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### **School performance, school attendance and peer pressure contributing to stress among adolescents in Colombo district, Sri Lanka**

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Psychosocial adversities at home, at school, and peer pressure are known to contribute to stress amongst adolescents in developed countries. The Adolescent Stress Questionnaire (ASQ) has been used in many populations in the world to assess adolescent stress levels. The objective of the study was to determine factors of school performance, school attendance, and peer pressure that contribute to stress among adolescents in the Colombo district. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among adolescents aged 14 to 16 years (n=104; mean age 15.3 years  $\pm$  0.50; 53% female) attending government schools in all four education zones of the Colombo district. Baseline data were obtained and the ASQ was administered after validating into Sinhala Language using the delphi technique. Subjects were divided into stressed (ASQ  $\geq$  150) and non-stressed (ASQ  $\leq$  149) groups based on ASQ score. Stressed subjects scored worse on 14 of the 17 factors in the ASQ, with the major differences being in relation to subject content difficulty and demands, teacher expectations, and peer pressure. There were no differences in the stress levels between males and females. 37.5 % (n= 39) were stressed in relation to stress of school performance, school attendance and peer pressure. The mean ASQ score of the stressed adolescents 178.69  $\pm$  19.55 was significantly higher than the mean ASQ score of the non-stressed adolescents (116.76  $\pm$  19.48; p < 0.001). The mean score due to school performance was significantly higher in the stressed group (21.0  $\pm$  4.3) than the mean score in the non-stressed group (14.5  $\pm$  3.9; p < 0.0001). The mean score due to school attendance was significantly higher in the stressed group (6.15  $\pm$  2.6) than the mean score in the non-stressed group (4.88  $\pm$  1.8; p = 0.004). The mean score due to peer pressure was significantly higher in the stressed group (20.38  $\pm$  3.70) than the mean score in the non-stressed group (13.48  $\pm$  3.86; p < 0.0001). Factors in school performance school attendance and peer pressure significantly contributed to stress among adolescents. Measures to avoid or minimize stress factors in the school environment need to be adopted for these stressed adolescents to minimize stress and enhance learning.

Key words: Adolescent, school performance, school attendance, peer pressure, stress.

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