

Review Article

Do Movies Influence Smoking Among Adolescents?

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to sensitize the influence of movies on adolescent smoking. Adolescents' motives to start smoking differ from adults. The more exposure to tobacco that adolescents see and hear they are more likely to become tobacco users. Movies have a powerful influence on adolescent smoking. For tobacco industry to survive it hooks new customers to replace those who die or quit. Hence, they catch them young. Younger the age they start; longer the duration they use. Hence, the best way to protect the children from tobacco use, is to ban all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship in the media. Let us make our Kids Healthy and Smart! Say 'No' to Tobacco and 'Yes' to Life!

Keywords: media, teenage smoking, child mental health.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are children who are aged between 10-19 years. Adolescence is a developmental period where the child is in the process of becoming an adult. It is the period between puberty and adulthood. In this transition period tremendous change occurs in all dimensions such as physical, psychological and social. Apart from studying, one needs to learn the skills required in all aspects such as development of identity, abstract reasoning, performing adult roles and engage in meaningful relationships. At this stage their goal is to acquire sets of life skills. During this time, there is chance of engaging in high risk behavior.

Adolescents at this stage tend to experiment with many things such as

alcohol, tobacco and sex. These risks taking behavior can have an enduring effect on their mental health and obstruct them in achieving their goal. They get easily influenced by their peers and media.

Media

Media includes print and electronic media aimed at educating, entertaining and informing the public. Among the media, cinema is considered to be the most influential. The Indian film industry is one of the largest film industries in the world. Averagely every year 1250 feature films and short films are produced in India. It has about 13,000 cinema houses and every day 15 million viewers watch the movies (Censor Board, India). Influence of media on teen-age smoking is less studied in India.

Purpose of media is to educate, entertain and inform the public, and it is skewed by entertaining the public more. Specially, cinema rarely educates, occasionally informs but frequently entertains. Cinema is not only for entertainment, it reflects society and its culture as well. The freedom of expression is interpreted as the right to express one's opinion by word of mouth, writing, printing, picture or any other style. But this right is subject to "reasonable restriction" on grounds set out under Article 19 (2) which says that reasonable restrictions can be made to protect the larger interest of the community. In India media, especially cinema enjoys less restriction than any other countries in the world. The relatively small number of individuals controls what we watch, read and hear in the media

Factors influencing adolescents

Social psychology supports the connection between media and smoking. Bandura's Social Learning theory reveals that people can find out how to make out things by watching over, imitating and modeling others. This can be real-life situations, symbolic observation from TV/films. According to Erickson's psychosocial development adolescence were in the stage of identity vs confusion. Adolescence is a point of identity crisis, hence most of the adolescents identify actors as their models and imitate their actions, dialogues which showed in films. Social psychology supports the connection between media and smoking.

How actually media influence adolescent smoking?

Film motivates thought and activity and guarantees a high degree of attention and retention as compared to the printed lyrics. The combination of human activity and speech, sight and sound in semi-darkness of the theatre with elimination of all distracting ideas will bear a substantial impact on the psyches of the viewers and

can involve emotions. Therefore, it has as much potential for evil as it has for good and has an equal potential to instill or cultivate violent or good behavior. It cannot be equated with other modes of communication (Supreme Court judgment, 1989). Audio-visual medium can have a stronger influence than the printed word, particularly in the impressionable minds of the children.

Children are vulnerable in general and particular to the effect of media. They are easily impressionable, have difficulty in distinguishing fantasy and reality, motives and grey areas in the media messages (Latha KS 2007; Shanakarnarayanan 2007). Advertisements appearing on screens showing the macho image of men who smoke and drink alcohol have a lasting impact on children's minds (Sailaxmi, 2007). Movies rarely depict the negative health consequences associated with smoking. Depiction of smoking is more common in movies and smoking by popular actors has a major influence on adolescent because they glamorize, normalize and glorify smoking behavior. By doing so, media weakens the cultural opposition to tobacco use. Tobacco use among women and young girls is another rising concern.

Smoking in movies nearly triples the relative risk that an adolescent smoking. 52% of smoking initiation in the 10-14 year-olds was attributed to seeing smoking in movies. About 2050 adolescents (age 12-17) start smoking every day in the US, in that smoking in movies is accountable for addicting 1080 adolescents to tobacco, 340 of whom will die prematurely. Adolescent smoking has 19 times risk of getting cancer. Thus, smoking in movies is having a major effect on health (Stanton 2003). Several studies have reported that peer pressure often associated with initiation of substance use among adolescents. Adolescents with high exposure to smoking in movies are about three times more likely to try smoking or become smokers than less exposed

(Dalton 2003). Adolescents who lived with someone who smokes and whose parents did not discuss the adverse effects of smoking were almost twice as likely to smoke under the influence of smoking seen on TV or in movies than those not exposed (Butt 2009). These findings remain statistically significant after controlling for numerous other traditional risk factors such as personality, parenting style and socio-demographic variables.

Do movie stars influence smoking among adolescents?

There is a strong relationship between adolescents' favorite movie stars and their smoking status. Adolescents who smoke, their favorite stars smoked frequently on screen. Non-smoking Adolescents tend to develop smoking when they see their favorite star smokes on screen (Janet, 1999). Superstars in south India glamorize and glorify smoking as 'style'. Hence, many youth and adolescents tried smoking by imitating the styles of their favorite actors. These superstars normalize the smoking behavior and it becomes socially acceptable. About one-third of youth experimentation with tobacco occurs as a result of exposure to tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. Worldwide, 78% of young people aged 13-15 years report regular exposure to some form of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS). A ban on TAPS shows an average of 7% reduction in tobacco consumption.

Media and mental health of children

Studies have shown that excessive use of media leads to attention problems, school difficulties, sleep and eating disorders and obesity in children. In addition, the Internet and cell phones can provide platforms for illicit and risky behaviors among children. Messages about tobacco and alcohol are rampant in the media. They see signs for tobacco and alcohol products at concerts and sporting

events. Movies send kids the message that smoking and drinking make a person sexy or 'cool' and that "everyone does it". Three most advertised cigarette brands were also the most popular ones smoked by teens and they admit that ads about tobacco products they see on the screen influence them to smoke (Latha KS, 2007)

Wakefield (2003) reviewed the empirical studies on the influence of media on smoking and made the following observations. Media shapes and reflects the social values about smoking (b) media provides information about smoking directly to audiences (c) media act as a source of observational learning by providing models which teenagers may seek to imitate (d) media messages about smoking provides direct reinforcement for smoking or not smoking (e) media promotes discussion about smoking (f) the media also influences "intervening" behaviors that may make teenage smoking less likely.

How the media can curb the menace of adolescent smoking?

Movies and televisions need to educate public about the ill effects of smoking through programs and advertisements. There may not be many sponsors to support these kinds of initiatives except government. Most of the featured films in televisions are sponsored by advertising companies. They do not bother about smoking scenes in the movies. Now, movies are not rated based on smoking. Movies that depict smoking should be given an adult rating (A) or restricted rating (R). Like television, movies also need to display anti-smoking, static messages on screen. When the movies are broadcasted on television, smoking scenes can be censored. This would reduce the exposure of occurrence of smoking. Movies should de-normalize, de-glamorize, degrade tobacco use. By doing so, movies can curb the menace.

Overview of rating system of movies in India and US

Present movie rating in America (MPAA) Motion Picture Association of America			Existing Rating System In India (CBFC) Central Film Board Certification		The proposed system of rating the films in India	
Rating			Rating		Rating	
G	General Audience	Suitable for all audiences	U	Unrestricted public exhibition	'U'	Unrestricted viewing
PG	Parental Guidance Suggested	May contain some material not suitable for young children. Could include brief nudity.	A	Restricted to adult audiences	'12+'	Unsuitable for children below 12 years,
PG-13	Parents Strongly Cautioned	May not be appropriate for children under 13. May contain bad language, brief nudity, sexual overtones, and drug usage	U/A	Unrestricted public exhibition subject to parental guidance for children below the age of twelve	15+	Unsuitable for children below 15 years,
R	Restricted	Under 17 not admitted without parent or adult guardian. Film will definitely contain adult material	S	Restricted to specialized audiences such as doctors or scientists.	'A'	Only for adults, or people above 18 years.
NC-17	No one 17 and under will be admitted.	Adult film with explicit sex scenes, sexually-oriented language, or excessive violence			'S'	Restricted to certain professions or classes.

The Central Board for Film Certification (CBFC), known as the Censor Board, proposed new system of rating the films in line with international norms. Cinematograph Bill 2010, gives direction to certify films under the U, 12+, 15+, A and S categories. Initially, there were only two categories of certificate – 'U' and 'A', but two other categories were added in June, 1983 – 'U/A' and 'S'.

Initiatives taken by the media in against smoking

Advertising tobacco products on Media is against the law. At present, Indian media have stopped broadcasting advertisements related to tobacco and alcohol products. But still one can see lot smoking scenes in movies, television and posters showing celebrities photograph with a cigarette in their hands.

Enforcing ban on tobacco in India	National/ International TV/Radio	Local/International magazines	Local/International Newspapers	Billboard Outdoor Advertising	Point of sale	Internet	Overall Compliance of ban on direct advtmnt
Advertising	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	5/10
Promotion, sponsorship	Free distribution in mail or other means	Promotional discount	Non-tobacco products with tobacco brand names	Brand name of non-tobacco products used in tobacco products	Appearance of tobacco product in TV/ film	Sponsored events	Overall Compliance of Ban on promotion
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5/10
Additional bans	Ban on publicity of CSR activities by tobacco companies	Ban on publicity of CSR activities by other entities	A ban on tobacco companies funding for smoking prevention media campaigns	Required anti-tobacco ads for visual entertainment media product	Ban on tobacco vending machine	Sub national ban	
	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Most cinema theatres show antismoking advertisements before viewing the movie and during intermission. But it is not in accordance with Ministry of Health. Ministry of Health & Family Welfare notified the Information and Broadcasting Ministry that a 20 second anti-smoking

message as approved by (Health Ministry) with the voice of one of the actors who is seen smoking in the film to be broadcasted at the beginning and after an interval of the film. Secondly, A static anti-smoking message to be displayed on the movie/TV screen whenever smoking scenes comes in

the film. Presently film industry implements only first notification **without the voice** of the actors who smokes in the movie. Television sectors implements only second notification 'displaying static message'. The film industry has difficulty in implementing this notification.

Role of censor board in protecting children from negative influence of media

Central Government has issued the following guidelines to CBFC to ensure that

1. Children do not get exposed to psychologically damaging matter
2. The medium of film provides clean and healthy entertainment
3. Anti-social activities such as violence are not glorified or justified
4. Scenes which have the effect of justifying or glorifying drinking/smoking/ glamorize drug addiction are not shown
5. Scenes showing involvement of children in violence as victims or perpetrators or as forced witnesses to violence, or showing children as being subjected to any form of child abuse
6. Human sensibilities are not offended by vulgarity, obscenity or depravity; such dual meaning words as obviously cater to baser instincts are not allowed
7. Scenes degrading or denigrating women in any manner are not presented
8. Scenes involving sexual violence against women like attempt to rape, rape or any form of molestation or scenes of a similar nature are avoided, and if any such incidence is germane to the theme, they shall be reduced to the minimum and no details are shown

Media Literacy

Media Literacy is a science based approach to prevention. Most school based

prevention programs have endorsed media literacy. Many studies suggest that media literacy can make adolescents, less vulnerable to the negative effects of media. Children who understand the motivations and hidden agenda of media messages are less likely to adopt the destructive attitudes and behaviors that are depicted in the media. Media Literacy represents a new and exciting approach to protecting children and adolescents from the unhealthy effects of media. Media literacy is "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create/produce media in a variety of forms. Some of the key concepts of media literacy as follows.

1) **All media are constructions:** Media do not merely reflect society/external reality. Rather, they present carefully crafted constructions. Media Literacy works towards deconstructing these constructions

2) **Media construct reality:** majority of our observations and experiences from which we build up our understandings of the world are based on media messages that have pre-constructed attitudes, interpretations and conclusions.

3) **Audiences need to negotiate meaning in media**

4) **Media messages have commercial implications:** Media literacy aims to encourage awareness of how the media are influenced by commercial considerations

5) **Media messages contain ideological and value messages.** All media products are advertising in some sense proclaiming values and ways of life.

6) **Media messages contain social and political implications.** Media have great influence in politics and forming social change. Television can greatly influence the election results on the basis of image. In Tamil Nadu, major political parties have satellite channels to propagate their election manifestos. The role played by satellite channels was very evident from 2006 and 2011 Tamil Nadu assembly elections.

7) Each medium has a unique form and content: Each medium has its own grammar and codifies reality in its own particular way. Different media will report the same event, but create different impressions and messages

How parents can help?

Children spend an average of seven hours a day on entertainment media, including televisions, computers, phones and other electronic devices. To help kids to make wise media choices, parents should monitor their media diet. Parents can make use of established ratings systems for shows, movies and games to avoid inappropriate content, such as violence, explicit sexual content or glorified tobacco and alcohol use. American association of pediatrician recommends children should engage with entertainment media for no more than one or two hours per day.

Reinforce the positive values of a movie by sitting down with your children after the show and discussing what they saw. Use the movie as an educational aid, clearing up any misunderstandings and sharing new ideas. Parents who discuss the dangers of smoking with adolescent children are less likely to smoke even if they live with a smoker and are exposed to media smoking most of the time. Parental smoking strongly influenced smoking among adolescents than the media exposure (Villianti, 2011). Hence, parents are advised not to smoke /chew tobacco products at home. Adolescents perceiving high parental psychological control had a significant higher tendency to select smoking friends (Mercken 2013). Parents need to decrease their psychological control over their adolescents this would results less negative influence of peers on smoking.

Peer Influence on adolescent Smoking

Studies showed that adolescents are more likely to smoke if they have friends who smoke. The smoking status of friends is one of the highest correlates with

adolescent smoking. Peer influence has a stronger influence than peer selection on adolescent smoking (Hoffman 2007). Non-smokers were more likely to become smokers if they initially belonged to a smoking group and smokers were more likely to become non-smokers if they initially belonged to a non-smoking (Myon 2013). Selecting smokers as friends in 6th grade predicted both smoking and smoking susceptibility in 7th grade (Hall 2007).

WHO Initiatives

WHO announced theme for 2003 and 2008 World No tobacco day was 'smoke free films' and 'Tobacco free youth'. In July 2013 it launched WHO report on Global Tobacco Epidemic which has particular focus on enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS). WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is the first international treaty negotiated and demonstrated the world's commitment to decisive action to reduce tobacco use by banning TAPS. World Health Organization designed six MPOWER strategies to combat and protect the youth from tobacco use epidemic. They are

Monitoring tobacco use and prevention policies

Warning about the dangers of tobacco

Protecting people from tobacco smoke

Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship

Offering help to quit tobacco use

Raising tobacco taxes

CONCLUSION

Adolescents' motives to start and quit smoking differ from adults and their vulnerability to dependence makes prevention and refusal skills priorities. The more exposure to tobacco that adolescents see and hear they are more likely to become tobacco users. Movies have a powerful influence on children that they can negate parental influence against smoking. For

tobacco industry to survive it hooks new customers to replace those who die or quit. Hence, they catch them young. Younger the age they start; longer the duration they use. Hence, the best way to protect the children from tobacco use, is to ban all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship in the media. Let us make our Kids Healthy and Smart! Say 'No' to Tobacco and 'Yes' to Life!

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