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Distribution of personality traits among medical students in Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

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Background: Personality traits are used to distinguish internal properties of individuals from their behaviour and investigate their causal relationship. The personality of a medical student is important to understand the future direction in their carrier pathway.

Objective: The aim of the study was to find the prevalence of personality traits among medical students in Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences (FMAS), Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL).

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study among medical students of FMAS, RUSL was conducted with the ethical clearance from the Ethics Review Committee, FMAS, RUSL, selected by non-probability conventional convenience sampling. The Big-five personality-trait test validated to Sri Lankans was used as a self-administered questionnaire. According to the scoring protocol in the test manual, personality traits were decided as, extraversion (EXVS), agreeableness (AGB), conscientiousness (CNT), neuroticism (NRT), openness-to-experience (OPE), and mixed traits (MXT). Data were analyzed using SPSS software for windows and presented as percentages of the total sample.

Results: Participants were 401 medical students with mean age of 23.4 ±4.1 years. Of them, 119 (29.7%) were males and 282 (70.3%) were females representing both pre-clinical (n=261) and para-clinical (n=140) courses. Prevalence of the OPE, AGB, CNT, EXVS, NRT and MXT were 47.6% (62 males; 129 females), 25.4% (24 males; 78 females), 19.0% (27 males; 49 females), 2.5% (3 males; 7 females), 1.7% (1 male; 6 females) and 3.7% (2 males; 13 females) respectively.

Conclusion: Openness was the most prevalent personality trait while ‘neuroticism’ being the least regardless of the gender or course level among medical students in FMAS, RUSL according to the Big five personality trait model.