The Habit of Smoking While Driving: A Phenomenological Study in Balikpapan City

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Article Info:	Abstract:
	Purpose: In Balikpapan City, an urban area with industrial activity and high traffic density, this practice represents a complex, risky behavior that cannot be adequately explained solely through legal or health approaches. This qualitative research aims to explore the meanings, experiences, and social processes underlying this phenomenon from the perspective of the perpetrators.
	Methodology: Using a phenomenological approach combined with case studies, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 drivers and participant observation on major roads. The data were analyzed thematically to identify essential patterns in participants' lived experiences.
Corresponding Author: Deris Arista Saputra **Email:** derisaristasaputra@gmail.com	**Findings:** The research findings reveal three main themes: first, smoking functions as a psychological coping strategy to manage stress and boredom in the temporal pressure of traffic jams; second, this practice is a product of habitus normalized through social learning and peer pressure within the driving community; third, there is a constant inner dialectic between individual enjoyment and awareness of transgression and its social impact.
 	Implication: This study contributes to the enrichment of Bourdieu's habitus theory by introducing the concepts of "mobile habitus" and "dialectical habitus," which are sensitive to the context of mobile spaces and the ambivalence of agents. Practically, these findings highlight the urgency of community-based interventions and socio-cultural approaches in road safety policy, while also opening up space for further research on the transformation of risky habitus in the context of urban mobility.

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the hustle and bustle of the streets of Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, a social phenomenon continues to emerge: motorcyclists and car drivers freely smoking while driving. This practice is not simply a traffic violation, but has become part of the habitus internalized in driving culture. Data from the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) shows the prevalence of smoking in Indonesia reached 28.8%, while the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) estimated that 70 million people are active smokers. In Balikpapan, an industrial city with high traffic density, this activity is a daily sight that both the perpetrators and the public often overlook.

From a driver's perspective, smoking while driving is seen as a way to reduce stress and boredom, especially when facing traffic jams. However, behind this "convenience" lies significant risks: impaired concentration, impaired visibility, and physical impairment, which increase the potential for accidents. For passengers and other drivers, the wafting of cigarette smoke not only disrupts comfort but also endangers health and safety. Regulations such as Traffic Law No. 22 of 2009 and Minister of Transportation Regulation No. 12 of 2019 prohibit this practice, but enforcement remains weak.

Initial observations at major intersections in Balikpapan (e.g., Jalan Sudirman and MT Haryono) indicate that smoking while driving has become a widely accepted social norm. Exploratory interviews with 15 drivers revealed that this practice is not seen as a violation, but rather as a "normal habit" supported by the social environment. Cultural aspects of tobacco and distorted risk perceptions reinforce this phenomenon. Globally, similar studies in developing countries have shown that risky behavior on the road is often influenced by socioeconomic and cultural factors.

The urgency of this research lies in the high number of traffic accidents triggered by distracted driving. Data from the 2023 Risk Behavior Study indicates that traffic violations (including smoking) are a dominant factor in motorcycle accidents. Locally, Balikpapan, as a city with high economic activity, requires immediate intervention to reduce accident rates.

Recent literature (2019-2024) shows that studies on smoking while driving are still dominated by quantitative approaches focusing on health and legal compliance. For example, Muh. Yusrin's (2023) study measured smokers' self-awareness using descriptive quantitative methods, while a health study by Hidayati et al. (2019) evaluated the effect of health education on knowledge of the dangers of smoking. However, both studies failed to address the deeper dimensions of subjective experience and social processes.

The gaps in the literature lie in: (1) Phenomenological Dimension: no studies have reconstructed the experience of smoking while driving from the perpetrator's perspective; (2) Habitus Analysis: Bourdieu's theory of habitus has not been applied to analyze this practice as a product of the internalization of social norms; (3) Local Context: research in Balikpapan is still limited to legal aspects, without exploring cultural roots.

This study aims to: (1) reconstruct the subjective experiences of drivers who smoke while driving in Balikpapan through a phenomenological approach; (2) analyze this practice as a habitus formed by social and cultural structures, using Bourdieu's theoretical framework; (3) reflect on the implications of this practice for road safety and public policy.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design combined with a single case study. The phenomenological approach was chosen to understand the subjective experiences of drivers who smoke while driving, capturing the meaning and essence of this practice in everyday life. Meanwhile, the case study was applied to explore the specific context of this phenomenon in Balikpapan City as a unique social case. This combination allows researchers to delve into the depth of individual experiences while analyzing them within a broader socio-cultural framework, in line with the research objectives that focus on the dimensions of experience and the process of habitus formation.

Participant selection was conducted using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that they met specific criteria: active motorcyclists or car drivers who regularly smoke while driving, reside or work in Balikpapan City, and are willing to participate in in-depth interviews. The number of participants was set at 15 people (10 motorcyclists and 5 car drivers), considering this number was sufficient to achieve data saturation in qualitative research. Participants were recruited through rider community networks and recommendations (limited snowball sampling) to access relevant groups.

The research location was Balikpapan City, East Kalimantan, with a focus on busy roads such as Jalan Sudirman, Jalan MT Haryono, and Jalan Ahmad Yani. The location selection was based on initial observations indicating a high prevalence of smoking while driving at these locations.

Data were collected through three main techniques: (1) In-depth Interviews: conducted in a semi-structured manner with an interview guide that included questions about experiences, motivations, risk perceptions, and social context. Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes and was recorded with the participant's permission; (2) Participatory Observation: researchers engaged in observations at the research location to document driving behavior, social interactions, and road situations that support smoking practices. Detailed field notes were taken to record context and dynamics not revealed in the interviews; (3) Document Analysis: included a review of traffic regulations (Law No. 22/2009, Minister of Transportation Regulation No. 12/2019), accident reports, and local media articles related to this phenomenon.

Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis model of Braun and Clarke (2006) through the following stages: (1) Transcription and Familiarization: interview transcripts and observation notes were read repeatedly to

understand the overall data; (2) Initial Coding: marking data relevant to the research and grouping them into open codes (e.g., "stress coping", "peer influence", "risk ignorance"); (3) Theme Search: codes were grouped into potential themes (e.g., "cultural normalization", "behavioral rationalization", "legal vs. customary conflict"); (4) Theme Review and Refinement: themes were checked for consistency with the raw data and refined; (5) Definition and Reporting: final themes were interpreted within Bourdieu's habitus theory framework. NVivo 12 software was used to assist the coding and data organization process.

Data validity is guaranteed through: (1) Credibility: triangulation of sources (interviews, observations, documents) and member checking (verifying interpretations with participants); (2) Transferability: detailed descriptions of context and participants to enable application in similar settings; (3) Dependability: audit trail by transparently documenting the entire research process; (4) Confirmability: researcher reflexivity by noting biases and assumptions throughout the research.

This study adhered to the following ethical principles: (1) Participant Consent: each participant signed an informed consent explaining the purpose, procedures, and their rights; (2) Confidentiality: participant identities were anonymized using codes (e.g., P1, P2); (3) Non-Maleficence: the researcher avoided questions that could trigger distress and provided information about counseling if needed.

Theoretical Review. The phenomenon of smoking while driving in Balikpapan City is not simply a legal violation, but a complex social practice internalized through cultural processes, space, and power relations. This theoretical review builds a conceptual framework to understand how this practice is produced, experienced, and reproduced in the daily lives of drivers. Three main theories—Bourdieu's Habitus Theory, Coleman's Theory of Conflict of Rights in Public Space, and the Spatio-Temporal Behavioral Perspective—are used to explore the dimensions of subjective experience, social dynamics, and mobile space context that shape this phenomenon.

Bourdieu's habitus theory explains how social practices are formed through the internalization of social structures that then become unconscious dispositions that guide behavior. In the context of smoking while driving, habitus is formed through: (1) Normalization of Tobacco Culture: smoking in moving spaces is perceived as part of masculine identity and a symbol of "freedom" in Indonesian driving culture, particularly in Kalimantan which has a history of tobacco plantations; (2) False Autonomy: drivers feel their actions are individual choices, when in fact they are shaped by broader social structures (e.g., cigarette advertising, peer pressure, and work culture in Balikpapan's extractive industries). Example of Participant Experience: A truck driver said, "Smoking is our lifestyle here. If we do not smoke while driving, it feels like something is missing." [Interview P5]. This statement shows how habitus overcomes the rationality of safety. Limitations of Theory: Bourdieu does not highlight the conflict of moving spaces as an arena for negotiating rights, which is critical in the context of driving.

Coleman's theory analyzes the dynamics of the struggle for rights between smokers and non-smokers in public spaces. In the context of Balikpapan streets, this theory explains: (1) Smoker Dominance in Moving Space: streets as "moving public spaces" are often claimed by smokers as autonomous territories (cell 1 in Coleman's theory), where non-smokers (e.g., passengers, pedestrians) have no power to object; (2) Absence of Law Enforcement as Reinforcement: weak law enforcement (e.g., traffic tickets) reinforces the perception that smokers have the "right" to dominate moving space, even when regulations clearly prohibit it. Example of Participant Experience: A passenger complained: "I do not dare to protest because I am afraid of being shouted at. On the road, drivers who smoke feel the most powerful." [Interview P12]. Limitations of the Theory: Coleman focuses too much on binary conflicts (smokers vs. non-smokers) and pays less attention to the temporal-spatial dimensions that influence smoking practices.

Saarloos et al.'s (2009) study in Human Geography integrates time, space, and mobility to understand health behavior in an urban context. In the context of Balikpapan, (1) Mobile Space as a "Temporal Enclave": traffic jams and long driving times in Balikpapan create "pockets of time" where smoking becomes a strategy to cope with boredom and stress. This activity is not just a habit, but a response to the temporal pressures of urban mobility; (2) Dynamic Environmental Exposure: drivers are exposed to traffic air pollution, which is exacerbated

by cigarette smoke, creating an unconscious double burden on health. Example of Participant Experience: An online motorcycle taxi driver stated, "Traffic jams in Balikpapan can last an hour. Rather than stress, smoking is a solution." [Interview P8]. Limitations of Perspective: This approach does not adequately address the symbolic power dimension described by Bourdieu.

Based on a comparative analysis, Bourdieu's Habitus theory was chosen as the primary lens due to its ability to explain why breaking the law does not change behavior. In Balikpapan, the practice of smoking while driving has become part of the "doxa"—an unquestioned belief—reinforced by the culture of extractive industry and masculinity. Coleman and Spatio-Temporal Theory are used as complements to explain the spatial conflicts and temporal pressures that contribute to shaping this habitus.

The framework of this research is built as follows: (1) Theoretical Position: the researcher views smoking while driving as a habituated social practice, where the driver is not a rational agent, but a product of socio-cultural structures that operate through the body and perception; (2) Analytical Orientation: phenomenology to reveal the driver's lived experience through the lens of habitus, and social criticism to analyze how symbolic power (e.g., cigarette advertising, gender norms) produces risky habitus; (3) Data Reading: the experience is sought for emotional patterns (e.g., boredom, pride) associated with smoking, the social process is analyzed how family, friends, and the work environment reinforce the habitus, and the spatial-temporal is mapped how location (e.g., red lights) and driving duration trigger the practice of smoking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals the complex meanings behind the practice of smoking while driving through a phenomenological approach. From thematic analysis of interview and observation data, three main themes emerged, representing the participants' experiences, conflicts, and reflections.

"Cigarettes Are a Loyal Companion on the Road" – Smoking as a Coping Strategy in Fragmented Space and Time. The crowded, hot, and frequently congested streets of Balikpapan create a unique psychological environment. Congestion is not only a physical issue, but also a deprivation of personal time and space. In this context, smoking emerges as a ritual to regain control over the space and time that feels robbed by the congestion.

Subtheme 1.1: Escape from Boredom and Stasis. Boreout caused by being stuck in static traffic is a powerful trigger. Cigarettes provide a sense of progression in a stagnant situation. An online motorcycle taxi driver (P4) stated: "Imagine, sir. I only traveled 500 meters in an hour. My mind is stuck, my hand aches from holding the gas. Now, when I smoke... There is something to do. The smoke that slowly escapes is like... a sign that time is still moving, that I have not died trapped here." This quote demonstrates how smoking provides the illusion of progress and activity, acting as a temporal marker in a static space.

Subtheme 1.2: Filling Emptiness and Ritual Connection. Between pauses in travel, such as waiting for a green light or a passenger, cigarettes fill the void that arises. They become a ritual transition from one state to another. A taxi driver (P11) explained: "I have been waiting for a passenger, and finally I get a ticket. Before I go full throttle, I light this (cigarette). It is like a sign that a new journey is about to begin. After that, the journey becomes calmer." Here, the cigarette functions as a transitional object, a psychological marker that separates the state of waiting (passive) from the state of moving (active).

"Everyone Does It Here" – Social Normalization and the Formation of Collective Habitus. This practice does not exist in a vacuum. It is reinforced by a social ecosystem that normalizes it until it becomes taken-for-granted, or doxa in Bourdieu's term. Observations at roadside coffee shops, parking lots, and driving communities show that smoking is part of the social language and communal bond.

Subtheme 2.1: Social Learning and Peer Pressure. Many participants began this habit by imitating seniors or coworkers. Refusing a cigarette offered while driving was often seen as a rejection of group solidarity. A truck driver (P7) revealed: "At first, I tried it out after seeing my fellow passengers doing it. When offered, it was

awkward to refuse. They said, 'Do not be a crybaby, you are not good at being a driver if you do not smoke.' Now it has become a habit. If you do not smoke, you feel like you do not belong." This quote suggests the strong internalization of group norms, where smoking becomes a symbol of inclusion and professional identity.

Subtheme 2.2: Rationalization and Risk Minimization. To overcome the dissonance between risky actions and awareness of their dangers, participants developed various rationalization mechanisms. A private employee (P2) argued: "Accidents are a matter of fortune and fate, sir. It has nothing to do with smoking. I am actually more focused on smoking. Besides, the dangers of street pollution are greater than the smoke from my cigarette." This statement demonstrates how risk distortion and self-exemption bias operate. External dangers (pollution) are exaggerated to minimize the dangers of one's actions.

"Between Comfort and Guilt" – Inner Dialectics in a Contested Public Space. Behind the social normalization, almost all participants experienced a subtle inner conflict. They vacillated between the subjective pleasure they felt and the subtle awareness that their actions were illegal and likely disturbing others.

Subtheme 3.1: Awareness of Disturbances and Violations. Some participants were aware of the impact, especially on passengers or other drivers, although this awareness was often clouded by rationalization. A housewife (P9) admitted: "I know it is a violation. Sometimes when a small child passes next to me, I feel guilty. However, it is too late… It feels too comfortable to stop. I try to direct the smoke outside, but I still feel uneasy." This quote captures the ambivalence very clearly: the conflict between individual comfort and social responsibility.

Subtheme 3.2: Self-Negotiation Strategies in Public Space. To mitigate this internal conflict, participants developed various tactics. For example, they chose to smoke when the street was quiet, ensured the smoke did not reach the motorcyclist behind them, or only smoked when alone without a passenger. One entrepreneur (P14) explained: "I have my own rules. If the car has air conditioning and I have family, I will not smoke. That is my limit. However, if I am alone, with the windows down, that is my private space." These actions demonstrate how they actively—though not fully consciously—renegotiate the boundaries between private space (the car) and public space (the street).

The findings of this study reveal three layers of meaning of the practice of smoking while driving in Balikpapan: (1) as a psychological coping strategy in the face of temporal-spatial congestion pressure, (2) as a product of collective habitus normalized through social interaction, and (3) as a site of inner dialectic between individual enjoyment and awareness of violation. This discussion not only reconfirms the findings but also analyzes them through the dialectic of Bourdieu's Habitus theory, spatial conflict (Coleman), and urban mobility pressure (Saarloos et al., 2009), while also engaging in dialogue with recent literature.

The first theme suggests that smoking functions as a "faithful companion" that fills the temporal void on the streets. This finding enriches Bourdieu's often-perceived static concept of habitus by demonstrating how it operates in a mobile space filled with pressures. Bourdieu (1990) defined habitus as "incorporated history"—a history incorporated into the body. However, this study demonstrates that in the context of urban mobility, habitus also responds to real-time pressures such as congestion and boredom. These findings align with Saarloos et al.'s (2009) study in Human Geography, which found that health behavior in urban areas is strongly influenced by "temporal enclaves"—pockets of time that trigger specific responses. However, our findings go further: they are not simply responses to time, but rather attempts to seize control over the space and time that congestion robs.

The second theme reveals how this practice becomes taken-for-granted (doxa) through social learning and peer pressure. This finding reinforces Coleman's (1994) theory of rights conflicts in public spaces, but also highlights its limitations. Coleman views conflict as a struggle for rights between conscious groups. However, in Balikpapan, this "conflict" is often invisible because it has transformed into symbolic violence (Bourdieu)—where non-smokers (passengers, pedestrians) accept the dominance of smokers as normal. The finding regarding risk rationalization ("pollution is more dangerous than cigarettes") aligns with a study by Hidayati et al. (2019), which found that knowledge of health hazards is insufficient to change behavior without changes in social norms.

However, this study reveals a deeper layer: rationalization is not simply a cognitive error, but a strategy to maintain group identity.

The third theme, concerning inner conflict, is the most original contribution of this study. This finding does not fully align with Bourdieu's theory, which is often criticized as too deterministic. Bourdieu does not sufficiently highlight the ambivalence within the habitus. However, this study shows that actors are not robots completely controlled by structures; they experience an inner dialectic between individual pleasure and social responsibility. The inner turmoil experienced by participants (such as P9's guilt) demonstrates that the habitus is not a prison without loopholes. These loopholes are opened through awareness of social and legal impacts. This finding aligns with recent developments in habitus theory, such as the concept of "dialogical habitus" proposed by scholars who criticize Bourdieu. This concept states that the habitus can contain an internal conversation between various social voices. In this context, the voices of "law" and "empathy" dialogue with the voices of "comfort" and "tradition" within each driver.

As a researcher from outside the professional rider community, I recognize the potential for bias in interpretation. However, my position as an "outsider" allows me to see things that participants consider normal as problematic. Balikpapan's socio-cultural background as an industrial city with a strong masculine culture significantly influences the findings. The research results might have been different if conducted in cities with different characteristics, such as Yogyakarta or Bali.

The theoretical implications of this study extend Bourdieu's habitus theory to the context of mobile habitus and introduce psychological dimensions (coping) and inner dialectics that have received little attention in previous studies. The main practical implication is that legal approaches alone will not be effective. Community-based interventions that target social norms and group identities are needed. Road safety campaigns should utilize opinion leaders from within the driving community itself, and not only convey information about hazards but also offer healthier alternative coping rituals to fill the "temporal void" on the road.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the practice of smoking while driving in Balikpapan City is not simply a deliberate violation of the law, but rather a manifestation of a complex habitus. The core findings of the study indicate three main patterns: first, this practice functions as a psychological coping mechanism against temporal-spatial stress in the context of urban congestion; second, it has become part of the internalized doxa through a process of social normalization within the driving community; third, there is a constant inner dialectic between subjective enjoyment and awareness of its socio-legal impact, which indicates a gap for behavioral transformation.

This study makes two significant conceptual contributions. First, it extends Bourdieu's habitus theory to the realm of mobile habitus, demonstrating how habitus is not only formed within stable social spaces but also responds to and shapes practices in dynamic and stressful mobility contexts. Second, the findings on ambivalence and inner conflict enrich the understanding of agency within the framework of habitus theory by introducing the dimension of "dialectical habitus"—an internal space where various social voices (law, group norms, empathy) dialogue and negotiate.

The findings of this study have concrete implications for various stakeholders. For policymakers (Ministry of Transportation, Police), a law enforcement approach alone has proven inadequate. Social norms-based safety campaigns involving opinion leaders within the driving community are needed. For developers of social and public health interventions, programs need to be designed to provide healthier alternative coping rituals to fill the "temporal void" on the roads. For safety education and literacy, road safety education materials need to integrate socio-emotional education that addresses stress management, peer pressure, and the courage to reject harmful social norms.

The researchers acknowledge several limitations in this study. First, the geographic focus on Balikpapan, while providing contextual depth, limits the transferability of the findings. Second, the relatively homogeneous participant composition (dominated by male professional riders) leaves the voices of other groups, such as female and teenage riders, unexplored. Third, the phenomenological approach, while rich in depth, does not allow for broad generalizations.

Based on these findings and limitations, several avenues of further research are promising: comparative studies that differentiate the same phenomenon in cities with different characteristics; participatory action research that actively engages participants in designing and testing interventions; exploration of the perspectives of affected groups on the voices of victims; and mixed-methods approaches that combine in-depth qualitative approaches with quantitative surveys.

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