this study finds that the level of education of the main caregiver can be either positively or negatively correlated with time use for different activities. However, one interesting finding is that the level of education of the main caregiver is positively correlated with time use for education for children aged 5 to 14 years old. Another factor which helps to explain time use in childrearing is the job of the main caregiver.

Conclusion

Given that the number of migrant workers in Thailand has been increasing, and that migrant workers have to bring up their children under circumstances that are expected to be different from what would have been had they not migrated, policies to provide support for migrant workers' families for their childrearing is of increasing importance. This paper provides an overall picture of the situation of childrearing of migrant workers in Thailand. In particular, the paper investigates the relationship between time use in childrearing and the characteristics of the main caregiver and the household. Insights from the paper should provide policy makers with an understanding of the situation, and lead to effective policies to support migrant workers' families as they bring up their children in Thailand.