

Youth as Agents of Change in the Enforcement of Tobacco Control Policy

Sri Yuliani^{1*}, Ismi Dwi Astuti Nurhaeni¹, and Rahesli Humsona²

¹Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

²Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

Abstract. Tobacco control is an important strategy to reduce morbidity and mortality induced by non-infectious diseases due to cigarette consumption. Youths have a strategic position as agents of change capable of encouraging the shifts in social norms related to smoking behavior and strengthening the implementation of tobacco control policies. This study aims to examine the role of the *Pemuda Penggerak* community in advocating for tobacco control policies in Surakarta City, especially in enforcing the Smoke Free Zone (SFZ) policy. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews and documentation of advocacy activities recorded in print and online media. The results of study show that youths play a significant role in increasing public awareness and encouraging compliance with tobacco control policies through a collaboration-based approach and the use of social media. Collaboration is carried out by promoting cooperation with NGOs and youth communities in the form of joint campaigns to enforce tobacco control policies. YouTube and Instagram platforms are used to build an online movement to disseminate information and education on the hazards of smoking. This study confirms that the active and innovative involvement of youth in advocating for tobacco control policies is a determinant in enforcing policies and raising collective awareness of the importance of a healthy environment without cigarettes.

1 Introduction

Tobacco is one of the biggest threats to public health in the world. Tobacco use, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), causes more than 8 million deaths annually, with more than 1 million of them due to exposure to passive cigarette smoke [1]. In Indonesia, the prevalence of smokers is still relatively high, particularly among adolescents and youngsters. Data of the 2018 Primary Health Research (*Riset Kesehatan Dasar* or *Riskesdas*) [2] indicates that the prevalence of novice smokers aged 10–18 years increased from 7.2% in 2013 to 9.1% in 2018. This implies that despite various tobacco control policies, their implementation in the field still faces various challenges.

The Indonesian government has adopted various tobacco control policies, including Government Regulation No. 109 of 2012 concerning the Safeguard of Materials Containing Addictive Substances in Tobacco Products, as well as regulations related to Smoke Free Zone (*Kawasan Tanpa Rokok*, thereafter called KTR) implemented in various regions. The Republic of Indonesia's Minister of Home Affairs (*Menteri Dalam Negeri*) reported that 337

* Corresponding sriyuliani63@staff.uns.ac.id

of 514 regencies/cities in Indonesia had regulations on Smoke Free Zone (SFZ) up to 2025 [3]. Although more and more regions have regulations on KTR, they all have ineffectively reduced the number of smokers [4].

In Surakarta City, tobacco control is governed through Regional Regulation Number 9 of 2019 about KTR [5]. This regulation's inception is inseparable from the active involvement of *Pemuda Penggerak* (Youth Activist) community, focusing on the issue of protecting children from the hazards of tobacco products. The contribution of *Pemuda Penggerak* includes various activities, ranging from the campaigns for public awareness of the hazards of cigarettes, collecting data as a basis for advocacy for the ratification of Regional Regulation about KTR, to the involvement in the process of formulating and ratifying it [6]. However, even though the KTR Regional Regulation has been issued, the enforcement of regulations related to the prohibition of cigarette advertising, promotion, and sponsorship has not been optimal. This is due to the local government's weak commitment [7,8,9] and the community's low compliance with the applicable provisions [10,11]. In this situation, *Pemuda Penggerak* plays a strategic role as an agent of change in encouraging advocacy and enforcement of KTR policies through a number of initiatives such as educational campaigns on the hazards of cigarettes, the cigarette butt collecting action, and the movement to decline the existence of cigarette advertising, promotion and sponsorship in public spaces.

This study aims to explore the role of *Pemuda Penggerak* community as an agent of change in encouraging the enforcement of tobacco control policies, particularly related to the implementation of KTR in Surakarta City. The analysis focuses on the role of youth analyzed in three main dimensions of the role of youth in policy advocacy: (1) involvement in public education regarding the negative impacts of cigarettes particularly on children and adolescents; (2) contribution to formulating policy proposals based on data and field findings, and (3) attempts of establishing strategic partnerships and networks to encourage policy makers to immediately establish and enforce regulations on KTR.

The results of study are expected to provide insight into the role of youth in the advocacy of tobacco control policy, particularly related to KTR, and recommendations to government, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to further involve youth in the attempt of creating a sustainable smoke-free environment.

2 Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore in depth the role of *Pemuda Penggerak* (Youth Activists) as agents of change in the advocacy of tobacco control policy in Surakarta City. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with members of Youth Activists and facilitators and administrators of the Surakarta Children's Forum. In addition, data were also collected through documentation of campaign activities, publications on social media, mass media coverage, and field actions mapping cigarette advertisements and the "Cigarette Butt Collecting" action. The data analysis technique was implemented thematically [12], by tracing the involvement of youths in KTR policy advocacy. Data resulting from interviews, documentation, and media publications were coded openly to identify actions and advocacy strategies taken by *Pemuda Penggerak*. The codes were then grouped into key themes reflecting the role of youths in public education campaigns, proposing data-based policy recommendations, and building networks to gain political support. The analysis was carried out iteratively with source triangulation and confirmation to informants (member checking) to maintain data validity. This technique allows mapping the strategic role of youths in KTR policy advocacy toward the policy changes supporting the protection of children from the hazards of cigarettes.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of *Pemuda Penggerak*

Pemuda Penggerak is a youth community in Surakarta City focusing on child protection issues, particularly the protection against exposure to tobacco products. This community consists of youths previously active in the Children's Forum or serving as facilitators of the Surakarta Children's Forum, and receiving assistance or facilitation from the *Yayasan Kakak* (*Kakak* Foundation). This community establishment was begun in 2019 through collaborative activities between facilitators and the Children's Forum in monitoring the existence of cigarette product advertisements, promotions, and sponsorships in the Surakarta area. The monitoring initiative was taken by the *Kakak* Foundation, also playing a role in providing capacity building to community members. This reinforcement focuses, among others, on encouraging the active role of Children's Forum as a pioneer and reporter in advocating for the SFZ policy and the prohibition of cigarette product advertisements, promotions, and sponsorships. Through this process, a collective awareness has raised among youths that children are vulnerable, recalling that they are the main targets of the cigarette industry's marketing strategy [6].

The issue of protecting children's rights is the main focus taken because the facilitators of the Children's Forum were formerly the forum administrators. In their role, the facilitators are charged with providing encouragement and motivation to children to fight for their rights. Departing from the experience and various activities having been carried out, this community has made a commitment to focus on health issues, particularly tobacco control, seen as having a direct relationship with the attempts of protecting the children's rights.

Pemuda Penggerak is a youth community committed to encouraging the fulfillment of children's rights through research, education, advocacy, and collaboration. This community's vision is to become a motivator for the youths to realize children protection. Its main missions include conducting research on child protection issues, increasing public awareness, advocating for policies favoring the children, and building strategic networks and collaborations to strengthen the youth movement in realizing a safe, healthy, and child-friendly environment. The scope of *Pemuda Penggerak*'s activities focuses on children's health issues, especially tobacco control and nutrition, as well as environmental conservation. Using a collaborative and data-based approach, this community seeks to be a catalyst of social change to ensure a healthier and more sustainable future for the younger generation [6].

3.2 The Role of *Pemuda Penggerak* in Tobacco Control Policy

The attempt of controlling tobacco requires advocacy strategies not only relying on the role of state institutions but also involving non-government actors, including young people with great potential as agents of change, despite vulnerability. In this context, *Pemuda Penggerak* as a youth community in Surakarta City is not only involved in campaign activities or public education, but also plays a strategic role in urging the establishment and enforcement of policies to support the protection of children from the hazards of tobacco products. To understand their role more deeply, this study focuses on three main roles: (1) involvement in providing education to the public, (2) participation in the preparation of data-based policy recommendations, and (3) efforts to build partnerships with various stakeholders to strengthen support for the enforcement of SFZ policies. Through this framework, the role of youths in tobacco control advocacy can be seen as a dynamic process bridging the realities in the field and the expected policy changes.

3.2.1. The Role in Public Education Campaign

The role of *Pemuda Penggerak* in public education campaigns is an attempt of ascertaining that the issue related to the negative impacts of cigarettes on health and environment attracts the wider community's attention and is seen as a public issue urgent to be addressed. Along with the Kakak Foundation as a partner, *Pemuda Penggerak* first received capacity building related to the hazards of cigarettes and the importance of the SFZ policy in protecting children from exposure to tobacco products.

A facilitator of *Forum Anak Surakarta* (FAS) explained:

"Initially, we were invited by the Kakak Foundation to discuss the hazards of cigarettes and the importance of KTR for equating perceptions. We were made aware that there are still children's rights having not been fulfilled, particularly regarding the protection from exposure to cigarette smoke in public spaces. This awareness then encouraged us to engage actively in encouraging the establishment and enforcement of KTR policies. We utilize CFD (car free day) to campaign for raising awareness of the hazards of cigarettes in the wider community." (Interview with FAS Facilitator)

The advocacy strategy does not stop at the campaign for growing public awareness but develops towards mapping the situation of cigarette hazards based on data and field experience. The form of activity is, among others, initiating the Cigarette Butt Collecting Action, involving the Children's Forum from village to sub-district levels. This action is carried out in the areas having been designated as SFZ, such as city parks, playgrounds, and Smart Parks (*Taman Cerdas*). Cigarette butts found are collected, counted, documented, and used as empirical evidence in public campaigns and will later be used as a database in formulating policy proposals.

Meanwhile *Yayasan Kakak* administrator described the initiative of Cigarette Butt Collecting Action as strategy for campaigning:

"One of our advocacy strategies is to collect data through the Cigarette Butt Collecting Action; the activity is also carried out along with friends from the Children's Forum; it targets several SFZs including public parks, city halls, playgrounds, and smart parks. This activity is intended to collect data to be able to hold an audience with the Surakarta City Government and to accelerate the ratification of the SFZ Regulation in Surakarta City." (Interview with *Yayasan Kakak* administrator)

In addition to carrying out the Cigarette Butt Collecting Action, *Pemuda Penggerak* also monitors cigarette advertisements, promotions, and sponsorships in public spaces. In this activity, *Pemuda Penggerak* involves the Children's Forum throughout Surakarta City area to map cigarette advertisements, promotions and sponsorships in their respective areas. The results of mapping are calculated, recorded, documented and accounted as a strong basis for the evidence-based policy recommendations along with the results of the Cigarette Butt Collecting Action.

The campaigns for raising awareness were disseminated not only through social media accounts of *Pemuda Penggerak*, FAS and *Yayasan Kakak*, but also in collaboration with the mass media to get wider coverage.

A member of *Pemuda Penggerak* explained:

"We usually work directly with Solopos or other news portals. So the results are directly published in print media or on Youtube or IG accounts of Pemuda Penggerak, FAS and Yayasan Kakak." (Interview with a member of *Pemuda Penggerak*)

The interviews with *Pemuda Penggerak* members revealed that they work actively with local media such as Solopos and other news portals to ensure that the results of their advocacy activities, such as monitoring cigarette advertisements or the Cigarette Butt Collection campaign, can reach a wider audience. Coverage in print media, YouTube channels, and partner media Instagram platforms make the issues they raise not only known among limited communities, but also enter the wider public space.

It can be concluded that this public education strategy is the construction of issue considered important in policy advocacy. An issue, according to Kingdon [13], will only enter the policy agenda if it is successfully perceived as an urgent public problem. Public awareness campaigns and symbolic actions such as Cigarette Butt Collection have an important function in building public opinion on an issue as a serious problem requiring policy intervention. The mass media in the problem stream plays a strategic role in strengthening the position of problem as a public issue prioritized to enter the policy agenda [14]. Collaboration with the mass media shows that strengthening the issue of tobacco product control, particularly related to the importance of KTR, not only depends on field data, but also on the ability of managing public opinion through credible and widespread communication channels.

3.2.2. The Role in Formulating Data-Based Recommendations

Pemuda Penggerak becomes an actor helping urge the local government to establish a tobacco control policy. The activity was carried out by compiling data-based recommendations from the results of field monitoring which would later be communicated to the local government. With the assistance of the Kakak Foundation and the support of the involvement of the Children's Forum in Surakarta City, *Pemuda Penggerak* collected data for strong evidence to demand the immediate ratification of KTR policy in Surakarta City. A *Pemuda Penggerak* member described their monitoring activity:

"We monitored the existence of cigarette advertisements, promotions, and sponsorships on the streets, near schools, in public parks, and in playgrounds in five sub-districts. We use the results as data to give the DPR (Legislative Council) evidence that there are many cigarette advertisements, promotions and sponsorships in Surakarta City that can persuade children to consume cigarettes." (Interview with a member of *Pemuda Penggerak*)

An administrator of *Yayasan Kakak* stated:

"The monitoring result, when documented systematically, can strengthen the credibility of youth advocacy. It revealed that their recommendations were not just opinion but supported by field evidence" (Interview with *Yayasan Kakak* administrator)

Pemuda Penggerak developed a data-based advocacy approach by means of monitoring results to urge policy solutions to the DPRD (Local Legislative Council) and the city government. This indicates that recommendations come not merely from children's perceptions, but also from empirical findings in the field proving the weak supervision of smoking behavior in public areas and the existence of cigarettes advertisements, promotion, and sponsorship in Surakarta City. Kingdon states that only feasible and data-based ideas are acceptable politically and administratively and will be considered by policy makers.

3.2.3. The Role in Building Network

Pemuda Penggerak builds a multi-actor network to strengthen its political position in the dynamics of policy formulation. The form of real contribution to the political flow is shown, among others, through strategic collaboration between *Pemuda Penggerak*, Surakarta Children's Forum (FAS), and *Kakak* Foundation in the mapping of cigarette advertisement, promotion, and sponsorship (*Iklan, Promosi dan Sponsorship* or IPS), as well as the symbolic action of Collecting Cigarette Butt. The results of these two activities are not only a tool for public education, but also used as evidence of advocacy in official audiences with Mayor and DPRD of Surakarta City. This attempt is intended to encourage the inception of regional policies protecting children from the impacts of tobacco products.

A member of *Pemuda Penggerak* emphasized the youth ability in building collaboration:

“The results of the IPS mapping and the ‘Cigarette Butt Collecting Action’ were used by Pemuda Penggerak, FAS and Yayasan Kakak to hold an audience with the Mayor and DPRD of Surakarta City regarding the request for the development of a policy to protect children from tobacco products. From the results of the audience, the Mayor of Surakarta instructed the Health Office to draft a regional regulation on Smoke Free Zone, among others, regulating the prohibition of Cigarette Promotion, Advertisements, and Sponsorships.” (Interview with a member of Pemuda Penggerak).

In the context of current research, Pemuda Penggerak plays a significant role in building political power through a coalition advocacy strategy with the Surakarta Children’s Forum (FAS) and the Kakak Foundation. The collaboration between Pemuda Penggerak and the Children’s Forum and the Kakak Foundation through the Cigarette Butt Collecting Action and monitoring the IPS of cigarette products shows the potential for collaboration and citizen involvement in controlling a smoke-free environment. The use of an innovative and inclusive approach shows that youngsters can play a role in formulating more responsive, contextual, and accountable policies. The findings of research are in line with Khan’s opinion [19] stating that in policy advocacy, political influence not only come from the ruling elite, but also from grassroots social movements capable of transforming public issues into real pressure for policy change.

The following table presents the roles and key findings of Pemuda Penggerak in enforcing tobacco control policy in Surakarta.

Table 1. Key Research Findings by Theme

Theme/Role	Key Findings
Public Education/ Campaign	- Youth actively held awareness campaign in public event (Car Free Day) - Cigarette Butt Collecting Action is carried out as symbolic action, manage to engage the public and media attention - Social media and local newspaper were used to disseminate messages widely
Evidence-based recommendation	- Youths monitored cigarette advertisements, promotions, and sponsorships in schools, playgrounds, and public spaces and collected cigarette butts in Smoke-Free Zone as empirical data - Findings were compiled into advocacy reports and presented to DPRD and city government as evidence for policy change
Building Network	- Established collaboration with Surakarta Children’s Forum and Yayasan Kakak for joint advocacy. - Coalition strategy strengthened legitimacy when meeting the Mayor and DPRD - Media partnership helped amplify advocacy outcomes and pressure policymakers

Source: primary data from Pemuda Penggerak, Yayasan Kakak, and Surakarta Children’s Forum

4 Conclusion

This study shows that youths play a strategic role in supporting the tobacco control policy through three mains strategies. Firstly, in the field of public education, Pemuda Penggerak has carried out awareness campaign on the dangers of smoking during Car Free Day, organized symbolic action such as Cigarette Butt Collecting action, and utilized mass and social media to influence public opinion. Secondly, in terms of evidence-based advocacy,

Pemuda Penggerak has systematically collected data on cigarette advertisements, promotions, and sponsorships, as well as collected cigarette butts in Smoke-Free Zone, thereby providing credible inputs for policy proposal. Thirdly, in building network, *Pemuda Penggerak* has reinforced its advocacy through strong collaboration with Surakarta Children's Forum, *Yayasan Kakak* (Kakak Foundation), and local media in addition to engaging directly with policymakers. The results indicate that the *Pemuda Penggerak* community serves as an agent of change in raising collective awareness of the negative impacts of cigarettes and the importance of creating a healthy environment. In addition, *Pemuda Penggerak* also demonstrates its capacity as an evidence-based advocacy actor, capable of filling in the information gap in the policy process while increasing the accountability and legitimacy of policy proposals. Both roles are undertaken through an advocacy strategy based on cross-sector collaboration with NGOs, peer communities, and local media, effectively expanding the influence of the campaign and strengthening the movement's legitimacy of policy advocacy. These findings underline that youth participation is not symbolic but rather a decisive factor in policy enforcement and in the establishment of a healthier, smoke-free environments. This study has limitations, particularly because the qualitative approach used focuses more on deepening the experiences and strategies carried out by the *Pemuda Penggerak* community in advocacy activities. Most of the informants interviewed were those directly involved in the movement, so there is a potentially positive bias in the assessment. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve the perspectives of policy makers and other parties with different interests - such as smokers, cigarette industry players, and traders - to obtain a more comprehensive and balanced analysis.

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