

## Abstract

Adolescence is a phase of life where a person is in transit and is neither an absolute child nor an adult. It is an extremely sensitive, different time in life with many physical and psychological changes taking place, sometimes at a rate the individual is unprepared for, emotionally.

This study was undertaken to identify the behavioural and emotional problems and their associated factors among grade 10 students in Ampara Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS) area, as well as to develop and evaluate an educational module to reduce their behavioural problems.

A school based Descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted from May 2018 to March 2019 among 1340 grade 10 students studying in 43 government schools in Ampara RDHS area. A multistage stratified cluster sampling was done, and cluster allocation was done according to the proportion of student population in each educational zone.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was used to assess the mental health status of the students. Effectiveness of life skills-based intervention to reduce behavioural problems among the students after 12 weeks.

Data analysis was done using the SPSS 21 software. Prevalence of emotional and behavioural problems were summarized as percentages. Associated factors of the mental health status were examined using Chi square test and binomial logistic regression.

The sample size was 1340 and out of them 54.6% was females and 45.4% was males. According to the Sri Lankan cut offs, 11.9% of the participants had emotional and behavioural problems. Emotional problems were the most common problem (15.1%) which was followed by conduct problems (12.9%), peer problems (12.1%) and Hyperactive/inattention problems (11.7%).

Not involving in religious activities regularly (OR 2.3 95% CI 1.3-4.3), stressful life events during the last six months (OR 1.9 95% CI 1.1-3.4), mothers low education level (OR 1.9 95% CI 1.1-3.4), not having a family member to discuss the problems (OR 2.4 95% CI 1.3-4.2), tobacco consumption by father ( 2.9 95% CI 1.2-6.6) and difficulties in academic activities ( OR 5.9 95% CI 2.5- 13.6) were significantly associated with

the abnormal total SDQ score. The life skills based educational intervention was effective reduce the behavioural problems among the school children ( $\chi^2 = 4.7, p = 0.03$ )

**Conclusion** - Emotional and behavioural problems are common among the grade 10 students in Ampara RDHS area and life skills-based intervention was effective to reduce the behavioural problems among the students.

**Recommendations** – screening programmes on mental health of the students should be incorporated to the School medical inspection programme and more life skills based activities should be conducted in schools.

**Keywords-** Emotional and behavioural problems, Life Skills, Intervention