

**STUDY OF THE PREVALENCE OF SYMPTOMS OF BEHAVIOURAL  
DISORDERS IN GCE (A/L) STUDENTS OF  
THE ANURADHAPURA DISTRICT IN SRI LANKA**

P.V.R. KUMARASIRI, I.P. WELGAMA AND N.M. MUNASINGHE

*Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya*

The main objective of this study was to obtain knowledge about the prevalence of any abnormal behaviour symptoms among the above mentioned section of the society. We also assessed the effects of socio-economic factors and the parental habits on the behaviour of these children and any effects of these symptoms on the social and family life of the subject. This study was a community based descriptive cross-sectional study and school children, aged between sixteen to nineteen years from four selected schools of the Anuradhapura district were chosen. It involved the use of a self-administered questionnaire. Part one contained several questions on personal information, which were thought to influence the behaviour pattern of the subjects. Part two included the validated, Sinhala standard Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) ([www.sdqinfo.com/questionnaires/sinhalese/aja5.pdf](http://www.sdqinfo.com/questionnaires/sinhalese/aja5.pdf)), in which 25 questions covering abnormal symptoms of behaviour were included. The questionnaire also contained a few questions, included to obtain information as to how the symptoms affected the social life of the subjects.

Informed consent was obtained from the subjects prior to initiating the study. Data entry and analysis were performed using MS Excel worksheet and SPSS 10.0. The frequencies were calculated and cross-tabulations were performed using the Chi-Square test and the Z-test. Their proportions were calculated and the probability values were obtained. Scoring for the questionnaire was done according to the standard SDQ scoring system. Two hundred and sixteen subjects were used and over five percent of them were found to have an abnormal total behaviour score, and over nine percent of the sample was in the borderline category. Males were found to have a significantly higher total behaviour score and a conduct disorder score than the females. Unsatisfactory family situation has led to a significantly high level of conduct disorders among the children. Heavy alcohol consumption by the father was found to have a major effect on the behaviour of their children, with the total behaviour score, the emotional disorder score, the conduct disorder score and the hyperactivity score all being significantly higher in these children. The excessively high educational expectations of the parents also seemed to affect the children, with some having a significantly high emotional disorder and conduct disorder score. No significant effects were seen from the family income, parental education level, smoking by fathers and the media. Also peer disorders and pro-social behaviour were not significantly affected by the variables we considered. A larger sample study might confirm these and show better effects of the other variables on abnormal behaviour.