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# The dark side of online home-schooling after Covid-19 in Sri Lanka

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Free education has been particularly influential in the educational upliftment of poor families in Sri Lanka. However, over the past year and a half, similar to all other countries in the world, the educational conditions of Sri Lanka have also been affected by the unexpected circumstances of Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Sri Lankan government has taken various initiatives to ensure the educational activities. In this regard, this study aims to determine the impacts of current home-based educational activities on low-income families in Sri Lanka. Qualitative research method was used in this study, 90 low-income families were selected as the study sample. In-depth interview technique and observation were used to collect data and thematic analysis method was used for data analysis. As a result of this study, most of the students from low-income families are unable to engage in the online learning process at home, learning activities of children have become a burden to the parents and parents temporarily abstain their children from learning in some families. Therefore, the study recommends that the government should concentrate to facilitate the children in such low-income families to continue their learning in a non-burden and cost-efficiency manner during the pandemic situations.

# Introduction

Sri Lanka is recognized as a country that provides free education from primary to university level (Sarma et al., 2018). Specifically, the rise of such free education has helped students to transcend caste and class structures and achieved better social upward mobilization (Hettige, 2015). Free education serves as the heart of Sri Lankan education system. Studies show that children from many low-income families have been influenced positively by this free education policy to pursue education and have achieved upward social mobility without any restrictions (Gunawardena, 1991; Shavit & Blossfeild, 1993; Lam & Coung, 2017).

Alawattegama (2020) indicates that education was accessible to all without any discrimination. The policy of free education, the policy of free lunch, the practice of providing free uniforms and free books have greatly contributed to education for all children in Sri Lanka in 1943. The aims of this free education provide educational opportunities to the students from economically marginalized families and making them better citizens (Kadirgamar, 2020). Under such policy, traditional learning-teaching processes have been largely carried out by the schools. This practice has enabled children to fully participate in the school education across various regional and institutional differences in the country (Lucas, 2020; Sarma et al., 2018). The educational activities have been carried out smoothly until the Covid-19 hit the country, Sri Lanka (Kadirgamar, 2020).

The outreach of Covid-19 pandemic disease has affected educational, economic and political stability of all countries in the world (Lucas, 2020). In order to overcome educational backwardness after the Covid-19, modern communicative mode of education has been introduced in almost all the countries in the world. The UNICEF (2021) report pointed out approximately 60% of the students are continuing their education in online and within that only 31% of children in developing countries enroll in online education system. While observing the above statements, it emphasizes that even though the learning process has been carried out in online platform, only the considerable number of students have been learning through online education.

In this regard, educational activities in Sri Lanka have been affected as much as global context (Tharindu et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the government has taken alternative measures to enable students to continue learning. Thus, for the first time in the history of higher education in Sri Lanka, students have been enrolled in online education system since March 2020 in order to pursue learning (Rameez et.al. 2020). It has become a huge success (Hayashi et al., 2020). In this sense, schools have also started to adopt modern technological equipment, which were commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka to teach students since March, 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2021). However, various difficulties have been identified in continuing online teaching and learning (Nanayakara, 2020). Particularly, students' educational attainments have been affected by technology-based learning, all students face difficulties in accessing such technical education, and the condition of home environment for learning is not that much favorable to all the students (FHHS, 2020; Little, 2011).

Thus, Wakefield (2021) mentioned in his descriptive report that Sri Lanka, as a developing country and one of the least technologically advanced countries in the field of education, carries out the online teaching and learning process while no preconditions for learning education through institutionally regulated technology. Further, he also revealed that teaching through technological devices has posed

various social challenges. This has hampered the education access of millions of students and created obstacles in continuing the free education in Sri Lanka.

Nevertheless, it is possible to observe that even though education is provided to students through such online platforms, there are many obstacles identified in acquiring such online education by the students. For example, the reports of UNICEF in 2020 and 2021 continuously emphasize that Covid-19 has been a massive setback in learning-teaching processes of the Third World countries. In particular, learning activities and the educational participation of children in low-income families has been affected (UNICEF, 2021). At the same time, the report of Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka (2021) pointed out that concentration in accessing online education, which was implemented in Sri Lanka is low among the students and families and they also face enormous challenges because of it. In this sense, the study focuses on the following problem. What are the familial reasons influenced in students' non-participation in such online learning?

Many studies (Haththotuwa et al., 2021; Shibly et al., 2021) were undertaken in Sri Lanka on the impacts of Covid-19 prevalence, however, there have been no any qualitative sociological studies carried out on challenges faced in online education from low-income families yet. Therefore, this study focused the continuum between learning environment and social institution (family) and the problems that are found within the family due to the impacts of Covid-19. Based on such background, this study was carried out to identify the realistic view of the problem, what are the challenges found in families because of online home-schooling? In this regard, the study aims to investigate the challenges faced by students in poor families in carrying out learning activities through online platforms.

## Method

The study used qualitative research methods based on its objective. Kalmunai Education Zone in Ampara District of Sri Lanka was selected as the study area. Nintavur from the Kalmunai Educational zone was selected as the sample of the study. Considering the objective of the study, low-income families that include the secondary school students were selected based on purposive sampling method. There are about 10,758 families reside in this study area, among them 4238 families are categorized as low-income families who receive Samurdhi (Poverty alleviation program) scheme. Within that 758 families who got children of secondary school students were identified. Among those families, 740 families engage in non-permanent wage labor. All families suffer without any regularly source of income because of the Covid-19 situation prevailing in the country. The families which have more than two children and earn less than LKR 10,000 per month after the covid-19 pandemic were selected as the study population. Based on the above-mentioned characteristics, 90 families were selected from 320 families based on purposive sample method for this study. Considering the sample population, 30 families were included for in-depth interviews and 70 family members from the 70 families participated in focus group discussions.

Primary data collection methods and secondary data collection methods were used in this study. In-depth interview method and observation method were used as primary data collection tools for the study. In-depth interview method proved very useful for sharing closely the life experiences of the respondents relating to their online educational issues. Observation method was used to understand the environment and challenges of online study of the respondents. Secondary data were also used in this study.

Sources accessed were reports, books, documents, essays, magazines, journals, conference proceedings, and reliable web sources.

The collected data were analyzed based on thematic analysis method. To make an important connection to the research question, thematic analysis method was used for this study. This way, three distinct themes emerged from the data in relation to the research question such as Economic conditions of families for purchasing technological equipment for children's online learning, Usage of technological equipment during learning activities in the home environment and Monitoring children's learning at home. Collected data were analyzed based on these themes. The data obtained is read over and over again based on the responses of those studied, marked phrases and answers. After that, the data were divided and categorized similar themes into groups according to the topics. Then the groups were reclassified according to the selected themes from which the results of this study were further refined.

# Results and Discussion

### Economic conditions of families for purchasing technological equipment for children's online learning

School learning activities have been carried out through television, radio, social media, and zoom meeting In Sri Lanka after the impact of Covid-19. Specifically, WhatsApp and zoom have been mostly used for school learning activities (Impact Report, 2021). Further, this Impact report (2021) indicates that such mechanisms greatly enable students to learn in most of the regions of Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka requested all schools to continue their teaching through the technological devices. Therefore, most of the teachers followed the instructions and they have been continuing teaching through technological media.

Most of the government schools in Sri Lanka have started the teaching and learning via online channels after Covid-19, where teachers are spending large volumes of material as PDF documents to students via WhatsApp and Viber. This situation has created a new inevitable condition to conduct teaching through new technological tools (Wijayakumar, 2020). Therefore, many families pushed to purchase technological equipment for their children's education. A minimum of Rs. 15,000 is spent on this. Likewise, students use technological devices, such as mobile phones, laptops, and tabs as the basis for online learning. Among those technological devices, most of the students use mobile phones for their learning activities in all media (Hayashi et. al, 2020). Particularly, a mobile phone with audio and video capabilities is required for this online learning. A minimum of Rs. 15,000 has to be spent for this. The report of UNICEF (2020) states that it is impossible for all the students to engage in online learning at such cost. According to the report, students from poorer households who do not have access to technological devices at home are more likely to face difficulties in learning due to the lack of mobile phones.

Most parents pointed out that they have fully and or partially lost their job due to the impact of Covid-19, and that they do not have enough income to purchase mobile phones as a basic learning aid for their children's education.

**Table 1. Occupation, family members and average monthly income of households**

| Types of Occupation | Number of family members and secondary school students | Monthly Income (SL Rupees) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean income (Rs) | Maximum income (Rs) | Minimum income (Rs) |
| Fisher man | 7 (3) | 5500.00 | 5000.00 | 6000.00 |
| Carpenter | 6 (2) | 2500.00 | 3000.00 | 2000.00 |
| Labourer (Shop) | 5 (3) | 6000.00 | 6000.00 | 6000.00 |
| Labourer (Hotel) | 8 (4) | 10000.00 | 10000.00 | 10000.00 |
| Labourer (Daily) | 6 (3) | 4000.00 | 5000.00 | 3000.00 |
| Labourer (Mason) | 5 (3) | 5000.00 | 6000.00 | 4000.00 |

*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

The above Table 1 shows the current occupation, number of family members and average monthly income of the households. According to the field data, most of the breadwinners of the households are earning from labor works in the study community. Among those, majority of the people are getting income between Rs. 2500.00 to Rs. 6000.00 per month. According to all household members, their families consist above five members and they have minimum of three children are pursuing their secondary education. The respondents highlighted that their income does not even meet the basic food necessity of the whole family.

Covid-19 pandemic situation has severely affected the unstable income generating industries (FHSS, 2020). This impact has been felt in these households because of their temporary occupations. Most parents argue that it has become impossible to prioritize the consumption of education in a family with such a low-income background. The daily wage laborers are unable to move to other places due to the continuous travel restriction imposed in the study area. They earn between Rs.500.00 to Rs.1000.00 per day and are currently being at home due to travel restrictions in the county and being denied permission to go to other areas for job opportunities by security forces and health officials. In this period, most people emphasized that the little money which they hold in their hands, support from wealthier people such as money and food items to them were helped to fulfil their basic needs at least. Further, people mentioned that it has become impossible to make expense for education where they live with the help of others. All parents pointed out that due to such unstable conditions, it is very difficult to meet even the basic needs of their family and they are unable to meet other basic educational needs.

A father named Niyas (name changed) who do carpentry on a daily basis mentions about this:

*I have already been indebted to many for the past one year due to difficult economic hardships. I have not been able to go to any work for five months now. Normally a mobile (smart) phone worth Rs. 25000.00 was used for home communication purpose. At this time, we wish to buy a new mobile phone for learning of my children, but we do not have any economic facilities for this. In this circumstance, there are no further chances of getting a loan. How to spend on children's education at such a time?*

And another daily wage working father named Saleem (name changed) mentions that:

*We have the facility of eating only one time a day for the past twenty days. I work as a daily*

*wage laborer in a shop. Now the shops are closed because of the pandemic condition and I lost my daily wage. However, the employer pays me Rs. 6000.00 per month. I cannot go for any other jobs at the moment and we probably eat with such small income right now. What is the facility that I can give to my children for their learning in such a situation? It is beyond my capacity.*

These statements identify the impossibility of facilitating children's learning in the absence of parental income.

Nevertheless, it is identified that parents are over-indebted beyond their economic status so that their child's education is not disrupted in some families. Some parents are forced into debt situations because of their children's desire in education and children's nagging. Particularly, teachers also instruct the students to do lesson exercises. Thus, when students are tasked to study from home, they constantly annoy their parents. As more and more lessons are taught using mobile phones, children have become adamant to attend those online classes, which causes uncomfortable situation for parents.

When a carpentry working father named Mohamed (name changed) mentions about this:

*My children are interested in education. We wish them a better future. However, it is difficult to buy a mobile phone or a computer because of economic deficiency. Though, considering the children's education, I have mortgaged my wife's jewelry and bought a mobile phone worth Rs. 25000.00.*

In some families, conflicts arise between parents about the cost of their children's education. Such conflicts have been resulted in father being indebted. Children's education is not a burden to parents as children normally go to school and learn. However, disagreements and arguments occur between father and mother when it comes for asking money to pay for online classes and photocopying the subject matters per week.

A net mending father Yakoob (Name changed) says about it:

*"The cost of education of my child did not affect us in any way as they go to school previously. However, at present a mobile phone is required for online learning. During this time my wife often fights with me to buy a mobile phone for our child's studies. So, I had no choice but to sell my wife's jewelry and got Rs. 12 000.00. I borrowed Rs. 6000.00 and bought a mobile phone. I wanted to settle this debt very soon, which has become an additional burden to me. In such circumstance, there are also frequent fights with family members about the expenses of internet data and photocopy charges."*

The study reveals that these situations in the family of home-schooling have created additional burdens to most of the parents, there is an increase in the number of parents being pushed into debt situations and frequent fights within the family.

However, the basic principle of free education is the students from poor families should be able to pursue learning without difficulties, and learning should not be an additional burden on them (Bao, 2020; Little, & Hettige, 2013). The above explanations clearly highlight the correlation between education and economic condition. It is possible to observe the adverse impact of the learning process over the poor families during this period. Based on these descriptions, this study reveals that online educational activities have brought additional economic burden on poor families in the area of study.

Similarly, parents in some families are forced into a state of mind where they ought to stop their children from learning. Most families, who are already surviving without proper income, and do not have the

facility to buy a mobile phone for learning. And in some families, teachers requested the parents to provide additional explanations in studies for their children at home. The mothers in most families in the study area do not possess enough literacy to teach their children here. Such a situation affects the learning of children too.

A mother named Shafna (name changed) mentions about this:

*I learnt up to grade five. However, I could not clearly understand my son's grade eight lessons. When my son asked about the subject matters, which I did not understand while doing exercises in some subjects, I could not explain about them. Who will teach that lesson again to my son? My daughter is studying in grade six and I should take care of her too. I need to look after the household chores. Seeing all these make worries. Concerns about my children's education are also high, along with household difficulties.*

Based on the opinion of many families that were studied, hand-outs or modules and assignments that were sent by the teachers should be taken as hardcopies. Students who do not have the facility of a mobile phone, are required to take photocopies of the lessons from neighboring students, which is a cost to parents.

House wife named Saleema (name changed) mentions with a great annoyance that her children's education has become an economic and time-consuming burden.

*There are eight subjects that has to be taken notes for my children to study, the exercises have to be photocopied in all subjects. I have three children. We need to spend extra money for this. In the situation of not even get at least Rs. 300.00 per day, how we could spend such money when there is no continuous income? There is no need to talk about it at home as it is not possible to spend on education for now.*

According to most respondents, food is the only priority in families at the moment. Nowadays, most parents in the family are having a thought that they have no way to reach their children's education so let the children learn as soon as school starts. Some parents are seen as having low interest in their children's education in such a crisis situation. The study also pointed out that parents often use the term 'learning is not necessary now' when the children often give difficulties related to studies due to the economic stress. The study highlights that parent are not inters in their children's education because of the prevailing situation.

A thirty-five years old mother named Kareema (name changed) responds on this matter:

*The fishery has been affected for the past seven months. There is no income. We are able to meet our daily food needs with the money available in our hands. Our situation has worsened over the last three months. In this instance, it is unimaginable to spend money on learning of all three children at home. If they want to study, they will study after the reopening of school.*

The above statement reveals that poverty prevailing in the family affects learning. Poor parents are less likely to invest in educating their children if they feel the quality of education is low (McKenzie, 2019; UNICEF, 2020). Parents have to spend additional money to make the necessary arrangements for online learning. Most families face challenges in compensating for such additional expense. Most of the parents engage in non-permanent occupations. Due to the current Covid-19 travel restrictions, there is a shortage of income because of the discontinuity of going for work. In such an environment, parents have to pay for internet data required for continuous online learning of their children too. Continuously, parents are reporting that such costs have become serious concern and burden to them.

A mother named Larifa (name changed) who works as a house maid explains about this problem:

*I have to spend for compulsory learning of my two children. One studies in Ordinary Level and other studies Advanced level. However, there are problems at home in providing complete learning facilities for them. Spending on a continuous internet connection is an additional load for us. Maintaining daily household expenses is a difficult task for us at the moment and we put a lot of effort in spending on education. We owe more for this.*

Similarly, parents who do not have the facilities of smart mobile phone, obtain photocopies from other children in order to educate their children. However, this also increase the cost.

Parent named Jamal and his wife Salma (name changed) talk about this:

*Spending on Photocopying is something I can't do. When children are hungry and starving at home, how can I spend on education? There are four children studying at home. Teachers send study materials and notes with multiple pages. I have to spend money for all children on photocopying the notes. Price for photocopies has risen as stores have closed during this time. There is no income to cover such expenses. Thus, we are only copying certain important subjects.*

This claim raises the challenges of prioritizing the concern of parents on their children's education because of prevailing severe poverty at home. Economic condition particularly influences in enrolling economically disadvantaged students in this online teaching (FHSS, 2020). Income-based environment is a major influence in education (Nafrees et al., 2020). Free education practice in Sri Lanka is the basis for the education of such poor children. However, the new techniques and technologies, which are currently being used to pursue free education have brought costs to poor. These online teachings have pushed poor students backward in the education (UNICEF, 2020).

According to functionalist perspective, children are assessed on the basis of merit in the schools, how they are judged is based only on how they perform on a standardized set of goals regardless of social background (Parsons, 1950, as cited in Ballantine, 2012). Further mentions about this, the school is functionally related to the workforce because it assigns people to their roles based on achievement, skills, and capability (Booher, 2008). On the other hand, Marxist approach suggests that education influences the maintenance of low-income and help to maintain the people in their low social status (Cole, 2008). In this way, this study highlights that prevailing poverty in families may influence on the education of children in normal circumstances, poor families currently face enormous challenges in engaging in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic situation. Therefore, educational activities carried out with the objective of providing free education continuously to all would pave the way for unequal educational attainments in the study area.

### *Usage of technological equipment during learning activities in the home environment*

The study also identified that understanding the lessons and joining at the correct time of teaching have become other challenges for children in most families. Particularly, it is found impossible for all the children at home to join online teaching during the lessons in all families. Even though some parents bought mobile phones and gave it for children's learning beyond their poverty level, the children at home find it difficult to use them in a timely manner. All the children are unable to participate in

the lessons because teachings are done for children on the same time. This condition is found in the most of the houses in the study area.

A parent named Arsath (name changed) speaks about this:

*I do masonry. I borrowed money and bought a mobile phone for learning. Two children are learning in my home. The son is in grade 10 and the daughter is in grade eight, both study their lessons simultaneously. So, my children are systematically arranged their timetable and only learn important subjects. Sometimes contradictions also appear among them. As a result, they are unable to participate in all classes completely.*

The study of Rose et.al (2017) identified that inadequacies in learning equipment in rural areas lead to the low performance of the students. As well as, the study also pointed out that the engagement of students in poor families in learning has become lower due to lack of chances in using educational equipment.

Also, male children spend more time in mobile phones through their superiority in most of the families. The parents also give more importance to male children and prioritize male education. The situation of using mobile phones for long period of time apart from the lesson, prevents girls from their learning activities. In the school, there is an inequality in learning between boys and girls (Khashunika et al, 2021; Ranasinghe et al., 2016). However, the study pointed out that there are widespread gender inequalities in home-based education. Particularly, boys use mobile phones more often than girls at home. Boys are less likely to provide the mobile phone during class hours of girls in learning. Boys at home other than studies, they visit other sites at times. Parents in most families agree that volunteering to provide mobile phones for girls for their studies is very rare and less likely happen at home.

When a girl named Maryum (name changed) indicates:

*We, three members learn at home. My elder brother uses mobile phone than I do. Although my brother does not have any online classes and I have a lesson, I could not join the online lessons on time because he uses the mobile phone for other purposes such as playing games and watching YouTube videos. This often leads to fights between us.*

This statement helps to understand on how the influence of male children affect the female children's education at home. Most of the parents claimed that it has become a huge headache for them to handle the conflict arises between their children because of this online schooling.

A mother named Wajitha (name changed) mentions about this:

*My three children are studying at home now. I wake up every morning with fear about what will be the conflicts and arguments arise among the children related to learning. My three children often fight among them for keeping the mobile phone after their learning activities were completed. Most of the time they engage in fights for participating in the online teaching, reviewing the notes send by the teacher and having discussion with friends about the lesson that were taught already. I have not seen such conflict situation before in home and my two boy children create conflict more than my daughter.*

Moreover, some parents favour and offer benefits to their son than daughters.

When a mother named Nairoosa (name changed) remarks about this:

*My son who is in grade 09 uses his mobile phone more than the daughter who is in grade ten. Normally, he focuses less on study. Now that he is more focused, we are giving him priority in learning and let him to finish the class first over the phone than the daughter.*

This suggests that female children are less likely to prioritize in learning than male children, and can identify the discrimination based on gender at home in online learning. Parents also pointed out that conflicts that occur between children in such situations and interfering in resolving them can be a massive problem to them. The gender differences in learning at school is very low. Gender differences in family influence in the roles of man and woman. The condition in which men are considered superior, identifies boys as empowered. Thus, girls are not seen as equally at home, thus influencing in their educational attainments at different times and gender roles in poor communities are disadvantaged in obtaining education (WB, 2018). The study also reveals that such conditions are found in significant families when girls are educated in the home environment. As well as, social mobility theorists mentions that family of origin, such as wealth, material conditions, and socialization influence on the children's' educational effects. Particularly, Raymond Boudon (1979) mentions that educational effects are entirely dependent upon choices made by individuals and their families (Boudon, 1979, as cited in Ballantine, 2012; Maio,2019). Therefore, the study clearly highlights that learning activities that take place at home environment is influenced by gender differences that exist at home.

## Monitoring children's learning at home

The study indicates that, teachers urge parents to monitor their children in learning and teaching. However, most parents pointed out that monitoring their children's learning and studies have become another challenge as they have other children at home to look after.

A mother named Raheema (name changed) mentions about this:

*Teachers of my children instruct to monitor the children while teaching and learning and ask us to support the children in learning at home. It is a good thing; however, we do not have enough time for that. I have three children, two of them are studying now. I wanted to monitor both my children and look after the small child too. As well as, I do household chores too. It is impossible to monitor the children's online learning at home. However, I do monitor my children's educational activities within the other works every day, which increases my burden.*

And another mother named Bazeera (name changed) mentions that:

*Teachers send homework to the children and asked the parents to help the children to finish the assigned work within the time. This is a good thing but my daughter is in grade 10. I have no knowledge of her lesson. How can I help her?*

The above statements make it clear that monitoring each and every child's learning activity further increases work of parents. Similarly, the study pointed out that as parents in most families are poorly educated and they are unable to monitor and support their children's education properly. Learning and supervising children from home is often referred as other challenges by all mothers. Notably all mothers mention that more effort and attention is being paid to monitoring children at home than last year. Thus, mothers specify that in most cases conflicts arise between children and them because of this supervision.

A parent named Sumaiya (name changed) mentions about this:

*I am very observant when children learn on mobile phones. However, in many cases it is very difficult to deal with conflicts that occur between them because of mobile phone. This often leads to anger and frustration. And most of the time children do not engage in continuous learning. It*

*is very difficult for me because I also have other domestic tasks to do at home.*

Feminist theorists emphasize on how knowledge plays a central role in social domination of women. In this sense, according to Griffith and Smith (2005), women engage in sending their children to school and helping with their household chores. As a result, it is said that women are being burden. (Jennings, 2008). Such conditions can also be identified in the study.

Moreover, the children spend considerable amount of time other than learning. The study reported that children in most families waste their time and money on playing online games. Parents tend to control their children due to fears in their minds whether their children will be exposed to negative effects of electronic games. Many parents reported that when children behaved without understanding such situations, they have become angrier with their children. They also pointed out that such problems are encountered only after learning process started to take place at home. At the same time, parents mentioned that provision of mobile phones for learning is unavoidable and that constantly monitoring the children is a massive task.

Ayesha (name changed) talks when referring to this situation:

*Teacher gives particular lesson timetable of the week. Although, I allowed to use the mobile phone only for online classes my children also try to use the phone other than class time while I am at other work, which irritates me. Many times, I advised the children about it, but they continue to behave in this way, which make me worried. Sometimes severe anger also occurs within me and I started to shout at those times. I am having a thought of when will school start again to stop these issues.*

The constant use of mobile phones and having lessons have prevented children from engaging in other extracurricular activities and social cohesion. Parents have the anxiety that this will create an absurd situation in children. Parents worry about their children's behavior on constantly move to other website after the online classes finished. Some of the parents mentioned they are very frightened that their children would be attracted to other pornographic sites and deadliest video games.

A laborer father named Kabeer (name changed) mentions about this:

*I cannot always keep track of my son who is studying in grade 11. Because I have to do business in our small shop. I have to look after my other children and household work. However, sometimes I was able to observe my son visits other web pages, I have quite knowledge in checking mobile phones and I checked on it. It is embarrassing and worrying that my son watched some unwanted contents and visited restricted pages for his age.*

The above respondent's claim pointed out that the opportunities of the specific learning times in the school environment are less likely to take place in the home environment and parents at home are more likely to experience psychological stress. It's inevitable that children would be exposed to dangerous websites and webpages on mobile phones. The study highlights that these issues related to children's online learning have brought considerable negative consequences.

## Conclusion

Education plays an important role in the upward mobility of the people regardless of any differentiation. The introduction of free education in Sri Lanka has helped all the students for upward mobilization. However, Covid-19 pandemic disease has replaced the onsite schooling to online home-

schooling, which has negatively influenced on low-income families and their children's education.

The study identified that all families have faced various challenges in providing needed learning equipment to their children. Some families are forced into debt situation for their children's education. Parents in some lower income families tend to be unwilling in their children's education due to lack of income. Understanding the lessons that have been taught in online and joining the online platforms at the particular time of teaching have become other challenges for children in most families. The availability of a mobile phone in the home makes difficult for children to learn in a timely manner, where more than one child is studying in online platforms. Spending more time on monitoring children while having other household chores and helping them to do the tasks and activities send by the teachers are further increase the burden of parents. As well this study also highlighted that many low-income families are facing stress because of online home-schooling, specifically mothers. It is also notable that some households face issues of resolving conflicts when children using the mobile phones for learning in the same time and monitoring children to prevent them to visit unwanted websites has led to more conflicts in the families.

Considering the above findings of the study, even though the online education system, which has been introduced to the world after the severe impacts of Covid-19 has served as the alternative way of fulfilling the educational needs of the students and sharing knowledge, it has brought negative impacts in lower-income families. The impoverishment of lower-income families in affording the online home-based education in Sri Lanka has negatively influenced the children's education and their future, which should be addressed immediately.

## Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

## Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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