

Prevalence of common menstrual problems and their association with psychological stress among the female medical students of University of Jaffna

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Introduction and Objectives: Menstruation is a normal vaginal bleeding that occurs as part of a woman's monthly cycle. Variations in menstrual patterns are frequently observed among young females and affected by a number of factors. Menstrual abnormalities and psychological stress are the two very common complaints among female medical students. The aim of this study was to estimate the prevalence of common menstrual problems (irregular menstrual period, heavy menstrual bleeding, dysmenorrhea and premenstrual symptoms) and to determine the associated psychological stress factors among female medical students of University of Jaffna

Methods: An institution based descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 390 female medical students from 6 batches in Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna in 2020. Proportionate stratified random sampling and self-administered online questionnaire was used to collect data. Ethical clearance was obtained from Faculty of Medicine, Jaffna. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS-21. WaLIDD score, Symptom Severity Score (SSS) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) were used to assess dysmenorrhea, heavy menstrual bleeding, and perceived stress respectively. Chi squared, t test and Pearson correlation were used for analysis.

Results: Out of 404 students, 390 (96.5%) responded. Irregular menstruation, dysmenorrhea and heavy menstrual bleeding were reported by 14.9% (n=58), 78.7% (n=307) and 2.6% (n=10) students respectively. More than half of the students affected by at least one kind of premenstrual symptoms. 50.5% (197) were affected by psychological stress most of the time. Psychological stress showed statistically significant associations (<0.05) with premenstrual symptoms and heavy menstrual bleeding. Dysmenorrhea (p=0.392) and irregular menstruation (p=0.373) did not show statistically significant associations (>0.05) with psychological stress. Although dysmenorrhea was highly prevalent among menstrual abnormalities, it was not associated with psychological stress.

Conclusion: Common menstrual problems in the target population were strongly associated with psychological stress. Given the higher prevalence of psychological stress associated with menstrual problems it would be beneficial to screen students for psychological stress related to menstrual problems.

Keywords: Irregular menstrual period, Heavy menstrual bleeding, Dysmenorrhea, Premenstrual symptoms, Psychological stress factors, Medical students, Jaffna.