

SAFE SANITATION AND POPULATION HEALTH: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS TO IDENTIFY DETERMINANTS OF LATRINE USAGE IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract: *Latrine usage and sanitation in Sri Lanka is one of the best in South Asia. Interventions providing toilets and promoting usage have substantially improved health conditions of the population. However, lack of usage of available sanitation facilities and consequent unhygienic practices, such as open defecation is still prevalent in Sri Lanka. These cause serious health issues and environmental problems. Therefore, this study aims to identify factors determining toilet usage in urban, rural and estate sectors. Data of Household Income and Expenditure Survey of the Department of Census and Statistics of the year 2016 has been used for the analysis. The study is cross-sectional and predominantly descriptive in nature. It was found that sector (urban, rural and estate); districts (Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts in the Eastern Province); age of the members of the households; headship of the head of the household; ethnicity of the head of the household; education level of the head of the household; and poverty (income) are determinants of usage of latrines, whilst family size was not a significant factors. The findings of the study will support Evidence-Based Policy. However, further emphasis is to be given to socio-economic, cultural and behavioural aspects of latrine usage in future studies.*

Keywords: Latrine usage, socio-economic and demographic factors, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Safe sanitation is vital for health, from averting spread of contagions, and to improve and maintain social as well as mental well-being. The absence of safe sanitation contributes to diarrhoea, a major public health concern and a primary cause of disease and death among children under five years in low and middle-income countries. Moreover, poor sanitation causes several tropical diseases, in addition to broader adverse outcomes such as undernutrition. Lack of access to suitable and safe sanitation facilities is also a major cause of risks and anxiety, especially for women and girls (WHO, 2018). According to the World Health Organisation, 4.5 billion people live devoid of a safe toilet, and 892 million people still practice open defecation (WHO & UNICEF, 2017). Worldwide, one fifth of the schools do not provide toilet facilities – a particular problem for girls during menstruation (WHO & UNICEF, 2018).

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution, ‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ which proposed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 associated targets (WHO & UNICEF, 2017), and the formation of SDG 6, ‘Ensure availability and sustainable

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