

Quality of Life among Cannabis Consumers And Non-Consumers in South Florida: Preliminary Results from the Herbal Heart Study

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Background: Cannabis is often cited as a potential alternative or an adjunct for managing symptoms of physical and mental chronic medical conditions. While existing literature reports extensive physiological effects of cannabis use, an understanding of its impact on subjective well-being such as the quality of life (QoL) is still lacking. This study seeks to bridge this gap by assessing various domains of QoL among young adults, a population that has been reported to have a higher prevalence of cannabis consumption using various methods. We further compared the differences with their non consumer counterparts.

Methods: The data is from the initial assessment of participants in the ongoing Herbal Heart Study cohort that investigates the effect of cannabinoids on subclinical cardiovascular risk among young adults (18–35) in South Florida. QoL was assessed through the 26-item World Health Organization Quality of Life questionnaire (WHOQOL-BREF), categorized into four domains: physical health, psychological well-being, social relations, and environment. The mean scores within each domain were utilized to compute domain scores, aligned with WHOQOL-100 standards, and subsequently transformed to a 0–100 scale. Two items gauged participants' overall perceptions of QoL and health. To compare QoL scores based on cannabis use status and administration routes, the Mann–Whitney U test and Kruskal–Wallis were applied as appropriate, using SAS Analytics.

Results: Of the total young adults (N=150), the mean age was 24.6 years ($SD=4.5$), with 66.7% being female, 51.3% identifying as Hispanic/Latino, and 50.7% reporting cannabis use. Among cannabis users, 30.3% were blunt users, 34.2% joint, and 35.5% vape (35.5%). The total QoL score did not show a significant difference between cannabis users and non-users ($Z=1.5494$, $p=0.12$). The median scores for overall QoL and general health were not significantly different between the two groups ($P=0.49$) and by routes of cannabis administration among users ($p=0.36$). Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference in median scores across all four domains when comparing cannabis users to non-users. However, within the group of cannabis users, a significant difference emerged in the median score for psychological well-being by routes of cannabis consumption: [joint (75.0), blunt (62.5), and vape (58.3), Kruskal Wallis $X^2=10.234$, $df=2$, $p<.01$].

Conclusion: Although no significant difference in the overall QoL was observed between two groups, a significant difference in psychological well-being among cannabis consumers by methods of use highlights the importance of examining specific QoL dimensions in understanding the impact of cannabis use on holistic well-being among cannabis habitual users.

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