STRUGGLE, BEARING, OR CONSENSUS: EXPERIENCE OF PASSIVE SMOKING AMONG WOMEN IN URBAN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Women’s passive smoking is a significant public health issue in China. To explore the experience of their husbands’ secondhand smoking among urban women, a qualitative study was done in central China. The meanings and the interpretations given by women to husbands smoking were that it was an addiction, an uncontrollable bad habit, due to a lack of responsibilities to family, a way of overcoming stress, a male way of combining business and recreation, a small matter, and part of being a man. The form of women’s reactions to their husbands’ smoking at home and husbands’ responses to the reaction are individually and contextually dynamic. They include: movement from a wife’s long time struggle to long time bearing, wife’s struggle and success, embodied consensus, and consensus with occasional persuasion. Medical knowledge and traditional stereotypes related to couple’s gender power relation are considered as two common social and cultural factors influencing women’s experience. These two factors exercise their power competitively and dynamically in the individual body. There are also some individual factors which are highly related to the exercise of the two common factors, such as the child’s worsening health condition, the traditional stereotype of the elder who is tolerant of the younger partner in the couple, negotiation skills, and IEC materials. Thus, empowerment of women, advocacy of smoke-free rights of female non-smokers, strengthening women’s comprehensive understanding of medical knowledge, and providing health consultation to female passive smokers are recommended to guide health promotion practices.

KEY WORDS: PASSIVE SMOKING / WOMEN / DISCOURSE / EXPERIENCE/ QUALITATIVE STUD

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