

Abstract

Background: Psychological distress is the number one cause of specific disability adjusted life year (DALY). There are many factors associated with the maternal psychological distress in lower and middle-income countries include socioeconomic status, living in rural areas with crowded households, lack of social support, food insecurity and adverse life events. The present study was conducted to describe the psychological distress and associated factors among young mothers (under 24 years) of children under 5 years in Mullaitivu district

Method: Community based descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in Mullaitivu from August 2018 to November 2018. Young mothers who are not completed 24 years at time of interview and having one living child under 5 years was recruited. Sample size was 482 (4.93% non-responders). Psychological distress was assessed by Kessler 6 questionnaire and modified life event inventory. Selected factors, maternal physical and sexual abuse assessed by abused assessment questionnaire (AAQ) and maternal support by maternal social support scale (MSSS). Psychological distress defined as Kessler 6 score 7 and above. Chisquare was applied to see the statistically significance.

Results: Prevalence of psychological distress among young mothers with under 5 children in Mullaitivu is 37.3%. Majority of mothers (84.4%) had good social support.

Socio- demographic factors associated with psychological distress in young mothers with under 5 children were marital status when categorized in to married/living together and other status

($p=0.003$), Husband/Partner's education categorized in to studied grade five and above with less than grade five ($p=0.008$), household income categorized in to above and below 25,000 Rupees ($p=0.017$). Other factors associated with psychological distress were ever physical abuse ($p=0.001$), physical abuse while pregnant ($p=0.001$), current physical ($p=0.001$) and sexual abuse ($p=0.001$). Life events such, separated from partner/husband ($p= 0.0001$), husband use harsh words ($p=0.0001$), husband been unfaithful ($p=0.0001$), arguments with family member ($p= 0.0001$), involvement in big fights ($p= 0.0001$), husband become unemployed

($p=0.003$), and debt beyond means of repayment ($p=0.0001$) have significant association with psychological distress.

Conclusion: - Prevalence of psychological distress among young mothers of children under 5 years in Mullaitivu is high (37.3%). More than 90% of young mothers of under 5 children studied up to grade 10 and above. Most of the school dropout happen at grade 10 or Ordinary Level (83%). Majority of mothers (84.4%) in sample has good family support. About forty-two percentage of woman had ever physically abused and more than 15% of mothers recently got abused. Physical or sexual abuse is significantly associated with psychological distress in young mothers of children under 5 years in Mullaitivu District.

keywords: psychological distress, young mothers, young mothers of under 5 years, life event.