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A Call for Economic Justice for Myanmar's Laborers: A Capability Approach

Saw Lalbwel Htoo¹

Abstract

In Myanmar, many labors face difficult challenges. They face high unemployment rates and those who are employed often suffer unfair treatment from their employers. These mistreatments have increased since the 2021 military coup, which sparked protests and workforce strikes. Many foreign-invested companies, especially those owned by Chinese companies, are often accused of violating labor rights. Labors are reluctant to report these types of violations for fear of retaliation, as there is no effective union or advocacy group to support them. Even when they go on strike, the government does

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not seem to take their concerns seriously. Minimum wages are a major issue in Myanmar, where many labors struggle to make a living. In this research, the capabilities approach is used to analyze the unfair situation of Myanmar labor. The capabilities approach is a broad framework used to evaluate and value individual well-being and social arrangements, as well as to design policies and proposals for social change in society. When analyzing the capabilities approach, the situation is often called “starvation wages” and is considered a form of modern slavery. The government's response to these problems has been inadequate, leaving many labors in poverty and difficult living conditions.

Key words: Economic justice, Myanmar labors, minimum wages, inequality

IJE: D63, F66, J31

1. Introduction

Following the election in 2020, on February 1, 2021, the military seized power on the day that parliament was set to convene for the first time. This led to the detention of Pres. Win Myint, Aung San Suu Kyi, a state counsellor, and other members of the NLD party. Myint Swe, a former military officer and vice president, was appointed as the acting president, invoking

articles 417 and 418 of the constitution to declare a state of emergency for one year. The military commander in chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, was handed control of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing claimed the military takeover was necessary due to alleged electoral irregularities and the failure to postpone the opening of parliament. He promised to hold new elections after the state of emergency and transfer power to the winner. A day later, the State Administrative Council was formed with Senior General Min as chairman, and it took over government functions during the state of emergency. On August 1, the military-led caretaker government replaced the State Administrative Council with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing as the prime minister, and the state of emergency was extended until August 2023.(McKenna 2023)

1.1 Labor right violation after military coup

Myanmar is grappling with a significant unemployment problem, and many labors who have jobs are facing daily labor rights violations. These violations have been on the rise since the military coup in February 2021, which led to a large number of labor force members protesting against the military dictatorship. However, the junta arrested some labor leaders, and others fled, leaving unions unable to operate effectively.

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As a result, some employers are ignoring labor rights and engaging in abusive practices, such as withholding pay, failing to compensate labors who are dismissed, and not paying employees for overtime work. These abuses are especially common in Yangon's industrial zones, where many of the country's labors are employed.

According to survey findings of International Labor Organization (ILO), job opportunities have been disproportionately limited for labors from urban and higher income households since the military takeover, with little progress in improving the situation. Despite this, there are still migrants seeking employment, even though irregular means, despite the increased risks of detention and exploitation due to the slow recovery of employment, fragile economic outlook, and ongoing security concerns. Gender inequality has also been a factor, with women experiencing a greater loss of employment than men. In 2021, there was an overall contraction of 8.9% in employment, resulting in a loss of 1.8 million labors, while women labors saw a loss of 10.2%. Furthermore, the report estimates that in the first half of 2022, employment levels remained below those of 2020 by 5.4%, with female employment being 6.5% lower.(ILO 2022)

The garment industry is Myanmar's largest employer, having provided significant foreign currency earnings for the country. Prior to the pandemic, around 700,000 labors, mostly women, worked in this sector. However, this number has now dropped to just under 500,000 labors, and the garment industry is now the sector with the most significant labor rights violations. Employers are taking advantage of the low demand for labors to engage in abusive practices, such as paying labors below the minimum wage, failing to pay overtime, and reducing overtime payments.

Despite laws stating that people who work on public holidays must be paid double their normal wages, labors are only receiving their normal wages for such work. Moreover, many labors face other challenges, such as being forced to drink tap water due to insufficient drinking water and not being allowed to use the restroom when needed.

While some factories follow labor regulations, others, especially Chinese-owned factories and workshops, are reportedly the worst violators of labors' rights, according to labor rights activists. Labors are reluctant to speak out against such practices for fear of being dismissed or retaliated against, as there are currently no functioning unions or union leaders to advocate for their rights. Consequently, Myanmar has one of the lowest rankings in the 2021 Global Labor Rights Index compiled

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by the International Trade Union Confederation, which surveyed labors in 149 countries.

Despite the approximately 150 labor strikes that occur each year in Myanmar, the government is not taking the labor violations seriously. Before the coup, investors were attracted to Myanmar by cheap wages and favorable tax breaks, but many investors fail to follow labor regulations. While some foreign brands and factories follow local labor laws, others do not.

Myanmar's poor score on the Global Rights Index is due to labor rights not being guaranteed by law, the arrest or killing of union members, and severe restrictions on freedom of expression and gatherings. Unfortunately, Myanmar will likely remain one of the worst-scoring countries on the 2022 Global Rights Index, given the current state of labor rights in the country.(Mizzima 2022)

1.2 Oppression over Myanmar labor

Adidas has been a sponsor of the World Cup for over 50 years. For the 2022 World Cup, the company sponsored 7 out of the 32 teams that qualified. To sponsor shoes, shirts, and accessories, the company had to order from 63 existing factories in 18 countries. One of the shoe suppliers to Adidas is Myanmar

Pao Chen Co., which is owned by a Taiwanese company, where Myanmar laborers work.

More than 2000 laborers in the factory held a three-day strike, demanding a wage increase to 8000 MMK (approximately 2.50 USD) per day from 4,800 MMK (approximately 1.50 USD), as Myanmar faced money depreciation and high commodity prices after the 2021 military coup. At the end of the protest, the factory owner rejected the salary increase demand and then fired 26 laborers who organized the protest, citing their absence for three days without leave as the reason for their dismissal.

1.3 Breach of Supply Chain Code of Conduct

If the primary suppliers work directly with Adidas, they must comply with the company's supply chain code of conduct. The Workplace Standard is designed to improve working conditions, health, safety, and well-being for labors. Through the supply chain code of conduct, Adidas assesses whether primary suppliers follow these standards or not. Specifically, Adidas mentions the need to follow the UN International Bill of Human Rights and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in its supply chain code of conduct.

Under the UN International Bill of Human Rights and ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work,

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factory labors have certain rights, including the freedom from discrimination and slavery, the right to social security, the right to work, the right to strike, and the right to a fair trial.

During the protest against the factory, the factory management notified and called upon the military to disperse the protestors. However, military officials inspected the protest and determined that it was about a salary increase, not political protest, and they withdrew military force from the protest. The factory management threatened the protestors with military force and breached their right to strike and their right to a fair trial by not agreeing to a salary increase, claiming that they had offered a minimum wage to the labors.

In Myanmar, the minimum wage was set at 3,600 MMK in 2015 for the first time. In 2018, the minimum wage was last set at 4,800 MMK. According to the Myanmar Minimum Wage Law, the minimum wage is to be revised and set every two years. The next year for setting the minimum wage was 2021, but the coup d'état in the country prevented the revision of the minimum wage until the end of 2023.

In September 2022, the World Bank set the poverty line. If a person's daily wage is less than 2.15 USD, they are considered poor (Bank 2022). If the minimum wage is set at

4,800 MMK (around 1.5 USD), all labors in Myanmar would not be able to cover the cost of living and would be considered poor, even though they have a regular job and receive a salary. This type of wage is commonly referred to as a starvation wage. If a person has to work without protection from any laws and earns a starvation wage, it is considered modern slavery.

1.4 Research questions

This research composes of –

- By which value of economic justice should Myanmar government take an action over oppression on Myanmar labors?
- How does the value of economic justice by the Capability Approach reflect the violation over Myanmar labors?

1.5 Purpose of the study

In this paper, I will analyze how Myanmar labor were oppressed by international factories, by not being protected by Myanmar laws and how Myanmar labor could not find economic justice. This paper is to advocate the government that it should take an action over Myanmar labor for political and economic well-being, to educate international factories to adopt political situation and to support Myanmar labor to be able to find economic justice out of any kinds of oppression.

Moreover, I will make an argument on economic justice by the Capability Approach on the analysis of oppression on

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Myanmar labor. I will describe the economy system between multinational firms and Myanmar labors in a supply chain, how Myanmar labors were oppressed and, work without protection of law and from the government, how government fail on its responsibilities.

1.6 Advantages of the study

This research is to enhance the knowledge of economic justice in modern age against the modern slavery. This research is to explore a core value of justice among economic actors within and out of a failed state, focusing on well-being of labors, who cannot be a part of international labor mobility by the lack of education, the lack of skills, the lack of information and chance in a solitude country.

2. Theory of Justice

Rawls' seminal book, "A Theory of Justice", primarily details a normative framework for establishing a fair societal structure and its major institutions, including political, economic, legal, and social systems. These institutions play a crucial role in regulating the allocation of resources and societal burdens among individuals who are part of a given society, ultimately influencing their life opportunities. Meyer and Pranay explore the implications of Rawls' theory in contemporary philosophical discourse, including discussions on globalization and intergenerational justice. The concept of social justice

expands in scope during globalization, extending beyond a particular society to encompass the global community. Intergenerational justice, on the other hand, raises questions regarding the responsibility to consider the welfare of future generations and what present sacrifices are necessary to secure their interests.(Barry 1991)

Melvin Lerner (1956) endeavored to define the motivational factors that drive just behavior. This suggests that the desire for justice cannot be simplified to self-interest, which has been a fundamental principle in economic conduct.(Lerner 1965). Montada and Jurgen (2016) provide an important insights and ideas about self-interest, as well as the claim that justice is a major driving force of human behavior that cannot be reduced to self-interest (Montada, Maes et al. 2016).

2.1 Economic Justice on Laborers

Aristotle's notion of "the economic" contrasts with modern Economics. In his writings, he employs the term "oikonomikè", which we translate as "the economic." However, Aristotle's understanding of "the economic" differs significantly from what we now refer to as the economy. Nevertheless, we can still identify aspects of Aristotle's work that pertain to contemporary economic reality. Moreover, we should not assume that Aristotle failed to establish a link between "the economic" and the production, distribution, and consumption of material goods.(Crespo 2010)

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Despite not being an economist, Aristotle introduced fundamental concepts that form the basis of modern Economics and its intersection with Ethics and Politics. To fully appreciate Aristotle's contribution, we need to clarify the meaning of his concept of "the economic." Once we untangle this terminology, we can uncover a wealth of insights into Economics. Therefore, the significance of Aristotle's ideas lies in our attempt to reinterpret them and bring out their hidden potential (Crespo 2010). Before modern economic theory, economics was part of an administrative tradition dealing with efficient household, military, and political management. (Pack 2008)

Aristotle considered justice as the ultimate virtue. He classified justice into general and particular justice. The latter pertains to assigning portions to different individuals and can be further divided into distributive justice and retributive justice. Distributive justice deals with the fair distribution of goods, money, and honor. (Lennig 2011).

Marx proposed a scientific version of socialism that he believed to be both inevitable and unavoidable. He outlined its key characteristics as follows: the role of philosophy as a catalyst for change, the inevitability of class conflict, the reality of exploitation, the worsening poverty of the working class, the entrenched power of private property, and the necessity of

establishing a proletarian dictatorship to eradicate exploitation and inequality.(Geetha 2021)

Marx believed that justice is a type of ethical community founded on principles of equality, freedom, and beneficence, which helps to foster and enhance humanity's purpose or end. He applied his concept of justice to a wide range of concerns, including issues related to labors' creativity and control, producer associations, human rights and needs, fairness and reciprocity in trade, wealth distribution, political liberation, economic and ecological challenges, and economic democracy.(McCarthy 2017)

Marx was not just an economist but a comprehensive social scientist. His framework was centered around the concept of human production. Drawing upon classical economic theory, Marx argued that the value of labor power is determined by the average number of hours of labor required to provide a worker with the essential means of subsistence, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Put simply, the long-term wages received by labors are a function of the amount of labor required to produce a capable worker.(Prychitko 1988)

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. argued that the American economic system had abandoned African Americans and impoverished individuals. Income inequality has worsened in the United States, particularly for these groups. In his last book, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?", King

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discussed how market forces contributed to unemployment and idleness. King suggested that the government should create jobs to benefit the common good for those who were unable to secure employment, which some may view as a form of welfare state.(Silver 2022)

Through a speech titled as “The Other America”, King said,

“ ... we must see that the struggle today is much more difficult. It's more difficult today because we are struggling now for genuine equality. And it's much easier to integrate a lunch counter than it is to guarantee a livable income and a good solid job. It's much easier to guarantee the right to vote than it is to guarantee the right to live in sanitary, decent housing conditions. It is much easier to integrate a public park than it is to make genuine, quality, integrated education a reality. And so today we are struggling for something which says we demand genuine equality”. (King Jr 1968)

A significant focus of The Wealth of Nations is the advantages of the "system of natural liberty," which, according to Smith, promotes the growth of a nation's wealth. Consequently, some economists have argued that Smith's

primary concern was with matters of allocative efficiency. This was to be achieved by allowing the invisible hand to operate freely as individuals pursued their desired occupations. Smith found exclusive privileges for specific groups objectionable since they resulted in an inefficient distribution of resources, leading to a reduced level of overall production of goods for the public.(Noell 1995).

In addition to being inconsistent with his perception of justice, Smith was also opposed to exclusive privileges in the labor market. Furthermore, laws that banned employee or employer combinations were contradictory to liberty and justice. Such laws impeded the ability of labor market associations to negotiate, leading to harm for both parties. Smith's advocacy for the importance of freedom of association as a component of justice, along with his disapproval of exclusive privileges for labor market associations, imply that he was operating with a conception of justice comparable to the Schoolmen's notion of commutative justice. Smith's reference to justice are explicitly expressed in relation to the scholastic idea of commutative justice in his earlier writings on moral philosophy. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith examines various interpretations of the term justice and approaches justice through the lens of the medieval understanding of it:

*“ The first sense of the word coincides
with what Aristotle and the Schoolmen call*

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commutative justice, and with what Grotius calls the justitia expletrix, which consists in abstaining from what is another's, and in doing voluntarily whatever we can with propriety be forced to do.
” (Smith 1759)

3. Capability Approach framework on Economics Justice

The capability approach is a broad framework used for evaluating and assessing individual well-being and social arrangements, as well as for designing policies and proposals for social change in society. This approach is applied in various fields, such as development studies, welfare economics, social policy, and political philosophy. It can be utilized to evaluate several aspects of people's well-being, such as poverty, inequality, individual well-being, or average well-being within a group. Additionally, it can be used as an alternative tool for assessing social cost-benefit analysis or as a framework for designing and evaluating policies, from welfare state projects in affluent societies to development policies implemented by governmental and non-governmental organizations in developing countries. The distinctive feature of the capability approach is its emphasis on evaluating what individuals can actually achieve based on their abilities.(Robeyns 2005)

There is ongoing debate as to whether Nussbaum's list of central capabilities is open to revision or whether it is a fixed set of abilities that cannot be altered. Nussbaum (1995) has maintained that her central capability approach is firm and not subject to revision in response to debates about the list of central capabilities.. (Nussbaum and Glover 1995)

Nussbaum (2009) notes the emergence of a new theoretical paradigm in the realm of development known as the "Human Development" or "Capabilities" approach. This approach starts with the fundamental question of "What are people actually able to do and to be?" Although seemingly simple, this question is complex as it involves multiple elements that are interconnected and require further study in order to understand their relationships with each other and their impact on human life. (Nussbaum 2009). At minimum level, Nussbaum (2021) stated a threshold level of ten Central Capabilities as following-

- 1) Life - Able to live to the end of a normal length human life and not to have a life reduced to not being worth living.
- 2) Bodily Health - Able to have a good life which includes reproductive health, food and shelter.
- 3) Bodily Integrity - Able to freely change location, as well as able to have sovereignty over one's body, which

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includes being secured from assault (e.g. sexual assault, child sexual abuse, domestic violence and opportunities for sexual gratification).

- 4) Sense, Imagination and Thought - Able to use the senses to imagine, think and reason in a "truly human" way - informed by appropriate education, the ability to produce works of self-expression and engage in religious rituals without fear of political ramifications, the ability to have pleasant experiences and avoid unnecessary pain, and the ability to seek the meaning of life.
- 5) Emotions – Able to have attachments to things outside of ourselves; these include being able to love others, grieve the loss of loved ones, and being angry when justified.
- 6) Practical reason - Able to form a conception of the good and to think about it critically.
- 7) Affiliation: a) Able to get along with and care about others, empathize for others, and be fair and friendly. Institutions help develop and protect forms of membership.
 : b) Able to respect oneself and not be humiliated by others; that is to be treated with dignity and equal value. This entails a minimum protection against discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality,

religion, caste, ethnicity and national origin. At work, this means entering into relationships of mutual recognition.

- 8) Other species - Capable of caring for and coexisting with other animals, plants and the environment in general.
- 9) Play - Able to laugh, joke and enjoy recreational activities.
- 10) Control over one's environment: a) Political – Able to participate effectively in political life, which includes the right to freedom of expression and association.

b) Material – Able to own a property, not only formally, but materially (ie as a real opportunity). Also, able to seek employment on an equal basis as others and to be free from unreasonable search and seizure.(Nussbaum 2011)

In order for the capability approach to be justified, it needs to offer something that other approaches cannot. According to Pogge (2002), the capabilities approach has not yet demonstrated the ability to produce a viable standard of social justice that competes with resource-based approaches. He argues that Nussbaum exaggerates the difference between recursive approaches and the capability approach, which is essentially the question of whether natural human diversity, such as physical traits that reduce people's ability to convert resources into useful

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functions and are not caused by past or present social injustices, should be compensated for.(Pogge 2002) (Berges 2007)

Pogge (2002) contended that capability theorists commit the straw man fallacy by comparing the capabilities approach to a less plausible form of appeal. He further concluded that while the capabilities approach may be a valuable addition to recursive theories, it is not justified as a theory of social justice.(Pogge 2002) (Berges 2007).

Nussbaum (2011) asserted that her conception of social justice is founded on the idea that respect for human dignity necessitates allocating all citizens a sufficient level of capability in each of the ten Central Capabilities, where she includes every human beings in the list of citizens mentioned; not differentiating resident aliens, legal and illegal , and people living under different entitlements.(Nussbaum 2011)

In agreement with Nussbaum (2011), Sen (1993) argued that people have reasons to value freedom or liberty to produce, buy and sell in markets (Sen 1993). Despite this, the topic in question was a component of his broader work on development and differed significantly from the extensively debated matter in economics and politics regarding the merits and constraints of the market as an economic production and distribution system. Functioning and capabilities are ideas related to the attainment of well-being and the freedoms associated with it, and

determining which economic institutions are the most effective in fostering functioning is an issue that requires an analytical and political approach. The capability approach offers a (partial) solution to this question. (Robeyns and Byskov 2011)

4. Conclusion

Myanmar is struggling with a significant unemployment problem, and many laborers who have jobs are facing daily labor rights violations. These violations have been on the rise since the military coup in February 2021, which led to a large number of labor force members protesting against the military dictatorship.

According to a representative of the Industrial Laborers Federation of Myanmar (IWFMM), during times of crisis, factory management may further oppress laborers. However, under an elected government, labor union members can report any violation of labor rights by factory owners. With strong representation, factory owners are less likely to breach labor rights. However, since the military coup in Myanmar, labor unions have been disbanded, and factory owners have been able to violate labor rights with ease (The_Irrawaddy_News 2022). These violations include failure to provide overtime pay, imposing excessive working hours, and denying access to welfare facilities. In such circumstances, democracy is absent, and it is unlikely that labor rights will be respected under military rule.

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Obviously, military junta who declare itself as a caretaker government fail to take an action over violation of labor right. People should be able to create and shape the conditions that enable them to pursue their goals and aspirations. This can expand the range of options available to them and increase their capability to achieve their desired outcomes. If laborer can work under rule of law, or if they could speak out more about violating rights by factory owners, the whole mechanism of respecting one's right in the country would create a better workplace and could increase productivity. According to the contribution of Smith in a book called "The Wealth of Nations", he mentioned the advantages of the "system of natural liberty," promotes the growth of a nation's wealth.(Noell 1995)

Sen (1993) also argued that people have reasons to value freedom or liberty to produce, buy and sell in markets (Sen 1993). Through the framework of 'Controlling One's Environment' by the Capability Approach, the collective actions of being able to work, strike, and have a fair trial can enhance individuals' well-being by enabling them to live in accordance with their values and preferences. Additionally, these actions can help achieve economic justice through an elected and fair government. It can also create trust between consumers and producers, or suppliers and manufacturers such as Myanmar Pao

Chen Co. and Adidas. Mutual trust can lead consumers' confident, which can also affect on manufacturers to expend their investment.

While some factories follow labor regulations, others, especially Chinese-owned factories and workshops, are reportedly the worst violators of laborers' rights, according to labor rights activists. Laborers are reluctant to speak out against such practices for fear of being dismissed or retaliated against, as there are currently no functioning unions or union leaders to advocate for their rights. Despite the approximately 150 labor strikes that occur each year in Myanmar, the government is not taking the labor violations seriously.

More than 2000 laborers in the factory held a three-day strike against Myanmar Pao Chen Co., which is owned by a Taiwanese company, demanding a wage increase to 8000 MMK (approximately 2.50 USD) per day from 4,800 MMK (approximately 1.50 USD), as Myanmar faced money depreciation and high commodity prices after the 2021 military coup. After negotiations, the factory management rejected the idea of allowing factory laborers to nominate a representative from their ranks to be the leader of the Workplace Coordination Committee (WCC). Laborers claim that since the military coup, the WCC has been formed based on the preferences of the business owners, and during disputes within the factory, they

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consistently side with the employer rather than the laborers. (BHRRC 2022)

The most fundamental right of laborers is the right to affiliation. The laborers of Myanmar Pao Chen Co. protested and demanded to be represented by laborers to nominate a leader of the Workplace Coordination Committee (WCC), which was formed after the coup according to the preferences of the businessmen. In the process of disputes within the factory, they have always stood on the side of the employer in every factory (Myanmar_Now 2023). However, they did not have a chance to affiliate with the Labor Union and WCC, and then they lose the fundamental right of human well-being. They do not have the capability to cooperate with others towards a shared goal (BHRRC 2022). Marx applied his concept of justice to a wide range of concerns, including issues related to laborers' creativity and control (McCarthy 2017). By appointing a minister at the Ministry of Immigration and Population, the military junta systematically decimated laborers and obviously stood on the factor owners' side, meaning it does not agree with Marx's argument to let laborers control. It denied justice to laborers, according to Smith's advocacy for the importance of freedom of association as a component of justice, which is a "system of natural liberty" (Smith 1759). Where, laborers should be able to

participate effectively in political life, which includes the right to freedom of expression and association.

In September 2022, the World Bank set the poverty line. If a person's daily wage is less than 2.15 USD, they are considered poor (Bank 2022). If the minimum wage is set at 4,800 MMK (around 1.5 USD), all laborers in Myanmar would not be able to cover the cost of living and would be considered poor, even though they have a regular job and receive a salary. This type of wage is commonly referred to as a starvation wage. If a person has to work without protection from any laws and earns a starvation wage, it is considered modern slavery. Marx argued that the value of labor power is determined by the average number of hours of labor required to provide a worker with the essential means of subsistence, such as food, clothing, and shelter (Prychitko 1988). Phyo Thida Win, a laborer of Myanmar Pao Chen Co., stated that in 2018, they were paid \$2.25 (because of inflation rate, the currency value become gradually depreciated and its value is around 1.5 USD in 2022/23) and they made about 120 shoes per day. Production increased from 120 to 140, and then to 160 day by day (RFA 2022). Therefore, we are demanding an increase in salary in accordance with the increase in production. It shows that laborers have to overwork and get paid less which is unable to provide themselves with the essential means of subsistence, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Chit Ko Ko, another laborers of

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that, mentioned that we cannot live on 4,800 MMK a day; it is not enough at all. With the rising prices of basic commodities, 4,800 MMK does not even cover our minimum expenses. If we fall ill, medication costs around 6000-7000 MMK each time. Cooking oil costs more than 7000 MMK. Hence, he stated that it is our right to demand a salary increase (RFA 2022).

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. argued that the government should create jobs to benefit the common good for those who were unable to secure employment (Silver 2022). A laborer said that they are not enemies of the factory. Their families can only make ends meet because of these factories. That is why they wish not to engage in any further clashes with the factory. They want to peacefully return to work at the factory and negotiate our demands positively (RFA 2022). Nevertheless, 26 laborers got fired, given the reason that they were absent to attend the factory. But the military junta, in the process of disputes within the factory, is meant to stand on the side of the employer in every factory. That is a significant oppression on not only laborers of Myanmar Pao Chen Co., also every laborers across the country. Also, the military junta fail in its practice to protect every kind of employment. Every kind of labor should be secured to live to the end of a normal length human life and not to have a life

reduced to not being worth living, and should be able to have a good life which includes reproductive health, food and shelter.

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Government Spending and Economic Growth: A Case Study of Myanmar

Nay Myo Htun¹

Abstract

Every government must allocate the budget as the expenditure on various sectors in the particular country for the development of it. According to Keynesian economics, if the government spending rises while all other spending components stay constant, output will increase. However, Wagner's law shows that increased government spending is likely to harm economic growth. Sethi (2016) discovers a long-run relationship between economic growth and government spending, as well as unidirectional causality from government spending to economic growth. The purpose of this research is to determine the trends in the growth rate of government spending and GDP from 2011 to 2023, as well as to analyse the relationship between government spending and economic growth in Myanmar (2011-2023). The data used in this study are from secondary sources such as the World Bank, the Ministry of Planning and Finance of Myanmar's website, other Myanmar Government websites, and previous studies. Different types of analysis are used to obtain scientific results, including correlation, regression, and

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the Granger Causality Test. The findings show that there is a rejection of the unit root for Government spending (Expenditure) at level but Economic Growth (GDP) at first difference. And there is a positive correlation between Economic Growth (GDP) and Government Spending (Expenditure) in Myanmar. And Government spending (Expenditure) granger cause Economic Growth (GDP) of Myanmar but Economic Growth (GDP) does not granger cause Government spending (Expenditure) at 5% level of significance.

Keywords: Myanmar, GDP, Government Spending, Correlation, Granger Causality

1. Introduction

1.1. Background Study

Government spending and economic growth are two crucial components of any economy. Government spending is the amount of money that the government allocates towards various public services, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, defense, and other expenses. Economic growth, on the other hand, means that the increase in the production and consumption of goods and services in an economy over time, like GDP.

The relationship between government spending and economic growth has been a topic of intense debate among economists and policymakers for decades. According to Keynesian's economics, some argue that increased government

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spending can stimulate economic growth by creating jobs and supporting public investment. By Wagner's theory, others contend that government spending can crowd out private investment, leading to lower economic growth and increased debt. In this research work, the relationship between government spending and economic growth with a case of Myanmar based on the data from 2011 to 2023.

1.2 Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship of government spending and economic growth in Myanmar. The objectives of the study are

- to know the trends of the growth rate of government spending and GDP from 1990 to 2023, and
- to investigate the relationship between government spending and economic growth in Myanmar.

2. Literature Review

Polu et al. (2022) examined the impact of government expenditure on economic growth in Ghana. Using the secondary data from 1970 to 2016, ARDL econometric estimation technique is used. The results showed that there is a positive correlation between government expenditure and economic growth in the short-run but there is a significant positive correlation between Gross Capital Formation; and Foreign Direct Investment and economic growth in both the short-run and long-run, there is a significant negative relationship between

population growth and economic growth (GDP growth). Chindengwike and Tyagi (2022) investigated the effects of government expenditure in Uganda on infrastructure in promoting sustainable economic. Using Johansen cointegration test, Granger- Connection, and Vector Auto Regressive (VAR), the results show that there is a long-run relationship between government expenditure in infrastructure, communication, electricity, and financial development, an indirect relationship between economic development rate and all components of public spending; and public spending on infrastructure, communication, and energy having a direct effect on economic development rate.

Suwandaru et al. (2021) found the relationship between public expenditure for education and the economic growth in Indonesia. By using Autoregressive Distributed Lag bound tests based on the secondary data from 1988 to 2018, the results show that that public expenditure on education has an insignificant relationship in the long- and short-term estimation. However, they both have different directions, which is a positive relationship in long-term and a negative relationship in short-term estimation. Meanwhile, gross fixed capital formation shows a positive relationship, and the labour variable has a negative relationship in the short and long terms. Nayak et al. (2021) investigated the effects of government spending on long-term Indian economic growth. Based on the data from 2006 to

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2016 using co-integration analysis, the results point out long-run spending on economic services, general services, social services, and grants has a positive effect on GDP in the revenue account, while in the capital account, economic services and general services have a positive impact on the economy but social services and public debt and loans have a negative impact on the country's GDP.

Mishra and Mohanty (2021) studied the relationship between government spending and economic growth in subnational governments in India. Based on the secondary data, the findings show that government spending, institutional credit, and commercial electricity consumption all have a positive and statistically significant impact on economic growth, and that there is bi-directional causality between government spending and economic growth, as well as between electricity consumption and economic growth. Aijaz Syed (2021) investigated how military spending improves economic growth and industrial productivity using empirical data from India, China, and Pakistan. Based on the secondary data, the findings portray that military expenditure has a significant positive and negative impact on economic growth in the long run for China and India, but only a positive impact in the short run, with a symmetric effect in the short run and an asymmetric impact in the long run.

Barlas (2020) studied the impact of expenditure compositions on economic growth in Afghanistan. Based on the secondary data, Unit root test, Johansen co-integration test and bound test and Autoregressive Distribution Lag (ARDL) model is used to analyze the data. The results showed that there is a long-run relationship between dependent and independent variables, the previews and current expenditures on education and infrastructure are positively correlated with economic growth and security expenditure is negatively linked with growth rate. Ogar et al. (2019) examined the impact of government expenditure on the growth of the Nigerian economy, specifically examination of the impact of government capital, government recurrent expenditure and government fiscal deficit on the growth of the Nigerian economy. Using VAR technique based on the secondary data for the period 1980 to 2017, the findings showed that government capital expenditure had a positive but insignificant effect on the growth of the Nigerian economy. Also, it was revealed that government fiscal deficit had insignificant negative effect on the growth of the Nigerian economy. Lastly, the study revealed that at the short run, government recurrent expenditure had an insignificant positive effect on the growth of the Nigerian economy while in the long run it has a positive but insignificant effect on economic growth.

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Nguyen (2019) investigated the effect of state budget expenditure with two major components: development investment expenditure and recurrent expenditure in Vietnam. Based on the data for a period of 2000-2017, ordinary least-squares technique is used. The results show that the state budget expenditure has positive impact on economy, recurrent expenditure also has significant positive impact on Vietnamese economy but there is no evidence for the relationship between the development investment expenditure and the economic growth. Sessaiah et al. (2018) studied the trends in general government expenditure and Real GDP growth of the Indian economy from 1980-81 to 2015-16, as well as the relationship between General government expenditure and GDP growth. Based on secondary data, the findings show that, with the exception of FDI growth rate, all explanatory factors have a positive and significant impact on GDP growth rate. There was also a negative and significant influence of general government expenditure on GDP growth rate after 2008, during the crisis period, and a positive and significant impact of general government spending on GDP growth rate after 1991, during the reform period.

Dudzevičiūtė et al. (2018) examined to provide more reliable estimates of the relationship between government spending and economic growth in the European Union (EU). Based on the secondary data from 1995 to 2015, descriptive

statistics analysis was employed and correlation and granger causality test was applied for the data analysis. The findings indicated that eight EU countries have a significant relationship between government spending and economic growth. Piabuo and Tieguhong (2017) studied the comparative analysis on the impact of health expenditure between countries in the CEMAC sub-region and five other African countries that achieved the Abuja declaration. Panel ordinary least square (OLS), fully modified ordinary least square (FMOLS) and dynamic ordinary least square (DOLS) were used to analyze the secondary data from World Development Indicators (2016) database. The results showed that health expenditure has a positive and significant effect on economic growth in both samples. A unit change in health expenditure can potentially increase GDP per capita by 0.38 and 0.3 units for the five other African countries that achieve the Abuja target and for CEMAC countries respectively, a significant difference of 0.08 units among the two samples. In addition, a long-run relationship also exists between health expenditure and economic growth for both groups of countries.

Ejaz et al. (2017) examined the impact of public expenditure on economic growth in Pakistan. Based on the secondary data from 1982-2017, the ordinary least square (OLS) test and CUSUM, CUSUM Square tests are applied to analyze the data. The result pointed out there is a significant positive

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relationship between development and health expenditures on economic growth. Furthermore, defense and education expenditures have negative relationship on economic growth. Mallick et al. (2016) investigated dynamics of educational expenditure and economic growth in selected 14 major Asian countries. Based on panel data of 1973-2012, Pedroni cointegration, FMOLS and panel vector error correction (PVECM) are used to analyze the data. The FMOLS data showed a positive and statistically significant effect on their economic development from their education spending. Both in the short- and long-term, the panel vector error correction (PVECM) exhibits unidirectional Granger causality from economic growth to education spending but educational expenditure only Granger causes economic growth in long-run in all countries. The FMOLS reveals a positive impact of educational expenditure on economic growth.

Alper and Demiral (2016) investigated the impacts of government's social expenditure such as education, health and social spending on economic growth performances presented by the changes in GDP per capita. Based on the panel data of 2002-2013 using the feasible generalized least squares (FGLS) estimators, the results show that the social expenditures in all three dimensions significantly impact on the economic growth. Adamu and Hajara (2015) studied to analyze the impact and direction of causality between fiscal variables and economic

growth. By using ADF unit root test, ordinary least square and multiple regression to analyze the secondary data for the period 1970-2012, the findings show that there is positive and insignificant relationship between capital expenditure and economic growth while recurrent expenditure had a significant positive impact on economic growth and there is a unidirectional causality running from the fiscal variables to economic growth in validation of the Keynesian theory.

Sethi (2015) examined the long run and causal relationship between government spending and economic growth in India. Based on the secondary data, ADF test, Phillips Perron test, Johansen's cointegration test, Granger causality test is used. The results point out there is a long run relationship between economic growth and government spending and there is unidirectional causality from government spending to economic growth consistent with Keynesian viewpoint. Gangal and Gupta (2013) analyzed the impact of public expenditure on India's economic growth. Using the ADF Unit Root Test, Cointegration Test, and Granger Causality Test, the results show that there is linear stationarity in both variables, indicating long run equilibrium, and a positive impact of total public expenditure on economic growth, but only in one direction, from TPE to GDP, as well as a positive impact of shocks from TPE to GDP and vice versa.

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Okoro (2013) studied the impact of government spending on economic growth in Nigeria. Using ordinary least squares, multiple regression analysis, Granger Causality test, Johansen Cointegration Test, and Error Correction Mechanism based on secondary data, the result indicate a long-run equilibrium relationship between government spending and economic growth in Nigeria, as well as short-run dynamics that adjust to the long-run equilibrium at a rate of 60% each year. Srinivasan (2013) explored the relationship between public expenditure and economic growth in India. Using cointegration approach and error correction model based on secondary data, the findings show that there is a long-term equilibrium link between public expenditure and economic growth in India, as well as one-way causality flows from economic growth to public spending in both the short and long run, validating Wagner's rule of public spending.

Nworji et al. (2012) examined the impact of public government spending on the Nigerian economy. Using the OLS multiple regression model based on the secondary data, the findings show that capital and recurrent expenditure on economic services had an insignificant negative effect on economic growth during the study period, while capital expenditure on transfers had an insignificant positive effect on growth. However, capital and recurrent expenditure on social and community services, as well as recurrent expenditure on

transfers, had a significant positive effect on economic growth. Biswas (1992) studied the relationship between defence spending and economic growth in emerging countries. Based on secondary data using Conventional Model and the Augmented Neoclassical Model, the results indicate that military spending has a beneficial effect on LDC growth.

3. Research Methodology

This study is the explorative research which is the quantitative data for government spending and economic growth in Myanmar. The data used in this study is based on the secondary sources which are World Bank, Ministry of Planning and Finance of Myanmar Website, other Myanmar Government websites and previous studies. Different types of analysis are used to obtain scientific results, including correlation, regression, and the Granger Causality Test with the use of E Views Statistical Software.

4. Data Analysis

In this part, the relationship between government spending (total expenditure) and the economic growth of Myanmar from 2011 to 2023 (2023-2024 Fiscal Year) is analyzed. So, the descriptive analysis of GDP Growth Rate and Expenditure are mentioned in table 1 as follows.

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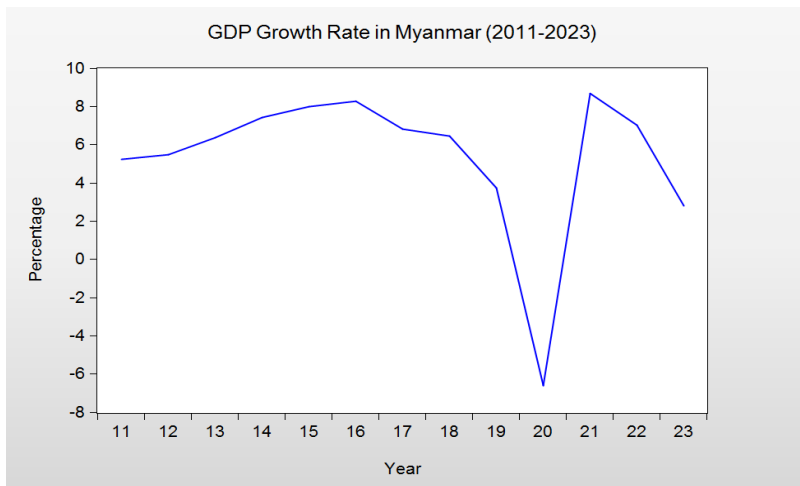
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	GDP Growth Rate (%)	Expenditure (Kyats in millions)
Mean	5.57	20381677.64
Standard Error	1.18	2219766.86
Median	6.62	19269515.62
Standard Deviation	4.07	8305607.08
Minimum	-6.6	8212477.65
Maximum	8.68	33175053.33

Source: Author's Calculation based on the data from Ministry of Planning and Finance of Myanmar and World Bank Website by using E View Statistical Tool

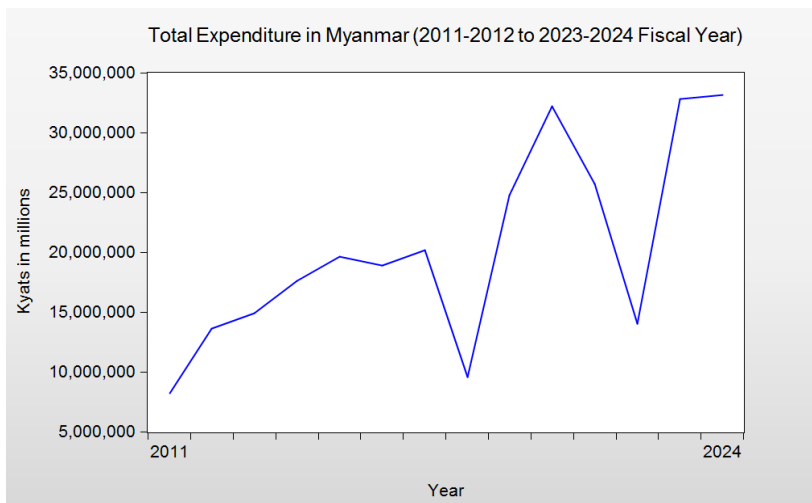
Table 1 points out that the minimum GDP growth rate is -6.6% and maximum is 8.68% from 2011-2023 while the maximum expenditure is 33175053.33 kyats in millions and minimum is 8212477.65 kyats in millions. And let's see the trends of GDP growth rate and expenditure in Myanmar (2011-2023) described in figure 1 and 2.

Figure 1. GDP Growth Rate in Myanmar (2011-2023)



Source: Author's Contribution based on the secondary data by the use of E View Software

Figure 2. Total Expenditure in Myanmar (2011-2012 to 2023-2024 Fiscal Year)



Source: Author's Contribution based on the secondary data by the use of E View Software

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According to figure 1, there is a fluctuated trend for GDP growth rate in Myanmar (2011-2023) and the highest GDP growth rate is 8.68% in 2021-2022 but the lowest is -6.60% in 2020-21. Figure 2 interprets that the expenditure increased year by year because the expenditure growth rate trend fluctuated. The highest expenditure growth rate is 158.66% in FY 2018-19 and the lowest is -20.24% in FY 2020-21 although there is the lowest expenditure growth rate in the mini budget year in 2018 and 2021.

4.1. Empirical Results

4.1.1. Unit Root Test Results

The stationarity of the variables – Government spending (Expenditure) and Economic Growth (GDP) was tested using Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) test. Table 2 reports the results which suggest the rejection of the unit root null hypothesis of stationarity for Government spending (Expenditure) and Economic Growth (GDP) at Level.

Table 2. Unit Root Test Results

For Expenditure	ADF (level)	P Value	ADF (first difference)	P Value	ADF (second difference)	P Value
(with intercept)	-4.761	0.0018	-6.008	0.0002	-4.386	0.0051

(with intercept and time trend)	-4.514	0.0120	-5.745	0.0016	-4.106	0.0304
For GDP	ADF (level)	P Value	ADF (first difference)	P Value	ADF (second difference)	P Value
(with intercept)	-3.722	0.0138	-8.301	0.0000	-3.807	0.0232
(with intercept and time trend)	-4.002	0.0300	-3.364	0.1083	-3.785	0.0737

Source: Author's Calculation based on the data from Ministry of Planning and Finance of Myanmar and World Bank Website by using E View Statistical Tool

4.1.2 Correlation

Table 3. Correlation between GDP Growth Rate and Expenditure in India (2004-2023)

	GDP-Expenditure
Correlation	0.171513

Source: Author's Calculation based on the data from Ministry of Planning and Finance of Myanmar and World Bank Website by using E View Statistical Tool

In table 3, the correlation between Economic Growth (GDP) and Government Spending (Expenditure) in Myanmar

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can be seen. Based on the data from 2004 to 2023, the result points out there is a positive correlation between Economic Growth (GDP) and Government Spending (Expenditure) in India with a value of 0.172.

4.1.3. Granger Causality

The empirical literature analyzes the relationship between government spending (expenditure) and economic growth through Granger Causality. It is used to measure short run relationship of two variables.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no granger causality from Government spending (Expenditure) to Economic Growth (GDP) of India.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no granger causality from Economic Growth (GDP) to Government spending (Expenditure) of India.

The results are reported in table 4.

Table 4. Granger Causality Results

Null Hypothesis:	F- Statistic	Prob.
No Granger Causality from Expenditure to GDP	15.4346	0.0009
No Granger Causality from GDP to Expenditure	4.79392	0.0347

Source: Author's Calculation based on the data from Ministry of Planning and Finance of Myanmar and World Bank Website by using E View Statistical Tool

According to table 4, the results indicate there is Granger causality from Government spending (Expenditure) to Economic Growth (GDP) of Myanmar and there is also Granger causality from Economic Growth (GDP) to Government spending (Expenditure) of Myanmar at 5% level of significance.

5. Findings

According to the results, the GDP growth rate in Myanmar is fluctuated and the expenditure increases year by year with the fluctuated growth rate trend since 2011 to the present time 2023. The highest GDP growth rate is 8.68% and the lowest is -6.60% while the maximum expenditure growth rate is 158.66% and minimum is -20.24%. From the scientific results using the econometric tools, using Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) test, there is a rejection of the unit root for Government spending (Expenditure) at level but Economic Growth (GDP) at first difference. And there is a positive correlation between Economic Growth (GDP) and Government Spending (Expenditure) in Myanmar. And Government spending (Expenditure) granger cause Economic Growth (GDP) of Myanmar but Economic Growth (GDP) does not granger cause Government spending (Expenditure) at 5% level of significance.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, this study highlighted the relationship between Government spending and Economic Growth in

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different method. One thing that the study points out is the importance of government spending as a key driver of economic growth in Myanmar. This study used time series data covering from the period from 2011 to 2023 to empirically analyze the relationship between Government Spending and Economic Growth in Myanmar. This research finding indicates that there is a positive correlation between Government Spending and Economic Growth in Myanmar which means the government has to boost the effective expenditure for economic growth of the country. And also point out there is only unidirectional between Government Spending and Economic Growth. So, the government needs to spend effectively the expenditure to boost the economic growth of the country Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between government spending and economic growth in Myanmar and Myanmar follows the Keynesian's economics.

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Linear and non-linear regression analysis of Trade Openness and FDI on Economic Growth of Myanmar (1990-2022)

Htwe Ko¹

Abstract

The study objects to investigate trade openness, foreign direct investment (FDI) and their impact on economic growth of Myanmar for the periods between 1990 and 2022. Authors employ Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple linear regression model and Exponential Smooth Threshold Regression (ESTR) Model. Before model estimation, we first performed a Unit Root Testing with Phillips-Perron (1988) to check the stationarity issues. We second performed Pearson correlation test to check if the correlation exists between dependent and independent variables before model estimation. The findings of the results reveal that trade openness has positive influence on economic growth of Myanmar. The results also show that foreign direct investment does not have positive effect on economic growth of Myanmar. Future study is encouraged to adopt models that can capture short-/long-run relationships between dependent and independent variables.

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Keywords: Ordinary Least Squares Linear Regression, Exponential Smooth Threshold Regression, Trade Openness, Foreign Direct Investment, Economic Growth,

1. Introduction

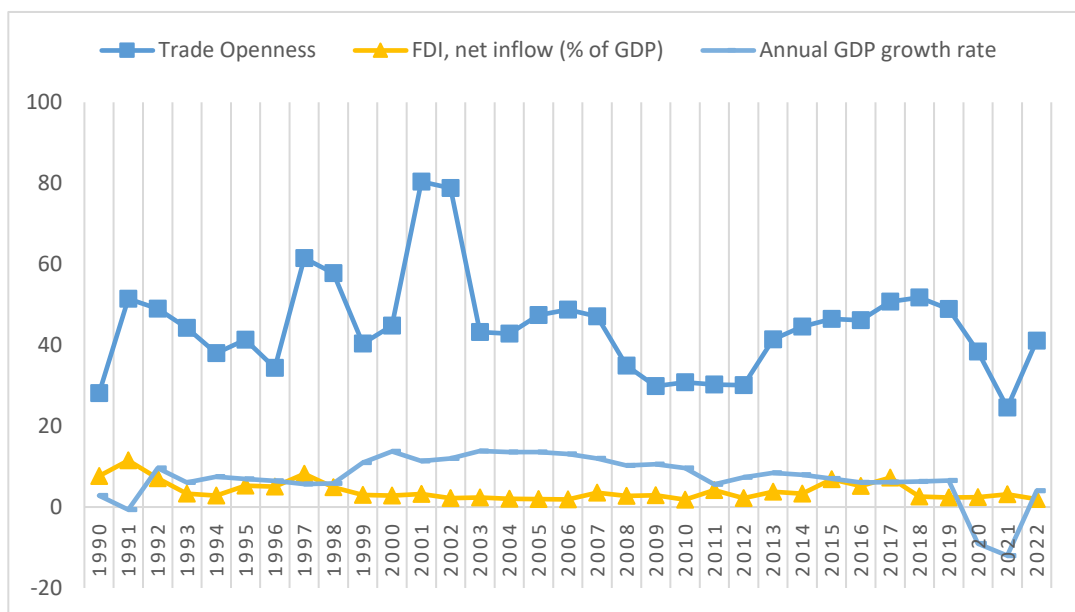
Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Trade Openness have emerged as significant drivers of economic evolution in developing nations during the period of liberalization and globalization (E. Nketiah et al, 2020). As the globalization continues, understanding the associations between among trade openness, FDI and economic development becomes increasingly central, especially for countries undergoing significant transitions, such as Myanmar.

Myanmar, as a developing country, has been actively engaging in foreign trade and attracting more foreign direct investment. Myanmar, a country transitioning from decades of military rule to a more democratic system, the associations between trade openness, FDI, and political transition is particularly relevant. The recent political reforms in Myanmar have created new opportunities for international trade and investment, but also pose challenges related to institutional capacity-building and regulatory reform (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2017; Kyaw, 2013). However, the dynamics have shifted again with the onset of a military coup in February 2021, significantly impacting the country's economic landscape and raising

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questions about international trade, foreign investment, and economic development in the face of political instability. And, the influence of international trade and foreign investment on economic development in Myanmar remains unclear.

Figure 1. Trends of Trade Openness, FDI (% of GDP) and GDP annual growth rate



Source: author adjusted the data from World Bank and Myanmar Statistical Yearbook

The figure I.1 illustrates the trends of trade openness, FDI % of GDP and annual-GDP-growth rate from 1990 to 2022. Open openness has a significant peak around 2000, after which it declines sharply and then stabilizes at a lower level before year 2020. FDI as percentage of GDP also fluctuates but in a less

dramatic manner compared to trade openness. For GDP growth rate, it shows a generally increasing trend from 2.82% in 1990 to a peak of 13.84% around 2013. After this peak, there decreased a trend, hitting a low of -12.02% in 2021.

The primary objectives of this study are to investigate the influence of trade openness and foreign divestment investment on economic growth of Myanmar during 1990 and 2022 by using both linear and non-linear regression models. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In section II, we review the relevant literature section followed by theoretical framework with section III. Then, we will report the data sources and describe research methodology in section IV. We will discuss the results in section V. Finally, we will conclude this paper with section VI.

2. Literature Review

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, as a statistical method, is widely used by econometrics learners to examine the real-time effects of multiple independent variables on a dependent variable, such as GDP, while controlling for other factors (Greene, 2012). It allows the analysis of long-term correlations and provides valuable insights into policy implications (Wooldridge, 2015). By estimating coefficients and assessing significance levels, OLS regressions offers a severe framework for investigating complex economic phenomena,

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making it a suitable choice for analyzing the factors like trade openness and foreign direct investment and their impact on economic progress (Kmenta, 1986; Stock & Watson, 2014).

A study investigated the influence of macroeconomic variables and trade openness on Pakistan's GDP growth using yearly time-series dataset over the periods of 1973 to 2012. Researchers used Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression model to analyze the long-run and short-run relationship between trade openness, GDP growth and other macroeconomic features, including government expenditure, inflation and exchange rate. The findings disclosed a positive and significant effect of trade openness on GDP growth for the long run, indicating the importance of international trade for Pakistan's economic development. Additionally, the study highlights the role of other macroeconomic variables in shaping Pakistan's economic growth trajectory (Ramzan et al, 2013).

Another study also examined the connection FDI, trade openness, and Ghana's economic improvement. In that study, panel dataset covering FDI net inflows, trade openness, the growth rate of GDP and inflation rate was used for a specific time period. They employed OLS regression model to analyze the connection among economic growth, FDI and trade openness. They found a significant positive bond between FDI inflows, trade openness and economic development in Ghana

((Nketiah et al, 2020). In 2012, HYE & LAU studied the relationship between trade liberalization and economic growth in India using annual time series data from 1971 to 2009 (HYE & LAU, 2012). They used an autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) approach and found that a positive and statistically significant correlation has been identified between India's economic growth and trade openness. Sijabhat, R (2023) also carried out a study investigating the nexus between foreign portfolio investment (FPI), foreign direct investment (FDI) and GDP in ASEAN countries (Sijabat, 2023). The study applied Fully Modified Least Squares and Dynamic Least Squares panel testing methods for data obtained from 2009 to 2020. The findings indicated a significant influence of both FDI and FPI on the GDP of the ten ASEAN member countries.

In the context of Myanmar, a few studies in this field have been published. Among them, Jinhwan OH and Kyi Chi Thant conducted a study to analyze Myanmar's trade liberalization and its effects on foreign trade landscape, employing a Gravity approach (Oh & Thant, 2016). Their investigation used a panel dataset encompassing 8 ASEAN countries, including Myanmar. Their findings illuminated that Myanmar's trade has encountered distortions attributable to political influences, particularly the economic sanctions levied by Western powers. Their analysis concluded that Myanmar's

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trade patterns have been skewed, with a notable reliance on neighboring nations such as China and Thailand.

Another paper also delivered the correlation between foreign trade and GDP growth of Myanmar with the use of annual exports data and imports data and GDP at current prices and constant prices for three different time periods (Nem, 2020). He, author employed Toda and Yamamoto (1995) Modified Wald (MWALD) Test and causality test for three periods (1948 – 1962), (1962-1988) and (1988 – 2017). During the initial period, Toda and Yamamoto's causality analysis revealed evidence of causal relationship between imports and GDP growing. Similarly, the findings indicated unidirectional causality from imports to exports and from exports to GDP growth. Moreover, bidirectional causality was observed between the quarterly real values of imports and exports, as well as between quarterly real values of exports and economic development. In subsequent periods, a feedback relationship between GDP growth and imports emerged. Additionally, unidirectional causality from GDP growth to exports was identified. However, in the third period, no discernible relationship was found between the quarterly real values of imports, exports, and GDP growth in Myanmar.

A large body of existing literature have not used both linear and non-linear regression approaches in examining the

impact of trade openness and FDI on GDP growth rate including the specific case of Myanmar. It leaves a knowledge gap to fill for this study to carry out.

3. Theoretical Framework

The link between economic growth and trade liberalization or openness could be a central tenet to classical and neoclassical economic theories. According to these theories, increased openness to trade allows nations to specialize in the production of goods and services in which they have a comparative advantage, leading to greater efficiency and higher overall output. This can result in enhanced productivity, technological advancement, and ultimately, economic growth (Balassa, 1965: Romer, 1990).

Foreign investment is another important factor for economic advance, particularly in the situation of developing countries. Theories such as Solow-Swan model and Endogenous growth theory hypothesize that Foreign direct investment can stimulate economic development by promoting wealth accumulation, technology transfer, and knowledge spillovers (Lucas, 1988: Solow, 1956). FDI inflows enable recipient countries to access new technologies, managerial expertise, and international markets, thereby enhancing their productive capacity and competitiveness. Moreover, political transition acts a decisive role in mediating the associations between trade, FDI,

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and economic progress. Countries with stable political environments is more likely to interest foreign investment and benefit from trade liberalization policies (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2001). Conversely, political instability, corruption, and weak governance can undermine investor confidence and delay economic development efforts.

4. Data Collection and Methodology

Authors uses secondary annual timeseries dataset obtained from reliable sources including world bank open database, Myanmar yearly statistics and UNCTAD database. The sources of variables are summarized in Table IV.1 below.

Table IV.1 Summary of Sources of data and variables

Sym	Variables	Sources
bols		
GDP	Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annual growth rate (%)	“World Development Indicators (1990 – 2022, http://databank.worldbank.org ”
TOP	Trade Openness [(exports + imports)/GDP*100]	“World Development Indicators (1990 – 2009) and Myanmar Statistical Yearbook (2010-2022),

		http://databank.worldbank.org and http://csostat.gov.mm/publicationandrelease/statisticalyearbook
FDI	Foreign-Direct-Investment net inflows (% of GDP)	“World Development Indicators (1990 – 2022), http://databank.worldbank.org ”
EMR	Employment to Total Population ratio, (%), (aged 15 +)	“World Development Indicators (1990 – 2022), http://databank.worldbank.org ”
EXR	Exchange Rate (1MMK=USD\$)	“United Nations Conference, Trade and Development (UNCTAD), https://unctadstat.unctad.org ”
INR	Consumer Price Index, Inflation Rate (%)	“World Development Indicators (1990 – 2019) and Myanmar Statistical Yearbook (2020-2022), http://databank.worldbank.org and http://csostat.gov.mm/publicationandrelease/statisticalyearbook ”

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PTD	Political Transition Dummy (0 and 1)	Dummy for military rule is 0 and democratic transition is 1
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Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Linear Regression Model

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method is commonly applied to estimate the unknown parameters in the linear regression model (Hayashi, 2000). The general form of a linear regression model is presented in equation [1]. If that develops to a multiple linear regression model at which several independent variables (X_1, X_2, \dots, X_q) and one dependent variable (Y), it can be written as expressed in equation [2]. It is essential to ensure that there exists a correlation between dependent and independent variables before linear regression modeling. Pearson and Spearman Correlation Tests are very common for that (Hauke & Kossowski, 2011).

$$Y = X\beta + \epsilon \quad [1]$$

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_q X_{nq} + \epsilon_i \quad [2]$$

Where, Y is the vector values of dependent variable ($n \times 1$), X is the matrix of independent variables ($q \times (n+1)$), β = the vector of unknown parameters of the regression model ($(q+1) \times 1$) and ϵ = the vector of error term ($n \times 1$).

$$Y = \begin{bmatrix} Y_1 \\ Y_2 \\ \vdots \\ Y_n \end{bmatrix}$$

$$X = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 & \dots & 1 \\ X_{11} & X_{21} & \dots & X_{n1} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ X_{1q} & X_{2q} & \dots & X_{nq} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\beta = \begin{bmatrix} \beta_0 \\ \beta_1 \\ \vdots \\ \beta_q \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\varepsilon = \begin{bmatrix} \varepsilon_1 \\ \varepsilon_2 \\ \vdots \\ \varepsilon_n \end{bmatrix}$$

The coefficient of unknown parameters in the linear regression model can be estimated using the OLS formula presented in equation [3].

$$\hat{\beta} = (X^T X)^{-1} X^T Y \quad [3]$$

In this paper, authors use multiple linear regression modeling with OLS method. In which, one dependent variable, two independent variables and four control variables are used to investigate the impact of trade openness and foreign direct investment on the economic growth of Myanmar for the periods between 1990 and 2022. They are as follows;

Y = Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annual growth rate

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X_1 = Trade Openness

X_2 = Foreign Direct Investment, percentage of GDP

C_1 = Employment to total population ratio aged 15 +

C_2 = Exchange Rate, Myanmar Kyat (MMK) against US dollar

C_3 = Consumer Price Index, Inflation Rate

C_4 = Political Transition Dummy

The data is analyzed with Frequentist method by using linear and non-linear regression modeling to estimate the coefficient of the parameters. In this study, we use EViews software for the regression analysis. The first empirical model of this research for OLS linear regression is developed in equation [4]. And the second empirical model for ESTR model is shown in equation [6].

$$GDP_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TOP_t + \beta_2 FDI_t + \beta_3 EMR_t + \beta_3 EXR_t + \beta_4 INR_t + \beta_5 PTD_t + \epsilon_t \quad [4]$$

Exponential Smooth Threshold Regression (ESTR) Model

Threshold regression models including Exponential Smooth Threshold Regression (ESTR), capture nonlinear relationships between dependent and independent variables specified in different regimes or states under the assumption of normally distributed errors.

The general form of smooth transitions between regimes is proposed by discrete switching models expressed in equation [5].

$$Y_t = x_t' \varphi + (x_t' \theta) \cdot G(y, c; s_t) + \mu_t \rightarrow t = 1, 2, \dots, T \quad [5]$$

Where, φ_i and θ_i = the parameter vectors, x_t = the vector of endogenous and exogenous variables, μ_t = independent identically distributed errors and G indicates a continuous transition function bounded between 0 and 1. The slope parameter γ of the transition function depends on the transition variable S_t (Kavkler et al, n.d). $\gamma > 0$ indicates how quickly the transition occurs between two states, 0 and 1. The threshold parameter, C , shows where this transition happens. Usually, the transition variable, S_t is one of the explanatory variables or the time trend.

By following the linear equation [4], a non-linear equation for the STR model can be written in equation [6].

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$$GDP_t = (\beta_{10} + \beta_{11}TOP_t + \beta_{12}FDI_t + \beta_{13}EMR_t + \beta_{14}EXR_t + \beta_{15}INR_t + \beta_{16}PTD_t)d[q_t \leq \gamma] + (\beta_{20} + \beta_{21}TOP_t + \beta_{22}FDI_t + \beta_{23}EMR_t + \beta_{24}EXR_t + \beta_{25}INR_t + \beta_{26}PTD_t)d[q_t > \gamma] + \mu_t \quad [6]$$

5. Results and Discussion

It is also important to check stationarity issues with unit root testing for each variable used in this study. Table V.1 provides the results of unit root testing with Phillips Perron (PP). Besides, it is a common to check the existence of correlation between dependent and independent variables because authors are building regression models. So, authors first perform the Pearson test. In table V.2, Pearson correlation testing results between dependent variable and independent variables are provided. Based on those presenting results, it indicates that the variables are correlated between GDP annual growth and selected independent variables. That is interpreted upon p-value of variables that are less than critical value of α (0.05). Thus, these data can be used to continue regression modeling.

Table V.1 Unit Root Tests with Phillips Perron (PP)

Variables	Phillips Perron (PP)			
	Constant without		Constant with	
	Linear Trend		Linear Trend	
	Adj. T- Value	P- Value	Adj. T- Value	P- Value
GDP	-	0.1055	-	0.2497
	3.653730*		4.273277*	
TOP	-3.539383	0.0132	-	0.0412
			4.273277*	
FDI	-	0.0756	-	0.1399
	3.653730*		4.273277*	
EMR	-	1.0000	-	0.7906
	3.653730*		4.273277*	
EXR	-14.77568	0.0000	-10.82647	0.0000
INR	-3.053083	0.0406	-5.722355	0.0003
PTD	-	0.4812	-	0.7919
	3.653730*		4.273277*	

Notes: * denotes indicates the significance at 1%. The lag-length automation for PP (1988) unit root is selected by Newey-West Bandwidth. These tests are applied to the level.

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Table V.2 Pearson Correlation Testing Results

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
TOP	0.811369	0.0000
FDI	0.601932	0.0002
EMR	0.811590	0.0000
EXR	0.317156	0.0676
INR	0.659582	0.0000
PTD	0.738264	0.0000

Table V.3 below shows the results obtained from running multiple linear regression model using OLS method. The model estimation based on given assumptions resulted that TOP, FDI, EMR, EXR and INR variables are significant predictors of dependent variable GDP except PTD. R-squared value indicates how much percentage of factors relating GDP annual growth rate is explained by selected independent and control variables in this model. And, 79.5% proves a good fit of model with this dataset. The coefficient value of intercept term is the estimated value of GDP annual growth when all independent variables equal zero. The findings of the results revealed that one percent increase in trade openness brings an increase of approximately 0.15% in economic growth of Myanmar. We also found that GDP annual growth rate declines

about 0.76% by a rise of each percent in foreign direct investment, net inflows (% of GDP) while controlling other variables. As expected, every 1 percent increase in employment in total population ratio (aged 15+) produces economic growth of Myanmar around 1%. Furthermore, the results indicated that the larger inflation rate (consumer price index), the slower economic growth of Myanmar during 1990-2022. In addition, the Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic is a test for autocorrelation in the residuals. DW Statistic value at $1.5 < 2$ means that this model does not capture all the factors that influence economic growth of Myanmar.

Table V.3 OLS multiple linear regression model estimation results

Variable	Coefficient	T-Value	P-Value	Std. Error
Intercept	-56.92492	-7.007017	0.0000	8.123987
TOP	0.150498	2.817056	0.0091	0.053424
FDI	-0.762571	-2.334168	0.0276	0.326699
EMR	1.009605	7.818967	0.0000	0.129123
EXR	-297.4153	-3.079906	0.0048	96.56636

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INR	-0.301184	-	0.0004	0.094
		4.098583		
PTD	-1.683860	1.611538	0.3057	1.611538
R-squared(R ²)		0.794974		
F-Statistic		16.80217		
Durbin		1.500347		
Watson				
Statistic				

$$\text{GDP} = -56.92492 + 0.150498 \cdot \text{TOP} - 0.762571 \cdot \text{FDI} + 1.009605 \cdot \text{EMR} - 297.4153 \cdot \text{EXR} - 0.301184 \cdot \text{INR} - 1.683860 \cdot \text{PTD}$$

Table V.4 displays the results obtained from ESTR model estimation. In the linear column, it shows the coefficients of parameters, standard errors, and p-values for each variable while the non-linear column demonstrates corresponding values plus the slope of parameter and threshold variable. From the values of coefficient, and Probability in both linear and non-linear component of TOP reveals a statistically significant relationship while FDI has no significant relationship. These findings partially support our findings from using OLS linear regression model above.

Table V.4 Exponential Smooth Threshold Regression (ESTR) Estimation Results

Lin	Coeffic	Std.	P-	No	Coeffic	Std.	P-
ear	ient	Error	valu	n-	ient	Error	Val
			e	line			ue
				ar			
TO	3.9232	0.660	0.00	TO	-	0.639	0.00
P	51	485	00	P	3.9007	570	00
					17		
FDI	-	1.776	0.60	FD	0.9948	1.951	0.61
	0.9399	012	35	I	29	128	67
	89						
EM	0.3063	0.235	0.21	EM	-	0.229	0.51
R	53	543	07	R	0.1510	521	94
					13		
EX	-	1649.	0.00	EX	5137.4	1690.	0.00
R	5383.7	598	46	R	58	674	74
	65						
INR	-	1.335	0.00	IN	6.1703	1.307	0.00
	6.1745	017	02	R	86	387	02
	69						
PT	-	37.24	0.00	PT	161.60	36.91	0.00
D	165.31	470	04	D	69	588	04
	81						

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	γ	5.7839	1.323	0.00
		8	597	04
	C_t	6.7065	0.052	0.00
		81	738	00

In Table V.5, the results of the Additive Nonlinearity testing are provided. The hypotheses are structured based on different orders of the Taylor expansion (i). The F value and P Value for each hypothesis signifies the nonlinearity effects of variables. Additionally, we computed RMSE, MAE and MAPE to compare two models used in this study (see the results in Table V.6). The results point out that ESTAR model offers better forecasting accuracy.

Table V. 5 Addictive Nonlinearity Testing Results

Hypothesis	F-Value	P-value
$H_1: \beta_1 = 0$	2.148408	0.1399
$H_2: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = 0$	4.332675	0.0174
$H_3: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = 0$	4.314804	0.176
$H_4: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = 0$	3.544943	0.0349

Note: H_i test uses the i-th order Taylor expansion ($\beta_j = 0$ for all $j > i$).

Table V. 6 Forecasting Comparison between linear regression and non-linear regression

Estimation Model	RMSE	MAE	MAPE
Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Linear Regression model	2.556	2.117	33.964
Exponential Smooth Threshold Regression (ESTR) model	1.526	1.077	14.445

VI. Conclusion and Policy Recommendation

The results derived from Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple linear regression model and Exponential Smooth Threshold Regression Model, computed using EViews software, reveal that trade openness has positive influence on GDP annual growth rate of Myanmar. Surprisingly, the results show foreign direct investment (% of GDP) has no evidence to support economic growth of Myanmar. But we found that employment in total population ratio aged 15+ has a positive influence on GDP annual growth rate of Myanmar. Since employment and trade openness have positive impact on GDP annual growth rate in Myanmar, the government and policy makers should consider to implement policies and initiatives that really address job creations and trade liberalization. In this way, the economic

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growth can be sustained and the socio-wellbeing of individuals in Myanmar shall be brought to a better status.

This paper is geographically limited to Myanmar formerly known as Burma. Future study is encouraged to adopt models that can capture short-/long-run relationships between dependent and independent variables.

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The Chin in a Time of Revolution in Burma

Min Thang¹

Abstract

On 1 February 2021, a military coup took place and the elected civilian administration was overthrown. Following the coup, massive anti-coup protests took place across the country. In response to the nonviolent protestors, the military has carried out harsh crackdowns, arrests, and tortured, and killed civilians, who participated in peaceful demonstrations. As a result, civilians who are mainly young people, have progressively changed from peaceful demonstrations to becoming partially armed with a concentration on protecting civilians and attacking military personnel and property. Chin State has led some of the toughest opposition and has refused to cooperate with the junta. Young residents have formed the Chinland Defense Force (CDF), primarily made up of young men and women with homemade weapons like handmade guns, knives, and arrows (known as sa-hnet in Chin and tu mae in Burmese) alliance with

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Chin National Front (CNF/A) one of the ethnic armed groups to resistance brutal attack of the State Administration Council (SAC) military on civilians in Chin State and beyond. One may argue that Chin state was the true birthplace of this spring revolution. The articles used qualitative research methods and data will be collected from secondary sources to analysis this study. The study will look at Chin resistance and resilience to continuous revolutionary politics and processes at the state level with a focus on the consequences of the military coup, the Covid-19 pandemic, and other social challenges in Chin sate and beyond since 2021. The major goal of this study is to understand the risks, challenges, and advantages of the Chin people's perseverance and resistance in Burma.

Keywords: Coup, Armed Resistance, Conflict, Chin, Burma

Introduction

Right after the 2021 coup, the local militias attacked on the SAC military, therefore, Tatmadaw appears to be weaponizing mass starvation in order to hit back resistance groups across the country. The military have carried out mass killings, torture, sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, and other abuses against civilians, peaceful protesters, journalists, lawyers, health workers, and political opposition members amounting to crimes against humanity. The military have subjected many detainees to torture and other ill treatment, including routine beatings, burning with lit cigarettes, prolonged

stress positions, and gender-based violence. They continue to launch targeted and indiscriminate attacks on civilians and internally displaced people (IDPs) camps. The junta has deliberately blocked humanitarian aid from reaching million risks, in violation of international humanitarian law. Troops have attacked aid workers, destroyed supplies, and blocked access roads and aid convoys, as a form of collective punishment against civilians in areas where junta rule is contested (HRW, 2022).

There has been resistance for more than 2 years now. Armed resistance spread across the country once the revolution was started with handmade guns by the Chin people in April 2021. In Burma, there are more than 400 local defense forces. The military regime is currently being battled by opposition groups in the following states: northern Kachin, western Chin, eastern Kayah, southeast Karen, central Anyar, which includes the Mandalay, Sagaing, Magwe, and southern Tanintharyi regions. At least 27 armed resistance groups are based in Chin state, most of which are made up of young people from various backgrounds, which is opposition against the junta. In the Chin State townships of Mindat, Kanpetlet, Hakha, Thantlang, Paletwa, and Matupi, fighting is happening between the SAC military and Chin resistance groups. The majority of Chin state is currently controlled by revolutionary groups. Except for the towns, most of areas are under control of the CDF (Yuzana,

2023). Armed opposition to the Tatmadaw is currently present all over the country. However, not all armed opposition organizations are part of the People Defense Force (PDF) of the covert National Unity Government (NUG). The essay gives a general description of the Chin resistance and how it has continued resisting and resilience to oppose the coup for more than 2 years. The study looks at the violent and disruptive incidents that have disrupted the lives of the people in Chin State and beyond regions.

Burma before the 2021 Coup

Burma is one of the world's longest-running civil wars. Right aftermath of independence from the British rule in 1948 until 1958, parliamentary democracy was used for governing. On 2 March 1962, general Ne Win overthrew a democratically elected administration. The country was cut off from the rest of the world under Ne Win dictatorship. Burma became one of the world's poorest nations as a result, and on 8 August 1988, student leaders called for a massive protest that became known as the 8888 Uprising (Nay, 2020). The majority of people from Burma migrated to neighbouring countries because of violence, poverty, unemployment, discrimination and statelessness in some places. Conflict, insecurity, political violence, and natural catastrophes are all significant forces behind migration, helping to create complicated flows of people driven by a combination of economic, familial, educational, and survival goals. A

decade-long battle between Tatmadaw (the official name of the Burma military) and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) in Burma has resulted in increased internal displacement as well as outflows of refugees and asylum seekers to neighboring nations. Every year, hundreds of thousands of migrants from Burma are trafficked into Southeast Asia for a variety of reasons, with the majority going to India, Thailand, and Malaysia (David, 2016).

The majority of those leaving the country through the borders are doing so because of the junta's economic mismanagement, political persecution, and violations of human rights. Every time there is an armed clash, the local people hide in jungle and end up as IDPs and some crossing international border for safety. And with the money they earn, they may support their loved ones back home. The majority of the Chin migrate in India relocated the political unrest in 1962 and 1988, a time when persecution on account of ethnic and religion was widespread in Burma especially in border region. The diaspora Chin community, including churches and people have made contributions and supported their families and relatives back home in education, church construction, and other developments in Burma from a variety of perspectives. The people of Burma are also enjoyed life in the country from brutal dictatorship to democratic since 2010 to 2021. There was some development and reforms in various ways under democratic transition.

Reflection from the Pandemic, Election, and Coup

The COVID-19 pandemic was present prior to the national elections on 8 November 2020, endangering the lives of citizens there. Both the pandemic and the 2020 elections were important events for the people of Burma. Civil warfare broke out in Rakhine, Chin States, and the northeast of Burma during the pandemic and until the 2020 election. Furthermore, the NLD government stopped humanitarian aid deliveries to those conflict areas and held the general election, and disallowed votes in constituencies in those conflict areas. The pandemic was declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, however Burma did not have its first confirmed case until 23 March 2020 in Chin State (World Bank, 2022). To stop the COVID-19 pandemic, it implemented lockdown in one village in Chin State. A humanitarian crisis was exacerbated by the continuous armed conflict in Chin and Rakhine States during the COVID-19 outbreak. People are forced to relocate because of the violence, which also results in inadequate living conditions and affects access to healthcare. The right of the people to obtain vital information on the pandemic and other matters was threatened by the NLD government's blocking of Internet access in nine townships in the states of Rakhine and Chin. There was no policy to offer humanitarian relief or healthcare for refugees, they are particularly at risk (Su Yin Htun).

The 2020 Election

The importance of holding and announcing the 2020 general election should not be underestimate by the NLD government, nor should the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. After all, one of the hardest tests for a democratic transition is conducting elections in the midst of a pandemic. The smaller and ethnically-based parties perceive themselves as being at a disadvantage in comparison to the bigger parties like the NLD and Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). The Union Election Commission (UEC) planned election to be place on 8 November 2020. Smaller and ethnically based political parties' elections are anticipated to be more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic related ban on gatherings of more than 30 persons (Thomas and Annabelle, 2020). International observers and the majority of voters are certain that the NLD will win a second term. Aung San Suu Kyi's appearance before the International Court of Justice in The Hague in December 2019 to defend the country, which is accused of the genocide of the Rohingya people, eventually helped to build this strong support. During the hearing, thousands of people had gathered across the country and waved banners that read, "We stand with Aung San Suu Kyi." The NLD unveiled its schedule of candidates for the 2020 elections on 23 July 2020 (Thomas and Annaabelle, 2020). The Rohingya were once again denied the opportunity to vote, despite the fact that the majority of potential

voters fled to Bangladesh in late 2017 to avoid Tatmadaw brutal attacks and killing. A number of candidates from various ethnic nationalities were rejected, and some ethnic political parties accused the UEC of making biased election rulings (Michael, 2021).

Prior to the 2020 election, the military had expressed initial worries about the UEC and alleged promised to hold the NLD accountable. Due to security concerns related to the civil war, voting was cancelled in 56 townships large portions of the Shan, Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, and Mon states as well as the Bago region (Michael and Anne, 2021). The NLD held elections and once again won by a landslide, securing them the next five years of leadership. The military-backed USDP rejected the outcome (Chiraag, 2022). The USDP held a press conference on 11 November 2020, in which they stated that they would not accept the outcome and asked that the Tatmadaw take appropriate measures. The military took up the concerns in December 2020 and asserted that it had discovered 10.5 million errors on voter registers, a claim for which it provided no supporting documentation (Myanmar Country Report 2022). The military asked that the NLD dissolve Burma's electoral board, the UEC, and enlist its cooperation in the recount of all the ballots cast in November. Prior to the swearing-in of parliamentarians elected in the 2020 election two days later, on January 28, 2021, the NLD rejected these requests at a meeting.

On 1 February 2021 the military seized power and established State Administration Council (SAC) (Jasnea and Roshni, 2021).

The Military Coup 2021

The military seized control through a coup d'état on 1 February 2021, and proclaimed a one-year state of emergency, citing electoral fraud and the necessity to save the nation's democracy. Vice-President Myint Swe, a member of the USDP, the military-backed opposition party, authorized the declaration of an emergency that gave Min Aung Hlaing control of the country (Hnin, 2021). Massive anti-coup protests took place across the country since the 2021 coup. The military has carried out brutal crackdowns, arrests, tortured and killed civilians. As a result, civilians took armed and resistance the military and its affiliated groups across the country. The country become collapsed and people are living fear, pain and lost love one life and hope are in vain because of the coup. Thousands are civilians and tens of thousands of civilians become internally displaced and refugees in neighboring countries.

Chin State after the 2021 Coup

For many years, the military regime has systematically mistreated the Chin people in Burma. After the 2021 coup, civilians had adapted with peaceful demonstration across the state, however, after the military brutal attack, arrest and killed civilians. Many young people including students, civil servants, healthcare workers, and school teachers have picked up arms to

defend themselves and civilians from the regime's attacks after it mercilessly killed, tortured, jailed, and so on. Many people worry that the country is led for a complete civil war and governmental collapse. The coup has resulted in grave human rights violations, including murder, enforced disappearances, persecution, torture, and imprisonment (Damian, 2021). In the wake of the 2021 coup, the Chin state has led some of the toughest opposition and has refused to cooperate with the junta. Numerous thousands of people demonstrated in the streets. The military and police has indiscriminate attacks on whole towns across the state. Therefore, young people have formed defense groups called the Chinland Defence Force (CDF) alliance with the Chin National Front (CNF/A) on 4 April 2021, and the exile government called National Unity Government (NUG) afterwards organized the People's Defense Force (PDF) in heartland of Burma in 5 May, 2021. On April 24, CDF members in Mindat Township engaged in their first altercation with law enforcement after the officers refused to release seven prisoners. Because they had set up anti-regime strikers throughout the city, three men and four women were detained. When a police officer fired into the crowd during a protest demanding the release of the captives, the defense force retaliated, killing three security personnel. In Myanmar's history, it was probably the first time that civilians had used a homemade gun to defend themselves against a military assault. The army tried to send reinforcements

via road to Mindat to help the overworked local battalion as the situation quickly deteriorated. On April 26 and 27, CDF fighters ambushed military convoys on the routes going into town. It is said that more than 30 soldiers were killed, army trucks were destroyed, and weapons were looted (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Post-Coup Armed Resistance in Chin State

The Chins live in a region that is bordered by Bangladesh in the southwest, Manipur in the north, and Mizoram in the west of India. They belonged to the Mongolian race and went by a variety of names, including Chin, Mizo, and Kuki. About half of the Chin people in Burma reside in the Chin Hills, the other half in the plains and the Kale Valley of Sagaing and Magwe regions, and a tiny number in Rakhine State. In India, Assam and Mizoram are home to two-thirds of the country's Chin population, while Manipur is home to one-quarter of them (David and Barbara, 2005), and less in Chittagong Hill Tract of Bangladesh. One of the seven states in Burma is the Chin state. It has a 13,902 square mile land area (Khin, 2012). The early day, the Chin chiefs who are supported by the older members of society rule the Chin people. The Chin land is independent and freedom before colonial rule, and postcolonial times. They made every struggle to fight back as the British attempted to annex their territory and establish dominion over them. They were unable to vanquish their enemies because of they have superior

weapons. The Chin chiefs made every struggle to safeguard their territories and people (Lalthanglian, 2014). In this research the author focused mainly on the Chin people in Burma. Under the British colonial rule of Burma, the Chin Hills were administrated as a part of the Province of Burma and constituted a scheduled district. When Burma gained independence in 1948, they were grouped into a political unit and their habitation was given the name Chin Special Division (Khai, 1995).

Under colonial rule and postcolonial period Burma was one of the top countries in Southeast Asia from 1948 to 1958. When U Nu and Ne Win coup proclaimed Buddhism as official religion in 1960, the country's majority Christians, including the Chin and Kachin, began armed revolution against the military and Bamar central government (Physician for Human Rights, 2011). Suppression of federalist Chin leaders in Chin state by the 1960s sparked an expanding revolution by the Chin National Organization (CNO). The Chin National Front (CNF) was established by ethnic Chin leaders in Mizoram, India, in March 1988. Its mission was to "recover the Chin people's right to self-determination and to restore democracy and federalism in the Union of Burma." Nevertheless, in response to the CNF, the SLORC militarized the Chin state even further, driving tens of thousands of ethnic Chins to cross the border into Mizoram, India (Physiican for Human Rights, 2011). Students from the Uprising and other young Chins joined uprising in 1988 (Peter,

2013). Chin resistance is therefore nothing new. They again engaged in the country's largest percentage of Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) during the most recent coup in Burma. They were the first ethnic group to use homemade weapons like handmade gun, knife, and arrow to resist the coup. The CNF has denounced military action, demanded the release of the imprisoned elected government, restored democracy, and rejected the military's role in the peace process. Most pro-democracy organizations reject the military takeover. One of Burma's ethnic armed groups, the CNF, has joined forces with the National Unity Government (NUG), the country's shadow government established to overthrow the military regime (The Irrawaddy, 2021). In Chin State, the CNF has played a significant role in aiding, educating, and arming members from various militias connected to the recently created CDF at its base camps.

Chin state is part of the western frontier of Burma towards India and Bangladesh and is often described as the least developed region. The government of Burma had little economic interest in the remote region. Armed conflict remained relatively low in the region before the 2021 coup. Following 1988, Chin state experienced considerable militarization and expansion of army battalions and with-it regular human right abuses (Rainer, 2018). The Chins are largely Christians and have long faced persecution from the military and majority Bamar central

government of Burma. Lacking profitable natural resources such as oil, teak, gold and precious stones, it is one of poorest states in Burma. In response to the 2021 coup, new armed resistance formed in Chin state, comprising local students, civil society members, and professionals: the CDF. It's have allied themselves with the long-established CNF, one of the many armed organizations in Burma formed in response to decades of ethnic discrimination by the central government. Together with other armed organizations across the country, the groups in Chin state aim to remove the military dictatorship and replace it with a federal democracy. They have relied on donor support from the Chin diaspora and civilians. Although Chin's armed organizations are doing their best to drive out the Tatmadaw, most major towns remain under its control. Residents have become subject to arbitrary arrests, kidnappings, and harassment (Alex, 2022).

Since 2021, Chin state has been the forefront of the armed resistance (CDF/CNA) to the junta and therefore, they have faced the brunt of the Burma army's madness. There were deadly clashes in the Chin state between the armed resistance groups and the junta. The military has burnt down entire villages and towns in Chin state and more troops have been arriving steadily, giving rise to fears of a new offensives. There are fleeing unrest to India border because there is no humanitarian aids, healthcare, education and security reason. The situation in

Burma today is critical, with human rights organizations alleging that the military junta is responsible for actions that constitute crime against humanity prohibited under international law (The Hindustan Times, 2022). Persecuted in their own country and fearing for their lives and refugees who continue to cross over into Mizoram state of India.

The Impact and the Cost of Armed Conflict

Post-coup, the regime has brutally repressed the people as it tries to quash dissent and consolidate its grip on the country. A broad-based resistance movement is using non-violent and violent means to prevent the junta from succeeding. In such situation, vulnerable populations face a dire future. In addition to the insecurity, Burma's economy is in freefall, the national currency is crashing, health and education system have collapsed, poverty rates are estimated to have doubled and half of all household cannot afford enough food. Despite the severe situation and the considerable risks associated with having a failed state at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, international attention is declining (International Crisis Group, 2021). "Four cuts" policy was used by the military to the civilians and resistance to cutoff like funding, food, intelligence and recruits" (GK Today, 2022). The troops committing widespread acts of arson, looting, rape and murder during its offensives in the country, where it has encountered strong resistance from armed resistance groups and members of anti-junta People's Defense

Force paramilitary groups. International efforts to deescalate the violence have yielded few results and announced ceasefires have failed to reduce armed conflict, while authorities regularly conduct raids on dissenters, and humanitarian operations are denied access to the people in most need (RFA Burmese, 2022). There are currently 15.2 million people who experience acute and moderate food insecurity (OCHA, 2022). Since 2021, Burma is one of the largest numbers of migrant in Southeast Asia. More than 50,000 the Chin have been forced to seek asylum in Mizoram state and New Delhi of India.

Fighting has been most intense in Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Shan states and the Sagiang and Magwe regions. Burma has a central area inhabited by the Bamar majority ethnic group, surrounded by minority ethnic groups on its periphery and borders, almost all of whom have been waging armed resistance against military dictatorship for decades (Rashed, 2022). Since 2021, resistance groups more than 250 groups have emerged and carrying out regular attack on regime targets. The resistance groups, many of which have the words “defence force” in their names, range from underground urban cells consisting of a few people to large, well-organized militias with hundreds of fighters equipped with modern light arms. Some alliance with ethnic armed groups and trained by EAOs (International Crisis Groups, 2021). Fighting between regime forces and People’s Defense Forces (PDF) continues across the

country, especially in Chin, Kayah, Karen and Kachin states and Sagaing, Magwe, Mandalay and Yangon regions. The resistance forces use guerrilla tactics and have inflicted heavy casualties on junta troops. In retaliation, regime forces have increasingly carried out indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including air and artillery strikes, arbitrary killings and massacres, burning people alive, using civilians as human shields, and looting and burning houses. The properties were destroyed either in air and artillery strikes or were torched by regime soldiers and pro-junta Pyu Saw Htee militia (The Irrawaddy, 2022). Since 2021, more than 5,683 civilians have died in Burma, according to RFA (RFA, 2022).

The military set up many checkpoints where all motorcycles, cars, and personal items like laptops, mobile phones, and storage devices for Facebook, Instagram, and other social media were checked. In addition to other things, they have packed medicine, a knife, protective clothing, sleeping bags, blankets, solar lights, and other things. No one can enter or exit towns in Chin state from Magwe and Sagaing regions because the Junta has blocked all major highways. The SAC military shut down all traffic between Pakokku and Chin state, and there were food and medicine shortages in the Chin state. There were many restaurants between Pakokku-Chin state before the coup, but now there was no restaurant where one could eat. In the Chin state, there are a lot of children, old people, women and

individuals sick who urgently need of health care, food, security, nourishment, and other things.

Burma urgently needs humanitarian aid, including food and medical supplies, from domestic and international communities due to the country's current political instability and food insecurity. The junta is preventing millions of displaced individuals and other persons in danger from receiving urgently needed humanitarian supplies. New travel restrictions for aid workers have been put in place by the SAC security forces, who have also cut off communications, obstructed assistance convoys and access roads, damaged non-military supplies, and attacked relief workers. New restrictions put in place by the military have led to a national humanitarian crisis (HRW, 2021). Chin state desperately needs humanitarian assistance. When it comes to reaching displaced people and conflict zones, local networks and humanitarian organizations face security obstacles that are made worse by the fact that some of the affected areas have never experienced conflict or needs of this magnitude, which means that the agencies do not yet have any operations there. The military has obstructed transit to these places, taken away relief goods, and arrested and, in at least two cases, killed those bringing them. These domestic networks have been attempting to provide assistance to residents displaced from Mindat town of Chin state. The regime should be pressured by humanitarian organizations through all possible channels to

grant immediate access to displaced individuals. International actors should exert all of their efforts to prevent the military from continuing its obvious violations of international law and its obstruction of aid flows (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Suffering and Destruction of Civilians Properties

The military has carried out aerial bombing of civilians in Karen, Kachin, Chin, Magwe, Sagain region close to border areas. Targets have included schools, hospitals, and mines as well as civilians' homes and agriculture, with the aim of destroying villagers' livelihoods. Tens of thousands of civilians' mostly ethnic minority areas including Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Mon and others have been displaced and remain in hiding. The Myanmar soldiers had been firing on boats carrying aid to the displaced people. The intensification of airstrikes caused thousands of people to flee in forest and border areas (Terese and Hayso, 2021). The military have been targeting areas that are known to be home to thousands of armed civilians who call themselves the PDF/CDF. Soldiers have attacked residential neighborhoods with rocket launchers and arson, cut off Internet access, restricted food supplies, and shot at fleeing civilians. And now tens of thousands of civilians become homeless and internally displaced persons within Burma and neighbouring countries like India and Thailand from 1 February 2021 to November 2022, there have been at least 592 armed clashes in all nine townships of Chin state. These battles were

fought by the military council and the local defense force. At the same time, at least 1,489 homes and buildings were burned down during the armed conflict. The most cases of arson were in Thantlang township and at least 1,325 houses were burned down by the military. As a result of these conflicts, there were at least 99,550 refugees fleeing the civil war in Chin state (Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar, 2022). The number of refugees varies depending on the definition, but according to UNHCR, there were an estimated 1,473,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Burma, including 1,143,000 people who have been newly displaced since the coup 2021. In India an approximately 49,600 individuals fled from Myanmar mostly the Chin (UNHCR, 2022).

Conclusion

Burma has now entered a violent new chapter. The military faces widespread, fierce opposition from ethnic armed organizations it was fighting even before the coup and ordinary citizens who organized militias. Wowing to resist the military junta, former lawmakers and activities formed a shadow government and mobilized fighting forces across the country. The military has responded with a brutal crackdown on opposition forces and protesters. But it still has not been able to consolidate control over large areas of the country. It is going to be two years, but still resistance and resilience of civilians are strong enough and the military cannot take control the country.

Violence is not limited to the areas that have large ethnic minority populations but is also occurring in major central cities such as mainland Burma. Although the widespread violence has led thousands of civilians to flee into neighboring India and Thailand. More than 1.4 million people fled abroad as refugees. Hundreds of thousands more remain displaced internally (Lindsay, 2022). The Chin resistance will not give up fighting the junta, regardless of the many violations they may do on civilians and destroyed their homes and belongings in the state. They will resist for their last breath. The Chin needs to united as to resisted together the coup with other resistance groups. The military have known how divide rule its people but most of the time civilians do not know how united ourself as one and resist the coup from national politics.

As a result, Chin state has become an active frontline of the armed resistance to the junta that has experienced a series of brutal attack. The CDF are supported by Chin diaspora community as much they can. The relatives from abroad have support basic and modern weapons to resist the coup in Chin state. Thantlang township in Chin state was completely burnt down by the regime in several times and all town is become an ash. The most a massacre that took place on 6-7 January 2022 in Matupi township of Chin state, in which 10 civilians were killed, including a 13-year-old boy. Burma has been collapsed with social, political, financial, education, and healthcare because of

nationwide protests and strike by hundreds of thousands of civilians, civil servants, and healthcare workers. It is still continued human rights violation by the junta in across the country. Even though neighbouring countries include the ASEAN, India, and China, they should pay closer attention to the country's dilemma. Despite being one of the most democratic nations in the world, India has chosen to remain silent on the suffering of people in Burma. Both China and India cooperated with the regime for their interest on investment in Burma. They have failed to promotion and support Burma on its way to becoming a federal democratic nation in the midst of strife and civil war. The neighboring nations of Burma do not support the country's road to democracy and development; rather, they merely have Burma's own interests in mind.

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The Quality of Life of Legal Myanmar Migrant Labors in Mae Sot, Thailand: The Case of Mae Tao Community

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Abstract

This research objects to propose the solutions for improving the quality of life of legal Myanmar migrant labors from Mae Tao community in Mae Sot, Thailand. Many researchers have been studied on international migration with different focuses, nevertheless, the quality of life of migrants has not much represented, especially for the country like Myanmar. Therefore, this study explores the current state of quality of life among legal Myanmar migrant labors in Mae Sot, Thailand. Twelve legal Myanmar migrant workers were interviewed by employing semi-structured designed questions followed by open discussion and follow-up questions upon how the interviewees led to the points. This study focused on aspects such as material wealth, physical and mental health, legal protection and work-life balance of those legal Myanmar migrant labors from Mae Tao Community in Mae Sot, Tak

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Province of Thailand. The findings reveal that legal Myanmar migrant labors' objective wellbeing is poor but subjective wellbeing is high. It also seems comparatively connected to the background and environment they originally came from when migrating for better living.

Keywords: Quality of Life, Legal Myanmar Migrant Workers, Mae Sot, Thailand

1 Introduction and Background of the study

Many researchers define the quality of life with a number of terms such as social indicators, standard of well-being, way of life and so on. In short, the quality of life determines to what extent individual's life satisfaction is upon his or her needs and wants (Kerce, 1992). Objective approaches contemplate the quality of life based on objectively favorable conditions, consequences and activities in an individual's life. In contrast, subjective of quality-of-life approaches is a set of beliefs in one's life which is why it seems like the subjective approach enables each and individuals to define the quality of life themselves. In other words, the government agencies prefer the objective approaches even though independent organizations might adopt subjective approaches (Kerce, 1992). Researcher, Campbell (1981) who in favor of subjective approach also

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stated that the feeling about a life is supposed to be individual living that life while asking for direct source of information.

The scale of changes in migration is much related with global social and economic transformations. The globalization is a fact that the numbers of international migrants are increasing over time. There were about 272 million people migrating one country to another or across the borders in 2019; it is equal to 3.5 percent of world population (IOM, 2020). By this number, it will be 1 in every 30 people while 272 million international migrants' ratio of world population by 7.7 billion. Most people migrate internationally to work and study intentionally. It could have different reasons of leaving their home countries. For example, some people leave their homes and countries to run away from political conflict, natural disaster as well as persecution. In such a case, these people would become refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs). Additionally, IDPs families and refugees are often in need of support and assistance, especially food to eat and shelter to live in. According to United Nations on international migrant stock 2019 by destination and origin, Asia hosted 84 million of international migrants while Europe hosted 82 million of international migrants. Meanwhile, nearly 59 million international migrants were hosted in North America.

People from less developed move to richer countries, referring as international migrants play a significant role in economic development with three affects roughly. Migrants themselves enjoy higher income through migration from rural areas into a new economic sector followed by destination countries' structural change of the economy as well as impacting positively on origin countries despite the loss of human capital. In general, for being an important channel of material improvement, international migration affects inclusive growth for both individuals and their offspring (IMF, 2021, p.4). On the other hand, a study from International Labor Organization (ILO) stated that it has worsen the free flow of goods and capital in terms of income inequalities on labor markets (Stalker, 2000). The study has revealed that there is also negative side of migration. For instance, it causes the loss of farm labors which leads to collapsing local agricultural economy. People from neighboring countries, particularly Myanmar, migrate to Thailand because of wage differences solely. Besides, Thailand is the country which has been sustaining a higher level of economic growth lately compared to most ASEAN countries.

For Myanmar migrant labors to Thailand, the main reason for those migrants have been associated with political conflicts in Myanmar. The civil war between Myanmar

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central military and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) has long been in the country which continue causing stagnated conditions of economic growth and social development for decades in the country. Myanmar was about to be one great of shinning country among its neighbor countries after independence from British Empire in 1948. But then, 25 years later, general Ne Win adopted “the Burmese Way to Socialism” and imposed “the Burmanization” along his policy (Promphakping, et al., 2019). It resulted Myanmar became one of the world’s least developed countries designated by the United Nations in 1987. The numbers of Myanmar migrant labors have been increasingly drawn into Thailand to seek the quality of life. Seeking jobs and better quality of life are the present to Myanmar migrant labors in Thailand, and it shall still be due to the resuming of military rule in Myanmar since 1st of February, 2021 after its military rule lasted from 1962 to 2011. Asia Foundation reported that nearly 76 percent of Myanmar population live under poverty line and about 70 percent of them come from rural areas, particularly from the agriculture sectors (Carr, 2018). Plus, a poverty report of Myanmar Living Conditions Survey (MLCS) 2017 said that 24.8 percent of the population in rural areas live under poverty line (1,590 kyat or lower), this is an issue of concerning with agriculture-based earning and

lower education level. As a result, one out of four people is living in poverty (UNDP and World Bank, 2019).

As well-reported earlier, there have been too many research and studies on international migration on this issue. Nonetheless, most research mainly focused on the reasons of migrating and challenges of international migrants as well as on economic aspects. With all respect to Myanmar migrant labors in Thailand, Myanmar received the estimate amount of 367.235 million in 2005 and 300 million dollars in 2007 from Thailand (Huguet & Punpuing, 2005). Meanwhile, Myanmar received only 284 million dollars from Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in early 2022 which is the year of the study, also. However, the wellbeing and quality of life of legal migrant labors at their works in Thailand are underrepresented. It perhaps may be because of inaccessible to particular overseas migrants when addressing the quality of life.

Plentiful employment opportunities in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore bring the flows of Myanmar migrants increasingly for decades in labour market of Southeast Asia. Still, sharing the long land border between Myanmar and Thailand records a larger number of Myanmar Migrant Labours despite the fact that Singapore and Malaysia have higher per capital GPA than Thailand. It is assumed to could have better results when reporting anything

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concerned with those Myanmar migrant labors in Thailand. Approximately, 1.3 million Myanmar migrant workers are legally employed in Thailand, and mainly in industries such as construction, fishery, and service-related (Chantavanich, S. & Vungsiriphisal, P., 2012, p. 241). The lowest number of Myanmar migrant labours in Thailand are employed in factors like INGOs and NGOs, and this has rarely been represented to the public how the wellbeing of those and etc. This research study aims to explore and assess the living conditions of Myanmar legal migrant labors in Mae Sot, Tak province of Thailand through conducting semi- interview questions covering four main dimensions: material wealth, physical and mental health, legal protection and work-life balance. The focus of analysis is placed on objective wellbeing and subjective wellbeing of legal Myanmar migrant workers at Mae Tao community (whereas, INGOs and NGOs Myanmar migrant workers are legally employed) to understand their state of quality of life. Previous studies have publicized those migrant workers pursue economic opportunities. However, the extent of this study is beyond economic growth but to assess quality of life by examining the gap between what they achieve and what they want more.

1.1 Overview of Mae Tao Community

Mae Tao community is located in Mae Sot, Tak province of Thailand. Many people know that shares a border with Myanmar, and it is known for its increasing population of Burmese migrants and refugees overtime. Migrant labors working in Mae Tao community can be divided into three different groups; first group is volunteer in respective organization, second group is that those who work there for permanent (paid employees), and third group is professional for particular subject. Three of these are main migrant workers groups working in Mae Sot.

Myanmar migrant labors have been residing in this area because of several wars in Myanmar and borderline to Thailand. So, people eventually call Mae Sot as little Burma. A group of partnered non-profit organizations are existing today in Mae Tao community namely Mae Tao clinic (MTC), Children Development Centre (CDC), Suwannimit Foundation, Committee for Protection and Promotion of Child's Right (CPPCR), Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF), Cotton on Foundation, Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee (BMWEC), Burma Medical Association (BMA), Ethnic Health System Strengthening Group (EHSSG), Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT), and Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW). Dr. Cynthia Maung, Gwangju Prize for

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Human Rights 2022, is chairperson for all those partnered organizations in Mae Tao community, whereas, about three to five hundred of legal migrants are working and servicing for Burmese refugees and migrant population in Western Thailand. Among those partnered organizations, Mae Tao Clinic has founded and begun giving services since 1989. Nearly 10,000 or more are living in and relying to these community-based organizations for their livelihood opportunities and better living standards. Most of them are Karenni ethnic from all parts of Myanmar. Some other ethnics would include Burmese, Mon, Shan, Rakhine and a very few others aged between 20 to 35 years old. This seems to be related with opportunities and working experiences at young ages while they can also give services to community development. And also, a significant number of children who were born in Thailand can be found in this community as well. However, illegal migrants in Mae Sot are way higher than legal migrants and it should have been reporting the life of those in particular.

Plus, author found out that mostly young people work at Mae Tao community for two major reasons, first is to seek for working experience and second is to maximize their educational opportunities because they can continue higher education like going to university with financial aids after working there for a few times. Precisely, working at Mae Tao community have a chance to winning scholarships from one of

those; Cotton on Foundation, Girls Rising, Prospect Burma, and Child's Dream to continue their college or university education.

1.2 Objective and Subjective of Quality-of-Life Approaches

The individual's objective needs satisfaction in relation with one's subjective perspective of his/her well-being can define Quality of Life (Daniel, 2011). It can be assumed that there are two different approaches to evaluation of Quality of life (QOL). In which, the objective approach evaluates QOL through economic indicators while the subjective approach analyses QOL through individual's perspective or actions.

There have been long enough that people started doing research on living standard by using different social indicators in developing world, and it helped educating people around the world. For example, people begun to see the fact that the improvement of material wealth can determine how good living and working conditions of those in general. However, those studies somehow proved that the measurement of quality of life is not appropriately approached in theory as a whole or either the use of one of two QOL approaches. It is obvious that neither QOL objective approach nor QOL subjective approach is widely

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accepted alone to apply in most cases of quality- of-life evaluation, but use both objective and subjective indicators because of a strong interdependence between those two (Daniel, 2011, p. 56). Notedly, Quality of Life is unmeasurable directly and required the dimensions of social indicators to be converted (Lak, 2010, pp. 381-399).

As each of two QOL approaches has both strengths and weaknesses, it perhaps is a reason why a number of authors did not use them separately on measuring wellbeing surveys. Objective QOL approach alone is incomplete statistical registrations when subjective QOL approach is reflecting important experiences of individual. Likewise, objective QOL can allow valid comparisons while subjective QOL approach can be lack of validity. Therefore, individual's level of satisfaction altogether with his or her living conditions should be analyzed in order to evaluate the quality of life so it shall be more accurate in results.

Since both objective and subjective quality of life have been becoming a standard life measures outcome, a good instrument is to enable the semi-questionnaires for QOL in this study. Comprising fundamental materials for a good life includes basic income, physical and mental health, legal protection and work-life balance. Besides, the state of individual's perception to his or her quality of life is another dimension. As wellbeing is believed to be comprised of

objective and subjective aspects, this study will also conduct two dimensions both the state of quality of life of legal Myanmar migrants and the state of perception to their living standards.

2 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research, using both primary and secondary sources of data to support and validate the findings when exploring the quality of life of legal Myanmar Migrant Workers in Mae Sot, Thailand. The direct data source received from interviews with Myanmar legal migrant labors at Mae Tao community which were not enough to illustrate whole thing. Thus, secondary source of data which is existing data from written articles by scholars, recent academic thesis written by senior graduates in relative fields, and journal articles by several researchers has been used in the support of this research. Secondary sources would bring strong facts about historical background and issues in the research area. In short, this study sees wellbeing of Myanmar Legal Migrant labors from Mae Tao Community with comprised of two dimensions; both the state of quality of life and their perception state of quality of life. Due to limitation of access to an appropriate number of participants for conducting a survey, the WHO QOL

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assessment instrument (WHOQOL Group, 1998) could not be included in this study to validate the findings.

However, semi-structured interviews were used in this study by allowing participants and interviewees to engage more with researcher for in- depth interviews. Mae Tao community was chosen for two major reasons. First, this community partnered with many other associated NGOs at which a large number of legal Myanmar migrant workers are actively working and volunteering. So, researcher believed that would be a good source of accurate information reflecting on the wellbeing of those legal migrant workers. Second reason was that this community was not emerged last year or a year before last year but over two decades which is why it would really be appropriate to do a study research about the quality of life of legal Myanmar migrant labors. In respect of qualitative approach, the researcher collected primary data from twelve interviewees who work legally at Mae Tao community in Mae Sot, Tak province of Thailand. The interviews were conducted through several online channels including Facebook Messenger, Google Meet and direct phone call. These interviews were held with twelve legal Myanmar migrant workers from Mae Tao Community in Mae Sot, Tak Province of Thailand. Primary data in this research were also be supplemented with secondary data secondhanded from new articles, reports, and books.

Because primarily source alone could not fully cover while doing a research on living conditions of migrant labors working in special area like Mae Tao community from Mae Sot, Thailand. Author has had to contact those people from that community for the interview several times before booking for actual interview appointment date. The duration of interviews started from late August 2022 until early November 2022, including the period of time author contacting Mae Tao's partnered organizations for interviewees.

The interviews concerned the material wealth, physical and mental health as well as legal protection and work-life balance of legal Myanmar migrant workers from Mae Tao community. The researcher arranged individual interviews and contacted interviewees in advance with an explanation of interviewing purpose. For the advantage of all interviewees, the researcher also offered flexible schedules to make appointments for their contribution to this study. The interviews were recorded to transcribe thereafter for summarizing.

Interviewees were invited regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion and political views to participate in this research study. The selection criteria for interviewees are simple; as long as they shall recently worked or be working

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at any organization in Mae Tao community legally, and be willing to participate.

3 The findings of the results

Table 3.1 accumulates the list of interviewees that shows participants' gender, age, ethnicity, organization and also working status/position. In this way, that surely would help the readers to evaluate the living standards of those who represent their own specific organization.

Table 3.1. List of Interviewees from Mae Tao Community

No.	Participants	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Organization	Worker's Status
1	Participant A	Male	22	Karen	Mae Tao Clinic (MTC)	Volunteer
2	Participant B	Male	24	Kachin	Mae Tao Clinic (MTC)	Permanent Staff
3	Participant C	Female	22	Burmese	Children Development Centre (CDC)	Volunteer
4	Participant D	Female	21	Karen	Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee (BMWEC)	Volunteer
5	Participant E	Female	22	Karen	Committee for Protection and Promotion of Child's Rights (CPPCR)	Permanent Staff
6	Participant F	Male	27	Kachin	Ethnic Health System Strengthening Group (EHSSG)	Permanent Staff
7	Participant G	Female	27	Karen	Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF)	Permanent Staff
8	Participant H	Male	23	Karen	Suwannimit Foundation (SF)	Permanent Staff
9	Participant I	Male	24	Burmese	Cotton on Foundation (COF)	Permanent Staff
10	Participant J	Female	23	Karen	Burma Medical Association (BMA)	Permanent Staff
11	Participant K	Male	42	Burmese	Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT)	Professional

				Karen Department of Health and	
12	Participant M	Female	28	Karen	Welfare (KDHW)
				Professional	

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Welfare (KDHW). Dr. Cynthia Maung, Gwangju Prize for Human Rights 2022, is chairperson for all those partnered organizations in Mae Tao community, whereas, about three to five hundred of legal migrants are working and servicing for Burmese refugees and migrant population in Western Thailand. Among those partnered organizations, Mae Tao Clinic has founded and begun giving services since 1989. Nearly 10,000 or more are living in and relying to these community-based organizations for their livelihood opportunities and better living standards. Most of them are Karenni ethnic from all parts of Myanmar. Some other ethnics would include Burmese, Mon, Shan, Rakhine and a very few others aged between 20 to 35 years old. This seems to be related with opportunities and working experiences at young ages while they can also give services to community development. And also, a significant number of children who were born in Thailand can be found in this community as well. However, illegal migrants in Mae Sot are way higher than legal migrants and it should have been reporting the life of those in particular.

Furthermore, the researcher found out that mostly young people work at Mae Tao community for two major reasons, first is to seek for working experience and second is to maximize their educational opportunities because they can continue higher education like going to university with financial aids after working there for a few times. Precisely, working at

Mae Tao community have a chance to winning scholarships from one of those; Cotton on Foundation, Girls Rising, Prospect Burma, and Child's Dream to continue their college or university education. In the following, the different terms of social indicators shall be reported with both texts and tables of which results be assumed to assessing the wellbeing of those legal Myanmar migrant workers at Mae Tao community.

Material Wealth

Most participants in this conducted semi-structured interviews are neither materially rich nor legally procession upon direction-finding of shelter and diet, education and employment, and income and expenditure. As a result, almost all legal Myanmar migrants' material wealth is considerably low, and most of them often face lack of money to do things they wish. Two interview participants from Mae Tao clinic organization and Burmese Migrant Worker's Education Committee responded and addressed to their income and expenditure as frequent lack of money.

Although most participants in this study research have a proper education status, it seems very challenging for them to get employed by big company. Participant C said that, "new comer who migrate to Mae Sot shall not get a job with a proper salary in Mae Tao community," (Participant C,

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personal communication, October 16, 2022). Thus, this is more likely they would end up working at factories where human rights violation exists. Surprisingly, there is no difference income rate between men and women at Mae Tao community. However, when asking interviewees about their income and cost of living, almost all of them shared the dissatisfaction on the increase of salary because the cost of daily basis is getting higher year by year. It seems the amount of increasing salary is not that much.

Based on interviews, volunteer get paid about 2,500-baht monthly stipends, permanent staff get paid between 6,000-to-11,000-baht monthly salary except for professionals because most of them work for charity but professional participants in this study do not want to share how much they earn. Participant M from Karen Department of Health and Welfare said that, “monthly expenses are costing 2/3 from monthly salary and it is very difficult for us to support our kids and parents,” (Participant M, personal communication, October 26, 2022). On the other hand, most participants answered that those legal Myanmar migrant workers can have three quality meals per day and can afford for proper shelter such as 10 x 15 feet wide room for living with the stipends or salary they receive. This study found that all households’ activities like sleeping, cooking and resting are supposed to get done in that same rented rooms.

Table 3.2. Material Wealth of Legal Myanmar migrant workers at Mae Tao community

Item	Intervi ewees	Yes	No	Percentage
Nutrition Affordability	12	12/12	0/12	100
Being able to buy Vehicle(s)	12	2/12	10/12	16.67
Being able to buy House (s)	12	0/12	12/12	0
Assessing to Electricity and Water	12	12/12	0/12	100
Being able to use Telecommunication	12	12/12	0/12	100
Savings	12	2/12	10/12	16.67

Health (Physical and Mental)

From the interview answers, it could perceive those legal migrants in Mae Sot region receive free of charge for physical and mental health by one of the partnered organizations of Mae Tao community known Mae Tao Clinic. Researcher noted same answers from all participants that the initiatives of Mae Tao Clinic are effective and beneficial not only for those legal Myanmar migrants but also everyone living in Mae Sot, Thailand. Hence, one main source of health services those workers obtained can be considered is Mae Tao Clinic as it is free of charge and none of those can afford high costs at private clinic nor public hospital. In fact, participant I, Suwannimit Foundation said

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that, “all Myanmar migrant workers living in Mae Sot region access to free health care from Mae Tao Clinic (MTC),” (Participant I, personal communication, October 31, 2022). Hence, Myanmar migrants’ health conditions in Mae Tao community are relatively high while they all are entitled to health care services with nearly at zero cost. Which is saying that low-income migrant workers hardly face difficulties to access to health care services because they do not need to go to private clinic or public health center as long as they are a part of Mae Tao community. In addition, migrant workers at Mae Tao community does not feel like going to public health center or hospital either due to language barrier with Thai medical staff and etc. This reveals that it is difficult for those migrant workers to receive health services from public hospital as long as local language adaption is required. Besides, low income causes the fact that those workers are prevented from having access to medical services so they ended going to Mae Tao Clinic for free.

Table 3.3. Health of Legal Myanmar migrant workers at Mae
Tao community

Item	Interviewees	Yes	No	Percentage
Being able to afford health expenditure	12	12/12	0/12	100

Assessing to physical and mental health services 24/7	12	12/12	0/12	100
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Legal Protection

The legal protection is a primary concern once people live and work in another country. While half of interviewees stated that legal protection for Myanmar migrants is good in the respective area of this study, some participants are unhappy about it. For those who answered negative, they believe relevant agencies should be continually incorporated with local authorities since migrant legal policy is always changed without notices. Participant F, Ethnic Health System Strengthening Group additionally mentioned that “legal protection is too weak for Myanmar people migrating to Mae Sot compared to another region of Thailand like Bangkok, capital city of Thailand,” (Participant F, personal communication, October 17, 2022). Unlikely, two interview participants said that, “we receive full legal protection and feel better living and working at Mae Tao community than where we originally came from,” (Participant G & H, personal communication, October 31, 2022). As a result, participant H, Suwannimit Foundation added, “Myanmar high school graduates would not get a job that can broaden our opportunities and networking in Myanmar but in it does

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while working here,” (Participant H, personal communication, October 31, 2022). This seems worse when Myanmar itself holds Civil War so that it is obvious. Thus, legal protection at minimum can be well for them unless they migrate to work at Mae Tao community for other reasons.

Table 3.4. Legal Protection for Legal Myanmar migrant workers at Mae Tao community

Item	Interviewees	Yes	No	Percentage
Fully protected at work	12	12/12	0/12	100
Legally protected by the host organization when traveling within Thailand	12	6/12	6/12	50

Work-life Balance

For this aspect, most participants do not demand more than working schedule and condition at present. As a matter of fact, participant A to M except participant C reacted positive to their work-life balance. Participant K from Back Pack Health Worker Team said, “my working time is from 9:00 AM to 17:00 PM only,” (Participant K, personal communication, November 2, 2022). They have lunch break in the afternoon from 12 PM to 13:00 PM so total working hours is 7. This is normal working hours for most people. Three interview participants said, “we also have day off in

the weekend and public holidays.” Besides, nearly all of them answered that their jobs do not demand the greater amount of time than what it should be once participants are asked about their work-life balance. For example, migrant workers at Mae Tao community need not to work strictly with their time and schedule but take day-off or leave the office early in case personal events happen to them. “Working hours is flexible since they can eventually head off part-time job while working in their respective job or office”, (Participant B, personal communication, October 26, 2022), (Participant C, personal communication, October 16, 2022), and (Participant G and I, personal communication, October 31, 2022). Not only these five interview participants knocked they have work-life balance, but the other remaining seven interview participants also agreed that work-life balance in Mae Tao community is good.

Table 3.5. Work Life Balance of Legal Myanmar migrant workers at Mae Tao community

Item	Interviewees	Satisfaction	Unsatisfaction	Percentage
Weekly Working Hours (35 hours per week)	12	12/12	0/12	100
Being able to pursue a hobby	12	12/12	0/12	100
Being able to take days off for sickness or personal events	12	12/12	0/12	100

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Subjective Quality of life

In order to achieve the average percentage of the subjective quality of life of legal Myanmar migrant workers from Mae Tao's partnered organizations, researcher tabled it down based on the interviewees' responds to how the state of perceptive to their quality of life.

Table 3.6. Subjective Quality of Life of Legal Myanmar migrant workers

Item	Interviewees	Satisfaction	Unsatisfaction	Percentage
Having quality food to eat	12	12/12	0/12	100
Being able to save money	12	4/12	8/12	33.33
Assessing to educational opportunities or having education	12	10/12	2/12	83.33
Having both good physical and mental health	12	12/12	0/12	100
Being able to support parents or kids	12	2/12	10/12	16.67
Being able to return homeland	12	4/12	8/12	33.33
Being able to buy new apartment or house	12	2/12	2/12	16.67

Being able to enjoy	12	9/12	3/12	75
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personal events

Table 3.6 shows the overall percentage of subjective quality of life of legal Myanmar migrant workers at Mae Tao community based on the interviewees' answers. Every individual participant said, "I am satisfied working at Mae Tao community despite low salary." As these organizations' objectives and goals are clear working on community development and people living within, this is obvious that people feel happy working there while they are also contributing back to the community. You can imagine how proud they shall be when being a part of organization which contributes the community development, especially volunteers. "We feel so secure and being protected living here rather than homeland", added some participants. This is much related with their places they originally came from. For example, some of them might have lived where civil war exists or remote areas with very low-socio economic backgrounds before. Six interview participants stated, "we are satisfied because vocational trainings are provided to those who work at Mae Tao partnered organizations, eventually educational fund for college students". "There are many young people who already got educational assistance after working there for a while," said participant F from Ethnic Health System Strengthening Group (EHSSG),

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(Participant F, personal communication, October 17, 2022). Participant I said, “my neighbors and colleagues are very kind and supportive so that I feel like a second home,” (Participant I, personal communication, October 31, 2022). All interviewees rated 9 out of 10 to their physical and mental health conditions when working at Mae Tao community. They all added, “we are free to practice our faith with any hindrances, and rarely miss any of their personal events due to working schedule”.

Their responses resulted that there are four lower items existing to improve the living standards of those migrant workers; being able to save money, being able to support parents and kids, being able to buy new apartment or house and being able to return to homeland. Oppositely, the higher achievements are having quality foods, having education or educational opportunities, having good health physically and mentally, and being able to enjoy personal events. It is also evident that those migrant workers have good health and foods as well as education thus their subjective quality of life is considerably high. However, the objective quality of life of those migrant workers is yet not above average.

Previous research studies are primarily concerned about the challenges and violation of migrant labour rights, and suggest to improve the social security for them in order

to develop living standards. Legal protection or social security seems to be ranked as one of the highest importance because number of previous studies report how poor their social security related aspects are. One of the previous studies written briefly earlier has been used sampling methods to access the Quality of Life of Myanmar migrant workers in another province of Thailand known as Samut Sakorn. And, it revealed that there is a strong association between Buddhist temple and those Myanmar migrant workers, and also researchers suggest that the role of that Buddhist temple shall be increased to improve QOL of those migrant labors (Promphakping, et al., 2019, pp.39 – 40). In Thailand's labor migration aspect, the number of NGOs and INGOs is the lowest compared to factors such as construction, fishery and service-related areas. Not only that, the reports concerned with the wellbeing of those migrant labors is underrepresented as well. Therefore, this study explored to the quality of life of legal Myanmar migrants working in INGOs and IGOs sector by taken Mae Tao community for primary data resources.

In this study, QOL objective and QOL subjective approaches are so as to evaluate overview of quality of life of those legal Myanmar migrant labors due to the interconnection between those two social indicators. As described above upon conducted semi-structured interviews

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in terms of material wealth, physical and mental health, legal protection and work-life balance, the objective quality of life of legal Myanmar migrant labors at Mae Tao community is relatively low despite a good range of education opportunities and health care services they received. Based on their answers, researcher could note that those migrants would not be going back to homeland in a short period time of working because they are unable to save money for extra. Plus, they appreciate their working life at Mae Tao community until reaching to age of 60 or when Myanmar is no longer fighting for civil war. It also proves that Myanmar people migrating to Thailand for better living is pretty much related to Civil War in homeland. From interviews, those labors prioritized three importance to improve or achieve; better apartment or house, being able to save money and support parents and kids as well as being able to return to homeland. Table 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 also demonstrate how the present quality of life of those legal Myanmar migrant workers in terms of material wealth, physical and mental health, legal protection and work-life balance.

The subjective quality of life of legal Myanmar migrant labors at Mae Tao community is considerably high (see Table 3.2 above). All interviewees in this research said that they are happy and satisfied working here rather than living and working in homeland. In fact, legal Myanmar

migrant workers kind of feel safer and better living compared to where they originally came from. Participant E and F answered that they really enjoy working within Mae Tao community while benefiting the safety of working environment, free health care services and educational opportunities such as financial aids if they apply to higher education in the future, except for low income and unable to support families (Participant E, personal communication, October 16, 2022), (Participant F, personal communication, October 17, 2022). Participant D from Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee organization suggested that, "legal protection should be improved across Mae Sot region for Myanmar migrant workers," (Participant D, personal communication, October 16, 2022). And she witnesses that some people are being abused by local authority. Furthermore, she said that one out of five new migrant comers from Myanmar get discriminated in Mae Sot, Tak province of Thailand. This is why she believes it could have been much better for living and working in case migrant policies shall be abolished or these people will be protected by not only host organization and but also local government.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

In this research paper, author has explored how the quality of life of Legal Myanmar migrant workers in that particular area to report by using both semi-structured interviews for primary sources and secondary sources from journal articles, previous researches and books. And then, it has been able to describe the conditions of legal Myanmar migrant labors in terms of material wealth, health, legal protection and work-life balance as well as propose some ways to improve the prioritized aspect of living standards by those labors. This study found out that the objective quality of life is noticeably poor, and it could be considerably average or high once three importance prioritized by those migrant workers will be improved including material wealth and legal protection.

For subjective quality of life, it is considerably high. Perhaps, it could be because of the backgrounds where they originally came from like Myanmar migrants have almost no choice but continue working there. For another perspective is that some type of legal Myanmar migrant is quite happy that we can do something about it while they can give their hands to those in need. As mentioned in chapter 1 previously that Myanmar people migrate to Thailand for better livings and avoid suffering from civil wars. Thus, they would feel much better working there unless they are illegal and arrested. It

shall except some people since some legal Myanmar migrant workers are working there for their volunteerism and loving-kindness (Metta) toward refugees and migrant children at Thailand-Myanmar border camps. Subsequently, the chapter 4 findings and interview answers submit the high satisfaction of Myanmar migrant workers to their working life.

Overall, the results from findings in this study reveals that legal Myanmar migrant labors' objective wellbeing is poor but subjective wellbeing is high at Mae Tao community. It also seems comparatively connected to the background and environment they originally came from when migrating for better living. In the following paragraph, the recommends of this study shall be advantageous for all concerning agencies and eventually migrant workers themselves.

Regarding recommendations, researcher would recommend some sights on how the quality of life of legal Myanmar migrant labors can be improved whilst living and working in foreign countries. It is also frustrating to just convince which relevant agencies would do to advance the quality of life for Myanmar Migrant Workers. However, the analysis of findings in this research proposes four solutions to improve both the objective and subjective quality of life of

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Legal Myanmar migrant workers in this area based on the analysis of used data and information.

First solution is requesting the local government to provide the standard dormitories for foreign workers, not just in this community alone but also across Thailand. In this way, it can reduce the abuse from private landlords and agencies so that legal migrants can access to quality of life by ensuring that they are safe and secured to live and work while the physical standard are being upgraded. It also protects national security somehow.

Second solution is encouraging those legal migrant workers to look for self-employment opportunities by local agencies. It surely will provide more economic independence and subtract health inequality among workers with same status, education background, income, and social integration.

Third solution is working a part-time job, earning extra money so that they can support their parents or kids or eventually returning homeland.

Fourth solution is adapting to minimalism practices by themselves, which will help them satisfy despite low income. For example, limiting the amount of spending on unnecessary items and cut the meaningless expenses. By doing it, they will be able to save some of it for the emergency fund in case.

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