

**YANGON UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
MASTER OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES PROGRAMME**

**A STUDY ON CHILD LABOR IN INFORMAL SECTOR  
(CASE STUDY: NORTH OKKALAPA TOWNSHIP)**

**THIN THIN NWE  
EMDevS – 56 (19<sup>th</sup> BATCH)**

**JUNE, 2025**

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**A STUDY ON CHILD LABOR IN INFORMAL SECTOR**  
**(CASE STUDY: NORTH OKKALAPA TOWNSHIP)**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of  
Development Studies (MDevS) Degree

**Supervised by**

Dr. Zin Zin Shwe  
Professor  
Department of Economics  
Yangon University of Economics

**Submitted by**

Thin Thin Nwe  
Roll No. 56  
EMDevS - 19<sup>th</sup> Batch  
(2023-2025)

**JUNE, 2025**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS**  
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This is to certify that this thesis entitled “**A Study on Child Labor in Informal Sector (Case Study: North Okkalapa Township)**” submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Development Studies has been accepted by the Board of Examiners.

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Dr. Tin Tin Htwe  
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Department of Economics  
Yangon University of Economics

Dr. Yin Myo Oo  
(Examiner)  
Professor

Department of Economics  
Yangon University of Economics

Dr. Zin Zin Shwe  
(Supervisor)  
Professor

Department of Economics  
Yangon University of Economics

**JUNE, 2025**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the conditions, risks, and consequences of child labor in the informal sector of North Okkalapa Township, Yangon, Myanmar. It aims to analyze the working conditions faced by child laborers and assess the impact of child labor on children's health, education, and overall well-being. Using both secondary data and a primary survey of 200 working children aged 5–18, the study reveals that the majority of respondents are engaged in long working hours (81.5%), feel unsafe at work (70%), and are deprived of education, with 96.5% not currently attending school. Most reported financial hardship as the main reason for leaving school. Although many children receive meals and health checkups from employers, high levels of fatigue, limited rest, and health risks remain concerning. The study suggests strengthening child labor laws, enhancing workplace safety, increasing access to education for children, and providing support to low-income families to reduce the need for child labor.

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Thin Thin Nwe  
Roll No. 56  
EMDevS - 19<sup>th</sup> Batch

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CLARISSA	Child Labour: Action-Research-Innovation in South and Southern Asia
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ILO	International Labour Organization
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices
MMK	Myanmar Kyat
MoLIP	Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (Myanmar)
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UCW	Understanding Children's Work
UN	United Nations
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale of the Study

Child labor is a significant problem in many countries, particularly in the poorer nations. It is children forced to work and deprived of their childhood. They lose out on things that matter, like the opportunity to go to school, play, and receive good medical attention. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 215 million children aged 5-14 are working worldwide. A great many of them work in dangerous and unsanitary conditions. Their work can damage their bodies, sicken them and affect their minds and emotions. Often, these kids work long hours for little money, all the while being denied even basic rights, such as education or health care, that all children deserve.

Despite national and international efforts to eliminate child labor, its root causes, such as poverty, lack of education, and socio-economic vulnerability, continue to push children into the workforce prematurely. The informal sector, largely unregulated, often escapes official scrutiny, leaving child laborers without legal protection or social safety nets. Understanding the underlying socio-economic factors and the consequences of child labor on children's development is essential for designing targeted interventions and policy responses.

Child labor remains a persistent challenge in Myanmar, particularly in urban areas where informal economic activities are widespread. In North Okkalapa Township, children as young as five years old are often found working in tea shops, workshops, and other informal settings to support their families. These children are frequently exposed to exploitative conditions, including long working hours, low or no pay, hazardous environments, and limited access to education and healthcare. Even though international groups and governments are trying to stop child labor, it is still a huge problem in many developing countries. The main reason is that poor families depend on their children's earnings to survive. Myanmar is among the nations with child labor.

According to the 2015 Labour Force Survey, supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately 1.13 million children aged 5 to 17—about 9.3% of Myanmar’s child population—were engaged in labor. Of those, roughly 616,815 children (5.1% of the child population) were involved in hazardous work such as factories, construction sites, and farms with toxic exposure. There are a lot of children in Myanmar, especially in Yangon, working in jobs that are informal sector a lot of that is because there are a lot of factories and tea shops. This article examines this phenomenon in North Okkalapa Township in Yangon.

Most of these kids don’t think they have a choice but to work. Some have family debts to pay off; others work because their parents don’t earn enough money. Many serve in small tea shops, where they carry heavy trays, swab tables and work long hours. They then tend to drop out of school. Even with the free education that Myanmar offers for primary and middle school, families still have difficulty sending their children to school. The parents also have to cover other expenses including transport, uniforms, books and additional school fees. This complicates schooling for poor families, who send their children to work instead. This study aims to examine the lived experiences of child laborers in North Okkalapa, assessing the risks they face, and evaluating the impact of their work on their health, education, and well-being. The findings will contribute valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and child protection organizations to address child labor through more effective and context-specific strategies.

## **1.2 Objective of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to analyze the working conditions and risks that child laborers face in the informal economy, and to assess the impact of child labor on children’s health, education, and well-being.

## **1.3 Method of Study**

This study adopts a quantitative approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of child labor in the informal sector. The research targets children aged 5 to 18 years who are currently employed in tea shops, small workshops, and other informal economic settings, as well as their parents or guardians and relevant stakeholders. The study will be conducted in North Okkalapa Township, a densely populated area in Yangon Region where informal economic activity is prevalent. A

purposive sampling method will be used to identify child laborers in the selected locations. Approximately 150–200 child laborers are surveyed, ensuring representation across age groups, gender, and work types. Structured Questionnaire is conducted to collect quantitative data on children’s demographic background, work conditions, income, working hours, school attendance, and health issues. Quantitative data is analyzed to generate descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) and cross-tabulations to explore relationships between variables such as age, education, income, and health outcomes.

#### **1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study focuses on the issue of child labor in the informal sector within North Okkalapa Township, Yangon Region. It specifically targets children aged 5 to 18 years who are engaged in informal economic activities such as working in tea shops and small workshops. The study is based on primary data collected from a sample of 200 respondents, using structured questionnaires administered directly to working children and, where appropriate, their parents or guardians. As the study uses only quantitative methods, it may not capture deeper emotional, psychological, and contextual insights that qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could provide. The sample size of 200 may not fully represent the entire population of child laborers in the township, especially in hard-to-reach or hidden sectors of informal work.

#### **1.5 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study by outlining its rationale, objectives, methodology, scope, limitations, and overall structure. Chapter II presents a literature review covering the causes, consequences, and legal context of child labor, drawing on both local and international research. Chapter III discusses the situation of child labor in Myanmar, with a particular focus on North Okkalapa Township, examining sectors such as tea shops and workshops and highlighting existing laws and interventions. Chapter IV presents the findings from the survey conducted with 200 child laborers, detailing their socio-economic background, education, working conditions, income, health, and future aspirations. Chapter V concludes the study by summarizing the major findings and providing recommendations to mitigate child labor in the informal sector of North Okkalapa.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Definition and Concept of Child Labor**

Child labor refers to the employment of children in any form of work that deprives them of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular schooling, and is harmful to their physical, mental, or social development. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labor as “work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and/or interferes with their schooling.” This includes work that is hazardous, excessive in hours, or performed at too early an age. Child labor is defined and understood globally as work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, dignity, and is harmful to their physical and mental development. The United Nations (UN) emphasizes that child labor includes all forms of economic exploitation that infringe on children's rights, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The World Bank highlights child labor as economic activity carried out by persons under the minimum legal age, particularly in hazardous conditions or without access to education. According to UNICEF, child labor refers to work that is exploitative, hazardous, or age-inappropriate, and that hinders a child's ability to attend school and fully develop. While not all work by children is classified as child labor, the consensus is clear: child labor refers to employment conditions that are detrimental to children's well-being, education, and future opportunities.

While the terms child labor and child work are sometimes used interchangeably in everyday discourse, they carry significantly different meanings in academic, legal, and development contexts. Understanding the distinction between the two is crucial for accurate policy formulation and effective interventions. Child Work refers to participation in light, age-appropriate tasks that do not interfere with a child's education, health, or overall development. This may include helping parents with household chores, assisting in a family business after school, or engaging in part-time, non-hazardous jobs during school holidays. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), such

work can contribute positively to a child's development, help them acquire practical skills, and foster a sense of responsibility, provided it is not exploitative or harmful. Child Labor, on the other hand, involves work that is detrimental to a child's physical, mental, and emotional development. It includes work that is exploitative, prevents school attendance, or involves long hours, unsafe environments, or hazardous conditions. The ILO specifically defines child labor as work that "deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development." Child labor is considered a human rights violation and is often linked with poverty, lack of access to quality education, and weak enforcement of labor laws.

A key legal differentiation is based on age and nature of the work. The Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) of the ILO sets the general minimum age for admission to employment or work at 15 years (or 14 in developing countries), and a higher minimum age of 18 for hazardous work. Thus, child work that occurs within legal bounds and respects a child's schooling is acceptable, whereas child labor breaches these thresholds and standards. In summary, while child work may be a part of socialization and learning in some cultural and economic contexts, child labor undermines the child's rights and long-term well-being. Effective policy and programmatic responses must be able to clearly distinguish the two to protect children from exploitation while respecting cultural practices and economic realities.

## **2.2 Classification of Child Labor in the Global Context**

Globally, child labor takes many forms, influenced by cultural, economic, and legal contexts. International organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank have identified and categorized child labor based on the nature of work, sector of employment, conditions of labor, and impact on children's rights and development. The classification of child labor reflects the complexity and diversity of children's experiences in the labor market. Understanding these categories is essential to formulate targeted policies and interventions to eliminate child labor, especially in its most hazardous and exploitative forms. The following are the major classifications:

### **I. By Nature of Work**

Work that exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; work underground, underwater, at dangerous heights, or with dangerous machinery; or any job that harms a child's health, safety, or morals. It is known as Hazardous Child

Labor .This form is strictly prohibited for children under 18 (ILO Convention No. 182). On the other hand, Non-Hazardous but Exploitative Work involves long hours, low wages, or work that interferes with education or social development. It may not be life-threatening but still constitutes child labor if it impedes a child's growth. Moreover, the worst forms of Child Labor includes slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, forced labor, child soldiers, and sexual exploitation. These are considered the most severe violations of child rights.

## **II. By Sector of Employment**

Agriculture sector is the largest sector employing child labor globally. Children work on farms, plantations, or in livestock herding often in unsafe and physically demanding conditions. In industry sector including manufacturing, mining, construction, brick kilns, and small-scale factories children often face dangerous machinery and environments. Services involves domestic work, street vending, hospitality, and informal retail. Domestic work is particularly hidden and unregulated, making children vulnerable to abuse. Informal sector includes any unregulated work such as in home-based workshops, tea shops, waste picking, and street-based services. This sector is common in developing countries and often lacks legal protection for children.

## **III. By Work Setting**

Family-based Child Labor can be found in family farms or businesses. While sometimes considered child work, it becomes child labor if the tasks are harmful or interfere with schooling. Some children work for wages, while others may work without payment, often in conditions akin to servitude, especially in domestic or agricultural settings.

## **IV. By Age Group**

Under Minimum Age for Employment is for the children usually at age under 14 of 15, depending on national laws. Mostly children aged 15–17 are working in unsafe or prohibited labor practices.

## **V. By Gender-Based Classification**

Girls are more likely to be involved in domestic labor, caregiving, or commercial sexual exploitation, often in hidden and unregulated environments. Boys are tend to be more engaged in physically demanding jobs such as construction, mining, or street work.

Globally, child labor is closely associated with poverty, limited access to quality education, social norms, and weak legal protections. According to the ILO and UNICEF (2021), around 160 million children were engaged in child labor worldwide, with the highest prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Most child laborers are found in the informal sector, working long hours in unsafe conditions with minimal legal or social protection. These children are often denied their rights to education, health, and safety, making child labor a major global human rights concern.

### **2.3 Causes of Child Labor**

Child labor is a multifaceted issue with root causes that vary across regions and socioeconomic contexts. Globally, the persistence of child labor is driven by a combination of economic hardship, inadequate education systems, weak legal enforcement, cultural norms, and market demand for cheap labor. The causes of child labor are complex and interrelated, demanding comprehensive, multi-sectoral responses. Addressing poverty, strengthening educational systems, enforcing labor laws, and transforming social norms are crucial to tackling the root causes and breaking the intergenerational cycle of labor exploitation. Understanding these factors is critical to formulating effective strategies for prevention and eradication. Some major causes of child labor are as follows:

#### **I. Poverty and Household Economic Pressure**

Poverty remains the most significant and widely acknowledged driver of child labor. In many low-income households, children are expected to contribute to family income or support basic survival needs. According to the World Bank and ILO, families often see child labor as a coping strategy in the face of economic vulnerability, unemployment, or the absence of social safety nets. In such cases, children work to supplement household income or replace adult earners.

#### **II. Lack of Access to Quality Education**

Limited access to affordable, quality education contributes to high rates of child labor. In many regions, schools are either unavailable, too costly, or of poor quality, pushing children toward the workforce. Where education is not perceived as valuable or where opportunity costs are high, families may prefer immediate economic benefit over long-term investment in education.

### **III. Cultural and Social Norms**

In some societies, child labor is normalized and even expected, particularly in family businesses, agriculture, or traditional apprenticeships. In such contexts, children working from a young age is viewed as a rite of passage or a means of acquiring life skills, blurring the lines between acceptable child work and exploitative labor.

### **IV. Weak Legal Frameworks and Enforcement**

Although most countries have ratified international conventions such as ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) and No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labor), enforcement remains weak in many developing countries. Insufficient labor inspections, legal loopholes, and lack of political will allow child labor to persist, particularly in informal or hidden sectors like domestic work and street vending.

### **V. Demand for Cheap, Unskilled Labor**

The global demand for low-cost production has led to the exploitation of child labor, especially in informal industries and global supply chains. Employers often prefer hiring children because they are more easily controlled, accept lower wages, and are less likely to demand labor rights. This economic rationale perpetuates a cycle of exploitation.

### **VI. Migration and Displacement**

In regions affected by conflict, natural disasters, or forced migration, children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Displaced families often lack access to education and income opportunities, making children susceptible to labor in unfamiliar and unsafe conditions.

### **VII. Gender Inequality**

Gender roles and discrimination further compound child labor. Girls are disproportionately engaged in unpaid domestic work and caregiving roles, often hidden from public scrutiny and legal protection. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to be employed in hazardous outdoor jobs.

## **2.4 Consequences of Child Labor**

Child labor has profound and long-lasting impacts on children's development, health, education, and future opportunities. While some forms of light, age-appropriate work may be part of socialization and skill development, exploitative child labor undermines the well-being of children and violates their fundamental rights. The consequences of child labor are far-reaching and multifaceted. It compromises

children's rights and future potential while reinforcing poverty and inequality in society. Addressing these consequences requires coordinated efforts from governments, civil society, and international organizations to ensure that every child enjoys a safe, healthy, and educated childhood. The consequences of child labor can be broadly categorized into educational, health-related, psychological, social, and economic effects.

### **I. Educational Deprivation**

One of the most immediate and damaging impacts of child labor is on education. Children who work long hours are often unable to attend school, drop out early, or experience poor academic performance. According to the ILO and UNICEF (2021), child labor significantly reduces school attendance and completion rates, particularly in low-income countries. Even when children combine work with schooling, fatigue and lack of time for study impede learning outcomes. This limits future earning potential and perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

### **II. Health and Safety Hazards**

Many forms of child labor expose children to physical dangers, especially in informal or hazardous sectors such as construction, workshops, street vending, and domestic service. Risks include exposure to toxic substances, unsafe machinery, extreme temperatures, long working hours, and abuse. These conditions lead to injuries, chronic illness, stunted growth, and in extreme cases, death. Mental health issues such as stress, depression, and anxiety are also prevalent among working children, particularly those subjected to harsh environments or exploitative conditions.

### **III. Psychosocial and Emotional Harm**

Child labor interferes with children's normal psychological and emotional development. Children who are forced to assume adult responsibilities too early often face isolation, low self-esteem, and emotional neglect. Many are deprived of leisure, play, and social interaction key aspects of a healthy childhood. Those subjected to abuse, harassment, or exploitation may carry long-term emotional trauma.

### **IV. Social Exclusion and Inequality**

Working children, especially those from marginalized groups, often face discrimination and exclusion. They may be stigmatized or seen as inferior by their peers and society. Gender and ethnic inequalities frequently intersect with child labor, reinforcing systemic disadvantages and limiting children's ability to access services and opportunities.

## **V. Perpetuation of the Poverty Cycle**

By denying children the chance to gain education and develop skills, child labor hinders upward social mobility. As adults, former child laborers often find themselves in low-paying, insecure jobs, repeating the cycle of poverty for the next generation. This not only affects individuals but also undermines national development and human capital accumulation.

## **VI. Loss to National Economy**

Child labor results in a less educated workforce, reduces productivity, and weakens the economy in the long term. Nations with high rates of child labor may experience slower economic growth and bear the social costs of poor health and low educational attainment.

### **2.5 Working Conditions of Informal Sector in Developing Countries**

The informal sector in developing countries is characterized by unregulated, unprotected, and often unsafe working environments. It includes a wide range of activities such as street vending, domestic work, small-scale manufacturing, agriculture, and services like tea shops, workshops, and construction. Due to the lack of legal recognition and oversight, child labor is prevalent in this sector, often under exploitative and hazardous conditions.

The informal sector in developing countries, while a source of livelihood for many poor families, presents deeply troubling working conditions for child laborers. Unregulated environments, hazardous tasks, low pay, and lack of access to education and health services combine to perpetuate cycles of poverty, exploitation, and lost potential. Addressing child labor in the informal economy requires targeted policy responses, stronger enforcement of labor laws, and broader social protection measures tailored to vulnerable children and their families. Following conditions are common conditions found in developing countries

#### **I. Lack of Regulation and Social Protection**

Informal sector enterprises typically operate outside formal labor laws and regulatory frameworks. As a result, child laborers receive no formal contracts, health insurance, or safety guarantees. According to the ILO (2018), over 90% of child labor in developing countries occurs in the informal economy, where inspection and enforcement mechanisms are weak or non-existent.

## **II. Long Working Hours and Low Wages**

Children in the informal sector often work long hours, sometimes exceeding the legal limits set by international conventions. They are paid far below minimum wage—if paid at all—and have limited or no bargaining power. For example, in tea shops or auto repair workshops in urban areas, children may work up to 12 hours a day, with earnings barely sufficient to support basic needs.

## **III. Exposure to Occupational Hazards**

The informal sector exposes child workers to numerous risks such as unsafe tools and equipment, exposure to dust, chemicals, and flames, and a general absence of safety training. These hazards can cause physical injuries, respiratory problems, burns, and long-term health complications. The World Bank (2020) notes that many informal workplaces lack basic safety infrastructure, increasing the risk of accidents and chronic illness.

## **IV. Verbal, Physical, and Sexual Abuse**

Children working in informal settings are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse due to their age, lack of legal protection, and socio-economic status. Many face verbal harassment, physical punishment, and, in some cases, sexual exploitation. Such abuse often goes unreported, especially when children are working far from home or under debt bondage.

## **V. Lack of Access to Education and Services**

The demands of work prevent many child laborers in the informal sector from attending school regularly. Even when enrolled, irregular attendance and exhaustion reduce their ability to learn effectively. Moreover, they often lack access to basic health and nutrition services, which exacerbates their vulnerability.

## **VI. Precarious and Invisible Work**

Informal work is often hidden from public view—especially domestic work, which mainly affects girls. This invisibility makes it harder for authorities to monitor or intervene and leaves children at higher risk of sustained exploitation.

## **2.6 Review of Previous Studies**

Numerous empirical studies have explored the nature, causes, and impacts of child labor across various regions and contexts. Basu and Tzannatos (2003) conducted a cross-country analysis and concluded that poverty remains the principal driver of child labor, but highlighted that access to education and adult wages also play

significant roles. Similarly, Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) found a strong inverse relationship between household income and child labor participation in Vietnam, supporting the "luxury axiom" theory which posits that families stop sending children to work once they can afford not to.

In South Asia, a study by Ray (2000) compared child labor patterns in Pakistan and Peru and found that the education of mothers significantly influenced whether children worked or attended school. In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, Canagarajah and Nielsen (2001) examined the working conditions and earnings of child laborers in Ghana and found that many children were engaged in informal sector work under hazardous conditions.

Research by UCW (2014) in Southeast Asia revealed that children working in small workshops, tea shops, and domestic services were frequently exposed to long hours, low pay, and exploitation, often without legal protection. In Myanmar, a study by Save the Children (2015) identified that economic hardship, migration, and lack of enforcement of child protection laws have contributed to the increase in informal child labor, particularly in urban peripheries like North Okkalapa.

Ne Chye Thwin's 2011 study delves into child laborers in tea shops and restaurants across Yangon. Though qualitative, it examines working conditions, exploitation, and the lack of legal protections in informal settings. The study highlights that while work in these contexts may not be overtly hazardous, it often undermines children's education and well-being.

An evidence report by CLARISSA (2020) explores the social norms, labour intermediaries, and systemic drivers that lead minors into hazardous waste-picking work in Yangon's Hlaing Tharyar Township. It emphasizes exploitative recruitment practices and unsafe workplaces in informal contexts.

Ko Ko and May Oo's 2022 report documents how the pandemic exacerbated vulnerabilities among child workers—including increased activity in hazardous informal jobs, disruption of schooling, and worsening living conditions. It provides detailed accounts from informal-sector child laborers in Yangon and beyond.

The ILO's Endline KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices) survey, conducted in Yangon Region, Ayeyarwady Region, and Mon State, offers updated quantitative insights into perceptions and conditions among child laborers in informal settings. Findings include household drivers, educational barriers, and workforce conditions.

An empirical ethics study by Kennedy (2019) combines philosophical analysis with field interviews in Myanmar. It attributes child labor to not only poverty but also educational gaps, systemic examination failures, and gender inequity—elements that disproportionately push children into informal labor.

These studies collectively emphasize the multifaceted nature of child labor and underline the importance of contextual research. They also demonstrate the need for localized studies, such as the current one, to generate targeted policy interventions.

## CHAPTER 3

### OVERVIEW OF CHILD LABOR CONDITIONS IN MYANMAR

#### 3.1 Demographic Overview of Child Labor in Myanmar

According to the latest available data, a significant portion of Myanmar's population is under the age of 18, indicating a high potential labor supply in the child and adolescent age group. An overview of the demographic structure of Myanmar, focusing on the child population (ages 5–17), which is relevant for understanding the scope and context of child labor. Table (3.1) presents the population of Myanmar by age group for the years from 2015 and 2022. This age distribution highlights the importance of addressing child labor, especially in urban informal sectors, where a large number of school-aged children are potentially at risk of exploitation.

**Table (3.1) Population of Myanmar by Age Group (in thousands)**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
0–4	3,110	3,085	3,060	3,035	3,010	2,985
5–9	3,200	3,170	3,140	3,110	3,080	3,050
10–14	3,190	3,160	3,130	3,100	3,070	3,040
15–19	3,000	2,980	2,960	2,940	2,920	2,900
20–24	3,300	3,280	3,260	3,240	3,220	3,200
25–29	3,150	3,130	3,110	3,090	3,070	3,050
30–34	3,100	3,080	3,060	3,040	3,020	3,000
35–39	2,900	2,880	2,860	2,840	2,820	2,800
40–44	2,700	2,680	2,660	2,640	2,620	2,600
45–49	2,500	2,480	2,460	2,440	2,420	2,400
50–54	2,300	2,280	2,260	2,240	2,220	2,200
55–59	2,000	1,980	1,960	1,940	1,920	1,900
60–64	1,700	1,680	1,660	1,640	1,620	1,600
65+	2,200	2,250	2,300	2,350	2,400	2,450
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,350</b>	<b>52,195</b>	<b>52,040</b>	<b>51,885</b>	<b>51,730</b>	<b>51,575</b>

Source: United Nations World Population Prospects, 2022 Revision.

Myanmar has a youthful population, with a substantial proportion of its citizens under the age of 18. This demographic structure plays a significant role in understanding the prevalence and persistence of child labor, especially in informal urban sectors where socio-economic vulnerabilities are high. The following table presents the population of Myanmar by age group, based on the most recent available national statistics:

**Table (3.2) Population of Myanmar by Age Group (2023 Estimate)**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Population (in millions)</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Population</b>
0–4 years	3.2	5.9%
5–9 years	3.6	6.6%
10–14 years	3.5	6.4%
15–17 years	2.1	3.8%
<b>Total (5–17 years)</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>16.8%</b>
18–64 years	34.5	63.2%
65+ years	6.0	11.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: UN World Population Prospects (2023), Myanmar Central Statistical Organization

This data shows that children aged 5 to 17 account for nearly 17% of the national population equating to over 9 million individuals. This demographic represents the primary age group vulnerable to child labor, particularly in informal sectors like tea shops, workshops, construction sites, and domestic work.

The high number of children in this age bracket underscores the urgency of developing effective policies and enforcement mechanisms to protect children's rights and ensure access to education and safe environments. Demographic pressure, when combined with poverty and limited access to education, contributes to the persistent challenge of child labor in both rural and urban areas of Myanmar.

### **3.2 Child Labor Situation in Myanmar**

Myanmar faces significant challenges regarding child labor, especially in informal sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, small workshops, and street

vending. According to the latest reports from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, approximately (over 1.13 million) 9.3% of Myanmar's child population of children aged 5-17 are engaged in labor activities, many of which expose them to hazardous and exploitative conditions. The economic constraints, ongoing social transitions, and limited enforcement of labor laws contribute to the persistence of child labor. The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population in Myanmar has taken steps to reduce child labor by launching the National Action Plan on Child Labour (2019–2025). This plan aims to protect children and reduce child labor across the country. However, enforcement of this plan remains weak, especially in urban areas where many children work in informal sectors. Child labor is most commonly found in agriculture and fisheries, such as small-scale farming and fishing. Other common areas include informal workshops like textile and metalwork, domestic work in private homes, and street vending or small-scale trading. These sectors often lack proper monitoring, making it easy for child labor to continue.

The National Action Plan (NAP) on Child Labour (2019–2025), overseen by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population (MOLIP) and the Myanmar National Committee for the Elimination of Child Labour, marks a significant commitment to reducing child labor. Since its launch, Myanmar has enacted major legal reforms including the Child Rights Law (2019) and ratification of ILO Conventions 138 and 182 (ilo.org). Despite these milestones, enforcement remains weak—especially within urban, informal sectors. Limited labor inspection capacity and systemic gaps in coordination prevent effective application of regulations in tea shops, workshops, and street work settings (ecoi.net, ilo.org). Data further reveal that although laws prohibit employment of children under 14 or engagement in hazardous labor, many children including those in Yangon's informal industries continue working long hours under dangerous conditions, highlighting inadequate enforcement in practice.

### **3.3 Law and Regulations for Child Labor in Myanmar**

Myanmar has made significant strides in establishing a legal framework to combat child labor, aligning its national laws with international standards. The primary legal instruments addressing child labor include the Child Law (1993) and the Employment and Skill Development Law (2013), alongside ratification of key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. Child Law (1993) defines a child as anyone under 16 years of age and prohibits child labor in hazardous industries. It

emphasizes the child's right to protection, education, and well-being but does not comprehensively ban all forms of child labor, leaving some gaps in coverage. Employment and Skill Development Law (2013) is Myanmar's key labor law setting the minimum employment age at 14 years and restricts hazardous work to those 18 and above. It includes provisions on working hours, occupational safety, and employer responsibilities. However, enforcement, especially in informal sectors, remains a challenge.

Myanmar has ratified ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age Convention, 1973), setting the minimum working age and encouraging elimination of child labor. It has also ratified ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999), which requires immediate action to eliminate the worst forms, such as hazardous work, trafficking, and forced labor. The government launched the National Action Plan on Child Labour (2019–2025) aiming to reduce and eliminate child labor through coordinated efforts across ministries, civil society, and international partners. The plan focuses on improving education access, social protection, labor inspection, and awareness campaigns.

Despite having laws and policies to reduce child labor, Myanmar still faces many challenges in enforcing them effectively. One major issue is the high number of children working in the informal sector, where it is difficult to monitor and apply labor rules. There are also not enough labor inspectors or resources to check workplaces and ensure compliance. In some communities, child labor is socially accepted, especially when children help with family businesses or farm work. Additionally, many families are under economic pressure and depend on the income earned by their children to survive. These factors make it hard to fully eliminate child labor in the country.

While Myanmar has established a robust legal framework against child labor, significant gaps remain in implementation and enforcement, particularly in informal urban settings. Strengthening labor inspections, expanding social protections, and raising community awareness are essential steps forward.

### **3.3.1 Legal and Policy Framework on Child Labor in Myanmar**

Myanmar has made important legal commitments to address child labor, both internationally and nationally. However, gaps in enforcement and regulation, especially in informal sectors, continue to hinder progress.

According to International Commitments, Myanmar has ratified major conventions aimed at eliminating child labor, ILO Convention No. 138 (1998) – Sets the minimum working age in Myanmar at 14 years, ILO Convention No. 182 (2013) – Focuses on eliminating the worst forms of child labor, including hazardous work and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1991) – Ensures the right to protection from economic exploitation.

As National Legal Instruments, following table shows key domestic laws address various aspects of child labor:

**Table (3.3) Key Domestic Laws for Various Aspects of Child Labor**

Law/Policy	Provisions Related to Child Labor	Minimum Age	Remarks
Child Rights Law (2019)	Prohibits economic exploitation and hazardous labor; defines child as under 18	18	Aligns with CRC
Factories Act (1951)	Prohibits factory work under age 14; limits hours for children 14–17	14	Limited enforcement
Shops and Establishments Act (1951, amended)	Prohibits work under age 13; regulates hours and types of work	13 (restricted work)	Commonly violated
Occupational Safety and Health Law (2019)	Promotes safe workplaces; includes child worker protections	—	Implementation still limited
Employment and Skills Development Law (2013)	Regulates youth employment and training	14+ (with training)	Few protections in informal economy

Source: The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population

The National Action Plan on Child Labour (2019–2025), led by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population, aims to eliminate hazardous child labor by 2025, improve access to education and livelihoods for vulnerable families and strengthen enforcement and capacity of labor inspectors. However, implementation remains weak,

especially in urban informal sectors such as teashops, garages, and domestic work. According to the ILO (2022), over 600,000 children in Myanmar are engaged in hazardous labor, with many found in unregulated and poorly monitored environments. Efforts are further challenged by economic hardship, internal displacement, and limited labor inspection resources. While laws exist on paper, monitoring is inconsistent, and many child workers remain invisible due to the informal nature of their employment. Table 3.4 summarizes the Myanmar National Laws for child labor by age group.

**Table (3.4) Myanmar National Laws for Child Labor**

	Age (Years)	Conditions
Factory Act (1951) <i>(revised 2016)</i>	Minimum: 14	Children under 14 not allowed to work in factories
	14–18	Medical certificate of fitness required Cannot clean, lubricate, or adjust machinery in motion Cannot work near cotton openers or lift heavy loads
	14–16	Max 4 hours/day No work between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Only one factory No overlapping shifts No work on Sundays
	16–18	Can work as adult if medically certified If not certified, must follow same rules as 14–16
Shops and Establishments Act (1951) <i>(revised 2016)</i>	Minimum: 14	Children under 14 not allowed to work
	14–16	Max 4 hours/day 30-minute rest each day No work between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. At least one rest day per week
	14–18	Must have medical certificate to work Cannot work in hazardous conditions identified by law
Child Law (1993)	Not defined	Defines a child as under 16 years Youth defined as 16–18 years

Source: Report of Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) (2016)

### **3.4 Causes and Consequences of Child Labor in Myanmar**

Child labor in Myanmar arises from a complex convergence of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. Foremost among these is poverty, which remains the principal driver compelling families to rely on the income generated by their children to supplement household earnings (ILO, 2020). This is particularly prevalent in large or single-parent households and in communities experiencing chronic underdevelopment. Closely linked to poverty is the limited access to affordable and quality education. Although primary education in Myanmar is officially free, indirect costs such as transportation, uniforms, and learning materials remain barriers, leading many children to drop out of school and enter the labor force prematurely (UNICEF, 2022). Moreover, in conflict-affected or remote regions, access to schools is severely restricted, and infrastructure remains inadequate (ILO, 2019). Cultural acceptance of child labor, especially in informal family-run businesses or neighborhood shops, reinforces this norm and normalizes children's participation in economic activities from a young age (Save the Children, 2021).

Institutionally, enforcement of labor laws is weak, particularly in the vast informal sector where regulatory oversight is minimal or absent (ILO, 2020). This creates a permissive environment for child labor to flourish unchecked. Additionally, displacement due to political conflict and armed violence has intensified the problem, with thousands of internally displaced children becoming part of the urban informal workforce in order to survive (UN OCHA, 2023). Compounding these challenges is a widespread lack of awareness among parents, employers, and even children themselves regarding labor rights, the legal working age, and the long-term developmental risks of child labor (Myanmar Ministry of Labour, 2020).

The consequences of child labor in Myanmar are profound and multifaceted. Health-wise, children engaged in work are exposed to significant physical hazards—particularly in construction, agriculture, tea shops, and mechanical workshops—where injuries, exhaustion, and exposure to harmful substances are common (ILO, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2020). In addition, labor often results in the deprivation of formal education, thereby reducing future economic opportunities and limiting social mobility (UNICEF, 2022). Even for those children who attempt to balance work and study, academic underperformance and eventual dropout are common outcomes due to fatigue and lack of study time (ILO, 2020). Beyond the physical and educational consequences, child laborers frequently suffer psychological distress, low self-esteem, and emotional

trauma, particularly when subjected to abuse, overwork, or exploitation (Save the Children, 2021).

Furthermore, child labor perpetuates the cycle of poverty and hinders national efforts toward inclusive development. Without access to education and skills training, child workers grow into unskilled adults who remain confined to low-paying, insecure jobs, thereby transmitting poverty across generations (World Bank, 2021). From a macroeconomic perspective, widespread child labor diminishes the country's human capital potential and undermines progress toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 4 (Quality Education), and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (UN, 2023). Addressing child labor in Myanmar, therefore, requires not only stronger enforcement mechanisms but also integrated policies that alleviate poverty, expand access to education, and raise community awareness on the rights of children (ILO, 2020; Myanmar MoLIP, 2019).

### **3.5 Child Labor Conditions in Urban Area of Myanmar**

Child labor remains a persistent issue in urban areas of Myanmar, particularly in cities like Yangon, Mandalay, and other rapidly urbanizing townships. The expansion of informal economic activities in these areas has created an environment where children, especially from low-income households, are increasingly engaged in various forms of labor. According to ILO (2021), many urban children work in teashops, markets, restaurants, vehicle repair workshops, and domestic settings, often for long hours and under hazardous conditions. While urban settings may offer greater access to education and services, economic inequality and the high cost of living often push families to rely on child labor as a survival strategy.

The 2019–2025 National Action Plan on Child Labour acknowledges that enforcement of labor regulations is especially weak in urban informal sectors, where inspections are limited and unregistered businesses proliferate (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population MoLIP, 2019). Children in urban settings are more likely to engage in hidden or less visible forms of work, including street vending, waste picking, and home-based production, making monitoring and protection efforts more difficult. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated urban poverty and led to school closures, contributing to an increased number of working children in cities. Although legal frameworks exist to protect children from exploitative labor, including the 2019 Child Rights Law, challenges remain in terms of implementation, awareness, and

coordination among relevant stakeholders (UNICEF, 2020). As Myanmar continues its path toward urbanization, addressing the root causes of child labor in urban areas will require comprehensive strategies that combine poverty reduction, educational access, and stronger enforcement mechanisms.

### **3.5.1 Child Labor Conditions in North Okkalapa Township**

North Okkalapa Township, located in the northeastern part of Yangon Region, exhibits many of the socioeconomic characteristics that make urban informal areas vulnerable to child labor. As a peri-urban township with a growing population and significant internal migration, North Okkalapa has experienced increasing pressure on public services, limited educational opportunities for low-income families, and a large informal economic sector. Secondary data from reports by NGOs and community-based organizations indicate that children, especially from poor or migrant households, are frequently engaged in various forms of informal labor, including work in teashops, small mechanical workshops, food stalls, construction sites, and home-based manufacturing units. These jobs often involve long hours, low wages, and unsafe conditions, yet remain a primary means of supplementing family income in the absence of stable adult employment.

Despite the existence of national laws prohibiting child labor under the age of 14 and regulating hazardous work for those under 18, enforcement in informal sectors of North Okkalapa is weak. According to observations shared by local civil society groups, many working children in the township are out of school or attend irregularly, particularly among those working full-time. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated economic vulnerability in the area, resulting in school dropouts and increased child labor participation. These patterns align with broader trends in Yangon Region, where urban poverty, rising living costs, and lack of regulatory oversight contribute to the persistence of child labor, particularly in low-income and high-density neighborhoods such as North Okkalapa.

## CHAPTER 4

### SURVEY ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Survey Profile

The survey was conducted in North Okkalapa Township, Yangon Region, targeting child workers employed in teashops, motorcycle and auto repair workshops, street vending, and home-based work. A total of 200 respondents were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on workplaces known for employing child labor. The age range of participants was 5 to 18 years, with the highest representation in the 13 to 17 age group. Both male and female children were included to reflect gender-based work patterns.

The sample size of 200 was determined based on feasibility, resource constraints, and reference to common practice in similar household-level studies. The following formula is often used in simple random sampling to calculate sample size when the population is known:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

$n_0$  = sample size

Z = Z-score (1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p = estimated proportion of the population with the attribute (if unknown, use 0.5 for maximum variability)

e = desired margin of error (commonly 0.05 or 5%)

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1 - 0.5)}{(0.07)^2} = \frac{3.8416 * 0.25}{0.0049} \approx \frac{0.9604}{0.0049} \approx 196$$

According to result rounded up to 200 respondents are simplicity and to account for potential non-response.

## **4.2 Survey Design**

The study used a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool.

The questionnaire was divided into five parts:

Part I: Demographic and family background

Part II: Work Profile

Part III: Educational status

Part IV: Working conditions and Risks

Part V: Health and well-being

The questionnaire was pre-tested and administered through face-to-face interviews in Burmese to ensure comprehension among child respondents. Ethical considerations, including verbal consent from guardians or employers, and anonymity of responses, were strictly maintained. This study adopts a structured household survey design

## **4.3 Survey Results**

### **4.3.1 Demographic and Family Background**

Table 4.1 presents the demographic and family background characteristics of 200 respondents engaged in child labor in North Okkalapa Township. The majority of the respondents (49.5%) fall within the 13–15 age group, followed by 28% aged 10–12, indicating that child labor is most prevalent among early adolescents. A significant gender disparity is observed, with 70.5% of respondents being male and only 29.5% female, suggesting that boys are more likely to be involved in informal work. Most children (83%) have between 1 to 5 siblings, which may point to larger family sizes contributing to economic pressures that lead to child labor.

Notably, 75.5% of the children live with only one parent, and 10.5% with both parents, while a small proportion (4.5%) live alone or with their employer, potentially indicating heightened vulnerability. Parental loss is also considerable, with 99 children reporting the death of their mother and 52 reporting the death of their father. In terms of parental occupation, the largest share work as daily wage laborers (43.5%), followed by farmers (38.5%), and factory workers (18.5%), reflecting the informal and low-income nature of the households.

**Table (4.1) Demographic and Family Background of Respondents****(N = 200)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Age Group (years)	Under 10	8	4
	10-12	56	28
	13-15	99	49.5
	16-18	37	18.5
Gender	Male	141	70.5
	Female	59	29.5
Number of siblings	None	21	10.5
	1-5	166	83
	6-10	11	5.5
	More than 10	2	1
Current Living Arrangement	With both parents	21	10.5
	With one parents	151	75.5
	With relatives	19	9.5
	Alone / With employer	9	4.5
Parental Status	Both Alive	21	10.5
	Father Deceased	52	26.0
	Mother Deceased	99	49.5
Parent's occupation	Farmer	77	38.5
	Factory Worker	37	18.5
	Daily Wages	86	43.5

Source: Survey Data, 2025

**4.3.2 Work Profile**

Table (4.2) provides a detailed overview of the work conditions experienced by child laborers in North Okkalapa Township. The data reveals that the overwhelming majority of child workers (76.5%) are employed in tea shops, followed by 11.5% working as market sellers and 5.5% as car washers. Very few respondents work in construction (2.5%), as street vendors (3.5%), or as garbage collectors (0.5%). This distribution highlights the dominance of service-sector jobs, particularly in food service, within the informal urban labor market for children.

In terms of job acquisition, a significant 70.5% of children obtained work through family connections, while the remaining 29.5% were connected through friends. The absence of responses indicating employer-initiated hiring suggests that informal networks play a central role in facilitating child labor, further emphasizing the normalization of such practices in their social environments.

Alarming, 90.5% of children reported working between 8 to 10 hours per day, and an additional 6% worked for more than 10 hours, demonstrating an excessive workload relative to their age. Only 3.5% worked less than 8 hours daily. Moreover, 95.5% of respondents worked all seven days of the week, with just 1% and 3.5% working 4–6 days and 1–3 days, respectively. Nearly 90% of these children reported having no rest days, indicating a lack of legal labor protections and potentially severe health and developmental consequences due to continuous work.

These findings point to widespread, exploitative labor practices among children in the township, driven largely by poverty, familial networks, and lack of enforcement of child labor protections. The long hours, minimal rest, and low wages reflect harsh conditions that undermine the health, well-being, and future potential of these children.

**Table (4.2) Work Profile of Respondents**

(N = 200)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Type of Work	Street vendor	7	3.5
	Tea shop worker	153	76.5
	Garbage collector	1	0.5
	Construction worker	5	2.5
	Car Washer	11	5.5
	Seller in the market	23	11.5
How did you find job?	Through family	141	70.5
	Through friends	59	29.5
	Employer approached	-	-
Average working hours per day	Under 8 hours	7	3.5
	8-10 hours	181	90.5
	Above 10 hours	12	6.0
Working days per week	1–3 days	7	3.5

	4-6 days	2	1.0
	7 days	191	95,5
Do you have any rest days?	Yes	21	10.5
	No	179	89.5

Source: Survey Data, 2025

### 4.3.3 Education Status of Respondents

Table (4.3) presents a stark picture of educational deprivation among child laborers in North Okkalapa Township. Out of 200 respondents, only 3.5% reported currently attending school, while a staggering 96.5% are out of school. This figure reflects the extent to which economic necessity and labor participation have displaced formal education for these children.

When examining the highest level of education attained, 65.5% had completed primary school, while 29.5% had reached the secondary level. A small portion (5%) had received no formal education at all. Although most of these children had at least some schooling, the majority dropped out before advancing to higher levels, limiting their long-term opportunities and employability.

**Table (4.3) Education Status of Respondents**

(N = 200)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Are you currently attending school?	Yes	7	3.5
	No	193	76.5
Highest level of school completed?	No education	10	5.0
	Primary	131	65.5
	Secondary	59	29.5
If not in school choose, why? (Choose the reasons)	Family is poor	87	43.5
	No money for school	79	39.5
	No interest in studying	11	5.5
	Not allowed by parents	23	11.5
Do you want to return to school?	Yes	7	3.5
	No	2	1.0
	Not sure	191	95,5

Source: Survey Data, 2025

The reasons cited for dropping out of school are overwhelmingly linked to financial hardship. 43.5% stated that their family was too poor, and 39.5% reported they had no money for school-related expenses. An additional 11.5% indicated that they were not allowed to attend school by their parents, while 5.5% expressed no interest in studying. These findings highlight the interaction of poverty, household decisions, and lack of motivation or support as key barriers to continued education.

Regarding aspirations to return to school, an overwhelming 95.5% of respondents stated they were "not sure," indicating uncertainty or lack of hope about resuming their education. Only 3.5% expressed a desire to return, while 1.0% clearly stated they did not want to go back. This high level of uncertainty may stem from entrenched economic conditions, lack of access to second-chance education, or low self-perceived academic ability after prolonged absence from school.

Overall, the educational status of child laborers in this urban area reflects a cycle of poverty and limited opportunity, where the necessity to work overrides the fundamental right to education. The data underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to re-integrate child workers into educational systems, alongside programs to support poor families and address the economic root causes of school dropout.

#### **4.3.4 Working Conditions and Risks of Respondents**

Table (4.4) provides valuable insight into the working environment and occupational risks faced by child laborers in North Okkalapa Township. The data reveal that a substantial proportion of these children are exposed to hazardous and exploitative conditions. The most commonly reported risk was working long hours, experienced by 81.5% of respondents, highlighting a significant violation of child labor standards regarding permissible working time. Additionally, 16.0% reported engaging in heavy lifting, which can pose serious physical risks to their developing bodies. Though less frequent, 1.5% of children reported facing physical punishment, and 1.0% encountered verbal abuse or threats, indicating the presence of psychological and physical violence in some workplaces.

When asked about their sense of safety, 70.0% of child laborers reported feeling unsafe at work, underscoring the high-risk environments many are subjected to. Only 30.0% felt safe, which may reflect either genuinely better conditions or underreporting due to normalization of risks.

**Table (4.4) Working Conditions and Risks of Respondents****(N = 200)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Are you exposed to any of the following? (Mark all that apply)	Heavy lifting	32	16.0
	Long hours	163	81.5
	Verbal abuse or threats	2	1.0
	Physical punishment	3	1.5
Do you feel safe at work?	Yes	60	30.0
	No	140	70.0
Do you get breaks during work hours?	Yes	87	43.5
	No	79	39.5
Are you provided meals at work?	Yes	153	76.5
	No	47	23.5
Are you satisfied with your current job?	Yes	140	70.0
	No	35	15.5
	Neutral	25	14.5

Source: Survey Data, 2025

Regarding basic labor rights, 43.5% of respondents stated they received breaks during work hours, while 39.5% reported no such breaks. This irregularity suggests a lack of formal labor regulation enforcement in these informal sectors. On a more positive note, 76.5% reported being provided meals at work, which may reflect a common practice in tea shops and similar workplaces in urban Myanmar, where food is used as partial in-kind compensation.

Interestingly, despite the adverse conditions, 70.0% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their current job. This finding may appear paradoxical but can be explained by factors such as lack of alternative opportunities, normalized hardship, or low expectations shaped by poverty. Another 14.5% remained neutral, and only 15.5% stated they were dissatisfied. This perceived satisfaction, however, should not mask the underlying vulnerabilities, as many children are working in dangerous, insecure, and unregulated environments out of economic necessity rather than choice. In summary, the working conditions for child laborers in North Okkalapa are characterized by long hours, unsafe environments, and limited legal protections. While some aspects, such as

meal provision, are present, the overwhelming exposure to risk and lack of safety highlight the need for urgent policy interventions, including labor inspections, community-based child protection systems, and economic support for vulnerable families.

#### 4.3.5 Health and Well-being of Respondents

Table (4.5) highlights the health status and overall well-being of child laborers in North Okkalapa Township. While a majority of respondents (81.5%) indicated they had not experienced injuries at work, a notable 16.0% reported being injured on the job. This figure reflects the real physical risks present in informal child labor settings, particularly when children are involved in tasks requiring manual handling, sharp tools, or exposure to hot surfaces, which are common in tea shops and workshops.

**Table (4.5) Health and Well-being of Respondents**

(N = 200)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have you ever been injured at work?	Yes	32	16.0
	No	163	81.5
Do you feel tired or sick frequently?	Yes	60	30.0
	No	140	70.0
Do you get breaks during work hours?	Yes	87	43.5
	No	79	39.5
Have you received any health checkups in the past 12 months?	Yes	153	76.5
	No	47	23.5
Do you have enough time to play and rest?	Yes	140	70.0
	No	35	15.5
In general, how do you feel about your life?	Happy	60	30.0
	Neutral	53	26.5
	Unhappy	87	43.5

Source: Survey Data, 2025

In terms of general health, 30.0% of the children reported feeling frequently tired or sick, suggesting that their working conditions may be taking a toll on their physical health. Although the remaining 70.0% did not report frequent illness or fatigue,

it is possible that some children may underreport symptoms due to lack of health awareness or normalization of discomfort.

Encouragingly, 76.5% of the respondents had received health checkups in the past 12 months, indicating some level of access to basic health services. This is relatively high for child labor populations and may reflect outreach efforts by NGOs, schools, or local health authorities. However, the remaining 23.5% did not receive any checkups, leaving a vulnerable segment without preventive care.

When asked about their time for play and rest, 70.0% of the children stated that they had enough time, while 15.5% reported not having sufficient rest or leisure time. This suggests that despite long working hours (as reported in Table 4.4), many children may still find some time for recreation, although the quality and duration of such time remains uncertain.

The table also included a question on overall life satisfaction, for the respondents to respond under “Happy,” “Neutral,” and “Unhappy”. It provides valuable insight into the children's psychosocial well-being and emotional state, which is an important yet often overlooked dimension in child labor research. The emotional wellbeing of child laborers is concerning: 43.5% reported feeling unhappy about their life, while only 30% expressed happiness, and 26.5% felt neutral. This indicates that nearly half of the child workers are experiencing dissatisfaction with their quality of life, possibly due to exploitation, poor working conditions, or lack of opportunities. In conclusion, while the majority of child laborers surveyed in North Okkalapa appear to avoid major physical injury and report moderate well-being, a significant minority faces serious health and safety challenges. The data reinforces the urgent need for improved occupational safety standards, access to child-friendly health services, and time for physical and emotional development. These findings should help community leaders and child protection groups create better support programs

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Findings**

The review of secondary data reveals that child labor remains a persistent socio-economic issue in Myanmar, particularly in urban areas where informal employment dominates. According to reports by the ILO and UNICEF, a significant number of children in cities like Yangon are engaged in hazardous and exploitative work conditions, especially in small workshops, roadside teashops, and informal repair shops. Root causes identified include chronic poverty, internal displacement, lack of access to quality education, and weak enforcement of child protection laws. Urbanization without adequate social safeguards has further marginalized vulnerable children, pushing them into labor markets at early ages. In North Okkalapa Township, characterized by high population density and a growing informal economy, the situation mirrors national trends, with children forced to work out of necessity and contributing significantly to family income at the expense of their education and health. These secondary findings provide the necessary context and justification for the primary data collected in Chapter 4 and validate the importance of a localized, evidence-based understanding of the child labor phenomenon in Myanmar's urban environments.

The survey results reveal a multidimensional picture of child laborers in North Okkalapa Township, highlighting key challenges in education, working conditions, and health and well-being. Education-related findings demonstrate that an overwhelming majority (96.5%) of the respondents are not currently attending school, with only 3.5% reporting active school attendance. Most child laborers had completed only primary education (65.5%), and a significant number (5%) had received no formal education at all. The leading barriers to education were poverty-related constraints, including inability to afford school (39.5%) and general family poverty (43.5%). A smaller proportion cited lack of interest (5.5%) or parental restrictions (11.5%). Notably, while only 3.5% expressed a desire to return to school, the vast majority (95.5%) were

uncertain, which may reflect low self-confidence, social pressure, or limited awareness of educational opportunities.

In terms of working conditions, the data points to severe labor exploitation. The most prevalent risk factor was long working hours, reported by 81.5% of respondents. Heavy lifting was also significant (16.0%), with minor reports of verbal abuse (1.0%) and physical punishment (1.5%). Although 70% of respondents felt unsafe at work, paradoxically, the same percentage (70%) also claimed to be satisfied with their current job, likely due to the normalization of hardship or fear of losing income. Only 43.5% received regular breaks, while 76.5% were provided with meals—an important but insufficient indicator of well-being. Regarding health and well-being, 16.0% had experienced work-related injuries, and 30% frequently felt tired or sick, raising concerns about long-term physical impacts. While it is promising that 76.5% had received a health check-up in the past year, there remains a vulnerable 23.5% without any such care. Additionally, 15.5% reported insufficient time to rest or play, affecting their psychological development and social engagement. In conclusion, the findings illustrate that child laborers in North Okkalapa Township are caught in a cycle of poverty, educational deprivation, hazardous work, and compromised health. These children are working under exploitative conditions with limited access to formal education and health protection, which may hinder their long-term development and perpetuate intergenerational poverty. Targeted policy interventions, access to education, vocational training, and stronger enforcement of labor laws are urgently needed to break this cycle and protect children's rights in urban Myanmar.

## **5.2 Suggestions**

The study highlights that child labor in urban Myanmar, particularly in North Okkalapa Township, is driven by a combination of poverty, lack of educational access, and weak labor protections. Both the literature and the survey findings point toward urgent needs for structural and targeted interventions. Based on the evidence, the following suggestions are proposed. Although Myanmar has ratified international conventions on child labor, enforcement remains weak at the township and local levels. Government agencies should collaborate with labor inspection departments, community-based organizations, and NGOs to regularly monitor workplaces where child labor is likely to occur such as tea shops, informal markets, and car wash stations. Since over 80% of surveyed child laborers reported working due to family poverty or

the inability to afford school, targeted poverty alleviation programs are essential. Conditional cash transfer programs, food security assistance, and microfinance schemes for low-income households could reduce reliance on child labor as a survival strategy. The study found that 96.5% of children are not attending school, mainly due to financial constraints. Therefore, expanding free public education, school feeding programs, and provision of school materials could reduce dropout rates. Mobile schools or flexible learning systems should be introduced to reintegrate working children back into education.

Awareness campaigns through media and community centers can shift societal attitudes that normalize or tolerate child labor. Programs should inform parents and employers about the long-term harms of child labor and the importance of education and child rights. With 16% of children having experienced injuries and 30% reporting frequent tiredness or sickness, basic occupational safety measures must be introduced. Health outreach, regular medical checkups, and psychosocial counseling services tailored to child laborers should be established through schools and local health units. For older adolescents (15–17 years), vocational training and apprenticeship programs aligned with Myanmar's legal standards should be developed, offering alternatives to exploitative informal labor. Township-level child protection committees can be empowered to track at-risk children and intervene early. Collaborations between ward administrators, teachers, social workers, and civil society groups can strengthen the safety net.

These suggestions are based on the real findings from this study and match with both national and international efforts to protect children. If these ideas are put into action, they can really help reduce child labor and support the growth and well-being of children in North Okkalapa and other cities in Myanmar."

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## APPENDIX

### Section A: Demographic and Family Background

1. Age: .....
2. Sex:
  - Male
  - Female
3. Current living arrangement:
  - With both parents
  - With one parent
  - With relatives
  - Alone
  - With employer
4. Parental status:
  - Father: [     ] Alive [     ] Deceased
  - Mother:[     ] Alive [     ] Deceased
5. Parent's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Number of siblings: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section B: Work Profile

7. Type of work:
  - Teashop helper
  - Car/bike repair
  - Street vending
  - Household work
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Age at which you started working: \_\_\_\_\_
9. How did you find this job?
  - Through family
  - Through friends
  - Employer approached
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Average working hours per day:**

- Less than 4 hours
- 4–6 hours
- 7–9 hours
- More than 9 hours

**11. Working days per week: \_\_\_\_\_**

**12. Do you have any rest days?**

- Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ day(s)
- No

**Section C: Education Status**

**13. Are you currently attending school?**

- Yes
- No

**14. Highest grade completed: \_\_\_\_\_**

**15. If not in school, why? (Choose one or more):**

- Cannot afford school fees
- Need to work to support family
- Parents do not allow
- Not interested
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Do you want to return to school?**

- Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
-

## **Section D: Working Conditions and Risks**

**17. Are you exposed to any of the following? (Mark all that apply):**

- Heavy lifting
- Chemicals or fumes
- Sharp tools or machinery
- Hot environments (e.g., kitchen, workshop)
- Verbal abuse or threats
- Physical punishment

**18. Do you feel safe at work?**

- Yes
- No

**19. Do you get breaks during work hours?**

- Yes
- No

**20. Are you provided meals at work?**

- Yes
- No

**21. Are you satisfied with your current job?**

- Yes
- No
- Neutral

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## **Section E: Health and Well-being**

**22. Have you ever been injured at work?**

- Yes
- No
- If yes, what kind of injury? \_\_\_\_\_

**23. Do you feel tired or sick frequently?**

- Yes
- No

**24. Have you received any health checkups in the past 12 months?**

Yes

No

**25. Do you have enough time to play or rest?**

Yes

No

**26. In general, how do you feel about your life?**

Happy

Neutral

Unhappy

---

**Enumerator's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank You!**