

Peer Review

Review of: "Tobacco Use and Perceived Stress Among Male College Students in Bangalore, India"

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This study explores the relationship between tobacco use and perceived stress among male college students in Bangalore, India, addressing an important public health concern given the high prevalence of tobacco consumption among young males in the Indian context. The manuscript demonstrates several strengths, including the use of standardized psychometric instruments such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14) and the Autonomy Over Smoking Scale (AUTOS), which enhance measurement reliability. The study also provides clear categorization of smoking status, including current smokers, experimental smokers, former smokers, and never smokers, allowing a more nuanced examination of tobacco use patterns. Additionally, the statistical approach is generally appropriate, utilizing ANOVA, independent sample t-tests, and Pearson correlation analyses to address the stated research objectives. The focus on the association between stress and loss of autonomy over smoking contributes to the understanding of psychological correlates of nicotine dependence in young adult populations.

However, several methodological limitations reduce the strength and generalizability of the findings. The cross-sectional design prevents causal interpretation between stress and tobacco dependence, limiting conclusions to associative relationships. The relatively small and geographically restricted sample, consisting exclusively of male college students from urban Bangalore, significantly restricts external validity and prevents extrapolation to female students, rural populations, or broader adolescent groups. Additionally, reliance on self-reported tobacco use and psychological stress introduces potential reporting and recall bias. The absence of biochemical validation of smoking status may also affect measurement accuracy.

The study would benefit from controlling for potential confounding variables known to influence tobacco use and stress, including socioeconomic status, academic performance, mental health disorders, family

history of substance use, and peer influence. Furthermore, while the correlation between nicotine dependence and perceived stress is statistically strong, the manuscript could strengthen its interpretation by exploring bidirectional mechanisms and theoretical models explaining stress-dependence interactions. Greater discussion of cultural and environmental factors influencing tobacco use behaviors in Indian college settings would also enhance contextual relevance.

Overall, this study contributes useful preliminary evidence regarding the relationship between psychological stress and nicotine dependence among young adult smokers. While the findings highlight the importance of incorporating psychological factors into tobacco prevention and cessation programs, further longitudinal, multicenter, and gender-inclusive studies with larger sample sizes and objective tobacco exposure measures are necessary to confirm and expand upon these results.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.