

5-7 DECEMBER 2023 – AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

# ANZALS 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

## *'LEISURE FOR LIFE'*



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# ***‘LEISURE FOR LIFE’***

## **Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Leisure Studies (ANZALS) 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference**

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Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Leisure Studies (ANZALS) 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference  
Leisure for Life.

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## **Mental well-being amongst adolescents in Sabaragamuwa province in Sri Lanka: The importance of being active**

*Sriharan Sriranganathan, Kath Godber, Denise Atkins & Richard Wright (Auckland University of Technology)*

Physical Activity (PA) and mental well-being are intricately linked and shape many aspects of our lives. However, further investigation is needed to understand the influences contributing to the issue of increasing youth mental ill-health and decreasing PA levels. The World Health Organization found that individuals who participate regularly in moderate-to-vigorous exercise exhibit resilience, positive decision-making, and good self-esteem. This trend has been attributed to multiple factors, including physical and psychological maturation, changing social roles, and a move away from childhood towards greater independence and responsibility. Mental well-being has been a cause for concern in Sri Lanka for some time. The country has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, with an average of 6000 deaths and close to 100,000 attempts each year. Contributing factors include political unrest and instability, economic crises, environmental disasters, cultural and sociological influences, and the COVID-19 global pandemic. One of the biggest limitations in understanding the status of mental well-being in Sri Lanka is the lack of information, particularly in rural areas and in the northeast, where much of the war took place. Research within urban and rural populations has not been done yet, especially in the post-war years. This presentation shares findings from a pilot study looking at adolescent mental well-being in Sabaragamuwa province, Sri Lanka. The research design incorporated a socio-ecological approach based on Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) ecological systems theory. Data was collected from 60 secondary school students, aged 16-18. A questionnaire was designed to investigate the factors and influences of adolescent physical activity levels on mental well-being. The pilot study established a research network in Sabaragamuwa province in Sri Lanka, allowing the team to analyse a small data set to inform a larger study.

Keywords: *adolescents; mental well-being; physical activity; Sri Lanka*