



Public Health Students Taking the Lead in Advancing Knowledge about the Issues of Vaping and Tobacco Use

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Vaping and tobacco consumption pose critical public health issues globally, and Qatar is no exception. These issues disproportionately impact adolescents and young people. Undergraduate students in Qatar University have contributed to the advancement of research and knowledge on these subjects, providing vital perspectives to direct efforts at prevention, policy, and cessation. Four recently published studies, all spearheaded by Qatar University public health students, made notable contributions to our understanding of vaping behavior and early vaping initiation in Qatar and beyond. Further, they study second-hand smoke in the household as a contributor to negative respiratory outcomes and public support for the tobacco endgame in Qatar. These studies are highlighted in this article and emphasize how student- and alumni-led research is influencing the discourse around vaping in the Middle East.





Study 1: Differences in vaping frequency and negative health effects experienced from vaping in a sample of vapers from three Middle Eastern countries.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e42657>



The first published study, led by public health student, now alumna, Rana Abouזור, examined the prevalence of vaping and its adverse effects on health among users in Qatar, Egypt, and Iraq. In this study, a comprehensive cross-sectional online survey circulated on social media was used to evaluate the vaping trends and health outcomes of 386 adult vapers from Qatar, Iraq, Egypt, and other Arab nations. The findings from the study showed clear country-based variations associated with local policies' restrictiveness. Vapers in Qatar were less likely to vape daily, reflecting the country's more stringent regulations against vaping. Vapers in Iraq reported more adverse health impacts, while vapers in Egypt were significantly more inclined to vape every day. Also, female vapers were more susceptible to adverse health effects from vaping than males. Additionally, compulsive or everyday vapers were more likely to have a history of tobacco use. Most importantly, the study called for targeted interventions in populations most at risk, particularly females and vapers trying to quit vaping.

Study 2: Sociodemographic characteristics and vaping motives as potential correlates of early vaping initiation.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1484252>



The second published study, led by public health students Aisha Al-Naimi, Fatma Al-Obaidli, and Reem Al-Rashdi, examined the sociodemographic traits and reasons for early vaping initiation (EVI) among adult vapers in the Middle East. This study surveyed a broad sample of people from Qatar, Iraq, Egypt, and other Arab nations, asking specific questions on age of initiation, motivations, and societal influences. According to the data, expatriates and older participants were less likely to experience early vaping initiation. Additionally, males and residents in Qatar had a higher likelihood of early vaping initiation than women and Egyptian participants, respectively. The authors proposed practical strategies to assist in counteracting early beginning patterns. Finally, this research emphasized the necessity of multifaceted approaches that take sociodemographic and motivational variables into account for supporting the deployment of tailored prevention campaigns and policy responses in Qatar.

Study 3: Second-hand smoke exposure level in the household increases risk of chest pain and wheezing: evidence from Qatar biobank.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-23927-2>



The third study led by past public health student and current alumna Rana Abouzeor, and biomedical sciences students Farah Issa, and Marah Abdulla, examined Qatar biobank data from 6000 individuals and found that exposure to second hand smoke in the household (number of smokers and amount of time spent with them in proximity) are associated with chest pain and wheezing after adjusting for other variables. Some of the associations were evident even when looking at the relationship for the subgroup of non-smokers and non-shisha smokers, which signifies the importance of reducing exposure to secondhand smoke in the household. The students conclude by calling for awareness campaigns to encourage less or no exposure to secondhand smoke in the household.

Study 4: Tobacco endgame policies: An analysis of preferred strategies and support levels in a sample from Qatar.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1515633>



The fourth study, published, led by public health students Aisha Al-Naimi, Khadiga Elsayed, Marwa Alharoon, Fatma Al-Obaidli, Hissa Almuraikhi,

Amaal Osman, and Reem Al-Rashdi, who received a UREP grant, was conducted to determine the public's preferences and level of support for tobacco endgame policies in Qatar's population. This study surveyed locals and expatriates to find the most favored government initiatives to permanently reduce or eradicate tobacco use. The study highlighted that standardized packaging was more popular among men and current tobacco users, while females supported nicotine reduction policies. In contrast, those who had never used tobacco were more likely to support tax increases, import bans, adult and minor restrictions, and flavor bans. When compared to 'current' users, 'never' and 'past' users often expressed more support for tobacco endgame initiatives. Furthermore, those who had never used tobacco or quit their usage showed more support for endgame measures than those who were currently using them. The study concluded that Qatar's public health is well-positioned for the tobacco endgame, but it also emphasized the necessity of culturally sensitive implementation and ongoing engagement to maximize effectiveness.

Together, these Qatar University studies illustrate how undergraduate public health students are leading the effort to address the critical issues of tobacco use and vaping in their area. Their studies offer practical recommendations for public health practice and policy changes, emphasizing the significance of tailored interventions, social impacts, demographic variables, and policy implementation. These students are advancing knowledge and influencing the local and regional response to tobacco-and-vaping-related hazards by systematically investigating vaping and tobacco. Such involvement enhances public health education, and their research serves as a basis for upcoming projects that safeguard the health of Qatar's youth and adults.

