College students’ opinions on tobacco control policies on college campuses
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Background

Tobacco control policies on college campuses play an important role in deterring tobacco use, and an increasing number of colleges have implemented these policies.

Previous research on college students has found that non-cigarette smokers display more favorable attitudes towards smoke free campuses compared to cigarette smokers.

However, previous research examines differences in support for only cigarette control policies, and not towards comprehensive tobacco control policies, which include all tobacco, and alternative tobacco products.

This study assessed 1) college students’ support of campus tobacco control policies for various tobacco and alternative tobacco products, and 2) differences between current smokers and non-smokers on the level of support for those tobacco control policies.

Measures

Current smoking status

Current cigarette use was assessed by recoding past 30 days use response into a dichotomous variable, with 0=no use in the past 30 days, and 1=used cigarettes at least once a day in the past 30 days.

Support/non-support of tobacco control policies

- Students’ support of campus tobacco control policies for different products was assessed by asking, “Please indicate to what extent you support or oppose each rule or policy”.
- Level of support ranged from 1= strongly support, to 4= strongly oppose. After recoding, higher scores represented stronger support for a product.

Table 1. Level of Support for Various Tobacco Control Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Non-Cigarette Smokers (n=2535)</th>
<th>Current Cigarette Smokers (n=415)</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M, SD</td>
<td>M, SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban cigarettes</td>
<td>3.20, 0.87</td>
<td>2.21, 0.96</td>
<td>449.14***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban e-cigarettes</td>
<td>3.04, 0.93</td>
<td>2.08, 0.97</td>
<td>374.63***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban all tobacco and alternative tobacco products</td>
<td>3.16, 0.96</td>
<td>2.06, 1.01</td>
<td>447.23***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Level of support was scored 1=strongly oppose, to 4=strongly support. ***p<.001

Results

Of the entire sample, 73% of students either strongly supported or supported prohibition of cigarette use on campus, 67% either strongly supported or supported prohibition of e-cigarette use, and 68% either strongly supported or supported prohibition of all tobacco and alternative tobacco products on campus.

One analysis of variance indicated that current cigarette smokers were significantly less likely to support prohibition of cigarettes $[F(1,2949)=449.14, p<.001]$, e-cigarettes $[F(1,2947)=374.63, p<.001]$, and all tobacco and alternative tobacco products on college campuses $[F(1,2958)=447.23, p<.001]$, compared to current non-smokers (see Table 1).

Implications & Recommendations

- Consistent with prior research, cigarette smokers indicated less support for campus tobacco control policies, compared to non-cigarette smokers.
- Not all students supported the tobacco control policies on cigarettes. Even fewer students supported policies on prohibition of e-cigarettes, and all tobacco and alternative tobacco products on college campuses.
- Future research needs to examine why the complete prohibition of all tobacco and non-tobacco alternatives on campuses is not a high priority for college students, despite the risks associated with tobacco use on campus.
- The support of non-cigarette smokers should be rallied to change campus-based policies, since non-cigarette smokers were significantly more likely to support campus tobacco control policies. Also, additional efforts by health educators and policy advocates are warranted to change students’ attitudes towards campus policies.

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