

**ENG 180: Second Place**

The Struggles of Vaping

By Dustin Steinkamp

Over the past few years vaping has grown in popularity and is showing no signs of slowing down. This is a huge health problem that affects a lot of individuals in America. As a society, we must work together to understand why people vape and use tactics to convince people that they need to quit vaping. Every governor in America needs to understand that vaping is a major problem and that they are obligated to take action to make the society we live in a healthier and happier place.

To understand more about why people vape, I decided to conduct a survey at Western Illinois University in which I asked the following questions: Do you vape? Do you know someone who vapes? Do you think vaping is dangerous? Why do you vape or why do you think people vape? In your opinion what is something that we could do as a society to encourage people to quit vaping? In this study, I handed out thirteen surveys and found that only two of the thirteen people vape but twelve of the thirteen know someone who vapes. Although not a lot of people in the survey vape almost everyone knows someone who does and is affected by it. Everyone in the survey understood that vaping is dangerous, and the majority of people believe the reason people vape is because of peer pressure and/or because vaping is seen as the popular thing to do. A few others believe that people vape because it is addicting and/or they think it is a better alternative to other things like cigarettes. About half of the people that I surveyed think that a way to stop people from using vaping products is to make vaping illegal. The other half thinks that society needs to show facts and dangers of vaping to help sway people's decision not to vape. In conclusion of my research, I found that a lot of people are affected by people who

vape and, at least in this survey, many people understand the risks of vaping, so we need to come up with a solution that goes beyond just showing the facts and dangers of vaping.

The first reason why people vape that I would like to address is how people are misinformed. I know in my field research that not many people vape, but in larger studies researchers have seen a big increase in the past few years of the number of people who vape. In an infographic called “Vaping 101” by BlueChoice HealthPlan of South Carolina, it says that “teen vaping has gone up by 80% since 2018.” Not only does this tell us that vaping is getting out of control, but it also tells us that vaping companies are targeting young adults. These teens are not getting the correct information from vaping companies. The infographic also shows that “vape manufacturers do not have to report what is in e-cigarettes.” Kids then have to rely on sources that may or may not be credible. This is where another problem comes in: peer pressure. Teens are seeing all these advertisements about how vaping is cool and a better alternative to smoking. There are two problems with this happening in society. The first problem is that high school kids are seeing many advertisements that wrongfully promote vape products, and this can in turn lead them to pressure other students into vaping. The second is how many students and adults think that vaping is a better option than smoking. Kathleen Raven wrote an article in Yale Medicine called “Teen Vaping Linked to More Health Risks,” and she pointed out that “vape devices have not been proven to help adult smokers quit smoking and actually increases the risk a teen will smoke cigarettes later in life.”

Another main reason why vaping has become so popular is because of how addicting it is. In her newspaper article “Teen Vaping Linked to More Health Risks,” Kathleen Raven writes that “the adolescent brain is extremely sensitive to nicotine and that the brain doesn’t stop growing till around twenty-five.” High nicotine levels alone are very dangerous as it can

“interfere with memory and attention processing.” The high levels of nicotine in vaping products is especially dangerous to still-developing brains. Furthermore, I think that a possible reason for the increased popularity of vape devices in teens is because of companies' conscious efforts to take advantage of kids. Companies like Juul understands that teens can be easily persuaded and are using them to make a profit even though they are causing a huge health scare in America. As I showed earlier, “companies don't have to report what is in their products” (“Vaping 101”). Therefore, companies really have a lot of leeway in how they market their products and the result is many misinformed teens about a very dangerous product.

Now that we have addressed some reasons that are causing this vaping epidemic, we can start to focus on how to solve the problem. Like I said earlier in my field research, a possible solution would be to “show facts and dangers of vaping” (Wright 1). As researchers learn more about the effects of vaping, people can spread those results to their communities. People can spread the facts and dangers by any means possible including everything from billboards to TV commercials to just spreading the news by word of mouth. Another option is to show individuals who vape the benefits of not vaping. It doesn't have to be limited to health reasons as there are many other reasons to quit vaping other than becoming a healthier person. A couple of examples of this would be explaining how much money they could save and how that money could be used for more useful, stable things such as a down payment on their dream home. A second example would be explaining how vaping hurts your friends and families. The loved ones around you don't want to see you suffer and throw your life away because you choose to vape. By doing this I think it will help vapers see that what they are doing is harmful.

Another solution proposed in my field research plan was to make vaping illegal. In theory this sounds like a great idea to just make vaping products illegal so we just don't have to worry

about it anymore. The problem though is that it would be very difficult to ban vaping products. People like to engage in risky behaviors and believe that it is unconstitutional for the government to take away the right to participate in these activities. A great example of this is prohibition when the government banned the consumption of alcohol but could not keep the law because too many Americans were against it. I believe the same thing would happen for vape products and so it would not be effective to ban vapes.

I think the biggest argument people have for wanting to vape is because they think vaping is healthier than smoking. Kathleen Raven illustrates in her article that one of the reasons people get the misconception that vaping is healthier than smoking is because “vaping devices have less harmful or potentially harmful chemicals in them.” This does not mean vaping is healthier because “vape devices can contain nicotine and is a dangerous drug especially for teens.” Researchers may still be just getting a grasp on understanding vape devices, but research has indeed shown that “vaping increases the risk that teens will smoke cigarettes later in life” (Raven). I think if the majority of people who vape understood this, then they would be less likely to vape.

To stop the spread of vaping, we need to incorporate a few methods together. We need to continue to spread awareness about how vaping is harmful, and we need to inform our states’ legislatures that there is a widespread vaping issue that needs to be addressed quickly. In addition to this, we also need more support centers to help people overcome addiction to vape devices. No matter how much you may advertise the risks associated with something, there are still going to be people that fall back into addiction and that is why we need more support centers in America. As a society we need to embrace that people have flaws, and it is our obligation to help those in need. It is also important to note that we need to incorporate all the methods stated above

because it will be easier and more effective to take different angles to help solve the problem.

Taking only one approach may not be successful because a problem like vaping has many different causes, and everyone is different. If we can push society and government officials to help stop the spread of vaping and not to ignore the problem, then I believe in a short time we will be able to live in a much healthier and happier society.

Works Cited

Raven, Kathleen. "Teen Vaping Linked to More Health Risks." *Yale Medicine*, 7 Sep. 2019,

<https://www.yalemedicine.org/stories/teen-vaping/>.

"Vaping 101." *BlueChoice HealthPlan of South Carolina*, 2019.