

Abstracts submission

Tobacco trade

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DETERMINING THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF ILLICIT CIGARETTE USE IN MALAYSIA INVOLVING PACK COLLECTION AND INTERVIEW:

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Additional Topic/Keyword: Illicit Trade

Please select preferred presentation format: Oral or Poster

Please indicate the country which your research / intervention / initiative was performed: Malaysia

Background and/or Objectives: Background: Recently, cigarette smuggling in Malaysia is said to be the highest in the world. The Confederation of Malaysian Tobacco Manufacturers (CMTM) reported smuggling rate of 37.5% in 2009 and 36% in 2010 compared to 20% in 2003. These data are used by the industries to warn governments about further raising tobacco tax. Independent and reliable researches on use of illicit cigarettes are very much needed to counter industries claims. This paper present the findings of the research on sales of illicit cigarette in Malaysia carried out in 2009.

Objective: (1) To evaluate the prevalence of illicit cigarette use in Malaysia (2) To describe the differences in the selling price of illicit and genuine cigarette products in Malaysia. (3) To describe the cigarette brands that are involved in the illicit market and (4) To describe the criteria that are associated with the identification of illicit package.

Methods/ Description: Methodology: The study involved 1711 adults male smokers of factory-made cigarettes from seven states of Malaysia surveyed between July to December 2009 (Wave 4). They were part of the ITC Southeast Asia Survey, a prospective longitudinal cohort survey which begun in 2005. A multi-stage cluster sampling design was used to randomly sample smokers for this survey. Data were collected using a telephone survey; respondents were asked to mail in their cigarette packs for analysis. A total of 685 packs were received. Genuine packs were verified based on criteria stipulated in the Tobacco Control Regulations of the Food Act 2008. Absences of any specification on cigarette packs were considered as illicit. Descriptive statistics, chi-square test and logistic regression analyses were conducted for weighted data using the complex sample package in SPSS 15.0 to account for complex sampling design.

Results/Outcomes: Results: We found that 19% of the received packs were illicit. There was no significant difference between those sent and did not send with the respect of urban/rural, education and income. Among the received illicit cigarette packs (pack size 20), 53% (95% CI, 19.5 - 84.4) were lower priced cigarettes. Forty percent (95% CI: 20% to 64%) of the received illicit packs belonged to the kretek cigarettes, 35% (95% CI: 22% to 53%) from other white cigarettes and 24% (95% CI: 14% to 39%) from white cigarettes. All the illicit packs from the different brands did not meet with more than one criteria. Illicit kretek cigarettes did not have graphic health warnings and text description on 4000 hazardous chemicals while white cigarette failed badly with "duck test" (95%) and many did not have tax stamp (67%).

Conclusions /Lessons Learnt: Conclusion: A wide distribution of kretek, white and other white cigarettes are found as illicit packs. Compared to genuine packs, most of the illicit packs in Malaysia are cheaper than the standard price. The whites and other whites illicit cigarettes are mostly absence or fake in its security ink or tax stamp. The observed prevalence was not as high as the tobacco industry claimed.

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