

# A Cross-Sectional Study on Awareness of Siddha Medical and Paramedical Courses Among Higher Secondary School Students in Harur Taluk, Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu

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## Abstract

**Background:** Siddha medicine is an important traditional system of healthcare in Tamil Nadu and forms part of the AYUSH framework, contributing to preventive and curative health services. Awareness regarding Siddha educational opportunities among school students remains variable.

**Objective:** To assess awareness, perception, and career interest regarding Siddha medical and paramedical courses among higher secondary school students.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 500 students using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square test ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Results:** Among 500 students, 65% were aware of the Siddha medical course, whereas only 26% were aware of paramedical courses. About 56% knew about NEET requirements. Around 53% reported usage of Siddha medicine, but only 16% had visited Siddha clinics.

**Conclusion:** Awareness of Siddha education is moderate but insufficient, especially regarding career opportunities.

## Introduction

Siddha medicine is one of the oldest traditional systems of medicine practiced predominantly in Tamil Nadu. It emphasizes a holistic approach using herbal, mineral, and lifestyle-based interventions. Along with Ayurveda, Unani, Yoga, and Homeopathy, Siddha forms part of the AYUSH system supported by the Government of India.

Traditional medicine continues to play a significant role in global healthcare, with a large proportion of the population relying on such systems for primary health needs. Despite increasing institutional support, awareness regarding Siddha educational opportunities among school students remains inconsistent.

Career decisions at the higher secondary level are influenced by awareness, perception, and available information. Studies have shown that although students often have positive attitudes toward traditional medicine, this does not always translate into career choices. Limited awareness about educational pathways, including entrance examinations and postgraduate opportunities, may restrict student enrollment.

Hence, the present study was conducted to assess awareness, perception, and career inclination toward Siddha medical and paramedical courses among higher secondary school students.

## Materials and Methods

### Study Design and Setting

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among higher secondary school students in Harur Taluk, Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu.

### Study Population and Sample Size

A total of 500 students studying in Classes XI and XII were included.

### Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling technique was used.

### Study Tool

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed in English and Translated into Tamil. The questionnaire comprised two sections: (1) demographic and academic details And (2) awareness, perceptions, and attitudes regarding Siddha course, practices, and career Opportunities. The tool was pilot-tested for clarity prior to the main study

### Data Collection Procedure

Permission was obtained from school authorities, and informed consent was secured from students before data collection.

### Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using MS Excel and R software. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square test were applied. A p-value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

### Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of Government Siddha Medical College, Palayamkottai Participation was voluntary, and Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

## Results

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants (n = 500)**

Variable	Category	Frequency n (%)
Gender	Male	251 (50%)
	Female	249 (50%)
Age	16	191 (38%)
	17	196 (39%)
	18	113 (23%)
School Type	Government	251 (50%)
	Matriculation	249 (50%)
Medium	Tamil	280 (56%)
	English	220 (44%)

**Table 2: Awareness and Perception of Siddha among Students (n = 500)**

Variable	Yes n (%)	No n (%)
Awareness of Siddha Medical Course	326 (65%)	174 (35%)
Awareness of Paramedical Courses	130 (26%)	370 (74%)
Awareness of NEET Requirement	282 (56%)	218 (44%)
Usage of Siddha Medicine	266 (53%)	234 (47%)

Visited Siddha Clinic	82 (16%)	418 (84%)
Belief in Effectiveness	326 (65%)	174 (35%)
Interest in Siddha Career	192 (38%)	308 (62%)
Awareness of Equal Pay	70 (14%)	430 (86%)

**Table 3: Comparison between Government and Matriculation School Students**

Variable	Govt n (%)	Matric n (%)	p-value
Awareness of Siddha Course	127 (51%)	199 (80%)	<0.001
Awareness of NEET	94 (37%)	188 (76%)	<0.001
Awareness of Equal Pay	24 (9.6%)	46 (18%)	0.004

### Discussion

The present study assessed awareness, perception, and career inclination toward Siddha medical and paramedical courses among higher secondary school students in Tamil Nadu. The findings indicate that while overall awareness of Siddha medical education is moderate, there are notable deficiencies in knowledge regarding paramedical courses and professional pathways.

Approximately two-thirds of the participants were aware of the Siddha medical course, reflecting a reasonable level of exposure to traditional medical systems. This aligns with global and national trends where traditional medicine continues to hold cultural and healthcare significance. However, awareness of Siddha paramedical courses was considerably lower, suggesting that information dissemination regarding the full spectrum of educational opportunities remains inadequate. This gap is critical, as paramedical courses offer alternative entry points into the Siddha healthcare workforce.

A key observation in this study is the discrepancy between awareness and actual healthcare engagement. Although more than half of the respondents reported using Siddha medicine, only a small proportion had visited Siddha clinics. Similar patterns have been reported in previous studies, where traditional medicine is commonly used within households but not consistently accessed through formal healthcare systems. This may be influenced by factors such as accessibility, perceived effectiveness, and preference for allopathic care in institutional settings.

The study also revealed that awareness does not necessarily translate into career aspiration. While a significant number of students were familiar with Siddha medicine and acknowledged its benefits, only a minority expressed interest in pursuing it as a career. This finding is consistent with earlier research indicating that positive perception alone is insufficient to influence professional choices. Factors such as limited career guidance, lack of visibility of Siddha professionals, and societal preference for conventional medical careers may contribute to this gap.

Educational background appeared to influence awareness levels, with Tamil medium and matriculation school students demonstrating relatively higher awareness in certain domains. This may reflect differences in cultural exposure, curriculum content, and access to information. Previous studies have similarly highlighted the role of educational environment in shaping awareness and attitudes toward traditional medicine.

Another important finding is the low level of awareness regarding career-related aspects such as equal pay, postgraduate education, and research opportunities. This indicates that students lack comprehensive information about the professional scope and growth potential within Siddha medicine. Addressing this

knowledge gap is essential for improving student confidence and interest in pursuing Siddha as a viable career option.

Overall, the findings emphasize the need for early and structured interventions to bridge the gap between awareness and career inclination. Integrating Siddha-related content into school curricula, strengthening career counseling services, and organizing outreach programs by AYUSH institutions can significantly enhance awareness. Additionally, leveraging media platforms and community engagement can improve the visibility and acceptance of Siddha medicine among younger populations.

### **Conclusion**

The present study demonstrates that awareness of Siddha medical education among higher secondary school students is moderate; however, significant gaps persist, particularly in knowledge of Siddha paramedical courses and career opportunities. Although a considerable proportion of students reported familiarity with Siddha medicine and expressed positive perceptions regarding its effectiveness, this awareness does not adequately translate into career inclination.

The findings highlight a clear disconnect between awareness, utilization, and professional interest, indicating the need for structured interventions. Limited awareness regarding key aspects such as entrance requirements, higher education pathways, and professional benefits further underscores the necessity for targeted educational strategies.

Strengthening school-based career guidance, incorporating Siddha and AYUSH education into the curriculum, and enhancing media and institutional outreach can play a crucial role in improving awareness and shaping informed career decisions. Addressing these gaps is essential not only for increasing student engagement but also for ensuring the sustained growth and integration of Siddha medicine within the broader healthcare system.

### **Limitations**

The study employed convenience sampling and was limited to a single taluk, which may affect Generalizability. Self-reported responses may also be subject to reporting bias, as noted in similar Awareness studies.

### **Ethical Statement**

The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of Government Siddha Medical College, Palayamkottai .

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