TOBACCO CONSUMPTION PATTERNS
OF SCHOOL STUDENTS IN
NCT OF DELHI

ABSTRACT
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ABSTRACT

The progressive increase in the consumption of tobacco among adolescents is emerging as a complex and multidimensional problem. It continues to occupy a premier position among public health concern in almost all countries (NYTS, 2009). The most disturbing fact is the age of initiation, which is progressively falling (Chadda et.al. 2002). Children today begin to experiment with tobacco at a relatively younger age than they were doing a decade ago. It is estimated that in India, by the time most boys reach to the ninth grade, about 50 percent of them would have tried at least one of the gateway of tobacco (ICMR, 2006).

Early initial consumption of tobacco has been regarded as a serious health problem not only because it is believed to open the way for subsequent poly drug use, but also because of its linkage to impaired psychological and social development reflected in disrupted familial relations, school involvement and employment (NYTS, 2009). According to WHO (2009) tobacco consumption, in India, will continue to increase at 2.4 percent per annum and most of the new smokers will be India's school children. Some research studies suggest that use of tobacco created behavior problems in the high school setting including delinquency, truancy, and lower academic achievement (Rao, 2002; Reddy, 1997; Chandra, 1992). Studies (Aggarwal, 1998; Jayant, 1991; Kumar, 2000) have shown that different factors influence tobacco consumption among students, such as, parent’s addiction, economic status of the family, peer group pressure, easy access to cigarettes, etc. The behavior of important people in the immediate environment of the students are also likely to influence their activities particularly those to whom they may look up to as role models. There is also evidence that tobacco is a risk factor for hypertension among students which affects their overall development. Therefore consumption of tobacco, among school students is a matter of great concern and requires holistic understanding of the problem. Although there are some studies which have focused on the prevalence of tobacco consumption among school students in different states of India but no study so far has covered the other related factors, such as, awareness level, role of schools and parents. The present study, therefore, not only covers patterns of tobacco consumption among school students but also focuses on role of schools and parents.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study attempts to understand the various aspects related to tobacco use among school students with the following objectives:

1. To determine the prevalence of tobacco among secondary school students.
2. To study the pattern of tobacco consumption among school children
3. To find out the major reasons for tobacco consumption.
4. To analyze the consequences of tobacco use.
5. To analyze the awareness level of children, school authorities and parents on use of tobacco among school students.
6. To find out the role of school and family in dealing with the problem of tobacco use.
7. Suggest measures to develop programmes and policies at school and community level.

**RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

Descriptive research design has been taken for the present research study. Convenient sampling procedure was adopted for selection of units of the study. The Education Board of Delhi is divided into 12 districts. From these, two districts (North and North East) were selected for the purpose of the study. From each district one co-educational private and one co-educational government school was selected to cover schools with and without social workers/counselors. The sample comprised of 100 students from classes 9th to 12th from each school. The other stakeholders were: principals of all the four selected schools, the class teachers of 9th - 12th classes and two counselors (one from each district). Those parents whose children were studying in the classes 9th to 12th and who were willing to give the response were covered under the sample. Thus total of 400 students (100 from each school), 16 class teachers (4 class teachers of 9th – 12th classes from each school), 4 Principals (one from each school), 2 counselors (1 from each district) and 40 parents (10 from each school) were covered. Total-462.

**Major Findings**

The result shows the overall prevalence of consumption of tobacco was 73.5% in which 68% are boys and 31% are girls. The data shows that majority (57%) of the regular users belong to the private schools in comparison to government schools (43%). There was no significant difference between regular users of tobacco based on the district of the school. The study observed that the age of initiation of tobacco is important predictor of regular use of tobacco. It has been found that as the age increases the chance of regular use is high as the students who start tobacco at early age (10 years to 15 years) are consuming regularly in comparison to others. The study also reveals that by the age of 16-17 years very less number (3.4 %) of students initiate tobacco as at this age majority of the students have already become addicted.
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to tobacco. The mean age of initiation of tobacco use was found 10-13 years. The earlier studies (Umesh 2006 and Bhojani et al., 2009) conducted in Delhi reported that most of the regular users of tobacco initiated at the age of 14-15 years. This clearly shows that the age of initiation is coming down from 14 - 15 years to 10-13 years. The findings also show that there were students (8%) who started tobacco between the age of 7 to 9 years or even earlier.

There are several factors that can lead to tobacco consumption among students. The data shows that a higher proportion of students i.e. 39 % were influenced by tobacco advertisements from various media outlets (TV, Videos, Movies, etc.), 24% talked about their friends while 21.6% students were introduced to tobacco by their family members / relatives and 15 % also reported by their school staffs. The present study found that stress (29.2%) was the most common cause of tobacco use among students, followed by “to show themselves as a grown up individual” (22.1%). Friend’s/ peer pressure was found to be 16.8 %, curiosity was stated by 15.8 %, to increase self confidence was reported by 6.8 % students and 7.3% mentioned other reasons such as weight gain, taller height, tooth ache, etc. Another fact found was that majority of regular users, i.e. 66 % did not have good relations with their family. This clearly indicates that poor family relations are also an important factor leading to tobacco consumption among students. On the procurement of tobacco the results showed that majority (70.7%) of the students were freely purchasing tobacco products from the store, shop or from street vendors nearby their school and house. Nearly 8% of the students procured tobacco products from their homes and approximately 20% borrowed from someone or someone else purchased for them, especially in the case of girls (18.5 %).

The data found that 70 % of the students spent more than Rs 20 in a day on the consumption of tobacco. Only 29.9 % of the children spent less than ten rupees in a day for tobacco consumption. When they were asked about the source of money, 36% students mentioned about their pocket money, 28% borrowed money from someone, 22% stole from home/outside and 10 % sold their own things. The present study found that majority (82.1%) of the students opined that tobacco does not cause any problem and it has no harmful effects on health. But when probed further large majority of the regular users reported loss of appetite, fever, cold/cough, body ache, etc. Another fact found was that most of the regular tobacco users stated to be involved in theft, having more stress and anxiety, poor academic performance, etc.

Parents and teachers seem to be unaware about the present reality as majority (23 out of 40) of the parents refused to accept that their children are indulging in tobacco consumption. Only nine parents accepted it as a major problem and eight did not respond to the question.
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The fact that large majority (35 out of 40) of the parents had not discussed the harmful effects of tobacco consumption with their children clearly indicates their ignorance towards the problem. None of the schools had any type of programmeme related to tobacco. Majority of the students (82.1%) were not aware about the ill effects of tobacco and it was also observed that most of the students, parents and teachers did not have knowledge of laws prohibiting tobacco consumption.

Most of the schools do not have school counselors/social workers and the two schools covered by the study which had counselors were not allowed to perform their role. It was found that they were made to do substitute work rather than their own counseling work. There is an urgent need to sensitize the school personnel about the role of counselors/social worker so that they are allowed to perform their role effectively in the school.

The study revealed that there was no training given to the school personnel on awareness of the ill effects and symptoms of the tobacco use among students. The teachers even were not aware about the anti-tobacco programmemes and related laws. Therefore the study stressed upon the training of the school personnel on the awareness on harmfulness of tobacco use and it related laws so that teachers can intervene before the onset of addiction of tobacco. Training also may provide school personnel with essential tools to help them adopt and maintain a smoke free lifestyle so that students can see them as role models.

Hence, it can be concluded that the consumption of tobacco is an emerging social and public health problem and there is a need to sensitize parents, teachers and students towards the ill-effects of tobacco and the anti-tobacco programmemes for effectively dealing with the problem.

Recommendations

1. Formulation of a comprehensive school tobacco control policy and its effective implementation needs to be initiated.

2. The task of increasing awareness level of teachers, students and community needs to be continued and sustained as a high priority.

3. Teachers should be given training on formal tobacco-control education, and should have easy access to tobacco control materials.

4. Cessation help should be made available up to the school level for better outreach.
5. Access and availability of tobacco products to minors should be reduced to zero level by educating and involving other stakeholders such as community elders, school boards and tobacco sellers, etc.

6. Extra-curricular activities such as celebration of ‘World No–Tobacco Day’, Tobacco control photo exhibitions, essay writing competition etc. should become an essential component of school activity.

7. The intervention strategy focusing on stress management among students and family need to be developed.

8. Role of Counsellor needs to be strengthened in schools.

9. The findings of the study brought out that media has a major impact on children hence visual media and print media should to be used extensively to educate the students, teachers and parents regarding the ill effects of tobacco consumption and its consequence on health and social life.

10. There should be strict enforcement of anti tobacco laws.

14. Prohibit tobacco use at all school facilities and events at all times

15. School should encourage and help students and staff to quit using tobacco.

At last, in the light of findings an intervention strategy has been developed in the shape of Pamphlet on the awareness of tobacco ill effects for the students, parents and school.