

School connectedness, violence-related behaviours and mental health status among in-school youth

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Background:

Young people spend significant amount of time in school which has a substantial impact on the development of this group. Mental health problems and violence-related behaviours (VRBs) are common among youth including those in school. Studies on the relationship between school connectedness (SC), VRBs and mental health status (MHS) are currently scarce in the literature. This study was conducted to assess SC, VRBs, MHS of in-school youth in a rural community of southwest Nigeria and the association between SC, VRBs, and MHS.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 655 respondents randomly selected students of 4 public and 4 private senior secondary schools in Eruwa, Oyo State. A semi-structured interviewer-assisted questionnaire was used to obtain information on SC, VRBs and MHS. SC comprised of a 42-item scale, VRBs had 20 and MHS had 14-item scale. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square with level of significance set at 10%.

Results:

Mean age of students was 16.4 ± 1.3 years (public 59.2%; private 40.8%). Above one-half (55.8%) were disconnected from school, 86.4% reported participation in or experience of VRBs and 28.3% had poor mental health. Students who did not experience VRBs were less likely to have poor MHS (OR: 0.438; 95%CI: 0.23-0.82; $p=0.010$). Students from monogamous family setting were less likely to have poor MHS than those from polygamous setting (OR: 0.672; 95%CI: 0.46-0.99; $p=0.046$). Non-smokers were less likely to have poor MHS than their smoking counterparts (OR: 0.298; 95%CI: 0.12-0.73; $p=0.008$). Students who rarely experienced being sent out of school were less likely to have poor MHS than those who had regular experience (OR: 0.315; 95%CI: 0.11-0.89; $p=0.029$).

Conclusions:

There was high prevalence of VRBs among students with majority of them having good MHS. Predictors of poor MHS were experience of VRBs, family setting, smoking status and experience of being sent out of school.

Key messages:

- Predictors of poor MHS among youth lacking in literature were found. Pathway to addressing these globally is shown below. International bodies' support for restriction of cigarette's use by <18years.
- Funding of education in rural areas to reduce financial difficulty, parents modelling their children to correct attitude to violence and more studies unravelling mediating factors of polygamy on MHS.