



Prevalence and correlates of tobacco use among school-going adolescents in Madagascar

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Abstract Approximately 90% of adults start smoking during adolescence, with limited studies conducted in low-and-middle-income countries where over 80% of global tobacco users reside. The study aims to estimate prevalence and identify predictors associated with adolescents' tobacco use in Madagascar. We utilized tobacco-related information of 1184 school-going adolescents aged 13–15 years, representing a total of 296,111 youth from the 2008 Madagascar Global Youth Tobacco Survey to determine the prevalence of tobacco use. Gender-wise multivariable logistic regression models were conducted to identify key predictors.

Approximately 19% (30.7% males; 10.2% females) of adolescents currently smoke cigarettes, and 7% (8.5% males and 5.8% females) currently use non-cigarette tobacco products. Regardless of sex, peer smoking behavior was significantly associated with increased tobacco use among adolescents. In addition, exposures to tobacco industry promotions, secondhand smoke (SHS) and anti-smoking media messages were associated with tobacco use. The strong gender gap in the use of non-cigarette tobacco products, and the role of peer smoking and industry promotions in

Abbreviations: CI; Confidence Interval; FCTC; Framework Convention on Tobacco Control; LMIC; Low- and Middle-Income Country; NCD; Non-Communicable Disease; OR; Odds Ratio; SHS; Secondhand Smoke; SSA; Sub-Saharan Africa; TTC; Transnational Tobacco Company; WHO; World Health Organization

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adolescent females' tobacco use should be of major advocacy and policy concern. A comprehensive tobacco control program integrating parental and peer education, creating social norms, and ban on promotions is necessary to reduce adolescents' tobacco use.

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1. Introduction

Tobacco use continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the world and is a major risk factor for many illnesses in children and young adults, including short-term health consequences such as respiratory and atopic diseases and nicotine addiction, and long-term health consequences such as heart diseases, stroke, psychological disorders and cancer [1–3]. In addition, tobacco is an addictive product and is a gateway to other drug use among adolescents [2,4]. Over the past few decades, the tobacco epidemic has shifted to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs); yet, research investigations to address this public health issue are sparse. As approximately 90% of smokers start smoking during adolescence [2], it generates the need for investigations into tobacco use behaviors among adolescents to inform effective public health interventions, advocacy and policy efforts. Moreover, further research could help address the increasing trend of tobacco use in many LMICs, particularly those with high adult prevalence rates including Madagascar [2,5–7].

Tobacco use in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries is generally low, but progressively increasing, which provides potential market for transnational tobacco companies (TTCs) to explore. This is further augmented with increasing incomes, globalization, urbanization, demographic shifts in populations and low-levels of education in the region [8]. However, in few SSA countries such as the Madagascar, the prevalence of tobacco use among adults is exceptionally high [1,6]. In fact, recent studies demonstrated that approximately half of the adult population in Madagascar use some form of tobacco product [7,9], which creates a bleak public health future for Madagascar. The situation of public health in Madagascar is further exacerbated by the fact that approximately two-thirds of the populations lives below the poverty line, the Human Development Index is one of the lowest in the world and Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have emerged as major causes of

mortality [10]. Similar to other LMICs, Madagascar ratified the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004 to combat the tobacco epidemic. Thus, investigating tobacco use among adolescents in Madagascar will provide insight into the behavior and inform the effective implementation of the FCTC in the country, LMICs and worldwide.

The objective of this study was to estimate the prevalence and identify key factors associated with tobacco use among adolescents in Madagascar. Previously known as Malagasy Republic, Madagascar is the largest island in the Indian Ocean and located off the southeast coast of Africa. As of May 2014, the total population of Madagascar was approximately 23 million [11]. Although the tobacco industry has been in existence in Madagascar since the 1950s, the country has recently experienced aggressive penetration of its market by the TTCs [12]. In 2001, the Imperial Tobacco Limited (ITL) acquired the Tobacco Group and became a near monopoly in cigarette manufacturing. The primary goal of ITL in the acquisition of Tobacco Group is to increase tobacco use in Madagascar and distribute tobacco products in the Eastern and Southern Africa through common market agreements [6]. This situation provided potential venue for TTCs to target adolescents as these are the populations with increased susceptibility and more likely to become future tobacco users [13]. On the other hand, the government has taken aggressive steps to combat the increasing trend in tobacco use in the country since 1998 by implementing some of the underlying provisions of the FCTC, yet, tobacco use in the country is one of the highest among SSA nations [6]. Therefore, findings of this study will facilitate comprehensive understanding of the tobacco use in Madagascar with the potential to inform public health practices and policy to address the issue at an early stage. This could prevent Madagascan adolescents from tobacco use initiation and transition into future and established smokers.

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