

## **Household's Practices on Children Participation in Labour, a Cross – Sectional Study in Rural Area of Dry Zone of Myanmar**

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### ***1. Introduction***

Myanmar is a developing country with low in socio-economic status and high in economic inequality, which strike negative impacts to household's level. The nation's output of goods and services seldom reaches to rural poor due to lack of effective governance (Tyn Myint U, 2009). Many of the households' practices on care and support of their children are confronting with many issues such as poverty, social exclusion, poor health care services, and increasingly unaffordable costs which cast shadows over the society. Due to lack of skills and insufficient incomes among rural people, many of them have to depend on their children's labour at full basis or partly support of the household.

The central part of Myanmar, dry zone is less developed region in Myanmar. About 34 % of the total population lives in dry zone and 80 % of the dry zone population lives in rural areas (MOL, 2009). Dry zone comprises of three regions, namely Magway Region, Mandalay Region and Sagaing Region. Those all are resource-poor areas with scare water resource, thin vegetation cover and severe soil erosion, due to poor climate and geography conditions. The average rainfall is from 20 inches to 40 inches. It has uneven and unreliable annual high and fall of temperature as well as winds and drought. However, Most of rural households in dry zone are still relying on agriculture (Win Naing Thein, 2010).

Being in rural areas, and due to diverse pattern of households' socio-economy, the way they manage to get help from their children is little known in local as well as national level. And also the situation of the children involving in certain work, partly or largely in giving their labour may affect their educational and other developmental stages in somehow. Many often, most of the children engaging in works have no alternative, but have to work for their survival or support of household. Although parents understood the important of education, but they are confronting with educational fund problem (Hiromi Yamaguchi,2004).It is not easy for children, working in their early year, because exploitation attacks children, and especially they tend to feel helpless and inactive when they grown up, as they have been lack in education (Burns H. Weston,2005). The most difficult task would be to eradicate the main sources of inequality, the lower earnings households that meant lower capacity in caring their children (Mark Harrison, 1975).

Research Papers on 2004 Family and Youth Survey, Myanmar, recommended that *"There is a need to conduct research activities that would directly or indirectly help the responsible institutions to capture more information on children participation in the labour."* (Yin Yin Kyaing, & Aye Thein, 2009). By understanding the factors influence to household's practices, the answers can be considered by future projects, policies and programme of rural development measures at child protection and development concern.

To find solutions to numerous challenges posed by improper uses of children labour, it is necessary to pay more attention to individual household's practices.

## **2. Objective**

The objective of the study was to describe the proportion of households which used children's labour and factors related.

## **3. Material and Methods**

The study was applied with a mixed method, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approach, to know overall and in depth of the situation of rural household's practices. The study worked with household head and the unit of analysis was specifically, household which has children of 5 to 16 years of age, as in Myanmar Child Law recognizes that age under 16 year as children (MSWRR, 1993). This study focused on the central part of rural area of Myanmar. According to a series of multi-stage, step to step simple random fish ball samplings result through choosing the region to district, district to township and township to village group level. The study region is Mandalay region out of three regions in central dry zone. The study district is Meiktila out of six districts and township is also Meiktila choosing among from four townships consists in chosen district. Finally Shaw Phyu Kan village tract (group) was selected for study area among the (68) village tracts (groups) lie within Meiktila Township.

After choosing study area, (110) sample households were selected by systematic simple random sampling method among from (508) population households. For answering the questionnaire in the beginning, the sample households were asked for their consent. The study also approached to 10 key informants by using interview guide to support findings of the quantitative part. The questionnaire was prepared to determine household's use or not use of children labour participation, kind of work they use and intensity of work. The study not includes modifying whether they are child labour or helpers and whether they are under exploitation or abuse. It was approved by Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM) program committee and applied with two field assistants from Local Township, those who were trained before taking part in this study. The data were collected from April 2014 to May 2014. The data calculation was tabulated with SPSS 17. The outcomes of the objective were shown by frequency tables, percentage, 95% CI, Chi-square and binary logistic regression analysis.

## **4. Results**

The results were gained from household questionnaire that prepared to determine household's use of children labour participation and responsible factors, based upon the factors among socio-economic status of households, the status of household heads and the situation of children involve in household's domestic works and income generation works.

### **4.1 Background Characteristic of Study Population**

A large difference between family type in nuclear and extended can be seen in the population with 77.3 % in nuclear type and 22.7 % in extended one, whereas family size and gender were not much difference. Out of total (110) population household, 47.4 % were Male and 52.6 % female, 55.5 % households have less than five family members and 44.5% have more than five members. As in study households (110), the total population of households' member encompasses (618) out of which, study age children consist of (213). It was almost one third or 33% of population household. Socio-economic status differed in high for 32.7%, middle for 27.3% and low for 40%. For the household head, 90.9 % were male and 9.1 % were female. Among them, 96 % of study household head were ages under 60 of whom most are only read and write situation and has to work as unskilled workers.

#### **4.2 The Proportion of Households Which Used Children's Labour and Proportion of Children Engage in Labour**

The total of (81) households out of (110) study households, 73.6% use labour of children, study ages between 5 to 16 years of age with 95% CI 64.4- 81.6. Nearly half of the study age children are involving in household domestic work and income work that can be counted in (99) out of (213), 46.5% with 95% CI 40.1-53.9. However, by comparing age groups, (78) out of (90), 86.7% of children ages within 11 to 16 are engaging in labour with 95% CI 77.9 to 92.9. The proportion of working children age group 11-16 years was four times higher than that of 5-10 years group.

#### **4.3 The Situation of Children engage in Labour**

As shown in table 1, more than half of working children 56.6% left the school and of whom 53.3% were left school after primary level. In this study, almost all of (56) children giving assistance in domestic work were not overloaded with their work and it was found out as in light work situation.

However, among (43) children who are participating in income generation work (30) of them (almost 70 %) have to work for heavy work comparing to their age.

#### **4.4 Factors Affecting the Children Participation in Labour**

For the household use of children labour, except family size, none of the study factors shows significant association. As shown in table.2. large family size which is 3 times more likely to use of children labour than small family size households with (OR 3.38, CI 1.3-8.8) p- value <0.012. For the kind of work, represents in table.3, children in low socio- economic status are more likely to work in income seeking work for survival or support of their households with (OR 3.0, CI 1.2- 7.6) binary logistic regression p-value < 0.019. Table.4 indicated that household head with low education are more likely to rely on children labour participation, especially in income work with (OR 0.3, CI 0.1- 0.8) p-value <0.015. In Table.5, it was found that children of 11-16 years of age group are more likely to work in income seeking work than children of 5-10 years age group with the (OR 22.2 ,CI 2.8- 173.4) binary logistic regression p-value < 0.003. School dropout rate of children engaged in income work is significantly higher than children participated in domestic work with (OR 51.3, CI 11.1- 237.4) binary logistic regression p-value < 0.000.

#### **4.5 Factors Affecting the Intensity (Light or Heavy) of Children Participation in Labour**

The relationship between study variables, status of (household, household head, children) and intensity of work as such (light or heavy) has been analyzed during data tabulation ,whereas most of study variables cannot show association for the point of being worked in light or heavy. However, the association was found between gender and intensity of work. As shown in table 6, both male and female has to work income seeking work in equal portion; but the rate of doing heavy work is significantly higher among male than female with (OR 4.4, CI 1.0-19.1) binary logistic regression p-value < 0.05.

#### **4.6 Findings of the In-Depth Interview**

According to interviewing with key informants, over 70% of parents feel that it is better working than sending to school after some level of basic education. A greater percentage of parents not show their felling sorrow in children not sending to high school. Many parents pointed out that "*there are some persons completed higher education in the village, got no job and has to work the same as others.*" As for some cases, children engaging in work at their early age occurred upon children's concern. One mother said that "*She still wants to send her son to school after grade 5, but the son himself felt worry for family survival and income and decided not to continued schooling.*" The village head man and a local teacher pointed out the situation of lack of electricity in the village and far from high school as their key concern.

Over 50 % of respondent think that "*young children engage in work here is related to most of adults going out to cities for better jobs.*" Local business owners prefer employment of the minor than adult workers. One business owner mentioned that "*he prefers young labour force, for the adult worker has many complains in actual working condition, they not work well, some even drink alcohol.*" It can be observed that most of the study cases uses of children labour in this study were due to poverty context that drive the practice of using children labour participation became common among the region.

## **5. Discussion**

In this study, it was observed that two third (74%) of study households used children participation in labour. One feature of rural poverty is that poverty of working poor (Nancy Lohmann, & Roger A. Lonhmann, 2005). Among the household factors, household size is most determinants to use children in labour participation, that show when mouths are added in family table, the income of the family has to earn than before and children has to work.

There are only five persons reach to university level among (110) study household heads. It was one reason of being their low perception on benefit of education, and one of the causes that lead to a certain impact of their dependency children not continued further study (Jeffrey M. Jenson, & Mark W. Fraser, 2011). Some other reasons children not continued after primary level apart from parent practices are economic reason, electricity reason, far from high school etc.

It is strongly recommend that parental awareness on the value of education and government agencies' supports for infrastructures are a need of this region. When children must miss school in order to work, it is usually at the decision of the family. When education is valued by them, families will make great sacrifices in order to guarantee it to their children (William E. Myers, 1991).

One good thing is many of children up to 57% are just assisting in household domestic work in their early age. By participating in family household business, children can learn various skills and sense of responsibility and dignity of work (Union of Myanmar, 2006). However, school dropout rate among working children is higher than 50%. That means, many children engage in work without continuing education. Non formal education should be applied for out of school children as such resource poor region (MSWRR, 2006). According to this study, 0.5% of children under 11 years and 60% of children 11-16 years are engaging in income works. As such situation, local employers should be responsive to the rights over minor labour.

Domestic work is not a full time basis, no harm for physical as well as mental and mostly not conflict with their schooling. However, 70% of incomes seeking children were at more risk of working heavy work. The reason many of them work in construction site and some girl child work as house maid. Protection and help of children involved in heavy work should be developed and strengthen for children involving in work at their early age (Rachel Hodgkin & Peter Newell, 2007).

In this study, the rate of children involved in heavy work is lower among high socio-economic households. Both male and female has to work income seeking work in equal portion, but it showed that boys are more likely to work heavier than that of girls in income seeking work such as construction, masonry, and manual labour, etc. Skilled trainings should be conducted for those children, by getting help from relevant agency and child focus institutions. It is strongly recommended that the need of child development projects that is to provide and sustain family livelihood aspects in rural community.

## **6. Conclusion and Suggestion**

As in conclusion, three fourth of study households are using labour force contribution of children in this study. The point is that, large family size households are more risk of using labour of children. Children in households with low socio-economic status, household heads with low education, children elder than 10 year are more risk of doing income seeking works. Male are more risk of doing heavy work .Considering in- depth interview, using labour of children in study area is due to poverty context and a common practice among community perception. The main responsible factors are large family size, low socio- economic status, lower household heads education, and male sex of children, older age of children and a common practice of community, shown in figure 1.

Concerning with problems high dropout rate among working children, the government relevant Ministries have to think about the raise of national fund and set up plan for development of socio- economic of the rural households, and electricity and other necessary infrastructures. Township education responsible and relevant local organizations should support with alternative education program to the out of school children who are involving in various works. Good practices of household's transferring knowledge to their children should be reinforced by child rights and child development projects with the help of local institutions.

## 7. Acknowledgement

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**Table 1: Background Characteristics of Children (Aged 5-16 Years) Who Contributed Labour**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age:</b> 5-10	21	21.2
11-16	78	78.8
<b>Sex:</b> Male	40	40.4
Female	59	59.6
<b>Birth order:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup>	47	47.5
2 <sup>nd</sup>	21	21.2
Other	31	31.3
<b>School dropout:</b> Yes	56	56.6
No	43	43.3
<b>Drop out:</b> Primary	30	53.6
Middle	25	44.6
High	1	1.8
<b>Work:</b> Domestic work	56	56.6
Income work	43	43.4
<b>Intensity of domestic work</b>		
Light	64	98.5
Heavy	1	1.5
<b>Intensity of income work</b> Light	13	30.2
Heavy	30	69.8

**Table 2. Association between the HHs use of children labour and HHs factors (n=81)**

Variables	Household used children's labour		OR (95% CI)	Binary logistic regression P value
	Not Use	Use		
<b>Family type</b>				0.217
Nuclear	20 (69.0%)	65 (80.2%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
Extended	9 (31.0%)	16 (19.8%)	1.9 (0.7-4.8)	
<b>Family size</b>				<b>0.012</b>
≤ 5	22 (75.8%)	39 (48.1%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
> 5	7(24.1%)	42 (58.1%)	3.38 (1.3-8.8)	
<b>Socio-economic status</b>				0.973
Low	12 (41.4%)	32 (39.5%)	1.1 (0.4-3.1)	
Middle	8 (27.6%)	22 (27.2%)	1.1 (0.3-3.3)	
High	9 (31.0%)	27 (33.3%)	1.0 (Ref.)	

**Table 3: Association between Helper Type and Household Characteristics (n=81)**

Variables	Helper Types		OR (95% CI)	Binary Logistic regression p-value
	Non-Income	Income work		
<b>Family type</b>				0.607
Nuclear	36 (78.3%)	29 (82.9%)	1.3 (0.4- 4.1)	
Extended	10 (21.7%)	6 (17.1%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
<b>Family size</b>				0.098
≤ 5	27 (58.7%)	14 (40.0%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
> 5	19 (41.3%)	21 (60.0%)	2.1 (0.9- 5.2)	
<b>Socio-economic status</b>				<b>0.019</b>
Low	13 (28.3%)	19 (54.3%)	3.0 (1.2- 7.6)	
Above middle	33 (71.7%)	16 (45.7%)	1.0 (Ref.)	

**Table 4: Association between Helper Types and Household Head Characteristic (n=81)**

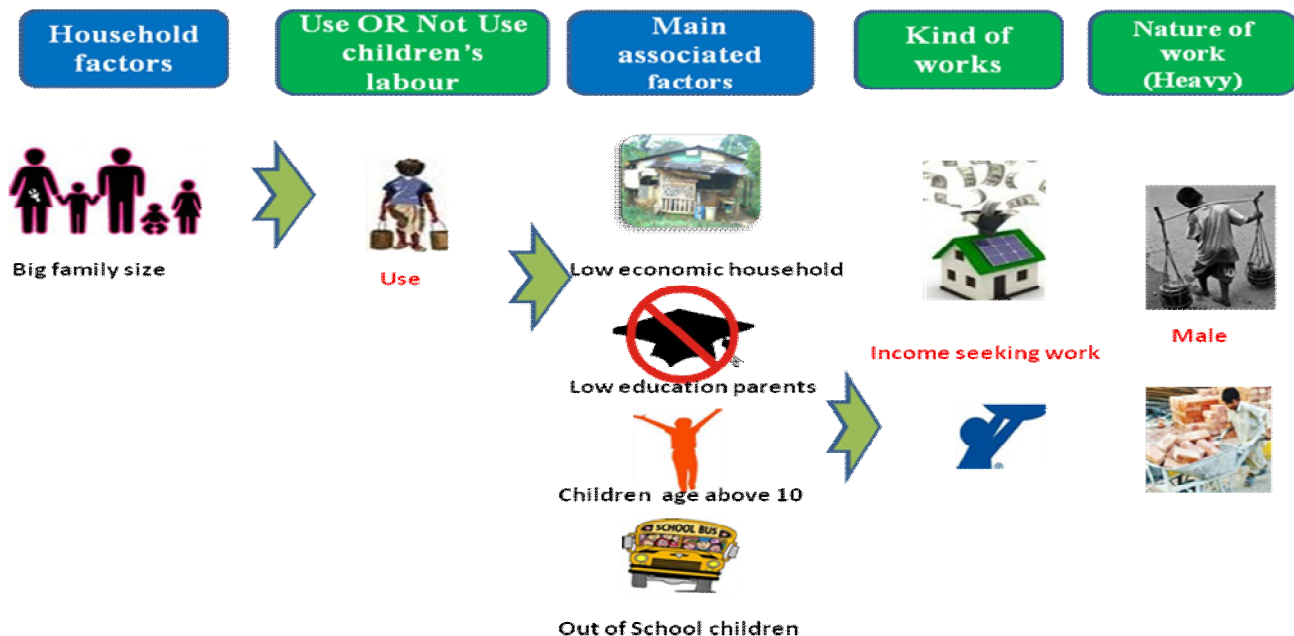
Variables	Helper Types		OR (95% CI)	Binary Logistic regression p-value
	Non-Income	Income work		
<b>Age</b>				0.499
<40	17 (37.0%)	16 (45.7%)	3.8 (0.4-37.4)	
40-60	25 (54.3%)	18 (51.4%)	2.9 (0.3-28.0)	
> 60	4 (8.7%)	1 (2.9%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
<b>Gender</b>				0.614
Male	42 (91.3%)	33 (94.3%)	1.6 (0.3- 9.1)	
Female	4 (8.7%)	2 (5.7%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
<b>Education</b>				<b>0.015</b>
Up to primary	30 (65.2%)	30 (85.7%)	3.1 (1.24-7.74)	
Above primary	16 (34.8%)	5 (14.3%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
<b>Occupation</b>				0.907
Yes	39 (84.8%)	30 (85.7%)	1.1 (0.3- 3.7)	
No	7 (15.2%)	5 (14.3%)	1.0 (Ref.)	

**Table 5: Association between Helper Type and Children Characteristic (n=99)**

Variables	Helper Type		OR(95% CI)	p-value
	Non-Income	Income work		
<b>Age</b>				<b>0.003</b>
5-10	20 (35.7%)	1 (2.3%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
11-16	36 (64.3%)	42 (97.7%)	22.2 (2.8- 173.4)	
<b>Sex</b>				0.211
Male	20 (35.7%)	20 (46.5%)	1.7 (0.7- 3.8)	
Female	36 (64.3%)	23 (53.5%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
<b>Birth order</b>				0.998
1 <sup>st</sup> birth order	26 (46.4%)	21 (48.8%)	1.0 (0.4- 2.6)	
2 <sup>nd</sup> birth order	12 (21.4%)	9 (20.9%)	1.0 (0.3- 3.1)	
Other birth order	18 (32.1%)	13 (30.2%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
<b>School dropout</b>				<b>0.000</b>
Yes	15 (26.8%)	41 (95.3%)	51.3(11.1-237.4)	
No	41 (73.2%)	2 (4.71%)	1.0 (Ref.)	

**Table 6 Associations between Children Characteristics and Intensity of Income Generation Work (n= 99)**

Variables	Intensity of Income work		OR (95% CI)	p-value
	Light	Heavy		
<b>Age</b>			Total	0.124
5-10	1(7.7%)	0 (.0%)	1 (2.3%)	
11-16	12 (92.3%)	30 (100.0%)	42 (97.7%)	
<b>Sex</b>				<b>0.050</b>
Male	3 (23.1%)	17 (56.7%)	4.4 (1.0-19.1)	
Female	10 (76.9%)	13 (43.3%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
<b>Birth order</b>				0.090
1 <sup>st</sup> birth order	7 (53.8%)	14 (46.7%)	1.0 (Ref.)	
2 <sup>nd</sup> birth order	5 (38.5%)	4 (13.3%)	0.4 (0.1- 2.0)	
Other birth order	1 (7.7%)	12 (40.0%)	6.0 (0.6-56.0)	
<b>School drop out</b>			Total	0.340
Yes	13 (100.0%)	28 (93.3%)	41 (95.3%)	
No	0 (.0%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (4.7%)	



**Figure 1. Main Factors Use of Children Labour Participation at household level**

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