

2021 Best Research Poster Award



Smoking habits and the influence of war on cigarette and shisha smoking in Syria

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INTRODUCTION

Syria has been in continuous armed conflicts and political unrest since 2011 [1]. The armed conflict and its related psychological pressure may have serious impacts and could be associated with risky behaviors such as initiation of smoking, increased smoking, or even substance abuse [2].

OBJECTIVES

Our study aimed to assess cigarette and shisha smoking in a community-based sample from Syria, as well as to examine the association of current tobacco smoking with various socioeconomic and war-related predictors.

METHOD

A community-based cross-sectional survey was conducted in Syrian Arab Republic from March to April 2019 using a web-based questionnaire. The survey aimed at assessing tobacco use (shisha and cigarettes) as well as examining the association between current tobacco use and various sociodemographic and war-related factors.

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RESULTS

The sample comprised 978 participants (251 males: 727 females) and had a mean age of 24.7 years (SD: 7.60). Most participants were single (n = 825, 84.4%), reside in Damascus and Rif-Dimashq (n = 579, 59.2%), and had a college/university education (n = 911, 93.1%). Concerning smoking, a total of 371 participants (37.9%) were identified to be current tobacco smokers, of whom 211, 84, 76 were exclusive shisha smokers, exclusive cigarette smokers, and dual smokers, respectively. The prevalence of cigarette smoking (exclusive and dual) among males and females was found to be 34.7%, and 10.0%, respectively. On the other hand the prevalence of shisha smoking (exclusive and dual) among males and females was around 34.3% and 27.6%, respectively.

DISCUSSION

Our study sheds the light on an important topic that is considered a threat to global public health, and one of the most common causes of preventable illnesses. The overall rate of current tobacco smoking (cigarette shisha) in our study was found to be around 37.9% (53.8% among males, 32.5% among females). Besides, rates of current cigarette smoking (exclusive & dual) among males and females were found to be 34.7% and 10.0%, respectively (p<0.001) with an overall rate of 16.4% in the total sample.

CONCLUSION

Amid the tobacco epidemic in the region, rates of tobacco use in Syria are still worrying. The Syrian armed conflicts may possess a double-edged effect on smoking, and tobacco users who adopt smoking to cope with various stressors should be targeted with well-structured health education, along with appropriate psychological services.

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