The Attitude of the Continuous Education of School Dropouts; Study Done in Modara and Mattakkuliya Areas of Sri Lanka

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Abstract: **This sociological study is done based on Children who are considered to be the School Dropouts of Adolescents in Urban area of Colombo, Sri Lanka. These Children live under the care of their Parents, grandparents, and with other care givers. The school dropouts in the Urban area of Colombo are found to be the victims of a society which is corrupted strongly due to Socio-Economic factors. The main objective of this Research article is to look into the main causes for students to dropout halfway of their schooling. The primary and secondary data were collected by providing questioners, interviews, and observations using accepted data collecting methods. The collected data are presented using most suited methods to analyze data by charts, tables and descriptive methods. The Parents, Teachers and Key Informants are being questioned as to why the percentage of School dropouts in this area is high and vulnerable. In order to achieve this objective, the questionners have been used particularly with School Dropouts and with their Parents further conduct interviews with Teachers and Key-Informants.**

Keywords: **Adolescent, Dropout, Impact, Family, Society.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Education fosters personal development and self-fulfillment. It encourages the individual to develop his mental, physical, emotional and spiritual talents to the full. Understandably, the word Education derives from the Latin word e-ducere, which means to lead out. In advance industrial societies Education is provided by the state as a matter of right for all its citizens. Formal institutions, schools, Colleges and universities are organized for this purpose. (M. Haralambos with R. M. Heald, 2011, P.172). The technical understanding in other words is to transmit the stored knowledge, values and skill from one generation to another. The Global publication of human rights and the act of child rights state that the education is a universal human need. This is also a very powerful human right including freedom and democracy. They are staffed by fulltime professional practitioners, Teachers and Lecturers. Attendance at schools is compulsory; it is upheld by legal sanctions. Education is provided free of charge, though ultimately it is paid for by the tax payer. Although free compulsory state Education is largely taken for granted today and regarded as a perfectly normal and natural state of affairs, it is important to remember that it is a very recent development in the history of man.

The word education has a complex meaning in a broader sense. Further, Education is always on the development process with new adoptions in any country. (Reddy, 1979). Education for human beings and animals has a different meaning. That means, the human beings could be educated always while animals are being trained. French sociologist Emile Durkheim saw the major function of education as the transmission of Society's norms and values. He maintained that "Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands". Durkheim argues that in complex industrial societies, the school serves a function which cannot be provided either by the family or peer groups. Further he says that Education teaches the individual specific skills necessary for his future occupation. (M. Haralambos with R. M. Heald, 2011, p. 175).

According to the "Sustainable Development" introduced in Brunt Land Report – 1972 of United Nations and Millennium development goals suggested to start in 2000 up to the end of 2015 and its annexure, the younger generation should be provided with a meritocratic education because many issues faced by the present society can be solved through it. Researches done by many of the recognized international organizations including UNESCO, state that most of the children who are in the schooling age, have not received their primary Education. Education is the basic foundation of a person's life. Therefore, not providing proper education causes to bring bad results to children as well as to the whole society where they live. American sociologist Talcott Parsons argues that after primary socialization within the family, the school takes over as the focal socialization agency. School acts as a bridge between the family and society as a whole, preparing the child for his adult role. Parsons sees the Educational system as an important mechanism for the selection of individuals for their future role in society.

According to the UNESCO report in 2016, 52% of the world population is urban population (8 billion). One billion of the world population belongs to the urban community who receive low income according to the same report and they live in slums. This slum population has a very low economy and their poverty has become their culture. Therefore, this

community is the source of many social issues that are directly affected to the co-existence and the development of the human society. socialist states that many deviant and delinquent behaviors such as prostitution, suicides, drug addiction, begging as a profession, underworld criminality, family problems, child abuse etc. have been created by its community.

Use of alcohol and other drugs among school children is a current global problem giving rise to many health hazards, psychosocial problems and reduced school performances, both in academic work and in sports. These problems are also seen in Sri Lanka and very few studies have been done to estimate their prevalence. Furthermore, no not worthy actions have been taken to improve this situation. (National Dangerous drugs control Board, RESEARCH MONOGRAPH, 2006, p. 146).

In the first place, need to discuss the vast amount of resources provided on Education. The highlighted fact is that in Sri Lanka, it is free Education and not only that even government provides free provision of textbooks, uniforms and mid-day meals. It records that the literacy rate of Sri Lanka stands as 92% for adults and 97% for youths. (Perera, 2012). This is a major drawback in schools located specially in the urban areas of Colombo. Thus, the literal meaning of School dropouts can be noted as "A student who leaves the school before completing the education for any reason other than death or without transferring to another school". (Perera, 2012).

It has been revealed that the highest numbers of school dropouts are from low-income families in urban areas and them quitting education halfway through has a disastrous effect on society. (Ministry of Education, 2017). Even among them, school dropout is frequent among adolescent children (11-18 years of age).

II. METHODOLOGY

Research refers to a search for new knowledge. It is a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. To Redman and Mory, "Research is a systematized effort to gain new knowledge". (Sminatharatnam and Chandra, 2004). Methods are methods of data gathering and interpretation, whereas methodology is concerned with the theoretical assumptions about methods. (Uyangoda, 2011). This research followed a mixed method design including both qualitative and quantitative research designs. Quantitative research analysis will be utilized to gather ground data of the school dropouts where qualitative research design will be employed to follow the narratives of the other entities related to the subject. The quantitative research design will allow the researcher to understand the family structure, economic structure and their societal relationship towards the community through their relationship among various community organizations of their social setting. Qualitative research design permitted the researcher to identify the unique stories of each and every school dropout regarding the real-life situations that they live.

The School dropouts and their families in Modara and Mattakkuliya of Sri Lanka are taken as the study population of the study. There are 50 families with students who do not attend schools and they are considered as school dropouts. (Field Survey, 2021). It will be non-random methods in selecting the sample of the study. Particularly 5 "Gramasevaka Areas" (GS) will be monitored. It is observed that Modara has 3 "Grmasevaka Areas" while Mattakkuliya has 2 "Gramasevaka Areas". The key informants (K) such as School Teachers (T), Principals (SP), and Gramasevakas (Headman of the Village) will be selected purposively.

The researcher employed a structured questionnaire which will be followed by interview. The first interview will be done with children (S) and second interview will be with their parents (P) and Guardians. Thirdly, the Teachers (T) will be interviewed and the key-informants (K) as well. The questions of the questionnaire were ninety percent designed with close ended questions whereas researcher will interview each and every dropout selected from purposive sample in filling the answers to all the questions.

III. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to Functionalism, the society is studied as a system, that is as a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole. The basic unit of analysis is society and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship to the whole. The early functionalists often drew an analogy between society and an organism such as the human body. They argued that an understanding of any organ in the body, such as the heart or lungs, involves an understanding of its relationship to other organs and in particular, of its contribution towards the maintenance of the organism. In the same way, an understanding of any part of society requires an analysis of its relationship to other parts and most importantly, of its contribution to the maintenance of society. In order for these essential services to be maintained, individuals must be sufficiently motivated to perform their roles. If they were totally apathetic, the social system would collapse through lack of effort. These socio-economic variables are an ideal descriptive cross-cutting which illustrate the realistic and profound circumstances of students who are living in a specific area. This phenomenon is studied under the topic of **"School Dropouts of Adolescents in the Urban Area of Colombo, Sri Lanka and possible Strategies towards Continuous Education"** and for this Colombo Divisional Secretariat of Sri Lanka is selected because in which it is visible that in the urban areas which exists the large number of school dropouts.

TABLE 1 Number of Sample Selected for the Study

Police Division	GS Division	Sample Size			
		Students	Parents	Teachers	Key Informants
Modara	Modara	10	5	5	2
	Aluth Mawathe	10	5	5	2

Mattakkuliy a	Lunu Pokuna	10	5	5	2
	Mattakkuliya	10	5	5	2
	Samithpura	10	5	5	2
Total		110			

In aiming and focusing the objectives of the study, five GS divisions namely Modara, Aluth Mawatha, Lunu Pokuna, Mattakkuliya and Samithpura in Colombo Divisional Secretariat division of Sri Lanka were selected. During the background analysis the researcher observed that the urban area of Colombo recorded the highest number of school dropouts (Perera, 2012).

A. The Attitude on Continuous Education
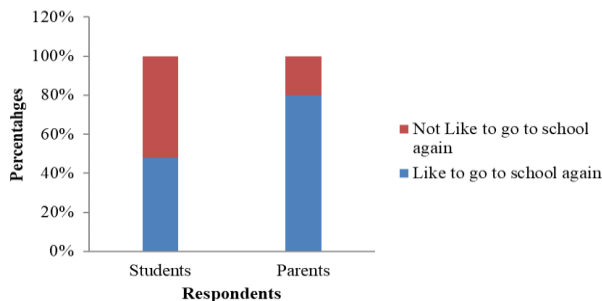
Fig. 1 Attitude about Continuous Education

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The researcher identifies that (52%) of school dropouts do not want to go back to the school while (46%) like to continue their schooling again. The researcher discovers during his field survey with students that amidst there are children who actually show love and concern towards their Parents. There are children who do not want to see their Parents suffering due to poverty and because of this reason children terminate their schooling.

"No, I don't want to go to school because I want to help my Parents and for that I need to find a suitable job". S/06

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

"Yes, I want to continue my schooling and for that I should have a permeant house and a permeant income to the family". S/10

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Most of the school dropouts stay at home without involving anything and these children go to bed late spending time with mobile phone or else spending time with friends till late night. Thus, in the following day wake up late and there is no one at home to pull these students to motivate them for education.

"I don't like to go to school because I want to sleep late and want to wake up late". S/20

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Many children noted during the interview about the prevailing school system in the country. The researcher evaluated deeply that these children are slow learners and thus the prevailing Teaching and Learning process of the school has to be changed in a way that would support these students to retain in their school.

"There should be an easy system of Teaching and Learning system in the school. Then, I hope I can continue my studies". S/33

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

According the graph above, the major proportion of parents (80%) to answered the same question and they like to see their child going to school again. (20%) of parents do not want to send the child back to school. It is a fact that considerable portion of parents still impress the child to continue schooling.

"I still try to impress this child to continue his studies at school". P/02

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

One strong fact which prevails in this society is that majority of school dropouts are not controlled by the parents and even these students reluctantly listen to the parents. One extra ordinary fact is, these children need to fulfill their wants and needs overnight some time parents cannot afford them.

"I still encourage the child to continue schooling, bearing the shortcomings at home". P/08

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

There are also parents who understand that at their house do not have a proper conducive environment for the child to continue school. These are discovered factors that these people live in shanties, no proper sanitary facilities, just one room for everything, people take turns to rest at home, probably when parents rest at home children lie on the road near the house, lack of food and nutrition and helpless. Therefore, psychologically and Biologically there are difficulties in and around.

"I prefer my child going to school but before that I need to create a conducive environment within the family at home". P/12

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Hence, having a such hectic and vulnerable condition at home, there should be people around these children who would understand their life situations. Their life is almost suppressed life and children look for protection and love once they come to school. In failing this need from the teachers at school, children are tempted to be in the suppressed conditions exist at their home thinking that would okay for the rest of their lives.

"Need to send the child to a school that would suit him and to a place where there are Teachers who understand him". P/18

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Even though the conditions are as such, still Parents taking into consideration the poverty and real-life conditions at home and since there is no any option at home, parents like if the school dropout do a job. This is due to typical poverty exist in and around them.

"Due to the poverty at home, I would prefer if my child could do a little job and earn something". P/09

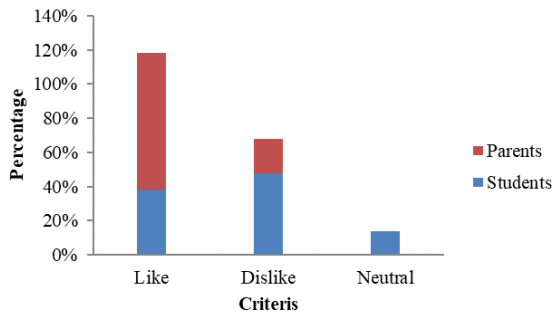Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

1) *Likeness towards Vocational and Other Professional Courses:*

Fig. 2 Preference to Going Back to the School

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The researcher also questions the school dropouts to identify whether they would like to follow any vocational or other professional course. Accordingly, (40%) says they would follow a vocational training, (50%) of children says "No" and (10%) of school dropouts have been neutral.

"I don't like schooling again. I am learning about CCTV operations right now and I would like to learn something more on the same field. I am trying to go ahead in this field and hope, I would be successful". S/01

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The researcher discovers that there are school dropouts who would prefer vocational training because they have the understanding that it can push them to commence a self-employment at any time. The self-employment is unique and these students may like it since it contains freedom.

"I want to train myself vocationally and then I hope, I can begin a self-employment one day". S/02

"I would like to follow any Course that would help me to do a job or to begin self-employment". S/03

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

One sad note, that the researcher came a cross is, there are school dropouts who like Computer science but they have discovered that without O/L they are not being recruited and thus regrets missing the school life.

"I would like to learn about Computer Science. I got the opportunity to follow a Course but I missed it since I do not have O/Ls and English". S/22

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

For the same question, the parents respond as follows, (80%) of parents like if their child follow a vocational training or a professional course for the future of their child. The following testimonies from parents would approve the fact.

"I don't like to see my child following a vocational Training Course but what I want is, he should study first otherwise he would also suffer like me". P/02

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The greatest desire of many Parents is that anyhow to see their child doing well one day without getting into unnecessary circumstances in the future. Therefore, even by following any type of course or a training, Parents expect a better future for the child.

"I like even by following a Course if he could organize his future one day". P/05

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The poverty is a major issue for children to drop out of school in this area, therefore the researcher discovers that the vocational training and other Technical courses which would cost money cannot be afforded by the Parents of these children.

"I have financial difficulties and therefore, I find it difficult to finance the course right now". P/07

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Hence it is clearly manifesting that at this stage parents desire not further education for their children but some sort of job to cover their own expenses of their school dropouts.

"The child likes to learn about Hotel Management but if I have to spend something for that, then I am unable. Therefore, prefer any job for the child". P/08

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

2) *School Level Mechanisms to Encourage and Promote Continuous Education:*
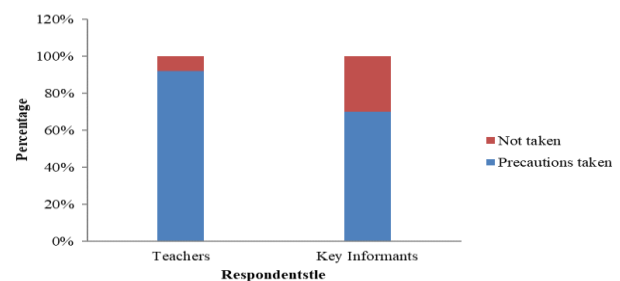

Fig. 3 Precautions Taken to Promote Continuous Education

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The teachers of schools in Modara and Mattakkuliya areas have played a wonderful service to keep the students in their schools. Considerable proportion (92%) of teachers express themselves with their programmes and activities that they have done as a school to continue the education for these students.

The key informants (70%) witnessed to what teachers have been conducting and doing special programmes at schools to motivate students to continue their studies. The researcher finds that many kind-hearted Teachers conduct personal classes amidst their other responsibilities in both school and in their homes.

"We conduct Personal classes for weaker students, extra classes, seminars and counselling sessions for students to keep them bound to the school". T/01

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

In many occasions the researcher finds during the interviews that a lot of Teachers together with their Principals conduct extra-curricular activities since the students in the schools specially in this urban area of Colombo are much interested. It is observed that this type of activities can attract the students to the school.

"We have introduced a lot of Extra events to the school programme such as Sports, Aluth Aurudu Uthsawa, Christmas Events etc… because children like these events". K/02

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Helping a child to continue studies in a school is a worthy course at any time. Understandably, students from Universities in the country volunteer to teach weaker students in this area. This worthy course is coordinated by Teachers and Principals in few schools in this area.

"The Students from the Engineering Faculty, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka come and conduct extra Maths classes for students. On Saturdays and Sundays; the Musjeed Federation conduct extra classes for students and students from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka come and conduct seminars for O/L and A/L students in the school". K/04

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

One highlighted fact, that few schools do in this situation is, school selects the best attendance time to time and give gifts so that students keep on continuing their school. Giving a gift also cost but Teachers manage to do it with the help of their friends and neighbors.

"The school has started to give gifts to students all those who come daily to school". K/03

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

At this stage it is necessary to note that the availability and the commitment of Teachers working in the schools in Modara and Mattakkuliya. The researcher discovers, many teachers work while being out of their frame of work in the school.

This is much commendable and appreciated because at times Teachers take risks in dealing with these students and with their families.

"There are Teachers who help the needful students in a personal level. Teachers arrange Tuts by their own to give to students. There are Teachers who produce clothes and food for students. They do it with love and affection". T/02

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The next fact that the researcher identifies is the commitment of the old boy/girl unions of schools. There are students who really love the school in which they have studied for many years. These passed out students have formed groups and go in search of school drop outs and somehow, they try to connect the students with the school.

"The old boy union of the school go to houses in searching the absentees and encourage the students and motivate the Parents to send their child to the school without any failure". T/01

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The researcher understands that every school dropout in this area has a problem for him or her to get out of the school. In some schools' principals organize his or her Teachers and send them to houses of students and accordingly identify the root causes and burning issues for students to terminate schools. Likewise, these Teachers are able to identify the important basic need and then to cater to it first.

"Most of the time there is a reason for the student to terminate their schooling. Therefore, what my school does is; always Teachers are sent to these families to discover the real burning existing problem around child. Likewise, we try to solve that particular burning problem first and then to move him or her for school education". T/17

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

As one Precaution, many a times Teachers call for Parents meetings and send letters stating the progress of the child. The parents' availability for meetings is not satisfactory and it shows lack of participation all the time.

"The school conduct Parents meetings to keep the Parents updated and sent letters to the Parents. Further we have informed the parents through the Police as well". T/02

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The researcher discovers that the Community Police Unit and Grama Sewaka (GS) play a major role in encouraging parents and bringing children to school. In this area children are bit excited since there is a government rule that every child below 18 year of age should continue school education. Therefore, (CPU) is much alert in this area on students who are not attending schools.

"We informed the Parents of these absentees through Grama Sewaka (GS) and through Community Police Unit (CPU)". T/08

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

There is a discovered fact that most of these students are slow learners and thus Ordinary Level (O/L) is only a dream for many students. What they prefer is a little involvement to earn something and as a preparation these schools, conduct professional Training after school. This training consists; electric, carpentry, home science etc…

"We as a school have commenced professional and vocational education apart from the general education of the school". T/05

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The commitment of the Teachers is enormous but what is discouraging is the commitment and contribution of the Students. The researcher continuously identifies that the enthusiasm of students for education is lacking. The experience and testimonies of Teachers would draw the reader much discouraged.

"We conduct extra classes and seminars for students specially for weaker ones but it is pathetic that students don't turn up for these classes". T/08

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

To make the teaching process easier, these students are categorized according to academic performances of students.

"According to Marks the Teachers categorize the group and conduct extra classes to make the process easier. But the support from the students is not satisfactory". T/10

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

It is realized that the support from the students is very discouraging and pathetic according to the personal notes of their school teachers.

"We were asked to conduct zoom classes but there wasn't any sufficient participation for these classes". T/09

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

3)   *School Attendance of the Children:*
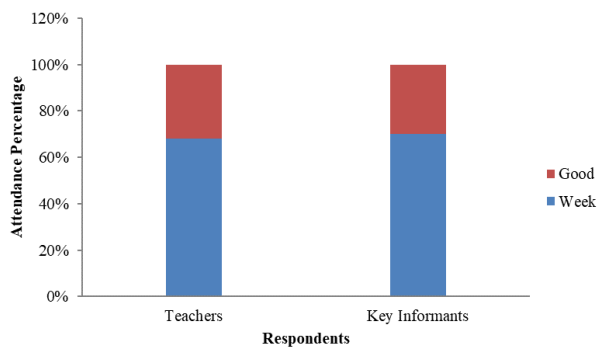
Fig. 4 School Attendance of the Students

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

According to the above chart, it expresses the views of the teachers about the attendance of the school children in their schools. Convincingly, (68%) of teachers highlight that the attendance of the children is very poor. About (32%) of students have been continuous for studies.

The same opinion is expressed by the key informant. (70%) of week in attending the schools while (30%) has been good.

4)   *Children's Interest on Education:*
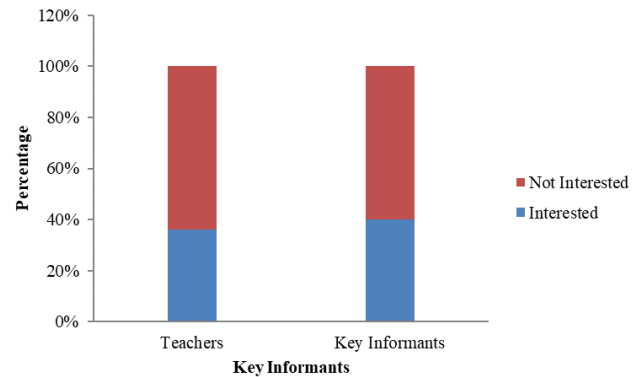
Fig. 5 Children Interest to School Education

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The next fact the researcher identifies is the interest of the students for schooling. According to the teachers (36%) the children are interested on education while (64%) are not interested at all. The key informants express the same, only 40% interested on education while a considerable proportion (60%) is not interested on education.

5)   *Clever of Children for Studies:*

The researcher found that there are very clever students in Modara and Mattakkuliya. The teachers (84%) with their own experience with children at schools prove this fact and 16% say that there no clever children.
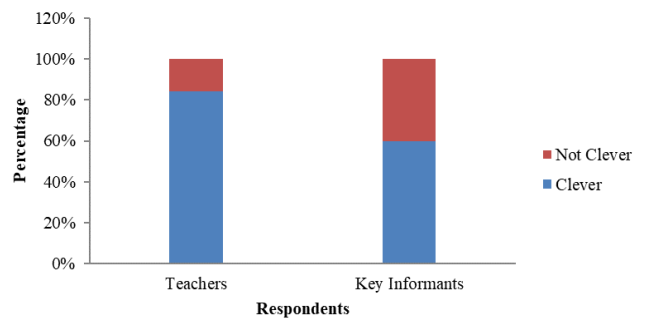
Fig. 6 Cleverness of the Students

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The key informants (60%) says that these students in these areas are clever for studies while (40%) express different ideas.

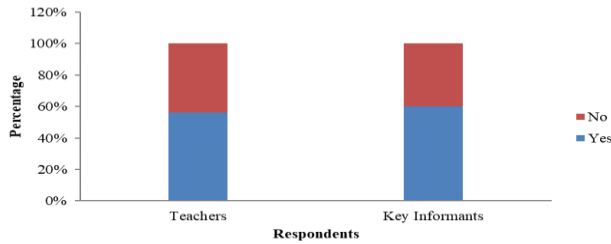*6) Attitude of Parents on Continuous Education:*

Fig. 7 Attitude of Parents on Continuous Education

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Understandably, the parents have fairly a good attitude towards education and this evaluated through teachers once again. (56%) of parents like to see their child schooling while (44%) of them have a different idea about the continuous education of their child. According to the key informants (60%) of parents conceive a positive idea about the continuous education while (40%) of them do not have proper attitude towards continuous education.

The children who are under 16 should be in schools and this is considered as a government rule and predominantly has to be strict to the urban area of Colombo. Otherwise, strict punishments, yet even though there are observations, the children are dropped out.

Children under 16 should be schooled and community Police is much alert on the fact. If a child found to be out of the school the Parents will be arrested.

Eg; we find all of a sudden strange child at school, reason is their Mother arrested and to release her, child has to continue schooling. T/10

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

7) Parents Interest to School the Child:

It is observed that (56%) parents are interested to school the child while a considerable proportion (48%) of them do not want to see their child schooling. According to the key informants (70%) of parents do not have proper interest to school their child while only (30%) of them interested in sending the child to the school.
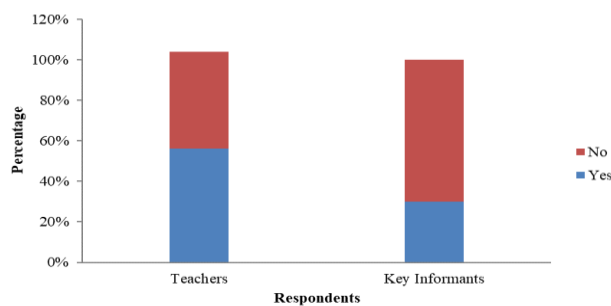
Fig. 8 Parents Interest in School of the Child

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

When analyzing the field data, the researcher finds that there is no any big interest within the Parents to school the child due to various factors. The following testimony from a teacher and it gives totally a different idea compared to the factors that are being discussed in this chapter.

There are Parents who give sleeping Tablets to the child because Parent wants the child to be at home thinking that if child goes out, he or she should be spoiled. Therefore, Parent is not worried about the education of the child. T/01

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Further discovered the Language difficulty of both Parents and children. There are incidents that Tamil speaking children which includes Muslims too, are recruited to Sinhala schools. Thus, these children find it difficult to study the lessons.

The language problem prevails strictly. The Tamil speaking children are admitted to Sinhala medium schools and due the language barrier children have been dropped out of the school. T/07

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

B. The Key Attitudes on Continuous Education

Considerably, half percent of school dropouts do not expect schooling again (52%). It is much highlighted the Parents (80%) of these children, majority are positive to send the child back to school. There are Parents who even like to see their child following a vocational or professional course (80%) knowing that it would support the child to stand on his feet amidst difficulties.

The school Teachers (92%) together with the school principal have taken number of Precautions to keep the child bound to the school. By and large, school attendance of the students in this place of study is very weak (68%).

Even though the circumstances are as such, it is discovered there are clever (84%) students in these schools and many times due to poverty the clever students have dropped out of school.

The attitude of Parents towards continuous education (56%) is weak in this Urban area of Colombo. The Parents like to school the child (56%) even though the family exists difficulties in and around.

IV.CONCLUSION

It is discovered that there are family related factors and school related factors that cause students to dropout of school's half way of their lives. When it comes to family related factors, the researcher discovered the school admittance had not taken place on time, the attention of the parents in this regard had been very poor, the education of parents not satisfactory, most of the parents are self-employed, larger portion of parents are daily wagers, the family condition of parents has caused the children to dropout of school and parents are not interested on the education of their children.

When it comes to the school related factors, the researcher discovered that there had been favorite subjects and teachers for these students, children have been much interested on extra-curricular activities and friends. The teachers highlight addictions, food and nutrition as major reasons for children to terminate their school. The parents highlight the Government education system as one of the main reasons for their children to terminate their school.

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