

FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATIONAL POVERTY AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE ESTATE COMMUNITY: A STUDY IN PUPURESSA, KANDY

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Education is a fundamental right and essential for personal and social development. However, children in estate communities often encounter barriers that result in educational poverty. This study investigates factors contributing to this issue among schoolchildren in Pupuressa Grama Niladhari Division, Doluwa Divisional Secretariat, Kandy. It focuses on how socioeconomic conditions, poor school infrastructure, cultural limitations, and health issues hinder children's educational access and completion. To understand this phenomenon both ontologically and epistemologically, a mixed-methods approach was employed, allowing for cross-sectional breadth and in-depth exploration. A survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted at Pupuressa Junior School with a stratified random sample of 55 schoolchildren. The findings show that 41.8% of children frequently lack essential school supplies due to their families' low incomes as tea plantation workers. Overall, children experience educational poverty marked by inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, limited computer and laboratory facilities, and other deficiencies. Notably, 76% of children lack access to a computer or internet at home. Limited access to nutritious meals and transportation further exacerbates absenteeism. The study concludes that educational poverty in this population arises from a complex interaction of socioeconomic, infrastructural, health, and cultural factors. A comprehensive, multi-stakeholder strategy is recommended, involving government, businesses, NGOs, and community leaders to provide teacher training, scholarships, nutritious meals, education on healthy eating habits, improved school infrastructure, and solutions for transportation issues. Addressing basic needs - such as subsidized supplies - and encouraging community involvement is essential to enhance these children's educational and overall quality of life.

Keywords: Educational Poverty, School Children, Tea Plantation Community, Social Work Intervention, National Child Protection Authority

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