The relationship between sources of stress and perceived level of stress among first year medical students of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna

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Background: Medical students face many stressors during their lengthy undergraduate medical programme. Stress has become a major problem among medical students compared to their non-medical peers.The objective of this study was to assess the relationship between sources of stress and perceived level of stress among first year medical students of Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.
Methods: This was aninstitutional-based cross sectional study offirst year medical students ofJaffna Medical Faculty. A pretested self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection.A modified version of the medical students' stressor questionnaire (MSSQ) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) were used to assess sources of stress and perceived level of stress, respectively.Responses to PSS-10 were marked out of 40 and a total mark (0-13 low stress, 14-26 moderate stress, 27-40 high stress) was obtained for each student.A total score was obtained according to responses under each stressor category. Analysis was done using Pearson correlation.
Results: 106 students participated in the study with a response rate of 78%. The mean age of the participants was 22 years. The mean PSS score was 19.44 (SD±4.658). A large majority of participants (91.4%)were identified to have a moderate level of perceived stress.A statistically significant relationship was identified between perceived level of stress and academic related stressors ($r \le 0.355$, $p<0.001$), interpersonal and intrapersonal related stressors ($r \le 0.267$, $p <0.05$),and group activity related stressors ($r \le 0.243$, $p <0.05$).
Conclusion: Most medical students at the Jaffna Medical Faculty experience a moderate level of perceived stress. Academic related stressors, interpersonal and intra personal related stressors,and group activity related stressors are positively correlated with stress level. Strengthening existing stress-relieving strategies and integrating new strategies to the curriculum would be a good start to addressing the sources of stress among medical students.
Key words: Medical students, perceived stress level, stressors.