

## **EXPLORING THE LEVELS OF STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES USED BY UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES OF UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA**

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Stressful life events are common in everyday life of every human being. Individuals respond to stressful life events in different ways by using a host of various coping strategies. The same stressful life event can have positive effect for one individual while having negative impact on another individual. A load of stressors faced by university students continue throughout their undergraduate life. Students also show unhealthy responses when the demands of a stressor exceed one's coping capabilities. In order to understand stress levels and coping strategies used by the university students including 26 males and 42 females, this study explored the average stress level of university students in the Faculty of Arts and the frequently used coping strategies of the undergraduates. The present study used a quantitative research design in data collection and analysis of stress level and coping strategies used by young adults. The sample of the study consisted of 74 undergraduates (Males = 26; Females = 42) of Faculty of Arts of University of Peradeniya selected from convenient sampling method. The participants ranged from 20 – 25 years. A self-report questionnaire consisting three sections (1: demographic data, Section 2: levels of stress, n = 155 questions on stress level and section B: coping-related thoughts and behaviours in response to stressors experienced by the participant, was used in data collection. Data analysis by descriptive analysis was done by using SPSS IBM version 20. The results of the study revealed that irrespective of gender, majority of the university undergraduates are under excessive level of stress. In general, students demonstrate more frequent use of religious and social support and problem disengagement coping strategies. This suggests that students do not engage in problem solving and it is apparent that with this approach to coping, they fall short in implementing actions to change the stressful conditions of their lives. The results of the study further revealed that participants are more likely to withdraw as a method of coping. However, disengagement proves to be an unhealthy approach for long-term adaptation as it will only provide short-term relief mainly when a person feels helpless or lack of control of the stressor. The study also concludes that stress can have an impact on academic affairs of the students as they are undergoing excessive level of stress. In relation to these coping methods there is no considerable difference between male and female participants. As a final point it could be concluded that students mostly rely on distraction to cope with stress as much more than problem solving engagement.

*Keywords:* Stress level, University undergraduates, Coping strategies