



Motivation and Plan to Quit Smoking in Health Students in Aceh: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Smoking is one of the preventable causes of death. Indonesia is a country with the highest percentage of smokers in the world, thus threatening the health, safety and economic welfare of the people. One of the most important efforts to prevent these effects is to stop smoking. Quitting smoking will benefit all ages, quitting earlier will have greater benefits. Research objective: To describe motivation and plans to stop smoking among young people in Aceh. Materials and Methods: This study was an exploratory qualitative study conducted on smoking college students (15-24 year old group) with a total of 35 participants. Research will be carried out in Aceh in 2022. Data collection was carried out by way of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) which was divided into 5 FGD groups. The results of the FGD were then transcribed, followed by coding and determining the theme. Results: The results of this study obtained 4 themes: motivation to stop smoking, barriers to quitting smoking, reasons for failing to quit smoking, and method to quit. Motivations to stop smoking include smoking is harmful, increasing spending, and health. Barriers to stopping smoking include smoking has become a habit and addiction. The reason for failure to quit was reported because of a friend who was a smoker. The method chosen to quit smoking spontaneously. Conclusion: To stop smoking must be based on self-desire then supported by other external factors.

Keywords:

Motivation,
Smoking Cessation Plans,
Youth.

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INTRODUCTION

The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing more than 8 million people each year worldwide. More than 7 million of these deaths were direct tobacco users, while about 1.2 million were non-smokers who were exposed to other people's cigarette smoke (passive smokers). All forms of tobacco are harmful, and there is no safe level of tobacco exposure. Cigarette smoking is the most common form of tobacco use worldwide. Tobacco kills up to half of its users. More than 80% of the world's 1.3 billion tobacco users live in low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2025).

In Indonesia, tobacco has damaged health, wealth, and the soul. Every year, more than 225,700 people die from tobacco-related diseases. Adult males (over 15 years old) 66.6% and adult females 2.1% are daily smokers, this is more than in other developing countries. This makes it something sustainable and a terrible threat to public health (The Tobacco Atlas & Vital Strategies, 2025). Currently, Indonesia is facing a serious threat due to the increasing

number of smokers, the prevalence of male smokers in Indonesia is the highest in the world (Kemenkes, 2019). The results of RISKESDAS 2018 show that the number of smokers in adolescents (10-18 years) has increased from 7.2% to 9.1% (Kemenkes, 2018).

Smoking by adolescents and young adults has detrimental health consequences, addiction, and accelerates the development of chronic diseases in adulthood (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.-a). Addiction or addiction to smoking is a dangerous or pathological condition because cigarettes contain 7,000 chemicals, 70 of which are carcinogenic (causing cancer) and other toxic substances such as nicotine, arsenic and ammonia (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

Quitting smoking is beneficial at any age. Quitting smoking improves health status and improves quality of life, reduces the risk of premature death, can add as much as a decade to life expectancy. Smoking will put a substantial financial burden on smokers, the health care system, and society. Quitting smoking will reduce those burdens, including health care expenses, reducing the risk of many adverse health effects, including reproductive health, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and cancer (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.-b).

Previous research on the motivation to quit smoking; reasons for returning to smoking; and how to quit, investigating former smokers and current smokers, data collection was carried out by group discussion of 24 participants (12 smokers and 12 former smokers) and eleven interviews (5 current smokers and 6 former smokers). The results of the study showed: motivations for quitting smoking include: the existence of smoking bans at home and work, high smoking costs, smoking causes odors, and worries about health. The causes of smoking return are stress, the need to have fun with smoking, and the smoker's environment at home and work. The method of quitting smoking is done without planning (Buczowski et al., 2014).

The research conducted in Poland aimed to investigate how Poles, including those who are medically ill, cope with smoking cessation and what their motivation is to quit. Convenience sampling is used for research purposes. Individuals who attended several health care units were screened for a history of smoking cessation attempts. Data were collected using questionnaires. The results showed that the most important reasons for quitting smoking were: general health problems (57%), personal health problems (32%) and social reasons (32%). A small percentage of former smokers (3%) who had not smoked for more than a year were unsure of their own efficacy to maintain further abstinence (Sieminska et al., 2008).

The research aims to explore the motivation and plan to quit smoking in young people. The results of this study can provide input on alternative actions to help adolescents stop. The sooner action is taken to quit, the better the health of the teenager himself and other aspects as a result of smoking behavior.

METHOD

This research is an exploratory qualitative research, with this method it is expected to be able to obtain individual responses in accordance with subjective views, dig deeply, examine understanding and know the individual's perspective (Denzin, 2009). In this regard, this study focuses more on answering the questions of what (what), why (why) and how (how) (Creswell, 2012). The participants in this study are youth (individuals aged 15-24 years) with student status in the city of Banda Aceh. The selection of participants was determined by the purposive sampling method with the criteria of current active smokers.

The research was conducted in 2022 in Banda Aceh. Data collection is carried out by means of Focus Group discussion (FGD). This method is used with efficiency considerations because within 1 to 2 hours researchers can collect information from more than 6 people for one data collection. FGD is a group data collection technique with

interaction between participants, thus it is hoped that there will be an improvement in data quality because the participants tend to give corrections to each other who have different views. The FGD group was divided into 5 groups. Each group consisted of 6-8 males aged 15-24 years, and were currently active smokers.

The research instrument used was in the form of FGD guidelines which contained open-ended questions related to the motivation to quit smoking and the plan to quit smoking. Other tools used are tape recorders, field notes, and cameras. Data analysis is carried out during or at the same time as the data collection process takes place (ongoing analysis). Analysis consists of creating transcripts, coding and setting themes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The participants in this study are 31 people with current active smoking status. Data collection was carried out through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The analysis of the transcript results from the FGD is grouped into 4 themes, namely: 1. Motivation to quit smoking, 2. Reasons for failing to quit, 3. Obstacles when trying to quit smoking, 4. Methods to quit.

Motivation for quitting smoking plan

Participants said that they actually wanted to quit smoking, but it was very difficult. The most decisive factor for success in quitting smoking is motivation or desire from oneself, although external factors can also influence. The results of the data analysis obtained several factors that motivated them to quit smoking someday, namely: 1) smoking is very detrimental to themselves and their families, 2) reducing expenses, 3) getting married and having children, 4) health reasons, 5) the existence of a smoking ban rule. This can be seen from the statements of the informant as follows:

Most of the participants said that the desire to quit smoking must come from their own volition, external factors as support.

"Actually, it depends on personal desires first, the factor from the outside is only 2%, it must be from oneself first, because if the desire stops from others, we only hear, enter from the left ear and exit from the right ear"

Some participants said they wanted to quit smoking because it was related to the economy, reduce expenses, and reduce the burden on their families.

"Quitting due to economic factors, in one day you can spend money to buy cigarettes up to Rp 90,000., Rp 60,000., Rp.50,000,".

Among the participants put forward another motivation to quit smoking sometime when they are married and have children. In addition, they realize that smoking is detrimental to health both for themselves and others (passive smokers), such as causing disorders in the lungs and heart.

"In the past, from grade 1 to grade 3 of junior high school in Islamic boarding school, it was impossible to smoke, obey the smoking ban regulations in Islamic boarding school, afraid of being whipped. If found smoking, his hair will be shaved, so he has never smoked for 3 years".

Reasons for failing to stop

Some artisans reported that they had tried to quit, many had even quit, but then smoked again. The reasons for failing to quit are grouped into several sub-themes: 1) an environment with many smokers, 2) friends often offer cigarettes that are difficult to refuse, 3) jobs that require concentration and stress. One of the reasons for failing to quit the environment of many smokers. Many people around him smoke. Adults often ask to buy cigarettes, then offer them them, so they eventually try to smoke again. The following is a description of the results of the interview with the FGD group:

"Sometimes they are told to buy cigarettes by adults, then they are offered to try cigarettes, the first offer is refused, tomorrow they are told to buy again, then they are offered cigarettes again, finally they want to try, but it is difficult, the environment is 80% of cigarettes?"

Participants spontaneously said that friends were the reason they failed to quit smoking. Most of them have quit smoking, having a friend who is a smoker is one of the factors why they relapse. They said there was no way they couldn't mingle and stay away from friends. Participants spontaneously said that friends were the reason they failed to quit smoking. Most of them have quit smoking, having a friend who is a smoker is one of the factors why they relapse. They said there was no way they couldn't mingle and stay away from friends.

"Friends, if we don't join with friends, it's impossible, when we meet and are offered cigarettes. I quit for 2 weeks, then met friends and finally smoked again. Almost all of them smoke again because of friends, the impact of friends is very big".

Some participants said work that required concentration and stress made them relapse, because if they didn't smoke, their thought processes didn't work and they couldn't control their thoughts.

"This is a relaxed situation, not forced to think, but when the situation requires a lot of thinking, for example when there is a problem, if there is no cigarette, the thinking process does not run, cannot control the mind. When there is a problem, we immediately smoke and suddenly calm down. As long as there are cigarettes, calm down".

Another participant said that smoking is an encouragement, when working to help parents, during breaks that are done is smoking, smoking is healing, like playing to relieve fatigue when working.

"How, mother, smoking gives encouragement, like that, mother, since childhood I have smoked, every time I work to help my parents in the workshop when the rest is done is smoking. Seeing cigarette smoke is the same as healing, like playing. After smoking can work well again".

Barriers to smoking cessation

"How, mother, smoking gives encouragement, like that, mother, since childhood I have smoked, every time I work to help my parents in the workshop when the rest is done is smoking. Seeing cigarette smoke is the same as healing, like playing. After smoking can work well again".

"Not smoking is like inactive happy substances, happy hormones don't exist. Actually, those of us who smoke want to quit, actually, it's just difficult to quit because it's already done."

"Actually, we smokers want to quit, because smoking is very detrimental, but it is difficult, one day without smoking, the mouth is not good".

"If you don't smoke, the happy substance becomes inactive, if you smoke, the happy hormone becomes active."

The chosen method to stop

Some participants said they chose to quit spontaneously, slowly by reducing the number of cigarettes consumed per day, while others reported quitting smoking by switching to e-cigarettes. Some of them said that e-cigarettes are less dangerous, because they only contain nicotine, while the cigarettes they have been consuming contain other harmful elements such as tar. The following are the results of interviews with informants (FGD groups):

"in my opinion, ma'am, I don't know according to others, cigarettes are more dangerous than e-cigarettes, because cigarettes contain tar, which causes the lungs to turn yellow, the lungs to become black, if the vave only contains nicotine"

There were also participants who revealed that e-cigarettes only cause addiction, safer because they only contain nicotine and flavors. The literature also revealed that electronic cigarettes are 82% safer than tobacco cigarettes, as follows:

"If you use vape, the content is less than cigarettes. If the cigarette contains tar, while the vape contains only nicotine and glucotine flavoring, if I'm not mistaken. So, the effects caused by vaping are only limited to addiction, with very little tar entering the body. Based on several studies I have read, the article states that vaping is up to 82% safer than tobacco cigarettes."

Discussion

The results of the above study can be concluded that the results of the research are 4 main themes, namely: 1) motivation to quit smoking, 2) reasons for failing to quit, 3) obstacles when trying to quit smoking, 4) methods to quit. Findings for motivation for smoking include: being very detrimental to oneself and family, reducing expenses, getting married and having children, health reasons, the existence of a smoking ban rule.

Almost all participants said they had quit, which can be concluded that they actually have a high motivation to smoke. Be consistent with research Jackson et al. (2020), Smokers who support descriptive norms (habits already in society) of smoking prohibition have increased the likelihood of reporting high motivation to quit. However, the results of this study are contrary to the research conducted by Sepúlveda-Sánchez et al. (2018) concluded that motivation to quit smoking was still low and poor readiness to receive smoking cessation support.

Another study conducted by about the motivation to quit smoking, the reasons for returning to smoking, and how to quit, investigated former smokers and current smokers, data collection was conducted with group discussions of 24 participants (12 smokers and 12 former smokers) and eleven interviews (5 current smokers and 6 former smokers). The results of the study showed: motivations for quitting smoking include: the existence of smoking bans at home and work, high smoking costs, smoking causes odors, and worries about health. The causes of smoking return are stress, the need to have fun with smoking, and the smoker's environment at home and work. The method of quitting smoking is done without planning (Buczowski et al., 2014).

The study was conducted in Poland with the aim of investigating how Poles, including those who are medically ill, cope with smoking cessation and what their motivation is to quit. Convenience sampling is used. Individuals who attended several health care units were screened for a history of smoking cessation attempts. Data was collected using questionnaires. The results showed that the most important reasons for quitting smoking were: general health problems (57%), personal health problems (32%) and social reasons (32%). A small percentage of former smokers (3%) who had not smoked for more than a year were unsure of their own efficacy to maintain further abstinence (Sieminska et al., 2008).

Other studies show abrupt cessation of smoking is more effective for long-term abstinence than taking a gradual approach. People who prefer a gradual stop are less likely to succeed in stopping, regardless of whether they try to stop abruptly or gradually (Smith et al., 2015). A study conducted on 33 participants reported that the basic factor for quitting smoking is self-control (WHO, 2014).

Research conducted by Yu, et al (2002) proved that 47% had tried to quit at least 1 attempt to quit smoking, 59% had tried 2 times, and 25% had reduced smoking. They tried to quit but failed because of addiction 20%, people smoked and they went along 18%, and 10% because of social functioning. Among them, 48% said that they could quit smoking at any time if they really wanted to. Other research conducted by Olenik & Mospan (2017), with the title "Smoking cessation: Identifying readiness to quit and designing a plan" explains the basics of stopping tobacco use, pharmacotherapy reform, and the emergence of e-cigarettes as a desired cessation tool for patients.

CONCLUSION

Some of the factors that motivate them to quit smoking one day are: smoking is very detrimental to themselves and their families, reducing expenses, getting married and having children, health reasons, the existence of a smoking ban rule. The reasons for failing to quit are grouped into several sub-themes: an environment where there are many smokers, friends often offer cigarettes that are difficult to refuse, jobs that require concentration and stress. To give an idea of the obstacles faced in the process of quitting smoking. The major obstacles that participants face when trying to quit are: smoking has become a habit, and they are addicted to cigarettes. Some participants chose to quit spontaneously, gradually by reducing the amount of cigarettes consumed per day, and by switching to e-cigarettes. 3. To other researchers can develop different research methods, and different participants, such as female smokers.

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