

ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE:

To determine the extent, pattern and the attendant risk factors of cigarette smoking and tobacco consumption among primary school teachers in Nairobi.

DESIGN:

A descriptive cross-sectional study.

SETTING:

The study was carried out among randomly selected Nairobi City Council primary schools in 1996.

PARTICIPANTS:

All the teachers in the selected primary schools were included in the study.

RESULTS:

Out of 910 teachers contacted, 813 responded (a response rate of 89.3%). A total of 800 teachers completed the questionnaire correctly and are the subject of the present analysis. Fifty per cent of male and three per cent of female teachers were cigarette smokers at the time of the study. The median age for starting to smoke was between 15 and 24 years. At this age, the teachers were secondary school and tertiary college students. It was observed that the age of smoking initiation seems to determine the individual's smoking status later in life.

CONCLUSION:

Since 57% of smokers started smoking during their secondary school days, secondary school students seem to be at a higher risk of initiating smoking. It is therefore important to target them for smoking control initiatives before they start the habit. A number of smokers were willing to quit smoking but did not know how to go about it. External assistance is therefore required for them to achieve their wish. It is also important to emphasise the need by the relevant authorities to initiate programmes for anti-smoking education in secondary schools and colleges in the country.