

Psychological and Emotional Difficulties Confronting School Students in the Post-war Context of Eastern Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study investigated the school students' psychological and emotional difficulties in the post-conflict scenario in Kiran Sri Lanka. The study focussed the eastern province in Kiran area schools. Purpose of the study to examine the prevalence of Kiran school student's psychological and emotional difficulties. The rate of psychological and emotional difficulties in 11-14 years old school children were examined using the strength and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ), children's Anxiety Scale (CAS) and Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HRS). The school student's data collected from three schools in Kiran. The sample population of schools selected by stratified random sampling method were linked to the school students between the ages 11-14 years old in grade 6 to 9, the school students selected with gender concern in each grade 15 female and 15 male students. The total of 120 school students was evaluated and identified both genders of school students were identified as issues in the psychological and emotional difficulties (20%). Hence female school student's anxiety level was higher than male gender. The emotional difficulties of depression were both in school students. However, the high level of the psychological and emotional difficulties identified from the school children in psychological problems (SDQ), anxiety and depression as well female students strongly impact by anxiety rather than male students, these are likely impact negatively on their education and behaviours. The school students felt some unsafe environment in schools, past bitter experience still sticks with their mind. The Kiran school student's lost their father or mother or both in past years war. Particularly the school has to use inadequate resources. It was an influence on the school children's psychological-emotional difficulties. Further, every public school require special counsellors.

Keywords: Anxiety, depression, emotional difficulties, psychological problem

1. Introduction

International conflict and internal conflict have a negative impact on the psychological health of affected adults and children. This psychological stress and emotional difficulties are the most common disorders in the aftermath of the war for both adults and children. Childhood and adolescence are particularly sensitive developmental stages of life (Wenar and Kerig, 2006). Further, disturbances experienced in these stages are important for later upbringing, socialization and successful functioning in adulthood. Growing up in aggressive, stressful and unpredictable family environments can have negative consequences in the

future lives of those children (Cummings and Davies, 2010)) Mental health is a key component of the child and adolescent development is establishing to influence global health initiatives (Sawyer, Afifi, Bearinger, Blakemore, Dick, Ezech, Patton, 2012). This is a significant issue of the current generation of children becoming adults, depression will be a second contributor of the disease globally (Mathers and Loncar, 2006). For children growing up in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, safe and supportive home and school environments are central to ensure they reach their potential and maintain their psychological health. However, it is impossible for children to go through such disturbance of the human behaviours of this kind of war which is affecting the children's behaviour.

As some bad experiences faced by Sri Lanka children as well. Unfortunately Sri Lanka had thirty years of ethnic conflict at the same time it was winding down by 2009. There was some rehabilitation program introduced by the government. On the other hand, many rehabilitation projects are implemented by international organizations. However, there are still hanging some issues within war-affected areas in the North and East parts in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka ethnic war directly affected two regions one is Northern Province and the other one is the eastern province. This internal ethnic conflict ruins all the ways logistically as well as psychologically. Most of the adults, children and women faced such a bad experience in their life. Most of the peoples especially who were living in the northern and eastern part of Sri Lanka needed such deep counselling to rebuild their life from their frustrated life. During the war, lots of school children drop out of their school education and consider the safe environment in their home or some other places.

However, the end of the conflict, with government and non-government organizations supporting many schools reopened for free education to children. Meanwhile, the school children are not recovered from the past experiences of the conflict till to date. This study focuses on eastern province school children. This study, based in eastern province in Kiran area schools. Aimed to examine the prevalence of school children's psychological problems as well as possible risk and caring factors.

Thus this study examined a representative group of 11–14- year-olds to determine the prevalence of behavioural and emotional problems, including emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer relationship problems and pro-social behaviours. The study examined gender equality among school children. Moreover, the children's self-report data were collected to provide an independent view of children's psychological functioning. The age group, 11–14 years, school children selected with gender basis concern.

2. Problem Statement

The children's psychological and emotional problems are certainly accompanied by functional impairments that compromise their ability to perform well at school, carry out household daily works as well as engage in social relationships with peers and other social groups. In this study consist that in Sri Lanka war- affected zone school children age of 11-14 years old children's psychological and emotional difficulties in Kiran.

3. Objectives

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To specify the school children's psychological and emotional difficulties in a post-war context in Kiran Sri Lanka.

2. To find out the differences between the school children's psychological and emotional difficulties and their gender.
3. To find out the differences between the school children's psychological and emotional difficulties and their age.
4. To specify the influence on school children's psychological and emotional difficulties and their gender in post-war context in Kiran, Sri Lanka.

4. Design and Methodology

The rate of psychological problems in Grade 6-9 who were examined using students reports questionnaires. Data on children from three war- affected area schools, in the eastern province Kiran. The students' selected by a stratified random sampling method from Kiran. The questionnaire-based on Strength and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) (Department of Health, 2016), Children's Anxiety Scale (CAS) (Spence, 1994) and Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HRS) (Hamilton, 2000) used to collect the data from students. The 120 respondents answered the questionnaire, with 60 female students and 60 male students.

Strength and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) of the instrument was adopted from the Department of Health (2016). This instrument was probably enhanced to measure the school children's emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peers problem and pro-social scale. Those five scales come under the SDQ. This domain consists of 25 items.

The Children's Anxiety Scale (CAS) of the instrument was adapted from Spence (1994). This instrument was probably enhanced to measure the school children's anxiety. This domain consists of 16 items.

The child labour's depression measured by the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HRS) (Hamilton, 2000). According to Morgan (2016) indicated in his study on depression measurements rating Scale Hamilton Depression Rating Scale is addressing the depression indicated with special attention to the evaluation of the recovery from depression. Karcher & Yun Lee (2002) in their study on Middle School Students Connectedness, they used the Hemingway Measurement rating Scale. This domain consists of 23 items.

The study of sampling population selected by stratified random sampling method, which is used to collect the data from the respondents. According to Boschetti, Stehman and Roy (2016) stratified random sampling this method is a type of the probabilistic sampling procedure. However, the researcher will be using sample random as convenience sampling or availability sampling in the war- affected area schools as well in this research the gender balance will consider.

Moreover, the study is based on eastern province locations Batticaloa district, Kiran. The sample size population will be selected from the Kiran school children in and stratified method. The school children in Kiran schools female and male students 120 who were war- affected area school's students in Kiran. The respondents selected from two schools in the age group 11-14 years who were in grade 6 to grade 9 students.

5. Literature Survey

Relevant Studies referred that although children confirmed few psychological reactions in response to their experience of being in a war zone (North, et al, 2010). Armed conflict is a neglected social

determinant of child health, and the acute and long-lasting effects of armed conflict on child health and psychological wellbeing (Ayesha, et al, 2018). Further, another study shows that 87% of children exposed to chemical attack weapons are exposed to psychological symptoms and high traumatic event level (Ahmad, et al, 2000). Another study has estimated that one out of three children who live in war zones could be vulnerable to develop some form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), psychopathological symptoms, and lower psychosocial functioning levels during their lifetime, which points to the volatile and violent environment they are living in (Freh, Chung, & Dallos, 2013). In the same manner, 43% of Lebanese children were found to continue to manifest post-traumatic stress symptoms even 10 years after their experience of being in war-related traumatic event (Macksoud and Aber, 1996). These studies show that during the war, or aftermath of war many children experienced with hazardous attacks and unsafe environment in their childhood. Which entirely affect the children's active life as well as their psychological and emotional difficulties too.

6. Results and Discussion

Below the table shows the mean and standard deviation of the three variables in which strength and difficulties questionnaire, school children's emotional difficulties of anxiety and depression. The respondents are asked to rate each of the items under normal variables by using 5 points of the likert style rating scale which there is ranging from number 5 strongly disagree to 1 don't know. Further the mean score for the all 64 items that are within range of the 3.80 to 3.85. Overall, then the mean score for the 25 items (SDQ) that are within the range of the 2.41 to 2.87.

Table 6.1.1: Means and SD of school children's psychological and emotional difficulties in the post-conflict scenario in Kiran Sri Lanka.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological problems	3.80	.306
Anxiety	3.81	.341
Depressions	3.85	.376

Table 6.1.2: Independent sample t-test of school children's psychological and emotional difficulties and their gender.

	Gender	N	mean	Std.Dev.	Std.Error	t	df	p
School children	female	60	3.9	0.57	0.04	-11.154	98	0.000
	male	60	3.6	0.47	0.05			

According to the Levene's test, the variances were not significantly different. The assumptions of homogeneity have not been met. Further, there was a significant difference between the female school children (M= 3.9, SD=.57) and male school children (M=3.6, SD=.47) the t (98) =-11.154, p=.000.

According to the finding (Table 6.1.2), the school children’s psychological wellbeing shows significant differences between the genders. The female school children are more differences from psychological and emotional difficulties.

Table 6.1.3: One way ANOVA results from school children’s psychological and emotional difficulties and their age.

	sum of squares	df	mean squares	F	sig
between groups (combined)	1.98	3	0.41	1.85	0.000
within groups	88.245	116	0.25		
Total	89.465	119			

The Levene’s test indicated that two variances were not significantly different. A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated for the child labourers’ age category of significant differences on psychological and emotional difficulties. For the ANOVA statistic the child labour’s ages in four ages was 11, 12, 13 and 14. Moreover the finding was $F(3,116) = 1.85, p = .000$. There was a school children’s psychological and emotional difficulties is more significant with their age category. However the results did not support to the H_0 . Therefore the finding given the evidence of which age group is more affective by the school children’s psychological and emotional difficulties. There are no differences between the school children’s psychological and emotional difficulties with their age. The research finding was the school children’s age category of 11 years old to 14 years, all of them without any different in their age ,they impact by the psychological and emotional difficulties in war-affected area schools.

Table 6.1.4: Regression analysis of the school children’s psychological and emotional difficulties and their gender

Dimensions	psychological problems	anxiety	depression
Female students	.355**	.243**	.316**
Male students	.224*	.015	.197**
R ²	.085	.075	.067
Adj.R ²	.080	.70	.062
F value	15.25	10.05	11.36

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate whether the School children female students and male students could predict their psychological problems. The result of the regression indicated that the model explained 8.5% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of the school children’s psychological problems.

$$\text{Psychological problems} = (.355^{**} \text{ Female students} + .224^{*} \text{ Male students})$$

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate whether the School children female students and male students could predict their emotional difficulties of anxiety. The result of the regression indicated that the model explained 7.5% of the Variance and that model was a significant predictor of the school student’s emotions of anxiety in post war context.

Anxiety = (.243**female students)

Hence female school children's has influence on their state of anxiety level.

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate whether the School children female students and male students could predict their emotional difficulties of Depression. The result of the regression indicated that the model explained 6.7% of the Variance and that model was a significant predictor of the school student's emotions of depression in post war context.

Depression = (.316** female students+197** male student)

The research finding was the school children's psychological and emotional difficulties significantly differ with their gender. The most female school students differentiated from male school students with psychological and emotional difficulties. Moreover, female school students and male students were highly influenced by the psychological problems. The emotional difficulties of anxiety impact to the female students only. However the depression influence in both. According to the findings, female school students have faced psychological and emotional difficulties in post war context. Null hypothesis rejected the female school children's was more differences from the male students in psychological and emotional difficulties.

7. Conclusion

According to the research findings, both genders of school students were identified as an issue in the psychological and emotional difficulties. Hence, female school student's anxiety level was higher than male school children. The emotional difficulties of depression were both in school students. However, the high level of the psychological and emotional difficulties identified from the school students in psychological problems of pro-social issues, hyperactivity, emotional problems, conduct problems and peer relations problem further, emotional difficulties of anxiety and depression. Moreover, the female students deeply impact anxiety rather than male students, these are likely to impact negatively on their education and behaviours. The school students felt some unsafe environment in schools, past bitter experience still sticks with their mind. On the other hand, still, some school buildings were incomplete. The Kiran school student's lost their father or mother or both in past years of war. Therefore student's caregiver or single parents facing such economic problems to live and sending the children to school. Particularly the school has to use very limited resources. There is no clean drinking water facility, playground and logistical things, which was an influence on the school children's psychological-emotional difficulties. Hence, it is very important to each school to need the school counsellor, athletic coach. The war-affected area school children need special concern from the teachers as well as adults.

The study is attempt to report that the school students psychological and emotional difficulties in post-war context. The study has covered the appropriate sampling strategy and adequate sample to address the school children's psychological and emotional difficulties in Kiran Eastern province. This school children's need some form of motivational and counselling awareness program to overcome such serious situations. Moreover the school children's psychological issues and their emotional difficulties can be affect in a long term progress. Therefore, the Kiran School Children specially age of 11 to 14 they need to understand their value of mental wellbeing impact their future. On the other hand, this children has to know their rights and responsibility to develop the society and country too. Further this findings given the strong evidence of Kiran in Eastern province school Children's psychological and emotional difficulties. The findings of this study could be used to guide policy makers and decision makers in youth

development institutions, governmental organizations, child education related organization and the ministry of education. The findings could also be constructive for educational directors, school administrative staff and parents or guardian too. Particularly in Eastern province school Children based on their educational institutions. Eastern province educational sectors, Child development organization and social activists can also use the findings to develop related awareness programs in particular area. However, Future research could be investigate, how interesting these school children are to study. Students' level of interest in school education? The interrelations with their class teacher and students, how the school increasing the school children cognitive development activities and socialization activities among the school level and social level?

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