

SSH/PP/12

Hustle Culture: A Bane on the Maternity and the Long-Term Productivity of the Sri Lankan Economy

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Background: For the past decade, the "hustle culture" – the lifestyle that consistently prioritises professional and/or academic commitments over one's personal needs – has become a prevalent phenomenon among youth in Sri Lanka, despite its negative impact on mental health issues surrounding maternity.

Objective: To examine the impact of the "hustle culture" on negative attitudes towards maternity and parenthood among Sri Lankan youth.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted among school leavers, undergraduates, and fresh graduates currently residing in Colombo suburbs, using a structured, anonymous online survey distributed via Google Forms. Snowball sampling was used, whereby initial respondents were asked to share the survey link with others.

Results: The sample, with an average age of 23.2 years, comprised 111 students, of whom 64% (n = 71) were female and 36% (n = 40) were male. Results indicated that 79.2% (n = 88) of respondents were enrolled in an academic programme, and 30.6% (n = 34) of the respondents were enrolled in more than one academic programme. Out of those who are currently enrolled in academic programmes, 46.2% (n=42) of respondents were formally or informally employed part-time or full-time. Besides 60.5% (n=66) of respondents rated (0-5) the statement "I believe I should prioritise my studies/work over personal relationships at this stage to secure my future career." positively (3-5) (58.7%, n=64, p<0.001) Of respondents were uncertain or felt negatively about maternity and parenthood in the future due to the emphasis they have given upon their academic and professional lives.

Conclusion: The "hustle culture" mindset has had a significant negative impact on the youth's attitude towards maternity, with a potential decline in future birth rates in Sri Lanka. In this context, the country's dependency ratio is likely to be adversely affected, thereby placing Sri Lanka's economic productivity at risk. Hence, this issue should be readily addressed with the necessary economic and psychological support for youth.

Keywords: Hustle Culture, Productivity, Birth Rate