Negative Social Impact On Smoking

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Abstract

Smoking cigarettes is considered to be one of the greatest self-inflicted harm to the body of a human being. It causes extensive destruction of crucial organs of the body, including the lungs that help us in the respiratory process. For a long time now, smokers believe that the act of smoking only affects their health. However, there are numerous negative societal consequences of smoking. The society and the environment at large suffer great harm from smoking. Businesses and organizations are greatly affected by the employees who indulge in the vice of smoking. Even the economy is not safe from the detrimental effects of a constantly increasing smoking population (Stead, Martine, et al., 2001). The primary purpose of this paper will be to critically analyze the negative social impact of smoking in the society. A comprehensive literature review will be conducted to shed more light on these adverse social effects of smoking.

Introduction

Smoking has progressively grown to become a major social problem that requires immediate attention. Today, many people are familiar with the many health problems associated with smokers. However, there is very limited information on how smoking affects the society and the environment at large. It is estimated that an excess of 438,000 people die every year in the US from illnesses and medical conditions associated with smoking. This is in itself a big blow to the society as such persons would have contributed positively towards the growth and development of their immediate society. These deaths are preventable by a simple routine of quitting the habit of smoking. The effects to the

immediate society extends further to other vital issues (Fletcher, 2007). Below is a

comprehensive analysis of how smoking negatively affects the society and the environment.

Analysis

The first evident negative impact of smoking to the society is pollution.

Pollution from smoking comes about through two major ways. First and foremost, the second

hand smoke that smokers expel when smoking has been known to cause a significant health

risk to other people. The worst part about this is that the act of smoking exposes other people

to potentially fatal health risks against their own will. In a family, for example, a smoking

husband will not only pose a danger to his health, but rather to the other members of the

family as well. The kids are introduced to second hand smoke at a very early age. This could

greatly interfere with their growth and development. They are the involuntary victims of

smoking in the society. It is highly ethical for such innocent persons to be put at these

unnecessary health risks, because smokers need to fulfill their smoking urges (Poland, Blake,

et al., 2006).

The danger of second hand smoke has disintegrated very many families in the

society. People often try to stay far away from smokers, especially chain smokers who have

an addiction to nicotine. In public places, smokers are detested for exposing other members

of the society to second hand smoke. Smoking is slowly causing rifts between family

members and friends in the society. This greatly inhibits social cohesion and integration. It is

growing increasingly difficult for smokers to work or associate themselves with other

members of the society. In fact, very many people are now aware of the dangers associated

with smoking. Businesses, offices, residential areas and even public places like bus or train

stations have already enforced a no smoking rule to protect the interests of the non-smoking

members of the society. The smoking population in the US amounts to only 21% of the

general population. As the society enforces more anti-smoking rules, these people will

continue to suffer. Almost every public space will be a no-smoking zone. The strain on the

smokers will lead to their indulgence in other potentially dangerous activities, like crime, that

will also negatively impact the society (Thomas, Sian, et al., 2008).

The second way through which smoking causes pollution to the society is

through littering. Cigarettes are made with non-biodegradable filters that smokers dispose

after smoking. It is estimated that approximately 4.5 trillion non-biodegradable cigarette

filters are deposited into the environment every year. This is a very high figure that causes

unnecessary pollution to the environment. Societies have to constantly deal with the problem

of safely disposing this non-biodegradable waste. Moreover, the lucrative cigarette industry is

always attracting more investors who clear up large tracts of land for planting tobacco. In

many countries like Moldova, Korea, Malawi, Lebanon and Macedonia, tobacco plantations

comprise of more than 1% of the total agricultural land. There is a great preference for

planting tobacco than other agricultural foods necessary for feeding members of the society

(Christakis, & Fowler, 2008).

Sadly, many forests have fallen victim to tobacco farming as well. In

countries, especially from the African continent, deforestation is a common practice that is

used to pave way to big tobacco plantations. In fact, it is estimated that 5% of the

deforestation occurring in Africa at the moment is brought about by the expansion of tobacco

farms. In Malawi alone, the percentage of tobacco-related deforestation is at a startling 20%.

This is very bad and highly detrimental to the society. In general, deforestation often leads to

the disruption of climate patterns. Rainy periods grow shorter as more forests are cleared. The

society greatly suffers from deforestation as the quantity and quality of food produced from

farms is limited. In addition to this, creating more land for tobacco growth and not other food

produce is not justified at all. This tobacco will eventually cause a lot of health risks and

destruction of the society in the future (Fletcher, 2007).

Another way through which smoking contributes towards the degradation of the environment is through the destruction of trees. The tobacco that is used to make cigarettes must be dried first. Trees are usually used as a source of fuel during this drying process. The demand for tobacco on the planet is significantly high. There are approximately 1.2 billion smokers on the planet at the moment. This figure is constantly rising as more young people continue to embrace the culture of smoking, despite the health risks associated with this vice. As the demand for tobacco rises, more trees will have to be cut down to provide the fuel for dry tobacco. In the modern society, one tree must be destroyed to provide the fuel that will dry the tobacco needed to make 300 cigarettes. This translates to around 600 million trees being destroyed to source the fuel needed to dry the tobacco that will be used in making all cigarettes on demand. If the demand for cigarettes rises in the future, then the number of trees cut down will also significantly rise (Sturm, 2002).

Smoking also has several negative impacts on various business and economic aspects of the society. To begin with, smokers often have to create time out of their normal day to day routines in the workplace to go outside and smoke cigarettes. This habit greatly affects their performance in the workplace. Many employers are now highly selective during the hiring process to avoid hiring smokers. Smokers can be a burden to the organization. A smoker can also repel potential clients from using the products and services of a company. Smokers have a characteristic smell from the prolonged inhaling of tobacco. The smell can be instantly recognized, every time the employee interacts with potential clients. This may ruin the business relationship, especially if the client is allergic to cigarette smoke, or she pregnant or she has young children. This greatly hampers the successful growth and development of businesses in the society (Thomas, Sian, et al., 2008).

There also exists a general stereotype the smokers are less intelligent persons in the society. This emanates from the fact that there are very many health risks associated

with the use of tobacco. Many pro-health activists, including the government have made

significant strides in promoting public awareness about the dangers of smoking. Even the

cigarette packets themselves are laden with a detailed explanation of what the tobacco will do

to the body of a smoker. All of these initiatives are taken to ensure that people are

knowledgeable of the dire health risks associated with smoking. However, even with this vast

information, smokers still smoke, putting themselves and those people around them in great

danger. To many people, this blatant ignorance of the health risks is perceived to be stupid

and not wise at all. Therefore, whenever a smoker interacts with people on behalf of a

company or a societal group, there is always a risk that the audience may perceive him or her

to be less intelligent. This prohibits them from taking them seriously. This can inhibit positive

progress among companies and businesses in a society (Christakis, & Fowler, 2008).

Cigarette smoking also facilitates greatly in the spread of poverty. Tobacco

use is highly addictive and smokers cannot go for several hours without smoking a cigarette.

This dependence on cigarettes requires a lot of financial input. There is a direct correlation

between poverty and the use of tobacco. In some African countries, people from

impoverished societies heavily rely on tobacco use as a drug of choice to elevate them from

their suffering. In fact, cigarette related expenses contribute to more than 10%of their daily

expenditures. If the husband is addicted to tobacco usage, then the entire family will have to

utilize the small amount of money remaining after the tobacco expenditures have been

settled. This limits the amount of financial resources for other important basic amenities like

health care, education and food (Cutler, & Glaeser, 2007).

The growth of the tobacco used in manufacturing cigarettes also contributes

towards the degradation of the environment and the society at large. There are very many

diseases that can ruin a tobacco plant during its growth stage. To protect it from these

vulnerabilities, there is a total of 16 pesticides used. These are applied on the plant during its

three month growth span to maturity. These have very negative effects on the immediate society. They also seep into the underground water reserves, thereby contaminating the water that societies depend on for their daily livelihoods. The most toxic chemical substances applied to the tobacco plant before it matures include DDT, Methyl Bromide, Dieldrin and Aldrin. Using these chemicals repeatedly every three months to supplement the growth of tobacco leads to the depletion of the ozone layer. Once this happens, the society will suffer from the increased temperature and reduced protection from radiation (Poland, Blake, et al., 2006).

This heavy reliance on chemicals to grow tobacco for cigarettes also contributes to the development of a resistance among mosquitoes and flies towards pesticides. The society suffers greatly from exposure to malaria and other diseases usually brought about by these insects. It is a dangerous scenario that threatens to initiate epidemics with the potential of wiping out entire societies. It is one of the most dangerous cumulative effect of cigarette smoking. If people did not smoke cigarettes, then the demand for tobacco would not be as high as it is now. This increased volume of pesticides used in the growth of tobacco would not be present. Societies would enjoy living and working in a clean and safe environment free of any pesticide pollution (Stead, Martine, et al., 2001).

Smoking also has negative consequences on the social life of smokers. As mentioned earlier, very many people in the modern society detest smoking and anyone who indulges in the vice. A smoker will probably have a very hard time dating other people, unless they are smokers too. Their potential dating pool is restricted to the smoking population, which is greatly limited. Being a smoker is also viewed to be a great nuisance to the other members of the society. Whenever a smoker craves the need for cigarettes, he or she must access the environment to determine whether smoking is allowed or prohibited. Their

family members and other members of the society, may restrict them from smoking leading

to an unnecessary confrontation (Cutler, & Glaeser, 2007).

Even landlords are now genuinely concerned about smokers in their buildings. They

even restrict smokers from leasing or renting their properties, fearing that they elevate the

risk of a fire. The same case applies to businesses and organization in the society. Preference

is for non-smokers when hiring. Health insurance costs are usually high for smokers since

they are at a greater risk of succumbing to various smoking related diseases like lung cancer

(Sturm, 2002).

Conclusion

As clearly demonstrated in this paper, smoking is a major societal problem that

negatively impacts on positive social growth. The society is now strongly against the habit of

smoking now more than ever. The period when smoking was perceived to be a cool thing to

do is long gone. The society spends a significantly huge amount of financial resources to take

care of the terminally sick persons every year, who were addicted to smoking. There is

generally a great opposition towards smoking. The benefits, if any, of smoking, are very

minimal, compared to mounting negative impacts of smoking discussed in this paper. The

society is the silent victim of the prevalent use of tobacco. There are very many negative

impacts of smoking that limit the growth of the society. The pollution of the environment is

by far the greatest danger that the society suffers from this increased dependence on tobacco.

However, as cigarette smoking continues to be banned in public places, there is hope for a

bright future. Moreover, people are continually learning about the dangerous health risks

associated with smoking, which is a great indicator for positive change in the future.

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