

## ABSTRACT

The present study was planned to address the paucity of information on emotional disorders among adolescents. The objective therefore was to modify, adapt and validate an instrument for detection of emotional disorders as well as to estimate the prevalence of such illness in a school going community. Factors associated with emotional disorders in this population were also studied.

The study was therefore carried out in three phases. The CIS-R was translated and modified in the clinic setting followed by revalidation and the detection of cut off scores in the school setting. The instrument so refined (CIS-Sn) was then used to estimate the prevalence of emotional disorders. Correlates of such illness were studied using a self administered questionnaire given to respondents and a questionnaire filled by teachers.

The modified instrument demonstrates high repeatability and validity. It was also shown that lay interviewers could be used for the administration of the instrument. The estimated prevalence of emotional disorder was found to be 24.6% (95% C.L. 22% - 27%). The most commonly reported symptom was "difficulties in concentration and forgetfulness". A high frequency of non-specific somatic symptoms was observed. Fatigue, particularly of long duration and especially where fatigue is reported even for tasks which are enjoyed by the respondents were found related with the presence of emotional disorders.

An important finding of the study was the high prevalence (16.6%) of the feeling that “life is not worth living” among the study population irrespective of their emotional health status. Furthermore, 4% of this total population expressed suicidal ideas. Both these are confirmed by the current high suicide rates observed nationally and highlight the importance of instituting preventive action.

The key source of emotional distress in adolescents was identified as relationships with the family. This is related to the findings of the study that corporal punishment and strictness of parents were important risk factors for emotional disorders in the population studied. Part time employment of school going adolescents was the other important risk factor. This needs further explorative study.

Another key finding of the present study was the association of emotional disorders with the ability to grasp information. Participation in extra curricular activities was shown to have an inverse relationship with emotional health.

These findings highlight the need for institutionalizing a screening program for this age group within the school setting. This has to be preceded by extensive validation studies as well as assessment of acceptability and economic feasibility. An important area of intervention would be the creation of increased awareness in the community in general as well as programs directed towards improving parenting practices. Education of teachers towards better understanding of emotional changes associated with adolescence also appears very important.