

# Framing the future: Adolescents' views on Malaysia's tobacco-free generation policy

Zakiah Mohd Noordin<sup>1</sup>, Nurul Balqis Khairul Nazri<sup>1</sup>, Syarifah Syamimi Putri Adiba Syed Putera<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Pharmacy, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Teknologi MARA Selangor Branch, 42300, Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor, Malaysia, <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Royal College of Medicine Perak, Universiti Kuala Lumpur, 30450, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia

Track: Youth and Students

Theme: Tobacco-free Generation

## ABSTRACT

The tobacco-free generation (TFG), viewed as a bold policy to accelerate momentum towards tobacco endgame, has sparked debates across various sectors. In Malaysia, its omission from the final legislation following a declared intent to adopt it in January 2022 has generated similarly conflicting responses. Despite the strong advocacy by public health experts in view of the growing vaping epidemic, its viability is weakened by concerns over economic impacts and constitutional discrimination. This study focused on adolescents – a key target group – and explored their awareness and perceptions of the policy. Fifteen secondary school students, ages 15–17, were interviewed face-to-face. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis and NVivo. Participants demonstrated varying levels of awareness, ranging from apathy to strong understanding of the concept, with social media and school-based programs cited as primary information sources. Two main themes emerged regarding perceptions: (i) positive impressions and (ii) ambivalent sentiments. Support for the policy originated from personal experience with smoking individuals or environments and awareness of health and financial benefits. In contrast, participants expressed concerns about the policy's feasibility due to the existing high smoking prevalence and weak enforcement of the smoke-free zones and underage smoking regulations. Participants also highlighted limitations in the implementation timeline and enforcement capacity. In conclusion, the successful implementation of TFG will require enhanced awareness, engagement with key influencers and effective enforcement of current policies. Furthermore, extensive consultation with other stakeholder groups is vital for designing effective tobacco control strategies that are inclusive and sustainable.

Keywords: Tobacco-free Generation, Tobacco Control, Smoking, Adolescents