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# SOCIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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## CURRENT E-CIGARETTE SMOKING TREND AMONG YOUTH: INFLUENCING FACTORS

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**Summary:** This study examines the current trend in e-cigarette use among adolescents and young adults, focusing on the prevalence, key influencing factors, and awareness of smoking cessation initiatives. Based on an anonymous survey of 335 students aged 16–24, the research identified that 64.8% had tried e-cigarettes, and 37.3% were current users. Curiosity, stress, and peer influence were the most common reasons for smoking initiation. Early onset of smoking (before age 16) significantly increased the likelihood of current use. Although most respondents were aware of the health risks associated with e-cigarettes, only a minority expressed a desire to quit, and overall awareness of existing cessation programs remained low. The findings highlight the need for improved preventive strategies, stricter regulations on e-cigarette sales, and expanded accessibility of smoking cessation programs aimed at youth.

**Keywords:** e-cigarettes, youth smoking, adolescents, smoking behavior, influencing factors, smoking cessation programs, public health, survey study.

**Relevance:** Although marketed as a smoking cessation tool, e-cigarettes are

rarely used for this purpose. Nowadays, dual use is common among smokers and e-cigarettes are getting widely used by non-smokers, including youth and young adult [1]. The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) study, which was conducted in 2023, recorded that more and more adolescents are using alternative tobacco and nicotine products and e-cigarettes in Ukraine, and now this rate even exceeds the prevalence of use of these products by adults [2].

**Objective:** This review aims to identify the prevalence of this habit among youth, main factors influencing it's formation and to assess the effectiveness of existing smoking cessation programs on the example of students of National Pirogov Memorial Medical University.

**Materials and Methods:** The study is based on the analysis of the results of an anonymous survey. As a result, the data from 335 adolescents and young people was collected. The questionnaire included questions related to identifying the fact of having a smoking habit; type and onset of smoking; awareness of the harmful effects of smoking on health; knowledge about existing smoking cessation programs, etc. The data was processed in a table format and analyzed using statistical processing methods.

**Results:** The data from the students at the age of 16-24 was collected. The majority (81.2%) of respondents were female students. The average age of the study subjects was 19.3 (SD 2.0) years. The overall prevalence of students who have ever tried smoking electronic cigarettes among the residents was 64.8%, with the 27,5% of former smokers, and 37,3% of current smokers. The average age of first attempt at smoking was 15.4 (SD 2.5) years, which is a negative factor affecting the health of this contingent. The smoking experience among current smokers at the moment of questioning was 1-5 months for 4.5%, 6-12 months for 5.4%, more than 1 year for 5.2% and more than 2 years for 22.2% of all respondents.

There is no statistically significant association between sex or age and smoking frequency among students. Though it was found that current smokers prevalence was two times more common among students, whose first attempt at smoking was at the age before 16 years [odds ratio (OR) =2.0677; 95% CI: 1.1986-3.5668; P = 0.009].

The reasons for smoking were curiosity for 64.1% of the students, stress/desire to relax for 45.2%, influence of friends for 42.9%, availability of e-cigarettes for 26.7%, the desire to be “like everyone else” for 21.7%, and other reasons for 22.2%. The majority of current smokers (88,6%) were aware of the harmfulness of electronic cigarettes, however, only 27.6% of them stated a desire to quit.

Only 39.2% of current and ex-smokers know about the existence of programs or initiatives aimed at helping people quit smoking. Among those who responded positively, only 11,8% rated these programs as effective, 56,5% – as partially effective, and 31.8% – as inefficient. This means that there is a need for improving accessibility and quality of existing cessation programs.

According to respondents, the most effective measures in reducing smoking among young people may become e-cigarette sales restrictions (73.5%), price increase (53%), and conducting educational programs in schools/universities (50,2%).

**Conclusions:** The increasing number of smokers among adolescents and young adults remains a serious problem. E-cigarettes are becoming increasingly popular, wrongly perceived as a “less harmful” alternative. Most respondents start smoking because of curiosity, stress/desire to relax, and the influence of friends. The results also indicate the need to develop a more effective, comprehensive program to combat e-cigarette use, which will include strengthening educational work, e-cigarette sale restrictions, and expanding the availability of smoking cessation programs.

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