

current smokers have not seen cigarette advertisements in magazines and news papers, during the past 30 days.

- In major sports events sponsored by tobacco companies, and at social events, propaganda through banners could be seen very often. Publicity given at such events could have a significant effect on adolescents. Responses given to question 50, indicate only 15% of the children attending sporting events, fairs etc. have never seen advertisements during the past 30 days.
- Responses to item 51 are quite striking. It asked, “ has a cigarette representative ever offered you a cigarette”?, 7.9% males and 3.9% females among never smokers, 16.3% and 26.7% among current smokers have stated that they were offered a cigarette by a tobacco representative. When the responses to this question are looked further according to age span, it could be seen that this practice has been widely used to attract younger adolescents. As such 25.5% of the 13-year age group, 24.3% of the 14 years, and 14.7% of the 15 years were offered. This indicates that the tactic of the representative was to approach the younger children among adolescents.

5.8 What were taught at School about Smoking.

In Sri Lanka, the children in grades 8,9, and 10 selected for the survey are enrolled in the Junior Secondary section of a school. The theoretical content of the curriculum in these grades does not directly include the effects of the use of tobacco or narcotics. Although not compulsory, effects of smoking tobacco may be inculcated through the informal curriculum. Questionnaire items 52 to 55 are concerned on the extent to which children have learnt at school, on the effects of smoking.

- For question 52, included to estimate the proportion of children who were taught in schools of the dangers of smoking, 6.1% of the children have responded positively. It is reported, that 34.1% of the students have discussed in their classes the reasons for young people to smoke. It could also be seen that such discussions were comparatively higher among elder adolescents. 53.7% of the students stated that they were taught about the side effects of smoking such as, teeth becoming yellow, causing wrinkles, make them bad smell etc. Only a fewer proportion of students were taught on the effects of smoking as part of a lesson during the past one year.

6.0 Conclusions

The percentages of smokers of adolescents were observed as 12.5%. The female smokers are low (6.8%) when compared with males (17.5%) . It could be seen that majority of the children have been exposed to smoking before reaching 11 years. However when the extent of smoking is considered, children smoked more than 20 days a month is even less than 1%.

In Sri Lanka social and cultural influences are such that women are reluctant to smoke than males, with exceptions in certain communities. In certain sub-cultures such as children living in slums or areas where commercial tourism exists, girls could get

exposed to smoking. Therefore the prevalence of smoking among girls is matter to be reckoned with.

There is a higher tendency to smoke at social events such as parties big matches, especially with peers. None of the girls smoke after liquor.

Though the government has taken measures to prevent smoking, tobacco transnational have taken measures to propagate through indirect advertising and sponsorship. Responses to the same question analyzed separately for never smokers and current smokers indicate that there could have been a considerable impact by media, on the smoking of youth.

It is most likely that tobacco industrialists attempt to encourage minors on smoking. There is no evidence of any attempts made to implement anti smoking campaigns targeted at school children.

The degree of smoking is high among children whose parents are exposed to smoking. Smoking habits of elders have had a considerable effect on the smoking of children. Harmful effects of smoking have been discussed in families of about 50% of the children. As such more than 50% of smokers were aware of the effects of smoking. Smoking takes place among adolescents when they are with peers. This attitude is more among boys than girls. Social gatherings are an opportunity for children of 13-16 age group to smoke. More than 75% of the children feel that smoking should be banned in public places.

A relatively high proportion of adolescents, especially those who are in the higher age group of the sample, want to get rid of the habit. A considerable proportion of students have quitted smoking to maintain good health. This can be an indication of the impact of anti smoking campaigns implemented in the country. Higher proportions of students think that they can stop smoking if they wanted.