Should parents be punished for smoking in the presence of their children?

I. Introduction

Tobacco remains one of the most prominent industries, with countless different brands available. While everyone is free to make their choice of whether to partake in smoking, it is noteworthy that not only does it cause harm to oneself but also to others surrounding them.”Approximately 60 percent of nonsmokers in the United States have biological evidence of exposure to secondhand smoke(Carmona, 2006, p. 3).” Millions of children are exposed to secondhand smoke at home. “Among children younger than 18 years of age, an estimated 22 percent are exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes, with estimates ranging from 11.7 percent in Utah to 34.2 percent in Kentucky (Carmona, 2006, p. 3).” This may lead to some serious diseases such as: asthma, respiratory infections, and an increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Parents might be unaware of the harm they cause to those around them, which is why it is important to fully comprehend the consequences that may result from smoking and using any kind of substance. This essay will make the case that parents have a duty to ensure their children’s wellbeing and should refrain from smoking in front of them owing to the

serious health risks and psychological effects.

II. Body

A. The dangers of secondhand smoke on children’s health

1. Health risks associated with secondhand smoke

a. Increased risk of respiratory infections

b. Increased likelihood of ear infections and hearing issues

c. Long-term risks of cardiovascular disease and cancer

2. Impact on infants and young children

a. Increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

b. Slower lung development and weakened immune systems

c. Higher hospitalization rates due to respiratory issues

It is no surprise that smoking tobacco is bad for health. While everyone is free to make their choices, smokers need to consider their surroundings, especially their own children. Even though it might not be as dangerous as actual smoking it is still harmful for health nevertheless. Diseases that come with it are Heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and others.

**this article(https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/secondhand-smoke/health.html)** provides data that showcases how dangerous second hand smoking can be: “Since 1964, about 2,500,000 people who did not smoke died from health problems caused by secondhand smoke exposure. Among adults who do not smoke, secondhand smoke causes nearly 34,000 premature deaths from heart disease each year in the U.S. Secondhand smoke causes more than 7,300 lung cancer deaths each year among U.S. adults who do not smoke.”

This data is mostly about adults in the US so having children experience second hand smoking should have even worse consequences.

B. Psychological and behavioral effects on children

1. Early experimentation with smoking

a. Children often imitate behaviors they see in parents

b. Exposure to smoking at a young age may lead to experimentation with tobacco

Products

2. Increased likelihood of behavioral problems

a. Higher risk of developing behavioral issues such as hyperactivity, attention

problems, and conduct disorders.

b. Interference with cognitive development, contributing to learning difficulties or

impaired social behavior.

Not only does second hand smoking harm their health they might pick up the habit too. Children usually imitate what they see around them. So seeing their parents smoke may very well lead them to try smoking from a very young age. This may lead to addiction which in turn leads to many diseases mentioned in the previous paragraph. Even if they don’t pick up such an addictive habit they still are exposed to diseases which are exclusive to children. Such as respiratory infections, ear infections, and asthma attacks. In infants there’s a chance SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) might occur. Kids having exposure to smoking at such a young age could also lead to mental problems. According to **this(https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9885444/#:~:text=We%20also%20found%20that%20SHS,problems%2C%20and%20adolescent%20smoking32.)** there is a high correlation between ADHD and second hand smoking. Learning disability is also prevalent with children whose parents are smokers. The reason being is that nicotine interferes with brain development since its function is not stable until 12 years of age.

C. Social responsibility and the role of parents in protecting their children

1. Parents’ duty to safeguard their children’s health

a. Legal obligations regarding child welfare (e.g., safety in cars, homes, and general

well-being)

b. The moral responsibility of providing a healthy environment

2. The broader societal push for smoke-free environments

a. Public spaces, restaurants, and workplaces are now smoke-free

b. Raising children in smoke-free environments aligns with public health initiatives

Considering all the negatives of smoking in general and making other people second hand smokers, it is valid to assume that parents should be held accountable for such actions. Some may argue that such behavior should be illegal and they should be sentenced for it. It may be argued that putting your children in such bad environment meat be viewed as child abuse. **Article(https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/types-of-families/Pages/Secondhand-Smoke-and-Child-Custody.aspx#:~:text=According%20to%20federal%20law%2C%20child,a%20child%20has%20a%20health)** says that one side of judges views this as a criminal act so parents should lose custody over their children, and the other side views this as illness or addiction which requires proper treatment. When the parent is self-aware of their actions and they still willingly do it, it definitely should be considered as child abuse. Other cases could be argued for both sides since it's a rather subjective topic but there is no arguing that quitting smoking and having a healthy lifestyle is beneficial for both the parents and their offspring.

D. Counterarguments

1. Focus on Education Over Punishment

a. Educational programs and smoking cessation support are more effective than

punitive actions.

b. Punishing parents for smoking can create resistance, while education fosters

healthier environments through collaboration.

III. Conclusion

While smoking is a harmful personal choice, doing so in the presence of children endangers their health and well-being. The damage that secondhand smoking causes in children is evident and parents should be held accountable for those consequences. They have the responsibility to ensure their kids grow up in a healthy, smoke-free environment whether at home or elsewhere. This will significantly impact their overall health and quality of life.