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Talking cigarette in cyberspace: Cyber community response to the implementation of smoke free area policy in Bandung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background and purpose: The policy of implementing and expanding smoke free area (*kawasan tanpa rokok/KTR*) in several locations in the City of Bandung has become a topic that is highlighted by the community. Community response is an essential component in succeeding policy implementation. This study examines how the culture of cyber society responds to the implementation and extension of the KTR in the city of Bandung

Methods: This study uses a qualitative method with a netnographic strategy. Three posts were selected according to the criteria for the research objectives, including: @prfmnews posts, @infobandungraya, and @infobdg.com. Instagram is selected as the research data source because, according to the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo), it is the most popular social media in Indonesia. Indeed, every post and information on it has the potential to attract various groups. Several concepts and theories in this study relate to the diffusion of innovation, information literacy, cognitive dissonance theory, and selective process theory.

Results: This study found some of the contra arguments were conducting tobacco control is false propaganda; other regulations are more urgent than KTR; the leading cause of dirty air is vehicles; local regulation on KTR is ambiguous, and smoking is part of individual rights. In the pro category, the communities are supportive, especially those who are passive smokers and feel discomfort with cigarette smoke conditions. Information and digital literacy related to cigarettes are factors that trigger individual responses to hoaxes and conspiratorial information about cigarettes. Denial to the reality of the dangers of smoking illustrates how the process of cognitive dissonance occurs in smokers who try to justify their actions for various reasons. The cyber community has experienced selective exposure to the KTR and the diffusion of innovations in the KTR should be considered.

Conclusion: Based on the research findings, the researcher suggests that the government should pay attention to the stages of persuasion and promotion of KTR policies to achieve public obedience to the applicable local regulations.

Keywords: Bandung, digital literacy, netnographic, smoke free area, tobacco control

INTRODUCTION

The Bandung City Government has been intensively carrying out promotion of the smoke free area (KTR) through the Bandung City Regional Regulation (PERDA) number 4 of 2021 per May 2021.¹ KTR in Bandung City was mainly purposed as a form of government management so that people do not smoke in some places and the assessment that there are non-smokers who have the right to smoke-free air. KTR is concreted by installing smoking rooms accordingly. This process is also published through various online news platforms, including online news social media accounts.

KTR is a room or area declared prohibited for smoking, producing, selling, advertising, and/or promoting tobacco products. Such policy is realized following the State's Law no. 36 of 2009 on Health and PP No. 109 of 2012 on Safeguarding Materials Containing Addictive Substances in the Form of Tobacco Products for Health, which required local governments to establish KTR in their respective regions through Regional Regulations (Perda) or other regional laws and regulations. The areas in the KTR zone include several places, including health service facilities, teaching and learning places, children to play, worship, public transportation, workplaces, public places, and other designated places.^{2,3}

The regional regulation on KTR is indeed essential to be implemented in the city of Bandung. Data on smoking behavior in the city of Bandung shows that the proportion of Bandung people starting to smoke is from the age of 15-19 (49.4%) and 20-24 (26.98%). In addition, as many as 77.7 percent of smokers smoke indoors or in buildings, and as many as 43 percent smokes near other people in closed rooms.⁴ In fact, according to data, the population of smokers aged 15 years and over by province, West Java, continues to be in the top 4 positions from 2019 to 2021.⁵ This is certainly important to be considered and controlled by the government.

In addition, cigarette smoke is also worrisome to impact bad air in Bandung. The results of air quality measurements in Bandung in 2018 by the Bali Tobacco Control Initiative and LPA of West Java Province showed that 90% of the 101 places in Bandung City had poor air quality because they were above the WHO tolerance threshold of 25 micrograms/cubic meter.⁶ Therefore, the right to clean air needs to be considered through various air pollution control policies, one of which comes from cigarette smoke.

Although the government considers the urgency of implementing the Regional Regulation on KTR in Bandung City important, this has led to the dynamics of public opinion. A survey in 2016 found that 89% of the people of Bandung City agreed that the City of Bandung had a Regional Regulation on smoke free area.⁷ However, the effectiveness of the Regional Regulation on KTR in Bandung City is still doubted by a group of people.⁸ The KTR rules still need more dissemination in the community.⁹ In addition, according to the Observer of Public Communication, Dr. H. Deden Ramdan, M.Si, the role of government firmness and clarity of information regarding KTR need to be improved.¹⁰

Based on this explanation, the researchers reviewed that it is important to conduct further research on public responses regarding the implementation of KTR in Bandung, especially on social media, Instagram, which preferred by young people. Indeed, based on the Maverick Indonesia survey, 84% of the younger generation consume news through social media, and 89% choose to consume news through Instagram.¹¹ Public opinion on the internet is important for the government to pay attention to. According to Huang, public opinion in the digital world (cyber society) reflects the current hot issues in today's society, such as social security incidents, moral incidents, educational events, and other social problems. Thus, the formation of policy issues is the main link in the formulation of public policy, and the role of the internet is to promote social issues in the political sphere. The agenda ultimately shapes public policy issues.¹² The impact of public opinion on policy has power,

even when political organizations and elites' activities are considered.¹³ Public opinion is no longer created through deliberation but is constructed through a communication system in conflict with political actors, who seek to maintain control over the dissemination of information.¹⁴ This has proven to be the case in China, based on research findings suggesting that cyber public opinion is a very important component of social opinion in China and produces both positive and negative effects on government decision-making.¹⁵

The policy of implementing and expanding smoke free areas (KTR) in several locations in Bandung has become a topic that is highlighted by the community. Public response is certainly an important component in successfully implementing a policy. This study aims to explore the response of cyber society in cyberspace toward the application of KTR in Bandung City and policies for expanding the KTR area in Bandung City.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative method with a netnographic strategy. Netnographic research is research that relies on digital data as research subjects. This study seeks to describe how the culture of digital society (cyber society) responds to specific issues in the digital world so that they can understand the culture of life on the internet, which is reflected in traces, practices, networks, and social media systems.¹⁶ These findings are reflected in the three basic elements of netnography, namely investigation, interaction, and deepening.¹⁷

As with the netnographic research procedure, the researcher started the research by categorizing information on Instagram, then selecting the three posts with the highest number of responses on the topic of Non-Smoking Areas in Bandung City. The three selected posts include @prfmnews posts, @infobandungraya, and @infobdg.com. The three accounts are news accounts that contain news typical of West Java and its surroundings (including Bandung City). The selection of Instagram as research data is because, according to the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo), Instagram is the most popular social media in Indonesia, where every post and information on it has the potential to get attention from various groups.¹⁸

As the use of digital data is very dynamic, this study limits the comments taken to comments from the limit of this posting being submitted until December 31, 2021. Then, this research is processed using the NVivo 12 Plus application as a tool for the data coding process and data visualization.

This study analysed publicly available data, hence no ethical approval is needed. The researchers also ensured the publication is made confidential for name of individual or institution.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the application of the smoke free area (KTR) released in 2021 in Bandung reaps the pros and cons of the community. These pros and cons are also expressed in cyberspace. The research looks at the image of cyber society culture in responding to KTR policies conveyed through various comments on Instagram uploads regarding KTR policy news in Bandung City.

The cultural phenomenon of people commenting on social media has become a new culture in the era of digitalization, where people interact not only in the real world but also through various platforms on the internet. This means there are findings in the real world that can be converted into cyberspace, or even those that do not occur in the real world can occur in cyberspace. One of them is the uniqueness of interaction in cyberspace is the possibility of getting direct feedback and opening up space for users of information that does not only run in one direction like print/television media but also in two directions simultaneously. Even audiences on digital

media (one of which is social media) also have the opportunity to be a source of information.¹⁹

Social media is a place for interaction in the digital world that many people love. Based on the responses found, there are two main themes in the cyberculture of responding to KTR implemented in the City of Bandung, namely Pros and Cons. On the topic of KTR in Bandung City, the pros and cons that were found did not occur in major conflicts between cyber communities. This was because most comments rejected the application of KTR in Bandung City. It can be concluded that KTR in Bandung City has been rejected by the cyber community.

Basically, the pros and cons of cyber society in social media are findings that often occur, especially regarding matters related to government policies. The same thing happened to the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination policy in Indonesia, which also reaped the pros and cons of cyber society.²⁰ This is further supported by freedom of expression and the opportunity to hide identity on social media. People in anonymity develop tendencies toward greater aggression and violence.²¹ The existence of digital media is considered to be able to trigger conflicts in society between certain groups in society.²²

The pros and cons of social media cannot be separated from the individual's desire to select the information they think is true. This study reveals that cyber society tends to find reasons to justify smoking behavior and reject the application of KTR in Bandung. The phenomenon of seeking justification for smoking can be explained by the concept of selective exposure from Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory. This theory explains that individuals tend to avoid information that will create cognitive dissonance because it is not in accordance with their beliefs.²³ People tend to look for information that supports their beliefs.²⁴ The phenomenon of selective exposure in cyber society regarding KTR is found as follows:

“To stop smoking personally, it is difficult, because smoking feels so good”

“Do non-smokers have to get a higher share of rights than smokers like me?? Smokers have the right to smoke too!!”

“Smoking kills you but does not kill me”

“Respect people who do not smoke in places where smoking is prohibited, respect smokers in places where smoking is allowed”

The cyber community's comments against the implementation of KTR in Bandung tend to be defensive and build personal beliefs about cigarette consumption. Responses tend to lead to the justification of smoking behavior. Furthermore, this study also reveals that the selective exposure process carried out by cyber communities related to KTR in Bandung City can also be referred to as an act of seeking justification for admitting the dangers of smoking cigarettes and justifying smokers to switch to vaping. Cyber society believes that vaping is safer and can replace cigarettes. Vape should not be impacted by the implementation of KTR in the city of Bandung.

Based on the research findings regarding cyber society's defense in responding to KTR in Bandung City, it can also be related to social media consumption in the Post Truth era. Various information on social media has no accurate screening process disseminating information on social media.²⁵ Therefore, there is a need for awareness of information and digital literacy so that users are not easily provoked by inappropriate information on social media, such as hoaxes or conspiracies. Social media users need to acquire digital literacies, which is the ability to access, understand, select, distribute, produce, analyze, verify, evaluate, participate and collaborate in the digital world.²⁶

Some of the findings that illustrate the digital community's belief in conspiracy theories such as:

“How much did the pharmacy pay? Can you share it”

“I don’t know how good it is to smoke, so try it. Cigarettes have many benefits, they are healthy, as long as we are consumed by propaganda, how much will the city government pay”

Based on the cyber community’s response to the implementation of KTR in the city of Bandung, the researchers found the opinion of rejection into several categories of reasons (Table 1).

Table 1. Categories and subcategories of reasons for KTR rejection in Bandung

Categories	Sub Categories	Information
The presence of sources of smoke and other smoking behaviors that are more detrimental.	Vehicle emission. Smoking while driving.	Assessing cigarette smoke is no more detrimental.
Control should not be directly on the community, but on the structure above it.	Company discipline (company closure) Regulations apply to the government and civil servants (ASN)	
Cigarettes benefit the State.	Profits from large taxes. Open job opportunities. Become a source of development funds.	
Another sector that is more urgent to be regulated.	Flood problems in Bandung Angkots (Commercial van) that stop carelessly. Corruption. Pickpocketing. Thugs and blackmail. Rubbish	
Focus on fines	The fine amount is too big. Unclear flow of fines	The KTR regulation in Bandung City is considered to be blackmailing the people.
Defensive		Various forms of justification and defense with unfounded reasons.

In addition to the rejection of the KTR implementation in the City of Bandung, cyber communities are still questioning the clarity of the regulations made. Some things that have not been understood are related to (1) The exact location of KTR; (2) Clear limits for fines of KTR; (3) Limited space of KTR (closed/open space only); (4) What will the proceeds of the fine be used for; and (5) Completeness of regulatory information. The clarity of this information is certainly important for the community to understand the KTR rules clearly, and their implementation can be carried out orderly.

The implementation of government regulations, especially on regional policies, needs to consider the dissemination process and the inclusion of policy information to the public, as various previous research suggest that the framework for the diffusion of innovation has implications for public policy.²⁷ In addition, information clarity is also important to maximize policy implementation to support innovation diffusion. Innovation diffusion is when a person learns about an innovation that they think may have significant consequences, feels uncertain about how to respond, and then seeks further information so that potential adopters can better judge whether innovation attributes require further exploration.²⁸ In this case, it is also necessary to consider the influence of socio-cultural factors that is important in implementing innovations in society, especially in the

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the pros and cons of the public on social media regarding the application of KTR in Bandung are based on various perspectives and public defensive processes regarding smoking. The *selective exposure* behavior apparent in smokers is also an important point that needs to be considered to implement KTR in Bandung City successfully. The government needs to pay attention to the right communication strategy in promoting the KTR policy in the community.

This study also concluded that the clarity of information related to policies and the process of delivering KTR policy innovations in the community needs to be reviewed and considered again. One of the main focuses that can be considered is related to the delivery of information regarding the urgency of this KTR policy being implemented. This is one of the strategies to attract the public's focus so as not to look for loopholes by assessing that other things are more important than the KTR issue in the City of Bandung. It is also a big task for the government to convince the public about the benefits of implementing KTR in Bandung so that it can be carried out in an orderly manner.

The researcher hopes that this study can be an initial description of the response of the cyber community, which is mostly loved by young people, and become a consideration in making policies related to tobacco control, especially in the City of Bandung. The limitation of this research is the limitation of data which only uses data from Instagram comments on the special topic of KTR in the City of Bandung. The cyber community provides comments that can no longer be recognized by their characteristics and thoughts (anonymous) so there is an opportunity for further research development. This research has the opportunity to be developed with various other research methods to perfect more comprehensive results. Some suggestions for further research include; assessment of community responses using the case study method, quantitative research to measure program success, and various research based on community experiences.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

CMK and IRZ design the study; CMK carried out data crawling, analysis, and results drafting; IRZ searched for suitable literature reviews; CMK and IRZ reviewed the article result.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

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