

Understanding Quality of Life, Perceived Stress and Practices to Manage Stress among Adolescent Girls of Age 17 Years in a Selected School in Colombo

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Adolescence is a critical stage with significant stress impacting well-being, academic achievement, and mental health for girls. This study examines the quality of life, perceived stress, and stress management practices among 17-year-old girls in a leading girls' school in Colombo District. A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in a selected girls' school (n=418). The sample included students from A/L Science, Commerce, and Arts streams, evenly selected through simple random sampling. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire which included a modified version of the World Health Organization Quality of Life Assessment-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF) and perceived stress scale (PSS). Data analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics. Most students came from nuclear households (73.6%), with a median of one sibling (49.8%). Of the sample, 38.5% experienced high stress and 61.5% moderate stress, largely due to academic pressures and parental expectations. Significant differences in QOL scores were observed across academic streams, with Arts students reporting higher QOL across all domains ($p < 0.05$). Arts students experienced the lowest perceived stress whereas commerce students reported the highest perceived stress levels ($p = 0.008$). There is a strong negative correlation ($p < 0.01$) between perceived stress levels and all QOL dimensions. The majority (69.7%) of students reported occasionally engaging in stress management practices, including physical exercise, hobbies, and spending time with loved ones. However, seeking professional support services such as counselling was minimal, indicating poor awareness or stigma. The study shows poor QoL and high level of stress among students highlighting the need for targeted interventions to improve the QoL and stress management among these adolescent girls. Schools and parents should collaborate to create supportive environments that address academic pressure and provide accessible mental health resources.

Keywords: *quality of life, perceived stress, stress management practices, adolescent girls*