

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Regarding Psychological Stress Management Among First-year Students of the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya

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Psychological stress is one of the major problems faced by university students. Proper stress management plays a vital role in making university life a success. However, there is limited information and no validated tool to assess knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) related to stress management among Sri Lankan university students. This study aims to develop a questionnaire and assess the KAP regarding stress management among first-year students of the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 143 students selected by stratified proportional sampling method. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire developed by the investigator. Its content validity and test-retest reliability were assessed. Data was analyzed using SPSS (version 26). The questionnaire showed an acceptable level of reliability (Cronbach's alpha – 0.768). Out of 143 participants, 102 (71.3%) were females and 41 (28.7%) were males. Their mean age was 22.85 ± 0.93 years. The mean knowledge score was 67.20 ± 20.74 , with females scoring significantly higher than males ($p = 0.035$). The mean attitude score was 79.08 ± 10.50 , with no significant gender difference ($p = 0.267$). Regarding stress management practices, the participants most frequently sought support from family and friends (80.5%) compared to professional support systems (19.4%) and used avoidance-based coping strategies (55.4%) compared to problem-solving strategies (45.05%). The majority of students demonstrated good knowledge and attitudes towards stress management. The most frequently used stress management strategies were seeking support from family and friends, and avoidance-based practices. These findings highlight the need to enhance their awareness of professional support systems and the importance of problem-solving strategies to manage their psychological stress.

Keywords: Knowledge, attitudes, practices, stress management