

The Effects and Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Behaviors and Perceptions of Young Indonesians who Smoke

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Background

Smoking prevalence in Indonesia is high and a disproportionate number of individuals who smoke are male. 33.5% of adults older than 15 (64.7% of males, 2.3% of females) and 18.8% of youth ages 13-15 (35.5% of males, 2.9% of females) smoke. A survey after the first 10 months of the COVID-19 pandemic found that 40.3% of respondents who smoked reduced their smoking intensity. We examined the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the smoking behaviors and perceptions of young Indonesians who smoke.

Methods

- 12 focus group discussions (n=72) stratified by gender and age were conducted virtually via Zoom in July and August 2022.
- Four groups each of 13-17 year old males, 18-24 year old males, and 18-24 year old females
- Participants were asked how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their smoking behavior and/or thoughts about smoking.
- Conducted thematic analysis of the transcripts

Indonesian males changed their smoking behavior due to **boredom** and **economic concerns**, whereas females decreased smoking due to **health concerns** during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

Communication during **infectious disease outbreaks** should be **tailored**.



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“[My smoking] increased because I had more spare time and little activities. So, it’s more about getting rid of the boredom”. -Male

“It is said that smoking habits also affects the lungs, now that’s where I’m afraid of. Because if I get Covid, I fear that I will have more short breath because I smoke often”. -Female

“I prioritize health a little bit, previously I could have 1 pack a day, now 2 days, 1 pack”. -Female

Results

- The most common reason among males for reported increase in smoking was boredom.
- Males reporting a decrease in smoking cited economic concerns.
- Females commonly reported a decrease in smoking due to health concerns and associated fears.
- Among males and females, some participants reported no change in smoking behaviors due to COVID-19.

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