

# Perception of College Teachers about Health Related Behaviours of College Students

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## Abstract

**Background & Objective:** The present generation of people aged 10-24 years is the longest in history with population of 1.8 billion; they comprise a quarter of the world population. Nearly 90% live in low income and middle income countries where they constitute a far greater proportion of the population than in high-income countries because of higher fertility rates. Health related behaviours of these young people, who are also called college students, such as smoking, alcohol and other drugs, food habit, physical inactivity, impulsivity; tension and stress would determine the health of their later life. Teachers are the group of professionals who closely associate and interact with college students. Perception of teachers has significant impact on health cognition and health related behaviours of the college students. So the current study aimed at assessing the perception of college teachers about health related behaviours, mental and physical health condition of college students.

**Method & findings:** 31 college teachers who participated in a work shop on psycho educational skill training were given a 22 items questionnaire. Major domains of the questionnaires were demographic details, perception about physical and physical activity, alcohol, smoking and other drug abuse, eating habit and screen activities, impulsivity, violence and injury, relationship and mental health problems of college students. Most of the teachers felt that negative health related behaviours such as smoking, alcohol, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, relationship problems and mental health problems were increasing among college students.

**Conclusion:** Social work intervention targeting youth and college students addressing their health related behaviours are to be initiated. College teachers also have to be trained to educate and handle the students in health and mental health related problems and to be oriented to initiate and implement positive physical health and mental health related programme periodically in their respective schools and colleges.

**Key words:** college teachers, college students, health related behaviours, perception.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence and young adulthood coincide with major changes in health problems and determinants of health in later life [1]. Many risk process including tobacco, alcohol and illicit substance misuse, obesity and lack of physical activity, typically emerge around adolescence time [2]. Smoking of cigarette before the age of 10 among ever cigarette smokers was 36.9 per cent and any tobacco use by

students in the age group of 13-15 years of age was 14 per cent [3]. According to Global School Based Student Health Survey India (2007) 10.8 per cent of students were overweight and 2.1 per cent were obese, only 30.2 per cent of students were involved in some physical activities for a total of at least 60 minutes per day and there were 23.2 per cent of students who spent three or more hours in a day sitting and watch television, playing computer games, talking with friends, or doing sitting activities. The four leading modifiable risks factors associated with non-communicable disease are tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and harmful use of alcohol [4]. These are generally called health related behaviours[21]. In 2004, deaths due to non-communicable diseases in India were twice those from communicable diseases. Non-communicable diseases accounted for 40% of all hospital stays (with longer stays than for any other type of health condition) and 35% of all outpatient visits in 2004 [5]. By 2030, productivity loss due to non-communicable disease in India was expected to be almost 1,000% greater than the corresponding loss in the United States [21].

The environment such as family, neighborhood, peers and school are the predictors of health related behaviours of a person [6]. School and college are places where students spend a large amount of their time during the critical period of social, psychological, and physical development. Two groups of people who are in frequent contact with students are parents and teachers. So teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward health related behaviours can have significant impact on health cognition and health related behaviours of college students. School and college policies and programme are depended on the perception of teachers. School polices have greater importance and role in health promotion of youth and college students [7]. Written school policies are associated with lower likelihood of frequent binge drinking among adolescents [8]. Social cognition theories (which describe health cognitions) state that social pressures, such as school and college rules and policies, family rules and systems, determine health related behaviours of students [9].

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cigarette smoking among school teachers was around 7 percent and majority of them were males. Among the school

teachers 9 per cent of them had wrong concept about tobacco and smoking [10]. Imparting knowledge to students about cancer prevention through teachers found to be very effective. Improving knowledge and perception of teachers about cancer prevention made teachers capable of teaching students about cancer prevention strategies [11]. High school teachers and professional college faculties rated smokers are less intelligent, poorer in judgment and being more hostile than the nonsmoking student [12]. An online tobacco education programme for teachers was effective and the impact on students was significant in improving knowledge and attitude about tobacco use among students [13]. Focused group discussion with pre-school teachers on factors of sedentary activities among students revealed that lack of teachers' prompting was the one factors for sedentary behaviours among students [14]. School officials and teachers considered alcohol consumption of adolescents was problematic and it worked as a control factor for alcohol abuse among school students [15]. Educating teachers about nutrition and over-weight gradually reduced prevalence of nutrition problem and overweight among students within three years [16]. Establishing school policies on health related behaviours didn't ensure teachers' awareness and implementation. Teachers needed to be educated and reminded periodically [17].

Knowledge and perception of teachers and college faculties had greater influence on the behaviours of their students. Teachers, school and college policies are the factors of social pressure. They can act as a controlling factor on the behaviours of students. Teachers are expected to have better perception about health related behaviours. So the current study tried to assess the perception of college faculties about health related behaviours of college students.

### III. METHODS

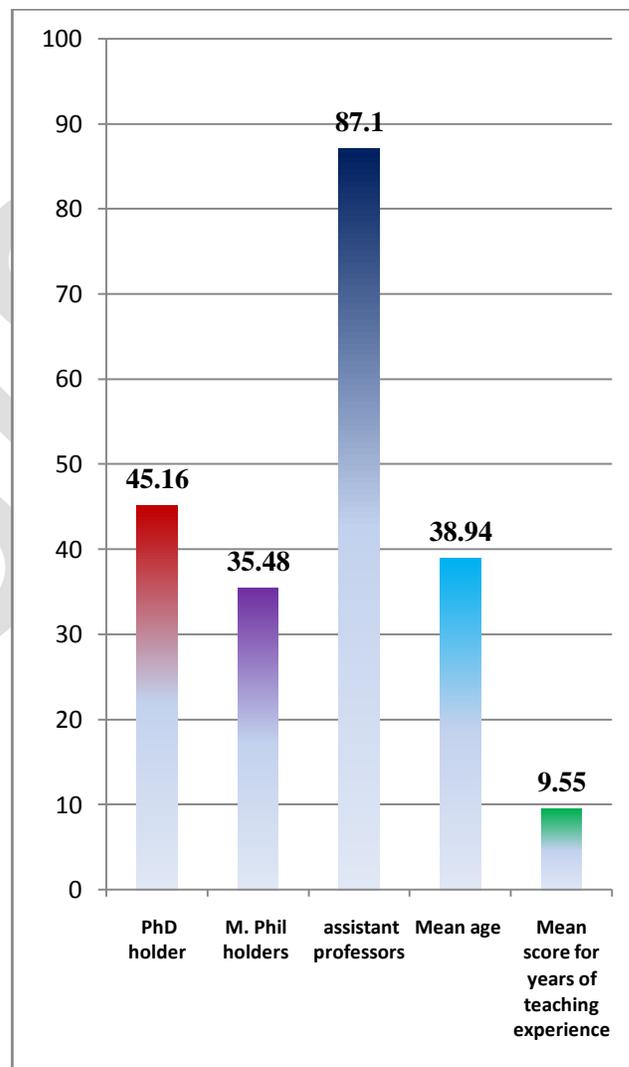
1).*Subjects & Data Source:* Thirty one college faculties were selected for the current study. Around forty five college faculties attended a three day workshop on psycho education skill development for college teachers in Chennai. Out of all, thirty one faculties expressed willingness to participate in the descriptive cross sectional study. The faculties were from different colleges.

2).*Data Collection Method:* A twenty two item questionnaire was developed for the study. The questionnaire was prepared based on the main domains of Indian Adolescent Health Questionnaire (IAHQ). IAHQ was mainly developed and used for assessing health related behaviours of Indian adolescents. Major domains of the questionnaire developed for the current study were perception about physical and physical activity, alcohol, smoking and other drug abuse, eating habit and screen activities, impulsivity, violence and injury, relationship and mental health problems of college students. Respondents had four options for each question such as 'increasing',

'decreasing', 'no change' and 'I don't know'. Oral consent was obtained from all the study participants.

3).*Statistical Analysis:* Descriptive statistics such as proportion, mean and standard deviation were utilized to describe the data. One way ANOVA was used to see the difference in perception based on age and years of experience in teaching. Fisher's exact test was used to see the association between perception of college teachers about alcohol and smoking of college students.

### IV. RESULTS



GRAPH I. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF TEACHERS

Among all the participants 80.65 per cent were married, 45.16 percent were PhD holder, 35.48, M. Phil holders and 87.10 per cent were assistant professors. Mean age of the respondent was 38.94 years with standard deviation of 8.84 years. Mean score for years of experience in teaching was 9.55 with standard deviation of 7.37 years.

TABLE I. PERCEPTION OF COLLEGE TEACHERS ABOUT HEALTH RELATED BEHAVIOURS OF STUDENTS

SL. No	Questions	Increasing (%)	Decreasing (%)	No change (%)	I don't know (%)
1	Alcohol use	83.87	9.68		6.45
2	Other drugs	67.74	6.45	6.45	19.35
3	Healthy eating habit & Hygiene	32.26	58.06	6.45	3.23
4	Emotional problems	83.87	9.68	-	6.45
5	Knowledge about HIV	67.74	16.13	9.68	6.45
6	Internet use	83.87	6.45	3.23	6.45
7	Healthy Parent-child relation	25.81	58.06	12.90	3.23
8	Healthy peer relations	35.48	51.61	6.45	6.45
9	Physical activity	29.03	64.52	6.45	-
10	Physical health	48.39	45.16	6.45	-
11	Pro-social behaviour	32.26	38.71	19.35	9.68
12	Relationship problems	74.19	22.58	-	3.23
13	Risk taking behaviour	74.19	12.90	6.45	6.45
14	Screen activity	93.55	3.23	3.23	-
15	Smoking	67.74	19.35	3.23	9.68
16	Healthy teachers student relationship	29.03	64.52	3.23	3.23
17	Violence	74.19	12.90	9.68	3.23
<b>N=31</b>					

According to the respondents, negative health related behaviours such as alcohol use (83.87%), other drug abuse (67.74%), smoking (67.74%), screen activities (93.55%), risk taking behaviours (74.19%) and violence (74.19%) were increasing among college students. Positive health related behaviours like healthy eating habit and hygiene (58.06%), physical activities (64.52%) and pro-social

behaviours (38.71%) were decreasing among college students. HIV/AIDS related knowledge and physical health consciousness were perceived to be increasing among college students. Teachers expressed the opinion that emotional and relationship problems were high among college students.

TABLE II. AGE, YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING AND PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS ABOUT HEALTH RELATED BEHAVIOURS OF STUDENTS

ALCOHOLISM						
Variables	Increasing Mean ±SD	Decreasing Mean ±SD	No change Mean ±SD	I don't know Mean ±SD	Test score	P Value
Age	39.35(8.98)	30.67(3.22)	-	46.00(0.00)	2.126	0.138
Experience	9.42(7.51)	5.67(2.52)	-	17.00(7.07)	1.491	0.242
SMOKING						
Variables	Increasing Mean ±SD	Decreasing Mean ±SD	No change Mean ±SD	I don't know Mean ±SD	Test score	P Value
Age	38.48(9.11)	39.67(10.37)	34.00(NA)	42.33(6.35)	0.263	0.851
Experience	9.00(6.96)	10.17(9.45)	3.00(NA)	14.33(6.81)	0.717	0.55
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY						
Variables	Increasing Mean ±SD	Decreasing Mean ±SD	No change Mean ±SD	I don't know Mean ±SD	Test score	P Value
Age	39.89(10.79)	38.15(7.46)	42.50(17.68)	-	0.28	0.758
Experience	11.78(9.74)	7.90(4.28)	16.00(18.38)	-	1.766	0.19
EATING HABIT						
Variables	Increasing Mean ±SD	Decreasing Mean ±SD	No change Mean ±SD	I don't know Mean ±SD	Test score	P Value
Age	38.8(9.65)	40.0(8.73)	29.5(3.54)	40.0(NA)	0.838	0.485
Experience	9.50(9.98)	10.22(6.26)	5.00(2.83)	7.00(NA)	0.321	0.81

One way ANOVA was carried out to see the difference in perception, age and years of experience in teaching of college teachers. The test was carried out with major health related behaviours (alcoholism, smoking, physical activities and eating habit). The analysis showed that there were no significant differences in the mean age of respondents between four response (increasing, decreasing, no change, I

don't know) towards alcoholism, smoking, physical activities and eating habit and there were no significant differences in the mean score of years of experiences in teaching of respondents between four responses towards alcoholism, smoking, eating habits and physical activities. It indicated that age and years of experiences did not make any significant difference in perception of college faculties

about health related behaviours of college students. New, young faculties and experienced, aged faculties had similar perception that negative health behaviours were increasing

and most of the positive health related behaviours were decreasing among college students.

TABLE III. ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS ON ALCOHOLISM AND SMOKING

		Smoking				Total	P value
		Increasing	Decreasing	No change	I don't know		
ALCOHOL	Increasing	20 (64.5%)	1 (3.2%)	2 (6.5%)	3 (9.7%)	26 (83.9%)	0.00939
	Decreasing	1 (3.2%)	1 (3.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.2%)	3 (9.7%)	
	I don't know	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.5%)	2 (6.5%)	
	Total	21 (67.7%)	2 (6.5%)	2 (6.5%)	6 (19.4%)	31 (100.0%)	

Fisher's exact test was carried out to see the association of perceptions of college faculties about alcoholism and smoking of college students. The test result showed that there was significant association (P value=0.0094) in the perception of faculties about alcoholism and smoking of students. Twenty out of twenty one faculties who told smoking was increasing also expressed the perception that alcoholism also increasing among college students. Twenty out of twenty six faculties who expressed the perception of increase of alcoholism among students also agreed that there was also increase of smoking among college students.

V. DISCUSSION

A review study on the health impacting behaviours of young people in India concluded stating that under-nutrition and over-nutrition, common mental disorders including stress and anxiety, suicidal tendencies and increased suicidal death rates, increased consumption of tobacco, alcohol and other substance use, high risk sexual behaviours, injuries mainly and violence were increasing among young people [18]. Among adolescents, 36.9 per cent had tried smoking at least one time before the age of fifteen [3]. A review of twenty-five Indian studies on substance abuse among children by Mary in 2010 found that school going children were using mostly tobacco and alcohol, whereas the out of school children especially the street based, slum based and child labourers were at a risk of experimenting with most dangerous substances both licit as well as illicit in nature. Studies showed that negative health related or health impacting behaviours among adolescents and young people were increasing. Perception of college faculties was also coinciding with the findings. Majority of the respondents, irrespective of age and years of experience in teaching stated and expressed the opinion that negative health behaviours were increasing among college students. College faculties had comparatively better perception and understanding about health behaviours. Teacher-delivered skill-oriented and present-focused intervention in preventing and reducing adolescents' posttraumatic stress-related symptoms was found to be

effective in reducing intense war-related psychological problems of adolescents [19]. An online tobacco prevention education program for teachers was effective with high satisfaction and the impact on students was significant in improving knowledge and attitude about tobacco use and in increasing the proportion of 6-12th grade students who decided not to use tobacco [13]. Brief, personality-targeted interventions delivered by educational professionals had clinically significant impact on mental health outcomes in high-risk youth, as well as personality-specific intervention effects in youth most at risk for a particular problem, particularly for youth with high levels of impulsivity [20]. Interventions improving knowledge and skill in managing students' related problems of school and college faculties found to be effective. School and college faculties are a group of professional who are closely associating with students and youth and they are found to be very effective in handling health issues, both mental and physical in nature, of the youth. Perception of college faculties, who participated in the current study, on health related behaviours of students was almost appropriate and parallel with the findings of scientific studies. This potential professional group can be educated and trained to handle the health related behaviours so many non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer can be prevented in the future.

VI. IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Non-communicable diseases are the major threat that the world population is suffering and going to suffer the most in the future. According to World Health Organization, alcohol, smoking, lack of physical activity and improper dietary practices are the major modifiable risk factors of non-communicable diseases. Teaching the youth and students healthy practices and healthy lifestyle will prevent multiple health related problems. School and college faculties are having good perception about the condition. Schools and colleges can implement student health policies, anti-smoking and alcohol policies and prevention strategies in their respective educational institutions. Mental health

professional especially social workers can take up a leading role in orienting them and training them with basic minimum skills to deal with health problems of their students.

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