

Abstract 19:

Involvement in extracurricular activities and perceptions regarding participation among Jaffna medical students

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Background and objective: Extracurricular activities (ECA), including sports, community services, games, and aesthetic activities, occur outside the academic curriculum. While these activities provide stress relief, enhance skills, and promote social interaction, medical students often face challenges in participation. This study aimed to assess the level of involvement in extracurricular activities and perceptions regarding participation among Jaffna medical faculty students.

Methods: This was an institution-based descriptive cross-sectional study. The sample was selected from the 41st to 45th batches of medical students in the University of Jaffna using a stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected, using a self-administered questionnaire that was developed by the research team and validated for content by experts. SPSS (20th version) was used to carry out descriptive statistics and the chi-square test. P value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: Of 205 invited students, 185 participated; 79 (42.7%) males and 106 (57.3%) females. A total of 132 (71.4%) students reported being involved in ECA. Among them, 57 (43.2%) were males and 75 (56.8%) were females; 109 (82.6%) reported a high level of involvement, while 23 (17.4%) reported low involvement. When considering students' perceptions, the main barrier to participation was academic workload, reported by 103 (55.7%) students. More than 2/3 of the students believed that participating in ECA could have a positive impact by reducing stress, improving skills, providing leadership opportunities, and enabling social interaction and a healthy lifestyle. Self-confidence was identified as a key motivational factor for participation. Lack of transport facilities (p=0.01), physical unfitnes (p=0.03) and unavailability of preferred activities (p=0.04) were individual factors that were significantly associated with low involvement (p<0.05). There was no evidence of an association between gender or family income and participating in ECA (p>0.05).

Conclusions and recommendations: A substantial proportion of students reported not participating in ECA. Academic workload should be managed more effectively to improve participation. Encouraging students to balance academics and extracurricular activities, promoting group participation, and improving facilities such as transport may increase involvement.

Keywords: Extracurricular activities, Academic load, Perceptions, Medical students, Jaffna