

E-cigarette Health Warning Labels: Perceptions of Harm and Attractiveness Among Filipino Youth

Background

- In 2019, one in seven Filipino students (ages 13–15 years old) reported current e-cigarette use
- Effective pictorial health warning labels (HWLs) on tobacco and nicotine products can decrease intention to use and increase risk awareness
- Philippine regulations require pictorial warnings covering 50% of each principal display area, but implementation is lacking
- We explored how e-cigarette HWLs are associated with product appeal and perceptions of harm

Methods

- In Jan 2024, we conducted 24 focus groups in Metro Manila, Cebu City, and Davao City
- A sample of 171 youth, ages 13–20, were stratified by rurality, gender, age, and e-cigarette use
- Participants ranked and discussed the appeal and perceived harm of 10 purchased e-cigarette product packs

Pictorial health warnings can increase perceptions of harm and reduce e-cigarette pack appeal among Filipino youth



Results

- Participants preferred packs without pictorial HWLs
- Most viewed packs with text-only HWLs as more attractive, less harmful, and less likely to convey negative health effects than those with pictorial HWLs
- Pack design elements/features either reduced (e.g., color) or enhanced (e.g., larger text) the effectiveness of pictorial HWLs in communicating harm
- Specific warnings depicting health outcomes (e.g., hand explosion) conveyed more danger than nonspecific images (e.g., skull)
- Pictorial HWLs provoked fear and disgust, deterring both participants who reported current e-cigarette use and those who did not; however, some participants who do use e-cigarettes reported desensitization over time

Conclusions

- Text-only HWLs were seen as more appealing and less harmful, which may reduce their ability to communicate risks
- Compliant and consistently rotated pictorial HWLs are needed to effectively convey e-cigarette harms and protect Filipino youth



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