

Relationship between Mental Health Status and the Cognitive Performance among Adolescents in Northern Sri Lanka

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Background: Mental health disorders are one of the major burden of disease in global. Mental health problems in adolescents thus present not only a major public health challenge but are also a development issue in low- and middle-income countries and may be central to achieving different Sustainable Development Goals. Good mental health of adolescent is very important for his/her optimum level educational performance and thus a brighter future. This study evaluated the relationship between the mental health status and the cognitive performance of the adolescents in a conflict-affected district of Northern Sri Lanka. **Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was performed among the school going adolescents in Jaffna district of Northern Sri Lanka. Students' mental health was assessed with Tamil Version of Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ). High score of SDQ indicates more mental health issues. Cognitive performance was assessed by an aptitude examination. Both were self-administered by the study participants. The assessments were carried out in the schools. **Results:** Six hundred and fifty-five school students have participated in the study. Mean age of the study participant was 14 years. Male-female ratio of the study participants was 1:1. The mean aptitude score was 64.0 with the range of 6-100. The SDQ score ranged from 0-26 and the average score was 9.6. Negative relationship was observed between SDQ score and aptitude score. The correlation coefficient of the relationship between SDQ and the Aptitude test was -0.11 and is statistically significant ($p=0.003$). This relationship was more among boys ($r=-0.169$, $p=0.003$) than girls ($r=-0.069$, $p=0.21$). **Conclusions:** Good mental health of an adolescent is important for better cognitive performance.

Keywords: Adolescents, Jaffna, SDQ, Mental health, Cognitive performance