



Factors Influencing The Behavior of Using Electronic Cigarettes Among Young Women in Medan City in 2024

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Abstract

Currently, e-cigarette smoking behavior has become a popular phenomenon in society, especially among women. Data from the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey stated that e-cigarette smokers among women were 5.5 percent and men 3.1 percent. The results of a preliminary survey conducted on 32 women in Medan City showed that the majority of respondents were interested in smoking because of friends' invitations and saw other people smoking as many as 11 people (34.4%). In theory, this is called conformity. So the purpose of this study was to

analyze the effect of conformity on e-cigarette smoking behavior among women in Medan City. The type of research used was a survey with a cross-sectional approach. With a sample size of 271 female e-cigarette smokers. The sampling technique used was Accidental Sampling. The data collection method was carried out using a questionnaire that had passed validity and reliability tests. Data analysis carried out included univariate analysis to describe the frequency distribution of each variable and bivariate analysis using a simple linear regression analysis test. The results of the study showed a sig value of $0.000 < 0.05$ so it can be concluded that there is an influence between conformity and electronic smoking behavior in women in Medan City. With a positive regression coefficient of 0.409, which means that when there is an increase in the conformity variable, the smoking behavior variable will increase. Health problems regarding electronic smoking behavior are a shared responsibility. Increasing public understanding of the dangers of cigarettes is very important so that increased promotional actions and policies are needed to reduce the number of smokers, both electronic smokers and conventional cigarettes in Indonesia.

keywords: Conformity, Smoking Behavior, E-Cigarettes

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Introduction

Smoking behavior is one of the habits that significantly impacts the health of individuals and society, as well as imposes a substantial economic burden. Despite the well-known dangers of smoking, the number of smokers remains high in many countries, including both developed and developing nations, such as Indonesia. The effects of smoking behavior can be observed across various aspects—medical, economic, and social—all of which are interconnected and collectively worsen the quality of life for smokers and those around them (Purwanti et al., 2021).

From an economic perspective, smoking imposes a significant financial burden. Daily expenditures on cigarettes reduce family income that could otherwise be used for essential needs. Furthermore, healthcare costs associated with smoking-related diseases, including long-term treatments, hospitalizations, and specialized care, are substantial. This burden is not only felt by individuals and families but also impacts national health systems, which must allocate significant resources to manage smoking-related diseases (Anwary, 2020).

Smoking also has social repercussions. Secondhand smoke affects the health of those exposed, and residues from cigarette smoke can linger on surfaces such as clothing, walls, carpets, and furniture, posing health risks even in shared public areas. These risks extend to vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly (Annur, 2023). Previous research indicates that passive smokers are four times more likely to develop cancer than non-smokers exposed to cigarette smoke (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

The percentage of smokers in Indonesia continues to rise. Currently, Indonesia ranks third globally in the number of active smokers, following China and India. According to Statista Consumer Insights, the number of smokers in Indonesia reached 112 million in 2021, with projections estimating an increase to 123 million by 2030 (Annur, 2023). Data from the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) reported that the prevalence of daily smokers aged ≥ 10 years is 22.46%, while occasional smokers account for 4.56%. In North Sumatra, daily smokers comprise 18.7%, with occasional smokers making up 4.5% (Ministry of Health, 2023).

In response to the health issues caused by smoking, the Indonesian government has implemented policies to reduce smoking prevalence and protect the public from the harmful effects of cigarette smoke. These policies include restrictions on cigarette advertising and promotion. Law Number 17 of 2023 on Health and Government Regulation Number 109 of 2012 require cigarette packaging to include graphic health warnings highlighting the dangers of smoking, such as cancer, heart disease, and respiratory disorders. These measures aim to raise consumer awareness and encourage smokers to quit (Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia, 2012).

Technological advancements have significantly changed smoking behaviors, particularly regarding the types of cigarettes consumed. The 2023 Indonesian Health Survey reported that residents of North Sumatra smoke kretek cigarettes (65.1%), white cigarettes (41.7%), rolled cigarettes (3.1%), electronic cigarettes (1.8%), and shisha (0.6%) (Ministry of Health, 2023).

Modern electronic cigarettes were first developed in 2003 by Hon Lik, a heavy smoker from China, who patented the technology in the same year. These devices, introduced to the market in



2004, typically consist of a battery, an atomizer, and a cartridge containing nicotine solution (Ariani et al., 2023).

The popularity of electronic cigarettes (vapes) is increasing, largely due to their convenience. In 2018, the Indonesian Personal Vaporizer Association (APVI) reported that there were 1 million vape users in Indonesia, including women (Tristanto et al., 2021). Electronic cigarettes are relatively affordable, with starter kits costing around two hundred thousand rupiahs and nicotine liquid starting at one hundred thousand rupiahs for a 30 ml bottle (Yuningrum & Trisnowati, 2024). These liquids come in various flavors, ranging from fruity and coffee aromas to other food and drink-inspired options.

However, the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM) of Indonesia has identified dangerous substances in some e-liquids, including metals, carbonyl compounds, and other harmful chemicals, sometimes at levels higher than those found in conventional cigarettes. Consequently, the agency has issued warnings about the health risks of vaping, which are considered comparable to or even greater than those associated with traditional cigarettes (Ariani et al., 2023). The Ministry of Health has also prohibited electronic cigarette use due to its dangers.

In recent decades, smoking behaviors have seen a significant transition, with an increasing number of women taking up smoking. Riskesdas 2018 data revealed that approximately 1% of Indonesian women aged ≥ 10 years smoke. Although this percentage may seem small, it is significant given that women constitute 50.4% of Indonesia's population. The mortality rate due to smoking is approximately 21% in men and 7% in women (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018).

The prevalence of vaping among women is rising. The 2021 Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) reported an increase in female e-cigarette users from 0.3% in 2011 to 3% in 2021. According to the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey, 5.5% of female respondents and 3.1% of male respondents in Medan use electronic cigarettes (Ministry of Health, 2023). This highlights the growing popularity of vaping among women.

This trend is often linked to social conformity. Previous research (Salma & Qodariah, 2024; Wibowo, 2018) found a significant relationship between social conformity and vaping behavior. In Medan, vaping has become a lifestyle trend, strongly influenced by peer pressure.

A preliminary study using interviews and questionnaires with female vapers in Medan revealed the following motivations: peer influence, ease of use, lack of odor, and reduced perceived harm compared to traditional cigarettes. Of 32 respondents, 34.4% started vaping because they were invited by friends, while others cited stress relief (25%) or curiosity (12.5%). These findings support the hypothesis that social conformity significantly influences vaping behavior among women in Medan.

Given the rise of vaping among women and its association with social conformity, further research is needed to explore this phenomenon in greater depth. This study aims to examine the influence of social conformity on vaping behavior among women in Medan in 2024.



Methods

This research is an analytical survey using a cross-sectional design. The study was conducted in Medan City in 2024. The population for this study comprised female e-cigarette smokers or vapers in the Medan City area. The sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula, resulting in 271 respondents. The independent variable in this study is conformity, while the dependent variable is electronic cigarette smoking behavior. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using a simple linear regression test.

Results

Analysis Univariate

The research results were analyzed using univariate analysis to describe the frequency distribution of each study variable, including respondent characteristics such as age, occupation, type of cigarette consumed, age at first smoking, amount of liquid consumed per month, monthly expenses for purchasing cigarettes, as well as the variables of conformity and electronic cigarette smoking behavior among women in Medan City.

Characteristics of Respondents

The total number of respondents in this study was 271. The frequency distribution of respondent characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Their Characteristics

Characteristics Respondents	Amount (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
< 21 years	50	18.5
21-30 years	187	69.0
> 30 years	34	12.5
Work		
Self-employed	42	15.5
Private employed	46	17.0
housewife ladder	8	3.0
ASN / TNI-POLRI	2	0.7
Other	173	63.8
Types of cigarettes consumed		
Electric cigarette	112	41.3
Electric and conventional cigarettes	159	58.7
Age first time smoking		
< 21 years	103	38.0
≥ 21 years	168	62.0



Amount of liquid consumed per month

< 60 ml	132	48.7
60 – 100 ml	105	38.7
> 100 ml	34	12.5

Expenditure For buy cigarette per month

< Rp. 300,000 / month	95	35.1
Rp. 300,000 – 500,000 / month	121	44.6
Rp. 500,000 – 1,000,000 / month	47	17.3
> Rp. 1,000,000 / month	8	3.0

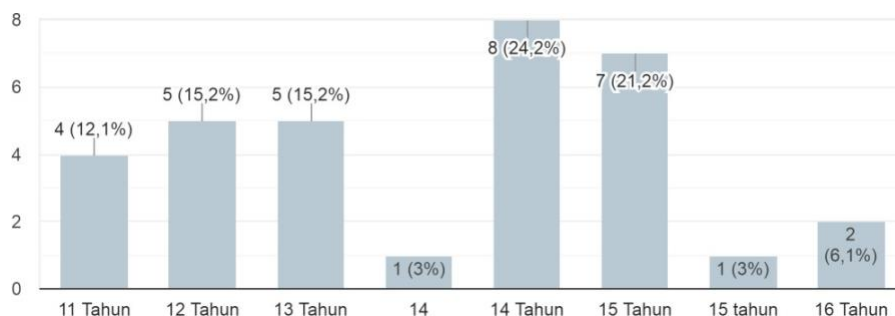


Figure 1. Percentage of Survey Results on the Age Teenagers Began Smoking Electronically (Vaping)

The percentages in the graph above were obtained by researchers based on survey results about the age at which teenagers began using electronic cigarettes (vaping). The data illustrates that most teenagers start vaping at the age of 14, with a total of 9 individuals (27.2%), comprising 1 teenager (3%) and 8 teenagers (24.2%). Conversely, the lowest number of teenagers who began vaping were 2 individuals (6.1%) at the age of 16.

Conformity plays a significant role in influencing this behavior. Highly conformist individuals tend to align their actions with group norms and behaviors. Similarly, the prevalence of vaping among teenagers is often driven by peer conformity, as teenagers seek acceptance within their social groups and fear rejection. According to Rahmah and Ahmad (2018), this tendency to conform is a key factor in the adoption of behaviors like vaping.

Sears (as cited in Abidin and Anam, 2017) explains that peer conformity arises from two main factors: the fear of social censure, such as the need to gain approval and avoid criticism, and the fear of being labeled deviant. This fear underpins most social interactions. When teenagers feel their position in the group is unstable or inappropriate, it creates inner conflict, leading to



restlessness and emotional instability. Consequently, teenagers often adopt behaviors aligned with group norms without considering long-term consequences.

The initial survey results, as shown in the graph below, highlight how peer influence contributes to vaping behavior among teenagers.

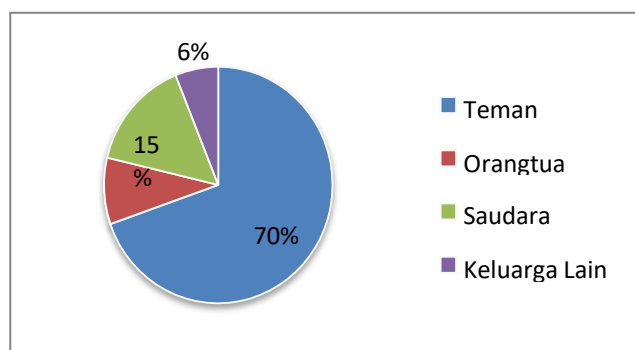


Figure 2. Initial Survey Results on Teenagers Influenced to Engage in Electronic Smoking Behavior (Vaping)

The percentages in the graph above were obtained by researchers based on the initial survey results of teenagers influenced to engage in electronic smoking behavior (vaping). As an overview, it can be observed that 70% of teenagers were influenced by their peers to engage in vaping behavior.

Distribution of Research Variables

The research variables analyzed include conformity and smoking behavior.

Conformity

The frequency distribution of respondents based on the conformity variable is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on the Conformity Variable

Conformity	Amount (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	49	18.1
Currently	162	59.8
Tall	60	22.1
Total	271	100.0



Behavior of Using Electric Smoking Devices

The distribution of respondents based on the variable "Behavior of Using Electric Smoking Devices" is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on the Variable "Behavior of Using Electric Smoking Devices"

Behavior Smoke Electric	Amount (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	62	22.9
Currently	145	53.5
Tall	64	23.6
Total	271	100.0

Analysis Bivariate

Bivariate analysis was conducted to determine the influence of the independent variable (conformity) on the dependent variable (behavior of using electric smoking devices). This analysis was performed using the simple linear regression method. The decision-making criteria are as follows: if the significance value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results of the bivariate analysis between the variables conformity and behavior of using electric smoking devices are presented in the table below.

Table 4. Model Summary Table

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.622 ^a	.387	.385	9.213

a. Predictors: (Constant), Conformity Score

From the model summary table in the simple linear regression analysis output above, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.622. The coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.387, indicating that the independent variable (conformity) influences the dependent variable (behavior of using electric smoking devices) by 38.7%. This suggests a moderate relationship, where conformity accounts for 38.7% of the variation in the behavior of using electric smoking devices.



Table 5. Anova Table

ANOVA ^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14414.918	1	14414.918	169,834	.000 ^b
	Residual	22831.717	269	84,876		
	Total	37246.635	270			

Behavior Score Smoke

b. Predictors: (Constant), Conformity Score

From the ANOVA table in the simple linear regression analysis output above, it is shown that the F-count value is 169.834, with a significance level of 0.000 (which is less than 0.05). This indicates that the regression model can be used to predict the variable "behavior of using electric smoking devices." In other words, there is an influence of the variable "conformity" on the variable "behavior of using electric smoking devices."

Table 6. Coefficients Table

Coefficients ^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	9,473	1,585		5.975	.000
	Conformity Score	.409	.031	.622	13,032	.000

Behavior Score Smoke

From the coefficients table in the simple linear regression analysis output above, the following values are obtained:

- The constant value (a) is 9.473.
- The coefficient of conformity (b/regression coefficient) is 0.409.

Thus, the regression equation can be written as:

$$Y = a + bX$$

$$Y = 9.473 + 0.409X$$

This equation can be interpreted as follows:

- The constant value of 9.473 indicates the baseline value of the dependent variable (behavior of using electric smoking devices) when the independent variable (conformity) is zero.
- The regression coefficient (b) of 0.409 means that for every 1-unit increase in the



conformity score, the behavior score increases by 0.409. Since the regression coefficient is positive, it indicates a positive relationship between conformity and behavior.

- b. Based on the significance value from the coefficients table, a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05) was obtained. This indicates a significant influence of conformity on the behavior of using electric smoking devices.

Discussion

Behavior of Using Electric Smoking Devices Among Women

The use of electric smoking devices in North Sumatra has significantly increased in recent years. According to the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) survey, the proportion of electric cigarette users in the region was 0.73%, which rose to 1.8% in the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI). This increase is most prominent among women, with a growth of 5.5%, compared to 3.1% among men (Ministry of Health, 2023). Such trends have negative health implications for both active users and passive smokers and are inconsistent with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages.

Women who use electric cigarettes or vape have various motivations, including switching from conventional cigarettes to reduce harm, boosting self-confidence, relieving stress, enhancing social status, conforming to peer pressure, or following lifestyle trends.

Based on interviews with respondents, many stated that their initial motivation for vaping was due to peer invitations and a fear of missing out (FOMO). FOMO is an emotional response characterized by anxiety and fear of exclusion for not participating in popular activities or trends (Ibrahim & Irna Aviani, 2024). Marketing techniques promoting electric cigarettes have made vaping a continuing trend among women. Respondents noted that their friends encouraged them to vape, claiming it had fewer health impacts compared to conventional cigarettes. Others shared that they felt less confident in social settings without vaping since all their friends were doing it.

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenkes RI) explains that both electric and conventional cigarettes pose similar health risks. Both types contain harmful substances such as nicotine, glycol, diacetyl, volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, and ultrafine particles, which can cause cancer and other severe health issues (Ministry of Health, 2018).

In a study involving 271 respondents, 112 (41.3%) consumed only electric cigarettes, while 159 (58.7%) used both electric and conventional cigarettes simultaneously, further increasing health risks due to the higher intake of harmful substances.

The study found that 168 respondents (62%) first smoked at the age of 21 or older, while 103 respondents (38%) started smoking under the age of 21. This violates the prohibition on selling cigarettes to individuals under 21, as stated in Law Number 17 of 2023 on Health. The regulation aims to reduce the number of young smokers, lower smoking-related illnesses and deaths, and raise public awareness of the dangers of smoking. However, it has been less effective due to the high level of conformity among individuals under 21.



Conformity among young individuals is characterized by imitating the behavior of peers. This period of life is often marked by a search for self-identity, making individuals more susceptible to environmental influences without considering long-term consequences (Farkhah, 2021). Conformity is often triggered by curiosity and the desire to try electric cigarettes after observing peers or following trends. Female users of electric cigarettes have diverse perceptions, ranging from feeling “cool” while vaping, wanting to experience the sensation, or merely imitating their friends.

The analysis revealed that 162 respondents (59.8%) exhibited a moderate level of conformity, 60 respondents (22.1%) a high level, and 49 respondents (18.1%) a low level. Among those with moderate to high conformity levels (222 respondents), individuals were more likely to adopt vaping behavior if their peers were involved in vaping. Based on these findings, further discussion will explore the influence of conformity on the behavior of using electric smoking devices among women.

Influence of Conformity on the Behavior of Using Electric Smoking Devices Among Women

Conformity refers to the social influence that encourages individuals to change their attitudes and behaviors in order to align with the social norms of their environment (Kosasi, 2018). Negative social influences tend to trigger negative behaviors, while positive social influences encourage positive behaviors. The stronger the social influence in an individual's environment, the higher the level of conformity is likely to be. Conformity has become a point of debate among medical professionals and policy stakeholders addressing issues related to smoking. High levels of conformity in the public can lead to the widespread use of electric smoking devices, making it a more difficult health issue to control.

The higher the level of conformity within a community, the more likely the behavior of using electric smoking devices will spread within that community. Based on the research conducted, the majority of women in Medan have a medium to high level of conformity. Among the 271 women smokers in the study, 60 (22.1%) had a high level of conformity, 162 (59.8%) had a medium level, and the remainder were categorized as having low conformity.

Women with medium to high levels of conformity are more easily influenced to adopt the behavior of using electric smoking devices, especially if they are in a social environment with a high number of electric cigarette users. This is because individuals with high conformity tend to adapt to the group in order to gain social acceptance, recognition, and avoid rejection. At a moderate level of conformity, the group's influence may not directly affect behavior but still acts as a significant motivating factor for women to consider using electric cigarettes.

The level of conformity among women in Medan is influenced by various interconnected factors, including social, cultural, and psychological aspects. A primary reason is the strong desire for women to be accepted within their social groups. Women often feel the need to align themselves with current norms and trends as a method of gaining social acceptance, recognition, and avoiding exclusion. This need is particularly strong because humans are social beings who seek relationships and interactions with others.



Other factors contributing to high conformity in public environments include social norms, culture, and public habits, especially in Indonesia, where deviations in behavior or opinions are often highlighted and discussed within the group. This causes individuals to feel compelled to follow certain behaviors.

The trend of using electric cigarettes has become particularly appealing among teenage women. They associate following the trend with a sense of rebellion, believing it makes them "cool." The rapid growth of the electric cigarette trend has been facilitated by social media, which further reinforces conformity. Social media creates spaces where new norms are formed and spread quickly. The pressure to follow what is considered "popular" is especially strong among teenage women.

Based on research conducted by Tristanto et al. (2021), conformity influences the behavior of using electric cigarettes by 78.3%. Therefore, conformity plays a significant role in the increasing use of electric cigarettes among women. The results of my own research on the influence of conformity on electric smoking behavior in Medan show a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that there is a significant relationship between conformity and electric smoking behavior. The regression coefficient is positive at 0.409.

This finding is consistent with previous studies by Priyanti & Silaen (2018) and Hidayah (2019), who also found a positive correlation between conformity and the use of electric smoking devices. They concluded that as the level of conformity increases, the behavior of smoking electric cigarettes also increases. Additionally, research by Nopriyanti (2020) highlighted a significant positive correlation between conformity and the behavior of using electric cigarettes in women, with conformity contributing to 7.1% of the smoking behavior.

The results of the study indicate a positive correlation coefficient, meaning both variables move in the same direction. As conformity increases, the behavior of using electric cigarettes increases as well. Conversely, if conformity decreases, the behavior of using electric cigarettes also decreases.

Conclusion

From the analysis results, it is known that the significance value is 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating a significant influence between conformity and the behavior of using electric smoking devices in the city of Medan. The regression coefficient for conformity in relation to electric smoking behavior is 0.409, meaning that for every 1% increase in conformity, the behavior of smoking electric cigarettes will increase by 0.409. Since the regression coefficient is positive, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between conformity and smoking behavior. This means that as the level of conformity increases, the behavior of using electric smoking devices also increases. Conversely, if the level of conformity decreases, the behavior of using electric smoking devices will also decrease.



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