

Level of Knowledge on Sexual and Reproductive Health among Undergraduate Students in Sri Lanka


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Abstract

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) problems in young groups are a common public health concern that can be a social and economic burden. University undergraduates represent a unique group of the young population, and their level of knowledge on SRH can contribute to improving the wellbeing of themselves and also their peers. The study aimed to assess the level of knowledge on SRH among undergraduates of state universities of Sri Lanka. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among undergraduate students from 12 state universities of Sri Lanka during August 2018. A structured questionnaire was developed, pre-tested, and delivered as an online questionnaire using Google Forms as the platform. Information on socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge on SRH, information sources of reproductive health, contraception, and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) among participants were collected. Necessary precautions had been taken to enhance the confidentiality of the information collected. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the frequency, proportion, and distribution variables using SPSS as the tool. A total of 700 students responded to the questionnaire, from which 645 (92%) responses were included in the analysis. Nearly 25% of undergraduates mentioned that they never received any kind of formal sexual education. Overall knowledge on SRH in relation to reproductive physiology and contraception was significantly higher among male participants than females. The commonly accepted contraceptive was condoms (80.3%), while the knowledge on other methods varied across the faculties. They were poorly aware of natural contraceptive methods, including withdrawal and safe period, by 48.9% and 53.1%, respectively. Undergraduates from management faculties and arts faculties indicated a comparatively low level of knowledge regarding contraceptive methods. The intention of using contraception was preventing pregnancy, and nearly 10% recognized the use of particular contraception for preventing STIs. The awareness of the participants about the mode of transmission of STIs is high across all faculties, and there is no significant difference between faculties. However, a significant number of participants (83%) identified saliva as a transmission medium of STIs. Overall knowledge on SRH varies among study participants based on their gender, attended school type, faculty, and academic year. Findings affirmed the requirement of comprehensive interventions to enhance knowledge towards sexual health among undergraduates in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Knowledge, reproductive health, undergraduates, contraception*

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