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Exploring the lived experience of marijuana using students: The Case of Unity University
Students Gerji Campus Addis Ababa.

By:

Maraki Getachew

A Thesis Submitted to School of Social Work, Addis Ababa
University, presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Social Work

Advisor: Demelash Kassaye (PhD)

Addis Ababa University
College of Social Sciences
School of Social Work

JUNE 2022

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Declaration

I, Maraki Getachew, declare that this thesis entitled “The lived experience of marijuana using students: The Case of Unity University Students”, is my original work undertaken under the guidance and suggestion of my research advisor. It’s offered for the partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Social Work. This research has not been done before and all sources of material used for the study have been appropriately acknowledged.

Declared by:

Confirmed by the advisor.

Name: _____

Name: _____

Signature _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Date _____

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Maraki Getachew entitled “The lived experience of marijuana-using students: The Case of Unity University Students”, which is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of master’s in social work complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signature by the Examining Committee:

Advisor

Signature

Date

Examiner (internal)

Signature

Date

Examiner (external)

Signature

Date

Acknowledgment

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

APA	American Psychological Association
DACA	Drug Administration and Control Authority of Ethiopia
NACADA	National Campaign against Drug Abuse
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
ONS	Office for National Statistics
THC	Tetra Hydro Cannabinol
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Program
UNIDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Program
UNODCCP	United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime prevention
WDR	World Drug Report
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to understand the experiences and challenges of students who use marijuana. To that end, the study employed a qualitative research design to comprehend the stories and meanings constructed by 11 current marijuana user and 2 key informants. The study's sample size was determined based on data saturation. Furthermore, the study used a descriptive phenomenological research approach to understand the participants' lived experiences and subjective meanings of their experiences. In-depth interviews and observation were used to collect data. The study employed purposeful sampling, in which participants were approached on purpose based on inclusion criteria. The information gathered from the informants was analyzed using thematic analysis. According to the study's findings, many young adults perceive marijuana as non-harmful in its entirety, which contributes to negative side effects in their emotional and social lives. The three overarching themes discovered were reasons for starting marijuana, perception of marijuana use, and impacts of marijuana use. The findings showed that peer pressure, self-medication, and role models have a significant impact on the decision to begin using marijuana. The findings also showed that students experience both positive and negative social, psychological, and educational impacts. The study's findings could be used to promote positive social change in young adults to improve life outcomes, reduce mental health problems, and prevent overall negative consequences. It also can pave the way for additional research and policy development regarding the impact of marijuana use on the lives of students.

Key Words: *Academic Achievements Age, Marijuana, Unity University,*

Chapter One

Background of the Study

According to the definition of marijuana by WDR (2021), marijuana is a hallucinogenic dried-out sticky flower bud and leaves of the female hemp or cannabis plant that contain high levels of THC, which stands for tetra hydro cannabinol, which is a psychoactive element found in cannabis. It can be inhaled, consumed, or eaten particularly for its mind-altering effects (Lin et.al, 2022). The term can also be used interchangeably with the terms weed, cannabis, and ganja (Merriam English dictionary, 2022).

Urban areas in Ethiopia describe marijuana in its more commonly known term, hashish. Furthermore, it is also known as Etse-Faris in rural areas (Duvall, 2019). Tobacco, Khat, alcohol, and marijuana usage have become one of the most serious problems afflicting most countries around the world, with marijuana becoming the most widely used substance on the planet (Morton et.al, 2015). Marijuana is the most tried illicit drug, with cocaine and ecstasy coming in second and third place, respectively (WHO, 2019).

In 2021, an estimated 275 million people aged 15 to 64 will have used drugs around the world (UNODC, 2021). Among all age groups, young adults aged 18 to 25 have the highest percentage rate of marijuana use (Emery et al., 2020). Marijuana was used for non-medical purposes by an estimated 192 million people globally in 2018 (UNODC, 2021). The United States has a high current prevalence of 48.2 million users by 2019, most of them accounting for young adults below the age of 25 (Ignaszewski, 2021). According to Hannah et.al, (2002), as the legalization of marijuana in the United States progresses and spreads among states, its usage by locals, particularly the younger population, is increasing in frequency, resulting in cannabis use disorder becoming more widespread.

According to the World Drug Report (2021), Africa has not been able to avoid the fate of drug usage by its citizens, and it is anticipated to worsen in the coming 10 years, with an estimated growth of 40%. The United States produces the most cannabis in the world, accounting for 64 percent of total production. Africa is quite close behind, accounting for 28% of total production (WDR, 2017).

Florac et.al, (2021) asserts that the younger generation is more prone to drug abuse, citing several common factors that promote marijuana use, such as peer pressure, and social media influences. Furthermore, many experts are concerned about the ease with which young adults can access and engage in marijuana use (Fiala et al.,2018). According to Prince (2021), when it comes to college-aged students, the main reasons they use marijuana are peer pressure, perceived non-harmfulness of marijuana, and self-medication. Furthermore, it has been reported that young adults have a lack of knowledge and understanding about the consequences of marijuana use (Fiala et al.,2018).

According to the Woldeyohannis et.al, (2021), Ethiopia is facing challenges related to drug use such as marijuana and its related effects, as there is lack of information in regards to this. For instance, Shegute et.al, (2021), have indicated that Ethiopian Higher institutions located in different parts of Ethiopia are facing major challenges because university students regularly use different drugs such as Shisha, and Marijuana which is leading to a lowering in their academic performance and in the long-term harming their productivity and employment standing. As a result, efforts are being made by the government to reduce the number of consumers, emphasizing that no regulatory approval has been given to legalizing marijuana nor will it be ever given in the future (Henok, 2015).

In the academic works of literature, there are different components indicated as impacts of marijuana use. For instance, for Turner & Agrawal, (2020), stated panic attack, mental illness, biological instability, and academic un-fulfillment as the main reasons whereas, for Winiger et.al, (2020), breathing problems, insomnia, increased risk of lung cancer, and psychotic disorders, are impacts of using marijuana. Hence, there is no single reason which can apply to all because every individual has a different experience when it comes to the impact marijuana brings upon them due to genetic variation (Martin & Rosenthal, 2012). That stems from the fact that based on an individual's genetic makeup, the THC located within marijuana targets different anatomical points in the brain resulting in either making the person go crazy with hallucinations or dive into a beautiful and relaxing mental state (Hudson et.al, 2019).

From an academic viewpoint student, no matter which state using marijuana has engulfed them in, there are common and very agreed upon difficulties many of the student's face (Beverly et.al, 2019). Consequently, the most seen behavioral consequence of students using marijuana is sleeping in class, not focusing on the course at hand, skipping class, attention, and neurocognitive performance weakness (Arria et.al, 2015). These effects can remain even after they have stopped using for up to a month. They also face long-term impacts on their academic achievement such as course failure, lower IQ, dropping out of school, unemployment, and eventually falling ill (Arria et.al, 2015). Hence this study sought to understand the lived experience of students who use marijuana and assess the relationship between the factors related to the use of marijuana and its impacts among the youth at Unity University.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of drug abuse has been well researched by different prominent scholars. For instance, Galvan et.al, (2017) conducted research on the risk perception of marijuana among the youth and its impact on their usage level in Bogota, Colombia. The study indicated that for the past three decades, the perceived harmfulness of using marijuana was significantly high among high school students. However, after the 2000s rolled in, the risk perception among the youth started to lower at an alarming rate. The study also indicated that the risk perception and marijuana use were proportionally correlated.

Reardon and Buka (2002) studied college students' risk perception of marijuana, and its relationship with increased usage in the United States and listed some other sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, and economical status as they are considered to play a role. The center of the finding was, age was positively correlated with lower risk perception, as such as students get older and gain experience through experimentation of various elements the more, they viewed using drugs lightly.

Hawke et al., (2020) researched considering the age factors' role in marijuana consumption in Canada. The study stated that for the past three decades, the culture of marijuana use has significantly increased in developed nations. The most probable age range at which marijuana is first initiated is between 14-16 years of age. The study also indicated that among other drugs, marijuana is shown to create dependence, in a very short amount of time leading to drug use problems. Dependency typically occurs between the age of 17-19, when students are on the verge of finishing high school and entering university. The central theme of the finding indicated that early interventions work on younger students as it's harder to work on older students.

Hines et al., (2020), studied the association of marijuana usage with mental health of adolescents in England. The research showed that marijuana use is reliably associated with poorer mental health status, such as developing anxiety, mood, attention, and behavior disorders. In addition, when their mind is impaired or disturbed in some way, the reason for the circumstance being consistent consumption of marijuana, they are functioning at a lower level of mental capacity, which directly affects their daily life which consists of their education as well.

William & Brands (2019) conducted research on the correlation between the extent of marijuana use and academic performance among undergraduate students in Jamaica. The research showed that the amount of marijuana use is directly proportional to the lowering of academic performance. The central theme of the finding indicated that, the percentage level of those who stuck in there and finished their class depended upon being an occasional user or a daily user, implying the former was most likely to finish.

Similarly, Muoti (2014) reported a study focusing on drug use among secondary schools that are found in Nairobi, Kenya. The central theme of the finding indicated that even though there are many types of drugs accessible, marijuana is for the most part very obtainable as well as an illegitimate drug which has a 10% chance of addiction, and the percentage increases highly if the drug is used before becoming an adult.

Correspondingly, Mahlet (2011) came up with a report assessing drug abuse among secondary school students in Ethiopia indicating that the number of young people improperly using drugs is a major issue. The central theme of her finding critically comments on the student's mental health and spiritual well-being without much emphasis on the impacts Marijuana can pose on students' lives. In support of this, another researcher, Henok (2015) conducted research on challenges of drug abuse among secondary school students in Ethiopia

indicating that students use drugs simultaneously. In a sense that a student might start with one drug and move on to the next.

The aforesaid studies conducted in Ethiopia have primarily focused on the effects that occur among high school students, excluding those who are enrolled in universities. The studies also focus on the impacts of drugs as a whole, thus prone to generalization. The studies conducted in other countries cannot be applied in terms of the Ethiopian cultural context for people's approach to drug use, risk perception, as well as values and norms, are very different since tradition plays a huge role. Therefore, this study looks at the students view and meaning construction to feel the knowledge gap by studying the lived experience of students who use marijuana.

Aside from that, the main reason for choosing Unity University was because the researcher was a former student at Unity University's Gerji Campus, which aided in reuniting with some former classmates/friends who were still in school due to their marijuana use, which caused them to fall behind in class. In the researcher's previous experiences as a student, there was also a push factor, implying that marijuana has a negative impact especially on academic performance. Furthermore, the researcher's family and companions who have attended Unity have been impacted by their use, which has harmed their academic achievement.

This provided an incentive for the researcher to analyze the existing status of marijuana use its associated factors, educational performance links, as well as overall impacts, in order to fill in any gaps that have not been addressed in previous studies and add to the body of knowledge. Furthermore, some previous studies on the subject propose that further studies be conducted to address and remove drug usage concerns among the youth. As a result, this study provided sufficient data and insight, as well as potential recommendations. Minimize thisgabs

Objectives of the Study

General objective of the study

The general objective of the study was to illuminate the lived experiences of marijuana users among Unity University Students.

Specific objectives

- To identify how students at Unity University started using marijuana.
- To identify students, access to marijuana at Unity University.
- To explore what has changed in their life after started using marijuana.

Research Questions

The major research question was “How do students explain their lived experiences of marijuana use and the challenges they encountered”

1. How did Unity University students start using marijuana?
2. How did Unity University students get access to marijuana?
3. What is the lived experience of students who use marijuana?

Scope of the Study

The title of this study was, the lived experience of marijuana using students. Drug abuse is a topic that is large in scope, and so this study only focused on the prevalence of marijuana or cannabis use. The study was delimited to the reasons and perceptions that are related to marijuana use and the impacts it has on the students. Even though there are many higher education institutes, the study focused on Unity University located in Bole Sub-city, Gerji Campus, in Addis Ababa. The study took place starting from December to February 2022. The assessment targeted students who were currently attending their second year of the

undergraduate program and thus informants within the age range 18 – 25 years were selected. Architecture and computer science students were selected.

Significance of the Study

The study can help professionals such as social workers in schools, psychologists, and counselors to guide and teach students who are going through similar situations and help them come to a better understanding. It can also help school officials and authority figures understand the issues their students are dealing with and adopt a better intervention to tackle the challenges by taking relevant action.

This study can familiarize different professionals and individuals working with young adults about the physical, social, and emotional consequences of drug use. This study is helpful to researchers in terms of upgrading the wider public understanding of the factors as to why this drug is used while equally supporting the development of policies and strategies to help these students become aware of its consequences.

There is limited existing research on marijuana use in Ethiopia, especially among university students. Therefore, it can serve as a reference for further study in this area and encourages academicians as well as other researchers with a similar field of study to conduct research related to the topic by taking the gap of this study into account. Generally, the study result provides key points for policymakers, school administrations, teachers, researchers, and other concerned agents on the prevalence of the problem faced by users and tries to come up with recommendations.

Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to the lived experience of second-year students from the architecture and computer science departments. Hence, the study did not incorporate the meaning

and experience of students who are from other departments as well as levels. Additionally, the study did not include the experience and view of recreational users as it focused on the consistent users. It was only limited to the meaning and experience of current marijuana users.

This study was also methodologically limited in the sense that, it only used a qualitative research method. Qualitative research cannot be statistically represented. In addition, the researcher has used a phenomenological research design in which the researcher had a prolonged time of the interactive interview with the participants. Other limitations of the study while it was being carried out were, the unwillingness of some students to do the interview due to covid-19 pandemic, as well as reluctance from students to participate in this study due to the sensitivity of the topic, and the failure of some of the respondents to give sincere answers.

Organization of Paper

The thesis was organized into five parts. Part one included the introduction section which consists of the study 's background, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, scope, and limitations of the study. The second section included the literature review where related concepts and literature related to the study were reviewed. The third chapter of the thesis described the research methodology of the study. It included a description of the study area, research philosophies and paradigm, research design, population, sampling design and sample size, types and sources of data, methods of data collection, data presentation, analysis and discussion, the definition of research variables, reliability and validity of instruments, and ethical consideration. The fourth chapter presented the data presentation and analysis. The fifth chapter presented a discussion of findings, whereas the last chapter forwarded conclusions, social work implication and recommendations drawn from the findings of the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

According to Gay and Airasian (2000), the purpose of a literature review is to identify a relevant theoretical or conceptual framework for a research problem, to lay the groundwork for a study, to inspire new research ideas, and to identify any gaps or inconsistencies in a body of research. The theoretical and empirical frameworks that guided the study were discussed in this section. The literature on student drug use and their experiences with it was examined in this chapter. As a result, various theoretical explanations for drug use and empirical research on the subject are discussed.

Empirical studies of Cannabis use

The prevalence rate of cannabis among the youth.

Marijuana is one of the most widely used contemporary drug in the planet (WDR, 2021). Marijuana is expected to be used by 200 million people by the end 2021. By 2015, it was predicted that four million people had developed a marijuana-related disorder. The youth account for 61% of the total number of users. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, cannabis is initially used. By the time they reach their early twenties, most people are completely reliant on it. (2017, WDR).

Young adult males used marijuana at higher rates than young adult females, and as they approached developmental markers of emerging adulthood, such as moving out, finding stable employment, and starting a family, young adults tended to reduce substance use. Greater use in metropolitan areas and among affluent households is due to availability reasons and corresponds to national trends based on household survey data. (SAMHSA,2021)

Prevalence of Marijuana (Cannabis) in Ethiopia

Marijuana has recently been legalized for recreational use in several countries, including Canada, Georgia, Mexico, South Africa, and Uruguay, and possession is permitted because it is viewed as a financially beneficial market, with supporters claiming that it will add billions to the economy, create hundreds of thousands of jobs, and stop wasting public resources, according to current statistics (Manu et.al, 2021).

Marijuana is still prohibited in Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian federal drug law spells out the consequences of unlawful cannabis cultivation, usage, or sale/supply. Despite this restriction, the possession and use of cannabis appears to be widespread and socially acceptable in modern-day Ethiopia. (Tulu et.al, 2016). According to several sources, the situation with drug and substance usage is frightening.

Research was conducted at Shashemene Town, of young adults aged 18–25 who use cannabis and are permanent residents and the study revealed that the magnitude of cannabis use disorder was 42.2%. The most contributing factors that remained to be statistically significant with cannabis use disorder were common mental disorder (Tulu et.al, 2016).

Another study on the incidence of illicit drug use in Dilla University found that over half of the students in high school and higher education used various psychoactive substances. In Ethiopia, the total prevalence of psychoactive substance misuse among high school students is around 30%, and peer influence is responsible for substance abuse among students in more than 27.95 percent of cases. More than two substance addiction was shown to be common in about 40% of people during their lives (Astatikei et.al, 2015).

Theoretical Explanation of Drug use

Different viewpoints on drug use among young people exist. Psychosocial development theory, social learning theory, social constructionist theory, personality theories, cognitive theory, stress theory, and neuroscientific and psychological theories were all covered in this review:

Erikson's theory of stage development, (1964), can be used to explain drug use. According to psychosocial development theory, poor or disrupted psychosocial development may contribute to substance use and addiction. For example, if a young person struggles to form a strong identity, he or she may be more likely to turn to drugs to do so. Disruptions to overall development have been shown to increase the risk of substance abuse, and children are especially vulnerable during transitions, such as crises encountered during psychosocial development. People who started using drugs or alcohol before the age of 17 had significantly more psychosocial problems in a variety of areas, including social competence and peer relationships (Crawford, 2004).

According to the Social Learning Theory, the social context can explain all behaviors, whether beneficial or bad (Bandura, 1977). While spending their days together, students learning together learn and share several behaviors. Furthermore, if one student is a drug user who is regarded as an excellent role model among a particular group, his or her non-user peers will replicate this conduct to be accepted into the group. As a result, youngsters learn from their close social group through the intimacy and contact they develop. It could also be linked to the effect of drug-using family members (Watkins, 2016).

The social constructionist theory is a complement to and extension of social learning theory, in the sense that children construct their reality based on what they see in their

surroundings and community (Vygotsky, 1962). Drug use is viewed as a social phenomenon in constructionist theory, with the community playing the most important role. As a result, it has neither a biological nor a psychological origin. Drug usage occurs when social norms and ideals are ignored, resulting in societal consequences (Zulinea et.al, 2007). This suggests that using drugs is viewed as socially unacceptable behavior.

Neuroscientific theories, on the other hand, claim that drug usage is linked to the brain. As a result, once the effect it has on the brain is understood, it may be combated. Different types of drugs have different effects on the mind, but there are two hormonal positions that lead to pleasure: dopamine and endogenous opioids, which are nearly always present in drug usage (Nutt et.al, 2015). The drugs release these hormones which induces deep relaxation. When the influence on brain balances and neurotransmitters wears off, the person reverts to their previous mental state, hence wanting to go back, and use again, leading to dependency and addiction (Salokagnas et.al, 2000).

The marijuana plant produces a variety of cannabinoids, which are plant compounds that can interact with the endocannabinoid system (Madras, 2019). The endo-cannabinoid system is a well-known neuromodulator system, which consists of a small number of neurons in the brain that control cognitive functions and play important roles in the central nervous system (CNS) (Lu & Mackie, 2016). It contains tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), with THC being the primary intoxicant (Madras, 2019). THC enters the brain quickly and binds to cannabinoid receptors. The natural endocannabinoid system is finely tuned to respond appropriately to incoming data. However, THC overwhelms the system. It prevents natural chemicals from performing their functions properly and throws the entire system off balance. (Willson and Nicol, 2002).

In support of that, cognitive theory emphasizes that when the brain is affected, it has both short-term and long-term consequences for the mind. If reliance has developed and cognitive efficiency has been harmed, academic performance will suffer as a result (Juarez et.al, 2018). Cognitive development such as memory and attention are impaired when students use substances, due to changes in how the brain functions. When these issues arise, they can lead to academic problems that might eventually lead to dropping out or withdrawing (Juarez et.al, 2018). Cognitive impairment is a well-known side effect of long-term drug use, such as marijuana, which alters the composition and function of the brain (Carpenter, 2001). This is especially true of teens' cannabis usage, which may have long-term negative consequences on cognitive processes (Jacobs and Tapert, 2014).

Unlike neuroscientific and cognitive theories, psychological theories say that drug use/abuse is primarily understood as a behavioral pattern and an unconscious belief system with psychological and sociological components (White, 1996). Drug use, according to the notion, is a form of inappropriate behavior that is rewarded and punished (Wanigaratne,2006). When a person consumes a certain substance, a reaction is unavoidable. A sense of euphoria, for example, could be a reaction that lasts just until the drug is stopped. Then occurs the creation, which results in changes in physical states, and an individual develops a strong desire to continue using the drug to achieve that sense of pleasure (Brook, 2013).

Another theory is stress theory which states that people are motivated to use drugs such as marijuana use with a desire to escape from personal or psychological problems (Rhodes and Jason,1988). Supporters of this viewpoint refer to studies that show that frequent drug users outperform nonusers on measures of psychological distress (Mellinger et al., 1975).

The ideas are extremely useful in gaining a better knowledge of drug usage from many perspectives. The arguments provide distinct perspectives in the sense that if one theory is unable to describe a pattern of drug use, the other may be able to help and adhere to the scenario. As a result, combining theories and looking at them from the perspectives of the mind, personality, and society is critical to our understanding of drug use among youngsters and their prospects.

Factors of Drug Use

There are many reasons why students use drugs. The major ones are the following

Family Backgrounds

Our families are the first people we will ever meet. Our primary interaction will be with our parents, siblings, and relatives from the day we are born until the day we start school. As a result, their influence will be significant. Children from families who were present for them and those who were neglectful and absent when they needed them had different life outcomes. Ojo et al. (2022) conducted research on the major factors that influence youth drug use. According to the findings, family factors have a significant influence on adolescent use of psychoactive substances. It also showed that children whose family have been loving caring and understanding are less likely to use drugs than children whose family are always blaming, abusing, degrading and demoralizing them. Therefore it indicated that when targeting drug use it should start from the base and work its way up, start with the relationship between this children and their families, work on there bond, trust level and interaction mechanism.

Role models

A role model is someone whom one admires and aspires to be like. Family members, teachers, social media influencers, and artists can all be role models. Children whose parents primarily used marijuana during their adolescence were at the greatest risk (Epstein et.al, 2020).

Epstein et.al (2020) conducted a study on marijuana-using parents and the effects it has on their children. The study concluded that consistent parental marijuana use increases the risk of substance use in children. Other psychiatric issues that may have an impact on their children's outcomes may arise.

Social media influencers, including underappreciated artists, serve as public role models. Willoughby (2020) conducted an explanatory study on the influence of social media on marijuana use. The study concluded that young people may be exposed to a variety of marijuana-related content on social media and that this exposure may influence marijuana use, highlighting a common concern among young people about the normalization of risky behaviors.

Peer influence

Peer influence describes how pupils are influenced by the beliefs and actions of their peers who use drugs. Some young adults may develop concurrent drug use habits to impress peers and gain social popularity, resulting in severe psychological difficulties (Olurishe, 2019). The social learning theory may simply describe peer influence effectively (Giovazolias & Themeli, 2014). There is a link between young adult marijuana use and peer influence because young adults who use marijuana during social events have a high attrition rate (Kioumarsis et al., 2017).

There are some young adults who use marijuana in college social settings for reasons related to college peer pressure, Stormshak (2019 as cited in Prince et.al, 2021). Formerly, perceived social and individual stigmatism was endorsed as a motivator for young adults avoiding mental health services (Gunn et al., 2018). It is also the ignorance of peers who see their friends as weak for seeking psychological help that discourages people from seeking psychological help for better health (Gunn et al., 2018). The young adult marijuana social culture

can have negative consequences for those who are unaware of the potentially harmful effects of marijuana (Gunn et al., 2018). Similarly, young adults may be unaware of the extent to which peer pressure can influence them to use marijuana, Stormshak (2019 as cited in Prince et al., 2021).

Yusuf (2010), while conducting research on factors of substance misuse among university students in Nigeria, concluded that peer influence as a variable should be included in the intervention agenda aimed at reducing drug use among university students because peer influence is the major factor that influences substance use. It emphasizes the notion that even a single factor that is unrelated to other factors can play a significant influence in leading vulnerable students down the incorrect road.

According to a study conducted by Josephine (2011) on peer pressure and alcohol consumption among college students in the United States, it is vital for students to be involved in high status groups to be socially recognized in a university context. Low-status groups, such as non-drinkers and non-smokers, may be marginalized since they are not perceived as cool because they do not engage in drug-related activities. As a result, individuals who start college resolved to stay drug-free are frequently swayed by their peers, whose desire to belong to high-status organizations becomes dominant. In a comparative study, it was discovered that young adults aged 18 and older are constantly subjected to peer pressure from their peers who want them to engage in recreational marijuana use in academic social settings (Prince, 2021).

Availability of drugs

Drug use is directly tied to accessibility and cost. Martin et.al, (2016) stated that accessibility of acquiring drugs relates to drug initiation and usage. According to the poll, 80% of young adults aged 18 to 24 said they could readily obtain marijuana if they want it, while 20%

believed they could quickly obtain cocaine. The perception these kids hold about drugs, combined with the reality of easy access, leads to drug use.

While conducting a study on the availability, usage, and repercussions of drugs at Nigerian learning institutions, Obot (2005) discovered that most participants used substances such as marijuana and cocaine, owing to their ease of access. It was also shown that when students recognized the financial benefits of selling drugs, as well as the ease with which they could access them, they were enticed to join in the act of selling

Risk Environmental Factors

The easy availability of substances highlighted positive norms and legislation, extreme economic deprivation, and neighborhood disorder are all listed as key environmental drivers of drug use and addiction (Bachman, 1994). For example, at Unity University, it is obvious to see the numerous drug-inducing establishments nearby where many students congregate.

According to a study conducted by Bosworth et.al (2011), about school climate factors among Arizona college students, school safety, aside from physical security features, includes any surrounding circumstances. As the number of bars, clubs, and pool halls in the area where the college is located grows, so does the number of shady people who frequent them, which eventually leads to more drug usage or violence around the institution.

Risk perception of Drugs

Reardon and Buka (2002) investigated college students' risk perceptions of marijuana and their link with rising use in the United States, as well as other sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic position, all of which are thought to play a role. The central finding was that, while the student's family's economic status had little influence on risk

perception, age was positively correlated with lower risk perception, as students grew older and gained experience through experimentation with various elements. As a result, as students grew older and gained experience through experimentation with various elements, they became less hesitant to use drugs.

According to Etter (2017), young adults perceive daily cannabis use as nonharmful when compared to other age groups, despite the fact that marijuana is harmful when used excessively. As a result, peer network counseling was recommended to promote interventions that assist young adults in breaking the cycle of addiction. Mason (2018) found that young adult participants who participated in peer network counseling interventions reported significantly fewer marijuana-related problems, indicating a positive social change.

Age and Drug use

In the United States, Johnston et.al, (2002) investigated the association between marijuana use and age. According to the report, most students try marijuana for the first time when they are about to start high school. It also revealed that, while more students began before joining college, a significant percentage of students began using marijuana once they arrived at institutions. As a result, just because high school students' usage levels are higher, all attention must be paid to them, even though it begins, persists, and grows once they arrive on campus.

Hawke et al. (2020) did study into the role of age in marijuana consumption in Canada. According to the report, marijuana consumption has increased dramatically in developed countries during the last three decades. Marijuana use is most likely to begin when a person is between the ages of 14 and 16. According to the study, marijuana, among other drugs, has been found to cause dependence in a short period of time, leading to drug usage difficulties. When

students are between the ages of 17 and 19, they are on the verge of graduating from high school and enrolling in university.

Self-medication

Self-medicating is the use of drugs, alcohol, or other substances to treat depression, pain, or intense emotions without the supervision of a doctor. Using cannabis to relieve psychological and physical distress, according to Wallis et.al, (2021), is a significant risk factor for cannabis use disorder. According to a study on marijuana and its risk factors, a significant number of young adults supported marijuana to alleviate problems such as anxiety, sleep, depression, pain, loneliness, social discomfort, and concentration. (Wallis et.al, 2021)

In addition to Wallis et.al, (2021), Prince (2021) stated that self-medication with cannabis may pose some risks to users. The main concerns are potential intoxication from high cannabis dosages, as well as users experiencing known and unknown adverse events. This is especially important given the lack of a minimal benefit-risk assessment prior to cannabis use for those individuals.

Causes of marijuana use/abuse by students.

Enhancement of academic performance, experiencing pleasure, receiving release from anxiety, peer influence, academic unhappiness, gaining acceptance from others, being sociable, and getting rid of boredom are all motivations for drug usage, according to Gezaheign et al., (2014). According to the report, students in colleges and universities were particularly influenced by marijuana use. When one enrolls in university, they get newfound independence and experiment with drugs as a result which leads to dependency.

Out of the regular reasons students smoke or take drugs, according to Ray (1999), is to escape reality. Marijuana and other mind-altering substances can provide the impression that you

can go to your ideal world for at least a few hours. As a result, any issues, and disasters the students may have in their lives are temporarily forgotten, and they feel entirely unconcerned.

Consequences of marijuana use on academic performance.

Usage of marijuana affects the mind in a very complex manner. The main reasons being that it damages your cognitive abilities during and after many days of using. Thus, resulting in hindering your educational achievement, for a significant time. (Lynskey, 2000). Lower grades which eventually lead to dropping out of school are highly associated with frequent use of marijuana. (Fisk and Montgomery, 2008).

Intelligence quotient is the measure of an individual's mental reasoning and due to cannabis abuse, that starts from a young age a single person will lose an average of eight points irreversibility. It's also important to mention that this does not apply to individuals who started marijuana as an adult. Focusing and response accuracy are the ones that are immediately impacted when using marijuana, they disrupt your thoughts, hence affecting your memory. (Martinez et.al, 2015).

Researchers, Diego et.al, (2003) reported that the academic grades of the students decreased as frequency of marijuana use increased. Numerous studies mention that every so often the use of marijuana leads to academic failure and other times early academic failure leads to use. There are many pathways that lead to negative outcomes from substance use during adolescence (Manu et.al, 2021). As a result, there is a link between marijuana use and students' ability to learn, as evidenced by instances where students under the influence don't bother to go to class, or if they do, their motivation is so low that they won't attend the class properly, making achievement impossible.

Consequences of Drug Addiction

Drug types and their health consequences

According to Ray et.al, (1999), drug misuse has a variety of repercussions, one of which is health related. Because youngsters' brains and bodies are still developing, drug use can have catastrophic repercussions. It has long-term consequences that may not become apparent until later in life. Cardiovascular disease, cancer, gastrointestinal, neurological, and mental health problems, respiratory impairments, and mortality are the major health repercussions.

Anything from an irregular pulse to a heart attack might be caused by cardiovascular disorders. According to Paul and Roth (2009), drugs taken via injection can cause issues like blocked veins and contagious infections in the blood arteries and heart valves. Cocaine and marijuana, for example, are drugs that lead to cardiovascular disease. Cancers of the mouth, neck, and stomach, as well as lung cancer, can be caused by smoking cigarettes. Secondhand cigarette smoke raises the risk of lung cancer in nonsmokers, as well as other health concerns. Young adult males who began smoking marijuana in their adolescence are at risk of developing genital cancer. Tobacco, marijuana, and steroid medicines are all cancer-causing chemicals.

Additionally, gastrointestinal side effects are prevalent, as many medicines cause nausea and vomiting after use. Abdominal discomfort and intestinal tissue deterioration are two side effects of cocaine use. Abdominal pain, acid reflux, and severe constipation are all side effects of opioid use. Heroin, khat, and nicotine are all substances that cause gastrointestinal symptoms (Ray et.al, 1999).

Park Lee et al., (2018), in addition to Ray (1999) findings, stated that drug addiction has a variety of neurological and mental health repercussions. Addictive chemicals work on the brain to produce their rewarding effects. Some people are harmed by seizures, strokes, and direct toxic

effects on brain cells. Chronic drug use leads to both short- and long-term brain changes, which can lead to mental health issues like paranoia, melancholy, anxiety, aggression, hallucinations, and more. Addiction and mental disease have a strong link. A common side effect of drug use is addiction. Cocaine, heroin, inhalants, LSD, and marijuana are drugs that contribute to the neurological and mental health impacts.

According to Gates et.al (2014), chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and lung cancer are the most common respiratory adverse effects of substance use, such as smoking cigarettes and/or marijuana. Cocaine is known to cause serious respiratory problems and lung damage. Opioids can cause asthma symptoms to worsen by delaying breathing and preventing air from entering the lungs. Death is caused by the overuse of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana since there are more deaths from drug use than any other preventable health concern.

Consistent with the above information, marijuana use is clearly linked to reddening of the eyes, possible weight loss or gain, heroin use is clearly linked to loss of appetite and severe withdrawal symptoms that can lead to death, cocaine use is clearly linked to, sleeplessness, tremors, and lung damage (NIDA, 2020). Common Ethiopian narcotics such as chat, hashish, and shisha, according to Ethiopia's Ministry of Health (2003), have immediate health-related impacts such as tooth rot, loss of appetite, mental sickness, and the danger of catching HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Emotional Consequences

Negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, and even fury, according to Park Lee et al., (2018), are frequently related with addiction. When someone suffering from addiction or alcoholism is confronted with these negative emotions, they frequently turn to drugs or alcohol to cope. When withdrawal sets in, the emotions worsen, and they must use more to

feel normal. As a person's addiction worsens, so do their emotional difficulties and changes. Khat, hashish, and cannabis, on the other hand, are reported to alienate oneself from family and community social values, causing huge sadness, psychological pain, and attempted suicide (Ethiopia's Ministry of Health, 2003).

Prevention strategies against cannabis use/disorder.

Measures must be taken to properly mitigate this problem. One of the ways that is possible is by screening students who are facing academic problems and making sure that there is no independent variable playing a factor, hence through counseling or testing, finding out the truth is the primary steppingstone. After the identification process, measures should be taken to ensure that students who are in the high-risk classification should be paid special attention so that they do not fall into this habit (Park et.al, 2018).

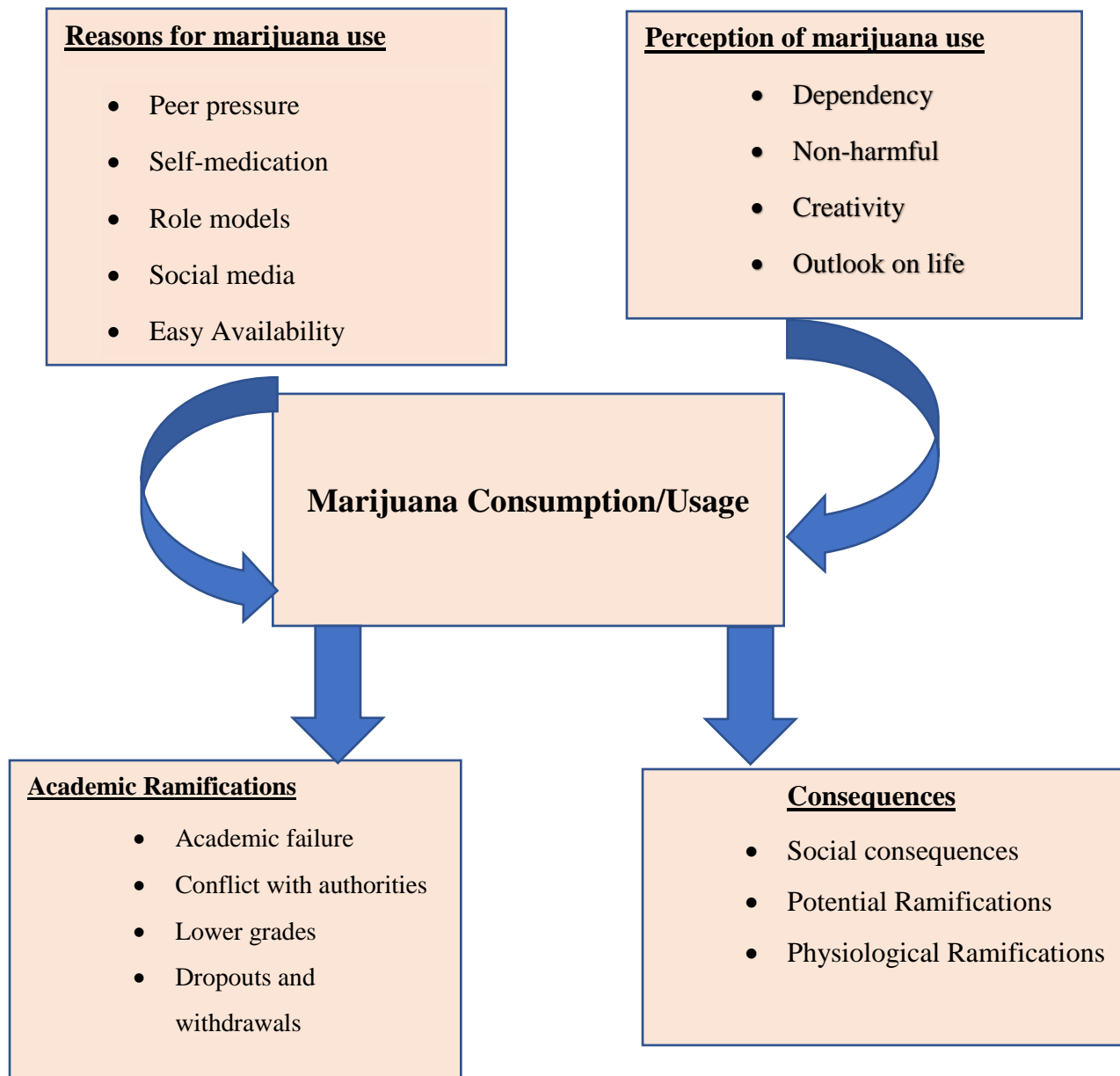
Several comprehensive assessments as well as interventions, then could be taken in relation to behavioral mental or physical problems students are currently facing. If among the identified students, some are already intertwined in this abuse, treatment shall be provided so that the person can quit permanently. Aria et.al (2015) noted in her research that, when one begins to incorporate marijuana or other harmful drugs, we are letting the mind be controlled and function on auto pilot. People associate academic potential with just grades, but that not just the case. Maintaining interest, curiosity and enthusiasm are major parts of success.

Kumsa (2019), explain that when one enters to a whole different environment, many challenges come along with it, trying to adjust to new groups, being apart from family and even financial constraints are part of it. These challenges possibly lead students to personal crisis, mainly emotional disturbance, stress, and another social crisis. These mainly lead to academic failure, drug addiction, social isolation, suicidal attempts and so forth. Along with these

problems, the need for educating students with desirable life skills and adaptive behavior is crucial which Universities must implement.

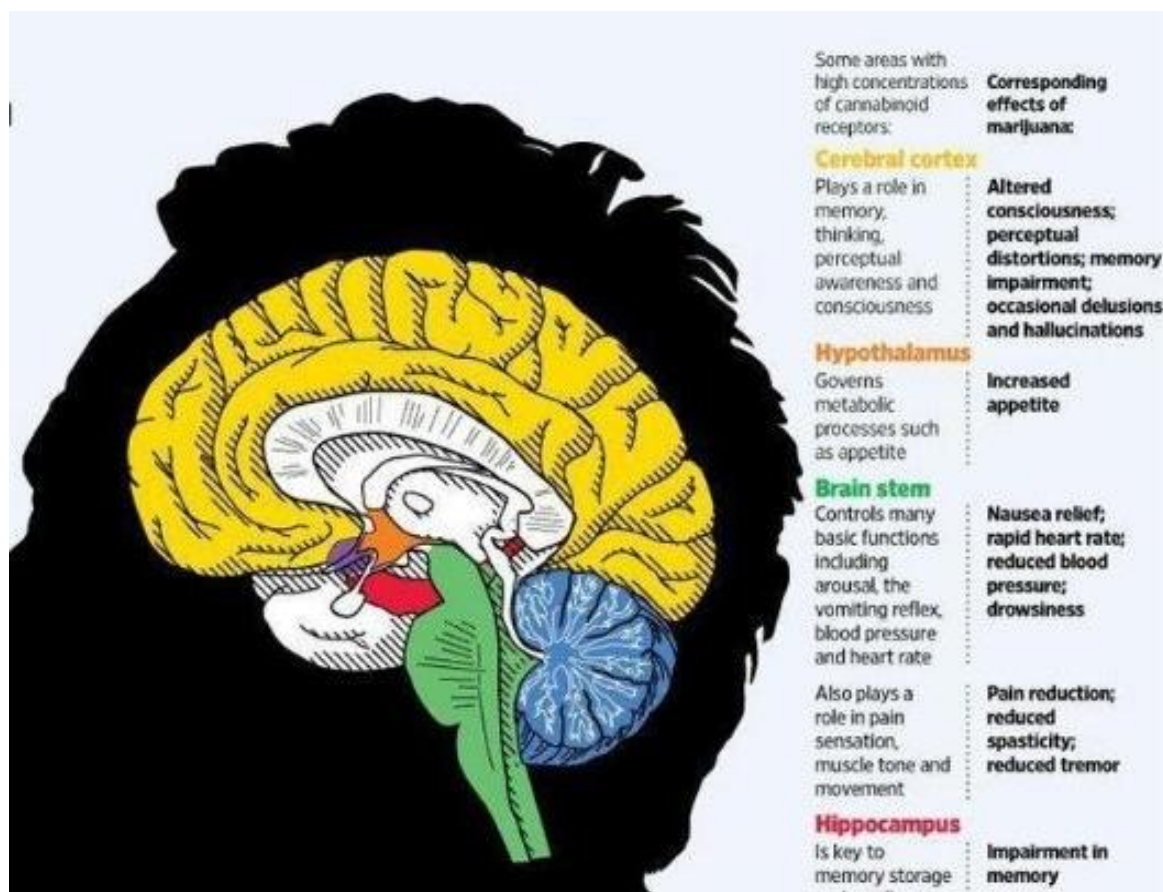
Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework is developed by the researcher to show the relationship between marijuana consumption/use towards social factors, demographic factors, risk factors and overall ramifications.



Source: Self developed for this study

Picture 1- Marijuana's effects on the brain



Source: *CannaSOS.com*

Summary of the reviewed literature

The previous section's marijuana use theories explain the factors and effects of marijuana use on students. The research questions of the study seek to answer students' perceptions, experiences, and challenges with marijuana use. To that end, social context, according to the social learning theory, can explain how students learning together learn and share a variety of behaviors, as well as how marijuana users influence non-users. It also explains the personality of students and their desire to fit in. Similarly, the stress theory proposes that students use marijuana to deal with their emotional baggage. As a result of the combination of the two theories, the researcher was guided to conduct the study.

The preceding research has explained the various causes and effects of marijuana use. According to reports, the main reasons for marijuana use are peer pressure, self-medication, and availability. Marijuana use is said to cause loneliness, depression, academic problems, and stigmatization. Young adults are vulnerable to a variety of experiences because of drug use, just as secondary school students face difficulties and stress because of drug use. Most studies have discovered that drug use causes numerous problems in the lives of high school students, but few studies have discovered that young adults are also susceptible to drug use.

Nonetheless, almost all the studies that cite the literature have focused on the overall effect of drug use rather than the effect of each drug individually, particularly in the case of marijuana use. The literature studies have failed to describe the entire experience of how young adults perceive marijuana, and it is unclear why young adults do not consider marijuana use to be problematic. Previous research studies on young adults' lived marijuana experiences lacked comprehensive accounts of this phenomenon (Burggren et al., 2019).

So far, researchers studying young adults' lived experiences with marijuana use have focused on only a specific area. The area that is most researched is marijuana in conjunction with other substances, not alone (Prince, 2021). Because most studies used quantitative methods to explain the effect of drug use on young adults, the literature studies have failed to describe the entire experience. Nonetheless, the reviewed study discovered that most drug-using children's grades and overall educational performance are harmed in some way.

As a result, this study used a qualitative study and a phenomenological research approach to describe the true experiences and stories of the study participants to compare, contrast, and understand their experiences in relation to their reasons, perceptions, and consequences. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate and discover what young adults believe about the consequences of marijuana use. In addition to exploring and discovering young adult perspectives, as well as clearly cataloging their lived experiences.

Chapter Three: Methods

This section describes the research methodology and design, the study area, sample population and sample size, the data collection instruments used, the procedures used while collecting the data, the ethical considerations and the methods used to analyze the data.

Research Design

According to Holborn et.al, (2004) qualitative research technique helps understand and analyze the different experience and stories of the participants in the study. Qualitative data is usually seen as richer, more vital as having greater depth and more likely to present a true picture of a way of life or people's experience, attitude, and beliefs (Holborn, Langley, & Haralambos, 2004). A descriptive research study was presented for research objectives, as the researcher seeks to gain a detailed grasp of the lived experience of students who use marijuana.

This study used a phenomenological research design to comprehend the nature of a particular phenomenon. According to Creswell (2014), phenomenological research is an approach to qualitative research that emphasizes on the lived experience of participants about a certain phenomenon. Because the study's goal was to characterize the lived experiences of students who use marijuana, the researcher decided that a phenomenological study design would be best for gathering detailed information from a small group of users.

Phenomenological research is also quite thorough and detailed, which aids in acquiring a thorough comprehension of the issue under consideration (Moustakas, 1994). The use of open-ended questions allows us to elicit rich, important information from the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Interactive interviews were conducted to acquire information relevant to the research issues. Hence, the researcher has selected a phenomenological research approach to document the lived experience of students who use marijuana.

Research Site

The study was conducted at Unity University, which is a private university in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. It is also Ethiopia's first privately owned higher education institution to be granted full university status by the Ministry of Education. Unity University (UU) is a modest coeducational Ethiopian higher education school established in 1991. Following its educational achievements, the institute was upgraded to the college level in March 1998, becoming Ethiopia's first privately owned college. It has an enrollment range of between 5,000-and 6000 students (Unity University, 2020). It offers courses and programs in a variety of fields that lead to officially recognized higher education degrees such as bachelor's and master's degrees. It had been in existence for almost 30 years and features a selective admission procedure that's dependent on previous GPA and other academic results in addition to the entrance examination (Unity University, 2020).

Unity University has a very wide compound more than capable of carrying thousands of students, the classrooms are organized and consist of enough chairs and other necessary tools for the classes to take place appropriately. The number of women and men attending the school was almost proportional, with girls slightly leading in number. The age ranges of most students were between 18- 27. There are many stationaries, internet cafes, and dining areas around the school where most students go to hang out, and mainly, students hang out by coffee places in which smoking is allowed. This coffee shop also has other facilities such as a pool table, a Khat chewing area, and food. This is primarily where students who use drugs gather. Primarily, it's a safe place because, from the outside, it appears to be a coffee shop, so students won't be caught doing other things. Second, it's relaxing because you can stay here for hours without being bothered. Most students frequent the establishment and pay well, so they are usually friendly

with the owners and the people who work there. Cigarettes, khats, marijuana, and occasionally alcohol are the most used drugs.

Sampling methods

In choosing the research participants, in this study, the researcher used the non-probability sampling method. The purposive sampling method was employed when selecting the students from the faculty of architecture and computer science at Unity University. The reason for that is purposive sampling technique is an acceptable kind of sampling for selecting respondents whom we think will provide us with the best information (Etikan et.al, 2016). As such the researcher explored places around the campus to get the right participants for the study.

The researcher reconnected with two students, which have a prior connection with the researcher while attending the school. The two senior students helped the researcher select the right respondents (marijuana users/who have experience using marijuana) for the study. This enabled the researcher to visually understand and make sense of the reality. The students were able to point out which coffee shops were the most used for these purposes. The researcher observed the students that were in the coffee shops were mostly architecture and computer science students.

Morse (1994) advises at least six respondents for phenomenological studies, although data gathering should conclude once the researcher is certain that no fresh information is on the way. As a result, based on the specified criteria, the researcher employed a purposive sample strategy (criteria-based sampling). This sampling strategy is especially useful for identifying specific study participants with extensive knowledge and experience of the phenomena under investigation (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Young adult marijuana users who discussed their lived experiences were designated as the target population for this study, with purposeful sampling.

Considering this, eleven students who use marijuana and attend their education at Unity University and who are from departments of architecture and computer science have participated. In addition, two key informants which includes class representatives of both departments were interviewed. Besides the above data collection instruments, the researcher used analysis of related studies to support the primary data of the study. To select the study participant who fit the inclusion criteria the researcher contacted students who had prior connections with the researcher and who attend the university.

A total of thirteen (including the key informants) one-to-one interviews were conducted and recorded. Each participant's interview time slot lasted no more than 45 minutes to an hour. This research topic is sensitive and one of the most avoided issues among schools and students as it's illegal and can result in serious consequences. Keeping in mind the difficulties the researcher believed that responses from the respondents of the two departments can achieve the objective of the study.

Participant Inclusion Criteria

The researcher used criteria for selecting participants include: The participants were eleven young adults with marijuana histories of 6 months and more. Each participant was selected due to having used marijuana consistently for over a while, to get a clear picture of the impacts of marijuana use (Macleod, 2018). The participants only consisted of students of Architecture and Computer Science at Unity University between the ages of 18 and 25. That's because marijuana use during the young adult years is associated with negative consequences (Emery et al., 2020). Currently, young adults who use marijuana are associated with a high rate of problematic factors. (Koocher & Shortt, 2018)

Sources of data

Semi-Structure In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews and key informant interviews were used to gather the required data. According to Creswell (2014), the best data collection method is an interview because phenomenology focuses on the individual's lived experience. As a result, a face-to-face interview was used to learn about the participants' lived experiences as marijuana users. Exploratory and descriptive qualitative research approaches benefit from semi-structured interviews with open-ended inquiries. It allowed respondents to speak freely, and it allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the respondents' primary responses and obtain a more detailed response on a specific topic (Creswell, 2014).

It includes open-ended questions that allow both the interviewer and the interviewee to discuss the topic in depth. In-depth interviews assist the researcher in gathering data related to individuals' personal histories, experiences, and perspectives, particularly when sensitive issues are being investigated, and they assist in inviting participants to articulate stories, experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about their subjective lived experiences (Kosny et al, 2014). The interview question was including questions about the background information of participants (age, birthplace, family size, educational level) and items related to marijuana use and their experiences. The interview guide was prepared in English.

Key Informant Interview

The key informant interview was conducted with purposively selected two informants who were the class representatives of both departments. The selection criteria for the key informants were their position in class and since their positions allowed them to directly have contact and rapport with their classmates. The interview focused on the overall condition, challenges, and perception of the students about marijuana use.

The Procedure of Data Collection

Because the participants were university students who were fluent in English, the data was collected in English. Before the actual data collection date, the researcher attempted to contact the participants to establish rapport and trust, which would allow them to speak freely about their lived experiences. The interviews were conducted in coffee shops where there were few people and where free and honest communication is possible.

The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour. In addition, the interview was recorded on tape, and notes were taken. The data collection process began with introductory questions designed to learn about the respondents' backgrounds. At the end of the interview procedure, the researcher asked participants if they wanted to add anything about the study questions or their comments before concluding each interview session. Finally, the researcher extended her gratitude to the participants for sparing their valuable time.

Data analysis and interpretation

Data collection and analysis go hand in hand in phenomenological studies, and the analysis starts with the first respondent (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2003) recognized bracketing as a tool for the researcher to avoid bias and judgment when analyzing the data and interpreting the results. As a result, by using the bracketing approach, the researcher was able to avoid affecting the coding, categorizing, and making meaning or interpretation processes as much as possible. Analyses and interpretations were undoubtedly data-driven rather than theory-driven.

To grasp the context and semantics, the data was read line by line. During the interview, the researcher took a field note of each participant's words and verbal expressions, focusing on their bodily expressions, gestures, emotion, and feelings, as well as the tones of their voice. Because the phenomenological approach had a restricted number of participants, the researcher

conducted all the interviews, transcribing the interview text, coding, decreasing the bulk data, and manually generating themes. This allowed the researcher to gain a precise understanding of the data as well as the ability to recall the specific situation of each participant's account of their experiences while also making sense of the phenomenon's core meanings in a continuous reflecting process.

The stories from respondents were the foundation for the categorization of ideas as well as the discovery of new themes and subthemes from the data. The researcher next discovered patterns of relationship between the highlighted themes and began writing the report. The reasons for marijuana usage, the perception of marijuana use, and the impacts of marijuana use were the main themes that were discovered. In addition, direct quotes from the respondents were used to provide evidence and help readers to make their own meanings.

Quality assurance of the study

In qualitative research, data quality can be assured by maintaining trustworthiness, as opposed to quantitative research, which seeks validity and dependability. To ensure credibility, direct interviewee quotes were used during the development of categorical data which was used to enhance the overall interpretational accurateness of the data presented. All interviews were recorded and transcribed word for word to certify the overall accuracy of interpretations.

To ensure dependability (accurate data interpretation and delving deeply into understanding participants' perspectives during data analysis), the recurring themes derived from the data provided represented the validation and proper implementation of participant quotes. To ensure transferability, the meaning was interpreted through the analysis of descriptive rich data using popular semi-structured interviewing strategies. The transferability was increased through careful documentation of observations made during attentive listening to participant responses,

and reflexivity was ensured as the researcher and participant engaged in an interpretive analysis for preventive measures. The research's trustworthiness was also ensured through careful documentation (as free as possible from bias).

Ethical consideration

The research topic was approved by Addis Ababa University's School of Social Work. Addis Abeba University wrote a letter of cooperation, and permission to obtain data from Unity University. Unity University also granted permission to collect data. According to Creswell (2014), to gain support from respondents, the researcher must inform them that they are taking part in a study without deception or lies. As a result, the study's objective was explained to the study participants.

The students chosen as interviewees had no personal relationship with the researcher. All participants were also informed about the possibility of additional questions being asked during the interview. The participants were informed ahead of time that they would be recorded for accuracy. Before beginning any interviews, the researcher also requested verbal agreements. During interview scheduling, interviewees were required to provide suitable times when the interview was least likely to be interrupted. The interview questions were repeated or explained at the interviewee's request at any time. During the interviews, participants were asked whether they had anything to say about the questions. Interviews finished right after the students concluded their answers with any remaining information. Interviewees were informed throughout the interviewing process that participation could be stopped at any point in time when they feel any sort of uncomfortableness. All interviewees were further informed that they could avoid answering questions anytime for any reason. The interviewees overall attitude as well as their reactions during the interview was observed and no problems came up.

Chapter Four

Data Presentations

The data presentations of the study are discussed in this chapter. The empirical data of this study were coded to obtain the meaning of the data. The researcher has made no judgment of the research participants' experiences but has established a link between the study's labeled meaning units. The codes were divided into four categories. These four main categories are presented in this part of the study.

The first section of the chapter discusses the research participants' backgrounds. It is followed by a section that delves into students' experiences with marijuana and the meanings they assign to it. This section describes the perceptions, feelings, reactions, and events that occurred because of marijuana usage, three themes are identified by the researcher's analysis. For each theme, illustrative quotations are included to allow the student's voices to depict their experiences in their own words. The obstacles that participants faced because of their marijuana use are also presented in this section. As a result, participants have shared their perspectives on the problems they faced, particularly in terms of their schooling.

Background information of the participants

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25, with a mean age of 22 years old. They smoked marijuana regularly for at least a year. Men and women from the architecture and computer science departments participated in the interviews. The selected participants were all second-year Unity University students with similar educational backgrounds. The details of the respondents' backgrounds are presented in the following table.

Table 1- Participants demographic and Background information

Code Pseudo	Sex	Age	Marijuana initiation age	Current use status	
Names					
P1	AZ	Male	20	16 years old	Every other day
P2	TY	Male	21	18 years old	Four times a week
P3	KW	Male	22	15 years old	Every day
P4	LR	Male	23	17 years old	Two or three times a day
P5	RJ	Male	21	17 years old	Three times a week
P6	GW	Male	23	18 years old	Every day
P7	MG	Female	22	17years old	Five times a week
P8	HS	Female	23	17years old	Everyday
P9	JY	Female	22	20 years old	Every other day
P10	PL	Female	20	19 years old	many times a week(lost count)
P11	JB	Male	22	15 years old	Everyday

Participants' reasons for consistent marijuana use

By incorporating direct quotes from the participants, the researcher was able to create integrated and holistic thematic. Four sub-themes emerged from participant responses to reasons for first using marijuana: Smoking role models, self-medication, peer pressure, and easy accessibility.

Role models

Participants discussed what marijuana meant to them and why they first started using it. Furthermore, as they began to explain their past while looking back, the researcher sensed their pain and regret as they reflected on what they had lost. When the researcher noticed that these students were in deep pain, she tried to listen with her heart. They felt as failures, because they knew their families had relied and depended on them but knowing what they know at this point they realized they had disappointed both themselves and their families. They had clearly chosen marijuana over everything else, even though it had ruined their lives in various ways.

The students in this study stated that they started using it for a variety of reasons. One of the most common reasons given is that they idolized their role models. Role models were people they aspired to be like, so they imitated and did what they did. The students stated that they are now filled with guilt and shame because this reason appears so childish when viewed from this age and perspective. Participants were also influenced by family members such as uncles, brothers, and cousins, while others were influenced by artists and social media influencers. For example, while explaining how and when it all started, AZ expressed deep regret. He stated the following:

When I first started using it with my cousin, I was about 16 years old. He'd been using it since he was twelve, and he knew everything there was to know about it. We lived nearby, so I was always hanging out with him and his friends. He encouraged me to do it one day. He said he knew I was interested because I was always asking him about it. He told me that the only way to overcome the curiosity was to try it. He assured me that I had nothing to worry about and that it would be better if I tried it with someone I knew and trusted. I did and have been smoking ever since cause I really enjoyed the effect it had on me.

Another participant, TY, spoke about his experience in a melancholy tone. He was watching intently, as though recalling all that had happened since his relationship with marijuana began. He was trying to figure out how things could have turned out differently now. As he explained how he started smoking, the researcher sensed his confusion as the participant was in a state of wondering if things would have been different if his uncle had done something to stop him, if he would have listened to him or done worse. He remarked that it is a question that I will never be able to answer. He states in the following way:

Since I can remember, my uncle has been smoking marijuana. When I was about 18, I began to take from him and experiment with it. He confronted me and asked whether I had stolen anything from him when he learned I was stealing from him; at that point, I was already high, and it was evident. He seemed really cool and calm when he spoke to me. He told me not to do it on the street, to just use it at gatherings and parties, and not to buy it elsewhere. And he said if I needed to smoke, I should come to get it from him because it's illegal and could get me in trouble.

KW's motivation was different from the previous ones. He stated that he started smoking because there were musicians he would always listen to. He stated that the musicians he was a fan of were mostly smokers. They have also openly talked about their experience with marijuana and how it is an epic experience, on social media platforms. As such by watching them he wanted to be part of the experience. According to the researcher, there were no signs of regret or shame in his eyes, in contrast to previous participants. He confidently explained with his gaze fixed on the researcher, as follows:

To begin, I dislike referring to marijuana as a drug. It strikes me as a derogatory term. Moving on, unlike most of my friends, I did not begin because of peer pressure. I consider myself mature because I never do anything unless I truly believe the logic behind it. When I was in tenth grade, about 15 years old, I first saw marijuana portrayed as fun and creativity-enhancing in music videos. I started researching it and discovered that the majority of the successful musicians I knew smoked marijuana and mentioned how much it helped with their art. I saw that nothing bad happened to them as well. As a result, I became involved and here I am today.

LR had a similar tone as well as reason, as to why he started using marijuana. The researcher noticed that the participant sounded proud and unbothered of this habit. He was sitting in a confident pose with his legs wide open and his hand on his hair as he was twirling his curls. His breath smelled of cigarettes as it was obvious, that he had been smoking. He even had a smirk as he knew that the researcher recognized the smell. He offered the researcher a cigarette stick but the researcher politely declined. LR stated as follows;

I started when I was 17 years old. Snoop Dogg was a well-known artist who captured my attention. I was his biggest fan, and he was always holding a weed dub in almost every video clip. I began inquiring with my friends about it. They explained that it was called marijuana and that it was used to get high. So my friends and I got together, bought it somewhere, and started smoking. It was a very thrilling experience. I felt closer to the artist and I've never felt happier.

Peer pressure

There were also other reasons why the students started smoking marijuana. Peer pressure was one of the most mentioned reasons why they started smoking. RJ stated that being alone was the hardest thing when he was in high school. He mentioned that he couldn't fit in with the smart kids because he wasn't gifted in that department. The other groups also didn't include him in their activities. But he couldn't let him pass it by when he got an opportunity with the cool kids also known as the smokers. He said of his experience

I left Addis Ababa when I was nine years old, and I've spent the majority of my life in the Middle East. I returned around the time I began high school. As a result, aside from my family members, I knew no one here. When I was in high school, I didn't have anyone to hang out with because my personality was a bit different. I began using it around the age of 17 after a classmate offered it to me and said that if I liked it, I could hang out with them and smoke. I really wanted friends so I lied and said I liked smoking, I got included in their group ever since, and they are still my friends.

GW also had a similar experience. The researcher noticed that the participant regretted the fact that he ignored the bad aspect of marijuana use just because friends said how much fun it was. He seemed hopeless, and a little bitter as he explained that, even though it was bad he thought it was only temporarily. He was looking down at the ground for most of the conversation as if he wanted to go back in time and undo it although unfortunately, that wouldn't be possible.

GW states as follows:

I began when I was in the 12th grade, around the age of 18. You've probably heard of days like Color Day and Gentles Day. My friends always got wasted and smoked weed whenever those events occurred. They always said I'd have a great

time if I tried it. I resisted at first but eventually gave in. At first, I didn't feel it and, I thought something was wrong with me, but when I tried it again, I got so high that I freaked out. Every time we went to events after that they would push me to smoke and I would. Eventually, it turned into habitual smoking And I'm still a smoker to this day, though I wish I wasn't.

Self-medication

Students use marijuana for a variety of reasons. It is sometimes used to treat mental emotional or physical symptoms. This is known as self-medication. In the short term, this may make you feel better. However, in the long run, it may possibly create new problems. There were students who reported that smoking helps relieve many mental health problems They also said it was possible to get on with their daily lives, without the need for other outlooks. MG said of her experience:

I began smoking at the age of sixteen. I was depressed growing up. I was the kid who didn't have a lot of friends, and our father wasn't around, so family and financial issues were the main reasons. The depression was so severe that nothing I did made a difference. I was home alone once, feeling sorry for myself. My older brother was a smoker and I knew he kept his stash in the storeroom, believing that no one would look there. I looked for it and found the weed he hid. I decided to try smoking it to see if that would help. I discovered that smoking didn't help my depression much, but it did make it easier to deal with or at least forget about it for a little while.

AZ expressed a similar view on self-medication, stating that he experienced social anxiety whenever he had to go out with friends or other people, so he avoided going most of the

time, negatively impacting his social life and leading to loneliness. He describes how marijuana has helped him cope with mental stress. He describes his approach to dealing with problems as follows:

Whenever there is an event, I try to build my confidence, dress up, and go. right before I am about to leave, I freeze. All the anxiety I feel controls my body and mind, so I end up not going. So, one day my friend recommended that I give marijuana a try. He told me to smoke right before there is an event and see how I feel. So the next time there was a party I tried it, an hour before going I smoked, and the relief I felt was so amazing., I felt like I could handle anything that came my way, and soon after I went out. I was talking with people, making jokes, and having fun. Soon after every time I go out, I smoke and I have a great time, and it has positively impacted my social life, I even have a girlfriend now, which is something I couldn't have imagined.

TY also agrees with the assertion that it aids in the treatment of mental health issues. He stated that he has been able to get the rest he requires since he began smoking. He stated that it put him to sleep and that he mostly had colorful and abstract dreams, which is a beautiful experience in and of itself. TY states the following:

It is so effective for my insomnia that I use it most nights to sleep. When I get enough sleep, I am less depressed, less anxious, and far happier. If I only take prescription medications, I quickly develop tolerance to them and they stop working, and once you start using them, you can't sleep without them. If I only use marijuana to sleep, the same thing happens. When I alternate between pills and marijuana, both work and I get a good night's sleep.

Similarly, SY agrees with the same connotation of using marijuana to deal with insomnia as she has employed it in her life. She describes her experience as follows:

I've been a bit of an insomniac since high school, but because my schedule wasn't too demanding, I didn't let it bother me too much. But after university, it began to affect my school life; I couldn't concentrate, so I looked for alternatives, and that's when I discovered marijuana. I had heard that one of the side effects of marijuana use is the ability to sleep, and after trying it, I knew it worked, so I persisted. It's been nearly two years. I use it every night for about a month, then take a month or two off before returning to it. Whenever I start taking a break, insomnia returns, and I wait until I can't stand it anymore and feel like I'm going insane before I resume using it.

Easy availability of Marijuana

The students reported that another factor that mainly influences them to use is availability. Most of them have also mentioned that the price is very low and affordable. There is a variety of price range options to choose from starting from thirty Birr (low quality) going up to three hundred birr or more (high quality). And this does not include what they get for free from their family and friends, which is often what they do if they can't afford the low-quality weed. Hence, no matter what this shows that they can access it whenever and however they want. KW describes his experience as follows:

It's simple to get access, you can get it by asking your friends, and there are places to buy it from as a weed smoker knows how to look for it in the right places. The price is also low, but I don't usually pay to get weed because my friends, cousins, and uncles, and almost all of them have weed at their house; as such, I don't need

to go looking for it somewhere else. I also work part-time at a restaurant, so I have cash; If ever I am out of money, which is the worst-case scenario for me. I ask my uncle for money or weed.

JB shares the same view. She stated that being able to easily access it has led me to curiosity. She stated that the fact that she can find it anywhere led to her wanting to try why the drug is so in demand. She states her experience as follows:

It was cheap when I first started. The first time I tried it, I was walking by around Megenagna when a kid selling soft drinks and biscuits asked if I wanted "the thing." When I asked what "the thing" was, he told me it was a drug that kids my age used to get high on. So, I asked him how much he was going to sell it for, and he said he could give me 50 birr's worth of weed, which would last me a week. I had no idea what he meant at the time, but I agreed, took it, and told my friends. We tried it and we enjoyed it. As such, access wasn't an issue. You share with your friends: if I have cash today, I share with my friends, and if I don't have it tomorrow, they share it with me; consequently, there is a probability of never running out.

According to the accounts above, the study participants began smoking for a variety of reasons. Some participants had a negative attitude toward marijuana and expressed regret for using it. Other participants, on the other hand, stated that marijuana helped them in a variety of ways and made their lives much better and easier. The researcher also observed the participants' hygiene. Everyone in the study was properly attired and clean. Although the participants occasionally smelled strongly of cigarettes.

When key informants spoke with students in that class whom they knew personally, they explained various reasons. The first reason given by students to key informants is that someone

famous is doing it. A celebrity, musician, or social media influencer could be the person. They justify their excuse by claiming that, despite smoking so much marijuana, these people are very successful and creative. They had no problems and were not restricted in their lives. The second reason they were given was that they couldn't get through the day without it. That it will either be boring or uneventful because time will pass by so slowly.

Even if some of them deny being addicted, they claim that life would be meaningless and boring without marijuana. Additionally, it would be impossible for them to go and sit with their smoking friends while doing nothing. Key informants reported that by observing smokers' actions, it is easy to guess why they are doing it without even knowing them. As evidence, one of the key informants shares the following information:

When we leave school for a break or class ends, we all have different places where we hang out. Smoking is permitted in many public places. Most of the students I know who smoke marijuana go to these locations with their friends. They not only smoke cigarettes but also marijuana here. When they don't show up to a class in the afternoon, you know they've been smoking marijuana. Furthermore, there are behavioral changes. Most of the time, you will notice a complete mood shift before and after using marijuana. The majority of students say they smoke to be happy.

Impacts of consistent marijuana use

Main thematic data is generated by incorporating quotes taken directly from the participants chosen for the completed interviews. The participant responses revealed four sub-themes:

Social Impacts of marijuana use

Social Enhancer

There were participants who reported that their social life transformed for the better after starting marijuana use. The participants reported feeling less stressed and happier after becoming smokers, as their lives were mostly lonely and isolated before. As a result, the participants' positive social experiences have been stated.

MG's experiences before her relationship with marijuana began were depressing as seen in her facial gestures when she goes on explaining. Her eyes showed the utter darkness she must have been feeling during that period. The researcher encouraged MG to describe her feelings however she deemed was best. She started by explaining using a metaphor from a movie she has always watched. In the movie, she was the girl who was always alone, hiding in her room, who had no friends because of her low self-esteem crying, and miserable. The way she explained showed that she used to feel so alone. She shared her life experience as follows:

I felt as though I were drowning. I didn't know whom to talk to. I didn't have somebody to talk with or laugh with. When I was under duress, I had no one to hold my hand. It was depressing . It seemed like I was going to fall over, and all the emotion that's been building up inside of me is about to burst out.. When the teacher asked for people to pair up, I knew I'd be the only one without a partner. And even though it may appear ridiculous, I felt humiliated. It's excruciatingly uncomfortable to be alone. But once I started smoking, I found a community that accepted me, I made friends, and I was part of the group. I am not saying it is a good enough reason to start smoking, but for me, in the place I was in, it was my only way out and it did come through.

Consequently, JY had a similar life experience compared to the previous participant. She explained that her relationship did get better after she started smoking marijuana. As she stated she met her boyfriend in that environment, and they are still dating to this day. JY has stated as follows:

I have been single for as long as I can remember, I have never actually dated because I was always afraid and had low self-esteem. Whenever I think about approaching a guy, I find attractive, I get anxious and don't follow through. That was me before I became a smoker. I don't know how to describe it, but I had a complete personality change afterward. I was confident, I felt attractive, and felt like I can get any guy I wanted. After a while, it happened I met someone I like and we hit it off, he is also a smoker, and we usually hang out together and smoke. We have been together for a year now and I have never been happier.

Other participants have stated that marijuana has greatly improved their lives, not just their social lives, but also their emotional and personal lives. LR explains it this way:

Marijuana calms me down when I'm stressed, and it cheers me up when I'm down, but before I didn't have a way to deal with my emotions, so I would always act out and ruin my relationships with people because I couldn't control myself. It assisted me in expressing my emotions by drawing me closer to my soul. It makes me compassionate and prevents my delusions from becoming too overwhelming by quieting the voices in my head, as I was on the verge of breaking down before. With marijuana in my life, I feel like I can handle anything that comes my way.

SY was also in agreement with this concept. She seems to be comfortable while she was describing her experience of her high school days. She felt invisible and unwanted by her friends

and family before marijuana use. Additionally, she reported that she neither got the time nor the attention she needed from her parents. She brings back her memory as follows:

I didn't have many friends as a fat kid, I was just the lonely, fat, dark-spirited social outcast. In tenth grade, I transferred to another school. There, I met a lot of new people, so to reinvent myself, I agreed to smoke marijuana with a new friend. The first time was incredible. My mind simply relaxed in a way it hadn't in years. I continued to smoke with this new friend, and she introduced me to other students at school. We formed a group and continue to smoke to this day.

Social rejection

There were participants who mentioned that their relationships with neighbors, friends, and families had deteriorated after they became smokers. Furthermore, they were embarrassed and chose to avoid the people in their neighborhood and school. For example, GW felt embarrassed to even walk around his neighborhood and felt he had to keep his head down. He felt out of place and isolated because people kept looking at him for what they perceived to be his wrongdoings: He stated the following:

It's not something that you can share with just anyone. It ruins your relationship with your other friends who don't smoke, especially friends from church. I have also faced difficulty while dating because once people find out, they don't want to associate with a pothead. My girlfriend of three years left me once I became a consistent smoker because she said that if her family ever found out that she is seeing someone who is a smoker they would disown her, and she just couldn't take that risk. So, the relationship that I have worked so hard on maintaining was destroyed over this.

Consequently, the participants mentioned that they have faced problems related to social acceptance in their relationships because people believe marijuana to be a very dangerous and insanity-enhancing drug, hence associating smokers as such which leads to stigmatizing. RJ stated as follows:

I've always desired to be in a relationship. Even though I didn't have a girlfriend before I became a smoker, I had numerous opportunities to date and meet girls. Girls, on the other hand, have avoided me since I began smoking. Their perception of me has been completely shattered; I am what they refer to as "dureye," and no one wants to be associated with me. I've tried a few times to show them that I'm not like that, but I'm at the point where I've given up. Because I am stigmatized by society, my self-perception is destroyed.

Marijuana has negatively impacted the participants' relationships with their friends and the opposite sex. Marijuana has also negatively impacted the participants' relationships with their family members. LR states as follow:

My relationship with my family has not been the same since they found out. They appear more distant and as if they have given up on me. When I go out, they always ask me where I'm going and whom I'm going with. My mother even approaches me and tries to smell me to see if I've been doing drugs recently. Life had simply been unpleasant. When I return home, I notice that my room has been opened and my belongings have been touched. They are constantly doubting me, and we are constantly arguing. We don't even hang out as a family as much as we used to because every time I sit down with them, they nag me about quitting. I just wish they'd never found out

Following her parents' discovery of her smoking habit, HS's life took a similar turn. Her parents ceased to be as concerned and attentive as they once were. She mostly felt neglected by her father. When her father was mentioned, she kept looking down and trying not to cry. HS states as follows:

My relationship with my father was strained; I had never seen him so disappointed, and it hurts me so much to realize I had broken his heart after everything he had done for me. He found out when I was in high school and was about to be expelled, and I still remember his shocked expression. Since then, even though I have not used drugs, he has always suspected me, and we have had numerous disagreements. We used to be close, but now we just fight because all he does is accuse me.

Psychological impacts of consistent marijuana use

As a result of their marijuana use, some of the participants reported hallucinations, mood changes, memory problems, depersonalization, paranoia, delusion, and disorientation. For example, after becoming a smoker, RJ's ability to remember things, focus, and motivation all suffered greatly. He was suffering from depression. His perception of reality had been altered in ways he couldn't put into words. As a result, he felt misunderstood and lonely, leading him to isolate himself even more. He tells his story in the following way:

When I smoke marijuana, I have bad hallucinations. Faces and bright lights are everywhere, as are strange sounds and shadows, and I occasionally scare myself. Even when I didn't smoke that day I'm still paranoid, and anxious. Before going to bed, I always lock the door. I'm always startled at the slightest sound to the point that I can't sleep properly. I have difficulty concentrating because I fidget a lot. Overall starting marijuana was a huge mistake I deeply regret.

AZ's experience was not so different from the previous participants. The fact that his smoking is getting worse concerns him as he is noticing some changes in his mental status. He couldn't fathom what kind of emotions he was feeling as he felt his mind playing tricks on him. He described his experience as follows:

I kept standing up to go somewhere or do something and I got stuck because I forgot what I was doing, so I go back and sit down to try to remember what I was trying to accomplish, and after a long time, I remember and go back to do that thing. Whether I smoke before I do something or not has been a recurring theme in my life, along with zoning out and becoming overly paranoid. I then told the doctor that I trusted that this was happening frequently he told me that it's a side effect of marijuana and that I should stop.

SY has also faced psychological difficulties because of her marijuana use. She was mentally disoriented from her environment. Her mind was constantly wandering about without giving much importance to her responsibilities. The despair on her face was noticeable. She describes her experience as follows:

In the early stages of smoking, I was ecstatic and had a good time. After a few months, that state wore off, and I began to feel paranoid every time I smoked. I was having all these thoughts in my head like, what if my parents found out, what if I do something crazy, and I then went into full panic mode, which was the worst state for me I eventually stopped smoking with others because I didn't want to get in trouble. I still smoke and I feel like I don't know who I am anymore.

There were participants who had varying experiences with marijuana's impact on their mental health. TY was positively affected by marijuana in that it was only after he began

smoking that he noticed his depression fading and saw a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. He was able to enjoy life and function confidently in the real world. TY describes his experience in the following way:

I used to wake up depressed, crying for no apparent reason, and feeling hopeless. I couldn't snap out of it and gather myself enough to get ready for school, so I skipped most days. My girlfriend once suggested that I try smoking marijuana. I took a few hits and felt much better within minutes; I was no longer sad, I was no longer desperate, and I was able to pick myself up and start my day with a smile. I still do this every morning, and my days couldn't be better.

JB holds a somewhat similar viewpoint. She believes that it does not treat depression in the sense that it does not help to get to the root of the problem and address it. However, it can be extremely beneficial in coping with the symptoms of a wide range of mood disorders. She says the following:

I used to have very depressing thoughts, and whenever they overwhelm me, smoking a nice joint will temporarily relieve the emotional pain, allowing me to stop obsessing and enjoy myself for a short time. It was a true lifesaver whenever I was experiencing emotional issues. In the sense that, I saw and felt every ache and pain leave my body and heart.

According to the accounts above, the participants had both negative and positive psychological effects. They believe that it is dependent on both the cause of the depression and the individual smoking it. Most participants believe that marijuana is not a good long-term approach for mental healthcare because, like other drugs, it comes with its own set of side effects.

Legal consequences

The participants reported being caught by law enforcement officers for having marijuana in their pockets or bags, as well as smoking. AZ, for example, stated that if you smoke and have never been caught, you are either wise or fortunate. The good news is that I've never been caught red-handed, which means they've never discovered a joint on me while I was being body-checked. He tells his story like this:

Last year, I was smoking with some friends when we were stopped by the police. You see, I and my friends had our own smoking area. People in the neighborhood began complaining about people smoking marijuana on their sidewalks, and they eventually reported it. Officers arrived after receiving the report and arrested all of us; fortunately, we destroyed the evidence before they arrived. We spent the night there, and in the morning, they told us to call our parents. After a while, my parents arrived, and paid the officer in charge, for my release.

TY had a similar experience. He stated that being apprehended by law enforcement was a difficult emotional experience for him. He is throat chocked up while he described what had happened to him. He felt abused and emotionally harmed. He angrily claimed that the law is not being followed correctly and that it is not fair. He mentioned that if legal measures were improved, for example, if they caught someone smoking and put him on probation or house arrest while also attempting to help that person, there might be a change. He goes on to explain:

When the cops caught me smoking, the first thing they did was hit me. I apologized numerous times, but they would not stop, and I was becoming seriously injured. After a while, they came to a halt and asked me to give them money from you. They threatened to take me to jail if I didn't have any money on me. Because I didn't have

any money at the time, they took me to jail, hit me, abused me, and basically treated me like a dog before releasing me the next day. I know I was lucky to be let go, but I still have nightmares and get nervous whenever I see an officer.

As a result of his marijuana use, LR has also had run-ins with law enforcement. He was mentally disoriented because of his surroundings. His fear was clearly visible on his face. He describes his encounter as follows:

I have been caught three or four times. One time, I remember my friend and I were walking around a place called Saris, and we were holding a bag. My friends put weed in there, and I didn't know about it. So, I was walking around carrying a bag of weed with me, and there was a checkpoint where officers were stopping people and checking inside cars and bags. When they asked us to give them a bag, we confidently gave it to them because I knew there was nothing in my bag. When they were going through the bag, they found the weed. They took us both to jail, and we spent the night there. It was a horrible experience; they told me to take off my socks and trousers. I slept with just my shirt, and it was freezing in there; I don't think I have ever been that humiliated in my life.

SY had a similar experience. She explained that the worst part for her was when her parents found out. There was fear and anxiety when she talked about the things her parents said to her. She states as follows

My friends and I were smoking at our usual spot. Suddenly, four or five officers jumped over the gates, and we were apprehended. They arrested us took us to jail and said that they would let us off with bail money. The inspector then summoned the parents, they all arrived at the station and paid our dues. There was yelling

and screaming, parents crying, and some hitting and insulting their kids. It was chaotic, and my mother didn't speak to me for about a month after that.

Being imprisoned, according to the testimonies above, brought with it a perpetual sense of hopelessness, powerlessness, and desperation. The participants felt intense remorse for disappointing their loved ones. Some of the emotional and psychological issues they have faced include total distrust and contempt for individuals in positions of power, as well as an inability to overlook perceived acts of disrespect by anyone which led some of them to anger issues.

Polydrug use

This refers to an individual's use of more than one drug or type of drug, either concurrently or sequentially. Three participants admitted to using other drugs after starting with marijuana. For example, RJ stated that he has always wanted to quit, but it has been two years since he said that, and he has also begun using other drugs in the meantime. He said the following:

I've started smoking cigarettes in addition to marijuana. I wanted to quit smoking because I believe it is extremely harmful. But I've become so reliant on it because, until I'm able to smoke weed, cigarettes are what keep me going as they can be smoked anywhere. And I believe I'm dependent on it because I keep looking for it even after I've gotten my weed. So, first and foremost, I'd like to stop smoking cigarettes.

Similarly, in the view of the above participant, GW stated that he has been a Marijuana smoker for many years and that he used harder drugs after starting marijuana. He believed that however, he is not sure whether it has any linkage. He states his story as follows:

I can't say for certain that marijuana led me to use other drugs. I'd always been fascinated by the mind-altering effects of drugs, particularly hallucinogenic drugs. I would have definitely tried the other drugs whether or not I smoked marijuana. So, in the end, I believe it depends on personal preference. However, I can say that of all the drugs I've tried, and I've tried pretty much every kind, Marijuana is the only one I've stayed with.

LR has a similar opinion, in the sense that he doesn't know if there is truly a link. As in whether he started smoking because of marijuana or it just happened. But he said combining it with other drugs gives a very pleasant and euphoric feeling. He states as follows:

I mostly use marijuana with chat and cigarettes. The feeling of euphoria is enhanced when you use them together. When I'm tired of the effects of marijuana, I'll experiment with other drugs for a while before returning to the safer drugs. However, I agree that marijuana is an excellent starting point for those interested in more dangerous drugs. I believe that the decision to progress to other drugs, on the other hand, is entirely within your control and responsibility.

There were also other participants who, on the other hand, do not believe marijuana leads to the use of other drugs. KW stated that the only reason a person might start using other drugs after marijuana is if they hang out with the wrong crowd or become overly interested in other harder substances. He replied, as follows:

The majority of people I know who smoke weed only smoke weed including my brother. Marijuana was the last drug I tried, and I used it to get off the other drugs at first, but I discovered I liked it and continued to use it. As a result, marijuana is a gateway drug in the sense that it serves as a starting point for socializing with

suspicious people. But it is not a gateway drug in the sense that it will make you crave cocaine or ecstasy suddenly.

In addition to what JY said, PL shared the same belief and began explaining confidently. She was staring deeply as if she was really thinking about this. The researcher got the impression she was perplexed because she was trying to recall her experience while looking for an answer. She states it in the following way:

For me, it is not and will never be a gateway drug. I have always believed and will continue to believe, that cigarettes are the true gateway drug that so many people fear. Cigarettes are the most common substance that addicts claim they cannot live without. I suffered far more trying to quit smoking cigarettes than I did marijuana. As I started with cigarettes before moving on to marijuana, I don't really see how marijuana can be held responsible. Furthermore, I believe marijuana is not addictive; if it is not addictive, you can stop whenever you want, so it does not have a stronghold on you.

According to the accounts above, marijuana can sometimes lead to other drugs and sometimes not. Some of the participants viewed marijuana as a drug that led them to use other drugs, whereas other participants stated that it did not lead them to use other drugs and that it depends on other circumstances and the person's personality.

Educational problems

Because of their marijuana use, the participants reported being unable to concentrate in class and having lower academic achievement. SY's performance and attention in school, for example, deteriorated as her marijuana consumption increased. She became careless with her

schoolwork. As a result, she is planning to withdraw from school. She tells her story in the following way:

I intend to withdraw from the program because marijuana instilled a belief within me that taught me that I don't need a paper to define my worth, nor do I need this education when I can go out and start something related to my passion. It convinced me that I didn't need to waste my time sitting in class and listening to the teacher talk about things that wouldn't help me in the real world.

AZ has also faced academic difficulties in school as a result of his marijuana use. He was mentally disoriented from his environment. His mind was constantly wandering about without giving much importance to his responsibilities. The hopelessness on his face was clearly noticeable. He describes his experience as follows:

My ability to manage my time had completely vanished. I was always at least an hour late. I'd be busy doing nothing all night. Then I sleep in the mornings, sometimes until 11 a.m., and miss class. No one could rely on me because I couldn't complete assignments or give presentations. At times, I couldn't even get started on assignments, and I couldn't do much else but waste time with friends, having fun, and smoking. Even the most basic of tasks would be difficult for me at times. At times, I felt as if I lacked common sense and had no long-term goals. Overall, it's a package deal, with one side effect leading to another.

Similarly, TY has had academic troubles with his marijuana use. He admitted that daydreaming was one of his difficulties. His mind was constantly wandering, and he paid little attention to his assignments. The look of laziness on his face was unmistakable. He describes his encounter as follows:

Marijuana had a negative impact on my short-term memory. I won't be able to concentrate if I smoke and then try to study. When I try to study while smoking, but my book is across the room, I tell myself I just need to get off the sofa, but then I get so lazy that I don't get off the couch for hours. I just eat and sleep, telling myself I'll do it later, and the cycle continues. As a result, I didn't study, and my grades suffered, resulting in me failing numerous classes, skipping classes, and failing tests.

KW reported that prior to becoming a smoker, he was concerned about his education. After becoming a smoker, he felt tired all the time, unmotivated and just overall careless. He stated that his friends who also smoke had the same energy. He states as follows:

Unless I was sick, I used to go to class every day and concentrate in class and study diligently. Everything changed when I started smoking. I remember having no idea what I was doing by the time matric came around in 12th grade after I started doing it frequently. In the month leading up to the exam, while everyone else was studying, I was out smoking and hanging out with friends. I believe I passed because of God's grace, but I don't think I'll make it this year.

Because of how much their schoolwork suffered, students believed that smoking had a negative impact on their education. JB's story demonstrates how marijuana use can negatively impact academic performance. Growing up, JB was a good kid who did well in school, made her family proud, and even aspired to be a respectable Architect. Unfortunately, this dream was not realized. After her mother died, JB began smoking. She explained, with tears in her eyes, that she couldn't bear the pain but felt better or at least distracted after smoking, so she continued to do it.

She now believes she is addicted to it and cannot function without it. She stated that it is too late for her because she has missed many classes and is receiving poor grades because she

does not study. Her GPA is below average, and she is simply waiting for the university to expel her. She felt so hopeless that she gave up on a future where everything would work out. She stated that she no longer has the energy to try

Not showing up to class and failing an exam were not the only problems that came with marijuana use. Conflict with school officials, for example, has been common when using marijuana. Participants have been temporarily or permanently suspended or expelled from the. HS's remarks demonstrate the impact marijuana can have on students' academic performance. She described her predicament as follows:

What happened was that there was a secret smoking and drinking area within the school. One day, our nemesis discovered our location and informed the principal. The principal dispatched his supervisor, who caught us red-handed. They escorted us directly to the principal. Because the school year was coming to an end, the principal felt that dismissing us would be counterproductive, so he suspended us for two weeks. After that, the teachers of the courses we took all heard and labeled us as bad students, and we were treated differently.

The students described lives filled with challenges related to their education. The students misused the drug due to a lack of other options for dealing with the emotional issues they were experiencing, as well as misinformation about the drug in order to take precautions. LR claims that smoking marijuana harmed his academic performance and tells his story as follows:

I dropped many of my classes and sold my school supplies to buy marijuana. I believe marijuana was to blame for my poor academic performance because when I was high, I simply stopped caring about things. Because I was unconcerned about my grades, I never bothered to show up to class or complete my coursework. I saw

the same thing happen to other friends who were in the same situation as me - smoking marijuana demotivated them to do much of anything.

Other participants had a different experience on the impact of marijuana on their school performance. JY was affected positively in a sense that it was after she started marijuana that she felt a sense of creativity and interest in her field of study. She had a clear imagination and understood the importance of education. JY describes her experience as follows:

It helps me stay focused during tasks and challenges. I've also discovered that overuse, whether in terms of frequency or quantity consumed, cancels out the positive effects I just stated. When it comes to finding that inspiration, for example, for a design assignment or creating models, I'd say marijuana can help, but keep in mind that everything has limits. Use it sparingly otherwise, as I have witnessed firsthand, it will have a negative impact.

Marijuana use has had an impact on the participants' educational attainment, both positively and negatively. But, for the most part, it has had incomparable negative consequences, such as their grades dropping, courses failing, suspensions and expulsion, and conflict with school officials, to name a few.

By observing the action of the smokers, key informants reported that it is simple to see a link between marijuana use and academic performance. They primarily do not attend class, and those who do attend end up sleeping. When they come to class, they sometimes cause trouble by laughing and chatting with their friends, which disrupts the class. As a result, the teacher notices, and points this out, resulting in conflict and total chaos. So, since most of them have been through this at one time or another, if they smoke, they don't come to class. So since they miss

the class they face academic consequences. As supporting evidence, one of the Key informants shares her information as follows:

I know many students who have dropped out of computer science and gone into accounting or marketing or any other simpler course because they couldn't handle the pressure. This is because they smoke a lot, and they've also told me because I'm their friend that they don't have time to study, can't focus, and can't do anything. After withdrawing, they may lie to their families in order to obtain funds and claim that they are paying for school. The money is then used to purchase marijuana. There are some students who have a lot of potential, but if you don't work hard, it means nothing because you must do assignments and finish tasks on time, which you can't do if you smoke every day.

Perception of marijuana users

Various methods of marijuana consumption

There are various ways to use marijuana, according to the respondents. They stated that it is dependent on what you want and the benefits you are willing to obtain. According to them, there are four common ways to use marijuana. Using it in a joint or blunt, a bong, food, or drinks. The most obvious is what is known as a joint. AZ stated that he usually uses it in this manner for the following reason:

I enjoy smoking it in the form of a joint. First, I get the paper from the drug dealer himself some of the more upscale ones sell it. I used to smoke blunts, but since they contain tobacco, and I despise cigarettes, I switched to joints, which contain only cannabis and the paper on which it is rolled. The advantage of smoking joints is that you do not become exposed to tobacco or nicotine. But, when all else fails, and because the

paper in which you roll the weed is expensive, I resort to blunts. The effect is similar in both cases I get high quickly.

While smoking, LR prefers to use a bong. He stated that he does so because he believes it is far better for your health than joints or blunts. He explains his understanding as follows:

The first thing to note is that each high is unique. When I smoke a blunt, I feel dizzy for the rest of the day, but when I use a bong, I get high much faster and harder, but once it wears off, I am quite alert and can get on with my day's tasks. Furthermore, you can put in a small amount and it will last longer than smoking. I believe it is better for your health because the water filters out the tar and whatever else is present. As a result, I prefer it over the others.

RJ stated that he uses it in the same manner as the previous participants, mostly when he doesn't have time to cook or is out with his friends. RJ stated that when he is alone at home or at a friend's house, he enjoys making it in edible form. He gives the following reasons:

I prefer eating it to smoking it because I believe it is better for my lungs, but it usually makes my stomach sick for the first hour, after which I am completely fine. I also enjoy the

high because it is unique; it takes about an hour to hit you, but once it does, it does not fade away quickly, as it does when you smoke a blunt. You are high for several hours.

The

only issue I've had with this is that depending on the strain of marijuana, it may take much

longer to hit you, leading you to believe you didn't take enough or that you've developed a

tolerance, so you add more. Then your high will take over your mind, and instead of enjoying it, you will freak out and have panic attacks.

When it comes to marijuana, PL has a similar story. She explained that because she doesn't like smoking it, she now eats it. She burst out laughing as she recalled a recent bizarre but memorable event. She tells her story in the following manner:

I usually cook it with eggs, so I melt some butter on it and then cook fry it. I do this when I'm alone at home. One day I was unaware that my father was present at the time. Marijuana stinks up the whole place when you try to cook it. My dad came up behind me and asked what the smell was, and I told him it was a new sauce I was experimenting with. He said he wanted to try it as soon as I was finished. I couldn't say no because it would make me appear suspicious. I gave him a small portion and he ate it. I was completely freaked out because I thought I had drugged my father. So, after a while, when he's just sitting there, I go up to check on him. He said he was tired, so I told him to go to bed, and he was fine in the morning. He never mentioned it. It was the most scariest situation in my life because if he found out I would have been in big trouble.

KW said he preferred it with tea or milk. He stated that he has always experimented with various drugs and methods of administration. He explained that the best one for him has always been drinking it because it lasts him the entire day. Before using, know what kind of high you want, according to KW. Because the outcomes are all different. He describes his own experience as follows:

So the first thing you should know is that whenever you want to eat or drink marijuana, you need fat, such as a spoon of butter, heavy oil, cream, or whatever. I discovered this by experimenting with various kinds of butter at first, because some work really well,

such as sheno kebe, while others do not. As a result, once I found what worked for me, I brew it for about 15 minutes, then drink it. It is mostly very strong and does not have the same immediate effect as smoking. As a result, depending on the high, I wait thirty minutes before deciding whether to pour another one.

According to the above accounts, the students use marijuana in various ways due to the various effects. As a result, the simplest method mentioned was smoking it in a blunt, while the most time-consuming method was cooking it. The students explained that there are various types of "highs" and that it depends on what they want at the time and the environment they are in.

Regulated use

The respondents were concerned about the way marijuana was being used. Because marijuana manifests differently in different individuals and thus the way people react is unknown, the students must psychologically prepare themselves to see this new dimension. There are also different types of marijuana, so knowing what they are will help you predict how you will react. Marijuana use was considered safer by the students when it was done under the observation of other friends who had previously experienced it. Because they would know how much they should use when it is their first time would give them all the necessary warnings.

Participants also advised against using during certain activities and emphasized that young adults should follow their own rules and regulations while using to avoid major accidents. One of the students emphasized that self-education is critical because jumping right into anything can have negative implications. He added that most kids rush in without conducting any research and end up misusing it because of peer pressure. He remarked that this was his greatest regret and expressed the following:

When I first tried marijuana, it was at a party with my friends. I took a hit. When the first hit didn't work, they told me to try again. I repeated the process because I didn't feel anything, or so I thought. After all those puffs, I immediately realized it had gone to my head. I started crying and freaked out because I couldn't feel anything and couldn't see things well. I lost consciousness and fell after hitting my head on the cupboard while racing about for a few minutes. They were all scared, so they phoned one of their nursing friends, and she came to check on me. I don't recall what she did, but I awoke after a few minutes, and it was the worst experience of my life. When my friends try to persuade someone else to use marijuana after that day, I always remind them of what happened to me and defend the person they are pressuring.

Other participants also seem to share this similar notion. They share the same concept of not persuading people to use it because one can never be sure how it will affect their mental health. They explained that if someone has a prior history of marijuana use, it's okay to do so together because they already know how they react to it and won't go insane. But if it's their first time, most of the students aren't comfortable doing it with the newbies because their reaction is totally unexpected. MK explained as follows:

First and foremost, I tell my friends who haven't started smoking but plan to do so, that they should not start smoking and that it is harmful in many ways. If I fail to convince them and if they insist on doing it, however I often urge individuals that they should understand their bodies. I ask them how they feel after the first drag, and I can guess what their reaction will be based on their responses. I ask them if they can work, study, and function while consuming marijuana. The reason for this

is that after using marijuana, most people get drowsy, dumb, and dizzy. I also told them ahead of time that if they can't function, it will wreck their lives, therefore I strongly discourage them from doing it again.

Initiation Age

When it comes to the age most students started smoking, most of them reported between the ages of 14-20 with the mean age of 17. They reported that most of them got the opportunity to smoke a year or two before entering college. The participants also mentioned that during those times they smoked, they only have done so occasionally. That was because their family was strict as such, they only did it at parties and events. But even though they did it occasionally, they believe that if they haven't started then, they wouldn't be addicted today. PL explained his experience as follows.

I believe my memory has suffered as a result of my early start. I can't even remember what someone told me the day before. I realized this is because I began at a young age when our minds are developing because I have friends who began about a year ago and don't appear to be having any problems.

According to the participant accounts, they regret starting because they believe it made their marijuana use worse, as well as impacted their memory, focus, and perception. Consequently, the participants were not free of conflicts and disturbances within their minds. On the other hand, RJ had a different life experience compared to the previous participants. He was completely ok with the fact that he started when he was in high school. He was glad to have started when he had because it helped him survive. He describes his experience as follows:

I was the type of kid who was down in the dumps. I fantasized about ceasing to exist. Marijuana has helped me connect with other people when I really needed it. It

provided me with friends who enjoyed spending time with me as much as I enjoyed spending time with them. We would take the bus home every day and pool our allowance money to buy a small bag of marijuana. Marijuana taught me that I can have fun in life. It keeps my mind from going into a negative spiral. I doubt I'd be here doing this interview if I hadn't discovered marijuana as a teen.

JB also had somewhat of a similar view. He reported that high school is a very sensitive time for students. He explained that he was immature when he started and he didn't really research marijuana use, he was just excited by trying to do something new. He describes his experience as follows:

I started smoking marijuana during my junior year of high school. I've never really been a good student, I have always done the bare minimum, so once I met all of the passing criteria, I didn't care about anything else. I smoked five days a week for almost a year. As a result, my memory has suffered slightly, and I occasionally struggle to maintain a conversation without becoming anxious or struggling to find the right words.

Similarly, JB said that high school is a very sensitive time. Especially the last year is very stressful because our future depends on it. Many of the students I know including myself started a couple of months before matric because we couldn't handle the stress. Little did we know it made us more anxious, but at the same time is not able to take any action. It made us more stuck and even sabotaged our productivity. JB explains as follows:

A few months before our exam we were worried about passing because failing to do so would prevent us from enrolling in university. therefore it was a major emotional burden for most of us. Someone told me that marijuana would help us cope with worry and stress, so we started smoking it as a coping mechanism. After

it was too late, we recognized that we couldn't study at all while high. As a result, we were unable to study as effectively, and our situation worsened. Fortunately, I passed with a very poor score, but two of my friends did not.

Other participants have also stated that they have started when they were at a young age. They attribute it to the fact that they were foolish, childish, and unaware of the consequences. The participants stated that if someone told them what it would have brought into their life they would have never started. AZ stated as follows:

I began smoking at the age of sixteen. I was hooked after two months of nonstop smoking. I was mistaken in thinking I was in control because I kept increasing the frequency and consumption many times over. While my studies and everything else suffered as I became more careless, I was oblivious to the drastic effect it was having on my mind. I went totally insane. But luckily the unending support of my family and religious community who prayed for me continuously brought me back to my senses. Sadly enough I stopped for a few years but went back to it and here I am today.

According to the above accounts, the younger the students started using marijuana, the more likely they continued to do so. It also caused memory problems, depression, and consistent use, which led to addiction. Even though some participants stated that it had no effect on them, most of the responses are negative.

Regarding the marijuana use of students, the Key informants have reported that marijuana by itself might not be harmful if used occasionally for events or celebrations. But these students are abusing it, they are facing physical, emotional, and social problems in their daily lives. One of the key informants shares his story as follows:

Students between the ages of 18 and 25 are considered young adults who are at a high risk of experiencing negative psychological long-term irreversible symptoms. Most students believe marijuana is harmless, which has led them to abuse it and become addicted. In Ethiopia, students over the age of 18 are treated as adults capable of caring for themselves. What is not realized is that students are not provided with a comprehensive understanding of the pros and cons of marijuana use through literature before they decide to use the substance. As a result, they are swayed by family members, peer pressure, and social media, and they end up making decisions that can ruin their lives.

Outlook on life

When it comes to other perception students have when it comes to smoking marijuana is what they call the “Rastafarian mindset”. Marijuana is sacred in the Rastafari mentality. It purifies the body and psyche, bringing individuals closer to God. Most of the participants believe that marijuana makes someone good and holy. MG states as follows

Marijuana gave me a Rasta worldview. Two words sum up the Rasta philosophy: love and peace. It provides you with direct access to a high level of spiritual energy. It molds you into someone who values nature, fears violence, and fights for human rights. Anything that has the potential to contaminate your body is harmful. Everything must be done in a natural manner. Marijuana is a one-of-a-kind experience for a Rasta. My dreadlock hairstyle reflects my desire to be like them. I am also strongly opposed to evil and violence, and marijuana allows me to gain perspective.

Other participants also supported the notion that marijuana makes you a peaceful person with no energy to put out negative energy into the world. In support RJ states as follows

Marijuana changed my entire demeanor. I was a child who spent most of his time fighting. I had a lot of disagreements with everyone I met. It might be with my professors, family, or friends. I'd never understood why I was so combative. But after marijuana entered my life, all I wanted to do was a lecture about love and nature, and how we should all strive for peace in this world. I haven't had a single fight since I began, and it's all thanks to marijuana. It has aided me in managing my rage in ways I cannot express.

JY also supports the idea that marijuana does make someone a better person. She states as follows:

If everyone used marijuana, I feel the world would be a better place. There would also be fewer hard drugs, in my opinion. I also feel that reality might even change, imagination might be restored, and forgotten laughter might return to the world. As everyone will be smoking marijuana, there'd be more compassion to care for those that are underprivileged, as marijuana does invoke compassion in the smoker.

KW's experience of life was also in alignment with the other participants. He believes that marijuana is a unique drug that is meant to be used and much better than other drugs. He states as follows:

It is the only drug that will not deceive you or distort your reality. For example, Khat creates an illusion in which you believe you have everything right now, which boosts your self-esteem and makes you feel like someone you're not. When the high

wears off, you're left with nothing. But marijuana does not deceive you or alter your reality. The hallucinations are not far off from reality.

Marijuana is a drug that most students regard as distinct and one-of-a-kind. Some argue that marijuana is not a drug, but rather a plant that God created for humans to use. It is far superior to other drugs. For example, CS stated that he has learned a lot from using marijuana. He says the following.

When you smoke marijuana, you become more present than ever. It does not give you a hangover or a bad taste in your mouth like alcohol does. The aftereffects of a high can be more enjoyable than the high itself. I'm also impressed by how delicious everything you eat is. I also enjoy how the high fluctuates from time to time giving you different experiences at different times.

GW states that for him personally marijuana is a plant with unique properties and applications, so he would classify it as a herb. It has healing properties that can help when you get sick, as it has medicinal benefits when used properly. He states as follows:

Marijuana is even better than some pills, as you may have heard, that it helps with diseases. It does not completely weaken you like alcohol or khat, as you remain conscious. It can even be consumed as food. More than anything, you will not die from marijuana; you can conduct research and you will never find a person who overdosed on marijuana. As a result, it is secure. It also depends on who you are and how you use it. Additionally, it also depends on people's blood types and bodies, it may work well for some and not for others, so you must find out and always know your limits. If you do that marijuana is the safest drug(herb) you can ever use.

According to the above accounts, the students regard marijuana use as beneficial to their personality, creativity, and health. This attitude toward marijuana is a major reason why they continue to smoke to this day. They emphasize that as long as one does not overdo it and takes precautions, marijuana is more beneficial than harmful.

Dependency/Addictive

Other perceptions students have of marijuana include viewing it as a daily activity, admitting dependency, mentioning addictive properties, or exhibiting signs of dependency. Most participants reported using it daily, though it had an impact on some of their relationships both positively and negatively. GW states as follows:

To be honest, I don't think I'll be able to stand on my own two feet while still smoking. Marijuana kills productivity by draining your energy and making you lazy, which ultimately leads to wasting the rest of your day. Then, at the end of the day, when you become conscious, you realize you have wasted an entire day doing nothing, and you have a panic attack. Then you realize you need to smoke marijuana to relax. As a result, you smoke, and the cycle continues. You are a prisoner. However, wanting to stop and doing so are two entirely different things. I feel like I can't stop because I am so addicted that I can't imagine my day moving forward with smoking being a part of it.

Another participant also states that trying to quit is very difficult as it's already part of your habits. LR states as follows:

I wake up early in the morning, roll my weed, smoke it, get a taxi, and go to class. Then in between breaks, I smoke again. Even if I don't have class, I smoke early in the morning, check-in with my friends at the meeting time, and head to them.

Smoke with them again, and that's how the day passes. I usually hang out with them every day; there is someone always available.

HS also seemed troubled when asked about this. She seems to be uncomfortable while she was describing her experience after she became addicted. She brings back her memory as follows:

I identify as an addict because if I wasn't addicted, I wouldn't be wasting my time. Life is conspiring against us, and right now I could be doing some business, brainstorming new ideas, or putting my all into something, but I'm here because of my addiction, so I really believe I should stop, and I want to take a break for at least 30 years before returning to it. Because I intend to use it recreationally.

JB stated that she had low self-esteem and was unable to socialize with others prior to becoming a smoker. She felt as if her life was meaningless. As a result, she became an introvert and refused to allow anyone to approach her. Marijuana, on the other hand, helped her regain her self-esteem and self-worth once she began smoking. I could see in her eyes that she is grateful to her friends who assisted her in getting started. At the same time, she couldn't stop once she started. JB tells her story as follows:

In my experience, becoming addicted to marijuana caused me to lose my sense of self. I smoked for many years. I realized that the person I was before smoking was not the same as the person I am now. While everyone else has matured, I still feel immature and stuck. That hurts my self-esteem because I kept remembering the kind of drive I had as a kid and wondering where it all went. I lost my sense of self-awareness, work ethic, and sense of responsibility to get things done, and didn't care

about my life because I smoked so much. I wouldn't be this hopeless if I hadn't become addicted.

According to the above accounts, the students regret smoking marijuana because they believed it would not harm them and that marijuana is not addictive. However, their experience revealed that it was an addictive drug that ruined a lot of things for them. They claimed that they no longer care about their lives because one of the side effects of marijuana is that it makes you careless about things in your life, among other things.

According to information gathered from key informants who are class representatives from the departments of computer science and architecture, students almost never quit smoking despite all of the problems that come with it. The key informants stated that the first way they determine if someone is a consistent smoker is through our social network because if you're learning together, you know people who know people, and we're all interconnected because we've been together for three to five years. Furthermore, you hear rumors, see them around school, and you just know.

The second method is to look at the physical symptoms. It is very easy to tell if someone is a drug user or not by looking at their face. They usually have red eyes that are slightly dimmed. You also notice how they look at you, how they have no energy, how they talk to you with long pauses, and even how they walk. You can spot them by the way they dress, as most of the consistent smokers I've observed wear the same shirt or jeans every day of the week. You can sometimes smell it on them along with cigarette smoke. They just have a certain vibe about them that you can easily identify. Most of them are open about their drug use because they need to make connections in order to find the drug, making it nearly impossible for them to keep it quiet

Regarding the characteristics of the students who are using marijuana on a regular basis, key informants stated that they had encountered students who were emotionally depressed and hopeless because they tried to quit, even going to church and rehab, but nothing worked. As a result, they were perplexed and had difficulty deciding what to do about their future. They have also encountered students who did not experience any negative emotional effects as a result of smoking. As evidence, one of the key informants shares the following information:

Marijuana is a serious problem. I'm shocked to hear that those young kids, who I wouldn't expect to be exposed to this kind of thing, are smoking. I am opposed to the perception that marijuana is not harmful, and I believe that this should be changed. As I have seen, many students are unable to complete their education on time, if at all. If they continue to smoke, they risk having a mental breakdown as a result of the weed affecting their minds, or being stigmatized by society, which can lead to isolation and a downward spiral, as well as negatively influencing their younger siblings and cousins. Something needs to be done. We are attempting to establish an after-school club for addicts in which they can share their problems and experiences in order to find solutions. Things will hopefully improve one step at a time.

Chapter Five

In this section, considering the analysis of the information gathered the following discussion points were drawn. Based upon the results it was given under the framework of the basic research questions.

Discussion

Participants' stories of marijuana use showed that it was a positive experience for them, while others saw it as their biggest regret. The findings of this study suggest that the individuals in the study had a range of motivations for starting to smoke in the first place. The reason study participants began using it was because of the role models they idolized, which included family members, while others were motivated by social media. This finding of the study is consistent with the findings of Hurd et al., (2009), who have indicated that youngsters' exposure to unfavorable adult behavior was linked to greater externalizing, internalizing, and substance-using behaviors, as well as negative school attitudes and behavior.

A similar study conducted by Willoughby et. al, (2022) on social media influence and marijuana use showed an overall emphasis on how social media use is associated with increased exposure to pro-marijuana content for adolescents and college students. The similarity in the relationship between role models and marijuana use between the study by Willoughby and this study might be due to the significance of this factor.

According to the study's findings, peer pressure was also a factor in the students' decision to start smoking marijuana. The study also indicated that marijuana usage is widespread among the people who surround the students, as many respondents said they have marijuana-using acquaintances. Both the findings of this study and the reviewed literature have indicated that marijuana use and peer influence are highly linked. For example, Samuel and Edward (2015)

discovered that university students use marijuana because their classmates have a strong influence on them, as evidenced by student behavior in both on- and off-campus coffee shops.

Similarly, Yigzaw Kebede (2005) discovered that many students consume drugs solely to gain social acceptance from their peers. According to the findings, peer pressure and the presence of a drug abuser in the family are important motivators for students to use drugs. Students who have a parent or a friend who uses drugs are more likely to use drugs. Additionally, some students also feel like they need marijuana and other drugs to help them escape from problems at home, at school, or with friends. This finding is supported by the reference group theory, which argues that a person may use marijuana in an attempt to imitate those who do and that way will be considered part of the group.

This study indicated that the social and emotional life they had before starting caused the participants to feel lonely and isolated, as they didn't have friends and were extremely lonely. This finding is consistent with the findings of Gutkind et al., (2022), who found that students who had experienced loneliness at least a few times in the previous two weeks reported more days of subsequent alcohol or cannabis use than those who had not. The findings suggested that this is cause for concern, as loneliness and potentially harmful coping behaviors such as substance use are linked.

Self-medication is another reason why students use marijuana. Students used marijuana to cope with a variety of mental health difficulties, according to the data. Smith et al. (2017) found that there is a well-established link between mental health conditions and substance usage, as well as a self-medication theory, in a comparable study on young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 and drug use. The interviewees in this study reported that marijuana allowed them to participate in social occasions that they would not ordinarily enjoy in large gatherings, because

of their social anxiety. This finding is backed up by stress theory, which claims that people use marijuana to cope with personal or psychological problems. Marijuana use is sometimes seen as a coping mechanism in which a person seeks a psychological or recreational refuge from mild to severe anxieties, boredom and depression.

A study conducted by Green and Ritter, (2000) indicated that it is people who use marijuana that has lower levels of psychological well-being such as depression. In quite the reverse way, this study has revealed that students have indicated that their emotional and social lives got better after marijuana use. This implies that marijuana use apparently does not increase their risk for depression as the problem was already there before their use started.

According to the data, another aspect that led to marijuana use is its availability. This is because marijuana is readily available and inexpensive. This discovery is in line with Halverson's findings (20004). The findings revealed that participants' drug accessibility has an impact on their consumption, as those with the most access to marijuana had higher levels of use.

Some students in this study described their marijuana experiences as positive and pleasant, while others described them as negative. The results show that the participants had a diverse set of views on marijuana use. In the beginning, the participants believed that daily cannabis use was not harmful. The most frequently mentioned response was that no one has ever overdosed on marijuana, making it a safe drug. Because of this perception, students have used this fact as a crutch whenever the negative consequences were mentioned. Consistent with the findings of the study, viewing regular marijuana use as a risky behavior acts as a protective factor against both the intention to use and the actual use of marijuana (Lopez and Neumark, 2010).

Participants in the study also believed that restricted use was critical. Participants believe that young people should be warned about the dangers of marijuana use before engaging in it. Furthermore, the students stated that it is not the marijuana itself that is dangerous, but rather the lack of self-control that leads to the students abusing the drug that makes it harmful. Bull et al., (2017) advise that parents, other role models, and social workers can strive to change young adults' behavior views regarding marijuana use by implementing various educational strategies for them to learn more about marijuana use.

Students' age was another factor that they perceived was an important factor in this study. Most of the students began experimenting with, marijuana, and other substances between the ages of 15 and 20. According to this study, marijuana use at a young age has many negative consequences, as participants stated that starting marijuana use at a young age contributed to their increased marijuana consumption. The findings are consistent with the findings of Bray et al., (2000), who found that marijuana use at a young age is associated with dropping out of high school and heavier marijuana use.

In support of the previous finding, Johnston, and Bachman (2012) investigated the association between marijuana use and age. According to the report, most students try marijuana for the first time when they are about to finish high school. It also revealed that, while more students began before joining college, a significant percentage of students began using marijuana once they arrived at institutions. The result points out that only focusing on high school students' usage levels and status may lead to an increase in marijuana use by university students, as it persists, and grows once they arrive on campus.

Another main finding in this study was that young people perceived marijuana as a cleansing and healing herb with numerous benefits. Marijuana, the students believed, made them more creative, become better people, and become more spiritual, and whole. This finding goes supports the result of the study indicated by Loren Cova, (2011) which indicated that marijuana users scored significantly higher in the spiritual dimension of mysticism than non-users. In contrast to the findings of this study, the findings of Bourassa et. al, (2001) argued that marijuana had no positive effects on creativity in beginner users and had a negative effect on regular users.

The findings of this study also revealed that students regard marijuana as a daily activity, admitting dependency. Participants expressed how difficult it was for them to reduce their marijuana use, even though it was negative in some cases where it affected their productivity, because of the powerful positive outcomes they experienced. This finding is consistent with the findings stated by WHO (2016) which stated that regular marijuana usage has been related to a higher chance of developing cannabis use disorder, as well as higher rates of mental illness and co-substance addiction with alcohol and other drugs, among other things. Additionally, marijuana use among young adults has been linked to long-term dependence or habitual use, which posed serious risks such as psychotic symptoms (Borggren et.al, 2018).

The study's findings revealed differing attitudes toward the negative and positive effects of marijuana use. According to the findings, some of the participants' social lives improved after they began using marijuana. This is because they made friends because of their increased self-confidence, were part of a smoking group, and met compatible partners within that group.

In contrast, other participants reported that their relationships with their neighbors, friends, and families had deteriorated after they began smoking. Because of their marijuana use,

they felt abandoned and had difficulty socializing. This finding implies that some participants' confidence in meeting people and engaging in conversations and activities is harmed as a result of stigmatization by those around them. This finding is parallel to the studies of Feeney et al. (2016), who discovered that marijuana use was associated with impaired social relationships with family and friends.

The findings of this study revealed some of the participants encountered psychological implications such as hallucinations, mood changes, memory problems, depersonalization, paranoia, delusion, and disorientation. The findings indicated that the participant's social life transformed for the better after starting marijuana use. This finding of the study is supported by a study conducted by Smith et.al, (2017), that reported higher rates of marijuana use were more likely to produce hallucinogenic thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, those who reported higher rates of marijuana use had more unsettling delusional ideas that they held with greater conviction.

According to my observations of the participants, most of the study participants appeared disoriented and lost. As a result, during the interviews, some of the students displayed various mood changes that indicated emotional disturbance. According to the researcher's observation, marijuana usage is linked to cognitive deficits and low-level discomfort tolerance on a variety of occasions, and consequently, their ability to deal with high-stress circumstances was harmed.

Almost all the participants reported clashes with legal authorities. This is because they have been caught red-handed, have been reported on, and have been caught while purchasing drugs from a drug dealer. Marijuana use, according to Woldeyohanis et al., (2021), will get you arrested and summoned to court within 48 hours, and it could land you in prison for 5-10 years. However, the findings of this study revealed that almost all of the participants were imprisoned

overnight, subjected to emotional and physical abuse, and then released the next day. The study's findings imply that students' rights to be protected by the law, to be treated humanely, to not be deprived of food or water, and to not be beaten have not been respected and have been violated. Furthermore, because they have been humiliated and emotionally attacked, they tend to accumulate their emotions, which can lead to even more behavioral problems in the future, including drug abuse.

Polydrug use has also been documented. This is because the participants have admitted to using other drugs after beginning with marijuana. In line with these findings, Dupont et al. (2018) reported that using any one substance significantly increases the prevalence of other substance use among youth, implying that marijuana use is associated with other substance use. Other participants, on the other hand, have stated that, while they have experimented with other drugs, the link between marijuana use and harder drugs appears to be coincidental, and they are skeptical which goes in line with the findings of Yuan et.al (2019).

Beverly et.al, (2019) found that once marijuana usage started, students had a variety of academic consequences. The difficulties of being attentive in the classroom, not attending class, memory and focus problems, falling grades, suspension, withdrawal, and general academic failure are some of the issues addressed. According to the findings of this study, the majority of the participants had struggled with academic accomplishment. Furthermore, the key informants claimed that they frequently witnessed students who use marijuana not attending class and, as a result, failing their courses.

Chapter Six: Conclusion, Implication, and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study's main goal was to learn about the lived experiences of marijuana users among students. To this end, the study had the explicit goals of studying students' perceptions reasons, and experiences, as well as determining the effects marijuana use had on them. The study was quite successful in achieving its goals. The most important factors in student drug use are peer pressure, drug availability, role model influence, and self-medication. Students are more prone to drug use behavior as they enter adulthood, so it is prudent to protect them from drug abuse.

Students' most common perceptions are that it increases creativity, is considered non-harmful, is not a drug, and enhances personality. Young adults who use marijuana may develop a dependence on it and face addiction as a result. The fundamental reason for this is those young individuals who use marijuana do so without comprehending the potential adverse effects. Before their marijuana use, most of the participants lived in a contented and tranquil home, but following their marijuana use and family members' awareness, their home became a conflicted one filled with continual arguments and disagreements with their parents.

Marijuana use hurt students' family lives and their ability to achieve harmony in their lives. They felt stigmatized and pessimistic about their future as a result. Furthermore, because of their marijuana use, most of the students' overall emotional, social and mental well-being as well as educational proficiency had significantly deteriorated. Participants stated that they would like other marijuana users to know that they should always make informed decisions before beginning any drug because it has numerous irreversible side effects.

Social Work Implications

The research's done in the future in relation to this topic should concentrate on supporting young adults who have different experiences with marijuana use. Marijuana usage

research and young individuals' actual experiences are mostly unknown. Researchers must first comprehend the psychological health issues linked with marijuana usage. After using marijuana, some of the participants described a lack of psychological and physiological balance within themselves to the point of not recognizing who they were anymore. On the other hand, some participants also mentioned psychological benefits that helped them function in the world better.

All the interviewees emphasized how much they regret using marijuana in the first place. They emphasized that their lack of knowledge in addition to their immaturity led to their use. As such potential marijuana users need to understand the many consequences of using the substance. Psychologists, researchers, and educators all have a role to play in raising understanding in this area. Social workers can also work to provide psychological intervention support networks for young adults who use marijuana, either inside or outside of school, by forming a club for at-risk kids. These services can be provided anonymously so that children are not stigmatized.

The findings can be used to inform future scientific research studies and policy on marijuana usage among young adults. The Ethiopian government has put in place organizations to combat the ever-worsening crisis of drug misuse. Ethiopia's drug administration and control authority has been attempting to expand educational initiatives to minimize drug abuse among young people (Tullu et.al, 2016). The government also has regulations forbidding the cultivation of marijuana on public lands, as well as requiring someone caught with drugs to be arrested, brought to court in 48 hours, and sentenced (Woldeyohanise et.al, 2021).

However, on the ground, there are three issues: first, there are no clear and sufficient regulations regulating drug usage, such as marijuana; second, there is insufficient thought and discussion by relevant agencies; and third, existing and written policies are not being executed

appropriately. For example, almost all, if not all, of the participants have stated that they have not been taken to court, assigned a lawyer, or had their basic rights respected.

The first educational implication is related to training, specifically school social work training. School social workers play an important role in proactively supporting good youth development and providing skills that allow young people to express themselves. As a result, school social workers should receive adequate training with a focus on students. School workers, particularly counselors, are frequently confronted with issues related to student substance addiction. They are, however, unprepared to recognize, treat, or support students who are abusing substances (Sikes et.al, 2009). As a result, social workers should receive training so that, when students refuse to open up, they may conduct a complete assessment to see if there is a possibility of marijuana use or abuse.

Secondly, the social work education curriculum should place a strong emphasis on managing practical cases in the field practice course since school social workers facilitate activities and interventions that increase students' motivation to learn and provide a connection for them to their school environment, gaining experience through many fields work will be beneficial. Consequently, leading to school social workers being qualified to work as substance abuse counselors in a variety of settings, including schools. They can also work with students directly, such as providing individual and group counseling. They can serve as substance abuse educators by delivering substance abuse prevention presentations at schools. They can assist students who are dealing with this issue by connecting them with treatment centers.

The study found that young adults who use marijuana, especially without any kind of regulation are at risk. Furthermore, the harmful issues associated with marijuana use necessitated a better understanding of how marijuana use negatively affects the mental health and behavior of young adults. As a result, young adults who are more knowledgeable about marijuana use will make better decisions in the future. As a result, more research should be done on successful ways young adults can be educated about the consequences of marijuana use before they engage in it.

Further research on the healthy coping mechanisms of students who face emotional and psychological problems should be conducted. The findings could be used to explain the negative characteristics observed in the experiences of young adult marijuana users. This study also suggests various topics for further research. Topics such as marijuana use motivations, the effects of the perceived risk of marijuana use, marijuana use and depression, rehabilitation, and a new life after drug use were identified as potential research areas in this study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded.

- In the future, researchers can focus their efforts on representativeness and work with a bigger participant sample size. They can also investigate the negative repercussions that marijuana may have and examine the favorable outcomes that are thought to outweigh the negative ones, as well as explain from the students' perspectives. In this manner, students will feel understood and will be able to seriously consider marijuana use. Researchers who investigate it this way might be able to figure out how to cope with it.
- To strengthen the validity of the results for different individuals, the current study can be done again with additional or different groups that are affected by different substances from different departments as well as different universities. To cultivate better school counseling sessions, research being done on marijuana usage periods, reasons, perceptions, and consequences for various age groups might be beneficial.
- Creating interventions in university settings, such as life skills programs, social skills lessons, activities to boost self-esteem, refusal skills, skills in recognizing high-risk situations, and normative educational methods are examples of school-based interventions that will be very beneficial to students. Proper implementation of this might help
- The study's findings significantly clarified the importance of linking young adults with critical psychological interventions for better mental health outcomes, as well as changing the mentality of the students, that seeking help in any form, is not a weakness and something to be made fun of. This recommendation was mentioned by the participants who have dealt with stigmatization when seeking therapy.

- Families should be more concerned about these young adults' unfavorable circumstances and social networks. Young adults have had numerous problems as a result of marijuana use among their peers, which is why increased parental supervision is necessary, in the sense that instead of parents reacting negatively to the mention of drug use, parents should react calmly and without judgment, allowing the individual to be open and honest, and the healing process can start from there.
- It is necessary to raise youth awareness of the negative consequences of drug use. The media and organizations should play a vital role in bringing about this change. Because the media has such a strong influence on how young people feel about themselves and their nation, and how they see that there is always a route out.
- The young adult participants who use marijuana stated a desire to educate new young adult users about the difficulties that can arise while using marijuana for the first time. Before deciding to use marijuana, potential young adult users should get a thorough awareness of the benefits and drawbacks of the substance by reading different kinds of literature, as well as doing their own research. According to the participants who were interviewed, new users should take the time to learn more about marijuana usage before they jump straight in, to have a better life outcome.

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Appendix A: Consent Form with study participants

Lived experience of marijuana use

Hello, my name is Maraki Getachew. I am a second-year master's student at Addis Ababa University, department of Social work. I kindly ask for your consent to participate in this study. Moreover, this form provides detailed information about the study. If you are not able to read or understand the contents of the form, I will read and explain the information verbally to you.

Purpose of the study

This study aims to document your whole experience to your marijuana use. The reason behind for you to take part in this study is because the researcher aims to document your own meaning construction to your own drug use.

Expectations

If you choose to participate in this study, you will describe your personal perception and meaning of your marijuana use (before and after), challenges, and reasons. In addition, the interview session will last for a minimum of 45 minutes. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded.

What do I gain from participating in the study?

Even if this study has no direct benefit to you, your participation in the study will allow other concerned bodies, individuals, parents, professionals such as psychologists and social workers to have a detailed understanding about the lives of marijuana using young adults. Accordingly, social workers and other professionals will learn about the ways to minimize drug use and indicate different skills and coping mechanisms with mental health issues as well.

Risks of participating in the study

You may feel stressed while sharing your story to the researcher. However, the researcher will start the interview with friendly conversations and attempt to make the interview questions simple. Anytime you may feel overwhelmed during the interview session, you may stop or take a few minutes of break from the interview.

Discretion/ Secrecy of the information

The information you provide to the study will stay between us and no other person will get a hold of your personal information. To this effect, the researcher will hide away the information provided from you and keep it in a safe place. This study will be anonymous and pseudo names will be used in the study to enhance the confidentiality of the study. Nevertheless, this study may be published in the future, but your real names won't be part of the study.

If you have decided to participate in the study, please sign the consent form

Name_____

Sign_____

Date_____

Appendix B: Consent Form with Key Informants

Hello, I am a second-year master's student of Addis Ababa University, department of Social work. At present, I am conducting a study on the lived experiences of marijuana using students in Addis Ababa, the case of unity university. The nature of this study is to understand the experience and meanings constructed by these young adults of marijuana use. I kindly request for your permission to share your knowledge and experience as representatives of your class and encounters you had with students and how the process of marijuana use takes place. The interview will be open-ended questions and will take for a minimum of 45 minutes. Additionally, if you feel stressed or uncomfortable during the interview session, you may stop or have the rights to refuse to participate in the study. In addition, the information you provide about will be kept confidential and anonymous. Hence, if you agree to participate in the study, please sign the consent form. Thank you.

Name_____

Date_____

Sign_____

Time of the interview_____

Place of the interview_____

Date of the interview_____

Appendix C: Research Protocol (Interview Guide)

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

Department of Social Work Master's Thesis Project

Topic of the Study: Understanding the lived experiences of students who use marijuana

Interview Guide

Part one: Demographic Information

Please answer the question below

Date: -----

Basic personal information

Place of birth -----

Age -----

Sex -----

Educational status -----

Family size _____

Part two: Personal information

RQ1: How did university students start using marijuana?

1. Tell me about how you have started using marijuana?
2. Share with me what you like most when you started smoking marijuana?
3. Tell me about your future plans? Do you think you can achieve them smoking marijuana.
4. Tell me if you have every challenged by legal bodies due to smoking marijuana?
5. What does a normal day look like for you before, during, and after you start smoking??
6. How often do you smoke or use marijuana?
7. What would you like other young adults to know before they engage in marijuana use?
8. Would you change anything about your marijuana use and why?

RQ2: How did Unity university students get access to marijuana use?

9. Can you please tell me how you can get access to Marijuana?
10. Describe what beliefs led you and your peers into using marijuana?
11. What type of influences, such as from friends or families, led you into using marijuana
12. Describe the benefits you have experienced with marijuana use.
13. Provide a description of the challenges you have faced using marijuana.
14. What would your concerns be about using marijuana?
15. How has marijuana use affected your mental health?

RQ3: What is the lived experience of students using marijuana?

16. Were there life challenges because of smoking marijuana? If yes, please explain them to me.
17. Provide a description of how marijuana has impacted your life
18. In what way has marijuana use affected your educational achievement.
19. How much do you think students risk harming themselves by using marijuana?
20. What do you believe are the advantages of using marijuana when it comes to academic achievement?
21. What do you believe are the disadvantages of using marijuana when it comes to academic achievement are?
22. Describe your academic performance before and after marijuana use.
23. Provide a few final words for potential marijuana users?

Thank you for participating in this research study, your contributions are highly appreciated. Do you have anything else you would like to add to your responses?

Appendix D: Research Protocol (Interview Guide)
(Interview Guide with Key Informants)

1. How do you identify students who are consistent users of marijuana?
2. How are you able to tell if there is a relationship between their use and academic performance?
3. What is your opinion regarding the use of marijuana and its challenges on students?
4. Do you think marijuana use is a concerning issue for students when it comes to their health and overall life status.

Appendix E- Observation Checklist of the study participants

- 1) Personal hygiene of the students
- 2) School setting of the students
- 3) The nature of the relationship of students with their peers
- 4) Kinds of emotions, tones of voices, laughter and facial gestures of the participants
- 5) Usual time of entrance to the coffee shops
- 6) Usual time of usage
- 7) Behavior before and after using marijuana
- 8) Energy after and before using
- 9) Other drug use while entering coffee shops
- 10) How often they frequent these coffee shops