

Reasons and Characteristics of School Dropouts in Adolescent and Youth Not on Education Employment or Training (NEET) in Anuradhapura

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Adolescent and youth NEET is a problem to health and development. NEETs are difficult to reach and are subjected to social exclusion. The objective of this study was to explore the reasons and characteristics of school dropouts among adolescent and youth NEET in Anuradhapura district. We conducted a mixed method study in which the phase 1 (qualitative) focused on group discussions (fifteen) and in-depth interviews (six) conducted on adolescents and youth NEET, teachers, parents, health officers and community dwellers, in four different communities in Anuradhapura. Thematic analysis was also conducted in phase 1. During Phase 2 a descriptive cross-sectional study among adolescents and youth NEET in NuwaragamPalatha Central Medical Officer of Health area assessed sociodemographic factors, reasons and implications of school dropouts. Results for Phase 1 showed that the main reasons for dropouts were discouragement, personal decision, financial problems, family issues and problems of education system. While some left school due to actual financial difficulty, others left to earn money as desired. Females regretted about school leaving. The results for Phase 2 showed that of the 197 adolescents and youth the mean age was 20-22 years and 63.5% had sat for ordinary level examination. Of the parent's 35.3% were happy or did not care about their children's education. 17.3% of the participants had dropped out because of financial problems and 18.3% had stopped schooling for no reason. However, of the participants, 87.7% always or often liked schooling. Hence, it can be concluded that school dropout is influenced by many socio-cultural and economic factors which can be intervened at school and at community.

Keywords: Social exclusion, sociodemographic factors, discouragement, financial problems