


High Times, Higher Stakes: Mental Health Impacts in New Recreational Marijuana Legal Landscape

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INTRODUCTION

As society evolves, the legalization of recreational marijuana in various states, including Ohio, presents new challenges and concerns, particularly in sectors where safety and mental acuity are paramount. This study delves into the potential repercussions of such a shift on aviation college students, a group for whom stress, sleep disruption, and the intense demands of flight training are everyday realities. The focus is on understanding how this societal change might influence their mental health and behavior, with a particular emphasis on the normalization of substance use.

BACKGROUND

The backdrop of this research is Ohio's recent legislative change regarding recreational marijuana, a move that mirrors a broader trend across the United States. In the high-stakes environment of aviation training, where the margin for error is minimal, the well-being of future pilots is of utmost concern. This study draws on insights from Diana Semilia's 2022 investigation into the mental health and substance use patterns of Kent State Flight Students, aged 19-26, to offer a comprehensive analysis applicable to flight schools nationwide.

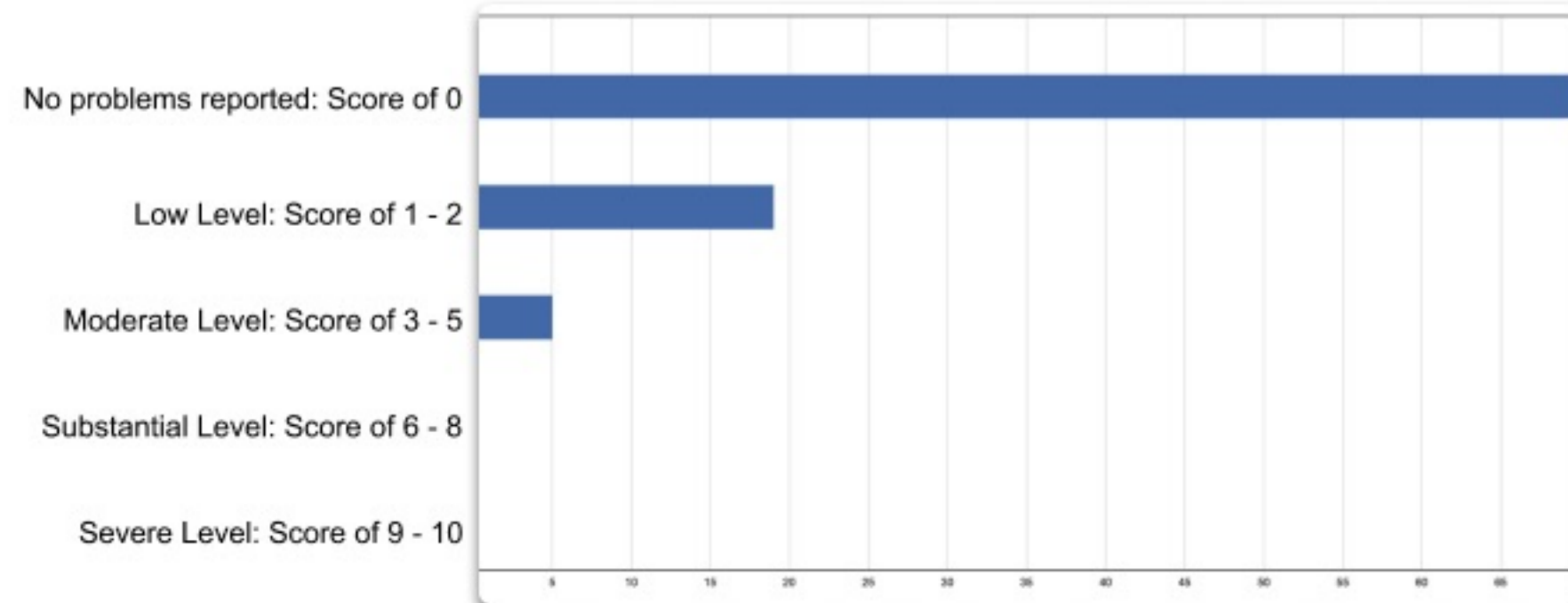
HYPOTHESIS

The central premise of this investigation is that the increasing societal acceptance of marijuana, as evidenced by its legalization for recreational use, might exacerbate existing mental health issues among aviation students. This, in turn, could compromise not only their personal well-being but also flight safety. The study hypothesizes that there is a correlation between the normalization of marijuana use and an increase in mental health challenges within this demographic.

METHODOLOGY

Employing a quantitative approach, the study surveyed Kent State Flight Students to gather data on mental health conditions, substance use rates, and perceptions of support systems within their training environment. Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted to deepen the understanding of students' experiences and the contextual factors influencing their mental health and substance use.

KSU Pilot Drug Abuse

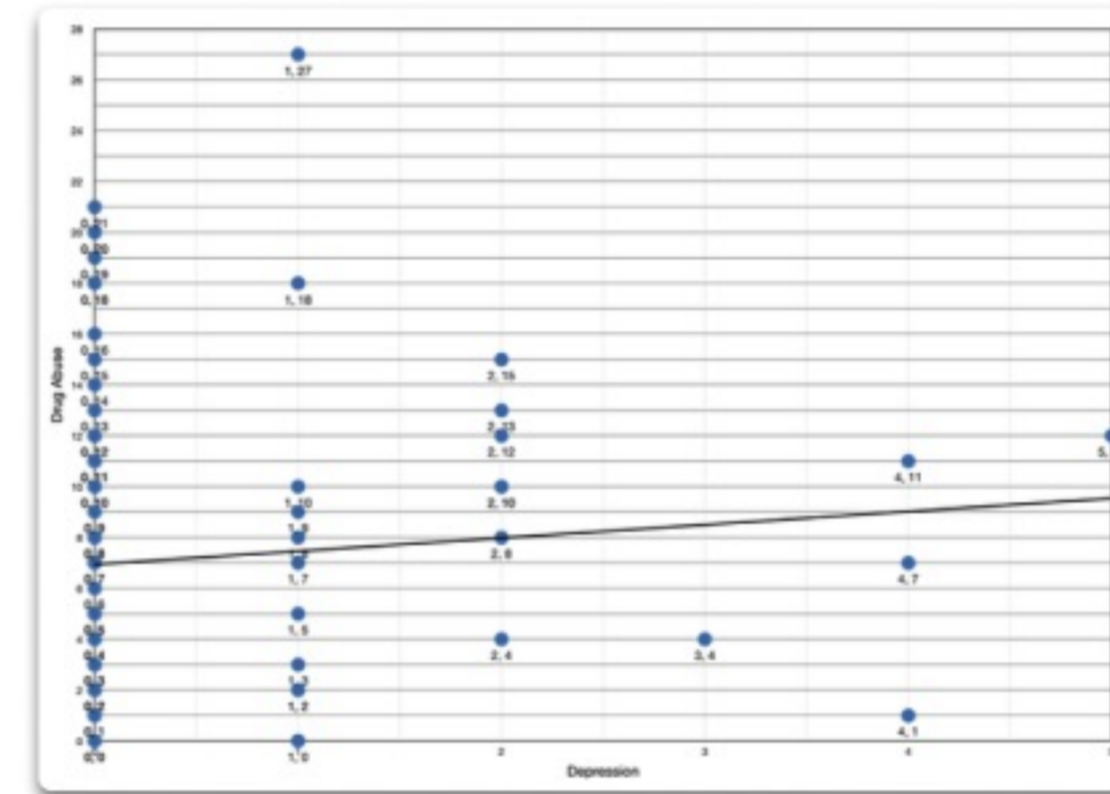


Note. This figure displays five (5) categories of drug abuse thresholds as part of its scoring system. The associated points Kent State University's pilots scored are displayed within each category. Each of the responses were based on experiences within 12 months of taking the survey.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

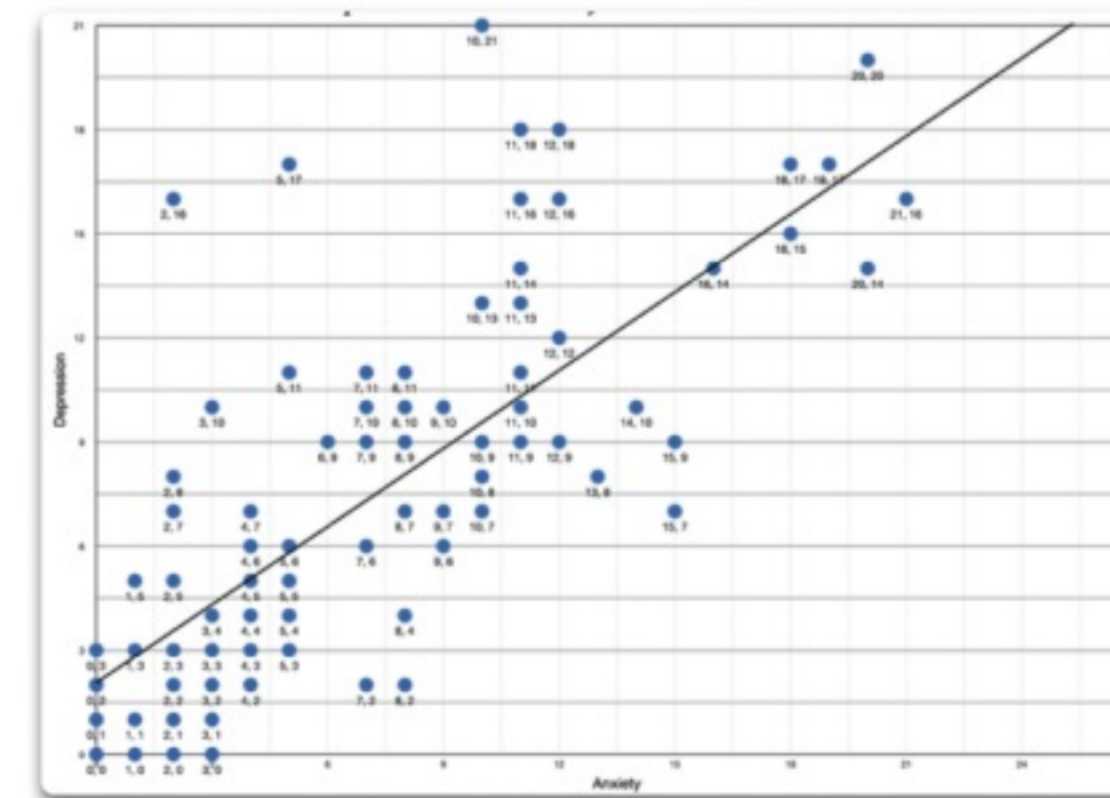
The study unveiled a significant correlation between heightened stress levels and increased substance use among the student population, underscoring a gap in the existing mental health support and substance abuse prevention measures within the flight training ecosystem. Recommendations include the implementation of targeted mental health initiatives, enhanced substance abuse education programs, and the creation of a more supportive community that encourages open discussions about mental health and substance use.

Correlation between Drug Abuse and Depression Scores



This figure displays the little to **no correlation between the drug abuse and depression scores** found among Kent State University's pilots. In other words, there is no direct pattern as to their scoring's exact relationship.

Correlation between Depression and Anxiety Scores



This figure displays the **positive correlation between the depression and anxiety scores** found among Kent State University's pilots. In other words, as depression scores increase, anxiety scores are also seen to increase and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for flight schools to adapt to the changing societal landscape regarding marijuana use. By fostering a training environment that prioritizes mental health support and substance abuse prevention, aviation education institutions can better prepare their students for the challenges of their future careers, ensuring the safety and well-being of the next generation of pilots. This research underscores the complex interplay between legal, societal, and individual factors in shaping the experiences of aviation students and points towards a holistic approach to addressing these issues.