Marijuana in College Athletics: A Research Proposal

Scarlet Ditoro, SUNY Canton (supervised by Dr. Barat Wolfe)

SUNY CANTON

WELLNESS EQUITY RESEARCH COLLECTIVE

Background

- Student-athletes endure stresses that may impact overall well-being and performance - athletic and academic (Mottram, 2010)
- Although historically substance use of athletes has matched their non-athlete peers (Labrie et al., 2009), more recent research suggests that athletes use less (NCAA, 2023)
  - D3 athletes use at higher rates than other divisions, particularly in states where marijuana is legalized (NCAA, 2023
  - While most athletes report social use, use of marijuana for sleep (38%), coping with anxiety (37%) and pain management (17%) are significant (NCAA, 2023)

Gaps in Literature

- NCAA policy and regulation has lagged behind state legalization, resulting in need to study S-A use – particularly in rising uses (e.g., pain)
- While physiological explorations of marijuana use – especially in stress conditions – are needed, subjective, lived experiences of S-As using marijuana for coping are also beneficial

Purpose

- To add to the literature on marijuana use by exploring D3 S-A experiences in NYS (i.e., legalized state)
- Explore reasons for marijuana use, particularly as they pertain to management of stress and health outcomes (e.g., pain)
- Explore possible predictors of marijuana use (including perceptions of NCAA and state policy)

Methodology

- After securing IRB and coach approval, student-athletes will be sent a link to an online survey, letter of consent
- Survey:
  - Demographics: age, class year, gender, type of student (predominantly OL, predominantly F2F, combo), self-reported GPA, sport
  - Type of marijuana use (inhaled, edible, etc.)
  - Reasons for use
  - Self-reported anxiety (STAI), depression (CES-D), social connectedness (SCS), well-being (SF-12), stress (SSS)
  - Perceptions of NCAA and state policy, including open-ended questions:
    - How do you feel about the NCAA policy?
    - Does the fact that cannabis is legal in NYS encourage you to use?
    - What do you feel are the consequences of using cannabis?
  - Analysis: multiple regression and content analysis

Implications

- Findings can help close gap in knowledge – especially in the context of legalization for some states, coinciding with NCAA prohibition
- Understanding use of marijuana for stress and health outcomes, rather than assuming social reasons, can inform new policy, and boost well-being and S-A performance
- Subjective, experiential, self-reports can be linked in the future to much needed physiological studies examining impact of marijuana on training and S-A outcomes

Limitations

- Students may not feel comfortable sharing due to
  - NCAA laws and regulations
  - Social desirability

References

LaBrie, J. W., Grossbard, J. R., & Hummer, J. F. (2009). Normative misperceptions ``` and marijuana use among male and female college athletes. Journal of Applied ``` Sport Psychology, 21(S1), S77-S85.

Mottram, D., & Mottram, D.R. (Eds.). (2010). Drugs in Sport (5th ed.). Routledge.

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2024, January). NCAA National Study of Substance Use Habits of College Student-Athletes [PDF].