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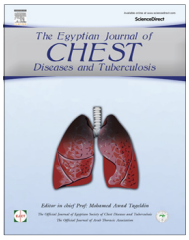

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Smoking problem among Helwan University students: Practical versus theoretical faculty

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**KEYWORDS**

Tobacco smoking;
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**Abstract** *Introduction:* University students are at high risk of smoking as they become exposed to greater availability of cigarettes and intimate association with smoking peers. Also, they face social, emotional and educational challenges when they enter the university.

*Aim of the work:* To explore the magnitude of smoking problem among Helwan University students and its related factors.

*Subjects and methods:* A cross-sectional study was conducted at Helwan University. Two faculties were taken; one of them was a practical faculty (Pharmacy) and the other was theoretical one (Social Work). A sample of the students from 1st year and last year of each faculty was taken via the multistage random sample technique. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire modified from the standard questionnaire of National Center for Social and Criminal Research, 2002.

*Results:* The percentage of current smokers was 8.6%. Smoking prevalence was higher among the students at faculty of Social Work than at faculty of Pharmacy [(12.1%) versus (5.3%); $p$-value = 0.001] and their concern about smoking effect on health was less. Smoking was higher among males than females; [(28.5%) versus (0.9%); $p$-value < 0.001]. Other socio-demographic factors namely; father's education and occupation, presence of dead mother, and working students were significantly related to smoking. Friends (47.6%) followed by fathers (44.4%) were the commonest models of smokers.

54.4% of students were exposed to passive smoking which was mostly at the university (84%).

*Conclusions:* High prevalence of smoking among Helwan University students was found. Special concern should be directed to male students and to students at theoretical faculties while targeting smoking problem.

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## Introduction

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the world. Tobacco control action will prevent young people from

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starting to use tobacco, help current tobacco users to quit, and protect non-smokers from exposure to second hand smoke [1].

Early smoking initiation increases life time duration of smoking and burden of smoking related diseases [2,3]. University students are at high risk of smoking as they become exposed to greater availability of cigarettes and intimate association with smoking peers. At the same time, they face additional social, emotional and educational challenges when they enter the university [4].

Several studies report that the prevalence of smoking increases from the first year to the final year among university students, which underlines the fact that the early years at the university are important for targeting anti-smoking activities [5,6].

### *Aim of the work*

The aim of the work was to explore the magnitude of smoking problem and its related factors among Helwan University students at a practical faculty (faculty of Pharmacy) in comparison with a theoretical one (faculty of Social Work).

### *Students and method*

#### *Study design*

A cross-sectional study that was carried out at Helwan University.

#### *Sample type*

A multistage random sample technique was used. Two faculties were randomly chosen; one was randomly chosen from practical faculties (faculty of Pharmacy) and the other from theoretical faculties (faculty of Social Work). A random sample of the students from 1st year and last year of each faculty was taken. The study was conducted during the period of academic university year 2011–2012.

#### *Sample size*

The calculated sample size was 800 (200/group) using the Epicalc2000 program (Brixton Health [www.brixtonhealth.com/]), using:

1- The proportion of smoking in practical faculty 12.9% versus 26.4% in theoretical faculty {Reference: El-Sharkawy [7]}.
2- Significance level at 0.05.
3- Study power of 90%.

The calculated sample size was 179/group and by adding 10% of non-response, it will be 198 [(about 200)/group].

#### *Data collection*

Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire modified from the standard questionnaire of National Center for Social and Criminal Research [8].

#### *Ethical consideration*

The study was done after an oral approval from the students to answer the questionnaire.

#### *Administrative procedure*

The study was done after a written permission from the Vice Dean for education and students affairs in each faculty.

#### *Statistical analysis*

The data were coded and entered using the statistical package SPSS version 15. The data were summarized using descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, median, and range for quantitative variables and number and percentage for qualitative values. Statistical differences between groups were tested using Chi Square test for qualitative variables, independent sample *t*-test and ANOVA (analysis of variance) with post Hoc Bonferroni test for quantitative normally distributed variables while Non-parametric Mann–Whitney test and Kruskal–Wallis test were used for quantitative variables which are not normally distributed. Regression analysis was done to detect significant predictors of smoking. Odds ratio (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI) was used whenever possible. *P*-value less than or equal to 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

## Results

### *Smoking status of the students and their concern about smoking effect on health*

The main findings of our study were the following: the percentage of the current smokers among the whole studied population was 8.6%, ex-smokers 2.7%, and non-smokers 88.7%. There was a higher prevalence of current smokers at faculty of Social Work than at faculty of Pharmacy [47/389(12.1%) versus 21/399(5.3%) respectively; *p*-value = 0.001]. Also, there was a significantly higher prevalence of current smokers at faculty of Social Work than at faculty of Pharmacy at the first year ($P1 = 0.024$) and at the last year ($P2 = 0.015$) (Table 1).

It was also found that, first year students of faculty of Social Work were significantly less concerned about smoking effect on health than first year students of faculty of Pharmacy ($P1 = 0.008$). Also, first year students of faculty of Social Work were significantly less concerned than last year students ($P3 = 0.044$) (Table 1).

### *Awareness of smoking hazards*

Awareness of the hazards of smoking was the most common reason among students for being non-smokers (82.4%). Last year students of faculty of Pharmacy were more aware about smoking hazards than last year students of faculty of Social Work (*P*-value = 0.006) (Fig. 1).

### *Socio-demographic characteristics of the students and their relation to the smoking status*

The mean age of current smokers among the students was significantly higher than mean age of non-smokers ($20.89 \pm 2.12$ year versus $20.11 \pm 1.57$ year; *P*-value = 0.005).

The prevalence of current smokers was significantly increased among students with certain characteristics as shown in Table 2.

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