

Self-reported Reasons For Voluntary Abstinenances

By Adolescent Cannabis-Users



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Introduction

- Cannabis remains the most commonly used illicit substance by adolescents (ESPAD, 2015). Factors influencing cannabis use have previously been identified mainly using multivariate approaches.
- According to Triadic Influence Theory (Flay & Petraitis, 1994), these factors mainly fall within the intrapersonal, cultural/attitudinal and social/interpersonal dimensions.
- Adult qualitative data indicates that reasons for voluntary abstinences by cannabis users mainly include a short term change in circumstances, together with concerns about health (Terry et al., 2007).
- However, no study has explored this for adolescent cannabis users. Thus the present study's aim was:-


To identify reasons for voluntary abstinences by adolescent cannabis users using Triadic Influence Theory as a framework

Method

- 261 adolescents aged between 11-18 years (m=16.21yrs, SD= 1.45) were recruited from 4 schools across the West Midlands. 59.8% were female.
- 38 cannabis users were identified from this sample, of which 34 reported experiencing voluntary abstinences from cannabis.
- Participants completed a questionnaire containing two open-ended questions asking them to provide details of and reasons for their brief voluntary abstentions.
- 22 cannabis users provided this information, and their responses were analysed using thematic analysis.
- Stages of thematic analysis described by Braun & Clarke (2006) were followed for the analysis

Results

Theme 1: Internal (Intrapersonal)



State of Mind

"Mind-set, but now I want to be more open to new things."

"When I've been at a party and wasn't really in the mood and many times I've been out and couldn't really be bothered"

Negative Effects

"...plus had a bad feeling one time and it put me off it."


"...Bad experiences with it previous times, hallucinations."

Attempt to Quit

"When I say I'm going to stop."

"Being with someone who smoked regularly encouraged me to also smoke but there was a time I decided I didn't want to"

Theme 2: External (Social/Interpersonal)



Prior to Important Events

"When I had important matches in rugby."

"I was given a date for a drug test, I did not smoke for a month before and did not start again for a month after...to see the effect it had on me."

Prior to Family Interactions

"...If I was seeing my parents a short time afterwards"

"...Also didn't want to be caught high by family."

Peers

"My friends were smoking a spliff, they offered me some and I decided."

"Asked to go at a friend's where they would have been smoking it, didn't go"

Discussion

- Results show that adolescent cannabis users are flexible in their approach to using cannabis, being able to briefly stop when the situation warrants it. This distinguishes them from those with a substance use disorder, who by definition, continue using in spite of consequences.
- Results are also comparable to previous qualitative research identifying a change in circumstances and negative effects as influential for brief voluntary abstinences in adult users (Terry et al., 2007)
- The results broadly mapped onto Triadic Influence Theory (Flay & Petraitis, 1994), however, no themes relating to the cultural/attitudinal dimension were apparent.
- Although this is the first study to identify reasons for voluntary abstinences from the adolescent cannabis user's perspective, a more in depth qualitative approach will be needed, as the data collection method utilised limited the richness of the data.

References

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