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Major Factors Affecting Policy Changes on Illegal Migrant Workers in Thailand

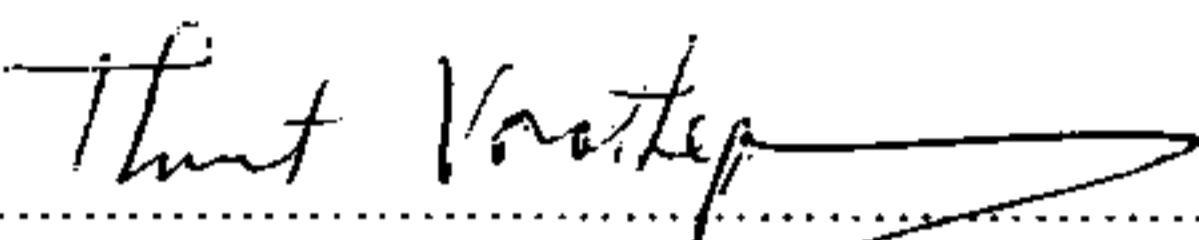
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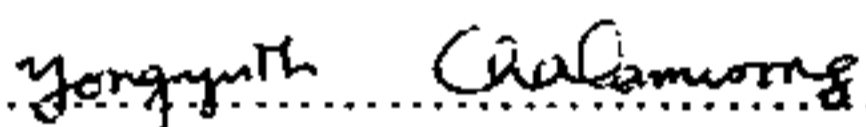
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Title of Dissertation Major Factors Affecting Policy Changes on Illegal Migrant Workers in Thailand
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Abstract

This study has sought to fulfill four major objectives: (1) to study the changes of the previous policies or the policy development on illegal migrant workers in Thailand, (2) to identify the major factors affecting policy changes on illegal migrant workers in Thailand, (3) to analyze the intended and unintended impacts of the policy changes, especially on economic and social aspects, and (4) to propose policy alternatives and management options for more effective policy implementation as well as directions for future research.

The general theoretical models in this study are developed from the causal model after a review of various sources of related literature. The model assumed that illegal migrant workers policy, as a dependent variable, is affected by the independent variables, namely, real Gross Domestic Products (GDP), real wage in non-agricultural sector, cabinet decision on illegal migrant workers policy, total labor force, employment in non-agricultural sector, number of illegal migrant workers, and active sub-committee meeting on solving illegal migrant workers. In turn, there were five simultaneous equations that contain research hypotheses tested in this study.

Total labor force is influenced by the real GDP and the real wage. Total employment is influenced by the real GDP and the real wage. Cabinet decision is influenced by the real GDP, real wage, and the number of meetings held by the sub-

committee on solving illegal migrant workers. The number of illegal migrant workers is influenced by the real GDP, real wage, total labor force, total employment, and the cabinet decisions. The policy change on illegal migrant workers is influenced by seven major factors: (1) Gross Domestic Products, (2) real wage in non-agricultural sector, (3) total labor force, (4) employment in non-agricultural sector, 5) number of active sub-committee meetings on solving illegal migrant workers, (6) cabinet decisions on illegal migrant workers, and 7) total illegal migrant workers.

The hypotheses are tested primarily using quantitative analytical technique. Existing statistical data are obtained from previous studies, surveys and government reports to represent quantitative data. The linear multiple regression analysis and the linear path analysis are used to test the significance of correlation between variables, explore the relationships among variables, identify the sign of relationship and examine the causal relationships of factors affecting policy change on illegal migrant workers. The result from in-depth interviews among several key policy makers is also obtained as qualitative data to support the selected variables and hypothesized relationships.

The findings from the above inquiry are successful in confirming and supporting the hypotheses set forth in the study. There are 5 sub-hypotheses accepted as successful in explaining the variation of selected factors in the dependent variables, associated relationships among variables and proving the expected signs of relationships significantly. The success in explaining the relationships between variables of causal paths led to a success in explaining the main hypothesis. Seven major factors selected are proven significant and associated with the change in illegal migrant workers policy.

The results also conclude that the active sub-committee meeting on solving illegal migrant workers is the most meaningful factor which determined the change on illegal migrant workers policy directly. The active sub-committee meeting also indirectly affected the policy change operating through the cabinet decision. Thus, the real GDP and the real wage did not influence policy change directly but operated

through the total labor force, employment and the number of illegal migrant workers. Similarly, the total labor force and employment did not influence policy change directly but operated through the number of illegal migrant workers.

The impacts of illegal migrant workers policies are divided into two periods: 1992-1998 and 1998-1999. The impacts during the first period are positive in generating investment in the country, increasing the labor force, influencing Thai workers to develop their skills and upgrade their status, and enhancing higher compulsory education among Thai children, as a result of illegal migrant workers replacing the country's low skilled labor market. On the other hand, the negative impacts are seen as increasing the social problems such as public security and public health, opening an opportunity for international organizations and trading partners to bring in unfair treatment and human rights issues, discouraging Thai employers to improve manufacturing technology, increasing government expenditure, and damaging Thailand's relationship with its neighboring countries.

The impacts in the second period show more damages to both business operators and Thai workers as well with similar negative impacts as observed during the first period.

This public policy study also reviews the development of illegal migrant worker policies from the past to present. Finally, deriving from statistical analyses and in-depth interview results, the study proposes some recommendations for public policy implications and management options as well as directions for further research.

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