

Prevalence and Correlates of Mental Disorders in Children and Adolescents in Mendefera Community, Eritrea

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Abstract : Introduction: Epidemiological research is important to draw need-based rational public health policy. However, research on child and adolescent mental health in low and middle income countries, where socioeconomic, political, cultural, biological and other mental health hazards are in abundance, is almost nonexistent. To the author's knowledge, there is no published research in this field in Eritrea, whose child and adolescent population constitutes 53% of its total population. Study Aims and Objectives: The objective of this study was to determine the prevalence and patterns of DSM-IV psychiatric disorders and identify their socio-demographic correlates among children and adolescents in Mendefera, Eritrea. The study aims to provide local information to public health policymakers to guide policy in service development. Methodology: In a cross-sectional two stage procedure, both the Parent and Child versions of the SDQ were used to screen 314 children and adolescents aged 4-17 years, recruited by a multi-stage random sampling method. All parents/adult guardians also completed a socio-demographic questionnaire. All children and adolescents who screened positive for any of the SDQ abnormality sub-classes were selected for the second stage interview, which was conducted using the K-SADS-PL 2009 Working Draft version to generate specific DSM-IV diagnoses. All data gathered was entered into CSPro version 6.2 and was then transported in to and analyzed using SPSS version 20 for windows. Results: Prevalence of DSM-IV psychiatric disorders was found to be 13.1%. Adolescents 11-17 years old and males had higher prevalence than children 4-10 years old and females, respectively. Behavioral disorders were the commonest disorders (9.9%), followed by affective disorders (3.2%) and anxiety disorders (2.5). Chronic medical illness in the child, poor academic performance, difficulties with teachers in school, psychopathology in a family member and parental conflict were found to be independently associated with these disorders. Conclusion: Prevalence of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders in Eritrea is high. Promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation for child and adolescent mental health services need to be made widely available in the country. The socio-demographic correlates identified by this study can be targeted for intervention. The need for further research is emphasized.

Keywords : adolescents, children, correlates, DSM-IV psychiatric disorders, Eritrea, K-SAD-PL 2009, prevalence and correlates, SDQ

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