

Nutritional Status of Female Students in Primary Grades in Plantation Communities and Its Impact on Their Learning Development (A Sociological Study Based on Type 1C Schools in the Yatiyantota Urban Area)

Ravichandran Gajan

Department of Education, University of Peradeniya

Correspondence: a18184@arts.pdn.ac.lk

Abstract

Plantation communities in Sri Lanka are considered socio-economically and educationally disadvantaged. Particularly, female students living in these communities face numerous barriers to engaging in education. Education is a powerful tool that lays the foundation for social advancement, especially for girls. Providing education to female students shapes the basis for improving their quality of life and for enabling them to play a meaningful role in society. Malnutrition of girls in primary grades in yatiyantota 1C schools is a challenge to achieve excelling in education even the importance of education is well aware. The poor nutritional status observed among primary-grade female students in these communities has a significant impact on their educational outcomes and is recognized as a major social issue in Sri Lanka. This study sociologically investigates the nutritional status of primary-grade female students in four villages within the Yatiyantota urban area and examines its impact on their learning development. The study explores the current nutritional conditions of these students, the contributing factors to undernutrition, and proposes recommendations to improve their nutritional status. The sample for this study was selected based on convenience sampling. The research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, involving the observation of 40 students, questionnaires given to 20 primary-grade teachers and 20 parents, and interviews with four school principals. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using Excel, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis and interpreted accordingly. According to the findings of the study, the nutritional status of primary-grade female students in plantation communities is adversely affected by factors such as low household income, poverty, poor dietary habits, lack of nutritional awareness, low parental education levels, and large family size. These factors have contributed to setbacks in the academic achievement levels of the students. The conclusions and recommendations of the study highlight that by drawing attention from educationists, the negative impacts of poor nutrition on the learning development of these students can be mitigated.

Keywords: plantation community, primary education, nutritional status, learning development.