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Influence of Parental Income and Gender on Parental Involvement in the Education of Secondary School Children in Sri Lanka: A Comprehensive Investigation

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Abstract: This research explores the intricate interplay of parental involvement in the education of secondary school children in Sri Lanka, with a particular focus on the intertwined influence of parental income and Gender. The study aims to unravel the complex relationships between parental income, Gender, and parental involvement and how these factors intersect within the educational context. The research is grounded in the backdrop of socioeconomic challenges and gender disparities in Sri Lanka's secondary education system, emphasising the importance of parental engagement in addressing these issues. The study's methodology involved a survey-based quantitative research design, and data analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings reveal that while parental income may not significantly impact overall involvement, it does influence various dimensions of parental participation. Gender-related variations in involvement are also evident, highlighting the importance of addressing disparities in educational support. These insights call for tailored strategies and policies to foster equitable involvement in education. The study offers valuable implications for educational policies and interventions, emphasising the need for comprehensive assessments of parental involvement, contextual analysis, and a focus on promoting equity and inclusivity in education. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of parental involvement in the complex educational landscape of Sri Lanka, with the goal of ensuring equal opportunities and success for all secondary school children, irrespective of their gender or socioeconomic background.

Keywords: Parental Involvement; parental income; gender; secondary school children, learning

Introduction

The study aims to assess parental involvement in their children's education, examining variations based on gender and parental income levels. In the sphere of education, parental involvement has been acknowledged as a powerful catalyst for the academic success and holistic development of students. The active engagement of parents in their children's education is a subject of enduring interest, and its multifaceted nature continually invites deeper exploration. In the context of secondary school education in Sri Lanka, where socio-cultural dynamics are intricately interwoven, the influence of parental income and Gender on parental involvement represents a compelling area for investigation. Sri Lanka, known for its cultural diversity and educational complexity, offers a unique setting for examining the role of parents in shaping the educational experiences of secondary school children. While the importance of parental involvement is widely recognized, understanding how parental income and gender influence this engagement is an increasingly vital facet that requires in-depth analysis. This research embarks on a comprehensive exploration of parental involvement in the education of secondary school children in Sri Lanka, with a particular emphasis on the intertwined influence of parental income and Gender. It is widely accepted that both economic and gender-related factors

can significantly impact how parents engage with their children's education. This study seeks to unravel the complex interplay of these variables and to elucidate the ways in which they may jointly or independently influence parental involvement. The primary objective of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between parental income, Gender, and parental involvement and how these factors intersect within the educational context of secondary schools in Sri Lanka. This investigation, aims to contribute valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge on parental involvement in education. These insights can serve as a foundation for developing more informed and inclusive educational policies and practices that consider the diverse socioeconomic and Gender dynamics that shape the educational experiences of secondary school children in Sri Lanka, ultimately fostering equitable and effective educational opportunities.

Sri Lanka has maintained a steadfast commitment to free education for seven decades, yet ensuring comprehensive access to quality education for all school children is a persistent concern. This complex issue reveals that various factors contribute to this challenge, particularly within secondary education. Among these factors, the economic well-being of parents, and specifically the influence of parental income and poverty, takes centre stage. The 2016 Child Activity Survey Sri Lanka, conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics, underscored several alarming statistics. It revealed that a significant 10% of an estimated 4,571,442 children between the ages of 5 and 17 were not enrolled in school despite the government's sustained efforts to provide free education. Within this demographic, the age group of 15 to 17 accounted for a disproportionately high percentage at 15%. The reasons cited for non-attendance are diverse, encompassing issues such as a lack of interest in or valuation of education, disability, aversion to the schooling environment, financial constraints, concerns regarding safety within schools and their surroundings, chronic illness, and engagement in household enterprises. While the challenge of non-attendance and school dropouts is multifaceted, this study narrows its focus to the specific dimensions of parental income and poverty as central determinants of educational participation. Socioeconomic factors surrounding parental income and poverty play a pivotal role in shaping the educational trajectories of secondary school children in Sri Lanka.

Prior research has indicated that low parental income can significantly affect a family's ability to actively engage in their children's education, from providing necessary resources to participating in school-related activities. Economic instability can further exacerbate the barriers that impede a child's access to quality education and academic success. It is crucial to address these issues, as they lie at the heart of the educational disparities that persist within Sri Lanka's secondary school system. Notably, Sri Lanka faces significant gender disparities in academic performance, with girls consistently outperforming boys across all levels of the educational system (Tushani and Sarma, 2018). This disparity is evident in the 2015 G.C.E. (O/L) examination results, where 67.15% of female students qualified for G.C.E. (A/L) (General Certificate of Education - Advanced Level), while only 58.11% of male students qualified, according to the Department of Examination's 2016 report. These gender disparities pose a challenge that demands thorough examination and targeted intervention. Aturupane et al. (2018) have highlighted the issue of insufficient gender-disaggregated data collection and distribution in Sri Lanka, especially concerning academic success. This data gap may be a contributing factor to the lack of attention given to addressing the underperformance of boys in the education system. Recognizing these challenges and disparities is pivotal, and it forms the backdrop for our comprehensive investigation into the influence of Gender on parental involvement in the education of secondary school children in Sri Lanka. Our study aims to shed light on this multifaceted issue and provide insights that can inform more inclusive and effective educational policies and practices.

Hence, this study endeavours to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the intricate interplay between Gender, parental income, and poverty and their collective impact on the education of secondary school children in Sri Lanka. Our aim is to delve deeply into the specific roles of parental income and Gender, recognizing how these factors collectively influence educational outcomes. By addressing this multifaceted issue, we seek to provide valuable insights that can inform the development of policies and practices geared towards mitigating the adverse effects of poverty on educational access and achievement. Our ultimate objective is to cultivate a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape that ensures equal opportunities and success for all secondary school children in Sri Lanka, irrespective of their Gender or socioeconomic background.

Literature Review

This comprehensive literature review delves into the significant influence of parental income on student participation in various aspects of education. A multitude of research studies have explored the intricate relationship between parental income and students' involvement in learning, both within and outside the school environment. This review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of these findings and their implications for educational outcomes. Cashman et al. (2021) established a significant correlation between parental income and parental involvement in education, indicating that parents with higher incomes exhibit greater engagement in activities such as visiting schools, reading stories, actively participating in their children's learning, and establishing connections with their children's teachers. Furthermore, CETIN and Taskin (2016) reinforced this correlation, emphasizing that parents with better socioeconomic status are more active and eager to participate in their children's education. However, it's worth noting that Alghazo and Alghazo (2015) found no statistically significant correlation between parental income and parental participation at school. Nevertheless, their study revealed a statistically significant correlation between parental involvement at home and parental income.

Tomaszewski et al. (2020) focused on the impact of students' socioeconomic backgrounds on their involvement in learning. Their research indicated that students from low-income backgrounds exhibit lower levels of engagement compared to their more affluent counterparts, especially in terms of behavioural and cognitive aspects. Importantly, their findings suggest that lower engagement is associated with lower academic achievement. Murphy (2019) explored the context of Australian education and found a strong correlation between a school's socioeconomic status and student participation in mathematics learning and educational achievement. Ferguson et al. (2007) shed light on the early disparities in education, noting that children from low-income families often start school at a disadvantage compared to their more affluent peers. This is evident in measures of school readiness, where poverty adversely affects student learning. Sirin (2005) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis that examined 74 samples and over 100,000 students, providing robust evidence of the connection between parental income, education, occupation, and various academic achievement outcomes. The author emphasized that financial and social backgrounds significantly influence the opportunity structure through which parents can positively impact their children's educational development. Kipkulei (2008) highlighted students' voices, with nearly 96% of girls acknowledging that parental income plays a pivotal role in their educational participation. High parental income helps acquire essential resources like food, school uniforms, sanitary towels, and learning materials, all crucial for their education. (Ogur, 2014) identified multiple factors contributing to low student participation, including inadequate parental income, parental education, and parental support. Socio-cultural factors, such as early marriages, gender roles, and cultural preferences for boys over girls, also play a role in shaping student engagement.

Parental income also extends its influence on students' participation in extracurricular activities. Jelani et al. (2015) conducted a study on primary school children in Penang and found that extracurricular activities are determined by parental education, income, and ethnicity. Students from high-income families, those with tertiary-educated parents, and those from specific ethnic backgrounds tend to participate in higher-level extracurricular activities. In contrast, Burkhardt (2016) examined the effect of poverty on student participation in extracurricular activities and found no significant impact among students in Anne Arundel County's middle schools.

Some studies suggest that parental involvement is largely gender-neutral. Parental participation did not significantly differ based on the Gender of the child (Aliyu, 2018). Fathers engaged differently with their sons than their daughters, as did mothers. These gender-specific patterns of involvement may be influenced by societal gender norms and expectations (Hill & Craft, 2003). Families with higher socioeconomic status may exhibit gender-related differences in involvement, impacting the child's educational experience (Lareau, 2011). Parental involvement in Western cultures, emphasizing how cultural norms can influence gender-specific patterns of involvement in education (White, 2016). The literature on parental participation in student learning based on Gender reveals a nuanced landscape. While some studies suggest that Gender may not significantly influence parental involvement, others indicate that variations exist in the types of involvement based on the child's Gender. Socioeconomic status and cultural factors further complicate this relationship. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing tailored strategies to enhance parental participation

in education, ensuring that all students, regardless of their Gender, benefit from the support and involvement of their parents.

This comprehensive literature review highlights the profound impact of parental income and Gender on parental involvement in their children's education. The evidence strongly indicates a discernible connection between Gender, parental income, and parental engagement in the learning process, with consequential effects on students' academic performance. The socioeconomic backgrounds of students are pivotal in shaping their level of engagement in education, often resulting in disparities in educational outcomes. Furthermore, the influence of both Gender and parental income extends to extracurricular activities, contributing to the holistic development of students. Recognizing these intricate dynamics is of paramount importance for educators, policymakers, and researchers committed to addressing educational inequalities and fostering equal opportunities for all students.

Methodology

1. Research Design

In this study, we employed a survey-based quantitative research design to explore the dynamics of parental involvement in children's education among secondary school students in Sri Lanka. The focus was specifically on understanding the correlations between parental involvement, Gender, and parental income.

2. Sample

The study population comprised secondary school students, and we utilized a meticulous stratified random sampling technique to select a representative sample of 1350 participants. This approach ensured adequate representation across different demographic strata, enhancing the generalizability of our findings.

3. Data Collection

This study used comprehensive survey instrument with two distinct sections. The primary section gathered essential demographic information about the students, while the second section focused on assessing the students' perceptions of parental involvement in their educational journey. To measure parental involvement, we employed a Likert Scale with five response options, ranging from "Never" to "Always." Prior to survey administration, we rigorously validated the questionnaire's content with experts in the sociology of education to ensure its reliability and validity.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis encompassed both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis enabled the calculation of means and standard deviations, providing insights into the extent of parental participation in children's educational endeavors. We utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 for data analysis. Additionally, to explore potential disparities in parental involvement based on Gender and parental income, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). This analysis aimed to ascertain whether statistically significant variations existed across different income groups and Genders concerning parental involvement in children's education. By employing this comprehensive approach, we gained a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between Gender, parental income, and the level of parental involvement in shaping the educational experiences of Sri Lankan secondary school students.

The Findings

1. Assessing Parental Involvement in Children's Education

Descriptive analysis is used to determine the level of parental involvement in children education. Seven items were constructed to determine the respondents' ratings in the category of parental participation, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Parental involvement in children's education

No.	Item	Mean	S. D	Interpretation
My parent				
1	participates in the parental meetings in school which enable them to exchange ideas on my education in school and home	4.553	0.894	High
2	visits my school to discuss with teachers about my education	4.063	1.044	High
3	discusses with me about my learning activities and how well I am doing at school	4.290	0.979	High
4	keeps discussions with the parents of my classmates about our studies	3.717	1.167	Moderately High
5	participates in community and social activities at my school (sports, carnivals, plays, etc.)	3.917	1.226	Moderately High
6	takes me to certain places in the community to learn specific things (museums, church...)	3.581	1.274	Moderately High
7	monitors my studies and supervises my homework at home	4.140	1.100	High
Overall		4.037	0.790	High

Table 1 shows the items in the parental participation category. The overall mean was found to be 4.037, overall S.D. 0.790, and the interpretation is high. The highest item in this category is 1. It is about parental participation in school parents' meetings that enable them to exchange ideas on their children's education at school and at home. The mean of this item is 4.553 (S.D. =0.894), and the interpretation is high. The second highest item is a parental discussion with their children about their learning activities and how well they are doing at school (3), with a mean of 4.290 (S.D. = 0.979) and high interpretation. The lowest item in this category is 6, which is about taking students to certain places (museums, church, etc.) in the community to learn about specific things. This has a mean score of 3.581 (S.D. =1.274), and the interpretation is moderately high.

2. Parental Involvement in Children's Education based on Gender

Table 2 shows the MANOVA analysis for the difference in mean scores on parental involvement based on students' Gender among secondary school children in Sri Lanka.

Table 2. MANOVA difference parental involvement based on gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Total Square	F	Sig.
Parental Involvement	Male	675	3.956	0.834	8.801	1	8.801	14.213	0.000
	Female	675	4.118	0.736					

The data presented in Table 2 reveals notable distinctions in parental involvement with regard to the gender of their children. Specifically, the mean score for male children is 3.956, with a standard deviation of 0.834, whereas the mean score for female children is 4.118, with a standard deviation of 0.736. These findings strongly suggest a statistically significant difference in parental participation in student learning based on gender. Notably, parental involvement in the education of female children appears to be significantly higher than that observed in the case of male children. The disparity in mean scores, supported by the standard deviations, underscores the significance of this difference and underscores the need for further investigation into the factors contributing to this gender-based variation in parental participation.

3 Variations in Parental Involvement in Children's Education Based on Parental Income

Table 3 shows the MANOVA analysis for the difference in mean scores on parental participation based on parental income.

Table 3. MANOVA difference aspects of parental involvement based on parental income level

Income Level	N	Mean	S. D	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Total Square	F	Sig.
>Rs. 15,000	487	3.976	0.794	3.678	3	1.226	1.965	0.117
Rs.15,001-46,000	609	4.057	0.796					
Rs.46,001-150,00	215	4.123	0.745					
< Rs.151,001	39	4.018	0.861					

Table 3 illustrates variations in the level of parental participation based on different income brackets. Specifically, for parents with an income below Rs. 15,000, the mean score is 3.976, with a standard deviation of 0.794. In the income range of Rs. 15,001-46,000, the mean score is 4.057, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.796. For those with an income falling between Rs. 46,001 and 150,000, the mean score is 4.123, and the standard deviation is 0.745. Finally, for parents with an income exceeding Rs. 151,001, the mean score is 4.018, with a standard deviation of 0.861.

Table 3 shows that there is no any significant differences of parental involvement in children learning based on parental income level. The absence of a significant difference in parental participation based on parental income implies that, within the context of this study involving 1350 secondary school students in Sri Lanka, children from various income backgrounds tend to experience a similar degree of parental involvement in their education. This finding is of paramount importance as it suggests that the commitment and engagement of parents in their children's educational journey transcend economic disparities. It underscores the idea that parents from diverse income brackets are equally invested in their children's education, indicating a potential commitment to equal educational opportunities and support for students regardless of their family's financial circumstances. These findings contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on parental involvement in education and emphasize the role of parental commitment as a universal factor, irrespective of income disparities among the student population.

Table 4 shows the post-hoc analysis of different aspects of parental participation based on parental income among secondary school children in Sri Lanka.

Table 4. Post hoc analysis of difference aspects of parental participation based on parental income

(I)Parental Income	(J)Parental Income	Mean difference	Std. Error	Sig
>15,000	15,001-46,000	-.08123	.04802	.414
	46,001-150,000	-.14735	.06468	.159
	<151,001	-.04208	.13145	.992
15,001-46,000	>15,000	.08123	.04802	.414
	46,001-150,000	-.06612	.06266	.774
	<151,001	.03916	.13047	.993
46,001-150,000	>15,000	.14735	.06468	.159
	15,001-46,000	.06612	.06266	.774
	<151,001	.10527	.13748	.900
<151,001	>15,000	.04208	.13145	.992
	15,001-46,000	-.03916	.13047	.993
	46,001-150,000	-.10527	.13748	.900

Table 4 appears to present the results of a post-hoc analysis examining the differences in various aspects of parental participation among secondary school children in Sri Lanka based on different categories of parental income. The table is organised in a matrix format, with each cell comparing two specific income categories (I and J). The key components of the table include. For each comparison, it can be interpreted that the results based on the mean difference and the significance level. A non-significant result (e.g., $p > 0.05$) suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in parental participation between the two income categories. Taking the first row as an example, comparing ">15,000" to "15,001-46,000," the mean difference

is -0.08123 with a standard error of 0.04802 . The p-value (Sig) is 0.414 . Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 , it might conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in parental participation between these two income categories.

Discussion

The research findings unveiled a significant revelation regarding the relationship between parental participation and parental income. Notably, the results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in parental participation based on parent income. This intriguing discovery aligns with the findings of Alghazo et al. (2015), who similarly reported no significant correlation between parents' income and their involvement in their children's education. However, it is worth noting that Alghazo and colleagues did find a statistically significant correlation between parents' income and their educational involvement within the home environment, which highlights the multifaceted nature of parental participation. In contrast, Cashman et al. (2021) presented a differing perspective, as their research revealed a connection between parental income and various dimensions of parental participation. Their study demonstrated that parent income was linked to greater involvement in activities such as visiting their children's schools, engaging in storytelling and reading with their children, actively participating in their children's learning process, and even having knowledge of their children's teachers' names. This suggests that the relationship between parental income and involvement in children's education may vary across different aspects of parental participation, emphasizing the complexity of this relationship. Additionally, Cetin et al. (2016) conducted a study that shed light on the influence of socioeconomic status on parental involvement. Their research indicated that parents with better socioeconomic status displayed greater enthusiasm and engagement in participating in their children's education. This implies that socioeconomic factors may indeed play a significant role in shaping the extent of parental involvement, aligning with the findings of Cashman et al. and suggesting that the relationship between parental income and participation is multifaceted and context dependent.

The finding that this study demonstrates a significant difference in parental participation in student learning based on Gender, with higher involvement in female children compared to male children, is consistent with a growing body of research on parental involvement and gender disparities. Studies by Aliyu (2018) and Hill and Craft (2003) have also pointed to gender-related variations in parental engagement. This difference can be attributed to a variety of factors, including cultural and societal norms, which may place different expectations on parents regarding their children's education based on their Gender. Such disparities in parental involvement can have implications for students' academic experiences and outcomes. Recognizing these variations is crucial for educators and policymakers to design interventions that promote equitable involvement for both male and female students, ensuring that all children receive the support they need for their educational success (Aliyu, 2018; Hill & Craft, 2003).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the complex relationship between parental income, Gender, and parental involvement in children's education. While parental income may not significantly impact overall involvement, it appears to influence various dimensions of parental participation. Additionally, gender-related variations in involvement underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing disparities in educational support to ensure equitable opportunities for all students. These findings call for tailored strategies that consider the multifaceted nature of parental participation in education.

- i. **Comprehensive Assessment:** Future research should undertake a comprehensive assessment of parental involvement, considering the various dimensions, including home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and extracurricular activities, to gain a holistic understanding of the impact of parental income.
- ii. **Contextual Analysis:** It is essential to recognize that the relationship between parental income and involvement may vary by cultural and contextual factors. Studies conducted in diverse settings and cultural contexts can provide a more nuanced understanding of this relationship.

- iii. Policy Implications: These findings have implications for educational policies and interventions. Policymakers should design strategies that address the multifaceted nature of parental involvement and tailor initiatives to meet the specific needs of different income groups and cultural contexts.
- iv. Equity and Inclusivity: Efforts should be made to promote equity and inclusivity in education. This includes providing additional support to families with lower incomes to ensure they can actively participate in their children's education.
- v. Parental Education: Promoting parental education and awareness about the benefits of involvement in their children's education can help bridge the gap in parental participation based on income.

The relationship between parental income and participation in children's education is intricate and multifaceted. Understanding these dynamics is essential for creating effective educational policies and interventions that promote equity and ensure that all children have access to the support they need for their academic success.

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Conflicts of Interest: There is no conflict in this study.

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