

Perceived Effectiveness of 5 Different Message Themes in Youth Vaping Awareness Materials

Authors:

Giang T. Vu¹, Gary Chan¹, Tianze Sun¹, Tesfa Yimer¹, Daniel Stjepanović¹, Jason Connor¹, Wayne Hall¹, Coral Gartner², Janni Leung¹

¹ *The National Centre for Youth Substance Use Research, School of Psychology, The University of Queensland, Australia,* ² *NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence on Achieving the Tobacco Endgame, School of Public Health, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.*

Background: *Public health campaigns have adopted various message themes to address youth vaping, but evidence regarding which themes most effectively resonate with young people remains limited. This study compared the perceived message effectiveness (PME) of five themes in vaping awareness materials targeting youth.*

Method: *We conducted cross-sectional analyses of PME ratings from two Australian samples: an online panel (n=614, mean age=20.5) and university students (n=149, mean age=19.5). Participants rated 50 materials representing five themes: health consequences, nicotine addiction, financial impact, industry manipulation, and social norms. PME was assessed using two categories: effect perceptions (vaping perception; behavioural intent) and ad perceptions (attention, information, convincingness). We used linear mixed models to compare themes. For effect perceptions, lower scores indicated greater effectiveness; for ad perceptions, higher scores indicated greater effectiveness.*

Results: *Health consequences messages consistently received the highest effectiveness ratings across all PME measures across both samples. They had the lowest mean scores for vaping perception (online panel: M=2.34 [95% CI=2.09, 2.59]; university: M=2.20 [1.74, 2.65]). Our models confirmed significant differences between themes, with nicotine addiction messages showed the second most favourable ratings, not significantly different from health consequences. Social norms messages consistently received the least favourable ratings and was not significantly different to the neutral midpoint.*

Conclusions and Next Steps: *Messages highlighting health consequences and nicotine addiction were most effective at influencing youth perceptions and intentions.*

Implications for Practice or Policy: *These findings suggest vaping awareness campaigns should prioritise health- and addiction-focused messaging. A multi-thematic approach with health consequences as the primary focus may provide the most effective strategy for youth vaping awareness.*