

The Impact of the Current Economic Crisis on the Quality of Secondary Education in Sri Lanka with Special Reference to Monaragala District

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Abstract

In terms of education quality, school education plays a significant role, and under this, the senior secondary student category is a unique turning point that creates skilled human resources for the near future. Both internal and external economic shocks directly disrupt the smooth functioning of quality education in any economy; in line with this, the negative impact of the economic crisis creates a tragedy in the quality of education. This study's objective is to determine the effect of the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka on the quality of senior secondary education during the worst economic crisis in the economic history of independent Sri Lanka. For this study, 396 senior secondary students and 792 of their parents were randomly selected from 21 government schools under three school types in the Monaragala district, and data were collected through structured questionnaires via telephonic interviews. Factor analysis was employed to construct the dependent variable-education quality-while ordinary least squares linear multiple regression analysis was utilised to assess the impact of economic crisis on education quality. Factor analysis revealed that both reliability, consistency and validity are statistically significant with higher responsiveness, and there is a significant influence on the education quality of the model. In the regression analysis, the three proxies indicating the economic crises of the country are increasing household income generation time of parents, students attending household income generation, and students' annual private education cost. In alignment with this, key analysis revealed that increasing the household income generation time of parents and students attending household income generation has created a considerable negative impact on education quality. But during the economic crisis, students' annual private education costs have created very minimal positive effects on education quality. Aside from that, during the economic crisis, parents with a poor monthly income have been actively involved in secondary jobs. Moreover, during the crisis period, 254 Ordinary Level students had scored less than 55 in science, mathematics, and English subjects, while 48 Advanced Level students failed at least one subject. Under the policy recommendations, the social safety net should be systematic, ensure the teaching and learning basics, and have continuous research and development processes for school regulation and facilitation in order to ensure consistency in quality education during a crisis.

Keywords: Economic Crisis, Education Cost, Education Quality, Secondary Jobs, Senior Secondary Education

INTRODUCTION

"People learn from birth to death; hence it is said that 'learning' is a life-long journey." (Alawattegama, 2020, p. 2). Any stage of education enables high socioeconomic mobility and can be identified as the easiest path to eradicating poverty and inequality in any economy. The quality of education that is nurtured with knowledge, skills, and good attitudes plays a unique role in maintaining the sustainable economic process of any economy in the world. "The only way to have economic growth, in the long run, is to improve the quality of schools" (Hanushek, 2020, p. 25). Within the framework of schooling, overall senior secondary education (*school education is from grades 10 to 13*) has become a prominent global milestone because it is an educational transition stage, and students in that age group are more likely to be

away from education and high tendency to join the labour market. Maintaining uniformity in the quality of senior secondary education is an extremely important factor, especially for any developing and developed economy. Because the students who receive senior secondary education in any economy of the world will help to create a unique human capital in that economy in the next 10 years. This idea is also associated with the National Education Commission (2022) and Epstein et al. (2002).

However, the Sri Lankan economy, which is facing the worst economic crisis since its independence (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2022) has a big challenge to maintain the stability of the quality of senior secondary education. According to

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Dundar et al. (2017) and, Ambusaidi and Yang (2019), this has become a prominent incident during periods of economic crisis, and that has a negative or positive effect on the quality of education. According to Shafiq (2010); Ferreira and Schady (2008), these negative impacts are more powerful and lead to a decline in national educational outcomes during an economic crisis.

Sri Lanka's current economic crisis has also been burning like sparks under the ashes for a long period because of the many weak and inconsistent economic policies that have been taken during the 75 years since the post-independence era (Fernando, 2022). Fortunately, or unfortunately, the Easter attack, the weak policy suggestions that have been taken, the limitation of economic activities after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the dark aspect of the economic crisis that has been hidden for a long time have converted the current Sri Lankan economy into a severe economic recession (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2022). In line with the above explanation, Sri Lanka is also facing the problem of a negative economic growth rate that continues to rise. There was an unprecedented decline in economic growth between the 4th quarter of 2021 to the 4th quarter of 2022, as -5.8%, 2%, -1.6%, -8.4%, -11.8% and -12.4% respectively. More notably, the allocation of GDP to education remains at a lower level in Sri Lanka from 2016 to 2022, at 3.23%, 2.6%, 1.6%, 1.5%, and 1.2%, respectively (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2023). In this context, according to LIRNEasia, (2023) 7 million of the total population (2 million families) of Sri Lanka live below the poverty line. Especially since a high percentage of school students (97%) in Sri Lanka receive their education through free public education (National Education Commission, 2022), the current severe government financial instability is practically more possible to threaten the quality of their education (Fernando, 2022). But there is no sufficient evidence to uncover whether the sudden degradation of the economy might be impacting senior secondary education quality in the current circumstances or not.

Consequently, this study attempts to identify the effect of the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka on the quality of senior secondary education. Furthermore, under the specific objectives, this study attempts to identify the impact of three main indicators on the quality of senior secondary education during the crisis period. These are students' engagement in household income-generating activities, parents' (either the father or the mother) spending more time in household income generation, and annual private expenditure on education (private tuition, essential learning aids, transport) during the crisis period.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Both the Theoretical and Empirical literatures were reviewed under this section. Any person in the world has the right to seek quality education, and the more an economy expands access to quality education to its community, the faster economic development of that economy can be promoted (Carron & Chau, 1996). This idea is also supported by Mbole Nkong et al. (2016) and Shafiq (2010). *"Throughout history, education has reflected the ideals of society, and it is viewed as the engine that drives social and economic prosperity"* (Mbole Nkong et al., 2016).

According to UNICEF and the National Educational Policy Framework (NEPF) in Sri Lanka 2020-2030, *"A quality education is defined by five elements: the learner's outside experiences, learning environment, content of education, learning processes, and education outcomes. Learners must be healthy, well-nourished and supported by their families and communities. The learning environment should be safe, healthy and stimulating. Appropriate education content is relevant to the learner and presented in a well-managed classroom. Learning outcomes should promote participation in society"* (Agnihotri, 2017, p. 4878).

Quality education is fundamentally driven by two basic principles. The 1st principle asserts that the main objective of the overall education system should be the development of social, intellectual, mental, physical, and cognitive factors of all students without concern for their nationality, gender, socio-economic status, and geographical location. The 2nd principle emphasises that quality education should create responsible citizens with good attitudes and creative thinking skills (Agnihotri, 2017). *"Quality determines how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal, social, and developmental benefits"* (Agnihotri, 2017, p. 4879). The students' physical and mental health plays an important role in continued engagement in school (McCain & Mustard, 1999), and the continued focus on the school curriculum and continued engagement in school affect students' achievement levels and the development of education quality (Madani, 2019). Carron and Chau (1996) argued that the low level of physical and mental nutritional status of children limits their access to quality education, and this idea is also supported by Rasheed et al. (2000), who argued that *"physically and psychosocially healthy children learn well"* (p.5). Factors such as the sufficient salary of teachers (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006), the nature of teacher education and education policy, teacher qualifications and teaching practices, nature of teacher motivation and school attendance, professional qualifications, the sufficiency of school infrastructure, availability of textbooks and learning materials, the number of students under the teacher, mastery of teacher knowledge, whether a teacher uses traditional or modern teaching methods, efficient use of school time, continued involvement in student activities in the classroom are affecting to transfer of quality education from the teacher to the student (Rasheed et al., 2000).

"According to the neoclassical framework, crises are exogenous phenomena arising from inadequate expectations in relation to the economic fundamentals" (Nemiña, 2015). According to John Maynard Keynes's business cycle theory, there are two primary causes of an economic crisis, namely, the marginal efficiency of capital and effective demand deficit. The collapse of this marginal efficiency of capital can be identified as the cause of many of the world's financial crises, including the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s (Ge & Liu, 2010). The financial crisis can be identified as the worst economic impact that results from situations such as the large-scale balance of payments problems, the collapse of foreign assets, external financial supply or credit-related constraints, internal or external shocks, and macroeconomic imbalances (Claessens & Kose, 2013). A sudden economic downturn caused by a financial crisis can be identified as an economic crisis, and collapses in many macroeconomic var-

ables can occur during this timeline (e.g., negative economic growth rates, rising unemployment, and high inflation) (Perera, 2016). *"Economic crises result in deterioration in the labour market, increased unemployment rates, pay cuts, poor working and living conditions, and difficulties in obtaining essential items, all of which could lead to increased stress and psychological problems"* (Rohanachandra, 2022, p. 338).

The empirical literature basically aims to identify how economic crisis affects education quality. When any economy in the world is faced with a severe economic recession, the impact spreads to every small economic unit of that economy and can affect various outcomes at the household level, including poverty, unemployment, household health, prosperity, and schooling (Duryea et al., 2007). Some prior studies provide evidence of null or positive effects of economic crisis on education quality. Such positive effects are mostly created in richer developed economies (Ferreira & Schady, 2008). *"When an economic crisis impacts the education sector negatively, the overall development of a nation worsens, leading to illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, restlessness among youth, etc"* (Gunawaradana & Karunaratna, 2022 p.277). According to previous studies, the determinants affecting the education quality in an economic crisis have led to the following hypotheses.

"When children enjoy a pleasant learning environment, they are likely to attend school with a lot of passion, thus allowing them to complete the schooling with great achievement" (Mbole Nkong et al., 2016, p. 38). In line with this idea, for the quality of education, it is important to have wider access to quality curricula, better teachers who handle those curricula, and a facility system that facilitates teaching and learning support materials. The availability of sufficient school equipment, textbooks, sanitation facilities, classroom spaces, other learning aids, and timely maintenance etc., is positively associated with the quality of education (Rasheed et al., 2000; Tety, 2016). Consequently, sufficient information provided by previous studies leads to the following hypothesis.

H1: There is a significant relationship between annual private expenditure on education and the quality of senior secondary education of school children.

Parental involvement can be identified as a mirror of a child's educational quality, and prior studies have confirmed that if parents are involved, children are more likely to continue their focus on education. A study conducted in 12 Latin American countries has found that high levels of parental involvement are essential for children's quality education (Wilms, 2002). The "Epstein model" can be identified as a model that explains this parental relationship perfectly. Through this model, the parental intervention that can occur in children's education can be recognised in the *"six-level framework that includes: parenting, learning at home, communicating with the school, volunteering at school, decision-*

making in the school, and collaborating with the community" (Barnard, 2004; Epstein et al., 2002 p. 41). Evidence has confirmed that when parents monitor their children's home studies, encourage participation in extracurricular activities, and make the parent-teacher relationship more active, it affects children's end-of-year progress and increases student achievement (Boro & Alidou, 2015). Consequently, sufficient information provided by previous studies leads to the following hypothesis.

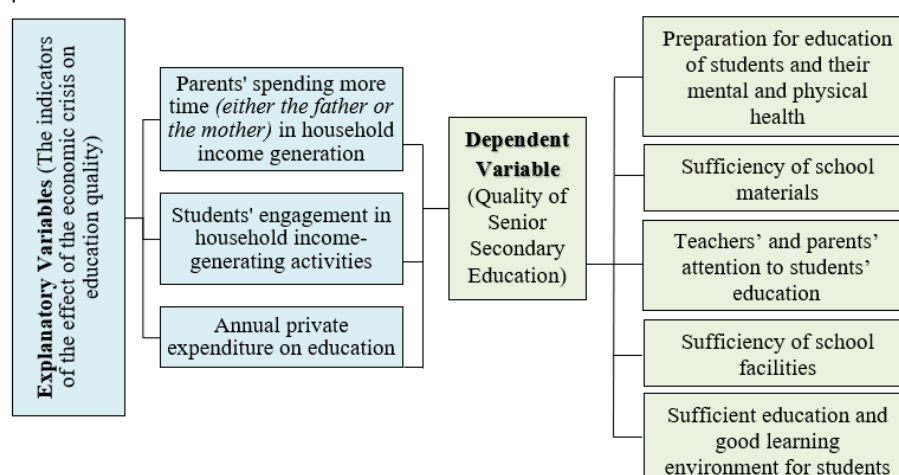
H2: There is a significant relationship between Parents' spending more time on household income generation and the quality of senior secondary education of school children.

"Sensing weaker labour market prospects from a decline in school quality, parents may withdraw their child from school or become less supportive of their child's educational endeavours" (Shafiq, 2010, p. 6). As elderly students, this would be harmful to senior secondary students, perhaps compelling them to terminate their school journey. Confirming that, (Rohanachandra, 2022) highlights that declining household income has generated *"Spillover Effects"* on mental and physical health, the supply of adequate learning materials, and the declining learning period of the secondary students. During the Indonesian economic crisis in 1997, 2% of school students supported their parents in income-generating activities of the households by declining their school attendance (Thomas, et al., 2004). Moreover, the economic crisis in Brazil has led to a rise in child labour among individuals aged 10 to 16, due to the unexpected short-term unemployment of the head of the household (Duryea et al., 2007). Confirming that, Mugumya et al. (2022) highlight that the unexpected short-term unemployment of parents puts pressure on the mental structure of the students, and they argue that *"There may be pressure for children and youth to help augment family incomes, resulting in more school absences or higher dropout rates"* (p. 7). Consequently, sufficient information provided by previous studies leads to the following hypothesis.

H3: There is a significant relationship between students' engagement in household income-generating activities and the quality of senior secondary education of school children

Thus, the ample information provided by prior studies leads to the identification of the factors, specifically, Preparation for education of teachers and students and their mental and physical health, sufficiency of school materials and facilities, teachers' and parents' attention to students' education, good learning environment for students, which covers quality education. Consequently, this study is conducted to identify whether there may be an effect on the quality of education under the current Sri Lankan economic crisis. Hence, much aligning with previous empirical studies, the conceptual framework, which is explained via Figure 1, has been created for identifying the impact of the current economic crisis on the quality of senior secondary education

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Developed by Author, 2023.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research philosophy for this study could be identified as positivism, and the research approach can be identified as the deductive approach. To identify the effect of economic crisis on educational quality, the majority of research studies, such as those by Bamigboye et al. (2016) and Eleni et al. (2014), have employed the quantitative method as their research method. As well as most of the research studies have employed, namely, Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011), Barnard (2004), and Mugumya et al. (2022), primary data to analyse the impact of the economic crisis on education quality. Following the above structure, this study also used the quantitative approach and primary data for analysis.

According to LIRNEasia (2023) Uva province showed the current highest poverty headcount ratio (48%) in Sri Lanka. Also, Uva province is the highest food-insecure province in 2022 than other provinces in Sri Lanka. (World Food Programme, 2022). As well, Nambissan (2010) highlights that the pressure of the economic crisis is sharply felt on the most impoverished households in any economy, which is deeply impactful on their educational expenses. In line with the above backdrops, this study is covered in Monaragala District as the study area, which showed a 21% poverty headcount ratio and a 3.3% poverty contribution ratio (Department of Census and Statistics, 2022). The 21 government schools of Monaragala Education Zone were selected under cluster sampling to cover all three secondary school

types (1AB, 1C, and Type 2) to represent all four Educational Zones in Monaragala District.

Most of the previous studies, such as those by Bamigboye et al. (2016) and Eleni et al. (2014), have employed three types of units of analysis, namely, teachers, students, and their parents as research studies. Simple random sampling has been used in lots of studies, such as those by Eleni et al. (2014) and Mugumya et al. (2022), as the sampling technique. In line with this, a total of 396 students and 792 of their parents were selected by simple random sampling as the effective sample through the "Krejcie and Morgan Table" method from the current population in the Zone.

Data collection was done through structured questionnaires via telephonic interviews with students, their parents, and teachers, based on previous studies such as Dabo (2015). The questionnaire comprises three sections: five-point Likert Scale questions ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" (Bamigboye et al., 2016), employed to assess educational quality via dimension reduction under factor analysis (Mugumya, et al., 2022), alongside structured and MCQ questions, are utilised mostly to identify the value of four proxies of economic crises. Table 1 clearly illustrates this concept. The dependent variable, Education Quality, has been measured under the factor analysis technique through dimension reduction (Mugumya, et al., 2022) The regression analysis has been done through the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis to identify the impact of the economic crisis on educational quality

Table 1: Operationalization of the Variables.

Measurement Variable	Dimensions	Items	Measurement	References
Explanatory Variables	Annual private expenditure on education	Cost for essential education supportive things	Interval Scale	(Okongo, et al., 2015)
		Tuition Classes		(Heyneman, 1990)
		Transport Cost		(Nambissan, 2010)
	Parents spending more time (either the father or the mother) in household income generation		Nominal Scale – Dummy Variable	(Neppl, et al., 2016)
	Students' engagement in household income-generation activities		Nominal Scale – Dummy Variable	(Rohanachandra, 2022) (Rohanachandra, 2022) (Shafiq, 2010)

Measurement Variable	Dimensions	Items	Measurement		References
Dependent Variable – Education Quality	Preparation for the education of teachers and students, and their mental and physical health	School Attendance	Five-Point Scale	Likert	(Rasheed et al., 2000)
		Engagement with supportive education			(Ambusaidi & Yang, 2019)
		Usage of modern teaching and learning techniques			
		Using school time effectively			(Thomas, et al., 2004)
		Completion of the school syllabus			
		Encouraging students in their studies and extra-curricular activities			(Mugumya, et al., 2022)
		Evaluation of students’ accomplishments			
		Taking healthy foods continuously for the main three meals			
		Spending school time in happiness			
Dependent Variable – Education Quality	Sufficiency of school teaching and learning materials and facilities	Sufficiency of school textbooks, extra reading materials and teaching guides	Five-Point Scale	Likert	(Arop et al., 2015)
		Sufficient materials for online education			(Okongo et al., 2015)
		Adequacy of notebooks, writing materials, and other required practical materials			(Tety, 2016)
	Teachers’ and parents’ attention to students’ education	Parents’, teachers’, and students’ communication	Five-Point Scale	Likert	(Mugumya, et al., 2022)
		Engaging in students' study activities and allocating time for their education at home			(Neppl, et al., 2016)
		Encouraging for education			(Epstein, et al., 2002)
		Supplying academic materials for their convenience			(Rasheed, et al., 2000)
		Parental involvement in the parents’ meetings and specific functions of the school			(Nurhakim, et al., 2021)
		Teachers’ involvement in students' activities during school hours			
Developing students’ attitudes					
(For Both Models)					

Source: Developed by the Author, 2023.

The researcher has done final data analysis under the two approaches, namely, descriptive statistical analysis and Causal Research Design (OLS multiple linear regression), which have been done in previous studies, such as those have Animba and Edeh (2021), Mugumya et al. (2022), and Mbole Nkong et al. (2016). Finally, the researcher has conducted key Assumption tests, reliability, consistency and validity tests, coefficient significance tests (*T-tests*), Coefficient of Determination (R^2), and overall significance tests (*Analysis of Variance, ANOVA*), and hypothesis tests for OLS linear regression under the 95% significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First, some of the demographic data have been gathered to identify the demographic spread of the sample. Table 2 illustrates that more than 50% of surveyed students are female students, and most of them are ordinary-level senior secondary students. The most probable reason was that the majority of science and math stream advanced-level students did not attend school normally to study.

Table 2: Demographic Data of Senior Secondary Students.

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	220	55.56%
	Male	176	44.44%
School Category	1AB	128	32.32%

	1C	181	45.7%
	Type 2	87	22.13%
Education Stage	Ordinary Level	240	60.6%
	Advanced Level	156	39.4%

Source: Survey data, 2023.

According to Table 3, when we consider the demographic data of parents in Monaragala District, the majority of them

had Ordinary Level and Advanced Level education or below. Moreover, Table 3 shows that the majority of the parents of senior secondary students in Monaragala District are working in the agriculture sector and the service sector today.

Table 3: Demographic Data of Parents of the Students.

Variable		Frequency		Percentage	
		Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Education Level	No Schooling	8	2	2.07%	0.51%
	Grade 1-5	40	17	10.38%	4.34%
	Grade 5-9	77	46	20%	11.76%
	Ordinary Level	149	176	38.7%	45.01%
	Advanced Level	86	109	22.33%	27.87%
	Diploma	7	13	1.81%	3.32%
	Technical/ Vocational	9	3	2.33%	0.76%
	National College Education	3	9	0.77%	2.3%
	Graduated	6	13	1.55%	3.32%
	Post Graduate or Upper	-	3	-	0.76%
Job Sector	Agriculture	216	153	57.75%	53.49%
	Industrial	38	18	10.16%	6.29%
	Service	120	115	32.08%	40.2%

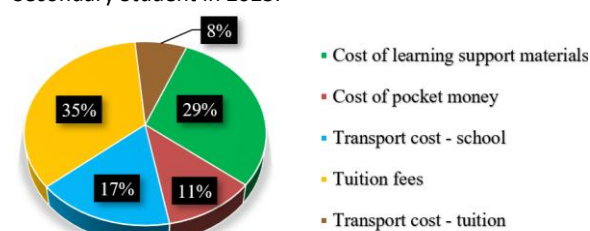
Source: Survey Data, 2023.

The research investigated how the special factors related to the quality of senior secondary education identified through the literature review are present in the Monaragala district during the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka. In the face of the pressure of the economic crisis, parental unemployment, real income fall, books, education cost increase, and transportation cost increase and this affects the educational results and mental pressure of students (Ananat et al., 2011; Heyneman, 1990). In line with this, during the 2008 global financial crisis, student achievement in subjects such as Mathematics and English dropped sharply in America's schools (Shores & Steinberg, 2017). Parallel to this, among the grade 10 and 11 students who faced the last term examination and represented the sample in Monaragala district, based on the 2022 final term test marks, 39% (254 of students) of the students have shown a score level of less than 55 for mathematics, science and English subjects and 11% (71 of students) of the students have shown a score level of less than 35 for these subjects. Also 30% (48 of students) of Advanced Level students have failed the exam according to the 2022 last term test marks.

During the 2008 global financial crisis, low-income Indian parents resorted to some solutions, such as non-payment of tuition fees and withdrawing their children from tuition classes to face rising household costs (Nambissan, 2010). In line with this, 52% (125 of students) of the sample representative senior secondary students in Monaragala district have

dropped out of at least one of the subjects they received tuition education due to their inability to afford the cost based on their household income. Also, during the economic crisis period, 18% (43 of students) and 16% (39 of students) of the students represented in the sample of Monaragala district have dropped at least one tuition subject due to the increase in tuition fees and the increase in transportation costs, respectively. Due to the impact of the economic crisis in Indonesia in 1997, school textbooks, photocopying fees, tuition fees, and school transport fees have risen sharply (Thomas, et al., 2004). In parallel with this idea, considering the categories of monthly general education expenditure for a senior secondary student during the crisis period (Figure 2) in Monaragala district, the expenditures such as tuition, learning support materials, and transport show a remarkably high monthly average

Figure 2: Monthly Average Education Cost of a Senior Secondary Student in 2023.



Source: Survey Data, 2023.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics.

Descriptive Items	Dependent Variable	Independent variables		
	Quality of senior secondary education	Students' engagement in household income-generation activities	Annual private expenditure on education	Parents spending more time (<i>either the father or the mother</i>) in household income generation
Mean	0.0908	0.3263	104692.7	0.7474
SD	0.7782	0.4694	69348.76	0.4351
JB Test (P value)	0.1093			

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

According to the descriptive statistics shown in Table 4, in Monaragala district, the annual average education cost of one representative senior secondary student during the crisis period from February 2022 to January 2023 is LKR 104,692.70, and that is underscoring the substantial financial burden shouldered by households in supporting secondary education. The Standard Deviation of annual private expenditure on education is Rs. 69,348.78/-, and it means that, during that period, the annual education expenditure of the majority of the sample representative senior secondary students has spread mostly within the upper and lower limits of Rs. 69,348.76/- from the mean value. During the economic crisis, the average of being a senior secondary student involved in household income generation is 0.3263, implying that approximately 32.6% of students are involved in such activities. Also, during the economic crisis, the average of being a parent who is spending more time in household income generation is 0.7474, indicating that in nearly 75% of

the surveyed households, either the father or the mother dedicates more time to household income-generating activities. This suggests that a significant percentage of students and parents allocate their time between education and income generation during the economic crisis period, which may have implications for the academic performance of the students. Table 4 is utilised to clearly illustrate the above ideas. According to Table 4, the Jarque Bera (JB test), the normal distribution test confirms that both models have a normal distribution under the 95% significance level.

When measuring quality education, the researcher utilised the following dimension reduction approach (Table 6) using the values that are given by respondents of the five-point Likert scale. This approach is also supported by Bamigboye et al. (2016), Thomas et al., (2004), and Mugumya et al. (2022).

Table 6: The Approach of Measuring the Dependent Variable.

Dimensions	Five-Point Likert Scale					Calculations	
Mental & physical health	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Natural	Agree	Strongly Agree	Method of Dimension Reduction	Single Value for Education Quality
Preparation for education							
Sufficiency of school materials							
Teachers' attention to students	1	2	3	4	5		
Parents' attention to students							

Source: Developed by the Author, 2023.

When considering the items discussed under the conceptual framework, the quality of senior secondary education (*Dependent Variable*) under the model of senior secondary students, the Indicator Reliability of all items was statistically significant under the 95% significance level. Also, the Consistency and Validity under Cronbach's Alpha statistical test

and KMO and Bartlett's test, respectively, were equal or higher than 0.6, which means that the model of senior secondary students has the best consistency and Validity. Table 7 is utilised to clearly illustrate the above ideas.

Table 7: Reliability and Validity of Dependent Variable - Education Quality.

Items	Indicator Reliability		Consistency	Validity
	component	P Value	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO and Bartlett's
Mental & physical health	0.77	0.0000	0.838	0.824
Preparation for education	0.79	0.0000		
Sufficiency of school materials	0.77	0.0000		
Teachers' attention to students	0.841	0.0000		
Parents' attention to students	0.724	0.0000		

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

Table 8: Reliability and Validity of Independent Variables - Proxies of Economic Crisis.

Proxies of Economic Crisis	Indicator Reliability		Validity
	component	P Value	KMO and Bartlett's
Annual private expenditure on education during the crisis period	0.614	0.0000	0.61
Parents (<i>either the father or the mother</i>) spending more time on household income generation	0.615	0.0000	
Students' engagement in household income-generating activities	0.615	0.0000	

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

When considering the items discussed under the conceptual framework, the three proxies of the economic crisis (*Independent Variable*) under the model of senior secondary students, the Indicator Reliability of all items was statistically significant under the 95% significance level. As well, the validity of these three proxies under the KMO and Bartlett's test was equal to or higher than 0.6, which means that this model, which represents the economic crisis in education, has the best consistency and validity. Table 8 is utilised to clearly illustrate the above ideas.

According to the multiple regression analysis model results, which are revealed in Table 9, all coefficients with the intercept term are statistically significant under the 95% significance level (P value < 0.05). Maintaining the quality of education without affecting its economic process has become an extremely important factor for any economy in the world to maintain a fast and stable economic development process (Mbole Nkong et al., 2016). But some negative and positive impacts on the education quality can be identified under the above explanation. Table 9 is utilised to clearly illustrate the above ideas.

In keeping with Table 9, during the current economic crisis, the quality of senior secondary education increases by

0.00000196 when the annual private cost of education is changed by one unit (Shores & Steinberg, 2017). Sirait, (2016) asserted that the essential education supportive things and sufficient learning materials (*test books, exercise books, and writing materials, etc.*) largely impact the attainment of educational quality; but in the Sri Lankan context, this is somewhat obscured by the prevailing culture of excessive inflation. According to (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2022), the 2022-2023 average annual national inflation rate for Sri Lanka was around 45%, which has generated a negative impact on the real benefit of the education expenses as well. A somewhat parallel idea to this idea can be identified in the Study Okongo et al., (2015), and during a period of economic crisis, the costs of learning support materials, transportation, and tuition education increase rapidly, which directly affects the education quality of students. According to the Nambissan, (2010) study, due to the economic crisis in India in 2008, many parents from poor or low-income families removed their children from tuition classes, severely cutting their education expenses, and thus had a sharp negative impact on the education quality. Although the Sri Lankan story is a little bit different, due to very little positive impact most likely to be negative in the near future due to this worse inflation.

Table 9: Multiple Regression Model: Impact of Economic Crisis on Quality of Secondary Education.

Variables	Coefficient Value	T value	0.05	P value
Intercept	0.3162	3.2619	0.05	0.0012
Annual private expenditure on education	1.96E-06	-4.7055	0.05	0.0000
Parents' (either the father or the mother) spending more time in household income generation.	-0.402	3.2619	0.05	0.0012
Students' engagement in household income-generating activities	-0.3904	3.6087	0.05	0.0003

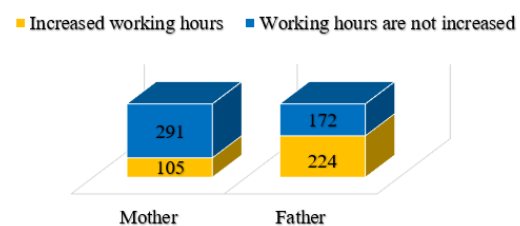
Source: Survey Data, 2023.

In keeping with Table 9, during the current economic crisis, relative to a senior secondary student who is not involved in the generation of household income and a parent (*either the father or the mother*) who is not involved in the household income generation for a longer period, being a parent who is involved in the income generation for a longer period in time will reduce the quality of senior secondary education by 0.402. As a parallel to this idea, during an economic crisis, many households fall into poverty, thereby increasing the number of parents in their daily working hours. Accordingly, parent-child communication is weak, and it negatively affects the children's education quality (Neppl et al., 2016). Due to the high inflation during the economic crisis, the stress on the parents may be increasing, which might have contributed to their longer working hours. These findings are also confirmed by Shafiq, (2010) and Eleni et al., (2014). In line with this, as a result of the 1998 Asian financial crisis, parents in low-income Indonesian families have tended to increase their working hours during the economic crisis (Thomas, et al., 2004).

According to Figure 3, considering the sample of Monaragala district in Sri Lanka, there is a significant number of parents (A percentage of 41.5% of total parents) who have increased their working hours due to the economic crisis. In the analysis of the sample data, the majority of fathers are interested in increasing working time than mothers in the Monaragala district, and many parents have focused on increasing work-

ing time to more than 2 hours per day during the crisis period. Not only that, 21% (168 of parents) of the parents represented in the sample of Monaragala district have been involved in new secondary jobs to increase household income during the crisis period. As identified through telephonic interviews conducted during data collection, lots of parents in Monaragala district were engaged in secondary jobs in that period, such as farming, hired work, latex collection, garment industry, small businesses, small industries (*such as brick, besom, and broom making*), and small self-employment (*mushroom cultivation, coconut shell products*). Parallel to the above students' job involvement, 85% (396 of parents) of the parents who increased their working time or joined new jobs in the sample of Monaragala district during the current economic crisis were identified as the group whose monthly family income is less than Rs. 50,000/-.

Figure 3: Parents who Increased Working Hours During the Economic Crisis.

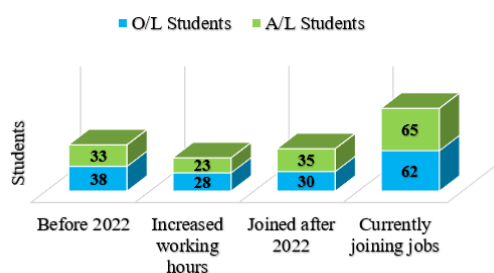


Source: Survey Data, 2023.

In keeping with Table 9, during the current economic crisis, relative to a senior secondary student who is not involved in

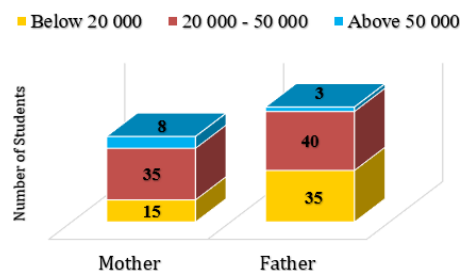
the generation of household income and a parent who is not involved in the household income generation for a longer period, being a senior secondary student involved in household income generation reduces the quality of senior secondary education by 0.3904. In times of economic crisis, there is a rapid decline in household income, which puts a lot of pressure on older school children (Eleni et al., 2014). So that especially senior secondary students often resort to helping their parents' jobs or taking up new jobs of their own preference, which has a negative impact on the quality of education (Rohanachandra, 2022; Shafiq, 2010). In times of economic crisis, there is a rapid decline in household income, which puts a lot of pressure on older school children (Eleni et al., 2014). A study conducted during the Argentine and Tanzanian economic crisis shows that the family's income level and the education level of the parents are also other reasons for this (Nihan & Rosati, 2009). Parallel to that, 83% (96 of students) of the students who increased the working time or joined new jobs in the sample of Monaragala district during the current economic crisis were identified as the group whose monthly family income is less than Rs. 50,000/-. According to the labour data of the student sample shown in Figure 4, 51% (65 of students) of senior secondary students currently involved in family income-generating activities are those who joined new jobs after the economic crisis. In line with this idea, a considerable number of senior secondary students in Monaragala District have utilised their school time for income generation initiatives amid the economic crisis to boost their household income capacity. Figure 4 supports this notion, revealing that 32% (127 of students) of senior secondary students are now employed, and most of them are utilising their school time for income generation. According to Shores and Steinberg, (2017), many surveys conducted after the 2008 global financial crisis have explained that during an economic crisis, students who used their schooling time to work suffered a long-term decline due to missing out on quality education. This idea is also supported by Shafiq, (2010) and Rohanachandra, (2022); who discovered that the students who are engaged with household income generation activities during crisis periods have to face negative impacts on their educational achievements.

Figure 4: Senior Secondary Students who are Involved in Household Income Generation.



Source: Survey Data, 2023.

Figure 5: Parents Engaged in Secondary Jobs Relative to Their Monthly Earnings.

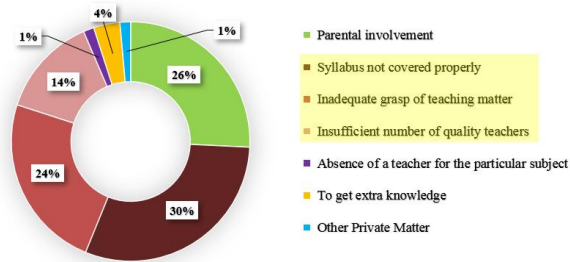


Source1: Survey Data, 2023.

Figure 5 reveals that 55% of students whose parents engage in secondary jobs fall within the monthly family income range of LKR 20,000 to LKR 50,000. Confirming that idea, according to (Department of Census and Statistics, 2022), the "Poorest 40% families earn only Rs 26,931, not enough even to put 3 meals on their table at current prices". Consequently, this study points out that more than 37% of students whose parents engage in secondary jobs do not reach a sufficient monthly income level to cover their educational expenses due to their monthly family income level lying below LKR 20,000. Besides that, the parents who are at a low-income level tend to be involved in secondary jobs, which has a negative impact on students' quality of education. This view was supported by Shafiq (2010) and Mugumya et al. (2022); they emphasised that these considerable secondary job involvements of parents with poor monthly incomes generated substantial pressure on the quality of education background of their children.

"Teachers are at the heart of quality education" (Agnihotri, 2017, p. 4878). Improving the quality of teaching is a fundamental element in improving the quality of schooling. If so, all school teachers who contribute to the work of teaching in the school system are a major determinant of the quality of education and have an important impact on student outcomes in both academic and non-academic aspects (Nurhakim et al., 2021). Aligned with those findings, this study is also focused on illustrating why secondary students are going to supplementary education centres, utilising Figure 6. Figure 6 illustrates that 68% of senior secondary students responded that they are involved in supplementary education due to the weakness of the school teachers (*inadequate grasp of teaching matter and insufficient number of quality teachers*) and the inadequate instructional quality (*syllabus not covered properly*) of the government schools. Consequently, these circumstances are compelling secondary students or their parents to seek external educational support under a payment mechanism, which will generate external education costs for students, even though we have a free education system.

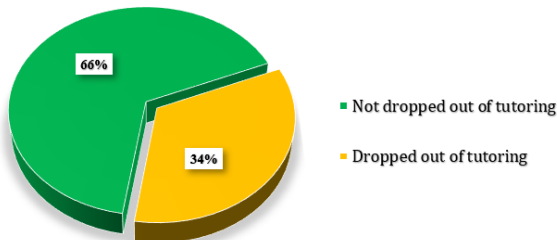
Figure 6: Determinants of Secondary Students' Engagement in Supplementary Education.



Source: Survey Data, 2023.

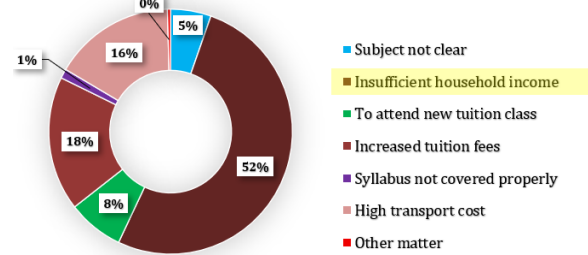
This is also supported by Bamigboye et al., (2016), who highlight that, during the bad economic circumstances, some teachers are unnecessarily rude to students and have not taken the time to provide adequate explanations of any concepts being taught. In here, during the economic crisis, Bamigboye et al., (2016) argued that lots of poor households cut their children's education expenses to support other essential household needs. During the current economic crisis here, this study is also aligned with this idea; Figure 7 argues that 34% of students have dropped out of the tuition classes. Significantly, the main reason for leaving tuition education was the insufficiency of household income during the economic crisis. Figure 8 confirms that 52% of students who dropped out of tutoring did so due to insufficient household income. This idea is also supported by (Barakat et al., 2010), who argued that during the period of the economy not performing well, parents tended to remove their children from supplementary education due to insufficient household income.

Figure 7: Patterns of tuition dropout among secondary students.



Source: Survey Data, 2023.

Figure 8: Causes of tuition dropout among secondary students.



Source: Survey Data, 2023.

Based on the results of this study, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of all explanatory variables is very close to 1, and the value of Tolerance is upper than 0.7, which means there is no multi-collinearity among all variables. When considering the specification bias of the model, the probability value of Ramsey's Reset Test was 0.00039, and it was 95% statistically significant, which means there is no specification bias in this model. When it comes to the heteroscedasticity of the disturbance term of the model, the researcher utilised the 'Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey Test' and 'White's General Heteroscedasticity Test.' According to Figure 9, both values (*F Value*) of the above tests are not statistically significant under the 95% probability level (*Probability Value* > 0.05), which illustrates that there is no heteroscedasticity for the disturbance term in this model.

Table 10: Heteroscedasticity Test.

Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey Test		White's General Heteroscedasticity Test	
F Value	Probability	F Value	Probability
0.9711	0.3265	0.9711	0.3265

Source: Developed by the Author, 2023.

Moreover, the value of R^2 is 0.18, which means 18% of the presence of quality of senior secondary education is described by all independent variables. Finally, the F value test of ANOVA for multiple regression analysis of senior secondary students, which is mentioned under Table 11, demonstrates that the regression model accounts for a statistically significant percentage of the variation in the dependent variable. The explained sum of squares (ESS = 41.563) relative to the total sum of squares (TSS = 229.4912) yields an F-statistic of 27.72 with 3 and 376 degrees of freedom (df). The corresponding p-value (p-value < 0.05) strongly rejects the null hypothesis of no model effect, confirming that the explanatory variables collectively exert a significant influence on the education quality during the economic crisis.

Table 11: ANOVA Test – Students' Model.

Model	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Sum of Squares	F Value	P Value
ESS	41.563	3	13.8543	27.72	0.0000
RSS	187.9281	376	0.4998	-	-
TSS	229.4912	379	0.6055	-	-

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

CONCLUSION

Education quality is the invisible hand that guides an economy towards rapid, sustainable development of the nation.

In pursuit of education quality, school education plays a pivotal role in creating fruitful, knowledge-based human resources to face the real economic challenges, especially in a

developing country. Consequently, this study aims to identify the impact of the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka on the quality of senior secondary education. In keeping with this objective, Uva Province–Monaragala District, which showed higher poverty in Sri Lanka among the poverty indicators and even showed the highest food insecurity in Sri Lanka in 2023, was selected as the study area. Accordingly, 396 senior secondary students and 792 of their parents were selected from 21 government schools as study units under simple random sampling. The factor analysis, which is for the determination of education quality, and the ordinary least squares multiple regression analysis, which is for the determination of the impact of the economic crisis on education quality, have been employed for data analysis.

According to this study, the researcher has identified a significant negative impact on the quality of senior secondary education from parents spending more time on household income generation and students' engagement in household income-generating activities. And there is relatively little positive impact on the quality of senior secondary education from annual private expenditure on education. All these results have been statistically significant under the 95% percent significance level. Also, the family income level has a significant impact on the parents being involved in the household income generation for a longer period of time, and the students being involved in the household income generation in the crisis period, which was found as a special finding through the study. Besides that, this study confirmed that parental and school teacher involvement in the educational activities of senior secondary students is one of the key requirements for their quality lifelong journey in the future. Significantly, evidence supported by the study shows that the majority of senior secondary students tend to be involved in supplementary education due to poor performance of the school teachers (*inadequate grasp of teaching matter and insufficient number of quality teachers*) and weak institutional management of government schools (*syllabus not covered properly*) in Sri Lanka. Consequently, during the crisis period, more than 50% of students who were involved in supplementary education have left tuition classes due to a lack of sufficient household income. As well, this study was also completely aligned with the ideas of previous studies, which investigated the decline of school attendance that has been seen throughout the crisis period. Moreover, considering the 2022 final term test results, the senior secondary age group students represented by the sample in the Monaragala district have obtained poor test scores, and some of them have failed the exams.

Thus, it can be finally concluded that the majority of the sensitive factors that target the quality of senior secondary education in an economic crisis identified in the literature can be identified in Sri Lanka. As well as the decline in the quality of senior secondary education today, probably creates a painful second impact on the economy in the coming period. Based on the above backdrops, immediate policy requirements are essential to address these negative impacts on education quality in order to safeguard the sustainable long-term economic journey in a quality manner.

Finally, in order to reduce the pressure of the impact of the economic crisis, some policy recommendations have been introduced by the researcher, namely (1) One of the most valuable implementations is to facilitate 13-year compulsory

school education, especially for senior secondary students. For that kind of policy implementation, the government needs to initiate a proper identification method to strategically identify the students who are from poor family backgrounds. The study argued that the students who are from low-income families are significantly involved in income-generation activities during the economic crisis. Aligned with that, during the crisis period, the average monthly education expenditure of a senior secondary student was LKR 9000, and due to that, the social security network should be implemented systematically (*at least partially*) to cover low-income families. Furthermore, the government might launch awareness campaigns to make low-educated parents aware of the worth of higher education instead of involving their children in income-generating activities. (2) Moreover, make school life popular among senior secondary students (*mostly among A/L students*) with creative learning activities to get a complete outcome from the government-free education system. (3) More than 50% of senior secondary students are involved with supplementary education due to the poor performance of government teachers. Accordingly, teachers should be trained in creative teaching styles, thinking patterns, and good attitudes to maintain the uniformity of the quality of school education. (4) Besides that, providing sufficient necessary school facilities and teaching and learning materials on time for teachers and students all over the country in school premises. (5) Continuous and efficient regulation of schools and all educational centres (*especially private higher education institutions*) should cover the entire island as soon as possible. In line with these, urgent policies should be put in place to prevent the rise of child labour, strengthen their independent education framework and accelerate research and development in the education sector covering the whole country.

However, this study contains some limitations that open the way for new scholars to carry out further studies. There may be more than four determinants of the quality of education during an economic crisis, and future researchers can focus on them. Finally, there is a scope for future researchers to carry out this study with a wider interpretation to cover all 25 districts of Sri Lanka. Moreover, there is a scope for future researchers to conduct research covering the fields of early childhood, primary, junior secondary, and higher university education.

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