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Exploring GCE O/L Students' Awareness of A/L Subject Selection in Sri Lanka's Plantation Schools

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Background: The transition from the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) to the Advanced Level (A/L) is a pivotal stage in Sri Lanka's education system, shaping students' academic and career pathways. Students in plantation schools often encounter barriers such as limited career guidance, socioeconomic hardship, and language constraints, which contribute to uninformed subject selection and restricted future opportunities.

Objective: This study investigated the awareness of GCE O/L students in plantation schools regarding A/L subject selection and examined the factors influencing their decision-making.

Methods: A descriptive quantitative survey was conducted among 65 GCE O/L students from plantation schools in the Badulla District, selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms, focusing on students' awareness of A/L subject streams, readiness for selection, access to career guidance, and socioeconomic influences. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were analysed using SPSS (21) software.

Results: The findings revealed low awareness of A/L subject streams and their career implications. A total of 56.9% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that they understood the subjects available in each stream, while 50.7% were unaware of subject requirements for desired careers. Only 24.6% expressed confidence in choosing appropriate subjects, and 60.0% reported insufficient school-based support. Parents (76.9%) and teachers (66.2%) emerged as the primary sources of guidance, though 9.2% of students reported receiving no support. While 56.9% aspired to pursue university education, 46.2% expressed doubts about their families' financial capacity to support further studies.

Conclusion: The study highlights substantial gaps in awareness and preparedness for A/L subject selection among students in the plantation sector. Strengthening school-based career counselling, mentorship initiatives, and access to reliable information is essential to empower marginalised students, promote informed decision-making, and ensure educational equity.

Keywords: students' awareness, career Guidance, plantation Schools