



Attitude toward tobacco and alcohol practices among dental undergraduate students: A questionnaire survey

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Abstract

Background: Just like other adults, dental graduates to have inclination toward habits such as consumption of tobacco and alcohol. Our study aimed to find the number of dental graduates indulged in this bad habit. This is an important study as it assesses the true awareness among dental graduates who being medical professionals are an active part of health promotion and prevention campaigns.

Materials and Methods: A questionnaire-based survey was conducted for all the 4-years volunteer dental graduates.

Results: Consumption of both tobacco and alcohol was increased over the subsequent years. Based on gender, females were less likely indulged in these habits. Majority consumed cigarette smoking form of tobacco and beer was the most used alcoholic beverage.

Conclusion: A very small percentage of students showed excessive tobacco and alcohol use, and it is for this group that education on the consequences of tobacco and alcohol abuse would be most relevant. There should be a role for higher education, community, and professional bodies to participate actively in the prevention of tobacco and alcohol abuse among undergraduates.

Introduction

Both alcohol and tobacco consumptions come under top 10 leading risk factors globally. Tobacco causes 6 million deaths every year across the world.^[1] Worldwide, alcohol caused 1.8 million deaths, equal to 4% of the global disease burden. Both of these are marketed in low- and middle-income countries. Now, people more than ever are exposed to these products and patterns which are either imported or adopted from other countries causing long-term risk to health.

Comparable data on the age-related prevalence of tobacco and alcohol use are required. Incidence of tobacco use has been increasing over the last part of the 20th century especially in low- and middle-income nations but a decline in the high-income nations. We all must be aware of the fact that tobacco causes mortality and adverse health effects with each and every form of its usage, which includes both the smoking and smokeless form of tobacco consumption.

Global alcohol consumption is increased in the recent times in the developed nations. There has also been noted the change in the different parts of the world in the volume and pattern of drinking.^[1]

Tobacco use continues to be the leading global cause of preventable death. It kills nearly 6 million people each year. Tobacco use if goes by the current trend then by the year 2030 nearly 8 million individuals will die every year, which will account to 80% death among young individuals living in low and middle-income countries.

For reducing its usage, awareness should be regarding the adverse effects of tobacco, addictive nature and potential for disability and premature death caused by its use. Control measures should be taken to promote people not to use tobacco and take proper control measures. Although we expect dental students to be aware of the adverse effects of tobacco, still, they use them may be because many aspects of adverse have not been understood by them or explained to them.^[2] Surveys of dental health professionals have been done regarding tobacco and alcohol use and gave similar cause for concern.

The aim of this study was to check the prevalence of tobacco and alcohol compare its use among different year of dental students, hence, determine whether it is a cause for concern as is shown in previous studies.

Materials and Methods

Sample selection

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to male and female dental students to 1–4 years students. Each one of them was asked to fill the questionnaire. A closed-style of questioning was used with the majority of questions multiple choices. This increased speed of completion and anonymity. Questions on tobacco and alcohol use were included. Questions were asked regarding ever or current consumption of tobacco, type of tobacco, and alcoholic beverage.

The prevalence of risky alcohol drinking among dental students has been estimated between based on alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT) questionnaire.

Methodology

A structured form of 400 questions was constructed by the surveyor and was distributed among the dental students. Dental students took about 15 min to complete every question and their corresponding answers were explained before distribution of questionnaire. Confidentiality of each and every student was maintained and nowhere in the questionnaire they had to mention their identity.

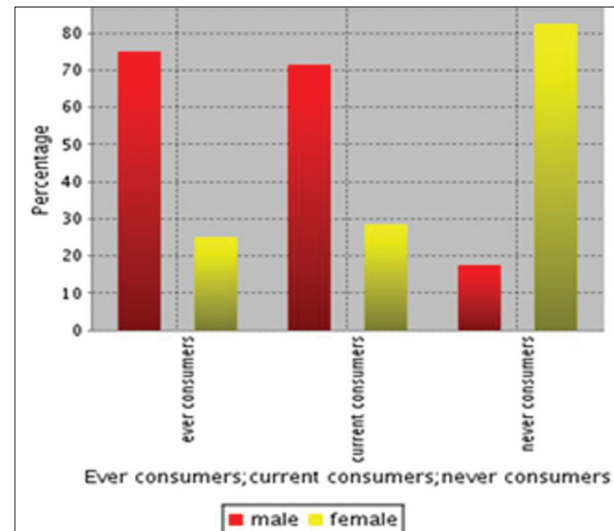
Results

Total dental students participated were 384 (100%) out of which 98 (25.5%) were Ist year, 96 (25%) were IInd and IVth years both, and 94 were IIIrd years. On the basis of gender, a total number of male dental students participants were 98 (25.5%), whereas 286 (74.5%) were female.

Of total 384 participants, a total number of dental students who had once in their lifetime consumed tobacco products were termed as ever consumers. A total number of Table 1 ever consumers in all the 4 years were 44 (11.5%) out of which 5 (11.36%) were in 1 years, 7 (15.9%) were in 2 years, 15 (34.09%) were in 3 years, and 17 (38.63%) in 4 years. In all these ever consumers, a number of male dental students were 33 (75%) and 11 (25%) were female dental students [Graph 1]. A total number of dental students who currently consumed tobacco products were termed as Table 1 current consumers. A total number of current consumers in all the 4 years were 38 (9.9%) out of which 5 (13.15%) were in 1 year, 6 (15.78%) were in 2 years, 11 (28.94%) were in 3 years, and 16 (42.1%) in 4 years.

In all these current consumers, a number of male dental students were 27 (72%) and 11 (28%) were female dental students [Graph 1]. A total number of dental students who had never consumed tobacco were 302 (78.6%), among which majority were female dental students, i.e., 220 (73%), whereas male dental students were 82 (27%).

Among the different forms of tobacco products, i.e., both the smoking as well as smokeless forms, it was found out that majority consumed smoking form as compared to smokeless form. Cigarette smoking was found to be the most common



Graph 1: Sex-wise distribution in respect to tobacco consumption

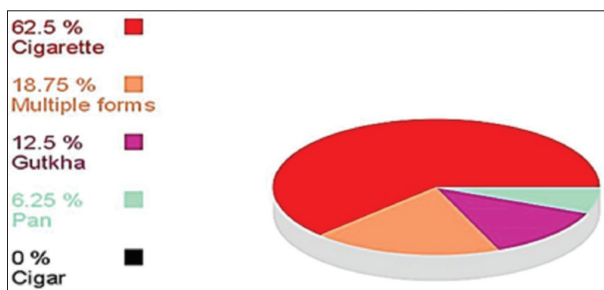
form of tobacco with 57.4% current consumers consuming it presently while 62.5% had consumed cigarettes among the ever consumers. Cigarette smoking was followed by multiple forms of tobacco (more than one type of form). 21.2% current consumers consumed multiple forms, whereas 18.75% of ever consumers had consumed in multiple forms. Gutkha consumption was present in 14.2% of current consumers, whereas 12.5% of ever consumers had consumed gutkha. Similarly, Pan consumption was present in 7.2% of current consumers, whereas 6.25% of ever consumers had consumed pan. Cigar was not consumed by neither current nor ever consumers [Graphs 2 and 3].

On alcohol consumption, it was found that in all the 4 years, most commonly consumed alcoholic beverage is beer followed by wine then whisky and vodka then breezer. In the 1 year dental students, it was seen that breezer (33%) and vodka (33%) were equally consumed as was beer (17%) and wine (17%). 2 years dental students consumed beer in majority (45%), followed by wine (33%), whisky (11%), and then vodka (11%). 3 years dental students consumed wine (33%) in majority, whereas equal percentage of beer (22%), breezer (22%), and whisky (22%). 4 years students consumed almost equally beer (30%), vodka (30%), whisky (30%), and followed by wine (10%).

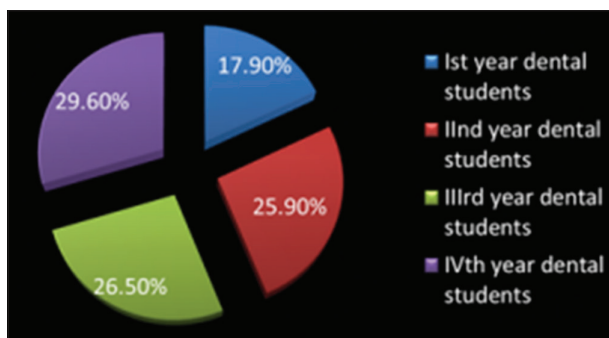
Among all the 4 years dental students, maximum alcohol consumption was seen in 4 years (30%) followed equal number of students in 2 and 3 years (26%) then 1 year (18%) [Graph 4]. In all the 4 years, male dominance was seen except 3 years in the alcohol consumption. 1 year had 60% male, 40% female, 2 years had 55.5% male, 45.5% female, 3 years had 45.5%, 55.5% female, whereas 4 years had 65% male and 35% female [Graph 5].

Discussion

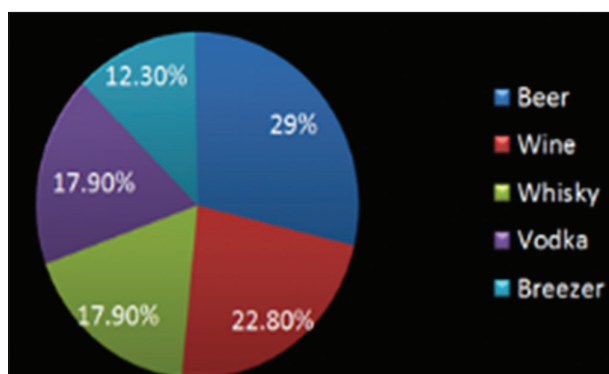
Despite clear evidence about the dangers of tobacco use, many tobacco users worldwide underestimate the full extent of the risk to themselves and others.



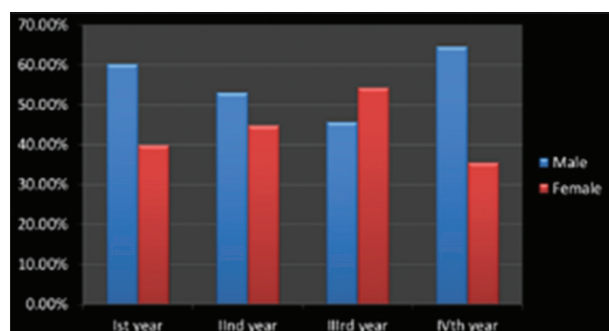
Graph 2: Representation of the type of tobacco consumption among ever consumers



Graph 3: Distribution of different types of alcoholic beverages consumption among dental students



Graph 4: Year-wise consumption of alcoholic beverage among dental students



Graph 5: Alcoholic beverage consumption among the dental students in all 4 years in both the genders

Table 1: Year-wise type of consumption (ever consumers/current consumers) of tobacco in percentage

Variable	n (%)	
	Ever consumers	Current consumers
1	5 (11.36)	5 (13.15)
2	7 (15.9)	6 (15.78)
3	15 (34.09)	11 (28.94)
4	17 (38.63)	16 (42.1)
Total	44 (11.5)	38 (9.9)

The extreme addictive nature of tobacco is also not widely acknowledged. Many people, including smokers, incorrectly believe that tobacco use is simply a bad habit, not an addiction. They often do not fully comprehend the speed with which people can become addicted to nicotine, or the degree of addiction, and grossly overestimate the likelihood that they will be able to quite easily when desired and before health problems occur.

In this study of 384 dental students who participated in the questionnaire study, 9.9% were current tobacco consumers, whereas 10.4% were alcohol consumers. Our data were collected according to Global tobacco surveillance system and WHO-the AUDIT for tobacco consumption and alcohol consumption, respectively. In a study done in India by Centre of disease control in the year 2005 of 3rd years dental students (1266), it was found out that overall smoking rate was 10% in which 15% were male and 2% were females.^[3] A national survey was conducted to provide up-to-date data on current and ever use of tobacco among 4th years Iranian dental students, of 325 participants, 54.2% were ever users of tobacco products (73.0% of males vs. 44.4% of females); 50.8% had used water pipes, 34.2% cigarettes, and 9.3% other products. In the same study, current tobacco use was reported by 20.6% of respondents, cigarette smoking by 10.8%, and water pipe smoking by 15.8%.^[4] Non-users of tobacco as well as alcohol were more in our study as compared to other studies. In a study conducted by Underwood *et al.*, among 384 dental undergraduates at one English University tobacco smoking was reported by 27% of males and 13.5% of females, 63% of males and 69.5% of females reported drinking alcohol.^[5]

In a study by Barber *et al.*, current tobacco use was reported by 7% of dental students and 19% of law students, while 9% of dental students and 1% of law students reported to have given up. There was a statistically significant difference in tobacco use between the two groups of students ($P < 0.001$). Of the current tobacco users, the majority of dental students (50%) smoked 1–5 cigarettes a day, whereas the majority of law students (33%) smoked 6–10 cigarettes a day. No dental students and only 2% of law students smoked more than 20 cigarettes a day. In the same study, it was found that 86% of dental students reported drinking alcohol.

This current study expands on previous research in this area by aiming to compare tobacco, alcohol among dental undergraduates in an institution. Encouragingly, the results show a general trend toward reductions in tobacco, alcohol use. Significantly, fewer undergraduates reported drinking alcohol,

and of that drinking alcohol there was a general reduction in the amounts consumed. Some important points should be considered when interpreting these results. The first is the significant increase in the number of students who consume no alcohol. However, regardless of this change, the general trend is toward a decrease in alcohol consumption. Overall, these trends toward lower levels of alcohol use can be regarded as positive and could be a result of a number of interventions such as recent changes in smoking legislation and increased awareness of the health and social issues involved.^[6]

A limitation of the study, as with all questionnaire surveys, is the difficulty to assess the reliability and accuracy of the data. However, the questionnaire was completed by the students on a voluntary, anonymous basis, which we think promotes a more reliable response.

Conclusion

Tobacco cessation counselling (TCC) is not yet part of routine practice in India, and dental schools currently provide only basic knowledge-based curricula and do not incorporate more effective, behaviorally based components affecting long-term change. Unless dental students become better skilled in this area, TCC practice will remain low. Instilling these ideas at an earlier stage of a professional career will reap multiple health benefits. Hence, we recommend that tobacco cessation is given greater emphasis in the curriculum of Indian dental schools.^[7] The results from this study suggest both alcohol and drug use is extremely prevalent among dental students.

A very small percentage of students showed excessive tobacco and alcohol use, and it is for this group that education on the consequences of tobacco and alcohol abuse would be most relevant. There should be a role for higher education, community, and professional bodies to participate actively in the prevention of tobacco and alcohol abuse among undergraduates.^[8]

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