

Report on Female Smokers in China: Facts and Reason Seeking

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ABSTRACT. *Based on the fact that the number of female smokers, especially young, well-educated female smokers cannot be ignored, and objective to examine the smoking status and its influence factors among female smokers in Wuhan city, several young ladies were interviewed. They talked about why they smoked and their views on women smoking: they know that there are many disadvantages, but they still enjoy the benefits, such as relieving stress, getting rid of loneliness, and seeking gender equality.*

KEYWORDS: *Female, Smoker, Relevant Factors, Stereotype*

The very first time Yihan Li feel the irresistible desire of smoking cigarette is the time she broke up with her first love. She was 17. “Obviously I knew that the smoking cigarettes is harmful for my body,” Says Yihan, who is now a 19 years old college students, “and I had to take the risk of becoming addicted.” She took to cigarettes right away, “The smell was s attractive after my breakup,” Yihan says.

But that was not the only reason she started smoking and never quit, Yihan says. “Smoking looks cool,” she says. “You know, my friends do this all the time, so...I do it too.”

There is a meme trending on the Chinese social medias named “HuaZi”, and this is the most popular cigarette brand in China. Smokers, usually the teenagers or relatively young customers will post the pictures of them smoking “HuaZi” on their social medias and make them look cool---smokes embraces them in the nights. Take a look at one of the most popular social Media, QQ, you can see some people, especially teenagers, like to post the pictures of them smoking Huazi, showing the cigarette box with “Huazi” printed on intentionally. Huazi is one of the expensive brand in Chinese cigarette, and its smell is relatively strong.

The reality is that the amount of female smokers in China is indeed increasing. According to CTR (the biggest investigative organization of Chinese citizens), although the smoking prevalence for women dropped from 2.3% to 1.2 %, between 2005 and 2010, the smoking prevalence for women has been increasing since 2010 and reached 3.3% in 2014. [1]In the same investigative report about female smokers, it is also showed that the greatest increase in smoking is among younger, higher-educated women. In 2014, for example, the female smokers were earning nearly twice the average Chinese women's income: the average income is 7818 Yuan (1116 dollars) for the female smokers, while this number for all the women in China is 4367 Yuan (633 dollars).[1]

Luyao Li, A saleswoman in the supermarket, says she has been smoking since she was 15—and that almost all her girlfriends smoke. “Smoking relaxes me,” she says. “I do it when I am stressed or feel lonely.”

The generations born 1980 after are the main reason of the increase. 48% of the female smokers are aged from 15 to 34, and 64% of them have the education background of bachelor or higher degrees. Moreover, from CTR investigative report, the increase can be caused by the pressure: 72% of the female smokers agree that “there are too many things in my life that can make me stressed out.”, but this number is 57% for all the women who live in the city.[1] “I found smoking can be a good way to abreact myself, and I do it when I am stressed or feel lonely.” LuYao said.

All the ladies agree with the fact that more and more females starts smoking, and this phenomenon usually happen in teenagers as well. “I COULD buy cigaretteS in most small shops or markets when I was 16, because no one WOULD ask me to show AN ID card,” says JiaHao Ruan, a 18 years old college students in Wuhan, “ The government needs the huge tax incomes from the tobacco industry. ” There are anti-smoking campaigns and advertisements in China, but people do not care about it. Those advertisements do not have the power to make them quit smoking or prevent teenagers from trying to smoke. “They do not work for me at all.” JiaHao shrugged.

The Chinese tradition caused some stereotype toward the female smokers, but it seems that these stereotypes are being gradually eliminated. “The generation when I belong to, the ones who born after 1990, cares about sexual equality,” says Yiling Xiao, a 28 years old lady who has a nine-to-five job at an investment company. “I have the right to do the things that I like and I do not want to hide anything about my personality.”

It is true that the fast pace development of china is not only physically, but also mentally for the country. People share and discuss their understandings of woman's rights on the internet and all kinds of the social medias, and this is one of the most popular topics in china for these several years. “This is good for us, because we need respect, not stereotype and bias.” Xiao said firmly.

Both Yihan Li and LuYao Li have thought about quitting smoking, and KNOW it is a torturous hard work. LuYao Li SAYS is still struggling with that, “I am afraid that

smoking will eventually damage my uterus and I may unable to have children in future, but the process of quitting is desperate and even painful sometimes.”

As for Yihan, she dose not care that much as LuYao dose, “I know it is harmful to my body, but, uh, whatever.”

“Although there are harms about it, I have the right to enjoy my cigarette.” Yiahan said.

References

[1] <http://www.199it.com/archives/352191.html>, 2015-06-01