

# Prevalence of Depression and Associated Factors among Final Year Undergraduates in Three Health-Related Faculties of University of Peradeniya

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There are only few comprehensive surveys for examining mental health conditions of undergraduates in Sri Lanka although the graduates are the back bone of the country. This study aimed to assess depression and its associated factors among final year undergraduates of some health related faculties of the University of Peradeniya. A pre-designed, pre-tested, multiple choices and semi-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Prevalence of depression was evaluated using Peradeniya Depression Scale (PDS) which is a screening tool for depression developed and validated in Sri Lanka. A student having a PDS score of 10 or above was suspected to be suffering from depression. A total number of undergraduates who participated in this research were 245. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression models were used for analysis. There are 16.4 % depressed students in these 3 faculties. There is a significant association between depression score with race ( $p = 0.021$ ), religion ( $p = 0.000$ ), residence at university time period ( $p = 0.016$ ), frequency of doing exercise ( $p = 0.013$ ), trying to lose weight ( $p = 0.032$ ), break up of a steady relationship ( $p = 0.044$ ), facing family members death ( $p = 0.020$ ), clinical problems (far away hospitals ( $p = 0.031$ ) and being frequently ill ( $p = 0.005$ ), parents divorced ( $p = 0.009$ ), having problems with a close friend ( $p = 0.000$ ), court/ police appearance ( $p = 0.019$ ), physical disabilities ( $p = 0.000$ ) and socio economic status ( $p = 0.023$ ). This study shows that there is a higher depression prevalence rate in undergraduates compared to that of the general population due to their academic stress, life style changes, social interactions etc. Differences in the significantly associated factors with depression among different faculties may be due to the differences in their work set-up, curriculum and team working. To prevent and reduce the incidences of depression cases, effective services in mental health should be offered and awareness campaigns for students can be introduced to improve early diagnosis of suspected depression.

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