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The Inhalant Behaviour *Ngelem* of Punk Community Members

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Narcotics, Psychotropics, and other Addictive Substances (*NAPZA*) abuse is the use of one or several types of *NAPZA* regularly beyond the limit of medical indications, causing physical health, psychological and social functioning disorders

Objective: To know how punk communities influence the inhalant behaviour *ngelem* of punk community members.

Methods: Design of qualitative research conducted by observation and in-depth interviews toward 20 main informants and six key informants. Informants of this research are the punk community members in Makassar City.

Results: The punk community provided an inhalant stimulus and made members of the punk community give an operant conditioning by following the behaviour. They do not get rewards, but punishments such as prohibitions and suggestions to stop the inhalant behaviour *ngelem* from other punk community members. They get health problems as well, such as shortness of breath, dizziness, and headache. As a result, some informants decided to stop the activity, and some of them remained *ngelem*.

Conclusions: Lack of knowledge about the danger of inhalant behaviour *ngelem* makes them not refuse the stimulus, let alone invite fellow punk community members to refuse the behaviour.

Key Words: Inhalant behaviour *ngelem*, Stimulus, Punk community members

INTRODUCTION

Consumption of Narcotics, Psychotropics, and other Addictive Substances (*NAPZA*) affects the body, especially the brain/central nervous system, causing physical health, psychological and social function disorders due to habits, addiction, and dependency on *NAPZA*. *NAPZA* abuse is the use of one or several types of *NAPZA* regularly beyond the limit of medical indications, causing physical health, psychological and social functioning disorders.¹ Based on the composition, inhalants or volatile substances are one type of addictive substance in the group of *NAPZA*, which are very easy to be found generally. Products such as glue, gasoline, varnish, acetone for nail colour cleaning, paint thinners, correction pen, spray, and freon are examples of products containing volatile substances and are sold freely in stores or stalls. Misuse of these products can cause serious damage and even death.²

According to the report of Monitoring Future National Survey Result on Drug Use 1975-2016, it shows an increase of

inhalant use on grade VIII, X and XII students in the United States in 1991, inhalant users were 7.6% and continued to increase until 1995 by 10.2% and subsequently decreased until 2016 to 2.6%.³ The results of a survey conducted among students aged 15-16 in almost 40 European countries, an average of 7%, is known to say that they have used inhalant products.⁴ A systematic international review concludes that the most widely used drug among street children in low and middle-income countries is inhalants.⁵ In some provinces in Indonesia, the use of glue or commonly referred to as *ngelem* was mostly chosen in the first attempt of Narcotics, Psychotropics, and other Addictive Substances (*NAPZA*) used by students. Insufficient financial resources and the ease of access to this drug, because it is sold freely at stalls or shops, make it a choice for students.⁶ The research result conducted upon punk community on the streets of South Jakarta explains that the punks are very vulnerable to being affected by society problem and also contribute to the development of the social problem in their environments such as *ngelem*,

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alcohol, drug, and narcotics abuse, free sex, prostitution, and criminal acts.⁷

In Makassar, the activity of *ngelem* is carried out by children aged 15-18 years. The average education level is an elementary school and has a low economic status.⁸ Besides, based on a researcher observation result, it is found that the activity of *ngelem* often carried out by the punks around Ujung Pandang District of Makassar City. Girls aged 15 years are found joined in a punk community. The number of punk community members reach hundreds. The inhalant behaviour *ngelem* is often carried out when they gather. This research aims to find out how the punk community influences the *ngelem* behaviour of the punk community members.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The study was conducted in Makassar City. Primary data collection was conducted in April 2018. The data were collected through interviews toward 26 informants consisting of 20 members of the punk community, and six relatives of the members. The method used for data collection was by direct interview, and observation was carried out as well for the data validation process. After the data have been collected, content analysis was carried out to conclude efforts to determine the characteristics of the message objectively and systematically, then interpreted and presented in the form of narration.

RESULT

Informants involved in this research were 26 people consisting of 20 members of the punk community. The age of the informants interviewed, namely, the youngest informant was 12 years old, and the oldest was 22 years old. This range of age is a period where people tend to look for who they truly are. The key informants in this study were six people, namely relatives of the community members, with the youngest age of 19 years old, and the oldest was 80 years old.

Judging from the educational background of the main informants, in this case, members of the punk community, two people did not graduate from elementary school, 11 people graduated elementary school, five people graduated from junior high school, and two people graduated from high school. The educational background of the relatives of a punk community member is one who graduated from elementary school, and five others graduated from high school. Stimulus or situation that obtained by the informant, which encourages *ngelem* behaviour. One of the things that can stimulate *ngelem* behaviour is the source of information. Based on informant answers, 16 out of 20 received

information about *ngelem* in the punk community, while four others get information about *ngelem* from outside of the punk community. Informants in the punk community explained that they get information about *ngelem* by observing the behaviour of their friend who did *ngelem*, and then they concluded what they saw. The interview excerpts are as follows:

“From a friend. ngelem, illusions. It’s like you can give it off the chakras. Imagining, like ..., like a dragonis passing by, can penetrate clouds, can do magic. Yes, he is a punk community member too.”

(RI, 15 years old, Punk community member)

On the other hand, some informants got information about *ngelem* from outside of the punk community. The interview excerpts are as follows:

“Because of mingling with those kinds of people, people who ngelem too. Just a comingling, it has been so long since the age of 10 years old. I was not a punk kid yet. Not yet. Well, just kids around the neighbourhood.”

(R, 19 years old, Punk community member)

Operant conditioning is a response to the environment. The response issued as a response toward the stimulus for *ngelem*. Out of the 20 informants 16 informants are affected by the stimulus and eventually adopt *ngelem* as behaviour. While 4 informants rejected the stimulus to do *ngelem*. The informant who follows the *ngelem* behaviour admitted that he immediately tried when he was offered. The interview excerpts are as follows:

“I tried it. Even though at the very first place I did not want to. At first, I intended to just get drunk, but because I was offered so I joined them as well”

(MSS, 24 years old, Punk community member)

Even so, there were also informants who were not affected by the stimulus to *ngelem*. The interview excerpts are as follows:

“They invited me once, but I didn’t respond to it. I left them be and I went busking. When I returned and I still saw them ngelem, using drugs, I directly went to bed. Even if it is my girlfriend, I am never afraid to be left behind, moreover if it’s only my friends. I ever prohibit them to do ngelem by saying “don’t do it, it is not good for you”.

(E, 17 years old, Punk community member)

Health problems due to *ngelem*, which are detrimental to health consisting of clinical symptoms that are felt during and after *ngelem* in one day. Out of the 16 (sixteen) informants who did *ngelem* 12 of them had health problems. Whereas the informants who did not *ngelem* all answered

that they had friends who had health problems from *ngelem*. Informants acquired different health problems due to *ngelem*. As quoted in the following interview:

“Yes, I ever felt my chest hurt after I did ngelem. It hurts like my chest was being pulled from inside and also I felt like I wanted to puke, but I didn’t. I was experiencing a headache and something like “strip-strip”.

(ARD, 20 years old, Punk community member)

Besides that, some informants did not get health problems due to *ngelem* behaviour. The interview excerpts are as follows:

“Nothing happened. nothing”.

(T, 18 years old)

The *ngelem* behaviour is a person’s response or reaction to sanctions and or rewards for *ngelem* behaviour. The intended behaviour mentioned is in the form of observable practices or actions. Out of the 16 informants who did *ngelem* 8 of them stopped *ngelem* after receiving sanctions, rewards, and health problems while 8 others continue to do *ngelem* activity. Meanwhile, the informant who initially refused the stimulus to *ngelem* up to the time of the interview still refused the stimulus. Informants who stopped *ngelem* for different reasons. As quoted in the following interview:

“I have stopped since I moved to Hertasing. Because I got no companion and also no one ever asked me out to do it. Also, to keep the name of punk.”

(AR, 18 years old, Punk community member)

Also, some informants maintain the behaviour of *ngelem* after getting sanctions, rewards, and health problems. Although maintaining the behaviour of *ngelem*, there was still a change in each informant. Some increase the amount of glue inhaled and also some decrease it. Some did *ngelem* secretly.

“Yes, I still do it, if it runs out, I take again, again and again. Let’s say up to 3 cans per day. Yes, the amount increase.”

(ID, 17 years old, Punk community member)

DISCUSSION

The stimulus of informant’s *ngelem* behaviour can be acknowledged from *ngelem* sources of information, solicitation of *ngelem*, the occurrence of *ngelem* activity in the community, and the existence of friends from the same punk community who engage in *ngelem* behaviour. The interview’s result shows that most informants obtain information about *ngelem* from fellow members of the punk community. Punk community members do not distance themselves from fellow

punks to discuss or exchange ideas. It is proven through the observation of researchers, who saw the intimacy built between punk communities. They do not hesitate to chat even though it is their first time meeting each other. This is due to the absence of castes or classes among the old-young, senior-junior, or superior-subordinate. So they are easier to get along with, even though most members of the punk community prefer to get along with their peers because of having the same topic of conversation or work. Punk communication’s pattern is a communication of star pattern which means that all members are the same and have the same authority in conveying information both about ideologues, music, fashion, and experience.⁹

Most of the informants participate in the activity of *ngelem*. A supportive environment and the presence of stimulus to *ngelem* are making the informants vulnerable to being influenced by doing a similar thing. Although adolescents already have cognitive maturity, in reality, they have not been able to manage information received correctly. Consequently, adolescents are often uncontrolled. It cannot be denied since nowadays, teenagers receive information easily from peers, television, social media, and others. If this happens, adolescents are vulnerable to doing things that harm themselves and others.¹⁰

Most of the informants get health problems due to *ngelem* behaviour. It is caused by the content of benzene exposure within the glue. High concentrations of benzene exposure through inhalation or breathing can cause depression in the nerves system and can cause death. Initial symptoms can affect the nerves system in the form of drowsiness, dizziness, headaches, vertigo, and loss of consciousness.¹¹

Some informants stop *ngelem* after getting sanctions, rewards, and health problems due to *ngelem*. It is figured from the interview’s results and observations at the time of the study. The decision in reducing the use of addictive substances is caused by threats perceived by the informant. This corresponds with the Health Belief Model theory that one of the individual drivers acts to fight or treat the disease if he feels a vulnerability to illness. The informant did not know for certain the type of disease that threatened him, but symptoms of illness in the body due to the use of addictive substances.¹² That children know for sure the negative effects of *ngelem*, but they like the intoxicating sensation generated by *ngelem*.¹³ Informants use addictive substances because as they stated, there are positive effects that are felt after consuming these substances.

CONCLUSION

The punk community gives a stimulus to *ngelem* and makes members of the punk community provide operant conditioning by following the behaviour. This does not make them

get rewards but punishment in the form of prohibitions and suggestions to stop *ngelem* from other members of the punk community. Besides, they get health problems as well, such as shortness of breath, dizziness, and headache. Thus, some informants decided to stop *ngelem* and some of them remained *ngelem*. Members of the punk community did not think about the risk of *ngelem* before imitating or accepting the offer to *ngelem*. They are more concerned with a sense of brotherhood than their health. Lack of knowledge about the dangers of *ngelem* makes them not refuse the stimulus or ask for fellow members of the punk community to refuse the behaviour.

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