

The rise in hookah (shisha, water pipe) tobacco smoking among adolescents: A silent pandemic

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Abstract

Background & Objectives: There are over 150 Hookah lounges/joints operating in Ahmedabad city. Since the ban lifted last year on hookah lounges last year, there has been a high influx of many adolescents visiting these joints legally as well as illegally. My objective was

- 1) To analyze the reasons and consequences of hookah addiction.
- 2) To study the external factors playing a dominant role in hookah indulgence of both the sexes.

Material and Methods: The study was done by snowball sampling method, it is a cross sectional study. The interviews were conducted following a

Semi-structured schedule in water pipe cafes and in their homes. About 89 boys/girls belonging to 10- 19 age groups were interviewed with confidentiality from July 2016 to October 2016. Prior approval of ethical committee was taken.

Results & Conclusion: About 60 % of respondents admitted to hookah addiction causing them underperform in exams. The youngest hookah addict was 12 years old. The prevalence of hookah (water pipe smoking) is more prominent in male gender as compare to female. About 80.32 % admitted to their liking of hookah flavours leading to long-term addiction none of the respondent's parents/guardians have knowledge about their hookah addiction. 90.21% were unaware of harmful effects on health due to hookah/e-cigrates. Only 8% show willingness to quit hookah.

Keywords: Adolescents, hookah lounges, addiction

Introduction

The waterpipe (also named shisha, narghile, argileh, etc.) is a traditional aid for tobacco consumption. There are over 150 Hookah lounges/joints operating in Ahmedabad city. Though the habit of cigarette smoking has decreased considerably among the youth, the habit of smoking other tobacco products such as hookah has gone up. Since the ban lifted last year on hookah lounges last year, there has been a high influx of many adolescents visiting these joints legally as well as illegally. If one form of tobacco use is curbed, the tobacco companies find an alternative, the latest being the use of hookah. ^[1]

As per doctors, since hookah involves inhaling a large amount of smoke in a short span of time, the damage done to the lungs are high and can cause wheezing, meningitis and acute bronchitis. Over a period of time, it can develop into cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses, led to low birth weight, lung, esophageal and pancreatic cancer. Sadly, not many hookah smokers understand the implications as many think hookah is not as harmful as cigarette smoking. ^[1]

During a regular smoking session, the temperature of water pipe tobacco does not exceed 200 °C and thus stays considerably lower when compared with the glowing Cone of cigarettes (600–900 °C). ^[3]

In a 60 minute hookah session, smokers are exposed to 100 to 200 times the volume of smoke inhaled from a single cigarette. When contacted, a hookah dealer in the city who sought anonymity said that hookahs were a popular concept at weddings and many people even requested for the services at the privacy of their homes.

Materials and methodology

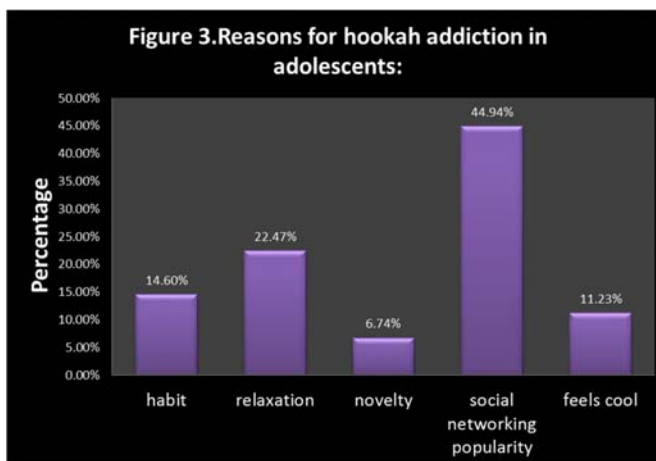
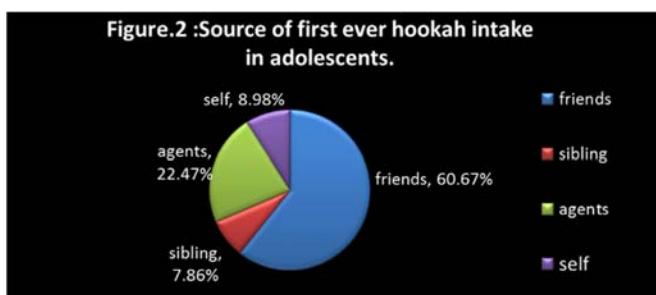
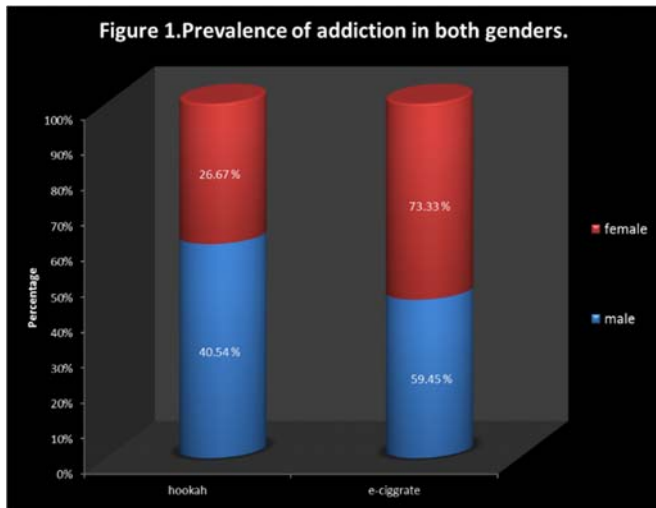
The study was done by snowball sampling method, it is a cross sectional study. The interviews were conducted following a Semi-structured schedule in water pipe cafes and in their homes. About 89 boys/girls belonging to 10- 19 age groups were interviewed with confidentiality from July 2016 to October 2016. Prior approval of ethical committee was taken. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. All participants provided informed verbal consent. The interviews were recorded. Detailed notes were made from listening to the recordings.

Results

About 60 % of respondents admitted to hookah addiction causing them underperform in exams. About 80.32 % admitted to their liking of hookah flavours leading to long-term addiction. The youngest hookah addict was 12 years old. The prevalence of hookah (water pipe smoking) is more prominent in male gender as compare to female. None of the respondent's parents/guardians have knowledge about their hookah addiction. 90.21% were unaware of harmful effects on health due to hookah/e-cigrates. Only 8% show willingness to quit hookah.

Table 1: Duration of indulging in shisha/hookah smoking as per interviews.

Period of addiction(N=89)	Response	percentage
0-3 month	4	4.49 %
4-6 month	7	7.86%
7 months to 1 year	46	51.68%
More than 1 year	32	35.95%



Discussion

My study revealed that about 51.68% of adolescents are hookah addicts since more than 6 months resulting in very high pocket expenditure. The most common reason is social networking popularity by posting the hookah pictures (44.94%). The ratio of hookah: cigarette was more in male gender as compare to females. Also, about 60.67 % admitted to the source of first hookah intake through the medium of friends.

Today hookah comes with different flavour which results for users to have lots of alternative. These various flavours which are highly popular are used among many people without taking into account its consequences. Hookah, a type of water pipe that originated in the Middle East and India, facilitates charcoal-heated air through a tobacco mixture, then through a water-filled chamber and finally through a pipe that allows users to inhale the vapor.

It's typically smoked in groups – hookah bars and cafes are a mainstay in many cities – with the same mouthpiece passed from person to person.⁵ It is sad to know that most of the hookah users are ignorant about the addiction it can cause. The flavours of hookah only covered and hide the harmful effects of the main ingredient that makes the user an addict in the long run.

As per a study, among the 5,540 students surveyed nationwide, the most frequent users were from families of higher socioeconomic status.⁵ Applying flavored waterpipe tobacco enables consumers to inhale huge volumes of smoke. The smoke is very mild and even consumers who would reject cigarettes due to their smell and harsh taste can adapt easily.⁴

Hookah users have the misconception that the smoke in pipe is safe because the water absorbs the amount of nicotine present in the smoke, and thus completely harmless. ² it appears to deliver more tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide than cigarettes. Consider that during an hourlong hookah session, it's possible to inhale as much smoke as a cigarette smoker would consuming 100 or more cigarettes, according to a 2005 report from the World Health Organization. And in May, researchers found that just one evening of hookah smoking could make nicotine urine levels spike by more than 70 times.⁵

People often believed that smoking from a hookah removes the nicotine and other toxins from the tobacco. This is not true. This is one of the things that need to be known to Hookah smokers. What they believed to be the fact is in actually, a myth they make up themselves. Hookah tobacco is addictive and every bit as hazardous to a smoker's health as traditional cigarettes. Additionally, a one-hour session of hookah smoking exposes smokers to as much nicotine and toxins as they would get from a day or more of cigarette smoking. ^[2]

Many adolescents, frequenting hookah joints in the city, say that they have switched to smoking hookahs at home, after the bars were shut down on charges of sneaking marijuana into the sheesha.¹

Many people know what smoking is and what it can do to affect the health of an individual. Tobacco use and smoking are very dangerous addictions which commonly cause a wide variety of diseases, cancer and death. ^[2]

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and electronic hookahs (e-hookahs) allow the user to inhale a vapor that may contain nicotine as well as other flavors and chemicals. Many e-cigarettes and hookahs look just like real cigarettes or pipes. But some look like pens or USB memory sticks. Most have a battery-operated heating device. The cartridge may contain nicotine or other flavors or chemicals. It also contains glycerol or propylene glycol (PEG), which looks like smoke when you exhale. Each cartridge can be used a few times. Cartridges come in many flavors. ^[6]

These products are sold in flavors that may appeal to children and teens, such as chocolate and key lime pie. This could lead to more nicotine addiction in children. Teens who use e-cigarettes may be more likely to take up smoking regular cigarettes. ^[6]

Due to the lack of sufficient data on the toxicological Effects of water pipe smoke, the medical community and public health decision-makers are as yet not well prepared in providing meaningful advice regarding this increasingly important worldwide health issue.

There were some limitations to this study. The aim was to Study a specific population group, student water pipe Smokers. Such

smokers are not easy to find and hence a Method of snowball sampling was used rather than some theoretically based purposive sampling.

Conclusion

Water pipe smoking in students is established by contact of Hookah agents, social networking and a desire for peer acceptance. It is believed to be affordable and enjoyable social activity with few health risks. N Also the current trend of group hookah smoking on birthday occasions, festivals and hang-outs is quite popular among adolescents. Media Influence is also one of the factors generating curiosity on hookah smoking. Easy availability of electronic cig grates or e-hookahs to adolescents also leads to further sharing among friend circles ending in a continuous chain of addiction. There is no awareness regarding hookah prevention by government and other public health sectors. Understanding reasons behind the rise in water pipe tobacco use is important if appropriate prevention, cessation, and policy interventions are to be formulated. Strict adherence to laws is warranted, with careful and vigilant attention that all tobacco products are covered by laws that prevents them from reaching the vulnerable adolescents.

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