

Local

Concern over vaping's growing popularity among teens in Kuwait

E-cigarettes sold illegally despite health ministry ban

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Vaping among teens has skyrocketed and become widespread in society. There is a concern in Kuwait over the growing numbers of vapers, especially teenagers. Although e-cigarettes are banned by the ministry of health, they are still illegally sold on social media and in stores.

Studies have shown that the use of e-cigarettes is unsafe for teens because it contains nicotine, which is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development. Its effects continue into the early to mid-20s. Kuwait Times spoke with psychologists, teenagers, parents and experts to learn more about this issue to find the best way to resolve a problem that troubles many.

Sama Naeem, 13, told Kuwait Times that vaping was a stress reliever from all issues going on in her life. "Social media made it a cool trend to be followed. Most of my friends at school vape and offered me to try it," she said. When Kuwait Times asked her how teens can afford the cost of vaping and refills, she said: "All teens buy it from the supermarket. There is also a single-use (disposable) vape, which you can smoke and throw away. It costs only KD 1.5." Sama revealed the main reason behind vaping. "Attention is all I want from my parents, to care more about what I'm doing and prevent me from ruining my life," she said.

"To be cool"

Maya Kheder, 16, said that most of her friends vape to be cooler. "They imitate family or friends. Also, anxiety is mostly the reason, including social issues," she said. She mentioned smoking helps to integrate quickly in social groups - many students try to be more social by vaping and showing off their smoking skills.

As for Rayan Waleed, 15, vaping does not compare to smoking. For him, teenagers do much worse, and vaping is the last thing to worry about. "Vaping is just a modern way to smoke, and according to many, vapes are not like cigarettes, and damage is way less. People vape to quit smoking," he reasoned.

Ahmed Assaf, a parent of a teenager, said that the main reason teens smoke is curiosity, but many other reasons could be behind it. "When a boy grows up and reaches a critical age, he needs special attention from his family. During this period, he is restless and faces a lot of fluctuations in his life, which makes monitoring his behavior an important thing," he said.

"Likewise for a girl who goes through this stage; the mother has a great role in accompanying her, teaching her, and supervising her friends, so that she does not fall into a trap. Teenagers reject direct guidance and only accept indirect advice, so do not try to advise or direct them directly. You have to be their friend and give advice in hidden messages," Assaf pointed out.

Barehan Azam, a parent of a teen and psychologist,



told Kuwait Times: "Young people who vape may be more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future. Teenagers always feel rebellious and their rejection is not a real refusal, but an expression of their attempt to discover the world around them. I know their needs are different from their parents, because simply it is a different era, and to

Safe and confident

On how to deal with a vaping teenager, she said: "Parents must talk to a smoking teenager gently. Do not shout at them, control yourself and do not get angry. Maintain the tone of your voice, make your phrases clear and understandable, make them feel safe and confident, and make it clear that you want to help them get rid of their bad habits and mistakes. Most importantly, be a good listener and don't underestimate their feelings, and appreciate them when they do something positive."

In an earlier statement, the Head of the Healthy Cities Office at Kuwait's Ministry of Health Dr Amal Al-Yahya said the annual cost of direct and indirect smoking in Kuwait is KD 419 million, adding the rate of smoking among male adolescents aged between 13-15 is 24 percent. Among girls of the same age, the rate is between 6 and 8 percent.

In Feb 2022, a study published by researchers at Ohio State University College of Medicine gave an insight into what happens to the cardiovascular system of adolescents when they vape. In a mice study, researchers found vaping had a significant and long-term cardiovascular effect on adolescent males, but not females.

Researchers said the findings heighten the concern about vaping, especially among youth. A survey by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found more than half of high school seniors have tried e-cigarettes and nearly a third reported current use of the products. Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, an addictive drug that can harm the developing adolescent brain.



Kids find stress relief in vaping

gain their trust, parents must understand their needs."

She noted adolescence is one of the most important stages of development, because it largely determines the formation of the personality of the individual and their future. The adolescent faces many biological, social and psychological changes that affect how they deal with their new world and the requirements of their transition from the stage of complete dependence on the family to achieving the required independence.



Efforts to hire women in govt leading posts

KUWAIT: There are intentions to create a quota for leading women in every government ministry and institute, a local daily reported Sunday quoting government sources, adding that there are attempts to implement a mechanism to appoint at least a woman leader in each state department through a government decision proposal.

"The step will hasten the woman empowering program in government posts and achieve the goals of the development plan by raising women's

positions to 35 percent of the state public leading posts," said the sources, adding that one of the solutions to enable women to reach leading posts and reach the said percentage is to set certain numbers of women in leading posts in each government body.

According to the sources, there are many vacant leading posts at the current time which may meet the sought-after percentage for women in leading posts, "especially that the rearrangement of appointment percentages and use of leaders will become smoother and more flexible, bearing in mind appointment of leading women based on competence and skill."

The sources said recommendations will be submitted soon, as the government is responding to efforts to support women's appointment in leading posts "as evident in the appointment of four women in the Municipal Council for the first time."



Used tires found in Jleeb basement

KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Ministry inspectors raided the basement of a residential building in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, which was used for storing large quantity of used tires and expired new ones. A store had rented the basement to keep the tires with the purpose of sale, the ministry said in a statement. The raid took place following investigations and identification of the supplier. Legal action is under way.



Legalese

Paying for tickets during the pandemic



By Fajer Ahmed

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As most people are aware, the pandemic changed many different aspects of our lives, including the working environments we are used to. Although it has been two years, we are still dealing with and understanding some aspects. The Kuwaiti government did issue ministerial decrees to discuss important labor issues, such as stating that an employer cannot force his employees to take their annual leave during a lockdown and that an employee's salary may not be cut. With that said, we are still anticipating court decisions regarding these matters, which usually take years to be issued, but will help us understand the laws and consequences of the pandemic.

One question that has been left unanswered is whether foreign employees are entitled to airfare - an airline ticket once a year to go back home - during a pandemic.

Question: My contract says I am entitled to airfare equivalent of KD 200 every year to go back to my home country. But during the pandemic, since I could not fly, I was not able to get a ticket, and my workplace did not provide me with the money for the ticket. I have been receiving it for the past 20 years. Am I legally entitled to it?

Fajer: This is a tough question to answer, and it might be considered a grey area. My opinion though is if the contract strictly and clearly states that you are entitled to not an airline ticket but a certain amount for an airline ticket, and you have been receiving the amounts consistently throughout the 20 years, then you should be able to receive it, as under law, any bonuses or yearly entitlements become part of your salary.

With that said, the pandemic did hit companies hard, and the law did state that as an employee, you can let go of some of your rights for the benefit of the company, with your consent of course. If you feel this way, and you think the company is struggling financially, then maybe you can reach an agreement with the company to be paid later or in installments for these tickets.

For readers whose contracts did not specifically state an amount equivalent for a ticket and just a ticket, this will depend on the wording and the agreement, and also as stated above, the consistency and the way that the ticket has been given previously. But there could be a chance that you are not entitled to a ticket in the years that flying was not possible.

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