

## A qualitative study to control adolescent smoking behaviour in junior high school

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To evaluate efforts made to help young people curb smoking behaviour.

**Method:** The qualitative study was conducted from January to February 2020 at 3 junior high schools in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after approval from the ethics review committee of the University of Indonesia. The participants were students in grades 7 and 8. Data was collected through interviews, documentation and field notes. Data was subjected to construct and content validation, and was qualitatively analysed using NVivo 12 Plus.

**Results:** Of the 16 students, 2(12.5%) were from grade 7, and 14(87.5%) from grade 8. Overall, 12(75%) adolescents had smoked. There were 5 themes that emerged: smoking compulsion, adolescent perspectives on smoking behaviour, knowledge of the risks associated with smoking, obstacles to quitting, and smoking control strategies. To curb adolescent smoking, there were 2 themes: barriers to quitting smoking, and smoking control strategies.

**Conclusion:** Efforts to curb smoking should focus on increasing adolescent self-control.

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### Introduction

Indonesia is a country with the highest number of smokers in the world, after China and India.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that 70% of tobacco-related deaths take place in developing countries.<sup>2</sup> The World Health Organisation (WHO) has reported that the number adolescents make up for around 30% of the total number of smokers in the world. The high incidence of smoking in adolescents is a concern.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS), 20% adolescents in Indonesia smoke at age 13-15 years.<sup>3</sup> Smoking prevalence in Indonesia continues to increase every year, and in 2018 the incidence rate grew by 9.1%.<sup>4</sup>

Adolescents struggle refuse an invitation to smoke from their peers because adolescents have a strong desire to try new things, and have a high level of curiosity about new behaviours. Adolescents who lack self-control are persuaded to smoke by their peers.<sup>5</sup> Adolescents are likely to adopt negative behaviour if they are exposed to a negative environment.<sup>6</sup> Adolescents will struggle to avoid smoking behaviour if they lack self-control. Peers can easily influence adolescents who lack self-control, and cannot think about the outcomes of their conduct. Adolescents who start smoking when they are young are more likely to continue smoking later on.<sup>5,6</sup>

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Smoking behaviour in adolescents can be managed with a positive environment and a clear set of community values, and in this regard, peers, parents, siblings and teachers can all be excellent role models. Adolescents with positive social attributes are likely to avoid engaging in risky behaviour.<sup>7</sup>

The current study was planned to evaluate efforts made to help young people curb smoking behaviour.

### Subjects and Methods

The qualitative study was conducted from January 9 to February 2, 2020, at 3 junior high schools in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after approval from the ethics review committee of the University of Indonesia. The sample was raised using quota sampling technique. Those included were students in grades 7 and 8. After taking informed consent, data was collected till data saturation through interviews, documentation and field notes. Those who did not volunteer to participate were excluded.

Data was subjected to construct and content validation, and was qualitatively analysed using NVivo 12 Plus and the source triangulation method.<sup>8-10</sup>

### Results

Of the 16 students, 2(12.5%) were from grade 7 and 14(87.5%) from grade 8. Overall, 12(75%) adolescents had smoked; 7(58.3%) had started in primary school, and 5(41.7%) in junior high school.

There were 5 themes that emerged: smoking compulsion, adolescent perspectives on smoking behaviour,

knowledge of the risks associated with smoking, obstacles to quitting, and smoking control strategies. To curb adolescent smoking, there were 2 themes: barriers to quitting smoking, and smoking control strategies.

There were numerous barriers to controlling smoking behaviour, as identified by the participants.

*"When I am out with my friends, I get addicted to smoking."* (P3)

*"It is difficult for me to avoid my smoking friends."* (P2)

*"I find it difficult to decline a friend's request to smoke."* (P13).

*"A friend persuaded me to smoke."* (P11)

*"I was hesitant because a friend offered me cigarettes, but I refused."* (P13)

The efforts the participants were making for controlling their smoking behaviour were also articulated.

*"I pray to forget about cigarettes."* (P3)

*"I'm looking for a non-smoking friend."* (P3)

*"I recite the Quran at night."* (P3)

*"I do not smoke anymore because my mother forbids it."* (P7)

*"If I want to be a soldier like my uncle, I need to quit smoking."* (P7)

*"I play football with my friends every afternoon."* (P7)

*"I play sports with my friends every afternoon."* (P9)

*"I do not have to play with smoking friends, and I can find friends who do not smoke."* (P6)

The participants also expressed the need for support to control the smoking behaviour.

*"I need my parents' support. My parents are opposed to my smoking. If I smoke, my parents get upset."* (P10)

*"Even though my father smokes, my father forbids me from smoking."* (P5)

*"I need my friends' help to quit smoking."* (P3).

## Discussion

The study found that adolescents experienced obstacles in quitting smoking because they felt they failed to avoid friends who smoked. The adolescents said that the obstacles they faced came from their peers and the negative environment around them. The peer influence identified in the current study was in line with earlier findings.<sup>11</sup> The social aspect is a powerful predictor of smoking.<sup>12</sup> The current study also found that the adolescents tended to imitate their peers and family adults who smoke. This is in line with previous research.<sup>13</sup>

Obstacles to quitting smoking came from their family because someone in the family happened to be a smoker. The status of parental smoking influences adolescent

smoking behaviour.<sup>14,15</sup>

The current study suggests that the barrier could be overcome by increasing adolescent self-control. As revealed by the current subjects, the way to control smoking behaviour is by increasing self-efficacy by overcoming the inability to decline the invitation of friends who smoke.<sup>16</sup> Another way to control smoking is to increase self-confidence by not getting influenced by peer persuasion, and by taking part in positive activities.<sup>17</sup> Self-control from an early age is likely to prevent adolescent smoking behaviour.<sup>17</sup> Self-control is the ability to self-regulate, and is a variable related to one's coping actions.<sup>5,17</sup>

The current study found that the strategies for controlling cigarettes adopted by the adolescents comprised motivating themselves to stop smoking, taking advantage of free time, obeying parents, following school policies, and making new friends who do not smoke.

Adolescents addicted to cigarettes or novice smokers promise to reduce the number of cigarettes smoked, but the intention to have it is the most important determinant of a person's behaviour.<sup>18,19</sup> Intention is defined as a person's motivation to behave; it is a psychological trait that affects a person's attitude towards behaviour. A person's strong intention will display certain behaviours. Intentions change over time. The greater the gap between intention and behaviour, the more is the likelihood of a change in intention.<sup>19</sup>

Research has suggested that in addition to peers, the parents have a direct association with adolescent smoking behaviour. If the parents have positive attributes, it will have a good impact on adolescent behaviour.<sup>20</sup>

Control smoking behaviour is influenced by environmental factors at home and at school. Adolescents can control their smoking habits by making friends who are non-smokers. Efforts to control smoking behaviour should focus on identifying values in society and the environment around adolescents. Teenagers who have positive social connections are less likely to engage in dangerous behaviour.<sup>6,7,19,20</sup>

## Conclusion

Adolescent smoking behaviour can be controlled by increasing adolescent self-control.

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