

Closing the Gap: Medical Marijuana

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Abstract

The information provided through this survey has presented some valuable data into the hearts and minds of many different kinds of people. To speak on their responses, they all believe that medical marijuana is popular by the majority, they feel it will eventually be legalized and that governments and businesses stand to make billions from the sale and taxation of marijuana. Most agreed the public sector should be charged with its management and that the same rules that apply to tobacco and alcohol should apply to marijuana.

Keywords: Globalization; Legalization; Medical uses; Marketing; Federal regulations

Introduction

Globalization is the norm of today's world in international business. Governments and businesses alike contribute to today's globalization expansion efforts like never before. Businesses, governments and the people that aim to tackle the dynamic global marketplace face many challenges. With advancements in technology and communication, there are not many borders for governments, business and people to grow with others. This research paper will discuss what role medical marijuana has to play in today's globalization efforts. It will highlight closing the gap of the pros and cons of medical marijuana as it pertains to governments and businesses realizing the lucrative properties both medically and monetarily and incorporating this into the supplies and demands of the world.

Background of the Problem

Marijuana is a sensitive topic for many people who do not engage in that practice. A narcotic, marijuana is popular and continues to be a topic of interest to lawmakers about legalization. The most widespread issues regarding marijuana are with its medicinal properties, which cannot be overlooked, and have gained popularity with other nations who have laws permitting its use in the medical field [1].

For medical marijuana to gain traction there must be debate and conversation from both sides addressing the pros and cons. For this to get accomplished, different debates need to address the unique, constructive and structured forms of medical marijuana. Documented medical uses of marijuana and case studies prove that the pros outweigh the cons because of its advancements in medical science. The chief argument for the medical usage of marijuana is its effective treatment for patients who are in extreme pain or the terminally ill [2]. There is also a growing debate on whether or not marijuana is a gateway drug to more potent narcotics, or if it has addictive agents within its composition. Countries that have legalized marijuana mandate that their doctors proceed with caution when prescribing medical marijuana to their patients [3].

Public opinion favours the legalization of medical marijuana. In the state Michigan, a ballot was created for the medical marijuana initiative, and received more votes than President-elect Barack Obama [4]. However, since there is not much research done on medical marijuana, the scientific community lacks data to convince the political community of its pros and cons, thus leaving some critical decisions about its legalization in the hands of misinformed politicians. The lack of documented research makes medical marijuana a political issue rather than a scientific one [5].

Although the United States federal law prohibits possession of marijuana, 17 of the 50 states, including Washington, DC, have laws that legalize the use and sale of medical marijuana. The rules certainly put states at odds with federal statutes. The workplace is affected by the statutes, and places employers in the awkward position to follow state and federal regulations. The topic will continue to be a problem until the contrasting legislation is addressed [6].

The moral concerns about medical marijuana should be visible. With its legalization in Los Angeles, California, a growing concern is the marketing of medical marijuana through dispensaries, forgoes its medical benefits for the modern recreational usage and hallucinogenic effects. Even though this is a minority, they hold a significant position that allows them to threaten proponents who are getting pushed back from the opponents. There are claims that marijuana is unsafe, a drug that will not test reasonably as a suitable treatment option, and that legalizing it will lead to increased recreational use that sends a negative message to the youths [7].

Statement of the Problem

Medical marijuana and the growing impact of its legalization is a huge international business topic. The pros and cons, as well as the potential business initiatives, need to be analysed.

Research Question(s)

1. What do governments and businesses know of the monetary benefits of medical marijuana, and how do they analysing this data?
2. What factors prohibit the governments from legalizing medical marijuana?

Literature Review

The association of Marijuana with illegal drugs has changed for the better over the years. Many countries have laws that allow personal, private usage of marijuana [6]. High public approval is primarily the

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reason many politicians approve legislation without relevant scientific data to support it [8]. The people supporting the legalization of marijuana make a compelling argument of the myths presented that marijuana is unsafe, and will hurt children [7].

One reason there is so much public support for medical marijuana is its medical benefits. Medical marijuana gets credit for the treatment of many ailments that even some sceptics in the medical community cannot deny [9]. The progress made on illnesses that can be treated by marijuana has even brought positive results in the treatment of cancer and AIDS. Medical marijuana has experienced great strides in dealing with patients that have Multiple Sclerosis [9].

One disadvantage with medical marijuana in the United States is the growing feud between the federal government and states. A federal ban makes it illegal to possess marijuana; however, the 17 states, along with Washington D.C., that have legalized usage, pose a challenge [10]. All 17 states have laws that allow citizens to use marijuana when their doctor prescribes for specific ailments where marijuana is a treatment option. The problem that the states have is because of the federal ban; those patients who use medical marijuana are breaking federal law and are in danger of potential prosecution [6].

Another positive effect with medical marijuana is the amount of taxes states will generate, and the new business that it may create. The states that have legalized medical marijuana have ensured their ability to tax its sales [11]. Businesses can breathe a sigh of relief with the Justice Department informing the states that it will not pursue prosecution to any marijuana clinics that operate within the law [12].

The concern of the federal government is the potential of increased illegal activity from the sales of marijuana [13]. There are reports of a rise in crimes in states where marijuana is legal - medically and recreationally. The criminals are unlawfully entering clinics and dispensaries and stealing marijuana for sale on the streets [14]. Such behaviours lead many banks to be reluctant to give out loans to marijuana clinics. Although the federal government will not pursue charges against marijuana clinics [12], there is still a major concern with banks that conduct business deals or give out loans to marijuana clinics and dispensaries that may attempt to commit tax crimes [15].

The workplace is a topic of much discussion within the marijuana debate. In the states where the drug is legal, residents are allowed to take their prescribed marijuana to treat ailments and do not get prosecuted

[16]; unfortunately, the federal government could technically take action against them because of the Federal Control Substances Act [6].

The federal government will not go after clinics, but the rule does not apply to individuals [12]. This omission also creates issues with companies and their drug policies. Even though companies are cognizant that they have a legal right, under state law, to the use prescribed medication, the concern is how limited their employees will be to complete work-related tasks [17]. However, many would agree that taking any drug that may impair judgment is no excuse for workers to operate a vehicle or heavy machinery [18].

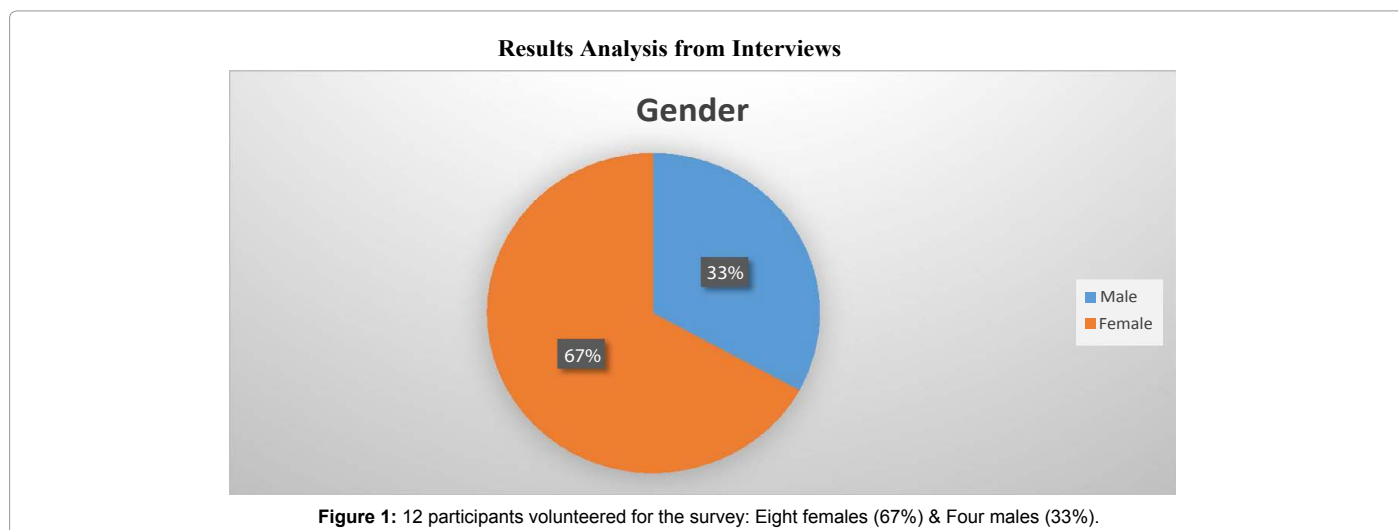
With the public support behind marijuana, there is still a need for the proper education of the masses on this topic. A good education will ensure that all sides that are for or against medical marijuana at least have all data that is as accurate as possible. There are misconceptions about the medical benefits of marijuana that the scientific world needs to update [19]. Institutions who have done research should share with professionals in the medical field [3]. The doctors of tomorrow that will prescribe medical marijuana to their patients receive regular training on new discoveries. Proper education and informed patients maximize the benefits [20].

Many studies disprove concerns that some people have regarding marijuana and its effect on society. Initiatives claim marijuana usage is part of the screening process in young people, as a means to determine childhood behavioural problems [21]. To the contrary, another study concluded that since the legalization of marijuana, adolescent suicides have decreased, and that marijuana does not play a role in forcing young people to commit suicide [22] (Figures 1-4 and Table 1).

The survey was given to twelve people aimed to understand their general feelings towards marijuana, if they are for or against its legalization and if they believe that there is awareness from the government and businesses about its potential monetary and medical benefits. Lastly, the survey also gets a general sense of who they feel, when legalized, is the most responsible to manage and regulate its practices. The participants answered an additional eleven questions that required more elaboration on their answers.

When you hear the word marijuana, what are some thoughts that come to mind?

The majority of the participants acknowledge that marijuana is a



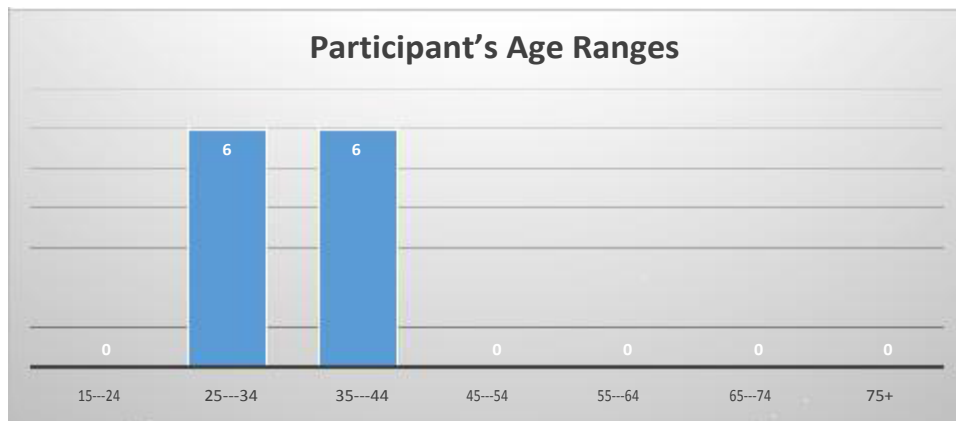


Figure 2: Age ranges.

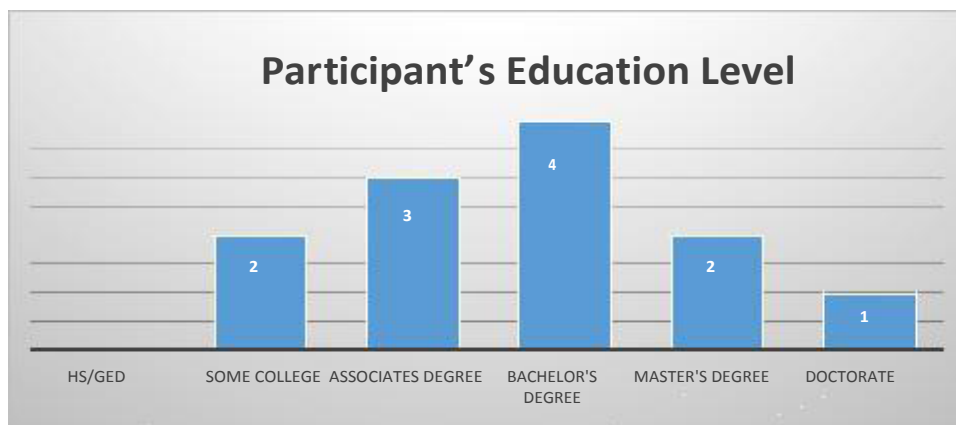


Figure 3: Education levels.

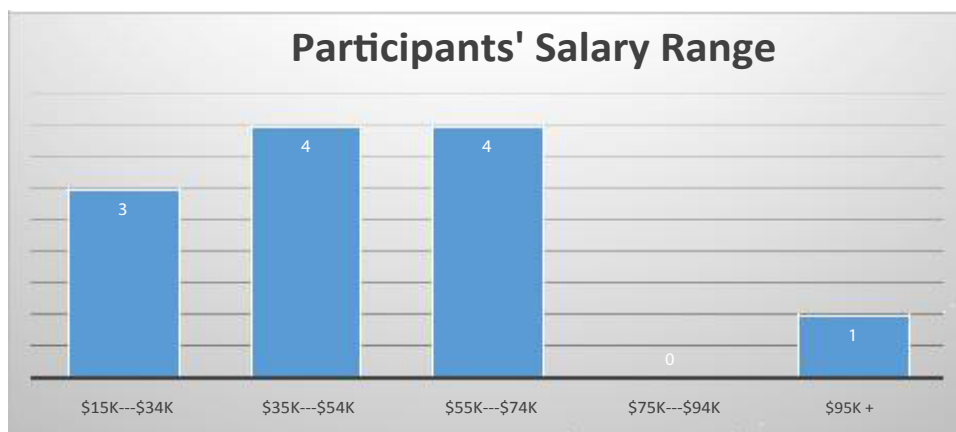


Figure 4: Annual salary ranges.

popular drug that has many different kinds of uses from recreational to medicinal. However, one outlier did highlight that crime is associated with marijuana.

Overall, what are some general feelings that people have towards marijuana?

The entire set of participants all agreed that the feelings towards marijuana are some like it and some do not. A majority also agreed that

there is a lot of misinformation regarding marijuana and feel others should educate themselves first then come to a reasonable conclusion.

What do you believe to be some pros and cons regarding medical marijuana?

An overwhelming majority of participants believe that a pro for marijuana is its medical benefits. A generally accepted con is young children getting exposure and other people abusing its use. Regulation

Ethnicity	Percentages
African American	42
Caucasian	17
Hispanic	25
Asian	0
Other	17
Native American	0

Table 1: Ethnicities of the participants.

was also a con for a small minority of the participants. The idea behind this is the affordability of marijuana may change for the worse with government regulation. Of the participants, 33% do feel there are no cons to medical marijuana.

Why do you feel that there is so much tension and resistance to the medical marijuana movement?

All agreed that resistance is in large part due to the preconceived notions and misinformation that has been shared amongst the people about marijuana. The government being apprehensive about condoning usage even though there is evidence to the contrary is biased and aims to serve a specific constituency. The only outlier is the notion of the decriminalization of marijuana leading to less and less unnecessary arrest which limits the prison and jail population thus limiting a number of inmates that the prisons can manipulate and make money from.

Off the top of your head, what are some ailments that you think would be better treated with medical marijuana as opposed to traditional medical treatments?

All participants agreed that the first ailment that they think of is cancer and the studies that have shown to be a good treatment option. The second was glaucoma with the remainder of the ailments that were geared more towards pain relief.

How much information about medical marijuana do you think governments and businesses have on the monetary gains of legalization?

All participants agree that both the government and businesses are well aware of the monetary benefits and have more than enough information to fully support legalization. Most also were unclear as to why, with respect to the United States federal government, why they still have apprehensions.

What factors do you feel governments and businesses consider when analysing medical marijuana data?

The participants all agreed that cost is the first item they consider regarding medical marijuana.

Explain the role (if any) the people have in legalization of medical marijuana?

Everyone agreed that the people can vote for the representatives that have their best interest at heart. That would agree with the majority on this topic and lobby for its legislation. The people have the power to make this happen sooner than they realize.

Shed some light on what you believe the future of medical marijuana will be in the United States in the next 20 years?

All participants fully expect marijuana to be legal across the entire nation in the next 20 years. There will still be opposition, but that will slowly fade away.

Which entity (private or public sector) in your opinion is best served at regulating medical marijuana?

More than 50% of the participants fully believe that the government (public sector) is best equipped at regulating medical marijuana. Their reason is the transparency and openness that the government is required to show the people. The remaining participants (17%) believed that the private sector is best served while some others didn't know who the best fit for regulation was. Some also thought the medical industry is best served by regulation or that both the public and private sector can work together.

The potential pay out of legalizing medical marijuana is said to be in the hundreds of billions, could that fact alone be enough of a reason for governments to legalize its uses? or Do you feel that there is a moral aspect that is not being addressed?

More than 80% of the participants believe that the monetary benefits are more than enough reason for legalization of medical marijuana. One outlier does believe that money and morality are not enough and that more research should be done as to its ramification on society as a whole. Moreover, none of the participants believe the government factors morality into this topic much less other topics.

Conclusion

With all of the research that was done along with the survey data collected it would seem that the evidence shows that marijuana is rapidly being accepted as a social norm. The benefits of marijuana are money but also health. The range of illnesses and ailments that are treated with marijuana grow as more and more studies and research is done. It will be legalized fully with time because the people as a whole are demanding it. Elected officials will not be able to hide behind its ignorance for much longer as the scientific data presents strong arguments for legalization. The major concerns regarding marijuana are issues that can be addressed with education and understanding.

Recommendations

Based on the survey that was conducted, here are some recommendations:

- More education sharing needs to be disseminated to the people as this will help to address the misconceptions of marijuana.
- The people should have the right to use whatever drugs they feel will treat their illnesses that do not have debilitating side effects.
- The government could do itself a big favour and listen to the people as they show support for this initiative.
- The government should regulate its practices because the private sector is only concerned with their bottom line.
- Open discussion and compassion need to be the focal point when addressing this matter.

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