

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS IN GRADE TWELVE REGARDING SMOKING

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INTRODUCTION:

Young people start smoking and often remain smokers because of the addictive effect of nicotine. The average age for smoking initiation was found to be 10 years or under in the Global Youth Tobacco Survey in 1999 (Swart, 2001). The South African overall prevalence of smoking among young people was 19.6% in 1998 (Guthrie, et al, 2000).

OBJECTIVES

To investigate whether students had heard information about dangers of smoking, attitudes regarding smoking, and determine relationship of smoking and attitudes and different responses of students in grade twelve towards smoking status.

METHODS

Three high schools were selected randomly from a sample-frame of forty public high schools of the Tshwane South Education District in Gauteng province in the Republic of South Africa. All the grade twelve students of the three randomly selected high schools were studied. A cross sectional analytical study was conducted on the knowledge and attitudes of 452 students. An anonymous, assisted, self-administered questionnaire was completed.

RESULTS

Table 1: Attitudes by smoking status

Smoking status	Attitudes%				Chi-Square
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Don't know	
Non-smoker	10(3%)	26(9%)	171(58%)	90(30%)	Chi-square=127.458 d f=1 p=<0.001
Smoker	46(44%)	20(19%)	224(23%)	14(14%)	

Table 2: Heard of information about smoking

Information	Smoking Status	Answer (%)		
		Yes	No	Don't know
Heard of dangers of smoking	Non-smoker	281(95%)	11(4%)	5(1.68%)
	Smoker	98(95%)	3(3%)	2(1.94%)
Heard of dangers of passive smoking	Non-smoker	249(85%)	16(5.8%)	27(9%)
	Smoker	87(83%)	9(9%)	8(8%)
Heard of negative impact of smoking the economy of the country *	Non-smoker	107(37%)	80(28%)	100(35%)
	Smoker	32(31%)	49(48%)	22(21%)
Chi- Square= 4.119, d f =1,P = 0.001				

Table 3: Words and phrases expressing attitudes on smoking

Words and phrases expressing attitudes towards smoking	
Negative	Positive
“Smoking is bad”	“It is cool”
“Hazardous, death”	“It relaxes the body”
“It is disgusting”	“It is yum-yum
“Quit smoking”	“It stimulates the mind”
“It is not cool”	“I like it”
“Shame”	
“Smells bad”	

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Non-smokers were more likely to say that smoking impacts negatively on the economy of the country than smokers. Smokers were more likely to have an opinion on smoking than non-smokers. Again, smokers were more likely to have positive attitudes than non-smokers. This study needs to be replicated throughout high schools in the province and perhaps the country so that well-defined health promotion strategies can be targeted at schools for smoking to be prevented or stopped.