Relationship between Place Poverty, People Poverty, and Crop Diversification (CD) in Moneragala District

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Crop diversification (CD) involves shifting from subsistence food crops to market-oriented ones. Moneragala, the second poorest district in the country, has implemented CD programs to combat poverty. However, some areas have been slow to practice these programs, with farmers' still practicing traditional Chena cultivation. This study aims to explore the relationship between place poverty, people poverty, and CD in the district. While many studies focus on how CD helps alleviate poverty, this research examines poverty as a barrier to practice CD. Using a positivistic approach and quantitative research methods, data was collected from secondary sources and analysed using spatial statistics: Moran'sI statistic and spatial regression model. Results revealed CD clusters in the western part of the district, where less place poverty, and less people poverty. Conversely, place and people poverty clusters in the Eastern and Southern parts show less prevailing CD. This indicates that CD programs have not effectively reduced poverty in the area, as the clusters do not coincide. OLS model statistics demonstrate that place poverty variables are not statistically significant, meaning they do not sufficiently explain CD's spatial distribution. However, people poverty variables (Income, Food vulnerability, and Education) are significant and explain CD's spatial distribution. The negative relationship between people poverty and CD implies that an increase in CD leads to a decrease in people poverty and vice versa. While the model effectively explains CD's spatial distribution, it highlights that both place poverty and people poverty restrict access to CD in certain areas. The recommendations provided can contribute to the development of targeted interventions and policies that aim to alleviate poverty through the promotion of CD in the district. Future studies should incorporate field data and a humanistic approach to understand why farmers in impoverished areas are reluctant to adopt CD.

Keywords: Crop diversification, Place poverty, People poverty, Spatial statistics