



Role of Youth in Preventing Tobacco Addiction

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Abstract

In 21st century India has become one of the countries with most deaths occurring due to tobacco associated habits. The role of youth in control and prevention of tobacco and associated habits has become very crucial. This study paper focuses more on methodology and coping strategies which can be implemented and will give desired results in coming years taking the power of youth in consideration. Based on the concept ‘‘ The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow ‘‘ this article gives a broad perspective in making India a tobacco free country with the help of young generation.

Keywords: Addiction , Awareness, Cancer , Prevention , Role , Smoking , Tobacco, Youth.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, India is the second largest producer of tobacco next to China. Tobacco induced oral cancer is the sixth most common type of cancer, with India contributing to almost one-third among all the countries and it is on second place for having the most number of oral cancer cases.

In today’s world the use of tobacco has been seen to be increasing especially among the youth. The youth being the most critical and vulnerable period of life are highly motivated. If our youth arise and act, they have the potential, strength and dynamism to generate a huge transformation in the society. Considering social vulnerabilities of youth interventions are necessary based on the sociodemographic factors.

‘The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow’-Nelson Mandela.

The Tobacco Institute of India reports that cigarette sales have increased by 26.5% between 1993–94 and 1997–98, and estimates that tobacco consumption will continue to increase by 5% per year.^[1] Even the companies such as The Indian Tobacco Company Ltd (ITC), manufacturer of Gold Flake and Wills cigarettes promote these products in places where the young people visit more. Hence it is very important to engage the youth in tobacco control efforts. They are an essential part of an effective and comprehensive tobacco program.

In 21st century, India has become one of the countries in which most deaths occur due to tobacco associated habits.^[2]

Tobacco is dangerous for our health and has numerous ill effects. It affects mind as well as body when consumed. We need to discuss everything and spread awareness among all the individuals’ especially young individuals because they get influenced easily due to many factors (stated by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS] 1994) such as:-

Sociodemographic factors (socioeconomic status [SES], developmental challenges of adolescence, gender, and race/ethnicity); Environmental factors (acceptability and availability of tobacco products, interpersonal variables,

perceived environmental variables); Behavioral factors (academic achievement, problem behaviors, influence of peer groups, participation in activities, and behavioral skills); Personal factors (knowledge of the long-term health consequences of using tobacco, functional meanings of tobacco use, subjective expected utility of tobacco use, variables related to self-esteem, and personality); and current behavior relative to tobacco use (intentions to smoke and smoking status).

These individuals should be motivated to actively participate in preventing and restricting the use of tobacco and tobacco related products, which will eventually lead in making the country tobacco free and improve overall quality of life.

ILL EFFECTS OF TOBACCO

Tobacco can lead to a variety of ongoing complications in the body, as well as long-term effects on our body systems. While tobacco can increase the risk of a variety of problems over several years, some of the bodily effects are immediate. Its consumption causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. The risk for tuberculosis, certain eye diseases, and problems of the immune system, including rheumatoid arthritis can be seen significantly high among such individuals.

The true face of tobacco is disease, death and horror - not the glamour and sophistication the pushers in the tobacco industry try to portray. Every pack of cigarettes contains a statutory warning about the health hazards of smoking, but how dangerous they really are? It is observed that on a day-to-day basis the number of smokers has been increasing rapidly. With time tobacco if consumed in any form including different harmful ingredients in different products such as acetone, tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide can turn out to be fatal.

Nicotine is one of the major factors leading to health-related problems in individuals. It is a very poisonous substance and also leads to addiction. When consumed nicotine travels to the brain within a short span of time almost in seconds. In brain it binds to specific receptors having structural similarity like acetylcholine that leads to cerebral metabolism which in turn is then distributed throughout the body majorly involving the skeletal muscles. The brain ends up needing more nicotine. As nicotine mimics the work of dopamine that provides the feel-good factor, your brain starts associating smoking with feeling good. When you try to quit smoking, you start experiencing withdrawal symptoms which is because of nicotine, the feeling of irritation, anxiousness, suggests body has a strong craving for nicotine. As a result of these symptoms, most people reach for another last cigarette, and then another which is never last. It is basically nothing but knowingly fooling oneself.^[3,4]

On the other side Carbon Monoxide also causes harmful effects by reducing the levels of oxygen in the blood and leading to difficulty in breathing. One of the most common carcinogenic factors is Tar which contains Benzopyrene. Various other compounds causing cancer are carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ammonia, volatile nitrosamines, hydrogen cyanide, volatile sulfur containing compounds, volatile hydrocarbons, alcohols, aldehydes and ketones.^[5]

Taking everything into consideration, tobacco consumption ultimately leads to negative effects not only on mental and physical health but also on the daily lives of that person and also the people surrounding him.

DISCUSSION

The youth can be the voice of the people in educating them about the ill effects of tobacco use. Their new ideas and innovative tactics can be of great use in such programs. They bring energy to activities and events that can increase awareness and advance tobacco control goals. Before engaging the youth, it is important to educate them about the same. They are engaged when they are respected and trusted as well as when their opinions and ideas are valued. They are involved as both teachers and students and see change as a result of their contributions.

Youth is that generation of our society that can bring about a huge change if given a chance and guided properly. They can help build tobacco free communities as youth and later as adults. The tobacco industry keeps targeting the youth into using their products to replace that die or quit using tobacco. Now if the youth are educated about the ill effects of tobacco at a young age this can be prevented which is essential because younger the children when they first start using tobacco the more likely they are to become regular users and less likely they are to quit.

Young generation is especially vulnerable to second hand smoke exposure. It is the need of the hour to create a tobacco free environment. Young people's energy and enthusiasm for tobacco free strategies can help to bring attention towards the importance of protecting youth from exposure to second hand smoke and e- cigarette aerosols, and also can call attention to tobacco control issues by raising awareness about tobacco impact on health in their society.

They can spread awareness and educate people starting from their home itself. Youth have the courage of raising their voice when something is wrong; they notice what is going on in their community. This can be helpful as they may conduct surveys regarding the smoke free laws in their community and whether they are enforced or not. They can talk to the community members about the importance of comprehensive smoke free laws that can make quitting tobacco easier. The Youth and staff can also educate the community on available cessation resources.

When young people speak about how the cost of tobacco may affect the use of tobacco, they help us in making strategies to increase the price of tobacco products. They can help to survey people about their support for tobacco control strategies. They can use this information to design health communication campaigns and other strategies to reduce tobacco use. When youngsters get involved in tobacco control programs, they are forming the next generation of tobacco control leadership, also those who see the impact of their efforts may even choose to devote their careers to building tobacco free communities.

Thus, stopping the consumption and spreading awareness among all individuals is only the option which will bring the health back on track and will further decline the use and substance abuse. Willpower alone cannot help us in stopping smoking suddenly; it has been considered the least effective way. It can be easier with the support of family and friends. It is often said that surrounding environment influences the person, also one should find other ways to cope up with stress and anxiety. The most important thing to keep in mind is quitting and it is not as easy as it seems and relapse is a common factor despite of which one should not quit trying.

COPING STRATEGIES IN INDIA

The Government of India has become increasingly involved with India's tobacco problem in the recent times. Various acts have been introduced such as COTPA introduced in 2003 which is a more comprehensive cigarette and other Tobacco products act. It focuses mainly on the tobacco use in public places and tobacco advertising as well as sales and packaging regulations. Apart from this the Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (FCTC) was regulated in 2005. The WHO also plays an important role as it helps in introducing smoke free policies, pricing and taxation measures as well as preventing tobacco sales among minors

MPOWER is one such program which focuses on collection of both clinical and process outcomes (Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies, protect people from tobacco smoke, offer help to quit tobacco use, warn about the dangers of tobacco, enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, raise taxes on tobacco ^[6,7]

The fourth round of Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4) conducted in 2019 by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) was designed to produce national estimates of tobacco use among school going children aged 13-15 years at the state level and Union Territory (UT) by gender, geographic location of the school (rural-urban), and management of school (public-private). The first three rounds of GYTS took place in in 2003, 2006 and 2009.

A total of 97,302 students from 987 schools out of which 544 were from public while 443 were from private participated in the survey. From these 80,772 students aging from 13-15 years were considered for reporting. The objective of the survey was to provide information on tobacco use, cessation, second-hand smoke, access and availability, exposure to anti-tobacco information, awareness and receptivity to tobacco marketing, knowledge, and attitudes. The Minister was also informed regarding the key findings of the Survey: Almost one-fifth of the students that were aged from 13-15 years used some form of the tobacco product (smoking, smokeless, and any other form) in their life. However, the current use which is during last 30 days was 8.5%. Compared to the last two surveys, the current use declined by 42% (2009-2019). ^[8]

CONCLUSION

‘WE CANNOT ALWAYS BUILD THE FUTURE FOR OUR YOUTH, BUT WE CAN BUILD OUR YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE’ – Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Under many measures taken to involve youth in programs in India Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF) has conducted various campaigns that also involves the school children to spread awareness regarding tobacco consumption and its harmful effects. They have launched various campaigns such as Quit Tobacco Movement (2008) to promote freedom from tobacco, Life Se Panga Mat Le Yaar (2011) to counteract positive images of tobacco in popular cinema, Election Campaign (2014) to encourage people to stop using tobacco as part of new year's resolution and ‘Tambakhu ko Dhishum’ (2015) to collect cases of violation of COTPA (Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products Act) 2003. ^[9]

These campaigns help in reaching out to a huge number of people and attain our objective of involving the youth in such programs. It helps in reducing the tobacco habits in future generations of India.

Hence youth play an important role in tobacco control programs. They should be encouraged for their initiative and innovative ideas, by the members of the society as they help to make the society a better place to live in by teaching people regarding the ill effects of tobacco and promoting a better lifestyle.

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