

Social and Economic Consequences of Smoking and Poor Implementation of Public Smoking and Prohibition Laws: A Study of Selected Motor Parks in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the barriers to implementing public smoking and prohibition laws, drawing on Neutralisation and Rational Choice Theories. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with 40 transit drivers who were randomly selected. Research indicates that low public awareness, ineffective law enforcement, entrenched cultural norms, and corruption are major hurdles to the successful enforcement of these laws. The study also emphasizes the detrimental health, social and economic effects associated with inadequate smoking regulations. Findings suggest that reinforced policy enforcement, public education initiatives, and other measures are crucial to successful law enforcement and have a substantial impact on compliance, leading to a healthier, smoke-free environment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Tobacco, Public Smoking, Smoking Prohibition, Tobacco Control, Regulatory Compliance.

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1. Introduction

Implementing comprehensive smoke-free laws and prohibiting tobacco sale are essential public health measures that can result in substantial reductions in tobacco-related health consequences and mortality. The interventions are meant to protect people who are non-smokers from passive smoke exposure, assist smokers in preventing initiation of tobacco use, particularly among young people and those who are most vulnerable. However, despite these measures, tobacco pandemic still remains a pressing global problem, causing more than 8 million fatalities annually of which 6 million are among tobacco users and 1 million among non-smokers who have been exposed to passive smoking. Unfortunately, this tobacco epidemic has become far more severe in low and medium-income countries, where 80% of global smokers live and where tobacco control policies are largely weak (WHO, 2021, Dai, 2022, Adekola, et al. 2023, Gilmore et al, 2025).

Efforts for global prohibition have been hindered by inconsistent enforcement and surveillance, most notably in low and middle-income nations where finance, politics, and societal norms significantly influence the outcomes (Mondal et al, 2021, Adekola et al, 2023, Sakhuja, et al, 2024). Within sub-Saharan Africa, numerous nations remain without comprehensive smoke-free laws, and accordingly, smoking prevalence is highly disparate, from 1.8% in Zambia up to 25.8% in Sierra Leone (Brathwaite et al, 2015, Singh et al, 2020, Singh, 2023). In Nigeria, the National Tobacco Control Act 2015 was a landmark legislation for Nigeria's anti-tobacco initiative; however, enactment into law has been delayed and difficult due to numerous reasons including policy loopholes that allows for specially demarcated smoking spaces and accessibility of tobacco industry to meddle with regulatory control (Egbe et al., 2019, Udokanma et al, 2021, Cunningham, 2022, Akin-Onitolo, & Hawkins, 2022). In addition, enforcement and implementation of such legislation have been inconsistent, particularly subnationally (Egbe et al, 2022, Adekola et al, 2023)

These loopholes not only undermine the effectiveness of the law but leave room for smoking in the public domain, frustrating public health interventions. In spite of the presence of legislations, smoking in public places is still common in most Nigerian cities. This calls for a question of what may be the barriers to effective enforcement and compliance with tobacco control legislations. Consequently, lax enforcement by regulatory agencies, ignorance among the general public, the social perception of smoking, political will and interference by the tobacco industry further complicate the effective enforcement of such legislations (Egbe et al, 2022, Alli, & Dada, 2024. Oboma & Ben 2024, Ekpenyong et al, 2024).

Understanding these specific challenges will create a microcosm for exploring general challenges in Nigeria's tobacco control.

This study's concentration is on Ibadan, in Oyo State, a leading urban center in South-West Nigeria, to investigate the essential drivers that shape the enforcement of public smoking and prohibition law. Ibadan city boasts of a complex social and economic environment whose urbanization, traditional establishments, and disorganized market arrangements influences smoking attitudes. This study focuses specifically on transit drivers' attitude and approach toward prohibition of smoking, given that drivers are highly prone to tobacco use. This study seeks to contribute to larger discussion surrounding the public health implication of tobacco use and inadequate smoking policy implementation which invariably result in ineffective health programs. This research's implication will resonate well with policymakers, public health professionals, and stakeholders in tobacco control programs across Nigeria. The study results will provide insights into drivers and inhibitors for implementing smoking and prohibition laws. It will be significant to policymakers, public health professionals, and parties engaged in tobacco control initiatives in Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework

Two major theories have been analyzed, which are neutralization theory and rational choice theory. Neutralization theory explains the motives of those who opt to disobey the National Tobacco Control Law, which prohibits smoking in publicly available spaces in Nigeria, while rational choice theory explains the rationale for the choice of some people to use tobacco despite its corresponding socio-economic and health consequences. The Neutralization Theory was propounded by Gresham Sykes and David Matza, in 1957. This paradigm explains how deviants who commit forbidden behavior justify their acts using certain mechanisms that permit them momentarily to disengage from following conventions, hence, enabling them to exercise a certain amount of liberty in committing forbidden acts.

A central assumption of the theory states that unlike the common perception that offenders capitalize on subcultural values in contrast to values professed and practiced in regular society, these offenders are connected to societal norms and laws. The theory asserts that although lawbreakers who break the law are deeply committed to societal norms and laws, they succeed in dissociating themselves from such norms using explanations called neutralization mechanisms. These explanations are deviant mechanisms that people temporarily utilize in order to justify and absolve themselves from norm-violating activities that would otherwise deviate from conventional normic prescriptions of society. Therefore,

the deviants succeed in evading feelings of guilt and develop an impaired image about themselves from these explanations

To strengthen the neutralization theory, an integration of Rational Choice Theory has been made. This theory advocates for an actor-based approach, which seeks to describe social processes in terms of rational choices acted upon by actors whose own interest is their driving factor. The core assumption of this theory is that emergent social conduct results from choices made by single agents who are partaking in personal choice processes. Under the conditions of rational choice theory, people need to anticipate possible consequences arising from different courses of action and consider which available option will lead them to the best overall outcome for themselves. Rational agents choose an option expected to bring them maximum satisfaction.

The theory assumes that rational actors analyze pertinent information, consider the chance for possible results, and weigh pros versus cons when making choices, then behave in a way that represents their calculated best choice. This theoretical premise holds that people first look at expected good and bad results when making choices and finally choose an approach that looks best for them under their given situation. Therefore, an individual's decision to use tobacco could be caused by an intricate interplay between various factors. This means that personal traits, together with environmental factors, guidance from parents, biological dispositions, behavioral habits, psychological elements, cultural environments, and social contexts, are all linked with tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke.

3. Research Methodology and Settings

The Study Site and Population: The study employs a qualitative approach in assessing the determinants shaping effective implementation of public smoking and prohibition law. The research focuses exclusively on Ibadan, Oyo State; located within the south-west part of Nigeria. Ibadan city mainly consists of people from the Yoruba ethnic group. Ibadan city ranks Nigeria's third-largest metropolis after Lagos city and Kano, with a projected population of about 3,875,000, officially documented in 2023. The participants for this inquiry were transit drivers from different motor parks across Ibadan city. The participants were selected based on criteria such as serving mainly as transit vehicle drivers with a verified park and being a part of the road drivers' association. Within this inquiry, these transit drivers, are referred to as the major unit of analysis.

Data Collection Method: The data collection was done through a semi-structured interview schedule, a requirement for gaining a holistic grasp concerning the

purposes of this inquiry. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity, while informed consent was gotten from them before allowing them to participate in the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted among 40 randomly selected drivers from the transportation parks in Ibadan. These individuals were chosen to participate in the interview sessions that produced the study's data as key informants. Four Motor Parks were chosen with ten (10) each from the Ojoo, Apata Ganga, Orita Challenge and Dugbe all in Ibadan, Nigeria. Only Men were represented as there are no female transit drivers in these locations. The interviewees were adequately briefed about the purpose of the research and they consented to being interviewed. Some of the data was presented as literary pictures to set the conclusions in context, while other data was provided as a sociological overview

4. Findings

Awareness, Knowledge and Effectiveness of Public Smoking and Prohibition Law

A variety of data has been collected to bolster this study. To explore the factors affecting the enforcement of prohibition laws and public smoking regulations, the participants' awareness and knowledge towards the laws were sought. One participant showed an absolute lack of awareness regarding the public smoking and prohibition law and stated he is not aware such a law exists and had not seen it being implemented (SSI/Male/Driver/Apata Ganga Motor Park, Nigeria/February 2025). It was further noted that the law remains largely unknown to drivers and the wider community; even though it has possibly been in effect for some periods, it seems to enjoy little support and has no sense of validity (SSI/Male/Driver/Dugbe Motor Park, Nigeria/February 2025). This indicates a considerable amount of unawareness towards the regulation of public smoking and the application of the prohibition measures, and it therefore seems likely that some groups of the population do not possess sufficient information. On the contrary, some of the interviewees showed some awareness of the law, and at least some mentioned that they had heard about it via a discussion on the radio. One participant, who stated he graduated from school before he began driving, revealed: "I know the law is in place but it is disappointing the law has no hold and has not been properly implemented" (SSI/Male/Driver/Ojoo Motor Park, Nigeria/February 2025).

To create an equilibrium between understanding and awareness, interviewees were asked about their knowledge of the law. It was realized that a limited percentage of the drivers had knowledge specifically regarding the legislation around public smoking and the ban on it. This shortcoming of understanding may be a major hindrance to effective compliance, bringing to the forefront the importance of better education strategies for increased public awareness of the

specifics of the law (SSI/Male/Driver/Apata Ganga Motor Park, Nigeria/February 2025). Moreover, another respondent maintains that low awareness corresponds to a lower level of understanding; this reiterates the fact that a large percentage of the respondents lack sufficient awareness and knowledge about the prohibitive law (SSI/Male/Park/Ibadan/February 2025). Additional information acquired underscored the importance of the realization that most transit drivers undergo a great deal of stress driving vehicles and one of the avenues to reducing the stress includes smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. As a result, even where awareness or understanding of the law might be realized, compliance would not be seen as feasible, particularly where awareness or understanding is fully missing (SSI/Male/Driver/Ojoo Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria/February 2025).

Factors Influencing the Implementation of the Public Smoking and Prohibition Law

The implementation of regulations around public smoking is in essence crucial to addressing tobacco-related health risks, protection of non-smokers, and promotion of healthy environmental conditions. However, the effectiveness of these laws is often dependent on a multitude of determinants. This study examines the underlying themes, trends, and opinions presented by the participants in relation to the effective implementation of the smoking law in the public domain. Of particular concern raised is inadequate enforcement. A participant described gaps in enforcement, potentially caused by inadequate resources, lack of adequate training, corruption, and institutional deficits, often facilitating circumvention of the law (SSI/Male/Driver/Dugbe Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria/February 2025).

More so, a major stumbling block to successful implementation stems from the lack of extensive information among enforcement bodies. The law enforcement agencies often lack human and economic resources, as well as monitoring equipment, which detracts from their capability to manage the law comprehensively (SSI/Male/Driver/Orita Challenge Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria/February 2025). These issues highlight the need for a stronger framework of enforcement, increased allocations of resources, and targeted strategies for shifting cultural attitudes towards smoking.

In addition, the law-enforcing institutions are poorly meeting their obligations and lack concern regarding the manner in which smoking takes place and its popularity. It will not be an exaggeration to state “those who are to uphold the law are also those who are going against it”. (SSI/Male/Driver/Ojoo Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025). This implies the organizations responsible for the enforcement of the law are at the same time participating in its breach. It results in a pressing imperative for the agencies to become proactive. A serious lack of

initiative by these agencies seriously lowers the overall impact of the law (SSI/Male/Driver/Dugbe Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025).

Findings also revealed that bribery and corruption pose significant challenges to effective enforcement (SSI/Male/Driver/Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025). The strength of laws on public smoking and sanctions remains undermined as far as the agencies responsible for their implementation are susceptible to bribery and the offenses of such laws are repeatedly overlooked. Corruption has far-reaching consequences, as tobacco and related product merchant operators pay the enforcement officers bribes, who in turn receive these rewards, thus enabling continued lawlessness and further hindering the enforcement (SSI/Male/Driver/Orita Challenge Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025). These acts, along with the ubiquity of bribery, canvassing, and corruption, seriously erodes public compliance and observance not only of the laws on public smoking and prohibitions but also of other statutory provisions and laws.

In another submission, it was noted that cultural and social factors played a significant role in facilitating the poor implementation, low awareness, and low compliance. Participants noted that the cultural and social acceptability of smoking as a common behavior, lifestyle, and value among young people, especially in the subculture of taxi drivers, has deeply impacted the successful implementation (SSI/Male/Driver/Apata Ganga Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /February 2025). Moreover, the issue has been heightened by the increased smoking in social settings as seen at pubs, restaurants, social gatherings, traditional occasions, and cultural celebrations (SSI/Male/Driver/Ojoo Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /February 2025). Another argument posits that smoking has been seen as a core part of social interaction and socialization process among the youth (SSI/Male/Driver/Orita Challenge Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /February 2025). One respondent constantly pointed out the fact that traditionally, the action of giving a person a cigarette has been seen as an act of hospitality, acceptance, and friendship. This societal tradition has hindered the de-normalization of smoking and the enforcement of the public smoking ban law (SSI/Male/Driver/Dugbe Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025).

Another notable factor that compromises the implementation of the public smoking ban is the low level of public awareness and education. As earlier mentioned, many participants lack adequate knowledge of the presence of this regulatory framework. This lack of awareness, along with insufficient information has led to evasiveness and an increased incidence of offenses (SSI/Male/Driver/Apata Ganga Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025). A participant made an observation that the wider the public remains very unaware of the reasoning behind the law, the more the health consequences, and disobedience

to the provisions of the law (SSI/Male/Driver/Orita Challenge Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025). Besides, while educational materials have been distributed through various avenues, many of these materials are not properly clarified, and the widespread indifference towards the consequences of breaching the law further undermines enforcement efforts (SSI/Male/Driver/Ojoo Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025). This implies that while awareness has registered some positive aspects, there still remains significant potential to develop public knowledge on the law. Moreover, imprecise stipulations and loopholes built into the laws pose the significant challenge to their enforcement. One participant claimed the shortcomings of the law result from the obscurity of the stipulations. By way of illustration, the provisions for special areas where smoking has been allowed in public places can create ambiguous situations, adherence to which might be difficult to verify, thereby allowing perpetrators to make the most of these gaps (SSI/Male/Driver/Orita Challenge Motor Park, Ibadan Nigeria /March 2025).

Smoking and the Consequences of Inadequate Smoking Regulations

Health Consequences: The widespread problem of inefficient tobacco control laws in Nigeria poses a major threat to public health, leading to a multitude of adverse health effects on the population. Lack of strict regulations on the production, sales, and consumption of tobacco has resulted in a higher prevalence of tobacco uptake, further contributing to the numbers of tobacco-related diseases and premature death (Singh et al., 2020). Despite the ratification of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the effectiveness of this initiative has been significantly undermined (WHO, 2021; Ayodapo & Ibisola, 2021; Adekola et al., 2023). The issue has been further complicated by the shockingly low level of awareness of the health hazards of smoking among smokers in Nigeria, especially in the rural areas and some other parts of the country. The prevalence of an open culture of smoking from public places, allied with the failure to properly implement laws aimed at reducing the trend, has resulted in increased exposure of the general population to second-hand smoke (SHS); these populations are at a heightened risk of respiratory conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary (COPD) damage, bronchitis, and asthma. Implicitly, the health issues faced by the non-smoker population are oftentimes worse compared to the health issues faced by the smokers. Children and infants, for instance, are the most vulnerable population, and SHS exposure has been linked to illnesses including pneumonia, wheezing, and impaired lung growth.

In addition, the lack of strong regulatory frameworks, coupled with a low level of public awareness, aggravates the menace presented by the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases (Ayodapo & Ibisola, 2021; Adeniyi et al., 2017). Public

smoking significantly contributes to the development of respiratory diseases, which further overburdens the healthcare system and drains its resources. Smoking in public places is linked to cases of heart attacks and strokes, which eventually lower life expectancy and impact the quality of life among the populace (Chan et al., 2022; Kaondera-Shava, 2024). Although the reduction of exposure to harmful tobacco smoke is the major aim of implementing public smoking laws, low rates of compliance and ineffective enforcement lead to increased morbidity and mortality rates. The consequences of this problem significantly extend to individuals in the form of impaired physical health and interference with endocrine processes, which could lead to premature mortality. Besides, the absence of efficient regulations negatively influences mental health and general wellbeing through the promotion of stress and anxiety among individuals exposed to these conditions in public places (Yang, & Zikos, 2023). More so, people who are trying to quit smoking face increased challenges in public areas where tobacco smoking is high, resulting in a rise in relapse rates.

Social and Environmental Consequences: Ineffective implementation of public smoking laws and related bans has far-reaching consequences extending beyond the health-related factors, affecting societal structures, demography, and the overall environment. The failure to implement effective controls results in a major prevalence of smoking, in turn institutionalizing the practice, widening social gaps, and leading to environmental damage. Failure to implement strict smoking bans creates an environment that does not stigmatize smoking in public places, subsequently perpetuating the belief among affected groups that the behavior is acceptable. Moreover, exposure to smokers in public places, including public parks, poses a major challenge to the overall population, especially children and youths, who cannot protect themselves from the risks associated to tobacco smoke (Semple et al, 2022). Adding to the challenge is the availability of smoking substitutes, including e-cigarettes and shisha, with a large component of youths perceiving these to be safe alternatives despite the mounting adverse health effects.

In addition, the act of smoking infuses the ambient environment with harmful toxins and particles, thus adding to indoor as well as outdoor pollution. This occurs at the expense of the susceptible populations, exposing them to unusually high concentrations of secondhand smoke in crowded public areas, making the air hazardous to their health (Geist, 2021, Singh et al, 2025). In urban centers, the widespread consumption of cigarettes, shisha, and other tobacco-containing articles makes air quality a major concern, further exacerbating the negative effect on environmental health. Meanwhile, cigarette butts, when they come into contact with rainfall, leach poisonous substances into aquatic environments, impacting rivers, lakes, and oceans. Moreover, tobacco-related litter, encompassing

packaging refuse and discarded cigarettes, plays a major role in soil pollution, hence the negative effect on agricultural lands.

Economic Consequences: The deficiency and lack of effective enforcement of tobacco control laws create far-reaching and negative economic consequences that spread beyond the healthcare sector and into the entire socio-economic fabric of the country. A significant aspect of this economic cost results from huge expenditures channeled to the public healthcare system to deal with smoking-related diseases that would have been avoided. Patients with long-term diseases like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory diseases need extensive and long-term medical care. Such an economic burden on public health resources not only increases the country's healthcare costs but also distorts financial investments from critical sectors like maternal and child health, in addition to the fight against infectious diseases. This misallocation of limited funds adversely impacts the effectiveness and fairness of the healthcare system, eventually undermining the broad development goals (Huang, et al, 2021, Olumide et al, 2022, Adeniji, 2023).

Additionally, diseases linked to the consumption of tobacco hurt overall labor productivity. On the streets, in agriculture, and during transport, where dependability and physical capabilities are vital attributes, the incapacitation or death of the workers caused by tobacco-related diseases leads to considerable reduction in productivity. The economic impact intensifies the situation by increasing the ratio of dependents-to-workers, as the households lose their major breadwinners and become forced to depend on a smaller workforce. This not only lowers household income but also increases the burden on the social services of the government, subsequently increasing the public finance burden. On the household level, tobacco expenses take away resources from vital necessities like food, education, housing, and medicine. Economically disadvantaged households become victim to this misallocation, especially when the major caregiver becomes incapacitated or dies from tobacco-related diseases. The decline in earning capability hinders the possibility of saving and leads to economic uncertainty, thus hampering the chances of investment in income-generating activities or objectives (Adeniji, 2021, Shrestha et al, 2022). Entrepreneurship among street vendors selling on the streets and running small-scale businesses may be undermined by the all-round expenses related to smoking and healthcare, inhibiting the capability to invest in skill development, technology, or expanding the business.

More so, the environmental damage caused by the cultivation of tobacco, as well as the trash resulting from the consumption of cigarettes, entails further economic costs. The continued production of tobacco contributes to widespread

deforestation and soil degradation, which lowers agricultural output and increases the vulnerability of agricultural economies (Geist, 2021, WHO, 2022). Simultaneously, urban areas are faced with additional financial constraints due to the large amounts of trash resulting from the consumption of cigarettes, leading to increased sanitation and municipal charges. The lack of adequate regulatory systems allows an alternative tobacco industry to exist outside the scope of taxation and public health control. The government will therefore be losing potential revenue from tobacco in the form of taxes, thus weakening the ability of the government to fund public health. This situation has a significant and ongoing negative impact on Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) through tax revenue reductions, increased healthcare expenses, poorer workforce performance, and an increased dependence on welfare related to poverty (Adeniji, 2023).

5. Conclusion

Despite the existence of laws like the National Tobacco Control Act and state-specific regulations, enforcement remains inadequate, allowing smoking to persist in public places. The lack of clear definitions of public spaces and inconsistent enforcement by law enforcement agencies exacerbate the issue. Additionally, the tobacco industry's efforts to shape public perception and influence policy hinder effective implementation. Sociocultural factors, such as peer pressure and religious prohibitions, also play significant roles in shaping smoking behaviours among youths. To effectively curb public smoking, Nigeria needs to strengthen enforcement, enhance public awareness, and implement stricter regulations to protect public health, particularly among vulnerable populations like children and youths. To improve compliance and enforcement, this study recommends:

- Strengthening law enforcement through better training, stricter penalties, and increased monitoring.
- Raising public awareness through health education campaigns, media engagement, and community involvement.
- Addressing corruption within enforcement agencies to ensure fair and transparent law implementation.
- Promoting smoke-free environments by integrating clearer policies on designated smoking areas and stronger regulatory frameworks.

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