

The Prevalence of Externalized Behavioural Problems among 4 to 6 years old Preschool Children in Kandy District

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Externalized behavioural challenges manifested as aggression, defiance, and hyperactivity among preschool children pose notable hurdles for both the children themselves and their families. These external behaviours, along with juvenile delinquency, have emerged as pressing public health concerns globally. It has been noted that around half of these children continue to exhibit problematic externalized behaviors later in life. In the Kandy District of Sri Lanka, research indicates that 14% of children aged 6-18 experience behavioral issues, with 6.6% displaying internalized problems, 23.3% exhibiting externalized problems, and 7% showing borderline disorders. However, the current study aims to address the research gap concerning the prevalence of externalized behavioral problems among preschool children in the Kandy district, with the goal of enhancing the overall well-being and development of children in this age group. There has been insufficient exploration of externalized behavioral issues among preschoolers in developing nations. This study primarily aims to ascertain the prevalence of externalized behavioral problems among 4 to 6-year-old preschoolers in Kandy District, Sri Lanka. Additionally, it seeks to explore the connections between socio-demographic factors and externalized behavioral problems in these preschoolers. This quantitative research utilized a questionnaire-based approach employing a cross-sectional survey design, employing multistage random sampling. A total of 239 parents from Sinhalese, Tamil, and Moor ethnic groups participated in the study. Data collection involved a questionnaire incorporating the locally developed Child Behavior Assessment Inventory (CBAI) alongside socio-demographic inquiries. The Tamil version of the CBAI underwent translation and validation through a rigorous Delphi process. The study uncovered a prevalence rate of 5.4% for externalized behavioral issues among preschoolers in the Kandy district. Furthermore, it identified several socio-demographic factors linked to children's behavioral outcomes, including the presence of siblings as a positive influence and parental exposure to domestic violence and substance use as contributing factors to behavioral problems.

Keywords: Externalized behavioural problems, preschool children, parents' behaviours, family environment.