

THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S PRIMARY EDUCATION DUE TO THE TREND OF WOMEN LABOUR MIGRATION DURING THE CURRENT PERIOD OF ECONOMIC CRISIS IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

The migration of women abroad to provide labour began in the 1970s. The migration of women in Sri Lanka as housekeepers took place mainly focusing on the Middle Eastern region. Women are currently migrating to countries such as Dubai and Kuwait to work in the apparel industry as part of new trends in women's labor migration. The government has taken measures to encourage male migrants and reduce female labor migration due to the negative impact on children and social order caused by female emigration. Due to the current political and social instability and economic collapse in Sri Lanka, a new trend of women going abroad can be identified in violations of the various immigration laws imposed by the government on women's labor migration. Due to this, the family corporation and society are facing a serious situation where the mothers and guardian women of the children in primary education are going abroad. Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of women's migration in Sri Lanka on children engaged in primary education. Here, both qualitative data and quantitative data were obtained using mixed methods research. In the primary data collection, interviews and observations were used as methodological tools. In the secondary data collection, Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau reports, Central Bank reports, Ministry of Education reports, Grama Niladhari, and Family Health Officer reports were used as the methodological tools. With the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka, the labor migration of women has accelerated again, also a form of illegal migration can also be identified. In this situation, migrant women suffer from various problems and violence and many problems are arising in the socialization process, safety, education, and nutrition of children of primary education age. Due to this, many problems have arisen such as failure of the child's education, various cases of abuse, exploitation of the child's labor, nutritional problems in the child, and development of deviant behaviors in the child. Accordingly, our study concludes that in the face of the current economic crisis, the acceleration of women's labor migration has faced many challenges for these children receiving primary education and that the number of these children may increase in the future.

Keywords: *Economic crisis, Mental health, Primary education, Socialization, Women labor migration*

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Introduction

Children are the new members of a society. The process of adapting children to society can be identified simply as the process of socialization. Socialization, which is the most important continuous process in the life of an individual, is presented in several variants in the book “Sociology” (Roberston, 1997) and in the book, “Sociology: principles of sociology with an introduction to social thought” (Shankar Rao, 2012). They are Primary Socialization, Secondary Socialization, Tertiary Socialization, Re-socialization, and Incorrect Socialization.

The child first learns about his environment and society for the first time through primary socialization. There, the family becomes the most important social agency (Gaitán, 2014). Thus, the family plays a major role in building the individual's personality. Often these primary socialization problems occur in families with children of expatriate parents, and these children are often prone to later deviant behavior. After primary socialization is provided by the family, the child formally enters the socialization process through secondary socialization. There, school and peer groups are important (Nickerson, 2022). Here, the first five years of the child entering primary education are very important in formal education. This is because primary education is a very important factor for the development of a person's personal behavior and life skill (Al-Shuaibi, 2014).

The fifth-century philosopher “Plato”, in his book “Republic” has pointed out that primary education should consist of subjects such as music, wonder, movement, games, and storytelling, and that there is nothing left for children to teach elementary children by force. Also, according to Maria Montessori's (1876-1952) opinion regarding primary education, the child should be given the necessary freedom to express his ideas and self-study. It is also said that it is valuable to provide the opportunity to learn through the development of the skills necessary for the development of the child's abilities.

Although the UNESCO organization on primary education believes that children have the right to receive education, and the right to receive education has been highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals, it has been proven that more than 130 million children of school age in developing countries of the world do not go to school (Human Development Report, 2021/2022).

Also, the skills to be acquired by the child are the skills related to the natural, social and artificial environment, the skills related to ethics and religion, the skills related to having fun, and the skills related to learning.

However, factors such as the imbalance in the distribution of resources, poor infrastructure, learning poverty in marginalized communities such as plantation communities, education becoming a commodity in the face of the competitiveness of education, reduction of parental supervision and care, negative ideologies of parents about education, etc. are present in primary education and they have caused problems in primary education. The problem there is that the educational policies are not suitable for the Sri Lankan social system. The reason is that Sri Lankan society is developing and is constantly facing various socio-political and economic crises. There, the changes in the social system directly affect education and Social Corporation. This study also studies the effects of international female labor migration in Sri Lankan society on the children engaged in primary education.

In 1970, the unemployment rate in Sri Lanka was 20%, and the country's labor was exported as a result of the open economy (Selvanayagam & Mustafa, 2019). There, mainly women from this country went abroad to work as housekeepers who can earn a high income in the Middle East. Until 2009, the majority of labor migrants in Sri Lanka were women. According to the report of the Foreign Employment Bureau, in 2011, the number of labor women was 126,654 (48.16%) (SIBFE, n.d.). In this situation, the Sri Lankan government has tried to reduce women's labor migration due to situations such as sexual and labor exploitation and accidents. Also, in order to reduce the adverse effects on the child's socialization process, nutrition, and safety during the mother's departure abroad, it was made mandatory for foreign female workers to submit a family background report. But in the face of the severe economic crisis that Sri Lanka is currently facing, it can be recognized that women are moving abroad through illegal channels beyond this legal framework, and due to this, it can be recognized that there is a negative impact on the primary education and socialization of children. According to the Trending Economics 2013 report, Sri Lanka's net migration rate is 1.95. According to that, it appears that every year the amount leaving the country is more than the amount entering the country. Currently, there is high external labor migration in Sri Lanka. Also, according to data from the Foreign Employment Bureau in 2011, 41% of the community was still engaged in female housekeeping. Due to this adverse economic situation, there will be an increase in female labor migration in the next few years, which will directly affect the children who continue to receive primary education in this country.

Methodology

In carrying out this study, it is extremely important to investigate the impact of the family's primary education on the child in the process of re-accelerating female labor migration as a main answer to the current economic crisis in Sri

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Lanka. Here, it is also important to investigate the impact of primary education on the child. Also, the concepts of migration and social change are important. And the concepts of socialization and primary education are also used as important concepts. Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to investigate the impact of international female labor migration on children who are engaged in primary education.

Here, mixed research methods were used using both qualitative data and quantitative data as the research method. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling method. 25 children who are engaging in primary education were selected as the sample size. In the primary data collection, interviews and observations were used as methodological tools. In the secondary data collection, Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau reports, Central Bank reports, Ministry of Education reports, Grama Niladhari, and Family Health Officer reports were used as the methodological tools.

Results and Discussion

Through the twenty-five primary school children who were subjected for this study, educational problems as well as many other problems could be identified. A mother's support in education is extremely important for a child of primary education age. It is extremely important for the success of the child's learning process. The families of the children under study are the families suffering from poverty, most of them are rural families, and urban and semi-urban families are the least among them. Mothers in these families were found to have migrated abroad to escape poverty, mainly for housekeeping in the Middle East. This migration of the mother has caused physical and mental problems for the child. Often, these children are characterized by a tendency to be alone, less involvement in sports and extracurricular activities, poor academic performance, failure to form social relationships, lack of friends, and nutritional problems. These children are often underweight in height and physically weak. It can be detected that the father or guardians of the family do not care much about the child's education. Also, most of these children with migrant mothers remained isolated. They exhibited aggressive behavior and were found to be quick to lose their temper and fight with classmates when they faced a problem. They also lacked self-confidence and leadership qualities (Perera & Rathnayaka, 2013). Often the father or the guardian is also not getting a proper education, lack of understanding of the importance of primary education, and lack of proper supervision of the child by the school has left the child isolated and frustrated.

Also, it is a special feature that all the mothers of these children have gone abroad during the period of 2015-2022, and going abroad through private agencies is a common feature. It is also an important fact that all these female labor migrants are unskilled labor migrants. Also, the education of male children who receive primary education of these expatriate women is at a minimum level compared to female children. These boys spend a lot of time watching television, using cell phones, socializing with peer groups, and spending the least amount of time on educational activities. And the supervision of these children is minimal. Lack of love, care, guidance, and lack of mother's love has caused various mental problems in these children. Anxiety and personality disorders can be seen in them. And in these families, the child's education is only considered as consumption, and education is not considered a future investment. And it can be recognized that these children have to dedicate a lot of time to their labor for family work. Often the male child works with his father in various activities and the female child provides her labor for household activities. And due to this, these children have faced accidents such as burns and injuries. Also, situations such as marginalization and neglect of these children happen at school and in relatives' society, and due to this, various personality problems have arisen in the child. Also, these children have very poor reading and writing skills and are reluctant to engage in sports and recreational activities.

Lack of a mother's protection, love, guidance, etc. has been the main reason for the failure of children's primary education. The only ambition of these children is to go abroad like their mother. The causes of such problems are based on the fact that the living environment is not suitable for the child and the separation from the mother since childhood. This situation is intensifying with the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka, and it can be identified from this study that the migration of mostly women has a direct impact on the failure of children's primary education. Also, the future existence of a society is determined by the education of the society and the upward movement of any society is caused by education.

There primary education is more important as it creates the basic foundation of the future generation. There, the school as well as the parents and the entire society have a huge responsibility. It is no secret that the problem of primary education will lead to the creation of a crisis in the future society.

Conclusion and suggestions

It can be recognized that due to female labor migration, educational problems and physical and mental health problems also occur in children who engaging

in primary education. Although female labor migration is economically advantageous, the loss of the mother to the child can cause various problems. It can also be concluded that this situation may worsen in the future due to new trends in migration. Therefore, there is a need to revise national policies and implement more practical policies to minimize the harm caused to children and the family unit by recognizing the new trends in society and migration that are changing due to the current socio-economic crisis. The reason is that the collapse of the study of society is the cause of the collapse of society as a whole.

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