Associations Between Cannabis Consumption, Eating Habits, and Illicit Drug Use Among College Students

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Introduction

- Cannabis is among the most frequently used substances by adolescents both in the United States and worldwide (Mian et al., 2025)
- Cannabis usage has shown a positive correlation with increased fast food consumption and obesity in the United States (Romano et al., 2022)
- Those who did not consume cannabis scored higher on the Healthy Eating Index than frequent cannabis users (Gibson et al., 2023)
- Studies show that prevalence of other illicit drug use was consistently higher among young adults who regularly use cannabis (Fedorova et al., 2021)
- With the increased availability of cannabis, this study will fill the gap in existing research regarding its effect on the wellbeing of present-day adolescents
- This study was conducted to assess the correlation of cannabis consumption with eating habits and illicit substance use in adults aged 18 years or older pursuing higher-level education. The results of this study will raise awareness and educate the public about the negative effects of cannabis use.

Hypothesis

We hypothesize that cannabis consumption is positively correlated to negative eating habits and other substance use

Methods

- Data collection was performed using an anonymous survey questionnaire via Google Form survey
- The Substance Abuse and Choices Scale (SACS) was used to assess cannabis use
- Eating behaviors were evaluated using the Eating Disorder Examination - Questionnaire Short (EDE - QS) and the Food Mood Questionnaire (FMQ)
- A total of 805 participants aged 18 years or older and enrolled in higher level education participated in the study. Information regarding cannabis consumption and eating habits were recorded in the questionnaire
- The survey was distributed through Binghamton University outreach events, group chats, GroupMe group chats, and various other social media platforms
- The survey utilized the Five-Factor Model to measure human personality in relation to cannabis consumption, eating habits, and illicit drug use
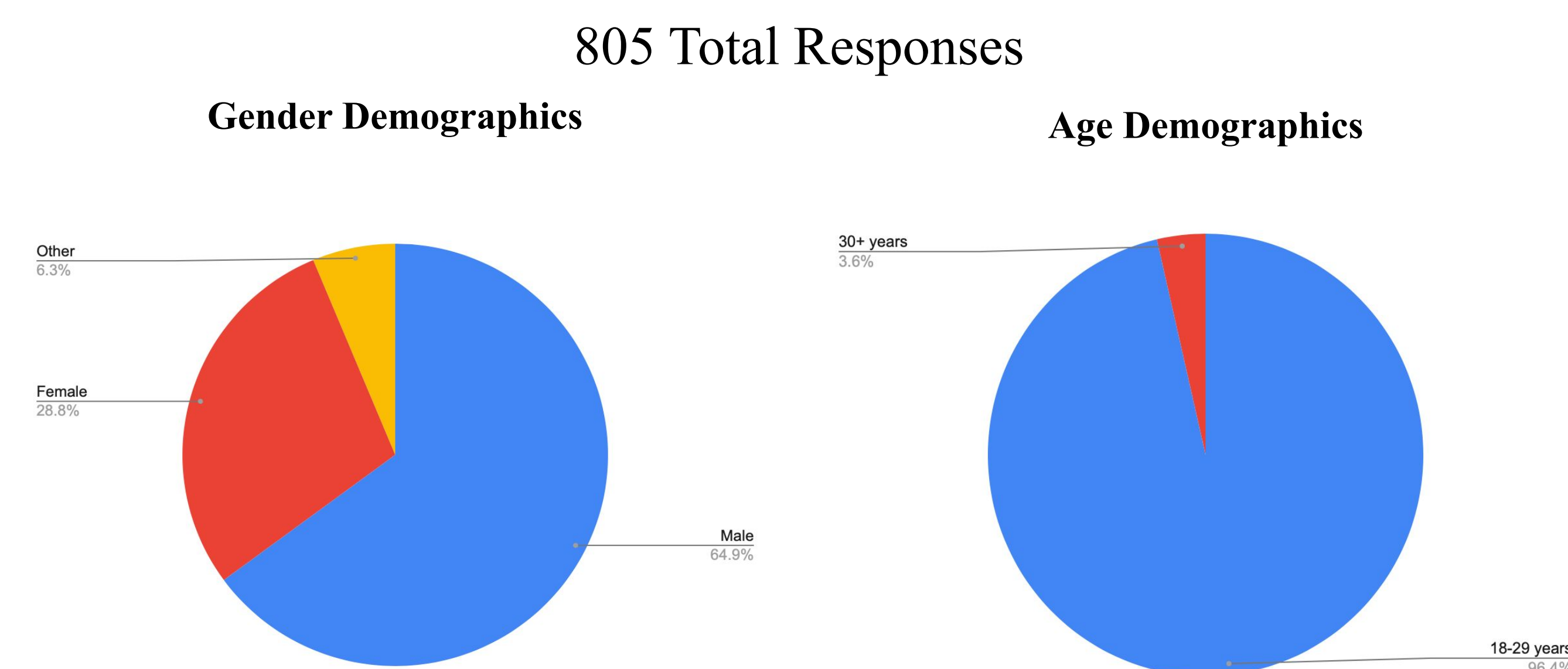- Data was evaluated through Pearson Correlation Coefficient in SPSS, Version 28.0

Results

805 Total Responses

Gender Demographics

Age Demographics

Table 1: Baseline Characteristics of Study Population

Age	Percentage	Gender Identity	Percentage
18-29 years	96.4	Male	64.9
30+ years	3.6	Female	28.8
		Other	6.3

Table 2: Association Between Cannabis Use and Healthy Eating Habits

Nutrition	Correlation
Breakfast Consumed	-.120**
Fruit Consumed	-.079*
Meat, chicken, or turkey consumed	-.072*

$p<0.05$ = * $p<0.01$ = **

Table 3: Association Between Cannabis Use and Unhealthy Eating Habits

Nutrition	Correlation
Fast food consumed	.175**
Large amounts of food consumed	.100**

$p<0.01$ = **

Table 4: Association Between Cannabis Use and Illicit Drug Use

Drug	Correlation
Alcohol consumed	.350**
Ecstasy consumed	.177**
Hallucinogens consumed	.290**
Amphetamines consumed	.145**
Sedatives consumed	.093**
Opiates consumed	.159**
Cocaine consumed	.195**
ADHD medications consumed	.237**

$p<0.01$ = **

Discussion and Conclusion

- The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between cannabis consumption, eating habits, and illicit drug use
- Cannabis use is defined as frequency of usage spanning from every day to month
- Healthy eating habits are defined as the consumption of breakfast and nutritious foods over the average week, and unhealthy eating habits are noted as overconsumption and fast food consumption over the average week
- The results of the study showed a negative correlation between cannabis use and healthy eating habits, revealing a decrease in fruit and vegetable consumption and an increase in sweets, snacks, fast food, and sugary drinks consumed (Gibson et al., 2023)
- Consistent with previous studies, cannabis use showed a positive correlation to unhealthy eating habits including binge eating and poor quality dietary choices (Elran-Barak et al., 2024)
- Illicit drug use is specified as the frequency of administration of illegal substances spanning from every day to month
- Cannabis use was found to be positively correlated to other illicit drug use (Fedorova et al., 2021)
- Data reveals that persistent cannabis use may have a relationship to poor eating habits and may increase the susceptibility to use other psychoactive substances
- This study will help to spread awareness of the issues associated with cannabis consumption in hopes to aid its prevention

Future Work and Limitations

- Possible limitations include inaccurate responses due to survey bias and more female than male participants contributing to the study
- Implications for future work should include a larger sample size, reevaluation of the questions asked to prevent bias, and a fair representation of male and female participants in the study
- Future research should further explore the longitudinal relationship between cannabis use, eating habits, and other illicit drug use
- Preventative measures such as increasing the intake of healthier foods and limiting consumption of other illicit substances should be advised

References