

Why do people smoke?

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Why Do People Smoke? Shourav Banik 1111263042 ENG 105: 14 Abdus Selim May 2, 2012

Why Do People Smoke? Introduction Smoking is one of the most popular habits among people today. All around the world we see people smoking. Even in Bangladesh the number of smokers is quite high. Especially around the university campus young adults are seen smoking frequently. It can be said that among every friend circle in universities we will find one or two smokers. My circle is no different also. Not only in universities, even around schools and colleges teenagers can be seen smoking. Offices and restaurants have their own smoking zone so that people can smoke without any kind of problems. Given this huge popularity of smoking one can only wonder the main reasons behind it? Smoking cigarettes has become a very common trend among people today. Although there are various bad effects of smoking cigarettes people find it very hard to quit smoking once they start. Now-a-days we see even very young boys and girls smoking cigarettes. The bad effects of smoking are known to almost everybody in the world today. There has been strong promotion against this deadly habit. In school students are constantly reminded of its bad consequences. But still we see people smoking. This is a habit that has been going on for many decades now. Several reasons drive a man towards smoking. Every person tends to think that they have different reason for smoking. But if we look closely we may see a general pattern among smokers. The main reason of smoking is psychological.

History of Smoking

First of all we will briefly look at the origin of smoking. Cigarettes have a long history. Tobacco, the main ingredient of cigarettes, first started growing in about 6, 000 B. C. In 1 B. C. American Indians started using tobacco. At first

they were mainly used because of religious reasons. It was also believed then that tobacco had healing powers and was used as a pain killer. Tobacco was brought to Europe by sailors. Randall (1999) reported that in 1492 Christopher Columbus was gifted with dried tobacco by the American Indians. Even in Europe the major reason for tobacco use was medical. It was believed that tobacco could heal almost everything, starting from bad breath to cancer. In 1571 a Spanish doctor called Nicolas Monardes even wrote a book describing its healing factors. In that he said tobacco could heal 36 health problems. In the 1600's tobacco became very popular. It was even used as money in some parts of the world. But this was also the time when people started noticing the dangers of smoking. In 1610 Sir Francis Bacon reported that quitting smoking is difficult. In 1776, during the American Revolutionary War, tobacco helped finance the revolution. It was used as collateral for loans the Americans borrowed from France. Over the years scientists began to understand the main chemicals in tobacco. In 1826, nicotine was discovered. It was then completely realized that smoking is a deadly habit. Around 1849 cigarettes became popular. Soldiers brought it to England from Russian and Turkish soldiers. During this time cigarettes were made from the scrap of other tobacco product. Chewing tobacco was one of them as it was quite popular among the Americans. In 1900's cigarettes became a major tobacco product. During the two World Wars the use of cigarettes became very high. During these times women were targeted by the cigarette companies. In the Second World War (1939-1945) cigarettes were included in the soldiers' C-Rations. Tobacco companies sent millions of cigarettes free of cost to the soldiers. And when the war broke they had a

huge number of loyal customers. In the following years the real dangers of smoking started to come to being. Scientists linked smoking to cancer. Various health hazards were discovered. During this time the advertisements of cigarettes in television were being prohibited in Great Britain and in the U. S. In the recent years more bad effects of smoking have been found. But still lots of people are smoking even after knowing the bad effects (Randall, 1999). Reasons behind Smoking There are various reasons behind smoking. Like discussed previously, smoking was once considered as a healing treatment. But in modern society things have changed. Among several of reasons the main reasons of smoking are psychological. Radwan (n. d.) said " Contrary to common beliefs people smoke cigarettes because of psychological reasons and not because of nicotine addition. " Starting from curiosity to depression, all the moods of human psyche play a large effect on smoking. Here we are going to see exactly what causes a person to smoke. The main psychological reasons are explained below. Depression Depression can play a big role in smoking. Whenever people get depressed they start to smoke. Again already depressed people might find difficulties in quitting smoking. For teen-agers depression triggers the starting of smoking. McGovern et al. (2006) reported that " Teens who smoke regularly are almost twice as likely as teens who smoke occasionally to report high levels of depression". The reasons for this kind of behavior have always been questioned. Only recently some explanations have come out. Cheong, Herkov, and Goodman (n. d.) explained some of the reasons: New research has suggested that there may be something in cigarette smoke that has antidepressant properties, which explains why cigarette smoking is much

more common among depressed patients. A survey of 3, 000 individuals in the St. Louis area confirmed that lifetime frequency of major depression was more common among smokers than nonsmokers (6. 6 vs. 2. 9 percent) This study also demonstrated that smokers who reported at least one episode of major depression were less likely to succeed in smoking cessation programs than smokers without depression (14 vs. 28 percent). These findings have been confirmed many times over. These properties influence depressed people to smoke. Also it is often seen that whenever someone get depressed they start smoking heavily. So we can say that depression can strongly influence people into smoking. Curiosity One more reason why people especially teen-agers start smoking is curiosity. Young people often start to smoke just to find out how it tastes. Gaskell (2010) said " Curiosity may get the best of some teens who begin smoking just to find out what it feels like. " Especially children are often curious to do new or forbidden things.

Whenever they go outside they see cigarettes being bought or sold. This all adds to their curiosity and they start smoking. The survey conducted for this research also yields the same result. This survey shows that almost 78% of students doing the survey have smoked out of curiosity at least for once. Some may think that young boys and girls actually smoke because it looks cool or to show off where the real reason is actually curiosity. Also some people start doing it as an act of rebellion (Pressmart Team, 2007). Peer Pressure Peer pressure also drives young people into smoking. Peer means friends who are of equal age. Maddox (2011) believes that peers play a large role in a person's behavior: The behavior and choices of peers can influence the behavior and choices of others in their peer group, which may have

either a negative or a positive impact, depending on the circumstances.

When it comes to the unsafe behavior of smoking, the connection between young people who do or do not smoke and their peers is very strong.

Whenever in a friend circle someone starts to smoke others also start doing it just because of not wanting to be left alone. Edwards (2011) reported that

“ . . . not participating in an activity that others are participating in leaves impressionable teens feeling " left out" and more likely to pick up the habit merely to fit in with the group. " So it is often seen that people get the smoking habit just by trying to fit in socially. Evans (n. d.) stated that “ Often they feel encouraged and pressured or even teased and taunted into smoking. Teens also want to fit in with peer groups they admire-the " cool" kids-and many of them will do what " cool" kids do. " So it is quite natural for young boys and girls to start smoking in order to get social acceptance.

Influence of Others Young children look up to their elder brothers and sisters, parents and other familiar faces. So whenever they see their favorite figures smoking they get highly influenced to do so. It is believed they do so because children want be more like them (Evans, n. d.). Parents also play a large role into this. Researches show that whenever mothers are depressed and smoke it is likely that their children will also take up this habit (Gaskell, 2010). Other studies also support this fact. Smokers in the family can lead children into smoking. Edwards (2011) reported: In addition, having family members who smoke increases the availability of cigarettes. Teenagers can simply take cigarettes from unattended packs around the house rather than putting effort into getting them another way. When a parent incorporates cigarettes into a teenager's life by having him bring the cigarettes, clean

ashtrays or even light cigarettes, the teen is more likely to pick up the habit than an adolescent who does not handle cigarettes or cigarette paraphernalia on a regular basis. Not only relatives and friends sometimes even favorite actors or players can influence young people to smoke. Especially in movies when children see the heroes smoking they get influenced to do so. So role models also play a big part in the reasons of smoking. Stress Many chain smokers continue to smoke to relieve stress. Mature people when get addicted to smoking they don't just continue to do it out of curiosity or peer pressure, they continue to do so to release stress or anxiety. Again some use smoking as a reliever of tension. It is very common among smokers to smoke whenever they feel stressed or anxiety. They often smoke in the beginning and the closing of the day. Ditcher (1947) said: The smoker has work to do, and he eases himself into the day's activities as pleasantly as possible. He gives himself a little consolation prize in advance, and at the same time manages to postpone the evil hour when he must begin his hard day's work. After a long tiring day of work they believe that smoking can make them feeling relaxed. Even during work it is not uncommon to take a break for a smoke. It can also work like a rewarding system. Orlopp (n. d.) explains this fact by saying: Taking five at work to smoke a cigarette is a reward for a smoker, most wouldn't think of taking five if they didn't have a reason too. With smoking, you have that reason to kick back and enjoy yourself for a couple minutes. It helps give you that boost to get through a long day of work. So whenever smokers find themselves in trouble they tend to fix it by smoking. Some even go as far as to say that without having a puff of smoke they cannot think properly.

Difficulties in Quitting Smoking Having discussed the main psychological reason for smoking, now we will gaze a view on why it is hard to actually quit smoking. Every year lots and lots of smokers try to get rid of this nasty habit but more than half of them fail. Again there are some people who succeed in giving up smoking but after a while they go back to it. There is a very common saying among the smokers, " Quitting is easy, and I have quitted smoking many times. " So we can see that there many people who tried to quit but for some reason they just cannot stay away. There are several reasons behind this. Thompson (2011) reported that although nicotine makes it hard to quit smoking the main reason behind it is a bit more complex. Smoking makes several of psychological changes in a man's life. People tend to make smoking a part of their everyday life. So whenever they try to quit smoking they also must deal with all parts of their life which can initiate the desire for smoking. One of the main difficulties in quitting is the withdrawal symptoms. It can vary differently among different people. The symptoms can be physical or psychological. Some of them are listed below: *

- Frustration
- * Anxiety
- * Irritability
- * Dizziness
- * Sleep disturbances
- * Concentrating problems
- * Restlessness
- * Headaches
- * Fatigue
- * Depression

These are the some of the many symptoms of withdrawal (Shaw, 2010b). So we can notice here that various psychological reasons that can cause smoking are also the effects of quitting. So smokers often find it hard and go back to smoking just to cope up with these problems. Another main obstacle in the fight against smoking is temptation. Some people find it very difficult to remain ex-smokers just because they cannot stay away from smoking. Shaw (2010a) has said: Dealing with temptations to smoke again often starts

on the first day of quitting and can last for days or weeks. Many ex-smokers have an emotional attachment to smoking for a time. They may remember smoking while having a cup of coffee or alcoholic beverage. Smoking after a meal had been a common practice. Some people have friends still smoking or want to go to places where smoking is accepted. Also the availability of cigarettes now-a-days can make resisting cigarettes more difficult. Mostly in the streets of Bangladesh cigarettes is sold in plenty. People don't have to walk very far to find a shop selling cigarettes. So just seeing all these cigarettes can awaken the temptation to smoke again. Another interesting theory about difficulties was described by Radwan (n. d.). He said that people with " self image problem" always feel uneasy in crowded environment. They often do various embarrassing things and lose control. So to fix this problem people go back to smoking. As smoking demands repeating " certain fixed movements", people can get back the sense of control they require. Thus for people like this quitting becomes extremely difficult. Survey Findings In order to prove the hypothesis that psychological reasons indeed play a large role into smoking a survey was conducted among 23 students of this university. Both male and female students were included in the survey. They produced significant results. And from the survey it seemed that curiosity, depression and influence from people are mainly responsible from smoking. An important question of this research was " does human psychology play a big role for people to smoke? " 14 people out of the 23 respondents thought that it played a big part. This means almost 61% people actually think that psychology is responsible for smoking. Figure 1 Among the 23 respondents 6 thought that it played moderate role.

And only 3 people thought psychology is not the main reason for smoking. From the percentage point of view only 13% people go against this hypothesis. So this statistics strengthens the hypothesis that psychology is the main reason for smoking. Previously we discussed that teenagers start smoking mainly because of curiosity. In the survey a question was asked if they ever smoked out of curiosity. And out of 23 people 18 of them answered yes. So almost 79% people have smoked out curiosity. The reason of adolescence smoking also came out to be curiosity. Figure 2 So from the chart we can see that the majority of people (11 out of 23) believe that curiosity leads young people into smoking. It is also found out that 27% people believe that showing off also is another reason for smoking. 22% believes that peer pressure is another reason. So it seems that in Bangladesh curiosity and showing off are the main reasons of why young people start to smoke. Again they were asked that when do people tend to smoke more. 15 out 23 people believe that when someone is tensed they smoke. Also 13 of them believe that depression causes them to smoke. And a small amount persons (4 out of 23) said that people smoke when they are happy. Figure 3 So from this chart we can come to the conclusion that tension and depression cause people to smoke more. From the survey another interesting result came out. It is popular belief that normal people smoke more than very successful and not successful people at all. This can point at the fact that a huge number of people smoke today as normal middle class people are the majority. Figure 4 As we can see the normal middle class constructs almost 35% of the total area of the pie and the lower middle class constructs 30%. So together, middle class people take up 65% of the whole

area. Not successful people also hold 26% of the total area. So all in all we can say that middle class people smoke more. Also there were some other questions like " does influence of other actually play a role in smoking? " 91% of the people thought that it did. And when they were asked who can influence them, most of them said friends and relatives. Again they were asked if they thought that smoking was fun. But most of them did not think that smoking was fun. Respondents also gave their own opinion about the reason of smoking. Most of them thought tension and depression are the main causes of smoking. So the survey produced some valuable results. The statistics from the survey proves that the main reasons those were discussed in the essay are quite correct. Conclusion Smoking today is a very popular habit among people today. Although it has severe consequences people still continue to do it. Various people do it for various reasons. But if we try to generalize the reasons we can actually see that most of them start smoking out of curiosity, peer pressure and influence. And when they get addicted they can't quit because of the added stress, tension and depression. All of these are psychological reasons. It is true that there are some physical reasons also behind smoking but it's the psychological reason that plays the bigger part. So it can be said that human psychology is the main reason behind smoking. References Cheong, J., Herkov, M., & Goodman, W. (n. d.). Depression and smoking. Retrieved from http://psychcentral.com/library/depression_smoking.htm Dichter, E. (1947). Why do we smoke cigarettes? In The psychology of everyday living. Retrieved from <http://smokingsides.com/docs/whysmoke.html> Edwards, C. (2011, June 14). Reasons why teenagers start smoking. Retrieved from [http://www.](http://www.https://assignbuster.com/why-do-people-smoke/)

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