

Abstract 25**A cross-sectional study of factors influencing cancer screening decisions among Senior School Teachers in Nallur Division, Jaffna**

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Background and objective: Cancer is a major global health challenge, with survival rates improving through early detection and quality treatment. Previous studies indicate that cancer screening decisions are influenced by knowledge, education, fear, trust in healthcare, and accessibility, while barriers include poor knowledge, low income, stigma, fear, cultural beliefs, and practical constraints (time and distance). However, the influential factors in Jaffna remain unexplored. This study aimed to assess the factors influencing cancer screening decisions among teachers aged 50-60 years in the Jaffna district.

Methods: An institution-based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among teachers, aged 50-60 years from schools in the Nallur division, Jaffna. As the study population (429) was nearly equal to the calculated sample size, all eligible participants were included. A self-administrated questionnaire was developed based on previous literature and discussions with supervisors and validated by an onco-surgeon, was used to collect data. Data were scored (+1/-1/0) and analyzed using SPSS, with cumulative scores (>0=influential) assessing positive (fear, knowledge, convenience) and negative (distancing, ignorance, avoidance) influences. Influential factors were determined using the chi-square test (significance level of 0.05).

Results: This study examined the influential factors among 385 teachers (response rate: 89.74%). The sample consisted predominantly of females (272, 70.6%), Hindus (341, 88.6%), and married individuals (331, 86.0%). Findings revealed fear (154, 40%) and knowledge (206, 53.5%) promoted screening participation, while ignorance and avoidance hindered it. Time constraints (184, 47.8%), location issues (88, 22.9%) and low cancer literacy (154, 39.9%) were prominent, with psychosocial factors outweighing demographic influences. “Awareness about early detection” ($p<0.01$) and “fear of cancer ($p=0.02$)” positively influenced to attend the cancer screening program. “Absence of past medical history ($p=0.03$)” and “absence of family history of cancer ($p=0.04$)” negatively influenced the attendance. Males, Hindus and Married individuals were more likely to accept the particular influencing factors.

Conclusion: Cancer screening participation was mainly influenced by psychosocial factors rather than demographic variables. Fear and awareness about early detection encouraged participation, while ignorance, lack of cancer history, time constraints, and poor accessibility discouraged it. Targeted education, workplace-based awareness programs, and improved access are recommended to enhance screening participation.

Keywords: cancer screening, early detection, participation factors, teachers, barriers