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**Impact of food insecurity on rural school absenteeism: A case study based on Medamahanuwara**

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**Background:** Many foreign and local studies show that food insecurity is a major cause of poor academic performance among students. Food insecurity has a significant negative impact on the school and higher education of students living in underdeveloped regions such as South Asia, South Africa, and Latin America. Accordingly, this rural school-based research aimed to study the impact of food insecurity on school absenteeism among rural school students in Sri Lanka.

**Method:** 50 students were selected as the sample, from the grades of 7, 8, and 9 at Medamahanuwara Secondary School, which belongs to the Medamahanuwara Educational Zone in Kandy district. And the selection of the sample was done through a simple random sampling method. 50 students who were absent from school for at least one day in the previous term were randomly selected to represent the above triad of grades. The collected data were analyzed using the chi-square test, correlation test, multivariable regression model, and descriptive statistics. The relationship between the categorical variables of food insecurity and school absenteeism was moderated through chi-square tests and correlation tests. A multivariable regression model was used to analyze the effect of the other independent variables (demographic factors) except food insecurity on school absenteeism. Also, a descriptive study was used to interpret the behavior of food insecurity variables.

**Results:** Meal size reduction and school absenteeism have been determined to be moderately but significantly correlated ( $r = 0.332$ ). A clear correlation between reduced meal size and absenteeism was demonstrated by the Pearson chi-square value, which was statistically significant at the 0.05 level ( $p < 0.043$ ). Since demographic factors such as household size, parental employment, and income were not statistically significant predictors of absenteeism, the multivariable regression model failed to show a relationship between school absenteeism & food insecurity

**Conclusion:** Absenteeism is impacted by inadequate nutrition, especially when it comes to meal reduction. Reducing absenteeism and improving academic performance in rural, low-income communities may require the implementation of consistent nutritional support.

**Keywords:** Food insecurity, education, rural, absenteeism, poor academic