

# **Factors Determining Smoking among Youth: A Case Study of Colombo District**

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Smoking is one of the major determinant factors that contribute towards various consequences of social, health and psychosocial problems. It is stated that many people die because of tobacco smoking annually. It is evident that more children and youth initiate smoking on a daily basis. This research focuses on factors that determine smoking among youth such as family background, peer pressure, availability, close relation with tobacco users, marketing strategies, policies related to tobacco use and sale. Further, the study also analyses the attitude in relation to creating positive or negative image on smoking, and the factors that influence subjects to start smoking, relation between smoking behaviour and education performance among youth.

Data was collected from three boys' colleges in this zone and had a sample of 250 students in Grade 12 and 13. 54% of them grade were in 12 and 46% of them were grade 13. 18% of total population were ever smokers while 82% of them reported to not using any kind of tobacco products. Based on the responses to a questionnaire especially designed according to the objectives, it was found that the availability of tobacco products, media strategies on tobacco companies that significantly influence the instigation of smoking and peer pressure contribute to a big role for smoking among students. Home environment also affects creating positive attitudes towards smoking and it was further found that education performance and smoking is not related to each other and that smoking is not a significant factor in relation to education. Results also conclude that the initiation age is 14 and prevalence of smoking is 18%. Research also found that prevention programmes for smoking does not have a profound effect on youth and the lack of programmes available may be a contributory factor to the negligence on the harm caused by smoking. According to the results, it can be concluded that policy programmes for reducing

the availability of tobacco products and creating a tobacco free environment for children and more prevention programmes for schools are necessary.

**Key words:** *Smoking, Initiation age, Education, Determinant, Peers.*