

## **Stress, depression, anxiety, and associated factors among A/L students of the Karaveddy Educational Division, Jaffna**

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**Introduction and Objectives:** Adolescence is a transient period in which many psychological and physiological changes take place, making adolescents more prone to stress and stress-related psychological dysfunction such as anxiety and depression. The G.C.E A/L examination is a major source of stress for school-going adolescents. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of stress, depression, anxiety and their associated sociodemographic and educational factors among A/L students in Karaveddy Educational Division in Jaffna District.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among A/L students of all five 1AB schools in Karaveddy Educational Division. Data was collected by visiting the schools. A complete enumeration of the study population was carried out using a self-administered questionnaire, which included questions about the participants, their schooling, and the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21). Data was analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21). Frequencies, percentages, and the Chi-square test were used in the analysis. The critical value was set at 0.05.

**Results:** In total, 465 students participated (response rate 100%). Out of them, 61.9% (n=288) recorded scores compatible with stress, among whom 15.5% (n=72) had severe stress, and none had extremely severe stress. Among the 24.1% (n=112) who had depression, 0.9% (n=04) had severe and extremely severe depression. Of the 37.0% (n=172) with anxiety, 4.9% (n=23) and 3.2% (n=15) had severe and extremely severe anxiety respectively. Not changing schools after O/L (p=0.009) and sleeping  $\geq 7$  hours (p=0.026) were significantly associated with stress. The parent/guardian's education level being <O/L (p $\leq$ 0.001) not having changed schools after O/L (p=0.033) and spending >2 hours per day on social media (p=0.005) were significantly associated with depression. Residing in a boarding (p=0.039) and sleeping  $\geq 7$  hours (p=0.036) were significantly associated with anxiety.

**Conclusion:** A substantial proportion of A/L students in Karaveddy Educational Division recorded scores compatible with stress, depression, and anxiety. Further research is needed to assess the mental health status of students in other schools of the Karaveddy and other divisions in Jaffna. Urgent measures are needed to improve the mental health status of adolescents.

**Keywords:** Stress, Depression, Anxiety, Adolescence, Jaffna district, Advanced level students.