Reviewer's report

**Title:** Snus user identity and addiction - a Swedish focus group study on adolescents

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**Reviewer:** Nora Wiium

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Manuscript title: “Snus user identity and addiction – a Swedish focus group study on adolescents”

The present study uses a qualitative design to explore adolescents’ view of themselves as snus users, their attitudes towards the behaviour and their reasons for engaging in the behaviour. Five focus groups (four of boys and one of girls), comprising 27 students between 17 and 19 years attending vocational institutions were used in the study. By using qualitative content analysis, the authors identify 8 categories related to the use of snus, which are further grouped under three themes: “Circumstances pertaining to snus debut indicate what makes you start using snus. Upholding, which focuses on the problem of becoming addicted and development of identity, and approach, where the adolescents reflect on their snus habits in relation to those around them” (Abstract, result section).

Considering the fact that most tobacco studies have employed a quantitative approach in their design, the qualitative approach undertaken by the present study brings in a new dimension that is becoming increasingly important in research. The paper is generally well-structured and addresses several important aspects of the circumstances surrounding young people’s use of snus, and thus contributes to the literature on tobacco use among young people. Nevertheless, there are also several flaws of the paper that need to be addressed. Please see general and specific comments below.

**General comments:**

The theoretical background of the study as well as the research question needs to be made more explicit; the method is generally well described with fairly detailed information on the different steps that were followed during data collection and data analysis, and the data presented are sound. The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition, and the discussion and conclusions are largely well balanced and adequately supported by the data. The title conveys the findings of the study. However, the limitations and implications of the study need to be made more concrete.

**Specific comments:**

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) Background, fourth paragraph: Ajzen’s theory of planned behaviour and how it
fits into the present study is not properly discussed. See Ajzen (1991) The theory of planned behaviour for a detailed description of the theory.

2) The authors introduce Tajfel’s theory on social identity and Connell’s theory on the hierarchy of masculinity in the discussion section. These theories together with the theory of planned behaviour should be given proper attention in the introduction and discussed as the conceptual framework of the present study.

3) The aim of the study should be formulated more clearly.

4) Analysis: The authors mention that the Graneheim and Lundman theory is used in the qualitative content analysis, but there is no description of the theory and how it can be used in the above mentioned analysis. A brief description taking up these points would be necessary.

5) The limitation and implications of the findings are not well discussed.

6) The paper in general could benefit from some additional work and editing.

- Minor Essential Revisions

1) Background, first paragraph, second line: The message in the sentence “Swedish studies indicated that the use of snus is introduced later than smoking” is not clear enough.

2) Background, fourth paragraph: The sentence “A Swedish study showed that snus users during adolescence caused a four times higher occurrence of symptoms of nicotine addiction than among adolescent smokers” is quite confusing.

3) Method, fourth paragraph: The last bit of the sentence “The first author (IE) acted as moderator and had the responsibility for leading the study and conducts the interviews” does not sound right and needs to be revised.

4) Results, third paragraph: There is a mix of Swedish and English words in the last line: “…cool and super…” rather than “…cool och super…”.

5) Results, paragraph before “Upholding”: The message in the following sentence is not clear: “Some of the girls had not said they had started to use snus instead of smoking, as they did not want to face the battle about snus as well”.

6) Results, Upholding, third paragraph, the sentence: “Generally, they reacted when they saw girls who used snus and felt it did not seem fresh”; the last bit of the sentence “….felt that it did not seem fresh…” is not clear.

7) Results, Approach, first paragraph, last sentence: There appears to be a contradiction in that sentence and the quote that follows.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field
**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.