

# Exposure to Tobacco Promotional Activities in South Western Nigeria-A Survey and Policy Implications

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**Abstract:** ***Background:** Restrictions on direct tobacco advertisements resulted in the use of subtle promotional methods by tobacco industries. Few studies have evaluated the pattern of exposure to promotional activities in Nigeria despite recent calls for increased tobacco control. This study aimed to examine exposure to tobacco related information and promotional activities in a sample of Nigerian undergraduates with a view to highlighting policy implications. **Method:** This is a cross sectional survey of a sample of Nigerian undergraduates. A subset of key questions from the global adult tobacco survey instrument was administered to obtain relevant information on exposure to tobacco smoking and smoking status. Questions adapted from the Smoking Knowledge Attitude and practice instrument (S-KAP) were used to assess level of respondents' knowledge. **Results:** Almost all the participants (99%) had been exposed to tobacco promotional efforts in the past 30 days. These included use of clothing or other items with a cigarette brand or logo (30.4%), movies (27.6%), musical videos (23.9%), stores advertising cigarette use (22.8%), free gifts or discounts on buying cigarettes (15.6%) and free cigarette samples (9.2%). Male students were more likely to have been exposed to tobacco related information on musical videos ( $P = 0.032$ ) and clothing items or brand merchandise ( $P = 0.003$ ). **Conclusion:** Despite the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control's (FCTC) recommendations, the media and branded items remain significant tools for tobacco promotional activities in this sample of Nigerian undergraduates with potential implications. This suggests that there may be a need for a review of existing policies and legal framework for tobacco related activities.*

**Keywords:** Tobacco, Promotion activities, Exposure

## 1. Introduction

Low and middle income countries would account for 70% of global tobacco related deaths by 2030 (1). The rising trend of tobacco use in developing countries calls for urgent and comprehensive action (2). The "epidemic shift" of tobacco use to low income countries has been partly attributed to increased promotional activities of multinational organizations in developing countries (3).

Following the ban on direct advertising in most countries, cigarette promotional efforts have been directed towards use of branded merchandise, free samples, television, radio and point of sale displays. Specific tobacco marketing messages or content on clothing and other items appears to have an impact on willingness of young individuals to initiate smoking irrespective of socioeconomic settings (4, 5). Subtle, indirect advertisements find their ways into newspapers, magazines and television programs e.g seeing an actor smoking were also reported to promote smoking behaviour in a sample of adolescents in developing countries (6). It has been suggested that the impact of indirect advertisements may be as strong as direct advertisements (7).

Point of sales and brand displays have been found to make adolescents susceptible to tobacco use. In one UK study, seeing tobacco on display during visits to shops was associated with three fold rise in susceptibility (8). In contrast, counter-marketing strategies e.g. anti-tobacco messages may encourage quitting and reduce the likelihood of initiating smoking (7).

In Nigeria, cigarette smoking is relatively lower than other western countries (9). However, previous studies reveal that the risk of smoking initiation and maintenance among young persons may increase if access to pro-tobacco related information is maintained (10), and awareness or perception of tobacco related harm is low (11).

Little information is available about exposure to tobacco, related information and knowledge of tobacco related harm in southwestern Nigeria, despite the presence of major multinational tobacco companies in this part of the country. Though Nigeria became a party to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004, the tobacco bill has not yet been signed into law (12). This study aimed to assess the extent of exposure to tobacco related information and promotional activities in a sample of undergraduates in southwestern Nigeria.

## 2. Methods

This is part of a larger study focused on interventions for tobacco related activities in a sample of Nigerian undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria. It is a cross-sectional survey of exposure smoking related information and promotional activities among undergraduates of the College of Health Sciences of southwestern Nigerian University prior to initiating a local anti-tobacco school prevention programme. Out of 203 students invited to participate in the survey, 181 (89.2%) from the departments of Anatomy, Nursing, Biochemistry and Physiology responded to the survey of local tobacco activities. A structured data collection tool was used to obtain sociodemographic data. A

subset of key questions from the global adult tobacco survey instrument was administered to obtain relevant information on exposure to tobacco smoking and smoking status (13). Questions adapted from the Smoking Knowledge Attitude and Practice instrument (S-KAP) were used to assess level of respondents' knowledge. Using a 5-point Likert scale ('strongly agree', 'agree', 'unsure', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'), the respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree with a list of statements on harmfulness of tobacco use. Responses were scored (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) (14). Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Teaching Hospital, Ogbomosho. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 16 (SPSS, Chicago IL, USA). Results were calculated as frequencies (%) and means. Group comparisons were done by Chi square test while t-test was used to assess relationship between exposure and S-KAP scores. Significance was calculated at  $p < 0.05$ .

### 3. Results

The mean age of the respondents was 21.6 (SD =7) years. Majority were females (69.1%), Christian (74.6%). Approximately, 3.65% were current smokers while 5.62% engaged in smokeless tobacco use. Almost all the participants (99%) had been exposed to tobacco promotional efforts in the past 30 days. Up to 55.4% had been exposed to tobacco messages on Television or radio. About 57.1% had observed health warnings on cigarette packs. The other forms of cigarette promotions in the past 30days reported included use of clothing or other items with a cigarette brand or logo (30.4%), movies (27.6%), musical videos (23.9%), stores advertising cigarette use (22.8%), free gifts or discounts on buying cigarettes (15.6%) and free cigarette samples (9.2%). Male students were more likely to have been exposed to tobacco related information on musical videos ( $P = 0.032$ ) and clothing items or brand merchandise ( $P = 0.003$ ). Female students reported higher scores on specific consequences of smoking. Participants exposed to anti-tobacco information in Newspapers and magazines had significantly higher mean scores of knowledge of smoking related harm ( $P=0.024$ ).

**Table 1:** Exposure to pro- and anti- tobacco activities

Variable	Overall n (%)	Male n (%)	Female n(%)	$\chi$	P-value
<b>Anti-Tobacco Information</b>					
Newspapers or magazines	63 (34.8)	24 (42.9)	39 (31.2)	2.316	0.128
Television or radio	85(47)	31(55.4)	54(43.2)	2.295	0.13
Health warning on cigarette packs	89 (49.2)	32 (57.1)	57 (45.6)	2.062	0.151
<b>Tobacco promotional activities</b>					
Advertisements in stores	36 (19.9)	13 (23.2)	23 (18.4)	0.563	0.453
Free samples	11 (6.1)	4 (7.1)	7 (5.6)	0.161	0.688
Free gifts/discount on buying cigarette	19 (10.5)	9 (16.1)	10 (8)	2.68	0.102
Musical videos	32 (17.7)	15 (26.8)	17 (13.6)	4.62	<b>0.032</b>
Movies	38 (21)	16 (28.6)	22 (17.6)	2.8	0.094
Clothing or other items with brands	37 (20.4)	19 (33.9)	18 (14.4)	9.06	<b>0.003</b>

**Table 2:** Participants' Knowledge of tobacco related harm

Variable	Male	Female	t	S.E	P-Value
The hazards of smoking have been clearly demonstrated	3.57(1.24)	3.61(1.24)	0.224	0.199	0.823
The hazards of second hand smoke have been clearly demonstrated	4.00(1.09)	4.22 (0.99)	1.36	0.165	0.175
Smoking increases the risk of Heart Attack	3.16(1.15)	3.57(1.08)	2.33	0.178	0.021
Smoking increases the risk of impotence	3.37(1.09)	3.89(1.02)	2.55	0.167	0.012
Smoking increases the risk of Diabetic ulcer	3.57(1.15)	3.85(0.97)	1.71	0.089	0.166
Smoking increases the risk of Bladder cancer	3.55(1.19)	3.87(1.00)	1.86	0.065	0.172

**Bold means  $p < 0.05$**

**Table 3:** Tobacco related messages and level of knowledge among participants

Variable	Mean	S.E	t	P-value
<b>Anti-Tobacco Activity</b>				
Newspapers or magazines	3.83(.788)	0.122	2.28	0.024
Television or radio	3.75(0.787)	0.112	1.65	0.101
Health warning on cigarette packs	3.72(0.882)	0.13	1.16	0.247
<b>Tobacco promotional activities</b>				
Advertisements in stores	3.77(0.96)	0.16	0.973	0.333
Free samples	3.28 (1.03)	0.39	1.74	0.083
Free gifts/discount on buying cigarette	3.67 (0.74)	0.13	0.160	0.873
Musical videos	3.77(0.82)	0.18	0.724	0.47
Movies	3.67(0.83)	0.13	0.415	0.679
Clothing or other items with brands	3.74(0.12)	0.120	0.554	0.580

**Bold means  $p < 0.05$**

#### 4. Discussion

Despite the FCTC's recommendation "to undertake a comprehensive ban or, in the case of a party that is not in a position to undertake a comprehensive ban due to its constitution or constitutional principles, restrict tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship on radio, television, print media and, as appropriate, other media, such as the internet, within a period of five years" the media and branded items remain significant tools for tobacco promotional activities in this Southwestern Nigerian University (15).

A high rate of exposure to cigarette advertisements via television and radio was found in this study. This is consistent with the findings of another local study indicating that the media remains major forms of indirect tobacco advertisements (10). In a review of substance use portrayal in Nigeria videos, up to 18.9% depicted tobacco use (16). It was reported to be as the most important source of tobacco related information in another study (17). The significant level of exposure to movies and musical videos portraying tobacco may act as triggers or reinforcement for smoking among the viewing audience (18). This may explain the association between media exposure to tobacco and smoking in previous studies (6, 10). The media may influence an individual's attitude towards smoking (19, 20).

#### 5. Limitations

This study had its limitations. These include the relatively small sample size and convenient sampling technique which makes generalizability difficult. Nevertheless, it provides relevant information on the level of exposure to pro- and anti-tobacco related activities in a part of the country. In addition to other evidence-based tobacco control measures, there may be a need to regulate tobacco promotional activities in videos. This could include strengthening legal provisions limiting tobacco promotional activities including portrayal in movies, musical videos and distribution of branded merchandise. For instance, extant tobacco laws state that "no person shall advertise tobacco products to the general public in a bid to encourage tobacco smoking unless the advertisement contains a warning that tobacco smoking is dangerous to health". This may easily be exploited by the tobacco industries. Therefore, it may be necessary to adopt the FCTC's recommendations (15). While similar approaches may work in different settings, it may be better to build on existing mechanisms and contextualize tobacco prevention programmes in resource constrained settings (21).

#### 6. Conclusion

Despite the FCTC's recommendations, the media and branded items remain significant tools for tobacco promotional activities in this sample of Nigerian undergraduates with potential implications. This suggests that there may be a need for a review of existing policies and legal framework for tobacco related activities.

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