

**PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: A
CASE STUDY OF FIRST-YEAR UNDERGRADUATES OF A
UNIVERSITY IN SRI LANKA**

Y.R.I.A. Gunarathna^{1*}, W.B.N.T. Fernando² and S.U.B. Tennakoon³

¹Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

² Department of Medical Laboratory Science, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences,
University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

³Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
*yriagunarathna@gmail.com

University undergraduates are an important group of people for the future of a country. Therefore, their mental health is an important health concern. Students in the first academic year are at the threshold of the profession-targeted education where the transformation of the education system from school education to university education occurs. Depression is a common and serious mental disorder that affects nearly 300 million people worldwide. It may lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems among university undergraduates. It is found that depression causes people to feel a loss of energy, a change in appetite, sleep more or less, anxiety, reduced concentration, indecisiveness, restlessness, feelings of worthlessness, guilt, hopelessness and thoughts of self-harm or suicide. The objective of this study was to evaluate the prevalence of depression among first-year undergraduates. Additionally, it was focused on finding any significant associations between depression and its contributing factors. A cross-sectional study based on a self-administered questionnaire which contained questions to gather information on age, gender, hometown, type of accommodation, satisfaction with the degree program following, economic status, physical activities, alcohol and substance usage and relationship status was used on a random sample of undergraduates from the first academic year of nine faculties in a state university. The Peradeniya Depression Scale (PDS) was used along with the socio-demographic questionnaire to detect depression and factors associated with it among undergraduates. A total of 354 undergraduates participated in the study, and the overall prevalence of depression among them was 9.0% ($n = 32$). According to the Chi-square test, depression was found to be significantly associated with a diminished level of satisfaction with the enrolled degree program ($p = 0.010$) and lower monthly income of the family ($p = 0.047$). A higher percentage of daily drug users (daily liquor users 28.5%, daily smokers 18.7% and 33.3% of daily other drug users) were found to be depressed. Further studies need to be conducted to identify other factors associated with depression. It is recommended to implement scheduled systematic screening for depression and promote counselling services among undergraduates.

Keywords: Addiction, Depression, Mental disorder, Prevalence