

Factors affecting children's education in urban settlement communities in Colombo

D.P.K. Manel and S. Perera

Department of Demography, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

It is widely evident that parental socio-economic factors significantly contribute to their children's human capital investment and well-being. Parental occupation and education are two key factors in decision making towards their children's education. It is evident that the lack of parental awareness and low socio-economic environment lead children to engage in child labour without continuing their education. In addition, children's poor commitment towards education will create a lack of protection and vulnerability within the community. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the factors associated with children's decreased participation in secondary and tertiary level education in urban settlement communities. The study is based on both qualitative and quantitative data gathered from two selected urban settlement communities in the Colombo district. The sample size is 100 households with children of age 5-18. In addition, 10 case studies will be analyzed. Descriptive and multivariate analyses are applied for the quantitative data while content analyses are made for the qualitative data.

The findings reveal that more than 90% per cent of the parents had low levels of education (below G.C.E. Ordinary level) which had a significant impact on their children's schooling and attitudes towards education. In addition, a majority of children who were aged 15-19 responded that they had lower intentions to continue education due to their parents' lower economic background. However, younger children who were aged 10-14 had higher intentions to complete their education up to G.C.E. O/L. Young children's positive attitudes towards education were associated with the intervention programmes which are being conducted by the government organizations in these locations. Furthermore, results make it evident that parental occupation also negatively affected their children's intention towards higher education. The qualitative findings also discovered that several community and environmental factors such as poverty, drug addiction, lack of awareness and encouragement, lack of resources and facilities, and parental attitudes towards education largely contributed to school dropouts and children's decreased intention to continue education.

*

Financial assistance from the University of Colombo is acknowledged.