

## Smoking Behaviour Among Resident University Students In North India: Some Issues And Challenges

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### Abstract

The use of tobacco as cigarettes has taken a form of epidemic. Unless it is not managed properly and in time it may become an uncontrollable behavior leading to long term health and social problem. This paper is based on a survey that was intended to explore the smoking habits of university students residing in hostels, their perception towards it, factors associated with it and their implications. The study was conducted using a questionnaire based survey among 200 students, who were in the habit of smoking, belonging to different classes and residing in the hostels of a residential central University of North India. It was found that smokers were mainly from urban background. More than a quarter of the smokers spent more than 600 rupees per month on smoking only. The most important reasons given by students for smoking behavior was peer pressure followed by tension. Most of them had started smoking between 14-17 years of age, followed by 17- 21 yrs. age group. The number of cigarettes used increased with seniority. Most of the surveyed students wanted to leave the habit but could not do so because of bad habit followed by tension. 51% faced health problems, the major ones being respiratory problems. The study suggests that most effective control of the habit can be achieved by targeting the students of adolescent age and minimizing the tension among them.

**Keywords:** Smoking, Adolescents, students' behavior, central university

### 1.1 Introduction

The use of tobacco as cigarettes is a phenomena predominating the 21-st century. Due to the large variety of diseases caused by smoking now it has taken a form of epidemic. The major diseases caused due to smoking are cardio vascular diseases, respiratory diseases, atherosclerosis or narrowing of arteries (Guyton and Hall, 2000) lung cancer and cancer of oral cavity etc (Harrison 2000) The smokers are 3 to 4 times more prone to heart diseases than non smokers (Anonymous, 1993) and 90% lung cancer deaths are due to smoking (Anonymous, 1979).

Approximately 90% (Park b 2000), of smokers start this behavior during adolescence. One of every three men in India is addicted to tobacco Cigarette smokers have a large share among them (Park a 2000). Factors that promote adolescent initiation of smoking are parental or older generation cigarette smoking, tobacco advertisement and promotion activities, easy availability of cigarettes and social acceptability of smoking. Approximately 70% to 80% smokers would like to quit smoking. One of the major cause due to which do not quit smoking easily is delayed

symptoms of diseases.

The present scenario of health and social risks due to smoking is a challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unless it is not managed properly and in time it will become an uncontrollable behavior leading to long term health and social problems all over the world.

Thus we found it very genuine to conduct a survey among the smokers of different classes residing in the hostels in order to study various aspects related with them.

### 1.2 Objectives of study:

1. To find out the background of smokers.
2. To assess monthly expenditure on smoking.
3. To find out the most vulnerable age of smoking.
4. To study the general trend of smoking frequency among different classes.
5. To analyze the health implication due to smoking.

### 1.3 Methodology

A survey was conducted among 200 students residing in different hostels of Aligarh Muslim University who were in the habit of smoking. The sample size was 50 students each of senior secondary, graduates, post graduates and research scholars category. The data was collected from the respondents through field survey with the help of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of many questions ranging from age, family background, home town (rural or urban), money sent from home, monthly expenditure, other sources of income (scholarships, tuition, etc.), reasons for smoking (peer pressure, tension, etc.), monthly expenditure on smoking, age of onset of this habit, brand of cigarette (or 'bidi') used, number of cigarettes smoked presently and in the past, their attitude towards leaving the habit and the health and social problems due to it.

**Statistical analysis:** The data of different groups was compiled and analyzed in various aspects of the respondents. The data was statistically evaluated and simple percentages were calculated. Chi square test was used to compare the categorical variables. The correlation between class in which the student was studying and the different responses was explored using spearman's test. All statistical analysis was done using SPSS 16.0 software. P value < 0.05 was considered as significant.

### 1.4 Results:

Smokers, especially students of senior secondary school and graduation (P < 0.05) were mainly from urban background but percentage of those from urban background decreased with class (table-I). Money received from home and monthly expenditure increased with class ( $r = 0.983$ ,  $r = 0.957$  respectively, table-II). More than half of the smokers spent upto Rs. 300/- on smoking and 26% spent more than Rs. 600/- per month (table-III) Expenditure was highest by research scholars and lowest by Senior Secondary students (P < 0.05). The most important reason for smoking was found to be peer pressure followed by tension. There was no significant difference in the causes mentioned by students studying in different classes (P > 0.05, table-IV). The age of onset for most of the students, especially those of senior secondary school was 14-17 yrs. (P < 0.05) followed by 17- 21 yrs. age group (table V). The frequency of smoking increased with class. Around one fourth of undergraduates and research scholars said that they smoked more than 10 cigarettes daily (table VI, Figure 1). There was a strong correlation between class and the desire to quit the habit. When asked whether they wanted to leave the habit, 64% of secondary school students said 'No' whereas an overwhelming majority (88%) of research scholars said that wanted to quit smoking. The causes for not leaving smoking were mainly habit and tension (tableVII). 51% faced medical

and social problems due to the habit, the major ones being cough and other respiratory problems (Fig 2). Both medical and social problems increased steadily with class ( $r = 0.959, P < 0.05$ )

### 1.5 Discussion:

The smokers were mainly from urban background. With increasing class percentage of rural background smokers increases. A wide gap in expenditure and money received from home is supplemented by other sources of income which include scholarships, local guardians, tuitions and part time jobs etc. 52% smokers spend up to Rs 300/month on smoking and the percentage of students spending more than Rs 300/month increases from senior secondary students to research scholars.

The major causes for smoking among students are prolonged habit, tension and friends. The major cause among senior secondary students is friendship followed by habit and tension. Undergraduates, post graduates and research scholars smoke due to prolonged habit or tension. An increasing trend of smoking due to habit is seen with the increase in class. 20% of senior secondary students smoke just to show-off and it declines towards higher classes. The factor of easy availability of cigarettes is equal among students of all classes and it seems that students of various classes do not have any problem in purchasing a cigarette from any place and smoking is socially acceptable.

Most of the smokers start very early between the age of 14 to 17 and 90% smokers started smoking before 21 years. 15% smokers are below the age of 14. This is in conformation of other studies.

The frequency of smoking increases tremendously with class. Those students who were weekly smokers have shifted to daily smoking and they have increased the number of cigarettes per day. Among post-graduate students high increase is found among daily smokers. In research scholars decrease is seen in both daily and weekly smokers but 6 folds increase is found among daily smokers smoking more than 10 cigarettes. The frequency of weekly smokers have decreased substantially with the increase in class. An increasing trend is seen in daily smokers.

Majority wants to leave smoking but they are unable. Those who do not want to leave smoking show high percentage among students of senior secondary and least among research scholars. Thus a decreasing trend of those who do not want to leave smoking is seen as class increases. This "showing off" factor is highest among senior secondary students and absent in research scholars.

Among graduates the most important factor is prolonged habit. An increasing trend of habit and tension is found as class increases. Half of the smokers have some health problems. The lowest among senior secondary students and highest in research scholars. So there is a continuous increase in health problems. Financial crisis and family pressure are the most important problem among senior secondary students. In graduates formation of cough and respiratory problems are significant & post graduates face problem of cough. Among research scholars cough is followed by lung infection and respiratory problem. The overall increasing trend of cough formation is seen. Same is with entire health problem specially lung and respiratory problems. Only research scholars reported for acidity, sleeping disorder, constipation etc.

### 1.6 Conclusion:

The study shows that most of the smokers have an urban background and belong to well-educated families. The most crucial age of onset of smoking is between 14-17. The next important age group is 17-21 years. 90% smokers have started smoking during their adolescence. The frequency of smoking is continuously increasing with class. The major factors are habit and tension. Approximately half of the smokers want to leave smoking but are unable to do so. The implications related to smoking are clearly visible. They increase with the increase in class due

to increase in frequency of smoking. About a quarter of the smokers spend more than 600 rupees on smoking only.

The health problems faced by these students are only short term implications of smoking and if not checked then a large number of students are prone to have many serious problems in the coming future. The main target group for antismoking programme should be students of Senior Secondary level. Efforts should be made to relieve the tension prevailing amongst the students for effective control of the menace.

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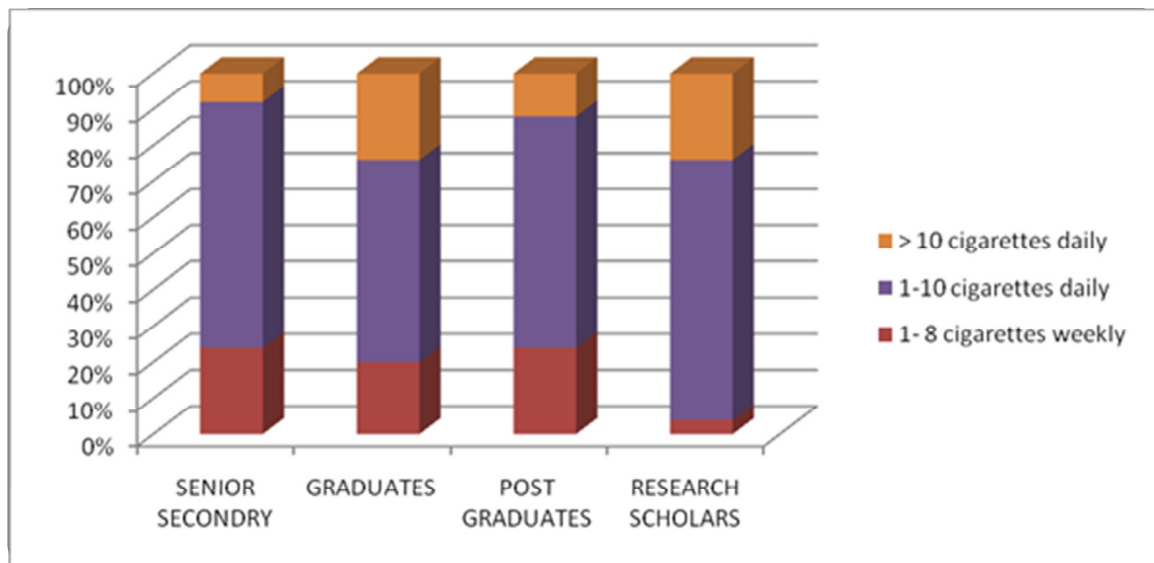


Figure 1: Frequency of smoking

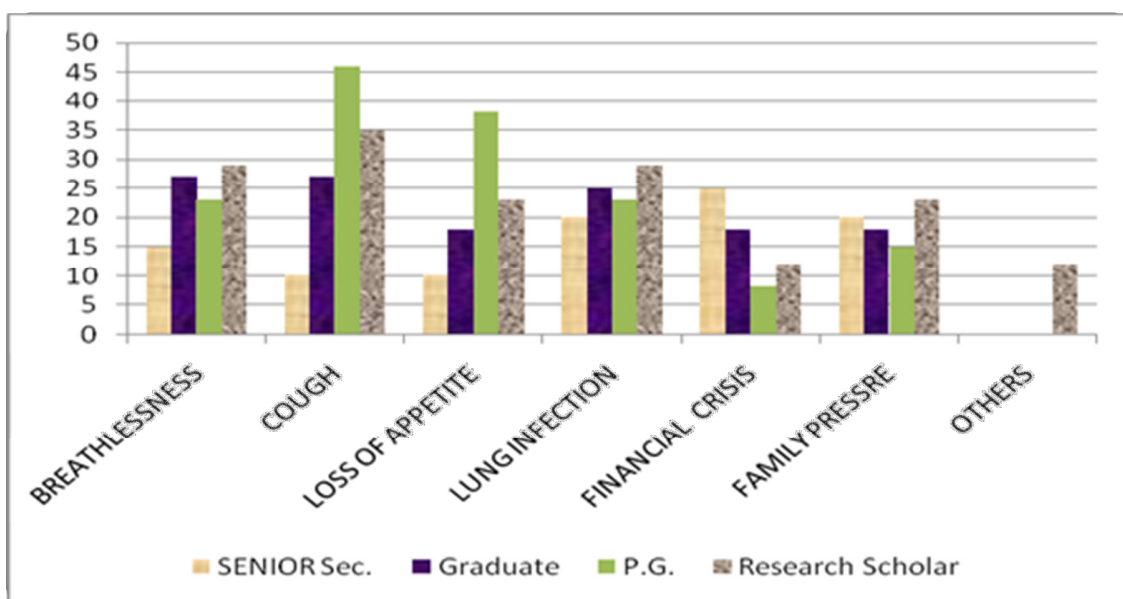


Figure 2: Health/social problems

TABLE – I PROFILE OF SMOKERS

CLASS	SENIOR SECONDARY	GRADUATES	POST GRADUATES	RESEARCH SCHOLARS	TOTAL
RURAL	28	32	36	52	37
URBAN	72*	68*	64	48	63
Posh Colony	16	12	6.5	8.5	9.5
Govt. Colony	11	6	13	8.5	6.3
General Colony	50	29	50	33	42.8
Others	22	53	31.5	50	41.2

P < 0.05

(All the figures are in percentage)

**TABLE – II INCOME/ STIPEND Vs MONTHLY EXPENDITURE (Rs.)**

CATEGORY	MONEY RECEIVED		MONEY SPENT	
	Up to 1500	>1500	Up to 1500	> 1500
<b>SENIOR SECONDARY</b>	60	40	60	40
<b>GRADUATES</b>	52	48	32	68
<b>POST-GRADUATES</b>	32	68	26	72
<b>RESEARCH SCHOLARS</b>	24	76	12	88
<b>Correlation (r)</b>	-0.983	0.983	-0.961	0.957

**TABLE – III MONTHLY EXPENDITURE ON CIGARETTE**

(Percentage of Respondents)

Expenditure (Rs.)	SENIOR SECONDARY	GRADUATES	POST-GRADUATES	RESEARCH SCHOLARS	TOTAL
UPTO 300	<b>60*</b>	44	54*	<b>40</b>	<b>52</b>
300-600	24	20	20	24	22
ABOVE 600	<b>16</b>	36	26	<b>36*</b>	26

P < 0.05

**TABLE – IV CAUSES OF SMOKING**

(number of students who responded in the affirmative)

CATEGORY	SENIOR SECONDARY	GRADUATES	POST GRADUATES	RESEARCH SCHOLARS	OVERALL
Peer Pressure	34	30	30	38	134
TO SHOW-OFF	10	4	10	8	32
TENSION	16	18	12	12	54
EASY AVAILABILITY	4	4	4	4	16
OTHERS	-	-	-	4	4

**TABLE –V: AGE OF ONSET OF SMOKING**

Age (years)	SENIOR SECONDRY	GRADUATES	POST GRADUATES	RESEARCH SCHOLARS	OVERALL
10-13	16	12	20	12	15
14–17	72*	32	28	48	45
18 –21	8	48	24	36	29
22-25	-	8	28	4	10

\*P < 0.05

(All the figures are in percentage)

**TABLE –VI Class-wise Smoking Pattern**

CATEGORY	1- 8 cigarettes weekly		1-10 cigarettes daily		More than 10 cigarettes daily	
	Last year	Present	Last year	Present	Last year	Present
SENIOR SECONDRY	40	24*	56	68	4	8
GRADUATES	36	20*	56	56	8	24*
POST GRADUATES	40	24*	52	64	8	12
RESEARCH SCHOLARS	12	4	82	72	4	24*
Correlation (r)	-0.767	-0.759	0.692	0.378	0.000	0.564

P < 0.05

NOTE: figures are in percentage

**TABLE – VII CAUSES FOR SMOKING**

Want to leave smoking	Senior secondary	Graduates	Post-graduates	Research scholars	r	Overall
NO	<b>64*</b>	56	40	12	<b>-0.968</b>	<b>43</b>
YES	36	44	60	88*	0.968	57
<b>REASONS FOR NOT LEAVING SMOKING:</b>						
Peer pressure	<b>25*</b>	8	<b>20*</b>	9		14
Bad HABIT	25	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>44</b>		<b>41</b>
TENSION	4	<b>24*</b>	16*	<b>33*</b>		<b>17*</b>
NOT SERIOUS	16	20	16	14		16
SHOW-OFF	<b>30*</b>	8	16	-		12

P < 0.05

**TABLE – VIII PRESENCE OF PROBLEMS O DUE TO SMOKING HABIT PROBLEMS**

ANY PROBLEMS?	SENIOR SECONDARY	GRADUATES	POST-GRADUATES	RESEARCH SCHOLARS	r	TOTAL
NO	60	56	48	32	<b>-0.959</b>	<b>49</b>
YES	<b>40</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>0.959</b>	<b>51</b>



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