Aug 17th, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Public Perceptions of Sugar Sweetened Beverage Taxes: An Integrative Literature Review

Stacy Gates
smg1022@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/nursing-colloquium

Part of the Public Health and Community Nursing Commons

https://via.library.depaul.edu/nursing-colloquium/2018/summer/66

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Nursing at Via Sapientiae. It has been accepted for inclusion in Grace Peterson Nursing Research Colloquium by an authorized administrator of Via Sapientiae. For more information, please contact wsullv6@depaul.edu, c.mcclure@depaul.edu.
Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013), noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), primarily diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and chronic respiratory diseases are responsible for 63% of deaths worldwide and are largely preventable.

A prominent factor underlying three of the four aforementioned NCDs is obesity. While increased consumption of both sugar and fat contribute to this epidemic, there is a clear association between dietary sugar consumption and weight gain (WCRF International, 2015).

Governments across the globe are enacting public health policies, in an attempt to stem the proliferation of obesity and the resulting noncommunicable diseases.

Both the WCRF International (2015) and WHO (2004) promote the use of taxation, as a proven method to curb consumption of products as a financial deterrent.

Problem Statement

In as many places that this tax has had success, it remains difficult to enact on a larger scale. One of the current gaps in the literature is understanding how sugar sweetened beverage taxes are perceived in the community, which is critical to successful tax implementation and long-term success.

Methods

Research Design

An integrative literature review

Literature Search Strategies

Four databases were queried: Cumulative Index to Nursing and Health Literature (CINAHL), PubMed, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, and Nursing & Allied Health Database.

Keywords Used: ((sweeten* OR carbonated OR sugar OR soda) (beverages OR drinks) and tax*)) AND (opinion OR perception* OR view* OR impression* OR coverage) for all four databases.

Inclusion criteria: Literature published in English and peer-reviewed.

Exclusion criteria: Articles that studied the opinions of children and not adults. I chose this particular exclusion criteria because I was more interested in how the adults’ opinion affected policy success and implementation.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the initial keyword search in the four databases, I used the inclusion and exclusion criteria to further narrow the search, eliminated any duplicates within and across the databases, and finally reviewed the remaining articles for content.

Data from the final nine articles was then assembled and critically analyzed to look for important concepts, themes, and results presented within each.

Results

Public Perception

- The lack of widespread success of sugar sweetened beverage tax policies confirms that a public’s opinion of these taxes remains low. One nationwide study of American adults, found support for a tax like this to be as low as 21.6%, and another 26% echoing this minority approval rate.

- However, pockets of America may be seeing an increase in support. In a 2015 telephone survey of adults from the Mid-Atlantic States, 50% of respondents approved of an SSB tax. In addition, the tax seems to garner a significantly higher level of support overseas with approval ratings of 48.5% in France and 54.5% in Australia.

Effective Strategies

1) Message Strategies

- Message strategies were a large part of the public discourse with this topic. One interesting perspective frames SSB tax messaging as a secondary mechanism next to price increases that affects consumer behavior. In general tax arguments were not effective if the tax or revenue purpose was poorly defined, as it lead to misperception.

- The tax was more favorably perceived if individuals were told the tax revenue went back into the healthcare system rather than as a preventative measure.

- In general tax arguments were not effective if the tax or revenue purpose was poorly defined, as it lead to misperception.

- However, pockets of America may be seeing an increase in support. In a 2015 telephone survey of adults from the Mid-Atlantic States, 50% of respondents approved of an SSB tax. In addition, the tax seems to garner a significantly higher level of support overseas with approval ratings of 48.5% in France and 54.5% in Australia.

Effective Strategies

1) Message Strategies

- Message strategies were a large part of the public discourse with this topic. One interesting perspective frames SSB tax messaging as a secondary mechanism next to price increases that affects consumer behavior. In general tax arguments were not effective if the tax or revenue purpose was poorly defined, as it lead to misperception.

- The tax was more favorably perceived if individuals were told the tax revenue went back into the healthcare system rather than as a preventative measure.

- In general tax arguments were not effective if the tax or revenue purpose was poorly defined, as it lead to misperception.

Discussion

- Overall, the research shows that public opinion and support for SSB taxes remains low in the U.S. and has substantially more support overseas in places like Australia and France, however, it remains low in the U.S. The literature does provide some hope that both opinion and support are increasing in pockets of America as the battle to fight obesity, noncommunicable diseases, and cancers continues on.

- Some of the lessons learned by policymakers, healthcare workers, and the general public are SSB tax policies need to be clear and specific, with linguistically and culturally targeted messaging from trusted community leadership. This is especially true in minority communities, which are disproportionately affected by tax policies like these.

- In addition, education surrounding the tactics that beverage companies use to garner support and sway opinions coupled with solid, evidence-based education regarding the link between SSBs and negative health outcomes is disparity needed in order to begin shifting the needle of public opinion in favor of SSB taxes.

Direction for Future Research

This the body of literature could benefit from definitive work on the health and economic effects of these taxes. As well as more research establishing best practices for implementing similar taxes in communities all over the world. An extension of successful implementation of SSB taxes is that this could also give us insight on how to implement other necessary public health initiatives in the future.

Conclusion

- Policy interventions such as taxation can be powerful tools to curb behaviors that negatively affect population health, while simultaneously providing incentive to engage in healthier behaviors.

- Interventions such as these are not new, however, the specific policies governing taxation of sugar sweetened beverages are. With their effectiveness hinging on the public’s perception of them this is a topic which could use further examination.

Figure 2. Diagram of review process and study selection

Public Perceptions of Sugar Sweetened Beverage Taxes: An Integrative Literature Review

Stacy Gates
Advisor: Dr. Karen Larimer, PhD, ACNP-BC, FAHA
DePaul University