

The Adverse Effects of Cigarette Smoking on Human Health

By

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Abstract

Despite the tremendous effects been made by Federal Ministry of Health in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) in warning and enlightening the general public about danger and health implications of cigarettes smoking in Nigeria, the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) indicates that 5.6% (4.5 million) Nigerians 15 years and older currently use tobacco products, of which 3.9% (3.1 million) are current smokers. It is against these problem that this paper reviewed the health and social implications of cigarettes smoking in Nigeria. The findings of this paper revealed that cigarettes smoking poses a lot of adverse health and social on the smoker. It obviously causes harm to almost all systems of the body including respiratory, representative, cardiovascular, nervous, and integumentary and digestive system respectively. Other health effects found associated with cigarettes smoking include the risk of developing cancers, infertility, diabetes, chronic respiratory disorder, impotence, dental problem, cardiovascular diseases, deafness, blindness and instant deaths. Based on these findings, it was concluded that cigarettes smoking is one of negative health practices that leads to higher rates of morbidity and mortality in Nigeria. It was finally recommended that Government, NGOs and health practitioners should double their efforts in enlightening people about adverse health effects of cigarettes smoking

Key words: Cigarette, Smoking, Health Implications, Nigeria

Introduction

Globally, over 1.3 billion people engage in cigarette smoking. From this figure, Nigeria accounts for 14 per cent of adult smokers, a development that has heightened serious concern about the growing addiction in the country. According to reports, the tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing more than eight million people yearly globally. More than seven million of these deaths are the result of direct tobacco use, while about 1.2 million are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoking (World Health Organization, 2021)

Smoking is described as an act or habit of inhaling and exhaling smoke of tobacco or drug. Smoking is also a practice in which a substance – most commonly Tobacco – is burned and the smoke is tasted or inhaled. Cigarette is a thin long paper tube filled with Tobacco (Doris, 2022)

The types and forms of smoking are: passive smoking, also called second-hand smoking; and active smoking, also called conscious or voluntary smoking. Sources of smoking are: marijuana, cocaine, cigarette and pipe/crack. Although Marijuana is a herb that is used to reduce stress in the lives of individuals, excessive intake of this herb can lead to mental disorder, emotional instability etc.

(Doris, 2022).

People usually smoke as a result of a formed habit, to socialize or feel among, to boost their ego, or cover-up their inferiority complex etc. Some people smoke because their colleagues, friends, siblings or parents smoke. Preventive measures should be taken to eradicate smoking from our society because every action performed by an individual has an impact on the society at large. Smoking has its own effects- economically, socially and health-wise.

In the areas of health, medical experts states that smoking is very bad for body organs. People who smoke end up developing lung cancer, colone cancer, brain tumour etc.

Socially, cigarette smoking results into emotional instability, which can cause a strain in relationships between the smoker and others.

Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking

According to Center for Disease Control [CDC] (2022), smoking leads to disease and disability and harms nearly every organ of the body. More than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking. For every person who dies because of smoking, at least 30 people live with a serious smoking-related illness. Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Smoking also increases risk for tuberculosis, certain eye diseases, and problems of the immune system, including rheumatoid arthritis (CDC, 2022).

Secondhand smoke exposure contributes to approximately 41,000 deaths among nonsmoking adults and 400 deaths in infants each year. Secondhand smoke causes stroke, lung cancer, and coronary heart disease in adults. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, middle ear disease, more severe asthma, respiratory symptoms, and slowed lung growth (CDC, 2022).

Tobacco smoke is incredibly harmful to health. There's no safe way to smoke. Replacing cigarette with a cigar, pipe, or hookah won't help avoid the health risks.

Cigarettes contain about 600 ingredients, many of which can also be found in cigars and hookahs. When these ingredients burn, they generate more than 7,000 chemicals, according to the American Lung Association. Many of those chemicals are poisonous and at least 69 of them are linked to cancer (CDC, 2022)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) stated that smoking is the most common —preventable cause of death". While the effects of smoking may not be immediate, the complications and damage can last for years. The good news is that quitting smoking can reverse many effects (Adamu, 2021).

Effects of Cigarette Smoking on Body Systems

The adverse effects of smoking cigarettes on various systems of the body are briefly discussed as follows:

1. Central nervous system

One of the ingredients in tobacco is a mood-altering drug called nicotine. Nicotine reaches brain in mere seconds and makes the smoker feels more energized for a while. But as that effect

wears off, the smoker feels tired and crave more. Nicotine is extremely habit-forming, which is why people find smoking so difficult to quit. However, physical withdrawal from nicotine can impair cognitive functioning and make smoker feel anxious, irritated, and depressed. Withdrawal can also cause headaches and sleep problems (CDC, 2019).

2. Respiratory system

When a smokers inhale smoke, they are taking in substances that can damage the lungs over time which leads to a variety of problems. Along with increased infections, people who smoke are at higher risk for chronic nonreversible lung conditions such as: emphysema, the destruction of the air sacs in the lungs, chronic bronchitis, permanent inflammation that affects the lining of the breathing tubes of the lungs, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a group of lung diseases, lung cancer etc. (Judith, 2019).

Withdrawal from tobacco products can cause temporary congestion and respiratory discomfort as the lungs and airways begin to heal. Increased mucus production right after quitting smoking is a positive sign that the respiratory system is recovering. In addition, children whose parents smoke are more prone to coughing, wheezing, and asthma attacks than children whose parents don't. They also tend to have higher rates of pneumonia and bronchitis (CDC, 2022).

3. Cardiovascular system

Smoking damages the entire cardiovascular system. Nicotine causes blood vessels to tighten, which restricts the flow of blood. Over time, the ongoing narrowing, along with damage to the blood vessels, can cause peripheral artery disease. Smoking also raises blood pressure, weakens blood vessel walls, and increases blood clots. The cigarette smoker is also at an increased risk of worsening heart diseases if already had heart bypass surgery, heart attack, or a stent placed in a blood vesse (CDC, 2022).

4. Integumentary system (skin, hair, and nails)

The more obvious signs of cigarette smoking involve skin changes. Substances in tobacco smoke actually change the structure of the skin. A recent study has shown that smoking dramatically increases the risk of squamous cell carcinoma (skin cancer). Moreover, the

finger nails and toenails of the smoker aren't immune from the effects of smoking. Smoking increases the likelihood of fungal nail infections. (Judith, 2019).

5. Digestive system

Smoking increases the risk of mouth, throat, larynx, and esophagus cancer. Smokers also have higher rates of pancreatic cancer. Even people who —smoke but don't inhale face an increased risk of mouth cancer. Moreover, smoking also has an effect on insulin, making it more likely that a smokers develop insulin resistance. That puts them at increased risk of type 2 diabetes and its complications, which tend to develop at a faster rate than in people who don't smoke (CDC, 2022).

6. Sexuality and reproductive system

Nicotine affects blood flow to the genital areas of both men and women. For men, this can decrease sexual performance. For women, this can result in sexual dissatisfaction by decreasing lubrication and the ability to reach orgasm. Smoking may also lower sex hormone levels in both men and women. This can possibly lead to decreased sexual desire (CDC, 2022).

Other Diseases and Medical Conditions Associated With Cigarettes Smoke

1. Impotence

In the same way that regular, long-term smoking constricts blood vessels to cause gangrene, it can cut off blood supply to male genitalia. Moreover, the chemical reactions in the body that occur as a response to smoking render most erectile dysfunction (ED) medication useless.

2. Cancer

Smoking causes most lung cancers and can cause cancer almost anywhere on the body. This includes the lips, tongue, mouth, nose, oesophagus, throat, voice box, stomach, liver, kidney, pancreas, bladder, blood, cervix, vulva, penis and anus (CDC, 2022).

3. Breathing problems and chronic respiratory conditions

Smoking is the main cause of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a serious, progressive and disabling condition that limits airflow in the lungs. Active smoking also

worsens asthma in active smokers and is associated with an increased risk for asthma in adolescents and adults (Doris, 2022).

4. Heart disease, stroke and blood circulation problems

Smoking is major cause of cardiovascular disease, such as heart disease and stroke. Smoking increases the risk of blood clots, which block blood flow to the heart, brain or legs. Some smokers end up having their limbs amputated due to blood circulation problems caused by smoking (CDC, 2022).

5. Diabetes

Smoking causes type 2 diabetes, with the risk of developing diabetes 30 to 40% higher for active smokers than non-smokers. Smoking may also worsen some of the health conditions related to type 1 diabetes, such as kidney disease (Doris, 2022).

6. Infections

Smoking weakens the immune system so the smokers are more likely to get bacterial and viral infections (CDC, 2022)

7. Dental problems

Smoking increase the risk of gum diseases, tooth loss and tooth sensitivity. Once a person has gum damage, smoking also makes it harder for their gums to heal.

8. Hearing loss

Smoking reduces blood flow to the inner ear. Many studies proved that smokers may also lose their hearing earlier than a non-smoker (CDC, 2022).

9. Blindness

Smoking damages the eye and can lead to macular degeneration, leaving the smoker unable to see because smoking choked the blood flow to retina. It could also leaves the smoker permanently blind (CDC, 2022).

Fertility problems

Many studies revealed that smoking can make it more difficult to fall pregnant and affect sperm quality. It can also results in early menopause in smoker compared to a non-smoker (Judith, 2019).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this reviewed, it was concluded that cigarettes smoking is one of negative health practices that leads to higher rates of morbidity and mortality in Nigeria as it poses many advance side effects on the health of smokers and even those living nearby (second hand smoker). It affects almost all organs and systems of the body leading to various medical conditions. Among the diseases and medical conditions that are associated with cigarettes smoking include cardiovascular diseases, various forms of cancers, infertility, loss of hearing, blindness, dental problems, weak immunity.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should banned the importation and sell of cigarettes throughout the country
2. Awareness programme should be carried out regularly throughout mass media such as radio and television stations in order to increase awareness level of the general public about health implementation of smoking cigarette.
3. Government should enforce too much tax to companies that are marketing cigarettes so that the price of cigarettes will go higher beyond the affordability of the poor Nigerian.
4. Parents should monitor the behavior of their children and discouraged any forms of antisocial behavior including cigarettes smoking.
5. Government should banned the act of cigarettes smoking at all.
6. Religious leaders (Imams and Posters) should enlighten the followers in general public about social and health implications of cigarettes smoking.

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