

## PP090

### **The association between negative experiences during childhood and social anxiety disorder: A cross-sectional study among Sri Lankan university students**

de Silva BGR<sup>1</sup>, De Zoysa PT<sup>2</sup>, Pathmeswaran A<sup>1</sup>, Williams SS<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka*

<sup>2</sup>*Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

#### **Introduction**

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) demonstrates early-onset, chronic course, and impairment in all social spheres.

#### **Objectives**

The study objective was to explore the association between negative childhood experiences among a university student sample that indicated a high prevalence of SAD.

#### **Methods**

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 1137 students from five state universities. The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale – Sinhala version, and a correlates questionnaire including a culturally adapted Adverse Childhood Events Questionnaire and contextually appropriate parenting-related questions, were used as instruments. The analysis included chi-square tests for independence, spearman's  $r$  correlations, and binary logistic regressions.

#### **Results**

Within the sample, 52.2% were female, and 66% were between 21-23 years. All faculties were represented with 27.5% from engineering. 32.2% of participants were first years. Bivariate analyses identified that being an eyewitness towards violence towards mother, feeling unsafe, feeling mistreated by family, experiencing physical abuse, experiencing sexual abuse, experiencing emotional abuse, experiencing parental dissatisfaction, and parental overcontrol to be significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) associated with SAD. Continuous variables of Parent dissatisfaction (AOR=1.07, 95% CI 1.01-1.13,  $p < 0.05$ ), parent overcontrol (AOR=1.08, 95% CI 1.02-1.15,  $p < 0.01$ ) and experiences of emotional abuse (AOR=1.31, 95%CI 1.11-1.54,  $p = 0.001$ ) remained independently associated with SAD on regression analysis.

#### **Conclusions**

Findings from this study corroborate the literature on the association between childhood experiences and parenting-related factors and SAD. The findings also highlight for the first time that Sri Lankan university students are no exception. An urgent need for awareness and prevention of adverse experiences within the family context, and early intervention to prevent the development of SAD are crucial.

**Key words:** *anxiety disorders, parenting styles, risk factors, childhood adversity, south asia*