

CHAPTER II

**THE PHENOMENA OF PERCEIVED HEALTH BELIEFS AND
INTENTIONS FOR SMOKING CESSATION TOWARDS CIGARETTE
SMOKING IN INDONESIA**

Cigarette smoking is deeply embedded within Indonesian culture throughout the passing generations, as it is often associated with the significance in socializing behavior amongst peers. The western influence had introduced tobacco into the Javanese island in the beginning of the 17th century, located within the Indonesian archipelago (Hanusz, 2000, as cited by Issuu, 2020), and due to the stimulating effects and value for social integration, it became a trademark habit. Tobacco smoking, alongside Betel nut (*Biji Pinang*), were sought out commodities in the market, particularly among Javanese upper-class men. During this time, cigarettes were still individually rolled from home-grown tobacco gardens without manufacturing. But in 1850, when the first commercial tobacco plantations were finally established in the Sumatran regions, the production for commercial cigarettes further advanced with tobacco wrapped in corn-husk leaves (Hanusz, 2000, as cited by Sellato, 2001). Throughout the following years, cigarette manufacturing refined within form, flavor, and financial cost. But its own societal significance remains unwavering.

In the present era, cigarette smoking is recognized throughout various social settings. Between conversations in the confines of public facilities and outdoor spaces, which ranged from small shops (*warungs*), street markets, coffee shops, restaurants,

learning institutions, public transportations, and even near places of worship. The smoking prevalence has become heavily ingrained within public society, that one cannot observe their own surrounding environment without coming across it (Martini et al., 2022). Other than that, smoking has become a common medium for individuals in managing stress relief, dietary methods, coping with heavy emotions or difficult situations, and improving concentration on a day-to-day basis (McRobbie, 2009).

Based on the perpetuated normalization of cigarette smoking, it further suggests that the prominent societal acceptance of smoking possesses the power to influence the perception of smoking as a health-risk behavior, especially from the smokers' standpoint. Formulating their perspective into subjective, yet individualized, health beliefs. Without proper awareness regarding the repercussions, smokers will not only struggle to shift away from prevalent smoking norms, but also become reluctant in grasping the severity of the foreseeable health consequences into their own understanding. The point of realization must strike deeply into the conscience of smokers, encouraging them to question the extent in which they will stop to fully acknowledge or accept cigarette smoking as a health-risk behavior that only gradually reduces the longevity and quality of their lives at the cost of their own.

Public majority continues to disregard health warnings associated with cigarette smoking, often underestimating risks and accepting misconceptions. Based on research from the Tobacco Economics in Indonesia, it discovered that smokers believed smoking 1-2 cigarette packs per day posed no significant risks (Barber et al., 2008). Another study reported that smokers believed that they could prevent themselves from

contracting smoking-related health issues only through traditional herbal remedies, reflecting a reliance on folk beliefs rather than scientific-based evidence (Febriyanti et al., 2024). Nowadays, smokers believe that smoking e-cigarettes is a safe alternative in quitting smoking, containing less harmful chemicals compared to conventional cigarettes (Glantz & Bareham, 2018). All of which is devoid from evidence in guaranteeing these beliefs lead to health improvements. Inaccurate public perceptions within society regarding smoking-related risks not only fosters misinterpreted information, but also positions smokers at susceptible risk in suffering from critical illnesses that they will encounter within their lifetime.

Cognitive dissonance performs as a significant role within the public acknowledgment of health risks associated with smoking. By minimizing their individual beliefs that regard smoking as a health-risk behavior, people avoid the discomfort that arises from their contradicting action. Previous research from the United States had investigated active smokers' beliefs on minimizing perceived smoking-related health risks and diseases that are susceptible to them. According to the findings, smokers had a moderate-to-high knowledge towards smoking-related diseases, such as risk for premature death (95%), pulmonary (94%), cardiovascular (93%), oral health disease (89%), cancer (71%). However, they underestimated the possibilities for developing a disability (63.5%) and reproductive issues (44%) as a health-risk from smoking (Oncken et al., 2005).

Although the strong cultural acceptance regards smoking as a socially-engaging behavior, it can cultivate a physically addictive relationship with nicotine as a negative

outcome. With the continuous increase in the number of smokers in Indonesia within the last decade (Nurfitriani et al., 2023), it is forecasted to amount to more than 38.58 % of the total population in the next few years. By 2029, it is estimated to have accumulated over 93 million people, particularly among adult smokers (Degenhard, 2024, as cited in Statista, 2024). Consequently, further raising serious concerns on the addictive nature of cigarettes in fostering nicotine-dependence throughout the population, as well as susceptible risks with smoking-related diseases among smokers.

The health risks and consequences associated with cigarette smoking in Indonesia can inflict great damage towards the human anatomy, harming nearly every internal organ and attracting diseases. With more than 70 million people consuming tobacco products (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2021; World Health Organization, 2024), smokers increase their own health risks of becoming susceptible towards smoking-related diseases, or meeting an unfortunate premature death from it. Illnesses, such as ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, tuberculosis, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases were discovered to be leading causes of smoking-related deaths (IHME, 2017 as cited in Marquez & Wadhwa, 2019). Harmful chemicals contained within cigarettes can further develop cancerous diseases, critically affecting numerous areas, such as the blood, cervix, colon, esophagus, lungs, kidney, liver, bladder, mouth, pancreas, stomach, and many more (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023).

Exposure from second-hand smoking can potentially endanger the people within the surrounding environment. Contracting nasal irritation, stroke, lung cancer,

heart disease, and adverse reproductive issues are commonly found among adults. However, adolescents are more susceptible towards lower respiratory illness, impaired lung function, and infant death syndrome (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014, as cited by Wills & Wiesen, 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO) surveyed the exposure to secondhand smoking in Indonesia (2021) among the population between the ages 15 and over and found that public citizens were still exposed to smoke within their surroundings in public and private facilities, involving restaurants (74.2%), residence (59.3%), government buildings (51.4%), workplaces (44.8%), public transportation (40.5%), and healthcare facilities (14.2%) (Statista, 2023).

The Indonesian government has safeguarded citizens in reducing the high smoking rates through public health campaigns and environmental regulations throughout regions. However, the knowledge and awareness regarding smoking-related health risks are still not as universally known as it seems, as there are still existing misconceptions surrounding the severity of the impact from smoking-related issues, inefficient progress on anti-smoking efforts, as well as the increase of victims to smoking-related diseases or deaths that continues to persist (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2023; World Bank, 2020; World Health Organization, 2021).

Despite the known health concerns and warnings, Indonesia is ranked third amongst the largest consumers and manufactured tobacco-producing countries in the world aside from China, Brazil, India, and the United States of America (World Health Organization, 2024). Considering the affordability, marketing exposure, and

accessibility to cigarettes that additionally contribute to the widespread prevalence in smoking, it counteracts the public health messages regarding smoking and undermines smoking cessation efforts. Therefore, reinforcing major difficulties to leave the smoking culture. All of which poses significant challenges for smoking cessation, as individuals can experience the social pressure in conforming with the prevailing smoking habit.

People still struggle to quit smoking, which is rooted to their dependence and accustomed smoking routine. Each smoker has their own unique motivations for smoking, which can include, but are not limited to, withdrawing from personal issues, finding a common community, sense of relaxation, maintaining self-identity via smoking, boredom, influences from peers and family, or environment. Essentially, smoking is an attempt to temporarily alleviate an internal urge through addictive substances. If it is not immediately addressed, it can lead towards a self-destructive cycle resulting with severe consequences. Therefore, the quitting process should be initiated, if a smoker desires a life that is beyond their dependence on cigarette smoking.

Understanding how smoking cessation could transform a smokers' health condition alongside significant benefits could help prevent them from developing smoking-related diseases that could heavily impact their health in the long-term. Smoking cessation, or more commonly referred to as "quitting smoking", is defined as the sustained capability to avoid tobacco product consumption (BrainsWay, 2024). The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) in Indonesia (2021) report revealed that over

63% from the population of tobacco consumers had planned to quit or thought about quitting smoking completely. Within the same year, the World Health Organization (WHO) surveyed the smoking habits among active smokers and found evidence that 43.8% (between ages 15 and over) have attempted to quit in the past 12 months (Statista, 2023).

Smoking cessation is considered as a health-promoting behavior in decreasing the risks of developing serious smoking-related health issues (Josling, 2016). A survey in Indonesia (2019) discovered that 78% of former smokers within the population desired a healthier lifestyle as their fundamental reason in quitting smoking, hence, foregoing smoking cessation (Statista, 2022). Quitting smoking may sound more easily said than accomplished. However, it requires extensive effort and determination when one pursues a committed path towards cessation. Physical, mental, and psychological boundaries are tested throughout the cessation process, and oftentimes people will even become tempted to relapse and return to their smoking behavior.

Researchers focusing on cessation studies further discovered additional factors, such as self-efficacy (or motivation), positive support system, and perceived health beliefs, which have performed a significant influence within the individuals' process for cigarette smoking cessation (Mohammadnezhad et al., 2023; Buczkowski et al., 2014; Domingo et al., 2022; Rattigan, 2001; Zahari et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2014; Morphett et al., 2015; Limalima et al., 2022; Pribadi & Devy, 2020; Vionalita et al., 2023; Swee Yaw, 2019; Chen et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2023; Hagimoto et al., 2009; Panahi et al., 2017; Alfianto et al., 2020; Napirah et al., 2022; Li & Kay, 2009; Reisi

et al., 2014; Edwin & Besral, 2018; Gu et al., 2023).

Quitting smoking with a solid social support system in a pro-smoking environment can strengthen the intention for cigarette smoking cessation in facing smoking cessation challenges, such as nicotine withdrawals (throughout emotional, mental, and physical areas), dealing with weight gain or loss, manage smoking cravings or triggering action, and recovering from relapses. Undergoing these cessation challenges can prove to be arduous for the smoker, but with the appropriate support and motivation, achieving smoking cessation will improve their life quality. According to Cresswell et al (2015), cultivating supportive social environments has beneficial contributions to help smokers in quitting and prevent them from relapsing. Smokers cannot rely on self-motivation or intervention methods alone, as accumulating social support from their peers can increase intentions to quit smoking and greater odds in smoking cessation compared to smokers who do not seek any form of support at all (Soulakova et al., 2019).

Estimating smokers' perceptions on their health beliefs can help predict whether or not they will engage with the health-promoting action. Based on how a smoker perceives their own susceptibility in contracting smoking-related risks (perceived susceptibility), acknowledging the severity of those smoking-related diseases and how it can impact their lives as a health consequence (perceived severity), how implementing or strengthening self-confidence within oneself could encourage them to believe in achieving a more healthier change (self-efficacy), considerations for the benefits and barriers within the foreseeable future in adopting a preventive measure

(perceived barriers and benefits), and trigger action that drives the person to become aware of their health situation and come to the point of realization (cues to action).

The phenomena of perceived health beliefs and cigarette smoking cessation in Indonesia has emphasized the significant necessity to reduce smoking prevalence through preventive measures and encourage successful smoking cessation efforts. The researcher believes that the aforementioned phenomena can contribute to greater research on health communication studies examining the correlation between health beliefs and the intention to quit smoking. Health communication, as an important domain within public health communication, provides the bridge in contributing knowledge on the context of our health. In addition, it is a profoundly important topic for health communication research on examining how we can communicate the perceived smoking-related health risks and the benefits of quitting within public health-contexts regarding cigarette smoking, as to further encourage a positive health-promoting behavioral change to increase smokers' quitting intentions, as well as their pursuit for cessation within a pro-smoking environment in Indonesia.