

Experiences and Perceptions of Cannabis Use: A Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract

Background: Cannabis has been used for medicinal and recreational purposes in various cultures. Research has shown efficacy and therapeutic merit for cannabis in clinical populations for mental and physical diseases and conditions; however, there is a paucity of data regarding cannabis use in active populations.

Purpose: The purpose of this mixed methods study is to examine cannabis use in active adults and explore perceptions of use, including mental and physical effects on performance and recovery.

Methods: An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was used. Descriptive statistics and frequencies were performed for quantitative survey data. Using a qualitative approach, 30 individuals participated in semi-structured interviews. Interview transcripts were analyzed using an inductive approach to generate codes and themes.

Results: The electronic survey was completed by a convenience sample of 196 active adults (61% response rate). Nearly half of the respondents (n = 88 [44.90%]) reported using cannabis “everyday”. The use of cannabis before exercise had a “small beneficial effect” on performance (n = 36 [25.71%]) and a “neither detrimental nor beneficial effect” on recovery (n = 70 [50.36%]). The use of cannabis after exercise had a “large beneficial effect” and “neither detrimental nor beneficial effect” on performance (n = 44 [31.88%]) and a “large beneficial effect” on recovery” (n = 59 [42.45%]). In the qualitative interviews, three themes emerged: (1) perceived benefits of cannabis use with exercise, (2) perceived effects of cannabis use on mental performance and recovery, and (3) perceived effects of cannabis use on physical performance and recovery.

Conclusions: Active adults in the United States may use cannabis frequently with exercise, with reported physical and mental perceived benefits of use on performance and recovery. This information can enhance future knowledge, education, and research within the cannabis and exercise field.

Key Words: *Cannabis*