

## The Perspective of the PMII Women's Corps (KOPRI) at UBJ on Women Smoking in the Series *Gadis Kretek*

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the perspective of an external Islamic student organization, KOPRI PMII UBJ, on women smoking in the series *Gadis Kretek*. The study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, and data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that KOPRI PMII UBJ views women smoking in *Gadis Kretek* as no longer a taboo, but increasingly normalized due to cultural shifts and changes in societal mindsets, although some older generations still hold negative stigmas. KOPRI believes that women and men have equal rights to express themselves, including in the choice to smoke, and therefore gender-based discrimination is unjustified. They emphasize the importance of respecting individual decisions as long as they do not disturb others, and argue that women who smoke should not be automatically associated with negative character. Through the character Dasiyah in *Gadis Kretek*, the series portrays women as strong, independent, responsible, and empowered, offering a new perspective that challenges existing stigmas and suggests that negative views toward women smoking are not always relevant in contemporary society.

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### Introduction

*Gadis Kretek* is a novel written by Ratih Kumala and published in 2012 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. The novel received recognition as one of the top ten nominees for the Kusala Sastra Khatulistiwa in 2012. It predominantly uses narrative rather than dialogue and highlights Javanese culture, particularly the early development of the kretek cigarette industry in Indonesia. Several years later, the novel was adapted into a series titled *Gadis Kretek*, released on November 2, 2023, on Netflix. The series was directed by Kamila Andini and Ifa Isfanyah, and starred Dian Sastrowardoyo, Aryo Bayu, Arya Saloka, and Putri Marino. This five-episode drama presents a strong socio-cultural background (Kumala, 2012).

The story follows Soeraja, the owner of the Djagad Raya kretek factory, which has existed since the Dutch colonial era. While battling cancer, Soeraja expresses his final wish

to meet a woman named Jeng Yah, also known as Dasiyah. His request confuses and upsets his family, especially his wife, who becomes jealous, yet his three sons—Lebas, Karim, and Tegar—set out across Java to find her. During the journey, Lebas meets Arum, who helps uncover the history behind Djagad Raya's success as Indonesia's leading kretek brand. It is later revealed that Soeraja and Dasiyah had a past relationship connected to the kretek factory, as Dasiyah was known for her exceptional skill in creating kretek sauce mixtures. The series also depicts moments of gender bias, such as when Dasiyah is reprimanded by Soedjagad, who believes that women should neither smoke nor work in kretek production.

The series portrays women smoking as relatively common and not inherently unusual, although women's involvement in the cigarette industry is still treated as taboo. Dasiyah's character challenges this norm, as she demonstrates expertise in selecting high-quality tobacco and producing superior kretek blends. Female characters frequently shown smoking include Dasiyah and her mother, Roemaisa, indicating that such behavior existed even in the past and was not necessarily considered a violation of femininity.

Women's smoking behavior is often influenced by individual desires and motivations. According to Sih Martini (2014), some women perceive smoking as a way to appear unique or "cool," differentiate themselves from others, or rebel against restrictive parental norms. Smoking can also serve as a form of self-expression or emotional escape. Some informants even view smoking as an alternative to alcohol consumption, although it may lead to dependency and become part of daily needs.

On the other hand, Hermanita & Mardhiah (2023) highlight the persistent stigma against female smokers, particularly among adolescents. Women who smoke are often judged negatively—for example, being avoided in public spaces, perceived as not valuing their health, or considered inconsistent with religious norms, especially for Muslim women who wear the hijab. Nevertheless, some people hold more supportive views, arguing that smoking is a personal right as long as individuals are of legal age.

In many Indonesian contexts, female smoking is still associated with negative stereotypes, such as being impolite, immoral, or deviant. Cultural norms often expect women to be modest and reserved, leading to social pressures, verbal harassment, and even limited employment opportunities for female smokers (Widianingrum et al., 2018). Historically, smoking has been associated with masculinity, making it socially unacceptable for women. However, modern perspectives increasingly challenge this view, emphasizing that smoking is not inherently tied to gender and that women should have equal rights and opportunities.

The portrayal of women smoking is not new in Indonesian films and series, appearing in works such as *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?*, *Kartini*, *Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts*, and *Pengabdian Setan*. Audience responses vary: some see it as realistic characterization or artistic expression, while others worry about its potential negative influence, especially on younger viewers.

The PMII Women's Corps (KOPRI) is an organization that provides a platform for female members of PMII to develop their intellectual, political, and social potential, while

promoting gender equality. Established in 1967, KOPRI aims to build a just society grounded in equality and humanitarian values, and actively works to strengthen women's roles within the organization. KOPRI has expanded across many universities in Indonesia, including at Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University (UBJ), where it was established in 2011.

The researcher selected KOPRI PMII UBJ because it represents a modern Muslim women's organization with diverse perspectives on social issues, including women smoking. This topic remains widely debated, particularly between traditional and modern viewpoints within Muslim communities. The selection of *Gadis Kretek* is also relevant because it reflects both historical and contemporary experiences of women smokers, including ongoing stigma and social intimidation.

Based on this background, the study focuses on examining the perspective of KOPRI PMII UBJ toward women smoking in the series *Gadis Kretek*, with the main research question: how does KOPRI PMII UBJ perceive the portrayal of women smoking in the series?

According to Suhanadji (2004), perspective refers to an individual's way of viewing or understanding issues in their surroundings, while Wihardit (1999) and Martono (2014) define it as a person's viewpoint or approach in interpreting phenomena or problems. In sociology, perspectives include the evolutionist perspective, which sees society as continuously developing; the functionalist perspective, which views society as an organized system of interrelated parts; the interactionist perspective, which focuses on interactions through symbols; and the conflict perspective, which emphasizes power dynamics and ongoing social change (Alfinitihadjo, 2001). Overall, perspective can be understood as a set of assumptions, values, and conceptual frameworks that shape how individuals interpret reality and guide their actions (Syafrudin, 2017; Marzuki et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, the social behavior paradigm explains that deviant behavior refers to actions that do not conform to social norms and values accepted in society (Irwanti Said, 2013). Ritzer (1975) identifies three major sociological paradigms: social facts, social definition, and social behavior, with the latter influenced by B.F. Skinner's behaviorism. This paradigm focuses on observable behavior patterns and suggests that human behavior, shaped through interaction with the environment, forms culture and can change over time (Fajarni, 2020).

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach to understand phenomena such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions holistically within a natural context using descriptive analysis (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). A descriptive qualitative method is applied with an inductive approach to explore who, what, where, and how a phenomenon occurs, allowing conclusions to emerge from specific experiences (Nurmalasari & Erdiantoro, 2020). Data are collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is conducted indirectly by analyzing scenes of women smoking in the *Gadis Kretek* and by observing

activities of KOPRI PMII UBJ members. Semi-structured interviews are used to gather in-depth information through guided yet flexible questioning, while documentation such as written records, images, and screenshots supports data validity. Data analysis follows the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, to systematically organize and interpret findings (Saleh, 2017; Latifah & Supena, 2021). To ensure validity, the study applies technique triangulation by comparing data from observation, interviews, and documentation, enhancing accuracy and reliability (Sugiyono, 2013). The research subjects are women smoking in *Gadis Kretek* and members of KOPRI PMII UBJ, while the object is KOPRI's perspective on women smoking. Informants are selected from KOPRI PMII UBJ members who have watched *Gadis Kretek*, as they are considered capable of providing relevant and credible insights (Rujakat, 2018; Satori & Komariah, 2013).

## Results and Discussion

### Research Informant Profiles

This study involves five informants from KOPRI PMII UBJ with diverse roles and experiences. The first informant, NNH, is a former chairperson who has been active in PMII UBJ for approximately four years. During her one-year leadership, she played a significant role in organizing and leading various activities such as book discussions and internal evaluations, ensuring members understood the organization's goals. Her motivation for joining KOPRI stems from her interest in women's issues and gender equality, which are frequently discussed in organizational forums and activities, including film screenings related to women's topics. The second informant, ZN, joined in 2020 and currently serves as Head of the Cadre Division while also working as a freelance election supervisor and private tutor. She perceives KOPRI as a platform for self-development, leadership training, and improving interpersonal skills, particularly in understanding gender dynamics. She is actively involved in discussions such as Sekolah Islam Gender (SIG) and regularly participates in organizational forums.

The third informant, SK, joined PMII in 2022 and currently serves as the treasurer of KOPRI while working as an elementary school teacher. Her responsibilities include managing organizational finances and supporting various activities. She emphasizes that joining KOPRI has helped her become more active, improve her public speaking skills, and gain experience in organizing events. The fourth informant, AO, a 2023 graduate now working in a corporate company, has been a member since 2021. Although not part of the organizational board, she occasionally participates in KOPRI activities and values the organization as a space for developing personal potential, exploring new experiences, and challenging patriarchal perspectives. She also acknowledges that KOPRI frequently facilitates discussions on women's issues and feminism, which she sometimes attends.

The fifth informant, MA, also graduated in 2023 and currently works in a startup company. She joined PMII in 2022 after being introduced by a senior and remains an active

member of KOPRI. She views the organization as a platform for self-discovery and learning, particularly through activities such as book discussions and campaigns against sexual violence. Like the other informants, she benefits from expanded networks, organizational knowledge, and opportunities for discussion. Overall, all informants share similar experiences in engaging with gender-related issues within KOPRI, participating in discussions, and gaining personal and social development, while also showing varied preferences in film genres that reflect their interaction with media and cultural narratives.

### **Perspective on the *Gadis Kretek* Series**

Based on interviews conducted by the researcher with informants regarding their perspectives on the *Gadis Kretek*, the findings indicate that the presence of women smoking in the series is not considered problematic. This is because female characters who smoke are portrayed as having their own reasons, particularly the main character Dasiyah, who comes from a family that owns a kretek industry and has a passion for creating kretek sauce and enjoying the cigarettes she produces.

“It’s just normal, nothing too significant. It means she is already aware that women smoking is not something bad. It’s just a stigma created by society, so I see it as something ordinary.” (NNH)

“When the series was first released, this phenomenon became quite common. But in the end, it’s like ‘you do you, I do me’—as long as it doesn’t disturb others, it’s fine. It also adds knowledge, like in the past women smoked as a symbol of rebellion, freedom, and self-expression. Now maybe the meaning has slightly shifted.” (ZN)

“In my opinion, it’s their choice. If they want to smoke, they smoke; if not, they don’t. It depends on the individual because they know what’s best for themselves.” (AO)

“It’s normal, just like people who didn’t smoke before but start because their friends do. It’s already common.” (MA)

According to informant NNH, women smoking is no longer considered negative, as it is merely a stigma constructed by society. Informant ZN stated that the phenomenon increased after the series aired but remains a personal right. Informant AO emphasized that smoking is an individual choice, while informant MA viewed it as something already common even before the series. All four informants agreed that smoking is a personal right and should not be forced or prohibited by others.

Regarding favorite female characters, most informants highlighted Dasiyah (Jeng Yah).

“The main female character, Dasiyah, represents a brave, strong, and elegant woman—through her way of walking, speaking, and thinking. I’d rate it 9.5 out of 10 because the visuals are also excellent.” (NNH)

“I like Jeng Yah’s younger sister, Rukayah. Even though she wasn’t shown much, she actually protected her sister and even raised her child. I’d give the series 5 out of 5 because the acting, story, and visuals are all very good.” (ZN)

“Jeng Yah is my favorite because she is very passionate about what she wants and fights for it. I’d rate it 9 out of 10.” (AO)

“I like Jeng Yah because the series presents a different perspective. Even though she smokes, she is hardworking, determined, and has leadership qualities. I’d rate it 9 out of 10.” (SK)

“Definitely Dasiyah. She really embodies her role, especially when mixing kretek sauce. She understands not only smoking but the entire kretek process. I’d rate it 8.5 out of 10.” (MA)

Overall, most informants favored Dasiyah as the central female character because she represents independence and conveys positive values despite being portrayed as a smoker.

Regarding the broader impact of the series, informants expressed differing but generally positive views:

“It became controversial at first. Society used to strongly reject women smoking, but after the series, it seemed more accepted. From an economic perspective, it could also be seen as targeting female consumers by normalizing women smoking.” (ZN)

“I think it’s fine because people are starting to see a different perspective—that women who smoke are not necessarily bad.” (AO)

“It’s not a problem. Instead, it opens people’s minds that something previously considered negative may not always be so.” (SK)

“The series not only presents an interesting story but also changes viewers’ perspectives, making them more open toward women smoking.” (MA)

These findings suggest that *Gadis Kretek* has influenced audience perspectives, making women smoking appear more acceptable and normalized.

“It’s the same as before. As long as it doesn’t disturb others, it’s fine.” (ZN)

“It depends on the person’s character, not whether they smoke.” (AO)

“I would question their reasons—whether it’s truly their choice or just curiosity or fear of missing out (FOMO). If the reason isn’t valid, I would remind them that smoking still has negative effects.” (SK)

In conclusion, informants ZN and AO believe that smoking does not determine a person’s character, while informant SK emphasizes that smoking should be based on valid personal reasons rather than curiosity or social pressure. Overall, the series contributes to shifting perceptions, encouraging more nuanced and less judgmental views toward women who smoke.

### **Perspective on Women Who Smoke**

From the perspective related to women who smoke, the researcher obtained results from interviews with informants showing that some of them consider it acceptable, as long as smokers maintain the comfort of passive smokers in public spaces and remain mindful of health considerations. This can also serve as a basis for understanding that women who smoke are not always bad or deserving of negative judgment, as such views are often shaped by social stigma. The decision for women to smoke is influenced by causes and backgrounds

that may not be immediately visible. Therefore, informants argued that women who smoke should receive equal treatment to men who smoke, as both share the same context as active smokers.

According to NNH, one of the factors encouraging women to smoke is their environment, such as being born into a cigarette or kretek industry family, which motivates them to smoke and understand the product they create. ZN views women smoking as a form of freedom and self-expression, especially in breaking stereotypes that confine women to domestic roles. AO emphasized environmental influence and personal enjoyment, such as appreciating the aroma of cloves. SK highlighted that smoking is part of understanding and creating quality kretek products, while MA also pointed out environmental factors, curiosity, and fear of missing out (FOMO) as contributing reasons. Overall, informants agreed that environment plays a major role in shaping smoking behavior among women.

Regarding general views, informants largely considered women smoking as something normal. NNH and AO saw it as an ordinary behavior, while ZN emphasized equal freedom for both men and women to smoke. SK noted that the negative health effects apply equally to both genders, and MA also regarded it as a common phenomenon. Thus, women smoking is generally perceived as acceptable within their social environments.

Historically, ZN explained that women smoking was once considered normal because stigma had not yet developed, unlike today. AO added that environments with strong cigarette production made it more acceptable. SK pointed out that since colonial times, women smoking has existed but has become negatively stigmatized in modern contexts. MA suggested that during colonial times, women smoked to assert their identity and equality with men. Informants concluded that changes in time and social perceptions have influenced how women smoking is viewed today.

NNH highlighted that women have long been a target market in the cigarette industry, including in the United States, where advertisements featured women smokers. ZN added that media representations, especially films in the 1990s, contributed to the stigma that women who smoke are “bad.” AO noted that stereotypes continue to exist due to cultural differences, while SK emphasized that societal changes have led to negative assumptions despite equal health impacts for both genders. MA pointed out that conflicting cultural views make it difficult to reach a unified perspective on women smoking.

In terms of personal stance, NNH considered smoking a personal choice influenced by internal and external factors. ZN took a balanced view, acknowledging individual rights while emphasizing consideration for others, especially regarding secondhand smoke. AO noted health concerns but still viewed women smoking as a personal preference. MA emphasized that smoking itself is harmful, but it does not define a person’s character.

Regarding smoking as a lifestyle, NNH observed a shift from being a normal behavior in the past to a lifestyle today, influenced by social and environmental factors. ZN saw it as a symbol of freedom and self-expression. AO believed that in the past, smoking was one of the few forms of expression available to women, while today it can be part of lifestyle

choices. SK linked it to resistance against patriarchal norms in the past, evolving into modern lifestyle practices. However, MA disagreed with labeling it purely as a lifestyle, arguing that individual experiences and backgrounds must be considered.

In terms of attitudes, informants generally responded neutrally toward women who smoke. NNH, AO, and SK emphasized treating them like any other individual, while MA added that as long as smoking does not disturb others, it should not be an issue. Regarding discrimination, NNH strongly opposed it, stating that both men and women face the same health risks. ZN also rejected discriminatory behavior and public judgment. AO noted that older generations may still hold such views, while SK suggested that discomfort with smoke may trigger negative reactions. MA emphasized that individuals should not interfere in others' personal choices.

When asked about societal responses, NNH stated that stigma persists due to longstanding beliefs. ZN and AO noted that responses vary depending on the environment, with younger or campus communities being more accepting. SK believed discrimination is still common, while MA stated that negative responses depend on specific contexts.

All informants agreed that there is no correlation between women smoking and negative moral judgments. NNH rejected labeling women smokers as "cheap," ZN saw no connection at all, AO emphasized personal value over habits, SK provided an example from *Gadis Kretek*, and MA stressed that smoking does not imply immoral behavior.

Regarding early perceptions, several informants mentioned being influenced by family and societal stigma during childhood, often associating smoking with negative traits in women. However, as they grew older and gained more knowledge, their perspectives became more open and nuanced.

Finally, regarding organizational rules, all informants agreed that there are no formal prohibitions within Kopri PMII UBJ against women smoking. While some branches may discourage it due to cultural reasons, overall it is treated as a personal matter rather than an organizational issue.

### **Kopri UBJ Members' Perspectives on Women Who Smoke**

In the past, women smoking was generally considered normal because social stigma had not yet been strongly constructed. In contrast, in the present day, women who smoke are often perceived negatively. Historically, women who smoked did so, among other reasons, to assert their identity and demonstrate that smoking was not exclusively a male activity. Based on the perspectives of all informants, women smoking has now become a common phenomenon, particularly in urban areas and certain social environments. Several factors influence women to smoke, including peer groups at home and on campus, as well as family members. The informants also emphasized that women who smoke should not be automatically labeled as bad or negative, as smoking is ultimately an individual's personal decision and right.

The informants generally normalize women smoking in light of social change and evolving stigma, acknowledging that both men and women have equal capacity to engage in

such behavior and experience similar consequences as smokers. They also noted that smoking among women is shaped by both internal and external factors, as well as personal choice. However, smokers are still expected to be mindful of their surroundings and maintain public comfort. From a health perspective, smoking is indeed harmful, but this does not necessarily define a person's character as bad or negative. A person's value should not be judged based on smoking habits or differences in lifestyle. There has been a shift in perception over time: while women smoking was once considered normal, it is now sometimes framed as part of a modern lifestyle. This shift is influenced by broader social changes, increased knowledge, and cultural development. In earlier times, women smoking could symbolize resistance or self-expression, whereas today it may also be associated with lifestyle trends. Nevertheless, some informants argue that labeling it purely as a lifestyle is inaccurate, as there may be personal reasons behind the behavior that are not publicly known.

Kopri's stance toward women who smoke is generally neutral, treating them no differently from others. Informants stressed that individuals should be judged based on their character rather than their smoking behavior, and as long as smokers do not disturb others, it should not be an issue. However, women who smoke may still face discrimination, largely due to persistent societal stigma. The informants believe that such discrimination should be addressed with understanding, as no one has the right to control another person's life choices, and women who smoke are aware of the consequences of their actions. In cases where discomfort arises—such as exposure to cigarette smoke—dialogue and mediation are encouraged rather than judgment. Negative responses and discrimination toward women who smoke still exist today, depending on the social environment and context, as societal stigma remains deeply rooted.

Furthermore, the informants agreed that there is no correlation between women who smoke and negative labels such as being morally inferior. A woman's value is determined by her personal qualities, not her smoking habits. Within Kopri itself, there are no formal rules or strict prohibitions regarding women smoking, as this is considered a matter of personal autonomy. In discussions within Kopri, the issue often raises critical questions about why a distinction is made between women who smoke and those who do not, given that it falls within the private sphere. However, on a personal level, some informants acknowledged that their initial views were shaped by family influences, including parental restrictions during childhood and the belief that women smoking was inappropriate. These perspectives often evolved over time as informants gained more knowledge and broader understanding, especially when smoking behavior does not disrupt social harmony.

From a theoretical standpoint, the perspectives expressed by the informants can be categorized within an evolutionist perspective (Alfinitihadjo, 2001), which explains how societies grow and develop over time. This perspective suggests that social change is progressive, although certain elements of past values may persist, even if only in subtle forms, within newer patterns of life. The perspectives of Kopri members differ from those of the broader public, particularly regarding women smoking. While informants tend to view

it as normal, public perceptions remain diverse. Other studies indicate that some individuals feel uncomfortable seeing women smoke, largely because smoking has traditionally been associated with men, making the behavior seem unconventional for women, despite equal rights (Hadisaputra, 2021).

Additionally, previous research has shown that women who smoke are often considered taboo due to traditional gender norms that associate women with femininity, gentleness, nurturing qualities, and adherence to social etiquette. Smoking is therefore seen as inappropriate for women, who are also expected to occupy domestic roles and uphold cultural values for future generations (Wahidah, 2021). However, the findings of this study differ, as the informants generally perceive women smoking as normal and commonplace. They respect individual choices and actions, particularly in the context of personal autonomy, emphasizing that no one has the authority to dictate or judge another person's private decisions. The informants also highlighted that as long as smokers—whether male or female—do not disturb others and are considerate of their environment, smoking does not pose a social issue.

### **Women Smoking as a Social Behavior Phenomenon**

The stigmas constructed by society toward women who smoke can be traced back to earlier times, when women smoking was often interpreted as a symbol of resistance or rebellion against colonial powers that oppressed them, including situations where women were treated as servants or concubines. Over time, along with shifts in culture and social norms, this meaning has changed into a negative stigma, where women who smoke are often perceived as “not good” women. However, in the present day, some people also interpret women smoking as part of a lifestyle or merely as a form of following trends (fomo). Informants revealed that women smoking is also influenced by foreign cultural elements entering Indonesia, which contribute to the emergence of new stigmas that frame women smoking negatively. This phenomenon reflects broader social change and the ongoing transformation of cultural values. At the same time, women smoking can be seen as an indicator of modernization, as younger generations increasingly understand technological developments and scientific knowledge, leading to diverse motivations and factors influencing women to smoke. Nevertheless, other studies have found that even women who do not wear the hijab but smoke are still considered taboo—especially those who wear the hijab—indicating strong societal disapproval of women smoking regardless of their appearance (Adiba, 2023).

Other research has shown that women who are active smokers often conceal their smoking habits due to prevailing social norms that consider women smoking as taboo. Society frequently assigns negative stigma, labeling women who smoke as “bad” women. As a result, women smokers may fear rejection or negative judgment, which affects their level of self-disclosure and makes them hesitant to smoke openly in public spaces (Rasyid, 2024). This situation highlights the relationship between social behavior and gender stigma, particularly in determining the extent to which women smoking is perceived as deviant or

acceptable. Within the social behavior paradigm, culture is essentially formed through patterned human actions, and the study of these behavioral patterns does not necessarily require abstract values or ideas. This paradigm also emphasizes that interactions between individuals and their environment can influence and even change individual behavior (Fajarni, 2020). However, the findings of this study differ, as informants generally agree that women smoking is a personal right and choice. They also emphasize that the consequences of smoking—both in terms of health and societal perception—are essentially the same for women and men.

The informants further stressed that women who smoke are fully aware of the consequences of their actions, indicating that their decision to smoke is based on personal awareness and willingness. According to them, women who smoke should not be labeled as bad individuals. While smoking itself is harmful to health for both women and men, this does not automatically make smokers morally inferior. Informants also argued that women smoking should not be categorized as deviant behavior, as such labeling is largely driven by societal stigma rather than objective reasoning. Historically, men have also engaged in smoking, yet negative stigma tends to be directed more strongly at women, even though the health impacts are the same regardless of gender. Other studies have found that the symbolic meaning of smoking—particularly the use of vape or e-cigarettes among women in communities such as Hexohm Pasuruan—is complex and multifaceted. It may represent lifestyle, identity, self-expression, prestige, masculinity, or functional use. These meanings are constructed and negotiated through symbolic interaction and are influenced by factors such as gender norms, social class, and popular culture (Khotimah & Ula, 2023).

These findings align with the present study, which also indicates that women smoking can function as a symbol of lifestyle and self-expression. Such meanings are shaped through interaction with others and influenced by factors including gender and popular culture. As a result, women smoking is still perceived differently across social groups—some consider it deviant, while others accept it as a normal phenomenon. Informants in this study also suggested that acceptance in certain groups may be linked to economic considerations, as increased cigarette consumption contributes to national economic growth through tobacco sales. In addition, films and television series often depict women smoking, reinforcing the idea that the phenomenon is increasingly normalized. For example, in the series *Gadis Kretek*, the character Dasiyah is portrayed as someone who enjoys and consumes cigarettes. Informants emphasized that women have long been a target of tobacco advertising and industry strategies, as seen in films and advertisements that associate smoking with women. However, due to persistent societal stigma that frames women smoking as negative, the phenomenon continues to generate debate and controversy.

### **Women, Smoking, and Gender Stigma**

Women who smoke are often still considered taboo in Indonesian society due to both health concerns and deeply rooted social norms regarding femininity. From a health perspective, smoking is particularly feared for women because of its potential risks,

including harm to reproductive health and pregnancy. Normatively, women are expected to behave in ways that reflect ideals such as being well-mannered, graceful, modest, self-controlled, and well-groomed. Consequently, women who smoke are frequently judged as failing to meet these expectations and are labeled as “not good” women. This study shows that women who smoke still sometimes receive negative responses and discrimination from groups that oppose the behavior, largely due to long-standing stigma that persists across generations. Those who continue to view women smoking as taboo are often influenced by family values and social environments that strongly reject such behavior. Other research indicates that women who smoke are significantly influenced by family and their surrounding environment; although they are generally aware of the health risks associated with smoking, quitting remains difficult without strong personal commitment and internal motivation (Adam et al., 2018). Additional studies reveal that urban women tend to display more diverse behaviors, and smoking among women in urban settings is often openly visible. In these contexts, women smoking in public spaces is no longer unusual. For some, smoking carries symbolic meaning, functioning as a form of communication within social groups, where implicit norms and mutual understanding develop among smokers (Martiana et al., 2017).

The series *Gadis Kretek* attempts to reinforce the stigma that women smoking is inappropriate, as seen in scenes where the main character, Dasiyah, is reprimanded by her father’s colleague for her interest in kretek and her desire to create her own sauce blends. Dasiyah is portrayed as having deep knowledge of high-quality clove ingredients for her family’s cigarette factory. In another scene, she is also criticized by Soedjagad, a rival factory owner, who asserts that women should not be involved in the tobacco industry. Within the series, only Dasiyah and her mother, Roemaisa, are depicted as women who smoke, while other female workers are limited to rolling cigarettes. Although the series presents elements of rejection toward women smoking, other studies highlight that Dasiyah’s character also conveys positive values, such as being hardworking and highly dedicated to her family’s kretek business. Her strong curiosity drives her to question gender-based restrictions, such as being prohibited from entering the sauce room. She is also portrayed as creative, consistently experimenting with new sauce recipes to improve product quality. Additionally, her father, Idrus Muria, demonstrates compassion by offering employment opportunities to others, such as Raja. These elements illustrate that Dasiyah embodies multiple positive traits beyond the act of smoking (Nisa et al., 2024). The series also portrays women as empowered individuals who can contribute to others and to their own development. It not only depicts women who smoke but also delivers meaningful messages to the audience. According to several informants in this study, the main character Dasiyah significantly shapes the narrative, as she convincingly portrays a village woman with maturity, assertiveness, and independence. She challenges male dominance and refuses to be controlled without reason. Dasiyah firmly defends her principles, particularly her

commitment to developing the best kretek sauce for the advancement of her family's business.

In responding to and challenging the stigma that women who smoke are inherently “bad,” the informants from Kopri UBJ expressed similar views. They believe that women who smoke should not be automatically judged negatively, as behavior cannot be fairly assessed based solely on outward appearance. Instead, understanding the underlying reasons and contextual factors is essential. Kopri also plays a role in advocating for gender equality and justice, especially for individuals whose safety and comfort are threatened. The organization strongly opposes discriminatory practices, particularly those targeting women who are judged or blamed—such as cases where women who smoke are subjected to harassment or sexual violence due to negative labeling. Other research on Kopri highlights that the identity of a “movement woman” is defined by her ability to contribute positively to others and serve as a driving force in societal progress. This perspective is shaped by an awareness of the important role women play in shaping the future of civilization (Indriyani et al., 2020). Kopri contributes to dismantling outdated stigmas through activities such as discussions, book reviews, and knowledge exchange among its members. These efforts aim to generate new understandings aligned with evolving knowledge and social change. By fostering critical thinking and awareness, Kopri encourages individuals to adapt to technological advancements and cultural transformations. In the face of global change, Kopri is expected to actively voice its perspectives and provide input on societal developments, particularly those considered unsuitable for Indonesian contexts, while grounding its stance in deliberation and research-based analysis.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, women smoking in Indonesia reflects a complex intersection of social change, gender norms, and evolving cultural values. While historically stigmatized as inappropriate and associated with negative moral judgments, contemporary perspectives—particularly among Kopri UBJ members—tend to view women smoking as a personal choice shaped by various internal and external factors rather than a marker of character. Despite ongoing stigma and occasional discrimination rooted in traditional norms and societal expectations, there is a growing recognition of gender equality, where both men and women are seen as having equal rights and facing similar consequences as smokers. Cultural representations, such as in *Gadis Kretek*, further illustrate this duality by simultaneously reinforcing and challenging stereotypes, portraying women smokers as both controversial and empowered individuals. Overall, the findings suggest a gradual shift toward more inclusive and contextual understandings of women smoking, emphasizing the importance of reducing judgment, promoting awareness, and respecting individual autonomy within a changing social landscape.

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