

## Perceptions of Blood Donation amongst the Youth

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### Abstract

Blood donation is required constantly to replenish stocks in blood banks. Motivating relatives to donate blood in hospitals becomes a difficult job at times. Hence the youth who are the main source of our blood donors pool, need to be motivated to come forward for Voluntary blood donation. This cross sectional qualitative study is carried out to find out the reasons for youth donating or not donating blood. Youth in the age group 18-25 years both urban and rural were included. A validated questionnaire was used to interview the youth. The results were analyzed statistically. A total of 200 youth answered the questionnaire. 14% were unaware that blood could be donated, 24% of the youth did not consider blood donation to be important, and 85.5% youth had not donated blood even once. 65% of those who donated blood did so because they thought it could save lives and it was a noble act. We concluded that to increase the number of youth donors we need to spread awareness and educate our youth who are the main source of blood donors.

**Keywords:** Blood donation, Youth, Donors.

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knowledge with regards to blood donation and other issues<sup>(7-10)</sup>.

The youth are the future of our country and hardly any studies are available on the perceptions of youth on blood donation. Hence we decided to take up this study to find out the perceptions on blood donation among the youth.

### Introduction

Donation of blood has always been considered as a humanitarian act and a positive behavioral phenomenon. By and large blood donors can be categorized broadly as Voluntary and Replacement Blood Donors<sup>(1)</sup>. During major emergencies like the floods and earthquakes, there is an exodus of voluntary donors. Such calamities motivate people to help selflessly and voluntary donations of all kinds are offered by volunteers, with blood being one among them<sup>(2-3)</sup>. What is not realized however is that there is a necessity for blood even otherwise? Hence there arises a need for motivation to donate blood voluntarily on a regular basis.

There is a serious mismatch between demand and availability of blood in the country. Against 8.5 million units/year requirement, the availability is only 4.4 million units/year of which only about 52% is through voluntary donations<sup>(4)</sup>. It is observed that all over the world including developing countries like India, voluntary blood donors are a minority<sup>(5)</sup>. Even the National Blood policy of India recognized the importance of voluntary blood donation and has included promotion of the same as an important strategy<sup>(6)</sup>. There are various barriers to donating blood that influence the behavior of people towards blood donation such as cultural beliefs in some ethnic groups, socio-economic factors, their knowledge or lack of

### Aim and Objective

To find out the reasons for youth donating or not donating blood.

### Materials and Method

The research study was carried out among 200 youth after obtaining Institute Ethics Committee clearance. This was a cross sectional qualitative study.

### Inclusion criteria:

- Youth in the age group 18-25 years. Urban and rural youth were included.

### Exclusion criteria:

- Persons below 18 years of age.

A validated questionnaire was given to the respondents to be filled out after obtaining informed consent. In some cases, the questionnaire was filled by direct interview of the respondents. Following this they were educated about the importance of blood donation. Queries about blood donation were answered. The data was analyzed statistically.

### Results

A total of 200 youth answered the questionnaire. The results have been represented below on the basis of the questionnaire. 28 (14%) were unaware that blood could be donated while the rest 172 (86%) were aware about blood donation (Fig. 1).

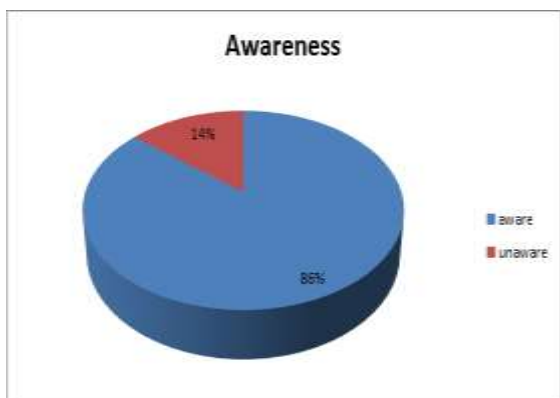


Fig.1: Awareness about blood donation

We observed that 24% of the youth did not consider blood donation to be important, while 76% agreed to its importance (Fig. 2).

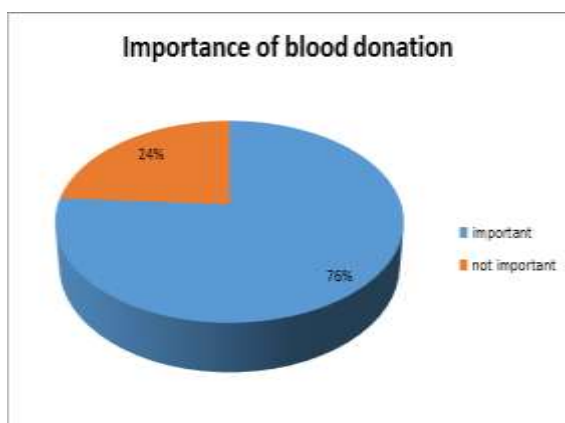


Fig. 2: Importance of blood donation

We found that 85.5% (171/200) youth had not donated blood even once. 14.5% (29/200) had donated blood.

1. **Reasons for not donating blood:** Of the 171 non-donors (Fig. 3):
  - a. 42.7% (73/171) had no specific reason for not donating blood.
  - b. 33.9% (58/171) were scared of blood transfusion needle and did not want to experience any pains, hence they did not donate blood.
  - c. 8.07% (48/171) did not donate blood because they were unaware of the importance of blood donation.
  - d. 4.1% (7/171) did not donate blood because their family did not allow them to do so.
  - e. 4.1% (7/171) had other reasons for not donating blood like
    - i. Did not know where to donate blood- 2/7
    - ii. Did not specify the reason in response-1/7
    - iii. Had anemia hence were unfit – 3/7
    - iv. Underweight and hence were unfit– 1/7

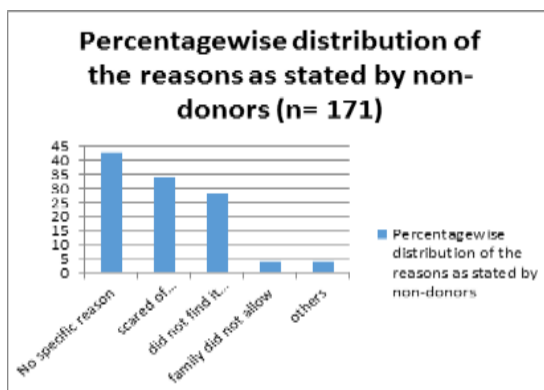


Fig. 3: Distribution of the reasons as stated by non-donors (n= 171)

2. **Responses of the youth who donated blood:** Of the 29 donors, the responses regarding blood donation were as follows (Fig. 4):
  - a. The number of times the donors had donated blood ranged from 1-8, the average being 3 times.
  - b. All of the blood donors felt good after donating blood (100%).
  - c. 79.3% (23/29) knew that interval between two blood donations must be atleast 3 months. However 20.7% (6/29) did not know this fact.
  - d. Blood donation camps, newspapers, radio, internet and movies served as the best source of awareness and most of the donors learned about blood donation from these sources
  - e. Reasons as stated by donors for donating blood were:
    - i. Considered it as a noble work as it could save lives: 19/29 (65.5%)
    - ii. Had to do it in an emergency for friend/family: 3/29 (10.34%)
    - iii. Needed money: 4/29 (13.79%)
    - iv. Considered it essential for needy: 16/29 (55.17%)
    - v. Was aware of importance of blood donation: 15/29 (51.7%)

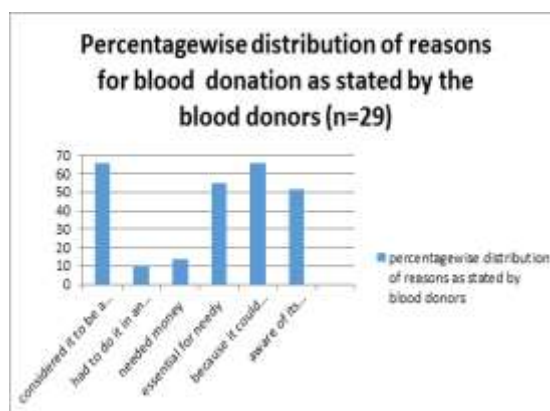


Fig. 4: Distribution of reasons for blood donation as stated by the blood donors (n=29)

## Discussion

Blood donation is a serious and rising issue in the area of transfusion medicine and hence it is very important to study each and every aspect of it in great details, to reach to a conclusion regarding present trends and how to combat them to bring about a change<sup>(3,5)</sup>.

As per our results, 76% of the youth were aware about the importance of blood donation. This is an encouraging figure and we can possibly rely on this part of youth for our future in transfusion medicine. As per other studies, 90% youth knew the importance of blood donation<sup>(2,4)</sup>. A significant part (14%) of the youth in our study was not aware that blood could be donated. However, the studies conducted in other countries indicated a negligible part being unaware<sup>(3)</sup>. The reason for such a low awareness response is low education ratio in India. In other countries, high literacy rates are parallel with higher ratio of youth being aware about blood donation<sup>(3)</sup>. Social media, newspaper, internet, blood donation camps and all the other sources have not succeeded as an educating and awareness spreading agent. The reason can be that most of these media are unavailable or inaccessible in rural areas. Hence in India the increasing gap of technology, usage and availability between rural and urban areas maybe a major cause of ignorance about blood donation<sup>(4-5)</sup>.

Blood donation camps in the cities and villages serve as important media of information and awareness<sup>(6-7)</sup>. We can effectively use this tool to educate and spread awareness amongst the ignorant part of our society and hence bring in more percentage of youth into the area of awareness about blood donation. Majority of the youth are aware about the importance of blood donation<sup>(1,5)</sup>. This was confirmed in our study also.

85.5% of the youth interviewed had not donated blood. As per other studies, this figure was found to be 70% on an average<sup>(5-6)</sup>. Other studies also indicated the same proportion of donors to non-donors, donors being in minority. This means that majority of youth is not donating blood and this is the scene all around the world, not only in India<sup>(2,7)</sup>. We urgently need to reverse these figures into 85.5% of donors and 14.5% of non-donors. It is the need of the hour.

Of the non-donors, 42.7% had no specific reason for not donating blood. This points towards their sheer ignorance to the importance of blood donation. This is probably because none of their near and dear one have ever needed blood<sup>(3-4)</sup>.

33.9% of non-donors stated that they were scared of transfusion needle and did not want to experience any pain. Other studies have stated the average figure of about 65%<sup>(5,7)</sup>. The major cause is the fear of pain and the needle prick.

28.07% did not donate because they were unaware of importance of blood donation. This figure can be improved by spreading more awareness and educating

the youth. The various sources of spreading awareness like newspaper, radio, campaigns' etc have been included as best educating means in multiple studies<sup>(4,5,7)</sup>.

4.1% did not donate blood as their family did not allow them to do so. This points towards the unawareness not only amongst the youth but also amongst the elderly. Other studies too indicated a negative influence of lack of education on donors<sup>(2,5)</sup>. Hence to motivate the youth, we also need to educate the whole family about blood donation.

Majority of the donors donated blood because they considered it to be essential for needy, noble work, life-saving act and a kind gesture. This points towards the prominence of feelings of gratitude, kindness and helping others. This restores one's faith in humanity and is encouraging<sup>(1,6)</sup>.

Reward progress psychology has been greatly studied and sufficient data is available that confirms that rewards make humans perform better<sup>(2,6,7)</sup>. 13% of donors donated for money. This points towards the human nature of give and take. If we want to bring in more donors, we can effectively do this by initiating things like prizes, certificates, gifts, trophies, etc. for those who donate.

## Conclusion

From our study we conclude that although majority of the youth were aware of the importance of blood donation, they had not donated blood. We need to educate our youth more effectively to motivate them to donate blood. We can probably use youth who have already donated blood, to educate and motivate other youth on a one to one basis, to effectively improve blood donation.

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