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THE CHALLENGES FACED BY LOW-INCOME FAMILIES DUE TO THE INCREASE OF HIGHER PRICE OF LEARNING MATERIALS IN SRI LANKA: A RESEARCH BASED ON NINTAVUR DS DIVISION.

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Abstract— Most of the countries in the world are developing countries as well un-developing countries. In such 20% of aid for education goes to low-income countries. On that, in developing countries the poor families are facing so many challenges. Education challenge is one of the most prominent problem among poor families. In Sri Lanka due to the impact of economic crisis, the price rates of all the things were higher than earlier stages. Like that, increasing the higher price of learning material is another issue in Sri Lanka. This study explores, the challenges faced by low-income families due to sudden increase in the price of study materials and to addresses the alternatives of this particular problem. The relevant data have been collected from primary and secondary sources. However most of the data were collected through qualitative tools. Nearly 3570 peoples get less than 5000/= for per month. In that this research focused on 50 families. Because, there are a total of 4167 Samurdhi beneficiary families in Nintavur. The obtained qualitative data has been analyzed by descriptive method (Thematic Highlighting). Whole collected data have been presented by statements. All the parents of 50 families they reported that, they are facing difficulties in affording School Supplies and Equipment for their children. And most of the children from poor families they dropout their school studies because of their family situations. And also they face psychological challenges too. Overall finding is, increasing the higher price of school equipment's causes the poor families into more critical. The researcher mentioned that in the study area are still facing challenges due to the price increasing.

Key Words: Education, Nintavur, School equipment, Children

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the countries in the world are developing countries as well un-developing countries. In such 20% of aid for education goes to low-income countries. The impact of poverty on the children life and their families is devastating, long lasting, and generational (Carter, 2014). About 20% of the world's children live in extreme poverty (UNICEF, 2017). Children are often viewed as the greatest victims because they enter poverty by virtue of their family's financial situation which they are powerless to alter (Brooks & Duncan, 1997). Therefore it impact on their educational activities.

In Asia, particularly Singapore, education is the key route for social mobility (Ong & Cheung, 2016). As a result, children from low-income families who perform poorly in school have to work harder to catch up with their peers or risk remaining within the poverty cycle. Cheang, 2018 stated that, six or more students often share outdated and worn-out textbooks in many parts of the world. Workbooks, exercise sheets, readers, and other core materials are in short supply to help students learn their lessons. Teachers also need materials to help prepare their lessons, share them with their students, and guide their lessons.

But for many of the poorest families, school remains too expensive and children are forced to stay at home doing chores or work themselves. Families remain locked in a cycle of poverty that goes on for generations. In many countries throughout Africa education is theoretically free. In practice "informal fees" see parents forced to pay for "compulsory items" like uniforms, books, pens, extra lessons, exam fees, or funds to support the school buildings (GLOBAL CITIZEN, 2019).

The student population in the country has gone down by 33,529 last year compared to the previous year, the Central Bank said. The Central Bank's 2021 annual report released this week stated that the country's student population of 4,272,289 in the year 2020 had reduced to 4,238,760 in the



year 2021. The government school population which was 4,063,685 in 2020 was reduced to 4,032,211 last year. Not only in government schools, but student numbers also decreased in private, special needs schools and pirivenas' as well. Private and special needs school student numbers came down from 138,726 in 2020 to 137,049 last year. Pirivenas' too saw a drop in student monks from 69,878 in 2020 to 69,500 last year. (THE SUNDAY TIMES, 2022). Geetha & Kariyasekara, (2021) pointed out that, further, Sri Lanka is a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals commitment to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all by year 2030. But, Most of the children in every districts are dropping out now a days because of the higher expensive of learning materials. Here we cannot see the equality among the school children. Because only students in low-income families have more difficulties. Despite, there are some Non-profit organization help the children in low-income families to give free learning materials. But now the current situation in Sri Lanka impact all the sectors. But so far, focusing on this area no study was conducted the challenges faced by low income families. Therefore, this study explores the challenges faced by low-income families due to the increase of higher price of learning materials.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

However, due to the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka, the sudden increase in the cost of study materials is a challenge for the students and their poor families. The education of school children is seen as an important issue, however it has seen a massive setback as far as this era is concerned. Thus, what kind of challenges are faced by students from poor families due to the sudden increase in the price of study materials?

III. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study was identified the challenges faced by low-income families due to sudden increase in the price of study materials
 Sub objective of this study was to addresses the alternatives of this research problem.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study was used the data from primary and secondary sources. However most of the data were collected through qualitative tools. Secondary data was gathered from Divisional secretariat records. Moreover, primary data was collected through interviews and focused group discussions with unstructured interview methods.

Data collection methods:

Primary and secondary data collection techniques were used for the purpose of obtaining data for analysis.

Primary data collection techniques:

1. Interview

In-depth interview were conducted through an unstructured interview methods. Under this, 50 persons were selected through the purposeful sampling method.

2. Focused group discussion:

There was a focused group discussion involving with 12 people on the purposeful sampling. The persons to be included in this group as follow,

Grama Niladhari – 03

Public – 03

Zakath committee members – 02

Members of volunteer organizations – 02

Principal – 02

3. Observation:

The data was collected by the researcher through direct observation on the community for this study.

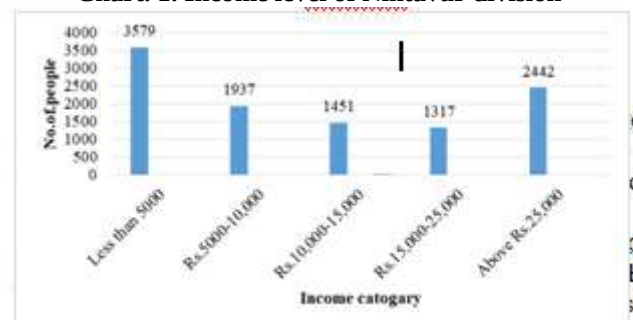
Secondary data collection techniques:

Secondary data were collected from reports of the divisional secretariat and also previous research articles, journals and websites.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Among the selected families living below the poverty line in Nintavur area, the challenges faced by such families due to the sudden increase in the price of school equipment due to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka were identified. Specifically, 50 selected families from each Grama Niladhari divisions among the low income families found in the study area were studied. The below chart.1 clearly talked about the income level of study area.

Chart. 1. Income level of Nintavur division



Source: Divisional secretariat, 2021

In the Nintavur area most of the people are seen as wage earners which is why the monthly income of a wage worker is found to be between less than 5000. But for others, they seem to be getting the monthly salary they need. However, compared to these, there are more wage workers in the Nintavur. The above chart clearly illustrates this things. As indicated in chart 5.1 above it is confirmed that more labours are found in the study area Nintavur area. Due to

this, 3579 people are found to be earning less than 5000/=. All of them are identified by society as wage labourers. However, there are only 1,317 people with an income of 15000/-25000/=. This shows a very low rate compared to other income levels. However, people with an income level of less than 5000 are more common in the society. Looking at the profile of Samurdhi beneficiaries, there are a total of 4167 Samudhi beneficiary families in Nintavur. Compared to other families, Nintavur 9th Division has the highest number of Samurdhi beneficiary category like 437 families come under these. The details of these are clearly illustrated by the chart below.

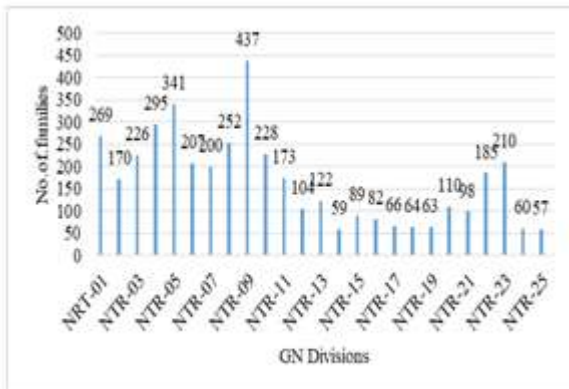


Chart. 2. Details of Samurdhi beneficiaries

Source: Divisional secretariat, 2021

And following this, Nintavur 09, 05, 04, 01, and 03. Further, Nintavur-23 and Nintavur-06 divisions are with the highest number of Samurthi users as compared to other divisions. Meanwhile, it can be observed that in all the three sections Nintavur 14, 18 and Nintavur 19, Samurthi users are found at a uniform level. Apart from this, Nintavur-14 is the division which includes least number of Samurthi users. The reason is that this segment is found in areas that include more businessmen.

At the same time Nintavur-09, which has the highest number of murti users, is found in the coastal area and the families of wage earners, so the number of samurthi users is high there.

Out of 4116 total families who are receiving Samurdhi assistance found in both areas, 1299 families are receiving Samurdhi allowance of Rs.3500/=. 710 families are receiving Samurdhi allowance of Rs.2500/=. 1819 families are receiving Samurdhi allowance of Rs.1500/= and other 450 families are receiving Samurdhi allowance of Rs.420/=. Among the Samurdhi user families found in the study area, most of the families are receiving Samurdhi allowance of 1500/= whereas only 409 families are receiving the lowest Samurdhi allowance of 420/=. A complete explanation regarding this is illustrated in chart. 3 below.

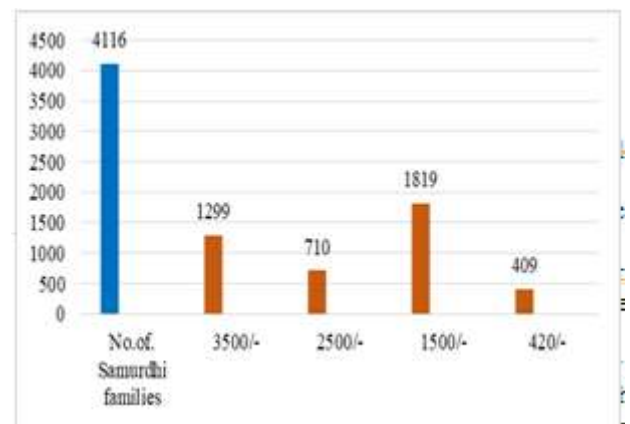


Chart. 3. No. of families receiving Samurdhi allowance
 Source: Divisional secretariat, 2021

Through this, the challenges faced by the 50 selected families and the school students belonging to those families due to this sudden increase the hike price of study materials were identified.

01. Parents are facing difficulties in affording School Supplies and Equipment for their children.

Normally, a student has to pay a high price for all the school materials, including the new school application book, in order to engage in educational activities for a new year. However, amid the current economic problem in Sri Lanka, the sudden increase in the price of school equipment is seen as a huge challenge faced by parents from families living below the poverty line.

The reason is that the families living below the poverty line are seen as well-off families and at the same time they are living in such a state of poverty that they are not able to fulfil their daily needs. In such a situation, it is very difficult to get the necessary school materials for their children's for their educational activities. As far as the study area was concerned, the educational activities of students belonging to 50 families living under the poverty line under the study was seen as makeable.

However, during the interview was conducted with one parent, "It is difficult to send out our children to school to engage them into learning activities. Because, we are wage earners although, we are trying to send our children to school but now a days increasing the higher price of school materials is another challenge for us". (Interview-02)

According to the current situation, during the past days a price of a pen was for ten rupees but now it is 40 rupees to 50 rupees, while the price of a pencil is at least 30 rupees and the lowest price of an exercise book is 150 rupees. This is a huge challenge faced by the poor families who are working as wage earners and the price of every commodity is increasing.



02. Engaging young children in small business activities except the school hours.

It is observed that, some parents in the study area engage their children in small business activities during the evening times.

According to the discussions was conducted among the parents of the children, they said, "There is a situation where we cannot send our children to special evening classes where school learning activities are appropriate. The reason is that despite the free education system in the school, in the evening special classes they ask tuition fees for us. In this situation we are not able to send their children to special classes. Also, apart from this, by engaging our children into small business activities in places where the public gathers more in the evenings our children get a certain amount of income". (Interview-01)

Through the interview, "However, it is a matter of concern that their children do not engage in activities in the evenings like other children and thus engage in small business activities that can alleviate the poverty of the family". (Interview-05)

As a result, children from low-income families who perform poorly in school have to work harder to catch up with their peers or risk remaining within the poverty cycle. In the hope that the children do not lag behind their peers they are engaging small business activities in the evening times.

03. Dropout from school

There is no doubt that if a child is dropout from school there is a strong reason behind it. However, due to the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka, we can observed that, many school students are dropout from school. Regarding the study area, even before such an economic crisis situation, many students from poor families have dropped out of school considering their family situation. However, due to the high cost of school materials, many poor families are unable to continue their children's education.

During the focused group discussion, they said, "children have no basic study requirement and cannot engaging with only school education on the other hand they have to engage with extra tuition classes in the evening because, most of the teachers in the school they are not teaching with their students in responsible manner. So, think about their family situation they dropout their students". (Focused group discussion)

Through the interview, one of the children said that, "His father was passed away and his mother make Idiyappam for breakfast to school children. They have no enough money to continue his school studies. So that, he dropout from school and during the evening time the mother prepared Groundnut and he take that with him to beach started to do some small business". (Interview- 02)

According the above statement some of the children from low-income families has dropout from their studies and it's still happening. In future it will surely increase

04. Psychological impacts on children

In each every event gives us psychological impact. But psychological impacts are mostly affected to children nowadays. Poverty adversely affects children's life chances and well-being in terms of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive abilities and school achievement (Brooks & Duncan, 1997).

During the interview, the parents said that, "their children asked them in everyday to buy some new school equipment like, school bags, school shoes and exercise books. But they don't have enough money to buy this things. At the same time some of the wealthy families give some school bags and shoes which were used earlier in their children. This time their children asked them to buy new things and this used things which they wear and when they go outside other children are scoffing them". (Interview-03)

So, children are easily adapted something and easily disappointed with each and everything they will treat us with soft manner. It was seems to another challenges faced by the parents in low-income families.

VI. CONCLUSION

Now the contemporary situation, education has faced so many challenges. On that, challenges faced by school children is very critical issue in everywhere. The reason is, the family background of the children become very low. Although, in Sri Lanka, Increasing the higher price of school equipment impact only the children in low-income families not for other families.

Compare to other families, the low-income families give more priority to educational activities. The parents of low-income families, they work hard and give education for their children. Based on the study area, we can observed this kind of matters. However the parents facing challenges because of the poverty they dropout their children from school. Anyhow we can change this temporary situation in future. Give sponsorship for Needy Students and Poor Schools. Support a student and empower them to transform their communities. Being born into poverty does not prevent a student from achieving their goals. Students that are sponsored are eager to learn and driven to help their families and friends overcome poverty.

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