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Challenges in child protection and education in plantation schools amid parental migration for employment abroad

Arulnesan S^{*1}, Prasannakumar K²

¹*School of Education, Christ University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India*

²*Journalist, Thinakkural Newspaper, Asian Media Publication Pvt. Ltd, Colombo, Sri Lanka*

*sivaselwam.arulnesan@res.christuniversity.in

Background: Protecting children and educating them in plantation schools is of utmost priority, especially when the parents have moved to foreign countries for employment. Due to economic problems and a lack of employment opportunities at plantations, many parents search for jobs overseas, leaving their children with guardianship, extended family, or supporting institutions. This research examines the issues confronting children in plantation schools due to parental migration, focusing on education, psychological well-being, and protection. The study aims to identify the loopholes in policy implementation and support systems for these children.

Method: A qualitative thematic research design was used to capture the lived experiences of children, teachers, and parents in plantation settings. Data were collected using in-depth interviews and observations in selected plantation schools. Thematic analysis revealed that among the major child protection challenges facing children in plantation settings left behind by migrant parents are violations of emotional well-being, academic performance, and institutional mechanisms in protecting children.

Results: The study revealed that these children are facing severe socio-emotional and educational difficulties. Many of them show signs of psychological distress, low school engagement, and increased dropping-out tendencies. Teachers report difficulties regarding students' motivation and discipline, while caretakers have trouble sustaining emotional and educational support. The mechanisms for child protection are weak in any context, with little intervention programming or focused policies concerning these children. The study argues an urgent need for targeted policy intervention for the children in the plantation schools affected by parental migration.

Conclusion: The recommendations include strengthening school counseling services, establishing community support networks, and enabling government initiatives and those of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in child protection. Interventions to address these challenges are critical for the welfare and education of the affected children.

Keywords: Abroad, child protection, education, employment, parental migration, plantation schools.