

Perceptions towards smoking among Anglia Ruskin University Student Smokers: A Qualitative Research

Faith Oluyole | Essex County Council | Senior Wellbeing and Public Health Officer | Faith.oluyole@essex.gov.uk

Background and Methodology

Smoking continues to be a major public health issue throughout the world, with negative consequences on people's health and wellbeing. Around 1.1 billion people who are 15 years of age or older smoke globally.

Overall, cigarette use is more prevalent among those aged 25 to 34 (15.8%) and 18 to 24 (13.2%) than all other age groups (Kufman *et al.*, 2020).

The aim of this study is to explore the perception of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) students toward smoking and smoking cessation.

Research Questions

1. How do ARU students perceive the health risks associated with smoking?
2. To what extent are ARU students who smoke aware of the various smoking cessation resources available to them, and what factors influence their willingness to use these programs to quit smoking?

Study design

This **descriptive qualitative study** took place in Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford Campus United Kingdom.

Inclusion criteria) ARU students; Above 18 years; Current cigarettes smokers for at least One year or up to 100 cigarettes

Exclusion criteria) Non -ARU students; Non cigarettes smokers; Students below age 18

Interviews were conducted for; 20 student smokers; 13 males and 7 females; Age range between **19 to 52 years** old; Ethnicity; Greek Caucasian, White British, Asian, Black British, Black African, Roman Jewish.

Result Themes

Perceived Benefits and Rationalizations of Smoking Despite Health Risks attributed to

- **Perceived Benefits of Smoking:** Habit, addiction, social norms, coping mechanisms, and fear of withdrawal.
- **Misconceptions and Denial:** believe actual risk posed by smoking to be debatable, don't smoke enough to cause considerable harm, health enough to withstand the effects of smoking, smoking aids weight control.

Participant Perspectives on Smoking Cessation Programs

- **Awareness, Affordability and Policy changes:** majority have never heard about the service; smoking cessation service should be subsidised or provided for free, advocate for complete prohibition of smoking within campuses.
- **Perception of vapes and nicotine products offer:** students believe vapes are as dangerous as cigarettes, the addiction to the smoking ritual makes quitting difficult, regardless of the cessation method used, vapes are relatively, cheaper, attractive and easier to get

Recommendation

1. Create programmes that address not just the physical addiction but also the psychological and environmental aspects that influence smoking behaviour.
2. There is need for precise information about the relative hazards of vaping compared to smoking. Advance promotion of smoking cessation services in colleges.