

Improving Decision-Making Skills in Early Adolescents: A Quasi-Experimental Study in the Anuradhapura District

Jayasekara EKPI ¹, Chandrarathne N ² and Fernando WMS ¹

¹Department of Health Promotion, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

²Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

Background: Decision making skills are crucial for optimal adolescent development. Early adolescence is also a period of significant biological and cognitive development. There is a gap in research on improving decision making among adolescent skills in Sri Lanka.

Objective: This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of a health promotion intervention in improving decision making skills among school adolescents in the Anuradhapura district.

Methods: A quasi-experimental study was conducted among grade nine students in two selected schools, selecting as the intervention group (IG) and control group (CG) with fifty students in each group recruited through convenience sampling. The IG received a four-month health promotion intervention delivered through participatory methods, including engaging discussions, role-playing scenarios and interactive group activities. The focus was primarily on these four criteria: not afraid to voice opinions, decisions not influenced by peers (e.g., substance use, love affairs, subject selections), concern about how others perceive them and prioritizing personal values. Data collection consisted of a pre- and post-assessment using a self-administered Likert-scale questionnaire for both groups and post-intervention focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with the IG. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were examined using framework analysis with a deductive approach.

Results: No significant differences were observed in the baseline socio-demographic factors between the IG and CG. The change of mean scores indicates a significant improvement in; not afraid to voice opinions (IG=1.3400, CG=0.2200, $p<0.001$), decisions not influenced by peers (IG=0.7800, CG=-0.2600, $p<0.001$), concern about how others perceive them (IG=1.0600, CG=0.2000, $p<0.001$), prioritizing personal values (IG=0.8800, CG=-0.1000, $p<0.001$) and total decision-making skills (IG=4.0600, CG=0.0600, $p<0.001$). Qualitative feedback aligned with the quantitative findings, confirming improvements in decision-making skills.

Conclusion: This study concludes that the health promotion intervention is effective in improving the decision-making skills among school adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents, Decision making, Health Promotion, School