



The smoking status and the perspective on Law No. 4207 of café, coffee-house, and restaurant owners on the busy streets of central district of Kars

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Abstract

Aim: Making indoor environments 100% smoke-free is the only proven way to protect people from passive smoking. This study aimed to evaluate the smoking status of café, coffeehouse, and restaurant owners and their views on Law No. 4207, which prohibits tobacco use in indoor public spaces, considering sociodemographic variables and the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Materials and Methods: The cross-sectional study population comprised 131 café, coffeehouse, and restaurant owners located on busy streets in the central district of Kars.

Results: 72 restaurants, 45 cafés, and 14 coffeehouses owners participated to the study. Among the employers don't allow smoking in the indoor areas of their businesses is 82.4%. Among the 85 smokers, 65.9% did not feel compelled to smoke in prohibited areas, and 57.0% viewed the indoor smoking ban positively. Of the 125 business owners who reported financial loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, 61.6% cited the country's economic situation as the primary reason. In the logistic regression analysis showed that a positive view of the law was 2.69 times higher among employers with high school education or above compared to those with middle school education or lower (95% CI: 1.01-7.2, $p=0.049$), 3.96 times higher those who did not allow smoking indoors at their workplace compared to those who did (95% CI: 1.28-12.23, $p=0.017$), and 10.98 times higher among those who stated that the law did not cause financial loss compared to those who stated it did (95% CI: 3.34-36.07, $p<0.001$).

Conclusion: Most smoking business owners view Law No. 4207 positively, this indicating that the law is also embraced by smoking employers. The business owners's identification of the country's economic situation as the main reason for financial loss during COVID-19 suggest that this factor could diminish the gains of Law No. 4207 and indicate the need for a more comprehensive tobacco control strategy.



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Introduction

The tobacco epidemic is one of the greatest public health threats the world has ever faced. This epidemic causes the deaths of more than 8 million people each year, including approximately 1.3 million deaths due to secondhand smoke exposure [1]. Considering the 7 million deaths caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to date, it is possible to speak of a Tobacco Pandemic that ravages the world every year [2].

Tobacco use increases poverty by diverting household expenditures from essential needs such as food and housing to tobacco [1]. Secondhand smoke is defined as the inhalation of smoke from others' tobacco products -

such as cigarettes, cigars, pipes, hookahs, and electronic cigarettes - or the smoke emitted from burning tobacco products [3].

Currently, 2.1 billion people living in 74 countries are not exposed to tobacco smoke in public indoor areas, workplaces, and public transportation [4]. Studies continue to show that bans on the use of tobacco products in enclosed areas of dining and entertainment venues are effective in preventing the health harms of tobacco products [5,6].

In our country, the Law No. 4207 on the Prevention of Harms of Tobacco Products was enacted in 1996 [7]. Following this law, the Law No. 5727 on the Amendment of the Law on the Prevention of Harms of Tobacco Products was passed in 2008, which includes provisions for banning the consumption of tobacco products in enclosed areas of

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restaurants, cafes, coffeehouses, and other entertainment venues owned by private legal entities. The implementation of the provisions of Law No. 4207 was enforced with the Prime Ministry Circular No. 2009/13 published in the Official Gazette No. 27290 dated 16.7.2009, and the ban took effect on July 19, 2009 [8,9].

Banning smoking in public indoor areas completely protects people from the harms of secondhand smoke, helps smokers quit, reduces smoking among young people, and does not cause financial loss to businesses [10].

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused not only human losses but also financial losses worldwide and in our country. The hospitality sector is one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic [11]. The aim of this study is to evaluate the smoking status of restaurant, coffeehouse, and café owners that their establishments located on busy streets in the central district of Kars province and their perspectives on the ban on the consumption of tobacco products in enclosed areas of their establishments under Law No. 4207, in relation to sociodemographic variables, the use of tobacco products in indoor areas and the COVID-19 period.

Materials and Methods

Type of research and sample

In the central district of Kars are 233 cafes/restaurants and 141 coffee-houses registered with the Kars Chamber of Tradesmen and Craftsmen. There have been no previous studies specifically focusing on the perspectives of restaurant/café/coffee-house owners towards Law No. 4207. Therefore, to estimate the population proportion, it was considered appropriate to use the maximum sample size, assuming a positive opinion rate of 50% towards Law No. 4207 among café/coffee-house/restaurant owners. "The minimum sample size representing the population was found to be 190 at a 95% confidence level using the following formula [12]:

- $n = [N(Z_{\alpha/2})^2 P(1-P)] / [d^2 (N-1) + (Z_{\alpha/2})^2 P(1-P)]$
- $n =$ Minimum sample size
- $N =$ Population size
- $Z_{\alpha/2} =$ Constant value for a two-tailed hypothesis at the error level ($\alpha = 0.05$)
- $P =$ Frequency of the event to be studied
- $d =$ Desired deviation based on the frequency of the event to be studied
- $n = [374(1.96)^2 0.5(1-0.5)] / [(0.05)^2(374-1) + (1.96)^2 0.5(1-0.5)]$
- $n = 189.75$

For this cross-sectional study, volunteer business owners that their establishments located on busy streets and meeting the participation criteria were included using a non-probability sampling method that judgmental sampling (The researchers' selection of restaurants, coffeehouses, and cafés on busy streets based on their own judgments).

This study consists of all busy streets with a high density of restaurant, coffeehouse, and café owners in the central district of Kars province. These busy streets were identified by the researchers through Google Maps and direct observation. Atatürk Street, Cumhuriyet Street, Faikbey Street, Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa Street, Şehit Yusuf Bey Street, Turan Çelik Street, Şehitlik Street, Karadağ Street, Küçük Kazım Bey Street, Halitpaşa Street, Kazım Karabekir Street, and Şehit Hulusi Aytekin Street are the streets included in the study. The inclusion criteria for the study are:

- The café/restaurant/coffeehouse being located on a busy street in the central district of Kars
- The café/restaurant/coffeehouse having an indoor seating area
- The café/restaurant/coffeehouse being operational before COVID-19
- The business owners aged 18 and over
- The business owners consent to participate in the study

A total of 153 businesses meeting the inclusion criteria were visited, and those whose owners were not present were revisited. Fifteen businesses were excluded from the study because the owners could not be reached even on the second visit. Additionally, seven business owners refused to participate in the study. As a result, 131 out of 153 business owners (85.6%) who agreed to participate constituted the study sample. The 68.9% of the minimum sample size representing the population (190) was achieved.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Committee for Non-Interventional Studies of Kafkas University Medical Faculty during the session dated January 26, 2022, and numbered 01, with unanimous consent. Additionally, official written permission was obtained from the Kars Governorship and the Provincial Health Directorate on May 12, 2022.

Data collection tools

Within the scope of the study, a survey was conducted face-to-face by the researchers with the business owners between June 21, 2022, and November 22, 2022.

The survey consists of 15 questions covering sociodemographic characteristics, the smoking status of the business owners, their perspective on Law No. 4207, and the financial impact of the COVID-19 period compared to the previous period. Participants were asked five sociodemographic questions, including sex, age, education level, marital status, and income level, which constituted the independent variables. Subsequently, participants were asked ten more questions regarding their smoking status, smoking indoors at home and workplace, the smoking status of employees at the workplace, their views on the current smoking ban, the financial impact of this ban, and a comparison of their financial situation before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the study, the smoking status of business owners and their perspective on Law No. 4207 were considered dependent variables, while the sociodemographic variables, smoking indoors at home and workplace, the smoking status of employees at the workplace, their views on the current smoking ban, the financial impact of this ban, and a comparison of their financial situation before and after the COVID-19 pandemic were considered independent variables.

Statistical analysis

The research data were evaluated using IBM SPSS (version 20, Armonk; NY: USA). Descriptive data are presented as frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation (SD). In the study, all variables except age consisted of qualitative data. Age was also converted into a qualitative variable for the analysis. Therefore, the relationships between dependent and independent variables were evaluated using the chi-square test. Variables found to be statistically significant in the chi-square test were further evaluated with the binary logistic regression analysis. A p-value of <0.05 was considered for statistical significance.

Results

Of the 131 business owners who participated in the study, 72 (55.0%) operated restaurants, 45 (34.3%) operated cafés, and 14 (10.7%) operated coffeehouses. The participants were predominantly male (88.5%) and married (64.9%), with the majority (44.3%) having completed high school. The arithmetic mean of age was 40.0 years (SD: 12.73 years). In the study, the youngest employer was 18 years old, while the oldest was 70 years old. In terms of income, 45% of participants reported just making ends meet, 35.1% were in debt to make ends meet, and 11.5% were using their savings to get by (Table 1).

Eighty-one business owners smoked daily. Including the four who smoked occasionally, the majority of the 85 smokers (65.9%) did not find it difficult to comply with smoking bans in restricted areas. Among the 118 workplaces with employees, 61.0% had both smokers and non-smokers. In 75.6% of business owners' homes, smoking was not allowed indoors. Based on observations and/or declarations from the business owners, 82.4% of workplaces did not allow smoking indoors. Of the 131 business owners, 77.1% had a positive view of the ban on the use of tobacco products in enclosed areas, while 47.3% believed that this ban caused financial loss. (Table 2).

When business owners were asked to compare their financial situation before and during the COVID-19 period, 125 out of 129 respondents reported experiencing financial loss during the COVID-19 period compared to the previous period. The most frequently cited reason for financial loss was the country's economic situation alone (61.6%). This was followed by COVID-19 (17.6%), the country's economic situation and COVID-19 combined (17.6%), Law No. 4207 (1.6%), the country's economic situation and Law No. 4207 combined (0.8%), and COVID-19 and Law No. 4207 combined (0.8%). Only 4 business owners cited the ban on the use of tobacco products in indoor areas as one of the economic losses during the COVID-19 period.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Café, Coffeehouse, and Restaurant Owners in Kars City Center, 2022.

Sociodemographic Characteristics	n	%
Type of Business		
Restaurant	72	55.0
Café	45	34.3
Coffeehouse	14	10.7
Gender		
Male	116	88.5
Female	15	11.5
Age Groups		
Under 40	71	54.2
40 and over	60	45.8
Educational Level		
Primary School or less	24	18.3
Middle School	19	14.5
High School	58	44.3
University or higher	30	22.9
Marital Status		
Married	85	64.9
Single	39	29.8
Divorced/Widowed	7	5.3
Income Status		
Saving Money	11	8.4
Just Getting By	59	45.0
Using Savings to Get By	15	11.5
Getting By with Borrowing	46	35.1
Total	131	100.0

Among the business owners, 85 (64.9%) were occasional or regular smokers, and 43 (32.8%) had never smoked, only tried smoking, or quit. No statistically significant difference was found between these groups regarding sex, age groups, marital status, education level, income level, type of business, indoor smoking status at the workplace, smoking status at home, and employee smoking status at the workplace (Table 3).

When assessing business owners' perspectives on Law No. 4207, 101 (77.1%) had a positive view, and 28 (21.4%) had a negative view. A positive view of the law was the statistically significantly higher among business owners with high school or higher education (83.9%) compared to those with middle school or lower education (66.7%) ($X^2=3.992$, $p=0.046$), among non-smokers (100%) compared to smokers (68.7%) ($X^2=15.113$, $p<0.001$), among those who did not allow smoking indoors at their workplace (83.0%) compared to those who did (56.5%) ($p=0.010$), and among those who believed the law did not cause financial loss (94.1%) compared to those who believed it did (60.7%) ($X^2=19.263$, $p<0.001$) (Table 4).

When the variables found to be statistically significant in the chi-square analysis were subjected to logistic regres-

Table 2. Smoking Status of Café, Coffeehouse, and Restaurant Owners and Their Views on Law No. 4207 in Kars City Center, 2022.

Variables	n	%
Smoking Status of Employer		
Never Smoked	25	19.1
Only Tried	5	3.8
Used to Smoke, Quit	13	9.9
Occasionally Smokes	4	3.1
Smokes Daily	81	61.8
Smokes Hookah	3	2.3
Difficulty Complying with Smoking Ban (n=85)		
Yes	25	29.4
No	56	65.9
Sometimes	4	4.7
Employees' Smoking Status (n=118)		
All Employees Smoke	22	18.6
Some Employees Smoke	72	61.0
No Employees Smoke	24	20.4
Smoking Indoors at Home		
Yes	32	24.4
No	99	75.6
Smoking Indoors at Workplace		
Yes	23	17.6
No	108	82.4
View on Smoking Ban in Enclosed Areas		
Positive	101	77.1
Negative	28	21.4
Indifferent	2	1.5
Financial Impact of Smoking Ban		
Yes	62	47.3
No	69	52.7
Total	131	100.0

sion analysis, a positive view of the Law No. 4207 was found to be 2.69 times higher among employers with high school education or above compared to those with middle school education or lower (95% CI: 1.01-7.2, $p=0.049$), 3.96 times higher those who did not allow smoking indoors at their workplace compared to those who did (95% CI: 1.28-12.23, $p=0.017$), and 10.98 times higher among those who stated that the law did not cause financial loss compared to those who stated it did (95% CI: 3.34-36.07, $p<0.001$) (Table 5). Although a positive view of Law No. 4207 was statistically significantly different between business owners who smoked and those who did not, this variable was not included in the binary logistic regression analysis because an Odds ratio cannot be calculated when one cell count is zero.

Discussion

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and even short-term exposure can be harmful to health. Smoke-free laws make smoking less acceptable, less visible to children and adolescents, and promote healthier behaviors such as not smoking at home or in the car. Smoke-free environments can also encourage smokers to reduce tobacco use, attempt to quit, and ultimately live tobacco-free in the long term [4].

According to the Turkish Ministry of Health's Health Statistics Yearbook 2022, the daily use of tobacco and tobacco products among those aged 15 and over is 28%, with a rate of 41% among men and 15% among women [13]. In our study, 61.8% of all participants smoking, and 64.1% used tobacco and tobacco products (with smoking hookah).

In a study conducted by Baran et al. (2010) in Kars Central just before the implementation of the ban on the use of tobacco products in enclosed areas of cafés, coffeehouses, bars, and restaurants under Law No. 4207 on July 19, 2009, 50% of café, coffeehouse, bar, and restaurant owners smoking [14]. The smoking rate of participants in our study is higher than both the national rate in Turkey and the rate reported in the 2009 study.

Studies examining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cafés, coffeehouses, and restaurants in our country have reported that nearly all food and beverage businesses were unprepared for the crisis, the support provided by the government was insufficient, and many business owners did not benefit adequately from the announced aid packages [15,16].

During the course of the study, some business owners mentioned during interviews that they smoking more due to the poor economic situation of the country. The high smoking rate in our study can be explained by the fact that 88.5% of the participants were male, and 61.6% of the 125 business owners who reported experiencing financial loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic cited the country's economic situation as a cause of their financial difficulties.

In our study, a positive view of Law No. 4207 was higher among those with high school and higher education levels compared to those with middle school and lower education levels ($p=0.046$). Similarly, Balcı et al. (2016) found that in their study conducted among employers and employees in coffeehouses, cafés, and restaurants in Kayseri, those with high school or higher education levels supported the law more than those with middle school or lower education levels ($p=0.018$) [17]. This situation reflects the impact of education level on health literacy, similar to other health indicators in our country [18].

In our study, those who had never smoked, only tried smoking, or had quit smoking had a more positive view of the Law No. 4207 compared to those who smoked occasionally or regularly ($p<0.001$). Similarly, in the study by Balcı et al. (2016), those who had quit smoking or never smoked supported the law more than current smokers ($p<0.001$) [17]. In a study by Özcebe et al. (2012) evaluating the views of employees and customers in coffeehouses, restaurants, and cafés across eight cities regarding the ban on smoking in the hospitality sector, 65.8% of non-

Table 3. Evaluation of Smoking Status of Café, Coffeehouse, and Restaurant Owners by Various Variables in Kars City Center, 2022.

Characteristics	Smoking Status of Employer*				X ²	p**
	Occasionally/Daily Smokes (n= 85)		Never/Only Tried/Quit (n= 43)			
	n	%	n	%		
Sex						
Male	77	68.1	36	31.9	0.722	0.395
Female	8	53.3	7	46.7		
Age Groups						
Under 40	48	70.6	20	29.4	0.773	0.379
40 and over	37	61.7	23	38.3		
Marital Status						
Married	55	65.5	29	34.5	0.012	0.912
Single/Divorced/Widowed	30	68.2	14	31.8		
Educational Level						
Middle School or less	27	62.8	16	37.2	0.175	0.676
High School or higher	58	68.2	27	31.8		
Income Status						
Saving Money/Just Getting By	40	59.7	27	40.3	2.237	0.135
Using Savings/Borrowing	45	73.8	16	26.2		
Type of Business						
Restaurant	48	66.7	24	33.3	0.001	1.000
Café/Coffeehouse	37	66.1	19	33.9		
Smoking Status of Employer (n= 126)						
Occasionally/Daily Smokes	18	81.8	4	18.2	2.056	0.152
Never Smoked/Only Tried/Quit	67	63.2	39	36.8		
Smoking Indoors at Workplace						
Yes	25	78.1	7	21.9	1.973	0.160
No	60	62.5	36	37.5		
Smoking Indoors at Home						
Yes	25	78.1	7	21.9	1.973	0.160
No	60	62.5	36	37.5		

*Row percentage, **Yates' corrected chi-square test.

smoking employees supported the ban, compared to 53.9% of smokers [19].

In another study by Özcebe et al. (2015) conducted in certain districts of Ankara, similar to our study, 75.7% of smoking employees and customers in patisseries approved of the Law No. 4207 in enclosed areas, compared to 93.4% of those who had quit smoking and 97.3% of non-smokers [20].

These results indicate that the ban is not as strongly supported by smokers as it is by non-smokers. Given the positive health effects of the ban on smokers, it suggests that smokers need more information about the benefits of the ban.

In our study, 75.6% of business owners did not allow smoking in their homes, and 82.4% did not allow smoking in the enclosed areas of their workplaces. Ay et al. (2016) found

non-compliance rates with the tobacco products ban in enclosed areas to be 49.0% and 29.7% for 2013 and 2014, respectively, based on data collected through direct observations and interviews in restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in Istanbul [21]. In a similar study conducted by Baran et al. (2010) in Kars before the implementation of the ban in 2009, 69.1% of participants did not allow smoking in their homes, and only 5.1% did not allow smoking in their workplaces. The non-smoking rate in workplaces in our study was significantly higher compared to 2009 [14]. This indicates that the ban has been embraced by business owners.

In the study conducted by Baran et al. (2010) in Kars before the implementation of the ban in 2009, 72.5% of business owners indicated that the ban would cause financial loss [14]. In our study, 47.3% of business owners reported

Table 4. Evaluation of Café, Coffeehouse, and Restaurant Owners' Views on Law No. 4207 by Various Variables in Kars City Center, 2022.

Characteristics	View on Law No. 4207*				X ²	p
	Positive		Negative			
	n	%	n	%		
Sex						
Male	89	78.1	25	21.9	1.000**	
Female	12	80.0	3	20.0		
Age Groups						
Under 40	55	77.5	16	22.5	0.001	0.969***
40 and over	46	79.3	12	20.7		
Marital Status						
Married	64	77.1	19	22.9	0.047	0.829***
Single/Divorced/Widowed	37	80.4	9	19.6		
Educational Level						
Middle School or less	28	66.7	14	33.3	3.992	0.046***
High School or higher	73	83.9	14	16.1		
Income Status						
Saving Money/Just Getting By	55	79.7	14	20.3	0.042	0.838
Using Savings/Borrowing	46	76.7	14	23.3		
Type of Business						
Restaurant	60	83.3	12	16.7	1.810	0.179***
Café/Coffeehouse	41	71.9	16	28.1		
Smoking Status of Employer (n= 126)						
Occasionally/Daily Smokes	57	68.7	26	31.3	15.113	<0.001***
Never Smoked/Only Tried/Quit	43	100.0	0	0.0		
Smoking Indoors at Workplace						
Yes	13	56.5	10	43.5	0.010**	
No	88	83.0	18	17.0		
Smoking Indoors at Home						
Yes	22	68.8	10	31.3	1.596	0.207***
No	79	81.4	18	18.6		
Financial Impact of the Law						
Yes	37	60.7	24	39.3	19.263	<0.001***
No	64	94.1	4	5.92		
COVID-19 Financial Impact (n=127)						
Yes	96	78.0	27	2.0	0.578**	
No	4	100.0	0	0.0		

*Row percentage **Fisher's exact chi-square test ***Yates' corrected chi-square test.

that the law caused financial loss, this situation indicating that the anticipated loss did not materialize as expected.

A limitation of our study is that it was conducted in restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses located on the busy streets of Kars city center. The researchers' selection of restaurants, coffeehouses, and cafés on busy streets based on their own judgments and the use of a non-probability sampling method prevent the results from being generalized to all restaurants, coffeehouses, and cafés in the central dis-

Table 5. The Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of Café, Coffeehouse, and Restaurant Owners' Positive Opinion About The Law No. 4207 in Kars City Center, 2022.

Characteristics	OR (95% CI)*	p
Educational Level		
Middle School or less	1.00	0.049
High School or higher	2.69 (1.01-7.2)	
Smoking Indoors at Workplace		
Yes	1.00	0.017
No	3.96 (1.28-12.23)	
Financial Impact of the Law		
Yes	1.00	<0.001
No	10.98 (3.34-36.07)	

*OR: Odds Ratio; 95% CI: 95% Confidence Interval.

trict of Kars. Additionally, the assessment of smoking in enclosed areas of workplaces relied on the business owners' declarations and observations of smoking and/or the presence of ashtrays in enclosed areas, which may not accurately reflect the actual situation. Furthermore, conducting the study between June and November, when smoking in open areas of workplaces is possible, made it challenging to objectively assess smoking in enclosed areas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the positive view of the implementation of Law No. 4207 and the belief that it did not cause financial loss among the majority of restaurant cafés, and coffeehouses business owners in our study indicate that the law has been accepted over the years. The fact that most smoking business owners did not find it difficult to comply with the smoking ban in enclosed areas and had a positive view of the law suggests that the acceptance of the law extends to smokers as well. The higher rate of smoking among business owners in our study compared to the national average in Turkey and the study conducted in the same area in 2009, along with the verbal declarations of some business owners attributing their increased consumption to the country's economic situation, and the fact that the economic situation of the country was cited as the primary cause of financial loss by business owners during COVID-19 pandemic, suggest that these factors may reduce the gains of Law No. 4207. This shows the need for a more comprehensive approach to tobacco control. In our country, the state should provide more support to the food and beverage sector, including cafes, coffeehouses, and restaurants. Awareness campaigns should be conducted for employers in this sector who use tobacco products about the prohibition of tobacco use in enclosed areas. Furthermore, the enforcement of this prohibition should be intensified to eliminate the distinction in the eyes of customers between cafes, coffeehouses, and restaurants that permit and those that do not permit tobacco use in enclosed areas. This approach will ensure steady progress towards protecting both tobacco users and non-users from the harms of tobacco products in the most effective manner.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that there were no conflicts of interest involved in the writing of this article.

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Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Committee for Non-Interventional Studies of Kafkas University Medical Faculty during the session dated January 26, 2022, and numbered 01, with unanimous consent. Additionally, official written permission was obtained from the Kars Governorship and the Provincial Health Directorate on May 12, 2022.

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