

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

The work and findings of this study will be summarized in this chapter. Specifically the major findings of the study will be analysed, the theories based on the findings and literature review will be discussed with the limitations of the study, suggestions for policy makers and recommendations for further study.

6.1 Major findings of the study

In the section, the four major findings of the study are analysed. These are elaborated and discussed in each section below.

6.1.1 Creating and utilizing social networks

Rakhine migrants are new people in a new environment. That is why, they do not have many friends and relatives in their host destination. But they migrated to Yangon to get a job in a factory with the help of their friends and relatives so they already have the beginnings of a social network in Yangon.

For the factory workers most of their time is spent in the factory. The factory is their world so it is essential to create their social networks at the factory. The study showed that when they created their social networks, they used their existing family and friends as a bridge. Most of the migrants could create and extend their social networks with their colleagues not only through working together but also through doing social activities together. In the factory there are a variety of people with diverse religious, ethnic and social backgrounds all working together. All the factory workers both male and female are working together closely inside the factory. In the study it was found out that Rakhine migrants have more friends who have different religious, different ethnic and different gender than in their past (in the place of origin).

They also extended their network with people who live near-by to them with the help of their colleagues who also live nearby, this provides a sense of security. To increase their kinship network in the host destination, migrants support their kin members in terms of financial assistance, accommodation and job information in order to assist in their immigration. In addition, this study also showed that migrants can extend his/her kinship network by getting married. When they get married, some of the migrants do not care if their life partner is co-ethnic or not, but they do care whether he/she is supportive of them.

Furthermore, from the study results it can be observed that the migrants link with civil society organizations inside and outside the factory. There are four organizations inside the factory. This provides opportunities for migrant workers to connect with these organizations which provide social welfare and social security for factory workers. These organizations exist in part because the factory does not have a social welfare scheme and the Government welfare scheme is also unreliable. Migrants can link with Rakhine organizations, including the Rakhine monastery with the help of their friends who have connections with these organizations. Migrants gain temporary shelter and food from the Rakhine monastery and migrants donate back to the monastery after they get a job. By supporting each other they can build connections.

6.1.2 Learning process of migrant workers

In general, most of the migrants are uneducated and do not want to learn or study a lot. However as migrants from rural areas of Rakhine they have to learn many things for their survival as well as for their life development. The study found that when Rakhine migrants arrived in Yangon they had to learn the Burmese language from their senior co-ethnic migrants so that they could communicate well with their colleagues and to reduce misunderstanding. When migrants can communicate they can extend their network and gain access to resources from Burmese people if needed.

After learning the language and when they can communicate, they learn job relevant skills more easily. From the study it was found that Rakhine migrant factory workers cannot learn job relevant skills without good relationships with seniors or colleagues because seniors are usually unwilling to share their knowledge and skills

with new labourers. Senior workers worry that if a new labourer knows everything, he/she will take over their position. That is why one of the first things new workers do is create social networks with seniors and then learn the job relevant skills from them. Migrants can promote their position in the factory by learning job relevant skills.

Furthermore, some of the migrants have not finished their education when they arrive in Yangon so they try to continue their education. In the study it was found that it is not easy for migrants to continue their education while working at the factory but migrants who want to be educated manage these challenges. Also it was discovered that no matter how the life of Rakhine migrant factory workers becomes difficult and insecure in their new environment some migrants learn how to play the guitar in order to entertain themselves when they are stressful. Additionally, the study observed that most of the migrants come from rural Rakhine areas so when they arrive into an urban setting do not know how to take the bus, where to find cheap food and where they can live at cheap prices. This is a small thing but it is really important for migrants so they definitely learn it from their social network members.

6.1.3 Support from social networks

Before migrants migrated to Yangon they got their information about their destination and financial support from their existing network members in the Yangon region. It is not easy for migrants who live in rural remote areas of Rakhine to migrate to urban Yangon, where they have never been before. Nevertheless, their social network supports them to migrate to Yangon without difficulty.

While the migrants are in Yangon, they use foreign medicine and consult with their friends if they have health problems even though they are used to traditional medicines and would normally have consulted with their parents in their place of origin. They are unwilling to inform their parents about their health conditions because they do not want to upset them, although they can connect with their families at any time via telecommunications. Most of the migrants have limited education so they may not be able to read descriptions of medicine and sometimes they may not be able to pronounce the name of a medicine correctly if it is in a foreign language, making it difficult to buy from a drugstore.

Therefore, they rely on medicine and health information from their friends. It is very risky taking medicines suggested by friends who are not a physician but it seems to be effective for migrants to reduce their health expenses. Apart from this, migrants have a higher risk of diseases according to information from the non-governmental organizations. If a migrant becomes ill and is a member of a social group inside the factory they receive social security if they are seriously sick or have an injury. One social group provides a donation trip like a retreat. By participating in these groups migrants gain social benefits and psycho-social support.

It is also difficult for migrant workers to transfer money to their family at their place of origin by using banks because banks do not exist in many places of Rakhine. However, it was found that migrants can transfer their money to their family through their social network members without using banks. There is no reported case of the money being lost on its way or in the hand of carriers. Their social network supports them to transfer their money to the right owner safely. All the migrant workers are poor and always need money but sometimes they lend amounts of money to each other because they also want to borrow money from their friends rather than the banks or money lenders if they need it. The study observed that migrants can access some small amounts of money from their friends and colleagues without interest if they have financial problems. Besides, sometime migrants can earn extra income by gambling with their friends.

One of the major challenges that migrant workers face is accommodation in Yangon as it is one of the most expensive cities in ASEAN, so migrants find it difficult to rent a house or hostel by themselves. Therefore, migrants tend to live together with their colleagues or relatives not only to reduce the living costs but also to support each other. In this study it was found that when they first arrived they live together with their existing network members. After they had a job they moved to other places. Usually when they found friends in a hostel or in the factory, they moved to a rented house to reduce the cost. It was also found that the Rakhine monastery is critical for new migrants as they provide temporary shelter as well as food.

Additionally, migrant factory workers have to work many hours for little money but they are used to going to Rakhine social and religious events which are held in Yangon. All these events celebrate in traditional Rakhine ways, it is a kind of Rakhine gathering in their new environment and open to all the public. By participating in these kinds of events, migrants gain psycho-social support and strengthen their pride in being Rakhine. Overall, it was concluded that migrant factory workers gain a variety of benefits from their social networks which helped them to overcome challenges in the mist of poor living and working conditions at Hlaing Tharyar Industrial region of Yangon.

6.2 Theoretical discussions of the findings

In this study the theories underpinning interpersonal networks as resources of migrant factory workers are discussed. Granovetter (1973), an early scholar in social network categorizes interpersonal networks into three types; strong tie, weak tie and absent tie. In general, strong tie means relationships with close friends, weak tie means relationships with friends of friends or acquaintance and absent tie means relationships among friends who do not meet with each other for a long time. The author argues that weak ties (friends of friends or acquaintance) are more useful than strong ties (close friends) because strong ties tend to have the same ideas, values, resources and information while weak tie have different resources.

But in this study there was a slightly different result, in that most of the migrant workers receive immediate support from their close friends or kin members (strong ties) if they had problems. When they have financial problems they can borrow money from their close friends and kin members. For the women if they do not want to go back to their home after they do overtime to midnight, they sleep at their close friends for their safety. They do not sleep at an acquaintances home. On the other hand, when migrants remit their money their friends of friends or acquaintance help them, but this does not happen frequently.

Cattle (2001, cited in Bruggeman, 2008) also pointed out that migrants cannot rely on their colleagues because the author assumed that social networks tend to form with people from the same class and level. It means friends of migrants are unreliable if they come from a different class. The factory is a melting pot of different social standings, ethnic groups and varying resources. Nevertheless, the study found out that migrants get much support from their friends.

Berkman (2000) reveals that migrants are not likely to get support from their parents because they are away from them. So migrants rely on people near to them, such as friends and colleagues. However, this study observed that migrants do get support from their parents although they are far away from them. When one of the respondents in the study delivered her baby, her mother came to Yangon in order to support her and her baby. Apart from this fact, parents gave psycho-social and social support via telecommunications to reduce the migrant's loneliness. Thuy (2005) mentions that migrant can do good things and bad things together when they are stressed or after they have finished their job. But the respondents in this study did not mention doing any bad things with their friends because they are busy at the factory and they have little money for their survival so they have to spend their money effectively.

Regarding organizational networks, Clark (2003) revealed that Civil Society Organizations are closed and homogeneous in the term of members fees, ethnicity, religion, interests and values. The study reinforces Clark's position as it found little variation in the make-up of the organizational networks even though most were open and inclusive. For example, the Hometown Association and Quality Control section are homogeneous, people who are not from that township and that section are not allowed to be members.

Anderson and Wallace (2013) argue that Civil Society Organizations force and encourage communities to perform as social movements. Labour Activist (2013) also reveals that Civil Society Organizations in Myanmar encourage labour strikes and support social movements. The same result was found in this study, in that the Labour Union that has been formed inside the factory with the support of the International

Labour Organization and Civil Society Organizations determine when, and if, a strike is required. Labourers will not undertake a strike without completing the required paper work to inform the Labour Exchange office and Labour Union of their intention. Support and encouragement of labourers to conduct a strike can then take place. All strikes in the studied factory are led by the Labour Union. Also in the factory religious based organizations are more powerful than any other groups because many people join and participate actively. Rakhine organizations in Yangon are also helpful for Rakhine migrant workers to gain psycho-social support.

With regard to the learning processes of migrant workers, Kyaw Kyaw Min Htut (2012) reveals that migrant workers learn language so that they can communicate with people and learn from them. This was also found in this study in that Rakhine migrant factory workers learn Burmese language in Yangon. After they learn the language they are able to communicate with their colleagues. If they can communicate with them, they can also learn job relevant skills which are essential for them. Kolb (1984) reveals that learning is a human adaption process. In the study it was also found that migrant factory workers learn survival techniques including the way of living in an urban city and adapt to a new environment.

6.3 Study implication

The following recommendations are made from the results of the study for Rakhine migrant factory workers, the studied factory and the policy makers. The majority of Rakhine migrant factory workers have a very limited education and their level of education is not very different among them. However, among these uneducated migrant factory workers those who learn job relevant skills and technical knowledge in their respective sections become supervisors and earn more salary than others. Some of the factory workers are degree holders but do not learn the job relevant skills or build good relationships with supervisors and colleagues so they are not promoted as a supervisor. Therefore, the study would like recommend that Rakhine migrant factory workers be provided with the opportunity to learn job relevant skills and survival techniques in order to overcome their challenges and promote their life in Yangon. This

should include instruction to assist in the connection with many organizations so people gain the confidence and support to overcome their challenges.

Secondly, the study factory does not have concrete policies for leave and promotions although there are approximately 1260 labourers. That is because labourers do not get an orientation so they do not know exactly the rules and regulations of the factory, even though as a labourer they can break the rules and be punished. Many labourers try to get favors from supervisors instead of working hard. In addition, some of the migrant factory workers would like to learn the job relevant skills in the factory but they do not have a chance to learn so they make friends with seniors to learn from them. This approach affects the role of social networks of the migrant factory workers. On the other hand, it seems to take time and blocks the efficiency of labourers, as well as the productivity of the factory. In order to solve these kind of problems it is recommended that the study factory provide in-house training for labourers who want to learn more about the job relevant skills and set up a Human Resources Management Department to develop concrete rules and regulations for the factory.

Thirdly, the new civil government has imposed some new labour laws and updated other laws to protect labourer rights and to solve labourer disputes peacefully. Nevertheless, labourers do not seem to receive protection from these laws in real life. Although the Union Parliament has passed the Labour Union law and non-governmental organizations are helping the Labour Union in each factory, labourers do not participate, as those who participate with the Labour Union leaders and members involved are likely to be fired by the factory owners in some factories. This is an area for the Government to be involved in these kind of cases to protect labourers in accordance with the Settlement of Labourers Dispute Law. The Social Security Law, 2012 supports health care services for labourers. However, labourers still have problems with access to government clinics and hospitals if they have health problems. The study would like to see the Government do checks on the ground in order to understand the real situation and support labourers effectively.

6.4 Study Limitations

The study has several limitations. First of all the study focuses on only one factory in the Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone and conducted in depth interviews with nine Rakhine migrant factory workers due to time and financial limitations. Therefore, the result cannot be generalized. There was no opportunity to interview Government officials for the section on the legal review of this study. Likewise there was no the opportunity to interview the Managing Director of the factory and those who support the lives of the Rakhine migrant factory workers.

In addition, there was not much of a chance to use participatory research methods to observe the life of migrants more closely because they are always busy at the factory. There was no Rakhine traditional events nor wedding ceremonies of factory workers at the time of the field research. It is recommended that more research be conducted on resilience of the factory workers and the role of the Labour Union in the Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zones, particularly how new migrants can best adapt and create a life in Yangon.

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