



# The Association between Marijuana Consumption in Adolescents and Social Acceptance based on Fitting in with Peer Groups

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## Introduction

- Adolescence is a crucial development phase with social, psychological, and physiological changes, prominently featuring identity formation influenced by peer and social environments.
- The normalization of marijuana use within certain peer groups can lead to increased consumption among their members, reflecting a broader struggle to fit in and be accepted (A. D. Hathaway, A. Mostaghim, P. G. Erickson, K. Kolar and G. Osborne, 2018).
- Research has shown a positive association between adolescents' sense of belonging at school and their likelihood of using cannabis (S. N. Oshi, W. D. Abel, K. Brown, K. Campbell-Williams, P. Whitehorne-Smith, C. F. Agu, et al., 2020).
- There is a research gap in understanding how external factors (e.g., peer pressure) interact with feelings of acceptance in influencing marijuana use (A. D. Hathaway, A. Mostaghim, P. G. Erickson, K. Kolar and G. Osborne, 2018).

## Research Question

How does seeking acceptance and fitting in with peer groups lead to marijuana use among teenagers, and in what ways do external elements (like the influence of friends) work to increase or decrease the frequency of marijuana consumption in adolescents?

## Methods

### Sample:

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Wave 1 AddHealth) is a nationally representative survey designed to examine the health-related behaviors of adolescents in the United States who were in grades 7 through 12 at the start of the study.
- Sample selection used a stratified, school-based, cluster sampling method for national representativeness.
  - Schools were chosen based on diverse characteristics like size, region, and urbanicity.
  - Students were randomly sampled within these schools for survey participation.

### Measures:

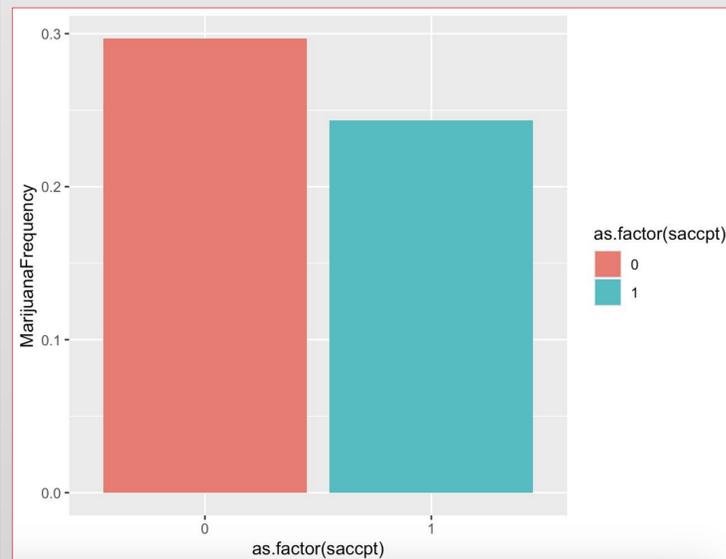
- Wave 1 of Add Health data collection included in-school questionnaires, in-home interviews, and parental questionnaires.
  - In-school questionnaires assessed students' social and demographic profiles, health behaviors, and school environment.
  - In-home interviews offered detailed insights into adolescents' health, psychological state, and family dynamics.
  - Parental questionnaires provided additional data on family socio-economic status, parental health behaviors, and other pertinent aspects.
- Variables of focus in this study:
  - Social acceptance measured with the statement "You feel socially accepted." Possible responses ranged on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
  - Age of usage onset (How old were you when you tried marijuana for the first time?).
  - Number of times used marijuana (During your life, how many times have you used marijuana?).
  - Adjacent marijuana use (Of your 3 best friends, how many use marijuana at least once a month?).

## Results

### Univariate

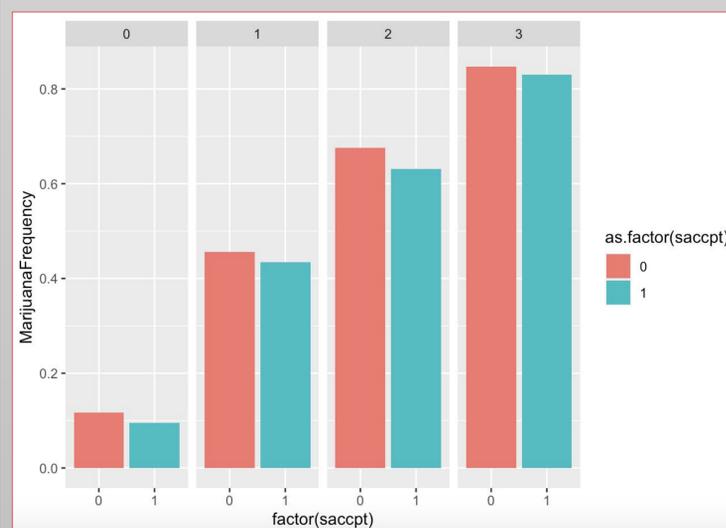
- 14.58% of sampled students reported not feeling socially accepted.
- 24.26% of sampled students reported having used marijuana 1-900 times.

### Bivariate



- This graph visually reveals that students who do not feel socially accepted ( $x = 0$ ) are more likely to use marijuana than students who do feel socially accepted ( $x = 1$ ).
- Chi-Square analysis showed **students who don't feel socially accepted are significantly more likely to have tried marijuana** ( $\chi^2 = 11.694$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.0006269$ )

### Multivariate



- There is a visual distinction in reported marijuana use based on social acceptance.
  - This trend proceeds after incorporating adjacent marijuana use. Participants who don't feel socially accepted and who have more friends who use marijuana are more likely to use marijuana
- Logistic regression analysis showed a statistical significance between marijuana frequency and adolescents who had two friends who used marijuana.
- After controlling for adjacent marijuana usage, social acceptance and marijuana use are still strongly associated.
- Adolescents who reported not feeling socially accepted are 3.6 times more likely to use marijuana than those who don't feel socially accepted (O.R. 0.84, C.I. 0.69, 1.01).

## Discussion

- The data revealed that students who do not feel socially accepted and have peers who use marijuana are more likely to try marijuana.
- These findings underline the importance of fostering an inclusive social environment in schools to potentially reduce marijuana use among students.
- Intervention programs might benefit from focusing on enhancing social acceptance and addressing peer influences.
- Further research could explore additional factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between social acceptance and marijuana use, such as family dynamics, mental health status, and educational achievement.

## References

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