

## **EFFECTS OF RURAL-URBAN YOUTH MIGRATION ON AGRICULTURE IN CHAUK TOWNSHIP, MAGWAY REGION**

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### **Abstract**

Agriculture is the major source of income and it includes the important role of socio-economic development in the study area. With the increasing of youth migrants from rural to urban area, labour force is decreased in the agricultural production. This study assessed to determine the effects of rural-urban youth migration on agriculture in the Chauk Township of Magway Region. This therefore raises the following pertinent questions: What are the socio-economic characteristics of the youth migrants? What are the causes of rural-urban youth migration? What are the effects of rural-urban youth migration on agricultural production? The objectives are to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the youth migrants; to ascertain the causes of rural-urban youth migration; and to inquire the effects of rural-urban youth migration on agricultural production. Primary data collected from the field observation through a structured questionnaire and interviews has been used in this study. Research has used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage. To assess the strengths and weaknesses which can bring about opportunities and threats due to rural-urban youth migration SWOT analysis is applied.

**Keywords:** migration, youth, agriculture, rural area, quantitative and qualitative methods, SWOT Analysis

### **Introduction**

Chauk is one of the commercial hubs of Magway Region. It is highly accessible transportation is good, as it is located at the main road junction and waterway. Generally the township has a very limited area of flat lowland, but valleys, uplands (hills) and steep cliffs dominate the relief. The upper layer of the land surface is composed of red soils, gravelly soils and sandy soils. Being located in the low-rainfall area of Central Myanmar and having highly undulated land, the availability of potable water is rather difficult. Groundwater can be withdrawn only from the tube-well with at least a depth of over 12.7 metres (500 feet). The majority of rural populace earns their living on farmwork. The main products of the township are oil seeds and pulses which are mostly sent to Yangon and Mandalay (Source: GAD, 2018, Chauk Township).

Agriculture is the major source of income in most rural area and also serves as a source of employment to most rural people. Evidence has shown that majority of the population in most rural areas are small scale farmers providing food for human consumption and raw materials for export and manufacturing industries. The definition of youth by United Nations on “International Youth Day”, 2013 is the young people having an age of between 15 and 35 years. Rural-urban youth migration can be seen as the physical transnational change of young individuals or group of young people from rural areas to urban centres. Rural-urban youth migration is the most important aspect of labour migration, because it affects the structures and composition of the population (Mbah et al, 2016). With the mass migration of youths from rural to urban areas, only

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few youths are left behind, consequently the cost of labour has been increased. With this trend, most farmers are faced with the difficulty to afford the high cost of labour. Even when some can afford it, labour is readily unavailable because many youths have migrated to cities and most of those left behind may not be interested in agricultural activities. Since more youths migrate to urban areas for better standard of living, many aged people are left to accomplish most tasks associated with farming. Rural – urban youth migration also slows down the pace of development of the rural areas.

### **Research questions**

What are the socio-economic characteristics of the youth migrants?

What are the causes of rural-urban youth migration?

What are the impacts of rural-urban youth migration on agricultural production?

### **Aim**

- The main aim of this study is to give suggestions for reducing rural-urban youth migration

### **Objectives**

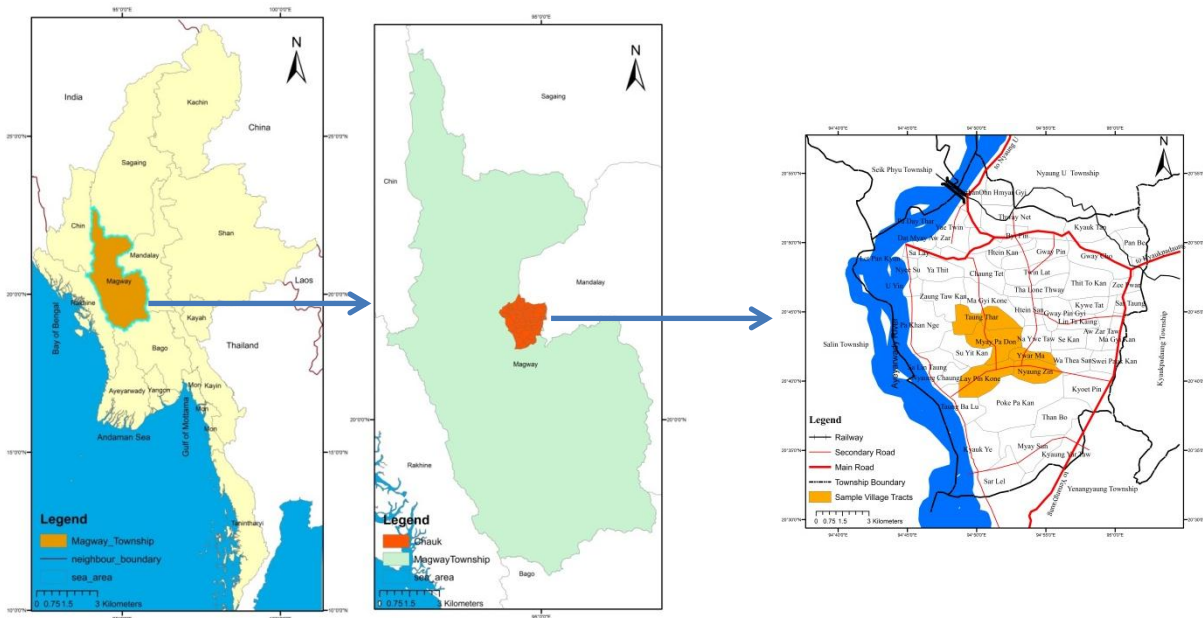
- to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the youth migrants;
- to ascertain the causes of rural-urban youth migration; and
- to inquire the effects of rural-urban youth migration on agricultural production

### **Data and Methodology**

The 5 village tracts out of 51 are selected as sample areas because of intensive growing of groundnut, high cost of groundnut cultivation, growing the crop in accord to the seasons, high demand of labour in the period from the beginning to the harvest time, high accessibility and easy transport of the crop to markets (Chauk and Kyaukpadaung) and having no difficult for the youth migrants to move and work in other towns and cities. The analysis is based on a survey of 100 migrants during the period from 1-4-2019 to 30-6-2019. The survey was conducted by questionnaires and collected detailed information on the socio-economic characteristics of the youth migrants (gender, age, marital status, level of education, income, current job, past job, migrant's destination or town, reasons of migration, migration time, etc.), agricultural production (farm ownership, condition of labour hiring, yield per unit area of crop, market condition) and the interest in ya farming of the youth migrants. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage. To assess the strength and weakness which can bring about opportunities and threats due to rural-urban youth migration SWOT analysis is applied.

### **Study Area**

Chauk Township is located in Magway District, Magway Region of Central Myanmar. It lies between 20° to 20° 25' north latitudes and between 94° to 94' 50" east longitudes. The distance from east to west is 35.41 km (22 miles) and from north to south is 41.84 km (26 miles), covering a total area of 1481 sq. km (572 sq. miles). The township is bordered with Bagan-Nyaung U Township on the north, Kyaukpadaung Township on the east, Yenanchaung Township on the south and Salin and Seikphyu Townships on the west.



**Figure 1** Location of sample village tracts in Chauk Township

The net sown area of cultivated land is 55,265.09 hectares (136,563 acres) of which 52,901.72 hectares (130,723 acres) or 95.72 percent are Ya land. The second important land type is Kaingkyun land which occupies 1,368.65 hectares (3382 acres) or 2.48 percent of the total. The remainder, 8.09 hectares (20 acres) or 0.01 percent is garden land ((Source: GAD, 2018, Chauk Township). As Ya land is by far the most dominant land type, such ya crops as groundnut, sesame and pulses (green grain, pigeon pea, lablab, etc.) are mostly grown.

There are 44,278 households in Chauk Township and the number of total population is 212,733. The township comprises 15 wards in the urban area and 51 village tracts which are made up of 230 villages in the rural area. The sample study area has 4,354 houses, 4,564 households 20,286 people.

## Findings

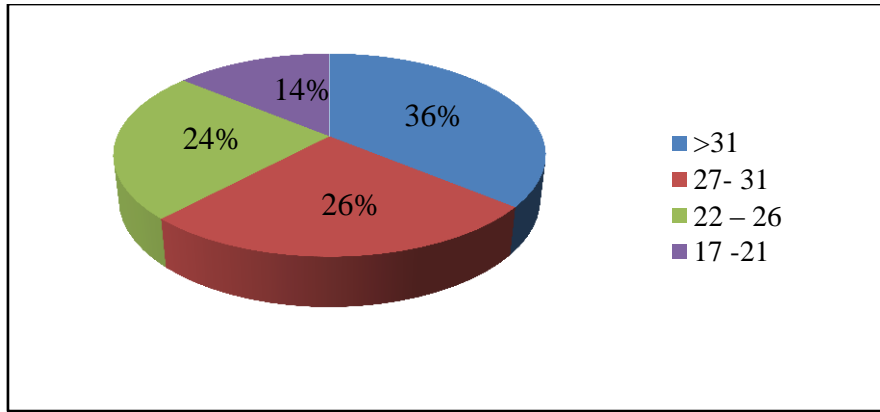
### Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

#### Gender

Of the 100 respondents or youth migrants, 65 percent are males and 35 percent females. This indicates that the males that once engaged in ya work have left their natives and migrated to other large towns or places for better job opportunity. As such the female youths have to do ya work.

#### Age (years)

As shown in Table (1), 36 percent of the respondents are aged 31 years and above. The 27 to 31 - year age-group is second largest in number which represents 26 percent of the respondents. The number of 22 to 26 year age-group account for 24 percent, and the remainder or 14 percent of the total are aged between 17 and 21 years. This shows that the majority are of the age suitable for strenuous work.



Source: Table 1

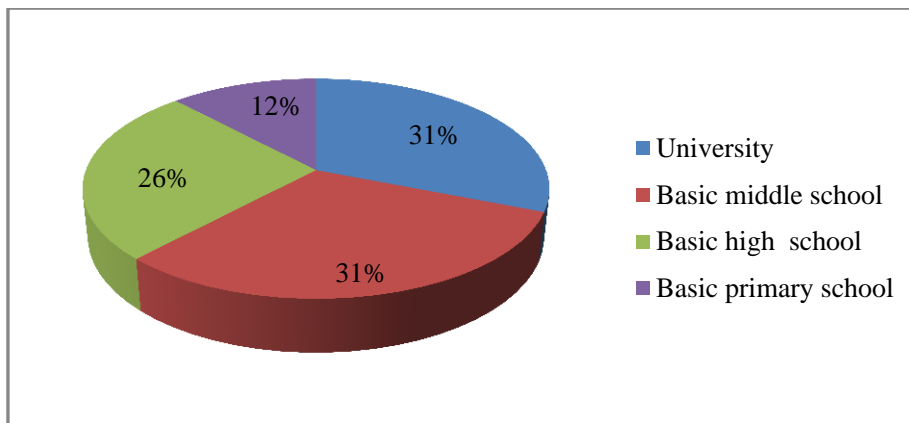
**Figure 2** Age of the respondents in the study area

**Marital Status**

Among the respondents 60 percent are single or unmarried and the remainders or 40 percent are married. This means that not only the married are responsible for the family but also the single are not interested to get involved in the traditional ya work and moved to the urban area where less strenuous jobs are available.

**Level of Education**

Among the respondents 31 percent of each are graduates and middle school level pass, 26 percent basic high school level pass and 12 percent primary level pass. The migrant youths include not only graduates but also these who finished only basic primary level. Ya farming do not bring in regular income and thus the youths with different level of education moved to the urban areas for higher and regular income.



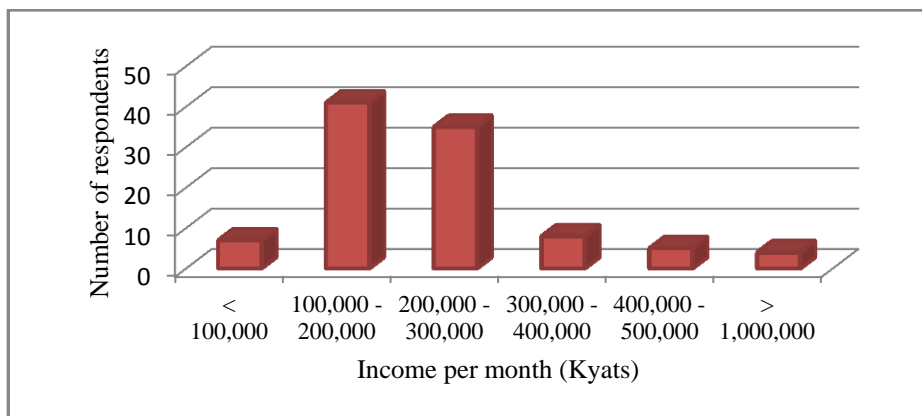
Source Table 1

**Figure 3** Education levels of the youth migrants in the study area

**Income**

According to the respondents, 41 percent of them receive a monthly income of between Ks 100,000 and 200,000, 35 percent between Ks 200,000 and 300,000, 8 percent between Ks 300,000 and 400,000, and 5 percent between Ks 400,000 and 500,000. Besides, 7 percent of them earn less than Ks 100,000 while 4 percent get over Ks 10 lakhs monthly. Among the youth

migrants who earn a monthly income of more than 10 lakhs include one percent each BE degree holders and second year university students and 2 percent basic education high school pass. Among the 31 percent migrants who earn between Ks 3 and 5 lakhs are 4 percent graduates and 27 percent under-graduate (7 % basic education primary school, 11 % basic education middle school and 9 % basic education high school). This shows that undergraduates can earn high salary if they finished certain professional training.



Source: Table 1

Figure 4 Income per month (Kyats) of the youth migrants in the study area

Table 1 Distribution of youth migrants according to socio-economic characteristics (n= 100)

Socio-economics characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	65	65
Female	35	35
Total	100	100
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
17 -21	14	14
22 – 26	24	24
27- 31	26	26
>31	36	36
Total	100	100
<b>Education</b>		
Basic primary school	12	12
Basic middle school	31	31
Basic high school	26	26
University	31	31
Total	100	100
<b>Current Jobs</b>		
Transportation	21	21
Government servant	10	10
Private servant	54	54
Own business	15	15
Total	100	100
<b>Past Jobs</b>		
Agriculture	56	56
Government servant	35	35
Students	5	5
Own business	4	4
Total	100	100

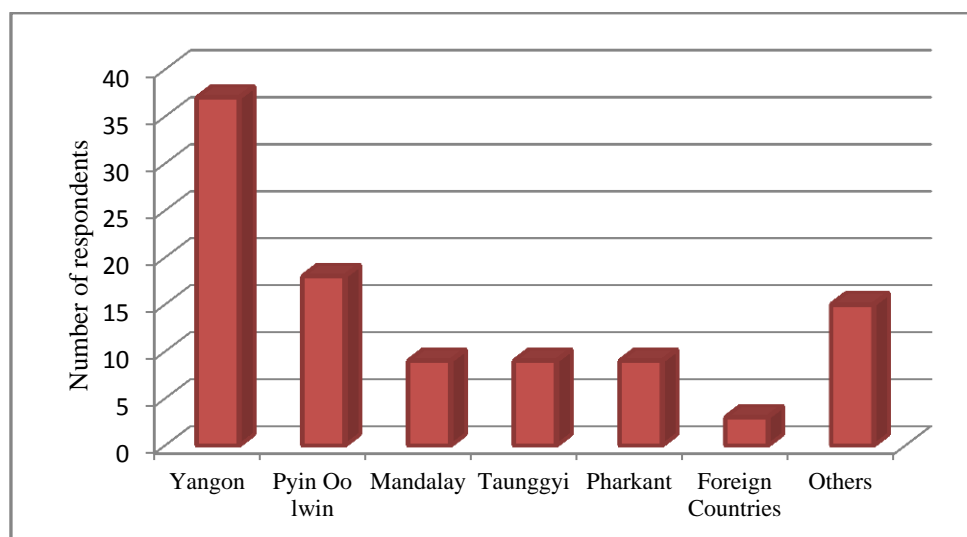
<b>Socio-economics characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Income</b>		
< 100,000	7	7
100,000 - 200,000	41	41
200,000 - 300,000	35	35
300,000 - 400,000	8	8
400,000 - 500,000	5	5
> 1,000,000	4	4
Total	100	100
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	60	60
Married	40	40
Total	100	100
<b>Migrant's Destination or Town</b>		
Yangon	37	37
Pyin Oo lwin	18	18
Mandalay	9	9
Taunggyi	9	9
Pharkant	9	9
Foreign countries	3	3
Others	15	15
Total	100	100
<b>Reasons of migration</b>		
Economics	6	6
Job opportunities in destination	81	81
Government service	9	9
Survival	3	3
to live with family	1	1
Total	100	100
<b>Migration Time</b>		
2000-2004	4	4
2005-2009	9	9
2010-2014	32	32
2015-2018	55	55
Total	100	100
<b>Farm ownership (Acre)</b>		
No own land	30	30
< 2	25	25
2--3	23	23
3--4	5	5
4--5	5	5
>5	12	12
Total	100	100
<b>Condition of Labour Hiring</b>		
Poor	32	32
Suitable	9	9
Good	2	2
Difficult	57	57
Total	100	100
<b>Yield Per Unit Area of Crop</b>		
< 20	11	11
21 -- 25	40	40
26 -- 30	1	1
31 -- 35	16	16

Socio-economics characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
> 40	2	2
Non	30	30
Total	100	100
<b>Market</b>		
Poor	7	7
Suitable	10	10
Good	16	16
Irregular	67	67
Total	100	100
<b>The Interest in Ya Farming</b>		
Yes	27	27
No	73	73
Total	100	100

Source: Field observation (1/4/2019 – 30/4/2019)

### Migrants’ Destination or Town

The number of migrants who moved to Yangon are the greatest with 37 percent. Yangon City is the commercial hub of the country and has a number of industrial zones. The second most important destination is Pyin-Oo-Lwin where 18 percent of the respondents are working and 9 percent each go to Mandalay, Taunggyi and Pharkant and 3 percent to foreign countries (Malaysia, Korea, Singapore). The respondents who seek job in other towns in the country (Pyay, Katha, Letpadan, Loilem, Myeik, Hpa-an, Yenanchaung, Taungoo, etc.) account for 15 percent of migrant youth total.



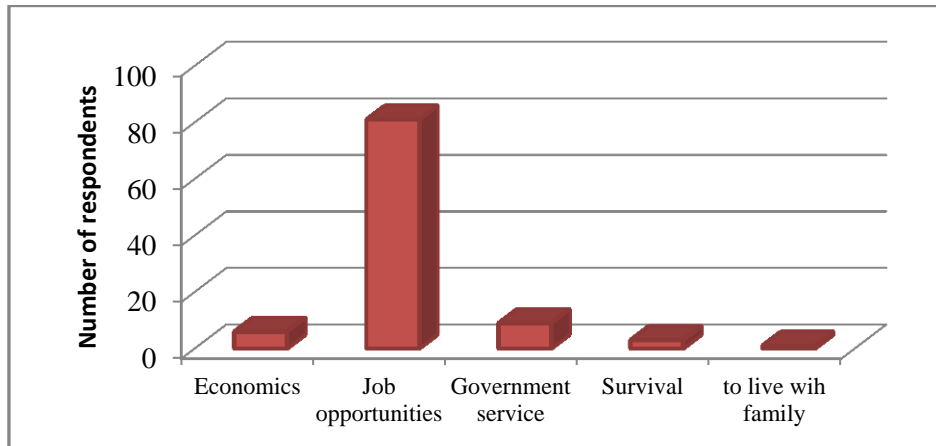
Source: Table 1

Figure 5 Destination or town of the youth migrants in the study area

### Reasons of Migration

The main reason of migration from the study area to other place is to get better and higher income. Those migrated for job opportunities are largest in number which represented 81 percent of the respondents. This means that the youths of these days are not interested to carry on the traditional job of ya farming. A few (6%) moved to other places, expecting to get rich there. The

government service personnel working in other places account for 9 percent of the total respondents, while 3 percent moved to other places because of economic hardship in the native land and 1 percent migrated together with all the family members.

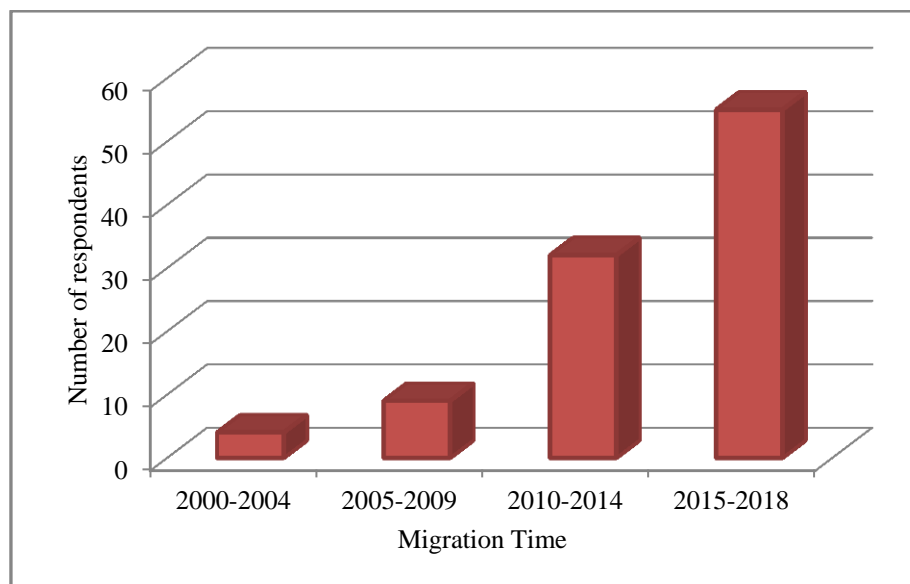


Source: Table 1

**Figure 6** Reasons of migration of the youth migrants in the study area

**Migration Time**

According to the questionnaire survey, 4 percent migrated in the 2000-2004 period and 9 percent in the 2005-2009 periods. The number of migrant youths increased more than two-fold in the 5-year period. The number of youth migrants increased to 32 percent in the 2010-2014 period and 55 percent in the 2015-2018 period. The rural-urban migration trend has become more and more obvious in the very recent years. Most youths do not want to spend their life working in ya land with little or no hope of prosperity. They want to get regular and higher income and better job if possible in a certain urban area.



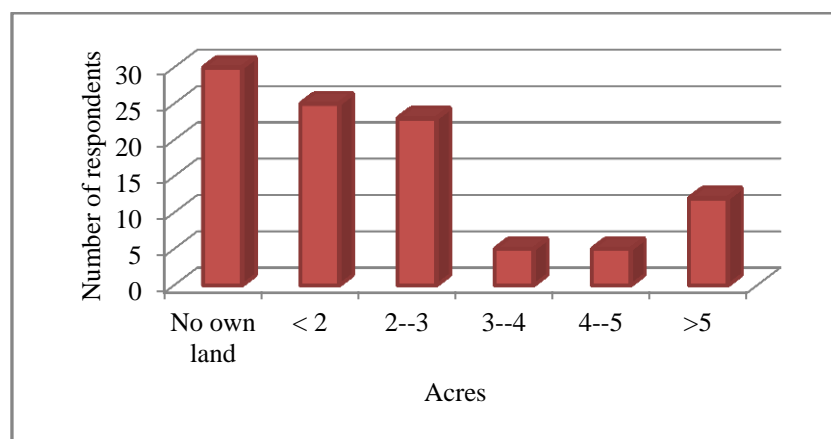
Source: Table 1

**Figure 7** Migration time of the youth migrants in the study area



### Farm Ownership

Table (1) shows the land ownership of youth migrants. Among the migrants 31 percent have no own land and had to work in other people’s land as daily wage earner or piece-work basis. The migration of such farm workers results in the labour shortage for ya cultivation. The land areas belong to the youth migrants are mostly limited with 25 percent under 0.81 hectare (2 acres) and 23 percent 1.21 hectare (3 acres). Besides, the lands are fragmented as small fields in several places. Generally the areas of land are small in size and not dependable for the livelihood of the households concerned. However, 10 percent of the migrants own from 1.21 to 2.02 hectares (from 3 to 5 acres) and 12 percent over 2.02 hectares (5 acres). According to farmers with over 30 year of farming experience, if a household has 2.02 hectares (5 acres) of farmland and grow groundnut the economic return is sufficient enough for the livelihood of the household. This shows that even members of the households that have a fairly large farmland take no interest in farming and moved to certain urban area for less strenuous job and regular income.



Source: Table 1

**Figure 8** Condition of farm ownership of the youth migrants in the study area

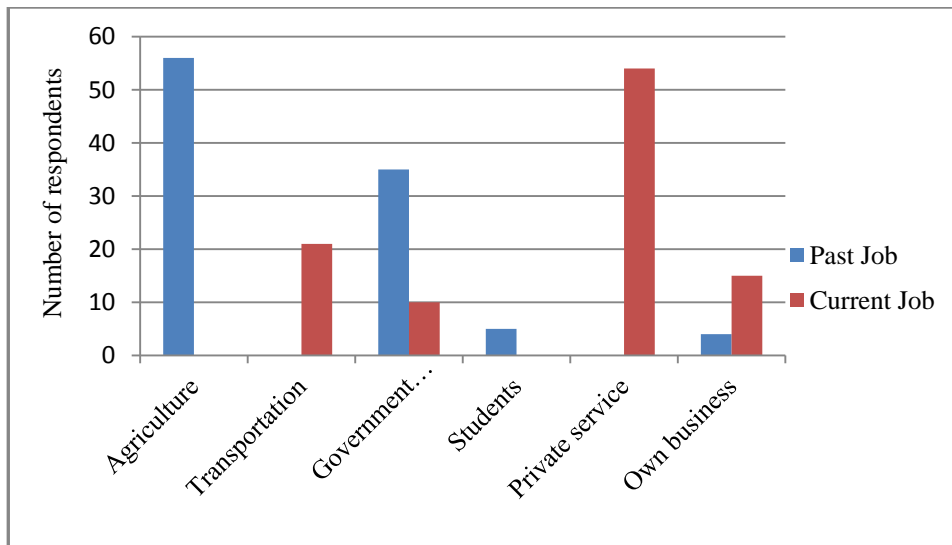
### Current Jobs

According to responses of youth migrants 54 percent of them are engaged in private businesses as waiter, in-charge of frying food, beauty salon helper, tailor and security man, etc., while 21 percent are engaged in transportation sector as driver or spare. Some of them (15 %) run their own business as sellers of boiled pork with stick, setters of snack, dimson, foodstall, tea-shop, etc.). The remaining 10 percent serve as the government service personnel.

**Table 2** Comparison the difference between current job and past job of the youth migrants

Types of Job	Past Job	Current Job
Agriculture	56	0
Transportation	0	21
Government service	35	10
Students	5	0
Private service	0	54
Own business	4	15
Total	100	100

Source: Field observation (1/4/2019 – 30/4/2019)



Source: Table 2

**Figure 9** Comparison the difference between current job and past job of the youth migrants

### Past Jobs

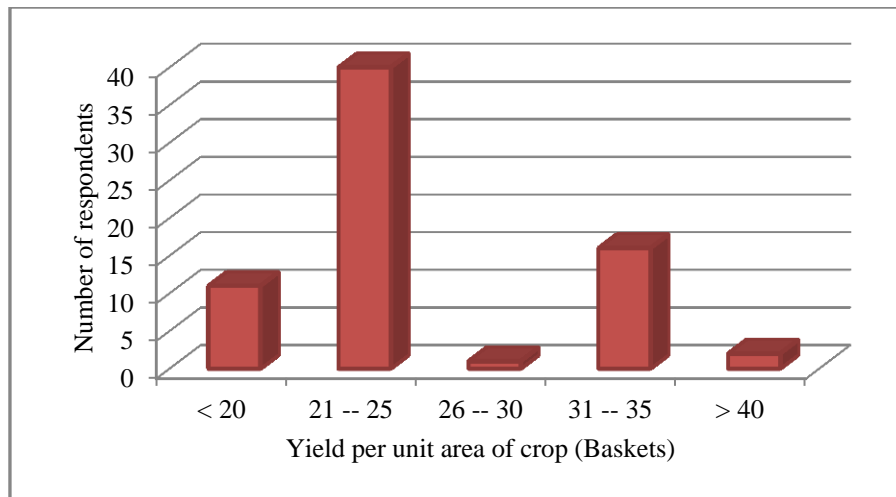
The past job of youth migrants are also studies and according to their responses, 56 percent were farm workers whereas 35 percent were students. The students do not want to earn their living on the traditional farm-work. Before they have migrated to certain urban area 5 percent were government service personnel and 4 percent had their own business with manageable scale.

### Condition of Labour Hiring

As more and more youths have migrated to other urban areas, it is more difficult to hire worker for the framework, according to responses of 57 percent respondents. This can somewhat affect the success of traditional farmwork.

### Yield per Unit Area of Crop

According to Table 1, the yield of groundnut is 21-25 baskets per acre for 40 percent of the migrant households, less than 20 baskets for 11 percent, 26-30 baskets for 1 percent, 31-35 baskets for 16 percent and over 40 baskets for 2 percent. According to interviews with U Aung Than and U Thaung Htay who had more than 40 years of farming experience, it would be appropriate only if the yield of groundnut is at least 40 baskets. Nowadays, ya farming is not profitable because of erratic climate conditions, difficulty in hiring workers, the increase of cost of labour, and having no stable market for agriculture produces.

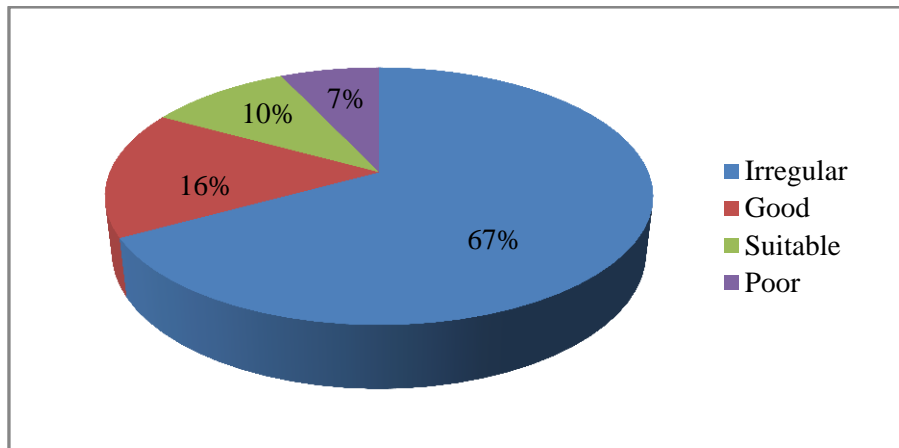


Source: Table 1

**Figure 9** Condition of yield per unit area of crop in the study area

**Market Condition**

According to the respondents, 67 percent said that there is no stable market for ya crops. Usually the price of the crop is fairly high before the harvest time, but it drops sharply soon after the start of harvesting. The unstable market condition discourages the traditional growers to carry on ya crop production. The price of the groundnut is 13,000 kyats per basket in 2018.



Source: Table 1

**Figure 10** Market condition of crop in the study area

**The Interest in Ya Farming**

Based on the answers of the respondents, only 27 percent want to carry on ya farmwork while the great majority (73%) have no interest to get involved in the ya crop production work on account of increased amount of capital investment, uncertainty of the crop yield due to this changes in climatic condition and low economic return.

## SWOT Analysis on the effects of rural-urban youth migration on agriculture in Chauk Township

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strength</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase of contact between rural and urban people</li> <li>- The widening spectrum of knowledge (in politics, economic and social)</li> <li>- The increasing similarity of the aspirations between rural and urban youths</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weakness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The greater proportion of older and younger age - groups are engaged in Ya farming.</li> <li>- Decrease in the number of population</li> <li>- Increase in the cost of labour in Ya farming</li> <li>- Low crop yield due to being unable to finish cultivation in time</li> <li>- Difficulty in hiring farm workers</li> <li>- Perceived farmwork as boring</li> <li>- Unable to grow timely due to scarcity of labor</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase of sending remittance from urban to rural area</li> <li>- The increase of annual household income</li> <li>- Standard of living is getting higher</li> <li>- The expansion of urban market to absorb the food produced in the rural area</li> <li>- More accessible for rural people to take treatment at the urban hospital</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The decrease of students in the basic education level</li> <li>- More difficult to hire workers for farmwork</li> <li>- Low cooperation between groups of youths (e.g. in No vitiation Ceremony, wedding ceremony, fire brigade, occasion of death)</li> </ul>

**Source:** Own idea based on field observation and interview (1/4/2019 – 30/4/2019)

### Discussion and Conclusion

This paper analyzes the effects of rural-urban youth migrants on agriculture in the Chauk Township, Magway Region. The survey discovered that most of the respondents are males, singles, and aged 31 years and above. The number of migrants who moved to Yangon is the highest with 37 percent. The main reason of migration from the study area to other place is to get better and higher income. Those migrated for job opportunities are largest in number which represented 81 percent of the respondents. Major effects of rural-urban youth migration as indicated by the respondents are decrease in the number of population, greater proportion of older and younger age groups are engaged in Ya farming, difficulty in hiring farm workers, unable to grow timely due to scarcity of labor, increase in the cost of labour in “Ya” farming, low crop yield due to being unable to finish cultivation in time, and perceived farmwork as boring. According to the respondents, most “Ya” owners are getting less interest in “Ya” cultivation due to instability of market demand, low cost-effectiveness, and scarcity of labour. Those who have no “Ya” land have to work in other people’s land with low wage, low working hours (only in the morning), having work only in the harvest time, have no regular work which lead to low income and cannot support the livelihood of the family. As such a number of youth workers have to move to other places for better job opportunity. Therefore, the government or the Department of Agriculture should undertake proper arrangement to uplift the interest of “Ya” owners to concentrate on “Ya” cultivation, to regulate the price of crop and market demand, to ease the difficulty in labour recruitment and to rent or sell the agricultural machines at reasonable prices to the local farmers. The study recommends that the government should be encourage youths to remain in agriculture, reduce rural - urban youth migration as well as improve in the agricultural products.

## Acknowledgements

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