



## Determinants of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand

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### Abstract

This article aims to study the determinants of economic practices among elders who have migrated to Khon Kaen city, a city of economic importance in northeast Thailand. The study applied quantitative research methodology with data analysis at the level of individual units. Data were collected in April 2018 from interviews of 276 elderly migrants aged over 60 years old. Data analysis incorporated descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The findings showed that determinants of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand included household roles, positive health care behavior, daily life activities, preparations taken prior to migration, and the location of the migrant's origin was a statistical significance of .01. The length of time the migrant had lived in the new destination was a statistical significance of .05. All of the aforementioned factors were able to predict economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand at 62.6 percent. Therefore, social and environmental factors, as well as factors related to migrant planning, are important determinants of economic practices among elderly migrants.

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### Introduction

Thai demographic changes, including an increase in the elderly population, families having fewer children, more single parenting among youth (United Nations Population Fund, 2015), and a trend toward fewer extended families living together, require that elders be prepared to look after their own daily expenses without social conflicts (Brown, 2014). Elders should not be perceived as future social

burdens, but rather they can be perceived as members of society with potential to benefit the family and community, as they continue to play a role in the family and may also participate at the community level (Yodpetch, 2006; Nakubon, Boongird, Hathirat, & Tiengsompong, 2015).

Elderly migrants are an interesting sector, as elders normally tend to stay in one place on account of living with family, relatives, and neighbors in origin community they've become accustomed to living with over time (Porapakkham & Atibobhi, 2000). Nevertheless, some elders do migrate. According to current national statistics, migration from people over 60 years of age has been increasing since the year 2012 (National Statistical Office, 2013). In the year 2017, elderly migrants were (3.8%) all migrants (National Statistical Office, 2017). Elderly

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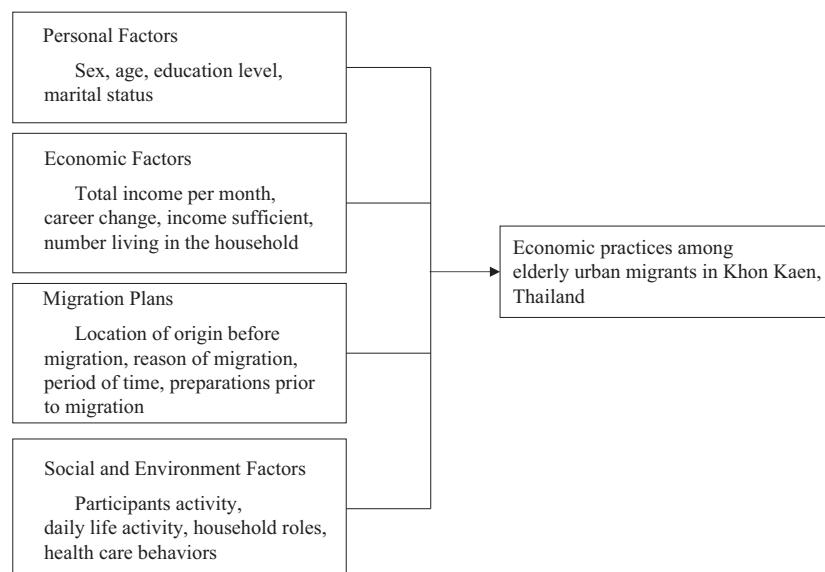
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migrants are also remarkable as they change their location of residence near the end of their life, which forces them to face changes in their lifestyle, environment, and social conditions, as well as adapt to the new destination and household members (Jampaklay, 2013), such as children, grandchildren, and neighbors. Some groups of elderly migrants prepare themselves before migrating with enough economic funds to depend on themselves in their new destination, while others do not make such preparations, have economic limitations, or have health issues that may force them to move and be dependent on family members who already live in the new destination (Bernard & Pelikh, 2019). Elders who migrate to move in with family members may not wish to become economically dependent, even while moving in with their children, on account of being dependent in the form of physical or mental health. In order to show that elderly migrants are able to be economically independent, this study aims to identify factors that determine the economic practices of elderly migrants.

## Literature Review

This research used the administrative concept of human capital to describe the economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The concept of human capital was developed by economists Schultz (1960) Becker (1964) and Mincer (1975) in Chicago in the 1950s (Patmasiriwat, 2015). They defined human value in terms of its importance as an asset in providing production and services (Lee & Barro, 2001). According to this concept, individuals can find value in themselves and develop added value in terms of internal qualities, for example, by developing knowledge, abilities,

skills, and expertise, as well as by seeking and accumulating experience (Kongkasawat, 2007). The importance of such internal qualities, especially accumulated human knowledge and experience, is analogous to that of possessing healthy physical qualities (Little, 2003). However, human capital is not limited to knowledge and experience, but includes various other components as well (Lee & Barro, 2001). Aside from physical capital, (Polseela, Sonsuphap, & Vicheanpanya, 2015) define the following types of human capital: (1) Intellectual capital takes the form of knowledge, abilities, study and work skills, and expertise, as well as an individual's experience; (2) Social capital originates in the interactions between people, for example doing activities together, participating in groups, or exchanging information; and (3) Emotional capital is distinct from the first two types of capital in that it is the ability of the individual to recognize, be aware of, control, and manage their own emotions, applying methods to manage their own emotions and feelings appropriately when facing issues or challenging situations (Teece, 2002). Possessing these types of human capital helps one to conduct life in a creative manner, find happiness, and have a high quality of life. They also assist an individual in conducting economic activities, especially when an individual possesses all components of human capital, including physical, intellectual, social, and emotional (Polseela, Sonsuphap, & Vicheanpanya, 2015). Therefore, these concepts of human capital; physical capital, intellectual capital, social capital, and emotional capital were applied in this study on economic practices of elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand, for which the conceptual framework (Figure 1) was as follows.



**Figure 1** Conceptual framework

## Methodology

This study used a quantitative methodology to identify determinants of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The unit of analysis was the individual, and the population of study was elders, both male and female over 60 years old, who had migrated from elsewhere to Khon Kaen city.

### Participants

The 938 participants had come from 95 different communities (Khon Kaen Municipal Office, 2016). The sample group size was determined at 274 individuals using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table due to knowing the number of elderly people having moved to Khon Kaen city, and data were collected from a sample group of 276 individuals. Selection of the sample group used inclusion criteria, such as (1) aged over 60 years old on the day of relocating from the original town to Khon Kaen municipality, (2) they had to have lived in Khon Kaen municipality for at least 6 months, and (3) good health.

### Data Collection

The research tool used to collect data was interview questionnaire. The quality of the interview questions was examined by two professionals, who investigated the accuracy of the interview question content. After implementing the professionals' recommended modifications, the questions were trialed on 25 elders who had similar characteristics to those in the study sample group. The interview questionnaire was then analyzed for reliability using Chonbach's alpha coefficient to test the trial data. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire overall was 0.92 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014), which was an acceptable level of reliability. Subsequent modifications were then applied to the questionnaire before it was used to collect the study's authentic data.

The interview questionnaire was used for data collection from the study sample. The researcher conducted all data collection. This enabled the researcher to explain and build understanding of the research objectives and to clarify the content in the questionnaires to the participants in cases of doubt or a lack of understanding about the questions. Before interviews were conducted, the researcher coordinated with the village leader or a volunteer in order to ask for information on a preliminary list of names; then a meeting was organized with the village leader or volunteer and the researcher in order to meet with the participants. In cases where participants were unable to

attend the initial interview, the researcher returned at a later date to conduct the interview. In addition, the research was conducted under the principles of respect for human dignity and was reviewed by the Khon Kaen University Human Ethics Committee (code number HE 603003).

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a statistical program. Statistics used to describe the data and to identify the determinants of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand included frequency distributions, percentages, averages, standard deviations, and multiple regression analysis. The data were described with tables.

## Results and Discussion

### *Background Information of the Elderly Migrants*

Of the sample group of 276 elderly migrants, there were more females (65.9%) than males. This gender ratio among the elderly migrants is proportional to the gender ratio among the elderly population in general, which has been shown to have a higher female to male ratio (National Statistical Office, 2017). The majority of the participating elderly migrants, or (56.9%) were in the age range of early elders (60–69 years), with an average age among all participants of 68.64 years. The majority, or (61.1%) of participants were still in a spousal relationship. Findings showed that (63.0%) of the elderly migrants had had up to primary school education, with data collected by the National Statistical Office in the year 2014 that showed that the majority of elders had finished up to primary school or lower (National Statistical Office, 2015). The sample group had an average income of 219 USD per month, which is above the official poverty line (the official poverty line as of the year 2017 was 81 USD per month). More than half, or (52.0%) of the sample group had a monthly income below 151 USD. The majority, or (89.1%) of the participants received their income from government subsistence allowances and (64.9%) of participants expressed that the allowance was not sufficient to cover expenses. The majority, or (61.6%) of the elderly migrants lived with less than three household members. The household members that the elderly migrants had moved in with reflected changes in households; whereas, in the past, two or more generations would live together in the same household, families have gotten smaller and tend to include only two generations (Potisita, 2009).

## Migration Plans

Most elderly migrants in the study had migrated from outside of a municipality into Khon Kaen municipality, including (45.7%) of participants, followed by those who had migrated from villages within Khon Kaen municipality, including (35.5%), and those who had migrated from communities into Khon Kaen municipality, including (18.8%). Most of the elderly migrants in the sample group had moved from rural areas close to Khon Kaen province, such as Nakhon Ratchasima, Chaiyaphum, Kalasin, and Roi Et provinces, as well as various sub-districts in Khon Kaen province. There were also migrants from other provinces who had migrated to Khon Kaen's municipal center, including Phrae, Phichit, Lampang, and Ayutthaya provinces, as well as Bangkok. Migratory patterns among elders were similar to those among youth and consistent with findings from the survey "Migration from rural to urban areas," on the 2014 elderly Thai population. The survey showed a trend of increased migration to urban areas among elders, both as a result of elders moving to the city as well as expansion of urban areas. However, the majority of elders remain in rural areas, with (40.9%) of elders living in urban areas and (59.1%) living in rural areas (National Statistical Office, 2015). Urban migration tends to occur on account of urban areas having convenient and accessible medical, health care, and welfare services (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2013). Elderly migrants with their spouse, including (51.1%) as spousal couples are life partners who help each other through difficult times, those who lack a spouse due to being widowed, divorced, or separated inevitably feel some isolation (Nirom, 1995). The main reason given in the present study for migration, according to (54.7%) of respondents, was the desire to live closer to family members. This finding is consistent with Koschasan (2014), who found that the most frequent reason for elderly migration was elders following relatives, children, or grandchildren. In the present study, the majority of elders moved in with their children, followed by those who moved in with their relatives and those who rented their own house and lived on their own. These findings are in line with Damsangsawat (1999), who found that elderly migrants tend to have relationships with social networks consisting of their own children and grandchildren, more so than other types of social networks. Elderly migrants' reasons for migrating make them distinct from labor migrants, who tend to give importance to economic reasons for their migration (Chamratrithirong et al., 1995). The elderly migrants had lived in their new destination an average of five years, with the majority, or (48.6%) having lived in their destination for one to five years. Most elderly

migrants, or (46.1%) had a medium level of preparation before migration.

## Social and Environmental Factors

Most of the elderly migrants, (98.2%) reported high levels of daily activity, such as using free time to sit leisurely and rest, watching television, listening to the radio, sleeping, doing housework, preparing food. The daily activities of the elderly migrants could be categorized into activities relevant to household members and personal activities consistent with Choiejit (2016), who found that elders used most of their time in their daily lives caring for family members (Sornboon, Chumpawadee, & Palapol, 2019). The elderly migrants who fulfilled household roles at a high level were (90.6%). The role of the female elderly migrants as a supporter of the household was considered as the benefit exchanged between the elderly migrants and household members. The female elderly migrant was happy to do housework for children's households, while other household members had those who take care of housework instead of them. These findings are consistent with Pornsiripongse, Bonnraksa, and Ruedeechamroen (2007), who found that elders must be given a role in training and teaching household member children and grandchildren to follow their advice, whereby the elders will feel that they have properly fulfilled their duty (Choiejit, 2016). As for health care behaviors, the majority, or (100%) of elderly migrants in the study gave them high priority. Health care behaviors included regularly eating three meals a day, getting sufficient amounts of sleep and rest, and exercising.

## Economic Practices among Elderly Urban Migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand

The sample group of elderly migrants included (48.6%) who showed a medium level of economic practices (Patmasiriwat, 2015), followed by (34.4%) who showed a high level and (17.0%) who showed a low level. Levels of economic practices among the different categories were as follows: (1) Physical economic practices showed a high level at (96.4%). There was a high level of vigilance to prevent accidents while driving. (2) Intellectual economic practices showed a medium level at (69.5%). There was a high level of learning how to use tools and modern technology with household members. (3) Social economic practices showed a medium level at (54.0%). There was a high level of participation in community activities. (4) Emotional economic practices were at a high level at (71.0%). There was a high level of management of emotions and stress.

## Determinants of Economic Practices among Elderly Urban Migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand

In order to analyze the determinants of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand, multivariate analysis coupled with multiple regression analysis was used. The analysis applied the assumptions that the independent and dependent variables had to be interval scale or ratio scale level variables (Vanichbuncha, 2016). If any variable was a nominal scale or ordinal scale level variable, such as sex, marital status, education level, career change, income sufficient, location of origin before migration, and reason of migration, it was adjusted as a dummy variable. It was stipulated that the reference group and independent variables in the model could not have multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2014), which was tested using coefficients of correlation. Coefficient of correlation tests showed that the paired independent variables used in the study had weak relationships. None of the paired variables had a relationship stronger than 0.75 (Prasith-rathsint, 2013). Therefore, the researcher was able

to use the variables in multiple regression analysis. Entering the findings from the analysis showed that the determinants of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand (Table 1) were as follows.

### Factors related to migration plans

The location of origin before migration had a positive influence on economic practices among elderly migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The multiple regression coefficient was ( $\beta = 0.114$ ). This may be a result of elderly migrants living in urban areas before migration. They have service-related work, own their own business, or sell products they have crafted or produced using their own skills. This finding is consistent with Bunyanuphong, Bunyanuphong, and Chanta (1990), who found that the living areas of elders, whether in an urban or rural area, are similar in nature aside from differences in work, as elders living in urban areas tended to own businesses, whereas those living in rural areas were mostly employed by others (Wongkitrungruang, 2017).

**Table 1** The determinants of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand

Variable	b	$\beta$
<b>Personal Factors</b>		
Age	0.046	0.029
Married <sup>(1)</sup>	1.420	0.046
Widowed, Divorced and Separated <sup>(1)</sup>	0.584	0.030
Primary education <sup>(2)</sup>	1.032	0.053
Secondary education <sup>(2)</sup>	1.360	0.057
Higher education <sup>(2)</sup>	1.857	0.062
<b>Economic Factors</b>		
Total income per month	-9.579	-0.007
Negative career change <sup>(3)</sup>	-1.559	-0.082
Positive career change <sup>(3)</sup>	-2.229	-0.117
Income sufficient enough <sup>(4)</sup>	-0.336	-0.017
Number of household members living in the household	-0.183	-0.036
<b>Migration Plans</b>		
The location of origin before migration to urban area <sup>(5)</sup>	2.156	0.114**
Family care <sup>(6)</sup>	-0.013	0.267
Health problems, and need to access medical services <sup>(6)</sup>	-0.912	-0.022
Work <sup>(6)</sup>	-0.497	-0.025
The period of time	-0.295	-0.118*
Preparations prior to migration	0.459	0.220**
<b>Social and Environment Factors</b>		
Participants activity	0.019	0.017
Daily life activity	0.127	0.167**
Household roles	0.579	0.329**
Health care behaviors	0.530	0.222**
a (constants)	8.831	

$R^2 = 0.626$   $F = 20.243$

Note: Group refer (1) Single (2) No schooling (3) No career change (4) Income sufficient not enough (5) Rural area (6) No one take care

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

The period of time participants had lived in the new destination had a negative influence on economic practices among elderly migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The multiple regression coefficient was ( $\beta = 0.118$ ). This issue may be related to simultaneous aging, which can cause the elderly migrant to begin decreasing their role in economic practices in congruence with Choorat, Sawangdee, and Arunraksombat (2012), who found that aging elders tend to be at risk for physical and mental health issues related to aging.

Preparations prior to migration had a positive influence on economic practices among elderly migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The multiple regression coefficient was ( $\beta = 0.220$ ). This is in line with Litwak and Longino (1987) and Kim, Kim, and Kim (2003), who found that elders tend to have preparation and planning before migration occurs, which involves considering whether the situation will work for them and how they will be able to exploit the destination's resources for profit. Similarly, Sukpaiboonwat (2017) has shown that elders must plan and save money while they are young enough to work. These savings can be used in retirement and can decrease elders' dependence on society.

#### *Social and environmental factors*

The analysis showed that in Thailand, elderly migrants' daily life activities had a positive influence on economic practices among elderly migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The multiple regression coefficient was ( $\beta = 0.167$ ) in congruence with Nakphu and Sontirat (2014), who found that self-dependent elders who conducted daily activities independently felt fulfillment from seeing their own abilities and self-assessing their role as an elder who still had some benefit. These findings are also consistent with Soonthorndhada (2010); Sombat, Yodpatch, and Sakdaporn (2011), who found that work conducted by elders may be in the form of activities conducted within community groups and that participation in such work can create economic and social value, whether in the form of money or in other forms.

Elderly migrants' household roles had a positive influence on their economic practices among urban elderly migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The multiple regression coefficient was ( $\beta = 0.329$ ). This finding is consistent with Yodpatch (2006), who showed that elders have abilities and can benefit the family and community by continuing to take on family and community roles.

Health care behaviors had a positive effect on economic practices among urban elderly migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The multiple regression coefficient was ( $\beta = 0.222$ ). This is consistent with data collected from a 2017

survey conducted on Thailand's elderly population, which showed that physical health conditions of elders were mostly at the medium level. Elders' health care practices include practices such as exercising, eating vegetables and fruits, drinking at least eight glasses of clean water per day, and trying to avoid smoking and drinking alcohol or drinks containing alcohol (National Statistical Office, 2016; Siripanich, 2001).

The model used in this study can be considered in terms of the independent variables' collective ability to explain variances in economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand, which was shown to be 62.6 percent ( $R^2 = 0.626$ ).

#### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Determinants of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand include: fulfilling household roles, health care behaviors, preparation prior to migration, participation in daily activities, the length of time living at the new destination, and the location of one's origin before migration. Interestingly, general background information of the elderly migrants did not provide any variables that served as determinants of their economic practices. Especially noteworthy is that education levels were not a determinant of economic practices among elderly urban migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand. Patmasiriwat (2015) shows that formal and informal education can be considered investment in human capital development, increasing skills, knowledge, and expertise, which helps increase opportunities to work in occupations with higher wages and more secure benefits. Elders must prepare prior to migrating, for example, by searching for information about the destination, finding out how to access public health services, how to participate in active local groups, how to access benefits, or how welfare services may be affected by a change of address, etc. Such pieces of information are important for elderly migrants in order to conduct their daily lives. They must also find channels for conducting economic activities. When preparing prior to migration, elders may need to rely on their family members to support and provide them with information and guidance. In addition, household members hosting an elderly migrant can be a driving force in helping them to conduct economic activities. They can support the elder in conducting activities they are interested in or provide them with necessary materials and equipment for conducting activities that provide income. The elder can then use this income to take care of his or herself, which helps to decrease their dependence on household members.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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