

Sexual health knowledge, attitudes and practices of third-year undergraduates in non-health related faculties at the University of Colombo

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Introduction: Sexuality is a crucial component of healthy development for young people and an intrinsic part of human life in general. Sexual behaviours in youths are intimately related to both physical and mental health and they are more vulnerable to engaging in sexual activities. The majority of university students are at high risk for many health issues related to their sexual behaviour such as sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and illegal abortion which ultimately results in poor academic performance and psychological issues.

Objective: To determine the sexual health knowledge, attitude, practices, and associated factors among third-year undergraduates in non-health-related faculties at the University of Colombo (UOC).

Methods: An institution-based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using 366 3rd year undergraduates from six non-health-related faculties at UOC. A stratified random sampling technique was applied probability proportionate to size according to sex disaggregation. Data was collected using a self-administered online questionnaire. This study was carried out in the month of January 2023.

Results: Totally 366 students (86.7%) completed the survey. The majority of participants (n=259, 70.8%) exhibited a satisfactory knowledge on sexual health. Unfavorable attitudes toward sexual health were exhibited by the major proportion of the participants (n=189, 51.6%). Many participants were not willing to talk about their premarital sexual practices (64.5%).

Conclusions: The results showed that most of the students possess satisfactory knowledge about sexual health. However, unfavourable attitudes are still prevalent among the participants. Thus, it is imperative to enhance knowledge on sexual health, and promote favourable attitudes, by implementing sexual health interventions and programs.

Keywords: *Sexual knowledge, sexual attitudes, sexual practices, undergraduate student.*