

Peer Review

Review of: "Are Tobacco Companies in Nigeria Complying With Health Warning Label Regulations on Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products?"

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Strengths

Relevance to Public Health Policy

The article addresses a pressing public health issue—tobacco product labeling—and evaluates compliance with both national legislation and WHO FCTC guidelines. This is a critical topic in global tobacco control, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) like Nigeria.

Broad Scope of Product Assessment

By including both cigarette packs and other tobacco products such as cigars, snuff, and loose tobacco, the study goes beyond the traditional cigarette-centered approach and highlights important regulatory gaps in non-cigarette products.

Methodological Clarity and Sampling Design

The use of a multistage random sampling technique across local government areas (LGAs) with a high population coverage strengthens the representativeness of the data. The choice to collect discarded packs from multiple points-of-sale also ensures real-world relevance.

Detailed Quantitative Reporting

The authors clearly report the number of brands, types of products, and compliance percentages, providing transparency and a strong empirical foundation for the conclusions drawn.

Identification of Regulatory Loopholes

The study effectively exposes the lack of enforcement and exploitation of regulatory weaknesses by

companies—especially exporters without local presence—providing clear guidance for policy reform.

Areas for Improvement

Ambiguity in Research Objectives

The background section lacks a clear and concise research question or hypothesis. The aim of the study should be explicitly stated to help readers understand the study's scope and direction from the outset.

Insufficient Detail on Compliance Indicators

The article refers to "9 indicators" of compliance but fails to enumerate or describe them. Providing a list or table explaining each indicator would strengthen the methodological transparency and reproducibility of the study.

Lack of Statistical Testing or Error Margins

While percentages are presented, the absence of confidence intervals or statistical tests limits the analytical depth. Even basic inferential statistics would help evaluate the robustness of the findings.

Limited Explanation of Key Concepts

Terms like "image manipulation" and "cessation assistance" are used without definition or examples. Clarifying how these elements were assessed would enhance reader comprehension and methodological rigor.

Minimal Comparative Discussion

The discussion would benefit from comparing the findings to previous studies from Nigeria or similar LMICs. Without this context, it is difficult to assess whether the compliance rates found are unusually high, low, or consistent with global trends.

No Temporal or Longitudinal Analysis

The study provides a snapshot of compliance within a short time frame. Including comparisons with previous years—or recommending future longitudinal follow-up—would help track the evolution of compliance over time.

Superficial Treatment of Policy Implications

While the conclusion recommends stronger enforcement, it stops short of proposing concrete policy actions, such as increasing penalty severity, introducing track-and-trace systems, or banning imports from non-compliant exporters.

Absence of Stakeholder Perspectives

Incorporating perspectives from regulators, vendors, or tobacco control advocates could add valuable qualitative insights into the causes and consequences of low compliance.

Minor Language and Stylistic Refinements

The manuscript contains a few awkward phrasings and redundancies. For example, the phrase “which are not adequate and do not effectively capture all FCTC requirements” could be simplified to “which inadequately reflect FCTC requirements.”

Title and Abstract Needed

The manuscript currently lacks a formal title and abstract. These are essential for academic publication and for helping readers quickly understand the purpose and findings of the study.

Overall Assessment

This article offers important evidence on the poor compliance with pictorial health warning label regulations in Nigeria, shedding light on weaknesses in both domestic enforcement and international accountability. Its methodological clarity and relevance to policy debates are key strengths. However, improvements in the articulation of objectives, detailed methodological descriptions, statistical depth, and comparative discussion would enhance its scientific rigor and impact. The findings strongly support calls for Nigeria to expand its regulatory framework and more strictly monitor all forms of tobacco marketing, particularly among foreign exporters.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.