

Original Investigation

Effectiveness of Antismoking Media Messages and Education Among Adolescents in Malaysia and Thailand: Findings From the International Tobacco Control Southeast Asia Project

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Abstract

Introduction: Finding ways to discourage adolescents from taking up smoking is important because those who begin smoking at an earlier age are more likely to become addicted and have greater difficulty in quitting. This article examined whether anti-smoking messages and education could help to reduce smoking susceptibility among adolescents in two Southeast Asian countries and to explore the possible moderating effect of country and gender.

Methods: Data came from Wave 1 of the International Tobacco Control Southeast Asia Project (ITC-SEA) survey conducted in Malaysia ($n = 1,008$) and Thailand ($n = 1,000$) where adolescents were asked about receiving antismoking advice from nurses or doctors, being taught at schools about the danger of smoking, noticing antismoking messages, knowledge of health effects of smoking, beliefs about the health risks of smoking, smoking susceptibility, and demographic information. Data were analyzed using chi-square tests and logistic regression models.

Results: Overall, significantly more Thai adolescents reported receiving advice from their nurses or doctors about the danger of smoking ($p < .001$), but no country difference was observed for reported antismoking education in schools and exposure to antismoking messages. Multivariate analyses revealed that only provision of antismoking education at schools was significantly associated with reduced susceptibility to smoking among female

Malaysian adolescents ($OR = 0.26$). Higher knowledge of smoking harm and higher perceived health risk of smoking were associated with reduced smoking susceptibility among Thai female ($OR = 0.52$) and Malaysian male adolescents ($OR = 0.63$), respectively.

Conclusions: Educating adolescents about the dangers of smoking in schools appears to be the most effective means of reducing adolescents' smoking susceptibility in both countries, although different prevention strategies may be necessary to ensure effectiveness for male and female adolescents.

Introduction

Tobacco use has been identified by the World Health Organization as the leading cause of death and disability in the world (Murray & Lopez, 1997). This is because more than 4,000 toxic or carcinogenic chemicals have been found in tobacco smoke (Hoffmann & Hoffmann, 1987). Half of all long-term smokers will die from tobacco use. Every cigarette smoked cuts at least 5 min off life on average (Center For Disease Control and Prevention, 1994). Each year, over 430,000 people die in the United States as a result of smoking-related diseases (WHO, 2006). However, over 50 million continue to smoke, including over 3 million teens (Al-Bedah, Qureshi, Al-Guhaimani, & Basahi, 2010).

At present, approximately 500 million of the world's 1.3 billion smokers live in Asia (Kumar, Mohan, & Jain, 1996). It is expected

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