

## **Prevalence and Factors Associated with Deliberate Self-Harm among Undergraduates of the University of Moratuwa**

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**Introduction** - Deliberate self-harm (DSH), defined as intentional self-inflicted injury without suicidal intent, is a major global public health concern, particularly among young adults. While previous Sri Lankan studies have focused on adolescents, little is known about DSH among university students who face distinct stressors such as academic pressure and financial challenges. This study aimed to determine the prevalence and associated factors of DSH among undergraduates at the University of Moratuwa to inform effective mental health interventions.

**Materials and Methods** - A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 351 undergraduates between November 2023 and October 2024. Participants were selected using a multistage stratified probability proportionate random sampling method across faculties and academic years. Data were collected using a pretested self-administered questionnaire from students who provided informed written consent. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics and chi-square tests with a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ .

**Results** - The lifetime prevalence of DSH was 7.4%, while 5.7% reported engaging in DSH after entering university, suggesting the influence of university related stressors. No significant associations were observed between DSH and sociodemographic factors ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, significant associations ( $p < 0.05$ ) were found with psychological, behavioral, and social factors, including academic and financial stress, exposure to violence or harassment, persistent criticism, childhood trauma, substance abuse, lack of social support, and having close contacts who attempted selfharm or suicide.

**Discussion** - This study highlights a concerning prevalence of DSH among undergraduates and identifies multiple psychosocial stressors contributing to self-harming behaviors. Strengthening on campus mental health services, including counselling, mentorship, stress management programs, and awareness campaigns, is essential to foster resilience, reduce stigma, and encourage help-seeking behavior among students.

**Keywords**- Deliberate self-harm (DSH), Undergraduate Mental Health, Psychological Stressors, Risk Factors, Sri Lanka