

# Compliance and awareness of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act among tobacco sellers in urban Ludhiana

Pranjl Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Surinderpal Singh<sup>1</sup>, Mahesh Satija<sup>1</sup>, Pushapindra Kaushal<sup>2</sup>, Anurag Chaudhary<sup>1</sup>, Sarit Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Sangeeta Girdhar<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Community Medicine, Dayanand Medical College and Hospital, Ludhiana, Punjab, India, <sup>2</sup>Department of Community Medicine, MM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Ambala, Haryana, India

Correspondence to: Surinderpal Singh, E-mail: sps.ahluwalia@gmail.com

Received: May 01, 2019; Accepted: May 24, 2019

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Tobacco use is one of the major preventable causes of deaths globally. Although India responded early to combat this global problem by implementing Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), there is a need to evaluate its implementation. **Objective:** The objective of this study was to assess the compliance and awareness of the tobacco vendors to Section 5 (Point of sale advertisements of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products) and Section 6 (Prohibition on sale to minors and within 100 yards of educational institutes) of COTPA. **Materials and Methods:** The present study was a community-based cross-sectional study. All tobacco selling stores located within 100 yards distance from 58 educational institutes in urban Ludhiana were assessed for compliance to Section 5 and 6 provisions of COTPA. The study also assessed awareness regarding COTPA legislation among the tobacco vendors available in these tobacco selling stores. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. The questions were asked to determine the level of awareness of COTPA among the tobacco vendors. **Results:** Around 42.0% of the educational institutes had tobacco stores located within 100 yards and only around 25.0% of educational institutes had mandatory signage prohibiting ban on selling tobacco products displayed outside institutions. Most of the tobacco outlets (77.7%) were permanent, exclusive tobacco sellers (72%) and had displayed the products enabling easy access to minors. Majority (89%) of the vendors knew about an act regarding tobacco products. However, only 19.4% and 25% of vendors were aware of ban on selling tobacco products within the radius of 100 yards of educational institutions and to minors, respectively. **Conclusion:** Strict enforcement of the provisions of COTPA around educational institutes to reduce easy access of tobacco products to minors and strengthening awareness generation activities by involving key stakeholders is needed.


**KEY WORDS:** Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act; Compliance; Awareness; Educational Institutes; Punjab

## INTRODUCTION

Tobacco use has become a rampant problem globally. It is the world's leading preventable killer, driving an epidemic of cancer, heart disease, stroke, chronic lung disease, and other

non-communicable diseases. Tobacco is a risk factor for six of the eight leading causes of deaths in the world. Tobacco kills more than 7 million people each year. More than 6 million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use while around 890,000 are the result of non-smokers being exposed to the second-hand smoke. Around 80% of the world's 1.1 billion smokers live in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>[1]</sup>

Globally, India is the third-largest tobacco-producing country and the second-largest consumer of tobacco. Of 1.3 million deaths due to tobacco in India, 1 million are attributed to tobacco smoking and the rest to smokeless tobacco use.<sup>[2,3]</sup> As per global adults tobacco survey-2, 28.6% of adults in India,

Access this article online	
Website: <a href="http://www.ijmsph.com">http://www.ijmsph.com</a>	Quick Response code
DOI: 10.5455/ijmsph.2019.0514324052019	

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aged 15 and above currently use tobacco in some form.<sup>[4]</sup> According to the National Family Health Survey -4, 44.5% of men and 6.8% of women in the age group of 15–49 years use tobacco in some form in India.<sup>[5]</sup> The first law for regulating tobacco products in India was the Cigarettes (regulation of production, supply, and distribution) Act, 1975. Gradually, it was upgraded to the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) and was launched in 2003. India was also one of the earliest nations to respond to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC, 2004) by launching National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) in 2007–2008.<sup>[6]</sup>

The prevalence of tobacco use in Punjab is 13.4%. COTPA was also implemented in Punjab in letter and spirit in 2003.<sup>[7]</sup> One of the aims of NTCP is to ensure effective implementation of provisions of COTPA; this act also bounds the tobacco vendors to comply for the rules given in it. However, there is a need to evaluate status of COTPA implementation in Punjab. Thus, this study was conducted in Urban Ludhiana with the objective of assessing the compliance of the tobacco vendors to Section 5 (Point of sale advertisements of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products) and Section 6 (Prohibition on sale to minors and around educational institutions) within 100 yards of educational institutes. The study also assessed awareness of these tobacco vendors regarding COTPA-2003.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was a community-based cross-sectional study to assess compliance to Section 5 (point of sale advertisement of tobacco) and Section 6 (prohibition of sale of tobacco products to minors and selling outlets within 100 yards of educational institute) of COTPA. All tobacco selling stores located within 100 yards distance from 58 educational institutes in Ludhiana city were assessed for compliance to Section 5 and 6 provisions of COTPA. The study also assessed awareness regarding COTPA legislation among the tobacco vendors available in these tobacco selling stores. Convenience sampling was used to determine 58 educational institutes which included medical colleges, degree colleges, and government and private schools. All possible information regarding the study were given to the tobacco sellers. They were given the option of quitting from the study. After necessary permission, data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and confidentiality was maintained. The questions were asked to determine the level of awareness of COTPA among the tobacco vendors. Descriptive analysis was done using open Epi (open-source epidemiologic statistics for public health) Version 3.01.

## RESULTS

All tobacco selling stores located within 100 yards distance from 58 educational institutes in urban Ludhiana were assessed for compliance to Section 5 and 6 provisions of COTPA.

A total of 36 tobacco selling stores within 100 yards distance from educational institutes were identified and observed. About 42.0% of the educational institutes had tobacco stores located within 100 yards and selling cigarettes or tobacco products. Around one-quarter of the educational institutes had mandatory signage displayed outside institutions. About 72.0% of stores were exclusive tobacco sellers. Most of the tobacco outlets (77.7%) were permanent or fixed stores and other with temporary or mobile outlets. Half of the outlets were selling tobacco products by displaying in a manner enabling easy access to minors. However, only 8.3% of the tobacco stores displayed a signboard with a warning in Indian language that “sale of tobacco products to a person below the age of 18 years is a punishable offense.” All the stores were selling loose cigarette sticks [Table 1].

Awareness of COTPA and its various provisions among tobacco selling vendors were also assessed. A total of 36 tobacco vendors available in stores were interviewed. Nearly 89.0% of the vendors knew about an act regarding tobacco products. However, 41.7% of vendors were not aware of the clause of penalty on violating the act. When asked further about Section 5 and 6 provisions within the COTPA, around 80.0% of vendors did not know that selling tobacco products within the radius of 100 yards of educational institutions are a punishable offence. Only one-fifth of the vendors were aware of ban on selling tobacco products to minors. Majority of the sellers (94.4%) were aware of mandatory health warning on tobacco products. Only around 14.0% of the vendors knew that they cannot sell any other food/drink items along with tobacco. Most of the sellers (75.0%) were not aware of prohibition of selling loose cigarettes. Awareness of ill effects of tobacco showed that among tobacco sellers, 26.0% were not aware of the harmful effects of the second-hand smoke. Majority of the vendors (91.7%) knew the adverse health effects of chewing or smoking tobacco products. Only 38.9% of subjects agreed that it is right to stop tobacco smoking at public places [Table 2].

## DISCUSSION

The present study reflected on awareness of tobacco selling vendors and compliance to COTPA and its provisions. The study revealed that about 42% of selected educational institutes had tobacco selling outlets within 100 yards of selected educational institutes in violation to provisions of Section 6 of COTPA. Around one-fifth of institutes had mandatory signage outside with ban on sale of tobacco products clearly reflecting the unawareness of educational institutes regarding COTPA and non-involvement of educational institutes in COTPA implementation. Half of the tobacco selling outlets had displayed products with easy access to minors in the current study and major cause for concern is that majority of the outlets had not displayed a board with warning against consumption of tobacco products. Although majority of the sellers were operating in fixed shop, it was also observed

**Table 1:** Compliance of tobacco selling outlets to different provisions of COTPA legislation

Variables	n (%)
Compliance/violations to Section 6A of COTPA (n=36)	
Outlets selling cigarette or tobacco products displayed in a manner enabling easy access to minors	18 (50.0)
A board displayed at POS which should contain the warning. Minimum size of the board should be 60 cm×30 cm with white background	3 (8.3)
Compliance/violations to Section 6B of COTPA (n=58)	
Any instances of selling cigarettes or other tobacco products within 100 yards of educational institutions	24 (41.4)
Number of educational institutions with (general and higher education) mandated signage	15 (25.8)
Compliance/violations at POS (n=36)	
Exclusive tobacco seller	26 (72.2)
Selling loose/single cigarette sticks	36 (100)
Permanent/fixed shop	28 (77.7)

COTPA: Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, POS: Point of sale

**Table 2:** Awareness of tobacco legislation and its provisions among tobacco selling vendors

Variables	n (%)
Awareness of vendors (n=36)	
Aware of any act/legislation regarding tobacco products (COTPA)	32 (88.9)
Aware of penalty for violation of act	21 (58.3)
Ban on selling tobacco products within the radius of 100 yards of educational institutions?	7 (19.4)
Ban on sale of tobacco products to <18 years old	9 (25.0)
Mandatory to have health warning on tobacco products	34 (94.4)
Knowledge of any tobacco-related health problems (such as cancer, respiratory disease, heart disease, tuberculosis, and hypertension)	33 (91.7)
Knowledge of harmful effects of the second-hand smoke	26 (72.2)
Aware that loose cigarette is not to be sold	9 (25.0)
Aware that you cannot sell any food/drink (any other) items	5 (13.9)
Do you think that it is right to stop smoking tobacco at public places	14 (38.9)

COTPA: Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act

that few of the vendors were selling tobacco on bicycles and on the floor mat, which is the another hindrance to increase compliance to provisions of Section 6. Selling of loose cigarettes was universal.

Rath *et al.* in a community-based study in Haryana observed that about 10.0% of tobacco selling outlets were within 100 yards of schools.<sup>[8]</sup> In a study conducted by Pimple *et al.*, in Mumbai, it was observed that none of the selected educational institutes had mandated signage.<sup>[9]</sup> As observed in the present study, it also revealed that not displaying warning, easy access to minors, and vendors operating through bicycles

and hand-driven carts were the major challenges for COTPA implementation.<sup>[9]</sup> Similar results were reported by Rath *et al.*, wherein it was observed that none of the stores were fully compliant to provisions of COTPA and were selling tobacco to minors and displaying tobacco products openly.<sup>[8]</sup> Majority of the tobacco selling vendors were aware of the existence of tobacco control legislation though about 58.0% of the vendors knew about the penalty for violation of the act. Pimple *et al.* also observed that around half of the tobacco vendors knew about tobacco control act and more than 70.0% were aware of the provisions in Sections 5 and 6 of COTPA.<sup>[9]</sup> Contrary to the current findings, Sharma *et al.*, in Delhi, reported low awareness of COTPA among general population in slums.<sup>[10]</sup> Other studies conducted by Rath *et al.*, in Haryana,<sup>[8]</sup> Singh, in Bihar,<sup>[11]</sup> Rao *et al.*, in Andhra Pradesh, showed that awareness of COTPA legislation was lower; however, knowledge and perception of provisions of COTPA were higher.<sup>[12]</sup> Most of the tobacco vendors were aware of tobacco use being harmful to health. This is in agreement with observations from other studies.<sup>[9,12-14]</sup> In the present study, awareness of ban on selling tobacco products within radius of 100 yards of educational institutes and selling to minor was low also reflecting as poor compliance, which was similar to the study by Rao *et al.*<sup>[12]</sup> Regarding attitude of the sellers, around 40% responded that it is right to stop smoking in public places. Hirani and Balaramanamma in a study conducted among school students in Ahmadabad observed that majority of respondents believed that smoking is banned in public places.<sup>[15]</sup>

### Strength and Limitation of the Study

The present study indicates the level of compliance and awareness regarding provisions of COTPA among the tobacco sellers and forms a basis for its effective implementation around educational institutes in Ludhiana and other parts of Punjab in the absence of large-scale studies. The study is limited by small sample; hence, observations may not be generalized to all the educational institutes in Ludhiana as also random sampling procedure was not followed.

### CONCLUSION

The COTPA was enforced to control the tobacco consumption in India and to protect health of the people from the diseases occurring from tobacco use. However, an effective enforcement and compliance with the law is necessary to ensure a beneficial public health impact. The present study concludes that there is a lack of effective implementation of COTPA near educational institutes which provide easy accessibility of tobacco to minors. Most vendors have an idea about law against tobacco products. However, they lack necessary knowledge of various provisions of COTPA. Hence, effective implementation of this act near educational institutes and more awareness generation through campaigns, involving key stakeholders like educational institutes is the need of the hour.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the participants for their support.

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**How to cite this article:** Sharma P, Singh S, Satija M, Kaushal P, Chaudhary A, Sharma S, Girdhar S. Compliance and awareness of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act among tobacco sellers in urban Ludhiana. *Int J Med Sci Public Health* 2019;8(11):902-905.

**Source of Support:** Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.