

Communication Styles of Wives with Smoking Husbands in Protecting Their Babies from Cigarette Smoke Exposure at Home

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Abstract - Exposure to cigarette smoke in the home poses significant health risks, particularly to infants and toddlers. This study explores the communication styles used by wives to encourage their smoking husbands to quit or reduce smoking to protect their children's health. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing a constructivist paradigm with in-depth interviews conducted among mothers of toddlers with smoking husbands. The findings reveal that while most wives possess good knowledge about the dangers of smoking, they face challenges in persuading their husbands to quit. The most common communication style used was passive, influenced by cultural norms, education levels, and social support. While assertive communication was more effective in reducing smoking habits, it was less frequently employed. The study concludes that broader interventions, such as community-based programs and education for both parents, are necessary to promote smoke-free environments for children. Training and social support are recommended to improve communication effectiveness in encouraging smoking cessation.

Keywords: Cigarette smoke; Communication; Couple communication; Family health; Interpersonal communication

Introduction

Smoking remains a significant public health challenge worldwide, particularly in countries with high smoking prevalence rates like Indonesia. As of the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2021, Indonesia ranks third globally in the number of smokers, trailing only behind India and China. This alarming position reflects a deeply entrenched smoking culture that has persisted despite various public health efforts to curb tobacco use. The survey revealed that the number of smokers in Indonesia increased by 8.8 million between 2011 and 2021, reaching a staggering 69.1 million adult smokers (Global Adult Tobacco Survey: Indonesia, 2021). This increase presents a grave concern for public health officials, especially given the widespread exposure to cigarette smoke among non-smokers, particularly in domestic environments.

The 2018 Riskesdas data further underscores the severity of the smoking epidemic in Indonesia, indicating that 33.8% of individuals aged 15 years and older are smokers. The gender disparity is pronounced, with 62.9% of males and 4.8% of females reporting regular smoking habits (Basic Health Research 2018, 2019). This discrepancy highlights the cultural acceptance of smoking among men in

Indonesia, where smoking is often perceived as a social norm or even a sign of masculinity. However, the implications of such widespread smoking behaviors extend far beyond the individual smokers themselves, profoundly affecting the health of their families, particularly their children.

Cigarette smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, many of which are toxic and can cause cancer. Secondhand smoke—smoke inhaled by non-smokers who are nearby—has been classified as a Group A carcinogen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, indicating that it is a known cause of cancer in humans. In Indonesia, the problem of secondhand smoke is particularly pervasive. According to the GATS 2011, Indonesia had the highest percentage of passive smokers globally, with 78.4% of the population exposed to cigarette smoke indoors (Global Adult Tobacco Survey: Indonesia, 2011). This exposure affects over 97 million people, including vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, infants, and toddlers, who are at higher risk for developing serious health issues due to their exposure to cigarette smoke (Coneus & Spiess, 2012; England et al., 2017; Etzel et al., 1997).

Toddlers are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of both secondhand and thirdhand smoke. Secondhand smoke, which is inhaled by individuals in the presence of an active smoker, contains higher concentrations of nicotine and other harmful chemicals compared to the smoke inhaled directly by the smoker. This means that the health risks associated with passive smoking can be even more severe than those faced by the smoker (Cao et al., 2015). Thirdhand smoke, on the other hand, refers to the toxic residue left on surfaces after the cigarette has been extinguished. This residue can linger on furniture, walls, clothing, and even toys, continuing to pose health risks long after the smoker has left the area. For toddlers who frequently crawl on the floor and put objects in their mouths, the risk of ingesting or inhaling these toxic substances is significant (Sugeng et al., 2020).

Studies have shown a strong correlation between parental smoking behavior and the incidence of respiratory illnesses in children, particularly Acute Respiratory Infections (ARIs), which are a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in children under five years old (Putri et al., 2022). In households where smoking occurs indoors, toddlers are continuously exposed to harmful smoke, leading to a higher incidence of respiratory issues, stunted growth, and other developmental problems (Ellis-Suriani et al., 2021). The Ministry of Health in Indonesia has reported that smoking inside the home is a major contributor to indoor air pollution, which significantly affects children's health (Reg. of the Minister of Health of Indonesia No. 5, 2017).

Despite the well-documented risks of smoking, particularly in the presence of children, many parents in Indonesia continue to smoke indoors, often due to a lack of awareness or disregard for the health consequences. This behavior persists even though numerous public health campaigns have been launched to educate the public about the dangers of cigarette smoke. The Ministry of Health's data from 2013 indicated that around 72% of married men in Indonesia smoke, and a significant portion of this smoking occurs indoors (Basic Health Research 2013, 2013). The result is that household exposure to cigarette smoke in Indonesia is not only widespread but also deeply embedded in the social fabric, making it a challenging issue to address.

The role of the family, particularly mothers, in protecting children from the dangers of cigarette smoke cannot be overstated. As primary caregivers, mothers are often seen as the guardians of their children's health, responsible for creating a safe and healthy home environment. However, the dynamics of power and communication within the household can significantly influence the effectiveness of these protective measures. Wives, who may recognize the health risks associated with their husbands' smoking, often face challenges in convincing their partners to quit or reduce smoking (Ediana & Sari, 2021). These challenges can stem from various factors, including cultural norms that discourage women from confronting their husbands, a lack of knowledge about effective communication strategies, and the potential for conflict within the relationship.

Communication within marriages can take many forms, from passive to aggressive, with varying degrees of effectiveness. Passive communication often involves avoiding confrontation, which can lead to the continuation of harmful behaviors like smoking. Aggressive communication, on the other hand, might provoke defensiveness or resistance, potentially exacerbating the issue. Assertive communication, characterized by clear, direct, and respectful exchanges, is generally considered the most effective approach (Omura et al., 2017). However, it requires a level of knowledge and confidence that may not be present in all individuals. The communication style adopted by a wife in addressing her husband's smoking behavior can therefore significantly impact the likelihood of successful smoking cessation (Lipkus et al., 2013).

In addition to communication strategies, social support plays a critical role in smoking cessation. Research has shown that smokers who receive strong social support from their partners, friends, and colleagues are more likely to quit successfully (van den Brand et al., 2019). For many men, their wives are the closest source of social support, particularly in the context of family life. Wives who actively support their husbands in quitting smoking can significantly increase the chances of success (Buitenhuis et al., 2021). However, this support must be coupled with effective communication strategies to overcome the resistance that often accompanies efforts to change deeply ingrained behaviors (Lindson et al., 2021).

This study aims to explore the communication styles used by wives to influence their smoking husbands and protect their children from the dangers of cigarette smoke exposure. By examining the communication dynamics within these households, the study seeks to identify the factors that contribute to successful or unsuccessful smoking cessation efforts. The findings are expected to provide insights into the role of communication in health-related behavior change and to offer practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of smoking cessation interventions within the family setting.

In conclusion, the issue of smoking within the home in Indonesia presents a significant public health challenge, particularly for the protection of vulnerable populations such as toddlers. The role of wives as primary caregivers and agents of change within the household is crucial in addressing this issue (Ayuningtyas et al., 2021). Through effective communication and strong social support, it is possible to mitigate the health risks associated with cigarette smoke exposure and create healthier home environments for children. This study contributes to the understanding of these dynamics and highlights the importance of empowering women with the knowledge and tools they need to protect their families.

Theoretical Framework

The detrimental impact of smoking, especially on toddlers, has been the focus of extensive research. Jamal et al. examined the effect of exposure to cigarette smoke on the incidence of Acute Respiratory Tract Infections (ARI) in toddlers at the Lompoe Health Centre in Parepare City (Jamal et al., 2022). This analytical observational study utilized a cross-sectional research design involving 1,242 toddlers with ARI and a sample of 30 respondents selected via accidental sampling. The study found a significant association between exposure to cigarette smoke and the incidence of ARI in toddlers. Parents were strongly advised to avoid smoking indoors and improve household ventilation to mitigate the accumulation of pollutants such as cigarette smoke (Jamal et al., 2022).

More recently, a study explored the correlation between parental smoking behaviour and the incidence of ARI in toddlers aged 1-4 years in the Selat Health Centre. The study used correlational analytics involving 258 parents of toddlers, selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis using Spearman's rho revealed a strong correlation between parental smoking behaviour and ARI in toddlers, emphasizing the need for collaboration between stakeholders to enhance Health Education and Promotion (HEP) programs that address smoking cessation and the dangers of second-hand smoke exposure (Juniantari et al., 2023).

In another significant study, there was an analysis of the relationship between spousal smoke exposure and Low Birth Weight (LBW) incidence among women aged 15-57 years. The research revealed that mothers exposed to active smoking spouses had a slightly higher risk of giving birth to low-birth-weight babies compared to mothers with non-smoking spouses. This study underscores the importance of reducing smoke exposure in households to improve birth outcomes (Simamora & Ronoatmodjo, 2020).

Household smoking behaviour has also been the subject of various studies. Researchers investigated factors related to smoking behaviour among rice farmers in Deli Serdang District. This study used a cross-sectional survey of 106 household heads and found a correlation between knowledge, attitudes, healthcare worker roles, and spousal support in determining smoking behaviour. The study recommended policy implementation for smoke-free homes, health education to increase knowledge about the risks of smoking, and empowering spouses to encourage smoking outdoors (Siburian et al., 2021b).

In terms of smoking cessation, some researchers explored the role of motivation, social support, and coping mechanisms in smoking cessation through a qualitative study involving 18 informants, including ex-smokers and current smokers. The study found that health concerns were the primary

motivator for quitting, and social support played a crucial role in maintaining cessation efforts. Cognitive coping strategies were also effective in controlling smoking behaviour, with social support moderating the cessation process (Reskiaddin & Supriyati, 2021).

Limited research is available regarding wives' responses to smoking husbands. However, in a study explored social control mechanisms in smoking couples in Indonesia found that wives typically exerted some level of social control, especially during pregnancy or when children were involved. However, despite acknowledging the harms of smoking, marital harmony and family needs were often prioritized over smoking cessation (Ayuningtyas et al., 2021).

In another related area, smokers' responses to pictorial health warnings on cigarette packages were explored in some studies. These studies found that while pictorial warnings raised awareness, they did not significantly influence smoking cessation. Smokers often perceived the warnings as disconnected from their actual smoking experiences, leading to a rejection of the messages (Andriani et al., 2023; Mariyamah et al., 2020).

Finally, researchers studied the decision-making process of adult smokers in purchasing cigarettes in Porong City, focusing on the influence of cigarette advertising. The study found that advertising based on the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) concept significantly influenced purchasing decisions, with attention being the most dominant factor (Nasir & Yulianto, 2023).

Based on the literature review, this theoretical framework aims to explain the relationship between smoking behaviours, exposure to cigarette smoke, and its impacts on health, particularly among vulnerable groups such as toddlers and pregnant women. The framework integrates various factors such as social, environmental, behavioural, and psychological aspects of smoking, emphasizing the need for both individual and collective interventions to address smoking-related issues.

Health Impact of Smoking Exposure on Toddlers and Pregnant Women: a. **Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke (SHS):** Several studies highlight the negative health impacts of second-hand smoke, particularly on vulnerable groups like toddlers and pregnant women. Some researchs show a significant correlation between exposure to second-hand smoke and the incidence of Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) in toddlers (Jamal et al., 2022; Juniantari et al., 2023), while another one associate spousal smoking with Low Birth Weight (LBW) among infants (Simamora & Ronoatmodjo, 2020). **Interventions:** These findings suggest that reducing household exposure to smoke through improved ventilation and smoking bans indoors is critical. b. **Health Education and Promotion (HEP) programs and policies to promote smoking cessation are important strategies for reducing these risks.**

Behavioural and Social Factors Influencing Smoking: a. **Parental and Spousal Smoking Behaviours:** The literature underscores the importance of family dynamics and household environment in shaping smoking behaviours. One research found that factors such as knowledge, attitudes, and spousal support influence smoking behaviour (Siburian et al., 2021a). Meanwhile, another one discuss the role of social control within households, where wives exert influence on their smoking husbands, especially during pregnancy or in the presence of children (Ayuningtyas et al., 2021). b. **Policy Recommendations:** This highlights the need for targeted interventions that engage not only the smoker but also family members in smoking cessation efforts, emphasizing the role of social support.

Psychological and Motivational Aspects of Smoking Cessation: a. **Motivation and Social Support in Smoking Cessation:** Research suggest that health concerns are a primary motivator for quitting smoking, and social support plays a crucial role in sustaining cessation efforts (Reskiaddin & Supriyati, 2021). Cognitive coping mechanisms also moderate the cessation process, allowing individuals to manage their smoking behaviour effectively. b. **Intervention Strategy:** This implies that smoking cessation programs should focus on strengthening motivational aspects, promoting social support systems, and developing coping strategies for smokers.

Effectiveness of Health Warnings and Advertising: a. **Pictorial Health Warnings:** Despite their intention to raise awareness, pictorial health warnings have been found to have limited influence on actual smoking cessation (Andriani et al., 2023; Mariyamah et al., 2020). Smokers often perceive these warnings as irrelevant to their own experiences, leading to message rejection. b. **Influence of Advertising:** Research found that cigarette advertising significantly influences consumer behaviour, with the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model explaining the purchasing decisions of adult smokers (Nasir & Yulianto, 2023). c. **Policy Implications:** These findings suggest that more personalized and contextually relevant anti-smoking messages are needed, along with regulations to limit the impact of cigarette advertising.

Conceptual Model

The following components form the basis of the conceptual model for understanding the factors influencing smoking behaviour and its health impacts: (1) Exposure to Cigarette Smoke (Direct exposure (smoking), Indirect exposure (second-hand smoke), Impact on vulnerable populations (toddlers, pregnant women); (2) Social and Behavioural Influences (Family dynamics (spousal influence, parental behaviour), Social control within households, Cultural and societal norms around smoking); (3) Health Outcomes (Increased incidence of ARI in toddlers, Risk of LBW in newborns, Long-term respiratory and developmental impacts); (4) Motivational and Psychological Factors (Role of health concerns in smoking cessation, Social support as a moderating factor in quitting efforts, Cognitive coping mechanisms in managing addiction); (5) Media and Policy Interventions (Influence of cigarette advertising on purchasing behaviour, Efficacy of health warnings and educational campaigns, Policies promoting smoke-free environments and smoking cessation).

By linking the various factors—exposure, behaviour, health impacts, and interventions—the theoretical framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding smoking behaviour and its effects, as well as strategies for mitigating these impacts through social, educational, and policy measures.

Material and Methodology

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm, viewing social science as a systematic analysis of socially meaningful actions through direct and detailed observation of social phenomena in everyday natural settings. This approach aims to understand and interpret how the social actors involved create, maintain, or manage their social world (Hidayat, 2002).

This research employs the phenomenological method, which involves in-depth interviews where the researcher conducts extensive face-to-face interviews (more than once) to gather information from informants. Through intensive and dialogic in-depth interviews, phenomenological research explores three main dimensions: (1) The knowledge or awareness informants have from the experience being researched; (2) The meaning of the object of experience, consisting of its potential in human life; (3) The language used by informants, as language serves as a vehicle for meaning formation.

According to Suyanto, the phenomenological approach focuses on personal experiences, which are part of individuals who mutually share experiences with each other (Suyanto, 2019). Essentially, phenomenology is a research tradition used to explore human experiences. The phenomenological approach is a qualitative data analysis technique used to uncover the common meanings that constitute the essence of a concept. Phenomenology explains phenomena and their meanings for individuals by interviewing several individuals. It assumes that each individual consciously experiences a phenomenon. In other words, phenomenological studies aim to explore the deepest consciousness of subjects regarding their experiences in an event.

This study involves 11 informants, specifically mothers of toddlers whose husbands smoke, who visit the Community Health Center (Puskesmas) or Toddler Integrated Health Service Post (Posyandu) in the researcher's working area. The inclusion criteria for the sample selection are mothers who understand the dangers of cigarette smoke for children as second-hand and third-hand smokers and who wish for their husbands to quit smoking. Exclusion criteria include mothers who do not recognize the dangers of cigarette smoke or who do not have the desire for their husbands to quit smoking. The informants were selected through purposive sampling, where participants were chosen based on their knowledge and experiences relevant to the phenomenon under study.

The phenomenological approach in this study seeks to deeply explore the experiences of the informants regarding the impact of cigarette smoke on their children's health. Data collection is conducted through repeated in-depth interviews to ensure that every dimension of the informants' experiences is thoroughly uncovered. The researcher not only explores the informants' knowledge about the dangers of cigarette smoke but also delves into the meaning of these experiences in their lives and how they articulate those experiences through language. The use of repeated interviews allows for a deeper exploration of the phenomenon, ensuring that every aspect of the subject's experience is clearly articulated in the research findings.

Result and Discussion

This research was conducted with mothers of toddlers who have smoking husbands. The researchers interviewed the mothers when they brought their children to the Community Health Center (Puskesmas) or the Integrated Health Post for Toddlers (Posyandu Balita) in Matraman. Prior to the interviews, permission was obtained to inquire about their knowledge regarding the dangers of smoking, the effects of smoking on their toddlers, their husbands' smoking habits, how they remind their husbands about the risks, and their husbands' responses to such reminders.

Based on the interviews, data from the 11 informants concerning their knowledge about the dangers of smoking, exposure to smoke, their husbands' smoking habits, how they remind their husbands, and the husbands' responses were gathered and adapted as follows:

Mothers' Knowledge

The interviews revealed that most mothers have a solid understanding of the dangers of smoking on their toddlers' health. They recognize that exposure to cigarette smoke can lead to a variety of health issues such as pneumonia, heart disease, respiratory infections, and heightened susceptibility to illness. Some mothers also noted that smoke exposure could occur through clothing. Additionally, there was awareness among some mothers about smoking's potential link to stunting, learned from external sources like Google. This awareness can empower mothers to make better decisions regarding their children's health and promote a smoke-free environment. Similar findings were noted in previous studies, where most mothers had moderate to good knowledge about the dangers of smoking during pregnancy (Kamaruddin et al., 2020).

Impact of Smoking on Toddler Health

Most mothers reported being aware of the adverse effects of smoking on their toddlers' health, such as respiratory issues like coughs, colds, and respiratory infections. However, not all mothers received adequate support from their husbands or extended family, who attributed their toddlers' illnesses to other causes, such as cold drinks or weather changes. Previous research has found a significant relationship between cigarette smoke exposure and the incidence of acute respiratory infections (ARI) in toddlers (Jamal et al., 2022). Another study highlighted similar findings, linking smoking behavior to an increased risk of ARI in children (Juniantari et al., 2023).

Husbands' Smoking Habits and Their Influence on Toddler Health

The interviews showed that the smoking habits of the husbands significantly influenced their toddlers' health. Husbands who smoked heavily indoors and near their children posed a higher risk of exposing their toddlers to harmful smoke. While some husbands took precautions like washing hands or changing clothes before interacting with their children, the risk of smoke exposure still remained. Research conducted in community settings has demonstrated a connection between smoking behaviors and health risks, particularly when no precautions are taken (Juniantari et al., 2023).

Reminding Husbands about the Dangers of Smoking to Toddlers

The informants used various communication strategies to remind their husbands about the dangers of smoking around their toddlers. The study found that passive communication was the most common style, where wives often felt powerless in asking their husbands to quit smoking. In some cases, they avoided conflict by keeping their toddlers away from the smoke, while others occasionally used sarcasm or anger to express their frustration. On the other hand, some wives used assertive communication, clearly stating their concerns and setting boundaries. Research on fishermen's wives showed that assertive communication had limited success in changing smoking behavior (Ibnu et al., 2018). This highlights the complexity of communication styles in family dynamics.

Husbands' Responses According to Wives

The interviews revealed a range of husbands' responses. Some husbands showed willingness to change their smoking habits, either by reducing the frequency or avoiding smoking near their children. However, many were passive or resistant, continuing their smoking habits despite their wives' concerns, and often blaming other factors for their children's illnesses. The differing responses may be linked to the level of social support received and the relationship dynamics between the couples.

Analysis of Factors Influencing Communication Style

Several factors influence the communication styles that wives employ when addressing their husbands' smoking habits. These include: (1) Cultural Norms: In many cultures, women are often expected to take a more passive role in family matters, particularly when addressing their husbands. This can result in communication styles that are less assertive and more passive, as women may feel discouraged from challenging their husbands' behaviors directly (Nurislamiah, 2021); (2) Education Level: Higher levels of education are often associated with more effective communication strategies. Wives with higher education may have a better understanding of the health risks of smoking and be more empowered to use assertive communication styles to protect their children. Conversely, women with lower education levels may feel less confident in confronting their husbands (Fitriza & Taufik, 2022); (3) Social Support: The availability of social support from family, friends, or community groups can play a significant role in how wives communicate with their husbands. Women who have strong social networks are more likely to feel supported in their efforts to encourage their husbands to quit smoking. Social support from healthcare providers can also contribute to successful communication (Abbas et al., 2019).

These factors underline the importance of addressing not only individual knowledge but also broader social and cultural contexts to effectively promote behaviour change.

In this study, the majority of mothers had a good understanding of the dangers of smoking on their toddlers' health, though they faced challenges in persuading their husbands to quit. Passive communication styles were the most commonly used, influenced by cultural norms, education levels, and social support. Wives who adopted more assertive communication strategies generally had a higher chance of success in reducing their husbands' smoking behaviour.

The findings highlight the need for broader interventions, such as community-based programs or healthcare provider support, to create more effective strategies for reducing tobacco exposure in households with young children. Addressing social norms and providing education to both parents could further help in fostering smoke-free environments for children.

Conclusions

This study revealed that most mothers of toddlers with smoking husbands have a good understanding of the dangers of smoking to their children's health. These mothers are aware that exposure to cigarette smoke can lead to health issues such as respiratory infections, pneumonia, and even an increased risk of stunting. However, many of them face challenges in persuading their husbands to quit smoking. Husbands who continue to smoke indoors pose a significant risk to their children's health despite being reminded by their wives. The communication style most used by the mothers is passive, influenced by cultural norms, education levels, and social support. While mothers who used more assertive communication strategies had a higher chance of reducing their husbands' smoking habits, the challenge of changing behaviors remains.

The study recommends broader interventions, such as community-based programs or support from healthcare providers, to develop more effective strategies to reduce tobacco exposure in households with young children. Additionally, educating both parents about the dangers of smoking, alongside efforts to address social norms that empower mothers to take a more active role in protecting their children's health, is crucial.

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