



TOBACCO: THE BANE OF THE SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

In 21st century tobacco has become a greatest public health threat in the world due to alarming spike in its demand and consumption. This increase paves way to pressure and burden on economy of the country and further renders burden on health system due to adverse health impacts conferred by frequent consumption of tobacco. Around 80% of the world's 1.1 billion smokers are from low- and middle-income countries, where the number of tobacco-related illness and death is highest. In current eras more number of teenagers and adolescents are indulging in this deadly habit of tobacco consumption. Tobacco use specifically smokeless tobacco use among teenagers and adolescents is considered as a symbol of belonging to higher strata of society and way to escape from stress. The aim of this article is to highlight the changing trends in tobacco use which has led to increased prevalence of tobacco use among adults and tobacco becoming the bane of society. It also encompasses various initiative and legislative steps taken by government to combat with increased tobacco use.

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INTRODUCTION

Tobacco use is one of the world's most serious public health problem.^[1] Tobacco kills nearly six million people worldwide annually. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, there were 100 million premature deaths worldwide due to tobacco use in the twentieth century, and if current tobacco use trends continue, this number is expected to rise to 1 billion in the twenty-first century.^[1] Tobacco is addictive due to the nicotine content, making it difficult to refrain from purchasing tobacco products. Tobacco use has significant economic costs, including significant health-care costs for treating disease caused by tobacco use, as well as lost human capital due to tobacco-attributable morbidity and mortality.^[1] The purpose of this article is to elucidate reasons leading to increased demand and popularity of tobacco among teenagers and adolescents and focuses on initiative taken by government of India to combat with increasing tobacco use

Why Tobacco has become the bane of the society?

Tobacco use is highly prevalent among all stratas of society specifically among the people of developing countries. Among all the countries worldwide, prevalence of tobacco use ranges from 43% in Bangladesh to 6% in Panama and Nigeria. Prevalence is much higher among men than women, 12 countries have a prevalence lower than 5%. The men to women ratio prevalence of tobacco use was highest in Egypt (38:1) and in Asian countries such as Malaysia (22:1) and China (27:1) and was lowest in Argentina, Brazil, Greece, Poland and Uruguay as the ratio of male to female tobacco use was less than 2:1.

People who use tobacco daily contribute to majority of tobacco users in all countries except Mexico. In the 22 countries, there are 879 million current tobacco users, including 721 million men and 158 million women. Egypt consist of highest ratio of men to women tobacco users that is 61:1. In China 288 million men and 13 million women are tobacco users and is the country with the largest number of tobacco users, followed by india with 197 million men and 78 million women. The prevalence of tobacco use (smoking and smokeless) generally increases in young adulthood or middle age and then decreases, mainly due to quitting of habit or death of tobacco user. However, this trend is less obvious in Asian countries particularly India, Bangladesh and Thailand where prevalence is highest among adults age 65 and above.^[2] According to Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2 reports 2017, In India 28.6% adults have indulge themselves in consuming both the forms of tobacco out of which 10.7% adults are users of smoking form of tobacco and 21.4% are smokeless tobacco users [Fig 1].^[3] Khaini(a form of Smokeless Tobacco) and bidis are the predominant forms of tobacco consumed in India, around 11% and 8% men consume khaini respectively.^[4] Among all states/UTs in India, the prevalence of tobacco use is highest in Tripura (64.5%), while the lowest prevalence is in Goa (9.7%). Tobacco users outnumber non-users in Tripura and its neighbouring states of Mizoram (58.7 percent) and Manipur (55.1 percent)[Fig 2 and Fig 3].^[2] In the recent years it has gained popularity among teenagers and adolescents. Teenagers and adolescents consider tobacco intake as stress buster. Since the teenagers and adolescents are future of the society intake of tobacco at such initial stage of life will have direct impact on their overall health leading to subsequent decline in their

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performance and success rate. Tobacco use imposes burden on economic costs and health-care costs for managing diseases caused due to tobacco use. It further leads to loss of human capital due to tobacco-attributable morbidity and mortality. The industries concerned with the manufacture and supply of tobacco attract youth in this trap of such addictive substance by using flavours that are attractive to them in tobacco and nicotine products and through attractive packaging. They promote tobacco products as “reduced harm” or “cleaner” alternatives by celebrity/influencer sponsorships and brand sponsored contests. They attract the teenagers and adults by sale of tobacco products at vendor outlets frequented by children. Industries concerned with tobacco manufacturing promote and sell single stick cigarettes and other tobacco and nicotine products near schools. Such activities of industries concerned with manufacturing and purchase of tobacco employ litigation to weaken all kinds of tobacco control regulations and efforts of all organizations for tobacco control.

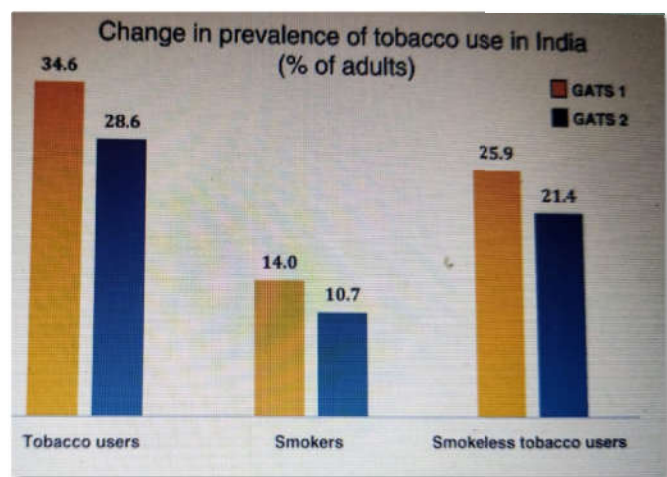


Fig 1 Epidemiology of Tobacco used in India (According to GATS 1(2009-2010) And GATS 2(2016-2017)

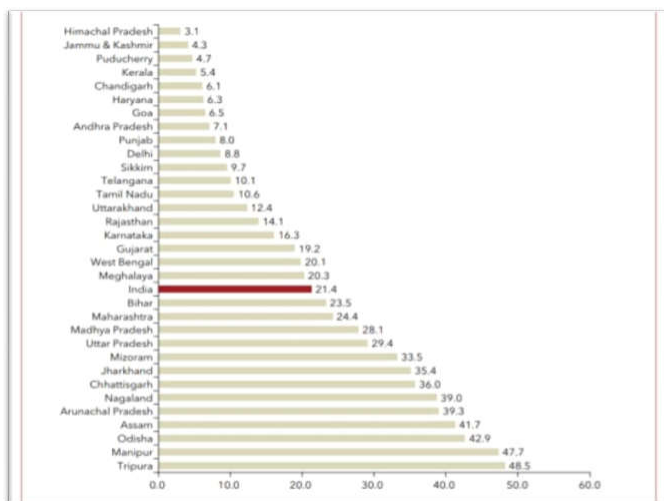


Fig 2 Prevalence of Smokeless Tobacco users according to state union territories of India

(According to GATS (2016-2017))



Fig 3 Prevalence of Smoking form of tobacco use according to state union territories

(According to GATS 2016-2017)

Initiatives taken by government of India to reduce tobacco intake

Tobacco legislation in India

India is emerging as the country with increased prevalence of tobacco use hence various step has been undertaken by government of India in the form of policies, national programmes and laws for tobacco control. India is considered to play a leading role in formulation of tobacco control policies and has enacted various comprehensive laws and legislation.^[5] The Government enacted the Cigarette act (Regarding control, Distribution, supply) in the year 1975.^[6] One of the step towards it included statutory warning which includes printing of scary pictures on tobacco packets highlighting “smoking is injurious to health”, to be displayed on all tobacco packages, advertisements and cartoons related to tobacco. In Maharashtra and Karnataka a rule was formulated that entails prohibition of cigarette smoking in public places. In Maharashtra as per the specification of board in English and Marathi instructions were displayed regarding prohibition of smoking tobacco use in premises which were declared as smoking free.^[7] According to Food Adulteration Act 1990 (Amendment) act statutory warning regarding harmful effects of pan masala and chewing tobacco was made mandatory.^[8] According to Drug and Cosmetic 1940 (Amendment) in the year 1992 use of tobacco in all dental products was banned.^[9] Under Cable Television Network act 2000 (Amendment) ads on tobacco use was banned on state controlled electronic media and cable televisions.^[10] Another legislation that was enacted by Government of India on Cigarette and Tobacco products (Regarding prohibition of Advertisements, Trade Commerce Distribution and Supply) COTPA that came into being in the year 2003.^[11] The major norms of this act includes prohibition of smoking tobacco at public places, advertisement of tobacco products by adults below 18 years of age and sale of tobacco products within 100 metres of educational institutes was prohibited with mandatory pictorial warning regarding harmful effects of tobacco on tobacco packages. The law also mandates testing and checking of nicotine and tar in tobacco products. The law pertaining to pictorial warning on tobacco products finally came into being on 31st May 2009. In the year

2004 Government ratified the W.H.O Framework for Tobacco Control(F.C.T.C) consists of strategies to reduce tobacco demand and purchase.^[12]These strategies to reduce tobacco use included(statuatory warning regarding adverse effects of tobacco, pictorial warning) further strategies adopted to reduce tobacco purchase includes hike in the charges of taxes in the purchase of tobacco products thereby giving a set back to tobacco manufacturing company,^{[13][14]} Despite implementation of National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) many states failed to formulate a effective tobacco control measures.^[13] A nationwide mass media campaign programme for spreading awareness regarding tobacco control and provisions under COTPA are some of the initiative of NTPC from last 3 years. The anti-toabcco messages in TV and radios are translated in 18 languages under national level campaign programme. The World Lung foundation confers technical support for the establishment of well tested and good quality radio and TV spots.^[12] The Ministry of Family and Health Welfare has led a research project with respect to cultivation of alternate crops as a replacement to tobacco in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture and Central Tobacco Research institute Rajmundry Andhra Pradesh. The initial results described by Central Tobacco Research institute can become a bigger step in tobacco control as it suggested presence of economically viable options for alternate crop.^[11] In the year 2009, further advancement was formulated towards this was set up of Tobacco Cessation centres that were designated as Resource Centre for Tobacco Control(R.C.T,C) which apart from providing tobacco cessation .made an effort in setting up Tobacco Cessation Centre in educational institutes and further these institutes are providing outreach programmes in spreading awareness related to adverse effects of tobacco among school, urban and rural areas. Tobacco regulation act enforced by Government of India on e-cigarettes is Prohibition Of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Trade Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage And Advertisement) Act, came into being in the year 2019. The tobacco regulation law imposed ban on the production, manufacture, trade, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement of electronic cigarettes”.^[15] Tobacco regulation billrecently proposed by Government of India Ministry of Health and family Welfare in the year 2021 was COTPA (Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce Production Supply and Distribution) Amendment Bill. According to this bill certain amendments was made in the COPTA Act 2003. Complete ban was imposed on the sale of tobacco products to the children below 21 years of age and within 100 metres of educational institutes. A ban was further imposed on sale of loose cigarette products. The bill proposed supply, export and Commerce of cigarette or any other tobacco product in sealed, intact and original packaging.^[16]W.H.O has conferred its support towards implementation of IEC guidelines and policies for tobacco cessation in the country.^{[13][14]}National Guidelines for Treatment of Tobacco Dependence that was formulated in the year 2001, to provide training to professionals for implementation of tobacco cessations in the country .^[17]W.H.O and government collaborative work has led to assigning of 12 states out of 21 to consultants to help state government . Every year 31st May is celebrated as “WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY” which is the result of support and initiative of W.H.O .On this day every year Tobacco Control policies furthered by W.H.O is highlighted through state level

programmes . Every year State Tobacco Control cells organize programmes on theme set by World Health Organization on “World No Tobacco Day” , reiterating commitment of the state towards this approach.^[11]The theme of World No Tobacco Day for the year 2021 was “Commit to Quit”. According to World Health Organization(W.HO) , smokers are at 50% greater risk of COVID-19 disease in comparison to non-smokers. So quitting tobacco is considered as one of the important step to minimise the risk of getting infected with coronavirus .^[18]

Conclusion

In 21st century this addictive substances has enveloped the society in such a manner that it has crossed all the barriers of age, gender, socioeconomic status and taboo usually associated with it.^[19] Tobacco in all forms is harmful, and there is no safe level of tobacco exposure. Tobacco use has significant economic costs, including significant health-care costs for treating diseases caused by tobacco use, as well as lost human capital due to tobacco-attributable morbidity and mortality. This is a global concern and immediate step towards its restricted or negligible use is the need of the hour as more and more adolescents and youth who are the building blocks of any nation are slowly getting in the trap of this addictive world.^[20] Blend of awareness , motivation , mass participation ,more involvement of youth and drafting of stringent rules on tobacco use and making it to be followed strictly by everyone are the various initiative steps that can contribute in building a tobacco free world .

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