

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form ([see an example](#)) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below. Some articles will have been accepted based in part or entirely on reviews undertaken for other BMJ Group journals. These will be reproduced where possible.

ARTICLE DETAILS

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| TITLE (PROVISIONAL) | Students' attitude and smoking behaviour following the implementation a university smoke-free policy: a cross sectional study |
| AUTHORS | Chaaya, Monique; Afifi, Rima; Nakkash, Rima; Alameddine, Maysam; Nahhas, George |

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

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| REVIEWER | Dr. Omar Khabour Associate Professor Jordan University of Science and Technology Jordan I declare that I have no competing interest |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 25-Oct-2012 |

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| GENERAL COMMENTS | <p>This manuscript evaluated the student's attitude behavior following the implementation a university smoke-free policy, as well as a comparison of attitude between smokers and non-smokers. This study is in general well done and well written but there are few comments and some clarifications are required.</p> <p>1- The word argileh and narghileh were used to describe hookah smoking. Please be consistent and use only one term to describe the same phenomenon. For the study, it is more relevant to describe the prevalence of cigarette smoking among university students in AUB rather than describe prevalence of hookah smoking.</p> <p>2- Page 6, line 45: American University of Beirut should be abbreviated.</p> <p>3- Throughout the manuscript, the word "Faculty" was written sometimes with capital letter and sometimes without. Please be consistent</p> <p>4- Throughout the manuscript description of frequencies are sometimes with a space between the number and % and sometimes without. Be consistent and consult instruction for authors.</p> <p>5- Page 8 line 44, you have mentioned that there was oversampling from the Faculty of Health Sciences and in the following sentence you have mentioned that 41% of the sample was from the Faculty of Art and Sciences. What remained for other faculties? I suggest that you information about number of students recruited from each Faculty.</p> <p>6- The authors mentioned in the manuscript that AUB has students from 69 countries and thus the authors should mention the language of the questionnaire. Was the questionnaire distributed in Arabic language or in multi-languages? What was the percentage of foreign students in the sample?</p> <p>7- Page 8 line 13: define FCTC</p> <p>8- Page 9 line 47, what is the difference between school and Faculty?</p> |
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| | <p>9- Page 10 line 21, the authors mentioned in text that (51.7%) of current smokers were not at all satisfied with the ban, while the in the table 1, the percentage is 63.8%. Please clarify the this discrepancy</p> <p>10- Page 12, line 45, remove the words around one third and the brackets.</p> <p>11- Page 16 line 11, remove extra bracket</p> <p>12- Page 17: paragraph 1 and 2 should be one paragraph</p> <p>13- Pages 21-23, check the references style.</p> |
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| REVIEWER | <p>Libby N Brockman Researcher, Seattle Children's Research Institute USA</p> <p>I have no competing interests.</p> |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 19-Nov-2012 |

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| THE STUDY | <p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do the results support the "success" (how is this defined?) of a smoking ban? Perhaps more accurately, one of the key messages of this study is that implementing a smoking ban is a complex process with numerous stakeholders, including students which are not often included in such analyses. Their opinions and attitudes are important and varied based on smoking status. - One of the strengths of this study is that it is the first to document student perceptions of barriers to smoke bans. Would be interesting to hear more from the authors on why the student perspective is so valued. <p>Abstract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add # of students who completed the survey - Add data collection methods - Provide #s, percentages, p-values for some of your main results to bolster your results section. <p>Limitations of this study are not discussed anywhere. Please add a discussion of them to the Discussion section.</p> <p>It is hard to judge the appropriateness of the statistical methods when the exact tests used aren't described. The statistical methods are only summarized briefly in the Methods section (uni/bivariate analyses), however the exact tests used are not named (T-tests? Fischers exact? Chi- squared tests?). This would be helpful to know, please add to the Methods section. Further, the term "significant" has technical implications. When using this term, readers will expect to see hypothesis testing results such as p-values and confidence intervals. The authors often make judgements of significance and compare groups within the text without providing statistical evidence to back this up. For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Pg 10, line 14: Authors conclude that "Difference in attitude were mainly between regular smokers and non-smokers" yet do not provide evidence of the comparisons they made to reach this conclusion. Please provide analyses. 2) Pg 11, line 35 3) Pg 12, line 39 4) Pg 12, Line 52 |
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| | <p>USA smoking prevalence rates in this manuscript come from a 2002 paper (pg 5, line 24). The American College Health Association National College Health Assessment (ACHA-NCHA) provides more current data on risk behaviors among US college students. This may be a good source for smoking prevalence among USA college students.</p> |
| <p>RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS</p> | <p>Nowhere in the entire manuscript is the # of participants stated. Please provide total N. Relatedly, the Total columns in Tables 1-4 are missing a total N and should be moved from the last column to the first column of reported data. Lastly, note that in Table 3, the term Overall is used instead of Total. Please be consistent.</p> <p>The Results section is lacking a basic description of the study sample in terms of demographics and smoking experience (descriptive statistics).</p> <p>This reviewer questions the difference between "large extent" and "some extent". Is there a quantitative or meaningful difference between "large extent" and "some extent"? If so, please define. Further, though the tables break these into two separate groups, the authors often combine them in the text and report them as one [eg, pg 10, lines 10-14, lines 16-21, lines 32-34,]. Perhaps the survey question and its representation in the tables should be dichotomized (some extent (large + some) vs not at all/not sure) rather than categorical.</p> <p>Whichever order the authors chose to list their objectives, this should remain consistent when discussing their findings in the Discussion section.</p> <p>Please clarify the implications of these study results. For example, the authors suggest smoking cessation services need to be better advertised on campus, yet none of the results in this study measured students' awareness of smoking cessation services. Further, the results of this study do not speak to educational campaigns regarding anti-smoking strategies, as the authors suggest on page 19. Lastly, it remains unclear whether these results suggest a national tobacco control policy will strengthen a campus policy. While this may be logically argued, the participants in this study were not asked whether not having a national smoking ban is a barrier to implementation of a campus smoking ban. Please discuss implications of this study's specific results.</p> <p>Statements on Pg 18 lines 7-8 ("if not more") and 57 ("more effective") lead the reader to think that educational programming may be more important than smoking ban policies. This conclusion is unrelated to the results presented in this study, nor does this reviewer find evidence to support this. What does the research say about this? Further, on page 19, lines 29-33, the authors seem to contradict the statement made on page 18 by saying policy is the best/most effective approach. Please clarify.</p> |
| <p>GENERAL COMMENTS</p> | <p>Overall suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My major concern regards the # of objectives and their order of presentation which currently are not consistent. This reviewer questions whether there are perhaps 3-4 objectives rather than just two as outlined in the Introduction. Further, whichever order the authors chose to list their objectives in the Intro, the following content in the Methods, Results and Discussion sections should follow that same order. For example: compliance, attitudes, barriers. |

- Per BMJ policy, remove all mentions of the name of the school where the study took place. See:
<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/guidelines.xhtml> .
- Remove first person language (we, our, etc), use past tense, keep words consistent (questionnaire vs survey, lifetime not ever smokers, current vs regular), provide statistical results when using the term significant/different.

Introduction:

I enjoyed reading your background section as it set up your paper appropriately. However, I wonder if reordering this section will provide readers the answers to their questions more quickly. Here is a suggested outline that may help with this:

- 1) Smoking is prevalent among university students worldwide
 - a. International estimates
 - b. Lebanese estimates
- 2) Smoking is a public health concern because of its associated negative health outcomes
 - a. Cardiovascular disease, lung cancers, respiratory problems, etc.
- 3) Public health interventions at the policy level are necessary for 2 reasons
 - a. Help reduce smoking among smokers
 - i. Back up with Fitchenberg, Weschler research
 - b. Reduces second-hand exposure to non-smokers
 - i. Back up with Khuder, Pell research
- 4) The purpose of this paper is to examine the implementation of a smoking ban on a private university in Lebanon. While Lebanon ratified the WHO FCTC in 2005, very few Lebanese institutions implemented such policies (Nakkash).
 - a. In 2008 a private university implemented a non-smoking ban on campus
 - i. Describe it like you do at the end of paragraph #4 of the current Intro
 - b. Our primary objective was to assess compliance
 - c. Our secondary objective was to assess student attitudes & opinions towards the campus wide smoking ban and tobacco control measures in general
 - d. Our third objective was to assess perceptions of barriers to implementation of the ban

Page 6, discusses smoking practices of Lebanese students. Please define and explain the difference between argileh and narghile; are these the same? Using just one term may be more consistent and less confusing.

Page 6, line 34: Most literature on smoking prevalence differentiates between current and lifetime smoking. Is there a difference between "regular" and "current"? If so, please clarify.

Methods:

-Move statements about date of data collection and IRB approval from the Data Collection subsection to right under the Methods heading. This should be listed before the subsection of Participants. "This study took place between [Month] 2008- June 2009. IRB approval was obtained from AUB for all research procedures...".
- Pg 8, Line 46, sentence "Data collection was completed in June 2009" should be added to the very beginning of the Methods section, as noted above.

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| | <p>-pg 7, line 26: please note that INSTRUCTORS of "a random sample of classes offered in the spring semester..." were asked to invite their students to complete the survey.</p> <p>-pg 8, line 48, sentence "None of the instructors contacted..." can be moved to pg 7, line 33 before the sentence "The selection of classes was based..."</p> <p>- page 7, line 44: The sentence starting with "The highest percentage of surveyed students..." should be moved to the first sentence of the Results section.</p> <p>- Decide if you will use the term questionnaire or survey, but be consistent and stick with just one of those terms.</p> <p>- You can combine the Questionnaire and Data collection sections into one "Questionnaire (or Survey) & Data Collection"</p> <p>- How was the survey administered? Online, or with paper and pencil?</p> <p>- pg 8, line 39: Sentence starting with "Questionnaire construction and data collection were done as..." should be moved to the first sentence of the Questionnaire & Data Collection section.</p> <p>-pg 8- line 13: "Various statements" should read "Survey questions"</p> <p>-pg 8, line 20: most literature on smoking prevalence differentiates between current and lifetime smoking. Therefore, "ever" should read "lifetime"</p> <p>- Pg 9, line 11: "Answers to attitudes..." sentence is unclear. "to a larger extent, to some extent, and not at all/not sure" are not answers to "the ban". Please specify what the questions were so readers understand what the measures were.</p> <p>- Can the authors comment on why "not at all" and "not sure" were grouped together? These seem like different answers to me.</p> <p>Results:</p> <p>- pg 9 line 40: keep wording in past tense, "are" should be "were"</p> <p>- pg 9, line 44: university should not be capitalized. Correct this throughout the manuscript</p> <p>-pg 11, line 47: Do you mean "more similar" rather than "closer"? Closer denotes physical proximity.</p> <p>-pg 12 line 4-5: "a little bit less" should read "almost"</p> <p>- Capitalize Table or Figure when referring to these throughout the manuscript</p> <p>Discussion section</p> <p>- pg 16, line 27: should read "All OF the above..."</p> <p>-pg17 line 11: Should read: "There are multiple reasons for this..."</p> <p>-pg 17 line 32: Other reasons for what?</p> <p>-I wonder if the discussion of the 2012 smoking ban in Lebanon could be summarized in fewer sentences. While this may important to note, signifying advances the country has made in recent years, I am unsure where it belongs in this manuscript.</p> |
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1: Dr. Omar Khabour

1- The word argileh and narghileh were used to describe hookah smoking. Please be consistent and use only one term to describe the same phenomenon. For the study, it is more relevant to describe the prevalence of cigarette smoking among university students in AUB rather than describe prevalence of hookah smoking.

R: We substituted all "argileh" with narghileh. The authors feel that a simple description of smoking behavior gives a better idea on students in general.

2- Page 6, line 45: American University of Beirut should be abbreviated.

R: Done

3- Throughout the manuscript, the word "Faculty" was written sometimes with capital letter and sometimes without. Please be consistent

R: Done. We used "Faculty"

4- Throughout the manuscript description of frequencies are sometimes with a space between the number and % and sometimes without. Be consistent and consult instruction for authors.

R: We removed the space

5- Page 8 line 44, you have mentioned that there was oversampling from the Faculty of Health Sciences and in the following sentence you have mentioned that 41% of the sample was from the Faculty of Art and Sciences. What remained for other faculties? I suggest that you information about number of students recruited from each Faculty.

R: The true proportion of FHS students at AUB is around 4 %. However in the sample it was 13 %. Therefore we weighted the data in the analysis according to Faculty, as mentioned in the analysis part.

All Faculties were represented in the sample. We could add more information in the text about the distribution or leave as such and readers could refer to table 1.

We added one table to describe the demographic characteristics for the total sample and by smoking status. The results on the sample profile in the text could be presented without the table. We leave it to the editor to decide if the table is necessary

6- The authors mentioned in the manuscript that AUB has students from 69 countries and thus the authors should mention the language of the questionnaire. Was the questionnaire distributed in Arabic language or in multi-languages? What was the percentage of foreign students in the sample?

R: The questionnaire was administered in English. 13 % of the sample were non Lebanese. Another 15 % had dual nationality. They could be Arab non Lebanese or non Arab

7- Page 8 line 13: define FCTC

R: Done

8- Page 9 line 47, what is the difference between school and Faculty?

R: No difference. Before separating from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences(FAS), It was named a school. After becoming independent of FAS, it kept its name and they added the name of a major donor named Olayan: Olayan School of Business.

9- Page 10 line 21, the authors mentioned in text that (51.7%) of current smokers were not at all satisfied with the ban, while the in the table 1, the percentage is 63.8%. Please clarify the this discrepancy

R: We corrected in the text and replace with 63.8 % as per the table. We reported before those who were not satisfied at all only and these amounted to 51.7 %

10- Page 12, line 45, remove the words around one third and the brackets.

R: Done

11- Page 16 line 11, remove extra bracket

R: Done

12- Page 17: paragraph 1 and 2 should be one paragraph.

R: Done

13- Pages 21-23, check the references style.

R: Done

Reviewer 2: Libby N Brockman

- Do the results support the "success" (how is this defined?) of a smoking ban? Perhaps more accurately, one of the key messages of this study is that implementing a smoking ban is a complex process with numerous stakeholders, including students which are not often included in such analyses. Their opinions and attitudes are important and varied based on smoking status.

R: The authors consider that the smoke ban was a success at AUB with almost two thirds complying with the ban and a high proportion reporting that ban was justified and that they were satisfied with it. WE totally agree with the reviewer that implementing a smoking ban in the country is very complex. We added a statement on the complexity of the process in the key messages as suggested.

- One of the strengths of this study is that it is the first to document student perceptions of barriers to smoke bans. Would be interesting to hear more from the authors on why the student perspective is so valued.

R. We added the a statement under "strengths"

As the authors pointed earlier and rightfully so that students are important stakeholders for the success of a smoke ban in the country. They constitute a significant proportion of the young population whose support of the tobacco control in general is essential

Abstract:

- Add # of students who completed the survey

R: Done

- Add data collection methods

R: Done

- Provide #s, percentages, p-values for some of your main results to bolster your results section.

R: Done

Limitations of this study are not discussed anywhere. Please add a discussion of them to the Discussion section.

R: The study does not intend to measure a change or any associations and therefore its cross sectional nature does not entail any limitation. The oversampling from the Faculty of Health Sciences was corrected in the analysis by post weighing the analysis. A statement was added in the discussion about limitations.

It is hard to judge the appropriateness of the statistical methods when the exact tests used aren't described. The statistical methods are only summarized briefly in the Methods section (uni/bivariate analyses), however the exact tests used are not named (T-tests? Fischers exact? Chi- squared tests?). This would be helpful to know, please add to the Methods section.

R: Done

Further, the term "significant" has technical implications. When using this term, readers will expect to see hypothesis testing results such as p-values and confidence intervals. The authors often make judgements of significance and compare groups within the text without providing statistical evidence to back this up. For example:

1) Pg 10, line 14: Authors conclude that "Difference in attitude were mainly between regular smokers and non-smokers" yet do not provide evidence of the comparisons they made to reach this conclusion. Please provide analyses.

2) Pg 11, line 35

3) Pg 12, line 39

4) Pg 12, Line 52

R. This is not a hypothesis driven study and the authors wanted to describe compliance and attitudes. The authors see that it is legitimate to compare attitudes according to smoking status . these analyses help in highlighting target groups for intervention. To highlight the differences and since the survey was based on probability samples, we performed bivariate analyses and reported statistical differences. When statistical differences were found among the three groups of smokers, the authors examined the observed percentages to describe the patterns and where the differences occur.

USA smoking prevalence rates in this manuscript come from a 2002 paper (pg 5, line 24). The American College Health Association National College Health Assessment (ACHA-NCHA) provides more current data on risk behaviors among US college students. This may be a good source for smoking prevalence among USA college students.

R: We changed the reference as per the suggestion of the reviewer and reported the prevalence in the USA of 14.3% according to the American College Health Association 2012

Nowhere in the entire manuscript is the # of participants stated. Please provide total N. Relatedly, the Total columns in Tables 1-4 are missing a total N and should be moved from the last column to the first column of reported data. Lastly, note that in Table 3, the term Overall is used instead of Total. Please be consistent.

R: The number is mentioned on page 8, line 30 under the section "participants"(p 7 line 31). The total is 535.

Tables were changed

The Results section is lacking a basic description of the study sample in terms of demographics and smoking experience (descriptive statistics).

R: Done

This reviewer questions the difference between "large extent" and "some extent". Is there a quantitative or meaningful difference between "large extent" and "some extent"? If so, please define.

Further, though the tables break these into two separate groups, the authors often combine them in the text and report them as one [eg, pg 10, lines 10-14, lines 16-21, lines 32-34,]. Perhaps the survey question and its representation in the tables should be dichotomized (some extent (large + some) vs not at all/not sure) rather than categorical.

R. Attitudes questions are usually constructed on a likert scale. It shows levels or strength of agreement or support with a particular statement and not a simple yes and no answer. "Large extent" denotes a stronger support " and "to some extent" a moderate support. Only in one table the authors report the three categories and felt that it reflects better the results and the differences in supporting the ban

Whichever order the authors chose to list their objectives, this should remain consistent when

discussing their findings in the Discussion section.

R: Done. We restructured both results and discussion according to the order of the stated objectives. The reason why the authors chose in the first to present attitudes first is because it includes all the sample of students and not only the smokers(smokers and non smokers)

Please clarify the implications of these study results. For example, the authors suggest smoking cessation services need to be better advertised on campus, yet none of the results in this study measured students' awareness of smoking cessation services. Further, the results of this study do not speak to educational campaigns regarding anti-smoking strategies, as the authors suggest on page 19. Lastly, it remains unclear whether these results suggest a national tobacco control policy will strengthen a campus policy. While this may be logically argued, the participants in this study were not asked whether not having a national smoking ban is a barrier to implementation of a campus smoking ban. Please discuss implications of this study's specific results.

R: The authors are discussing the results within the broader context. For example if AUB implements a successful ban., If young students go to restaurants or other public venues where smoking is allowed, it will not help them quit .. and therefore, AUB ban would be more successful when a national ban of smoking in public places is implemented.

Statements on Pg 18 lines 7-8 ("if not more") and 57 ("more effective") lead the reader to think that educational programming may be more important than smoking ban policies. This conclusion is unrelated to the results presented in this study, nor does this reviewer find evidence to support this. What does the research say about this?

R: we were referring to the authors of the study (reference 17)we quoted that suggested that sometimes policy are not the best way but education could be as or more effective

Further, on page 19, lines 29-33, the authors seem to contradict the statement made on page 18 by saying policy is the best/most effective approach. Please clarify.

R. The education campaign that we proposed was to reinforce the smoking ban at AUB. AUB ban is prohibiting smoking in all outdoors places except for designated areas. We were specific about the type of campaign we meant. Yes it is true the education is not directly linked to the results on attitudes and compliance but could be a strategy to boost positive attitudes and compliance. The statement saying that policy is the best approach is true and does not contradict what we said earlier that the impact of AUB policy could have been stronger if we had a national tobacco control law

Reviewer 3

- My major concern regards the # of objectives and their order of presentation which currently are not consistent. This reviewer questions whether there are perhaps 3-4 objectives rather than just two as outlined in the Introduction. Further, which ever order the authors chose to list their objectives in the Intro, the following content in the Methods, Results and Discussion sections should follow that same order. For example: compliance, attitudes, and barriers. - Per BMJ policy, remove all mentions of the name of the school where the study took place. See:

<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/guidelines.xhtml>.

R: This a case study and we need to mention the setting

- Remove first person language (we, our, etc), use past tense, keep words consistent (questionnaire vs survey, lifetime not ever smokers, current vs regular), provide statistical results when using the term significant/different.

R: Done

Introduction:

I enjoyed reading your background section as it set up your paper appropriately. However, I wonder if reordering this section will provide readers the answers to their questions more quickly.

R: The introduction was restructured as per the suggestion of the reviewer

Page 6, discusses smoking practices of Lebanese students. Please define and explain the difference between argileh and narghile; are these the same? Using just one term may be more consistent and less confusing.

R: Argileh and narghileh are the same. We replaced all arghileh with narghileh

Page 6, line 34: Most literature on smoking prevalence differentiates between current and lifetime smoking. Is there a difference between "regular" and "current"? If so, please clarify.

R: Regular and current are the same. We replaced all current with regular.

Methods:

-Move statements about date of data collection and IRB approval from the Data Collection subsection to right under the Methods heading. This should be listed before the subsection of Participants. "This study took place between [Months] 2008- June 2009. IRB approval was obtained from AUB for all research procedures..."

R: This part was restructured as per the suggestions of the reviewer

- Pg 8, Line 46, sentence "Data collection was completed in June 2009" should be added to the very beginning of the Methods section, as noted above.

R: This part was restructured as per the suggestions of the reviewer

-pg 7, line 26: please note that INSTRUCTORS of "a random sample of classes offered in the spring semester..." were asked to invite their students to complete the survey.

R: This part was restructured as per the suggestions of the reviewer

-pg 8, line 48, sentence "None of the instructors contacted..." can be moved to pg 7, line 33 before the sentence "The selection of classes was based..."

R: This part was restructured as per the suggestions of the reviewer

- page 7, line 44: The sentence starting with "The highest percentage of surveyed students..." should be moved to the first sentence of the Results section.

R: This part was restructured as per the suggestions of the reviewer

- Decide if you will use the term questionnaire or survey, but be consistent and stick with just one of those terms.

R: The term survey was used to describe questionnaire and survey for consistency.

- You can combine the Questionnaire and Data collection sections into one "Questionnaire (or Survey) & Data Collection".

R: Done

- How was the survey administered? Online, or with paper and pencil?

R: Paper and pencil

- pg 8, line 39: Sentence starting with "Questionnaire construction and data collection were done as..." should be moved to the first sentence of the Questionnaire & Data Collection section.

R: Done

-pg 8- line 13: "Various statements" should read "Survey questions"

R: Done

-pg 8, line 20: most literature on smoking prevalence differentiates between current and lifetime smoking. Therefore, "ever" should read "lifetime"

R: Done

- Pg 9, line 11: "Answers to attitudes..." sentence is unclear. "To a larger extent, to some extent, and not at all/not sure" are not answers to "the ban". Please specify what the questions were so readers understand what the measures were.

Can the authors comment on why "not at all" and "not sure" were grouped together? These seem like different answers to me.

R. What we meant is that the response categories were regrouped into three groups. We put not sure and not at all together for two reasons: the small number of observations in most attitudes items and both denote a negative attitudes towards the ban

The sentence was changed to "The response categories of the attitudes questions towards the ban were also classified into 3 groups;"

Results:

- pg 9 line 40: keep wording in past tense, "are" should be "were"

R: Done

- pg 9, line 44: university should not be capitalized. Correct this throughout the manuscript -pg 11, line 47: Do you mean "more similar" rather than "closer"? Closer denotes physical proximity.

R: Done. "Closer" was replaced with "more similar".

-pg 12 line 4-5: "a little bit less" should read "almost"

R: Done

- Capitalize Table or Figure when referring to these throughout the manuscript

R: Done

Discussion section

- pg 16, line 27: should read "All OF the above..."

R: Done

-pg17 line 11: Should read: "There are multiple reasons for this..."

R: Done.

-pg 17 line 32: Other reasons for what?

R. This statements follows the statement: "There are multiple reasons for this: First, smokers ..." it explains why the ban did not impact students smoking behavior. Some editing was done on the paragraph to remove confusion

-I wonder if the discussion of the 2012 smoking ban in Lebanon could be summarized in fewer sentences. While this may important to note, signifying advances the country has made in recent years, I am unsure where it belongs in this manuscript.

R: Done

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

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| REVIEWER | Libby Brockman Clinical Researcher Seattle Children's Research Institute United States |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 14-Feb-2013 |

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| THE STUDY | <p>I appreciate the layout of aims and reorganization of objectives in this new draft. It is much cleaner and clearer. I think it would be even easier for readers to process this information if the objectives were always listed in the same order in the Intro, Methods, Results and Discussion sections. Please consider.</p> <p>Further, I wonder if perhaps there are really 5 objectives: 1) compliance with the university ban, 2) students attitudes towards the ban, 3) the ban's impact on smoking behavior among students, 4) students attitudes toward tobacco control/a general ban on smoking (off campus), and 5) perceived barriers to implementation of a campus ban at the university.</p> <p>ABSTRACT & INTRO SECTIONS: The abstract lacks results of the 4th objective (students' perceptions/opinions of a general, off campus ban).</p> <p>Thanks for adding study dates and IRB approval information to the Methods section.</p> <p>Unclear whether your response rate was 100% or 98%. Page 7, line 40 states that 535 students were in the selected classes. Then it is mentioned that fewer than 2% declined to participate, which makes the reader assume at least SOME did not participate...yet on pg 7, line 52, the authors still report that 535 students were included in the final sample. Please clarify whether any declined to participate and what the response rate was.</p> <p>Even a 98% response rate is unbelievably high. Please include if these students were paid or given credit for their participation.</p> <p>METHODS SECTION: Thanks for adding information regarding survey format (paper/pencil).</p> <p>What is the difference between "current" (pg 9 line 25) and "regular" (pg 5 line 13) smokers? Please be consistent throughout the manuscript.</p> <p>Double check the smoking literature- I believe the term "past 30 days" is the term more commonly used than "past one month" when discussing tobacco use prevalence (pg 9, lines 53-54).</p> |
| RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS | <p>RESULTS SECTION: Tables are hard to interpret. Are the columns counts (n) or percentages? Even though in some of the tables you say n=#, it is unclear if that column has counts in it. Please put the total sample size elsewhere (perhaps in the footnote of a table) and</p> |

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| | <p>just include n and % as column headings.</p> <p>In Table 1, the Lebanese and 'Engineering & Architecture' columns are the only 2 columns that have % signs in them. Please be consistent. Table 1 also says n-416 in the Non Smokers column but I think it should be n=416 instead.</p> <p>Pg 11, line 35: Its best practice to use “sex” or “gender” but not both (unless writing gender identity manuscripts). Please be consistent.</p> <p>I wonder why there was a large difference between males (31.4%) and females (5%) regarding self reported increases in smoking after the ban (pg 11, lines 42-43). This was contrary to your expectations, but I don't find a discussion or analysis of these findings in the discussion section. Please include why you think that might be.</p> <p>Please organize the Discussion section to reflect the objectives in the same order as described previously. I felt the Discussion section was a bit chaotic and could benefit from discussing the 4-5 objectives in the same order as they were initially presented in the abstract/intro.</p> |
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VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

I appreciate the layout of aims and reorganization of objectives in this new draft. It is much cleaner and clearer. I think it would be even easier for readers to process this information if the objectives were always listed in the same order in the Intro, Methods, Results and Discussion sections. Please consider.

Further, I wonder if perhaps there are really 5 objectives: 1) compliance with the university ban, 2) students attitudes towards the ban, 3) the ban's impact on smoking behavior among students, 4) students attitudes toward tobacco control/a general ban on smoking (off campus), and 5) perceived barriers to implementation of a campus ban at the university.

Text amended. WE stated 4 objectives: we put 3 and 4 together

“The specific objectives of the study were to: 1) assess compliance with the ban; 2) assess changes in smoking behaviour after the ban; 3) examine student attitude and opinion towards the campus wide smoking ban and tobacco control measures in general; and 4) assess perceptions of barriers to implementation of the ban. “

ABSTRACT & INTRO SECTIONS:

The abstract lacks results of the 4th objective (students' perceptions/opstaterpinions of a general, off campus ban).

This is mentioned in the abstract lines 12-18.

Thanks for adding study dates and IRB approval information to the Methods section.

Unclear whether your response rate was 100% or 98%. Page 7, line 40 states that 535 students were in the selected classes. Then it is mentioned that fewer than 2% declined to participate, which makes the reader assume at least SOME did not participate...yet on pg 7, line 52, the authors still report that 535 students were included in the final sample. Please clarify whether any declined to participate and what the response rate was.

535 students is the final sample size. We approached 545 (535 in addition to the 2% who refused to participate). Methods were edited to increase clarity.

Even a 98% response rate is unbelievably high. Please include if these students were paid or given credit for their participation.

Students were not paid nor given credit for their participation. This high response rate was expected given the setup of the data collection (classroom). In fact, other studies done at the American University of Beirut in the same context yielded similar high response rates.

METHODS SECTION:

Thanks for adding information regarding survey format (paper/pencil).

What is the difference between “current” (pg 9 line 25) and “regular” (pg 5 line 13) smokers? Please be consistent throughout the manuscript.

Page 9 line 25 “regular” means people who smoke currently on a regular basis. It is like we categorized current smokers into “regular” and “occasional” smokers. And in the study that we referred to in the introduction they reported the prevalence of regular smokers.

Double check the smoking literature- I believe the term “past 30 days” is the term more commonly used than “past one month” when discussing tobacco use prevalence (pg 9, lines 53-54).

That’s correct. This has been changed to “past 30 days”.

RESULTS SECTION: Tables are hard to interpret. Are the columns counts (n) or percentages? Even though in some of the tables you say n=#, it is unclear if that column has counts in it. Please put the total sample size elsewhere (perhaps in the footnote of a table) and just include n and % as column headings.

Done

In Table 1, the Lebanese and 'Engineering & Architecture' columns are the only 2 columns that have % signs in them. Please be consistent. Table 1 also says n=416 in the Non Smokers column but I think it should be n=416 instead.

This has been fixed

Pg 11, line 35: Its best practice to use “sex” or “gender” but not both (unless writing gender identity manuscripts). Please be consistent.

Gender was used throughout the paper

I wonder why there was a large difference between males (31.4%) and females (5%) regarding self reported increases in smoking after the ban (pg 11, lines 42-43). This was contrary to your expectations, but I don’t find a discussion or analysis of these findings in the discussion section. Please include why you think that might be.

I don’t have an explanation for the difference between males and females. However, the increase in general might be due to students wanting to deceive researchers and show them that the smoking ban is not effective. In fact an article states that:” attempting to use smoking bans to influence social norms may not represent wise policy. Sweeping smoking bans may actually increase the incidence of smoking. A large percentage of smokers acquire the habit at a young age, and they frequently do so because smoking is “cool.” Smoking is cool, of course, because it is rebellious. The harder anti-smoking forces work to coerce people into quitting smoking, and the more they engage the government and other establishment institutions in their efforts, the more rebellious — and thus the “cooler” — smoking becomes”. (Lambert, regulation winter 2006-2007).

We added a discussion on the reasons for increase in smoking in the discussion section.

Please organize the Discussion section to reflect the objectives in the same order as described

previously. I felt the Discussion section was a bit chaotic and could benefit from discussing the 4-5 objectives in the same order as they were initially presented in the abstract/intro.
DONE . Now discussed is organized in the same order s the stated objectives