Objectives World Health Organisation defines adolescence as the age group between 10–19 years. Globally, adolescent population is estimated to be 1.2 billion and in Sri Lanka adolescent population is approximately 3.8 million (1,2).

Adolescence is a period where the individual go through physical, mental and psycho-social changes (3,4). Common problems worldwide are substance abuse, accidents, violence and unintentional trauma, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual relationships, psycho-social problems , and lack of life skills, nutrition related problems and non-communicable diseases (5).

Our main objective was to identify the common problems amongst adolescents in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

Methods A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted in three mixed schools in Western Province from January to March 2017. We have analysed data gathered from voluntary participants following a life skills programme conducted for adolescents in the 10 - 16 year age group. Data was collected anonymously via blank papers distributed among students to write down any problems/questions or concerns they had. Upon analysis the team felt the importance of presenting this data in a scientific forum. Ethical approval was gained retrospectively from the Ethics Review Committee of Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. The frequencies were analysed manually.

Results A total of 309 responses were analysed. A sum of 106 (34%) of students raised concerns regarding the drug and alcohol abuse. 50 (16.1%) of students had problems regarding romantic relationships. Concerns regarding studying were raised by 40 (12.9%) students. 19 (6.1%) of the responses were diagnosed as depression while 13 (4.2%) of the responses were regarding eating disorders. Concerns regarding sexual abuse, internet and differentiation between good from bad were seen in 20 (6.4%), 14 (4.5%) and 20 (6.4%) responses respectively.

Conclusions Sri Lanka has higher school life expectancy of 14.1 years (6). 92.2% of children of 10 – 14 age groups attend school (Department of Census and Statistics). The study population closely resembles the early adolescents group in Sri Lanka.

The most common problem of adolescents in the three mixed schools in Western Province were related to the alcohol and drug abuse, romantic relationships and studying. Other less common responses were regarding sexual abuse, internet use and differentiating good from bad.