Com 882-22

Persuasive Communication

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Omega Graduate School

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Professor

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**Assignment #3 – First Draft**

1. Write a 5-page argumentative essay on your selected topic.

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that clearly states your topic, its importance,

and your position has a succinct thesis statement.

a. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought. Include logical arguments

and literature references to support the main points and sub-points of your

position. Include counterarguments, along with logical reasons for rejecting

them.

b. Add section headers to your paper that match your outline.

b. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

c. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the remaining

scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

**The health of young adults is jeopardized under the veil of medical marijuana.**

The global rise in youth consumption of recreational marijuana following its legalization raises a public health concern about addiction and mental health implications (Kourgiantakis et al., 2022). Zimlich (2019) reported a growing prevalence of marijuana use among 8th and 10th graders in the United States. Cannabis advocates and consumers lack awareness of the health risks, impact on brain development, and misguided treatment benefits. Cort (2017) reported that 4.2 million individuals in the United States, aged 12 and above, fitted the criteria for cannabis use disorder. Meanwhile, heightened THC levels affect the mental health and cognitive abilities of adolescents and young adults (Mennis et al., 2023).

**Literature review**

**Marijuana Legalization and the effects**

Medical Marijuana Law (MML) aims to address recognizing cannabis use as an individual choice for adults and replacing the illicit market with a legal and regulated one (Husock, 2024).However, challenges exist in the medical marijuana sector, which includes the perception of medical dispensaries as rivals due to lighter regulations and taxes, and the potential questioning of medical assertions without strong scientific support (Kilmer & MacCoun, 2017). Many previous debates on legalization occurred when marijuana had lower potency compared to today, with the increase in THC levels (Larkin, 2021).

The long-term effects of marijuana have been linked to similarities with tobacco and alcohol, but marijuana use increased among youth compared to the declining rates of tobacco and alcohol (Williams et al., 2024; Sabet, 2021; Larkin, 2021). Colorado was among the first states to legalize cannabis (Cort, 2014). However there exist a concerning trend of young individuals experiencing fatalities and frequent hospitalizations due to cannabis consumption (Anderson & Rees, 2023). Cannabis adversely affects the brain, leading to an increased risk of motor vehicle accidents and psychotic symptoms in adolescents (Scheier & Griffin, 2021; Gabaglio et al., 2021; Anderson & Rees, 2023).The prevalence of mental disease has increased since the 1970s, with Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) levels increasing since the 1970s (Berenson, 2019). THC is the primary psychoactive compound found in cannabis, which is used by individuals to induce a state of intoxication (Zimlich, 2019).

**Marijuana use discrimination and stigmatizations**Racially marginalized young adults use tobacco and marijuana to cope with discrimination, anxiety, and depression, while African American men specifically use cannabis to address racial discrimination (Keum et al., 2023; Dogan et al., 2021: Coleman-Kirumba, et al., 2023). Advocates in favor of legalizing cannabis argue that such a move could potentially lead to the decriminalization of individuals arrested for possession of the substance. This, in turn, has the potential to contribute towards reducing the prison population, addressing concerns related to overcrowding and the criminalization of non-violent offenses (Mohr-Avitia, 2024).

Public stigma and self-stigmatization are interconnected with substance abuse. When individuals receive education on psychological disorders, it can reduce personal stigma. However, this education may unexpectedly lead to an increase in self-stigma levels among those affected (Ross et al., 2019). Psychoeducation is essential for minority communities to understand the stigma associated with mental illnesses and their impact on mood (McKenzie, et al., 2022).

**Cannabis and its components**Cannabis contains at least sixty cannabinoid chemicals, with THC being the most active and affecting brain development (Berenson, 2019). Only two of these cannabinoids, THC and CBD, are widely discussed for their health impact. Hemp, a part of the marijuana plant, is used in soaps, herbal drinks, and fabric but contains minimal levels of psychoactive THC. Most young people are unaware of the difference between THC and CBD, leading to 80% of adolescents and young adults not perceiving cannabis as a health risk (Asare et al., 2024; Berenson, 2019 ;Cort, 2017).

**Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD) and its’s effects.**Studies indicate that young people can develop a cannabis use disorder, leading to addiction, as a result of early onset cannabis use (Mennis et al., 2024). Recent research suggests that young individuals with a familial history of mental illness, who consume high doses of THC and engage in substance use, are more vulnerable to developing serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia (Malabadi et al., 2023; Fischer et al., 2020; Scheier & Griffin, 2021).  
There is a misconception in the public regarding the therapeutic effects of marijuana, aiming to promote its legalization and recreational use for industry profit. Research indicates that most teenagers are unaware of its potential dangers to their psychological and mental well-being (Sabet, 2021).

**The Cannabis business market and its effects**Alpandinar, (2021) advised that the legalization of recreational marijuana entails legislative adjustments which permits legal access to marijuana through regulated distribution policies, akin to the sale of alcohol. Gabaglio et al. (2020) highlighted a 19% rate of marijuana usage among 15 to 24-year-old adolescents in Europe, while Zimlich (2019) cautioned against the rising trend of marijuana consumption among 8th and 10th graders in the United States.

Legalization enables a home cultivation market that allows cannabis enthusiasts to give the substance as gifts (Kilmer & Pérez-Dávila, 2023). However cannabis advocates fail to connect the increasing the risk of exposing vulnerable individuals in society to a legalized market. The expanding cannabis market, facilitated by grassroots lobbying, enables an augmented product of harmful substances to young individuals (Feldman, ;Gabaglio et al., 20) Moreover, the ineffectiveness of taxes not only impacts the financial situation of struggling individuals but also creates an environment where they become vulnerable targets for illicit markets (Choudhary, 2023).  
Kilmer & MacCoun (2017) discovered that the average THC content of confiscated flowers in the U.S. around 2000 was about 5%. Currently, retail market flowers average around 20% THC, with some exceeding 25%. The level of THC has increased compared to the "Woodstock weed" era, but it is detrimental to individuals who consume marijuana with a THC content of 20% or more, as it is associated with psychosis, other mental health issues, impairments in brain development, and decreased intelligence quotient (IQ) (Larkin, 2021; Sabet, 2021).

**Conclusion**

Classifying cannabis as a Schedule 1 drug highlights its addiction potential and risks. Cannabis faces scrutiny for its intoxicating properties, health concerns including Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD), cognitive decline, ADHD and psychiatric problems. Reclassifying cannabis would not eliminate the THC risks. Concerns persist, especially for young adults due to their rates of cannabis use . Critics advised that Medical Marijuana Laws unintentionally encourage recreational use. While medical marijuana advocates believe legalization reduces prison populations. But the focus on the vulnerable groups is lacking. Supporters of marijuana laws should consider youth health risks. Studies show 80% of young individuals do not view cannabis as a health risk and use it for psychiatric issues. Psychoeducation is vital, especially for marginalized communities, to address mental health stigma. Further, men often struggle to seek treatment for conditions like depression and anxiety.

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