

### **Knowledge of substance use and the association of socio-economic factors among Advanced Level students in Jaffna Hindu College and Vembady Girls' High School**

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**Background and Objective:** Adolescents are increasingly becoming victims of substances, and this has become a major social and health problem island wide as well as in Jaffna. This study aims to describe the knowledge on substance use and the association of socio-economic factors, among Advanced Level (A/L) students in Jaffna Hindu College and Vembady Girls' High School.

**Methods:** This school-based descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among A/L students in Jaffna Hindu College and Vembady Girls' High school. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed during school hours and students were requested to fill it out without interference from the researchers. Knowledge was assessed on various aspects and marks were given from 0 to 20. Total marks less than 10 was considered poor knowledge, marks between 10-13 average knowledge, and marks over 13 good knowledge. Data were analyzed in SPSS using chi-square test with a critical level of 0.05.

**Results:** In total, 512 students participated representing both genders and all A/L streams. A greater proportion of students had good knowledge (42.2%), while 33.8% had average knowledge and 24% had poor knowledge. Among A/L streams, engineering technology students had a lack of knowledge (37.7%). Only a few students were not aware of the names of substances (8.4%) and two students (<0.01%) were unable to list any side effects of substance use. In the sample, over a third (36.3%) of students had never participated in awareness programmes on substance use. Common sources of knowledge among students were telemovies (71.1%), social media (66.6%), internet (63.5%), newspapers (56.6%), teledramas (55.3%), and books (27%). There was a significant association between the level of knowledge and A/L stream ( $p=0.004$ ), but there was no evidence of an association between knowledge and gender, the highest educational qualification of parent/guardian, or the residential area of the students.

**Conclusions:** Most students had obtained knowledge on substance use through telemovies and social media. In order to improve their knowledge further, awareness programmes by the Ministry of Health or other reliable sources should be provided via one of the above media which will easily reach adolescents.

**Keywords:** Substance use, Adolescents, Knowledge, High school