

Effectiveness of a Health Promotion Intervention on Income: A Case Study among Tobacco Smoking Soldiers in Sri Lanka

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Tobacco smoking, a common prevalent unhealthy behaviour among soldiers in Sri Lanka contributes for the deprivation of their income. Income deprivation due to tobacco smoking is an unseen and neglected factor in improving quality of lives of soldiers and their families. A health promotion intervention was piloted in Security forces Wannu (Wannu SF), aiming reducing tobacco smoking among soldiers and reducing economic harm due to tobacco. The objective of the study is to test the effectiveness of the health promotion intervention piloted.

Soldiers representing each camp from all 6 administrative divisions of Wannu SF participated for the intervention. The intervention launched as six health promotion programs, conducted as each per an administrative division. The health promotion process was initiated with making soldiers realize about tobacco smoking as a major underlying factor for lack of happiness, poor quality of life and premature deaths of soldiers in Sri Lanka. With the facilitation, soldiers evaluated their quality of life focusing on economic aspects. Soldiers calculated own expenditure for cigarettes for a year and the amount of money burned from own camp on smoking per a year. Active groups were formed from each camp to implement activities to make non-participants of camps aware. Participatory Action Research model was used for the intervention and pre-test and post-test were used to evaluate the outcomes.

88% of participants (n= 684) improved their understanding about the economic harm due to tobacco smoking from pre-test to post-test. 71 % of soldiers accepted as smokers (n= 348) decided to stop smoking or reduce the number of cigarettes from pre-test to post-test. All active groups reported the activities done to spread the messages within the camps, such as exhibiting posters, after 3 months of the intervention. The social milieu in all camps changed towards non-smoking. Making soldiers realize about the income deprivation due to tobacco is an effective strategy to reduce smoking and to improve economic status of soldiers.

Key words: *Economic harm, Health promotion, Quality of life, Soldier, Tobacco smoking*