

Perceived Loneliness, Peer and Parental Relationship with Smoking: A Cross-sectional Analysis of 64,578 Adolescents across South-East Asia

CAITLIN MCCLURE-THOMAS¹, CARMEN LIM^{1,2}, SUSY SEBAYANG³, FITRI FAUSIAH⁴, GHEA FARASSANIA⁴, HEBE GOUDA⁵, JANNI LEUNG^{1,2}

¹ National Centre for Youth Substance Use Research (NCYSUR), The University of Queensland, Brisbane Australia, ²School of Psychology, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, The University of Queensland, Brisbane Australia, ³ Faculty of Public Health, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia, ⁴ Faculty of Psychology, University of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, ⁵School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

Presenter's email: <caitlin.mcclurethomas@uq.net.au,>

Introduction and Aims:

Tobacco use is a leading cause of preventable death in the South-East Asian Region. Targeting factors associated with smoking among adolescent populations could help lower the prevalence of tobacco use in the Region. This study aims to understand if perceived loneliness and relationships with friends and parents were associated with smoking among adolescents in South-East Asia.

Design and Methods:

Data came from the Global School-based Student Health Survey (survey year range: 2012-2015). The countries included were Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. A total of 64,578 (Males= 48.5%) adolescents completed the survey, aged between 13-18. Participants self-reported cigarette use in the last 30-days. They also self-reported feelings of loneliness, number of close friends and perception of parents understanding their worries.

Results: Prevalence of any cigarette use in the past 30-days was 10.6%. Only 1.4% reported daily cigarette use, indicating most self-reported smoking adolescents were intermittent smokers. Self-reported feelings of loneliness were associated with smoking status (OR=1.62 [1.62-1.63], $p<.001$). Smoking status was also associated with the lack of close friends (OR= 1.14 [1.13-1.15], $p<.001$), and parental understanding (OR=1.17 [1.17-1.17], $p<.001$). Significant interaction terms were observed by sex.

Discussions and Conclusions:

Adolescent smoking behaviour was associated with perceived loneliness and relationships with peers and parents. This information shows that psychosocial factors can be associated with smoking behaviour for adolescents in South-East Asia. This research could be an indicator that adolescents are more likely to take up smoking if they are perceiving feelings of loneliness. This suggests a need for research on measures for psychosocial factors and how they are associated with current tobacco policy in this Region, including advertising of tobacco products.

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