

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE EDUCATION OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

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COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected people's social, economic, political and cultural aspects. Among them, the education sector is very important. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a major crisis in world education. The pandemic has created a huge impact on the livelihood of the global citizens including Sri Lankans. The pandemic has paralysed the entire Sri Lankan education system. Although the developed countries activate many solutions to sustain the education system, the developing and less developed nations face lots of difficulties to fulfill the needs in the education system because of lack of technology. Due to this cause many researchers follow studies about the interrelationship between COVID-19 pandemic and education. However, there is a research gap on pre-school education during the COVID-19 and pre-school education. In according to that, this study found out information about the above-mentioned variables deeply from Matara-Yatiana area. This research was conducted qualitatively. Yatiana Grama Niladari division was selected as sample area and data collected through purposive sampling method. fifteen preschool children, their parents and two preschool teachers were selected as research participants for the data collection & in-depth interviews were used for primary data collection. In terms of the COVID-19 and education in Sri Lankan context, this pandemic highly affect the education system in Sri Lanka. Nearly two years, students have been restricted to their homes due to lock down and travel restrictions. Therefore, the responsible authorities closed all schools, tuition classes and other educational centres. Because of this situation students face many difficulties. Although the elder students fulfill their education need somehow, the pre-school children loss their exposure to education at the primary level. Pre-school education is simply associated with a child's creativity. It is not merely subject contents driven. It is a place where the child builds up many creative activities, ideas, and good habits like sharing, collaboration etc. Those skills cannot be developed online. Due to this pandemic the intervention of the teacher is very limited, and the support of the parents is mandatory for the child. However, the strengthening of the relationship between the parents and the child can be pointed out as a positive result. But the child does not get formal knowledge through online education. On the other hand, this study revealed that the child's active participation is decreased due to the inability to engage in practical activities. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to find out the impact of COVID-19 on pre – school education. In conclusion, it revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the entire education system in Sri Lanka including preschool education.

**Key words:** COVID-19, Education, Preschool, children, Pandemic