

Perceived reasons and coping strategies for psychological distress among community dwelling adults in a rural area, Southern Sri Lanka

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Psychological distress in individuals due to varied reasons affects their day-to-day life and this has become a major public health problem in communities all over the world. A community based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted with the participation of 280 adults aged between 20-64 years, residing in the Nagoda Divisional Secretariat area, Galle, in order to determine the perceived reasons and coping strategies for psychological distress. A self-developed pre-tested questionnaire was administered to ascertain the data related to perceived reasons for psychological distress and coping strategies. More than half (59.3%) of the participants were females and 39.6% were aged between 35-50 years. The most prevalent reported reasons for psychological distress were income (73.6%), future plans (64.6%), busy work schedule (70.4%) and personal appearance (71.4%). Most frequently reported perceived reasons for psychological distress were health condition of family members (53.6%), own health condition (52.1%), relationship issues (44.3%) and dietary pattern (44%). Three fourths of the individuals (75.7%) reported that they were watching television or listening to music as coping strategies. Only some of the male participants had practices of using alcohol (23.2%) and smoking (11.8%) as a stress coping method. Very few participants had reported healthy coping strategies including meditation (15.4%), engaging in exercise (14.6%), seeking support of counselling (13.9%), telling the problem to a familiar person (33.6%) and recreational activities (14.3%) respectively. Community dwelling adults reported varied reasons which lead to psychological distress and there is a lack of practices of healthy coping strategies which emphasizes the need for mental health development programmes at community level in order to improve the mental health among community dwelling adults.

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