

Between Books and Cigarettes: The Lure of Social Spaces in Shaping Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey indicates that approximately 5,500 youth in India start using tobacco daily, underscoring the urgency to address smoking habits among adolescents. Furthermore, the prevalence of smoking among college students in various studies ranges from 8.7% to 22.4%, indicating an alarming trend of tobacco use among youth. These statistics highlight the need for interventions aimed at preventing smoking initiation and promoting cessation among students. This study intends to discuss the transition of student interest from library to smoking areas and its impact on student behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of smoking among students, particularly in institutions of higher education, raises significant public health concerns. Smoking behavior is influenced by various factors, including peer pressure, family habits, and socio-demographic characteristics. Understanding these influences is critical to developing effective interventions aimed at reducing

smoking rates among students and mitigating its negative effects on education and health. Studies indicate the prevalence of smoking among university students globally. A cross-sectional study in Sudan revealed that approximately 74% of smoking students did not live with their families, indicating that living arrangements significantly influence smoking habits (Jarelnep, 2023). Similarly,

research conducted in Saudi Arabia reported a smoking prevalence of 9.5% among university students (Atwa *et al.*, 2019). Prevalence rates vary across regions and demographics, with some studies suggesting that smoking rates can be as high as 30.4% among male students in some regions (Kandasamy, 2023).

Smoking initiation often occurs during adolescence, with many students starting to smoke between the ages of 17 and 21 (Ibišević *et al.*, 2015). Factors such as peer pressure, social interactions, and family smoking habits play an important role in initiating smoking behavior among students (Mandil *et al.*, 2010; Fitria *et al.*, 2020). A study conducted in Nigeria found that peer influence was a significant predictor of smoking initiation among adolescents, emphasizing the importance of social contexts in shaping smoking behaviors (Hammagabdo *et al.*, 2018). Peer pressure is one of the most important determinants as students are often influenced by the smoking habits of their friends. A study by Popa *et al.* It has been highlighted that peer smoking habits and perception of those habits are closely related to individual smoking behavior among college students (Popa *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, family influences, such as having parents or siblings who smoke, have been shown to increase the likelihood of adopting smoking habits. Socioeconomic factors also play a role in smoking behavior. Research indicates that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to smoke, due to increased stress and limited access to health education (Ulus *et al.*, 2012; Aziz *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, parents' education level is associated with their children's smoking habits, and higher parental education is associated with lower smoking rates among students (Durum *et al.*, 2021).

Campus culture beyond the classroom

Campus culture extends beyond the confines of classrooms and encompasses many social interactions and community experiences that shape student identity and academic success. Social spaces on campus, such as libraries, cafes and canteens, serve as critical environments where students engage in informal learning, build relationships and develop a sense of self. These spaces are not just physical locations; They are dynamic areas that facilitate exchange of ideas, encourage collaboration, and enhance the overall educational experience. As higher education institutions evolve, understanding the role of these social spaces becomes increasingly important in creating an inclusive and supportive campus culture. The design and function of campus spaces significantly influence student interactions and academic performance. Aesthetically pleasing and accessible open spaces encourage socialization and collaboration among students, which is essential to their academic and social success. Furthermore, the emotional experiences associated with these spaces, feelings of happiness and satisfaction, directly affect students' engagement and satisfaction with their university life (Farag *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the interplay between physical environments and social dynamics is critical in shaping campus culture.

Libraries: Academic Haven or Social Hub?

Libraries have traditionally been viewed as centers of academic inquiry, yet contemporary studies reveal their dual role as vibrant social centers. The integration of cafes within library spaces exemplifies this transformation, as these areas facilitate informal gatherings and collaborative learning. The Library Cafe is emerging as a critical platform for students to engage in intellectually stimulating conversations, thereby acting as a catalyst for the intellectual life of the university. This dual

function enhances the library's role in fostering a sense of community among students as they navigate their academic journeys together. Furthermore, the evolving understanding of libraries as social spaces is consistent with broader trends in higher education, where collaborative learning environments are increasingly preferred. The design of library spaces should consider the diverse needs of students and include elements that promote social interaction while maintaining the integrity of quiet study areas. This balance is essential in creating an inclusive environment that caters to diverse learning styles and preferences, ultimately enriching the academic experience for all students.

Smoking Zones: Space for Unlikely Bonds

Although smoking zones may seem like an unconventional aspect of campus culture, they often serve as unexpected venues for social interaction and community building. These designated areas provide a unique opportunity for students from diverse backgrounds to connect and share experiences, fostering unlikely bonds that transcend academic disciplines. The informal nature of these interactions can lead to the formation of support networks, which is particularly beneficial for students navigating the challenges of university life. The importance of smoking zones as social spaces can be better understood through the lens of social behavior in public spaces. These areas facilitate spontaneous conversations and interactions among students (Liao *et al.*, 2012). As such, smoking zones play a critical role in shaping the social fabric of campus life, highlighting the importance of even the most neglected spaces in fostering community and connection.

Social spaces as identity formations

Social spaces on campus play a crucial role in shaping students' identity and sense of identity.

As students navigate their academic journeys, these spaces provide opportunities for self-expression and community engagement. Interactions that occur within these environments contribute to the development of social relationships and networks, which are essential for academic success and personal growth (Buddhiraja, 2023). Moreover, the appropriation of social spaces by different student groups may lead to the emergence of distinct identities and cultures within the campus community (Garalipay, 2020). Understanding the dynamics of social spaces is critical to fostering an inclusive campus culture that acknowledges and values diversity. The design and management of these spaces should prioritize accessibility and comfort, ensuring that all students feel welcome and supported.

Addiction to smoking and its consequences

Addiction to smoking among students is a critical concern as it can lead to long-term health problems and adversely affect academic performance. Nicotine addiction is particularly prevalent among youth, with many students reporting difficulty quitting despite the desire to do so (Ghaem *et al.*, 2020). Psychological aspects of addiction, including stress relief and social acceptance, often sustain smoking behavior among students (Shaw, 2023). The impact of smoking on education is multifaceted. Students who smoke may experience reduced cognitive function, reduced concentration, and absenteeism, all of which can impair academic performance (Abdulrahman *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the financial burden of sustaining a smoking habit can lead to increased stress and anxiety, further affecting students' educational experiences (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016).

Interventions and recommendations

To combat smoking among students, universities must implement effective

interventions that address the underlying factors that contribute to smoking behavior. Educational programs that focus on the health risks associated with smoking and the benefits of cessation can empower students to make informed choices. Moreover, creating a supportive environment that promotes healthy lifestyles and provides smoking cessation resources can significantly reduce smoking rates among students. Peer-led initiatives and support groups can play a critical role in changing smoking behavior. By fostering a culture of health and wellness, universities can encourage students to resist peer pressure and make healthy choices. Additionally, policies that restrict smoking on campus and promote a smoke-free environment can help reduce the prevalence of smoking among students.

CONCLUSION

Student smoking habits and the addiction that comes with them pose significant public health and educational problems. Understanding the factors that influence smoking, the consequences of addiction, and the impact on academic achievement are critical to designing successful solutions. Educational institutions may play a critical role in reducing smoking rates and improving the general well-being of students by prioritizing health education, providing supportive accommodations, and implementing comprehensive regulations. The interplay of social spaces and campus culture is a complex phenomenon that has a significant impact on students' academic and social experiences. Libraries, smoking rooms, cafes, and other public areas provide important opportunities for communication, collaboration, and identity creation. As colleges evolve, it is critical to recognize the role of these venues in shaping campus culture. Institutions that prioritize the design and functionality of social spaces can build active and inclusive environments that meet the diverse needs of their students and address the challenges posed by the smoking habits of

the people and harmful impact of smoking spaces on behaviour.

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