

Abstract

Perspectives on male partners' smoking and the potential role of females in tobacco control in Indonesia

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Background: As tobacco smoking decreases globally, rates of male smokers in Indonesia have risen to epidemic levels. Data indicates more than 70% of Indonesian male adults smoke, vastly outpacing rates of female smokers (5%). This study examined female perspectives on male smokers and the potential role females play in tobacco control. **Method:** 424 non-smoking females in Makassar, Indonesia (average age 26±12, 68.6% unmarried) were surveyed on knowledge, perception, and attitude toward tobacco smoking. **Results:** All study participants were aware of the harmful effects of smoking. 62.7% of the respondents believed it is socially acceptable for males to smoke, in contrast to 4.2% who believed it is socially acceptable for females to smoke. Most reported they were not attracted to male smokers (89.1%), primarily due to the smell (38.6%) and harmful effects of tobacco (25.8%). However, 55.3% of females (including widows) in the study were married to a smoker, while 76.3% of unmarried females reported smoking as a constraint to finding male partner ($p < 0.01$). While 71.4% said their male partners were upset when they were asked not to smoke, the study found the men were approximately 19 times ($OR = 18.8$; 95% CI 7.36 – 48.2; $p < 0.01$) more likely to stop smoking, 26 times (95% CI 1.58 – 427; $p = 0.04$) more likely not to smoke in front of women/children, and 8 times (95% CI 2.56 – 22.2; $p < 0.01$) more likely not to smoke in public. **Conclusion:** The study suggests that females may play an important role in reducing men's smoking prevalence in Indonesia. An intervention that empowers female partners to safely express dissatisfaction with male smoking could provide an avenue for cessation activities, particularly in a country lacking gender equality and where cultural norms support male smoking.

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