

Available online at <http://www.ijims.com>

ISSN: 2348 – 0343

Knowledge on Harmful Effects of Tobacco Abuse among School going Adolescents at Rural Areas of Tiruvallur District of India

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Abstract

Adolescents are vulnerable targets for the tobacco industry, being easily influenced by television, cinema, advertisements, and by their peers. Studies reveal that tobacco abuse is rising in adolescent age group in India, making the adolescents vulnerable to several health complications. The aim of this study was to assess the knowledge and abuse of tobacco and to find out influencing socio-demographic factors. A cross sectional survey was carried out in coeducational high school of Thiruvallur district among 100 students of VIII-IX standard. It was found that knowledge score was higher in females, students from nuclear families, and those with literate parents. Low prevalence of tobacco intake was obtained among the students, with 9.8% reported having ever used smokeless tobacco and 4.3% ever smoked. Tobacco intake was higher among those with a history of parental tobacco intake. Continued information education and communication (IEC) activities should be conducted by the school authorities, with involvement of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and parents for primary prevention.

Keywords: Adolescents, Smoking, Smokeless tobacco, Tobacco

Introduction

Adolescents are vulnerable targets for the tobacco industry, being easily influenced by television, cinema, advertisements, and by their peers. Smoking causes cough, shortness of breath, respiratory illnesses, reduced physical fitness, poor lung function, lung cancer, cardio vascular mortalities, and morbidities. Smokeless tobacco can cause cancers of mouth, pharynx, esophagus, receding gums, leukoplakia, etc. A study conducted by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) among middle school students in 2004, found that 12% reported using tobacco at least once in past 30 days and boys (about 13%) were more likely than girls (about 11%) to use them. Among high school students, 54% reported ever having smoked tobacco, and overall 23% smoked cigarettes.

Background of the study

Worldwide study on 13-15 year school students suggests 17.3% students were currently using tobacco. Any tobacco use was highest in the American and European regions (22.2% and 19.8%, respectively) and lowest in the South-East Asian and Western Pacific regions (12.9% and 11.4%, respectively). Boys were more likely than girls to currently use any tobacco in Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asian, and Western Pacific regions. World Health Organization (WHO) and CDC in the United States, launched "Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS)." Among 50,207 school children, aged 13-15 years, in those countries who responded to a GYTS questionnaire, 12-70% had smoked at some time, 2-34% were current smokers, 11-39% started before 11 years, and 40-87% wanted to quit. GYTS results in India revealed that 30.4% boys and 16.8% girls never used tobacco; 22% boys and 10.3% girls were current users of tobacco; 18.5% boys and 8.4% girls were current users of smokeless tobacco with 10.5% boys and 4.4% girls being current smokers.

Objectives

1. To assess the knowledge of harmful effects of tobacco and its abuse among school-going adolescent.
2. To find out the association between socio-demographic factors influencing the knowledge score and abuse of tobacco in the study population.

Hypothesis

There is a significant association between Tobacco abuse & socio demographic variables of adolescents.

Research Methodology

A descriptive cross sectional school-based study was conducted at school in tiruvallur district .which was selected randomly and all the students in class VIII-X standard of those schools were included as study population after assuring anonymity and taking informed consent of school authorities.

Inclusion criteria

1. Study population age between 13- 16 years,
2. Study population who can understand Tamil and English.
3. Study population who were willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria

1. Study population who were in the age of above 17 years,
2. Study population who are not willing to participate.

Description of the instrument:**The instrument consists of two parts.**

Part-I Consists of demographic data which includes Age, type of Family , occupation ,income ,education status of parent , source of information (mass media, friends) etc.,

Part- A predesigned and pretested semi structured questionnaire based upon CDC and Global School Health Survey (GSHS) questionnaire (applicable for students of class VIII-X) was prepared in Both Tamil & English, for self administration to the school students.

Data Collection Procedure

To assess knowledge, questions were adapted from GSHS questionnaire and scores were assigned for correct responses giving equal weight age. At end of data collection ,health talk on harmful effects of tobacco and benefits of quitting were delivered to participating students of the schools.

Results

Majority of the study population (76%) comprised of students aged 12-15 year. Nearly 46% of them belonged to nuclear families and in more than 50% of the students parents were literate. Nearly 70% of the students said there was no discussion about the hazards of tobacco in school during the past year, although 42% were informed about the hazards of tobacco at home. Nearly 33% students had seen anti tobacco advertisements in media last month, while 25% had watched their favorite heroes smoking on television or cinemas. Nearly 26% of the students thought that smoking causes no health problems. Nearly 29% thought that those who smoke are not mentally strong. Nearly 43% would refuse their best friend if offered tobacco. Knowledge regarding harmful effects of tobacco was assessed.. That '*tobacco is injurious to health and causes addiction*' was known to 69% males and 31% females . Side effect of nicotine causing stroke was known to 58.8% boys and 41.2% girls. Effect of tobacco on oral hygiene was correctly responded by 59.3% males and 39.7% females; ill effects of passive smoking by 53% boys and 47.0% girls. Tar of the cigarette causing lung cancer was nearly equally known to boys

and girls (50.2% vs.48.8%). Nearly 55.6% boys and 44.4 % girls correctly pointed out fetal risk from maternal tobacco consumption. Knowledge score was higher in female students, adolescents from nuclear families and whose parents were literate .Among the ever users of smokeless tobacco, 73% started by 11 years of age. Among these 17% were current users of smokeless tobacco. Use of smokeless tobacco including its current use was similar in both sexes. Only 10 male students have ever smoked, which was started mostly at the age of 10-11 years, and among them only 30% are current smokers. The first tobacco was consumed at friend's house (43.3%) followed by neighborhood (10.7%) and friends supplied most of them (14.4%) followed by roadside sellers (9.6%). History of parental tobacco intake accounts for 19.5% of the study population. .History of ever smoking and currently smoking; history of ever use of smokeless tobacco and current usage were all found to be high with history of parental tobacco intake

Conclusion

Knowledge score was significantly related to sex, type of family, parental education. Low prevalence of tobacco intake was observed in this study, but it was more among students with history of parental tobacco intake. Though the importance of IEC in addressing the problem of tobacco abuse is well-known but we found nearly no discussion on this matter was done in schools last year. Continued IEC activities emphasizing primary prevention and implementation of the National Tobacco Control Program are important to address this problem. Involvement of teachers, parents and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) are important steps in addressing these problems.

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