Does e-cigarette use support smoking cessation?

A qualitative study of why young people use e-cigarettes in Ireland

Joan Hanafin & Luke Clancy
TobaccoFree Research Institute Ireland
Technological University Dublin

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FINDINGS FROM THE YETI PROJECT

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Young People’s e-cigarette use in Ireland: Context

- Smoking prevalence in Ireland is falling in all age groups, including in young people.
- Prevalence of e-cigarette use is rising, particularly among young people.
- Evidence that e-cigarettes substantially increase young people’s likelihood of combustible smoking.
- Evidence suggests that the flavourings in e-cigarettes present potential hazards and
- Use may lead to increased risk of cardiovascular and obstructive lung diseases.
This qualitative study aimed to explore factors associated with young people’s use of e-cigarettes, and particularly, to explore whether e-cigarette use supports smoking cessation in this age group.
Young People’s e-cigarette use in Ireland: Methods
Sample

Purposive sample of 62 young people aged 18-24 years.

Two groups: students attending higher education (college students, 2 centres, 28 students) and students recruited through a youth organization working with early school-leavers from disadvantaged areas (Youthreach students, 3 centres, 34 students).

Ethical approval received from the Dublin Institute of Technology’s (DIT) (now Technological University Dublin [TUD]) Research Ethics Committee
Young People’s e-cigarette use in Ireland: Methods
Data collection

- 22 individual semi-structured interviews
- 8 focus group interviews (40 participants)
Using thematic analysis in psychology

Virginia Braun¹ and Victoria Clarke²

¹University of Auckland and ²University of the West of England

Thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method within psychology. In this paper, we argue that it offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. We outline what thematic analysis is, locating it in relation to other qualitative analytic methods that search for themes or patterns, and in relation to different epistemological and ontological positions. We then provide clear guidelines to those wanting to start thematic analysis, or conduct it in a more deliberate and rigorous way, and consider potential pitfalls in conducting thematic analysis. Finally, we outline the disadvantages and advantages of thematic analysis. We conclude by advocating thematic analysis as a useful and flexible method for qualitative research in and beyond psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology 2006; 3: 77–101

Key words: epistemology; flexibility; patterns; qualitative psychology; thematic analysis

Braun V, Clarke V.
Using thematic analysis in psychology.
Qualitative research in psychology. 2006 Jan 1;3(2):77-101.
Young People’s e-cigarette use in Ireland: Findings
Incentives for young people to use e-cigarettes

- Price
  "because it's much cheaper"
  [John, M, CS]

- taste/flavours
  “The flavours can be real tasty”
  (others agree) [FG, M, CS]

- possibility of indoor use
  "It was the novelty of being able to vape indoors and it was just easier" [FG, M, CS]
Young People’s e-cigarette use in Ireland: Findings

Disincentives for young people to use e-cigarettes

- **adverse health effects** (discomfort, coughing, sore throat, headache)
  
  “...the minute I take a little drag I just start coughing me lungs up like it just, it’s horrible” [Caitriona, F, YR]

- **negative user experience** (bad taste & device faults)
  
  “My ma ... got a fright when the liquid went into her mouth” (Marnie, F, YR).

- **over-consumption and "greater addictiveness**
  
  "... there is no end to an electric cigarette, it’s a battery... you just keep going for ten minutes solid” [Simon, M, CS]).
“Ambivalent cessation” because motivation stated by some was smoking cessation but, on further questioning, we found:

1. Continued or resumed smoking & RYO use
2. Dual use of e-cigs & other tobacco products
3. Inability to quit e-cigs
E-cigarette use was not a mechanism for smoking cessation in young people.
Young people are incentivised to use e-cigs through price, flavour, and indoor use.

Regulation is recommended to increase e-cigs price in line with combustible cigarettes, to restrict flavours, and to ban e-cigarette use everywhere that smoking is banned, including indoor areas.
Young People’s e-cigarette use in Ireland: Conclusions

Young people are aware of and concerned about many negative features of e-cigarette use such as adverse health effects, device problems, and nicotine addiction.

Health education programmes to educate young people about e-cigarette use should draw on features that they find concerning about e-cigarettes.
TobaccoFree Research Institute Ireland (TFRI) Team
www.tri.ie

Dr Joan Hanafin,
Director of Social Research, TFRI
jhanafin@tri.ie

Prof Luke Clancy,
Director General, TFRI
lclancy@tri.ie