

Knowledge, Attitude and Practices regarding Covid and its Prevention among High School Students in Urban Field Practice area of a Private Medical College

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Total number of Covid 19 cases in India were 23,340,938 positive cases (as on 11th May 2021). Surge of daily new cases and deaths was noticed and is coinciding with school reopening. Research studies say that children act like “silent carriers” and play vital role in spreading the infection. Study objective was to know Knowledge, Attitude and practices of High school children regarding Covid and its preventive measures.

Material and methods: A cross sectional study was done on 683 samples in 4 schools in Urban health Field practice area of private medical college, Sidhipet district. Data Collection tools were Pretested Prevalidated semi-structured questionnaire with 4 sections, Demographic variables, Cause and transmission, preventive and precautionary measures, attitude and practise regarding covid 19.

Results: 33.97%, 74.38%, and 4.1% were aware of all the routes of transmission of covid, Risk groups and asymptomatic covid 19 infection respectively. 16.4% of students were having knowledge on correct preventive measures. 63.25%, 61.93% and 100% of the students have positive attitude with regards to reporting to health authorities, home isolation and precautionary measures. 78.18% use Mask every time and 19.33% and 4.69% carry hand sanitizer and wash hands regularly.

Conclusion: Statistically significant association with regards to knowledge about Covid was found with education, Private school students, Occupation (professionals) and Income (class I & II).

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Practices, Covid

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) on January 30, 2020, declared COVID-19 a public health emergency, and later on March 11, 2020, the outbreak was declared pandemic and even after more than 15 months of declaration also there are no signs of end to the Pandemic¹. The virus responsible for causing Covid 19 pandemic is SARSCoV-2, and this name was given by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses^{2,3}.

Burden of disease as on May 11th 2021 was, World- Total number of Covid 19 cases are 16,04,16,106 and deaths reported were 33,33,785.⁴

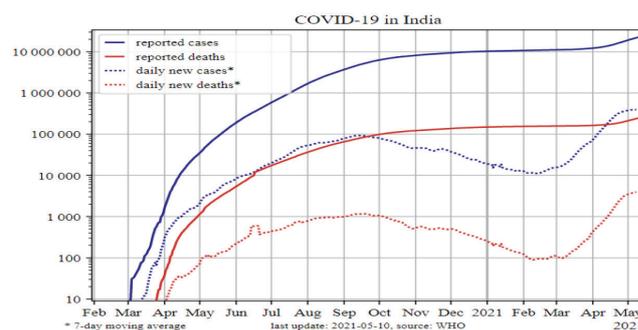
India- Total number of cases reported were 23,340,938 and deaths reported were 2,54,225 till now.⁴

Telangana- Total cases till now were 5,06,988 and 2803 deaths⁵.

Sidhipet District-Total cases reported were 230 and also identified as contaminant zone.⁵

Case fatality rate of covid in India is 1.1% and it causes 18.3 deaths per lakh population.⁶

Time trend of total covid cases, deaths and daily cases and deaths due to Covid 19 pandemic is shown in Figure I⁷.



we can see from figure I that there was surge of daily new cases and deaths from February 2021, that was second wave of Covid and this surge was exactly coinciding with school reopening which started in the month of January/February.

Indian Council of Medical Research has said that the two reasons behind the surge were, variants prevalent in the nation which were affecting younger people and also sudden increase in children going out due to School reopening.⁸

Many research studies also say that children either may infect themselves or can serve as carriers of the virus without symptoms called “silent carriers” and hence play a vital role in spreading the infection.⁹

There are certain standard precautionary measures to prevent covid infection and they are wearing mask, Social distancing (6 feet), avoiding crowds & poorly ventilated Indoor spaces and washing hands regularly¹⁰ and these

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precautionary measures should be known not only to the health workers and Adults (>18 years), but also to children who were affected more during second wave and also act as silent carriers of infection.

Globally, Cost of Covid Pandemic has not limited to health issues only but also has significant effects on economic and psychosocial issues and it is the responsibility of everyone to make their efforts to reduce the disease rate and hence effort was made in the present study to know the knowledge, Attitude (KAP) and practices of High school children regarding preventive measures of Covid infection, so that the results of the study will be helpful to Public health policy makers & health workers to recognize target populations/ Priority areas and to plan educational programmes.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Cross sectional study was done in between February 2021-May 2021 in Urban health Field practice area of RVM Institute of Medical sciences & Research Center, Laxmakkapally Village, Mulugu Mandal, Sidhipet district which is located in Turkapalle Village, its Catchment area includes 11 villages around Turkapalle village with a population of 30,902 and there are 4 schools having secondary school education.

Study population

All the students studying from 6th to 10th class from 4 schools were included in the Study. Total students studying from 6th to 10th class were 1263 students and among them only 892 students gave consent to participate in the study and in those only 683 students gave complete response to the Questionnaire (Google form) sent to them.

Inclusion criteria

1. School children between 11 to 16 years (Adolescents) studying between 6th to 10th class in the included school.
2. Either the student or their Parents should have access to smart phone and Internet.
3. who gave consent to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

1. School children less than 11 years and more than 16 years, although they were studying between 6th to 10th class.
2. Children who did not have access to smart phone and Internet.

Sample size

Z α is the standard normal deviate, which is equal to 1.96 at 95% confidence interval.

P – Prevalence of awareness about covid among school students ranged 65%-99%.¹³ With average 82.5%

1-p= 17.5%

e = Absolute precision taken as 3% of Prevalence (82.5%)

1-p = (1-50.68)

$$Sample\ size(n) = \frac{z^2 X p(1-p)}{1 + \frac{z^2 X p(1-p)}{e^2 N}}$$

$$Sample\ size(n) = \frac{(1.96)^2 X 82.5(100 - 82.5)}{(2.48)^2} \div \left(1 + \frac{(1.96)^2 X 82.5(100 - 82.5)}{(2.48)^2 1263} \right)$$

$$Sample\ size(n) = 530$$

N = Total number of students required were

Ethical Clearance

Study was conducted after obtaining Ethical clearance from the Principal of the school and from Institutional Ethical committee of the RVMIMS & RC.

Informed consent - Before starting data collection, all the students studying from 6th to 10th class (study participants) were explained about the objectives, purpose, and importance of the study with the help of teachers and they were asked to give consent to participate in the study after discussing with their parents and then by clicking agree link in WhatsApp, which was sent to students/Parent mobile number. All the students and parents were ensured about the confidentiality of their identity and the results will be used only for research purposes. After receiving their electronic informed consent, they were included in the study.

Data Collection Tool - Pretested Prevalidated semi-structured questionnaire was developed which was divided into four sections. Most of the questions were open ended.

1st section-Demographic variables, 2nd section- Regarding cause and transmission of Covid 19. 3rd section- Regarding preventive and precautionary measures about covid. 4th section-Regarding attitude and practices against covid 19.

Questionnaire was validated and also checked for its clarity, readability, acceptability and repeatability by the 5 volunteer school teachers and students and after their suggested modifications, questionnaire was sent through Google form through WhatsApp link. 683 students responded out of 892 students who gave consent.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data from the google form automatically gets converted in to excel and hence analysis that is percentages, proportions and Chi square test are done using Microsoft Excel Version 2019 software. P < 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

RESULTS

Table I describes the demographic characteristics of the participants, there were equal participation of males (51.68%) and females (48.32%). Mean age of participants was 13.84 years studying in class 6th to 10th. 80.38% of the students were from private school. Regarding parent's education majority were graduates (49.49%). Many were skilled workers (30.89%) & professionals (28.26%) by occupation. Table II describes knowledge of school students on etiology and transmission of Covid Infection. 77.89% knew correctly the causative organism for covid. 66.03% were not aware of all the routes of transmission of covid. 74.38% and 63.54% of the participants were aware that persons with comorbidities

S. No	Demographic characteristics	No.	Percentage
1	Gender		
	Male	353	51.68
	Female	330	48.32
2	Age		
	Mean Age \pm SD	13.84 \pm 1.41	
	11-12	208	30.45
	13-14	310	45.39
	15-16	165	24.16
3	Class		
	6 th	154	22.55
	7 th	142	20.79
	8 th	143	20.94
	9 th	123	18.01
	10 th	121	17.72
4	Type of School		
	Government	134	19.62
	Private	549	80.38
5	Education of Parents *		
	Illiterate	62	9.08
	Primary (1 st to 6 th)	112	16.40
	Secondary (7 th -10 th) and Intermediate	171	25.04
	Graduate and Post graduate	338	49.49
6	Occupation of Parents *		
	Unskilled	134	19.62
	Skilled	211	30.89
	Semiprofessional	145	21.23
	Professional	193	28.26
7	Income (BG Prasad Classification)		
	Class I &II	284	41.58
	Class III	107	15.67
	Class IV &V	292	42.75

*Parents considered were either mother or father whose ever education occupation was high

Table-I: Demographic characteristics of the school children

S. No	Knowledge related to Etiology and Transmission	No.	Percentage
1	Covid is caused by? *		
	Correct	532	77.89
	Incorrect	151	22.11
2	How do you think coronavirus gets transmitted/spread? **		
	Correct	232	33.97
	Incorrect	451	66.03
3	Risk groups for getting Covid Infection		
	Age >60 years	434	63.54
	Age 18-60 years	67	9.81
	Age <18 years	182	26.65
4	Risk groups for getting Covid Infection		
	With Comorbidities	508	74.38
	Without Comorbidities	175	25.62
5	How long will it take from infection to symptoms? ***		
	Correct	89	13.03
	Incorrect	594	86.97
6	Symptoms of Covid****		
	Correct	72	10.54
	Incorrect	611	89.46
7	Is it possible that covid 19 infected patients having no symptoms?		
	Yes	28	4.1
	No	655	95.9

* SARSCOV-2 virus/Virus. ** direct contact/airborne/fomite ***1-14 days ****Fever/Running nose/cough/tastelessness/Difficulty in breathing

Table-II: Knowledge of school students regarding Etiology and transmission of Covid Infection.

S. No	Knowledge about preventive measures	No.	Percentages
1	What are the preventive measures for corona infection?		
	Correct *	112	16.4
	Incorrect	571	83.6
2	What do you mean by PPE Kit?		
	Correct **	82	12.01
	Incorrect	601	87.99
3	When is PPE Kit Worn?		
	Correct***	82	12.01
	Incorrect	601	87.99
4	What are precautions to be followed by Covid Positive patients?		
	Correct****	104	15.23
	Incorrect	579	84.77
5	Do you know Helpline number for Covid in Telangana?		
	Yes	212	31.04
	No	471	68.96
6	Do you have any Idea about vaccine and its availability?		
	YES	82	12.01
	NO	601	87.99
7	Source of information on Covid		
	Parents/School teachers	512	74.96
	Friends	32	4.69
	Internet/social media	43	6.3
	News Paper/TV	96	14.06
* Wearing mask/handwashing & sanitization/ Social distancing/Avoid Unnecessary travel/Avoid touching face. ** PPE Kit meaning Personal protective Equipment includes Gown/Mask/Gloves/Goggles/Face shields. ***Persons getting Exposed to Covid Positive patients either for diagnosis or treatment. **** Consult Doctor/Self Isolation for 14 days and informing to friends& family and health authorities/regular monitoring of Symptoms.			
Table-III: Knowledge about preventive measures of covid infection.			

and >60 years are at risk of getting covid infection. Only 13.03% were having correct knowledge about Incubation period (1-14 days) and 4.1% of the children knew that covid 19 infection can be there even without symptoms.

Table III describes knowledge of children regarding preventive measures of Covid infection, 16.4%,12.01% and 15.23% of students were having knowledge on correct preventive measures, PPE Kit components & indications and precautionary measures to be followed by covid positive patients respectively. 31.04% were aware of Covid Help line Number.

Majority (74.96%) got knowledge about covid from Parents and school teachers and only 4.69% from friends and 6.3% from Internet and social media.

As seen in Table IV, 61.64%,63.25%,61.93%,49.34%and 100% of the students have positive attitude regarding voluntary testing for covid, reporting to health authorities, home isolation, help & counselling and following precautionary measures regarding covid respectively.

63.4% of students agree with cancellation of classroom classes and 47% of the students were willing to take vaccination if available (<18 Years).

Majority (78.18%) use Mask whenever they step out from home and only 31.4% change clothes on return from public places and only 3.37% did not miss to follow social distancing in last 15 days. 19.33% and 4.69% carry hand sanitizer and wash hands regularly. Only 4.69% of children

completely avoided small gatherings during last one month. As shown in Table V, Knowledge regarding etiology and preventive measures of covid were more among higher class students (37.71%), Private school students (31.18%), among students whose parents were more educated (31.84%) and working as semiprofessional and professionals (35.18%) and among Class I, II and III (35.83%) of BG Prasad socio economic status groups and the difference was statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS

33.97%,74.38%, and 4.1% were aware of all the routes of transmission of covid, Risk groups and asymptomatic covid 19 infection respectively. Only 16.4% of students were having knowledge on correct preventive measures. 63.25%, 61.93% and 100% of the students have positive attitude with regards to reporting to health authorities, home isolation, and following precautionary measures. 78.18% use Mask every time and only 19.33% and 4.69% carry hand sanitizer and wash hands regularly. Statistically significant association with regards to knowledge about Covid was found with education, Private school students, Occupation(professionals)and Income (class I &II).

DISCUSSION

World Health Organization (WHO) has declared covid 19 as pandemic on January 30, 2020,¹ since the announcement

S. No	Attitude of school children regarding prevention of covid	No.	Percentage
1	Are you willing to do voluntary testing for covid in case of suspicion?		
	Yes	421	61.64
	No	262	38.36
2	Is it important to report suspected case to health authorities?		
	Yes	432	63.25
	No	251	36.75
3	what should a person with covid positive test result should do in your opinion?		
	Stay in home isolation and inform to family, Friends and neighbours for help	423	61.93
	Can move out with covid safety measures for the requirements.	202	29.58
	Can do all the activities and behave same as others	58	8.49
4	What will you do if your closed ones are covid positive		
	Visit them for counselling and help	346	50.66
	Counsel on phone and help them by keeping the requirements at door	234	34.26
	Nothing	103	15.08
5	Do you feel that everyone should follow covid precautionary/preventive measures?		
	Yes	683	100
	NO	0	0
6	Do you agree with the announcement cancellation of classroom teaching in schools by the Govern-ment?		
	Yes	433	63.4
	No	250	36.6
7	How often do you check updates regarding Covid and its prevention?		
	Don't Check at all	287	42.02
	Once in a while (\geq Monthly once)	281	41.14
	Sometimes (once in a week or fortnight)	63	9.22
	Regular (more than once per week)	52	7.61
8	If corona Vaccine is available, will you take it for <18 years?		
	Yes	321	47
	No	362	53
Practices followed to prevent Covid infection			
1	Do you use Mask completely when you step outside the house?		
	yes	534	78.18
	No	149	21.82
2	Do you change your clothes on return from public places?		
	Yes	212	31.04
	No	471	68.96
3	How many times did you miss to follow social distancing in last 14 days?		
	Never	23	3.37
	Sometimes (≤ 4 times)	328	48.02
	Mostly (≥ 4 times)	332	48.61
4	Do you carry Hand sanitizer with you when you step out?		
	Yes	132	19.33
	No	551	80.67
5	How often do you practice hand washing?		
	Regularly (whenever new item is touched)	32	4.69
	Sometimes (daily >3 times)	443	64.86
	Rarely (<3 times)	208	30.45
6	How many times did you attend Parties or small gatherings during last one month?		
	Never	32	4.69
	Sometimes (≤ 2 times)	543	79.5
	Regular (≥ 2 times)	108	15.81

Table-IV: Attitude and Practices followed by school children to Prevent Covid infection

children were not much affected and schools were also closed (during First wave) and reduction of cases in the month of January 2021, led to opening of schools, since then cases started raising slowly leading to second wave from march 2021.⁷

Recent data has suggested that COVID-19 has also affected children and they are more likely to be asymptomatic or milder symptoms and no child presented with life-threatening symptoms.¹¹ Data also says that Children are not at high risk, but they can spread the virus, leading to surge of cases and

Demographic Characteristics	Correct responses NO. (%)	Incorrect responses NO. (%)	Total Responses	Chi-Square and P Value
Responses regarding Knowledge about Covid infection				
Class of the students				
6 th and 7 th	672(17.46)	3176(82.54)	3848	Chi square-425.9 P Value<0.001
8 th ,9 th &10 th	1897(37.71)	3134(62.29)	5031	
Type of School				
Government School students	344(19.75)	1398(80.25)	1742	Chi square-88.9 P Value<0.001
Private School students	2225(31.18)	4912(68.82)	7137	
Education of Parents				
Illiterate and Primary	462(20.42)	1800(79.58)	2262	Chi square-106.9 P Value<0.001
Secondary and more	2107(31.84)	4510(68.16)	6617	
Occupation				
Unskilled & Skilled	1023(22.81)	3462(77.19)	4485	Chi square-165.3 P Value<0.001
Semiprofessional &Professional	1546(35.18)	2848(64.82)	4394	
Income (B.G Prasad)				
Class I&II	1323(35.83)	2369(64.17)	3692	Chi square-515.2 P Value<0.001
Class III	612(44)	779(56)	1391	
Class IV &V	634(16.7)	3162(83.3)	3796	
Total	2569(28.93)	6310(71.07)	8879	

Table-V: Comparison of Knowledge of students with Demographic Characteristics, Attitude and Practices.

deaths in elderly population and this can be prevented by taking adequate precautions.¹² Considering this background effort was made in the present study to know the knowledge, Attitude and practice among school students. On literature search there were very few studies on school students and hence knowledge was compared with other groups and college students.

The present study was conducted among 683 school students with equal participation of males (51.68%) and females (48.32%) among 11-16 years age group, similar to Sharma Yadav et al¹³ study and lesser age compared to Patruni et al¹⁴ study (18-20 yrs). In Ferdous M.Z et al¹⁵(12-64years) and Zhong B L¹⁶ et al (16 and above) studies wider age group were studied.

In the present study, 77.89% knew correctly the causative organism for covid lesser compared to Sharma Yadav et al¹³ study (92.2%) but better than college students¹⁴ (30.2%) this difference was due to difference in accepted correct response (SARS Cov 2in college students and just Virus in school students).

In this study,33.97% ,74.38% and 63.4% were aware of all the routes of transmission, risk group and risk age, knowledge was lesser compared to Patruni et al¹⁴ study, Ferdous M.Z et al¹⁵, A.A. Siddiqui et al¹⁷ and similar to Sharma Yadav¹³ et al study.

In the present study, only 13.03% and 4.1% knew about Incubation period and asymptomatic covid 19 infection,lesser knowledge compared to Sharma Yadav et al¹³ study, Patruni et al¹⁴ study.

In the current study, only 16.4% of children were having correct knowledge on preventive measures much lesser compared to Sharma yadav et al¹³ study (88%), Patruni et al¹⁴ and Ferdous M.Z et al study.¹⁵ 31.04% were aware of Covid Help line Number similar to Dkhar et al study¹⁸.

Lesser knowledge in all aspects in the present study might be due to younger age group, open ended questions and valued by expecting complete list of points in each aspect. 74.96% of children got knowledge about covid from Parents and school teachers unlike other studies where social media and television were the source of Information.^{13,14,15}

Regarding Attitude of children, 61.64%, 63.25%, 61.93%, 49.34% and 100% of the students have positive attitude regarding voluntary testing for covid, reporting to health authorities, home isolation, help & counselling and following precautionary measures similar attitude was observed in Sharma Yadav et al¹³ study, Patruni et al¹⁴ study, better attitude observed in Ferdous M.Z¹⁵ et al study and Zhong B L¹⁶ et al study.

Regarding practices, Majority (78.18%) use Mask whenever they step out from home similar to Sharma Yadav et al¹³ study and 4.69% carry hand sanitizer and wash hands regularly and only 3.37% did not miss to follow social distancing much lesser compared to Sharma Yadav et al¹³ study, Patruni et al¹⁴ study, Ferdous M.Z et al¹⁵ study, Ngwewondo A et al¹⁹ study, B L Zhong et al¹⁶ study, Dkhar et al¹⁸ study .Lesser Preventive practices were noticed in the present study might be due to lesser knowledge, removal of Lockdown restrictions and opening of schools by the government at the time of Data collection (February & March 2021).

In the present study, statistically significant association with regards to knowledge about Covid was found with education, Private school students, Occupation(professionals) and Income (class I &II) of parents similar to Ferdous M.Z et al¹⁵ study, Srichan et al²⁰ study, Zhong B L et al¹⁶ study.

Results of the study are helpful to the policy makers and health workers to plan educational programmes and preventive strategies against Covid.

Limitations- Study was a cross-sectional study design hence causal inferences may not be established. Many questions were open ended and hence lesser knowledge score was elicited compared to other studies but open-ended questions were given with an intension that students should remember all the points and closed ended will give them clue regarding answers. Data was collected through online and hence restricted to only those with Internet access so did not reflect the entire population.

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