

Review of: "Purchasing and sourcing of e-cigarettes among youth in Scotland and England following Scotland's implementation of an e-cigarette retail register and prohibition of e-cigarette sales to under-18s"

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Potential competing interests: The author(s) declared that no potential competing interests exist.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. Overall, this manuscript is an important contribution to the tobacco control literature. I have a few comments for each manuscript section listed below.

Abstract:

1. In Results, the last sentence states, "Among past-30-day vapers, social sources were most common." Please clarify what you mean by social sources (e.g., older peers?), and clarify what you are referring to when you say "most common" (most common for purchasing e-cigs?).

Introduction:

1. The first sentence of the first paragraph should include a reference to indicate where this information on Scotland's regulations is coming from and can be accessed.
2. The second sentence is awkward. Suggest streamlining it as follows: "By contrast, England has prohibited the sale of e-cigarette products to under-18s since 2015 (Department of Health, 2015), but did not require retailers to register the sale of e-cigarette products at the time of this study."
3. The final sentence of the first paragraph is also a bit awkward.
4. The second paragraph could stand elaboration. For example, what are the specific reductions in prevalence?
5. The following sentence in the second paragraph should be broken up into two sentences (one on difficulty accessing; one on obtaining from social sources). Also, please elaborate on what you mean by social sources (e.g., older peers, family members?). Finally, please provide some specific stats to exemplify the increase in sourcing e-cigs from social sources (e.g., percentage increase pre- and post-regulations).

Methods:

1. Sample: Please specify what you mean by "Methods (for what?) are described online".
2. Pre-registration: Please tell us what outcomes were not modelled.
3. Pre-registration: This section appears to drop off at the second sentence.
4. Table 1 only shows how purchasing variables were assessed. Please indicate how sale refusal and sourcing were assessed.
5. Outcomes: Please clarify what you mean by "social source" (this would likely be clarified by answering the previous question).

6. I am getting confused about the difference between purchasing and sourcing. Can you clarify what the difference is in this study and how they are related?
7. Table 2: Your numbers for Sex appear to be wrong (there are more females than males representation, which contradicts the statement that the sample includes mostly males). Please clarify these numbers.

Discussion:

1. The first paragraph nicely summarizes the most significant findings, but it leaves me hanging in terms of what it all means. It begs the question of why these regulations are not effective. What do the authors think is going on? Non-compliance? Is there anything else going on in these countries that is lending to these numbers (e.g., retail staff not educated; not monitored)? What does this mean for implementation of regulations (current and future)?
2. The second paragraph also could stand for elaboration on the results (if not here, then in an implications section perhaps). Why are underage youth purchasing more than ever from vape shops despite regulations? Are youth aware of the regulations? How are they being shared with youth in Scotland and England? What about youth-related environments? For example, are schools and youth cultures that entail vaping resulting in ineffective implementation and enforcement? Is there a lack of enforcement in other youth-related environments, which lend to and compound lack of enforcement in shops? You don't have to answer these specific questions but I am personally intrigued by your results.
3. In the third paragraph, the second sentence is awkward. For example, "products from some retailers few minors".
4. What does the WHO licensing system entail? I think some elaboration would be helpful here.
5. The fourth paragraph would benefit from some elaboration on why sourcing socially is so common (e.g., vaping as a socially acceptable behavior; vaping as embedded in youth cultures).
6. The fifth paragraph (which is just a single sentence) should be connected to the previous paragraph (likely just a formatting issue).