

Abstract

Education is a key predictor of life opportunities, both within the economic and social sphere with respect to happiness and perceived quality of life. Continuation of the education of a child is mainly based on the academic performance. Understanding of children's academic performance and its associated factors is essential to improve the children's academic performance though the studies in such nature are meager in Sri Lankan context. Therefore, this research was designed to investigate the factors associated with the academic performance among school children. This cross sectional study was carried out in selected schools in Homagama MOH area with the participation of 565 grade seven students. The cluster sampling method with probability proportionate to the size was used to identify the sample. The information on the students' academic performance was measured through the results of a common term test. A self administered questionnaire was used to identify the socio demographic, personal, participation in tuition classes, extracurricular activities, physical and psychological conditions associated with the academic performance. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS software and the statistical significance of difference of factors between the sex was assessed using chi square test and the association of factors with the academic performance was assessed using ANOVA conforming that the distribution of academic performance has a normal distribution.

According to the findings average marks of the subjects (47.36) was below fifty and results of male students were poor compared to female students. Least marks were resulted in Mathematics, Science and English. Results of type 1 AB schools were better than the other two types. Being a female student, having parents with higher level of education positively influences the academic performance while increased family size and disturbances from the others have a negative influence. All these associations were statistically significant. The duration of studying at home, sleeping and watching television increases the academic performance up to a certain level and when the duration exceeds that level the academic performance decreases. Obtaining tuition for Mathematics, Science and English has a significant association with the results of the respective subjects ($p=0.00$), $p=0.01$, $p=0.00$ respectively). The students who engaged with sports and extracurricular activities have lesser results compared to the others.

The association of academic performance with acute diseases was not significant ($p > 0.05$) while chronic diseases have a statistically significant association with the academic performance ($F = 9.04$ $p < 0.001$). The marks for Mathematics was significantly associated with having breakfast ($F = 11.01$ $p < 0.001$) while there was no association of average marks with it. Stress with the studies and bullying lead to lower results.

Compare with the males, a higher proportion of female students involved in activities favorable to the education such as allocating more time duration for studies, using a favourable study technique, spending lesser time for watching television, getting adequate sleep and involving less with sports. There was no difference of obtaining tuition between the male and female students ($\chi^2 = 0.462$ $p > 0.05$) though the females have higher results compared to the male students.

With these findings, the researcher proposes to keep more concern on student's academic performance. Parents/students should be more aware when the students exceed limits of sleeping, watching television and even studying. Health officials should strengthen the existing school health program especially to identify students with chronic diseases and psychological problems. Further studies should be focused on the impact of sports, quality of the schools and tuitions with the academic performance of students in detail.

Key words: - academic performance, Students