

## Changing Attitudes Towards Smoking by Creating an Empowered Youth Female Community Using Health Promotion Approach in Yowunpura Exhibition in Sri Lanka

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Tobacco death toll grows 13.71% every year in globally but tobacco industry ensures the complacency of consumers hiding the bitter truth. Tobacco control advocates must reach out to other communities and resources to strengthen their efforts and create attitude change. The aim of this study was to develop an empowered youth barrier against smoking through changing positive image towards smoking using health promotion approach in Yowunpura exhibition, Sri Lanka. The study was conducted with a voluntarily participated sample of 202 girls in the age range 15-24 years in Yowunpura exhibition in Hambanthota, Sri Lanka. Group discussions were facilitated with the active participation of the participants. Topics discussed were, real harm of smoking and industrial strategies of creating a positive image towards smoking. Their attitudes towards smoking were assessed as base line before conducting the discussion using a questionnaire. Discussions were conducted focusing on real harm of smoking and industrial strategies of developing a positive image. For example, the positive attitude of the girls towards smokers were taken into discussion. Girls were engaged with intervention actively through writing their own suggestions for changing positive image towards smoking with the support of facilitators. An evaluation was conducted after the discussion using a questionnaire. The-matic analysis was conducted to analyze qualitative data. Conducting the discussion by dividing participants in to groups according to their hometowns were recorded highly responsive. 90% of participants changed positive image towards “smoking” after the discussions. 75% of them were empowered to act against smoking. Participants were encouraged to develop counter measures to tackle positive image and drafted a plan to implement in their home towns. Group discussions with active participation of the youth females can change the positive attitudes on smoking and health promotion is a better intervention in changing attitudes and empowering youth against tobacco smoking.

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