

Psychiatric morbidity among children and young persons appearing in the Nairobi Juvenile Court, Kenya.

Abstract:

To estimate the prevalence and pattern of psychiatric disorders among children and young persons appearing in the Nairobi juvenile court, Kenya. DESIGN: A point prevalence survey. SETTING: The Nairobi Juvenile Court, Kenya. SUBJECTS: Ninety (sixty-four males and twenty-six females) children and young persons aged 8 to 18 years classified as criminal offenders, group I (60), and those for protection and discipline, group II (30), were selected. METHOD: A socio-demographic questionnaire, reporting questionnaire for children (RQC), follow-up interview for children (FIC), present state examination (PSE) and clinical interview were administered to the subjects. International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) diagnostic criteria were used. RESULTS: The crude psychiatric morbidity (CPM) rate was 44.4%. ICD-10 documented psychiatric disorders detected in those with CPM were conduct disorders 45%, mixed disorders of conduct and emotion 20%, emotional disorders with onset specific to childhood 20%, mood disorders 12.5% and hyperkinetic disorders 2.5%. CONCLUSION: This study has shown a high presence of psychiatric morbidity in children and young persons appearing in the Nairobi Juvenile Court. These juveniles need and would benefit from mental treatment as recommended in section 18 of Cap 141 of the laws of Kenya; The Children's and Young Persons Act