

Prevalence of child work among school children in the fisheries community in the west coast of Sri Lanka: with special emphasis on its impact on the educational performance

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Marine and brackish water fishing community in the West coast of Sri Lanka is within the periphery of major metropolitan areas, hence subjected to outside market driven factors. By the technology used in fishing and the involvement in other income generating activities, different social strata could be observed in this community. Based on the hypothesis that child labour is high, particularly in the families of low level social strata, the present study was conducted in such community with the objectives of identifying the nature and prevalence of child work and investigating the effects of child work on the educational performance of children. School children in the fisheries community in Negombo educational zone were the target group and three schools attended by the poorest sector of the community were selected for the study. Data were collected using semi structured interviews with key informants, questionnaire based survey of children, assessment on children's performance in year end test and statistical analyses.

The presence of child work in the sample was as high as 58%. Working over 10 hours per week had a serious effect on educational performance of the child and hence was categorized as 'severe form of child work'; and it comprised the 17% of children. Religion and Sinhalese were the two subjects mostly affected by child work whilst child's performance in English was rather poor and independent of child work. Mathematic and Science were moderately affected. Types of child work and their associations with gender and age were also described.

Key words: child work, education, fisheries community, Sri Lanka, Gender, Child labour

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