

**Screen Time and Level of Perceived Stress Among Students of University of Peradeniya  
During Covid19 Pandemic**

**Muthukumarana P. C. K.<sup>1</sup>✉, Jayasinghe H. C. B.<sup>1</sup>, Nusky M. P. M.<sup>1</sup>, Pavithra T.<sup>1</sup>,  
Roshan M. J. M.<sup>1</sup>, Senadheera V. V.<sup>1</sup>, Prasanna A. L. I.<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract**

In this digital age, the use of screens has become an essential part of life. The COVID19 pandemic has increased the use of screens for various purposes, especially among students. This study was aimed at finding the association between screen time and the level of perceived stress among students of the University of Peradeniya during the COVID19 pandemic. In this cross-sectional study, a pretested questionnaire consisting of the 18 item Screen Time Questionnaire and Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire was distributed via email, and a representative sample (N = 387, mean age = 22.964 ± 1.818) was randomly selected from the responses received. Mean screen time was found to be 13 h 27± 4h 52 min and the most used screen type among males was laptop/computer, and among females, smartphone. 99.74% of the respondents' screen time was found to be higher than the 2 h per day screen time recommendation. The mean perceived stress of the sample was 20.499 ± 5.393. This value is higher than the established norm for the mean PSS-10 score of the 18-29 years age group, which is 14.2 ± 6.2. Spearman correlation for screen time and perceived stress showed an insignificant positive correlation (Spearman rho = 0.132, p = 0.009) between screen time and perceived stress. Mean perceived stress of heavy, moderate, and light screen time categories were 21.371 ± 5.728, 20.744 ± 5.301 and, 19.333 ± 4.949, and mean screen time of high, moderate and, low-stress levels are 14 h 33 min ± 5 h 14 min, 13 h 33 min ± 4 h 42 min and, 10 h 41 min ± 5 h 8min, respectively. Neither screen time nor perceived stress was associated with gender [F (1, 385) = 1.05, p = 0.307]. It was observed that perceived stress had not significantly deviated from pre-pandemic values in comparison to the studies conducted in similar populations in Sri Lanka. In conclusion, the majority of students have moderate perceived stress and the study shows an insignificant positive correlation between screen time and perceived stress during the COVID19 pandemic. Longitudinal studies of assessment of PSS are necessary to find a cause-effect relationship.

**Keywords:** COVID19, screen time, perceived stress, University of Peradeniya

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Physiotherapy, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya  
✉ Corresponding Author: chammi12b2@gmail.com