

ABSTRACT

Within recent years, tobacco use has become a priority problem affecting the health of individuals throughout the world and sadly, children are increasingly being encouraged in one way or another to adopt a lifestyle of tobacco use.

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey was conducted among 2661 students, of which 96% fell within the target age-group 13-15 years, in 61 schools across the country. Through a self-administered questionnaire, the study sought information on the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of this cohort on cigarette smoking, social and media influences which support it and other variables such as access and anti smoking lessons being taught at schools.

The findings revealed that 40% of those surveyed smoked cigarettes once in their lives,

with males having a greater inclination for this. Fourteen percent were current smokers with twice as many males than females. One fifth of those surveyed first smoked before age ten, and twice as many boys felt it looked more 'cool' to smoke.

Many students reported that cigarettes were easily available, had parents and close friends who smoked, and most saw tobacco advertisements in the media. The majority of smokers expressed a desire to stop smoking.

The report concludes that cigarette smoking among the surveyed population is cause for great concern, and there should be enforced legislation, continuous anti-smoking campaigns and education at all age levels to stem this problem.