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Prevalence of Mental Disorders among School Children in Kashmir Valley

Abstract

Background: Mental Health of children has great importance and is affected by many factors. In Kashmir, the ongoing political violence has been a major contributor in the deterioration of mental health. The prevalence studies conducted so far on mental disorders in children of violence affected areas have given varied results and no such study has been conducted on children of Kashmir. Hence the present study was designed to study the nature, distribution and prevalence of mental disorders across various socio-demographical variables among school children in Kashmir valley.

Method: The present study was an exploratory research in nature with multi-stage sampling and multi-informant reporting of mental health problems in children. A sample of 1000 school children with equal number of males (n=500) and females (n=500) were included in the present research. A list of schools in the district of Shopian was collected and twelve schools were randomly chosen. In every school, students of class 5th to 8th comprising of both male and female sections were selected through systematic random sampling method. Data was collected at different levels of screening by using Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Teacher form) and Mini International Neuropsychiatric Inventory (MINI-Kid). Socio-demographic data sheet was included to gather relevant information. Data was analysed by using Mann

Whitney U Test, Kruskal Wallis test, Stepwise multinomial logistic regression and chi square test. **Results:** The prevalence rates of mental disorders among school children were presented at different levels of screening. It was found to be 27.1% (95%CI 24.18 - 30.02) based on SDQ and 22.2% (95%CI 19.28 – 25.12) when assessed by MINI-Kid at second level of screening. However 10.81% (95%CI 7.89 – 13.73) were also found potential out of 5% of non potential cases (729) when screened by MINI-Kid. Therefore, overall prevalence rate of mental disorders was increased by 33% (95%CI= 30.08 – 35.92), when positive cases of 5% non potential sample were included. Distribution of students found potential on different subscales of SDQ shows conduct problems to be most common (N=185) followed by peer problems (N=134) and emotional problems (N=132). However 62 cases of hyperactivity and 84 cases with problem in prosocial behaviour were also observed. The most commonly found mental disorders were of anxiety (8.5%), followed by mood disorders (6.3%) and then behavioural disorders (4.3%). Prevalence of PTSD was found to be 1.3% while as dissociative disorders was found to be 1.2%. Although no case of alcohol abuse, eating disorders or psychosis was found. **Conclusion:** Percentage of children with mental disorders in Kashmir is much more than in other states of India. The political conflict in the state and lack of mental health facilities give rise to high prevalence rates of mental disorders. It highlights the urgency of immediate intervention and need of Mental Health Programmes for such affected children.

Key words: Prevalence, Socio-demographic variables, Mental Disorders, School Children, Kashmir.