ABSTRACT

The present investigation was a two-stage epidemiological study of psychological disturbance in five to eight year old school going children. In the first phase, 1,535 school children were screened for the presence or absence of 'psychological disturbance' and scholastic backwardness. In the second stage, a detailed assessment (involving both teachers and parents) was carried out for the 'disturbed' and 'scholastically backward' children. A comparable group of 'nondisturbed' and 'scholastically superior' children matched on the basis of age, sex and class in which they studied, were also studied.

The overall prevalence of psychological disturbance was found to be 18.31% on screening, 19.80% following a detailed teacher assessment and 27.17% following a detailed parent assessment. The overall prevalence of scholastic backwardness was found to be 10.23%. Conduct/externalizing and learning problems were common among boys and internalizing problems were common among girls.

The disturbed children were found to differ from the nondisturbed children on a few temperament dimensions. They more often belonged to a lower socio-economic status, had more adverse family circumstances and developmental and schooling problems compared to the nondisturbed children. The scholastically backward children showed maturational lag and had more problems in their families and schools compared to the scholastically superior children. The implications of the findings are discussed.