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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PATTERN OF TOBACCO SALE AND CONSUMPTION IN BATHINDA, PUNJAB - A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to study the patterns of tobacco sale and to assess the knowledge of tobacco vendors about health hazards from tobacco consumption in Bathinda, Punjab. The present cross sectional study was conducted for a period of 2 months on 374 vendors near the institutional areas of Bathinda city and around. Vendors who gave consent and had temporary or permanent stalls/shops selling tobacco products were included in the study. Around 500 vendors were approached out of which 374 were included in the study. Data collection included a face to face interview and the information gathered was filled in a pretested and pre validated questionnaire.

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Introduction:-

The Indian tobacco industry is one of the largest commercial sectors and an important source of direct and indirect employment in many regions of the country. In its latest study on the economic aspect of tobacco, industry chamber Assocham has found that the sector contributes a whopping Rs 11,79,498 crore to the Indian economy and employs an estimated 4.57 crore people.^[1]

Tobacco, being a labor intensive crop, provides employment to more than 60 lakh people who are engaged in the farming, curing, grading, primary marketing, processing, packaging, manufacturing, distribution, and retailing activities besides exporting.^[2]

Tobacco is one of the primary crops of national importance in India. Due to its increased production as well as consumption, it aids in elevating the nation's economy. The Indian tobacco market has grown at a strong rate during the period 2006-2022, as there has been strong sales growth in the cigarettes, loose tobacco and the cigars categories. New types such as E-cigarettes have also infiltrated the industry enormously which has caused the overall market to grow in a projectile manner.^[3]

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Indian tobacco occupies 10% of the area and 11% of the total world tobacco production. The consumption patterns are unique in a way and a taxation system that penalizes cigarettes (15% of total market share) over other traditional tobacco products such as bidis, chewing tobaccos, which together constitute the remaining 85%.^[4]

With this background, the present study was undertaken with the objective to study the patterns of tobacco sale and to assess the knowledge of tobacco vendors about health hazards from tobacco consumption in Bathinda, Punjab.

Methodology:-

The present cross sectional study was conducted for a period of 2 months on 374 vendors near the institutional areas of Bathinda city and around. Vendors who have consent and had temporary or permanent stalls/shops selling tobacco products were included in the study. A pilot survey was done to check the feasibility of the study and based on the results a sample size of 374 vendors was calculated. Around 500 vendors were approached out of which 374 were included in the study where others were excluded as few did not give consent, did not sell tobacco products, provided incomplete information and few had confidentiality issues. Simple random sampling was employed. Data collection included a face to face interview and the information gathered was filled in a pretested and pre validated questionnaire. The questionnaire was tested during the pilot survey and necessary changes were made accordingly.

Cronbach alpha of 0.80 indicated good internal consistency. Data was compiled and statistical analysis was done using Microsoft excel. Descriptive statistics included frequencies and percentages.

Results:-

The present study revealed that 61% of the total vendors visited agreed for selling tobacco products. Most common form of tobacco sold was smoking form compared to smokeless form of tobacco. Around 80% of the vendors sold both the forms of tobacco. 82% of the vendors knew the legal age of buying tobacco products but only 11% were aware of the ban on selling tobacco products within 100 yards of radius of educational institutions. Merely 5 % of vendors asked for identity proof from buyers to check for age of the buyer. Only 19% vendors were aware that loose cigarettes are not to be sold. More than half of the vendors (52%) were not aware of the fine that can be imposed for selling tobacco products in 100 yards of radius of educational institutions, violating the COTPA Act 2003. As high as 94% of vendors were aware of the health hazards caused by tobacco consumption but still chose to continue selling it.

Tobacco Vendors	Yes – 61 % No – 39 %
Forms sold	Smoke – 14 % Smokeless – 6 % Both – 80 %
Common forms	Smoke – 22 % Smokeless – 11 % Both – 66 %
Common age of buyers 20 – 40 years age	82 %
Knowledge about legal age of buying tobacco (18 years and above)	86 %
Knowledge about prohibition of tobacco sale	61 %
Knowledge about ban on tobacco sale within 100 yards radius	11 %
Vendors who ask for I'd poof	5 %
Knowledge about loose cigarettes not to be sold	19 %
Vendors not aware of fine that can be imposed	52 %
Knowledge about health hazards from tobacco consumption	94 %

Discussion:-

Worldwide, tobacco use is a serious public health concern affecting the youth. A vast majority of tobacco users start using tobacco well before the age of 18 years which has enormous psychosocial and health effects.

Adolescent onset tobacco use leads to 'accelerated dependency' within a short period from first exposure. In addition, it has been consistently linked to heart disease, cancers, and premature mortality. Tobacco use among youth has also been well recognised as one of the behaviours that defy social norms.

This study shows 60% of the vendors near educational institutions in Bathinda city sell tobacco products and majority of them (85%) sell both the smoke and smokeless forms of tobacco. Among all the tobacco vendors who participated in the study, the majority of them never asked the age of the buyers and 86.11 % vendors were aware of the legal age of buying tobacco products i.e. above 18 years of age. According to a study conducted by Ravishankar TL 82.83 % of the participants were aware of the legal age of buying tobacco products.^[5]

This study shows only 11% of the vendors were aware of tobacco products not to be sold within a radius of 100 yards of educational institutions. The findings of this study were similar to the findings from A.R. Rao et al and Rakesh Kumar et al where it was found to be 18.9% in Andhra Pradesh and 18.6% in Haryana city respectively.^[6] Whereas according to a study conducted by Ravishankar TL, about 78.66% of participants were aware that tobacco products should not be sold within the radius of 100 yards of educational institutions. This study asserts that 5.55% of the vendors asked for ID proof from buyers. Whilst a study done by Ankita et. al. emphasised that, the mean age of children and adolescents visiting tobacco shops was 11.83 years and the minimum age was 8 years. It was reported that 31.7% vendors always asked the age of the child while none of them asked for proof of age.^[7]

The study proved that 61% of vendors were aware about the prohibition on the sale of tobacco products around institutions. Meanwhile, a study conducted in Karnataka by Pratima Murthy et. al. stated that most vendors (92%) were unaware of the ban.^[8]

According to this study, 52% of vendors were unaware about the penalty for the breachment of the COTPA Act, 2003. A study done by Ravishankar TL1 et. al. states that around 37.5% of the participants were much aware of the penalty for violating the act. Defying the ban by smoking in public places such as streets, parks or government complexes will be fined up to 200 rupees and increased up to 1000. The same fine applies to vendors who sell tobacco to minors (under-18-year-olds). This is the reason that tobacco vendors are more aware because they have first hand information from seeing the public being punished for smoking in public places.

Based on this study, 94% vendors were aware about the health hazards that may be caused due to tobacco consumption but still chose to continue selling tobacco products as it is their major source of income. Some vendors were of the opinion that people can stop consuming tobacco products as the buyers are well aware of the health hazards caused.

Though tobacco vendors have a major role in reducing exposure of harmful tobacco products among adolescents, people themselves need to understand the fatal fate and stop tobacco consumption.

Limitation Of The Study

Multi-centric study can be planned including other cities of Punjab. Social desirability bias ought to exist during interview as vendors may not sometimes reveal the actual picture.

Conclusion:-

Policy makers should take strict actions to enforce the laws, as lack in it's implementation is adding to the havoc caused by tobacco to the youths of the country.

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