



An Exploratory Study on Cigarette Smoking and Health Status among Adolescent Boys

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *Teenage is a time of transition. They begin to confirm their own identities and imitate adults. They consider smoking as a grownup action and therefore resort to smoking and drinking alcohol. Teenage smokers tend to have felt of being unhealthy and face psychological problems. A sample of 50 school going adolescent boys 13 to 18 years were selected for the study. The questionnaire was framed by the investigator and was standardized in order to elicit the information from the selected adolescent boys who smoke. Data was collected and an educative pamphlet on the ill effects of smoking was given to them after the responses were elicited after it. The study focused to explore the smokers and brought out the fact that smoking habit is mostly taken up at the age of 11-17 years. Not more than 50% of the participants responded being aware of all the ill effects of smoking. However, all participants faced at least one mental health issues like mood swings, nervousness etc. It is evident that teenagers are allured to the habit of smoking and it can become a serious threat for the younger generation and the nation in the long run.*

INTRODUCTION

The teenage years are a time of transition. They form a bridge between the relatively sheltered environment of childhood and the roles of adulthood. Teenagers begin to confirm their own identities and emulate adult roles. There is a heightened awareness of role models and a tendency to establish boundaries through experimentation and experiencing new risks. School is obviously an important environment for teenagers and students who smoke at this age are more likely to experience difficulties in the academic setting. They experience lower grades, poor student-teacher interactions, minimal academic aspirations for the future, and often complain of unfair school rules. Teenage smokers also tend to have lower self-esteem and are more likely to report feelings of unhappiness and loneliness, a lack of confidence, and a sense of being unhealthy.

Young people who smoke generally have a reduced capacity to implement practices that promote advancement at home and at school, and in other important settings. This can affect their ability to maintain a healthy sense of identity that includes belongingness, worthiness, and hope for the future. Cigarette advertisements prey on these needs by offering an image of suave independence. The insinuation is that smoking will help an individual to achieve desirable qualities. Other aspects of the social environment have promoted the acceptability of smoking such as smoking by role models in the movie industry and the widespread visibility of smoking.

Adolescents are the most vulnerable population to initiate cigarette use. It is now well established that most of the adult users start cigarette use in childhood or adolescence. There has been a perceptible fall in smoking in the developed countries after realization of harmful effects of cigarettes. The cigarette companies are now aggressively targeting their advertising strategies in the developing countries like India. Adolescents often get attracted to cigarette products because of such propaganda. There has been a rapid increase in trade and use of smokeless tobacco products in recent years in the country, which is a matter of serious concern to the health planners. It is important to understand various factors that influence and encourage young teenagers to start smoking or to use other cigarette products.

India is the second most populous country in the world. It is a secular country but the Hindus form the majority. Hinduism

traditionally advocates abstinence from all intoxicants. Even then, India is the third largest producer and consumer of cigarette in the world. The country has a long history of cigarette use. Cigarette use has unfortunately been well recognized among the adolescents [Patel, 2007]. Cigarette addiction of a large number of adults has been initiated during the adolescence [Gavarasana et al., 1999 and Sarma, 2000].

Considering the enormous health complications associated with cigarette use, it is of utmost importance to understand the factors leading to its use and to plan strategies to reduce its intake. This is especially relevant for the developing countries like India, where cigarette use continues to be common notwithstanding the recognition of harmful consequences of its usage. The prevalence figures vary according to the criteria used to define cigarette use habits. For example, in one study ever-smokers constituted 14.2% of the study population and current smokers formed 7.1% of the study sample [Kapoor, 2008]. More than 40% of children had started the habit between 10–15 years of age. There was no rural-urban difference. Both the smokers and non-smokers were well aware of the adverse health effects of smoking indicating that mere provision of information on hazards of smoking may not be enough to reduce the prevalence of smoking. Most boys who were using cigarette were smokers (86%). Significantly higher proportion of boys smoked if their father or best friend smoked. Generally, boys were more sensitive to the best friend's or elder brother's disapproval rather than the parental. They were well informed about the general harmfulness of smoking but there was no knowledge on any specific health hazard.

Health effects of smoking among young adolescents

- Long-term health consequences of youth smoking are reinforced by the fact that most young people who smoke regularly continue to smoke throughout adulthood. Cigarette smokers have a lower level of lung function than those persons who have never smoked. Smoking reduces the rate of lung growth.
- Smoking hurts young adolescent people's physical fitness in terms of both performance and endurance—even among young people trained in competitive running. On average, someone who smokes a pack or more of cigarettes each day lives 7 years less than someone who never smoked.
- Teens who smoke three times are more likely than non-

smokers to use alcohol, eight times more likely to use marijuana, and 22 times more likely to use cocaine. Smoking is associated with a host of other risky behaviours, such as fighting and engaging in unprotected sex (CDC,2005).

Peer pressure is an important determining factor for initiation of cigarette use among children and adolescents. There are several processes by which being associated with drug-using peers contributes to drug-abusing behaviour. Here, modeling and social approval play an important role. When one is distressed due to any reason, an offered cigarette by a friend initiates the conforming process with a tobacco-using peer-group network [Vidya, 2005].

The need for conducting this study was recognized owing to the unparallel rise of using cigarette smoking by the adolescent boys and the effects of smoking on the broad spectrum of the adolescents' physical and psychological health, change in life style and adopting the western culture. The present study on the "An Exploratory Study on Cigarette Smoking and Health Status among Adolescent Boys" was undertaken by the investigator in order to know the general practices of adolescent boys on cigarettes and their awareness on the consequences of cigarette smoking and their general health.

METHODOLOGY

Investigator selected 50 school going adolescent boys with age group of 13 years to 18 years in Coimbatore district. The Questionnaire was framed by the investigator to elicit the information from the selected adolescent boy smokers. Data was collected and a pamphlet was prepared on the ill effects of smoking which was distributed to the study participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE I
AGE AT WHICH THE RESPONDENTS STARTED CIGARETTE SMOKING

Sl.No.	Particulars	N:50	%
1.	Between 11-17 years	21	42
2.	Between 11-15 years	16	32
3.	Between 11-18 years	12	24
4.	Before 10 years	1	2

Table I shows that most of the selected respondents started cigarette smoking in the age between 11-17 years (42%), 11-15 years (32%) and 11-18 years (24%). It is surprised to know that respondent (2%) started at the age of 10 years.

TABLE II
REASONS FOR USING CIGARETTES

Sl.No.	Particulars	N:50	%
1.	Peer pressure	17	34
2.	Failure in love	11	22
3.	To appear more adult	10	20
4.	Coping with stress	10	20
5.	Curiosity	2	4

From the above table II, it is expressed that 34 per cent of the selected respondents expressed that peer pressure is one of the main reason for starting to smoke cigarettes. Twenty two per cent of them started to smoke due to failure in love. Rest (20%, 20% and 4%) of them indicated the reasons as to behave like an adult, coping with stress and curiosity to taste the first cigarettes.

TABLE III
AWARENESS ON UNHEALTHY SYMPTOMS AND HEALTH PROBLEMS OF SMOKING

Sl.No.	Particulars	N:50	%
1.	Cough	14	28
2.	Yellowed strained teeth	10	20
3.	Asthma	7	14
4.	Bad breath	5	10
5.	Chest pain	5	10
6.	Lung cancer	20	40
7.	Heart disease	11	22
8.	Stroke	7	14
9.	Bronchitis	4	8
10.	Oral infection	2	4

The above table III projects that 28 per cent of them were aware of signs such as cough, 20 per cent of them were aware of yellow strained teeth. It is followed by asthma, bad breath and chest pain (14 %, 10 % and 10 %). It was clear that the respondents had awareness on the serious health problems of cigarette smoking, 40 per cent of respondents knew that lung cancer is another serious health problem due to continuous cigarette smoking and followed by heart diseases (22% and stroke 14%). And very few of them mentioned bronchitis and oral infection.

TABLE IV
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES FACED BY THE RESPONDENTS DUE TO SMOKING

Sl.No.	Particulars	N:50	%
1.	Mood swing	14	28
2.	Stress	8	16
3.	Depression	7	14
4.	Anxiety	5	10
5.	Nervousness	3	6

From table IV, 28 per cent of the selected respondents had mood swings, sixteen per cent had stress because some of them were not habituated to the cigarette smoking. And the remaining was in depression, anxiety and nervousness (14%, 10% and 6%).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that adolescent boys start smoking at a very young age and prefer to use cigarette even after knowing the harmful effects of smoking. Strategies should be taken by the government, civil society organisations and the family members to avoid teenagers getting into the habit of smoking.

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