

Participation in extracurricular activities and associated factors among students of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna

Mathuvanathi T¹, Keerthiga U¹, Majure K¹, Mahinthan C¹, Priyamantha H¹, Kumar R², Sathiadas G³

¹*Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

²*Department of Community and Family Medicine, ¹Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

³*Department of Paediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, ¹Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

Introduction and Objectives: Extracurricular activities (ECA) are crucial in medical education as they help to nurture the core competencies of a doctor. This study aimed to assess student participation in ECA, barriers and attitudes towards participation and associated sociodemographic and academic factors among medical students of the University of Jaffna.

Methods: This institutional-based descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among students of five batches registered in the MBBS course at the Jaffna Medical Faculty. A proportionate stratified random sampling method was used, and the data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire developed by the research team. ECA participation was categorized into non-participation, less participation (1-2 days/week) and greater participation (>2 days/week) to determine the factors associated with participation. Frequencies, proportions, and the Chi-squared test was used in the analysis with SPSS (v21).

Results: A total of 332 medical students participated (response rate 96.5%). About two-thirds (65.1%, n=216) reported participating in ECA; only 97 (29.2%) participated in sports. The majority participated in ECA on <3 days per week (68.1%) and for <2 hours per day (61%). Lack of time (27.5%) and transport (24.6%) were the key barriers to participation. The majority had positive attitudes towards participation; for instance, ECA enabled making new friends (63.2%) and enhanced social skills (60.2%). Ethnicity (p=0.030) and monthly household income (p=0.045) showed a significant association with participation in ECA, whereas Sinhala students and those with lower household incomes were less likely to participate. The phase of the medical programme (p<0.001) and exam results (p=0.019) showed a significant association with the level of participation were students in the para-clinical phase and those who achieved first class or second upper/lower division were less likely to participate.

Conclusion: Over a third of medical students do not participate in any type of ECA at the Jaffna Medical Faculty. Targeted interventions are needed to improve participation with consideration to identified barriers and groups who are less likely to participate in ECA. This may help to improve student wellbeing at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Keywords: Extracurricular activities, Medical students, Jaffna