



The Phenomenon of Vaping in Female Students

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 June 2023

Revised 28 September 2023

Accepted 29 September 2023

Available online 3 October 2023

E-ISSN: [2745-536X](https://doi.org/10.32734/ijma.v4i2.12282)

How to cite:

Indriani, R.C., Aulia, F. Sianturi, P.A., Sundari, P., Sembiring, S.U.B., Milala, Y.Y., Pasaribu, D.N., & Putri, A., (2023). The Phenomenon of Vaping in Female Students. Indonesian Journal of Medical Anthropology. 4(2), 44-49.

ABSTRACT

In its development, vaping is not only in demand by men, but women have also become its users. Some societies still stigmatize women who smoke or vape. Women who vape or smoke are often referred to as unrighteous or naughty women and get ridiculed or cursed. In fact, vaping behavior in women is inseparable from the motives that are their reasons for vaping. The purpose of this study is to find out what the motives of women for vaping are, what effects are obtained after using vaping, and what stigma is obtained. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach with primary and secondary data collection techniques. Primary data collection was conducted through an in-depth interview method (a departmental interview) by finding three key informants. The informant requirement is a woman who is a vape perpetrator. Secondary data in this study using a review of online literature. The database used is in the form of Google Scholar, where the author combines words relevant to themes such as "Vape and Women," "Motif," and "Stigma." The results of the study concluded that one of the reasons women vape is to think that vaping is something cool. Faster fatigue and shortness of breath are two of the effects they receive after vaping. Women who vape also often receive negative ratings from the surrounding community; they are often said to be bad women.

Keyword: Vape, Women, Vaping Motives, Stigma, Impact of Vaping

ABSTRAK

Dalam perkembangannya, *vape* tidak hanya diminati oleh kaum laki-laki, namun kalangan wanita pun turut menjadi penggunanya. Segelintir masyarakat masih memberikan stigma negatif kepada para perempuan yang merokok atau *vaping*. Perempuan yang *vaping* ataupun merokok sering disebut sebagai perempuan tidak benar atau nakal, dan mendapat cemohan maupun umpatan. Padahal, perilaku *vaping* pada wanita tidak terlepas dari motif yang menjadi alasan mereka untuk *vaping*. Tujuan penelitian ini yaitu untuk mengetahui apa saja yang menjadi motif para perempuan melakukan *vaping*, dampak apa yang didapatkan setelah memakai *vape*, serta stigma apa saja yang didapat. Penelitian yang dilakukan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data secara primer dan sekunder. Pengumpulan data primer melalui metode wawancara mendalam (*in dept interview*) dengan menemukan 3 orang informan kunci. Syarat informan adalah perempuan yang menjadi pelaku *vape*. Untuk data sekunder dalam penelitian ini menggunakan review terhadap literatur online. Database yang digunakan berupa Google Scholar yang mana penulis mengkombinasikan kata yang relevan dengan tema seperti "Vape dan Wanita", "Motif", "Stigma". Hasil penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa salah satu alasan perempuan *vaping* yaitu menganggap bahwa *vaping* merupakan sesuatu yang keren. Lebih cepat lelah dan sesak napas merupakan salah satu dampak yang mereka terima setelah *vaping*. Perempuan yang *vaping* juga sering menerima penilaian negatif dari masyarakat sekitar, mereka sering dikatakan perempuan nakal.

Keyword: Vape, Perempuan, Motif Vaping, Stigma, Dampak Vaping



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<http://doi.org/10.32734/ijma.v4i2.12282>

1. Introduction

A *vape*, also known as a *vaporizer* or electronic cigarette is an electronic device used to produce vapor from a liquid, which is usually called *e-liquid* or *juice*. *Vaping* comes as an alternative to conventional cigarettes. Those who use *vaping* are called *vapers*, and activities when vaping are called *vaping*. *This vape* is used by pressing a button that turns it on or off. After that, put the liquid into a liquid container called an atomizer, and then the liquid will be heated by the atomizer using power from the *vape* battery. *The heated liquid* will then turn into vapor that resembles cigarette smoke. If conventional cigarettes exhale smoke due to the burning of tobacco, while *vaping* exhales water vapor from heating liquid, *E-liquid* used in *vaping* usually contains a mixture of *Propylene Glycol*, *Vegetable Glycerin*, and various flavors and aromas; not infrequently, there is also a mixture of nicotine with doses of 3 mg, 6 mg, 9 mg, and 23 mg (Bagus & Priyatmoko, 2019).

The idea of *e-cigarettes* originally came from Herbert Gilbert in 1963. However, the invention did not result in *the vape* that is currently used. A pioneer in the use of *e-cigarettes* or *vapes* today is a Chinese pharmacist named Hon Lik in 2003 (Pranoto, 2018). Hon Lik is an active smoker, which makes him experience respiratory tract infections. Hon Lik wanted to create an alternative to help tobacco addicts. He got inspiration when he dreamed of drowning, where the water that entered his mouth when drowning evaporates and the steam is enough to form fog (Bagus & Priyatmoko, 2019).

The development of *vape* can be said to have been successful since the beginning of its manufacture in 2003. In America, *vaping* has been introduced since 2007 and has received a good response from the public. Even in China, one vape factory established in 2009 earns a profit of more than 1.5 billion dollars per year. The invention of *vaping* is accepted in the community because it is felt that it can match the taste of tobacco cigarettes. In this e-cigarette, there is a nicotine flavor like that in tobacco cigarettes, but there is no TAR content or carcinogens in the content of electronic cigarettes. In Indonesia, the entry of electronic cigarettes was in 2010. But at that time, this e-cigarette did not get certification from BPOM. Even so, *vape* and *liquid* are still traded in Indonesia.

Statistical data shows that *vape* users in Indonesia are dominated by men (64%), followed by women (35%). According to the *Global Adults Tobacco Survey* (GATS) taken from Bayu (2022), the prevalence of e-cigarettes in Indonesia reached 3% in 2021, where this figure increased ten times more when compared to 2011, which was only 0.3%. This increase is due to the assumption that electronic cigarettes are a healthier alternative when compared to conventional cigarettes.

Vaping is not only in demand by men; women are also users. Everyone's perception of *vaping* behavior is certainly different. For men who *vape*, it is considered something commonplace and informed. Unlike women, some societies will negatively stigmatize women who smoke or *vape* as synonymous with women who are unrighteous or naughty and get ridicule and swear at (Dwi Bramantyo & Wulandari, 2020). In fact, *vaping* behavior in women is inseparable from the motives that are their reasons for *vaping*, some of which start from curiosity that leads to addiction to using electronic cigarettes. There are also those who feel more confident when using *vaping*; this is due to the expensive price of *vaping*, so it is considered a non-cheap and sophisticated item (Zahratul et al., 2021).

A lot of literature has discussed the use of electronic cigarettes (*vape*) in men, but to our knowledge, there is very little literature that discusses this phenomenon of *vaping* in women. Therefore, this paper will try to identify the motives of women to *vape* and what is behind their decision to *vape*. Here will also be discussed what the impacts are felt by them when they start *vaping*, both in terms of social and health.

2. Methods

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach with primary and secondary data collection techniques. Primary data collection was conducted through an *in-depth interview method* (*in dept interview*) by finding 3 key informants. The informant requirement is a woman who is a *vape* perpetrator. The research questions use an interview guide by asking some open-ended questions. Furthermore, secondary data in this study used a review of *online literature*. The database used is in the form of Google Scholar where the author combines words relevant to themes such as "Vape and Women", "Motif", "Stigma". The amount of literature we found was more than 10 where the literature contained discussions about what *vape* is, how the history of the invention of *vape*, *vaping* culture in women, what is the background of *vaping* behavior, and the impact of *vaping* on body health.

3. Result and Discussion

In the past decade, *vaping* behavior has become a trend followed by young people as a medium of self-expression. Reporting from Ridwan (2023), it is said that global profits from the e-cigarette sector have experienced a promising increase since 2012, amounting to 4517.6 million euros, and will continue to increase until 2025. This revenue comes from countries that legalize the sale of *vaping* around the world. The *Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control* stated in 2021 that there are 73 countries that support the sale of *e-cigarettes* by observing certain regulations. And there are 37 countries that do not allow the distribution of *vape*. In its development, *vaping* is not only used by men but also by women. However, there are often differences in views or stigma given by society to men who vape and women who *vape*.

3.1. Vaping Motifs in Women

Every human behavior has a motive in its essence. Motive is a drive that comes from within humans to do something. Rose (pseudonym) is a student who is in college. Rose knew *vaping* since the first grade of junior high school, but Rose had a vacuum for *vaping* in high school, then he continued it again until now. Rose costs money to buy vape and liquid devices from around Rp. 300,000 to Rp. 1,300,000. Rose also has several collections of *vape devices* and has several liquid flavors. The cost that Rose can spend on maintaining her *vape* device is Rp. 60,000 to replace the wire. Rose bought a *vape* and *liquid* using the pocket money she saved.

Meanwhile, Jasmine (pseudonym) is a student who is in college. Jasmine has only been *vaping* since two months ago. Jasmin is still classified as a passive user because he is still a new user. Jasmine spent around Rp300,000 to buy a *vape*. Jasmine bought *vape* and *liquid* equipment with her own savings because she also worked for a public relations agency at her college.

Tulip (pseudonym) is also in college. Tulip has been *vaping* for about a year. Tulips can spend around Rp300,000–Rp400,000 for *vape* purchases and treatments. Tulip buys *vape* and *liquid* equipment with her own money earned from working part-time and also from pocket money.

When conducting in-depth interviews with informants, one of the questions we asked was the reason for encouraging the use of *vaping*. Some variations of the answers from informants are seen below.

"At first, I knew about *vaping* from Instagram and YouTube, right? Then I was interested in using it because it looked cool, and in my opinion, *vaping* was not dangerous because it was a liquid that was burned, different from cigarettes. If you smoke, the tobacco is burned," Rose said.

"I use *vape* because of stress—stress because of the responsibilities of working with lectures. I kept feeling empty, even though my activities were busy. When I *vape*, I am rich, calm, and relaxed, but after the *vape* is rich in stress, it comes again. Before using *vaping*, I used to use conventional cigarettes, but after I thought cigarettes were not good for my long-term health, I didn't know the level at which I used to *vape*. "In my opinion, the impact of *vaping* is not as severe as that of cigarettes," said Jasmine.

"I know *vaping* from friends, so join in. At first, my friends told me to try it; when I tried, it was exciting; this was exciting; finally, it continued. The main motive is actually because of the headache with college activities," said Tulip.

From the explanation above, we identified that there are at least four motives why a woman uses *vape*. The first is due to personal desires because they think that *vaping* is cool, second because of stress with lecture activities, the third because of trial and error and following friends, and fourth because there is an intention to reduce the use of conventional cigarettes.

Arifin (2018) said that the motives for women to use electronic cigarettes are divided into two, namely because they feel comfortable and environmentally friendly and the motive to quit conventional cigarettes. Infroman Jamine, in his answer said that previously he was a conventional smoker. He was aware of the dangers of conventional cigarettes, so he lowered his level and became a user of electronic cigarettes (*vape*). According to Zahratul et al. (2021), the reason someone does *vaping* is because there is curiosity, curiosity and a high sense of wanting to try. This is what Rose's informant experienced. At first he saw it on social media and then he was interested in wearing it because he felt *vaping* was cool. Infroman Tulip tried *vaping* because it was influenced by her friendship environment. One of the reasons someone uses *vape* is because they are in an environment that uses *vape* (Indrawan et al., 2016).

3.2. The Impact of Vaping on Health

The emergence of *vaping* was originally an effort to replace conventional cigarettes, which are famous for their harm to the body. *Vaping* is considered a safe alternative and can be used as a substitute for conventional cigarettes. By seeing the rise of *vape* users as an alternative substitute that is considered safe behind the FDA (*Food and Drug Administration*), the United States conducted a study in 2009 about *e-cigarettes* and found that tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNA), *diethylene glycol* (DEG), and carbon monoxide are toxic and can harm the body (Kurniawan Tanuwihardja & Susanto, 2012).

As quoted from Astasari (2022), the danger of electronic cigarette users can trigger cancer and cause respiratory tract disorders such as asthma, shortness of breath, and airway obstruction. In addition, the nicotine content in *e-cigarettes* can trigger the effects of opium. *Vape* users will tend to consume continuously without being stopped, which can affect the psychological health of their users. Nicotine contained in *vape* causes damage to nerve development and the brain and causes loss of self-control triggered by addiction to *vape*.

Based on an interview with Tulip, he said that *"when using vape, I often get sick because I often inhale steam and get respiratory problems and coughs."* Similarly, Rose said the impact of *vaping* that he felt was: *"I used to like sports; before I vaped during sports, I could run 10 rounds of the stadium, but after vaping since junior high school until now, I am in college, so I can only run 3 laps, even if it is already tight. Vaping makes my breathing disturbed and, not infrequently, also short of breath"*.

Not much different from the two informants, Tulip and Rose, the second informant, Jasmine, also felt the impact of *vaping*. Asmine said, *"I exercise diligently; what I experienced before making vape, I was still able to go around the field, but now I prefer to sleep, because if I run, I get tired faster, and my breath is rich so fast."* *"When I first used vaping, my lips were cracked. I assumed it was the process of adapting the vape to me because it was still early in using it."*

From the exposure of the three informants of *vape* users above, it can be seen that *vaping* triggers shortness of breath, coughing, and other respiratory disorders that affect the running of informant activities such as exercise. Based on Jasmine's narrative, even though using *vape* counted for only a few months, the impact of *vaping* has affected her body performance and health. Even though *vape* behavior has an impact on health, it is not uncommon for users to ignore it because it is considered normal and commonplace.

Active ingredients in *e-liquid* liquids include nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerin (glycerin), water, and flavoring. There are also chemicals in the vapor produced when liquefied is a potential carcinogen made up of formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, and acrolein, as well as metals and TSNA's (Runtukahu et al., 2021). Active chemicals contained in *vape* ingredients can cause lung disease in users if *vaping* is used for a long time (Kurniawan Tanuwihardja & Susanto, 2012).

Referring to the paper (Ariyani et al., 2019), it explains many adverse effects on the health of *vaping* users. *Vaping* users can experience cognitive and behavioral impairments, including impacting memory and attention, for people who inhale, swallow, or absorb *vaping* liquids. Not only does it affect physical health, but *vaping* also has side effects on the mental health of its users. *Vape* users tend to be given negative stigma from various parties, especially parents. A woman who uses *vape* is considered a bad or naughty woman, based on the narration of an informant named Rose: *"Parents forbid me to vape because it is considered to deviate from the prevailing norms; parents are also afraid that if one day I settle down and get pregnant, it can have a bad effect if I vape; smoking in any form for girls is not normal for parents; I was told to stop a lot, but I didn't care about them; I also hid if I wanted to vape."* Behaviors that arise due to parental bans can also affect the mental health of a *vape* user, such as stress and depression.

Vaping also causes a person to experience fertility problems. Eating *vape* can damage eggs, experience a decreased chance of pregnancy, increase the risk of ectopic pregnancy or pregnancy outside the womb, and also increase the risk of miscarriage.

3.3. The Stigma Obtained by Women Smokers

The phenomenon of women smoking, especially electric smokers (*vapes*), is not something new in Indonesia. We can find indiscriminate women active *vape* users from various circles, both students and students, women wearing hijab, career women, and even housewives. They can be found in public places such as cafes, streets, and even campus environments. However, the reality is that not all the existence of women smokers, be it conventional or electric smokers (*vape*), can be accepted and often considered troubling for certain communities (Panjaitan, 2016). Society normalizes if the smoker is a man but will sneer when a woman smokes, even with the money she earns herself.

As revealed by our three informants, who revealed that the surrounding environment often gives poor judgment to him.

Based on an interview with an informant, Jasmine revealed: "Because *it just so happens that my friends are good friends who have never smoked, then when you see a girl smoking, it's okay, and it's not uncommon for my friends to tell me like a bitch when vaping*".

Not much different from informant Jasmine, the stigma obtained by informant Tulip said: "They think it's just weird, just as bad. *I was once told that bad girls play too far; girls are not right why they can use vape like that, even though they say they participate in college activities until they have to vape like that, so they think it's just bad rich when I vape*".

From the presentation of the infoman, it can be seen that closed-minded people tend to label or label negatively smokers or *vaping* women, such as women who are not right, naughty, uneducated, or even bitches. It is also not uncommon for people to stigmatize female smokers as rebels and label them as "bad women" (Nangoi et al., 2023).

According to Ariwindyasari (2022), the stigmatization or negative assessment of female smokers cannot be separated from the main factor, namely the strong patriarchal culture in Indonesian society. Cigarettes are considered synonymous with symbols of masculinity, so in Indonesia, smoking is an inappropriate and taboo thing for women to do. In addition, men are considered to be the number one party and dominate (Ariwindyasari, 2022).

There is a society that still considers the position of women to be subordinate, so that women do not have a sufficient bargaining position in determining moral standards in the social sphere. In other words, women are required to settle into domestic work affairs. Thus, the role of women is bound by norms, social systems, and myths, so that the image of a woman who is phenimin, emotional, gentle, affectionate, and so on must be owned as a woman.

In addition, some people suspect that when women smoke, the moral and ethical values of these women will decrease (Halking et al., 2022). This view is common in society, but many people easily judge or interpret female smokers as inferior.

Referring to the writings of Hayati et al. (2020), mentioning views in discourse is an expression conveyed between humans and objects outside themselves, which means a way of thinking that separates thinking from reality. The views given are not always correct. Behind women using *e-cigarettes*, there must be reasons based on internal and external factors. Our informant told us that he tried *vaping* initially on the basis of personal desire.

"*I don't think it's a benchmark that he is actually stubborn just because he vapes; it can't be a heavy point. Don't because we vape him; it's considered wayward, not necessarily. Because it's like me, I vape just to play around, just make noise*", explained Rose.

Although the three informants received negative assessments as expressed during interviews, they responded to the assessments as normal and did not care about the judgments of others. In addition, they also do not want to be looked down upon or underestimated by the public because not all female active smokers include delinquent women (Mawardah & Darma, 2021). Because basically, female smokers, whether they smoke electronically or conventionally, must be very aware of the consequences they will face, both the adverse effects on health and the impact of stigmatization from people around them.

4. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, there are several factors behind *vaping behavior* in women, including the influence of the friendship environment, high curiosity, making *vaping* a stress reliever, and an effort to escape from conventional cigarettes. Most women smokers, both those who consume conventional and electronic cigarettes, often have a bad stigma in society. The main driving factor of the stigma is the assumption that cigarettes are synonymous with men, so smoking is an inappropriate and taboo thing for women to do. Society also assumes that when women smoke, their moral and ethical values will decrease. The reality is that not all women smokers are bad women, because there are reasons behind their being smokers.

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