UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE DRIED FISH VALUE CHAIN: A STUDY IN SAMUT SAKHON PROVINCE, THAILAND

by

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ABSTRACT

Dried fish has been one of the essential components of south and southeast Asian countries' food supplies and, provide livelihoods for many people, including migrant women. Despite the industry's significance, migrant women entrepreneurs face unique challenges due to their migrant and female status. These challenges impact their social well-being both positively and negatively. Studies focus on fish drying and processing methods, but it is rarely acknowledged that migrant women dried fish entrepreneurs confront additional obstacles due to their status as migrants and women. This study explores these experiences and their effects by conducting in-person interviews with women engaged in small-scale dried fish processing and trading in Samut Sakhon province.

The study finds that motivations for entering the dried fish business include personal circumstances, market demand, cultural familiarity, self-employment desire, and income potential. Business networks play a crucial role in success, aiding in resource access, support, and opportunities. Common challenges include legal constraints, logistical issues, financial struggles, and environmental impacts on product handling. Women entrepreneurs utilize different approaches to source products, manage finances, and adapt to market conditions. Problem-solving, negotiation skills, emotional coping, and support from informal networks also play crucial roles in navigating the complexities of the industry. The study evaluates various aspects, such as financial well-being, income contribution, relationships, risk perception, satisfaction, and gender dynamics. Financial well-being varies, with some achieving stability and assets, while others struggle. Participation in dried fish value chain positively affects relational well-being by fostering connections with customers, friends, and family. Subjective well-being is influenced by self-sufficiency, financial stability, and personal contentment. Gender relations have evolved, enhancing autonomy and communication, though challenges persist in managing work-life balance and traditional gender roles. Despite these challenges, the dried fish industry remains an attractive option for women seeking independence and economic opportunities.

Key Words: Dried Fish, Migrant entrepreneurship, Gender, Value Chain

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FAO	: Food and Agriculture Organization
IDI	: In-depth Interview
ILO	: International Labour Organization
MMK	: Myanmar Kyat
MWEs	: Migrant Women Entrepreneurs
THB	: Thai Baht
UNIDO	: United Nations Industrial Development Organization

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Dried fish is a staple food source and an integral part of the cultural and social heritage of South and Southeast Asian countries, as well as international fish markets, dating back to ancient times (Marcus, 1987; Ruddle & Ishige, 2010 as cited in Pradhan et al., 2022). This traditional food can be found in the cuisines of Myanmar, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam (ILO, 2016). The global consumption of dried fish accounts for 12% of total fish consumption but can be as high as 36% in countries with low incomes (Pradhan et al., 2022). The processing of dried fish is considered a vital contributor to food security and poverty elimination as per the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (FAO, 2015).

The nutritional value of dried fish is recognized in the field of food science, providing essential micronutrients to many impoverished populations and reducing the occurrence of malnutrition (Kent, 2019; Siddhnath et al., 2020 as cited in Belton et al., 2022). Dried fish products also provide economic opportunities for the entire fishery value chain, employing millions of people, particularly women, who play a significant role in processing and marketing.

The dried fish value chain starts with the capture of fish, followed by processing, marketing, and retailing before reaching the consumer. Each stage of the value chain has different actors, with their own interests and roles. Women constitute over half of dried fish producers and sellers, and their involvement provides both material and non-material benefits to their well-being and their families (Aslin et al., 2000; Tindall & Holvoet, 2008; de Pryck, 2012 as cited in Lentisco & Lee, 2014).

These benefits can be seen in various aspects of the industry, from the relationships between actors to the opportunities for engagement with the wider community. One of the most important benefits is the social connections that women can develop through their work. This can be particularly important for migrants who may have limited social networks and face isolation and loneliness in their new surroundings (Belton et al.,

2018). The dried fish industry offers opportunities for these women to develop social connections with other customers and other stakeholders, which can be beneficial for their mental health and overall well-being. It also provides economic opportunities for women, which can be essential for their social well-being. Women who work in this industry earn an income and support themselves and their families, which can enhance their sense of independence and agency (Overå et al.,2022). This can be particularly important for migrant women who may face barriers to accessing other forms of employment due to their status.

Furthermore, the dried fish industry can foster a sense of belonging and connectedness among value chain actors. This can be particularly important for women who may feel disconnected from the wider community due to language barriers, cultural differences, or other factors (Asiedu et al., 2023). Many dried fish processing and trading businesses are small and family-owned, and they are often embedded in the local community This means that women who work in this industry may have opportunities to engage with the community through events and other activities, which can help to build a sense of belonging and connectedness to the wider society.

However, despite the benefits that dried fish value chains bring to women, they face significant barriers, perpetuating gender inequality and affecting their well-being. Women in fisher households serve as primary caregivers, ensuring food safety and nutrition, and as processors and traders, assuring the family's financial well-being (Williams, 2010 as cited in Lentisco & Lee, 2014). The widespread stereotyping of women as fish processors and caregivers has influenced the way how "gender issues" have been addressed to date (Lentisco & Lee, 2014). While interventions to support women in dried fish value chains have been introduced, they are often superficial and do not truly address the needs of women (Lentisco & Lee, 2014). On the other hand, interventions of this kind have been organized relatively infrequently to study and/or examine the power distribution and gender power dynamics within households and communities (Lentisco & Lee, 2014). In addition, the burden of these inequalities is borne mostly by women who belong to socially excluded groups, such as women from lower castes, widows, and refugees (Belton et al., 2018). Little progress has been made to amplify women's voices across the industry, and their participation in fisheries governance remains limited (Lentisco & Lee, 2014).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The dried fish value chain is a crucial industry in many countries, providing livelihoods for a large number of people, including migrant women. In the province of Samut Sakhon, Thailand, which is well-known for seafood production, several Myanmar women run their own dried fish processing and trading business. The majority of them migrated from coastal areas dominated by the fishing and fish drying industries, such as Mon and Tanintharyi regions. Women processors and traders receive a range of benefits, such as income, employment opportunities, nutritional support, cultural linkages, and household resilience by participating in fish processing and selling operations (Pedrajas et al., 2018 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). Despite the numerous advantages, women's participation in value chain activities, as well as their potential rewards from such activities, are severely limited. The vast majority of women-owned enterprises in the post-harvest industry are either seasonal or micro firms. Moreover, they face several limitations, such as access to credit and production technology, poor education, skills, formalized job experience, self-confidence, market information and connections, time and transportation, representation and visibility, gender discrimination in the marketplace, and legal documentation (Siddiqui, 2012; Singh, 2012; Mayoux, 2001; Kuada, 2009 as cited in Kusakabe, 2016). These limitations prevent women from fully participating in the value chain and reaching their full potential.

Migrant laborers in Thailand are not supposed to operate business independently. Migrant women who take part in the production and trade of dried fish face obstacles across the value chain, such as interference from the authorities because of their migrant status, shortage of fish supply, and very little control over the benefits that are made available to them and receiving very little support in their fish-related activities. According to the literature, gender prejudice is ubiquitous in both the marketing and production systems. Dried fish processors must communicate with other actors in the fresh fish input and dried fish output markets, and their relationships and experiences in these two markets influence not just their income levels but also their socioeconomic status. Women producers have poor negotiating power with buyers as a result of normalized historical gender inequalities in the workplace and society, and they work in less profitable business activities (Jones et al. 2012 as cited in Kusakabe, 2016), receiving a lower economic return for their work than males (Chen et al. 2004 as cited

in Kusakabe, 2016). This hinders their ability to alter their circumstance, and it is challenging for individuals to participate in trading-related activities. Therefore, it is crucial to address the concerns faced by women in dried fish value chains by addressing the underlying problems that sustain unequal gender relations to create enduring wellbeing for the individuals as well as for women themselves participated in the value chain.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

The social well-being of women has been an important topic of discussion and research in various fields such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. In particular, the study of migrant women, who have relocated from one place to another in search of better opportunities, is crucial to understanding the challenges they face and the factors that contribute to their social well-being. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of women who are involved in business ventures. The study of the social well-being of migrant women owned dried fish processing and trading businesses is particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where migration is becoming more common, and women are increasingly involved in entrepreneurship.

Migrant women who are involved in the dried fish processing and trading industry face a range of challenges, including lack of access to capital, limited access to markets, limited knowledge of business practices, and cultural barriers. These challenges can have a significant impact on the social well-being of these women, including feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and limited opportunities for personal and professional development. On the other hand, owning a successful business can provide a sense of financial independence, personal fulfillment, and a sense of belonging in the community. It is essential to know the current status of women involved in fishing and fish marketing, despite the fact that few studies on fish drying have been conducted. Most of them focus on drying and processing methods (Lentisco & Lee, 2014). It is rarely acknowledged that migrant women entrepreneurs confront additional obstacles due to their status as migrants and women. This study aims to understand the unique experiences and challenges faced by migrant women in the dried fish processing and trading industry and how these experiences shape their social well-being. The study will also explore the strategies that these women adopt to overcome the obstacles they face and how these strategies impact their social well-being.

By gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by these women and the strategies they adopt to overcome these challenges, it will possible to design interventions that are more effective in promoting the social well-being of migrant women in this industry. The findings of this study will also contribute to the broader literature on women and entrepreneurship, highlighting the unique experiences and challenges faced by migrant women in this industry and the strategies they adopt to overcome these challenges.

1.4 Research Questions

Migrant women who engage in dried fish processing and trading often face unique challenges that can impact their social well-being. These challenges can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as their migration status, gender, and occupation. In order to better understand the experiences of migrant women in this context, the following research questions will guide the investigation and shed light on these challenges.

1.4.1 Overall research question

What are the reasons behind Myanmar migrant women's decision to start a dried fish processing and trading business as their source of income?

1.4.2 Specific research questions

These follow-up research questions were used in this study in order to support the overall research question of the study.

1. How did migrant women entrepreneurs construct their business network for their dried fish business?
2. What are the risks and challenges that women entrepreneurs face in the dried fish processing and trading business, and how do they cope with these challenges?
3. How does the participation of migrant women in the dried fish value chain impact their social well-being, and what support do they receive from their family, friends, and the community?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1.5.1 General Objective

With the aim to find out what motivates Myanmar migrant women to engage in dried fish processing and trading as a source of income, the specific objectives of this research are as follows:

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

1. To explore the business strategies, networks, and different benefits of migrant women processors and traders in the dried fish industry.
2. To examine the risks, challenges, and coping strategies of women entrepreneurs in dried fish processing and trading.
3. To assess the impact of dried fish value chain participation on migrant women's social well-being, and the support they receive from their social circle.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the study

The primary focus of the research was on the nature of the relationships that dried fish processors and traders have with the various other actors in the chain. The majority of the people who take part in the study were women who are engaged in the processing of dried fish on a small scale in the province of Samut Sakhon.

In the context of this particular investigation, the upstream stage of the value chain was not studied. This study places the majority of its emphasis on the mid-stream component, which consists of processors and traders. Like other studies, any method that is used to gather data will have its own set of constraints, whether those constraints are imposed by the availability or validity of the data or by the methods that are utilized. The accessibility of the respondents is the primary limitation of this study because the respondents are home-based and operate on a small scale, and they are not as visible as large processors in the industry.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter gives a review of the relevant literature focused on the entrepreneurial endeavors of migrant women and the participation of women in the fish processing industry. The following are some of the primary topics that are covered in this review: the motivations and reasons for the self-employment of migrants; the barriers faced by migrant women entrepreneurs; women's involvement in the small-scale fish processing enterprises and trade; the key constraints women face in benefiting from their participation in value chain activities; and contribution to their social well-being.

2.1 Social Well-being in Dried fish value chain

Dried fish is the subsector of the fish processing value chain, and participation in the dried fish value chain has the potential to enhance social well-being in addition to financial benefits. This industry is an essential source of income for many coastal communities, but its significance goes beyond economic value. The social dimensions of the dried fish value chain, such as social networks, cultural practices, and community relationships, can also impact the well-being of individuals involved in this industry (Galappaththi et.al., 2023). With its low startup costs and demand in both local and international markets, the dried fish processing and trading business has proven to be a viable option for women seeking to achieve economic empowerment and independence.

In this research, the idea of social wellbeing is utilized to examine the numerous and complicated ways in which value chains assist the people who take part in them, with the idea that the value chain goes beyond the material and monetary advantages. Social well-being is a multifaceted construct that encompasses a wide range of factors, including economic, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions. McGregor (2008) defined social well-being as a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life" (McGregor, 2008, p.1 as cited in Galappaththi et.al., 2021).

According to Coulthard et al. (2011), the concept of social wellbeing is useful for understanding how women benefit from dried fish value chains. Social wellbeing emphasizes that people's roles, rights, expectations, and outcomes are defined in

relation to each other within a particular context (White, 2008). McGregor (2008) stated that social wellbeing has three dimensions: material, relational, and subjective (McGregor, 2008 as cited in Galappaththi et.al., 2021). Material wellbeing refers to people's practical welfare and standards of living, while relational wellbeing includes social relations that determine people's scope for action or influence within a given setting. The subjective dimension refers to people's own perceptions of what they have and can do. Women who participate in dried fish value chains derive various benefits, which depend on the context and are often created in socially and culturally distinct ways. Fish drying may be among the limited options available for women to earn an income within the communities who host dried fish value chains, and they often use this income towards supporting household coping strategies (Quist, 2015). For example, women in Nazirartek, Bangladesh, rely on earnings from dried fish value chains for day-to-day survival in the face of poverty (Belton et al., 2018). Dried fish is also essential in local diets and a source of vital nutrients (Byrd et al., 2021). In addition, dried fish value chains support cultural identities and caste-based ways of life and have significant meaning to the women involved (Belton et al., 2018; Berenji, 2020). However, cultural continuity may also reinforce and maintain gender inequities in context-specific ways, such as cultural norms that restrict women's participation as traders (Manyungwa-Pasani et al., 2017).

The value chains involved in dried fish are interconnected with social, cultural, economic, political, and historical contexts, which shape local realities and conditions. The interrelatedness of these dimensions makes it difficult to promote individual well-being in the face of numerous obstacles. For instance, Belton et al. (2018) highlight the vulnerability of women working in the main fish drying sites in Bangladesh, namely Daspara and Nazirartek. In Daspara, women engage in fish drying activities mainly to strengthen their community identity and earn an income to support their personal needs, such as purchasing jewelry and cosmetics. In contrast, women employed in fish drying activities in Nazirartek mostly belong to marginalized groups, such as Rohingya refugees and migrant workers, who are extremely poor and heavily reliant on their earnings from value chain participation for their family's day-to-day survival.

2.2 Migrant Women in Business

The employment options accessible to migrants have changed over the past few decades, moving away from wage labor and toward chances to work autonomously in small businesses. Male and female immigrant entrepreneurs make a variety of economic contributions to their host nation. Desiderio & Salt (2010) identified that bringing new skills, fostering innovation and flexibility in the labor markets, addressing the labor shortage, boosting the economy both as employees and as entrepreneurs, and establishing new firms and businesses in a variety of occupations and industries outside of traditional ethnic businesses are some examples of contributions (Desiderio & Salt, 2010). In addition, migrant entrepreneurs can help increase trade between the host nation and their countries of origin because of their international connections (Desiderio & Salt, 2010).

The motives and reasons for the self-employment of migrants can be explained by structural and cultural factors (Bull & Winter, 1991; Danson, 1995; Davidsson, 1995 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011) or a combination of both (Waldinger et al.,1990 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). Social exclusion, discrimination, a lack of education and training, high unemployment rates, etc. are examples of structural factors. Cultural factors include particular cultural values, skills, and features like internal solidarity and loyalty, adaptability, personal motivation, strong work ethics, informal network connections with people of the same ethnic group, flexible financing arrangements, etc.

The existence of social and ethnic networks also significantly contributes to immigrant entrepreneurs (van Delft et al., 2000; Johnson, 2000; Kloosterman et al., 1998; Masurel et al., 2002; Ram, 1994a-b; Wilson & Portes, 1980 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). Such networks provide a protected market, a sufficient labor force, and rotating credits (Basu, 1998; Deakins et al., 1997; Deakins, 1999; Kloosterman et al., 1998; Lee et al., 1997; Rettab, 2001 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011), and they also foster more than average client loyalty for the ethnic enterprise (Donthu & Cherian, 1994; Dyer & Ross, 2000 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011).

In addition to the sorts of ethnic resources that immigrants employ to establish and maintain their small businesses, gender is a crucial element in influencing immigrant entrepreneurial activity (Dallalfar, 1994 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011).

Regardless of their country of origin, immigrant women are more likely to work alongside other immigrant women than co-ethnic men (Wright & Ellis, 2000 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). Being married, widowed, divorced, or separated enhances the likelihood of self-employment for migrating females. In general, women are expected to work in ways that don't interfere with their responsibilities to their families in order to earn a living. The welfare of the family and community may take precedence over individual success depending on cultural beliefs (Zhou & Logan, 1989 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011), therefore in this scenario, the women's goal would not be to pursue a profession but to immediately contribute to the home income for the benefit of younger members. Women working in enclaves receive poor pay, little benefits, and few possibilities for development (Gilbertson, 1995 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). Regardless of the sector of the labor market, discrimination, occupational segregation, and work/family problems lead to lower earnings and fewer possibilities for women.

Although access to resources that support entrepreneurship is a major benefit of enclave employment, research indicates that women in the mainstream sector face higher impediments to self-employment than males. As a result, enclave employment may further abuse women (Gilbertson, 1995 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). On the other hand, as most studies show, women's professional activities in an ethnic economy did not reduce their workload for their families but rather increased it (Gilbertson, 1995; Hilmann, 1999; Zhou & Logan, 1989 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). According to the results of various studies, many immigrants start their enterprises, after having a negative experience in the regular labor market, where they encounter obstacles including language problems, low pay, racial or ethnic discrimination, and even exploitation. A self-employment is generally a viable option for immigrant women to avoid unemployment after working in industry or following the inability of the more qualified second generation to integrate into the broader labor market (Hillmann, 1999 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). Therefore, becoming self-employed is more of a step forward than a catalyst for emancipation or a process of adaptation. Even though it doesn't always entail great income, self-employment for immigrant women might help them obtain a decent social status (Constant, 2004 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). Pearce (2005) shows that motivations for self-employed vary among migrant women entrepreneurs based on

their nationality depending on social class differences, how opportunities are set up, and how ethnic groups get along in a certain place(Pearce, 2005 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011).

Dallalfar (1994) says that immigrant women who are business-minded use the ethnic economy to do work that pays better than working for low wages and low status in businesses that are usually owned by men (Dallalfar, 1994 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011) . But the results of two studies, Morocvasic's (1988) and Hillmann's (1999), show that most self-employed immigrant women provided "non-ethnic" products and services and mostly sold to "non-ethnic" customers (Morocvasic's,1998; Hillmann's, 1999 as cited in Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2011). This overview demonstrates that the earlier phase of immigrant women's self-employment experience was part of a family strategy, whereas this trend has shifted over the years due to lower wages, minimal benefits, and the multiple effects of an enclave economy, towards a new phase to escape the subordination of women within patriarchal control mechanisms.

2.3 Barriers faced by migrant women entrepreneurs

According to research, women in underdeveloped nations are frequently excluded in societies that are already overburdened by poverty, underdevelopment, and insecure conditions (United Nations, 2006 as cited in Azmat, 2013). This means that, compared to other migrant women, these women are likely to experience more difficulties or obstacles while starting or operating their own businesses in industrialized nations (Raijman & Semyonov, 1997 as cited in Azmat, 2013). This is due to their lack of experience, skills, and education because of their socioeconomic standing and the sociocultural expectations in developing nations (Kantor, 2002 as cited in Azmat, 2013). In addition, they encounter challenges because of their exposure to various social and institutional perspectives, as well as a wildly different regulatory environment and socioeconomic background in their native countries.

Azmat (2013) mentioned that MWEs are not a uniform group; they deal with a variety of issues, and MWEs from developing nations are among the most vulnerable entrepreneurs (Azmat, 2013). It lists a variety of elements, including social capital, institutional issues, gender, family, culture, and human capital, as potential roadblocks for MWEs. Additionally, the results show that among those obstacles, culture, family,

social capital, and gender may serve as both obstacles and enablers for MWEs. Research shows that the biggest problems for immigrant entrepreneurs in the host country come from their very different social, institutional, and cultural backgrounds, as well as the fact that they have to deal with a very different regulatory environment and socio-economic context than they did at home (Azmat, 2010; Drori et al., 2006; as cited in Azmat, 2013).

Two types of barriers have been identified in the literature, namely Gender-neutral and gender-specific challenges. Challenges that are not related to gender include a lack of familiarity with the local culture, language, and economy, as well as access to financial resources and rules that are overly restrictive (Dhaliwal et al., 2010; Liversage, 2009; Collins, 2008; Volery, 2007; Kantor, 2002; Raijman & Semyonov, 1997 as cited in Azmat, 2013). In addition to gender-neutral issues, there are gender-specific challenges (Roomi & Parrott, 2008 as cited in Azmat, 2013), supporting the "double disadvantage" hypothesis, which refers to the difficulties women encounter as immigrants and as women (Smith-Hunter & Boyd, 2004; DeCarlo & Lyons, 1979 as cited in Azmat, 2013).

The entrepreneurs' behaviors and attitudes are shaped by both their ethnic and gender-related features (Baycan-Levent et al., 2003 as cited in Azmat, 2013). Women have more challenges than opportunities as a result of the combined consequences of their gender and their ethnicity. Some studies show that MWEs use their gender, ethnicity, and culture to their advantage and become successful business owners. MWEs, for example, use their language skills, cultural traits, knowledge, and ethnic contacts (Dhaliwal & Kangis, 2006 as cited in Azmat, 2013). They also use their identity and gender-related experiences to their advantage (Leung, 2011 as cited in Azmat, 2013).

Despite this, there is increasing evidence to suggest that MWEs suffer from "double disadvantage" (Dhaliwal et al., 2010; Smith and Tienda, 1988; Raijman & Semyonov, 1997 as cited in Azmat, 2013) and, in some cases, even "triple disadvantage" (Raijman & Semyonov, 1997 as cited in Azmat, 2013). "Double disadvantage" refers to the problems women face because they are immigrants and women. "Triple disadvantage" adds a third problem for immigrants from underdeveloped nations (Raijman & Semyonov, 1997 as cited in Azmat, 2013). According to a prior study, cultural characteristics might be beneficial or detrimental to MWEs. For instance, cultural

characteristics such as thrift, hard work, and reliance on family labor may support entrepreneurship (Dhaliwal et al., 2010; Kupferberg, 2003 as cited in Azmat, 2013), but cultural practices, perceptions, and religious beliefs may serve as impediments (Dhaliwal et al., 2010; Kupferberg, 2003 as cited in Azmat, 2013). According to their country of origin, immigrant women are likely to experience different socioeconomic disadvantages. MWEs from developing economies are said to be the most vulnerable group among entrepreneurs (Raijman & Semyonov, 1997 as cited in Azmat, 2013) because they are more likely to find it difficult to adapt to the institutional structure and labor markets of developed economies.

2.4 Women's small enterprises

There is no apparent correlation between women's independence and their ability to earn their own money, but it is evident that having greater access to and control over resources and assets improves women's self-esteem and provides them with more options (Kusakabe, 2016). The relationship between women owning businesses, alleviating poverty, and empowering women, according to Strier (2010), depends on socioeconomic circumstances. The discrepancies could be due to the personal lives and microenvironments of the women, as well as their social background.

Frequently, women-owned businesses remain small and face several obstacles, such as difficulty balancing work with other responsibilities, difficulty obtaining credit and production technology, inadequate education, workforce, formal job experience, self-confidence, market knowledge and connections, time and mobility, recognition and visibility, workplace discrimination, and legal requirements (Siddiqui 2012; Singh 2012; Mayoux 2001; Kuada 2009 as cited in Kusakabe, 2016). Women producers are less able to negotiate with consumers and are concentrated in less attractive economic sectors (Jones et al. 2012 as cited in Kusakabe, 2016). Compared to men, women are usually compensated economically less for their labor (Chen et al. 2004 as cited in Kusakabe, 2016).

1999 research by Mead and Liedholm indicates that enterprises owned by women are often smaller and expand at a slower rate than those owned by men (Mead & Liedholm, 1999 as cited in Kusakabe & Sereyvath, 2014). This is because women are less inclined to take chances and are more likely to diversify their businesses rather than grow them. Della-Giusta and Phillips (2006) discovered that women's businesses share three

characteristics: 1) lack of access to physical, human, and social capital as well as technical expertise and insufficient time and mobility; 2) being responsible for household work and having a negative view of earning money, 3) different types of businesses for men and women(Della-Giusta & Phillips, 2006 as cited in Kusakabe & Sereyvath, 2014). Others have noted how women company owners prioritize their families (Babbs, 1989 as cited in Kusakabe & Sereyvath, 2014) and how males can take control when their enterprises are extremely successful (Over, 2003; Strier, 2010 as cited in Kusakabe & Sereyvath, 2014). Analyses of value chains reveal that women-owned small enterprises are frequently forced into relatively low-priced markets and have less negotiating leverage than their male counterparts (Barrientos 2001; Williams 2012 as cited in Kusakabe & Sereyvath, 2014).

2.5 Women's participation in the small-scale fish processing and trade

Traditionally, women predominate in post-harvest activities which include fish processing, retail, and wholesale trading. Fish processing can be categorized into complete processing and semi-processing. Due to the significant financial investment needed for full processing, women typically work in semi-processing (Medard et.al., 2002). The fish processing industry generates employment and offers the opportunity for women living in developing nations. For example, Women make up about 70% of the small-scale processing industry in Ondo State, Nigeria, and the majority of processing tasks in the boneless siganid business in the Philippines are carried out by women, (Siles, et al., 2019). In Myanmar and Indonesia, women are primarily employed in fish marketing and processing (Tezzo et al., 2018; Halim et al.,2019 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). according to a study that looked at the impact of COVID-19 in Indonesia, women in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia are four times more likely than men to rely on processing fish as a means of coping with the effects of COVID-19, (Campbell et al., 2021 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022)

Women's involvement in the fish processing sector can be differentiated into small-scale private, cooperative, or industrial scale (Spleithoff, 1987). Most of the businesses owned by women in the post-harvest sector are seasonal or small (UNIDO, 2021 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). Small-scale processing at home was better suited for women because salting, smoking, sun-drying, and fermenting at a small scale are regarded to be domestic chores and they could do it along with other housework. Young girls frequently assist their mothers in various forms of processing (Spleithoff,

1987). Widowed or divorced women sustain their livelihood by taking up the fish processing business because of few other options for them. Other women utilize fish processing and fish trade to supplement incomes from agriculture, other small enterprises, or their husbands (Matthews et.al., 2014).

It is typical for women to work in the fish industry, particularly in retail and wholesale markets. Most women can only work part-time or seasonally because they have to take care of their household duties. Only a small number of women have made it as full-time traders (Spleithoff, 1987). Women make up an overwhelming majority of the fish-selling population in the countries of Asia (Siason et al., 2002). This is also a typical occurrence in several nations throughout Africa. Women make up between 70 and 87 percent of the workforce in artisanal fish trading in West African countries (World Bank, 2011). They buy fish in large quantities, either directly from fishermen or via co-operative groups, and then resell it to retail outlets as wholesalers. Women who run their own retail businesses buy fish from wholesalers and then transport it to the locations where they sell it. In fisher families, women are often the only ones who sell fish. This means that the fisher depends on the woman to turn the fish into money so that the fisher can buy other food and other things they need. Men are mostly in charge of this part of the value chain, so not many women have been involved in the global fish trade (De Silva 2011).

2.6 Gendered aspects within the fish processing value chain

Within the fish processing industry, the majority of the work is performed by women. However, there is an obvious difference in the kind of jobs performed by men and women. Despite regional differences in patterns of labor utilization, women are typically responsible for fish processing and marketing (FAO, 1977). Drying, smoking, and grilling are often jobs that are the responsibility of women, but husbands may occasionally provide support to their wives in these activities. In most cases, women sell small quantities of fresh fish to local merchants or at flea markets in their communities. Men have the option of selling fresh fish to cooperatives or large quantities of fresh fish or processed fish to dealers (Spleithoff, 1987).

In most cases, men who are engaged in the processing of fish will make use of different techniques and kinds of fish, such as smoking instead of solar drying. The degree of patience required throughout the process, along with the amount of manpower and

financial inputs necessary, are all factors that contribute to the diversity of processing techniques (Medard et al. 2002). Women in the state of Lagos, Nigeria, are responsible for most of the value addition and preservation of collected fish through the use of traditional processing methods such as solar drying, smoking, and salting. Men are in charge of fishing in the Northern Tanintharyi region of Myanmar, while women are in charge of sorting and processing the catch (Barbesgaard, 2019 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). In the provinces of Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, and Kampot in Cambodia, women are in charge of the purchasing and selection of raw fish, as well as the management of raw materials, transactions, and finances, whilst males concentrate on occupations that need physical strength (UNIDO, 2021 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022).

In terms of numbers, women do most of the fish trade, but they tend to do small-scale trade. The division of labor between genders in trade varies by region (Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). In contrast to Cambodia, where women are more prevalent in both retail and wholesale commerce, males make up a larger percentage of the workforce in Bangladesh's retail sector. In the Philippines, women dominate retail trade while men dominate wholesale trade; however, men are more prevalent in exports from all three of these nations (Weeratunge et al., 2012 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). Men work in packing and transportation in Palawan, the Philippines, while women handle the selling and help in the packaging (Dagaraga et al., 2018 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). There are some cities, such as Bangalore in India, that do not have any female business owners (Jyotishi et al., 2021 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). In the city of Trincomalee in Sri Lanka, Muslim women can be found in the marketplace engaged in the retail selling of clams and mussels (Lokuge & Hilhorst, 2017 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). Fish selling is regarded as masculine activity in the floodplains of Cox's Bazar district near the Bay of Bengal and in the northeastern portion of Bangladesh, and women are prohibited from engaging in it (Deb et al., 2014 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022).

In some cases, the ownership of the business is under the control of a man, even if a woman is a responsible person in trading (Iguban et.al., 2017 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). In Tamil Nadu, India, the average income of women fish traders is much lower than that of male fishers. This is because women tend to trade locally, while men are usually middlemen or exporters who work for companies and can get

fish from a wider range of places (Novak Colwell & Axelrod, 2017 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). In Mindanao, the Philippines, women found it more difficult to negotiate a price than men did since men were able to finish deals more quickly (Prieto-Carolino et al., 2021 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022). Small-scale cross-border fish trading in Cambodia is dominated by women, but large-scale fish exporters, who are primarily men, have challenged this trade (Kusakabe & Sereyvath, 2014 as cited in Kusakabe & Thongprasert, 2022).

2.7 The Key Constraints Women Face in Benefiting from Their Value Chain Participation

There are numerous ways in which the roles that women and men play and the experiences that they have in small and medium-sized fisheries enterprises (SMEs) differ from one another. These ways include the types of products that women and men sell, the business opportunities that they have, and the ways in which social barriers reduce the entrepreneurial potential of women by limiting their access to capital and resources (Lentisco & Lee, 2015). Small to medium-sized businesses are typically the focus of women's entrepreneurial activities in the fishing industry. This is typically the case since, in many regions of the world, self-employment is the only viable option for a woman's means of subsistence (Fields, 2019).

When it comes to handling, processing, and selling goods, men and women face a lot of the same problems and limitations. The expansion of firms that deal in processing and trade is inhibited by a number of factors, such as inadequate access to resources, limited financial services, poor transportation infrastructure, insufficient processing and marketing capacities, pricing controls, etc (Spleithoff, 1987). In addition to the constraints that are common to both men and women, women frequently face additional barriers that are special to their gender. Women play a crucial part in ensuring the distribution of fishery goods, either by handling value chains or by transforming fish into long-lasting commodities. However, the impression of the fishing industry as a male-dominated sector is still prevalent and diminishes women's contribution. According to Lentisco & Lee (2014), the lower status of women affects the recognition of their activities in the fishing supply chains, with women being viewed as housekeepers rather than significant players in the fisheries (Lentisco & Lee, 2014). Women working in the fishing industry face social limitations and challenges both in the public and private spheres. The underrepresentation of women in fishery creates

barriers for women to access resources, receive an education, gain knowledge, earn a fair wage, participate in associations and networks, make decisions, be heard, and be represented in laws and regulations (FAO, 2018 as cited in UNIDO, 2021). Cultural variables frequently have an impact on how much influence women have on their earnings and how much of it is invested in their businesses or goes toward general household needs (Westlund et.al., 2008).

National databases and statistics frequently lack information on women's contributions to fisheries since they frequently concentrate on fish collection due to production goals and overfishing concerns. This leads to the absence of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data throughout the supply chains, maintaining women's marginalization (Gee & Sisto, 2013 as cited in UNIDO, 2021). Diei-Ouadi et al. (2015) argued that chronic time poverty and gendered divisions of labor have a negative impact on the well-being of women, their productivity, and their participation in social and economic life (Diei-Ouadi et al., 2015 as cited in UNIDO, 2021). Because the majority of childcare responsibilities fall on women's shoulders, women in fisheries supply chains are required to work on tasks that may be performed close to their homes, are flexible, and do not demand much transportation or travel. Access to innovation, information, and capacity-building is restricted for women, which in turn hinders their productivity, communication, competitive efficiency, marketing, formalization, and the development of business (FAO,2017 as cited in UNIDO, 2021). Due to the nature of work, fish processors face higher losses than other actors involved in the value chain, and women processors experience more losses than men because of women's limited mobility, weaker negotiating position, lack of time, and fragility (Cole et al., 2018 as cited in UNIDO, 2021). Their limited mobility and bargaining strength force women processors must rely on inferior raw materials, which are more likely to cause losses (Diei-Ouadi et al., 2015 as cited in UNIDO, 2021). In addition, as industrial processing has expanded, modern fish processing companies frequently overtake small businesses, and the types of fish available at local markets and the methods by which women can sell their fish have changed (Spleithoff, 1987). When prices rise in the marketing and processing sectors, traditionally female positions in the fishing industry, such as fish dealing, are sometimes filled by men. In addition, international aid projects are typically taken over by men after their initial success has been established (Matthews et.al., 2014).

The literature suggests that entrepreneurship has become an increasingly popular option for women worldwide. However, certain structural and cultural factors may impact the self-employment of migrant women differently than native-born women. For immigrant women, self-employment can be seen as a viable option to avoid unemployment, but they face both gender-neutral and gender-specific obstacles along the value chain. Challenges such as nationality, social class, and cultural context can affect immigrant women entrepreneurs in different ways, and those from underdeveloped nations may face a "triple disadvantage."

Women play an important role in the fishery value chain, but they are often underrepresented and face barriers in accessing resources and decision-making. Gendered divisions of labor and time poverty negatively impact women's well-being and hinder their productivity, communication, competitiveness, and business development. Nevertheless, the benefits of participating in the processed fish value chain can be material and relational, with cultural, economic, and historical contexts shaping local realities and conditions.

Dried fish and migrant women entrepreneurship have several potential connections. Migrant women may start their own businesses selling dried fish to support themselves and their families. Additionally, migrant women may be involved in the production and processing of dried fish, which can be done from home and is a suitable option for women with low levels of formal education. Moreover, dried fish is a traditional food in some cultures, and migrant women entrepreneurs may be able to tap into the demand for this type of food within their communities.

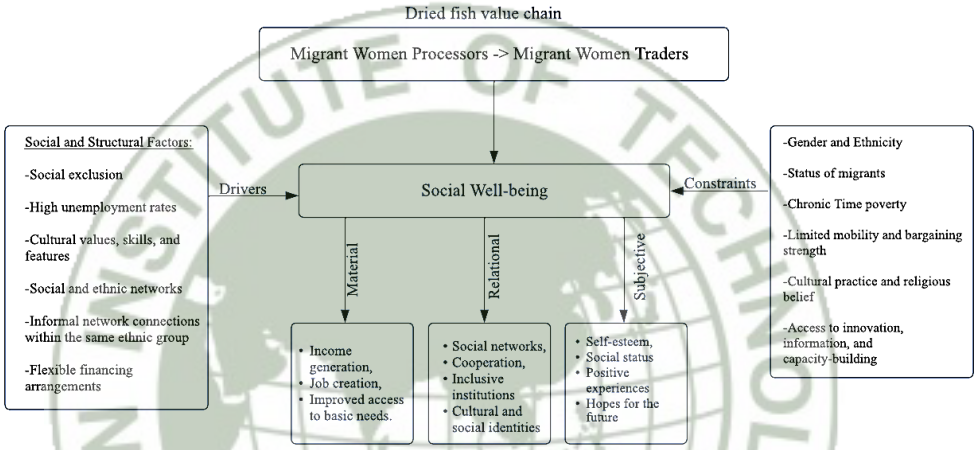
Migrant women entrepreneurship can impact both social well-being and the dried fish value chain. Successful businesses in the dried fish value chain can lead to increased income and employment opportunities for themselves and others in their communities, which can improve social well-being. Additionally, successful migrant women entrepreneurs may be able to use their social networks and knowledge to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the dried fish value chain, which can benefit all actors involved.

However, challenges to migrant women entrepreneurship, such as discrimination or limited access to financial capital or social services, can negatively impact both social well-being and the dried fish value chain. A lack of participation by migrant women

entrepreneurs in the dried fish value chain can limit innovation and the potential for growth and development within the industry.

In summary, the interrelationships between migrant women entrepreneurship, social well-being, and the dried fish value chain are complex and multifaceted. By understanding these interrelationships, it may be possible to develop policies and programs that can support migrant women entrepreneurs, promote social well-being, and enhance the dried fish value chain.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework



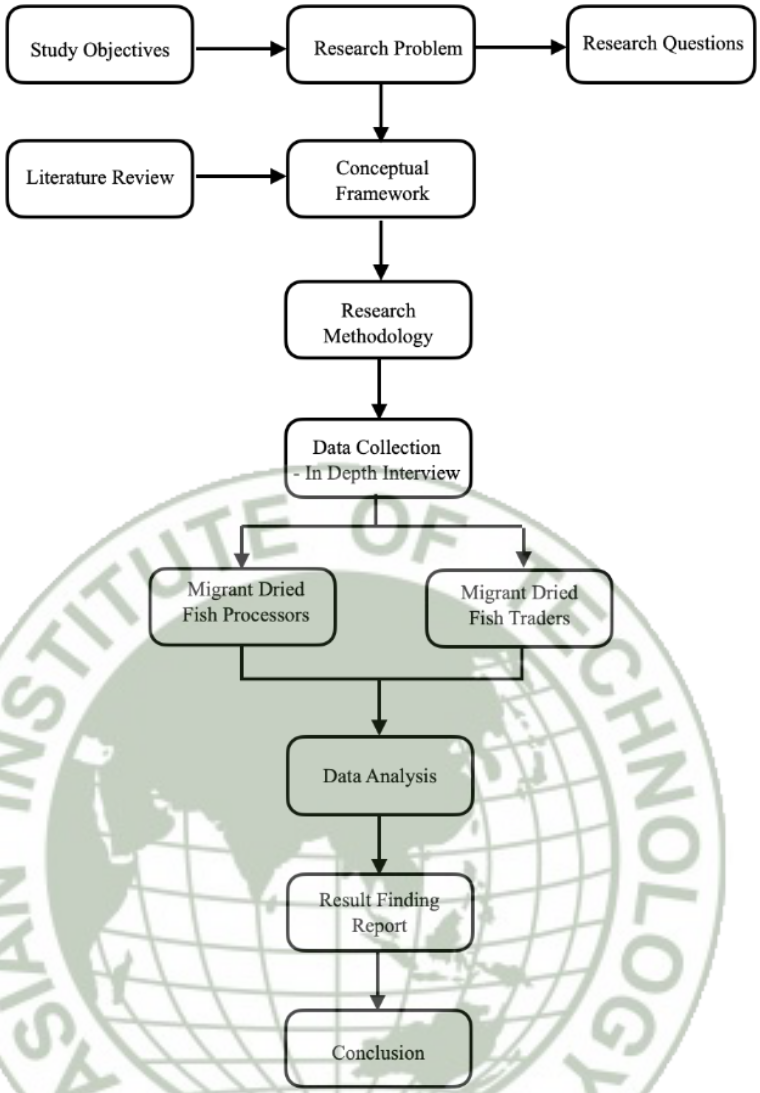
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology utilized in this inquiry is fully presented. There are five distinct sections in all. The first section describes the research technique and how the study was conducted. The second portion discusses the selection of the study region, while the third section discusses the selection of target respondents. In the fourth and fifth parts, the methodology for data collection and the mechanism for doing the analysis are separately explained.

3.1 Research Method

This study, which is exploratory in nature, examined the factors that influence women's decisions to engage in the small-scale dried fish processing and trading business, in Samut Sakhon province, with a particular emphasis on social well-being and the value of dried fish, as well as any obstacles or limitations that Myanmar immigrant women processors and traders may encounter when trying to participate in fisheries markets. For the better deeper understanding in this study, qualitative methods were used with the guidance of one of Creswell's methodological methods, the case study approach. The qualitative methods, in general, produce a considerably wider range of in-depth information about a much fewer number of people and cases (Patton, 1990). It is suitable to gather information on a group's cultural, social, or other norms, as well as to develop a variety of viewpoints on problems of significance to the groups or subgroups represented.

Figure 3.1 Research Design of the study

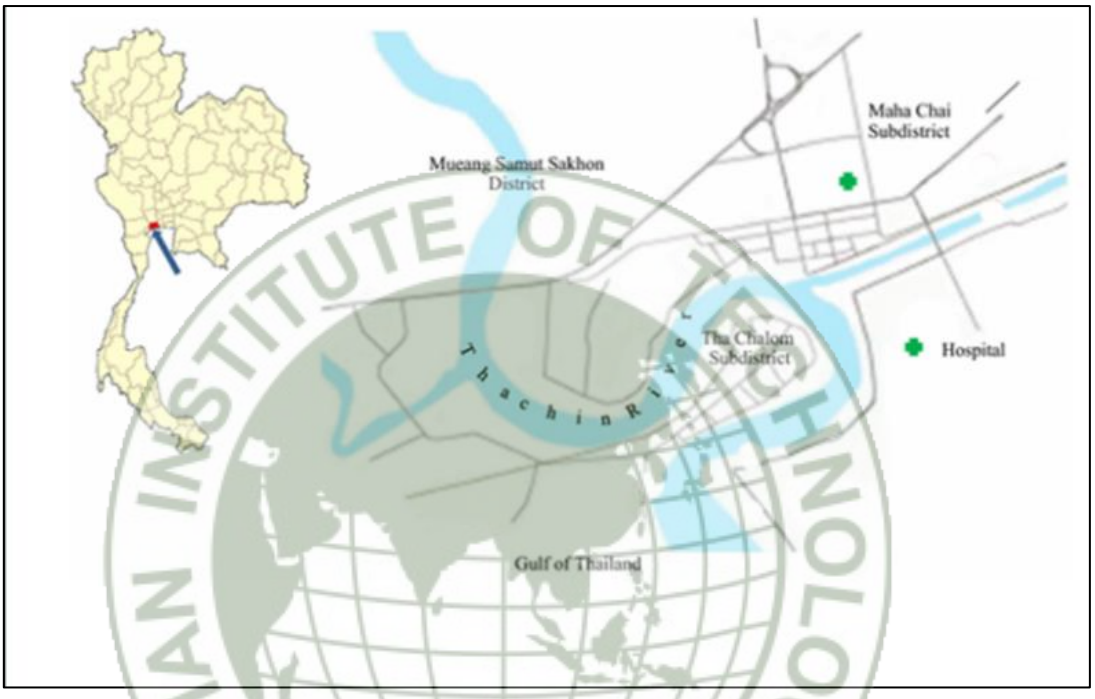


3.2 Selection of the study area

The location of this study was in the Mahachai, a sub-district of the Samut Sakhon district of the Samut Sakhon province. This sub-district is situated roughly 36 kilometers southwest of Bangkok on the Gulf of Thailand. Samut Sakhon is home to a large number of different types of factories, including private company wharves, private jetties, seafood processing industries, connected plants of processing companies, and other types of factories. The fishing industry, the shrimp industry, and the seafood processing industry all have a significant presence in Samut Sakhon, making it an important city for the Thai economy. Operators, traders, Thai and migrant workers, as well as other groups of people in the province, all benefit economically from fishing-related industries. Samut Sakhon Province is home to most Myanmar migrants in Thailand. In 2011, it was predicted that Samut Sakhon was home to approximately

300,000 Myanmar migrants (Sandar, 2011). Most of them are employed in fishing and fishery-related industries. There are a considerable number of female fish processors, middle women, and wholesalers in these regions. Migrant women depend on fish processing as their main livelihood and income opportunities. They provide processed fish products for their own community.

Figure 3.2 Location Map of the Study Area



Source: Internet

3.3 Selection of the target group

Because of the nature of the sector, the upstream portion of the fishery sector is predominantly owned by Thai business owners, and the vast majority of Myanmar's population is involved in operations that are carried out in the midstream and downstream segments of the value chain. This study focuses primarily on the mid-stream section, which includes processors and traders. For the selection of respondents, this study was aware of the variation of the activities of the processors involved in the small-scale dried fish processing and trading business in Samut Sakhon province. While some processors handle the entire process independently, from processing to selling the final products directly to customers, others follow a different approach. They engage in the processing of dried fish products themselves, while also purchasing processed dried

fish products from other processors to combine and sell as their own final products to customers.

Due to the difficulty in identifying small-scale processors and traders, a snowball sampling was used to recruit participants for the study. The snowball sampling method was used to identify initial study participants. Each initial participant was asked to suggest to other participants they believe to be qualified and relevant for the study. The selection of participants was based on specific criteria such as age, migration status, occupation, experience, business ownership, income source, legal status, and accessibility (Table-3.1). The principle of saturation guided the decision on the precise number of participants to be sampled for each group. This ensure that enough data is collected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social well-being of migrant women dried fish processors and traders in the study.

Table 3.1 Inclusion criterion of respondents

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Gender	Female	Male
Age	18 years or older	Under 18 years old
Migration Status	Myanmar migrant living in Thailand for any number of years	Non-migrants
Occupation Category	Dried fish processors and traders	Non-dried fish processors and traders
Business Ownership	Own Business	Non own business
Experience	Any level of experience	No experience in dried fish processing and trading
Legal status	Both documented and undocumented migrants	Non-migrants

Accessibility	Participants who can be accessed and recruited by the researchers	Participants who cannot be accessed and recruited by the researchers

3.4 Data Collection method

For a better deeper understanding of this study, the in-depth interview (IDI) method was used with the guidance of Creswell's methodological methods. When collecting data on people's personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, especially sensitive themes, in-depth interviews (IDI) are useful. In-person field interviews are critical to successfully achieving the objectives of this research due to the lack of documented records on the main target study participants (i.e., dried fish processors and traders) or their livelihood activities. These interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview protocol (See Appendix).

The questionnaire covered a range of topics including background information of the respondent, business performance, reasons for value chain participation, organization of dried fish trading, marketing, relationship of dried fish traders with other actors, barriers and challenges and coping strategies, social well-being, and growth potential. In the realm of social well-being, three primary dimensions- material, relational, and subjective were predominantly employed to evaluate and gauge their overall well-being. The questions were designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social well-being of migrant women dried fish processors and traders and the challenges they face in their businesses.

All the interviews were conducted by author himself with Burmese language as a medium of communication with the respondents who have different ethnic background. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions and clarify responses while ensuring that all relevant topics are covered. By conducting in-depth interviews, rich data was collected that can be analyzed to identify common themes and patterns. These findings were used to draw conclusions about the social well-being of the study participants.

3.5 Data Analysis

In the study of social well-being of migrant women dried fish processors and traders, content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected using an inductive technique. In contrast to the deductive technique, which applies a predetermined set of codes to the original dataset, the inductive approach allows the codes to arise from the unstructured original dataset (open coding) during analysis (Creswell, 2014). The primary goal of the content analysis is to identify and analyze the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by migrant women who work in the dried fish processing and trading industry, with a particular focus on social well-being.

The data analysis process began with transcription of the recorded interviews, followed by familiarization with the interview process and initial open coding of the data. Preliminary codes were allocated to the available data, which was subsequently be grouped into theme sections and updated as necessary. The evolving codes were methodically arranged to make it easier to establish gradual knowledge, conduct additional research, and extract significant conclusions. The themes that emerge from the analysis was used to gain insights into the social and economic factors that affect the well-being of migrant women who work in this industry. To ensure consistency of data and conclusions, only an author was involved in data processing and reporting. The recordings were accessible only to the writers, and after the analysis and final report are finished, they were deleted.

The collected information from the interview was analyzed according to the objectives of the study. The first component, background information of the respondent, involved analyzing the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants such as age, marital status, educational level, number of dependents, and migration history. This helped create a profile of the study participants and identify potential relationships between their backgrounds and experiences as dried fish processors and traders. In the second component, the overall objective was explored with the focus on the reasons for value chain participation, explored factors that may influence the participation of dried fish processors and traders in the value chain. This analysis identified insights into the motivations of the participants.

In the third component, the objective of exploring the business strategies, and network of migrant women processors and traders were analyzed. The information on how dried

fish trading is organized was explored to understand the roles of intermediaries, wholesalers, and retailers. Marketing strategies employed by the dried fish processors and traders were also analyzed to gain insights into the marketing practices of the participants. This analysis provided information on the relationship between dried fish traders and other actors in the value chain, including suppliers, buyers, and intermediaries. The objective of examining the major barriers and challenges, and coping strategies of women entrepreneurs was explored in the fourth component. In the fifth component, the last objective of the impact of participation in the dried fish value chain on social well-being was analyzed. The analysis identified potential areas for improvement in the social well-being of the participants, such as improving access to social services and enhancing social networks. Finally, the growth potential of the businesses of the dried fish processors and traders was analyzed to identify potential areas for improvement in the businesses of the participants and to determine the level of potential for growth.

CHAPTER 4

Background Information of Study Area and Respondents

This chapter provides a profile of the study area as well as a profile of those who participated in the study. The chapter is divided into three distinct parts. The first section summarizes the study area's profile. The second section describes the respondent profiles. The chapter is summarized in the third section.

4.1 Profile of the Study Areas

The profile of the study area provides briefly the geographical and socio-economic conditions of the study area. Information in this section is based on secondary data, and interview results.

4.1.1 Geographical Significance of Samut Sakhon Province

Samut Sakhon called "Maha Chai" by the locals, is a province located in central Thailand, on the western coast of the Gulf of Thailand. It covers an area of 872 square kilometers and is situated approximately 34 kilometers southwest of Bangkok. The province is known for its abundant seafood, and it is often referred to as the "seafood city." Its location makes it an ideal location for fishing and aquaculture industries, and it is also a major producer of salt, which is harvested from salt farms along the coast. The Tha Chin River flows through the provincial capital and serves as a transportation route for goods and people.

4.1.2 Socio-economic conditions

The socio-economic situation of Samut Sakhon is complex, with the province experiencing significant economic growth in recent years. The economy of Samut Sakhon is heavily reliant on fishing and seafood processing, which provides employment for a significant portion of the province's population (Samut Sakhon Municipality, 2021). The province is divided into three districts, and the study area, Mahachai is a sub-district of the Samut Sakhon district of the Samut Sakhon province. As of 2014, the population of Mahachai is approximately 68,208, with the majority being of Thai Chinese descent. According to the Provincial Employment Office, Mahacha is home to 84 small fish processing plants (Samut Sakhon Provincial Employment Office, 2009).

4.1.3 Migrant people and its contribution

The fishing and seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon is heavily reliant on migrant labor, mostly from neighboring countries like Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. As of 2022, the National Statistical Office reported approximately 274,974 registered migrant workers in Samut Sakhon (NSO, 2022), with most employed in the fishing and seafood processing industry. Samut Sakhon Province has most Myanmar migrants in Thailand, with an estimated 307,443 Myanmar migrant in 2011 (Samut Sakhon Provincial Service center, 2011), most of whom work in the fishing and fishery-related industries. There are also a considerable number of female fish processors. Migrant women depend on fish processing as their main livelihood and income opportunities.

Migrant women in Samut Sakhon province who work as fish processors are a significant group within the fishing and seafood processing industry. They come from marginalized communities and face significant economic and social challenges. They lack access to education and training, and their work is often physically demanding and requires long hours in difficult conditions (San San Htet, 2016). Moreover, these women often live in crowded, inadequate housing and have limited access to healthcare and other essential services (Sarapirom., etal 2020).

On the other hand, many of the migrant women working in Samut Sakhon province are also running their own businesses as fish processors and traders. However, they approach their business operations with caution, primarily due to the requirements and eligibility criteria for running a business in the region. They provide processed fish products for their own community. These women often operate as small-scale entrepreneurs, purchasing raw fish products from local fishermen and processing them into dried or salted fish for sale to local and regional markets. Operating their own businesses allows these women to have more control over their work and income. They can set their own prices, choose the types of fish products to process and sell, and decide when and where to sell their products. This can provide more stability and security than working for an employer, particularly for women who may face discrimination or limited opportunities for advancement in the workplace.

However, running a business also comes with its own challenges. Migrant women may face language barriers and difficulties navigating local regulations and requirements for starting and operating a business. They may also lack access to financing and other

resources needed to grow and expand their businesses. Despite these challenges, many migrant women have found success as entrepreneurs in the fish processing and trading industry. Their businesses contribute to the local economy and provide vital goods and services to the community. Moreover, entrepreneurship can provide a pathway for migrant women to achieve greater economic independence and improve their quality of life.

4.2 Characteristics of respondent

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the characteristics of respondents who participated in the study. It is divided into three sections. The first sub-section provides information on the types of respondents in the study areas. This includes details on the nature of the businesses, and the products or services offered. The second sub-section focuses on demographic aspects of the respondents, including gender, age, marital status, educational level, and household size. These factors can influence the types of businesses individuals choose to start, as well as their ability to access resources and support networks. The third sub-section explores respondents' occupation and work experience. Similarly, work experience can impact the types of businesses individuals choose to start, as well as their ability to manage and grow their businesses.

4.2.1 Types and profile of respondent

Following the analysis of responses gathered through in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys, the participants in this study have been re-categorized into two distinct groups based on their respective activities. The re-categorization process was informed by the data collected from both the in-depth interviews and the survey. The first group comprises women who process and sell dried fish products by themselves. Additionally, some of these women not only engage in the processing of dried fish products but also buy processed ones from other suppliers to create their own final offerings, which they sell to customers. They have knowledge of the different types of dried fish products and the market demand for certain products, as well as the prices of other complementary products they sell. These group of women involved in processing, cleaning, and packaging dried fish, as well as selling them in local markets or to wholesalers, and their income depend on the volume of dried fish they produce and sell as well as their ability to manage their production costs and negotiate prices with suppliers and customers.

The second group includes women who buy processed products from others and sell them to other customers. These group of women do not directly involve in the processing of dried fish products, but instead, purchase products from other suppliers or wholesalers to sell to customers. They have knowledge of the different types and quality of dried fish products, as well as the market demand and price points. Their income depends on the volume of dried fish products they purchase and resell, as well as their ability to negotiate prices with suppliers and customers. In terms of running their own business, both processors and traders operate their business under the shadow of the Thai Boss as a nominal owner because of their eligibility to do business on their own.

4.2.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

In the study, a total of 30 respondents (n=30) were selected for in-person interviews to gain in-depth insights into well-being aspects that are important to them. To differentiate processors from traders, initially, their job roles were clarified through interviews, and documentation. While some had dual roles, the primary focus was on capturing unique viewpoints. The categorization of respondents was predominantly determined by their predominant business focus, whether processing or trading, which determined the degree of emphasis. Processors, who are primarily involved in production, were distinguished from traders, who engage in buying and selling. Separate analyses conducted for processors and traders yielded distinct, group-specific insights. The principle of saturation was separately implemented for both categories, guaranteeing a thorough representation of perspectives from both processors and traders.

Most of the interviewees fall within the 36 - 40 age range, with eight participants, closely followed by the 41 - 45 age group with seven participants. Both groups have a significant presence in the middle-age range (36 to 45 years), while the older and younger age groups show relatively fewer participants.

Table 4.1 Age distribution of respondents

Age (Year)	Type of Interviewee		Total
	Processor	Trader	
26 - 30	0	4	4
31 - 35	0	2	2
36 - 40	4	4	8
41 - 45	1	6	7
46 - 50	4	0	4
51 - 55	1	0	1
56 - 60	2	2	4
Total	12	18	30

Source- Interview Data, 2023

In terms of marital status, most respondents (28 out of 30) are married. Two respondents are single. The analysis shows that processors and traders have varying family sizes, with some individuals having no children, while others have up to five children. Among processors, the most common family size is 2 children, with 6 respondents falling into this category. On the other hand, among traders, the highest number of respondents (8) have 1 child.

Table 4.2 Number of Children by Type of Interviewee

No of Children	Type of Interviewee		Total
	Processor	Trader	
0	0	2	2
1	0	8	8
2	6	0	6
3	3	2	5

4	2	4	6
5	1	2	3
Total	12	18	30

Source- Interview Data, 2023

In terms of educational attainment, most respondents completed elementary school, basic education level was the second highest, followed by those with a middle education and no education at each. High School had the lowest response rate.

Table 1.3 Education level distribution of respondents

Education Level	**Type of Interviewee**		**Total**
	Processor	**Trader**	
No Education	2	2	4
Basic	4	4	8
Primary	4	8	12
Middle	2	2	4
High School	0	2	2
Total	12	18	30

Source- Interview Data, 2023

In terms of ethnicity, most of the processors belong to the "Dawei" ethnicity, with 11 respondents falling into this category whereas “Mon" ethnicity is predominant among traders with 6 respondents. Notably, traders demonstrate a more diverse ethnic representation, with individuals from "Burmese," "Karen," and "Shan/Burmese" backgrounds.

Table 4.4 Ethnicity distribution of respondents

Ethnicity	Type of Interviewee		Total
	Processor	Trader	
Burmese	0	4	4
Dawei	11	4	15
Mon	1	6	7
Karen	0	2	2
Shan/Burmese	0	2	2
Total	12	18	30

Source- Interview Data, 2023

Based on the data presented, most of them have lived in Thailand for at least 20 years, with the highest Fewer individuals have resided in Thailand for less than 10 years, residing there for 6 to 9 years. 18 years is the average number of years of living in Thailand, according to the data presented.

Table 4.5 Distribution of respondents by years of living in Thailand

Year of living in Thailand	Type of Interviewee		Total
	Processor	Trader	
0-10	3	4	7
11-20	4	10	14
21-30	5	4	9
Total	12	18	30

Source- Interview Data, 2023

4.2.3 Economic Characteristics and Work Experience

The economic characteristics and work experience of the migrants who participated in the study revealed several reasons for migrating to Thailand, including economic hardship, political instability (such as arms clash and military coup), kinship ties with husbands and relatives, lack of employment, family hardship, domestic violence, and the impact of COVID-19.

Before migrating, the respondents in Myanmar worked primarily in agriculture, wage labor, dried fish processing, and grocery shops, while some were dependent on others. This suggests that many of the migrants had low-skilled jobs and may have struggled to find stable employment in their home country. The push factors for migrating to Thailand highlight the challenges faced by the respondents in Myanmar, and the data suggest that they may have been seeking better economic opportunities and improved living conditions in Thailand.

Prior to their participation in the dried fish industry, most of the participants have no experience of running their own business. The participants worked in a variety of jobs, including masonry, electronic factory work, shrimp processing factory work, domestic work, garment factory work, greengrocery, restaurant waiter, and another domestic work and shrimp processing factory work.

In terms of working experience in the dried fish industry, most participants have been working in the field for a long time, with a significant number reporting 10 years and 12 years of experience. Smaller groups mentioned shorter lengths of employment, with some having only one year of experience. These findings suggest that the dried fish industry provides long-term employment opportunities for migrant workers, and a considerable proportion of participants have gained extensive expertise in this sector.

The data shows that most spouses of the participants in the dried fish industry have occupations related to the industry, such as dried fish processing, dried fish trading, and working at the market. Some spouses work in factories, while others are dependent. The high number of spouses working in the dried fish industry suggests that the industry may provide employment opportunities for multiple members of a household.

4.3 Summary

Samut Sakhon province in central Thailand, is geographically significant due to its location on the western coast of the Gulf of Thailand, approximately 34 kilometers southwest of Bangkok. Known as the "seafood city," it is renowned for abundant seafood and is a hub for fishing, aquaculture, and salt production. The Tha Chin River serves as a vital transportation route.

The socio-economic conditions of Samut Sakhon are complex, with significant economic growth in recent years. The economy heavily relies on fishing and seafood processing, which provide employment for a substantial portion of the population. The province is divided into three districts, and the study area, Mahachai, is a sub-district of Samut Sakhon. As of 2014, Mahachai's population is approximately 68,208, with the majority being of Thai Chinese descent.

The fishing and seafood processing industry heavily relies on migrant labor, mainly from neighboring countries like Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. As of 2011, around 300,000 Myanmar migrant workers work in these industries. Among the migrant workforce, many women work as fish processors and traders, facing economic and social challenges. Migrant women in Samut Sakhon are significant contributors to the local economy. They either run their own small-scale fish processing businesses or buy processed fish products from local fishermen and sell them to local and regional markets. While they enjoy more control over their work and income, they also face challenges such as language barriers and navigating local regulations.

The study's respondents were categorized into two groups: women who process and sell dried fish products themselves and those who buy processed products from others and resell them. The participants are generally middle-aged, married, and have varying family sizes. They have diverse educational backgrounds, with many having lived in Thailand for at least 20 years. Most of the migrants had low-skilled jobs in their home country, and their migration to Thailand was motivated by factors like economic hardship, political instability, and kinship ties. In the dried fish industry, many participants had no prior experience of running their own business but gained significant expertise over time. Spouses of participants often work in related industries, indicating that the dried fish industry provides employment opportunities for multiple household members.

CHAPTER 5

Business Strategies and Networks in the Dried Fish Industry

This chapter discusses how migrant women entrepreneurs construct their business networks and participate in the value chain. It examines the reasons for their engagement in the dried fish industry, considering the roles of processors and traders. The chapter also sheds light on the organization of dried fish trading and the roles of intermediaries, wholesalers, and retailers. Additionally, it analyzes the marketing strategies employed by dried fish processors and traders, offering insights into their business practices.

5.1 Overview of Dried fish Vale chain in Samut Sakhon Province

Dried fish is a traditional and popular food in many Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand. The dried fish industry in Samut Sakhon Province, located in the central region of Thailand, is one of the largest dried fish production centers in the country. In Samut Sakhon, the dried fish value chain is dominated by small-scale processors and traditional methods of production. With an emphasis on input, manufacturing, and distribution, the dried fish value chain in Samut Sakhon province can be divided into two categories. One comprises a value chain catering to Thai consumers, led by Thai business operators, while the other serves Burmese consumers, managed by Burmese entrepreneurs.

Input: Both Thai and Myanmar dried fish processors rely on the Fresh Fish Market and Thai fish processing factories, and fishing boats for their input.

Local Thai processors: There are two types of production in the segment of production: small-scale and large-scale. Thai people run both scales, creating dried fish that is catered to both Thai consumers and the global market. Thai manufacturers also produce dried fish oriented for Myanmar migrant community in Thailand.

Migrant Fish Processors: Many migrant women in the area work as fish processors, performing manual labor tasks such as cleaning, sorting, and drying the fish. These women are often employed by fish processing companies and work long hours for low wages. Despite the challenging working conditions, many migrant women see this work as a source of income and a means to support their families.

Myanmar migrant processors: There are also small-scale dried fish processing businesses run by Myanmar migrants that mainly serve the Myanmar community in Thailand. These businesses focus exclusively on the Myanmar market. They do not offer a wide variety of dried fish products because they only use one or two different kinds of fish species in their manufacturing process. These businesses are often started by women to generate additional income and support their families.

Local Thai Wholesaler/Traders: Companies or individuals who purchase dried fish from processors and distribute it to markets, both locally and internationally. Thai wholesalers and traders mainly purchase dried fish from Thai processors to market to Thai consumers. They also import dried fish from Myanmar traders to sell to the Myanmar population in Thailand.

Local Thai Retailers: This includes local shops and market stalls that sell dried fish to consumers. Their specialty is Thai dried fish, adapted to Thai tastes. Some of these retailers sell Myanmar-style dried fish, reflecting the region's different preferences and cultural influences.

Myanmar Wholesalers/Traders: Some migrant women in the area are also involved in the trading of dried fish, purchasing dried fish from processors, and selling it at their own shops or to local shops and market stalls. They either process the dried fish themselves or purchase it from small-scale firms run by Myanmar migrants and import it from wholesalers and dealers in Myanmar via Mae Sot or Ranong.

Myanmar small-scale retailers: Myanmar small-scale retailers are distinctive in Samut Sakhon's dried fish value chain. Factory workers buy dried fish from Myanmar dealers and wholesalers to start businesses. They resell the products to their coworkers and the Myanmar community. These retailers use social media and personal networks to reach customers. They also offer installment payments, making dried fish purchases easier.

Consumers: There are two main groups of consumers: the Thai and the Myanmar. Thai people mostly like dried marine fish due to the greater availability of marine fish in the area and are used in many local dishes. The Myanmar community, on the other hand, likes freshwater dried fish, which is often brought from Myanmar because it is part of their culture, and they are used to freshwater species. But they also like dried fish from

the sea, especially Myanmar-made dried fish, which is popular with the Dawei and Mon people.

5.2 Construction of Business networks

Business networks play a crucial role in the dried fish industry, as they provide access to resources, support, and opportunities. This analysis examines the importance of business networks based on the interview excerpts. Regarding running their own business, both processors and traders have the potential to operate independently and be self-employed. However, the reality is more nuanced, and many migrant women entrepreneurs in the dried fish industry find themselves operating their businesses under the shadow of a Thai boss. This situation often arises due to various factors, such as eligibility requirements and regulatory constraints that migrants face when starting a business in Thailand.

Migrant women entrepreneurs encounter challenges in obtaining the necessary licenses, permits, and other bureaucratic hurdles that are essential for running a business independently. As a result, they choose to partner with a Thai boss who has the required credentials and legal standing to operate a business. In this arrangement, the Thai boss becomes the nominal owner of the business on paper, while the migrant women essentially run and manage the day-to-day operations of the business. While the Thai boss may not be directly involved in the business's daily activities, their presence provides a sense of protection and legitimacy for the migrants, allowing them to operate without the fear of legal issues or harassment. This arrangement can be seen as a pragmatic strategy adopted by migrants to navigate the complexities of doing business in a foreign country.

Bosses play a significant role in the success of traders and processors in the industry. They provide support and assistance, such as helping with police matters or enabling access to resources. Having a good boss can be the key to a stable and successful business. In some cases, the relationship between a trader and their boss spans many years, demonstrating the importance of long-term connections.

> *"My boss is good. I used to work for her, and because of her support, I was able to live this life. I have been living in Thailand for 18 years. For those 18 years,*

I got all her help. Now all the names in my shop are made with her name." (A 40 year old dried fish trader, PS09)

"If the boss is bad, you can't get a job. Also, if you don't have a boss, you can't sell anything. I also sell dried fish here. I also do work for my boss. Burmese people do not have full rights. If Burmese people stay like this, nothing will happen." (A 30-year-old dried fish trader, PS05)

In addition to this, establishing and maintaining connections is vital for traders and processors. Connections can help secure a business location or provide access to resources and opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable. For newcomers having connections is crucial for entering the industry. Many migrants do not have the right to work independently in the country, making it challenging to establish their own businesses from scratch. However, having connections with existing businesses or entrepreneurs can provide them with opportunities to work under the wing of a more established player, thus enabling them to participate in the industry and gain valuable experience. One trader expressed gratitude to a friend of the same ethnicity (Karen) who helped secure a shop for them. This highlights how ethnic ties and social networks can be instrumental in accessing essential resources.

"At first, I had no contact. This shop can't be rented easily, you must have good connections. I have a friend who is in the same ethnicity as Karen. I must thank him. He opened a shop here. He contacted me." (A 43-year-old dried fish trader, PS022)

Another trader narrated how a friend informed them about a Thai factory selling dried fish, which led to them starting their business by purchasing a small quantity of dried fish with limited capital. This example illustrates how a single connection and valuable market information can ignite an entrepreneurial venture, leading to gradual expansion and growth.

"Around here, I was first selling fish paste and pickles and made a little extra money, so I started thinking about it. I thought about buying some dried fish because I wanted to expand a little bit because people can't eat it every day. One of my friends told me that this Thai factory has dried fish. When I looked for it, I was in a position where it would be convenient to sell, so I started buying

and selling 10 kilos and 15 kilos with 3,000 baht in my pocket. I gradually expanded my vision." (A 40-year-old dried fish trader, PS030)

Traders and processors can overcome industrial obstacles with the aid of business networks. An employer or a coworker with connections, for instance, could be able to assist with concerns regarding licenses, permits, or other regulations. One trader mentioned consulting with their employer, who was also the boss of the house where she worked as a maid. This connection allowed her to seek advice and support for her business, providing a safety net in case any issues arose. Having the backing of someone with influence and connections within the industry brings a sense of security and confidence to navigate challenges effectively.

"First, I consulted with the boss of the house where I was working as maid. I told him how I wanted it. He accepted; I know about him. He knows about me. If something happens, he guarantees me. That's why I'm safe." (A 43-year-old dried fish trader, PS011)

Indeed, adaptability is also another key aspect that business networks foster among traders and processors in the dried fish industry. The exposure to different approaches and success stories within their network inspires them to explore new avenues and pivot their business strategies to meet evolving market demands. For instance, a trader observes the thriving success of other businesses in their network and decide to transition from selling garments to opening a grocery store specializing in dried fish products. This shift is driven by the realization that the market for clothing may be saturated, and a grocery store selling essential food items like dried fish could hold greater potential for consistent and sustainable sales. One trader initially opened a clothing store but found that the competition in that sector was challenging. Upon observing the demand and consistent sales of groceries, especially dried fish products, the trader decided to switch to a grocery store. The realization that people consume dried fish regularly presented a lucrative opportunity for sustainable business growth.

"At first, I didn't open this store, I opened a clothing store. But there are a lot of clothes shops. It's not convenient. This kind of grocery is sold well because people eat it every day." (A 42-yerar-old trader, PS012)

This example illustrates how business networks facilitate adaptability and encourage entrepreneurs to be responsive to market dynamics. As traders and processors learn

from one another, they become more open to exploring diverse avenues, innovating their offerings, and diversifying their businesses to stay relevant and meet the ever-changing needs of their customers.

5.3 Working Nature in the Fish and Dried Fish Industry

The working nature of individuals in the dried fish value can be characterized by various aspects, including the time spent on work, the division of labor, and the flexibility of work schedules. The respondents demonstrate a range of working styles and habits, reflecting the diversity within the industry. The time spent on work varies between traders and processors, reflecting their dedication to their respective roles. While traders work part-time hours based on the type of sale, processors, like a 53-year-old processor, dedicate long and tireless hours to their business, leaving little time for rest.

> *"I start selling at 4 o'clock in the morning and close the shop after 2 o'clock. We only provide wholesale to customers. As for retail, it is sold on Sundays. We ship to wholesale shops." (A-30-year-old trader, PS05)*

Contrasting the trader's part-time hours, processors, like a 53-year-old processor, devote extensive hours to their business, leaving little time for rest. The amount of time spent on work is often influenced by the individual's responsibilities and the unique demands of their role within the industry.

> *"Not to mention what I've been through since having my son. I only give one hour of sleep in 24 hours. My child's education future is in Thailand, so I only give one hour of sleep for my child's future. I don't waste time; I work all the time." (A53-year-old processor, PS015)*

In terms of labor division in their work, both processors and traders adopt various arrangements depending on the size and scope of their business, as well as the availability of support from family or employees. Processors mostly rely on family labor, as seen in the interview with a 38-year-old trader who mentioned,

> *"My nephew helps me in fish processing. I give him pocket money. His father does not want to give him other jobs. He just started working here." (A 38-year-old trader, PS04)*

On the other hand, traders have a more diverse approach to labor. Some traders rely on family members, like one interviewee who said,

> *"One of my relatives, a younger sister from Myawati, is helping me in my shop. She is paid a salary." (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)*

Others hire workers for specific tasks, as another trader stated, *"There are not many workers hired for my business. There are three people at present.*" (A 43-year-old trader, PS011) Another interviewee mentioned, *"Two young women have been employed for the task of selling these dried fish."* (A 38-year-old trader, PS07)

These differing labor practices highlight the flexibility and adaptability of traders and processors in organizing their work, depending on the specific requirements and available resources in their business environments. In the dried fish industry, the working nature demands a high level of flexibility from individuals due to the ever-changing circumstances, especially with fluctuations in fish availability. Interviewee PS02 and Interviewee PS014 exemplify this adaptability by adjusting their schedules and tasks based on the fish supply.

For instance, a 50-year-old processor (PS02) described her schedule, stating, "*Haung yen (fish cooling rooms) open at 8 o'clock. At this time, I usually go and buy fish. I usually come back around 9:30. Then I started to prepare the fish. At 4 o'clock in the evening, it is over. At 5 o'clock, I go to pick up the children from tutoring."* This demonstrates how she carefully aligns her work with the availability of fish and manages to balance her responsibilities as a processor and a parent.

Similarly, a 40-year-old processor (PS014) mentioned, *"I rest when I'm sick. Sometimes, if there are no raw materials, the business is stopped. But I have to wrap other things like pickled fish. If I get fish, I do the dried fish processing three times per week. If there is no fish, I pack pickled fish. I do not make pickled fish and dried fish on the same day.*" This illustrates the need for flexibility in her processing activities, as she shifts between dried fish and pickled fish based on the availability of raw materials.

The working nature of individuals in the fish and dried fish industry is characterized by diverse working styles, with varying degrees of time spent on work, division of labor, flexibility in work schedules, and the ability to balance work and personal life. These factors reflect the adaptability and resilience required to succeed in this industry.

5.4 Source of Inputs for Fish and Dried Fish

The dried fish industry plays a crucial role in the livelihood of numerous migrant people. This analysis focuses on the sources of inputs for these traders based on the excerpts from interviews with traders and processors. The interviews highlight the complexity of the supply chain and the importance of cross-border relationships in sourcing fish and dried fish products. Processors primarily rely on local markets, factories, and vendors to obtain their fresh fish input. They purchase raw fish directly from local markets like the Haung yen and the Talay Thai market, which provides them with convenience and the chance to inspect the fish's quality before purchasing. Some respondents, like Interviewee PS03 and Interviewee PS07, purchase their fish from local markets or vendors. This approach can offer convenience and familiarity, as well as the opportunity to inspect the quality of the fish before purchasing.

> *"I go to buy raw fish in the Haung yen (fish cooling rooms). Sometimes I buy it at the Talay Thai market. Sometimes I have to go Mae Gaw (local place). The cheaper it is, the more I buy it." (A 58-year-old processor, PS03)*

> *"Today, I went to a Thai vendor to purchase it." (A 38-year-old processor, PS07)*

Additionally, some processors opt for direct sourcing from factories, ensuring a steady supply and potential quality control. Meanwhile, vendors play a role in providing fresh fish to processors, as seen in cases where fish is ordered over the phone and delivered by vendors. Respondents like Interviewee PS03, Interviewee PS04, and Interviewee PS024 obtain their fish from distant markets or factories,

> *"Sometimes I order fish from Maha Chai over the phone. They come with a tricycle and sometimes I go to KL with my own car. The person selling there is a Mon ethnic, but he speaks Burmese. I called him and asked if he had fish or not. If he doesn't have fish, I ask someone from the city. I have to pay 300 for the tricycle. He came from the city with a tricycle." (A 58-year-old trader, PS03)*

> *"When I buy raw fish, I buy it directly from the factory. That's the only thing I have to buy directly. I only buy fish from one factory." (A 38-year-old trader PS04)*

Traders, on the other hand, have their own set of input sources. Less reliance on local fish processors. The interviews reveal that traders source their dried fish products from both Thailand and Myanmar. This cross-border trade is an essential aspect of the industry, as it allows traders to access a variety of products and expand their market reach. This method can provide access to different types of fish products and potentially better prices. However, it requires more logistical coordination, such as renting a car to transport the fish or ordering through phone calls.

> *"I mainly order dried fish from Mawlamyine and Myeik. The main thing is that the price is good. It's not a middleman, it's direct. I can compete with other sellers. I can sell it to my customers at a wholesale price. If I order it from Mahachai and Bangkok, it passes through double steps. My profit has decreased, and I can't compete with others anymore." (A 35-year-old trader, PS024)*

> *"I take it from Myeik through Kaw Thaung. And the goods came to Thailand from the Ranong side." (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)*

Some respondents, such as Interviewee PS028 rely on personal connections to source their fish products. These connections can facilitate access to preferred suppliers, as well as provide a sense of trust and reliability.

> *"We order dried fish from Myawady. They send the products to Me Sot from Myawati by car. It's convenient because there's a connection there." (A 42-year-old trader, PS028)*

Several respondents, like Interviewee PS011 and Interviewee PS012, obtain fish from multiple suppliers. This strategy can help them compare prices and ensure a continuous supply of fish products, even when some suppliers are unavailable.

> *"There are four sources where I used to get dried fish regularly. Now there are no more four, there is only one in Thailand from Myanmar processor, and another one is from Myanmar." (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)*

> *"There are more than 10 merchants who regularly deliver goods. They are from different places, Mae sot, Ranong etc." (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)*

The traders rely on their relationships with suppliers in both Thailand and Myanmar. These relationships are crucial for ensuring a steady supply of fish and dried fish products for the traders to sell.

> *"I mainly buy them from Thai people, and the rest from the other side, we have traders who send from Myanmar." (A 40-year-old trader, PS025)*

> *"Regarding the dried fish supplier, there are two Thai suppliers, and two Burmese suppliers from Myanmar." (A 60-year-old trader, PS026)*

> *"I buy dried fish from Thais. Although it is from Thailand, it was sent to them by a Myanmar contact. Many of these are Burmese items. You can think about that. Fish paste comes from Myanmar. These dried fish come from Myanmar. Most of the exports are from Myanmar."(A 30-year-old trader, PS021)*

Some trader express uncertainty regarding the origins and quality of the fish and dried fish products they purchase. This lack of information may impact their ability to ensure the quality and traceability of their products. This uncertainty highlights the need for greater transparency and traceability within the supply chain.

> *"I don't know where he bought the fish from Myanmar and delivered it to me." (A 26-year-old trader, PS 029)*

> *"I go to buy it myself and get it fresh. If you buy through an intermediary, the product may be damaged. I don't like it." (A 43-year-old trader, PS027)*

> *"Sometimes I get ugly items that are not worth the price I paid for them. Sometimes, I receive the items they send to me that are worth it, as well as the things that are not worth it. They mix with broken pieces and cut in the package. At that time, I have to adjust the price with them. I told them flatly that if you want to continue working with me for a long time, you have to adjust the price a little." (A 43-year-old trader, PS022)*

The input sources for the dried fish value chain in Samut Sakhon come from a variety of places, as demonstrated by the various interview responses. Participants in the value chain procure dried fish through multiple channels and methods. The fish and dried fish industry relies heavily on cross-border trade and relationships with suppliers in Thailand and Burma. However, there is uncertainty surrounding the origins of some

products, which highlights the need for greater transparency and traceability within the industry's supply chain.

5.5 Motivation Factors

The primary reason for starting the dried fish business appears to be a response to challenging life situations such as the loss of job, changes in the family dynamic, and financial difficulties, the need to address aging and illness, as well as the cultural familiarity with the production of dried fish. This business offers a viable alternative to conventional employment as well as to support to those who are aging and those who are suffering from illness. For instance, A 38-year-old trader got into the business of selling dried fish after quitting her work in a factory due to pregnancy, while a 38-year-old trader, and a 50-year-old processor got into the selling and processing dried fish after suffering the loss of her passport and dealing with an ill child.

> *" I worked at the factory for 13 years. After those 13 years, I had to quit the factory when I became pregnant because the machinery made me ill. When my daughter turned one, my husband left, and I looked to my kids for support. The landlord of our apartment supported us and offered a market spot in front of his home. From there, I began selling and embarked on a new adventure, converting life's unforeseen twists into chances." (A 38-year-old trader, PS 07)*
>
> *"I had to leave the workplace because my sick kid needed me. While away from the workplace, I misplaced my passport. I start dealing in selling fish and dried fish." (A 30-year-old trader, PS 05)*
>
> *"My daughter's expenses are high. I'm old too, over 50, so I can't do masonry anymore. That's how I started the dried processing business. (A 50-year-old processor, PS 02)*

Incentives for both processors and traders to participate in the value chain include employer support, the presence of existing social and ethnic networks. Employer support can come in various forms, such as financial aid, training, and mentorship. Social and ethnic networks provide access to resources, knowledge, and opportunities that help individuals succeed in the industry. Flexible financing options enable individuals to overcome barriers often associated with starting a new venture. Individuals often learn about the trade from friends, family members, or neighbors who

are already involved in the industry. In some cases, participants in the dried fish business receive guidance and training from other processors or traders.

> *"First, I work together with others, dividing the profits in half. After they return to Myanmar, there is no one to take over this business. That was transferred to us. They also taught me how to process the fish. They didn't come back, we continued doing their business." (A 58-year-old processor, PS 03)*

> *"I couldn't find a steady job when I first moved here. I had to work at random. My brother, who works at the passport office, asked if I could make some dried fish. I didn't know the boss well because I was new to the area. I then decided to try my hand at purchasing and processing fish, beginning with small amounts of five to ten kilograms. I made this a daily goal and was able to save a small portion of my wages. Before going to work, and when I returned, I bought fish and dried it." (A 43-year-old processor, PS016)*

For processors, their involvement is influenced by factors like previous employment in related industries, encouragement from friends, passion for dried fish processing, and cultural experiences. Additionally, the familiarity with dried fish production within communities makes it easier for individuals to enter the business and capitalize on local knowledge. Prior experience can provide valuable skills and knowledge that can be transferred to dried fish processing. Social support from friends can be motivating factors for individuals to enter the sector. A connection to cultural practices surrounding dried fish production can also inspire individuals to participate in the value chain.

> *"While working at the factory, I bought the fish and tried it, but I didn't know how to do it at first. My husband has a hobby, so he wants to make dried fish. His friends tried to do it, and he became interested in doing it. (A 38-year-old processor, PS04)*

> *"I've known what they do with fish in the villages since I lived in Myanmar, and I've seen my parents prepare dried fish at home since I was young." (A 40-year-old processor, PS 014)*

> *"When I was a farmer in Burma, I used to do everything. Most of us naturally know how to do dried fish."(A 49-year-old processor, PS017)*

"In the beginning, I had to hire a person for 500 a day to do dried fish processing. After that, I learned to work for myself, so I no longer hired him, so I started working on my own."(A 38-year-old processor, PS020)

The desire to be self-employed and gain control over one's work schedule and income is another factor driving individuals to start a dried fish business. Self-employment in this sector allows for flexibility, enabling people to balance work with other responsibilities, such as caring for family members or attending to personal health issues. Additionally, the potential for higher daily earnings in the dried fish business compared to other occupations can be a strong motivator for individuals seeking financial stability. As one processor put it.

"After calculating the remaining profit from making dried fish, and how much is left working in the factory for a month, I ended up making dried fish." (A 49-year-old processor, PS 01)

"I've been wanting to open my own business for a long time, and the sales dried fish here are good, so I decided to sell it." (A 35-year-old trader, PS08)

Market demand for dried fish products is another factor influencing people to enter the business. The popularity of dried fish among various cultural groups and the perceived profitability of the sector makes it an attractive option for those looking to start a new venture. Many individuals begin selling dried fish as an extension of their existing market stalls or as a response to local demand for the product. One trader highlighted the local demand for dried fish, saying,

" *Why did I start selling like this? When I came to this market, I thought about what to sell. When I thought about it, people couldn't eat without dried fish and rice, so I started selling dried fish." (A 60-year-old trader, PS010)*

"How did you get the idea? Because there are Burmese people here, there is no Burmese fish and dried fish. If I sell this, it will pay off, and customers from far away will come and buy it." (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)

"The majority of my meals here consist of dried fish and fresh fish. I'm not sure about other parts of the country, but I do know that the Dawei people enjoys

eating preserved fish as well as smaller saltwater fish." (A 35-year-old trader, PS024)

On the other hand, traders may not initially plan to sell dried fish but may find it profitable as a natural extension of their existing business. This commercial extension allows them to include dried fish in their product offerings, diversifying their income sources.

"Most Burmese are factory workers, so if they work overtime, they leave work late, so they often buy dried fish. That's why, since the establishment of the grocery store, I have been offering this dried fish, a favorite of Burmese people." (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)

"In the past, we did not sell such fish or dried fish. We sell flowers. From a small amount of Burmese goods, I sold more as a business expansion." (A 42-year-old trader, 012)

"At first, while selling food, I saw dried fish and decided to buy and sell them." (Interviewee A 40-year-old trader, PS025)

The driving factors for involvement differ between processors and traders, with the main influencers being employer support, and social and ethnic networks. Processors are often motivated by previous employment, encouragement from friends, passion, and cultural experiences, while traders enter the business as a commercial extension of their existing ventures. The reasons for entering the dried fish business are diverse and often interconnected. They include personal life situations, and market demand for the product. These factors combine to make the dried fish business an appealing and viable option for those seeking a new path in life.

5.6 Marketing Strategy

In the dried fish value chain of Samut Sakhon, both processors and traders use different tactics to reach their customers and maintain their interest. Processors have several tactics in their marketing arsenal. Leveraging personal networks and referrals is common, as processors sell to acquaintances, friends, and family, and use platforms like Facebook to reach a wider audience. In-person sales foster personalized customer service, allowing customers to visit processor locations for purchases, and this approach fosters stronger connections with clientele. Moreover, some processors (PS03, and

PS02) cater to customer preferences, offering custom processing options to meet specific tastes and dietary requirements.

Traders also adopt different marketing strategies. Phone sales are a prevalent practice, where traders regularly call customers to update them on available products and facilitate seamless transactions Direct sales are embraced similarly by traders, who directly sell their products to customers, offering face-to-face interactions and inspection opportunities. Understanding the financial challenges faced by some customers, traders (PS09, PS011, and PS024) provide flexible payment options, such as installment plans, to accommodate a broader customer base. Additionally, while most participants in the value chain do not offer shipping or delivery services, some traders (PS012, PS029, and PS025) arrange transportation in specific cases, using rented cars for larger orders. They recognize the significance of product rotation, ensuring a varied range of dried fish options to prevent customer fatigue and boost sales.

5.7 Competition among processors

The competition among processors in the dried fish value chain in Samut Sakhon can be examined through the insights provided in Interviewee PS04 and Interviewee PS01. These perspectives shed light on how competition influences their operations and interactions with other processors.

One aspect of competition is price-driven competition, as observed in Interviewee PS04. The respondent acknowledges that price differences can impact their purchasing decisions. They reveal that if their product is expensive, they will seek more affordable sources. This suggests that processors might engage in some degree of price competition, while also aiming to maintain positive relationships with both suppliers and customers.

> *"I'll tell you frankly, I'm not interested in other people's business (laughing). They sell whatever they like. The price I have just raised is the normal price." (A 38-year-old trader, PS04)*

On the other hand, Interviewee PS01 presents a different viewpoint on competition. The respondent believes that competition among processors is minimal because each processor has their own set of clients. In this perspective, the market is segmented, and processors target specific customer groups without directly competing against one

another. This form of competition can be described as indirect, as each processor focuses on meeting the unique needs of their individual client base.

> *"There is no such thing. They have their customers. I don't compare because I have my own customers." (A 49-year-old processor, PS01)*

These contrasting perspectives highlight the diverse ways in which processors perceive competition in the dried fish value chain in Samut Sakhon. While some may emphasize price competition, others maintain that the market is segmented, and each processor carves their own niche to serve distinct customer groups. Understanding these varied perceptions is crucial in navigating the competitive landscape and developing effective strategies within the industry.

5.8 Competition among traders

Competition among traders in the dried fish value chain in Samut Sakhon is a significant factor shaping their business strategies. The interviews with various traders reveal diverse perspectives on how they approach competition and manage customer relationships, highlighting some key themes. One important aspect for traders is fair pricing, as emphasized by Interviewee PS07 and Interviewee PS011. They believe in offering their products at reasonable rates to foster better relationships with customers and ensure steady sales. This approach indicates that traders prioritize fair pricing to attract and retain clients, rather than engaging in price competition.

> *"I'm not going to compare prices with each other. Don't take too much profit, and don't be too greedy. If so, it will sell well." (A 38-year-old trader, PS07)*

> *"I sold normally. There is no comparison. He also sells himself to his friends and sells himself to his friends. Those who want to buy from my shop, come to my shop and buy. I sit and sell at my own shop, and he also sits and sells them at his shop. It depends on the buyer's eye. If the buyer wants to enter this shop and buy, this shop will sell well. There is no competition. They have their own customers. I also have my own customers too." (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)*

The sales strategy is another crucial factor, as highlighted by Interviewee PS012. Instead of resorting to discount sales, this trader opts to offer additional products when customers make larger purchases. By employing this approach, they maintain strong

customer relationships while maximizing profit margins, a balance that contributes to their competitive advantage.

> *"I sell it at the right price, I sell it per kilo, two kilos or three kilos. Sometimes I know they resell them, so I give them wholesale price. I have a habit of saying that if the customer takes about 20 kilos, I add more here too. If the customer buys 10 and a half kilos, I don't count half a kilo." (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)*

Moreover, product variety plays a pivotal role, as emphasized by Interviewee PS010. This trader understands the importance of showcasing a diverse range of products to capture customer interest and increase sales.

> *"I have to put more products like this. People are interested in choosing more products. If you put a lot of items, people will be interested. If they are interested, they will buy." (A 60-year-old trader, PS010)*

Traders in Samut Sakhon's dried fish value chain employ various strategies to stay competitive. These include fair pricing to build strong customer relationships, effective sales techniques to enhance profitability, and showcasing a wide range of products to attract diverse customer interests. By adopting these measures, traders distinguish themselves from competitors and continue to thrive in the competitive market.

5.9 Gender perception

The interviews reveal various themes, including communication, patience, relationships, and profitability, which contribute to the understanding of how gender roles are perceived and enacted in this industry. Women are perceived as more effective communicators than men in the industry, which can lead to better sales and customer relations. This perception is based on the idea that women are better at explaining product quality and engaging with customers. Men, on the other hand, are seen as less effective communicators, which may hinder their sales performance.

> *"I'm a woman, so I'm more comfortable with women. if it's a woman, you don't have to be worried, you can talk openly. If I have to deal with men, I have to maintain what I should not say. That's why I don't really like dealing with men. I can talk intimately with the female traders, even if I have financial difficulties. I can also intimately tell me what I want. Easy to understand. Men are not as sure as us women. Men are not very involved in housework. Not too engaged in*

the workplace. Women know the most about the details of this business, such as quality of dried fish, and how to maintain the products. When dealing with men and women, I only like women. What I want to say is that there is no discrimination between men and women. But the proper way is to say that women are more suitable." (A 40-year-old trader, PS09)

The interviews reveal differing opinions on the level of patience exhibited by men and women in the industry. Some respondents believe that women are more patient, while others argue that men are more patient. This variation in opinion may be due to differences in personal experiences and perspectives.

"The woman is a good communicator. A man can't follow as much as a woman. There is one more thing. Men are impatient. The woman is patient and talks the buyer into buying." (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)

"Men tend to hesitant to bargain, but women are not. Men are not very patient. As for sales, I think a girl is more suitable." (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)

Opinions on the profitability of men and women in the industry are divided. Some interviewees believe that women can generate higher profits due to their communication and relationship-building skills, while others see no significant difference in profitability based on gender.

"If a woman sells, she will often make a profit. Men does not speak well. Women explain how this product is good, how this one is bad, salty, or unsalted, etc. Men often say that this is good, and this is bad. There are few buyers for the men. That's the kind of difference". (A 53-year-old processor, PS015)

"I'm not talking about only selling fish or dried fish, but men and women are different when it comes to selling goods. Men's sales are different from women's sales, because these jobs are not men's work, so women sell more than men sell. If a man sells it, he can sell only one kilo. If a woman sells, she can sell until it's all gone". (A 49-year-old processor, PS017)

"It's not about men and women, it's about you. It's about the stuff you sell. Anyone can sell if their product is good, and the price is right. It does not belong to anyone. Sometimes there is a difference between the shop owner's sale and the worker's sale." (A 38-year-old trader, PS07)

5.10 Summary

The dried fish industry in Samut Sakhon plays a significant role in the local economy, providing employment opportunities for both Thai and migrant workers, particularly women. The value chain involves multiple stages, from fishing to distribution, and relies on diverse input sources, including local markets and vendors, as well as cross-border trade with Myanmar. Business networks are crucial for success in the dried fish industry, as they provide access to resources, support, and opportunities. Bosses, connections, and collaboration play important roles in fostering business relationships and overcoming challenges in the industry. The working nature of individuals in the dried fish industry is characterized by diverse styles, reflecting the adaptability and resilience required to succeed. Participants vary in the time spent on work, division of labor, and flexibility of work schedules, catering to the demands of the industry.

Motivation factors driving individuals to enter the dried fish business include personal life situations, market demand, cultural familiarity, self-employment desires, and potential for higher earnings. Participants rely on various marketing strategies, such as product rotation, leveraging personal networks, phone sales, and flexible payment options, to reach customers and maintain their interest. Competition among processors and traders is a critical aspect of the industry. Processors may compete on price and market segmentation, while traders focus on fair pricing, sales strategies, and product variety to stay ahead in the competitive market. Gender perceptions within the dried fish industry reveal varying opinions on communication, patience, and profitability between men and women. Women are often perceived as effective communicators and patient, contributing to their success in the industry.

CHAPTER 6

Risks and Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in the Dried Fish Business

This chapter discusses the major barriers and challenges faced by the dried fish processors and traders in their businesses and the coping strategies used by the participants to overcome these challenges. It provides insights into the barriers and potential solutions for enhancing the industry's success.

6.1 Challenges

Migrant traders and processors in the fish industry face a range of common problems and challenges specific to their respective roles. Migrant status, interference from authorities, risky job perception, financial struggles, logistical challenges, and dependence on informal networks are common challenges that both traders and processors face. Processors face challenges related to inadequate facilities, lower economic return, limited credit services, fish shortages and price fluctuations, seasonal fluctuations, and quality control and storage. On the other hand, traders face disrupted trading routes, exploitation by competitors, and limited market expansion due to their migrant status, legal restrictions, and discrimination.

6.1.1 Legal restrictions and lack of rights

Migrants are not granted the right to sell goods in the market, and this often results in higher rental fees for their stalls. Additionally, they face difficulties related to their nationality, as they are not allowed to hold cash, and they often have to pay various taxes and fees. Many migrant dried fish traders face difficulty in selling goods as they do not have the legal right to sell in the market. They often have to pay additional fees or rely on local connections to continue their business operations. Traders are subjected to high fees and taxes that significantly impact their profit margins. They often have to pay local authorities, police, and other groups for permission to sell their goods. Migrant status poses a significant threat to the livelihoods of both traders and processors, making them vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, and restricted access to resources and opportunities. Both processors and traders face difficulties due to interference from the police, which may include under-the-table costs, harassment, and insufficient support for fish-related businesses. The dried fish industry, particularly

for migrants, is perceived as a risky job due to the legal, financial, and operational challenges associated with it.

> *"As a Thai, if you sell these items, you don't have to pay any commission. We have to pay. Because of the law that Burmese people do not have the right to sell goods. I don't want to say too much about the law because I live in another country. We Myanmar citizens have no right to sell goods here. There is no right to hold money. That's why it's difficult. That's why we often have to give it to the people concerned. And our shop rental here is also expensive. Since we are from Myanmar, the fees are higher. For example, if you rent a place that costs about twenty thousand, we pay about thirty thousand." (A 35-year-old trader, PS024)*

> *"Sometimes I don't have money. Sometimes, if the police catch me, I have to give them the money I would buy fish. The other time I was arrested, I had to pay 5,000 baht. The next time I paid 3,000 baht. They asked for 7000 to 8000 baht, so I replied that I didn't have any. I said that my husband is dead. They felt pity and only took 1,500. I have a lot of trouble sometimes. I don't even have money to pay rent. I spend about 2,500 baht per month. Profits become money to repay the police." (A 38-year-old processor, PS04)*

6.1.2 Transportation and logistical challenges

The traders struggle with transporting goods to and from the market due to poor road conditions and insecurity along the border. This results in delays and unreliability of supply, which negatively impacts their ability to sell goods. Traders face challenges in transporting goods across the border due to bombings, roadblocks, and arrests. These obstacles lead to delays and difficulties in getting their products to market.

> *"Yes... Currently, there is a conflict on the border road, and it's causing disruptions like bombing and bad road conditions. Occasionally, the Thai government may also close the road, leading to further challenges. Due to poor transportation, there are times when my sisters cannot sell their goods as they don't arrive from Burma on time. Moreover, even if they manage to transport the goods, they still face difficulties below, hindering their ability to bring the products to market." (A 38-year-old trader, PS023)*

6.1.3 Financial struggles

The traders often face financial difficulties, such as the lack of funds to invest in their businesses, repay loans, or even cover basic living expenses. This may be exacerbated by the various fees and taxes they have to pay, which eat into their already limited profits.

> *"Since we are small buyers, we often face the challenge of running out of stock because the big buyers purchase most of it. Financially, I rely on borrowing from others and pay them back after collecting the debt. Sometimes, I don't have any money, and I have to find ways to earn enough to cover the debt. This situation can be quite challenging." (A 40-year-old trader, PS025)*

6.1.4 Environmental factors

Processors face difficulties in storing and handling goods due to extreme weather conditions, such as heavy rain and high temperatures.

> *My business depends on the weather conditions. If it is raining, I cannot operate my business. Unlike big businesses, I have limited capacity and rely mostly on my own efforts. Others have their own facilities and resources, but I don't have any storage rooms for long-term preservation. As a result, I cannot store goods for an extended period." (A 40-year-old processor, PS030)*

6.2 Coping Strategies

In the dried fish industry, traders and processors face various challenges, including product shortages, financial difficulties, and fluctuating market conditions. This analysis examines the coping strategies adopted by individuals in the industry. Key themes include sourcing products, financial management, and adapting to market conditions. When faced with product shortages, traders adopt different strategies to maintain their businesses. Some traders source their products from larger shops or alternative suppliers to meet the demand. Others may diversify their product offerings, selling different types of fish or even non-fish products, such as bananas.

> *"As for me, when there is a shortage of products, there are large grocery stores in Thailand that sell just like us. We buy and sell through that store." (A 40-year-old trader, PS09)*

"If I can't buy fish, I buy other things. I buy and sell food like bananas." (A 38-year-old processor, PS04)

Financial difficulties are a common challenge in the industry, and individuals employ various strategies to cope with them. Some traders draw upon their savings or borrow money from others to meet their needs, while others manage their expenses by purchasing products from more affordable suppliers.

I had to settle with the money I saved before. Of course, I have to withdraw the funds. (A 38-year-old trader, PS04)

In the months when I don't sell fish, I have to borrow money from other people to feed my family. (A 30-year-old trader, PS021)

Traders also rely on problem-solving and negotiation skills to navigate challenges in the industry. For example, some traders work with their bosses or other stakeholders to address issues, such as avoiding police fees or resolving conflicts with suppliers.

"I was selling under the name of Thai boss, so there was no problem. The boss solved it. The situation is different now, and if there's any report of a bad situation, I have to avoid it until the report is obtained. There are extensive checks and paperwork involved. Each shop in this chain has to be cautious about illegal individuals. For instance, in my shop, only one person is allowed to handle money, and we have to display a check card and hang a sticker as part of the inspection process. So, we have to be careful and handle things independently to stay within legal boundaries." (A 40-year-old trader, PS014)

The interviews reveal that emotional coping strategies, such as maintaining a calm demeanor and managing anger, are essential for individuals in the dried fish industry. These strategies can help traders and processors navigate the stresses and uncertainties inherent in their work.

"I get sad sometimes. I'm feeling sad and am getting quiet. During those times, it's hard for me to say what I want to say, so I try to stay cool." (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)

6.3 Encouragement to Others

Encouragement and support are crucial in the fish and dried fish industry, especially for newcomers entering the market. Different perspectives among traders and processors on encouraging others to join the industry have been highlighted in the interview excerpts. Some traders believe that individuals should make their own choices based on their unique circumstances, and thus, they may not actively encourage others to enter the business. They recognize that everyone faces their own difficulties and will decide to join the industry if it aligns with their personal situation.

> *"They are not like you, are they? Can they bear the strain? I don't encourage it. If you want to do it, do it because everyone has their own place. Everyone has their own problems and if it's going to be a business, they'll do it, right?" (A 35-year-old trader, PS08)*

A few traders are open to the idea of encouraging others to join the industry, even if it means increased competition. These traders may believe that healthy competition can benefit the market and drive better practices and outcomes.

> *"I always encourage my customers to sell dried fish as side income because if they are selling well, my sale rate will be increased." (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)*

Some traders are willing to encourage others by sharing their knowledge and experience. They may provide guidance on aspects of the business, such as product wrapping and selling techniques, to help newcomers succeed.

> *I want to encourage other people in Thailand to sell it. There are many consumers. If anyone is interested, sell it, I encourage it. If they don't know how to sell, they can come to me, and I will assist them with wrapping and selling techniques. (A 26-year-old trader, PS026)*

Some traders and processors may be hesitant to encourage others to join the industry due to the potential challenges and strains associated with the business. They may believe that not everyone is suited to handling the difficulties of the industry.

> *I don't want to encourage others to sell dried fish since they will face challenges in the beginning. (A 40-year-old trader, PS09)*

A few traders have encouraged family members, such as their children, to enter the industry. This encouragement may be driven by the desire to pass down the business and keep it within the family.

> *This business is very convenient for me. It has been a great help in various aspects of my life. I have decided that I will pass it on to my children within the next three years. However, if they don't want to take it over, that's okay. They might consider starting another business instead. But if they are not interested, someone else might buy this shop. (A 60-year-old trader, PS010)*

6.4 Business Enlargement

Business enlargement is an essential aspect of growth and sustainability in the dried fish industry. Business enlargement in the dried fish industry depends on various factors such as financial constraints, family support, market limitations, gender differences, and legal and cultural barriers. A common challenge faced by traders and processors when considering business enlargement is the lack of financial resources. Most of them believe that expansion requires substantial capital investment, which may not be readily available.

> *Regarding the requirements for such an expansion, we don't need anything else except money. Having enough financial resources is the key to moving forward with the plan. (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)*

Some traders express their desire to expand, but their children cannot rely on them, leading to the consideration of separating a store. This highlights the importance of family support in the growth and sustainability of the business.

> *As for the expansion, I have the intention to do it, but I face limitations. My children cannot rely on me, so I am considering splitting up a store. (A 43-year-old trader, PS022)*

A few traders recognize the presence of many police in other places, which makes expanding into those areas difficult. This suggests that not all markets are suitable for expansion due to external factors that may hinder growth.

> *There is still a plan to do this, even though there are challenges with many police in other places. It's difficult, but I am determined to extend my business. (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)*

Some traders note differences between boys and girls when it comes to business expansion. They mention that girls tend to have better relationships and are more patient in selling, while boys are more impatient, which could impact the success of the expansion.

> *The girls have good relationships with customers, while the boys struggle to establish such connections. Girls are more patient in selling, whereas young boys tend to be impatient. If the boys cannot make a sale, they are more willing to quickly sell it off. (A 35-year-old trader, PS08)*

Some processors face legal and cultural barriers to expansion, such as being Burmese and unable to impress Thai people. These barriers can significantly limit the opportunities for growth in the industry.

> *I can't because I'm Burmese, so I can't impress Thai people. I want to expand, but I don't have to do it. (A 49-year-old processor, PS01)*

6.5 Summary

Migrant traders and processors face common challenges, such as legal restrictions and lack of rights, transportation and logistical difficulties, financial struggles, and environmental factors affecting the storage and handling of goods. Moreover, the risk perception associated with the dried fish industry adds to the complexity of their livelihoods.

Addressing these challenges requires a variety of coping strategies. Women entrepreneurs utilize different approaches to source products, manage finances, and adapt to market conditions. Problem-solving, negotiation skills, emotional coping, and support from informal networks also play crucial roles in navigating the complexities of the industry. Additionally, encouragement and support from experienced entrepreneurs are essential for newcomers entering the industry. However, some seasoned traders recognize the potential struggles and challenges that newcomers may face, leading to varied perspectives on encouraging others to join the dried fish business.

Business enlargement is seen as a vital aspect of growth and sustainability in the dried fish industry. However, financial constraints, market limitations, cultural and gender differences, and legal barriers pose significant challenges to expanding businesses.

Family support and strategic planning play a pivotal role in overcoming these barriers and fostering growth.

Overall, this chapter provides valuable insights into the unique risks and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the dried fish industry. Understanding these challenges and coping strategies is crucial for policymakers, stakeholders, and communities to support and empower women entrepreneurs in the fish value chain, thereby contributing to their economic empowerment and social well-being.

CHAPTER 7
The Impact of Participation in the Dried Fish Value Chain on Social Well-being

This chapter examines how migrant women's involvement in the dried fish value chain influences their social well-being. It explores the support they receive from family, friends, and the community, highlighting their experiences and contributions in the dried fish industry.

7.1 Material well-being

The material well-being of individuals involved in the dried fish industry in Samut Sakhon is a key aspect of their lives, providing insights into their financial stability, ability to support their families, and acquisition of assets. The interviews reveal a range of experiences and levels of material well-being among the respondents. The monthly income generated from the dried fish business varies considerably among the interviewees, with amounts ranging from 14,000 THB to over 200,000 THB. These income levels can be influenced by factors such as sales volume, profit margins, and the scale of the business. In general, when comparing the monthly incomes of traders and processors, traders tend to earn more than processors. Traders usually have higher monthly incomes, which could be due to various factors such as the nature of their business, the volume of sales, or the types of products they sell. On the other hand, processors have lower incomes because they primarily focus on the processing aspect of the business and do not have as wide a range of products to sell.

The dried fish business provides various levels of financial support for the livelihoods of the individuals and their families involved in this sector. The analysis of the interviews highlights several aspects of how the business contributes to household income, such as covering basic living expenses, paying for education, and supplementing other sources of income. Some respondents Interviewee PS04, Interviewee PS015, and Interviewee PS014 report experiencing sufficient material well-being, with their businesses providing enough income to support their families, invest in their children's education, acquire assets, and enjoy certain comforts. For these individuals, the fish and dried fish industry contributes to a stable and comfortable lifestyle.

"Without this fish and dry industry, it would not work. Because of this business, I can keep my children in school. I can support my family". (A 38-year-old processor, PS04)

"I use the money for donations. I donated 1000,000 MMK to Burma. Yes, I use it for my children's education. Then I also donate to the poor and elderly". (A 53-year-old processor, PS015)

"We are comfortable, and I wear gold all year round. I can buy five to six ticals of gold. I have also bought gold and saved it for my other child who is in school." (A 40-year-old processor, PS014)

Additionally, some respondents (Interviewee PS10 and Interviewee PS012) highlight how their income from the industry has facilitated asset acquisition, including cars, motorcycles, and houses, signifying an increase in material well-being for these individuals. This suggests that for some individuals, the dried fish industry can lead to increased material well-being through asset acquisition.

"At first, there were no houses in Myanmar, but now I own houses in both Mawlamyine and Dawei. Because of this business, I have been able to accumulate enough wealth to make significant donations. In Myanmar, I can donate a substantial amount, ranging from 2000,000 MMK to 3000,000 MMK, solely from the income generated by this business". (A 60-year-old trader, PS010)

"With the money I made from selling these dried fish, I was able to buy a car as well as a motorbike." (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)

However, several interviewees mention that the fish and dried fish business primarily helps cover their families' basic living expenses. Interviewee PS011 express that their income from the fish and dried fish business is limited and primarily covers basic expenses, and Interviewee PS02 and Interviewee PS013 explain that the business provides just enough income to support their families' needs, without generating significant additional profits. They acknowledge that their businesses provide some help, but the financial benefits are not substantial. This indicates that for some individuals, the fish and dried fish industry may not provide a high level of material well-being.

It's helpful because this business makes money. The money I get from the dried fish business is just the electricity bill, not enough for the people. (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)

How can I say it, it's not that much, it's just food. My shop is still small, so it doesn't sell too much. If I'm going to send money home, I have to send it with my younger sister. I can't send it alone. It hasn't been sold for a long time, but many of them have been selling for 7 or 8 years. (A 26-year-old trader, PS013)

Well, it's like this, you see. The money only goes towards covering the costs of the children's education and putting food on the table for the whole family. (A 50-year-old processor, PS02)

Some participants emphasize the importance of business in covering their children's education expenses. Interviewee PS05 states that the income from the business is used to pay for school fees for their four children. For some individuals, the fish and dried fish business is not their main source of income but serves as a supplementary income stream. Interviewee PS01 mentions that they also work with a Thai boss, indicating that the business is not their primary source of income.

Absolutely, this job is helpful. It's got everything I need; you know? I use the income to provide for my family's meals, pay the house rent, and take care of my children's school fees. You see, I have four children to support, so it's important for me to make sure all their needs are taken care of. In addition, I have to manage labor fees too. (A 30-year-old trader, PS05).

It's not very helpful, but it's helpful compared to working in the factory. It's convenient. The main income is not dependent on this alone, because I also work with the Thai boss. (A 49-year-old processor, PS01)

The interviews reveal that the income from the dried fish business can be inconsistent. Interviewee PS04 notes that the income provided by the business can vary significantly. This suggests that the business's contribution to household income might not be stable and could be influenced by factors such as market demand or external factors like politics, as mentioned by Interviewee PS07.

I support my parents with the income from this business. Sometimes I can give 100,000MMK. Sometimes, if there is not, I can only give 50,000MMK. My family is big. There are no sisters. (A 43-year-old processor, PS04)

Right now, due to the unfortunate state of politics in Myanmar, it's quite challenging to calculate income on a regular basis. (A 38-year-old trader, PS07).

The material well-being of individuals working in the fish and dried fish industry varies significantly. While some individuals can support their families and enjoy a comfortable lifestyle, others struggle to make ends meet. The dried fish business contributes to household income to varying degrees, depending on individual circumstances and external factors. For some families, it serves as a primary source of income, while others rely on additional income sources or experience fluctuating income levels. This variation is likely influenced by factors such as the success of their businesses, the extent of their investments, and their individual priorities and needs. As a result, the fish and dried fish industry offers a diverse range of material well-being experiences for those involved in the sector.

7.2 Relational well-being

The dried fish industry has a significant impact on the relational well-being of individuals involved in the sector. The interviews reveal that the industry provides opportunities for individuals to build and strengthen relationships with customers, friends, and family members, contributing to a sense of community and support. Prioritizing relationships over profits is evident in some cases, highlighting the importance of fostering strong connections with customers and stakeholders. Interviewee PS07 and Interviewee PS04 both discuss this approach, suggesting that fostering strong relationships with customers and other stakeholders is a priority.

"That's right, I sell my products without making a lot of profit. The customers benefit from my shop more than others, the number of friends has increased, and I have matured. Relationships are the most important thing." (A 38-year-old trader, PS07).

"If I don't have capital, I borrow from others to buy and sell dried fish. Then pay back. Sometimes the investment is lost. If the buyer wants to buy a small quantity, I will sell it. I have a good heart. If the buyers do not have the money, I told them to pay it back later, but I don't remember. I don't have any profit anymore. It's all gone". (A 38-year-old processor, PS04)

In the cases of Interviewee PS012 and Interviewee PS01, participation in the industry leads to an expansion of social networks. Both individuals note an increase in friendships and connections since starting their businesses, enhancing their relational well-being.

"At the beginning, when I was working in the factory, I had few friends here. When I started selling dried fish, the people who bought the dried fish from me every day became friends. They recommend others to buy at my shop. Saying, you can buy one hundred worth or two hundred worth at this shop. From that, the number of acquaintances has increased." (A 42-year-old trader, PS012).

"I've been having more social interactions. The number of customers is on the rise. I've got more acquaintances now. I've got a lot of customers". (A 49-year-old processor, PS01).

Moreover, family support and involvement play a vital role in enhancing the overall well-being of individuals, as families actively engage in business, contributing to a sense of togetherness. Interview-10 identifies their daughter-in-law as a confidant, while Interview-12 shares that their entire family is involved in the business. This family involvement and support contribute to the overall relational well-being of the individuals.

"In our family, all my children are helping me in my business". (A 60-year-old trader, PS010)

"In my line of work, one of the people I trust the most is my daughter-in-law". (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)

A positive work environment further contributes to relational well-being, with a nurturing and supportive atmosphere fostering strong relationships. Interview-1

mentions the assistance they receive from their boss, which suggests a nurturing and positive work environment that fosters strong relationships.

> *"Well, you see, this business is quite helpful when it comes to relationships. The boss, you know, helps with everything". (A 49-year-old processor, PS01)*

On the other hand, the analysis also sheds light on the impact of participation in the dried fish industry on gender relations. The interviews reveal that the involvement of women in the dried fish industry has led to increased autonomy within their relationships. Improved communication within relationships is also evident, with work experience leading to more open and assertive communication styles. For example, Interviewee PS08 and PS028 mention that they no longer need to rely solely on their husband for financial support, and they can speak more openly and assertively because of their work experiences.

> *"I can speak more in the relationship. Before, I only got money from my husband. Now that I have my own job, I don't need to talk anymore". (A 35-year-old trader, PS08)*

> *"At first, I was dependent on his income, so I accepted whatever he said. Of course, I have to be strict. I can't eat and buy whatever I want. I can only use as much as he gives me. I want to be as beautiful as others. I want to buy like others. Now, I have money, I do it myself, I work day and night without sleep. Now I can donate as much as I want. I can give as much as I want. I can decide for myself". (A 42-year-old trader, PS028)*

However, the demands of work pose challenges for work-life balance, affecting personal relationships and time spent with partners. The interviews highlight the challenges faced by individuals in the industry in terms of balancing work and personal life. For instance, Interviewee PS024 notes that work demands have led to less time spent with their spouse, which may strain the relationship. This suggests that the work demands may have both positive and negative impacts on gender relations.

> *"Things have changed. In the past, the husband and wife used to eat together. Now I can't look at him anymore. When he eats, he comes when he comes, and I'm busy with work. I have to spend time at work". (A 35-year-old trader, PS024)*

The persistence of traditional gender roles in some relationships is also apparent. The interviews indicate that traditional gender roles persist in some relationships, with women continuing to bear the burden of household chores despite their involvement in the dried fish industry. This division of labor may contribute to tensions within relationships and perpetuate gender inequalities.

> *"I could find it on my own, and they didn't say anything. Nothing has changed. I am tired of doing housework. I have to wash the pots and pans" (A 38-year-old processor, PS04).*

In summary, the dried fish industry has a considerable influence on the relational well-being of those involved. The industry provides opportunities to build and strengthen relationships with customers, friends, and family members, and fosters a sense of community and support. The analysis demonstrates that some individuals prioritize connections over profits, while others benefit from the support of their loved ones, ultimately contributing to their overall relational well-being. The dried fish industry has also influenced gender relations in various ways, including increasing autonomy and communication within relationships. However, challenges persist, such as balancing work and personal life and addressing traditional gender roles within households.

7.3 Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being and the perception of a well-lived life in the dried fish industry are intertwined, with various factors influencing how individuals define their happiness and contentment. Among these factors, self-sufficiency, financial stability, and personal satisfaction stand out as crucial elements shaping the well-being of those involved in this line of work. In the interviews conducted with several respondents, a common theme emerges - a sense of pride in their ability to support themselves and their families through their businesses. Despite challenges, many express satisfaction and contentment derived from achieving success independently. These individuals take pride in forging their path, even if they lack formal education or work.

One interviewee, in Interviewee PS09, exemplifies this sentiment by expressing pride in their independence and accomplishments in the business world. Similarly, Interviewee PS07 highlights another respondent's contentment in being self-sufficient and achieving success outside the confines of factory work. Interviewee PS04 further emphasizes the preference for self-reliance and independence in their business pursuits.

"As for business, I've been a person who has established myself since I was young, so my early life was quite different, but in Thailand, I'm living my own life. That's what I'm telling you frankly, I'm only interested in my survival and the success of my business". (A 40-year-old trader, PS09)

"I'm proud to have become my own business from working in a factory like this. Normally, if I worked in a factory, I would only get 10 instead of 50. There is a change. As much as you can find, if you work. you are true to yourself as much as you do." (A 38-year-old trader, PS 07)

"I don't want support from others, I just want to rely on myself and my own money." (A 38-year-old processor, PS04)

Family well-being is of utmost importance to some respondents, whether it's supporting parents or ensuring their children's happiness and education. Interviewee PS015 and Interviewee PS014 demonstrate happiness resulting from their work, which contributes significantly to their overall well-being. Additionally, in Interviewee PS06, maintaining financial stability through her business is a top priority for her, as she strives to ensure her mother's well-being.

"How can I say that because of my work and my mind, I am happy I want my husband to be happy, I want my children to be happy, because I can still find myself." (A 53-year-old processor, PS015)

"I'm happy because I'm comfortable at the moment. My husband also enjoys processing the dried fish." (A 40-year-old processor, PS014)

The main thing is, I want my mother to be perfect. I want to have some money saved up for my mother to eat and drink. I want to have a well-rounded family. I am happy when I sell more and save more money. Dried fish can be sold out immediately, so it's more convenient. (A 43-year-old trader, PS06)

Beyond personal success, many respondents share a desire for a peaceful life without depending on others or facing societal prejudice, as seen in Interviewee PS012. Being self-employed and making independent decisions are highly valued by some respondents. Income stability is associated with a good life, as it enables individuals to cope with challenging times and plan for their futures. The interviews also shed light

on the significance of personal freedom and the ambition to create a better life in their home country, as showcased in Interviewee PS011.

> *"Even if I'm not rich, I don't want to borrow money from others, so that they don't look down on me, that's my goal. This business of selling dried fish is neither rich nor poor, but it's a little bit better than others. I believe in myself". (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)*

> *"For me, the dried industry contributes 90 percent to a good life. Everyone has hope. I just want to do my job. No one has the idea of working in another country. If there were more like this in my country, I would like to make my own small shop at home". (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)*

Looking beyond themselves, some respondents focus on the future of their children as an essential part of their well-lived life. In Interviewee PS01, aspirations for their children's education and housing are linked directly to the support their business provides, reinforcing the connection between subjective well-being and achieving long-term goals.

> *"My eldest son is going to study Japanese. I plan to build a house. This business is helpful for my future plan." (A 49-year-old processor, PS01)*

The dried fish industry presents unique opportunities and challenges, but it is evident that self-sufficiency, financial stability, and personal fulfillment play vital roles in fostering the subjective well-being of those engaged in this field. This leads to a sense of self-reliance, independence, and optimism for the future, contributing to the overall well-being of those involved in the industry.

7.4 Perception of Risk on their business

The perception of risk in the dried fish industry varies significantly among respondents, driven by several influencing factors such as adherence to rules and regulations, food safety, and personal experiences. It can be categorized into three main groups based on the respondents' opinions on the riskiness of jobs in the industry.

Some individuals, such as those in Interview-9, Interview-4, and Interview-15, are acutely aware of the risks associated with their line of work. They express concerns about potential government intervention due to non-compliance with rules and regulations, as well as food safety.

"But the way we are selling now, we have not done much with the rules and regulations. Ah... If this was inspected, the Ministry of Food would have to close it if it was contaminated with chemicals. If I were to say, I would call it a risky job because these dried fish are not what their citizens eat, they are what our citizens eat. The government will investigate and say that this is not up to quality. For example, there is a stage where they will ask us to close our shop after they check." (A 40-year-old trader, PS09)

"I think it's too risky. If the police happen to come and catch you, you have got to make a quick getaway." (A 38-year-old processor, PS04)

It is a risky job, but I will face it for my child's future. I will run, I have no intention of anything but child education (A 53-year-old processor, PS015)

Others, like Interviewee PS013, recognize the inherent risks in the industry but demonstrate adaptability and resilience in facing challenges. She understands that business ventures involve risk-taking, especially with competition and demanding customer situations. Interviewee PS02, however, perceives the business as less risky due to having enough time to rest between tasks, indicating an ability to adapt to the inherent risks.

"Well, I have to risk it, my brother. Why is that? I'm not the only one who sells dried fish. There are many. The shopping place is a little far away, so sometimes the police check on the road. There are cases where I have to compete with other people to buy dried fish. People who sell dried fish also get into arguments with each other. There are difficulties like that, and that's why I can say that it's a risky job. I'm a single woman, so I don't want to talk too much, I keep my dignity. As you know, married women speak badly, so you are also disgraced. Of course, I have to reduce myself. I have to endure a lot of words that violate my morals." (A 26-year-old trader, PS013)

"After all, I was tired at the end of the day. Spread the fish heads and divide the fish into two halves. It's not just tiring to do it every day. I only do it 4-5 or 8 times per month, so I'm fine with it. I can take a rest for the rest of the time. After drying the fish, I am relaxed, but I don't think I'm tired. I have to be patient because I have to feed my family." (A 50-year-old processor, PS02)

In contrast, some respondents, Interviewee PS012, Interviewee PS011, and Interviewee PS010, do not perceive the fish and dried fish industry as particularly risky. They find pride and happiness in their work, which overshadows potential concerns about risk.

> *"It's not like I'm taking risks in this business. I will do it when I'm old enough to do it. One day when I can't do it anymore, I will go back home and rest. I don't see this dried fish business as a risky job." (A 60-year-old trader, PS010)*

> *"I don't think it's a risky job. It's not difficult. I had to work even harder than when I was working at other people's jobs. The main thing is your friendship, good and sweet." (A 43-year-old trader, PS011)*

> *"I don't think this dried fish business is a risk-taking job. If it's convenient for me, I'll sell it. If it's not convenient, I won't sell it." (A 42-year-old trader, PS012)*

In conclusion, the perception of risk in the fish and dried fish industry varies among respondents, with some respondents highly conscious of risks, others adapting to challenges, and some not perceiving significant risk at all. Personal experiences and circumstances likely contribute to these differing perspectives, shaping individuals' understanding of the risks involved in their work.

7.5 Satisfaction on their Dried Fish Business

Satisfaction with one's business is a crucial factor that influences the motivation and success of traders and processors in the dried fish industry. This analysis focuses on the provided excerpts from interviews with traders and processors, examining their satisfaction with their involvement in the industry and the factors affecting their satisfaction levels.

One significant concern mentioned by a trader (PS09) is the low profit margins in the dried fish trade. This financial aspect impacts their satisfaction and may lead to a reconsideration of their business focus in pursuit of higher profits elsewhere. Moreover, the unclean working environment is cited as another reason for dissatisfaction, affecting the trader's overall contentment with the business.

> *"I'm not interested in these fish for my own commercial sale. I'm telling you this openly because one thing about these five or six is that the profit is less. If we*

talk about two points, the environmental cleanliness is weak. If you cross this road, you will smell it." (A 40-year-old trader, PS09)

Interestingly, the same trader expresses a preference for other businesses, such as clothing retail and tailoring, indicating that they perceive these alternatives as more attractive. This preference may influence their long-term commitment to the fish and dried fish industry, as they might be tempted to explore opportunities in other sectors.

"My main hobby is clothes shop. I am a clothier and a tailor, so I love doing this intricate work. I don't really like this. But as I just said, since I run a grocery store, I sell this dried fish for the convenience of my customers. I can't say whether it will be long-term or not. But how to say 50% out of 100% is not so sure. This is frankly speaking." (A 40-year-old trader, PS09)

On the other hand, a processor's involvement in the fish and dried fish business is driven by the lack of other job opportunities. While this sentiment may indicate lower satisfaction levels, it also highlights their motivation to continue due to limited alternatives.

This sentiment may indicate a lower level of satisfaction with the business but also suggests that the processor is motivated to continue due to limited alternatives.

"How to do it? I don't have a job, so my income is from here, so I have to do this kind of thing." (A 50-year-old processor, PS02)

Another trader mentions not being fully satisfied with their career in the dried fish industry but accepts it and finds contentment in their current situation. This acceptance demonstrates that while their satisfaction might not be at its peak, they acknowledge the need to earn a living through the business.

"There is satisfaction. It's not the full percentage. That's not what I want to do. I have to do it because I am satisfied." (A 26-year-old trader, PS013)

Satisfaction levels in the fish and dried fish industry vary among traders and processors. Factors such as low profit margins, unclean working conditions, and a preference for alternative businesses may negatively impact satisfaction levels, potentially leading to reduced motivation and commitment to the industry. However, some individuals express acceptance of their situation and are content with their current business, even

if they are not fully satisfied. Understanding and addressing these factors could contribute to improved satisfaction levels and a more sustainable and successful fish and dried fish industry.

7.6 The Importance of the Dried Fish Business

The fish and dried fish business holds varying degrees of importance for individuals engaged in this sector. The analysis of the interviews highlights several factors that contribute to the perceived significance of the business, such as personal interests, age, and financial situations. Personal preferences and passions play a significant role in determining the importance of business. For example, Interviewee PS04 prefers pursuing their passion for dancing over continuing the fishing business. In contrast, others like Interviewee PS08 express their dedication to the business and plan to continue selling fish in the long run.

> *"It is important. Dried fish can be kept for a long time. If I sell it myself, it will be convenient. In the long run, I will continue to sell only these dried fish." (A 35-year-old trader, PS08)*

> *"I am fond of processing dried fish. My husband asks me not to do it anymore because of the low return from it." (A 38-year-old processor, PS04)*

Age is another factor that influences the perceived importance of the fish and dried fish business. Interviewee PS03 emphasizes the significance of the business for older individuals, as they may not be able to find other jobs or perform physically demanding tasks. Business thus provides a viable option for maintaining a livelihood for people in this age group.

> *"I am old. I can't do any masonry work anymore. I'm over 50 years old, so factory work won't accept me either. It's like buying and selling dried fish as a personal job." (A 38-year-old processor, PS03)*

The importance of business is also linked to the financial situation of the individuals involved. Interviewee PS01 mentions that the significance of the business depends on how much money they have saved. This highlights that the business's relevance is contingent on the financial security it provides for the participants.

> *"It is important that we have been doing it since the beginning. Whether or not this business will continue depends on how much money is saved. If the other*

job is good, I will cut this one. If there is no arrest by the police, I will continue to do so." (A 49-year-old processor, PS01)

The market demand for dried fish products can also influence the importance of the business. Interviewee PS07 and PS09 point out that customers travel from far away to buy their dried shrimp and dried fish, indicating a strong market demand for their products.

I will continue to sell dried fish. Dried fish and dried shrimp are complementary good. People from far away come to this store to buy dried shrimp and dried fish. (A 38-year-old trader, PS07)

"All work is important. I think this dried fish is also important on the other hand. Because, as I just said, some people want to eat dried fish, so they will buy dried fish. Some of them saw dried fish while buying other items, and they liked it, so they will buy it. For me, there is a part of it that helps." (A 40-year-old trader, PS09)

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that the importance of the fish and dried fish business varies among individuals due to several contributing factors. Personal interests, age, financial situations, and market demand all play a role in shaping the significance of business in the lives of the individuals engaged in this sector.

7.7 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter delves into the impact of participation in the dried fish value chain on social well-being among individuals in Samut Sakhon, Thailand. The study examines material well-being, the contribution of the dried fish business to household income, relational well-being, subjective well-being, perception of a well-lived life, perception of risk on their business, satisfaction with their dried fish business, the importance of the dried fish business, and changes in gender relations.

Material well-being varies significantly among those involved in the dried fish industry. While some experience sufficient material well-being, supporting their families and acquiring assets, others face limited financial benefits from their businesses. Monthly income levels also vary, with traders generally earning more than processors.

Relational well-being is positively influenced by the fish and dried fish industry, fostering connections with customers, friends, and family members. Family support and a positive work environment contribute to relational well-being, while overcoming barriers such as language differences enhances relationships with customers.

Subjective well-being is influenced by self-sufficiency, financial stability, and personal satisfaction. The ability to support themselves and their families brings pride and contentment to the participants, contributing to their overall well-being.

Perceptions of a well-lived life are diverse, with personal freedom, economic stability, family well-being, and aspirations for the future shaping individual understandings of what constitutes a good life. The perception of risk in the dried fish industry varies among respondents, influenced by compliance with regulations, potential health hazards, and personal experiences. Satisfaction with the dried fish business impacts motivation and success, with factors like profit margins, working conditions, and alternative opportunities influencing satisfaction levels.

The importance of the dried fish business is influenced by personal interests, age, financial situations, and market demand. It provides financial security for some and serves as a livelihood option for older individuals. The fish and dried fish industry has brought changes in gender relations, leading to increased autonomy and improved communication in some relationships. However, challenges persist in terms of balancing work and personal life and addressing traditional gender roles within households.

CHAPTER 8
Conclusion and Recommendation

8.1 Summary of the findings

The key findings from the study indicate that the decision to start a dried fish business is often driven by challenging life circumstances such as job loss, financial difficulties, and the need to address aging and illness. Cultural familiarity with dried fish production also plays a significant role in initiating this business venture. The industry provides an alternative to traditional employment and supports individuals facing aging and health-related issues.

Motivations for participating in the dried fish industry include employer support, social and ethnic networks, and flexible financing options. Employer support may include financial aid, training, and mentorship, while social and ethnic networks provide access to resources and opportunities. Desire for self-employment, control over work schedule and income, and potential for higher earnings are additional factors driving individuals to start a dried fish business.

The market demand for dried fish products is another influential factor, as it is popular among various cultural groups and perceived as a profitable sector. Many individuals enter the business by extending their existing market stalls or responding to local demand. Material well-being in the industry varies, with some enjoying sufficient income and supporting their families, while others struggle to meet basic expenses.

Relational well-being is positively impacted by the dried fish industry, with individuals prioritizing relationships, expanding social networks, receiving family support, and benefiting from a positive work environment. Despite challenges, individuals persist in building relationships with customers, fostering a sense of community and support.

Subjective well-being is influenced by factors such as self-sufficiency, financial stability, personal satisfaction, and family focus. Individuals take pride in their independence, self-reliance, and success outside of traditional employment. Happiness and contentment result from their work, and they aspire to provide a better future for themselves and their families.

The involvement of women in the dried fish industry has led to increased autonomy and improved communication within relationships. Women are no longer solely dependent on their husbands for financial support, leading to more equitable dynamics. However, challenges remain in terms of work-life balance and the persistence of traditional gender roles.

Migrant traders and processors face specific challenges associated with their roles, including migrant status, interference from authorities, risky job perception, financial struggles, and dependence on informal networks. Processors also encounter obstacles such as inadequate facilities, lower economic returns, limited credit services, fish shortages, price fluctuations, and issues related to quality control and storage. Traders face disrupted trading routes, exploitation by competitors, and limited market expansion due to their migrant status, legal restrictions, and discrimination.

Despite these challenges, the dried fish business presents an appealing and viable option for individuals seeking a new path in life, considering their personal circumstances and the market demand. Addressing common challenges faced by processors and traders, particularly migrants, is crucial for ensuring the sustainable success of the industry.

8.2 Discussion

Both the literature review on migrant women entrepreneurs and the finding from this study identify various motivations for entrepreneurship. Several studies stated that structural and cultural factors as drivers for self-employment, such as Bull & Winter, (1991), Danson, (1995) Davidsson, (1995) while the study emphasizes challenging life circumstances, cultural familiarity, and market demand as key motivators for starting a dried fish business. These findings align, indicating that individuals from diverse backgrounds and industries can be driven to entrepreneurship by a combination of external and internal factors.

The literature and the study recognize the significance of social and ethnic networks in supporting entrepreneurs. In the study of van Delft et al., (2000), Johnson, (2000), Kloosterman et al., (1998), Masurel et al., (2002) Ram, (1994a-b), Wilson & Portes, (1980) emphasizes the value of such networks for migrant women entrepreneurs, providing access to resources and facilitating business establishment. In the study, the dried fish traders and processors also leverage social networks to expand their customer

base and foster a sense of community. These findings reinforce the role of social capital in entrepreneurship across various contexts.

In addition, gender-specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs were discussed in both literature and finding of the study The literature review highlights the "double disadvantage" experienced by migrant women entrepreneurs due to their immigrant status and gender. The study discusses the challenges of work-life balance and the persistence of traditional gender roles in the dried fish industry. Moreover, the previous literature and the study both emphasize the importance of addressing challenges to ensure the sustainable success of entrepreneurship. Dhaliwal et al., (2010), Smith &Tienda, (1988), Raijman & Semyonov, (1997) discuss barriers faced by migrant women entrepreneurs, while the study highlights the specific challenges faced by migrant traders and processors in the dried fish industry. Both stress the need for targeted interventions to support the well-being and success of individuals involved in entrepreneurship.

This study also highlights the influence of market demand and cultural familiarity on starting and growing a business. Similarly, Dhaliwal et al., (2010); Kupferberg, (2003) discusshow cultural values and skills play a significant role in migrant women's entrepreneurial decisions. These findings reinforce the importance of understanding market dynamics and leveraging cultural strengths in business ventures. Overall, the findings from the study align well with the literature and add depth and specific examples from the dried fish industry, while the literature provides a broader perspective on motivations, challenges, and gender-specific issues faced by migrant women entrepreneurs.

8.3 Recommendation

The dried fish value chain is a critical source of livelihood for many women, particularly migrant workers. However, women entrepreneurs in the dried fish business face a range of challenges, including legal restrictions, financial struggles, transportation and logistical challenges, and environmental factors. Furthermore, government policies that restrict migrant laborers from operating their own businesses independently limit women's economic opportunities.

To address these challenges, it is essential to adopt a multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders. Providing training and education programs that teach women

about market analysis, financial management, and negotiation skills can help improve their confidence and skills in the business. These programs should also offer support to women who wish to establish or expand their businesses, including providing access to credit, technology, and legal documentation. Additionally, creating a supportive and inclusive environment that recognizes and values women's contributions to the value chain can help reduce gender-based discrimination and promote equitable outcomes.

Another solution is to work with stakeholders to create targeted skill development programs for migrant women, aligned with existing regulations and labor market needs. This empowers them to engage in permissible sectors, contributing to the economy within legal boundaries. Moreover, providing information about legitimate job opportunities and businesses would enable informed choices and active workforce participation.

The social well-being of women in the dried fish value chain is an essential aspect. In addition to the economic empowerment of women, social well-being encompasses aspects such as access to healthcare, and social protection. These are critical areas that impact women's lives and their ability to participate fully in the value chain. Social protection programs such as social security and insurance schemes can provide a safety net for women and protect them from financial and social risks. These programs can also promote women's access to credit and financial resources, which are essential for their economic empowerment. In addition to these areas, creating a supportive and inclusive environment is also crucial for improving women's social well-being in the dried fish value chain.

8.4 Research Recommendation

Based on the findings and limitations of the current study, several research recommendations emerge to enhance the understanding of the social well-being of migrant women in dried fish value chain. Firstly, to provide a comprehensive view of the dried fish value chain, future research should focus on investigating the upstream stage of the chain. This would involve studying the activities and interactions of actors involved in activities such as fishing, fish collection, and initial processing before the mid-stream processing and trading stages. Secondly, to capture a more diverse spectrum of perspectives, future research should consider diversifying participant inclusion, encompassing not only women engaged in small-scale processing but also large-scale

processors, traders, including Thai business owner and other stakeholders pivotal to the value chain dynamics. Involving stakeholders from various stages of the value chain in the research process can enhance data collection, validation, and interpretation. Engaging with key industry players, and policymakers can provide a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the dried fish value chain.

Thirdly, conducting comparative studies across different regions, provinces, or countries can reveal variations in value chain dynamics and shed light on factors that influence relationships and outcomes. This approach could help identify best practices and lessons that can be shared to improve value chain performance. Lastly, combining qualitative and quantitative methods can help mitigate the limitations associated with data collection. By employing a mixed-methods approach, researchers can gather more comprehensive and diverse data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the relationships, constraints, and opportunities within the value chain.

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Appendices

Appendix-1 Semi-structured Interview Guide

Demographic Information

Date of interview: _____ Location: _____

Age of Respondent: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Name of respondent: _____ Marital Status: _____

Education Level: _____ Spouse's occupation: _____

Number of Children: _____ Number of children at schooling age: _____

Background Information

1. How long have you lived in Thailand? Where are you originally from? What brought you to this country? What did you do before fish processing/trading in your original place and in Thailand?
2. How, and why did you begin the dried fish processing/trading business? Do you have any prior experience with fish processing/trading before? How long have you operated a fish processing/trading business?
3. How long have you operated a fish processing business?
4. Can you describe your typical day as a migrant woman processor or trader?

Operation and marketing

1. How did you construct the business network for the dried fish business?
2. How do you keep up with competition in the dried fish value chain?
3. Have you made any investments in equipment or other resources to improve your business performance?
4. Have you received any training or support to improve your business skills or knowledge?
5. Have you encountered any difficulties in acquiring raw materials or finding customers for your products?
6. Can you describe any challenges you face in your work as a dried fish processor or trader?

Material Well-being

1. Can you describe your current financial situation?
2. How do you earn a living as a dried fish processor or trader?
3. How do you feel about the income you earn from your work in the dried fish value chain?
4. In what ways does dried fish processing help support your household's financial stability, and how do you typically use your profits?
5. How do you and your family typically support yourselves during the off-season, when work is less frequent or not available?

Relational Well-being

1. How has your work impacted your social well-being, including your social interactions and relationships with others, your sense of belonging, and your emotional well-being?
2. Have you faced any discrimination or prejudice in your work as a migrant woman processor or trader? If so, can you describe the situation and how it affected you?
3. Can you describe your experiences as a migrant woman in the dried fish value chain?
4. How do you balance your work in the dried fish value chain with your responsibilities as a caregiver and/or homemaker?
5. Can you describe any instances in which you have experienced discrimination or mistreatment in the workplace?
6. How do you feel about the level of social support you receive from your community and from your family? Have these support systems been helpful to you in addressing any challenges or issues you have faced?
7. Have you noticed any changes in gender relations within your household?
8. Who among your family, co-workers, neighbors, and friends do you rely on for support during times of need?

Subjective Well-being

1. How do you feel about your current living and working conditions?
2. How do you perceive your social status and relationships within the community?
3. Can you describe any instances in which your gender or ethnicity has affected your experiences as a dried fish processor or trader?
4. Does being a woman/man matter in how you benefit from this work?
5. How do you see your future in the dried fish value chain, and what factors may impact this?
6. How do you feel about your work as a dried fish processor or trader?
7. Do you feel that your work is fulfilling and meaningful?
8. Is this a choice of employment that you would recommend to others? Why/Why not?
9. Do you consider your livelihoods to be risky? Why/Why not?
10. How does this business support you have a good life?
11. How do you see your future as a migrant woman processor or trader? Are there any changes you would like to make to your work or personal life to improve your social well-being?

Appendix-2 Summary of respondent Information

Participant ID	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Experience in business	Type of Interviewee
PS01	49	Dawei	Primary	10	Processor
PS02	50	Dawei	Middle	2	Processor
PS03	58	Dawei	Basic	3	Processor
PS04	38	Dawei	No Education	1.5	Processor
PS05	30	Burmese	High School	1	Trader
PS06	43	Mon	Basic	5	Trader
PS07	38	Mon	Primary	2	Trader
PS08	35	Mon	Primary	12	Trader
PS09	40	Burmese	Basic	1	Trader
PS010	60	Dawei	No Education	5	Trader
PS011	43	Karen	Primary	2	Trader
PS012	42	Dawei	Primary	12	Trader
PS013	26	Shan/Burmese	Middle	1	Trader
PS014	40	Dawei	Primary	10	Processor
PS015	53	Dawei	Basic	3	Processor
PS016	43	Mon	Basic	1	Processor
PS017	49	Dawei	Primary	10	Processor
PS018	50	Dawei	Middle	2	Processor
PS019	58	Dawei	Basic	3	Processor
PS020	38	Dawei	No Education	1.5	Processor
PS021	30	Burmese	High School	3	Trader
PS022	43	Mon	Basic	1	Trader
PS023	38	Mon	Primary	10	Trader
PS024	35	Mon	Primary	2	Trader
PS025	40	Burmese	Basic	1	Trader
PS026	60	Dawei	No Education	5	Trader

PS027	43	Karen	Primary	2	Trader
PS028	42	Dawei	Primary	12	Trader
PS029	26	Shan/Burmese	Middle	1	Trader
PS030	40	Dawei	Primary	10	Processor