

Non-Medical Prescription and Other Drug Use in Relation to Mental Health and World Beliefs: A Study of College Students

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Abstract : Non-medical prescription and other drug (NMPOD) use has been a significant public health issue for the last few decades, with problematic use increasing among university students more recently. The current study focused on associations between NMPOD use and mental health, well-being, and world beliefs among young adults. Young adults (N=513) completed online questionnaires assessing stress, demographic characteristics, self-esteem, NMPOD use, coping mechanisms, and anxiety. A substantial portion of participants reported using cannabis (48.5%, n=249), while smaller portions of participants reported using stimulants (26.7%, n = 137), sedatives (17.2%, n=88), opioids (10.8%, n=55), and hallucinogens (14.4%, n=74). Five hierarchical logistic regressions were performed to determine the independent relationships between mental health, well-being, and world belief factors and NMPOD use for the five classes of substances. After controlling for demographic factors (age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation), depression was associated with increased non-medical stimulant, opioid, and cannabis use; coping self-efficacy was associated with increased hallucinogen use, and attendance of worship services was associated with decreased non-medical cannabis and hallucinogen use. Results suggest that depression was strongly associated with non-medical stimulant, opioid, and cannabis use, and attendance of worship services was protective against cannabis and hallucinogen use. To the best of our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to investigate the relationships between mental health, well-being, world beliefs, and NMPOD use among young adults. The present study illuminates future targets for intervention, such as increased access to mental health diagnosis and treatment and the exploration of the roles of religion and shared community in the prevention of drug use among young adults.

Keywords : cannabis, mental health, non-medical prescription and other drug use, world beliefs

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