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Fact Sheet

Smokeless Tobacco - Jarda, Sadapata and Gul

Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of smokeless tobacco use in the world with 28 million users. It is mostly used among the adults (27.2%). Rates among women (27.9%) are slightly higher than among men (26.4%). It is also higher than the smoking rates (23%). The only difference is that among adult tobacco users men as smokers is 44.7%, and as users of smokeless is 26.4%; compared to adult women as tobacco users, women as smokers is only 1.5%, and as smokeless tobacco users it is 27.9%. In general, it is men mostly, who are using tobacco products in both smoke and smokeless forms[1].

Who are the Users?

1. Rural people

Smokeless tobacco use is higher among adults in rural areas than in urban areas (28.8%) versus (22.5%).

2. Less educated people

Smokeless tobacco use is more than four times as high among adults with no formal education as among adults that have completed secondary school or above (42.3% versus 10.2%).

3. Poorer people

Adults with the lowest wealth index (a proxy for socioeconomic status) have the highest rates of use (36.1%), and adults with the highest wealth index have the lowest (17.3%).

In general, the general observation is that smokeless tobacco product use is socially accepted but not as

'fashionable' as cigarettes among the urban, educated and the middle class men and women. So, these are used mostly by rural, less educated and the poorer people. Poor and lower income people both in rural and urban areas have significant difference in wealth index of 36.1% among lowest wealth index vs. 17.3% in the highest wealth index.

Known health impacts

Not much research has been conducted on the health impacts of smokeless tobacco. Smokeless tobacco causes serious health harms, including cancer, adverse reproductive outcomes, toxicity (including stillbirth, preterm birth and low birth weight), precancerous oral lesions, cardiovascular diseases and addiction[2]. The incidence of such health impacts are found but no research is done to document the extent.

Form of smokeless tobacco products

The most common form of smokeless tobacco used among adults is betel quid with tobacco (24.3%), followed by gul (5.3%), sada pata (1.8%), and khoinee (1.5%).

Production of smokeless tobacco: Jarda and Gul

A TABINAJ study conducted in 38 districts found 123 factories producing 225 brands of jarda and 23 factories producing 18 brands of gul. These are mainly cottage industry-based having names such as chemical works and perfumery using deceiving methods to hide smokeless tobacco production[3].

Control of smokeless tobacco products:

Control of smokeless tobacco products was not possible under the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act, 2005, as it did not include smokeless tobacco in the definition of tobacco products.

Due to the advocacy on the issue, Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) (Amendment) Act, 2013 (Bangla) included four most common types of smokeless tobacco products in the definition.

(c) "Tobacco Products" means any product made from tobacco, tobacco leaves, or its extract which can be sucked or chewed, or inhaled through smoking and shall include bidi, cigarette, cheroot, **gul, jarda, khoini, sadapata (chewing tobacco)**, cigar, hukka mixtures used in pipe;

Pictorial warnings on smokeless tobacco products

Bangladesh government passed the smoking and tobacco product usage (control) act 2005 (amended in 2013) and rules have been formulated to this law in 2015. It has been stated that "Health warnings shall be printed on both sides of the packet, cover, carton or box of tobacco products, covering at least 50% of the total area of each main display area or if the packets do not have two main sides in that case covering at least 50% of the main display area, with colored pictures and accompanying text, according to the act, about the harms caused by the use of tobacco products and these shall be printed in Bengali"

The following warnings shall be printed on the packet, cover, carton or box of tobacco products, i.e. For smokeless tobacco products:-

(a) Consumption of tobacco products causes mouth and throat cancer

(b) Consumption of tobacco products causes harms to the fetus.

In the amended law, there are two warnings mentioned in relation to smokeless tobacco products.

Price policy: taxation as control measures

Although smokeless tobacco use is occupying a significant portion of overall tobacco consumption, yet very little is known about the effectiveness of tax and price policy in controlling the use of smokeless tobacco use. The tax increase on smokeless tobacco products needs to be greater than the tax increase on smoked tobacco products to bridge the wide price differential between the two types of products that currently encourages downward substitution and discourages quitting behavior.

A specific excise system replacing the existing advalorem excise tax can substantially contribute to the revenue collection performance from smokeless tobacco products.

According to ITC Survey [4]

1. There are two distinct varieties of jarda available in the market -the cheaper variety that sells for less than 0.60 Taka per gm and the higher-price variety that sells for Tk.0.60 to 1.00 per gm.
2. The average price of the cheaper variety of jarda is comparable to the biri price per stick, while the price of higher-price variety jarda is higher than biri price.
3. On average, the price of jarda per gm is less than half of the price per stick of the cheapest brand of cigarette.
4. The price of gul is relatively skewed cantering around 0.10 Taka per gm.

The average price of gul is comparable to the lower side of the cheaper price variety of jarda.

Tabinaj findings on price of smokeless tobacco products

A Tabinaj investigation of 10 retail shops among 47 retail shops in Kawran Bazar (5), Shyambazar (35) and Chawkbazar (7) was conducted during March 30-31, 2016. Forty five different brands of jarda, 3 brands of Gul, 2 different sizes of Sadapata and 1 brand of Khoini were found in those shops.

- Four brands of jarda are imported from India. These are Shibdata Jarda, Nagina and Chaman Bahar of two different size packets.
- The pricing of the smokeless products are by size and amount of Jarda, Gul, Sadapata and Khoini. Only three brands of Jarda are found to be sold as piece, only Tk.2 per piece for Mokimpuri and Golai Jarda and Tk.5 for Dhaka jarda.
- Price range of jarda by size and amount is the following: 7-10 gram packater sold at Tk.5 to Tk.25 [brands Shantipuri, Shahi 99 Jarda and Chaman Bahar (Bangladesh)]. It may be noted that Chaman Bahar (India) is sold in 10-30 gram packets at Tk.25-Tk.60.
- Five jarda brands were found in 100 gram packs sold at Tk.55 - Tk.100. The brands are Surovi 55, Baba 120, Shova 55, Ratan Pati Jarda and Noorani Jarda.

- The average size and amount ranges between 20 to 50 gram between the price range of Tk.15 to Tk.50 per packet.
 - The imported Jarda packets are between 10 gram to 40 gram and are sold at Tk.25 to Tk.75.
- The prices of Jarda packs increased by Tk.1 or 2 for low priced brands and Tk.5 to 10 for higher brands making it less significant in terms of having an impact on the consumers.

Average daily/monthly expenditure on smokeless tobacco:

- One khili paan with jarda can be bought from a retail paan shop at Tk.5. A woman taking 12 khilis of paan per day spends Tk.60. Monthly expenditure is Tk.1800.
- Buying a packet of jarda of 14 gram at Tk. 15 per packet. A woman uses 3 packets per month takes Tk.45 only on Jarda, and along with it costs include betel leaf (paan) betel nut (supari), lime.
- An estimate of spending Tk. 1800 on paan-jarda is found[5].

For a poor household of 4 members, two meals would cost Tk.180, if Tk.60 is spent on jarda-paan then they are short of rice and some vegetables.

Spending Tk.1800 for jarda per month means that the family is trading off 10 days food cost.

Tabinaj investigation on SLT Use, 2016

Tabinaj member organizations conducted a small survey in 10 districts, Kurigram, Sirajganj, Pabna, Kushtia, Faridpur, Magura, Khulna, Brahmanbaria, Comilla and Cox'sbazar with information from 4517 households, having 19,261 members from 149 villages of 10 unions. There were 7644 female and 7798 male adult members, 1966 boys and 1853 girls (under the age of 18 years).

Out of the 19261 family members 4903 (25%) members were found to use any form of tobacco including smoked, smokeless or both tobacco products. Out of 4903 members, 1240 (25%) are women and 3663(75%) are men.

Among the male users (3663), 1894 (52%) are smokers, 440 (12%) used only smokeless products and 1329 (36%) use both smoked and smokeless products.

Among the female users (1240), 33 women (2.6%) are smokers, 1053 (85%) and 154 (12%) were using both smoked and smokeless tobacco products.

The expenditure on tobacco products was higher for men than women. Among the male users (3663) highest expenditure was ((Tk.2500 - Tk.4500) per month, spent by 170 (4.6%) users and lowest cost less than Tk.500 was used by 924 (25%) users. A large number of male users 1542 (42%) were spending about Tk.500 - Tk.1000.

Among women users (1240) highest expenditure Tk.2000 - Tk.2500 was found only among 1 user.

The lowest expenditure was less than Tk.500 used by 726 (58.5%). The highest number of women was in this category. The difference between men and women users is not only by form of tobacco products but also in expenditure [6].

Who can be brought under taxation?

Smokeless tobacco producers:

1. Custom producers: users or vendors who assemble smokeless tobacco ingredients according to the preferences of users.
2. Cottage industry producers: usually manual producers working in small retail environments (e.g., market stalls, shops) who generally use noncommercial packaging. Most smokeless tobacco product producers are cottagebased.
3. Manufacturers: there are some factory-base producers who use machines to produce commercially packaged products.

Taxation experiences on smokeless tobacco

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has kept tax rate on smokeless products unchanged in the budget for fiscal year (FY), 2015-16, while tax on other smoking tobacco products has been increased slightly.

Currently, there are 15% Value Added Tax (VAT) and 60 per cent Supplementary Duty (SD) on the products.

In 2013-14, the government received tax worth Tk 10 million from 'jarda', and Tk.5.0 million from 'gul'.

In 2014-15, total expenditure on consumption of smokeless tobacco products was Tk 16.50 billion. But the government earned only Tk.143.6 million tax from the sector, which is less than 1.0% of the total expenditure, according to NBR data.

The smokeless tobacco products have been produced informally, making it difficult for the taxmen to find out their factories, according to Tax officials. The number of the factories is high, and their products are very cheap for the low-income group of people.

The anti-tobacco groups and health experts demanded imposition of Tk 150 tax on each 100 gram packet and pot of smokeless tobacco items. They demanded to introduce cigarette-like band-roll system for these [7].

Recommendation on taxation

- As increasing tax on smokeless tobacco (SLT) products simultaneously with the tax increase on smoked tobacco products can have significant negative impact on the prevalence of smokeless tobacco use in Bangladesh, the tax increase on smokeless tobacco products needs to be greater than the tax increase on smoked tobacco products to bridge the wide price differential between the two types of products.
- The price distribution of jarda was found to be bimodal; higher-priced brands are consumed more frequently than the cheaper brands. This may be attributable to the fact that the higher-priced brands are perceived by consumers to be better quality products and are consumed in greater quantity than the cheaper and lower-quality products⁷. Therefore, higher tax can be imposed on the higher priced jarda.
- Among the poor the smaller packets, loose items are used more because these are found within Tk.2 to Tk.5. The whole salers reported higher turn out of the low priced jarda brands. So consumption reduction may only happen strong policy of regulation on SLT products.
- Increasing taxes on SLT products are important for making these products less affordable. Strengthening tax administration to bring the factories under the tax is equally important.
- Need special attention and mechanism for effective enforcement of the tobacco control law to reduce SLT use among the poor and production at the informal sector.

References

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