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Exploration of characteristics and associations of primary headache among grade 5 children in the Kurunegala Education Zone, Sri Lanka

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Introduction and Objectives: Primary headaches are a significant health problem in children and often under-diagnosed. Children sit for the highly competitive scholarship exam in grade 5 and many children report headaches in this age group. This study aims to explore the occurrence of primary headache among grade 5 children in the Kurunegala Education Zone.

Methods: This analytical cross-sectional study was carried out on 368 grade 5 children in the Kurunegala district. Schools were selected via stratified sampling. Data was collected through an interviewer-administered questionnaire.

Results: There were 51.4% males and 48.6% females aged 9-10 years. 23.1% reported a primary headache, with a female predominance of 54.1%. Demographic data showed 59.9% of fathers and 49.6% of mothers had not had education beyond the ordinary level exam. 94.6% of parents were married. 83.6% of children had siblings. The monthly income was less than Rs. 50,000/- in 45.2% of families. Correlation analysis revealed that there is a likelihood of children studying longer hours alone at home to complain of a primary headache ($r = -.12, p < 0.05$). The likelihood of children not doing extracurricular activities having a primary headache was significant ($r = -.18, p < 0.01$). However, scholarship examination tuition classes ($r = .02, P > 0.05$), gender ($r = -.01, p > 0.05$), type of school ($r = -.02, p > 0.05$), parent's level of education ($r = -.01, p > 0.05$), marital status of parents ($r = .08, p > 0.05$), monthly income ($r = .04, p > 0.05$), and parent alcohol intake ($r = .03, p > 0.05$) had no significant linear association.

Conclusions: Children who study longer hours alone at home and who didn't engage in extra-curricular activities were more likely to get primary headaches.