

## **Comparative analysis of stress, major stressors and coping mechanisms in a selected group of undergraduates of University of Ruhuna**

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The stressors related to challenging nature of the university life and the adolescent ages have made the university students much more vulnerable to excessive stress. As such, their academic performance may depend on effective coping mechanisms. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the stress levels, major stressors and coping strategies needed to enhance their academic performances in a selected group of university students. A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect data from Level 1, 2 and 3 students of the Faculty of Science, University of Ruhuna during the 2016/2017 academic year. Total of 165 questionnaires were distributed and 142 valid responses were taken in to consideration. Mean stress levels of male and female students of three study groups were estimated and correlation between the stress level and GPA of study groups were analyzed. Research findings reveal that, though there is no significant difference, female students ( $2.83 \pm 0.19\%$ ) are apparently stressed than male students ( $2.65 \pm 0.32\%$ ). There is no significant difference in the stress experienced by students according to their levels of study however the correlations between GPA and stress level in level 2 ( $r= 0.0114$ ) and level 3 students ( $r= 0.4553$ ) are positive. Most of the students used more than one strategy to cope with the stresses they faced. The most frequent strategy used by the students is sleeping (females 26%, males 24%) and males have more coping strategies ( $n=13$ ) compared to females ( $n=10$ ). Present study indicates that students are having different stress levels throughout their university life. Accordingly, it is recommended to provide specific support and care focused on study level and gender of the students to cope with the university life.

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