Smoking Problem in the Youth

Some Statistics

In England, 3% of children aged between 11-15 are involved in regular smoking. They smoke at least 1 cigarette a week in average. A regular child smoker smokes 31 cigarettes per week.

Approximately, 18% children in England aged between 11-15 have smoked at least once in their life. The number of girls of this age group who are regular smoker is double than the boys. This rate of young smoker is pretty same in the other parts of the UK. for example, the rate of regular smoker aged between 11-15 in Wales is 4%, in Scotland 2% and 4% in Northern Ireland.

Abstract

Smoking is very common among the youth worldwide as young pupils are easy targets of tobacco companies and they are easily influenced by media representation. Tobacco products mainly include pipes, hookahs, smokeless tobacco and so on. Most regular smokers initiate smoking before 20 years of age. Media, which is popular among the people, especially the youth, has been playing a big role in influencing them into smoking ever since it was created. Moreover, tobacco companies have been using media increasingly to promote their products although there are restrictions and policies on advertising tobacco products on the electronic and print media (Hastings, 1990).

How Media Representation Encourages the Youth to Smoke?

Young people are encouraged to smoke by seeing their role models smoking in the movies. They think it is cool. They have the tendency to imitate their idols' behaviour.

Through high level of tobacco advertising, young people are encouraged to buy tobacco products. When they see something in front of their eyes frequently they develop a desire to go for that. Moreover, children who see smoking in movies too frequently are 3 times more likely to start smoking than the children who see least smoking in the movies.

Despite the hallowed journalistic tradition of objective reporting, news stories are best conceptualised as highly crafted artefacts that shape events into a readily digestible format.

By framing issues in specific ways, the media can play an important role in influencing not only what issues are presented to mass audiences, but also how these are perceived, and what importance the public should attach to them.

How Does the Media Work?

Most of the advertisements we see on TV or other electronic media show smokers as healthy, energetic, sexy, and successful. Many TV programs and drama, movies and magazines consist smoking scenes. These scenes provide a wrong message to the youth that smoking indicates coolness. These scenes also ignore the negative consequences of smoking such as problem with breathing, cancer and other deadly diseases.

An analysis was conducted on the famous films released by Motion Picture Association of America between 2007 and 2009. The analysis found that almost 80% of the R (restricted) films, 64% PG (parental guidance) and 22% G (general) films had smoking related scenes (Navaro, 2005).

In the first 18 episodes of the famous Australian TV series, The Simpsons, smoking has been portrayed in a negative way in 35% depicted instances while in 63% scenes smoking was shown in a neutral way and in 16.2% scenes in a positive way. As a matter of fact, The Simpsons is a very popular TV show among the children and adolescents (Navaro, 2005).

Smoking can also be found in fashion magazines. Celebrities are often seen in photographs smoking cigarettes. For example, in 2005, a female celebrity named Mary- Kate Olsen, 19, appeared on three celebrity magazines with images of smoking (holding Marlboro pack in one hand and a cigarette in another) (Navaro, 2005).

Impact of Media Representation of Smoking on Public Perception

Fan's exploration with regards to the way that the smoking issue is depicted in American daily papers exhibited that adjustments in the public perception of smoking as a noteworthy issue which after some time could be represented by the confining of smoking as an "emergencies" in the press (Navaro, 2005).

Further evidence for the role of media influence on public opinion and public policy derives from studies of media advocacy efforts. Media advocacy entails the deliberate use of media by interest groups to advance specific causes and concerns (Navaro, 2005).

Legislation and Policy

Media representation of tobacco products means promoting them in the media such as television, TV news, newspapers and magazines. In the beginning of 2003, an Act named as the Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act 2002, introduced restriction on the instant and backhanded advertisement of tobacco products.

For the motivations behind the boycott, 'tobacco notice' is characterized as a commercial that has the sole reason for advancing a tobacco item (coordinate publicizing) or 'whose impact is to do as such' (aberrant promoting or brand-extending) (Distefan, 2004). The Act says that a 'tobacco item' is anything made 'completely or somewhat of tobacco and planned to be smoked, sniffed, sucked or bitten.' The same Act banned tobacco advertising in the press and on billboards in February 2003 including a full ban on direct marketing in May same year. The Health Act 2009 added further regulations on tobacco selling and marketing. On 1 October 2011, a restriction on the offer of tobacco from, and show of adverts on, vending machines came into constrain, the point being to anticipate under-age sales to youngsters and to help grown-ups attempting to stop smoking. On 6 April 2012, government introduced new regulations on tobacco displaying in supermarkets which includes hiding tobacco products from public view. Small shops other businesses started applying this regulation from 2015. On 20th May 2016, the UK government published guidance on tobacco advertising in the media. Article 20(5) of the Tobacco Products Directive 2014/40/EU requires EU Member States to present confinements on the publicizing of electronic cigarettes. These standards have been executed in Britain in the Communications Act 2003, changes by Ofcom (the correspondences controller in the UK) to the BCAP Code (UK Code of Broadcast Advertising) and Broadcast Code and in the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 (Gove. UK, 2016).

Conclusion

It is worldwide known that smoking is hazardous for individuals of any age. The habit of smoking usually develops at young age. Young people are immature and simply get influenced by media representation of smoking. Tobacco companies also target the youngsters as they are the long-term consumers of tobacco and can be easily encouraged. Government has policies and legislation about advertising tobacco products in the media yet smoking in the youth is increasing. There are some controversies and complexities of implementing the current policies and introduce new policies also. But, government needs to take this issue more seriously and restrict media representation of smoking to save the youth from going towards darkness.

Bibliography

11 Facts About Teen Smoking. (2016, March 03). Retrieved May 01, 2017, from DoSomething.org: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/

ash.org.uk. (2017). *Smoking Statistics: Facts At A Glance.* London: Action on Smoking & Health.

Childhood Smoking Statistics. (2016, January 16). Retrieved May 01, 2017, from Cancer Research UK: http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/risk/childhood-smoking#heading-Two

Health effects of smoking among young people. (n.d.). Retrieved Mayq 01, 2017, from World Health Organisation: http://www.who.int/tobacco/research/youth/health_effects/en/

HSCIC. (2016). *Statistics on Smoking.* London: Matinal Health Service.

Navaro, M. (2005). Where there is smoke there is a star. [online]. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/18/fashion/sundaystyles/where-theres-smoke-theres-a-star.html. [last accessed: 12/11/2017].

Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults. (n.d.). Retrieved May 01, 2017, from Surgeon General US: https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/factsheet.html

Under-18s guide to quitting smoking. (2016, January 16). Retrieved May 01, 2017, from NHS Choices: http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/smoking/Pages/Teensmokersquit.aspx

What happens to teen smokers? (2015, March 12). Retrieved May 01, 2017, from NHS Choices: http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/teengirls/Pages/teensmokers.aspx

Youth and Tobacco Use. (2016, August 03). Retrieved May 01, 2017, from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/