

# **Assessment of leadership skills among first year medical students using the authentic leadership questionnaire**

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## **Introduction**

With increased public interest to see doctors take on more significant leadership roles, it is essential to develop strong personal qualities and professional values through the medical curriculum, enabling them to become future leaders not only in the health sector but also in society in general.

## **Objectives**

To assess leadership skills among medical students and their immediate leaders.

## **Methods**

Self and Rater versions of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) were distributed among 200 first year students at the Faculty of Medicine, Colombo. The score calculated for each of the 4 components of the ALQ (transparency, self awareness, ethical skills, and balanced processing) is the average of the score of 1 to 4 given for its items. An average of 3 or more for each component is compatible with good leadership skills. Each component was analysed separately using descriptive and comparative statistics using SPSS (v13).

## **Results**

The overall assessment of leadership skills of the participants in all 4 components was  $<3$  (transparency,  $n=146; 2.82 \pm 0.44$ ; ethical skills;  $n=123; 2.51 \pm 0.51$ , balanced processing;  $n=115; 2.90 \pm 0.06$ ; self awareness;  $n=131; 2.83 \pm 0.51$ ). The skills of the leaders in all the components were significantly higher than self ( $p < 0.001$ ; transparency:  $3.31 \pm 0.44$ ; ethical skills:  $2.94 \pm 0.56$ ; balanced processing:  $3.17 \pm 0.05$ ; self awareness:  $3.20 \pm 0.56$ ). The females demonstrated significantly lower ( $p = 0.019$ ) ethical skills ( $2.36 \pm 0.52$ ) than males ( $2.71 \pm 0.46$ ). 85.4% rated themselves as good or average leaders and 76.3% rated their leaders as very good or excellent.

## **Conclusions**

Majority of students have poor leadership skills and a discrepancy exists between their actual skills and how they view themselves as leaders. Females have lower ethical skills than males. The immediate leaders have been rated to have significantly higher leadership skills than self. It is important to determine contributory factors for poor leadership skills in this group and address them during their training to improve their leadership skills.