

OP 07: Supportive facilities and challenges for education during covid-19 pandemic among orphaned children in child development centres in Gampaha district

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Introduction: Children living in Child Development Centers (CDCs) are critically underprivileged in receiving and accessing positive learning experiences in general. This may have worsened during a global pandemic with movement restrictions.

Objectives: To describe the supportive facilities and challenges for education before and during Covid-19 pandemic in CDCs in Gampaha District.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study targeted all wardens of CDCs in Gampaha District compatible with the inclusion criteria (N=46) using a telephone interview in February, 2021.

Results: The response rate was 56.5% (26/46) as others declined participation due to legal and administrative issues. Sixteen CDCs (61.5%) accommodated fewer than 20 children. Majority could not state a cost for education. However, 80.7%(n=21) stated they “managed”. Essentials for schooling and stationeries were adequately available. Only 10(38.5%) had a separate chair and a table for each child and only 23(88.5%) had libraries. Twenty-four (92.3%) reported that they sent their children to extra tuition classes. Only 16 CDCs had computers and 15 had internet connections before the pandemic. During COVID-19, roughly equal proportions used printed material sent from school (n=24;34%) online learning platforms (n=23;32%) and television (n=21;30%) to continue education. Only 18(69.2%) was able to provide equal e-learning facilities for all children and only 17(65.3%) could continue education without any interruption. The majority (n=21;80.7%) claimed that cost increased during pandemic which was covered mainly through private organizations (n=14;53.8%) and individual donations (n=10;38.4%).

Conclusions: COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on children's education in the studied institutions due to inadequate facilities.

Keywords: COVID-19, orphaned child, education