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**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

**“HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN THE ERA OF  
NEW NORMAL”**

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**FACULTY OF HEALTH-CARE SCIENCES  
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## A STUDY ON THE HEALTH LITERACY OF EASTERN UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES

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**Background:** A healthy life is a wealthy life. To be healthy, everyone has to understand the basic health information that needs to make appropriate health decisions, which can aid them in avoiding illness and safeguarding their health. Health literacy is the understanding and use of health information in this manner. The concept of Health literacy was evolved from information literacy. The study aimed to evaluate the health literacy level of undergraduates of Eastern University, Sri Lanka, and the factors influencing health literacy.

**Methods and Materials:** A cross-sectional study was carried out among undergraduates in selected faculties of Eastern University, Sri Lanka in 2022. Online data from 1085 individuals were gathered using the “Health Literacy Instrument for Adults (HELIA)”, a validated standard questionnaire. The HELIA categorized the health literacy as rank and levels. There were four ranks such as somewhat inadequate, inadequate, sufficient, and excellent. Former two are considered as limited health literacy level and later two are adequate level. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ordinal Logistic Regression. The data were entered and analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences 19 (SPSS v. 19).

**Result:** 1085 undergraduate students in total responded to the online survey, of those 62.2% (675) were female and 37.8% (410) were male. The results revealed that 42.2% (excellent-5.9%, sufficient-36.3%) of students have adequate health literacy level while majority of them have limited health literacy level (somewhat inadequate health literacy-41%, inadequate health literacy- 16.8%). In terms of overall health literacy among faculties, the Faculty of Health Care Sciences (51.1%) had the greatest level while the Faculty of Technology (27%) had the lowest. The Faculty of Commerce & Management, Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Art & Culture, and Faculty of Science had health literacy of 36.2%, 32.6%, 41.4%, and 48.5% respectively. Findings also revealed that when compared to the

Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Commerce & Management, Faculty of Agriculture, and Faculty of Technology had lower health literacy. Alcohol consumption, doctor's advice, and personal prescription significantly influence health literacy ( $P < 0.05$ ). Respondents with drinking habits demonstrated lower health literacy than those without drinking habits. In terms of doctor's advice, those who got simply drug prescriptions and drug prescriptions with disease information had lower health literacy than those who received advice on illness, prevention, and administration of prescribed medications. Respondents who got self-prescribed medicine showed lower health literacy than those who received frequent prescriptions from a physician for their illness.

**Discussion and Conclusion:** Majority of Eastern University's undergraduates had a greater degree of health literacy. Health literacy level was not correlated with age, gender, religion, parental education level, socio-economic status, year of study, or smoking habits in the study population. Only faculty of respondents, alcohol consumption, medical recommendation, and self-prescribed medication influence the level of health literacy.

**Keywords:** *Eastern University, Sri Lanka, Health Literacy, HELIA, Information Literacy, Undergraduates*