

Using Protection Motivation Theory and the normative context to better understand quitting among vapers: Are conventional cessation strategies up in smoke?

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Introduction / Issues: *Vaping is an emergent health risk behaviour of concern in adult populations, particularly due to perceptions that position vaping as a safer alternative (e.g., to conventional tobacco products). Understanding the psychological factors that are associated with vaping behaviour is important to inform vaping interventions.*

Method / Approach: *A sample of Australian adults (N = 818; 56.6% female, M_{Age} = 22.13 years) participated in a large cross-sectional online survey on vaping. Two thirds of vapers reported vaping every day, with the majority vaping at least hourly. A subset of participants (n = 640) reported their vaping behaviour, and completed measures from Protection Motivation Theory, related to vaping norms, as well as readiness to change for quitting vaping (RTC). Analyses examined the associations between these variables.*

Key Findings OR Results: *Vaping quit intentions were associated with higher vulnerability and severity, and lower intrinsic rewards related to vaping-related illness and quitting. Self-efficacy and response efficacy were positively associated with vaping quit intentions. Similarly, injunctive norms (but not descriptive norms) were moderately associated with vaping quit intentions. RTC was strongly positively associated with vaping quit intentions (r = .72). Past vaping behaviour showed a moderate, negative association with intention to quit.*

Discussions and Conclusions: *The results suggest that the PMT, normative, and readiness to change measures are valuable in understanding the drivers of vaping quit intentions and vaping behaviour among adults. The association between vulnerability and severity and vaping quit intentions indicates public health messaging around risk perceptions may be a worthwhile avenue for intervention. Similarly, the importance of intrinsic rewards related to vaping, and injunctive norms, indicate a salient interpersonal context for vaping behaviour, potentially distinct from conventional tobacco norms.*

Implications for Practice or Policy: *Findings have implications for the development of health behaviour change interventions that target vaping behaviour, including placing emphasis on threat perceptions and supporting the coping strategies of vapers who intend to quit, being mindful of change readiness and the potential for social norms to hamper quit attempts.*

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