

Religious Identity and the use of Alcohol and Marijuana in a Sample of diverse Young Adults

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BACKGROUND

- Binge drinking has detrimental effects for adolescents and young adult health and is associated with other health risk behaviors (Hingson & Zha, 2018; Miller et al., 2007).
- Heavy and long-term use of cannabis has also been linked to educational underachievement (Lynskey & Hall, 2000; Volkow et al., 2014) and unemployment (Fergusson & Boden, 2008).
- Religious identity and religiosity are associated with a lower risk of alcohol and other substance use among middle and high school students (Miller et al., 2000; Cotton et al., 2006; Hodge et al., 2001).
- However, less is known about the influence of religion on substance use among diverse young adults (ages 18-25) (Vaughn, de Dios, Steinfeldt, & Kratz, 2011).
- More research is also needed on the relationship between religion and substance use among diverse populations (Luk et al., 2013).

STUDY AIM

- To compare the rates of binge drinking and marijuana use among religious and non-religious diverse young adults.

HYPOTHESES

H₁: Participants that identify as religious will endorse a significantly lower rate of binge drinking in the past week as compared to non-religious participants.

H₂: Participants that identify as religious will endorse a significantly lower rate of past month marijuana use as compared to non-religious participants.

METHODS

- A total of 113 individuals were interviewed by phone and asked to self-report their demographic characteristics including gender, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and educational status/history.
- Participants were asked whether they had used marijuana in the past month and the average number of days they used marijuana in the span of a week.
- Participants were also asked about whether they engaged in binge drinking in the past week which was defined for females as consuming 4 or more drinks in a 2-hour period and as 5+ drinks in a 2-hour period for male participants (NIAAA, 2004).
- Participants were grouped as religious (i.e. Christian, Muslim, Spiritual) or non-religious (Agnostic, Atheist, Other).

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

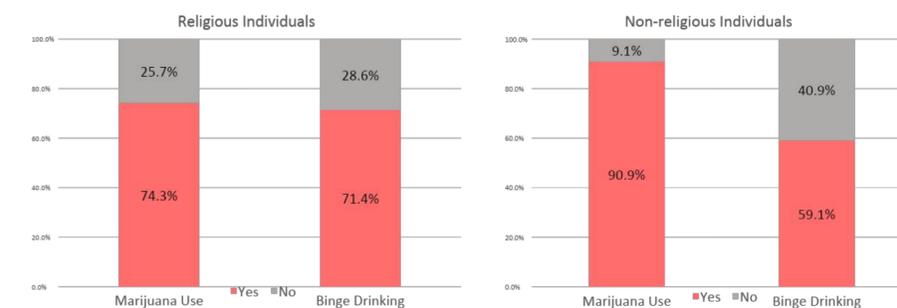
- Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the sample characteristics.
- Chi-square tests were used to compare the rates of binge drinking among religious and non-religious participants (**H₁**) and any marijuana/cannabis use in the past month (**H₂**).

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The sample was 55.3% (n=63) female, 61.4% (n=70) religious, and 78.9% (n=90) racial/ethnic minority adults. 66.7% (n=76) of the sample endorsed past 30 day binge drinking and 80.7% (n=92) endorsed past 30 day marijuana use.

RESULTS

- Religious individuals were significantly less likely to endorse past-month marijuana use than non-religious individuals [$\chi^2(1, n=113)=6.18, p<.05$].
- There was no difference in the rate of binge drinking among religious and non-religious participants [$\chi^2(1, n=113)=1.45, p<.05$].



CONCLUSIONS

- Findings indicate that religious identity seems to continue to be a protective factor against marijuana use into young adulthood among racially diverse young adults.
- However, a protective effect of religious identity was not found for binge drinking. This may be due to the fact that 50.9% (n=58) of our sample identifying as adherents of Christianity, which has less restrictions on the use of alcohol than other religions (e.g. Islam).
- The protective effect found for marijuana use may be due to the illicit nature of this substance in Texas and a possible greater concern for adherence to laws among religious individuals.
- Additional research is needed to determine the relationship between religious identity and marijuana use in states where this substance is legal, especially for religious groups with more explicit bans against alcohol than other substances such as marijuana (e.g. Islam).