

Review of: "Discourse on the Sugar-Sweetened Beverages Tax in Indonesia: The Multistakeholder and Consumers' Perspectives"

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The paper examines the applicability of a sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) tax in Indonesia, focusing on the link between SSB consumption and obesity. While the topic is significant there are several notable shortcomings in the paper that limit its effectiveness in informing the reader.

Firstly, the paper fails to provide information on the prevalence of obesity in Indonesia. Understanding the current obesity rates and trends is crucial for contextualizing the need for interventions such as an SSB tax. To enhance the reader's understanding, it would be beneficial for the authors to include statistics on obesity prevalence and the per capita SSB consumption in liters over time. This information would provide a comprehensive picture of the problem at hand and strengthen the argument for potential policy measures. Additionally, the paper overlooks the broader issues related to poor and unhealthy diet in Indonesia, including high sugar and salt content of unhealthy food as well as other factors contributing to obesity such as lack of physical activity.

The authors argue that Indonesia is no different from other countries and can adopt similar policies. However, it is important to consider alternative policy options as well, as highlighted by some participants in the focus group discussions. Merely implementing a tax policy without supporting demand reduction measures may fall short of achieving its intended objectives.

Moreover, the paper overlooks the fact that the most popular SSBs in Indonesia are ready-to-drink tea and coffee, energy drinks (which are expensive- presumably out of reach by many consumers), and few others. Considering that tea and coffee are often served with sugar on the side in many countries, it is important to investigate whether this is the case in Indonesia as well. If so, as the tax-induced price for ready drinks increases, consumers may switch to regular - unsweetened beverages and add sugar manually, albeit less conveniently, to reduce the cost. This potential behavior should be taken into account when evaluating the impact of an SSB tax.

I would like to suggest that authors should mention some examples of excise applications that countries impose on SSBs. For example, governments tax the sugar content of SSBs to incentivize manufacturers to reduce added sugar to mitigate tax liability. This aspect should have been highlighted to provide a comprehensive understanding of different tax approaches and their potential implications for public health.

Lastly, the paper fails to address critical issues surrounding the environmental impact of SSBs, particularly the significant cost posed by plastic containers to the environment. Considering the growing concerns about plastic waste, this aspect should be acknowledged and discussed in relation to the proposed policy measures.

In conclusion, the authors need to improve their understanding of the Indonesian context and consider the relevant factors before suggesting policy recommendations. The paper would benefit from providing information on obesity prevalence, per capita SSB consumption, and trends in Indonesia. Additionally, exploring alternative data sources and conducting in-depth analyses would enhance the paper's credibility. Addressing the specific challenges associated with popular SSBs, considering different tax approaches, and discussing the environmental impact of SSB packaging would further enrich the analysis.