INTRODUCTION

A significant number of college students report marijuana use at some point during their lifetime (Johnston et al., 2011). College students have also reported subclinical levels of depression, anxiety, and stress (Baghurst & Kelley, 2014; Beiter et al., 2015).

With the frequency of marijuana use among college students on the rise, largely due to legalization (Miech et al., 2015; NIDA, 2018; Sarvet et al., 2018; Suerken et al., 2014), it is of concern that marijuana use may be a risk factor for increased rates of depression, anxiety, and stress.

While marijuana use in association with depression, anxiety, and stress has been studied in the general college student population (Beck et al., 2009; Hyman & Sinha, 2009), there are few studies to date looking specifically at Hispanic college students.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of the study was to assess the relationships between the frequency of marijuana use within the past year and depression, anxiety, and stress reported among Hispanic college students.

METHODS

Participants

- The present sample (n = 345) of Hispanic college students (72.2% female; Mean = 20.13; SD = 3.92) participated via online survey, through self-report. The participants were recruited through UTEP’s undergraduate psychology program and received research participation credit (SONA).

Measures

- Sociodemographics: This questionnaire collected typical sociodemographic information (e.g., age, sex, education).
- Past Year Marijuana Use: This question was a continuous, single item assessing marijuana use during the past year. It inquired how many times she/he had used marijuana in the past year via self-report.
- Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS): The 42-item scale assesses constructs of depression, anxiety, and stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS has a set of 14-item self-report subscales which are scored on a 4 point scale of frequency or severity of a symptom over the past week. The resulting item responses are scored by summing the items within each of the three factors. The three scales demonstrate high internal consistency (α = .98).

Procedure

- After IRB approval was granted, participants were recruited online via SONA-system. Participants signed an informed consent form before they were prompted to being the survey. Participants were given course credit for their participation.

RESULTS

Depression (β = .53 p < .05) was positively associated and stress (β = -.53 p < .05) was negatively associated with past year frequency of marijuana use.

TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Continuous Characteristics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Participants Age</td>
<td>20.13</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>17-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly Marijuana Consumption (# of days)</td>
<td>17.12</td>
<td>56.45</td>
<td>0-365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>10.57</td>
<td>0-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>9.84</td>
<td>0-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>10.90</td>
<td>0-42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Summary of Linear Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Bold indicates p < .05. Adjusted R² = .04.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with previous literature, students reported more frequent marijuana use in association with higher levels of depressive symptoms (Beck et al., 2009; Dierker et al., 2017; Keith et al., 2015). It may be that those who use marijuana more frequently are avoiding or conversely attempting to cope with negative feelings. It may also be that the increase in marijuana use is decreasing the users over all motivation which may present as an increase in depressive symptoms.

REFERENCES


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