

THE EFFECT OF FEAR APPEALS ADVERTISEMENT AND HEALTH SOCIAL MESSAGES ON THE INTENTION OF SMOKING CESSATION

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is placed as the first rank for number of smokers in the world. Considering the danger of smoking, some actions have been taken into account. One of the ways to reduce the number of smoker is by promoting non-smoking advertisements. The aim of this study was to test whether advertisement with fear appeal in social message is more effective than in health message to reduce the intention to stop smoking. About 21 university students in Jakarta (N male =18; N female = 3, average age = 19.76) were recruited through convenience sampling. They were given two types of advertisements in within subject experimental design. Counter balancing method was used to control the effect of sequential presentation of the advertisements. The intention to stop smoking was measured by five items of a questionnaire immediately after the participants being exposed to each type of advertisements. The results showed that advertisement with health message was more effective to reduce the intention to stop smoking than the social message. Some factors are discussed for further study.

Keywords: emerging adults, smoking behavior, advertisement, fear appeal, social message, health message

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, smoking takes about 244.000 people's live every year (Aldino, 2017). This fact puts Indonesia at the first rank for number of smokers in the world (Riset Atlas Tobacco in Aldino, 2017). This number keeps increasing since 2007 from 34,2% to 34,7% in 2010, and 36,3% in 2013 (Dasar,2013). Indonesia also has the largest number of adolescent smokers, 45% of adolescents aged 13-19 are smokers (Susanto, 2014).

One of the ways to take care of this problem is by conducting campaign via anti-smoking ads. Campaigns of anti-smoking ads are proven effective for wider population. It is useful for smoking

prevention, promoting quit smoking behavior, and decreasing the usage rate of cigarettes among adults (Durkin, Biener & Wakefield, 2009).

Ads with fear appeal is a persuasive message that is intended to raise fear. The negative feeling is elicited by showing negative consequences of dangerous behavior. The ads suggests the person to stop the unlikely behaviors or does preventive actions (Wong & Capella, 2009), otherwise they will experience fatal aftereffect. In a study conducted in Canada and China, Laroche, Tofolli, and Zhang (2001) stated that cigarettes ads with fear appeal successfully made people view cigarettes badly and increase their

intention to stop smoking. Another study on the effectiveness of ads on stop smoking behavior was conducted by Biener, McCallum-Keeler, and Nyman (2000). They found that humorous appeal and entertaining appeal ads were less effective compared to fear appeal ads eliciting intention to stop smoking among smokers and non smokers.

We conducted a pilot survey towards 73 students of AJCU who are smokers and ex-smokers about anti-smoking ads appear in the mass media. About 38.4% of them mentioned that the anti-smoking ads were effective, because the ads elicit fear, while about 61.6% stated that the ads were ineffective. Among this majority, despite they admitted that the ads evoke fear, they reported that the ads were not fearful enough to stop them from smoking. They mentioned that they keep on smoking because they do not want to stop yet.

This fact drove us to analyze the content of the message in the ads. The fear appeal ads include negative aftereffect messages of smoking or issues about fear of bad health (Beaudoin, 2002). Many studies shows that advertisements involving health issues can create fear, and these ads are effective for adults and adolescent (Biener et al, Farrelly et al, Hyland, et al, Terry-Mcclrath et al., in Wong & Capella, 2016). Developing social relationships with peers is one of crucial developmental tasks for adolescent. Considering this developmental task and following types of ads presented by Uusitalo and Niemela-Nyrhinen (in Chung, 2014), we asked students in the pilot survey, whether fear-related (disease and death) and social disapproval of peers influence them to stop smoking.

We found that 45.50 % students showed their willing to stop smoking because of health issues, but only 19.2 % reported that they actually stopped smoking because of this issue. It was very few who mentioned that they have seen anti smoking ads with social messages.

Even though 50.7% of them started smoking because of peers/social influence, about 48.94% did not stop because of this factor.

Zhao Goldberg, & Reibling (2003) showed that disease and death theme in the ads were not effective for smokers unless they perceived that they were vulnerable in health. It was reported that adolescent did not perceived that they were vulnerable and therefore could not be affected by the dangerous impacts of smoking. Goldman and Glantz (in Beaudoin, 2002) described this phenomenon as one of adolescents's personal fable. This is interesting because according to Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), people are motivated to perform healthy behaviors not only to avoid health risks, but also to avoid social risks (Rogers in Pechmann, Zhao, Goldberg, & Reibling, 2003).

Health message and social message in this study is based on two of Pechmann, Zhao, Goldberg, & Reibling's 7 anti-smoking ads themes, disease and death message theme (health) and endangers others message theme (social). Disease and death message theme shows how smokers suffer from various diseases such as emphysema and lung cancer and die young. The purpose of this advertising theme is to convey the harsh medical reality of smoking. Endangers others message theme shows how cigarette smoke hurts other people like family, coworkers, and friends. The purpose of this advertisement is to raise awareness on environmental tobacco smoke. This ad also shows when the smoker dies young, the abandoned family suffers emotionally and financially. In addition, in this ad smokers are also faced with social disapproval from non smokers, where non smokers get angry and disappointed with the smokers because of the lack of attention, even some ads with this theme also finely punish smokers for injuring others.

Considering the importance of health behavior and supporting anti smoking activities, this study was intended

to test whether ads with social (peers) message could increase intention to stop smoking compared to ads with health messages.

METHOD

About 21 university students in Jakarta (N male =18; N female = 3, average age = 19.76) were recruited through convenience sampling were given two types of advertisements (health and social) in within subject experimental design. The participants were recruited via social media. The characteristics of participants include their smoking behaviors such as have been smoking for at least 1 year or more, consumes 1-24 cigarettes daily, and never join any experimental research.

A counter balancing method was used to control the effect of sequential presentation of the advertisements. Half of them were given ads with social message at first, followed by ads with health message, and the other half were given ads with health message at first, then followed by the social message. The social message ads described a situation when someone left by his friends because he is smoking. The other ads showed the impacts of cigarettes to our health. The duration for those two advertisements were controlled. The intention to stop smoking was measured via five items of a questionnaire with 5-point scale measurements immediately after the participants being exposed to each type of advertisements.

RESULTS

It is important to measure the level of fear experienced by the participant when they saw the ads. We found that the social message was perceived less scary (M = 2.1) than the ads with health message (M = 3.7). Following this, the Wilcoxon signed ranks test ($T = 8.21, n = 22, p < 0.05$) showed that participants had more intention to stop smoking when they saw ads with health message than the social

ads. The sum of positive difference ranks ($\sum R^+ = 21$) are lower than the sum of the negative ranks ($\sum R^- = 115$), which means there is negative impact of social-message ads. In another word, the advertisement with social message decreased participants's intention to stop smoking. It is better to use ads with health message.

DISCUSSION

The finding in this study is consistent with findings in researches mentioned by Wong & Capella (2016) that ads with health message with fear appeal are effective to reduce smoking behavior. The level of fear is the most crucial point in ads of fear appeal. Hovland et al., Witte & Allen in Tannenbaum, Zimmerman, Hepler, Saul, Jacobs, Alberracin (2015) stressed that low level of fear was not enough to elicit intention to stop smoking compared to the medium level of fear. We assumed that the level of fear elicited by the ads plays important roles. We reviewed the ads with social message presented in this study was not in the same level as ads with health messages. It is important to understand to what extent the social pressure is feared enough to influence young people to stop smoking.

Some factors are also needed to be considered for future studies. First, the perception of vulnerability in health among participants. In this study, we did not measure whether the personal fable regarding vulnerability of health and dangerous risk of smoking was perceived by participants. We assumed this perception could influence the level of fear, subsequently can affect the intention to stop smoking. Second, the history of physical health of participants. It is assumed that the physical condition affected by the number of cigarette intakes (heavy, medium, and light smoking behavior) and the length of smoking (years/months of smoking) could influence the perception of health risk that in the following condition could influence their

perception of fear and vulnerability of health. High consumption also signifies stronger addictions and also become a habit, which signifies higher withdrawal costs, and increases the difficulty to stop (Carlsson & Hammar, 2005). In this study the range is 1-24 cigarettes per day. Schane, Ling, & Glantz (2011) categorize > 24 cigarettes as heavy smokers. This broad range can affect the results of research if compared to a narrower range, we did not consider the difference between light smokers (<15 cigarettes) and normal smokers (15-23 cigarettes).

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