

Abstract

Background

Behavioral and emotional problems comprising internalizing, externalizing and mixed disorders consist of psychiatric disorders in childhood and adolescents. Prevalence rates of 8.3% for preschoolers, 12.2% for preadolescents and 15.0% for adolescents have been reported from around the world. This study aimed to measure the prevalence of emotional and behavioral disorders in 7–11 year-old school children studying in Kandy District Sri Lanka which was a first for the geographic area.

Method

This was a community based study at the primary section of the selected schools. The questionnaire, Child behavior Checklist-Sinhala (CBCL-S) was administered in a group setting to the main caregiver of 562 subjects selected randomly. The questionnaire identified problems in 8 subscales under three main sub categories : internalizing, externalizing and other. Data were analyzed using The Syndrome Scales for Boys and Girls developed for analyzing the questionnaire CBCL.

Results

Indicated a prevalence of 13.8% of emotional and behavioral problems in the study population. 8.8% of children showed internalizing problems and 8.8% externalizing problems. These findings are in line with the prevailing rates from previous studies of the world. Children in school types 1AB and 1C had less emotional and behavioral problems compared to type 2 and 3 schools.

Limitations

Only 20 schools in KEZ and Sinhala speaking population of the Kandy were studied.

Conclusions

This study showed the extent of childhood emotional and behavioral problems and also confirms that the schools with advanced level classes have lesser problems amongst primary children.