Substance Use and Lifestyle Choices

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Abstract

Substance use, a predominant issue across college campuses, significantly impacts various lifestyle choices and behaviors, such as sleep, nutrition, exercise, and personality traits. This study aims to identify correlations between these lifestyle choices and substance use habits. An anonymous online survey was administered through Google services and sent via email, GroupMe, and Messenger. This survey included basic demographic questions and questions on ADHD Medication and Substance use, Nutrition and Lifestyle choices, and Personality type. Data was analyzed using Pearson's Correlation Analysis in SPSS version 28.0. The findings show a negative correlation between the use of substances and viewing oneself as disciplined/dependable ($p<0.05$). There was additionally a negative correlation between sleep pattern satisfaction and use of marijuana ($p<0.01$). By shedding light on these relationships, students can become more aware of how their substance use influences their lifestyle choices.

Introduction

- Looking at overall health, substance use significantly affects both physical and mental health and lifestyle choices.
- In terms of personality in particular, substance use is linked to less desirable personality traits, such as lower levels of agreeableness and socialness, as well as borderline and antisocial personality disorders.
- Nutritionally speaking, substance use often leads to poor dietary choices and irregular eating habits. This aspect is often overlooked in the treatment and recovery from Substance Use Disorder (SUD).
- In terms of sleep, disturbances such as insomnia and sleep apnea have been bi-directionally linked to substances like alcohol and cigarettes
- As far as the impact on exercise, the use of substances has been linked to lower levels of exercise and poorer exercise performance. It can potentially serve as an effective remedy for those suffering from drug addiction

References

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Methods and Demographics

Our survey, titled Substance Abuse and Lifestyle Choices, received a total of 198 responses. A series of 70+ questions was used to survey participants, spanning a range of answer types, including a mix of Yes/No, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank options. The survey included both qualitative and quantitative questions, but the majority were quantitative.

Anonymous Online Survey (198 Total Responses):

Age Ranges:
- 18-29: 192 participants (97)%
- 30-39: 2 participants (1%)
- 40-49: 4 participants (2%)

Regions:
- North America: 193 participants (Majority - 98%)

Gender:
- Female: 114 participants (57.6%)
- Male: 84 participants (42.4%)

Figure 1: Gender of respondents

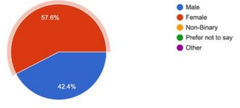
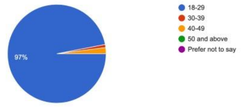


Figure 2: Age of respondents



Data was coded and analyzed using the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

Results

Figure 3: Number of days participants drank in the past 30 days

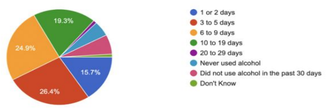


Figure 4: Reported use if participants have smoked all or part of a cigarette

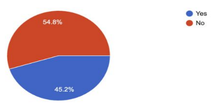


Figure 5: Reported use if participants have taken ADHD medication

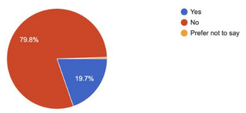


Table 1: Relationships between substance use and personality traits, sleep, and diet

Relationship	Correlation	p-value
Use of ADHD medications and viewing oneself as disciplined/dependable	-.164*	p<0.05
Sleep pattern satisfaction and use of marijuana	-.325**	p<0.01
Fast food consumption and cigarette use	.421**	p<0.01

Table 2: Relationships between substance use and exercise, multiple substance use, and personality trait

Relationship	Correlation	p-value
Average weekly exercise and monthy cigarette use	-.481**	p<0.01
Alcohol consumption and cigarette use in the past month	.417*	p<0.01
Alcohol consumption and viewing oneself as extraverted/enthusiastic	.171*	p<0.05

Conclusion and Discussion

Our findings conclude:

- Our participants with prior ADHD medication consumption are less likely to view themselves as disciplined/dependable. This indicates an interaction between personality/esteem and substance use. Many people report using these substances as focus aids, so trouble focusing may go along with the trend of lower self esteem.
- Our participants who consume marijuana report lower levels of sleep satisfaction. This indicates an interaction between sleep habits and substance use. This could be a bi-directional relationship, as previous literatures has suggested that marijuana may be used as a sleep aid in some cases.
- Our participants who more frequently smoke cigarettes also tend to consume fast food more often. This indicates an interaction between nutrition and substance use.
- Our participants who have used/are using cigarettes appear to be less likely to exercise. This indicates an interaction between exercise habits and substance use.
- Our participants who smoke cigarettes report higher levels of alcohol consumption (and vice versa). This indicates an interaction between the use of multiple substances.
- Our participants who reported consuming higher levels of alcohol reported higher levels of viewing themselves as extraverted/enthusiastic. This indicates an interaction between personality and substance use. This could be due to the fact that in the college environment, alcohol is often found in social situations/events.

Overall:

- The results from our data collection suggest that there is a strong relationship between substance use and lifestyle choices. While lifestyle choices is a very broad topic, by looking into specific choices such as exercise, sleep, nutrition and personality type, we were able to identify some correlations between these habits and substance use among college students.

Based on our research, we recommend:

- College students (and all individuals) remain mindful of their substance consumption decisions and understanding the far-reaching implications of substances, especially during their collegiate years, a vulnerable stage of development.
- Individuals build healthy habits such as positive exercise, sleep, and nutrition habits. This is essential in reducing the likelihood of developing substance addictions.
- Those addicted to substances are encouraged to seek help - factors such as nutrition and exercise can be crucial to recovery.

Future Work and Limitations

Future Work:
- For further examination, we would recommend an investigation into the influence of individual substances on lifestyle choices. These substances could include performance-enhancing drugs, depressants, stimulants, and hallucinogens. Since substance use is a lifestyle choice, this research would provide further opportunities for discussion and a deeper understanding of its effects on individuals.

Limitations:
- One limitation of our study is our sample size, we had 198 participants who we collected data from, although this may not be representative of the entire population of "college students". Additionally we had a few responses from an older demographic (6 responses), so the age range of participants had a relatively wide range.

Acknowledgements

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