

## PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY: SMOKING BEHAVIOR AMONG WOMEN IN THE DISTRICT OGAN ILIR

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### Abstract

Smoking behavior is a habit that has been going on for a long time in various cultures, especially in Indonesian society. This smoking behavior was previously considered an activity only carried out by men, but over time this trend has begun to develop among women. This research was conducted with the aim of exploring the meaning of smoking behavior for the life of a female smoker. The research method used is a qualitative phenomenological approach to understand the subjective experiences of female smokers. There were two female informants who were the subjects of this research. The research results show that smoking has a complex meaning in women's lives, often interpreted as a coping mechanism for dealing with stress and emotional conflict, both in romantic relationships and in the family environment. Even though smoking provides a sense of calm, this behavior has negative impacts on physical and psychological health, including the risk of heart disease, cancer, coughing, shortness of breath, insomnia and anxiety. It is hoped that this research can be used to design more effective preventive interventions.

**Keywords:** Phenomenology, Smoking Behavior, Women

### A. INTRODUCTION

Smoking behavior is a social phenomenon that has always been a concern in various circles of society, especially in Indonesia. This smoking habit is often associated with various health risks, both physical and psychological. Smoking is often thought to provide enjoyment for smokers, but on the other hand, this activity also has the potential to have negative impacts on smokers themselves and the people around them. The dangerous substances contained in cigarettes can have bad effects on the bodies of those who smoke them (Nugroho, 2017). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), smoking is the main cause of various serious diseases, such as lung cancer, heart disease and chronic respiratory problems. Smoking habits in Indonesia are in an alarming condition. According to data from the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) conducted by the Indonesian Ministry of Health, the number of active smokers is estimated to reach 70 million people, with 7.4% of them coming from the 10-18 year age group. The prevalence of smoking among teenagers and children always increases very rapidly every year.

In Indonesian society, smoking behavior is usually associated with a symbol of masculinity and maturity in men (Ramadani & Dody May Putra Agustang, 2023). However, as time went by, this smoking behavior was not only carried out by men, but also began to spread widely among women. A phenomenon like this is of course a serious thing for women to pay attention to, because it can cause various health risks. Based on several studies, women

who smoke have a 25% higher risk of heart disease and lung cancer than men who smoke. This is caused by differences in body weight and smaller blood vessel sizes in women. Among women, smoking has a very negative impact and high risk on women's health conditions which include reproductive system disorders, menstrual cycle disorders such as pain, decreased fertility, increased risk of breast, uterine and lung cancer, disturbances in fetal growth, problems with breast milk production, risk of miscarriage, and fetal death (Kurniafitri & Asriwandari, 2015).

The phenomenon of female smoking initially started from trial and error, but has now grown rapidly. Even in several areas in Indonesia, smoking behavior among women has been considered a lifestyle or current trend. However, the existence of a phenomenon like this often triggers the emergence of various pros and cons among society. Some people argue that smoking behavior in women can reduce their moral values as women who should be able to behave according to their gender, such as being polite, feminine, gentle and graceful (Halking et al., 2022). In this traditional view, smoking is often seen as behavior that is considered "hard" or "naughty", therefore this smoking behavior is very contrary to the image of women who are expected to be gentle and graceful.

As a behavior that has become a social phenomenon, smoking behavior is not only seen as a habit or addiction, but also reflects an individual's subjective experience in interacting with their social, cultural and psychological environment. There are two factors that encourage women to smoke, namely internal and external factors. These internal factors include high curiosity, while these external factors are influences from the surrounding environment such as peer interactions or lack of supervision from parents (Aulia et al., 2023). Another factor that can encourage individuals to smoke is stress. Because many people think that smoking can relieve stress. It should also be noted that women are a group that is more susceptible to negative influences from the surrounding environment, so they are very easily influenced to try things out because of their high level of curiosity.

Through a phenomenological approach, phenomena like this will later be studied in more depth regarding the dynamics of smoking behavior in women. Research using a phenomenological approach aims to understand human life experiences in the context of people's thoughts and behavior, as understood or perceived by the individuals themselves. Through this phenomenological approach, you will gain better knowledge about reality (Nasir et al., 2023). It is important to carry out this research to provide a more comprehensive picture of smoking behavior in women, and it is hoped that the results of this research can be used as a basis for developing more effective smoking prevention interventions and programs for women..

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Women and Cigarettes**

This highlights the complexity of women smokers' social identities, particularly in the context of how they negotiate between societal expectations and personal realities. On the one hand, they face strong social stigma, where women who smoke are often associated with negative stereotypes such as a lack of morality or non-compliance with traditional norms. However, on the other hand, smoking for some women is also a means of expressing self-identity, showing toughness, independence, or as a way of dealing with emotional and social pressure. The conflict between societal demands to adhere to traditional gender roles and personal desires to assert this identity creates a complex dynamic, reflecting how women who smoke are often held in an ambiguous position in the eyes of society.

In the context of public health policy, these findings show the importance of a more inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to education about the dangers of smoking. Approaches that focus too much on judgment or prohibition tend to be ineffective because they ignore the emotional and social motivations that underlie smoking behavior in women. Instead, strategies are needed that not only provide information about health risks, but also offer psychological and social support to help individuals deal with the stresses that drive them to smoke. Thus, health education based on empathy and understanding of the social context can be a more effective step in reducing the prevalence of smoking in women without strengthening existing stigma (Arisani et al., 2023).

### **The Meaning of Smoking for Women**

This reveals that smoking for female students has various meanings that are closely related to emotional aspects and self-identity. Smoking is often considered a form of relaxation, helping people achieve calm and clarity of thought amidst the stress of everyday life. Apart from that, smoking also functions to reduce negative emotions, such as anger or sadness, which are difficult for them to express directly. In certain contexts, smoking has even become a symbol of self-identity, where some female students consider it a way to show their tough, independent and brave side in facing social stigma. This shows that smoking behavior is not only related to physical habits, but also touches deeper psychological and social dimensions. However, the informants are aware of the negative consequences that accompany this habit, both in terms of health and social acceptance. Health risks such as respiratory problems and other illnesses are a concern, although they are often ignored in the short term. On the other hand, the social stigma against women who smoke, which is often associated with negative perceptions, is a challenge in itself. However, for some female students, awareness of this stigma does not necessarily stop them from smoking, but instead becomes part of their struggle to maintain or form their personal identity. This reflects the complexity of the relationship between emotional needs, identity affirmation, and social pressure in the lives of female students who smoke (Usman, 2024).

### **Motivation and Factors Driving Smoking Behavior**

Research shows that women's motivations for smoking are often rooted in deep emotional needs. The activity of smoking is considered to be able to provide a sensation of relaxation and calm amidst the pressures of daily life. For many women, smoking is also a way to reduce stress and manage negative emotions, such as anger, sadness or anxiety. In certain situations, cigarettes function as a temporary escape from environmental stress or internal conflicts that are difficult to overcome. More than just a physical habit, these activities have complex psychological dimensions, reflecting the way individuals deal with the emotional and social challenges they experience.

In addition, for some women, smoking is not only a habit, but also a means of asserting their identity. This activity is often associated with a symbol of toughness, independence and courage in challenging conservative social norms. Women who smoke may view smoking as a way to demonstrate resistance to gender stereotypes that require them to appear gentle or submissive. In this context, smoking becomes a symbol of emancipation and personal autonomy. This perspective is in line with the finding that smoking behavior can represent certain social and psychological values, especially among students and adolescents who are in the identity search phase. Thus, smoking is not just a habit, but also a manifestation of personal and social struggles faced by individuals in certain contexts (Hidayatullah., 2011).

### **C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative approach that focuses on phenomenological studies. In this strategy, researchers identify the nature of human experience regarding a particular phenomenon. This phenomenological approach is an approach that attempts to understand the subject from their own perspective. In this method, researchers act as the main tool for collecting information. Researchers need to have special skills to extract information from participants through in-depth and detailed interviews. In-depth interviews are a technique in which researchers obtain information by exploring participants' answers about their views on a phenomenon or symptom (Salim et al., 2024)

This research was conducted in Ogan Ilir Regency. Participants in this research were selected using a purposive sampling technique, namely a sample selection method based on special criteria set by the researcher. Participants in this study were determined based on the criteria of being female and having experience as an active smoker for more than 2 years. Informant data was collected using observation sheets and interview guidelines. After the data was collected, the researcher analyzed it by reading and marking statements that were considered significant. Statements that are considered important are then grouped into relevant themes to be described as the results of this research.

### **D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of data from interviews that we conducted with 2 informants with the initials N (21 years) and S (20 years), the results showed that there were various answers regarding the factors, impacts, reasons and meaning of smoking from the two informants who had a smoking habit.

#### **Factors Causing Smoking**

Based on the interviews conducted, the results showed that the informant first tried cigarettes because he copied the habits of his family. In line with research results (Utami, 2020), which show that parental smoking habits significantly influence the emergence of smoking habits in children. Meanwhile, the informant with the initials S tried smoking because he had a high curiosity about cigarettes. Apart from that, the friendship environment was also one of the factors that influenced the emergence of the smoking habit. This is similar to the answer given by the informant with the initials N who said that the reason he smoked was not only following his example from his family but also being influenced by his circle of friends.

The friendship environment has a significant influence on smoking behavior in women, especially among teenagers and young adults. If there is a role model in the circle of friends, such as a friend who has a smoking habit, women tend to imitate this behavior as a form of effort to get closer or strengthen their friendship. It should also be noted that women are a group that is vulnerable to being influenced by invitations from their peers. Peers are the first group where teenagers learn many things outside the family environment (Hidayah & Izzaty, 2019). Children in their late teens tend to do more activities with their friends, so this can give rise to various factors that influence attitudes, interests, conversations, appearance and even behavior, because peers have a very big influence (Turnip & Soetjiningasih, 2023).

#### **The impact felt**

According to WHO, the smoking habit has a serious impact, especially on female smokers. This is also in accordance with the statement made by the informant with the initials N, namely, he experienced problems with his body health such as frequent coughing for a long period of time, shortness of breath and difficulty sleeping. (insomnia). Cigarettes contain

substances that are harmful to health, with varying risks, ranging from minor problems such as coughing and bad breath to serious diseases such as cancer (Laia et al., 2022). The more cigarettes smoked every day, the higher the chance a person will experience insomnia. This is caused by the nicotine content in cigarettes which is a stimulant (Baureh & Purnawinadi, 2019).

Meanwhile, the impact experienced by the informant with the initials S was the impact on his psychological condition. The psychological impact he felt was that he felt anxious and uneasy because the informant with the initials S was already dependent on cigarettes. This is supported by the opinion of (Nurmawadah & Sa'id, 2021) which states that people who are dependent on smoking cannot control their desire to stop smoking because they are affected by the effects of nicotine. If an active smoker wants to stop smoking, they will feel anxiety and anxiety because they have to stop being dependent on nicotine. Someone who has experienced the pleasure of smoking tends to repeat the habit. The nicotine contained in cigarettes can trigger women who smoke to become addicted, so that this smoking habit is very likely to recur in the future for most women who smoke.

### **Intensity of Smoking Habit**

Someone who is already addicted to smoking has a fairly high level of smoking frequency. This is in accordance with the answers given by informants with the initials N and S, who said that in one day they could finish 1 pack of cigarettes or the equivalent of 16 cigarettes. On the other hand, the social environment also influences a person's smoking frequency, especially when they are hanging out with their playmates. Both informants said that the familiar and comfortable atmosphere when gathering with friends made them feel more relaxed, this is what encouraged them to continue smoking as a way to enjoy these moments of togetherness. Smoking is often associated with moments of pleasure and togetherness, therefore the level of cigarette consumption increases when someone is socializing.

Meanwhile, according to the informant with the initials S, he said that the intensity of his smoking habit increased when he was experiencing stress or was experiencing a lot of problems. This is in line with the results of previous research (Dewi et al., 2020) which revealed that there are differences in the intensity of smoking habits based on a person's stress level. The higher the level of stress, the greater the smoking habit in women. When someone smokes a cigarette, the nicotine contained in the cigarette will be absorbed by the body and received by the taste receptors on the tongue, then passed on to the brain. When in the brain, nicotine will stimulate the release of the hormone dopamine which can cause feelings of calm, stimulate the brain to work harder, provide a feeling of freshness, eliminate feelings of sleepiness, and stimulate other cognitive activities (Baureh & Purnawinadi, 2019).

### **The Meaning of Cigarettes for Smokers' Lives**

Cigarettes have complex meanings in the lives of many people, reflecting various social, health and psychological aspects. For some people, smoking can be a status symbol or a way to socialize, helping them feel connected to certain groups. Most smokers, when they smoke, feel an excessive increase in dopamine as a feeling of calm, happiness or enjoyment. Based on the results of the interviews conducted, there were several meanings conveyed by the two informants regarding the meaning of smoking for their lives.

First, informants N and S interpreted smoking as a form of diversion from a conflict. Informant N stated that smoking was a form of diversion from conflict in his romantic world. Informant N stated that when he felt disappointed in his love story, he vented his disappointment by smoking. Women who use cigarettes as a form of diversion from romantic

conflicts can be said to be a form of their coping mechanism in reducing emotional tension. However, the coping mechanism used by informant N leads to negative behavior. Conflict in love is a situation that is often unexpected, stressful and disappointing, so it can be a source of stress for someone who is unable to control their feelings of disappointment (Hafizhah & Paramita, 2023).

Apart from that, the informant with the initials S stated that smoking was a form of diversion from conflict in his family environment. The role of parents has a big influence on a child's development. Women who smoke as a way of diverting the conflict between their parents in a broken home can be interpreted as a form of escape from the problems they face. When parents frequently fight or separate, children may feel stressed, sad, or confused. Smoking could be one way the woman tries to reduce the pain or emotional stress that arises from conflict at home. In this case, smoking not only becomes a habit, but can also be said to be a temporary "comfort" to forget about existing problems.

The second meaning, they interpret smoking as a way to find calm when they feel stressed. Both informants considered smoking as an activity that can help regulate breathing, provide a sense of calm and clarity of thought, and function as a tool to reduce emotions such as anger or sadness. Based on the results of interviews with the informant with the initials N, he stated that smoking can relieve stress and the smoke released can reduce the burden on his mind, while the informant with the initials S stated that smoking can relieve the stress he feels. Some people say that the nicotine content in cigarettes can provide a feeling of calm or control in the midst of a chaotic situation, even though it is not actually a healthy solution. This is supported by the results of research conducted by Ari Usman (2024), which shows that women smokers view cigarettes as a source of subjective benefits, especially in the psychological aspect.

## E. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the smoking habit among women is influenced by various factors, such as family influence, friendship environment, and high curiosity. This habit has a negative impact on a person's physical health, such as experiencing coughing for a long time and shortness of breath. Not only that was the impact felt by the informants, they also felt a negative impact on their psychological conditions, such as often experiencing insomnia and anxiety due to dependence on nicotine. A person's smoking intensity can increase when he is in a comfortable social situation and when he is experiencing stress. The smoking habit has a complex meaning for women, where they see it as a way to divert attention from emotional conflicts, both conflicts with family and conflicts in their love stories. In addition, smoking is considered a coping mechanism to deal with stress and provide a sense of calm, even if it is only temporary. However, this coping mechanism leads a person to negative behavior, so it is very dangerous if left alone. Therefore, it is important to understand the complexity of the smoking habit by paying attention to social factors, health impacts and emotional meaning in order to encourage more effective interventions in reducing smoking habits among women.

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