

Tobacco teens: cigarette smoking among adolescents at a rural settlement, Jempol

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Smoking has become among the important current public health issues in Malaysia, as about one in four adult Malaysians currently smoke, and about one in ten adolescents smoke. The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence of cigarette smoking among adolescents and its associated factors in a rural community of Jempol, Malaysia.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted in 2013, involving rural settlements in Jempol, a district in the state of Negeri Sembilan, 147km south of Kuala Lumpur. Two rural settlements were randomly selected. The sampling unit was an adolescent (aged between 10-19 years) who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. The instrument used in this study was a self-administered questionnaire adapted from the National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) 2011. Questions on religiosity were included.

Results: A total of 167 respondents participated in this study. Among them, 31.1% (n=52) were identified as smokers; while 68.9% (n=115) were non-smokers. Mean age of smoking initiation was 14 years old. Being male, being employed, having large number of smokers in the family and among friends, having home smoking policy, being offered cigarettes, academic achievement, religiosity and perception of smoking being normal, cool and relaxing are factors significantly associated with smoking habits among adolescents ($P=.05$). Most preferred location to smoke was friend's house (44.2%) compared to own home (28.8%). Premises most visited to purchase cigarettes was the grocery store (59.9%), and majority of the adolescent smokers buy their own cigarettes (57.7%).

Conclusion: Suitable anti-smoking programs should be tailored to and focus on factors most significantly associated with smoking in this age group. Enforcement efforts should be focused on grocery stores to prevent the sale of cigarettes to minors. Future studies need to be carried out to detect a trend of the age of initiation, where or not it is becoming younger.

Keyword: Smoking; Adolescents; Rural; Religiosity; Malaysia