Gender, age, religion, and tradition influenced the smoking attitudes and behaviour of Bangladeshi and Pakistani adults


In Bangladeshi and Pakistani adults, what influences smoking attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour?

METHODS

13 bilingual South Asian community researchers (54% women) who had received qualitative research training used a grounded approach to data generation and analysis. 37 participants were involved in indepth semistructured interviews, and 104 participants were involved in 24 focus groups. Interviews and focus groups were based on topic guides that included smoking behaviour, views on what influences smoking, and how smoking affects health. 60% of interviews and focus groups were held in English; the remaining interviews were held in Punjabi or Urdu (for Pakistanis) or Bengali or Sylheti (for Bangladeshi). Interviews and focus groups were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English as necessary. Analysis used the constant comparison method, and data generation and analysis continued until no new themes emerged.

MAIN FINDINGS

4 dominant highly interrelated themes influenced smoking attitudes and behaviour: gender, age, religion, and tradition. In men, smoking was associated with a strong sense of social acceptance, social bonding, tradition, and male identity. Smoking in Bangladeshi men was more deeply socially ingrained than in Pakistani men. In contrast, smoking in Bangladesh and Pakistani women was associated with a strong sense of cultural taboo, stigma, and non-acceptance and was thought to affect a woman’s chances of marrying. Age appeared to influence the cultural acceptability of smoking. Smoking was more acceptable in older men, and to a lesser extent, in older women. Smoking in younger people was thought to be disrespectful and influenced by peer pressure, and was often hidden from elders. Varied and conflicting views existed on the acceptability of smoking within the Muslim religion. However, most participants viewed smoking in a mosque to be unacceptable. Tradition, culture, and the family appeared to have important roles in forming and cultivating norms and values related to smoking.

CONCLUSION

In Bangladeshi and Pakistani adults, 4 dominant, highly interrelated themes had an important influence on smoking attitudes and behaviour: gender, age, religion, and tradition.