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**Substance use and misuse by high-risk adolescents: A vulnerability evaluation**

Azmina Hussain<sup>1</sup>, Sidra Zaheer<sup>1</sup> and Kashif Shafique<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dow University of Health Sciences, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>University of Glasgow, UK

**Background:** Both 600 million consuming betel quid (BQ) and growing smokeless tobacco (SLT) use in South Asian countries are mounting public health concern. This substance consumption is proven risk factor for oral cancer. Adolescents formulate high-risk group for its use as habit commences at an age as early as 13 years. We aimed to observe determinants of SLT and/or BQ use to identify the fundamental influencers of its consumption in adolescents.

**Methods:** This was a cross-sectional analysis of 2140 adolescents of secondary schools of Karachi, Pakistan. SLT and/or BQ consumption was the main outcome variable. After adjusting for other determinants, both univariate and multivariate binary logistic analyses were used to report outcome as both crude and adjusted odds ratio with 95% confidence interval. The p-value was set to be significant at <0.05 for all analyses.

**Results:** The overall use prevalence of SLT and/or BQ consumption was 42.6% (n=912). There were more male users than females. A substantial percentage of users (61.2%) were from co-education schools. Students whose peers used SLT and/or BQ were six times more likely to use them (OR=6.79, 95% CI 4.67–9.87, p-value<0.001). The use of SLT and/or BQ by parents made adolescents' use more probable (OR=2.16, 95% CI 1.73–2.65, p-value<0.001). Students who never attended any awareness session regarding the harmful effects of SLT and/or BQ were more likely users. The availability of these products with outside hawkers increased the odds of its use by six times amongst youth.

**Conclusion:** The use of SLT and/or BQ use by peers and parents, students studying in co-education, lack of awareness sessions based on deleterious effects of the product and the easy access to the product from outside school hawkers, all play positive contributing role towards increased risk of SLT and/or BQ use in high-risk youth.

Azmina.hussain@duhs.edu.pk