

PSY 211 Example Research Design Worksheet

Complete each section of this worksheet. You will use this worksheet to inform the Research Design section of your final project submission.

Citation of Literature

Bechtold, J., Simpson, T., White, H. R., & Pardini, D. (2015). Chronic adolescent marijuana use as a risk factor for physical and mental health problems in young adult men. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 29(3), 552–563.

Gap Identification

Many studies look at the effects of marijuana use on prenatal development and possible physical and psychological effects throughout the life span, particularly in teenagers and young adults. Researchers have also studied the factors that influence marijuana use across different age groups and in various environments. Some states are legalizing recreational marijuana use, but there has not been much time to study how that influences marijuana use among people in different age groups from varying environmental and racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (gap).

Research Question

Are adults who smoked marijuana recreationally during their teenage years more likely to continue recreational marijuana use in states where that use is legal?

Research Design

I would use a qualitative design for this study because I am looking at hard data (chosen design type and reason for choosing it. Note that this is an experimental design; however, your design may lend itself to descriptive or correlational). My independent variable is the legal status of marijuana. Marijuana use in adulthood is the dependent variable (independent and dependent variables). I would recruit participants from four states—two where recreational marijuana use is legal and two where it is not legal at all for recreational or medicinal use. I would use Colorado and Washington as the two legal states and Idaho and Wyoming as the two illegal states. The studies in my chosen track focused on certain cities, so I chose the latter two states to ensure that all four choices are within roughly the same geographical region. I chose Idaho and Wyoming specifically because personal use possession is not decriminalized in those states and is a misdemeanor rather than a felony (choosing study population).

Previous and current marijuana use would be self-reported via questionnaires. I would use both male and female participants for this study, as the studies in my research track focused on males, which I see as a potential bias (identification and addressing of potential bias). I would like to see if there are gender-related differences. I would administer an initial screening assessment asking about frequency of marijuana use prior to age 20 and the way in which participants viewed their use (sporadically/experimentally vs. regularly/recreationally). I would select those who use marijuana recreationally on a regular basis for the actual study. (Additional study details, which can be added as necessary. Your study may span a longer time period, for example, a month or even years.)

Issues of Ethics

This study will potentially give me knowledge of people who are using marijuana illegally. I would make the assessments anonymous and use only demographic information to identify the subjects (accounting for issues of ethics).

This study involves adults and is simply an assessment, so there are no major ethical problems as long as I obtain informed consent from all participants. There are no risks in this study, but if there were, I would need to fully inform potential participants to help them decide whether or not to give informed consent. If I included teenagers, I would have to get parental consent for those under age 18 (management of ethics). Previous studies involving minors as participants addressed this potential ethical issue by obtaining parental consent. For example, in the research I reviewed involving a group of adolescents from Pittsburgh who were followed through adulthood and assessed for physical and psychological effects of marijuana use (Bechtold, Simpson, White, & Pardini, 2015), the researchers obtained consent from both the youngsters and their parents annually until they reached age 18. Then they obtained consent from the now-adult participants annually (incorporation of things learned).