

### **Challenges in adapting to English medium learning among first to fourth year medical students of the University of Jaffna**

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**Background and objective:** Empirical evidence suggests that medical students face challenges when switching from mother tongue-based education in secondary schools to English medium in the medical faculty. This study aimed to describe the challenges and the factors associated with challenges in adapting to English medium learning among medical students.

**Methods:** This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 414 first to fourth year students of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna using a self-administered questionnaire from September to November 2019. Students indicated the level of challenge experienced on a 10-point scale. Descriptive and inferential statistics were done using SPSS software.

**Result:** Majority of participants were females (60.9 %, n=252). The ethnic breakdown was as follows: Tamil (56.3%), Sinhala (33.3%) and Muslim (10.4%). Percentage of students who reported a high challenge in reading skills from first to fourth year was: 57.5%, 45.6%, 44.4% and 55.5% respectively. Percentage of students who reported a high challenge in English speaking skills from first to fourth year was: 66.7%, 57.8%, 51.4% and 64.7% respectively. Percentage of students who reported a high challenge in English listening skills from first to fourth year was: 50.8%, 28.7%, 36.1% and 42%, respectively. Percentage of students who reported a high challenge in English writing skills from first to fourth year was: 68.9%, 48.5%, 50% and 63.9%, respectively. Reading challenge was associated with sex (p=0.02). Writing challenge was associated with year of study (p=0.004) and sex (p=0.001). Overall, English skills were associated with type of school and parents' education in the English medium (p≤0.05).

**Conclusion:** Level of exposure to English language at school and parents' knowledge of the English language were associated with challenges in adapting to English medium learning at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna. Measures to overcome the challenges in adapting to English medium education should be implemented.

**Keywords:** Adaptation, English As A Second Language, Higher Education, Medicine