

**PREVALENCE RATE OF DEPRESSION AMONG HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS, TWO YEARS FOLLOWING THE
TSUNAMI, IN PHANG-NGA PROVINCE, THAILAND**

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ABSTRACT

Depression is an illness which can affect anyone from all ages and gender. It is believed that those affected by the disorder have to live with the pain of the illness longer than any other mental disorder. Depression is not a severe disorder per se, it is a common illness which can be treated and cured if help is sought for. However, most people who suffer from depression are likely to go undiagnosed and therefore will suffer from the illness for unnecessary extended periods of time.

This cross-sectional descriptive study used the Thai Depression Inventory to identify symptoms among high school students in grade 10, 11, and 12 in Takua Pa Senanukul and Taput Wittaya of Phang-Nga Province, the area most affected by the December 2004 tsunami.

The prevalence rate of depression among 205 high school students was divided into four categories; 2.94 percent revealed major depressive disorders, 7.80 percent showed to have moderate depression symptoms, 10.24 percent had low levels of depression, while 79.02 percent were diagnosed with no depression symptoms. The prevalence rate of depression was as high as 29.3 percent. Of the 205 respondents; nearly 60 percent found it slightly harder to make decisions and were disappointed about the future, 16 percent worried a lot about things in general and 12 percent found it difficult to concentrate. 5 percent felt worthless all the time while 4.4% were sad everyday.

Chi-square was used to describe the association between independent variables and depression symptoms (with $p=0.05$). Association was found with the number of mental health professionals and grades in Taput Wittaya high school as well as the following historical life events; problems with partner/lover, stress at school, Conflict with family members or friends, and financial problems.

The current findings also suggested that problems with a partner or lover, academic difficulties, conflict with friend(s) and family member(s), as well as financial problems affected the students' depression levels.

Depression levels were not revealed to be higher in tsunami affected areas two years following the disaster. The prevalence rate of depression among high school students was therefore not related to the December 2004 tsunami event, however, depression symptoms were associated with recent life events experienced by the students in the past two weeks.

KEY WORDS: PREVALENCE/DEPRESSION/HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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