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## **KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES AMONG PARENTS ON MENTAL HEALTH OF THEIR TEENAGE CHILDREN IN GAMPAHA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA 2019**

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### **Abstract**

Mental health is a state where an individual realizes their own abilities to cope with the stresses of life, to be productive and to make a contribution to their community. Sri Lankan parents bring up their children with constant monitoring and guidance. Therefore, it is essential to understand the knowledge, attitudes and practices towards mental health of children between the ages of 13-19 followed by their parents. A descriptive, cross sectional study design was used to conduct the study which included a conveniently selected sample of 250 parents of teenagers residing in Gampaha district only. Parents were prospectively recruited in the study. Data was collected by using a close-ended, self-administered questionnaire, which was an adaptation of previously published questionnaires and was distributed in both Sinhala and English languages. The collected data was descriptively analysed using the SPSS software where knowledge was assessed using case studies, while attitudes and practices were assessed using a series of practical questions on how they treat and interact with their teenage children and how parents would support and react if they identify any signs or symptoms related to a mental health condition. The research results indicated that 74% of parents were between the ages of 36-55 years. Nearly half of the study participants (48.8%) had completed advanced level examination as their highest educational qualification, and 14.6% had postgraduate qualifications. While 77.1% of parents lacked knowledge on teenage mental health, 68.7% neither held healthy attitudes nor followed good practices to ensure the mental health of their children. The study results pointed out that parents' use of negative practices, unhealthy attitudes and their lack of knowledge on mental health and related disorders which are prevalent among teenagers may affect them negatively. Hence, it is important to increase the awareness on mental health among teenage children's parents.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Knowledge, Mental health, Practice.