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COMMUNICATION STEREOTYPES OF FEMALE SMOKERS: A Case Study on Teenage Employees at Point Pool & Lounge in Kupang City

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ABSTRACT

There are many female smokers in Kupang City, and they are often encountered. One such place is the entertainment venue, Point Pool & Lounge. This has made the researcher interested in studying further the communication of stereotypes towards female smokers. The purpose of this study is: (1) to describe the communication of stereotypes towards teenage female smokers who work at Point Pool & Lounge and (2) to find out the reasons women become smokers who work at Point Pool & Lounge. This type of research is qualitative with a case study method. The theory used is Labeling Theory. Data collection techniques in this study are in-depth interviews, documentation, and observation. The results of this study show that (1) female smokers are seen as naughty women and they get a double stigma in their interaction with the social environment and (2) the reason teenage girls smoke is due to social factors and cigarettes as a medium of expression as well as changes in social construction and lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

Smoking behavior is a subject's activity related to their smoking habits, measured through the intensity of smoking, tobacco timing, and the role of smoking in their daily life (Oskamp, 2004). WHO data from 2008 indicates that among Indonesian teenagers, 24.1% of males and 4.0% of females are smokers. The number of female teenage smokers in Indonesia is indeed not as high as the number of male adolescent smokers. However, existing data suggests that the number of female smokers continues to increase. Not only that, the prevalence of smoking among teenage girls is higher compared to adult women. Other studies mention that smoking behavior is influenced by three main factors: social, psychological, and environmental. Smoking behavior is defined as the act of burning tobacco and tar leaves and inhaling the resulting smoke (Husaini, 2006).

Various factors have led to a condition where the habit of smoking among women has emerged as a new trend and is no longer considered taboo by most of society. Those who previously never consumed cigarettes are influenced by their environment, leading them to become active smokers to this day. The transformation that occurs in these female smokers requires a considerable amount of time, necessitating a lengthy process before they decide to consume cigarettes. Changes also occur in the aspect of social acceptance within their family, society, and among their friends. This modern society's shift in societal thinking is caused by continuous interactions with female smokers (Lestari & Demartoto, 2011).

Many female smokers in Kupang City are often encountered in nightlife entertainment venues such as Point Pool & Lounge. In a pre-observation, a female worker confirmed:

"I initially tried smoking due to an event that caused me considerable confusion and stress. My father passed away at a time when I was not ready to lose my first love. My father and I were very close. I tried several ways to cope with this pain and stress, but nothing seemed to work. Eventually, I tried smoking. At first, I felt a bit awkward and there was a sense of anxiety and fear, but as I continued to smoke, it seemed like the problems and stress disappeared when I exhaled the smoke."(Interview result with Elin Heke on 28/05/2023)

Female teenagers working at Point Pool & Lounge are tasked with serving visitors who wish to play billiards and often smoke during their breaks. The management policy of Point Pool & Lounge provides access to smoking activities for both visitors and employees. The author also observed that most female employees have a habit of smoking for various reasons. Their ages average 18 years and above, falling into the teenage category. The local management only employs teenagers above the age of 17, considering government regulations prohibiting the employment of minors.

The researcher is interested in examining the stereotype communication among female employees of Point Pool & Lounge, primarily driven by their lifestyle, especially the habit of smoking. In the context of Eastern culture, female smokers relatively have a negative social judgment from society. Their smoking habit has social consequences that are vulnerable in terms of social acceptance and treatment towards them.

This study intends to further examine the stereotype communication of female smokers working at Point Pool & Lounge, based on the perspective of Labeling Theory. This theory suggests that a person becomes deviant due to the process of labeling, which involves the assignment of nicknames or labels from their social environment (Sutrisno & Putranto, 2005). Labeling is categorized as a behavior that stereotypes certain individuals or groups. Such labeling is a social construction of society that influences the self-concept of the subject. This is because an individual's self-concept is formed from various social judgments of society, including stereotypes (Mufid, 2012). Stereotype communication among female smoking employees at the Point Pool & Lounge nightlife venue is worth conducting to understand the social-cultural reality behind smoking activities. Such good knowledge anticipates the presence of excessive discriminatory attitudes and actions towards these female workers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses conceptual and theoretical reviews as data analysis instruments. Erickson (in Komalasari & Avin, 2000) states that smoking is related to the period of identity-seeking in adolescents. There are 4 stages that a smoking individual goes through, namely: Preparatory Stage, Initiation Stage, Becoming a Smoker Stage, and Maintenance of Smoking Stage (Leventhal et al., 1985). Smoking activities can be divided into 3 levels: Light Smoker, Moderate Smoker, and Heavy Smoker (Mustikaningrum, 2010). Individuals who smoke are driven by biological factors, psychological factors, social environmental factors, and demographic factors (Sarafino, 1994). Female smokers relatively receive negative stereotypes in the context of Indonesian society's culture. However, the definition of stereotype itself can be both good and bad dimensions. Stereotypes are an economical way to view the world as a whole. Individuals lean on the testimony of others to enrich their knowledge about the surrounding environment. Stereotypes consist of 2 types, namely: positive stereotypes and negative stereotypes, although most people associate stereotypes with something bad (Mufid, 2012).

Psychologically, the development of stereotypes occurs deliberately and is built upon various

psychological processes of humans, namely: selective attention, appraisal, concept formation and categorization, attributions, emotion, and memory (Matsumoto, 2003). Negative stereotypes imposed on certain individuals or groups will eventually give birth to prejudiced attitudes. Prejudice refers to an antipathy attitude based on incorrect and inflexible generalizations. The repetition of mistakes by individuals or groups then forms a negative precedent and is directed at the concerned individual or group as a form of social comparison (Liliweri, 2009). When individuals or groups interact, the result can be simulated into 2 possibilities: social relations that contain tolerance or otherwise, social relations marked by the presence of prejudice.

The consequence of long-standing prejudice will give birth to social discrimination. Both stereotypes and prejudices indicate the existence of conflict that occurs in social relations. Such conflict arises due to a situation where there is a difference in will or interest between one and another so that one or both are disturbed (Hardjana, 1994). Conflict is a common social phenomenon, marking the dynamics of social life, but needs to be anticipated and can be resolved. According to DeVito (2007), there are 5 strategies in dealing with interpersonal conflict, namely: Win-Win Strategies, Avoidance Active Fighting Strategies, Force and Talk Strategies, Face Detracting, and Verbal Aggressiveness. Labeling theory affirms that the labeling process sometimes takes place excessively so that it can undermine an individual's self-image and self-esteem. Subjects of labeling tend to behave and act according to the label imposed on them (Allport, 1954). Labeling can encourage individuals to act deviantly through 3 stages, namely: primary deviation, secondary deviation, and deviant career (Thorsell & Klemke, 1972).

METHODOLOGY

This research is categorized into a qualitative variant. Qualitative research functions to interpret a research problem based on data in a descriptive or narrative description through the medium of words (Bungin, 2010). Qualitative research intends to interpret a phenomenon that occurs by involving various existing methods. Qualitative research seeks to find and narratively describe human activities and the impact of actions taken on their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1988). The purpose of qualitative research is: to describe the object, explore the meaning behind the phenomena, and explain the object (Anggito dan Setiawan, 2018). Specifically, the method used in this research is a Case Study. Case studies allow researchers to explore a particular phenomenon (case) in a certain time and activity (program, event, process, institution, or social group) and collect detailed and in-depth information using various data collection procedures over

a certain period (Creswell, 1998). A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident (Yin, 2002). The subjects of the study consist of 3 key informants, 3 supporting informants, and 1 expert informant who is considered relevant to the communication of stereotypes of female smoking workers at Point Pool & Lounge. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Data validation is done through source triangulation, which is digging and comparing the truth of information through obtained data sources such as written document interviews, involved observations, archives, and images (Sugiyono, 2016). There are 4 stages of data analysis in this study, including Data Collection, Data Presentation, Data Reduction, and Conclusion Drawing / Verification (Miles et al., 2014).

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Visitors assign stereotypes to teenage female smokers who work at Point Pool & Lounge. They perceive these workers as women of ill repute and cheapness (synonymous with commercial sex workers) due to their habit of smoking at the workplace. This perception somewhat influences the visitors' treatment of these female workers. It gives the impression that women are not entitled to enjoy what men can. Cigarettes seem to have a gender and are not supposed to be enjoyed by women (Nangoi & Daeli, 2023). The treatment received by these female workers is carried out both directly and indirectly. Directly, it is evident in face-to-face interactions involving verbal messages, especially in sexist conversations. Indirectly, the presence of these female workers is often gossiped or whispered among the visitors, especially by men. Negative treatment of female smokers is a common occurrence in the context of Indonesian society. This is inseparable from the long-cultivated social construction. Culturally, smoking activities are known to be a routine domain of men. This construction is further reinforced by mass media portrayals that associate 'naughty' women with smoking and hard-drinking activities. Thus, negative stereotypes towards women who smoke still relatively exist in Indonesia today (Santosa & Nestopo, 2012). One of the visitors confirmed the ongoing stereotype:

'I once regarded them (the female workers) as synonymous with commercial sex workers, judging from their workplace which is notably at night, as well as their appearance and smoking habits. Therefore, verbal interactions with them, it is usually filled with sexist conversations such as: 'You are so sexy' or 'You can be used'. It happens spontaneously because we initially judged them as not good women.' (Interview result dated 07/06/2023)

For female smoking workers at Point Pool & Lounge, the stereotypes imposed on them are a consequence of the job they chose and pursued. On the one hand, they try to work professionally, but on the other hand, they have to face social discrimination not only during their time at work but also in their social environment. At work, they are viewed negatively and treated poorly. In social circles, they are discriminated against, even opposed by their own families. The stereotyping of female smoking workers at Point Pool & Lounge generally occurs at the beginning of the encounter. But as interactions and communication intensify, these stereotypes begin to fade and disappear as sympathy and empathy for the backgrounds of these female workers emerge. Stereotypes are perceptions or beliefs held about a group or individual based on previously formed opinions and attitudes (Samovar et al., 2014). The judgments imposed on these female workers come from preconceived notions already ingrained in the minds of the stereotype givers. This thought construct then becomes the sole reference in giving certain judgments or labels to their target subjects in the first encounter. According to Liliweri (2009), intensive communication can reduce social prejudice among communication participants. Communication can pave the way for various knowledge and give birth to mutual understanding, thus leading to the emergence of sympathetic attitudes and solidarity. Communication can prevent ongoing social discrimination. One of the visitors expressed his attitude and experience towards the female workers at Point Pool & Lounge:

'Initially, I also had a poor judgment of the female smoking workers at Point Pool & Lounge. However, after knowing their background, I began to sympathize with their condition. Even though they are still teenagers, they have grown up, they can make choices and bear the consequences. Especially since this is part of the job they undertake to survive. That is already part of the risk of their job and we should not add more burdens to them.' (Interview result dated 07/06/2023)

The acceptance of female workers towards social labeling can vary. Some can accept this social treatment as part of the challenges in their job, but some also feel pressured and choose to isolate themselves from their social environment. In reality, the social labeling given to female smoking workers has an impact on their future lives. Most of them eventually accustom themselves to accept the existing conditions and choose to continue living according to people's assumptions. In this case, the implications of social labeling on individuals or groups have different implications depending on the level of acceptance. Labeling is seen as a social stamp on individuals, resulting in a kind of social control. In this process, two things are contained, namely power and interest. In terms of interest, labeling is considered a kind of social control over deviant individual behavior. Here, the label is seen as a positive social effort. On the contrary, in terms of power, labeling can

lead to arbitrary attitudes and behaviors towards the labeling subject and can cause resistance to the survival of the person concerned (Sutrisno & Putranto, 2005). A female worker at Point Pool & Lounge tells her efforts in dealing with stereotypes:

'Starting work was a challenge for me. Visitors, especially women, were uncomfortable seeing me smoke here. Not to mention being treated poorly here, being spoken ill of, being considered a cheap woman, and experiencing verbal sexual harassment. As a result, I once isolated myself from social interactions, even closing my social media account. Many of my friends told me that my name was being spoken negatively out there. But I finally decided to be ready to face this situation both at work and in the social environment. Now I am accustomed to this condition and I feel comfortable no longer being disturbed by the views of people around me.' (Interview results dated 29/05/2023)

The stereotypical communication experience faced by female workers at Point Pool & Lounge is a result of social construction. Working in the nightlife entertainment industry, which is synonymous with smoking and alcohol consumption activities, will undoubtedly attract a negative stigma. This happens because such assumptions are already embedded in the social perception of society and hence become a measure of social judgment within the community. Social construction refers to the institutionalization or naturalization of social perception of a reality of life. Various beliefs, knowledge, norms, values, and life practices are entities born from joint construction (Berger & Luckmann, 2012). Social construction also establishes rules and mechanisms for coexistence, including the cultural practice domain of smoking. Women's empowerment academics underline that the stereotype imposed on female workers at Point Pool & Lounge is created due to the social construction of society:

'Returning to the problem of social construction. For example, a woman who works at Point Pool & Lounge comes home late at night. That alone has already received a double stigma. A woman coming home late, working in a masculine place, let alone added to smoking. Society labels it because that is the social construction that applies in society. Social construction distinguishes what is bad and what is good, what is allowed and what is not. But social construction can change. Those who used to smoke were men, now women can do the same. Social construction develops in society and is 'maintained'. Maintained how? It is socialized from generation to generation so that people can finally form their own opinions. Stereotypes are more or less a form of social construction used in assessing the reality of human life.' (Interview results dated 14/06/2023)

Smoking activities among female workers have their respective reasons. The background of female workers at Point Pool & Lounge engaging in smoking activities is due to the development of the times, where smoking is no longer a domain of men but can be undertaken by women. There is a shift in the cultural practice of smoking because women have the same access to smoking activities. Smoking activities for female workers are a lifestyle in the context of modern society. Smoking makes them look cooler and it is in line with the demands of the situation and

conditions of work in the nightlife entertainment industry. Female smokers are a characteristic that marks the existence of women in urban society. Smoking is their way to communicate well with fellow smokers. This is their effort to be accepted in the smoking environment (Martiana et al., 2017). A visitor at Point Pool & Lounge outlined his perspective related to female smoker workers:

'Perhaps for them, smoking is part of the changing times, where modern women can now smoke. Smoking is part of a modern lifestyle, so they do it to appear to be keeping up with the times. Night entertainment venues like that (Point Pool & Lounge) provide ample access for workers to smoke. The term is, smoking is the identity of modern people, and therefore they smoke so as not to appear outdated.' (Interview results dated 07/06/2023)

The social environment also serves as a variable that encourages female workers at Point Pool & Lounge to engage in smoking activities. They decide to follow the habits of their peers. The social environment influences an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and attention. A person will behave in a smoking manner by considering their social environment. Various facts reveal that the more teenagers smoke, the greater the likelihood that their friends are also smokers, and vice versa. Two possibilities occur from these facts, first, the teenager is influenced by their friends or vice versa (Sarafino, 1994). Smoking is a strategy for female workers to be socially accepted in their environment. The habit of smoking becomes a routine of the peer group that is adapted by the members, making them feel united with their group. A local female worker explains the strong influence of the social environment on her decision to smoke:

'Almost all of my friends or companions are smokers. We almost always meet on various occasions. The term 'circle' of our social group consists of friends who have a habit of smoking. I gradually follow their behavior, not only to look cool, but it's my way of being accepted in that environment. I try not to be antagonistic towards friends who smoke and instead, I join in smoking so that I remain existent in our social group. At work (Point Pool & Lounge), it's more or less the same. On average, everyone there, both workers and visitors, smoke. So, I am faced with the same situation every day, which eventually influenced me to follow the same activity. It feels a bit strange, we are allergic to cigarettes, but we work in a place that is full of smoking activities.' (Interview results dated 29/05/2023)

Smoking activities among female workers are also driven by the factor of venting life problems, whether it concerns issues of self-identity, interpersonal relationships, family, school, and social environment. For them, such burdens of life can be overcome through smoking activities that can provide peace of mind. Technically, the nicotine content in cigarettes can provide relaxation for the mind. This indicates a correlation between smoking activities and the personal issues of the addict. Venting personal problems through cigarettes eventually leads to a phenomenon of addiction that is relatively difficult to overcome in the future. Smoking is used to produce positive

emotions, among them: happiness, relaxation, and pleasure of taste. Smoking can also minimize feelings of tension, common anxiety, or anxiety that arise within the addict (Leventhal et al., 1985). A female worker at Point Pool & Lounge tells her experience of cigarette addiction not much different from her other colleagues:

'My colleagues and I here (Point Pool & Lounge) have a commonality, that is, we smoke because there are personal issues to think about. Cigarettes and alcohol become our outlet for dealing with the burdens of life. Some of us are facing problems, such as broken homes, heartbreak, living economy, self-identity, and others. We are one social group, so whatever form of problems we face, we choose to consume cigarettes and alcohol until now. Perhaps others, they see us negatively, but they also need to know and understand how heavy the life problems we are facing.' (Interview results dated 28/05/2023)

From an academic perspective, two variables drive female workers to get trapped in the routine of smoking: there is a shift in social position between men and women. Modernity has implications for the equality of status and social roles between men and women. The routine of smoking, which was previously only intended for men, is now also practiced by women. It seems that smoking for women is an impact of the modern lifestyle (as many women in urban areas adopt), but in fact, the tradition of smoking among women can already be found in the historical traces of several cultural groups in Indonesia. In other words, smoking is not a monopoly of men (Santosa, 2021). The following variable relates to lifestyle. Cigarettes have become a routine of modern society that is adapted so that it can be socially accepted. Related to this, women's empowerment academics describe the factors that make cigarettes a routine, especially for women:

'Modernity, which presents openness everywhere, eventually erodes the boundary separating the worlds of men and women. Masculine jobs are increasingly occupied by women, and even feminine jobs are often filled by men. Examples of masculine jobs entered by women are numerous, including becoming soldiers, police, working in the technical sector, construction workers, and others. Also, feminine jobs are entered by men, for example: working in salons, chefs, and others. This means that the difference in social positions between men and women has become transparent to each other. Therefore, if it is said that there is a phenomenon of women smokers, it is a common thing. Cigarettes are produced to be consumed by all circles, especially without gender restrictions. However, in the context of our society (Indonesia), social construction still considers it taboo if women smoke. Smoking is part of the lifestyle of modern people, both men and women. Therefore, smoking activities are open to all circles without being limited by sexuality variables.' (Interview result dated 14/06/2023)

Various stereotypes imposed on female smokers working at the night entertainment venue, Point Pool & Lounge, should ideally be part of the dynamics in a social relationship. The social relationships that are established do not necessarily proceed in a conducive manner but are

marked by the presence of problems. Therefore, it is important to outline these various issues, identify the root of the problem, and its participants, and formulate solutions so that the relationship becomes more effective. Stereotypes are the dark side of identity because they involve invalid judgments against the existence of individuals or groups.

CONCLUSION

The stereotypes surrounding female teenage smokers working at Point Pool & Lounge are deeply rooted in long-standing social constructions. Society holds a belief that smoking is predominantly a male activity, making it taboo for women. Consequently, women who smoke are viewed as deviating from social norms and are subjected to negative judgments, including stereotypes, prejudices, labeling, and discrimination. These female workers are often misidentified as commercial sex workers, leading to excessive sexist treatment due to their nighttime job profiles and smoking habits. The social labeling they endure has varying impacts on their lives. Some accept it as a consequence of working in nightlife, while others experience social pressure and choose to isolate themselves.

Female workers at Point Pool & Lounge have different reasons for smoking. For them, smoking is a lifestyle adopted from their social environment. They smoke to feel comfortable in their work environment or to be accepted in their social circles. The presence of fellow smokers around them encourages continued smoking despite the social consequences. Smoking makes them feel more contemporary and serves as a way to alleviate the burdens of their life problems. Cigarettes provide a means to relax their minds and emotions, offering a temporary escape from personal issues.

In conclusion, the study highlights the complex interplay between societal stereotypes and the personal choices of female teenage smokers at Point Pool & Lounge. The entrenched social beliefs about gender roles and smoking contribute to the stigmatization and discrimination these women face. Their reasons for smoking are influenced by social factors and the need for acceptance in their environment. Addressing these stereotypes and understanding the underlying social dynamics are crucial for fostering a more inclusive and supportive society.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

Studies related to stereotype communication among female smokers at Point Pool & Lounge may not have been fully carried out, whether in terms of data adequacy, relevance of concepts and

theories, rigor of methodology application, and results. Therefore, future studies are needed to address various shortcomings in this research. The issue of stereotype communication among women is also a relevant issue lately due to its correlation with gender studies. Similar research can continue to be conducted to enrich the treasury of knowledge on related problems.

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