

Perception of College Teachers about Health Related Behaviours of College Students

*John Soyuz, ** Dhanasekara R. Pandian, ***Jeryda J.O. Gnanajane Eljo

* & **Department of Psychiatric Social Work, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, India

*** Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, India

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 [2].

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

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