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Assessment of knowledge, attitude, and practice of blood donation among paramedical students of a medical college in Chennai, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: Blood donation is an essential global need far outweighs the available supply, rendering it a scarce and valuable resource. Within India, blood transfusion services hold significant importance and constitute a crucial aspect of the national health-care framework. Voluntary Non-Remunerated Blood Donation (VNRBD) is deemed the safest among the various ways of donating blood. The student population of educational institutions across the country, particularly those who are young and physically fit, represents one of the most promising sources of blood donations. The aim of the study was to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and donation practices of medical college students and motivate them to embrace voluntary blood donation as a regular habit.

MATERIAL AND METHODS: The Department of Allied Health Science at Dr MGR Educational and Research Institute in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, conducted a questionnaire survey from March 2023 to October 2023. Two thousand and two hundred forty students were invited to participate, with 2331 ultimately willing to partake. The gathered data underwent analysis using the SPSS Statistics software, version 20, with a significance level fixed at a $P = 5\%$.

RESULTS: The study included 2331 participants, comprising 840 males (36%) and 1491 females (64%). The age range of the participants was between 17 and 25 years, with a mean age of 18.9 ± 1.3 years. Out of 2331 participants, the majority (66.7%) showed sufficient knowledge with 9 or more correct answers, while the rest (33.2%) showed below-average knowledge.

CONCLUSION: The Tamil Nadu Health Professions Colleges possess the potential to make a noteworthy impact on the promotion of blood donation. According to a recent survey, students express a keen interest in donating blood if a camp is organized on the campus. By organizing awareness campaigns and conducting informative sessions, the colleges can inspire and motivate more students to donate blood, thereby playing a vital role in saving lives.

Keywords:

Blood donation, medical students, voluntary, attitude, blood donation knowledge, perception of blood donation, practice, Tamil Nadu

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Introduction

The role of blood in healthcare is of utmost importance, as it represents a valuable resource that can be lifesaving

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in various medical scenarios. Blood transfusion is commonly employed in the treatment of emergencies, surgical procedures, bleeding disorders, obstetrical complications, hematological diseases, and cancer.^[1] Despite the global collection of

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approximately 118.5 million blood units every year, the demand for blood still surpasses the existing capacity, making it a scarce and valuable commodity in the health-care industry.^[2] As per the 2012 report published by the World Health Organization (WHO), the current annual collection of blood units in India stands at nine million, while the demand is for 12 million units. The shortage is particularly severe in the Delhi National Capital Region, where a yearly deficit of 100,000 units is observed.^[3]

The need for a constant supply of donated blood is a pressing issue due to the fact that blood cannot be stored indefinitely. Blood banks must continually replenish their supplies due to the short lifespan of donated blood, which lasts only 35–42 days.^[4] In order to ensure the availability of safe blood and blood products, the WHO recommends implementing a nationwide organized blood transfusion program. This program prioritizes voluntary non-remunerated blood donation (VNRBD) as the most sustainable solution. The WHO recognizes the importance of VNRBDs in ensuring an adequate supply of blood and blood products and has emphasized the need to establish and maintain a sufficient pool of these donors. By doing so, the safety and adequacy of the blood supply can be ensured, and patients in need of transfusions can receive the life-saving treatment they require. Such a program would offer a reliable and stable supply of blood, while also promoting the voluntary donation of blood without any monetary compensation.^[5,6]

Donating blood is an essential aspect of medical care and medical college students can make a significant contribution by serving as voluntary blood donors. However, research has revealed a concerning lack of awareness and insufficient participation in voluntary blood donation practices among these students.^[7] To address this issue, it is essential to investigate the factors that may be hindering their willingness to donate blood. By identifying and overcoming these obstacles, we can foster a culture of giving and encourage more students to become regular blood donors. The main objective of our survey-based study was to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and donation practices of medical college students and motivate them to embrace voluntary blood donation as a regular habit.

Materials and Methods

A survey questionnaire was administered at the Department of Allied Health Science, Dr. MGR Educational and Research Institute in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The survey was conducted for 7 months, starting from March 2023 and ending in October 2023. The Institutional Ethics Committee approved the study

plan under reference number 895/2023/IEC/ACSMCH. Both online and offline versions of the questionnaire were distributed. The offline version was dispensed by the designated principal investigator at the paramedical colleges in and around Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The investigator obtained informed consent from the subjects before data collection and collected the filled-out questionnaire forms on-site. The online survey was distributed to paramedical students through Whatsapp, Facebook, and E-mail using a telecommunications platform that merged the internet and telephone. The researchers recruited respondents by sending survey invitations that included general information about the survey, along with the questionnaire and consent statement, to eligible participants. Ethical considerations were met by obtaining written consent and maintaining confidentiality [Figure 1].

The present study utilized the research paper by Alsalmi *et al.*^[8] to construct a comprehensive questionnaire consisting of 40 items. The first section of the questionnaire is a meticulously designed component that aims to capture the participants' sociodemographic characteristics with utmost precision. It includes parameters such as age, gender, educational status, and blood groups, which are paramount for comprehensively analyzing the collected data. The second section was dedicated to assessing the knowledge and attitude of the participants toward blood donation, while the third section explored the practices, barriers, and universities' role in promoting blood donation.

Study design

From March 2023 to October 2023, a descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted on undergraduate Health Science graduating students from Paramedical colleges at the Chennai, Tamilnadu, India.

Statistical analysis

The data collected were effectively sorted and analyzed using Microsoft Office Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 (IBM, Chicago, IL). Descriptive statistical methods were applied to present the frequencies with corresponding percentages for the categorical variables and mean with standard deviations for the continuous variables. The Chi-square test was employed to ascertain the noteworthy correlations between blood donation practices, knowledge levels, and demographic characteristics. $P < 0.05$ was deemed statistically significant.

Results

The study involved 2331 participants, including 840 males, representing 36% of the sample, and 1491 females, constituting 64% of the sample. The age

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants (n=2331)

| Demographic variables | n (%) |
|---|-------------|
| Age (mean±SD) | 18.98±1.340 |
| Gender | |
| Male | 840 (36) |
| Female | 1491 (64) |
| Speciality | |
| Cardiac care technology | 566 (24.2) |
| Cardio perfusion technology | 314 (13.5) |
| Optometry | 152 (6.5) |
| Clinical nutrition | 2 (0.1) |
| Medical laboratory technology | 83 (3.6) |
| Operation theater and anesthesia technology | 569 (24.4) |
| Physician assistant | 370 (15.9) |
| Radiology and imag technology | 199 (8.5) |
| Renal dialysis technology | 76 (3.3) |
| Current academic level | |
| 1 st year | 753 (32.3) |
| 2 nd year | 462 (19.8) |
| 3 rd year | 606 (26) |
| 4 th year | 510 (21.8) |
| Blood group | |
| A+ve | 398 (17.07) |
| A-ve | 27 (1.15) |
| B+ve | 756 (32.43) |
| B-ve | 37 (1.58) |
| Ab+ve | 123 (5.27) |
| Ab-ve | 11 (0.47) |
| O+ve | 867 (37.19) |
| O-ve | 59 (2.53) |
| A1+ve | 26 (1.11) |
| A1-ve | 1 (0.04) |
| AB+ | 124 (5.31) |
| A1b+ve | 17 (0.72) |
| A2+ve | 2 (0.08) |
| A2-ve | 1 (0.04) |
| A2b+ve | 3 (0.12) |
| Ab1+ve | 1 (0.04) |
| Don't know | 1 (0.04) |

SD=Standard deviation

range of the participants was between 17 and 25 years, with a mean age of 18.9 ± 1.3 years [Table 1].

Knowledge and attitude toward blood donation

The study conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the knowledge and attitude of participants toward blood donation. Out of 2331 participants, the majority (66.7%) showed sufficient knowledge with 9 or more right answers, while the rest (33.2%) showed below-average knowledge. The mean number of correct answers was 9 out of 12, indicating a good level of understanding regarding blood donation.

A substantial number of respondents (79.4%) held a favorable opinion regarding blood donation,

Table 2: Knowledge on blood donation among the participants (n=2331)

| Questions | n (%) |
|--|-------------|
| Do you know the common blood groups? | |
| Yes | 2252 (96.6) |
| No | 79 (3.4) |
| Can a donor be infected by donating blood? | |
| Yes | 608 (26) |
| No* | 1723 (74) |
| How often can an individual donate? | |
| Weekly | 39 (1.7) |
| Monthly | 838 (36) |
| Three times monthly* | 324 (13.8) |
| Six times monthly | 377 (16.2) |
| Yearly | 753 (32.3) |
| Who is able to donate blood? | |
| Men (all ages) | 101 (4.3) |
| Women (all ages) | 22 (0.9) |
| Young males/females | 256 (11.0) |
| Old males/females | 11 (0.5) |
| Any healthy adult* | 1893 (81.2) |
| Anyone who is diseases | 48 (2.1) |
| What volume of blood is collected during each donation? (mL) | |
| 150-200 | 948 (40.7) |
| 400-450* | 1091 (46.8) |
| 700-750 | 214 (9.2) |
| 1000 | 78 (3.3) |
| What is the duration of a donation process? (min) | |
| <20 | 715 (30.6) |
| 20-40* | 1356 (58.2) |
| >60 | 260 (11.2) |
| Is blood required in emergencies? | |
| Yes* | 2211 (94.8) |
| No | 120 (5.1) |
| Can blood be stored? | |
| Yes* | 2125 (91.1) |
| No | 206 (8.9) |
| Can blood be donated while keeping a fast? | |
| Yes | 664 (28.4) |
| No* | 1667 (71.5) |
| Is there any age limitation on blood donation? | |
| Yes* | 1861 (79.8) |
| No | 470 (20.2) |
| Can women donate blood if she is pregnant? | |
| Yes | 156 (6.7) |
| No* | 2175 (93.3) |
| Can people with any blood group donate blood? | |
| Yes* | 1478 (63.4) |
| No | 853 (36.6) |

recognizing its significance for the community. Furthermore, a considerable proportion (62.6%) expressed contentment toward the blood donation process as carried out in blood banks. In addition, most participants (88%) conveyed their readiness to donate blood when requested by family members or others in need (71.8%) [Tables 2 and 3].

Table 3: Attitude towards blood donation among the participants (n=2331)

| Questions | n (%) |
|---|-------------|
| Will you donate blood when a patient relative needs? | |
| Yes | 2052 (88) |
| No | 279 (12) |
| Will you donate blood to anonymous patients? | |
| Yes | 1673 (71.8) |
| No | 658 (28.2) |
| Should donors be giving a gift/money for donation? | |
| Yes | 550 (23.6) |
| No | 1781 (76.4) |
| Do you feel that blood donation is important for community? | |
| Yes | 1851 (79.4) |
| No | 480 (20.6) |
| What is your feeling about the procedure in blood banks/hospitals? | |
| Positive | 1460 (62.6) |
| Negative | 64 (2.7) |
| Neutral | 807 (34.6) |
| Do you agree with blood importation from abroad? | |
| Yes | 1374 (58.9) |
| No | 957 (41.1) |
| Do you think blood donation is a religious duty? | |
| Yes | 369 (15.8) |
| No | 1962 (84.2) |
| Do you think being a health profession student, encourages you to donate blood? | |
| Yes | 2133 (91.5) |
| No | 198 (8.5) |

Practice of blood donation and universities role in promotion

Table 4 illustrates the blood donation practices and the challenges that hinder regular blood donation. Fifteen percent of the respondents (350 individuals) have donated blood in the past, with male respondents constituting 70% (245 donors). Among the male donors, 30% (105 individuals) donated blood only once. However, 15.8% of participants claimed that blood donation is a religious obligation. Public media campaigns have played a vital role in promoting blood donation, as 69.7% (1625 individuals) of the participants received calls for blood donations through the public media.

According to a recent survey on the role of universities in promoting blood donation, a significant proportion of students reported that their colleges did not offer any courses or lectures on the subject (47.9%, 1116 participants). However, a sizeable minority reported that their colleges had organized blood donation campaigns (37.1%, 865 participants). Of note, a substantial majority of respondents expressed willingness to donate blood if their colleges were to organize a blood donation camp on campus (63.8%, 1488 participants) [Figure 2].

Barriers and motivations for blood donation

According to the recent research, the fear of donating blood is the most frequently cited obstacle to donation, accounting for 11% of cases, while health-related reasons represent only 2.4% of cases, as reported by nondonors. Among the surveyed student population, 59.6% expressed that appreciation certificates are the most effective incentive for blood donation, while 27.1% preferred academic support in the form of bonus marks in their courses [Table 5].

Association between demographics, knowledge level, and practice of blood donation

The study yielded noteworthy findings on the relationship between blood donation behavior and three crucial factors, namely knowledge, academic level, and gender. The research revealed a statistically significant association between the aforementioned factors and blood donation behavior among students. Specifically, the results demonstrated that higher levels of knowledge about blood donation were linked to a greater likelihood of engaging in blood donation ($\chi^2[1] = 55.9, P < 0.001$). In addition, academic level was found to be a significant factor in blood donation behavior among students ($\chi^2[1] = 6.11, P < 0.001$). Finally, the study identified a significant association between gender and blood donation behavior ($\chi^2[1] = 202.6, P < 0.001$). These findings indicate that knowledge, academic level, and gender play critical roles in shaping the blood donation behavior of students [Table 6].

Discussion

Ensuring an adequate blood supply is of utmost significance for health-care organizations.^[9] To accomplish this goal, it is essential to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practices regarding blood donation among Health Sciences undergraduate students graduating from Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The present study's findings indicated that the study participants demonstrated satisfactory knowledge (66.7%) concerning blood donation. A related study conducted in South India shows a comparable percentage of blood donation among the population (62%).^[10] However, the findings are lower compared to studies conducted in Nigeria (85%),^[11] Thailand (80%),^[12] Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (83.6%),^[13] and Adama, Ethiopia (79.4%).^[14] On the other hand, the findings are higher than those of studies conducted in Nepal (32.4%),^[15] Central India (52.5%),^[16] Manipur (9%),^[17] and Kollam, Kerala (35%).^[18] The observed variations in the percentage of blood donation could be attributed to differences in sociodemographic characteristics and accessibility to information on the significance of blood donation.

Table 4: Practice towards blood donation among the participants (n=2331)

| Questions | n (%) |
|---|-------------|
| Have you ever donated blood before? | |
| Yes | 350 (15) |
| No | 1981 (85) |
| If donated blood before ... how many times? | |
| Once | 137 (5.9) |
| Twice | 52 (2.2) |
| Three to four times | 41 (1.8) |
| More than five times | 120 (5.1) |
| I have not donated blood | 1981 (85) |
| When was the last time you donated blood | |
| In the current year | 112 (4.8) |
| Before 1 year or more | 238 (10.2) |
| I have not donated blood | 1981 (85) |
| If you are a donor, where was the last time you donate your blood? | |
| In the hospitals or blood banks of the ministry of health | 89 (3.8) |
| In the hospitals or blood banks of the military institutions | 37 (1.6) |
| In private hospitals or blood banks | 224 (9.6) |
| I have not donated blood | 1981 (85) |
| If you donated blood before, will your last experience motivate you to donate again? | |
| Yes | 195 (8.4) |
| No | 155 (6.6) |
| I have not donated blood | 1981 (85) |
| If you are a donor, did you donate blood regarding someone asking for in social media websites (Twitter, Facebook, What's app ... etc.) | |
| Yes | 140 (6.0) |
| No | 210 (9.0) |
| I have not donated blood | 1981 (85) |
| Did you feel any side effects after donating blood? | |
| Yes | 51 (2.2) |
| No | 299 (12.8) |
| I have not donated blood | 1981 (85) |
| If you donated blood ... why did you donate blood in your last donation? | |
| A friend or relative needed blood | 225 (9.6) |
| Voluntary | 93 (4.1) |
| Rewarding | 22 (0.9) |
| To get the car license | 10 (0.4) |
| I have not donated blood | 1981 (85) |
| Have you ever seen any public media that calls people to donate blood? | |
| Yes | 1625 (69.7) |
| No | 706 (30.3) |
| Do you encourage relatives/friends to donate their blood voluntarily? | |
| Yes | 2044 (87.7) |
| No | 287 (12.3) |
| Does your family encourage you to donate blood? | |
| Yes | 1723 (73.9) |
| No | 608 (26.1) |
| What is your parent's attitude regarding blood donation? | |
| Supportive | 1304 (55.9) |
| Against blood donation | 175 (7.5) |
| Neutral | 852 (36.6) |

Contd...

Table 4: Contd...

| Questions | n (%) |
|---|-------------|
| Have you ever received blood before? | |
| Yes | 243 (10.4) |
| No | 2088 (89.6) |
| Have you had lectures/courses regarding the importance of blood donation in your college? | |
| Yes | 1215 (52.1) |
| No | 1116 (47.9) |
| Has your college organized a blood donation camp, or regular ones, since you attended it? | |
| Yes | 865 (37.1) |
| No | 1466 (62.9) |
| If your college organizes a blood donation camp within the campus, would you participate and donate your blood? | |
| Yes | 1488 (63.8) |
| No | 843 (36.2) |

Table 5: Barriers and motivators to donate blood among the study sample (n=2331)

| Questions | n (%) |
|---|-------------|
| If you are a nondonor, why have not you donated blood yet? | |
| Fears | 258 (11.0) |
| Health reason | 490 (21.0) |
| No time | 94 (4.0) |
| Common stereotype | 27 (1.2) |
| No specific reason | 558 (24) |
| No one asked me to donate | 554 (23.8) |
| I donated blood before | 350 (15) |
| If you are a donor, why do you think nondonors do not donate their blood? | |
| Fears | 45 (2.0) |
| Health reason | 58 (2.4) |
| No time | 31 (1.3) |
| Common stereotype | 12 (0.5) |
| No specific reason | 162 (7.0) |
| No one asked them to donate | 42 (1.8) |
| I have not donated blood | 1981 (85) |
| As a student, what is the best motivation to donate blood? | |
| Money/gift for each donation | 309 (13.3) |
| Approved certificates | 1389 (59.6) |
| Academic support and extra marks | 633 (27.1) |

A related study conducted in Pondicherry by Bharatwaj *et al.* among undergraduate medical students revealed incomplete knowledge about blood donation. Nonetheless, 85% of participants expressed their willingness to donate blood in future. The authors of these studies recommended organizing regular continuing medical education and seminars for medical students on voluntary blood donation.^[19]

According to the findings of our study, the predominant blood group was "B" comprising 32.4% of the participants, followed by "O" at 37.1%, "A" at 17%, and "AB" at 5.2%. These results are consistent with the findings of prior research conducted by Giri *et al.*^[20]

Table 6: Association between blood donation practice and multiple predictive variables (n=2331)

| Independent variables | Previous blood donation (s) | | P |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------|------|
| | No (n=1981), n (%) | Yes (n=350), n (%) | |
| Knowledge level | | | |
| Sufficient knowledge | 1280 (64.6) | 277 (79.1) | 0.00 |
| Below average knowledge | 701 (35.4) | 73 (20.9) | |
| Current academic year | | | |
| 1 st year | 647 (32.7) | 106 (30.3) | 0.00 |
| 2 nd year | 404 (20.4) | 58 (16.6) | |
| 3 rd year | 511 (25.8) | 95 (27.1) | |
| 4 th year | 419 (21.2) | 91 (26.0) | |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 596 (30.1) | 244 (69.7) | 0.00 |
| Female | 1385 (69.9) | 106 (30.3) | |
| Age (years) | | | |
| 17–18 | 784 (39.6) | 102 (29.1) | 0.10 |
| 19–20 | 968 (48.9) | 184 (52.6) | |
| 21–22 | 220 (11.1) | 58 (16.6) | |
| >23 | 9 (0.5) | 6 (1.7) | |
| Speciality (%) | | | |
| Cardiac care technology | 488 | 78 | 0.07 |
| Cardio perfusion technology | 280 | 34 | |
| Optometry | 129 | 23 | |
| Clinical nutrition | 1 | 1 | |
| Medical laboratory technology | 70 | 13 | |
| Operation theater and anesthesia technology | 488 | 81 | |
| Physician assistant | 312 | 58 | |
| Radiology and imaging technology | 151 | 48 | |
| Renal dialysis technology | 62 | 14 | |

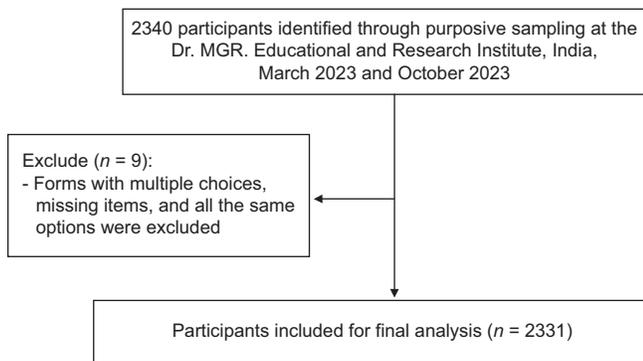


Figure 1: Illustration of the study design

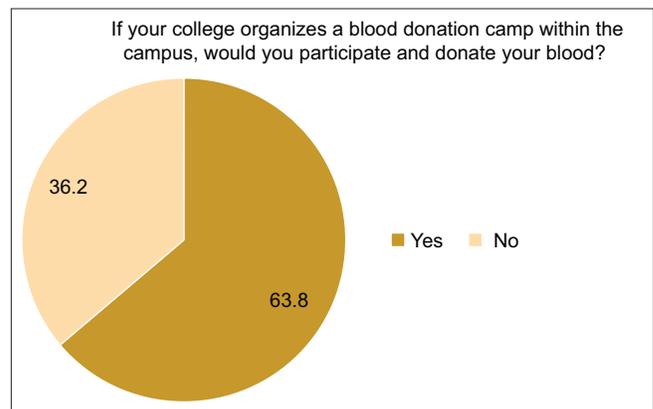


Figure 2: Willingness to donate blood

in Maharashtra and Chandra and Gupta^[21] in North India. The study sample included individuals with both common and rare blood groups, underscoring the significance of encouraging students to participate in voluntary blood donation programs and register with local blood banks.

According to a recent study, 15% of undergraduate Health Science students graduating had donated blood at some point. This figure is consistent with similar studies conducted in Thailand (11%),^[12] Tamil Nadu, South India (10.75%),^[17] South India (12.76%),^[22] and

Nigeria (15%).^[11] However, the rate is lower than those found in Central India (47.5%),^[23] the University of South India (38%),^[10] and Larissa, Greece (23.9%).^[24] These variations could be attributed to the promotional efforts of blood banks and other social institutions to promote the importance of donating blood.

Our study revealed a significant proportion of participants, accounting for 24%, did not donate blood due to the lack of being approached. This observation is consistent with a prior study of 500 Saudi individuals,

where 42.6% of nondonors cited the same reason for not donating blood.^[25] The results of our study and prior research underscore the importance of promoting the concept of “voluntary blood donation” through targeted marketing efforts, similar to those undertaken by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) in recent times. We recommend implementing proactive measures to increase the awareness and encourage blood donation among individuals who may not have been approached in the past.

Conclusion

The Tamil Nadu Health Professions Colleges possesses the potential to significantly contribute to the promotion of blood donation. The Health Professions Colleges of Tamil Nadu hold immense potential in furthering the noble cause of blood donation. Based on a recent survey, it has been observed that students are willing to donate blood if a camp is organized on campus. The college can inspire and motivate more students to donate blood and contribute to saving lives by implementing encouragement campaigns and educational sessions within the campus. Similar studies should be conducted at the district level across Tamil Nadu to promote 100% voluntary blood donation in the state and eventually expand to other states in India.

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Limitation of the study

Our study faced several limitations that are common to research on knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

Firstly, we acknowledge that responses may have been influenced by socially desirable attributes, and we cannot rule out the potential for both recall bias and interviewer bias. Secondly, considering the multicultural nature of Chennai and the diverse backgrounds of the students from multiple medical colleges, caution must be taken when extrapolating our results to the general population of Tamil Nadu. Lastly, we were not able to collect and analyze data from those who declined to participate in the study, which could have introduced sampling bias.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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