EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYABILITY AMONG MYANMAR GRADUATES IN THAILAND

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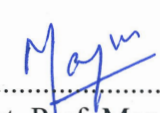Ms. Thet Htar Hsu Zar
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ABSTRACT

This study addressed the under-explored challenges faced by Myanmar bachelor's and master's degree holders transitioning into the Thai labor market, a group often overlooked in existing research which primarily focuses on migrant workers. The research problem is the limited understanding of the specific obstacles these graduates encounter when moving from academia to professional employment in Thailand. To bridge this gap, in-depth interviews were conducted with Myanmar bachelor's and master's degree holders from Thai universities. The research findings identified six key obstacles, including language barriers, visa limitations, uncompetitive compensation and insufficient university support, as well as employed graduates' coping strategies. The findings revealed that while graduates actively invest in their human capital and leverage social networks, systemic barriers persist. Furthermore, this study explored the need for targeted support from universities and employers, and provided practical recommendations to enhance the employability of Myanmar graduates in Thailand.

KEY WORDS: Myanmar graduates/ Thai job market/ Human capital theory/ Social capital theory/ Signaling theory
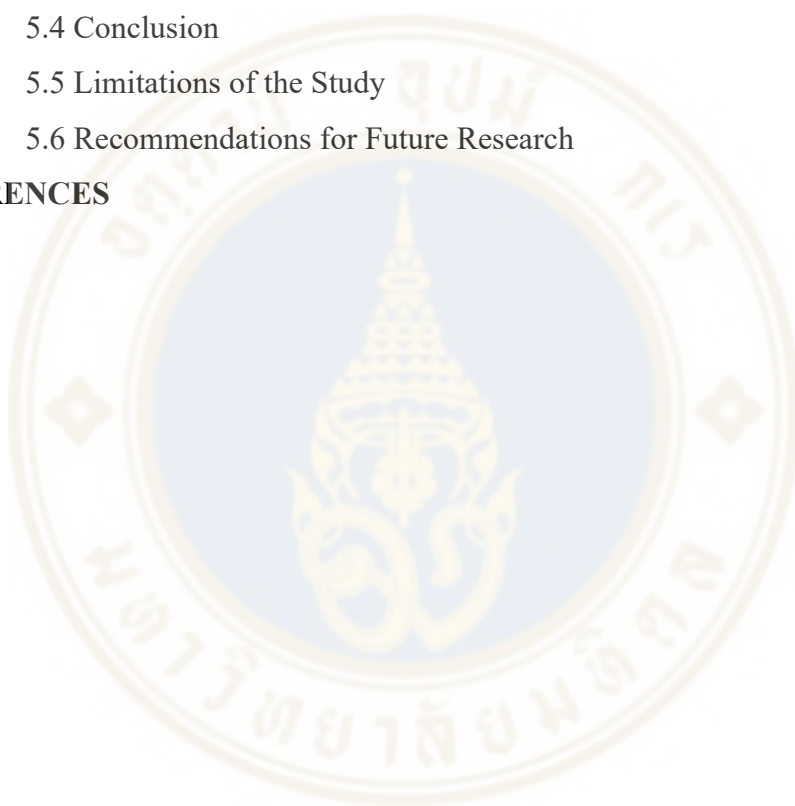
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Global migration patterns have seen a notable increase in the mobility of students pursuing higher education overseas. International students, who frequently refer to themselves as 'international' or 'visiting' scholars instead of 'migrants', are an important but understudied demographic in the field of migration studies (King & Gelices, 2003). These people frequently become an important source of skilled labor and make major contributions to both their home and host nations. Thailand, a popular Southeast Asian destination for international students, has seen a substantial rise in the number of students from Myanmar, especially following the military takeover in 2021. Since 2009, Myanmar has continuously ranked as Thailand's second-largest source of overseas students; the coup significantly accelerated this trend. In the first semester of the 2022 academic year alone, Thailand hosted 3,708 Myanmar students (Ministry of Education, 2023), a significant increase over the 2,266 students enrolled in 2019 (Ministry of Education, 2022). This flood of highly qualified people from Myanmar is a major "brain drain" for the country and increases competition for graduates from other foreign professionals as well as from Thai locals. Thailand's increasing focus on foreign education, as demonstrated by its 2020 market value of 2.6 billion baht and its average yearly growth rate of 12%, also highlights the significance of understanding international students' experiences in its educational system (Chemsripong, 2019). The Thai government's desire to position Thailand as a regional education hub emphasizes the need for study in this field. The tenfold rise in Myanmar student enrollment at Thai colleges following its complete reopening to international tourists (Khaosod, 2023) also serves as additional motivation for this research.

1.2 Research Gap

Although there is an extensive study on the challenges faced by migrant workers, the challenges of international students, especially Myanmar graduates navigating the Thai labor market remains under-explored. Existing literature frequently overlooks the specific challenges that these individuals confront as they transition from academia to professional employment in a foreign nation (Findlay, 2011). This study intends to close this important gap by examining the specific challenges and enabling factors that affect Myanmar international students' success in finding employment in Thailand after graduation.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research has important implications for a variety of stakeholders. This research will give Myanmar graduates useful insights into the Thai labor market, allowing them to better prepare for the challenges and opportunities that may arise. Their academic and extracurricular choices, soft skills, understanding of industry expectation and visa requirements can all be improved by the findings. Additionally, this study will contribute to knowledge of how universities may help international students make a smooth transition into professional careers. This research can help to bridge the talent gap and enhance employability outcomes by identifying effective job-readiness programs, mentorship initiatives, and university-employer partnerships. These findings will not benefit Myanmar students, but also international students seeking employment in Thailand upon graduation.

1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following two research questions:

1. What are the specific challenges encountered by Myanmar students during their job search in Thailand?

2. How do Myanmar students are solving these challenges and what recommendations can be made to increase Myanmar graduates' employability in Thailand?

1.5 Research Methodology and Aims

This study aims to address the aforementioned research gap by examining the specific challenges and enabling factors that influence the successful transition of Myanmar graduates into the Thai labor market. To achieve this, data will be collected through in-depth interviews with a target group of Myanmar bachelor's and master's degree holders who have recently graduated from Thai universities and are either currently employed or actively seeking employment in Thailand.

The paper will explore the graduates' experience in the Thai job market, the obstacles they encounter, and the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. Furthermore, this study will explore to provide practical insights that can inform recommendations for both future graduates, universities and employers. Based on the findings, suggestions will be offered to enhance university career support programs and to foster more inclusive hiring practices within Thai employers.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will examine the existing literature relevant to the employability of Myanmar graduates in Thailand. The purpose of this literature review is to establish the background context of Myanmar graduates seeking employment in Thailand and explore existing research on the key challenges they face. This review is important and directly relates to the research questions because it provides a critical analysis of the research problem and informs the development of realistic recommendations. While research on Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand is substantial, studies focusing specifically on Myanmar international students seeking professional employment in the Thai job market remain limited. Therefore, this review draws upon relevant literature concerning Myanmar migrant worker challenges and the experiences of international graduates in host countries. It will explore the patterns and motivations of Myanmar students migrating to Thailand as well as factors influencing students' decisions to study abroad, considering both the "push" and "pull" factors shaping Myanmar migration. A critical review of the challenges faced by Myanmar migrants in Thailand, particularly in employment, including competition with local graduates and access to information and resources, will be presented. Finally, the chapter will establish the theoretical framework for this research, drawing on human capital theory, social capital theory, and signaling theory to analyze the employability of Myanmar graduates in Thailand.

2.1 Migration

According to the United Nations, 'migration' is the long-term movement of people from one nation to another for a variety of reasons (United Nations, n.d.). Civil conflicts, starvation, political unrest, a lack of work opportunities, and inadequate living conditions can all be factors in migration. According to the Organization for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD), many young people view 'cross-border education' in higher-income nations as a way to improve their employment prospects (OECD, 2018).

2.1.1 Pattern of Educational Migration and Motivations

Students are encouraged to be more mobile to acquire skills that are in demand in a highly skilled labor market that is becoming more and more global due to the growing internationalization of education and the economy. According to the OECD (2018), degrees earned overseas are seen as having higher academic quality than those earned in the country of origin. Additionally, they become more competitive in the global market because of the language and cultural abilities they acquire while studying overseas.

Graduate employability is also expected of overseas graduates who choose to stay in their host country. According to Beine et al. (2014), this is known as 'brain migration' or 'brain drain', and the main objective of international students' migration is to improve their human capital. Although it may lead to brain drain from home nations, keeping outstanding students can have a major positive impact on the labor market and economy of the host nation (Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2011). Examples of this type of skills transfer are the PhD holders from China and India who make up the scientific core of Silicon Valley and other high-tech manufacturing centers (Wong, 2006), as cited in (Wang & O'Connell, 2020).

2.1.2 Myanmar Students Migration to Thailand

Since the late 1980s, Myanmar has experienced a 'brain drain' due to misleading economic policies and a remarkable neglect for the health and education sectors (Rieffel, 2010). According to IOM UN Migration Thailand, a growing number of middle-class Burmese youths are fleeing to Thailand for schooling as Myanmar enforces its military draft. This pattern shows how Myanmar's political climate affects young people's life, with Thailand serving as an important destination before they look for other opportunities abroad (IOM Thailand, 2024). As a result, millions of individuals have been migrating from the country in pursuit of better work and educational opportunities.

The number of overseas students studying in Thailand has been steadily rising. The number increased by 16%, from 11,785 to 20,150 students, between 2013 and 2017 (Chemsripong, 2019). In 2019, Thailand welcomed 26,635 foreign students, with the largest group being Chinese (14,017) and Myanmar (2,266) (Ministry of Education, 2021). While the overall number fluctuated slightly by 2021, the top nationalities remained stable, with 15,456 Chinese and 2,143 Myanmar students (Ministry of Education, 2022). Thailand welcomed 34,202 international students in the first semester of the 2022 school year, with almost 3,800 of those students coming from Myanmar (Ministry of Education, 2023). According to this data, Thailand's international student population is generally on the rise, with Myanmar continuously accounting for a sizable share of the total.

2.2 Factors Influencing Student Study Abroad

Lee proposed the 'push and pull' theory in 1966. According to the theory, global migration is caused by a combination of two primary causes: pull factors, which draw people to the destination location, and push factors, which drive people away from the original place. Civil wars, economic collapse, unemployment, political instability, and personal family issues could all be pushing factors. Pull factors could include an economic boom, job opportunities, a labor shortage, favorable geographic conditions, and the opportunity to improve their living standard. Individuals may have different push and pull influences depending on their age, gender, ethnicity, social standing, and physical capabilities (Lee, 1966). Moreover, people relocate from one location to another for three reasons. These are 1) macro-elements (economics, demographics, social, political, and environmental), 2) meso-elements (political, financial, technological, etc.) that either encourage or discourage migration, and 3) micro-elements (personal traits and attitudes) (Foresight, 2011). The figure below illustrates the three elements that influence migration.
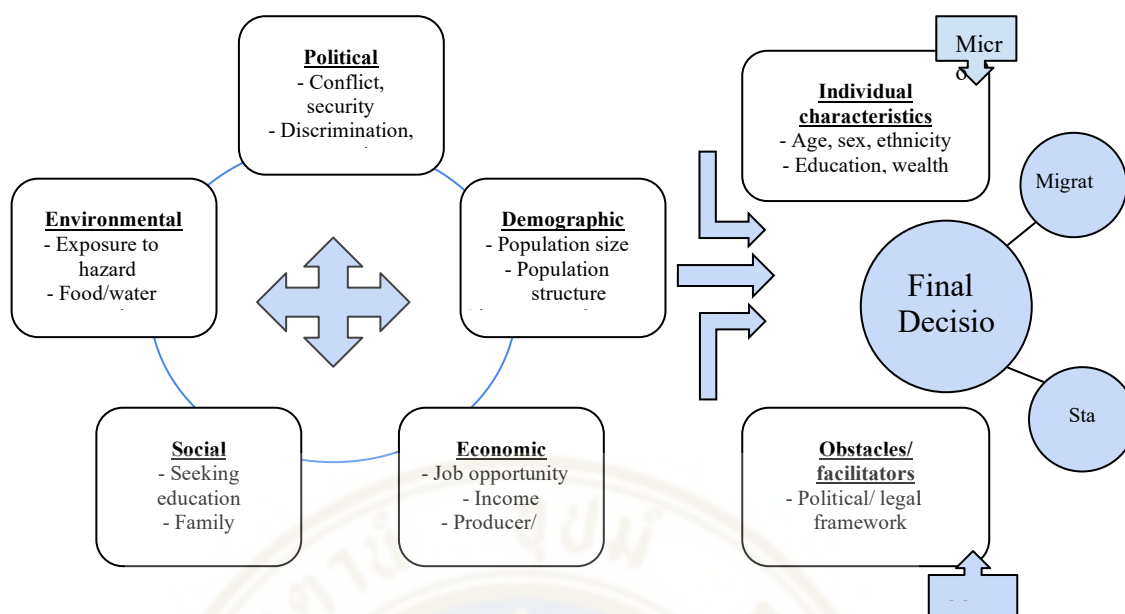
Figure 2.1: Drivers of Migration

Source: Foresight. (2011)

2.2.1 Push and Pull Influence on Myanmar Migration

According to a survey conducted with Myanmar migrants (Chantavanich and Vungsiriphisal, 2012), cross-border movement between Myanmar and Thailand has been happening since the 1980s, when Thai workers migrated to the Gulf countries in response to economic growth. Thailand's industrialization and mandatory education in the 1999s have made the country's labor shortage worse. Additionally, workers from Myanmar were drawn to Thailand by the country's declining working-age population, which fell from 18% in 1985 to 2% in 2015. In 2001, the Thai government also negotiated a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to accelerate the formal recruitment of migrants with the governments of Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. 74.9% of Myanmar workers feel that better pay in Thailand is the primary driver of migration, according to IOM (2014) study. Thailand labor demand, higher salaries and economic growth have been the pull factors for Myanmar migrants.

Furthermore, according to Rieffel (2010), workers in Myanmar experienced social pressures like lack of access to healthcare and education, political unrest in the 1980s, and economic hardships like low wages and a lack of job opportunities. These

factors combined to create a push to leave the country in search of safety, stability, and better living standards. The 2021 military takeover in Myanmar intensified pre-existing push factors of migration. According to Banki (2024), the post-coup situation is more in line with the "forced migration" in which workers and students from Myanmar were forced to leave their country due to safety and uncertainty concerns. Prior to and following the recent coup, Myanmar's political instability, economic hardship, and lack of employment opportunities offered motivating elements for Myanmar citizens to pursue education and employment in Thailand.

2.3 Challenges Faced by Myanmar Migrants in Thailand

2.3.1 Common Challenges

According to an OECD (2018) study, the country from where immigrant students come and the country where they settle affect the likelihood that they would be emotionally, socially, and academically resilient. Prior research found that there remains a gap between the educational achievement of Myanmar migrant youth and their future job prospects, despite the implementation of inclusive education policies and alternative education options. Although Thai public education appears to be a means of gaining further opportunities in host country, university-educated students are unable to effectively utilize their acquired knowledge and skills due to their irregular status (Chan, 2022).

One of these difficulties is not being fluent in the language used in the host nation. The greater the linguistic difference between a student's home language and the language of instruction, the less likely he or she is to achieve academic proficiency and feel a sense of belonging in school. Even though Thailand and Asian countries are close by and share sociocultural values, there is still a language barrier between them. For instance, a study conducted by Pongsin et al. (2023) on the educational experience of Asian students in Thailand revealed that the main obstacle was the low proficiency of English in Thailand's foreign programs and the language barrier that prevented them from fully engaging in social and professional life.

Another significant hurdle is a lack of past work experience as a fresh graduate. According to Holba (2023) research on displaced students from Myanmar who

moved to Thailand, employers said that their education had limited their employability by failing to provide them with critical technical skills that were in great demand in the Thai job market. Another problem is the visa status, where some companies have taken advantage of students by refusing them work permits because of documentation process. Additionally, there is discrimination in recruiting practices in Thailand, and foreign workers encounter difficulties with their employers' perspectives. This is because employers may believe that hiring a foreigner takes too much time because they have to translate all of the guidelines and working instructions into English. The fact that the students were from Myanmar caused employers to treat them differently and to limit them opportunities to advance into management roles. A representative of the HR consulting firm confirmed this issue, citing research showing Thai businesses have negative perceptions of international employees from nations, such as Myanmar (Holba, 2023).

Even after graduating, students still experience financial difficulties, which limit their capacity to pursue further education in technical or language skills. Many of them struggle since their labor rights and public services are not recognized or easily accessible, according to research by (Sarapirom et al., 2020). To address these issues, the authors suggest that it is important that all migrants become more proficient in Thai and gain a deeper comprehension of Thai laws and regulations.

These examples show how graduates may feel that there is a gap between the knowledge they have learned in university and the real-world situations they encounter after graduation, which hinders their ability to put their newly acquired knowledge and abilities to use.

2.3.2 Competition with Local Graduates

The OECD (2018) reports that immigrant students were more driven to succeed than local students in the majority of countries. Their education may serve as a steppingstone for citizenship and employment. Numerous studies have shown that another biggest challenge faced by overseas graduates is competing with local graduates for the same positions. For instance, Coffey et al. (2018) examined the experiences of international students in the Australian job market, while Alho (2020) studied international student job search experience in Finland. Beyond only qualifications, this

competition considers things like familiarity with the culture of the workplace, established local networks, and language skills. Employers may also favor local applicants because they believe they fit in with the company culture or because they want to avoid the administrative tasks of immigration and visa sponsorship (Coffey et al., 2018). As a result, even with similar or better academic credentials, international graduates frequently have a harder time finding desired work. This competitive disadvantage may push graduates to explore career options outside of their field of choice or result in underemployment, where they take jobs below their skill level.

2.3.3 Access to Information and Resources

Even though students from immigrant backgrounds are frequently very driven, it is crucial that they can capitalize on their passion. (OECD, 2012a) stated that for students with immigrant backgrounds to fully benefit from education and training services, information about career and educational opportunity should be made available. Given the limited knowledge that students may have about employment options and how to effectively prepare for them, education and career guidance are especially crucial for international students. Career assistance might include career information, evaluation and self-assessment tools, interviews, career education programs, job search programs, and transition services.

2.4 Theoretical Background

The term "employability" describes the personal qualities and traits such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities that people require to find work, keep a job, and find new opportunities for employment when needed. Graduate employability is usually measured objectively by employment outcomes, such as entrance salary and time to obtain a position (Coates & Edwards, 2010).

2.4.1 Human Capital Theory

There is a widespread belief that investing money on education improves abilities, which in turn enhance productivity or work experience; increased production is subsequently rewarded with higher incomes (Black & Lynch, 1996). The human

capital theory is the result of this. In his book "Investment in Human Capital," Becker explains the Human Capital Theory, which holds that a person's education, training, and experience make up valuable assets that increase productivity and earning potential (Becker, 1962). Empirical studies confirming Becker's human capital theory have demonstrated positive relationships between human capital and factors like salary levels (Climent, 2021), perceived employability (Wittekind et al., 2010), and a smooth transition from education to the workplace (Siddique et al., 2022). According to Fugate et al. (2004), demographic factors like majors, education levels, and school rankings can also be indicators of human capital. Shiyuan et al. (2022) incorporated grade rankings, scholarships, English proficiency, vocational qualification certificates, and job experience into the category of human capital, based on extensive study on the employability of Chinese graduates under COVID-19. Additional factors that contribute to comparatively high employability among graduates include labour market experience, type of employment, employment mobility, and the psychological contract's terms (Kirves et al., 2014). Moreover, research on skilled migrants in Australia indicates that elements other than individual credentials, like age at arrival, integration assistance, and workplace inclusion, have a big impact on career performance (Rajendran et al., 2020).

The relationship between education and employability/wages is far from positive, although scholars long ago argued about whether the costs of education and training are an investment or a cost (Bowles & Gintis, 1975), as referenced in (McLean & Kuo, 2014). According to Marginson (2017), human capital theory is unable to pass the reality test since it places a single linear pathway on the complex transition between heterogeneous schooling and employment. It is unable to explain how education increases productivity, or why salaries are becoming more disparate.

Human Capital theory helps to identify which attributes of Human Capital are valuable in the Thai job market, exploring whether education and training adequately prepares these graduates for the demands of the local workforce. It will also examine if factors like additional training beyond university degrees, language proficiency or credential recognition affect how graduates leverage their human capital.

2.4.2 Social Capital Theory

The long-standing practice of networking, which involves establishing and maintaining both personal and professional ties, builds a bank of contacts, knowledge, and help. Research indicates that these channels are generally more effective than other formal channels in terms of creating more employment offers (Patacchini & Zenou, 2012; Berardi, 2013). According to Shiyuan et al. (2022), social capital plays a crucial role in facilitating graduate employment in three ways: information gathering and screening through extensive networks; reduced transaction costs and increased trust, boosting employment chances; and direct influence on hiring decisions, that is, "going through the back door," which has become an unspoken professional rule in society. According to Chen & Tan (2004) research, which cited findings on the employment condition of graduates from 14 Chinese colleges and universities, 90.1% of college graduates believed that social relationships had a significant impact on their career prospects, and 92.8% of them got employment information through social capital.

Strong relationships, such as close friends and family, may have a greater impact on job searches than weak ones, according to (Lassassi & Alhawarin, 2018). Broader research also supports networking's positive effects on income growth and employment chances (Batistic & Tymon, 2017). This is supported quantitatively by Dang (2015), who used an instrumental variable method to find that social networks had a considerably favorable impact on the income dynamics of migrants in Vietnam. Networking creates many forms of valuable social capital including advocacy, introductions and mentoring that would otherwise require the use of human or financial capital. When combined with human capital, networking's social capital factor considerably improves graduate employability.

Even though many studies suggest a direct correlation between networking and employability, these benefits or effects are not guaranteed to occur just because of having a social network. One reason for inconsistencies in results linking networking and improved employability could be the lack of studies on indirect interactions. According to Swedish study, social capital and job-finding are positively linked to gaining steady work for initially unemployed job seekers but have no influence on individuals who are already employed and looking for a new job (Andersson, 2021).

Social Capital theory can explore how social networks (family, friends, alumni, professional contacts) influence job search success for Myanmar graduates. It will investigate if access to strong social connections facilitates finding employment and if cultural differences impact building social capital in Thailand.

2.4.3 Signaling Theory

Human capital, social networks, and employability are still debated, however there is evidence that the type of university attended, and the degree earned do affect employment results (Holmes, 2013). According to the Spence (1973) theory of signaling, the labor market is reliant on sharing of information, or 'signals', between employers and employees. In their article on graduate talent management, McCracken et al. (2016) noted that in overcrowded graduate labor market, where employers' demand for qualified and skilled graduates is exceeded by supply, employers must differentiate between graduates who are equally qualified to determine 'standout employability'. According to their research, employers value both personal and intangible skills, but little is known about how they identify outstanding graduate qualities.

When Anderson & Tomlinson (2020) examined small, medium, and big businesses in the public, private, and NGOs, they discovered that employers consider credentials and qualifications to be an asset for employability. Additionally, work-related experience including internships and familiarity with industry are also seen as essential since they reflect a potential client readiness and cultural fit between the graduate and the company. Furthermore, there is ongoing debate regarding the importance of a university's reputation (Finch et al., 2013). For instance, according to certain research, "gatekeepers" in the hiring process are influenced by the status of the university where a degree is earned (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015).

In summary, social and human capital have an impact on a person's perceived employability, which is linked to the theory of signaling how a person attracts employers during a job hunt. Signaling theory can examine how Myanmar graduates signal their qualifications to potential employers (e.g., degree, internships, language skills). It will assess if a Thai degree is a strong signal, if other signals are important, and if graduates face challenges in effectively communicating their value to Thai employers.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the research methodology applied in this study. It will outline the research method used and justify its suitability for addressing the research questions. The chapter will then discuss the target population, the sampling method used to recruit participants, and the sample size. Following this, it will introduce the research instrument, and the questionnaires used. The chapter will further explain the data collection procedures, including participant recruitment, the interview process, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This research will use a qualitative approach to explore the experiences of Myanmar graduates seeking employment in Thailand. Qualitative research is appropriate in this study because it allows researchers to understand complex and diverse individual experiences, rather than focusing on numerical data. This method can also explore the "why" behind their experiences, personal stories, and subjective meanings that quantitative data alone cannot reveal, explained by McDaniel & Gates (2015) as cited in (Coffey et al., 2018). In-depth interview was chosen as the data collection method because it allows participants to share their unique stories in their own words and detail way. It also allows researchers for follow-up questions and probing to gain more relevant information and new findings to this research.

3.2 Research Population

3.2.1 Target Population

The target population for this research will include two groups of Myanmar individuals in Thailand: (1) current Myanmar students actively pursuing internships or

seeking full-time employment prior to graduation, and (2) Myanmar graduates currently employed in professional roles in Thailand. Both groups share the common experience of job searching in the Thai job market, either currently or recently. For the purposes of this study, "professional jobs" are defined as positions requiring at least bachelor's degree or equivalent and specialized skills or knowledge. Individuals in both groups will have resided in Thailand for a minimum of six months and a maximum of four years, ensuring they have sufficient exposure to the Thai context while also capturing the experiences of those relatively new to the job market.

3.2.2 Sampling Method

A purposive sampling strategy will be employed to select participants for this research. Purposive sampling is appropriate because it allows for the considerate selection of individuals who can provide relevant information about this research topic. Participants will be selected based on specific criteria, including their education status (current student or graduate), employment status (actively seeking employment or currently employed in a professional role) and retention to continue in Thailand to seek a professional job. This purposive approach will ensure representation from diverse backgrounds and experiences within the target population such as university attended, major field of study, length of residence in Thailand, and prior work experience, to maximize a broad perspective of experiences.

3.2.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study will consist of eight participants, with four individuals from each of the two target groups. While this sample size is relatively small, it is considered appropriate for a qualitative study focused on in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalizability. The small sample size also allows for more focused and detailed interviews, making researchers explore individual experiences. Data collection will be concluded with eight interviewees when data saturation is reached, meaning that new interviews are no longer yielding significantly new information related to the research questions. If data saturation is not achieved with the initial eight participants, sample size may be slightly increased by two participants per target group.

Interviewees Characteristics

Interviewee Code	Degree	Major of study	Employment status	Year in Thailand
p1	Master's	Marketing	Graduated & Employed	2 years
p2	Master's	Marketing	Graduated & Employed	2 years
p3	Master's	Communication Arts	Graduated & Employed	3 years
p4	Bachelor's	Finance and Marketing	Graduated & Employed	4 years
p5	Master's	Global Business Administration	Current student & Seeking job	1 year
p6	Master's	Entrepreneurship Management	Current student & Seeking job	6 months
p7	Master's	Economics	Current student & Seeking job	1.5 year
p8	Bachelor's	International Business Management	Graduated & Seeking job	4 years

Table 3.1: List of Interviewees Characteristics

3.3 Research Instrument

A combination of general background questions and open-ended questions related to the interviewees' job searching experiences and challenges in Thailand served as the research instrument. Furthermore, probing questions, such as "What was that like?" and "Can you give me an example?", were used to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences. A total of 16 questions were designed for the interview.

3.3.1 General Background

1. What is your age?

2. What is your educational background and your current employment status?

3. How long have you been in Thailand?

4. Have you had any prior work experience in Thailand?

3.3.2 Questions related to Job Search Challenges

5. Could you describe your overall job search experience in Thailand?

6. What are the biggest challenges you've encountered while looking for a job in Thailand?

7. Have you experienced any specific difficulties related to being a Myanmar graduate in Thailand?

8. How has your English and Thai language proficiency affected your job search?

3.3.3 Questions related to Preparing to Get a Job

9. Have you pursued any additional training or certifications to enhance your skills and employability?

10. Are you involved in any Myanmar community as well as Inter students networking events in Thailand?

11. How important have your social networks (family, friends, connections) been in your job search and have you received any support?

12. Do you feel your Thai university degree and credentials are valued by Thai employers? Why?

13. What other things do you use to be a standout applicant for Thai employers?

3.3.4 Coping Strategies and Recommendations

14. What steps have you prepared to overcome the challenges you've faced?

15. What kind of support or resources would be most helpful for Myanmar students seeking jobs in Thailand?

16. Do you have any suggestions for how universities can improve their support for international students' job search success?

3.4 Data Collection

Potential participants were contacted via Messenger and Line to confirm their participation and schedule interview appointments. Interviews, each lasting approximately 30-45 minutes, were conducted via Zoom at times negotiated with participants to accommodate their availability, often outside of their regular working hours. This flexibility ensured that participants could provide thoughtful and complete responses without feeling rushed. The interview questions were shared with participants one or two days prior to the scheduled interview to allow them time for reflection.

To enhance the reliability of the research, interview questions were designed to be concise and straightforward. At the beginning of each interview, participants were explained about the research purpose. Participants were then asked for their permission to record the interview for notetaking and data analysis after the interview. The interview followed a structured format, from general background questions to open-ended questions related to job search experiences and challenges, supplemented by probing questions for deeper exploration of specific points. While the same interview questionnaire was used for all participants, the interview flow was adapted differently based on individual responses to encourage more detailed sharing and relevant follow-up information. During the interviews, participants shared their experiences struggling in the Thai job market and preparation tactics during their job searches. They also offered suggestions and ideas for improvements to address these challenges. Data collection concluded with the targeted eight interviewees, as they consistently shared recurring themes, and no new scenarios presented themselves.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Prior to each interview, participants were explained interview procedure, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was obtained verbally at the start of each interview, with participants assured of their right to decline to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any time. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, all identifying information was removed from the data analysis. Participants were assigned codes and any potentially identifying details about their education, company,

or personal circumstances were anonymized. Audio recordings of the interviews were stored securely and will be deleted immediately following the completion of the research project. All recordings and notes will be treated as confidential and accessed only by the researcher.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will present the findings derived from the in-depth interviews with Myanmar graduates and students in the Thai job market. The findings will be organized into three primary sections: the challenges faced by Myanmar students and graduates, the coping strategies practiced by those who have secured employment in Thailand, and suggestions for enhanced support from both universities and employers. In the first section, it will discuss the significant challenges encountered during the job search, including language barriers, limited job opportunities due to visa constraints, uncompetitive compensation, lack of familiarity with Thai job search platforms, and insufficient university support. The second section will present about the proactive approaches taken by employed graduates to overcome these challenges such as improving their human capital through skill development; enhancing social capital through social networking; and effective signaling of qualifications. The final section will synthesize the interviewees suggestions for improving the experiences of future Myanmar graduates.

4.1 Challenges Faced by Myanmar Students

The interviewees identified six key themes representing the main challenges they encountered during their job search. These main challenges are detailed below.

4.1.1 Lack of Thai Language Proficiency

A significant barrier consistently highlighted by all interviewees was the lack of Thai language skills. All graduates shared experiences where this language barrier directly hindered their job search, even when they possessed relevant qualifications. One employed interviewee (p4) reflected on a past experience, "*Even though I can communicate in English very well and my skills are qualified for job*

description, I was rejected after the second final interview because of not being able to communicate in Thai, as the company sometimes requires interaction with Thai clients." Interviewee currently seeking employment (p7) also said, "*No matter how international a company is, most clients and work relationships are Thai, so being unable to communicate in Thai is a disadvantage compared to locals.*" Interviewees felt that while they were capable and qualified for many roles, the language barrier restricted their potential. This limitation forced graduates to consider positions outside their areas of expertise, making them feel their skills are underutilized. For example, one working graduate (p1) noted, "*I was able to find a job, but it's not what I studied for. My lack of Thai meant I had to take whatever I could get, and it is difficult to advance without better Thai skills.*"

One interviewee (p8) further highlighted this issue, "*8 out of 10 jobs I applied for specifically required Thai language skill.*" Thus, interviewees frequently expressed frustration that their academic majors and prior work experience were often seen as less valuable due to their limited Thai language skills. This placed non-Thai-proficient graduates at a considerable disadvantage, regardless of their other qualifications.

4.1.2 Limited Job Opportunities for Foreigners

The language barrier discussed earlier also directly translates into limited job opportunities for Myanmar graduates in Thailand. This limitation arises from several interconnected factors. First, all interviewees said that the Thai job market is highly competitive, not only with local Thai graduates but also with other foreign graduates who may possess similar qualifications. This competition is further intensified by the significant number of roles that clearly require Thai language proficiency. Moreover, they added that lack of awareness regarding the nature of the Thai job market and employer expectations adds to the challenge.

This is particularly evident in smaller companies and startups, where job postings are in Thai, making it difficult for Myanmar graduates to even identify suitable positions. And even when job descriptions are available in English, the interview is often made in Thai language. As one interviewee currently seeking employment (p6) explained, "*Even though many job vacancies were shared in my university students'*

group and I could manage the tasks listed in the job description, I missed out on some interesting opportunities because they only accept Thai nationals." This issue was mentioned by another interviewee (p7) who shared, "*Most job postings are in Thai, and even when I find ones in English, the interview is often conducted in Thai. It makes it very difficult to showcase my skills and experience.*" This challenge limits a student's abilities and qualifications when they face a language barrier during crucial stages of the recruitment process.

4.1.3 Lack of Visa Sponsorship

Another significant hurdle encountered by Myanmar graduates seeking employment in Thailand is the lack of visa sponsorship from potential employers. 6 out of 8 interviewees confirmed facing challenges related to visa issues, which are presented in several ways. A primary concern was that many companies, particularly startups and smaller enterprises, do not offer visa sponsorship. This often forces graduates to seek alternative, and potentially costly, solutions through agents. As one interviewee (p2) explained, "*It's really hard to find a company that will process my work visa, especially the smaller ones. I end up having to rely on agents, which adds another layer of complexity and expense.*"

Beyond the lack of sponsorship, interviewees also highlighted the complexities of visa restrictions and work eligibility requirements. They said that the complex web of visa regulations, coupled with frequent changes, is also uncertain and anxiety. Furthermore, obtaining necessary documentation, such as tax IDs, is also a challenging and time-consuming process. While interviewees did not report facing specific challenges because they were Myanmar graduates, they consistently encountered reluctance from companies to handle visa documentation. One employed interviewee (p3) shared previous experience, "*I previously got rejected because companies don't want to process visa documents.*" The difficulty in securing internships while on a student visa was also a major concern. Three interviewees noted the constraints imposed by student visa status, including restrictions on working hours and the inability to work freely during study time, significantly limited their ability to gain valuable work experience.

4.1.4 Uncompetitive Compensation

The currently employed interviewees consistently reported feeling a sense of being undervalued in salary discussions. They thought that their reliance on visa sponsorship weakened their bargaining position. The additional burden associated with the visa process significantly impacted the salary negotiation power of Myanmar graduates. As one working interviewee (p4) stated, "*When I tried to negotiate, they mentioned the visa process as a reason for not being able to offer more. They said it was an extra cost for them, even though it's a cost for me too.*" Another interviewee (p3) also added, *"Because of the visa process, it's hard to negotiate salary. I feel that I got a salary lower than the market rate."*

Interviewees shared their feeling that some companies were aware of graduates' vulnerability and often used it as a disadvantage during salary negotiations. They felt pressure between accepting lower salaries and securing employment to maintain their legal status in Thailand. This created a cycle of disadvantage, where the initial lower salary limited their future earning potential and career advancement within the Thai job market. The graduates felt that their skills and experience were not being adequately compensated.

4.1.5 Limited Knowledge on Thai Job Search Platforms

While Myanmar graduates actively use online platforms for job searching, a gap exists in their knowledge and utilization of Thai-specific job search platforms. All interviewees mentioned that they use Linkedin as a main job searching tool. Moreover, a majority (5 out of 8) actively seek opportunities on company websites that they are interested in. One interviewee (p6) described their approach saying that "*I research reputable companies on Google first, then go directly to company career pages. I also checked on their Linkedin and Facebook for any openings.*" Another interviewee (p4) took a more proactive approach explaining "*I tried to network with contact people, attending events and reaching out to them directly on LinkedIn.*" One interviewee (p7) focused on NGO work used MIMU website (Myanmar Information Management Unit) and ThaiNGO website to find NGO jobs.

However, interviewees mentioned their limited familiarity with popular Thai job search websites and recruitment agencies. As all interviewees admitted their

common weakness, for example, p5 said "*I don't really know about any Thai job search websites. I'm just using what I'm familiar with, like Linkedin.*" This gap in knowledge restricts their access to broader potential employers and limits their familiarity with the Thai job market like salary and benefits. Many interviewees accepted that they relied heavily on platforms they were familiar with, rather than exploring potentially more relevant local options. This highlights a need for greater awareness and education regarding Thai job search resources among Myanmar graduates.

4.1.6 Lack of University Support

6 out of 8 interviewees answered that they frequently attend international and Myanmar student networking events hosted by their universities. However, participation in external Myanmar community events was low, with only one interviewee attending an external Myanmar youth startup event once. While Myanmar graduates actively participate in university-organized networking events, there is still a gap of career support provided by university. When discussing their social networking experiences, a new challenge theme is found which is the lack of adequate university support for job searches.

Although universities frequently organize student networking and guest speaker sessions, career fairs were often limited. Two interviewees said that career events are organized only once per semester and often ineffective due to companies primarily seeking Thai nationals. One of these interviewees (p8) said, "*We have career week, but it's largely ineffective for international students. Companies there usually only want Thai people, and the booths are mostly filled with Thai students.*" Another job seeking interviewee (p5) shared that, "*While my university offers career week, cultural exchange events and job readiness programs are overlooked.*"

Another concern among interviewees was the absence of career mentoring programs. All interviewees from different universities confirmed that their universities offered academic advisors but no career guidance or mentorship assistance. While some universities occasionally shared job information, as one interviewee (p2) said, "*The advisor and university sometimes shared relevant job information, but don't give career mentoring. This is insufficient.*" Another employed interviewee (p3) shared their feeling, "*My university did not expose me to relevant industries, and I lacked*

knowledge of employers' expectations for job documents, and salary negotiation."
Moreover, disparities in support were observed between degree levels. One interviewee
(p8) from a different university shared, "*There is job networking only for bachelor's
degrees but not for master's degree. This is probably because local master students are
already employed.*"

4.2 Coping Strategies by Employed Myanmar

Recognizing the challenges posed by the Thai job market, particularly the
language barrier and not getting visa sponsorship, Myanmar graduates proactively
adopted various coping strategies to enhance their employability. The coping strategies
can be categorized into three main themes: continuous learning to enhance technical and
language skills, expanding professional social networks, and leveraging accreditation
signals to distinguish themselves.

4.2.1 Investing in Human Capital: Job-Related and Language Skills

Both employed and job-seeking Myanmar graduates showed a strong
commitment to enhancing their human capital through continuous skill development
and language proficiency. Among all, 6 interviewees are actively preparing a range of
skill-building activities prior to graduation. This included taking supporting courses in
their major fields and pursuing certifications from platforms like Coursera and Google
Skillshop. As one interviewee (p2) working in marketing explained, "*As I am working
in the marketing field, I take digital marketing courses like Hubspot.*" Another
interviewee (p6) facing a language barrier said, "*I took industrial accredited
certification to be seen as a standout applicant because I lack Thai language skill.*"
Interviewees are using a strategic approach to compensate for language limitations by
boosting technical qualifications.

In addition, half of the interviewees are improving their English skills and
began learning basic Thai language during their free time. Beyond formal education, 5
interviewees invested significant effort in creating a strong online presence, especially
Linkedin profiles and creating CVs with their seniors to stand out to potential
employers. Reflecting on the graduates' efforts through various skill-building initiatives,

it is clear they recognized the importance of their human capital and therefore prioritized upskilling their technical knowledge and filling job-related skills gaps to remain competitive.

4.2.2 Job Connection by Social Network

Beyond enhancing their human capital, both employed, and job-seeking Myanmar graduates consistently prioritized expanding their social networks to facilitate access to job information and opportunities. All interviewees confirmed that social networking was their primary source of job information. This reliance on social networks was evident in how they obtained job leads, primarily through friends and academic advisors. As one employed interviewee (p1) shared, "*My friends were the ones who told me about most of the openings in Thailand I applied for.*"

The importance of university alumni networks was also highlighted during the interviews. One interviewee (p8) noted, "*If the HR or CEO graduated from a specific university, they intentionally favor their university graduates,*" emphasizing the value of shared educational backgrounds in influencing hiring practices. Furthermore, employed graduates shared past experiences of securing positions through referrals. For example, one interviewee (p3) recounted, "*I got referred by my friends for my previous internship position.*"

Beyond personal friendships and university connections, 2 interviewees emphasized the importance of professional networking platforms like LinkedIn and maintaining relationships with former colleagues. One employed interviewee (p4) explained, "*LinkedIn is crucial for building connections with professionals in my field. I've gotten several leads and even interview invitations through my network there.*" Another (p7) shared, "*I've been keeping in touch with my ex-colleagues. They often provide information about job openings that aren't advertised publicly.*" Their efforts in maintaining social connections demonstrate that they are building strong social capital to access information, gain referrals, and enhance their visibility to potential employers in the Thai job market.

4.2.3 Signaling Competence and Qualifications

Employed Myanmar graduates actively sought to signal their competence and qualifications to potential employers through a variety of strategies. The main signal is the Thai education degree which is a valuable asset, however it is not the sole determinant of success. Notably, students from private universities said that Thai employers generally viewed graduates from public universities more favorably than students from private universities. As one private university student (p2) explained, "*There's a perception that public universities are more reputable and competitive, so employers tend to be impressed more by those graduates.*"

Despite the perceived advantage of a public university degree, graduates noted that individual skill sets are essential to ensure successful employment. One interviewee (p1) shared, "*According to my seniors, employers value and look for a good GPA,*" showing that academic performance remains a significant indicator of competence besides of holding a public university degree. Furthermore, the reputation of the specific degree program also played an important role. One interviewee (p5) shared, "*My major is popular and has a reputation among similar degrees.*" On the other hand, one employed graduate (p3) noted, "*Although a Thai degree is the first steppingstone, an individual skill set is more important to prove in an employer's eyes.*"

Beyond university reputation and academic performance, graduates use a range of other signaling strategies to distinguish themselves from other applicants. They mainly prepare professional portfolios, maintain updated Linkedin profiles, as well as highlight awards and extracurricular activities. As one employed interviewee (p2) explained, "*I made sure my Linkedin profile was up-to-date and showcased my skills and projects. I also included links to my portfolio, so employers could see my work.*" Recommendation letters from professors and previous employers were also seen as valuable signals to endorse their credibility. One employed interviewee (p5) said, "*I always made sure to ask for recommendations from professors and ex-boss who knew my work well.*" These efforts show that Myanmar students use a proactive approach to signal their qualifications and maximize their chances of securing employment in the competitive Thai job market.

4.3 Suggestions for Enhanced Support

During the interview, Myanmar students provide suggestions aimed at enhancing Myanmar students' employability in Thailand. These recommendations can be presented in two themes: improvements in university support and recommendations for employer practices to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

4.3.1 Enhancing University Support for International Graduates

A central concern of Myanmar students is that they want to ensure leaving university equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the new job market. As one interviewee (p2) emphasized, "*Students need to leave university with the ability to communicate with future employers; not just with courses and degrees that university prepared for them, but with quantifiable work skills.*" Their concern represents the desire for universities to move beyond theoretical education and fill practical skills that foster smooth transition into the Thai job market.

Interviewees offered several suggestions for how Thai universities could enhance their support for international graduates, particularly in facilitating the transition from academia to employment. The most common theme was the need for more proactive job matching support, specifically with international companies operating in Thailand. As one interviewee (p4) opened up, "*Although the universities are not obliged to search jobs for Inter students, they shouldn't leave Inter students alone in the new job market. There should be job matching support with Inter companies.*" This sharing reflects the desire for universities to bridge the gap between international students and potential employers, particularly those with a focus on international role.

Beyond job matching, interviewees showed their willingness to receive job readiness programs from university. They suggested more frequent and targeted career fairs and workshops focused on practical skills development. To be specific, interviewees suggestions include CV reviews, talk sessions on understanding Thai work culture and norms, as well as general employment benefits and income tax laws in the Thai job market. One interviewee highlighted the need for university-employer collaborations to facilitate internship programs, like exchange study trips, to provide students with practical experience before graduation. Similar to exchange trips,

universities could partner with relevant companies to facilitate internships for students post-graduation, or to open required internships and offer academic credit for successful completion. Interviewees also proposed opportunities to leverage their alumni networks. For example, they suggested organizing webinars featuring employed seniors, facilitating job networking events, and creating platforms for sharing job information related to international graduates.

4.3.2 Improving Employer Practices

Interviewees also offered suggestions for employers seeking to attract and retain Myanmar graduate talent. A primary concern was the need for greater employer understanding and support regarding visa sponsorship. Interviewees suggested that companies should conduct internal advocacy training on visa documentation to familiarize themselves with the requirements and processes for foreign employees. As one (p1) interviewee noted, "*Many companies seem hesitant to hire foreigners because they don't understand the visa process. If they had proper training, they would be more familiar and used to the process.*"

Beyond visa support, interviewees suggested the need for on-the-job training. They believe employers should invest in developing the cultural competency and role-specific skills of their foreign employees like Thai business culture, building relationships and team working, software and tools training, etc. Moreover, two interviewees additionally mentioned the importance of cultural training. For example, one employed student (p4) stated, "*I got on-the-job training when I first joined. I could learn the company's value and how I should behave within my team.*" Another (p1) also shared their experience, "*It helped me understand how to communicate effectively with our Thai colleagues and clients.*" They believe this creates a more inclusive and productive work environment.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter will provide an overview of this paper's findings, their implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research. It will begin with an overall summary of the key findings from the previous Chapter 4, highlighting the main themes derived from the data. Following this, these findings will be connected to the research questions and the theoretical framework of human capital, social capital, and signaling theories. The chapter will then discuss the limitations of this study, specifically the potential impact of sample size, scope, and data collection methods on the results. Based on these limitations, recommendations for future research will be presented to address the identified limitations and suggest directions for further research. Finally, the conclusion will synthesize the key takeaways of the study, including its contribution to the existing body of knowledge and its significant role in enhancing the employability of Myanmar graduates in Thailand.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

5.1.1 Challenges Faced by Myanmar Students

The in-depth interview revealed a multifaceted set of challenges faced by Myanmar graduates and students finding jobs in the Thai job market. A primary challenge was the significant language barrier, with a lack of Thai language proficiency limiting access to job opportunities. This language limitation consequently led to restricted job opportunities, intensified by competition with local Thai graduates and other foreign nationals. Visa sponsorship is also said to be another major hurdle, with many companies reluctant to handle the complexities of visa processing. It resulted in rejecting applications and limited internship opportunities. Moreover, interviewees reported uncompetitive compensation due to visa-related costs and a lack of bargaining power. A lack of familiarity with Thai job search platforms, along with insufficient

university support in terms of career mentoring and job readiness programs. These compounded difficulties make graduates feeling inadequately prepared for the Thai job market.

5.1.2 Coping Strategies by Employed Myanmar Graduates

Employed Myanmar graduates shared their proactive approaches to overcome these challenges, focusing on enhancing their human capital and social capital. Recognizing the importance of human capital, they engaged in skill-building initiatives, including taking additional certifications and taking relevant courses to strengthen their technical expertise and language proficiency. They also practiced strategic social networking such as personal connections, university alumni networks, and professional platforms like LinkedIn to access job information and referrals. Furthermore, they used various signaling strategies to demonstrate their competence and qualifications, including highlighting academic achievements, building strong online profiles, and showcasing relevant experience through portfolios and recommendation letters. These efforts reflected a conscious effort to enhance human capital, build social capital and signal their value to potential employers in the competitive Thai job market.

5.1.3 Suggestions for Enhanced Support

Interviewees also provided suggestions to improve the experiences of future Myanmar graduates who want to remain in Thailand and find meaningful jobs. They highlighted the need for universities to provide job matching support, particularly with international companies, and to offer job readiness programs, including workshops on CV writing, and employee benefits in Thailand. They also suggested universities to facilitate industry-specific networking opportunities. For employers and companies, interviewees recommended conducting internal advocacy training on visa documentation to streamline the hiring process for foreign graduates. They also pointed out the importance of on-the-job training and cultural training to support the integration of international employees into the Thai workplace.

5.2 Discussion of Findings and Implications

The findings of this study provide insights into the job search experiences of Myanmar graduates in Thailand, directly addressing the research questions regarding the challenges they face and the strategies they employ. The consistent theme of language proficiency impacting job opportunities can be linked to the theory of 'human capital'. The graduates' proactive efforts to acquire new skills, pursue certifications, and learn basic Thai demonstrate a clear investment in enhancing their human capital to improve their employability. However, the findings also reveal that even with enhanced human capital, external factors, such as visa restrictions and employer perception, can significantly limit their ability to fully leverage their skills. This highlights the limitations of individual human capital investment in overcoming systemic barriers.

Moreover, graduates' effort in social networking to secure employment aligns with the 'social capital' theory. Graduates actively built relationships with friends, advisors, and university alumni as well as maintaining contact with former colleagues, recognizing that these connections can provide access to job information and referrals. The findings also show the relationship between human and social capital. While enhanced skills and qualifications (human capital) are essential, they are often insufficient without the support of a strong social network (social capital).

Finally, the graduates' strategies for signaling their competence and qualifications, such as academic achievements, building strong LinkedIn profiles, and securing recommendation letters, reflect the 'signaling theory'. The reliance on signals like GPA, university reputation, awards and certifications indicate that Thai employers generally rely on these indicators to assess candidates' abilities. However, the findings also suggest that these signals are not always sufficient to overcome barriers such as language barriers and visa restrictions.

This paper presents the complex relationship between theories of human capital, social capital, and signaling theory in the context of international graduate employment. It reveals that strong academic performance or established networks are insufficient in isolation; rather, an integrated approach is necessary to overcome both personal challenges and systemic barriers.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Myanmar Graduates

Building upon the need for proactive engagement, future Myanmar graduates should consider several additional strategies for successful job searching in Thailand. Firstly, given the emphasis on Thai language proficiency, students should begin language acquisition early in their studies, potentially through university-provided courses or self-study. Moreover, strong cross-cultural communication skills, beyond just language, will also be effective in Thai workplace. This includes understanding Thai business etiquette, communication styles, and relationship-building practices. Moreover, developing soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, interpersonal communication, analytical skills will be highly valued by employers in any field. Secondly, beyond language acquisition, and portfolio development, students should actively seek out opportunities to build their professional network beyond university-organized events like attending outside events and leveraging online platforms like LinkedIn to connect with professionals in their field and potential employers. These connections can provide invaluable insights into specific industries, company cultures, and unadvertised job opportunities. Thirdly, to cope with potential challenges like visa issues and uncompetitive compensation, students should thoroughly research visa requirements and understand their rights as foreign workers in Thailand. Building a financial buffer can also provide a greater sense of security during the initial job search period. Fourthly, exploring alternative opportunities like recruitment agencies and online freelance platforms can provide additional ways for graduates to broaden their reach and get experiences before entering an office job. Finally, graduates should be proactive in seeking out information on Thai job market, including typical salary ranges, employer expectations, and effective job search strategies.

5.4 Conclusion

This paper explored the multifaceted challenges faced by Myanmar graduates in the Thai job market, while also highlighting their resilience and proactive strategies to overcome these obstacles. The findings found the important role of language proficiency, visa sponsorship, and social networking in shaping employment outcomes. By examining the job search experiences of these graduates with the theories

of human capital, social capital, and signaling theory, this study provided a relationship of how these factors influenced their career path. This research also contributes to the existing body of knowledge by addressing a gap in the current literature, which primarily focuses on the challenges faced by Myanmar migrant workers in blue-collar sectors, by examining the challenges of Myanmar bachelor's and master's graduates transitioning into the Thai job market.

These findings are significant as they offer practical recommendations for different stakeholders to enhance the employability of Myanmar graduates. Universities can use these results to develop targeted career support programs, while employers can implement more inclusive hiring practices and equip their internal teams with the necessary resources to support foreign employees. By doing so, Thai universities and employers can unlock the full potential of international talent. Moreover, this paper discussed a comprehensive approach, connected by three theories, to address the challenges faced by Myanmar graduates, thus allowing future students to prepare for individual agency and systemic barriers. The key takeaways are that language skills are most influential, networking is essential, and both universities and employers play an important role in successful employability of Myanmar graduates in the Thai job market.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Although this paper uncovered the job search experiences of Myanmar graduates in Thailand, it is subject to certain limitations. First, the sample size of eight interviewees, selected through purposive sampling, restricts the generalizability of the findings. While this approach allows for in-depth studies of individual experiences, it may not fully represent the diversity of perspectives within the larger population of Myanmar graduates in Thailand. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported interview data may have introduced potential biases unintentionally because interviewee's interpretations of their experiences could be influenced by factors such as social desirability or selective memory. Secondly, the scope of the study focused on graduates from different majors and universities in Bangkok, but did not focus on the particular job industries or regions within Thailand. This omission may have overlooked industry-specific challenges. Consequently, the findings primarily reflect the general

experiences of bachelor's and master's Myanmar graduates at public and private universities in Bangkok, potentially overlooking unique challenges faced by those within specific geographic areas or regional variations in employment opportunities. Furthermore, the focus on employed graduates and those actively seeking employment may have excluded the perspectives of those who have given up on the job search in Thailand or pursued alternative career paths, potentially limiting the understanding of different experiences.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

This paper provides a foundation on job search experiences of Myanmar graduates in the Thai job market, but future research could expand these findings in several key areas. First, to address this paper's limitations of sample size and scope, a larger and more diverse sample could represent a more generalizable understanding of challenges faced by Myanmar graduates. This could include a broader geographic focus, extending beyond Bangkok to neighboring other regions of Thailand, as well as deeper dive into specific industry sectors to identify industry-specific challenges and opportunities. Furthermore, future research could consider using quantitative methods along with qualitative approaches or observational studies to uncover a wider understanding of the challenges and coping strategies. Moreover, it could mitigate potential biases associated with self-reported interview data.

Secondly, future research could explore related topics. For example, studying the role of specific university programs or employer initiatives in facilitating the recruitment of international graduates could provide a new perspective on this topic. Exploring the perspectives of employers and university career services would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the employment outcomes of Myanmar graduates. Additionally, a comparative study examining the experiences of graduates from other nationalities in the Thai job market could provide different challenges faced by Myanmar and other international graduates as well as identify suitable strategies to support international talent. Finally, future research could focus on those who have pursued alternative career paths or left Thailand due to job search difficulties to add a more complete view of the graduate experiences.

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