

Prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and psychoactive drug use among the college students in Chitwan

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ABSTRACT

Background & Objectives: Students of colleges may be vulnerable to consume tobacco, alcohol and psychoactive drugs due to various factors. This study was conducted with objectives of determining the prevalence of smoking, alcohol and psychoactive drug use among the bachelor level college students of Chitwan. **Materials & Methods:** This is a descriptive cross sectional study among the 132 bachelor level students at various colleges of Bharatpur, Chitwan district of Nepal. The students were chosen by purposive sampling. A standard pre tested questionnaire was used to collect the data. **Results:** A total of 90 (68.2%) were males and 42 (31.8%) were females. The mean age was 22.2 ± 1.7 years. Seventy four (56.06%) responded that they had never consumed tobacco in any form. The number of cigarette smoked ranged from one to 20, with a mean of 7.85 ± 4.94 years. Forty eight (36.36%) never consumed alcohol and (87.87%) had never used psychoactive drugs. The most common motivator of the use of smoking, tobacco and psychoactive drugs was curiosity. **Conclusion:** The prevalence of smoking among the bachelor level students participating in our study was 43.94%, alcohol consumption was 63.63% and psychoactive drugs use was 12.12%.

Key words: Alcohol; College students; Drug use; Smoking

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INTRODUCTION

The tobacco epidemic is regarded as one of the most problematic public health threats the world has ever faced. It kills more than seven million people every year and currently it is regarded as the single most important causative agent of preventable deaths.¹ Students of college are in an important transition period of their life and this is the critical time when young adults start to use tobacco.²

In a similar study among college students in Kathmandu valley, it was found that seven in 10 students were currently smokers and the mean age of starting of smoking was 14.5 years.³ Several studies have shown that college students are prone to develop the habit of tobacco use³⁻⁷ and alcohol

and other drugs of abuse as well.^{3, 8, 9}

Substance use can cause various functional impairments on students, like accidents, diminished academic and professional competency etc. This behaviour can also aggravate the psychiatric morbidity ultimately impairing their education.¹⁰ Tobacco smoking is a common problem among the general population of Nepal and it is more prevalent in males than females.¹¹

This study was conducted with objectives of determining the prevalence of smoking, alcohol and psychoactive drug use among the bachelor level college students of Chitwan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a descriptive cross sectional study among the

bachelor level students at various colleges of Bharatpur, Chitwan district of Nepal in the month of January 2017. Those students who were willing to participate in the study were included. A questionnaire was designed to explore the prevalence of smoking, alcohol consumption and psychoactive drugs use. We also incorporated the questions exploring the type of tobacco consumption, the frequency of usage of tobacco, alcohol and psychoactive drugs if they were consuming them. Further we also analysed the motivator for the use of the substances. The questionnaire was based upon the previously published studies and was pretested among 15 students who were not enrolled in the study. The responses of frequency of use were categorised as experimental if the respondents had used the substance for just one occasion. If the participants had used it for more than once, but not regularly, it was categorised as occasional and if they had used it daily in the last two months, it was categorised as regular.

We enrolled 133 students using purposive sampling method. Informed verbal consent was taken from the study participant and they were ensured that identity would not be revealed. The responses were collected, the data was entered in Microsoft Excel and further analysis was done using SPSS version 16.0. The age in years and the amount of cigarettes smoked per day were expressed as Mean \pm Standard deviation.

RESULTS

Among the bachelor level students participating in the study, 90 (68.2%) were males and 42 (31.8%) were females. The age of the participants was normally distributed as demonstrated by PP plot. The mean age was 22.2 ± 1.7 years. The minimum age was 19 years and the maximum 32 years.

Table 1: Pattern of tobacco use with respect to sex

Tobacco use	Sex		Total N (%)
	Males N(%)	Females N(%)	
Experimental	19 (21.1)	4 (9.5)	23 (17.42)
Never	38 (42.2)	36 (85.7)	74 (56.06)
Occasional	8 (8.9)	0 (0.0)	8 (6.06)
Regular	25 (27.8)	2 (4.7)	27 (20.45)
Total	90 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	132 (100.00)

P value: <0.01

When we studied the pattern of tobacco use among the participants, 74 (56.06%) responded that they had never consumed tobacco in any form. Among the 90 males, 38 (42.2%) and among 42 females 36 (85.7%), had never consumed tobacco. The distribution of the pattern of tobacco use is presented in table 1.

The most common form of tobacco use was smoking as responded by 48 participants. The number of cigarette smoked ranged from one to 20, with a mean of 7.85 ± 4.94 years. The study of pattern of alcohol use revealed that 48 (36.36%) never consumed alcohol. The finding is represented in table 2.

As represented in table 3, 116 (87.87%) had never used psychoactive drugs. None of the females responded that they had used the drugs.

Fourteen respondents had consumed Marihuana, three of them cocaine and one had consumed amphetamine.

The most common motivator of the use of smoking, tobacco and psychoactive drugs was curiosity. It was responded by 36 (41.4%) of the 87 participants who had once taken them in their lifetime. (Table 4)

DISCUSSION

This is a baseline study to explore the prevalence to tobacco use, alcohol consumption and psychoactive drug use among the bachelor level students of Chitwan district.

Our study revealed that males are mostly involved in using tobacco, alcohol and psychoactive drugs. This has been also established by the similar study from Nepal³ and several other countries.^{4, 12, 13} Twenty five (27.8% of the 90) males were regular users of tobacco, while only two (4.7% of the 42) females were regularly using tobacco. The occasional and experimental use of alcohol was however more common than tobacco consumption.

Table 2: Pattern of alcohol consumption

Alcohol consumption	Sex		Total N (%)
	Males N(%)	Females N(%)	
Experimental	8 (8.9)	7 (16.7)	15 (1.14)
Never	20 (22.2)	28 (66.7)	48 (36.36)
Occasional	49 (54.4)	6 (14.3)	55 (41.67)
Regular	13 (14.4)	1 (2.4)	14 (10.61)
Total	90 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	132 (100.00)

P value: <0.01

Table 3: Pattern of psychoactive drug use

Psychoactive drug use	Sex		Total N (%)
	Males N(%)	Females N(%)	
Experimental	11 (12.2)	0 (0)	11 (8.33)
Never	74 (82.2)	42 (100)	116 (87.87)
Occasional	3 (3.3)	0 (0)	3 (2.27)
Regular	2 (2.2)	0 (0)	2 (1.51)
Total	90 (100.0)	42 (0)	132 (100.00)

Table 4: Motivator for the use of smoking, tobacco and psychoactive drugs

Motivator	Number	Percentage
Coping others	6	6.9
Curiosity	36	41.4
Release of tension	25	28.7
Seeking pleasure	15	17.2
Social	5	5.7
Total	87	100

In our study, none of the females responded that they are using other psychoactive drugs.

The most common form of tobacco use was smoking. Very few of them had used cigar, smokeless tobacco and hookah.

Alcohol use was more common than smoking. Seventy four (56.06) had never consumed tobacco products while 48 (36.36%) had never consumed alcohol. Only few of them (16 or 12.12%) had used psychoactive drugs. Eighty seven (65.91%) had consumed either of the three substances we had studied in their life time.

The common motivator of the use of tobacco, alcohol and psychoactive drugs was curiosity as

reported by 36 (41.4%) respondents. Students at this age are very curious and they have tendency to use tobacco, alcohol and psychoactive drugs. They may also be very easily influenced by their peers who are already used to the habit of those agents and some of them may use them as the mode of coping their stress. The education system should include the deleterious effects of these substances and the students should be made aware that they may be habituated, addicted and even become dependent on those substances.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of smoking among the bachelor level students participating in our study was 43.94%, alcohol consumption was 63.63% and psychoactive drugs use was 12.12%.

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