

ABSTRACT

Introduction

The school has been identified as an ideal setting for health promotion to have an effective impact on the health of the community. Health-promoting practices at schools not only enhance the health status of the school community but it benefits the academic performance of the children and reduces the risk behaviours such as tobacco use, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, drug abuse, risk of injuries, and violence. Attitude and knowledge of teachers on health promotion directly influence the level of implementation of its practices at schools.

Objective

The objective of this study was to determine the knowledge, attitude, and practices on health promotion at schools, and to describe its associated factors among primary school teachers in the divisional education area of Kegalle.

Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out in 42 out of 45 government schools in the divisional education area of Kegalle in Sri Lanka, including 320 primary school teachers. Study subjects were randomly selected from all three types of schools proportionate to the size and the study was carried out using a self-administered, pretested questionnaire. Data were collected from November 2021 to January 2022. Cut off values were determined according to the national and international literature available and the Chi-squared test was used to determine the associations.

Results

Most of the teachers were females (91%), with a median age of 45 years, married (81.9%), had children, and many of them had more than 20 years of service as a teacher (40.3%) and graduates (34%).

It was found that teachers achieved 59.4% of good knowledge, 72.6% with favourable attitudes and 60.1% with good level of practices of health promotion at school.

Participation in health promotion awareness programmes ($p= 0.001$; OR 2.278; 95% CI= 1.367 to 3.798) associated with good knowledge. Good attitudes towards health

promotion was significantly associated with age less than 50 years ($p= 0.040$; $OR=1.858$; $95\%CI= 1.022$ to 3.376) and teachers highest educational qualification of diploma or above levels ($p=0.006$; $OR = 2.607$; $95\%CI = 1.29-5.26$). Good health promotion practices was significantly associated with the teachers having their youngest child more than 10 years old and participation in health promotion awareness programmes ($p=0.019$, $OR=1.786$, $95\% CI= 1.099$ to 2.903).

Good knowledge was significantly associated with favourable attitudes ($p= 0.014$; $OR=1.990$; $95\% CI= 1.141$ to 3.473) and with good practices of health promotion ($p=0.042$; $OR=1.641$; $95\% CI = 1.015$ to 2.652).

Conclusions and recommendations

Findings highlight the importance of compulsory exposure to health promotion awareness programs to improve the attitudes of teachers towards health promotion at school.

Measures to be taken to improve the quality of health promotion awareness programmes with close monitoring and evaluation is recommended. Teachers should be encouraged and motivated to develop good attitudes towards health promotion which may help to improve the good health promotion practices at school.

Key words: Health promotion, Teacher, School, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices