Junior High School Students' Attitudes Regarding the Recreational Use of Marijuana

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Abstract— This study evaluated the attitudes of the students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology San Isidro Campus concerning the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa). All students per grade level are included in the survey, thereby the total enumeration sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A descriptive-correlational research design was used for the study. To analyze the respondents' attitudes regarding the recreational use of marijuana, the researchers employed a variety of statistical methods, including percentages, means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations. According to the findings of the survey, the majority of the respondents possess a favorable attitude toward the recreational use of marijuana except for legalizing it. It was revealed that the respondents' main leading information about the recreational use of marijuana is social media platforms and mainstream applications. It was also revealed that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' age and attitude towards the recreational use of marijuana. As a result, the researchers suggest that more information dissemination about the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa) should be done to improve the understanding of the students about the nature of the said drug.

Keywords— attitude, marijuana, recreational use, Cannabis sativa

I. INTRODUCTION

Marijuana, often known as cannabis, is widely used by teenagers and adults today. Marijuana has had a big influence on people's lives, whether it's for medicinal reasons, socializing, getting high, or avoiding despair (Bottorff et al., 2009). Despite the fact that cannabis is an illegal substance, many individuals nonetheless access it. Although it affects natural brain processes such as memory, coordination, learning, and problem-solving, making it illegal has little effect on its usage and instead creates other more important problems that must be addressed (Bottorff et al., 2009). According to Yanoc et al. (2022), marijuana is a psychoactive substance that alters brain functions and behavior, moods, thoughts, feelings, and emotions when consumed. Some countries throughout the world have legalized cannabis for medicinal purposes. Some countries have legalized cannabis for recreational use. However, it is still debatable in the Philippines (Yanoc et al., 2022).

In Pakistan, there is little awareness of illicit substances and their effects, owing in large part to a lack of prevention programs and initiatives in schools and universities that could reach out to the student population, which, while well-informed in its own right, is also vulnerable to substance abuse (Khalid and Ahmad, 2014). Even pharmacy students in the Philippines, who are expected to be aware of the dangers of illegal narcotics, require instructional exercises concerning the advantages and hazards of Cannabis sativa. Republic Act 9165, often known as the "Comprehensive Dangerous Drug Act of 2002," prohibits all dangerous narcotic drugs, including cannabis, in the Philippines (Dulin and Guadamor, 2017). Marijuana is likewise classified as one of the most dangerous substances in the Philippines, with possession, manufacture, use, importation, and sale illegal. Individuals who violate the legislation will face penalties ranging from 100,000 to 500,000 pesos, as well as jail sentences ranging from twelve years and one day to twenty years. As marijuana use becomes legal in some locations, widespread assumption is that it is a safe source of mood-altering drugs. Although the hazards of using it have not been completely investigated, there is enough evidence to be worried (Volkow et al., 2014).

According to the National Institutes of Health, cannabis has been used to heal diseases for at least 3,000 years. However, the FDA has not determined whether cannabis is safe or effective in the treatment of any condition. The National Academy of Sciences assessment finds that cannabis use increases the probability of abusing and becoming addicted to other substances, therefore this result may be contentious (Railton, 2022). Although studies have found negative effects connected with marijuana usage in scientifically controlled laboratory settings, it is unclear how its recreational use affects people's daily lives. Marijuana users have poor social and emotional functioning, as well as reduced intrapersonal abilities. These results remained consistent

regardless of how frequently Cannabis sativa or alcohol was ingested (Ansell, 2015). As a consequence, the researchers want to determine the attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa) among the junior high school students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology San Isidro Campus.

II. METHODOLOGY

Study Design and Sample Size
A descriptive-correlational study approach was utilized to analyze the attitude of the respondents regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa), as well its relationships in their profiles. Total enumeration sampling was used. A total of 147 junior high school students agreed to take part in the study.

Instrumentation and Data Collection
The researchers used three-part questionnaires. The first part consists of items that gather the demographic profile of respondents such as age, sex, and family monthly income. The second part determines their attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana based on the study made by Pereira et al., 2020. The last part identifies their source of information. The study was carried out at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology San Isidro Campus in the province of Nueva Ecija. It began in December 2022 and ends in March 2024.

Data and Statistical Analysis.
All completed questionnaires were double-checked and verified for completeness and consistency. The data was entered in Microsoft Excel and Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The responses to the attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana were coded with five (5) for strongly agree, four (4) for agree, three (3) for slightly agree, two (2) for disagree, and one (1) for strongly disagree. To the source of knowledge, the responses were coded based on its rank. To the socio-demographic profile, frequency, and percentage were computed. Pearson Correlation was used to determine whether a significant relationship existed between their profile attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana.

Ethical Consideration
Permission was sought from the Director of the Campus. Informed consent was given first before the respondent answer the questionnaire. Sufficient time was given to ask questions, and the anonymity of the subjects, and confidentiality of information were maintained.

III. RESULT
Table 1. Profile of the Respondents.

Socio-Demographic Profile	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
12	18	12.24
13	32	21.76
14	37	25.17
15	40	27.23
16	20	13.60
Sex		
Male	61	41.50
Female	81	55.10
Prefer not to mention	5	3.40
Family Monthly Income		
Less than P 9,100	30	20.42
P 9,101 to P 18,200	52	35.37
P 18,201 to 36,300	37	25.17
P 36,301 and above	28	19.04

In the present study, a total of 147 respondents participates in the study. Many of them, 40 (27.23%) were 15 years old, 37 or 25.17% were 14 years old, 32 were poor 21.76% were 13 years old, 20 or 13.60% were 16 years old, and 18, or 12.24% were 12 years old. More than half of 81 (55.10%) were females, 61 or 41.50% were male, and 5 or 3.40% preferred not to mention their gender. Last, for their family monthly income, most, or 52 (35.37%) of them have income between P 9,101 to P 18,200, 37 or 25.17% have income between P 18,201 to 36,300, 30 or 20.42% have income Less than P 9,100 and, 28, or 19.04% have income P 36,301 and above [Table 1].

Table 2. Attitude of the respondents regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa).

Item Statements	Weighted Mean/S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. I feel that marijuana should be legalized for the general population.	2.48 ± 1.19	Disagree
2. I feel that marijuana is safe when used responsibly for recreational use.	3.10 ± 1.13	Slightly Agree
3. I feel that recreational use of marijuana can be beneficial to one's health.	2.97±1.04	Slightly Agree
4. I feel that marijuana is safe when used responsibly for medical use.	3.46 ± 1.09	Agree
5. I feel that marijuana is a gateway drug.	3.23 ± 1.23	Slightly Agree
Average Weighted Mean	3.05 ±1.14	Slightly Agree

Legend: S.D. = standard deviation; 3.25 - 4.00 = strongly agree; 2.50 – 3.24 = agree; 1.75 – 2.49 = disagree; 1.00 – 1.74 = strongly disagree.

In terms of the attitude of the respondents regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa), the result showed that item statement number 1 states, "I feel that marijuana should be legalized for the general population", received the lowest weighted mean equivalent to 2.48 with verbal interpretation as "Disagree". On the other hand, item statement number 4 states, "I feel that marijuana is safe when used responsibly for medical use", which received the highest weighted mean of 3.46 and was verbally interpreted, as "Agree". Meanwhile, item statements number 2, 3, and 5 states, "I feel that marijuana is safe when used responsibly for recreational use", "I feel that recreational use of marijuana can be beneficial to one's health" and, "I feel that marijuana is a gateway drug" obtained a weighted mean of 3.10, 2.97 and 3.23 with verbal interpretation "Slightly Agree", respectively.

Table 3. Source of knowledge of the respondents regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa).

Source of knowledge	Rank
1. on websites or social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube	1st
2. on television or radio	2nd
3. in school	3rd
4. at the movies	4th
5. in newspapers or magazines.	5th

Table 3 shows the source of knowledge of the respondents regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa). The result showed that their number source is on websites or social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. It is followed by what they hear and watch on television and radio. Third on the list is school which, is probably one of their subjects related to health. Next, is what they watch at the movies. Their last source is from the newspapers or magazines.

Table 4. Relationship between the profile of the respondents and their attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa)

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	P - value
Age	0.2518	0.0020*
Sex	0.0002	0.9978
Family monthly income	-0.0660	0.4266

Legend: * = significant at 0.05

Table 4 shows the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa). The data revealed that age has a significant relationship to the attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana while insignificant for the sex and family monthly income.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study aimed to determine the attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa) among junior high school students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology San Isidro Campus. In terms of the profile of the respondents, the majority of them were

15 years old, female, and have family monthly income between P 9,101 to P 18,200. In terms of the respondents' attitudes regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa), the result showed that the verbal interpretation obtained varies. Generally, they have a favorable view toward the recreational use of marijuana, except for the statement which refers to its legalization. The result was supported by many studies. First, Garcia-Romeu (2022) conducted a study in which their subjects expressed a favorable and hopeful attitude toward Cannabis sativa. Medical marijuana, according to their participants, can improve their well-being and daily functioning. According to Mina et al., (2022), male participants and those who had used marijuana for recreational or medical purposes had considerably higher mean attitude ratings toward cannabis usage. Another research conducted by Vogt (2019) discovered that the majority of respondents believed marijuana had potential medicinal use for animals. Just like the attitude towards vaccines, it depicts the Filipinos' positive attitude to any intervention whether it is a drug or vaccine, as long as it will help them to treat certain diseases or make them healthier (Santiago and Santos, 2022 and Santiago et al., 2023). However, Felnhofer et al., (2021) found that Austrian university students have a more unfavorable attitude toward Cannabis sativa. The same result was found in the study of Bazzari (2023), wherein it was found that the respondents of the study have a low and neutral agreement level regarding the therapeutic usefulness of Cannabis sativa and FDA-approved cannabinoid-derived drugs, respectively.

In terms of the source of knowledge of the respondents regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa), the result revealed that their top source is on websites or social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube followed by the news they heard and watched in television and radio. Pepitone (2010) contends that advances in communication technology have expanded how information can be transmitted and received. A study conducted by Westerman et al. (2014) and Santiago and Santos, (2021) found that people use platforms such as the Internet to find useful information about issues and crises, supporting this assertion. One such invention that has grown in popularity as a news source is social media. This conclusion was supported by Roditis' (2016) research, in which participants reported seeing posts concerning the possible risks and medicinal advantages of Cannabis sativa on social media. According to the same survey done by Ishida et al. (2020), the major source of knowledge about Cannabis sativa was social media or the internet, followed by health experts, conventional media, and friends/relatives. According to Kruger et al. (2020), the study found that respondents learned about Cannabis sativa, mostly from the internet or social media, as well as their own experiences. Given the global increase in cannabis usage and the dependence on the internet as a source of knowledge, significant efforts are required to offer reliable online cannabis education to reduce harm and maximize benefits for people and society. On average, FDA-sponsored information was much more credible than that of a branding agency, with factual statements being significantly more credible than evaluative claims (Mattern and Dina, 2016).

Last, for the relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and their attitude regarding their recreational use of marijuana. The data revealed that age has a significant relationship to the attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana while insignificant for sex and family monthly income. Herruzo et al. (2019) propose that respondents' attitudes are correlated with various parameters such as age, gender, and parental education level. However, the result was in contrast to the research by Clobes and Gagnon, (2022). They found no association between respondents' demographic traits and acquaintance with Cannabis sativa; this study is backed up by Felnhofer's (2021) study, which found that beliefs and attitudes impact behavior. This suggests that respondents' profile has a considerable impact on their attitude towards marijuana.

V. CONCLUSION

The study aimed to determine the attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa) among the respondents. The available information indicates that a significant proportion of the students are 15 years old, female, and have a family monthly income between P 9,101 to P 18,200. The results found that their attitudes regarding the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa) were generally favorable, except for its legalization. Their top source of knowledge regarding the recreational use of marijuana is on websites or social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Last, age has a significant relationship to the attitude regarding the recreational use of marijuana. As a result, the researchers suggest that more information dissemination about the recreational use of marijuana (Cannabis sativa) should be done to improve the understanding of the students about the nature of the said drug.

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