Reviewer's report

Title: Perceived risks and benefits of cigarette smoking among Nepalese adolescents: A population-based cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Ryan David Kennedy

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting article that describes reported perspectives of cigarette smoking benefits and risks from youth in Nepal – an area with limited published material.

All Comments are Discretionary –

This article is largely hinged on the idea that susceptibility to smoking is a good predictor of smoking initiation – and that susceptibility includes knowledge of the harms of smoking, relative risk, perceived personal ability to quit etc. Most of the literature used to support these ideas are from western studies and were published 10-20 years ago.

Specific comments from the draft are outlined below – but generally I feel this manuscript would be greatly strengthened if the background did a better job of setting up your study.

Make the case that smoking/tobacco use is an issue in Nepal – use published/accessible sources for this.

The literature around perceived risk needs to be rounded out – and focus more on how relevant perceived risks and benefits of cigarette smoking might be relevant to smoking rates. Much of the literature used in this background is very old – things that might have predicted youth smoking in 1985 are arguably not as relevant today (and further – may not be relevant at all in the context of Nepal).

Numbered comments:

The Abstract –

1. Consider re-wording the first sentence to

“Perceived risks and benefits of smoking may play an important role in adolescent smoking behavior.”

2. Methods section of Abstract –

Given that Nepal will be unfamiliar to most readers – consider adding a little more detail about the study area – how large are the communities – why was this region chosen (?) – what is the adult smoking prevalence (why did you pick this community?).

3. I would recommend listing that the analysis was done with 352 participants.
4. Wording - ‘To prevent susceptibility to smoking among adolescents,’ – Really the goal is to prevent smoking – consider re-wording to ‘To prevent uptake in smoking,'

5. Conclusion – the authors don’t really narrow it down for us – I request the authors be more definitive in the Abstract’s conclusion what they feel they can conclude from this work.

BODY of PAPER:

This is where I think a little re-organizing and further referencing could strengthen the paper.

6. The references for the Nepal deaths/impacts from tobacco and School study – are those available online anywhere? (refs 1-3) - Consider adding other references that are accessible to readers. Consider moving up some of the historic tobacco work discussed in the 'Discussion' section.

7. GYTS add in the text that those youth were 13-15 (correct – that is what the reference indicates).

Do you know anything from the GYTS data about who these never-smokers-who-would-like to smoke are? This would be relevant to help identify who is at-risk.

8. Reference 8 does outline the health risks associated with smoking cigarettes – is there any Nepalese report that calculates the potential impact smoking will have on Nepal? (The reference and facts feel forced there.)

9. The psycho-social research referenced in the background – Most of this is based on western research – and some of the sources used are 10+ years old – and seem to not be relevant to either this population or time period. Later in the paper you do link your findings to these works - so I don't suggest dropping them - If the authors are unable to find similar recent work about perceived risk in Nepal – the authors should state this in the background and not wait for limitations.

10. Reference 9 – to balance this belief - there are several reference that explain youth tend to overestimate risk of smoking – see Slovic – the issue is that even with gross over estimates of risk, youth do not abstain from smoking (this is the point isn’t it?).

Consider adding additional references to support this point – possibly:

“A systematic review of smoking Youths’ perceptions of addiction and health risks associated with smoking: Utilizing the framework of the health belief model” 2012

11. Reference 10 seems misplaced – this article was about household smoking
affecting adolescent smoking. Was there a reference in that manuscript that highlighted how adolescents inaccurately believe that cigarette smoking is less risky than other behaviors?

[further – if you want to make that statement in your article you should list some of these other behaviors]

METHODS –
12. Note - Your background did not explain that smoking is a sensitive issue in Nepal.

13. Sample size – unless this is customary for this journal the justification for your sample size does not seem necessary to me. (power calculations)

14. Perceptions of smoking-related risks and benefits –
It is interesting that ‘bad breath’ is considered a physical risk and not a social risk (?)
Further – it would seem that the range of physical risks were wide – from chronic disease to wrinkles.
- Is this consistent with the Halpern-Felsher article?
This is the only issue I have with the results - the way the responses were organized. However this might also be influenced by ideas of health in Nepal - please explain in the text why you grouped the ‘risk’ categories as you did.

15. Were any incentives given to participants?

Results -

16. how did you measure literacy and parental literacy (is it just reported or were they tested?)

Discussion –

17. This historic data would fit better in the introduction. (this was mentioned above)

18. In general I would suggest re-wording the idea of smoking benefits to perceived benefits throughout the document.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no conflicts or competing interests.