

## Tobacco and Youth Culture: A Cohort Study on Chandannagar Town in West Bengal

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### Abstract

Now days tobacco uses among the youth are very much popular issued. Tobacco is included in the lists of addiction, but still it is a part of life. Day by day it is associated with the culture or day to day activities. People consume is not just for addiction, it also plays a crucial part in providing pleasure. Here I wanted to show about the increasing rate of tobacco consumption among youth and about the emergence of a new sub-cultural trend of youth.

**Keyword:** tobacco, youth, addiction, culture, sub-culture.

### Introduction

Tobacco problems are the burning issue all over the world. There were long historical perspectives of tobacco addiction. Tobacco as we know it originated in pleasant climates in America. The native populations of here chewed and smoked the leaves, and they spread the plant throughout the Americas, but now days we can find tobacco plants more or less everywhere. It is one of the essential forms of addiction. Smoking, smokeless and chewing all three forms are we can find in the field of tobacco. In this study I am focusing on youth and their relationship with tobacco. In modern days youth is frequently associated with tobacco products. Modern socioeconomic and cultural setting provides them various opportunities and accessibilities to getting tobacco products easily. Generally, under 18 years old, people are more excited, and they want to experiment with tobacco products. The cigarette is a very popular and high rated tobacco product which attracts teenage most. School life is the important place as well as peer group also an essential factor from where young adults are experimenting with tobacco products. Sometimes they form a group and for entertainment using tobacco products. Habituation with these activities in regular basis creates a pattern of cultural.

Apart from cigarette smoking another serious concern is that other tobacco products—including pipes, hookahs, smokeless tobacco, and bidis, are also commonly used by youth worldwide. Youth may have several reasons for starting tobacco use, such as

- A. **Looking ‘Cool’, ‘Mature’, or ‘Sociable’:** they feel if they are using tobacco products (especially cigarette) they are becoming smarter and popular among the other people. It will shape their attitudes

and behaviors as like a mature person. They are not teens or child right now and they are more responsible and sociable. Tobacco activities provide them more attention and feelings of difference.

- B. Impression Management:** Impression management is very popular among the youth. Impression management term was first propounded by Erving Goffman in the year of 1969. It is a process whereby a person tries to influence and manipulate the attention, activities of others. Youth always wants to explore something new, different thing and beyond limit activities. They need attention and impression through their activities, whereas using tobacco among the groups are publicly provide them false impression. Apart from this for impression girls and gathering attention from girls' young boys are using tobaccos and alcohols. On the other hand, gathering attention among girl students and showing this message to boys, some girls are smoking and drinking alcohol. "Love affair" and "break up" are also provocative activities among the teenagers to involving them into addictive activities.
- C. Using tobacco is good for coping with stress and weight control:** youth felt that using tobacco products are very useful to decrease the level of stress activities. Lives are going through various ups and downs. Sometimes youth felt when the situations are not under control and stressful then using addictive products are the best way to resolve that issue. And sometimes they are comfortable that using addictive products to control their weight and it is maintaining the balance.
- D. Imitation:** Sometimes a younger generation wants to imitate the attitude of film stars and using cigarettes as like their idol film actors/actress. Apart from film stars youth are first to learn using tobacco products within the periphery of the house. They are imitating fathers and others family members' activities. Within the friends group they are learned behavior of other friends.

Though the uses of tobacco products among youth have varied from place to place, area to area. Various social classes are using those tobacco products in a different way. Increasing tobacco initiation among youth may vary country to country, but there are some common factors, such as through print media and digital media frequent publicity of tobacco advertisement; more acceptability of tobacco products in market, uses of tobacco products in movies and serials; are essential causes for tobacco addiction. Apart from this at the time of depression and anxiety, when feeling stressed people are dependable on tobacco products. Higher accessibility and lower prices of tobacco products also responsible. Report of World Health Organization's (WHO) on tobacco indicates that it is an essential problem among all others. Though are reducing this problems government are taking more initiatives and among those initiatives one is '**raising taxes on tobacco**'.

### Review of Literature

It is an essential section of every research. It provides researcher possible information and proper guideline to representing their study. Tobacco and youth are a burning topic of the society. Many researchers contribute their spirit and knowledge on this field. Here I want to mention some important books whose are helping me a lot to prepare this research paper.

1. **“Tobacco use and worship activity”**; if we focus on the historical background of tobacco we found that it was a part of worship activity. In the year of 2007 Eric Burns mentioned that from the beginning people are using tobacco leaf when they are involved in the worshipping of the God. Burns briefly discuss on this matter on his book **“The Smoke of the Gods: A Social History of Tobacco”**. Here he expresses that human are using tobacco products, using it as a smoke element and consuming it into their body and holding it for several seconds. It provides impact on every organ of the human body. It spread entire the body of human and engaging them into a strong active role for God. Here he wants to express that from the beginning uses of tobacco product was attached with divinity, but now days it is presenting into the lists of addiction. The scenario of tobacco has totally changed in modern times.
2. **“Historical evolution of tobacco”**; in his writing Jordon Goodman draw an attention of evolutionary nature of tobacco. **“Tobacco in History and Culture: An Encyclopedia”**, in this book Goodman explores historical nature of tobacco. In this book Goodman draw his attention on various aspects of tobacco leaf. Now day’s tobacco leaf are used as a form of cigar, pipe, cigarette and many more, but chewing tobacco was a popular form of Latin America. Generally, people think that tobacco is a recreational substance product, but it has not always been that way. If we focus on the history of many centuries, and up to quite recently in the west, we find that tobacco was used for the purpose of medical needs. Even in modern times tobacco is used in medical science actively. Here the author explores that day by day tobacco is becoming an essential part of cultural industry. In literature, art and photography, as well as in film, and music industry, it is playing popular and classical role.
3. **“Bedroom Space and Youth Culture”**; here Sian Lincoln wants to express that bedroom space is very important for every youth, it is shaping their behavior, attitude and culture. The process of learning and socialization are first shaping in the periphery of the home. Lincoln discusses briefly in this book, **“Youth Culture and Private Space”**. A cultural pattern of a youth is different from other youth because impact of family background playing crucial role here. He expressed that youth are aware about their activities and behavior. And all those activities and behavior are molded and shaped by specific area of space. Tobacco and other addicted products are playing an important role when youth staying alone in their home. Youth always wants to explore new things, tobacco and alcohols sometimes play, a provocative role to pull them. Through this they want to get mature

types of identity. Private space always provoked to exploring sub-cultural patterns. We can find a specific sub-culture in every youth group. Human role and activities are always changing in relation to the situation and circumstances. Here Lincoln tried to examine the changing role with relation to space and culture.

4. **“Making Decisions about Smoking”**; Deciding whether to smoke, or not, this decision is totally depending on the person. Vanessa Rogers said teens are using tobacco products because they want to use it. Though decision always taken by the human, but behind this decision social facts are there. Group activities, pressure of friends, impression management, and circumstances are very important factors which do impact on youth decisions. Among the youth group most of the time friends are provoked to other friends to using tobacco products. Rogers discusses briefly about in this book, **“A Little Book of Tobacco: Activities to Explore Smoking Issues with Young People”**. Rogers said that most of the time, youth are not fully aware of the legal, health and social impacts of their decision. Situations and group activities always influence those youth.
5. **“Addiction through the Ages”**; using addicted products and addiction are somehow related to particular ages. Virginia Berridge told in her book **“Demons: Our Changing Attitudes to Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs”** regarding the uses of addictive products and their relation to different ages. Tobacco products and alcohol both have historical evolution. Over the ages, both are facing legal obligations and accessibility of uses. From the earlier tobacco leaf was accessible in America, which I told earlier. But now more or less tobacco product is found everywhere. As well as earlier only adult people have a right to accumulate those tobaccos. Legal clearance regarding tobacco products made easily accessing it. Apart from legal clearance trade and economic matter are also associated with it. Youth can easily access it and using tobacco and alcohol are a trend of culture right now. Social media are also promoting those products.

### **Methodology**

Methodology is the essence of research. It provides researcher specific guideline to representing the research paper. It focuses on systematic investigation and using a useful method to prepare the research. To prepare this research paper I am using **triangulation method**<sup>2</sup>. Here I am using an unstructured interview tool for collecting data from the respondents. Through simple random sampling I choose yours from the place of Chandanagar strand, tea stall and food stalls. As well as using the focus group method to collect data from the school students. In this method, I am gathering students of a school in a particular classroom and after that I collected information among them. Here I am using **‘simple random sampling’** method. I am collecting data from 150 respondents. Among them, 50 youths belong

from different high schools, 50 youths are belonging from different colleges and the rest of 50 are directly not associated with education sectors.

. Here I mentioned some parameters,

1. Educational institutions with hostels attached to them produce more drug users than those without hostels.
2. The largest number of drug-using students comprised individuals who were devoted to pleasure, seeking new excitement and thrill.
3. Environment of family and staying away from parents.
4. Peer group pressure.
5. Looking cool and mature in front of the close friends and close groups.
6. Social factors like oppressive social system and power structure, subculture (slum areas, college/hostel etc.)
7. Accessibility of tobacco products in market.

## Objectives

Through this research paper I want to explore youth culture and their relationship with tobacco products. In this research paper I mentioned specific objectives, these are

1. To explore the present trend of youth culture.
2. To examine the accessibility of tobacco products with relation to the market.
3. To explore the relationship between youth and tobacco products.
4. To discover viewpoints of youth regarding tobacco.
5. Find out those mediums which create a bridge between youth and tobacco products.
6. Discover the process through which tobacco products are becoming part of youth sub-culture.
7. To find out those socioeconomic and psychological factors are responsible for provocation or not.

8. Shade on the existence of tobacco sub-culture among youth and their impact on society.

### **Findings**

Tobacco users are the burning issue now days. In this research paper I am focusing on two important sections of society. One is youth, and another is tobacco. Uses of tobacco among the youth are a common think in contemporary society. If we observe minutely we can see that in public and private both places youth are smoking cigarette. Societies are used to in this situation. It is becoming a part of our culture. Youth are always energetic and enthusiastic. They tried to explore new things, experimenting with bigger and broader parts. Using tobacco products and alcohol is like an experiment type material to them. School life and college life is the crucial time period where youth is experimenting more. Group of friends, more time spending outside of the home, etc. Provides lots of options to them. Youth are always learning thousands of things. Family, a group of friends, high school and college life, hostel life, media all are the agencies from where they are getting information. Here I want to discuss such points;

- A. **Family:** Socialization is the process of learning. Teens are first getting information into the periphery of the family. They are imitating the activities of parents. If the parents are using tobacco and alcohol in the house in front of children, then it is much possible for teens to imitate their activities. They are experimenting with those activities into their room. Personal room is a personal space for every child. They are exploring their ideas into their room. After collecting of data I noticed that teens whose are staying with a parent in a single room they are not getting any chance to experiment with tobacco or alcohol. On the other hand, those teens are staying in a personal room they are getting more chances to experiment. Personal room provides teens more options to experimenting with tobacco and alcohol. It is accumulating sub-cultural elements.
- B. **Group of friends:** younger people are spending lots of time with their friends. Peer groups are playing crucial role in changing behavior and attitude of youth. Peer group helps people to identify self and separating them from others. Sometimes younger people cannot do such things if he/she in single position, but within a group he/she can do these things easily. Group activity provoked group members are doing the same kind of things. In a specific time or occasion most of the youth groups are experimenting with tobacco products and alcohol. Sometimes they are using these behaviors as a sign of their group.
- C. **High School and College Life:** Education life provide a youth bunch of information and teach us thousands of things. It molds the personality of youth and shaping their attitudes, behaviors, and manners. In this research I noticed that most of the groups of students are belonging from high schools and colleges whose are wanting to experimenting with tobacco products. They felt that it is the age of

time to doing something different and experimenting with it. 70% students of school and college are influenced by the group activities. From the beginning they are using tobacco and alcohol products just for fun and as an experiment, but later most of the students are addicted by this. Apart from this, in many times for releasing the pressure of education and removing stress at the time of examination they are using tobacco products as a stimulus. “**Canteen Culture**” also an important factor which is sometimes played an inflammatory role for experimenting with tobacco products because this culture, providing a virtual floor to exploring attitude and dare devil nature.

- D. Hostel life:** Education is the only key which helps students entering the hostel life. Though it is not mandatory, that all the students must live in hostel when they are associated with education. It is the life when students are enjoying the freedom of their life. Involvement of family members is absent over there. They are the guide of their own life. Hostel life provides the ultimate opportunity for freedom. Young age and circumstances of hostel life most of the time responsible for experimentation. Most of the students of hostel are used with tobacco, alcohol and even weed. They are enjoying with this life and developing a different kind of culture.
- E. Media:** In modern contemporary times importance of media is enormous on life. Media provides people various information. Through media students are getting lots of information and guideline. Print media and digital media provide different image of tobacco products in front of the students. Positive side and negative side of tobacco, accessibility, price and value all the information is displayed by the media in front of the people, even the method of uses of tobacco products are also provided by the media too. Movie, serials are portraying the uses of tobacco in front of the public. Sometimes students are imitating the tobacco related activities of their favorite actors and tried to portray it in front of the others by the using it.

## Conclusion

“**Tobacco is killing us, don’t let it kill you!**”, this slogan is very popular and using it for promoting awareness among the people about tobacco products. Youth are the strength of our country and in contemporary times they are always trying to do bigger and better. Experimenting with tobacco products is a challenge to them. Market accessibility, various mediums of information, urban culture, all are the medium through which tobacco product becoming easily accessible to the people. We all know culture is the ways of life. It is always changing and always modified by the elements of society. Print Media and Digital Media are essential factor which is displaying tobacco products a lot. Media is injecting tobacco as a product in our daily culture.

Youth is influenced by this digital and print media. They are generating a different trend of culture and changing the traditional nature of culture. Tobacco products like a cigarette is a very popular product

to them. The uses of it are caring out style icon and showing a nature of attitude. They are frequently maintaining to use and even they cannot or did not feel any cultural stigma or feel of shakiness in different socio-cultural circumstances. At the time of the survey, I noticed using cigarette publicly a common factual matter of them. They told me it is a normal kind of things and they are mature enough.

Present social circumstances are used to to this cultural pattern. Selling tobacco products and alcohol publicly, smoking cigarette frequently in public places is a common matter now a days. This common matter of things is becoming a part of culture day by day. Youth are aware about the negative effects of the tobacco products. There are a bunch of public awareness advertisement in market promoted by government and non-government organization. They are awakening people about the possible negative impact of using tobacco products. When people bought cigarette from the market, they are watching the disastrous impact of smoking cigarette on the packet of the cigarette. Using tobacco product destroys the healthy body and sometimes it can be the cause the death. Still, it is a popular addictive material of youth culture. Youth is busy to displaying false attitude, coolness and maturity. Using tobacco products latently destroying their bright future and pushing them sometimes in a wrong direction. This trend of cultural pattern making youth addicted and destroying the healthy relationships.

### Limitation of the Study

To prepare this research I am collecting information from the Chandannagar town, which is a small town of Hooghly district. Variation in data collection cannot possible for me in this area. Another limitation of my research that sample size was not so big. There are a few colleges and faced issues about cooperating with the respondents. Apart from these it is a great experience to me.

### Scope for Further Research

In this research paper I am evolving two big parts of our society. One is the youth, and another is the tobacco culture. Both are always changing and shaping our society and culture. In this research paper I am trying to frequent tobacco using activities of youth shaping the pattern of culture. There are some fields which I cannot touch are useful for further research.

- **Relationship of Youth, Tobacco and Higher Education;** contradictory relationship of tobacco and education or pressure of education can be the possible field for further study.
- **A contradictory Analysis of Traditional Values and Modern Youth Culture;** traditional values and moralities are always facing changes and how you are involved within it could be more discoverable study.



- **Tobacco and Health: A Sociological Analysis of Health;** using tobacco products from the small age is destroying the health structure of youth and they are facing major health problems.

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