The Effects of Recreational Marijuana

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**Abstract**

 An NMC student researcher presents an original six-month study regarding the effects of the legalization of recreational marijuana has on the economy and society. The student researcher's intentions were to examine the effects of the legalization of recreational marijuana has and to inform people of the CNMI as it is on the way to being legalized. After collecting responses through surveys and interviews not many people are not aware of the effects the legalization of recreational marijuana may have on the economy and the society but agree with the legalization of recreational marijuana. This study is important because in the CNMI recreational marijuana's legalization is approaching and people must be aware of the effects it may have.

**Effects of Recreational Marijuana**

 The purpose of this research report is to examine the effects of the legalization of recreational marijuana has on the economy. The legalization of recreational marijuana has always been a controversial topic. As the CNMI is on the way to legalizing recreational marijuana the student researcher aims to answer the following. How will the legalization of recreational marijuana affect CNMI’s economy? What are the benefits of the legalization of recreational marijuana? How will the legalization of recreational marijuana affect the well-being of others? Will the legalization of marijuana negatively influence teenagers? The student researcher presents various amounts of literature, methodology, information on important findings, in what ways information was analyzed and future plans on how the results of this research report will be used.

**Background**

 On September 21, 2018 Governor Ralph Torres signed House Bill 20-178 also known as the Taulamwaar Sensible CNMI Cannabis act of 2019 which legalized recreational cannabis consumption for adults over 21 and the use of marijuana for its medicinal purposes. But with the legalization of recreational marijuana, there will be effects that is has to the economy and society. The student researcher was able to find multiple academic literature that discusses the effects that the legalization of recreational marijuana has had on different states. In addition, the student researcher was also able to conduct interviews with members of the CNMI House of Senate and CNMI House of Representatives. The student researcher was able to find out that the legalization of recreational marijuana impacts both the economy and society in positive and negative ways.

**Literature Review**

The student researcher was able to find information on impacts that the legalization of recreational has had which include an increase in tax revenue, lower amount of drug related crimes, increase of homelessness, and public health. In 2015, it was reported that recreational sales reached $1 billion and tax revenue and fees reached $135 million. To ensure that with the new tax revenue flow in Colorado is used wisely Colorado funds construction on public schools and funds public programs such as substance abuse. As marijuana is regulated the risks of having a black market and illegal drug dealers will reduce and with that so does the spending on law enforcement drug forces (Hajizadeh, 2016). It was reported that 9 out of 10 marijuana drug arrests nationwide are for possession, not distribution. Only .1% of federal inmates and .2% of state prisoners are marijuana drug related criminals and are often incarcerated due to parole and probation violations. Reducing the number of marijuana-related arrests and incarcerations caused growth in productivity as they are able to keep jobs. Also, marijuana advocates receive funding to reduce the criminalization of lower classes, mending broken homes or offering ride services (Evans, 2013). There some negative impacts that the legalization of recreational marijuana has on the society which includes, an increase of homelessness, increase of newborn children born with marijuana in their system, increase emergency room visits, rise in drug related suspensions, lawsuits from neighboring states, and more (Kang, O’Leary, et.al, 2016). There are also impacts on public health as marijuana smoke exposure can cause, birth defects, infertility, cardiovascular diseases, strokes, immune system damage, testicular cancer, emphysema, lung cancer, collapsed lungs and bullous lung disease (Evans, 2013). Evans also reported that marijuana is an addictive drug and people are in their late teens and twenties are more likely to be highly addictive and are more likely to have serious health complications in the near future. There is also a productivity loss, employees who were tested positive had 55% more industrial accidents and 85% more injuries and a 75% absenteeism rate (Evans, 2013).

**Methodology**

First, an online survey was created through google form and was added to the google link page for students to complete. The survey that was created contained ten questions that included open and close questions, demographics and opinions regarding the effect’s legalization of recreational of marijuana. Every week at least ten responds were expected to be received as it was required that each student must complete at least ten surveys. Then, a letter was sent out to ten experts with experience regarding effects of the legalization of recreational. The ten experts included members of the House of Representative and Senate of the state of Colorado, Nevada and Oregon and a journalist that has analyzed the state of Colorado’s economic changes after the legalization of recreational marijuana. The letter contained a brief introduction of the student researcher and about six questions regarding effects of the legalization of recreational marijuana. Lastly, the student researcher conducted three interviews with two members of the House of Representative and one member of the House of Senate here in the CNMI who requested that their identities remain anonymous. The purpose of the interviews with the members of the local legislature is to question their main purpose on legalizing recreational marijuana and ask for any expert opinion.

**Analysis**

 Findings of research were gathered from responses through surveys and interviews. Based on an online survey given through google forms, the student researcher was able to collect 20 responses from NMC students. In order to identify certain patterns in the finding’s demographics were also collected. There were sixteen female and four males who range from the ages of eighteen to twenty-seven. Out of the sixteen females eight were Asian and the other eight were pacific islanders. As for the males all were Asians. When asked if they support the legalization of recreational marijuana, five responded no, eight responded yes and seven are not sure on whether or not they support because of the lack of facts. As for medicinal marijuana all twenty of them responded that they supported the legalization of medicinal marijuana. The analysis was able to determine that because of the lack of knowledge that some people may have on the effects of recreational purposes is why seven people are unsure on what to agree with. And also, that 100% of the twenty people who took the survey agree with medicinal marijuana. The researcher was unable to receive any responses from the off-island experts but was able to find experts on island willing to do a face to face interview. And as for the interviewees, two were male and one was female. All three were elected officials of the legislature and agree with the legalization of recreational marijuana.

**Findings**

 After demographics were examined, responses from the surveys and interviews were able to show exciting findings. When asked if they have ever travelled somewhere that recreational marijuana was legalized only three out of the twenty had. Two respondents mentioned about their experience one said that it was regulated well and had no issues and one respondent said that marijuana smoke was not well contained making it an uncomfortable vacation. Nineteen respondents agreed that the legalization of recreational marijuana will affect the economy and all nineteen respondents agreed that it would be in a beneficial way. Some think it would bring in more tourists or hope that tax revenue collected will be spent on our local health care, so people won’t have to seek health care elsewhere. Eleven of the respondents have not smoked or consume marijuana recreationally but if it were to be legalized seven out of the eleven would be interested. Nine of the respondents have smoked or consume marijuana recreationally and would definitely continue if it was regulated. Seventeen out of the twenty respondents do not trust the government to safely regulate the usage and market of marijuana and only three out of twenty believe that the government will safely regulate marijuana. Findings for the interview were much more informational and has definitely benefited this research report. All three respondents support the legalization as they have reviewed statistics provided by the state of Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and California that have legalized recreational marijuana. The statistics report claim that criminal rates lowered and economy boosts. They discussed that economic boosts in the states mentioned above would happen here in the CNMI due to bringing in more tourism and the proper taxation on marijuana markets. One of the respondents who is a member of the House of representatives discussed that with the proper taxation on the marijuana markets, there will be less illegal drug dealers which will lower down the crime rates. The interviewee believes that as the markets are taxed, and fees are applied the CNMI government will receive a new source of tax revenue which will benefit our economy that only relies on tourism. The respondent hopes to use the tax revenue for funding school structures, public roads, and upgrading our hospital facilities. The other respondent is a new member in the house of representatives but is aware of the effects it has on the economy and society. The interviewee is more interested in creating programs to raise awareness against drug abuse and also being able to create programs that will prevent teenage drug abuse and dropout prevention programs. The respondent was aware that with the legalization of recreational marijuana, teens are more likely to get addicted and knowing that marijuana is a gateway drug the interviewee is worried. The last respondent answers were fairly similar to the two mentioned above but one thing he mentioned that really stood up was that as a new member of the house of senate he is aware of the misuse of funding here in the CNMI but hopes that new appointed members of the CNMI Cannabis Commission will create strict rules that will not allow the misuse of funds and create a system to track expenditures. The interviewee introduced the CNMI Cannabis Commission, three representatives from Saipan Ms. Nadine Deleon Guerrero, Mr. Matt Deleon Guerrero and Valentino Taisakan, one from Rota Mr. Thomas Songsong and one from Tinian Ms. Journie Hofscheneider.

**Discussion**

 The purpose of the literature sources presented is to support and indicate how it relates to the important findings in the research. According to an article titled, *Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact*, traffic deaths related to marijuana when a driver tested positive for marijuana has gone up by 10% for the past four years since legalization. And as for the usage of marijuana in high school and middle school students has gone up my 4% over the past four years since legalization. Other rates that have gone up is emergency room visits that are marijuana related, infertility, stillborn and newborns born with marijuana in their system, etc. Collected data of toxicology reports from people who have committed suicide has gone up by 6% and continues to rise. Other impacts include health issues like birth defects, infertility, cardiovascular diseases, strokes, immune system damage, testicular cancer, emphysema, lung cancer, collapsed lungs and bullous lung disease (Evans, 2013). There is also a productivity loss, employees who were tested positive had 55% more industrial accidents and 85% more injuries and a 75% absenteeism rate (Evans, 2013). Surveys and interview questions were regarding thoughts on why recreational marijuana should be legalized here in the CNMI. The people who I interviewed were aware of the rates that have raised in states that have legalized marijuana, but the respondents think there are ways to avoid these problems through the right leadership and they believe that the CNMI is capable of doing so.

**Future Plans**

 The student researcher plans to share this research report to anyone interested in acquiring information on the effects of the legalization of recreational marijuana may have here in the CNMI. The student researcher may distribute this research report to family, friends, classmates, coworkers, or even elected officials. It is important that people of the CNMI are aware of the facts presented by the student researcher as the legalization of recreational marijuana is near.

**Conclusion**

 In conclusion, the student researcher presented literature, methodology, and findings to conclude this research and highlight important information found. Through interviews and demographics, surveys were analyzed. The important findings are that many people agree with the legalization of recreational marijuana in hopes it betters the CNMI economy. Many literature sources were presented in support of the proposed topic. The student researcher was able to find information on impacts that the legalization of recreational has had which include an increase in tax revenue, lower amount of drug related crimes, increase of homelessness, public health and lower rates of productivity. The legalization of recreational marijuana may not be something that everyone agrees on, but it is happening here in the CNMI. As the legalization of recreational marijuana is near people must be educated on the topic to understand and to avoid future issues.

**Reference List**

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<https://www.saipantribune.com/index.php/breaking-news-nmi-legalizes-pot/>.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Pilot Study

Number of Researchers: 1

Number of Survey Responses: 20

Demographic: Students between ages 18-27

Survey Questions:

1. Race, age and gender?
2. Do you support the legalization of recreational marijuana?
3. Do you support the legalization of medicinal marijuana?
4. Have you ever traveled or been to any country/state where recreational marijuana has been legalized? If so, how was your experience
5. Do you think that the legalization of recreational marijuana will affect the economy? If so explain
6. Have you ever smoked/consumed marijuana? If so, how often.
7. If marijuana was legalized would you smoke/consume marijuana?
8. Would marijuana affect the well-being of others? If so, explain.
9. What other things might marijuana affect?
10. Do you trust that the government will safely regulate the usage/market of marijuana?

Appendix B- Results of Pilot Survey

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Do you support the legalization of recreational marijuana?** | **Do you support the legalization of medicinal marijuana?** | **Have you ever traveled or been to any country/state where recreational marijuana has been legalized? If so how was your experience** | **Do you think that the legalization of recreational marijuana will affect the economy? If so explain** | **Have you ever smoke/consumed marijuana? If so how often.** | **If marijuana was legalized would you smoke/consume marijuana?** | **Would marijuana affect the well being of others? If so, explain.** | **What other things might marijuana affect?** | **Do you trust that the government will safely regulate the usage/market of marijuana?** |  |
| Yes |  |  | Yes  | Yes | Yes | Maybe | Teen crimes | Maybe | Female |
| Maybe |  | Yes, It will provide safer practice and help for patients with certain ailments.  | Yes | Yes | Yes | The people who don't smoke. | Maybe | Male |
| Yes |  | yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | the economy | No | Female |
| Maybe |  | I am not sure.  | No | Maybe | Maybe | Perhaps killing brain cells  | Maybe | Female |
| Yes |  | I feel like it would. I've been to a few places where marijuana is legalized and so many people use it and there are so many businesses that has it at their forefront. Also, I feel that a lot of people use marijuana here, but they are just on the down-low because it's not technically legal yet. | No | Maybe | Maybe | I honestly cannot think of anything. I feel like the only reason why people are against it is because it's considered a "drug" and environmental smoke may be a problem, but other than that, nothing.  | Yes | Female |
| Maybe |  | Yes however it should only be made legalized for those who really need it. | No | No | Yes | Sense of judgement. | Maybe | Female |
| Yes |  | YES! TAXING IT WILL! | No | No | Maybe | I don't know. Maybe it could lead to underage useage. | Maybe | Female |
| Yes |  | Yes, I think it'll benefit the economy. | Yes | Yes | Yes | If regulations aren't set up correctly, I think it may have more of a negative to the youth. | Yes | Male |
| Maybe | Maybe | No, I have not traveled to any state. | I think it will because many people may do it in the open since it would be legal. And with it being legal there are some factors that could affect the economy for example; it could bring in new types of tourist, revenue but also it could bring in negative effects like younger generation copying and having it affect their schooling and adults may have difficulty focusing in their work when they are high. | No | No | Yes, like I previously mentioned it could affect their focus and performance in school. | Familial relations especially those who are against, health. | Maybe |  |
| Maybe | Yes | I don't think so. | Maybe, perhaps it could boost the economy? | Nope. | No | Good and bad, medicinally, I feel like it could improve many lives. But I also feel like something bad could happen, I'm not sure why though, just a gut feeling. | I'm not too sure. | Maybe |  |
| Yes | Yes | No | Yes, it will help improve the financial stability for the hospital | Yes, I stopped smoking it. | Maybe | No, it affects the brain.  | It affects speech | Maybe |  |
| No | Yes | California, not a good experience because people are using it for the wrong reasons. | Nope. | No thank you! | No | Yes, for those who have a medical condition such as epilepsy, seizures, and other conditions. | Many people who don't use it for medical purposes will be dealing and affect the safety of other people. | No |  |
| No | Yes | Marijuana smokes everywhere. | No | Yes but I have stopped. | No | According to informational posters that Marijuana does effect the human body and mind. It effects their lungs, give hallucinations, short term memory loss, etc. | Kids. Many children are on the urge of smoking marijuana which is highly affective on children.  | No |  |
| Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Never | Maybe | Possibly | Not sure | Maybe |  |
| Maybe | Yes | Yes, didn't see much difference. | Could boost our economy if we input taxes on it | Yes, not often | Maybe | Yes, might make them feel paranoid | judgement | Maybe |  |
| Maybe | Yes | No | I dont know | No | No | i dont know | the brain | Maybe |  |
| No | Yes | No, I haven't  | Yes I do because marijuana can affect people in a negative way | Yes & only once | No | Yes because it tends to make people slow, forgetful, and gain weight  | Social interactions  | No |  |
| Yes | Yes | No i have not. | I believe it would have both a positive and negative affect depending on how the community chooses do deal with this law. | I have tried, only a few times. | No | In a positive way, yes | Not sure | Yes |  |
| No | Yes | no | yes, access might vary as well as quality.  | no | No | Yes, indirectly. The actions of the user could affect those around them.  | One's health over time.  | Maybe |  |
| No | Yes | No | Yes. I think people from other countries will be invested and interested since just a few states only have legalized use of marijuana. | No | No | Yes. Marijuana is still a drug that if abuse may lead to unhealthy choices and growth. | Health and Lifestyle of a person | Maybe |  |



