

Pairing Peer Education and Social Media for Adolescent Smokers with Disabilities: A Concise Review

Melissa Beck Wells

Department of Educational Studies, State University of New York- Empire State University, USA

Submission: January 30, 2024; **Published:** February 08, 2024

***Corresponding author:** Melissa Beck Wells, Interim Director of Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development, 1200 South Avenue, Staten Island, New York, USA

Abstract

Tobacco usage for adolescents with and without disabilities is associated with negative outcomes in health and finance. To combat usage, inclusive peer-education combined with social media outreach may benefit efforts to minimize, prevent, and discontinue tobacco use in adolescents with and without disabilities. This article aims at concisely reviewing current literature associated with tobacco usage, associated with the term health outcomes, and social media usage; specifically connecting the relationships with adolescents with disabilities.

Keywords Adolescents with disabilities; Tobacco use; Addition; E-cigarettes; Peer-mentoring; Inclusion; Social media

Pairing Peer Education and Social Media for Adolescent Smokers with Disabilities

Smoking has been linked to several negative outcomes [1]. Nicotine, found in tobacco, has powerful and lasting effects on the developing brain, and adolescent exposure is associated with impaired cognition, attention, memory, and mood (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Particularly for individuals with disabilities, tobacco use may exacerbate impeding behaviors and characteristics (Beck Wells, 2023). The intricate relationship between social, economic, and health factors associated with disability poses risks for substance use, unhealthy habits, and addiction [2]. In addressing the negative impact of smoking on adolescents, researchers have explored intervention strategies. A systematic review by Dodd et al. [3] suggests that peer-education interventions show evidence of effectiveness. Additionally, Lazard (2021) found promise in social media campaigns educating about the harms of e-cigarette usage.

Peer Education for Tobacco Use

Peer mentors, individuals of the same age, can provide support towards a common goal. In Turkey, Bilgiç and Günay [4] discuss the potential positive impact of systematically planned peer education in changing the smoking behaviors of

adolescents. Khambayat et al. [5] emphasize the effectiveness of peer-led programs in India, including peer-to-peer education and support, in preventing e-cigarette use. Peer educators, trained to understand and communicate the dangers of e-cigarettes, offer non-judgmental support to their peers. In Finland, Kiuru et al. [6] suggest that addressing smoking trends in adolescents involves not only promoting resistance to peer pressure but also focusing on peer selection and challenging the perception that smoking is favorable. In the United States, Glover-Kudon et al. [7] found that raising the minimum legal age for tobacco sales to twenty-one, based on peer, family, or cultural groups, may accelerate a decline in tobacco prevalence. Lakon et al. [8] and Mamudu et al. [9] reported similar findings on the influence of peers on smoking behavior, indicating the potential impact on electronic nicotine delivery systems use.

Adolescents with Disabilities and Tobacco Use

Among adolescents with disabilities, Senders and Horner-Johnson found higher rates of cigarette use, e-cigarette use, and dual use. Krahn et al. [10] reported differences in health outcomes for individuals with disabilities, highlighting higher rates of unmet healthcare needs, unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, mental health and chronic diseases, and social determinants of poor health. Chen et

al. [11] emphasized the importance of peer engagement, noting its influence on social outcomes for autistic adolescents. Beck Wells (2023) suggests that evidence-based peer education programs may benefit adolescents with disabilities by reducing tobacco use and promoting positive decision-making, self-determination, and independent living skills. Wagemaker et al. [12] highlights the potential for peers to promote prosocial behavior in inclusive settings.

Social Media and Peer Education

Combining peer education with social media may be a beneficial pathway to support smoking cessation and avoidance in adolescents, including those with disabilities. Elmore et al. [13] found that media-related cognitions significantly influenced adolescents' perceptions of social approval for alcohol and tobacco use. In the context of social media, Argen et al. [14] reported a preference for peer support among young people with learning disabilities. Lazard (2021) suggested that social media campaigns can effectively reach youth, potentially through peer-to-peer sharing. Lyu et al. [15] recommended a combined approach, involving social media-based peer mentoring interventions for e-cigarette cessation.

Challenges and Limitations

There are challenges that may impede the applicability and practicality of pairing peer education and social media. Moorhead et al. [16], in their systematic review, stated while there are many benefits to the use of social media for health communication, the information exchanged needs to be monitored for quality and reliability, and the users' confidentiality and privacy need to be maintained. In a more recent systematic review, Chen and Wang [17] concluded that although several new usages have emerged since Moorhead et al.'s review such as advancing health research and practice, social mobilization, and facilitating offline health-related services and events, research gaps exist continue to exist concerning advancing the strategic usage of social media based on audience, assessing the impact of social media in health interventions, appreciating the impact of health identity development, and resolving privacy concerns. These health implications and social media findings can be applied to the health associations of tobacco usage in adolescents, and the usage of social media. Next steps include further investigation and creation of peer-mentoring social media programs which incorporate feasibility, acceptability, and efficacy for adolescents may be beneficial to support positive health outcomes.

Conclusion

Tobacco usage in adolescents, with and without disabilities, is associated with negative outcomes. Inclusive peer education combined with social media outreach may be effective in minimizing, preventing, and discontinuing tobacco use in adolescents with disabilities. The creation of such a program should be considered, with further investigation into the

usefulness of peer education and social media programs, building on the insights from previous research.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Andrew, Beckett, Everly, Emelia, and Eliza for time management and support.

References

1. US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General (2012) Preventing tobacco use among youth and young adults: a report of the Surgeon General.
2. Reif S, Lee MT, Ledingham E (2023) The intersection of disability with substance uses and addiction. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Global Public Health.
3. Dodd S, Widnall E, Russell AE, Esther LC, Ruth S, et al. (2022) School-based peer education interventions to improve health: a global systematic review of effectiveness. BMC Public Health 22(1): 2247.
4. Bilgiç N, Günay T (2014) A Method for Supporting Smoking Cessation in Adolescents: Peer Education: Turkish Thoracic J. Turk Toraks Dergisi 15(3): 102-105.
5. Khambayat S, Jaiswal A, Prasad R, Wanjari MB, Sharma R, et al. (2023) Vaping Among Adolescents: An Overview of E-Cigarette Use in Middle and High School Students in India. Cureus 15(5): e38972.
6. Kiuru N, Burk WJ, Laursen B, Salmela-Aro K, Nurmi JE (2010) Pressure to drink but not to smoke: Disentangling selection and socialization in adolescent peer networks and peer groups. J Adolesc 33(6): 801-812.
7. Glover-Kudon R, Plunkett E, Lavinghouze R, Trivers KF, Wang X, et al. (2019) Association of Peer Influence and Access to Tobacco Products with US. Youths' Support of Tobacco 21 Laws, 2015. J Adolesc Health 65(2): 202-209.
8. Lakon CM, Hipp JR, Wang C, Butts CT, Jose R (2015) Simulating Dynamic Network Models and Adolescent Smoking: The Impact of Varying Peer Influence and Peer Selection. Am J Public Health 105(12): 2438-2448.
9. Mamudu HM, Shahani D, Jones A, Ahuja M, Adeniran E (2022) Exploring Patterns of the Use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems among Adolescents in High-Risk Appalachian (USA) Communities. Substance Use & Misuse 57(2): 167-174.
10. Krahn GL, Walker DK, Correa-De-Araujo R (2015) Persons with disabilities as an unrecognized health disparity population. Am J Public Health 105(S2): S198-S206.
11. Chen YL, Schneider M, Patten K (2022) Exploring interpersonal and environmental factors of autistic adolescents' peer engagement in integrated education. Autism 26(5): 1255-1266.
12. Wagemaker E, Van Hoorn J, Bexkens A (2022) Susceptibility to peer influence on prosocial behavior in adolescents with Mild Intellectual Disability or Borderline Intellectual Functioning. Res Dev Disabil 120: 104143.
13. Elmore KC, Scull TM, Kupersmidt JB (2017) Media as a "Super Peer": How Adolescents Interpret Media Messages Predicts Their Perception of Alcohol and Tobacco Use Norms. J Youth and Adolesc 46(2): 376-387.
14. Ågren KA, Hemmingsson H, Kjellberg A (2023) Internet activities and social and community participation among young people with learning disabilities. Br J Learn Disabil 51: 125-134.
15. Lyu JC, Afolabi A, White JS, Ling PM (2022) Perceptions and Aspirations Toward Peer Mentoring in Social Media-Based Electronic Cigarette Cessation Interventions for Adolescents and Young Adults: Focus Group Study. JMIR Form Res 6(12): e42538.

16. Moorhead SA, Hazlett DE, Harrison L, Carroll JK, Irwin A, et al. (2013) A new dimension of health care: systematic review of the uses, benefits, and limitations of social media for health communication. *J Med Internet Res* 15(4): e85.
17. Chen J, Wang Y (2021) Social media use for health purposes: systematic review. *J Med Internet Res* 23(5): e17917.



This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License

Your next submission with Juniper Publishers
will reach you the below assets

- Quality Editorial service
- Swift Peer Review
- Reprints availability
- E-prints Service
- Manuscript Podcast for convenient understanding
- Global attainment for your research
- Manuscript accessibility in different formats
(Pdf, E-pub, Full Text, Audio)
- Unceasing customer service

Track the below URL for one-step submission
<https://juniperpublishers.com/online-submission.php>