

BACKGROUND

Regulations to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke are now being attempted in low- and middle-income countries where pro-smoking norms may be strong. In Indonesia, where 67% of men and 5% of women smoke, the secular norm is quite accepting of smoking. However, a number of prominent Muslim leaders and organizations have recently spoken against tobacco use. In a country of 247 million people where 87% of the population is Muslim, these leaders may have a large influence on compliance with smoke-free laws and other tobacco control measures.

Indonesia's first comprehensive smoke-free law was passed by the city of Bogor in 2009. Implementation began in 2010 and was met with limited success. In a 2012 research trip to learn about the implementation of the smoke-free law, we sought to understand how the statements of Muslim leaders have affected the views Bogor's residents have about law.



METHODS

Data Collection:

To gain the perspectives of the major stakeholders, we conducted:

- In-depth interviews with 38 city and NGO leaders**, representing religious organizations; Bogor City offices, including legal, health, public order police, and city parliament; local and national NGOs; professional organizations; and local media.
- Focus groups with 89 residents.** Focus group facilitators led 11 focus groups, each with 5-10 participants. Participants were recruited from both low- and middle-SES areas and groups were stratified by age, gender, and smoking status.
- Interviews with 17 venue managers.** We conducted individual interviews with 13 managers/representatives of a variety of restaurants, and 4 managers of shopping malls with food courts.

Analysis:

Translated transcripts were iteratively coded using ATLAS.ti 7.0 qualitative analysis software in a process of thematic content analysis, seeking both recurrent themes and unique answers relating to the research questions.

ISLAMIC LAW

Islam has a strong legal tradition that seeks to minimize the risk of harm to society and individuals. All human affairs are classified as one of five categories:

- fard* - mandatory
- mustahabb* - encouraged
- mubah* - neutral
- makruh* - discouraged, not sinful but those abstaining will be blessed by God
- haram* - prohibited, sinful

Muslim scholars debate about whether smoking is discouraged (*makruh*) or forbidden (*haram*).

POSITIONS OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES

Indonesia's Muslim Leadership

Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI):

- Smoking by women and children is forbidden.
- Smoking in public is forbidden.
- Otherwise smoking is discouraged.



Social-Religious Organizations

Nahdlatul Ulama:

- Smoking is discouraged but not forbidden, since while it may be harmful it was not specifically prohibited by the Prophet Muhammad.
- Disagreed with the MUI's fatwa, saying: *"...the danger of smoking is relative, not as significant as the danger of drinking [alcohol]. Also those who smoke have relative benefit, for example, their thinking is clear when smoking."*



Muhammadiyah:

- All smoking is forbidden because it is harmful and wasteful.
- Cite the Quran's prohibition on suicide: *"make not your own hands contribute to your own destruction" (2;195).*



KEY FINDINGS

1. Similar to the national-level authorities, local Muslim have differing interpretations of Muslim law regarding the acceptability of smoking.

"Cigarette makes us fall into the destruction and it is contradictory to the Quran. There is also another verse that says that it is wasting money. Every wasting is devil's brother."
- Muhammadiyah representative

"Many people from medical background said that this affect cancer but we know in reality many people smoke and don't have any cancer and have long... age. So I mean that the research itself... could be not universal."
- Nahdlatul Ulama representative

2. People said it is up to each individual to decide which religious leaders to follow and what to believe. People may favor positions consonant with their behavior.

"...there was a religious leader who said smoking was haram. But, I think it's more makruh"
- female smoker, age 40

"So it is like this, religion said no, law said no, doctor said no.. you see... so I really obey them"
- female nonsmoker, age 26

"The people [in] Indonesia try to find the legitimate, where they, where are the position? Now I'm [a] smoker; I will try to get with legitimate from NU, like that. Now I'm not a smoker; I try to legitimate the Muhammadiyah."
- local newspaper reporter

3. Some residents thought it hypocritical for Imams to speak against smoking when many smoke themselves.

"...even though he is the leader, he can only talk, but cannot implement it for himself."
- male nonsmoker, age 40

4. Smoking is widely accepted as being part of the Indonesian culture.

"If it is in our culture that it is a habit to smoke after eating, drinking coffee and smoking, drinking tea and smoking, and reading Quran and smoking, I don't know for the smoking when it is stated as haram by MUI or maybe KTR perda [smoke-free local law]. But if from the surrounding people they have this negative culture, to stop smoking is difficult."
- male nonsmoker, age 40

5. There is a possible role for religious leaders in promoting the smoke-free law.

"...in addition to NGOs, the health office, this should be supported by religious leaders. There is an impact."
- 19-year-old male smoker

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicate a possible benefit of integrating religious and public health messages around smoking. Our suggestions are to:

- Encourage local religious leaders to promote the smoke-free law.** Public health officials could meet with religious leaders to ask if they would be willing to publicly promote following the city's smoke-free law as a way for good Muslims to be respectful of other people. Even if the Muslim leaders do not quit smoking, they can set a good example of not smoking in public places.
- Explore religious messaging as part of the effort to raise awareness about the law.** Public health officials could conduct focus groups with the public to see their receptivity to the incorporation of religious justifications for the smoke-free law (e.g., posters could cite the Quran's prohibitions on suicide and wastefulness).

Possible future research directions:

- Conduct surveys to understand the general public's perspective as to whether smoking is forbidden or discouraged, and to learn whose opinions they value most.
- Investigate how the firmly-held religious and social prohibition on alcohol use can be a model for promoting social norms against tobacco use.

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