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BOOK OF ABSTRACT

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The level of perceived stress and affecting factors among first-year university students of Eastern University, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Introduction: Stress is an emotional feeling common for all the ages, which appears at any time of the life cycle. High stress causes physical and mental health problems and impairs university students' academic achievement. The transition from high school to higher education is a stressful experience for students as they struggle to cope with an array of changing conditions. Therefore, this transition period is accompanied by positive and negative emotional experiences of newcomers of the university.

Methodology: In this cross-sectional descriptive study, a self-administered questionnaire was used to gather information among 333 first-year undergraduates in the academic year of 2017/2018. All the faculties in Eastern University were selected except Trincomalee Campus. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select the study sample. According to the mean value, the level of perceived stress was graded into three categories. The analysis was done using one way ANOVA, T-test, multiple linear regression, and Pearson correlation.

Results: The overall mean stress score in the study population was 17.34 (SD=5.403). The highest was 19.66 (SD=4.335) reported from the Faculty of Commerce and Management while the Lowest (13.38) (SD=5.652) found among the students of Swami Vipulanandem Institute of Aesthetic Studies. There was a statistically significant, positive correlation between the level of perceived stress and type of the faculty (p = 0.000) and it was significantly higher among male students. None of the students reported high perceived stress level. Physiological, social, psychological factors had

a significant positive influence on perceived stress and environmental factors influenced negatively. Moderate positive correlations were reported from social and psychological factors while physiological factors weakly correlated with perceived stress score. The factors significantly correlated with perceived stress were the type of faculty, gender, gastrointestinal and urinary problems, sleep problems, fatigue/tiredness, lack of good relationship with family and friends, unable to enjoy meeting people, poor conflict resolution skills, feeling of loneliness and inferiority, lack of clear vision about future, low self-esteem, conflicts and aggressiveness towards others and problems of love affairs.

Conclusion: The level of perceived stress reported by the majority of the students was moderate. Many factors contributed to stress among them. Policymakers and the university administration have to consider more about the stress levels of the students and plan suitable activities or programmes for the students to manage stress.

Keywords: Affecting factors, first-year university students, mean stress score, perceived stress score