

Abstract

MIGRATION, WORK, AND MARRYING OUT

Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, this study demonstrates a relationship between rural-urban migration and marriage pattern through labor market in the context of Thailand. Many individuals participate in both the labor market and the marriage market (Stark 1988). Migration that facilitates a match in one may also influence prospects in the other. A match in the labor market may influence the prospects available in the marriage market and the outcome obtained. Therefore, both markets can provide an important social interaction.

Migration seems to expand individuals' marriage market through exposing them to people from other places of origin. How migration might broaden a migrant's marriage market, however, has not been described in a detailed way. Prior findings suggest that where a migrant moves to plays a role in determining to whom s/he is married. This suggests that it is probably not just the simple act of migration that shapes an individual's marriage market. Migration does not just randomly expose migrants to the marriage market in the destination where they can meet with people from outside their home region.

In this paper, I argue that the social environment in the destination may not always facilitate migrants mixing with people from different regions and enlarging their marriage market. The opportunity to meet with people from different regions depends rather on where migrants go and what migrants do to earn a living. While being employed in a given job in the place of destination, a migrant at the same time is exposed to the marriage market specifically related to the job. I hypothesize that a

migrant's marriage opportunities, which in turn affect marital choices, are partly formed by the labor market's milieu.

The main objective of this paper is to explain how being in a particular labor market affects an individual's marriage market. The conditions in the marriage market are in turn hypothesized to affect marital choices in terms of marrying in, marrying out, or remaining single. The study also aims to explore how these relationships differ between women and men. Using the case study of migrants from the northeast (Isan), Thailand, this study combines qualitative and quantitative analyses to obtain a more complete understanding of employment's effects on mate selection.

The qualitative analysis explores two types of employment (factory work and construction work) in the migration destination to consider their different extent in exposing migrants to eligible partners in general, and to eligible partners from different region in particular. In-depth interviews and observations of places where migrants work, live, and interact with people around them in the destination, which are not available in the survey data, are instrumental to this understanding. Sixteen migrants from the Isan region, who came to work in Bangkok and in the Eastern Seaboard areas as a factory worker or as a construction worker, were interviewed. The interviews also included ten key informants who work closely with migrants as a personnel staff of a factory or as a foreman in construction site. Workplace and living place of migrants were visited when available.

The hypotheses are further elaborated in the quantitative analysis. Using an event history analysis, the quantitative analysis tests these hypotheses to see if they are confirmed in a larger and more diverse sample including controls for possible confounding factors.

Findings in this study explain that the broader marriage market brought about by means of migration is, at least among women, closely related to what a migrant does in the destination. Whether and when a migrant meets a potential future spouse, who is more likely to be a non-Isan born, is not just a random impact of migration. Employment in the destination affects spouse selection through a shaping of migrants' life style and a shaping of demographic characteristics of marriageable individuals in marriage market related to the employment. The characteristics of the marriage market, in turn, affect migrants' spouse selection.

The qualitative analysis indicates that migrant factory workers and migrant construction workers, at least for migrants interviewed in Bangkok and in the Eastern Seaboard areas, live their lives differently. The nature of jobs not only affects migrants' lifestyle, but also designs what kind of people migrants are around with, both in the workplace and in the place of residence. The quantity and quality of eligible partners in the marriage markets related to work in a factory and work in a construction site clearly differ as well. The opportunity to mix with non-Isan people among migrants working in a factory and in a construction site appears to be different. Not only does factory work seem to provide migrants with a bigger pool of eligible partners, it also provides eligible partners with different quality in terms of regional background, age, marital status, and education. It appears that factory workers might have a greater chance than construction workers do to mix with non-Isan, therefore they seem to have a higher likelihood of marrying out.

The study clearly suggests that studies must not leave gender differences out when using a marriage market explanation to account for a labor market as a possible channel of migration's effects on spouse selection in this context. The quantitative analysis suggests that only women be affected by type of employment, while men are

not. Qualitative observations suggest that the stronger sense of preference to have an Isan spouse among women coupled with their greater extent of interaction with non-Isan people around them might in part be responsible for these gender differences. Among other things, moreover, gender differences in migration and work behavior in the destination as well as marriage gradient might together be responsible for the non-significant effects of type of employment on mate selection among men. The study also confirms the different effects of factory work and a construction work, compared to a farm work. Compared to farm work, factory work as well as service work enhances women's opportunity to marry out, while construction work, an employment that seems to create poor marriage market, does not increase women's likelihood of marrying out, regardless of whether or not she is a migrant while she is working.

Bringing qualitative method to first back up the design of the quantitative method and later to help reason quantitative results is a logical way to understand how migration impacts spouse selection. Bringing two approaches in one study potentially helps to better understand effects of migration on marriage market through labor market in which migrants are. It is my hope that this study will facilitate the development of formal theory and research on the mechanisms of migration's effect, especially roles of labor market, on marriage pattern.