

Underage vaping during exam season a fight parents must undertake, says VPasa

With ever-growing numbers of South African learners taking up vaping, stronger interventions are required to curb this scourge. The answer to this lies in limiting their access to vaping products - a role that both industry stakeholders and parents alike must be responsible for, says the Vapour Products Association of South Africa (Vpasa).



Source: [Unsplash](#)

Most of us can attest to the stress associated with exams. Whether it's burning the midnight oil or anxiously reviewing notes before stepping into the exam room, the exam period is undeniably demanding, particularly for the youth.

In this high-pressure world of academia, learners often find themselves seeking refuge from the relentless stress that exams bring. While some may find solace in exercising or listening to music, an alarming number of learners are reportedly turning to vaping for stress relief.

While vaping may seem like a quick escape from the overwhelming demands of the classroom, it's crucial to recognise the addictive nature of nicotine vaping and the need for stricter age restrictions.

According to Asanda Gcoyi, CEO of the Vapour Products Association of South Africa (Vpasa), a non-governmental organisation representing manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers of smoke-free vapour products in South Africa, the increase in underage vaping raises concerns about the accessibility of vaping products for South Africa's youth.

“According to a recent study conducted by the University of Cape Town Lung Institute on almost 7,000 learners across 12 schools in three provinces, 26.5% of Grade 12 learners, 17.4% of Grade 11 learners, 13% of Grade 10 learners, and 10.8% of Grade nine learners engage in vaping.”

While most underage users see vaping as a stress-coping method, the growing problem lies in the youth's easy access to vaping products. This is evident as many confirm purchasing vaping products themselves, with parents often assisting them. While VPasa members adhere to a strict Code of Conduct which prohibits the sale of products to minors, parallel channels appear less constrained by the need to protect young people from nicotine addiction.

While welcoming some elements of the draft Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Control Bill, VPasa is apprehensive about the unintended consequences of the Bill, which may lead to the mushrooming of informal channels that fall outside the regulatory net. This will set back all efforts to restrict youth access to vaping products.

VPasa continues to call upon all stakeholders to play their part in restricting youth access to vaping products. This includes vaping shops, government, the media, parents, schools and law enforcement.

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