

# Overcoming Employment Barriers: Strategies for Enhancing the Socio-Economic Integration of Professional Workers from Myanmar in Thailand

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to learn about the challenges that young Myanmar professional migrants to Thailand face in their personal and professional lives, and how these barriers might be overcome. It focused particularly on the transition difficulties faced by recent university graduates. The employment barriers included Thai language proficiency, cultural adaptation, legal barriers, and discriminatory practices, proposing strategic interventions to aid these young workers in achieving better employment outcomes and socio-economic integration. In this cross-sectional study, an online survey questionnaire was used to collect data from a convenience sample of 350 professional migrants and university students from Myanmar who were living in Thailand. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, percentage distributions, t-tests, Pearson's correlation coefficients, analysis of variance, and multiple regression. The findings suggested that statistically significant perceived barriers include learning the Thai language ( $p = .001$ ), a lack of suitable job opportunities ( $p = .012$ ), and legal barriers ( $p = .003$ ). They also revealed that learning the Thai language is generally the single most important accomplishment that opens doors to more professional job opportunities. Thai language proficiency improves migrants' ability to communicate with officials, which is helpful in understanding and surmounting legal barriers to employment. This study's findings provide practical steps that Myanmar professionals may take to facilitate and expedite their integration into Thai socio-economic culture.*

**Keywords:** Thai employment barriers, Myanmar professionals, integration

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## INTRODUCTION

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Migration, the movement of people from one country to settle in another, is becoming increasingly common. The former General Secretary of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon (2013), once said, "Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future. It's part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family." "No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark" (Shire, 2009). This quote reflects the crisis in Myanmar, where the citizens are figuratively in the mouth of a shark. Myanmar is in the midst of a civil war that has caused job scarcity and massive suffering; as a result, many of its citizens are seeking to migrate to better places.

Myanmar professional migrant workers in Thailand face many serious problems that make their lives difficult. They struggle with challenges and barriers to find suitable jobs and integrate into Thai society. These challenges and barriers include language barriers, limited job opportunities, skill mismatches, discrimination, and legal barriers. This study focused on these problems that affect Myanmar professional migrants' employment prospects in Thailand.

The purpose of this study was to examine the socio-economic challenges that Myanmar professional workers encounter in Thailand, and possible strategies that would make it easier for them to participate in Thai labor markets (Pathumsri et al., 2014). This research aims to become a resource for scholars, policymakers, and relevant civil society actors who seek both information and inspiration about how to foster social inclusion and equality, and ultimately empower marginalized migrant populations (Sciortino & Punpuing, 2009). Few researchers have described the situations of professional workers, and specific information about the challenges and employment barriers that they face in Thailand is minimal; previous research studies of Myanmar migrants in Thailand have largely focused on low-skilled workers. Thus, the limited attention given to professional migrants from Myanmar in Thailand, especially since the military coup in 2021, comprises the research gap that is addressed by this study. It involved a search for effective strategies to help professional migrants from Myanmar surmount employment barriers in Thailand.

The objectives of this research study were as follows:

- (i) To identify the employment barriers faced by Myanmar professionals in Thailand, and how these barriers impact their professional and personal lives.
- (ii) To explore feasible strategies for improving employment opportunities for Myanmar professionals who are seeking suitable jobs in Thailand.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *PESTLE framework*

The PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) framework (Yüksel, 2012; Abikova & Piotrowicz, 2021) offers an analytical overview of conditions that influence organizations and events such as migration trends. After a military coup in Myanmar on 1 February 2021, domestic

political conditions rapidly deteriorated. Facilitating payments were required for many basic public services like identity cards, pensions, and electrical services (Aung, 2021). Telephone service, Internet access, and international flights were reduced; certain television shows were no longer broadcast, and some food items became scarce (Bhattacharya & Raghuvansi, 2021). By 2023, coordinated assaults by the Brotherhood Alliance, a loosely linked group of armed ethnic minority organizations, had plunged much of the country into conflict (Ratcliffe, 2025). Simultaneously, annual growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which had averaged 6.4% to 6.8% during the pre-coup years, turned sharply negative during the pandemic. When the situation abated and economic activity began to recover, however, the World Bank noted that annual post-coup GDP growth had slumped to around 1% (Edwards et al. 2024).

During this same period of time, Thailand was rapidly becoming an aging society with labor shortages in many sectors (Thadchai et al., 2018; Chokphukhiao et al., 2024). Both countries are primarily Buddhist, with many social and cultural similarities. Thus, Thailand's peaceful setting, higher minimum wages, and MOUs to facilitate migrant worker employment were attractive to many Myanmar citizens (Chotikasatien, 2023). Digitalization was also driving demand for information technology professionals; thus, Myanmar's high unemployment rate and low wages led increasing numbers of both unskilled and professional workers to seek employment opportunities in Thailand. Although Thai policies impose some occupational restrictions and residency controls, these were generally seen as ad hoc, passive, and not strictly enforced, further encouraging prospective migrants (Siriphadaracht et al., 2025).

### *Relevant theoretical frameworks*

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) posits that education and on-the-job training to develop workplace skills are valuable investments that increase employee productivity, and thus long-term returns along with future earnings. For professional migrant workers, language proficiency is an additional, yet critical, component of human capital that enhances mobility and opens doors for work in foreign settings.

Social Capital Theory, developed by Putnam (2000), explains the important role that family and friend networks and trust play in facilitating job seeking and adapting to social changes (Claridge, 2015; Gelderbom, 2018). Personal networks make it easier for new migrants to settle in Thailand, because they can rely on those who are already

established for help in finding jobs, places to live, and adapting to life in a new country. Many migrants have come to Thailand because of poor job opportunities and economic instability in Myanmar. A study by Myat (2020) examined reasons why people left Myanmar and moved to Thailand; it found that a lack of good-paying jobs and sluggish economic development pushed citizens to look for better employment opportunities in neighboring countries.

### *Push and pull factors*

*Push* factors make people want to leave their homes and move to a new location in search of improved conditions (Aung, 2021). As applied to Myanmar, push mechanisms entail political instability as well as economic difficulties. *Pull* factors in Thailand include better job opportunities, higher wages, and an improved standard of living, along with a comparatively stable economic outlook (Lee, 1966). Since salaries have not kept pace with the inflation rate in Myanmar, many people began to ask family or friends of those who were working abroad about job opportunities in other countries. Social connections have been a major reason why people have been able to move from Myanmar to Thailand, and many have in turn invited their family members or friends to follow them.

### *Employment challenges for migrant workers*

There are two broad categories of jobs commonly referred to as white-collar and blue-collar jobs. *White-collar* jobs denote professional work that utilizes knowledge in positions such as teaching, information technology, doctors, administrators, etc. (Parietti, 2024). *Blue-collar* jobs are low-skill level jobs for those who work with their hands in tasks such as construction, manufacturing, waiters, nannies, etc. (Dhir, 2024). Tungsuwan et al. (2024) stated that “there is no legal distinction between blue-collar and white-collar worker under Thai Labor law;” these two types of jobs receive the same treatment. Regardless of the category, to contribute to the productivity and economic growth of their host country, migrants need skills, knowledge, and training—that is, they need human capital (Becker, 1964). Thai labor law has some protective features for foreign workers, but they may still encounter problems such as workplace harassment. This study focuses solely on suitable jobs in Thailand for white-collar professional migrants from Myanmar.

Previous studies in other ASEAN countries have noted that Malaysia was built on immigration (Kaur, 2014), and Singapore relies on guest worker policies to fill a substantial number of employment vacancies that its citizens are unable or unwilling to accept (Yeoh & Lin, 2013). Some policies, originally intended to provide an adequate supply of low-skilled, inexpensive labor, have been modified in recent years to provide pathways to permanent residence and citizenship. However, professional migrants still face discrimination and are often forced to remain in secondary labor markets due to legal or institutional restrictions (Kaur, 2014).

On the one hand, language barriers present a daily challenge for many Myanmar migrants in Thailand. Since they do not speak Thai fluently, they struggle to communicate in both their personal and professional lives. Additionally, language barriers contribute to migrants' social isolation, as they find it difficult to form relationships with Thai people and participate in local communities. Language barriers are a significant obstacle for Myanmar workers in Thailand, leading to misunderstandings, safety risks, and social isolation (Wai, 2024). On the other hand, language proficiency, a form of human capital, provides migrants with the possibility of better employment opportunities and higher wages. This is especially true of migrants from Myanmar working in Thailand (Min & Tontisirin, 2024). While they may endeavor to learn Thai or improve their English communication skills, insufficient study has been made of suitable long-term strategies for professional integration.

### *Adaptation and acculturation strategies*

The socio-economic opportunities offered by migration are an important factor that determines effective adaptation by migrants in their new host country (Tarver, 2024). Berry's (1997) acculturation model describes how immigrants relate to new societies based on two dimensions: 1) their desire to preserve their own ethnic culture, and 2) their desire to interact with members of the majority group. Based on these attributes, he proposed four possible acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. *Integration* suggests a desire to hold onto one's own culture while still interacting with the majority group. *Assimilation* signifies people who interact with the majority group and are willing to relinquish their own culture. *Separation* involves clinging to one's own culture and identity while rejecting interaction with the majority group. *Marginalization* means being willing to give up one's own culture, but having no desire to interact with the majority group. While

immigrants may not consciously choose marginalization as a strategy, it may become a de facto reality if the majority population is biased against or reluctant to interact with them. (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022).

Myanmar migrants often struggle with social integration and face discrimination in Thailand, especially when they cannot communicate easily with others (Tungsuwan et al., 2024); this may happen as a result of human trafficking. Those who are more culturally integrated have a better understanding of social standards and political mores, as well as a greater sensitivity to subtle discrimination.

### *Mitigation strategies*

There are several strategies that may help migrants to take advantage of opportunities to achieve success in a foreign country, even though they still face challenges. “Letters from Thailand” (Botan, 1969), a literary prize-winning novel, is based on the true story of a young Chinese immigrant struggling to assimilate in the Thai culture after World War II. The narrative describes the challenges, hardships, and prejudices this young man faced, even though he eventually became a successful business owner in Thailand. The events in this story highlight the need for perseverance, adaptability, and cultural awareness in overcoming the barriers to successful socio-economic integration.

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

*H<sub>1.1</sub>* Learning the Thai language is a significant barrier faced by Myanmar professional workers seeking employment in Thailand.

*H<sub>1.2</sub>* Limited job opportunities is a significant barrier faced by Myanmar professional workers seeking employment in Thailand.

*H<sub>1.3</sub>* Skill mismatches are a significant barrier faced by Myanmar professional workers seeking employment in Thailand.

*H<sub>1.4</sub>* Discrimination is a significant barrier faced by Myanmar professional workers seeking employment in Thailand.

*H<sub>1.5</sub>* Legal restrictions are a significant barrier faced by Myanmar professional workers seeking employment in Thailand

### *Conceptual framework*

What are the key socio-economic challenges faced by Myanmar professional workers in Thailand, and how do these challenges impact their professional and personal lives? The conceptual framework diagram shown below in Figure 1 provides an overview of the employment barriers faced by Myanmar professional workers.

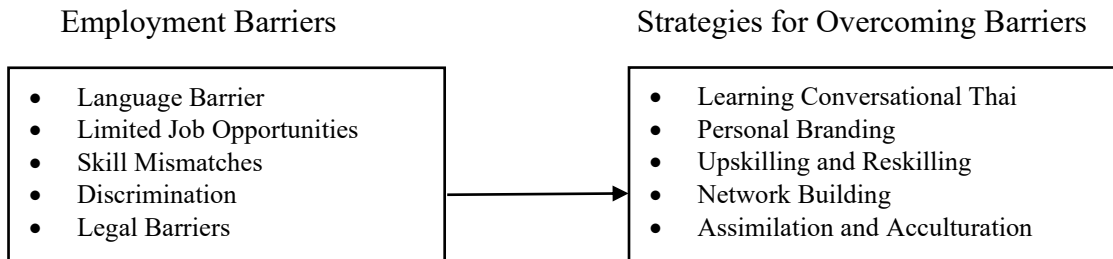


Figure 1 *Conceptual Framework for Research Study*

Employment barriers include language barriers (Wai, 2024), limited job opportunities (Chantavanich and Vungsiriphisal, 2012), skill mismatches (which means having a degree or certificate, but being forced to accept a blue-collar job due to local requirements), discrimination (Sarapirom et al., 2020), and legal barriers (Tungsuwan et al., 2024). Each barrier has been paired with a hypothesized strategy for overcoming it, most of which are drawn from previous studies.

General George S. Patton (1939) stated, “Good tactics can save even the worst strategy. Bad tactics will destroy even the best strategy.” According to the Global Knowledge Index (2024), Myanmar is ranked 123rd in education, and Thailand’s education rank is 57th. Thailand has a significantly higher education sector. For professional workers from Myanmar to have a good opportunity of getting a suitable job, they may need to upgrade their skills or reskill (Chakma & Chaijinda, 2020). They may also need to engage in network building, personal branding, targeting jobs, and assimilation and acculturation (Tarver, 2024). These essential tactical strategies are not only important for professionals who graduated from Myanmar, but also for those who studied in Thailand. This study endeavors to measure how helpful such strategies might be for Myanmar professionals who desire to find suitable jobs so that they can live and work in Thailand.



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Research design*

This quantitative descriptive study explored strategies whereby Myanmar professionals may more easily integrate and assimilate into Thai socio-economic culture; its findings are expected to help Myanmar migrants seek for ways in which they can overcome various employment barriers.

### *Population and sample*

According to data from the Office of the Foreign Workers Administration in Thailand, about 3.17 million Myanmar nationals were employed in Thailand when this study was conducted (OFWA, 2025). Based on employment categories (Article 59), a rough estimate of Myanmar nationals who were employed as professionals was 258,625 individuals, or about 8.17% of this total. The study's population consisted of professional employees and university students from Myanmar who were already working or looking for suitable employment in Thailand at that time (February–April 2025). University students from Myanmar were included in the sample as “near entry” professional migrants; some were already employed, while others were looking for work in preparation for joining the Thai labor market.

A suitable sample size for this population was calculated according to Yamane's (1967) method, and is shown below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

The target sample size was 384.

### *Sampling technique*

A non-probability sample that utilized convenience and snowball sampling techniques was adopted for this study due to limited access to official sampling frames of Myanmar professionals in Thailand. The Myanmar migrants who were surveyed consisted of 350 professionals who were living in Thailand and were willing to share their real-life experiences as professionals who had looked for suitable employment in



Thailand. Although slightly below the calculated sample size, the final response rate was adequate and consistent with similar studies.

### *Research instrument (validity and reliability)*

Three experienced researchers checked the validity of the survey questions to verify that they were related to the topic and were easy to understand using an item-objective congruence approach; their feedback and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the survey. The research instrument contained seven sections: demographic data/respondent profiles, language proficiency, job opportunities, skill mismatches, discrimination, legal barriers, and strategies for overcoming barriers to professional employment. Most survey items were 5-point Likert-type questions.

### *Ethical approval and data collection procedures*

After examining the instrument and data collection plan, permission and ethical approval for the study was granted by the Asia-Pacific International University Research Committee (AIU.RO.09/2025, 19 February 2025). Participant safety was protected by inviting—but not pressuring—potential respondents to complete the survey, and by ensuring that their identities were kept confidential. Protecting respondents' identity was viewed as the most important ethical issue for this study, as some members of the targeted sample group might harbor concerns about their immigration status in Thailand.

Data was collected by sending a link to a Google form via various online platforms such as Facebook Messenger white collar group chats, LinkedIn, and other online networks. The professional migrants were asked to answer Likert-type questions that captured their experiences, perceptions, and opinions about the employment challenges that they faced when applying for jobs in Thailand. Respondents represented occupations such as business, engineering, information technology, and teaching, as well as office staff, especially those who were recent graduates from educational institutions in Myanmar or Thailand. These groups were best suited to answer this survey about their employment search experiences and how they had tried to enter the Thai labor market. Use of an online survey may have excluded professional migrants without digital access in Thailand; this represented one limitation of the research methodology used to collect data.

### *Data analysis*

Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and standard deviation values were used to assess and interpret responses to demographic profile items and Likert-type questions. Comparisons across demographic groups were conducted using analytical statistical tests such as independent *t*-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test relationships among various employment barriers, and multiple regression was used to measure the impact of employment barriers on integration and assimilation outcomes.

### *Interpretation scale*

The descriptive statistical measurement levels for 5-point Likert mean scores followed criteria suggested by experienced research methodologists (Best & Kahn, 2014), and are shown below.

- An average score of 4.21–5.00 implied Strongly Agree/Very High Level
- An average score of 3.41–4.20 implied Agree/High Level
- An average score of 2.61–3.40 implied Slightly Agree/Average Level
- An average score of 1.81–2.60 implied Disagree/Low Level
- An average score of 1.00–1.80 implied Strongly Disagree/Very Low Level

## RESULTS

### 1. Demographic characteristics

Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and percentage distributions were used to analyze the data that was collected. This statistical method described the average values of response ranges. To describe respondents' demographic data, responses were summarized by frequency and percentage and are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1:

*Demographic and Educational Information (n = 350)*

| Demographic Data                          | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age                                       |           |            |
| 1. Under 21 years                         | 7         | 2.00       |
| 2. 21–25 years                            | 164       | 46.86      |
| 3. 26–30 years                            | 163       | 46.57      |
| 4. Above 30 years old                     | 16        | 4.57       |
| Gender                                    |           |            |
| 1. Female                                 | 140       | 40.00      |
| 2. Male                                   | 210       | 60.00      |
| Highest Education Level                   |           |            |
| 1. Undergraduate                          | 15        | 4.28       |
| 2. Bachelor's degree                      | 204       | 58.29      |
| 3. Master's degree or higher              | 131       | 37.43      |
| Graduated From                            |           |            |
| 1. Myanmar College or University          | 223       | 63.72      |
| 2. Thai College or University             | 123       | 35.14      |
| 3. Others (India, Indonesia, Philippines) | 4         | 1.14       |

Over 90 percent of sampled respondents were 21 to 30 years of age, and so may be characterized as recent entries into labor markets with minimal work experience. Both genders were well represented in the sample, and over 95 percent had completed a bachelor's or master's degree. A majority (63%) had completed their studies in Myanmar; thus, recognition of their degrees in Thailand is a salient issue.

Table 2 presents reasons why respondents left Myanmar, who helped them come to Thailand, where they live and work, how long they have been in Thailand, and details regarding their current jobs.

Table 2:  
*Current Job Position (n = 350)*

|                                             | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| What led you to leave?                      |           |            |
| 1. Avoid military draft                     | 140       | 40.00      |
| 2. Better future for myself/family          | 202       | 57.71      |
| 3. Higher wages                             | 8         | 2.29       |
| Who helped you originally come to Thailand? |           |            |
| 1. Employment agency                        | 154       | 44.00      |
| 2. Family                                   | 82        | 23.43      |
| 3. Friend                                   | 73        | 20.86      |
| 4. I came on my own                         | 41        | 11.71      |
| Location                                    |           |            |
| 1. Bangkok                                  | 147       | 42.00      |
| 2. Chiang Mai                               | 70        | 20.00      |
| 3. Tak Province                             | 105       | 30.00      |
| 4. Others                                   | 28        | 8.00       |
| Length of Time Living in Thailand           |           |            |
| 1. Less than 1 year                         | 44        | 12.57      |
| 2. 1-2 years                                | 135       | 38.58      |
| 3. 2-3 years                                | 102       | 29.14      |
| 4. 3 years above                            | 69        | 19.71      |
| Current Job Position                        |           |            |
| 1. Business or Management                   | 55        | 15.71      |
| 2. Education                                | 172       | 49.14      |
| 3. Information Technology                   | 47        | 13.43      |
| 4. Health Care                              | 10        | 2.86       |
| 5. Others                                   | 66        | 18.86      |
| Length of Time to Find Job                  |           |            |
| 1. < 1 month                                | 68        | 19.43      |
| 2. 1-2 months                               | 119       | 34.00      |
| 3. 3-4 months                               | 124       | 35.43      |
| 4. I am unemployed                          | 39        | 11.14      |

The family and friends of nearly 45% of respondents played an active role in helping them relocate to Thailand, reinforcing the important role of social capital (Putnam, 2000) when looking for a job in a foreign setting. While these young professionals live in different parts of Thailand, Bangkok was the most popular location since it hosts a relatively large number of white-collar jobs. Most respondents had been living in Thailand for three years or less, having left Myanmar after the military coup in 2021.

Education was the most common field of professional employment, accounting for nearly half of jobs, followed by business management and information technology respectively. For most respondents, it took from one to three months to find a job in Thailand, indicating a moderate level of difficulty.

## 2. Descriptive analysis of employment barriers

Table 3 below compares the scores for various categories of professional employment barriers.

Table 3:

*Average Scores for Categories of Professional Employment Barriers*

| Variable                     | Mean | SD  | Level   |
|------------------------------|------|-----|---------|
| 1. Thai Language Barriers    | 3.60 | .62 | High    |
| 2. Limited Job Opportunities | 3.41 | .42 | High    |
| 3. Skill Mismatches          | 2.99 | .39 | Average |
| 4. Discrimination            | 3.03 | .49 | Average |
| 5. Legal Restrictions        | 4.00 | .50 | High    |

Barrier categories with high scores included Legal Restrictions, Thai Language Barriers, and Limited Job Opportunities (4.00, 3.60, & 3.41 respectively). Legal restrictions related to work permits was ranked as the most important barrier by a considerable margin. Discrimination and Skill Mismatches were seen as less important issues, with only Average levels of agreement. However, responses to individual questions in these categories showed that these problems still represented high barriers in some situations.

## 3. Comparison by age group (ANOVA)

In Table 4, perceptions of barriers to professional employment by Myanmar nationals were compared by age group. The results of a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test demonstrated that there were significant differences in perception by age group of Employment Opportunities and Legal Barriers as shown below.

Table 4:

*Professional Job Opportunities and Legal Barrier Perceptions Compared by Age Group*

| Employment Opportunities | SS     | df  | MS    | F     | p      |
|--------------------------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|
| Between Groups           | 1.881  | 3   | 0.627 | 3.687 | 0.012* |
| Within Groups            | 58.819 | 346 | 0.170 |       |        |
| Total                    | 60.700 | 349 |       |       |        |
| Legal Barriers           |        |     |       |       |        |
| Between Groups           | 2.126  | 3   | 0.709 | 2.863 | 0.037* |
| Within Groups            | 85.621 | 346 | 0.247 |       |        |
| Total                    | 87.747 | 349 |       |       |        |

Note: \* $p \leq 0.05$  indicates statistical significance

Respondents were divided into four age groups: < 21, 21–25, 26–30, and >30. The first age group (under 21 years old) were students about to finish their bachelor's degrees; legal barriers didn't seem too important to them.

However, respondents who were 21 to 30 years old had likely faced these legal barriers. The mean scores levels of statistical significance for respondents aged 21 to 25 years old (0.442, .022) and 26 to 30 years old (0.459 and 0.017) were considerably higher. Many of them had probably learned from experience that it was not so easy to get a visa and work permit for a 25,000 Baht/month white collar job directly.

#### 4. Comparison by gender (*t*-test)

Table 5 compares perception of barriers by gender.

Table 5:

*Perception of Barriers Compared by Gender*

| Barrier Type      | Mean (Male) | Mean (Female) | Mean Diff. (M-F) | ( <i>p</i> -value) |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Job Opportunities | 3.4752      | 3.3200        | +0.1552          | 0.012              |
| Language          | 3.7171      | 3.4163        | +0.3008          | 0.001              |
| Legal             | 4.1083      | 3.8446        | +0.2637          | 0.003              |

When perceptions of job opportunities, language and legal barriers were compared by gender using an independent samples *t*-test, statistically significant

differences were found. For all of these variables, men had higher views of these barriers than did women.

### 5. Comparison by length of stay (ANOVA)

Table 6 shows the results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test based on the length of time that various groups had lived in Thailand (Table 2 shows the categories used). The group which had lived in Thailand for more than three years were better adapted to local conditions. This group was well developed in every aspect, including language proficiency, knowledge of job opportunities, and success in overcoming discrimination and legal barriers.

Table 6:

#### *ANOVA for Length of Time Living in Thailand*

| Variable          | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
|-------------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| Language          | 6.757          | 3  | 2.252       | 6.150  | .000 |
| Job Opportunities | 2.170          | 3  | 0.723       | 4.276  | .006 |
| Discrimination    | 7.225          | 3  | 2.408       | 10.696 | .000 |
| Legal Barriers    | 8.031          | 3  | 2.677       | 11.619 | .000 |

### 6. Correlation analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficients among professional employment barriers and strategies to overcome them were analyzed in Table 7.

Table 7:

#### *Pearson's Correlation Coefficients for Professional Employment Barriers*

| Variables            | 1      | 2      | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6     |
|----------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| 1. Language          | 1.000  |        |         |         |         |       |
| 2. Job Opportunities | .409** | 1.000  |         |         |         |       |
| 3. Skill Mismatches  | .183** | .222** | 1.000   |         |         |       |
| 4. Discrimination    | .136** | .164** | .240**  | 1.000   |         |       |
| 5. Legal Barriers    | .268** | .279** | .042**  | .125**  | 1.000   |       |
| 6. Strategies        | .118** | .098** | -.092** | -.042** | -.583** | 1.000 |

Note: \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$



The barriers to professional employment were closely linked together: discrimination and legal barriers are often the results of limited job opportunities. The relationships among the independent variables were less than .50 (the highest was .409 between language barriers and job opportunities), which means that collinearity among the independent variables was not a problem, and so the data was suitable for regression analysis.

### 7. Regression analysis of employment barriers and strategies to overcome them

Multiple regression analysis was performed to test the relationships between barriers to professional employment in Thailand for Myanmar nationals and potential strategies for successfully dealing with these barriers. The results revealed a positive relationship as shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8:

#### *Relationships Among Employment Barriers and Potential Strategies*

| Model | R    | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .603 | .364     | .354              | .329                       |

The five predictors of the multiple regression model together explained about 36.4% of variation in the outcome variable. This demonstrated a moderate level of fit, suggesting that respondent perceptions of these barriers were important variables in predicting their opinions about the value of various strategies for addressing them.

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) confirmed statistically significant relationships among the variables, as shown below in Table 9.

Table 9:

#### *ANOVA Test of Relationships Among Employment Barriers and Potential Strategies*

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| 1     | Regression | 21.323         | 5   | 4.265       | 39.305 | .000 |
|       | Residual   | 37.324         | 344 | .109        |        |      |
|       | Total      | 58.647         | 349 |             |        |      |

The ANOVA test revealed that the regression model was statistically significant,  $F(5,344) = 39.305$ ,  $p < .0001$ . This means that a mixture of legal barriers, skill

mismatches, discrimination, language barriers, and job opportunities significantly predicted the use of strategies to overcome these professional employment barriers.

## DISCUSSION

According to the findings, legal barriers received the highest score among the employment barriers. The Thai government and professional bodies have strict regulations for many occupations such as accounting, architecture, engineering and so on. These policies prevent skilled migrants from getting certain jobs that may match their education or professional experience. During the hiring process, even if legal permission exists, employers may favor appointing Thai nationals over foreigners, particularly for skilled positions; this results in de-skilling (Hall, 2011). It means that experienced foreign migrants may be forced to take on low-wage work (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphal, 2012); examples of this type of work include construction, domestic work, or factory jobs.

In Thailand, work permits are limited to specific jobs and employers. This makes it difficult for migrants to change careers or employers. Migrants are not allowed to enter the open job market, and they risk losing their legal status if they leave their assigned jobs. Moreover, Hall (2011) pointed out that foreign credentials and professional licenses from Myanmar and neighboring countries are often not recognized in Thailand. As a result, various professionals are unable to work in their trained fields. Even though migrants have skills and experience, they may be excluded from employment in higher-paying sectors.

Women's perceptions of certain professional employment barriers such as job opportunities, language, and legal barriers were significantly lower than those of men. Some possible explanations for this include the fact that women value verbal communication, and tend to learn other languages more quickly than men. Since women are more likely than men to have studied Education, obtaining visas to teach in an International School may also be easier for them than for men. In addition, they may view overcoming legal barriers as less difficult through the possibility of marriage to a Thai national.

These reasons were all related to each other: legal barriers and discrimination are caused by limited job opportunities. When professionals don't have the required documents, they may have to choose a lower-level job since professional job

opportunities are limited. But compared to their home country, Thailand has a good government. If the Thai government would develop more effective policies for migrant workers, these would make it easier for professionals to work in the fields for which they were trained.

### *Culture shock*

Culture shock in Figure 2 refers to feelings of confusion, stress, and disorientation that people often experience when they move to a new environment. This happens when a person arrives in a new location with unfamiliar customs, language, values, and social norms. Myanmar and Thailand are not too different in terms of their foods, cultures, or religion. San (2020) noted that Myanmar and Thailand have similar collective work styles, such as working in teams and group discussion of work projects. More than 90% of the people in both Myanmar and Thailand are also Buddhists.

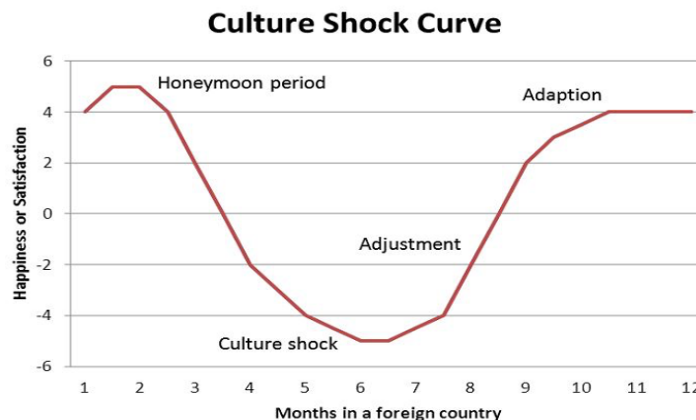


Figure 2 Culture Shock Curve

In culture shock, the honeymoon period is explained as the first excitement after arriving in a new country. During the first few months, new arrivals feel like tourists, and life is full of excitement in a new culture. After that as the months pass comes a time of frustration. People start to face challenges because of cultural differences, and home sickness sometimes leads them to frustration. The third stage is adjustment as individuals begin to adapt to the new culture and adjust their routines and daily lifestyles. They start to learn the local language and customs. This adjustment makes

them more comfortable in the new culture. In the last stage, individuals finally adapt to the culture successfully, have more comfortable lives, and feel confident in their new surroundings (Larson et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSION

The study's findings suggest that learning the Thai language is usually the single most important accomplishment that opens doors to more professional job opportunities in Thailand. Thai language proficiency also improves migrants' ability communicate with officials, which is helpful in understanding and surmounting legal barriers to employment. The greater the legal or language challenges specific to a particular job, the more that professional migrants need to employ one or more specific strategies to deal with them. Learning the Thai language and asking for appropriate help from friends, service agents, and non-governmental organizations are important ways to improve their chances of finding suitable job opportunities.

### *Limitations*

This study had some limitations. It was quite difficult to estimate the exact number of professional migrant workers in Thailand. For this reason, respondents were contacted through online platforms using text-based interviews and messaging apps like Facebook Messenger. However, online platform surveys also have a downside; the facial expressions of respondents cannot be seen, nor can their voices be heard, which made their answers less detailed than was desirable. Online respondents were able to participate in this survey; however, those from some regions in Thailand were unable to access it.

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

This study used a cross-sectional research approach. For future studies, researchers might consider using a mixed methods approach, longitudinal studies, or case studies to further elaborate on this topic. The majority of respondents were from Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Mae Sot. In the future, the researchers may endeavor to widen the study's scope by collecting survey or interview data from other parts of Thailand.

## *Practical Suggestions*

Myanmar migrant workers need to learn the Thai language. In Germany, the people speak German, and in France, they speak French; likewise, Thai is the official language of Thailand. Migrants need to look for both offline and online opportunities to learn Thai. Better Thai language skills can lead to better job opportunities in Thailand. To inquire about job opportunities, documentation, and the visa process, they can connect with the Myanmar migrant community, for instance the Myanmar Community Network page, on Facebook.

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