

Mass Media and Tobacco in Bangladesh: An Investigation on the Role of Mass Media in the Light of Tobacco Control

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Abstract : Context: The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced. Tobacco use is a widespread phenomenon in Bangladesh, and that causes numerous deaths and disabilities in a year. The studies conducted elsewhere have strengthened the evidence that mass media campaigns conducted in the context of comprehensive tobacco control programs can promote quitting and reduce smoking, as well as smokeless tobacco prevalence. Awareness building campaigns in mass-media against tobacco use should be prioritized more, and this paper will be an initiative towards enhancing mass-media's role in controlling tobacco in Bangladesh. Objective: the main objective of this study is to investigate the role of mass-media in controlling tobacco in Bangladesh. Methods: This is a qualitative study and both primary, as well as secondary data were used where information gathered through the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and media contents. The employees of media houses (five national papers, two online news portals and six TV channels) were selected as study respondent. Media Content Analysis is used through the broad range of 'texts' from transcripts of interviews and discussions along with the materials like reports, footages, advertisements, talk-shows, articles etc. Results: The study result documented several opinions of discussants where Mass media was found to play a strong role in support of the amended tobacco control law and its implication that could be created public support against tobacco farming, exposing to companies' tactics and other tobacco control activities. The study results also revealed that in controlling tobacco supply and demand effectively, media has been assisting the government and anti-tobacco activities productively. Majority of the Key Informants opined spontaneously on tobacco control program publicity, organizational interference, and influence of other activities on media. They also emphasized role of media for activities of anti-tobacco organizations, awareness building actions, popularization of tobacco control law and its amendment. Conclusion and Recommendation: The study shows evidence that mass media coverage of tobacco control issues is influencing the context of comprehensive tobacco control programs. To reduce tobacco consumption, along with strict enforcement efforts, media should be used to assist with the implementation of the tobacco control law. A sustained nationwide campaign to educate the masses against the dangers of smoking and smokeless tobacco is needed, and media can play an important role in creating further awareness about the dangers associated with tobacco consumption.

Keywords : Bangladesh media, mass media, role of media, tobacco control

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