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## Editorial

# Addressing the Issues and Approaches to Reduce Youth Smoking in Indonesia

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## Abstract

This article examines prominent concerns regarding adolescent smoking in Indonesia and investigates diverse strategies targeted at mitigating this public health issue. Indonesia is confronted with an escalating epidemic of tobacco consumption among young people, which is worsened by inadequate legislation and assertive marketing strategies employed by tobacco corporations. This article addresses the difficulties associated with the cultural acceptability of smoking, the restricted availability of quitting resources, and the lack of comprehensive anti-smoking programs. The paper emphasizes the significance of enhancing more stringent tobacco control legislation and implementing cross-sector collaboration activities specifically designed for the Indonesian context to address the problem of individuals who start smoking for the first time. This article emphasizes the importance of protecting the health and future of Indonesia's youth population by tackling these challenges and applying different prevention techniques.

**Keywords:** Youth Smoking, Tobacco Control, Tobacco Use, Healthy Lifestyle

## INTRODUCTION

Multiple scientific studies have demonstrated that smoking behavior is extremely detrimental to the health, social, economic, and environmental well-being of individuals and communities (Butry & Thomas, 2017);(Weinberger et al., 2015);(Wang et al., 2019). The tobacco industry continues to develop its tactics and has dominated the market in Southeast Asia. Children and adolescents are the main targets (Amul et al., 2020).

Globally, it is estimated that nearly 100,000 teenagers start smoking every day, with the vast majority (about 80%) of them coming from low-income countries (V. Schwab, 2011). The majority of tobacco product usage begins and develops during adolescence. Almost 90% of daily cigarette smokers in adulthood start smoking by the age of 18, and 99% start smoking by the age of 26. The addition of flavors to tobacco products can increase their attraction to young people. Flavored tobacco products were used in majority at the high school students

and the middle school students. Young smokers also tend to use e-cigarettes, where almost all e-cigarettes contain nicotine and flavor (CDC, 2023).

The prevalence of smoking in Indonesia has increased consistently from year to year (Kumboyono et al., 2020). A national survey (Riskesdas) showed the prevalence of adolescent smoking (10–18) was 9.1%, a significant increase from 2013's 7.2% (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2018). According to a report, more than 42% of teens ages 13 to 15 in Indonesia were reported to be smokers in 2013 compared with 8.2% in the United States (Kusumawardani et al., 2018). According to a study (Ilmaskal et al., 2022), parental smoking practices strongly influenced the smoking behavior of adolescent ( $p=0.000$ ;  $OR=1.397$ ;  $95\% CI=1.173<OR<1.663$ ). This is a significant public health risk requiring an immediate response.

Worldwide, tobacco use is linked to higher rates of morbidity and mortality in children. Smoking increases a child's risk of developing leukemia, inflammatory bowel disease, bronchitis, asthma, and TB. Furthermore, young people who have been exposed to cigarette smoking may have structural and functional changes in their arteries, which can result in early atherosclerosis and harmful long-term repercussions on the cardiovascular system. Smoking has a significant financial impact on both individuals and healthcare systems. According to a recent study, the direct healthcare costs and lost productivity associated with smoking totaled US\$1436 billion globally in 2012 (equal to 1.8% of the global gross domestic product)(Nazir et al., 2019).

### **Indonesian Adolescents' Perspectives on Smoking Habits**

A study conducted in Indonesia by Fithria, Adlim, Jannah, & Tahlil (2021) indicated that teenage smoking prevalence is high and that effective preventive strategies are required. As a reference for the development of successful prevention initiatives, the study examined Muslim adolescents' opinions on smoking. The study discovered that teenagers in Indonesia are aware of the health concerns associated with smoking, yet social and cultural factors, such as peer pressure and the impact of smoking family members, contribute to the high incidence of smoking among adolescents. Health professionals interested in designing smoking prevention programs in Indonesia should address the adolescent viewpoint on smoking in order to make the program more successful and suitable for adolescents.

### **Big Tobacco Targeting Youth in Indonesia**

According to a study (Syakriah, 2022), one business, Philip Morris International (PMI), has achieved extraordinary success in Indonesia by selling Marlboro cigarettes and other local brands for millions of dollars. Despite PMI's statements that it does not target Indonesian adolescents for marketing purposes, government statistics indicate that youth smoking rates in Indonesia have nearly doubled since PMI joined the market. In this environment, there are virtually no barriers stopping youth from smoking, and the government has taken few steps to limit cigarette sales and use.

### **Strengthening Tobacco Control Policies in Indonesia**

The physical and social environments, in addition to the way that tobacco use is portrayed in the media as a common activity, are all factors that contribute to young people using tobacco products. While they observe peers their own age using tobacco products, young people are more probable to do the same. Young people may be more prone to use tobacco products if their parents use the items. High school athletes are more likely to use smokeless tobacco than those of the same age who are not sports (CDC, 2023).

There is indication that adolescents might become dependent on nicotine more quickly than adults and that young people may be sensitive to nicotine. For young people, genetic factors may make quitting smoking more challenging. Smoking during pregnancy can make it more probable that the child to be born will continue to smoke. Smoking at younger ages is strongly associated with sadness, anxiety, and stress. They argue that young people are more inclined to smoke when they anticipate benefits from smoking, such as improved stress management or weight loss. The desire to smoke is also influenced by lower socioeconomic standing, including lower income and education levels, as well as a lack of knowledge about the negative effects of smoking and using tobacco products. absence of parental involvement or support. Availability, accessibility, and affordability of tobacco products. viewing tobacco product advertisements in stores, on television, the internet, in movies, or in periodicals and newspapers (CDC).

In order to reduce the prevalence of teen smoking, tobacco control regulations in Indonesia should be strengthened. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) of the World Health Organization provides a comprehensive set of principles for tobacco control policies, such as measures to reduce cigarette advertising and promotion, increase tobacco pricing, and encourage smoke-free public policy. The FCTC was ratified by Indonesia in 2006; however, its implementation has been delayed. The Indonesian government should take a more active role in implementing the FCTC and limiting cigarette sales and usage.

The enforcement of the KTR Regulation has not fully adhered to the regulation's requirements regarding the imposition of fines or confinement as sanctions. This is due to the belief that, in certain situations, the installation of smoking ban media is effective in sufficiently restricting smoking-related activities. Nevertheless, the implementation of sanctions is necessary to enhance the guarantee, safeguard, and administer legal redress to individuals who are exposed to second-hand smoke, with the ultimate goal of creating a smoke-free atmosphere by deterring active smokers.

The effectiveness of the KTR Policy relies on the collaboration of multiple stakeholders, including the community, business entities, and the city government. Each of these parties plays a strategic role in tobacco control through the implementation of KTR, which encompasses activities related to cigarette purchasing and selling, placement of cigarette advertisements, sponsorship of cigarette-related events, and smoking activities. The effectiveness and longevity of the policy will depend on the collaborative and unbiased contribution of all parties involved.

The high frequency of smoking among adolescents in Indonesia represents an urgent public health problem requiring prompt intervention. Effective preventive initiatives that incorporate the teenage perspective on smoking are required, and Indonesian tobacco control legislation should be tightened. Additionally, the government should have a more active role in controlling the sale and consumption of cigarettes.

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