

The Influence of Demographic Factors on Child Negligence

Himalshi Serasinghe¹

Child neglect is simply defined as not providing essential food, clothes, medical facilities, education, attention, and caring towards their children. Most parents or guardians do not pay much attention to their children whether the particular family is rich or poor. As a result, children have to face various disturbances during their childhood. There is numerous research in the literature to recognize the factors affecting child negligence. However, there is a lack of research in the literature to identify the association between demographic factors and neglect categories in the Sri Lankan Context. Demographic data are the information that exhibits the basic information of the person including education, age, hometown, marital status, gender, ethnicity, religion, siblings, and so on. The objectives of this study are to identify the influence on demographic factors for child negligence and find out the most common category of child neglect. Primary data were collected using a mixed research method and snowballing technique utilized for sampling. The researcher has distributed structured questionnaires (N=134) and conducted semi-structured interviews (N= 10) for the neglected children who lived in Gampaha District including Wattala, Ragama, Dompe, Weliveriya, Peliyagoda, Wewellagara, and Kelaniya in Western Province, Sri Lanka. Frequency analysis, Chi-square test, factor analysis and content analysis were used for analyzing purposes of the research. Findings show that gender, living area, age, educational level, and marital status can be affected for child neglect and religion, ethnicity and siblings were not the affecting factors for the child negligence. Age is the highest affected factor and the gender of the respondents was the lowest important factor to child neglect. Quantitative findings were more similar to qualitative findings. Results exhibited that physical neglect is the most common type of child neglect where several indicators were found to be highly influential. The indicator “Made sure that I did not get enough sleep” was found to be a highly affecting factor for the child's physical neglect. The cognitive neglect type has the lowest respondents while Supervision and emotional neglect indicated second and third places respectively. Therefore, the government should implement many awareness programs for parents or guardians to minimize child negligence in the future.

Keywords: Child Negligence; Demographic Factors; Child Neglect Categories