Research Article

Tobacco use and awareness patterns among students of an Industrial training Institute in Mangalore, South India

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Abstract

Background: Tobacco use is a common form of addiction which is started at an early age in various forms.  
Aims: To look at the use of tobacco products among students and to assess the awareness of students regarding the adverse effects of tobacco use. 
Material and methods: A cross sectional survey of students of a government run industrial training institute. 
Results and conclusion: Mean age of starting tobacco consumption was 16.3 years. Influence of friends mentioned by 47.05% of users for starting tobacco use. Awareness regarding health problems was seen in 99.7% of all students, among whom 82% were aware of malignancies. 
Keywords: Tobacco, Smoking, Addiction, Awareness, Students.

1. Introduction

Tobacco use is a very prevalent form of addiction in humans. It is used in various forms like smoking, chewing and as snuff. Addiction to tobacco use is one of the important factors which leads to its continuous use despite being aware of its adverse effects. Many adverse effects have been studied which include respiratory disorders, cardiovascular hazards and cancers/malignancies of the aero digestive tract. According to the WHO world health statistics 2012, the prevalence of smoking any tobacco product in India is 26% among men and 4% among women.

The World Bank reports state that about 82000-99000 children and adolescents all over the world begin smoking everyday and about half of them continue it to adulthood.

This study looks at the awareness of students about the adverse effects of tobacco consumption.

2. Material and Methods

This was a cross sectional survey. The students of a government industrial training institute were given a structured, self administered questionnaire which had twenty questions. Data on the use of tobacco, patterns of tobacco use, awareness about the health hazards and passive smoking were collected. Only the students who willingly consented to participate in the study were included.

The questionnaire included questions regarding the current tobacco use, past history of tobacco use, forms in which the tobacco was consumed, duration of tobacco use and reason for the use. An attempt was made to check the awareness among the participants by asking questions like whether they knew that tobacco consumption was injurious to health; and that it caused serious health problems. Also questions regarding passive smoking were asked.

3. Results

Three hundred students responded to the questionnaire. Eighteen students chose not to participate out of a total three hundred eighteen students. The response rate was 94.33%. The age of the participants ranged from 15 years to 23 years. All the participants were males as there were no female students.
3.1 Tobacco use
Tobacco was currently being used by 5.66% of the participants, while 94.3% were non users [Figure 1]. Smoking constituted 52.94% of tobacco users; Gutkha was consumed by 35.29%; 5.88% used snuff; and 5.88% used tobacco in multiple forms.

Age of first use
The mean age of starting tobacco consumption was however 16.3yrs. However 41% of the respondents had revealed that they had started tobacco consumption before 15 yrs of age.

3.2 Reasons for Tobacco use
Among the reasons mentioned for initiating tobacco use common ones were Friends influence (47.05%), Stress relief (17.64%), Fashionable (17.64%) while 29% did not mention any of the mentioned reasons [Figure 2].

Figure 2: Reason for starting tobacco consumption

Interestingly, 76.4% of users had contemplated about stopping tobacco use but were unable to do so. When asked about smoking in public places, all (100%) revealed that they continue to smoke in public places while 70% of them said they do so only occasionally.

3.3 Awareness about Health Hazards
The awareness that tobacco is injurious to health was observed in 99.66% of the total participants. Among the health problems related to tobacco use, cancer was mentioned by 82.6% of the participants and lung diseases by 29%. Awareness regarding other problems was very minimal - Heart attack (6.6%), stroke (4.3%), fertility issues (2.3%), peripheral vascular disease (6%) [Figure3].

Figure 3: Awareness of health hazards of tobacco consumption

Among the participants only 28.33% were aware of the meaning of the term ‘passive smoking’. Awareness regarding the fact that passive smoking can cause health problems was known to 57.66% of all participants, while 40.33% of them said they did not know about it.

4. Discussion
Three hundred students were included for this questionnaire study. All the students were either in their late teens or early adulthood and the age ranged from 15 years to 23 years. All of them were males. The questionnaire was formed in a way to assess the level of awareness and the current patterns of tobacco use.

Table 1: Current use of tobacco - a comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Current use of tobacco</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bhojani et al 10</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>GYTS 2009 11</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Singh et al 12</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gupta et al 13</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kotwal et al 14</td>
<td>16.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Present study</td>
<td>5.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our study found that 5.6% of the students used tobacco. These findings are similar to those of Bhojani et al and Singh et al [Table 1]. The mean age of starting tobacco consumption in our study was 16.3yrs. A study by Kotwal et al 14 found it to be earlier at 14 yrs.

The awareness that tobacco use was harmful was very high (99.6%), compared to studies by Bhojani et al 10 (78.3%). However specific disease awareness was limited to cancer (82.6%) and respiratory illness (29%). Awareness regarding heart disease, peripheral vascular disease and infertility was low. However in comparison to various other Indian studies, awareness levels are very high. [Table 2].
Table 2: Awareness regarding health hazards of tobacco use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Cancer</th>
<th>Respiratory illness</th>
<th>Heart attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bhojani et al 10</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>GYTS, 2009 11</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Singh et al 12</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Singh et al 15</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sajjan et al 16</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Present study</td>
<td>99.66%</td>
<td>82.66%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to our study, the most common reason cited for initiating tobacco use was ‘Friends Influence’. This is higher than the compared observations from studies in Bengaluru [25.5%], Delhi [38%] and Mumbai [46%]. The interesting point to note was that all the smokers considered tobacco chewing to be most harmful while tobacco chewers considered smoking to be more deleterious. With regard to smoking in public places, all the smokers continued to smoke in public places.

5. Conclusion
Tobacco use was seen in 5.6% of the participants. Awareness levels have shown an increase from other studies. Majority of the students were aware that tobacco caused harmful effects but the knowledge regarding specific adverse effects was inadequate. Tobacco users were aware of its health hazards but had continued its use regardless. Those who used tobacco considered influence of friends as a very important factor in starting tobacco use.

This study reveals that while tobacco use patterns have not increased and have remained the same, awareness levels have increased. However, raised awareness levels has not led to reduction or stopping its use. Regular health education programs and individual counseling might help in achieving the objective of reducing tobacco use.

References