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World Health Organisation (WHO) – Ministry of Education

Global Youth Tobacco Survey

County Report

Sri lanka

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THE GLOBAL YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY – SRI-LANKA

1. INTRODUCTION

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) project developed by the World Health Organization and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to control tobacco use among youth in the countries around the world is based on a common study using the identical methodology and common questionnaire. This is a preliminary report prepared based on the survey data collected in the Sri-Lankan national study.

WHO Resolution

Between 1970 and 1995, WHO adopted 14 resolutions on the need for the both national and international tobacco control policies. Four of the 14 resolutions are relevant to the UNF Project-GYTS Survey. Member states were encouraged to implement comprehensive tobacco control strategies that contain the following:

- 1) Measures to ensure that non-smokers receive effective protection, to which they are entitled, from involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke.
- 2) Measures to promote abstention from the use of tobacco so as to protect children and young people from becoming addicted.
- 3) The establishment of programmes of education and public information on tobacco and health issues, including smoking cessation programmes, with active involvement of the health professions and the media.
- 4) Monitoring of trends in smoking and other form of tobacco use, tobacco -related diseases, and effectiveness of national smoking control action.

Public Health Impact

Despite widespread knowledge of the harm caused by smoking, only modest success has been achieved in global tobacco control initiatives. WHO estimates that there are currently 3.5 million deaths a year from tobacco, a figure expected to rise to about 10 million by 2030. By that date 70% of those deaths will occur in developing countries.

Tobacco use is considered to be one of the chief preventable causes of deaths in the world. Most people begin using tobacco before the age of 18. Recent trends indicate that the smoking prevalence rate among adolescent is rising; and age of initiation is becoming younger. If these patterns continue tobacco use will result in deaths of 250 million children and young people alive today, many of them in developing countries. Therefore, adolescents and school –aged children should be a primary focus for intervention strategies. Carefully designed survey should provide a clear picture of the risk factor behaviors of young and school-aged children which then can be used to set up more effective and comprehensive tobacco control policies.

2.0 THE GLOBAL YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY- BACKGROUND.

UNF Project

The Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI)/WHO has recently been awarded by the United Nations Foundation for International partnership (UNFPI) what is probably the largest single tobacco prevention grant to initiate a joint project with UNICEF titled, "Building alliances and taking action to create a generation of tobacco free children and youth". The aim of the project is to pull together the evidence, technical support, and strategic alliances necessary to positively address the negative impact of tobacco and to encourage and support children and adolescents in leading healthy and active lives free of tobacco. The project will be focused in a small group of developing countries, one per WHO region, and will draw upon the combined technical expertise and operational resources of number of UN agencies – in particular WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank. The agencies will work together with the global scientific community, governments and non-government agencies, institutions and systems within countries, the media, and with young people to show that together they can make difference in this important public health issue.

The project is conceived as a dynamic and interactive process, where by the activities and products of each phase will be used to inform and guide subsequent activities. The project will consist of three distinct, but overlapping phases. The first phase will focus on **harnessing the evidence for action:** synthesizing the existing evidence from countries, some of which may participate in subsequent phases. ; Undertaking new areas of research to support actions; and establishing the research-based evidence for developing future actions.

The second phase will be the **activating phase.** Country Activating Groups (CAGs), with broad membership, will be formed in each of the participating countries as the coordinating and implementing mechanism at the county level to select and develop the components of a comprehensive country-based approach to addressing tobacco use among children and young people. Opportunities to promote the exchange of experiences and issues between countries and global activities will be developed and strengthened.

The third phase will involve **taking the project to scale:** producing and disseminating resources; strengthening regional capacity to sustain activities; integrating the products and results of the project into ongoing tobacco control work at the national, regional and global levels; transferring technology and experience between countries and regions; and strengthening cooperation and collaboration at all levels.

The GYTS

The GYTS is a school-based tobacco specific survey which focuses on adolescents age 13 – 15 (grades 8-10). It assesses student's attitudes; knowledge and behaviors related to tobacco use and ETS exposure, as well as youth exposure to prevention, curriculum in school, community programmes, media messages aimed at preventing and reducing youth tobacco use. The GYTS provides information on where tobacco products are obtained and

used and information related to the effectiveness of enforcement measures. School surveys are considered useful tools in gathering data as they are relatively inexpensive and easy to administer, tend to report reliable results, and refusals are significantly lower than in household surveys. The most common research approach for this specific population has been the self administered questionnaire. Therefore, all the above, reasonably justifies why a school-based survey has proved to be most appropriate, hence for the UN project on Youth and Tobacco

3.0 Objectives of GYTS

As it was mentioned earlier the GYTS is a school-based tobacco specific survey

The GYTS is a school-based tobacco specific survey that focuses on students' age 13-15 years. The objective of this survey is two fold;

1. To document and monitor prevalence of tobacco use including cigarette smoking, and current use of smokeless tobacco, cigars or pipes.
2. To better understand and assess students' attitudes, knowledge and behaviors related to tobacco use and its health impact, including; cessation, environmental tobacco smoke (RTS), media and advertising, minors access and school curriculum.

The GYTS is attempting to address the following issues

- determine the level of tobacco use
- estimate age of initiation of cigarette use
- estimate the level of susceptibility to become cigarette smokers
- exposure to tobacco advertising
- identify key intervening variables, such as attitudes and beliefs on behavioral norms with regard to tobacco use among young people which can be used in prevention programmes
- assess the extent to which major prevention programmes are reaching school-based populations and establish the subjective opinions of those populations regarding such interventions.

Contents of GYTS included the following aspects

- Smoking status of youth.
- Age of initiation of cigarette use.
- Number of cigarettes smoke in lifetime.
- Frequency of smoking.
- Likelihood of smoking.
- Knowledge and attitudes towards smoking.
- Knowledge and attitudes towards cessation.
- Exposure o environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) – amount/duration.
- Access to cigarettes.
- Exposure to media and advertising.
- School curriculum.

4.0 The Survey done in Sri Lanka

Sample

Under the guidance of WHO and UNICEF office, the survey in Sri Lanka's schools was carried out during the period June to August 1999 to cover all public and private schools in the country (except for those schools with less than 40 children). Grades 8 to 10 children in 100 selected schools were included in the sampling frame. A two-stage cluster sample design was used to produce a representative sample of above named grades.

School level

The first stage sampling frame consisted of all public and private schools (except for those schools with less than 40 students) containing any of grades 8 to 10. Schools were selected with probability proportional to school enrolment size. 100 schools were selected initially by WHO and two schools were ineligible to be included in the sample.

Class level

The second sampling stage was consisting of systematic equal probability sampling (with a random start) of classes from each school that participated in the survey. All second period classes in the selected schools were included in the sampling frame. All students in the selected classes were eligible to participate in the survey.

4.1 How the Survey was Conducted?/Data collection

All precautionary measures were taken by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) at the survey stage to obtain free and accurate responses of the students. Prior to the survey was started, groups of Director of Education were hand picked from 8 provinces, totaling 22 officers island wide. These officers were summoned to the MEHE on the 9th June, 1999 and one day session was conducted by the country coordinator advised and guided by Dr. Diyanath Samarasighe, an expert in the field. Printed questionnaires in both Sinhala and Tamil languages (the two national languages in the country) along with School ID forms and Class level ID forms were made available to the data enumerators. The said practical session was conducted for them until each officer becomes familiar with the survey process.

Directors of Education themselves visited the schools after making all the principals and relevant teachers and the students in grades 8 to 10 classes and their parents aware through the school principals. Each director had around five to six schools in their sample and they spent a minimum of one day in each school and in each class. The 2nd period was selected for the administration of questionnaire.

The questionnaire prepared on the guidelines of WHO comprised core component that provided similar data for the comparison between countries and regions and a set of

optional component that provided data to analyze the special issues relevant to the Sri Lankan situation.

After the survey was completed in the whole country school wise and class wise response sheets separately received by the MEHE were sent to WHO as had been instructed by them.

The survey instrument designed to assess the prevalence of smoking contained different questions in the core section under five major areas namely Rates of smoking, Knowledge and Attitudes towards Tobacco, Attitudes towards Smoking, Knowledge of Media messages about Smoking and what were taught in the school about smoking. As such the responses for questions are analyzed under the above headings. Out of the sample of 100 schools selected for the survey 89.0% (89 out of 100) participated and 2896 students (2896 out of 3253) were interviewed. Therefore, the overall response rate was 76.3%. The aggregated responses for a particular question was determined by using a computer programme and the respective percentages were determined at the 95% confidence interval. In this study a never smoker or non-smoker is defined as a student who has never smoked tobacco and a current smoker (present-smoker) a student that has smoked at least one to two puffs of tobacco.

Response Rates

Schools-85.7% 84 of the 98 sample schools participated.

Students-89.0%, 2896 of the 3253 sample students completed the usable questionnaires.

Over all Response Rate- $85.7\% + 89.0\% = 76.3\%$

5.0 ANALYSIS OF DATA

For the analysis of data a weighting factor was supplied to each student response to adjust for non-response and the varying probabilities of selection. The computer programmes SUDAN and Efi Info were used to analyze the data and the respective percentages were determined at the 95% confidence interval. In this study a never smoker or non-smoker is defined as a student who has never smoked tobacco and a current smoker (present smokers) a student that has smoked at least one to two puffs of tobacco.

5.1 Smoking Rates

The analysis of responses to question No. 4 included to identify the number of smokers in the sample, indicates that 12.5% of the children have been exposed to smoking; gender wise analysis show the 17.5% of males and 6.8% of females have smoked. When these findings are further extended according to age groups for years 13,14 and 15, it could be seen that the proportion exposed to smoking are 11.6%, 10.9% and 14% respectively. Even though the problem of smoking amongst school going young children is not an acute problem in Sri Lanka like in many other countries (Poland 79.8%; Moscow 67.2%; Ukraine 73.6%), this is a matter for policy-makers to take some preventive measures.

Table 1- Percentage of Students age 13 to 15 who used Tobacco

		Ever Smokers	Current Use Cigarettes	Other Tobacco Products	1st smoked Ciga.before age 10	After 10
Sex	Male	17.5	6.9	9.7	5.9	1.0
	Female	6.8	1.8	5.3	1.2	0.6
Grade	8 (13)	11.6	4.2	8.5	3.2	1.0
	9(14)	10.9	2.5	8.3	2.1	0.5
	10(5)	14.9	6.5	4.9	5.7	0.8

The rate of current smokers who have smoked within the past 30 days prior to the survey was as high as 17.5% for males and for females it is lower than double (6.8%). This again reflects a cultural factor in Sri Lanka, which dominates that the women should not smoke at all. Again the current smokers who have tried other tobacco products were also on the increase in respect of males (9.7%). What is significant is the number of students who are current smokers, have used other tobacco products extensively in their groups of 14 and 15. This is seen as a common factor not only among males but the females as well.

- Out of those identified as smokers 24.9% have experienced smoking before reaching 11 years of age.
- Out of sample of students 4.5% smoked one to two days a month and the percentage smoked more than 20 days is even less than 1.0%

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- Out of those identified as smokers 24.9% have experienced smoking before reaching 11 years of age.
- Out of the sample of students 4.5% smoked 1-2 days a month and the percentage smoked more than 20 days is even less than 1.0%
- With regard to the mode of obtaining tobacco 37.5% of students stated that they bought from a store, shop or a street vendor. Out of the smokers 37.2% have selected Gold Leaf as their brand, which is the most expensive locally manufactured cigarette.
- Although there are restrictions to sell cigarettes to minors, 38.5% of the children have stated that the sellers did not refuse them. The corresponding responses from various age groups are; 30.8% for the 13 years of age, 38.9% for the 14 year age group and 50.9% for the 15 year age group.
- In the context of the education system in Sri Lanka, smoking in the formal school is considered as a serious offence. During the recent past the government banned smoking in public vehicles and government institutions. Social and cultural set up in the country prevents adolescents/minors smoking in the presence of elders, parents, teachers, clergy etc. and women are more reluctant to smoke especially in front of

others. Views of the responses to question 13 which emphasize on the place of smoking the responses are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2-Place of Smoking

Place of Smoking	Percentage		
	Total	Male	Female
At School	5.6	4.7	5.8
At Work	9.3	9.0	12.5
At Home	12.2	10.6	17.5
At Public Places	17.5	18.8	13.6
At Friends Place	20.5	19.1	25.9
At Social Events	34.9	37.8	24.7

Out of the smokers 5.6% stated that they smoke at school, 9.3% at work, and 12.2% at home. More than 15.0% smoked at public places, at friends place, the maximum of 34.9% of the students at social events.

- It is believed that there are more tendencies to smoke when people are under the influence of liquor. Responses to question 14 indicate that out of the current smokers 7.3% of children smoke when they are under the influence of liquor. More concerning, the girls and those in the lower age group (0.0%) do not tend to smoke after liquor.

5.2 Knowledge and Attitudes Towards Smoking.

Items 16 to 36 of the questionnaire were included to gather views on Knowledge and Attitudes towards the use of tobacco. For a more comprehensive analysis they are grouped under Information about Parents and Others and Knowledge and Attitudes towards Smoking.

Smoking habits of Parents and Others

Responses of informants in respect of prevalence of smoking among their parents and others are indicated in Table 3.

Table – 3, Prevalence of Smoking among Parents and others

Question Number	Category	Particulars of the Item	Total %	Male %	Female %
16	Never Smokers	Whose parents do not smoke	47.1	45.8	48.3
16	Current smokers	Whose parents do not smoke	29.4	30.7	21.2
34	Never Smokers	Someone smoked in their homes in their presence during the past 7 days	54.7	57.8	52.0
34	Current Smokers	Someone smoked in their homes in their presence during the past 7 days	65.3	64.1	70.1
29	Never Smokers	All his/her closest friends smoke	0.6	0.9	0.4
29	Current Smokers	All his/her closest friends smoke	5.8	6.4	4.5
35	Never Smokers	Someone smoked in their presence other than those smoked at home	65.4	68.6	62.7
35	Current Smokers	Someone smoked in their presence other than those smoked at home	84.6	86.1	75.0

- It could be noted that smoking habits of others are most likely to facilitate and encourage adolescents to smoke. According to the above table 47.1% parents of never smokers, and 29.4% of current smokers are observed as non-smokers. These figures give an indication of the fact that children of smoking parents are more susceptible to smoking.
- More than 50% of the children have stated that someone in their homes have smoked in their presence during the past 7 days. These percentages are 54.7% for never smokers and 65.3% for current smokers. Here again it may be

concluded that the smoking habits of others have encouraged adolescents towards smoking.

- It was observed that the closest friends of most of never smokers interviewed are non-smokers. The analysis to question 29 indicates that the friends of only 0.9% of boys and 0.4% of girls of non-smokers are susceptible to smoking. However the corresponding percentages are slightly higher for current smokers (6.4% and 4.5% respectively).
- Exposure to smoking among adolescents can be affected by the smoking habits of people whom they associate frequently. Question 35 is concerned about the extent to which others have smoked, in their presence, when they are away from home, during the past 7 days. 65.4% of non-smokers and 84.6% of current smokers have stated that others smoked in their presence, when they were away from home during the past 7 days

5.3 Knowledge and Attitudes towards Smoking

Knowledge on effects of Smoking

Analysis of data pertaining to questions on knowledge is depicted in Table 4.

Table –4, Knowledge on Smoking

Question Number	Category	Particulars of the Item	Total %	Male %	Female %
17	Never Smokers	Definitely smoke if they are best offered	0.2	0.1	0.2
17	Current smokers	Definitely smoke if they are best offered	5.4	3.1	8.2
18	Never Smokers	Whose family members have discussed about the harmful effects of smoking	55.0	57.0	53.2
18	Current Smokers	Whose family members have discussed about the harmful effects of smoking	55.1	54.0	54.0
27	Never Smokers	Who think that smoking cigarettes make loss of weight	62.5	63.2	61.7
27	Current Smokers	Who think that smoking cigarettes make loss of weight	51.8	54.9	42.3
28	Never Smokers	Definitely think that smoking is harmful to health.	87.2	83.8	90.5
28	Current	Definitely think that smoking	51.5	53.5	50.1

	Smokers	is harmful to health.			
33	Never Smokers	Think that others smoking is harmful to them	76.5	75.1	78.1
33	Current Smokers	Think that others smoking is harmful to them	45.4	48.3	41.3

- 0.2% of never smokers have stated that they will smoke if they are best offered; for current smokers the percentages are comparatively high. (3.1% of boys and 8.2% of girls.)
- During the recent past there was a decline in the rate of smoking in Sri Lanka, among all age groups, mainly due to the publicity on anti smoking given by media and due to good community relations. There was a growing tendency to avoid smoking, as the public was made aware of the harmful effects of the use of tobacco. About 55 % of never smokers as well as current smokers indicated that their family members have often discussed the harmful effects of smoking. In this regard the responses are almost the same for both males and females.
- Question 27 was included to identify whether they were aware of the fact that smoking results in the loss of weight. 62% of nonsmokers and 51.8% of current smokers have responded positively. The familiarity in respect of harmful effects of smoking is quite high for both sexes. 83.8% of males and 90.5% of females of those among never smokers have felt that smoking is harmful to health; the corresponding percentages are 53.5 and 50.1 for current smokers. These figures indicate that never smokers are well aware of the consequences of smoking than the current smokers.
- There is a tendency for the non-smokers to be affected by the smoke expelled by others. Question 33 administered to identify this aspect reveals that 76.5% of the never smokers and 45.4% of current smokers feel that a person is likely to be affected by environmental smoking.

5.4 Attitudes towards smoking

The responses to questions on attitudes are tabulated in Table 4.

Table – 4, Attitudes Towards Smoking

Question Number	Category	Particulars of the Item	Total %	Male %	Female %
19	Never Smokers	Those will definitely smoke cigarettes in the next 6 months	0.2	0.2	0.2
20	Never Smokers	Those will definitely smoke cigarettes 5 years from now	0.2	0.3	0.1
20	Current Smokers	Those will definitely smoke cigarettes 5 years from now	3.1	1.0	4.2
21	Never	Once someone starts smoking	19.1	19.8	18.3

	Smokers	it is difficult to quit			
21	Current Smokers	Once someone starts smoking it is difficult to quit	16.3	15.6	19.0
22	Never Smokers	Boys who smoke cigarettes have more friends	48.6	45.7	50.8
22	Current Smokers	Boys who smoke cigarettes have more friends	57.8	58.3	56.0
23	Never Smokers	Girls who smoke cigarettes have more friends.	19.4	20.8	18.1
23	Current Smokers	Girls who smoke cigarettes have more friends.	20.5	20.2	21.9
24	Never Smokers	Smoking cigarettes help people to be more comfortable at social events	41.9	38.1	45.1
24	Current Smokers	Smoking cigarettes help people to be more comfortable at social events	46.5	44.1	63.1
25	Never Smokers	Smoking cigarettes makes boys more attractive	42.3	38.3	45.8
25	Current Smokers	Smoking cigarettes makes boys more attractive	50.2	48.0	56.7
26	Never Smokers	Smoking cigarettes makes girls more attractive	26.1	24.5	27.4
26	Current Smokers	Smoking cigarettes makes girls more attractive	26.2	23.7	37.4
30	Never Smokers	Thinks that a man smoking looks intelligent or Macho	6.1	6.3	5.9
30	Current Smokers	Thinks that a man smoking looks intelligent or Macho	12.1	11.5	17.2
31	Never smokers	Thinks that a woman smoking looks intelligent or Macho	5.5	5.9	5.2
31	Current Smokers	Thinks that a woman smoking looks intelligent or Macho	11.5	8.1	16.1
32	Never smokers	Its okay to smoke for only a year as long as you quit after that	6.1	7.5	4.9
32	Current	Its okay to smoke for only a	12.4	13.1	12.3

	Smokers	year as long as you quit after that			
36	Never smokers	In favor of banning smoking in public places	91.9	89.9	93.7
36	Current Smokers	In favor of banning smoking in public places	79.3	80.4	74.2

- Out of the sample of children comparatively a small percentage expects to smoke in the future. 0.2% hoped to smoke cigarettes in the next six months. Similarly 0.2% of never smokers and 3.1% of current smokers hoped to smoke during the next five years.
- Responding to the question included to find the possibility to quit smoking, indicated that a higher percentage of smokers have felt that it is impossible to stop smoking once they get exposed to it. The corresponding respondents are 19.1% for never smokers and 16.3% for present smokers.
- A common feature among adolescents is to associate peers as groups and identify them with each other closely. Members of such groups especially boys get together in occasions such as big matches, trips arranged by the school, at parties given at home by the parents. In such events these children are seldom supervised by the teachers or by elders. As such there is a higher tendency to get used to smoking, to keep up the group spirit. These trends are evinced by the following analysis.
- Responding to question 22, around 48% of never smokers and 57.8% of current smokers stated that boys who smoke cigarettes have more friends; similarly 19.4% of never smokers and 20.5% of current smokers have felt that girls exposed to smoking have more friends than others.
- Comparatively a majority of the students are of the opinion that smoking help people to be more comfortable at social events. Analysis of data pertaining to question 24 reveals that 41.9% of non-smokers and 46.5% of smokers are in favor of this idea.
- When the psychological aspect of smoking is considered, it is believed that adolescents tend to be more attractive among peers, and in the community, through smoking. Analysis of responses to question 25 indicates that around 45% of smokers as well as non-smokers have responded positively.
- It has also been observed that 6.1% of never smokers and 12.1% of smokers have felt that smoking looks more intelligent or macho.
- It is interesting to note that the degree of responses in respect of banning smoking in public places is very high. 89.9% among never smoking males and 93.7% of females, as well as 80.4% and 74.2% males and females of current smokers are in favor of this idea.

5.5 Attitudes towards stopping smoking

- Questionnaire items 37 – 42 referred to attitudes towards stopping smoking. Apparently 80.0% of the students, who smoke currently, have been so far wanted to stop smoking. The percentage is high as above 90% for the higher age group of the sampled students. However, according to the information gained through item 38, only 42.3% of males and 37.8% among females have made an attempt to stop smoking; the percentage is high (61.8%) for those in the higher age group.
- Among those who have stopped smoking around 60% of the children of both sexes stated that their intention was to improve their health. This percentage is again high (67.1%) for students in the 15-year age group.
- Question number 39 was concerned about the percentage of children who have stopped smoking; out of those identified as current smokers 53.4% of males and 63.2% of females have stopped smoking over one year ago.
- With regard to the impression that the current smokers could stop smoking if they wanted, more than 80% of the children of both sexes have responded positively; the percentage in this respect is high as 90% for children aged 15 years.
- A striking feature is, none of the smokers (0.0%) stated that they have not received any help to stop smoking.

5.6 Knowledge of Media Message about Smoking.

In Sri Lanka there was a significant decline in the rate of smoking among youth, during the past decade. This is a result of measures taken by the state to eradicate tobacco smoking. However, tobacco producing companies, both local and foreign, have taken various measures to reverse this trend, more concerning are the advertisements through electronic media, banners displayed at social gatherings such as cricket big matches, international tournaments etc. It is revealed that smoking habits of people occur during the early stages of adolescents. Items number 43 to 51 are included to estimate the knowledge of media messages on smoking among the sample of children selected for the survey.

- Only a small percentage of adolescents (10.2%) have not seen anti media smoking messages, during the past one month.
- Among those who go for sports events, fairs, concerts, community events or social gatherings, only around 15% have never seen anti smoking messages.
- To estimate the proportion of children that could be encouraged towards smoking as result of messages displayed through electronic media; they were asked the question “when you watched TV, videos, or movies how often do you see actors smoking”. Only 5.7% of the children have never seen such incidents.
- One of the tactics of tobacco companies is to distribute T-shirts, caps, stickers etc. with their brands colorfully displayed, at sponsored events. Observations arising through question 46, indicate that 9.1% of never smokers and 28.9% present smokers have used something with a cigarette brand logo in it. These data give some indication of the effect of advertisements on smoking.
- During the past 30 days 28.8% of students have seen a lot of advertisements on billboards.
- Responses to question 49, concerned about the propaganda through print media such as news papers, magazines; only around 15% of never smokers as well as

current smokers have not seen cigarette advertisements in magazines and news papers, during the past 30 days.

- In major sports events sponsored by tobacco companies, and at social events, propaganda through banners could be seen very often. Publicity given at such events could have a significant effect on adolescents. Responses given to question 50, indicate only 15% of the children attending sporting events, fairs etc. have never seen advertisements during the past 30 days.
- Responses to item 51 are quite striking. It asked, “ has a cigarette representative ever offered you a cigarette”?, 7.9% males and 3.9% females among never smokers, 16.3% and 26.7% among current smokers have stated that they were offered a cigarette by a tobacco representative. When the responses to this question are looked further according to age span, it could be seen that this practice has been widely used to attract younger adolescents. As such 25.5% of the 13-year age group, 24.3% of the 14 years, and 14.7% of the 15 years were offered. This indicates that the tactic of the representative was to approach the younger children among adolescents.

5.8 What were taught at School about Smoking.

In Sri Lanka, the children in grades 8,9, and 10 selected for the survey are enrolled in the Junior Secondary section of a school. The theoretical content of the curriculum in these grades does not directly include the effects of the use of tobacco or narcotics. Although not compulsory, effects of smoking tobacco may be inculcated through the informal curriculum. Questionnaire items 52 to 55 are concerned on the extent to which children have learnt at school, on the effects of smoking.

- For question 52, included to estimate the proportion of children who were taught in schools of the dangers of smoking, 6.1% of the children have responded positively. It is reported, that 34.1% of the students have discussed in their classes the reasons for young people to smoke. It could also be seen that such discussions were comparatively higher among elder adolescents. 53.7% of the students stated that they were taught about the side effects of smoking such as, teeth becoming yellow, causing wrinkles, make them bad smell etc. Only a fewer proportion of students were taught on the effects of smoking as part of a lesson during the past one year.

6.0 Conclusions

The percentages of smokers of adolescents were observed as 12.5%. The female smokers are low (6.8%) when compared with males (17.5%) . It could be seen that majority of the children have been exposed to smoking before reaching 11 years. However when the extent of smoking is considered, children smoked more than 20 days a month is even less than 1%.

In Sri Lanka social and cultural influences are such that women are reluctant to smoke than males, with exceptions in certain communities. In certain sub-cultures such as children living in slums or areas where commercial tourism exists, girls could get

exposed to smoking. Therefore the prevalence of smoking among girls is matter to be reckoned with.

There is a higher tendency to smoke at social events such as parties big matches, especially with peers. None of the girls smoke after liquor.

Though the government has taken measures to prevent smoking, tobacco transnational have taken measures to propagate through indirect advertising and sponsorship. Responses to the same question analyzed separately for never smokers and current smokers indicate that there could have been a considerable impact by media, on the smoking of youth.

It is most likely that tobacco industrialists attempt to encourage minors on smoking. There is no evidence of any attempts made to implement anti smoking campaigns targeted at school children.

The degree of smoking is high among children whose parents are exposed to smoking. Smoking habits of elders have had a considerable effect on the smoking of children. Harmful effects of smoking have been discussed in families of about 50% of the children. As such more than 50% of smokers were aware of the effects of smoking. Smoking takes place among adolescents when they are with peers. This attitude is more among boys than girls. Social gatherings are an opportunity for children of 13-16 age group to smoke. More than 75% of the children feel that smoking should be banned in public places.

A relatively high proportion of adolescents, especially those who are in the higher age group of the sample, want to get rid of the habit. A considerable proportion of students have quitted smoking to maintain good health. This can be an indication of the impact of anti smoking campaigns implemented in the country. Higher proportions of students think that they can stop smoking if they wanted.

